

# A Contemporary Market Town

## Chorley Town Centre Strategy



*Our vision is:*

*“To create a contemporary market town where people can enjoy a wealth of stores and attractions to rival neighbouring cities and shopping centres in the North West. A place where people can meet and enjoy their leisure time, where businesses can thrive and visitors can soak up a traditional Chorley welcome.”*





## CHORLEY: A CONTEMPORARY MARKET TOWN

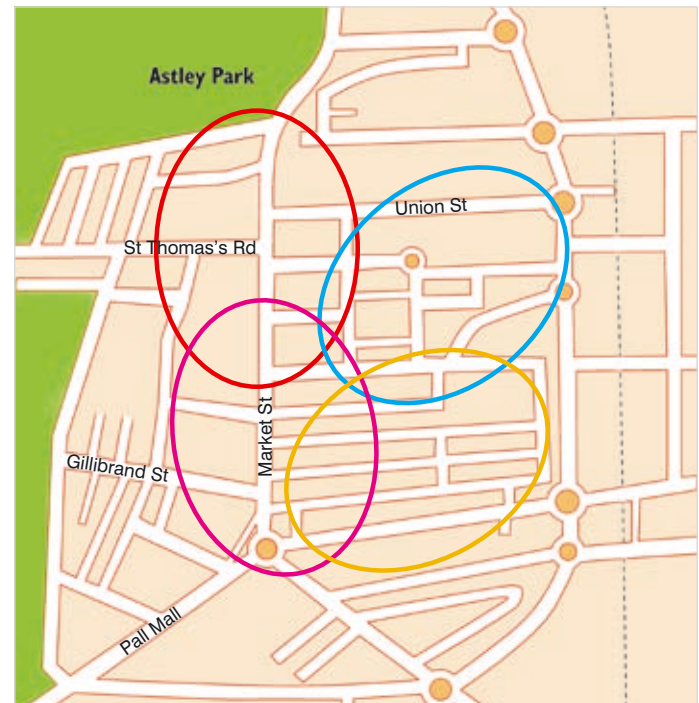
A thriving town centre needs to be many things to many people. It needs to provide a place where neighbours and friends can meet for lunch or an evening out, where local people can set up a successful business or thrive as entrepreneurs, or where visitors can enjoy a bustling commercial community filled with opportunity, colour and life.

A trip to our town centre also provides a first-hand experience of the warmth and hospitality of Chorley people.

Recent studies and surveys about Chorley town centre reveal a positive picture, but we want to grasp every opportunity to make it the best it can possibly be for everyone. We are proud of what we have and want to build on it for the future. Together we can make a difference.

This booklet outlines plans for the future and how you can play a part. Read it and let us know what you think. Then get involved!

- Civic Quarter
- Retail Quarter
- Cultural Quarter
- Residential Quarter



boutique





## WHERE ARE WE STARTING FROM?

A study by an independent specialist company White Young Green in May 2005 found Chorley town centre was irrefutably the main retail destination in the borough, with plenty of local people 'popping in' to visit Chorley's famous markets and a wide range of shops.

### *32nd on the 'wealth list' nationally*

The study also revealed how Chorley improved its position in the national ranking of town centres between 2001 and 2004. The Lancashire Shopping Study 2003 indicated that the town centre was trading well, particularly in comparison with other small towns in Lancashire. Chorley was ranked as the seventh highest town in the county when it came to selling items other than food, with a turnover of almost £80million, and third in the county based on a calculation of our average sales per metre<sup>2</sup>, a better position than some of the larger shopping centres.

Our town centre is also well known throughout the North West for its famous markets, including the Flat Iron, covered and flea markets, together with continental, French, local produce and other specialist markets from time to time.

The town centre boasts a diverse mix of traditional streets, markets, fine buildings and newer developments like Market Walk, producing an offer unique to Chorley in a largely pedestrianised area.

Success is reflected in the fact that there are few empty shops – lower than the national average and only around 4.5% (at the most recent check) of the total available for business.

BUT... value shopping is replacing quality retail offer and we cannot stand still.



## THE CHALLENGE

If we consider the town centre to be important then we can't stand still. We need to identify the potential for improvement, deal with issues of concern, look at forthcoming trends among businesses and shoppers and ensure that we maintain our competitive edge in the future.

The study by White Young Green gave us some specialist information and advice about how we can make real improvements and a difference to everyone. The following points provide some background information about some key issues for consideration.

- 1** Our town centre is perceived as a local destination which has lots of independent shops, as well as a smattering of national names and chain stores. This is considered a plus point and a major building block for the future. Chorley needs to establish its identity as a town centre with specialist shops and national retailers, as well as the popular markets.
- 2** As with many small towns, Chorley is going through a period of change and we need to make sure we promote what we have to make certain people both within and outside the borough are aware of what's on offer. This is particularly important when you consider the town's location – we're right in the middle of a very competitive shopping region with neighbouring towns and cities such as Preston, Bolton, Blackburn, Wigan and Manchester - just a short drive away and all competing for the same customers. In addition, out-of-town retail parks such as Middlebrook and even the Trafford Centre are able to offer real convenience as a way of tempting customers there.
- 3** By 2015 it's estimated that people in Chorley will spend about £40million a year on groceries – our town centre needs to make sure it has enough food stores and supermarkets to serve these customers.



**4** It's also predicted that over the next 10 years people will spend more on goods generally – and we need to make sure we have enough shops and floor space to benefit from this growth.

**5** And with more money around for shopping – we need to make sure that our town centre offers as much choice as possible. For this reason, we need to broaden the mix of shops.

**6** We also need to improve and enhance the environment to make sure we offer the best experience possible to everyone visiting our town centre for whatever reason. This includes improving the entrances or 'gateways' into the town centre, promoting the maintenance of buildings and the improvement of shop fronts, ensuring high quality design for new buildings, tackling unattractive or underused sites, improving public spaces and pursuing appropriate opportunities for public art so

people know we're committed to nurturing our town.

**7** Another thing we need to tackle is the town centre at night and particularly the town centre as a leisure destination. In order to bring people into the area at night and at weekends facilities are needed - be it restaurants, café bars, theatres, or cinema. We'll have to work hard to attract private companies to come and set up in Chorley – but it will be worth it.

**8** Once we've attracted people here, we need to make sure they can get around. Parking and access to public transport are paramount. We also need to make sure people with mobility issues – and that includes families with children as well as people with disabilities – can get around and access everything we have to offer.



homeware

Fresco & F





## THE VISION

*Our vision is:*

*“To create a contemporary market town where people can enjoy a wealth of stores and attractions to rival neighbouring cities and shopping centres in the North West. A place where people can meet and enjoy their leisure time, where businesses can thrive and visitors can soak up a traditional Chorley welcome.”*

We’re going to do everything we can to make it happen. That will involve creating a ‘Contemporary Market Town’ and improving our competitive advantage by:

- Working hard to make sure Chorley is the obvious choice over neighbouring shopping centres, towns and cities
- Making sure we have a wide variety of shops, ranging from small specialist retailers to national chain stores

We think we can do it. We already have a good foundation to build on. Our town centre is convenient and compact, with a strong business heritage. Combine that with the mix of independent and individual shops, together with national high street names and a safe environment and we believe we’ve got a recipe for success.





## WHAT DOES THAT ACTUALLY MEAN?

It means we've got clear objectives about how we're going to enhance and improve our town centre. These objectives will then inform an action plan of actual, on the ground activity.

Our objectives are to:

- Increase the number of shops and leisure attractions
- Make sure our town centre is as safe as possible and accessible to all
- Improve the appearance of our town centre
- Raise the profile of our town centre to encourage people to visit and use it
- Encourage local people and businesses to get involved and work with us to make a difference

On top of the objectives, we've identified some priorities – to build on existing positives. They are to:

- **Broaden Chorley town centre's appeal – making it more attractive as a place to spend leisure time or an evening out or seek retail therapy.**

Clothes and shoe shops have been highlighted as a main interest when attracting new stores.

- Improve the 'fabric' of the town centre – making sure things like the buildings and pavements, street furniture and floral displays are up to scratch. This will include regeneration, refurbishment and general maintenance.
- Make sure we have ready accessibility throughout the town centre – we need to make sure we address key issues such as car parking and getting into town on foot, by public transport or on bicycles.
- Support our local businesses. We want to do this by working with local and national traders, as well as promoting our town centre better.

Over the next few pages we'll look at each priority in more detail and give you some idea of the kind of actions and aims we'll be looking to achieve in each area.



## BROADENING OUR APPEAL

This sounds like a massive job – and it is. But it will be worth it. What we need to do is take complete stock of where we are and what we have – and then look at the gaps and how we’re going to fill them.

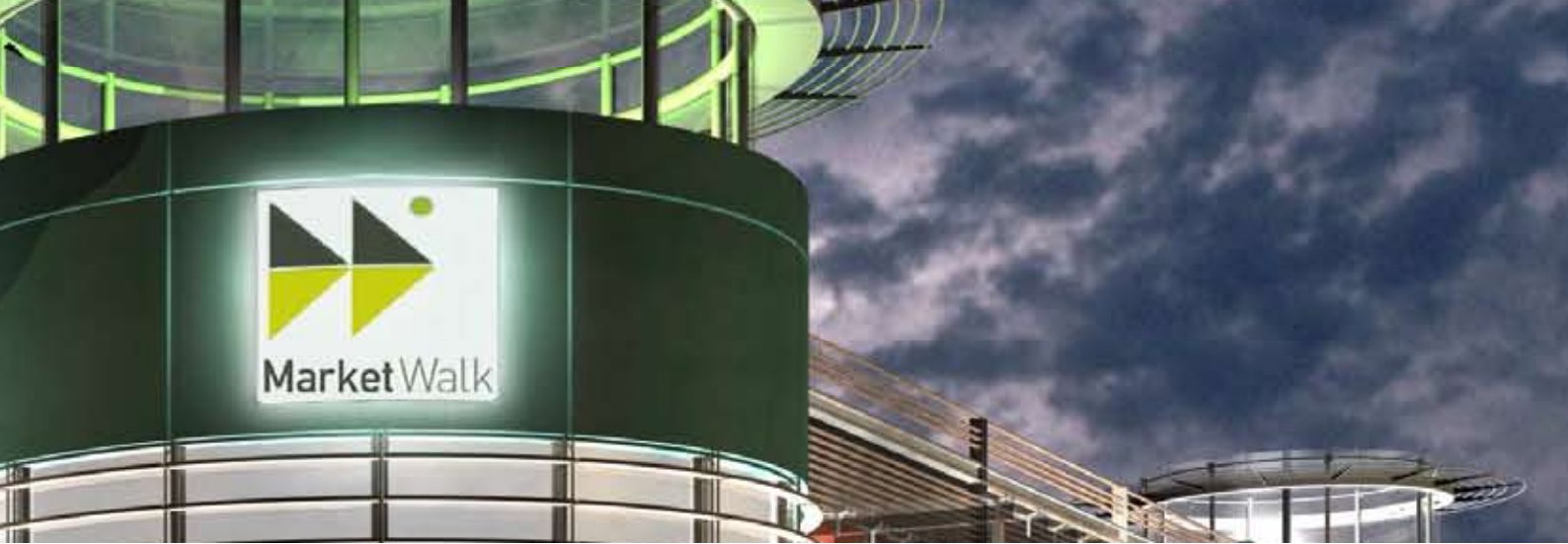
One of the first and most exciting elements of this priority is to extend the popular contemporary shopping area of Market Walk. This £20million project will lead to almost 10,000 metre<sup>2</sup> of extra shopping space in four big shops as well as extra car parking on a pay on exit multi-storey system. It might sound like a big plan but it will provide Chorley with a really exciting new focus. Once it’s built, we need to make sure we attract people to invest in the shops. We need to make sure they’re the right kind of shops too and the focus will be on quality and independent shops and High Street names.

Next up we need to make sure there’s plenty of modern, attractive office space for businesses. A thriving business community is fundamental to a thriving economy in the town centre. It also means jobs for local

people. We’re also keen to get people living in our town centre and making it a bustling, thriving place in the evening and at weekends. We’ll be looking to develop homes above the shops. There are four key sites we want to concentrate on that’ll make a real difference to Chorley town centre if developed properly. They are:

- The former McDonald’s site at the junction of Gillibrand Street and Market Walk
- Fleet Street North car park
- The corner of Pall Mall and Bolton Street – where QS Fashions is currently housed
- Part of the Union Street car park next to Market Walk

Once we have the shops, the businesses, the houses – the attractions – the only thing left will be to make sure the infrastructure is in place to support this rejuvenated community. We’ll also be looking to attract people to run other cultural and tourism facilities, as well as encouraging restaurants, café bars and evening entertainment venues to invest in Chorley.



## IMPROVE THE 'FABRIC' OF THE TOWN CENTRE

This is another huge job – but vitally important. Chorley town centre has got to look the part. The first thing we need to do is work out what we have and we'll do this by auditing the entire area, including the 'gateways' – the main routes into town which tell us where the town centre starts and ends and provide people with their first impression of the town centre.

We'll also look at buildings, streets and public areas, cycle parking, signage and landscaping – everything that contributes to how the town centre looks. We'll review our café culture and where pavement dining should be encouraged, where street theatre would be best placed and how we can make people feel safer than ever. One of the most exciting projects to fall under this priority is to transform the front of the Town Hall into a pedestrian square and we'll also be looking to smarten up the public areas near the Police station and also near the library. We want to add character to Chorley by incorporating street art where possible and, of course, safety will be considered at every stage of development. The main 'gateways' into town will need

to be carefully considered. These are:

- Park Road – from the entrance to Astley Park and including the Gala Bingo site.
- Town Centre bypass (A6) –working with Lancashire County Council to improve crossing places and links to car parks and to improve the look of the area.
- Bolton Street –working with businesses and local residents to bring about visual improvements.
- Pall Mall – again, working to achieve visual improvements.
- St Thomas's Road –opening discussion about improvements to the street and properties.

Work to improve the 'fabric' of Chorley, will also include promoting shop front improvements, replacing or removing old or unnecessary signs or street furniture, investing in public spaces and in specific measures to improve the appearance of unattractive sites and premises.



---

## A HIGH LEVEL OF ACCESSIBILITY

This is all about providing access to the town centre for everyone – whether they want to walk in, cycle, use public transport or drive and whether they are a family with children in push chairs or people with disabilities who can't get around as easily. We want to be open to everyone. Part of the work under this priority includes a major review of parking and the parking system we have in Chorley. This will include considering alternatives and coming forward with proposals that encourage people to come into Chorley and stay longer. We'll bring these ideas forward for discussion with you. It also involves making sure we have crossings in place on busy roads so there's no reason why people can't get into the town centre safely.

## SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS

Creating a vibrant town centre relies on a lot of different ingredients. There is a need to attract new businesses and outlets to help create the right mix. A way we can tackle this is to promote Chorley as a 'Contemporary Market Town' and all the positives the town centre has

to offer. Traditionally Chorley has undersold itself. We need to get out there and shout about our town centre more to make sure we get the people in, which in turn supports our businesses and attracts more businesses to get involved.

We also want to work with and provide more direct support to our traders and we'll be making sure we're in more open and continuous communication with them. This is important because it means we can tap into their expertise and ideas, as well as providing them with advice and guidance. It's a two-way street. We want to make sure we keep people informed and involved every step of the way through effective consultation.

We'll also be communicating with people through our website and we'll be marketing our attractions through visitor guides and town centre maps, and we'll be directly inviting people into the town centre with activities such as street theatre, performances and guided walks around points of interest.

---

## WHEN IS IT ALL GOING TO HAPPEN?

It's an ambitious plan. The strategy was approved in October 2006 and the vision looks forward to what our town centre will look like in 2016. That's 10 years away – but activity will start straight away.

The first thing is to start to work through the key proposals. The strategy will be monitored each year to see how far we have got and will be reviewed every three years to make sure we're still heading in the right direction generally.

There are some difficult decisions ahead and we might have to buy land or even use statutory powers to make things happen. But we're committed to that.

There are other things that may impact on progress – like cost - for us and for other businesses or partners. But we're ready for the challenge and we'll do our best.

If you've anything to say on this document, any ideas – or you want to get involved – please get in touch.

You can write to:

Cath Burns, Economic Development Manager,  
Chorley Council, Gillibrand Street, Chorley, PR7 2EL.

You can email:

[cath.burns@chorley.gov.uk](mailto:cath.burns@chorley.gov.uk)

You can call:

01257 515305

Chorley Council is committed to investing in and improving our town centre – and we'll do everything we can to make it happen. The shops and businesses here and the number of residents and shoppers who head in to look around and pick up everything from fresh fruit and vegetables to designer clothes and homewares.

But everyone we talk to is agreed that the town centre is the heart of our borough and we should do everything we can to improve it, nurture it and make sure it's alive and well for future generations.

*Putting Chorley at the heart of regional economic development*

**Chorley**  
Council

Civic Offices, Union Street, Chorley, PR7 1AL

[www.chorley.gov.uk](http://www.chorley.gov.uk)