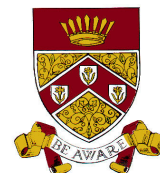

Chorley Economic Regeneration Strategy

Draft

March 2006



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આ માહિતીનો અનુવાદ આપની પોતાની ભાષામાં કરી શકાય છે. આ સેવા સરળતાથી મેળવવા માટે કૃપા કરી, આ નંબર પર ફોન કરો: 01257 515822

ان معلومات کا ترجمہ آپ کی اپنی زبان میں بھی کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ یہ خدمت استعمال کرنے کیلئے براہ مہربانی اس نمبر پر ٹیلیفون کیجئے: 01257 515823

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1 Foreword

1.1 To be added by Chorley (Chief Exec/ Deputy Chief Exec signatories)

2 Executive Summary

- 2.1 This is an exciting period in Chorley's development. The Government's Northern Way Growth Strategy provides a springboard for the borough in the context of the wider Central Lancashire City Region. Ambitious plans, founded on the economic growth potential of the borough within Central Lancashire, are in place. These plans address a full range of economic, labour force, strategic transport and investment priorities which will help to address the productivity gap between the northern regions and the south of England.
- 2.2 This document comprises the Economic Regeneration Strategy for Chorley. It forms part of the wider strategic outlook for the local authority and has been prepared in the context of Chorley Borough Council's Corporate Priorities and Community Strategy.
- 2.3 The Economic Regeneration Strategy provides a summary of the key issues and opportunities to which the Borough Council must respond. It sets a strategy whereby economic opportunity can be maximised, value-added activity driven up, and economic inclusion boosted.
- 2.4 In many respects the prognosis for Chorley's economy is very bright. The borough can boast:
- an economic structure aligned with the Core Central Lancashire sub-regional economy with recent employment growth in Chorley significantly out-performing surrounding areas in recent years;
 - a high business density of 34 per 10,000 resident adults as against county and regional average of 31 per 10,000. Chorley also has high levels of VAT registrations running at 11.7% of the business stock as against 10.9% across the North West and 10.6% nationally;
 - GVA per capita which is 11.5% above the Lancashire County average and 16% above the level across the North West region;
 - a relatively good skills profile with levels of NVQ4 and above qualifications above the regional level and proportions of NVQ 1 – 3 qualifications higher than both regional and national comparators;
 - high labour force economic activity, which has remained consistently high at 79.9% of the working-age population and is above the regional (76.5%) and national (78.2%) averages;
 - good educational attainment - four out of five of Chorley's secondary schools have higher GCSE pass rates than the national average (51.6%). Runshaw College of Further Education has the best A-level pass rate in the Country.
- 2.5 The borough faces a series of economic challenges which include:
- ❑ **Commuting Patterns:** addressing the mass out migration of the workforce on a daily basis;
 - ❑ **Low Workplace-Based Earnings:** addressing the difference between work based earnings within the borough and in surrounding authorities which currently provide an incentive to commuting;

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- ❑ **Historically Low Take-up of Employment Land:** overcoming supply-side constraints to economic development and investment in the borough;
 - ❑ **Chorley Town Centre:** maintaining Chorley's position in the retail hierarchy, growing the quality of its offer and providing a distinctive and attractive town centre environment;
 - ❑ **Economic Exposure:** putting in place measures to lessen the economic dependence upon more vulnerable sectors which are influenced by globalisation;
 - ❑ **Deprivation:** addressing pockets of multiple deprivation, re-connecting deprived areas with the evident opportunities which exist and addressing entrenched worklessness;
 - ❑ **Accessibility:** ensuring that public and road based transport infrastructure is configured to support economic growth.

2.6 The Economic Regeneration Strategy proposes targeted action across a number of inter-linked strands. At the heart of the strategy is a vision for Chorley of "Growing Sustainably". The Strategy incorporates measures to address:

- ❑ **Improving skills and addressing worklessness**
- ❑ **A thriving town centre**
- ❑ **Improving transport infrastructure and accessibility**
- ❑ **Supporting and developing enterprise**
- ❑ **Providing a portfolio of sites and premises**
- ❑ **Marketing Chorley to the world**

2.7 These relate closely to the some of the priority outcomes of the Council's emerging Corporate Strategy: of a thriving town centre; a robust transport infrastructure; and a vibrant local economy. It will also contribute to the delivery of wider objectives relating to education and training; economic inequalities; and neighbourhood renewal.

2.8 The Strategy draws upon Chorley's outstanding natural environment and waterspaces, its proximity to the Pennine foothills, its strategic location on the national motorway network and the latent potential of its employment land offer. It firmly establishes a strong town centre at the heart of Chorley enabling it to be a "modern market town".

2.9 A number of key actions are proposed under each theme, to be taken forward through more detailed action planning. This will be led by Chorley Borough Council but will involve a range of wider partners. Key actions are set out below.

Theme	Enabling Action	Action
Improving Skills and Addressing Worklessness	1. Maintaining and Growing Levels of Entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and develop existing business support initiatives • Establish Runshaw College as a major deliverer of the business training agenda • Develop a locally-tailored business skills/ training curriculum
	2. Become Investor Ready	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the development and refurbishment of small and start-up business space through developer agreements, direct investment and other funding streams
	3. Building a Business Support Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise potential to develop a shared business support infrastructure with South Ribble Business Venture and other partners
	4. Boosting Value-Added Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage Lancashire Economic Partnership and the North West Development Agency's Culture Change Programme¹ to understand approaches to boosting value-added activity • Promote knowledge transfer among businesses
	5. Supporting Opportunities for People to Work Longer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine potential for an innovative pilot scheme to encourage home-based entrepreneurship amongst the older population • Encouraging flexible working practices • Monitor and evaluate the impact of the Pilot
	6. Supporting Home Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop signposting and other guidance to support home-based working • Improve awareness of the elancs.net project
	7. Rural Diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake further analysis of the dynamics of the rural economy • Identify sustainable opportunities for economic diversification in rural areas • Continue to develop links with other initiatives including DEFRA grant schemes and Lancashire Rural Futures initiatives
Improving the Transport Infrastructure and Accessibility	8. Improving Sub-Regional Public Transport Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and promote the transport proposals for the Core Central Lancashire Sub-Regional Strategy in the Local Transport Plan • Develop the proposed new station and park-and-ride site at Buckshaw Village • Monitor the impact of new development and transport investment on traffic flow
	9. Improving Public Transport Services for Rural Settlements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicise improvements to bus services through the 'Kick Start' Scheme • Undertake an appraisal of rural transport options • Contribute to a Rural Transport Strategy with Lancashire County Council
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

¹ The programme aims to transform the 'culture' of companies, focusing on changing working practices, employer and employee attitudes to generate additional business benefits and improve productivity.

	10. Opening up New Areas to Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the appropriate land use mix for sites opened up for development in south and west Chorley Consider undertaking a feasibility study to examine the potential for development of a new motorway junction and strategic employment site at Charnock Richard
Providing a Portfolio of Sites and Premises	11. Bridge of Commercial Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the complementary role of different elements of the 'bridge of commercial opportunity' through the Local Development Framework Examine and develop the case for investment in infrastructure to improve the success of this area as a business location Market the assets of the area collectively, in partnership with Lancashire Economic Partnership
	12. Employment Land Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a critical review of employment land provision across the borough
	13. Portfolio of Workspace for Small and Expanding Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine supply of industrial and office premises suitable for small businesses Encourage new product development and refurbishment of industrial/ office premises Promote early development of new supply within the Southern Commercial Area at Buckshaw Village Examine potential 'next generation' prestige employment sites/ opportunities through the Employment Land Review
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
A Thriving Town Centre	14. Establishing a Spatial Framework for the Town Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the spatial framework for development in the town centre through the LDF/ Town Centre Area Action Plan, in light of the Town Centre Study and Economic Regeneration Strategy Prepare a masterplan for the Town Centre Implement improvements in the public realm and civic environment as detailed in the Town Centre and A6 Masterplans Develop design guidance for development opportunity sites Make the most of opportunities for heritage-based regeneration
	15. Town Centre Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess feasibility of a consolidated Town Centre management group Draw up a Town Centre Management Strategy

Improving Skills and Addressing Worklessness	16. Demonstrate a Business Case for Workforce Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the feasibility of developing a Pilot Programme to illustrate the operational and financial benefits of undertaking training/ skills development Disseminate findings of the Pilot within the local business community
	17. Incentivise Workforce Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the potential to link business grants to a requirement to undertake workforce training/ development
	18. Better Promotion of Existing Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote national skills/ training programmes to local businesses
Marketing Chorley to the World	19. Marketing Core Central Lancashire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to promote and brand the Core Central Lancashire area
	20. Marketing Chorley – the Modern Market Town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a branding exercise focused on Chorley as a “Modern Market Town” Develop a Marketing Strategy aimed at communicating the unique identity of Chorley; raising the profile of the town/ borough; its facilities, and programme of events, using a range of media
	21. Design Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a strong design focus for new development through the Area Action Plan for the Town Centre and development briefs for key sites Communicate a change in the quality of the built environment and a rediscovery of heritage through the Marketing Strategy

Introduction

- 2.10 Chorley has many of the key components of economic success – an accessible location for business at the heart of Lancashire; a high skilled labour force; well performing local schools; a balanced housing market offering a choice of housing; an attractive environment in which open countryside is “on the doorstep”; and a strong economic structure, orientated towards growth.
- 2.11 The prognosis going forward is very bright – Chorley offers considerable economic growth potential and can make an effective contribution, as part of the Core Central Lancashire Area (Chorley, South Ribble and Preston boroughs), to regional and national economic growth objectives.
- 2.12 This document - Chorley’s Economic Regeneration Strategy – is about supporting and enabling continued economic success and ensuring that this benefits all of the borough’s residents. Its raison d’être is to identify where potential for future sustainable economic growth and development exists and set out how this can be realised.
- 2.13 The Economic Regeneration Strategy forms part of the wider strategic outlook for the local authority and has been prepared in the context of Chorley Borough Council’s Corporate Priorities and Community Strategy. It will contribute directly to the Community Strategy’s objective of “developing a thriving and vibrant local economy.” It will also be a key mechanism in achieving some of the priority outcomes of the Council’s emerging Corporate Strategy: of a thriving town centre; a robust transport infrastructure; and a vibrant local economy, and contribute to the delivery of wider objectives relating to education and training; economic inequalities; and neighbourhood renewal.
- 2.14 The Strategy has been prepared on behalf of Chorley Borough Council by GVA Grimley, together with KPMG, in Summer 2005. It is based upon:
- ❑ a rigorous analysis of past economic performance, the borough’s economic structure and economic potential looking forward;
 - ❑ an understanding of labour market and travel to work patterns, demographic and socio-economic characteristics;
 - ❑ an understanding of sub-regional dynamics²;
 - ❑ consideration of recent performance of commercial and residential property markets and future supply of development land and premises;
 - ❑ a comprehensive consultation programme involving both public sector stakeholders and businesses.
- 2.15 While in developing the Economic Regeneration Strategy, GVA Grimley has been mindful to the wider public policy agenda. However the strategy is based upon the outcomes of the above and does not presuppose a specific policy context. It hence recognises the evolving nature of the policy framework.

² Understanding of sub-regional dynamics has particularly been developed through the Core Central Lancashire Sub-Regional Study.

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- 2.16 The Economic Regeneration Strategy provides a framework for action over a 10-15 year timeframe, establishing both a structure (through aims and objectives) for activities to be pursued and specific projects which will be taken forward. The proactive role of the public sector will be critical and the Strategy particularly provides a framework for activity and investment by Chorley Borough Council. However successful implementation will require strong engagement of private sector interests, Northwest Development Agency, Lancashire County Council, Lancashire County Developments Limited, and neighbouring local authorities. The Strategy therefore has an important role in communicating Chorley's priorities.
- 2.17 Chorley borough in the strategic contexts of the Core Central Lancashire area and the wider North West Region is presented in Figures 1 and 2 below.

Figure 1: Chorley – Regional Context

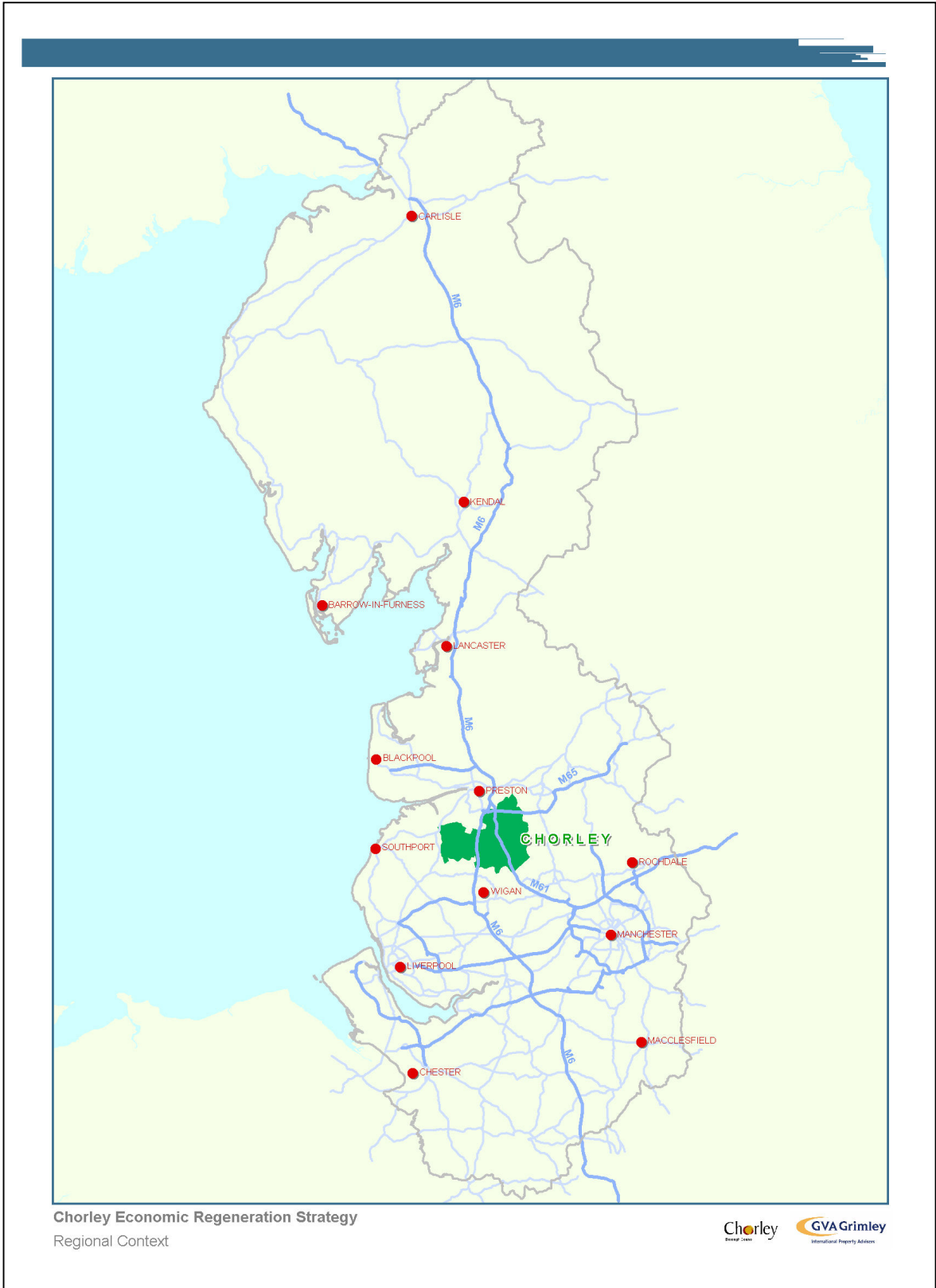
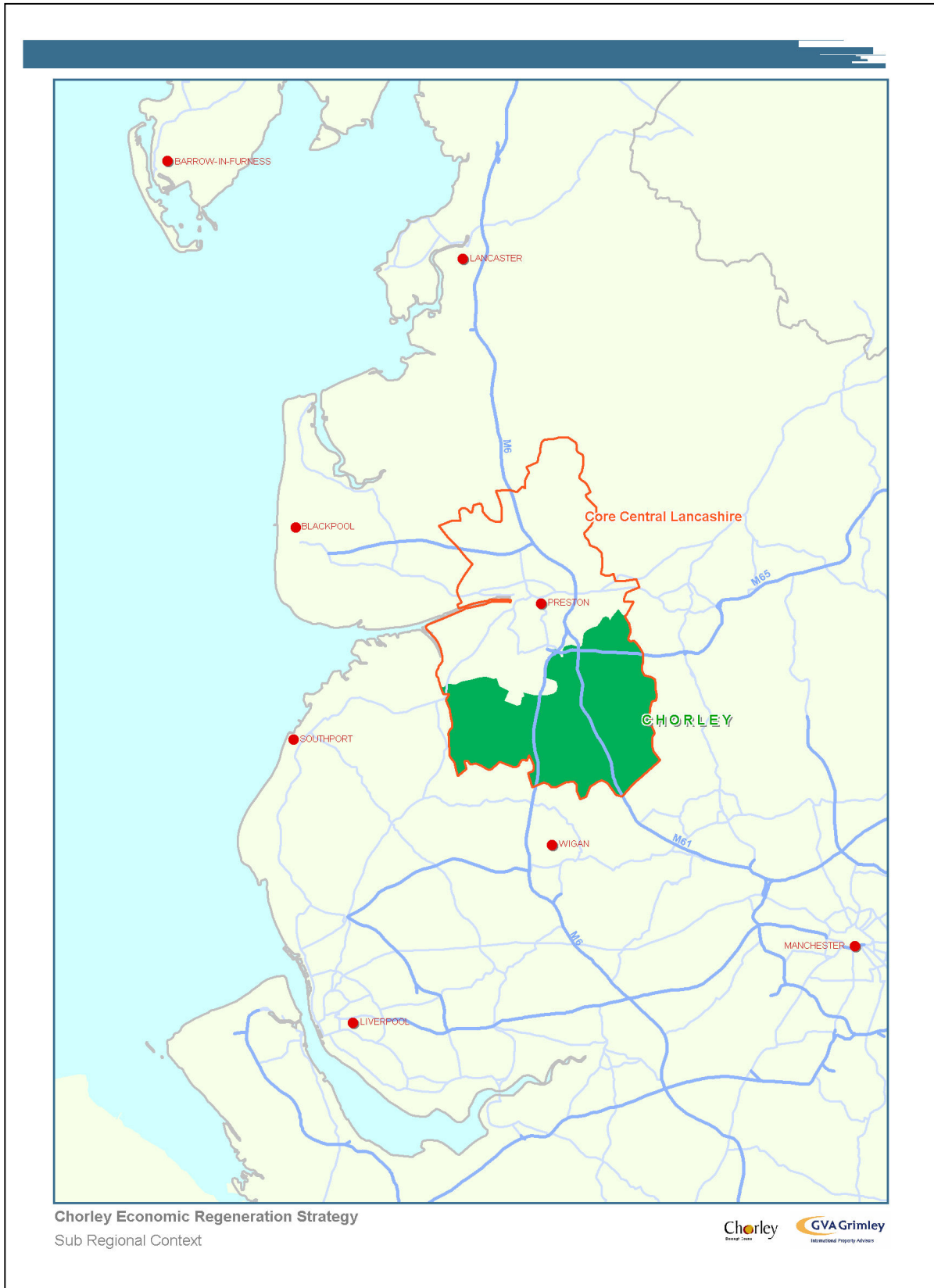


Figure 1: Chorley – Sub-Regional Context



What makes Chorley distinct?

- 2.18 Quality of life is a distinguishing feature of the borough. This is part of the reason why so many people have chosen to relocate their businesses and homes to Chorley. Contributing to the outstanding quality of life are a number of assets which distinguish and define Chorley from the areas surrounding it and make apparent its unique appeal. These include:
- ❑ Historical appeal – associations with famous historical figures such as Cromwell and Shakespeare;
 - ❑ A legacy of fine civic architecture and parks;
 - ❑ Market town heritage – the market has been a part of daily life in the town since 1498 and creates a bustling and exciting urban environment;
 - ❑ An “intimately scaled” town centre - with all amenities in walking distance of one another;
 - ❑ The Leeds Liverpool Canal – which winds its route through the borough is enjoyed by many;
 - ❑ Unspoiled upland countryside on the doorstep (the West Pennine moorland and foothills located to the east);
 - ❑ Access to three National Parks within a 1-hour drive of the town;
 - ❑ Traditional village life within easy reach of services and amenities of the larger urban centres; and
 - ❑ Excellent motorway connections to Manchester, Liverpool and Preston.
- 2.19 This strategy is designed to make best use of the current assets that the borough has to offer, and to create the right conditions for new opportunities to flourish – ensuring a bright future for Chorley. Maintaining and developing these assets will be important both in making Chorley a place where people choose to live and work; and in capitalising on the economic potential of the borough’s tourism and leisure assets.

3 An Economic Success Story

A Thriving Economy

3.1 Chorley demonstrates many of the fundamental components of economic success – a strong base on which to build - along with significant potential for further growth. However local economies do not conform to administrative boundaries. It is instructive to consider the sub-regional economic performance of the Preston, South Ribble and Chorley (Core Central Lancashire) area^A.

Core Central Lancashire: Key Economic Trends

GVA Trends: A well-performing economy with historically above average GVA growth as against the region implying that Core Central Lancashire has, structurally, a stronger industrial mix. Projected GVA growth is expected to be closer to the long-term average growth rate to 2015 (2.9% per annum), while the remainder of Lancashire will only track the regional average;

Sectoral Performance: A falling contribution of manufacturing to economic (output) growth but strong service sector performance, particularly connected to public-sector related activity (education; health; admin/ defence). Although declining, manufacturing will still make an important (and disproportionate) contribution to the strength of the Core Central Lancashire economy and is expected to experience net job growth;

Productivity: High manufacturing productivity at 10% above the UK average (a bias towards higher value-added manufacturing sectors) with earnings 8% above, particularly related to the performance of the aerospace sector;

Employment Trends: Consistent employment growth since the mid-1990s recession, with growth since 1998 of twice the regional and national average. Forecasting forward, employment growth is expected to be above the regional average with 3.3% growth over the next decade;

Growth Sectors: Key composite growth sectors (employment and output) are predominantly service-orientated and comprise the following sectors: manufacturing fuels, retailing, air transport, communications, professional services, computing services, other business services, and health and social. It is in these sectors that Core Central Lancashire has a competitive advantage;

Investment: Expected strong growth in investment (above the regional comparator (13.1% per annum) as Core Central Lancashire consolidates its competitive advantage in services;

Employment by Group: A degree of 'switching' between male self-employment into part-time employment, with full-time employment expected to remain roughly constant while self-employment is expected to drop, contributing to growth in part-time employment. Growth particularly in part-time employment in 'tourism' related sectors and higher value-added services (professional/ other business services); along with a significant increase in female full-time employment in the distribution; computing and health sectors.

3.2 The Borough of Chorley itself exhibits many signs of being a successful accessible location for business, a highly desirable place to live and a place in which open countryside is literally 'on the doorstep.' Its geographical position in relation to the Greater Manchester, Liverpool and Preston economies and its relative accessibility in a Lancashire context (by rail and road) have fuelled demand for Chorley as a

residential location. Taken together these factors have supported relative affluence of the borough³, in-migration from surrounding areas and a buoyant residential market.

3.3 The Borough of Chorley has and will continue to make an important contribution to sub-regional^B economic success. It can boast:

- ❑ a strong economic structure aligned with the sub-regional (Core Central Lancashire) economy which has significantly out-performed surrounding areas, posting strong employment growth (which has been largely indigenous i.e. growth of the business base from 'within' rather than driven by inward investment);
- ❑ a range of sector strengths promoting economic stability - key sectors (in employment terms) comprising metal fabrications, instruments, retail, hotels and restaurants, other business services, and health and other services;
- ❑ strong business growth – Chorley has been generating more than its fair share of VAT registered businesses and has a higher business density (VAT registered businesses per 10,000 population) relative to sub-regional/ regional benchmarks^C;
- ❑ business start-up rates – high levels of VAT registrations running at 11.7% of the business stock as against 10.9% across the North West and 10.6% nationally. Benchmarked against the population, registrations are also high at 34 per 10,000 population as against 28 at the sub-regional and regional levels;
- ❑ estimated GVA per capita of £15,800 which is 11.5% above the Lancashire average and 16% above the regional level for the North West;
- ❑ a relatively good skills profile – with levels of NVQ4 and above qualifications above the regional level and proportions with NVQ1 – 3 qualifications higher than both regional and national comparators;
- ❑ high labour force economic activity – which has remained consistently high at 79.9% of the working-age population and is above regional (76.5%) and national (78.2% GB) averages. Self employment in Chorley at 12.2% is also above regional (10.9%) and national (12.1%) levels;
- ❑ good educational attainment – four out of five of Chorley's secondary schools have higher GCSE pass rates than the national average (51.6%). Runshaw College of Further Education has the best A-level pass rate in the country at over 99%; and
- ❑ balanced housing stock – with a higher proportion of detached and semi-detached housing than regional/ national benchmarks and a more modern housing stock than many other parts of Lancashire.

³ Average household income in Chorley (CACI 2005) is above the regional and national averages. Within the county average household income is higher only in Ribble Valley and Fylde

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- 3.4 Looking forward, KPMG's analysis of the Chorley economy points to significant economic growth potential based upon strong recent economic performance. Considering recent performance and macro-economic trends, economic growth in Chorley is expected to be service-sector orientated - key growth sectors being business activities, health and social care, education, construction, and computer and related activities.
- 3.5 The tourism sector will also remain important to the borough's economy and is an area where there is potential for growth, building upon the boroughs environmental, heritage and leisure assets.

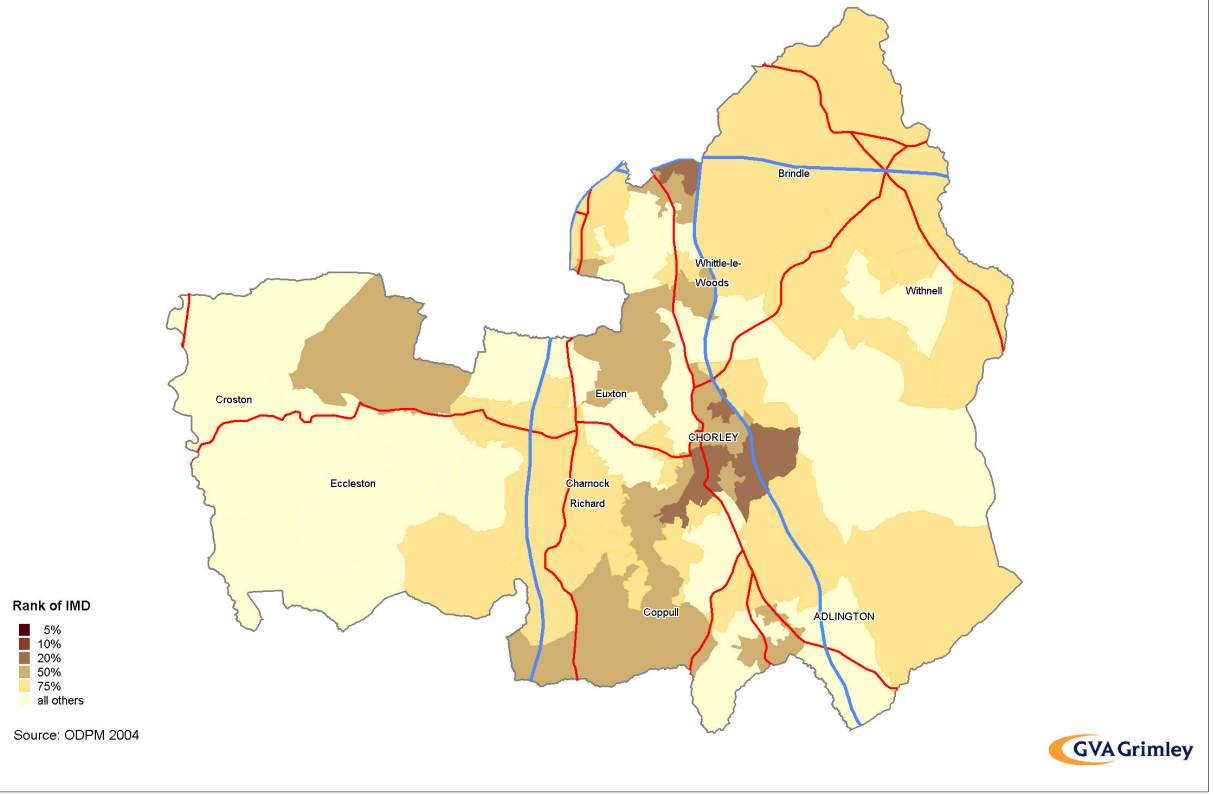
Key Challenges

- 3.6 While recent trends indicate further strong economic growth *potential* there are a number of conceivable 'brakes' on further growth potential. A key role of the Strategy is to address these, ensuring that the building blocks of economic success are in place.
- 3.7 The key challenges for the borough are:
- ❑ **Commuting Patterns:** The 2001 Census found that Chorley generated 51,004 travel to work trips but was the recipient of just 37,438 trips. Therefore the borough exports some 13,576 people (net) on a daily basis to other employment locations. Of the 51,004 travel to work trips generated in Chorley 48.2% are for a destination within the borough, 22.2% for a location elsewhere in the Core Central Lancashire City Region and 15.1% destined for Greater Manchester. Historically this is a legacy of the Central Lancashire New Town Programme which failed to deliver new employment in the borough commensurate with the level of house-building.;
 - ❑ **Low Workplace-Based Earnings:** which fall – 9% below the regional average and 12% below those in Manchester reflecting an employment base more biased towards lower-value opportunities. This results in a wage incentive to travel to employment opportunities elsewhere in Central Lancashire (South Ribble/ Preston) and to Manchester for a range of occupations and promotes out-commuting from Chorley. However there is a clear opportunity to redress this given the borough's good skills profile and resident-based earnings which are 7% above the regional average and 10% higher than those in Manchester;
 - ❑ **Low Levels of Workforce Investment:** Chorley's businesses invest less per employee in training and development than their counterparts elsewhere in Lancashire, as profiled by Lancashire Learning and Skills Council (National Employer Skills Survey 2003). Employees within the borough benefit from fewer days training annually, with Chorley's businesses investing approximately £40 less per employee on training every year and setting aside just 4.1 days of training per employee compared to 5.2 days at the Lancashire level. Chorley's businesses conduct fewer Annual Performance Reviews than their counterparts (67% employees compared to 75% at the Lancashire level) and contain fewer employees with a job description in place (84% employees compared to 87% at the Lancashire level). This culture of business complacency in relation to workforce development poses a major challenge for the borough in terms of offering a competitively skilled and dynamic workforce to prospective investors;

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- ❑ **Historically Low Take-up of Employment Land:** averaging just 0.9ha per annum over the last five years. Take-up has been constrained by the availability of *readily-developable* employment land, by a sites and premises offer which ill-match contemporary requirements both in terms of quality and location (and which are second best to supply elsewhere in the sub-region). A strategic policy response and concerted action will need to be maintained to address these supply-side constraints enabling Chorley to better position itself to capture investment in the future. Key to achieving this aim is the development of the 50 ha Former Royal Ordnance Regional Investment Site in Euxton;
 - ❑ **Chorley Town Centre:** retail employment in Chorley has contracted over the last five years during a period in which nationally, the retail sector has been buoyant. This is despite residential development in the borough. The Chorley economy and Chorley Town Centre have hence, to date, failed to capture some of the benefits of residential growth. This reflects leakage to and competition from competing retail centres. Chorley needs to maintain its position in the retail hierarchy if the town centre is to maintain and improve its vitality and viability;
 - ❑ **Economic Exposure:** potential exposure to employment losses in the more vulnerable sectors which are influenced by globalisation;
 - ❑ **Deprivation:** notable pockets of deprivation exist in Chorley Town as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004. Parts of the town fall within the worst 10% nationally in respect of employment, living environment and health deprivation and it is imperative to re-connect these areas with opportunities which exist across the borough as a whole;
 - ❑ **Accessibility:** while Chorley is theoretically well served by road and rail networks, key inter-regional arterial routes (particularly the M6) do not serve the borough effectively. Some roads and junctions in the borough are operating close to capacity and this has some bearing on business success. Public transport services are focused upon the central urban belt^D with infrequent services in the more rural extremities in the east and west of the borough.

3.8 Plan 1 overleaf show the spatial pattern of deprivation across the borough.

Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004: Chorley



3.9

4 Chorley's Economy: Defining the Future

Developing a Vision

- 4.1 Chorley's Community Strategy has established the over-arching vision for regeneration of the Borough which Chorley Borough Council has now adopted as its Corporate Vision:

"by 2025 Chorley will be recognised as the most sought after place to live and work in the North West, offering an excellent quality of life to all its residents, and will be at the heart of regional developments whilst retaining its unique character."

- 4.2 The statement demonstrates the central role of economic development in the borough's overall vision.
- 4.3 The Community Strategy further defines "Putting Chorley at the heart of regional economic developments in the Central Lancashire Sub-Region" as number one of its five defined priorities, based upon the issues identified by the Borough's residents. This forms the overriding aim of Chorley's Economic Regeneration Strategy.
- 4.4 But what do the Vision/ Priority Statements mean in reality? The Vision is expressed as a series of eleven outcomes which describe what the Chorley Partnership wants to achieve. These include:

- A transport infrastructure that facilitates economic growth of the Borough;
- Typical earnings will be above the average for the region;
- No parts of the borough will be in deprivation;
- Chorley town centre will be thriving;
- The borough will develop its unique character and feel.

- 4.5 However the economic challenges that the borough faces are wider than this; they encapsulate:

- reversing the current trend of leakage of labour and expenditure from the local economy;
- accessibility issues (particularly by public transport);
- historically low take-up of employment land;
- a particular issue around workplace-based earnings; and
- an element of exposure to the effects of economic restructuring.

- 4.6 However the Economic Regeneration Strategy is less concerned with the 'what' (the aspiration being provided by the Community Strategy) and more concerned with the 'how'. This Strategy is therefore principally concerned with *delivery* - setting out how to turn goals into reality. It is driven by the need to

capitalise on the clear opportunities for economic development and growth which exist across Chorley Borough; and address the particular challenges identified in the previous paragraph which the borough faces.

Growing Sustainably

- 4.7 Over the past few decades, Chorley Borough has accommodated large-scale new housing development as part of the former Central Lancashire New Town. However this has not been matched by a commensurate level of employment growth or development of the economy to support the incoming population. This has contributed to a high level of out-commuting from the borough.
- 4.8 Clearly this is not a sustainable model. A Sub-Regional Strategy for Core Central Lancashire has been developed to establish a framework for the sustainable spatial development of the boroughs of Preston, South Ribble and Chorley. It emphasises a balanced model for future development with the strengthening and extending of Chorley's role as a market town, employment growth through provision of new sites in accessible locations, and a appropriate level of housing development within a wider Core Central Lancashire context.
- 4.9 In many ways, the challenge for Chorley is not about inspiring investor confidence. Chorley already enjoys a qualified workforce, higher than average incomes and a commensurately high quality of life. The challenge is about **facilitating economic growth**, and about **ensuring that future growth is accommodated sustainably** – that it is supported by appropriate infrastructure, accessible and contributes to the wider economic regeneration objectives of the borough.
- 4.10 The Economic Regeneration Strategy provides a platform for encouraging economic investment and facilitating growth; along with residential opportunities; a package which will not only contribute to immediate issues of sustainability but will also contribute to the achievement of the wider objectives for the Borough.

5 The Economic Regeneration Strategy

- 5.1 Chorley needs to turn the obvious economic and locational advantages that it enjoys into a package of commercially deliverable projects that capture the imagination of investors, businesses, stakeholders and residents alike. This will be particularly about delivering high-quality, readily available sites and business premises; about Chorley ‘selling itself’ and about ‘place-making.’
- 5.2 Chorley also needs to support and nurture what it has got, in terms of developing its labour force; supporting business start-ups, survival and growth; and addressing worklessness and deprivation to ensure all of the borough’s residents share its success.
- 5.3 These challenges have been structured by way of six inter-linked themes around which this Economic Regeneration Strategy is based. Each theme will contribute to the overall goal of ‘Growing Sustainably,’ with the six themes given equal priority. The inter-relationships between the themes are illustrated below.

Figure 1: Strategy Framework



Supporting and Developing Enterprise

- 5.4 Enterprise is one of the key drivers of productivity in the UK economy. Building a strong enterprise culture and environment has been identified as one of the key pillars of closing the productivity gap between different UK regions and internationally between the UK and its main competitors.

5.5 The Government's Enterprise Vision is that anyone with the talent, potential and drive to succeed in business should have the opportunity and the necessary support to do so, regardless of their background and where they live. The public sector has a key role to⁴:

- ❑ Build a more enterprise friendly environment – creating the conditions for businesses to thrive and prosper;
- ❑ To correct for specific market failures – that create obstacles to successful enterprise, such as accessing finance, awareness of business advice, and difficulties in accessing training, research and development.

5.6 The borough can be viewed as an entrepreneurial success story with self employment levels and business start-ups significantly exceeding the northwest regional averages⁵. Looking forward, the growth of an economically active, older population some of whom are willing and able to work, provides an opportunity for Chorley to encourage greater coincide of residence and working in the future.

5.7 The economic analysis supporting this strategy has highlighted a number of factors which are the hallmarks of an entrepreneurial borough. Among the factors prevalent in Chorley are:

Strengths

- ❑ The relatively high generation of VAT business registrations compared to peer benchmarks;
- ❑ A relatively high density of businesses per employee compared to the North West and Central Lancs averages;
- ❑ Evidence to suggest that business growth rather than creation of new business units is triggering the higher levels of VAT registration;
- ❑ A clear entrepreneurial spirit;

Weaknesses

- ❑ A lack of higher value base associated with entrepreneurial activity and small business growth;
- ❑ A superior labour force with high qualification levels, but which is largely displaced out to surrounding travel to work areas due to wage differentials.
- ❑ A rural community which is performing as well as regional and national benchmarks. However the future is clearly uncertain particularly with the phasing out of grant regimes which have supported the agricultural sector.

5.8 The challenges for the Economic Regeneration Strategy are thus:

⁴ HM Treasury & Small Business Service (2002) *Enterprise Britain: A Modern Approach to Meeting the Enterprise Challenge*

⁵ Statistics are provided in paragraph 3.3

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- ❑ Continuing to maintain indigenous business start ups and growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs)^E;
 - ❑ Enabling a shift to higher-value added activity and attraction of the borough's target sectors;
 - ❑ Providing a competitive wage offer.

5.9 If business growth and a shift to higher value-added activity can be supported, opportunities will be created for employment at wage levels which will match those offered elsewhere within Chorley's travel to work area. More knowledge-based, higher value-added activities generally pay more. Thus it will be possible, in a limited sense, to combat the exodus of workforce from the borough that occurs on a daily basis.

However as the borough is approaching full employment , future employment growth is predicated upon securing additional labour through a combination of in-migration, natural increase and a reversal of travel to work patterns in favour of Chorley. Given current differences in wage levels between Chorley and surrounding areas, raising the levels of higher value added activity and commensurately higher paid employment opportunities is imperative to the competitiveness of the borough.

Enabling Actions

5.10 The package of enabling actions that the Economic Regeneration Strategy proposes is designed to address both supply and demand factors as detailed below. The proposals are intended to provide an indication of the scale and scope of intervention required to facilitate the requisite shift in value-added activity within Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. They are linked to and supported by the other strands of the Economic Regeneration Strategy.

Demand Side Measures

5.11 **Enabling Action 1: Maintaining and Growing Levels of Entrepreneurship.** Runshaw College is a premier further education institution with national recognition for the highest attainment levels. It also offers higher education on a franchised basis. Runshaw College operates a Business Centre and has expertise in training and business development. The College is a clear asset to the borough and can help to further stimulate levels of entrepreneurship alongside equipping existing businesses with the skills and knowledge to ensure high business survival and succession rates.

5.12 The Council will engage the College proactively in two respects:

- ❑ In the establishment of a "single point of contact" for business training advice. The referral of business enquiries to the College's Business Centre will ensure signposting to the most appropriate opportunities; and
- ❑ Through joint working and research to determine business curriculum and training. By actively working with the College and Business Link Lancashire, a locally tailored business curriculum will be developed.

Supply Side Measures

- 5.13 **Enabling Action 2: Becoming Investor Ready.** A consistent theme that has emerged both from the analysis of Chorley's stock of business premises and the consultations with business interests is that the borough lacks an appropriate supply of small and start-up business space. The current stock of starter units that is operated by the Council is at capacity and this level of demand does not show any signs of abating. The supply of sites and premises warrants detailed consideration and indeed comprises a separate strand of the Economic Regeneration Strategy. In the context of sustaining entrepreneurship and containing expanding businesses within the borough, property supply side measures^F will undoubtedly comprise an important component of the strategy response.
- 5.14 **Enabling Action 3: Building a Business Support Infrastructure.** There is a need for a "customer responsive" approach to business support, which meets the needs of individual businesses as and when they arise. The Council will investigate the potential to develop a shared business support infrastructure with the South Ribble Business Venture.
- 5.15 **Enabling Action 4: Boosting Value-Added Activity.** The Council will engage the Lancashire Economic Partnership/ NWDA (Culture Change Programme) at an early stage in order to understand approaches across Lancashire to facilitating a shift up the value chain in the activities of indigenous firms. There is an opportunity to capitalise on best practice emanating from East Lancashire, where there are dedicated resources to facilitate the evolution of traditional manufacturing and final assembly firms into higher value-added activity. The Council, along with business support providers, will work to promote knowledge transfer among businesses, capitalising on best practice both within and outwith the borough.
- 5.16 **Enabling Action 5: Supporting Opportunities for People to Work for Longer.** The demographic analysis has revealed that the borough has an ageing population structure. In the future this provides a new opportunity to grow entrepreneurial activity. The Council will investigate the potential to develop an "innovative" pilot scheme to encourage home-based entrepreneurship. The pilot scheme will be used to assess levels of demand. The Rosebud Fund, administered by Lancashire County Developments Limited, providing grant based assistance to micro businesses will be one appropriate funding stream to investigate in pursuing this opportunity.
- 5.17 **Enabling Action 6: Supporting Home Working.** The Council should consider additional planning policy measures to support greater incidence of home based working. These include stipulating a requirement for live/work accommodation in relation to town centre residential developments in addition to policy measures explicitly supporting the live/work concept in established residential areas⁶.
- 5.18 Home-working also requires effective communications infrastructure to be in place. This is being addressed by the elancs.net project – a £1.5 million project supported by the European Regional Development Fund, Business Services (East Lancashire) Ltd, East Lancashire LearnDirect Hub, The New Opportunity Fund and the private sector. It aims to provide high-capacity broadband network connections to the business, community and public sectors.
- 5.19 **Enabling Action 7: Rural Diversification.** Supporting the establishment of small rural businesses which will include recreation/ tourism/ leisure business elements. Cedar Farm, Botany Bay and Bygone

Times are local examples of successes in diversification of the rural economy. The Council will undertake further work in order to understand current dynamics of rural enterprise and to identify sustainable opportunities for economic diversification.

Key Delivery Partners

5.20 The Lancashire Strategic Partnership must lead delivery of this theme, but will need to work more closely with the local business base and a range of external agencies. Key partners and agencies in realising the interventions will be:

- ❑ Runshaw College
- ❑ Business Link (Lancashire)
- ❑ Lancashire Economic Partnership
- ❑ Lancashire County Developments Ltd (Rosebud Fund)
- ❑ North West Development Agency
- ❑ Business Representatives/ Chamber of Commerce

Improving the Transport Infrastructure & Accessibility

5.21 Chorley is well-served by both road and rail networks with two rail lines and three motorways running through the borough. The borough's relatively good accessibility is borne out by current travel to work patterns, with 48.2% of trips originating in Chorley destined for a location outside the borough.

5.22 However good car-based accessibility masks a number of significant challenges:

- ❑ Chorley is inaccessible from key national routes – there is a poorly-placed junction on the M6 and no principal station on the West Coast Mainline within the borough;
- ❑ The impact of planned and future developments, most notably at Buckshaw Village and the Royal Ordnance Regional Investment Site, upon traffic movements meaning that, in the absence of intervention, several road links are likely to operate close to or at capacity in peak periods;
- ❑ Infrequent and commercially non-viable public transport services in the rural extremities to the west and east of the borough.

5.23 Relative accessibility is a key component of Chorley's competitive advantage. Chorley, and Central Lancashire more widely, have the potential to capture a significant proportion of investment over the next 10-15 years. The critical point here is that a lack of investment in transport infrastructure will reduce Chorley's competitive advantage, both as a location for businesses and a place to live, and will potentially contribute to social exclusion through inhibiting access to employment and services by those who do not have access to a car.

⁶ Subject to a protection of residential amenity

5.24 Investment in infrastructure will be critical to capturing the considerable economic growth potential that exists; in achieving the borough's ambitions for attracting investment, and ensuring the success of the Royal Ordnance Regional Investment Site. It will also be critical to ensuring that local people are able to access the new opportunities that are created (be they employment, services or leisure) ensuring that social inclusion objectives are achieved. Targeted improvements in public transport are therefore required to connect communities across the borough to the opportunities that will be created.

5.25 The impact of the current transport issues which affect Chorley extend well beyond its boundaries. In addressing many of the problems and constraints Chorley will need to work with its partners in Central Lancashire to justify and build a strategic case for investment, recognising that many of these issues transcend administrative boundaries as well as the current 'tight' funding regime for infrastructure investment.

Delivery Actions

5.26 Key actions are focused upon addressing current problems (addressing constraints to growth); supporting strategic opportunities (enabling growth); and linking people to new employment opportunities (social equity).

5.27 **Enabling Action 8: Improving Sub-Regional Public Transport Connectivity** The most successful places are those that are truly outward-looking. Historically, this has been a key component of Chorley's success and this principle continues to apply.

5.28 Providing high quality and rapid public transport connections between Chorley's settlements and the principal growth centres of the Northwest will help to attract investment to Chorley, will provide Chorley's residents with access to a range of employment opportunities and will encourage modal shift towards public transport, reducing pressure on the highway network. Major priorities to be taken-forward will have a sub-regional impact. These have been defined through the Core Central Lancashire Sub-Regional Strategy and comprise:

- ❑ Improving the speed and reliability of the Manchester to Blackpool via Preston Rail Service;
- ❑ Development of a new station to serve the Buckshaw Village and Royal Ordnance Regional Investment Site and as a park and ride site for the wider area;
- ❑ Introduction of express bus services and a Quality Bus Corridor linking Chorley with Leyland and Preston City Centre;
- ❑ A Quality Bus Corridor between Chorley and Wigan (planned to be introduced in 2005/6).

5.29 Investment in public transport will be supported by a dedicated Marketing Strategy at the sub-regional level to increase awareness and patronage of the public transport network.

5.30 Improvements in public transport accessibility will also be achieved through a spatial strategy for targeting new housing and employment developments in locations which support and sustain public transport.

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- 5.31 **Enabling Action 9: Improving Public Transport Services for Rural Settlements.** The viability of public transport services in rural areas is not a problem unique to Chorley. Traditionally a function of low population densities, in Chorley this is compounded by relatively high levels of car ownership which further reduce patronage. However public transport services remain essential for those without a car including vulnerable groups such as the elderly.
- 5.32 The rural parts of the borough are currently served by a number of mainstream bus services but patronage and the frequency of services is low. Through the Department for Transport 'Kick-Start' Scheme investment is being made in pump-priming rural transport services and implementing service improvements. With £800,000 funding a high quality fully accessible integrated bus network is being developed in Chorley that is attractive to both existing and potential users. The nine route network has been developed in partnership with Stagecoach North West and aims to provide continuity of service during the day, evening and weekends for settlements across Chorley. However many services continue to require heavy subsidies. In sustaining and improving public transport provision longer-term, more innovative forms need to be assessed. Parts of the borough are currently served by Central Lancashire Dial-a-Ride services or by Community Cars Services, provided by volunteers.
- 5.33 A co-ordinated appraisal of the range of transport options in the rural parts of the borough is necessary. Any appraisal would assist in the development of a Rural Transport Strategy, led by Lancashire County Council. Any strategy should investigate in the opportunities to strengthen existing provision and the potential for developing and extending more demand-responsive models.
- 5.34 **Enabling Action 10: Addressing Congestion.** Highway improvements will be essential to ensuring that Chorley remains a competitive business location and ensuring the success of the a number of major development opportunities, most notably at the Royal Ordnance Site. Besides the key motorway links which run through the borough, a network of A-roads connect the borough's key towns to destinations across the region. Congestion is a key problem on some routes, most notably on the A6 Preston Road north of Chorley Town Centre. Over a five day period in September 2003 over 45,000 vehicles per day were recorded using this section of road. Congestion costs businesses in terms of time lost and also acts as a deterrent to investment.
- 5.35 As part of the Buckshaw Village and Regional Investment Site developments traffic signals will be installed at M6 Junction 28, a new connection made to the A6 North and improvements made to the Hartwood Roundabout. It is unclear at this stage how effective these schemes will be in addressing current problems let alone the expected increase in traffic associated with the new development. A properly functioning highway network will be critical to the success of the new development opportunities and close monitoring of the impact on traffic flow is required. Further infrastructure investment to relieve congestion is not precluded.
- 5.36 **Enabling Action 11: Opening Up New Areas to Development.** Chorley needs to think about its next generation of development opportunities. In quantitative terms the borough has sufficient employment land to meet the needs of existing firms and inward investment over the next 10 years or so. However there is little employment land identified in the longer term. The Council will start planning for this now to ensure that the provision of strategic opportunities of the highest quality is maintained.
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- 5.37 In connection with a number of recent residential schemes the Council has secured construction of the Gillibrand Link Road and work will soon begin on the Eaves Green Link Road, the final part of the bypass around the south and west of Chorley Town Centre. This will then form an orbital route from the A6 south of Chorley to the A581 to the west of the town, bypassing the town and opening up potential development sites to the west and south of the town. Careful consideration will be given as to an appropriate land use mix for these sites.
- 5.38 The continuing use of the Camelot Theme Park at Charnock Richard is believed to be uncertain. Cessation of this use could release a site adjacent to the motorway for future development. The potential future use of this site demands a careful and early feasibility assessment of the sustainability of development at this location and potential demand level that it might attract. The site is potentially strategically important to the future employment growth of the Core Central Lancashire sub-region while a new motorway junction could play a key role in defining its future use, in opening up the western portion of the borough and ensuring the long-term success of its economy.
- 5.39 Feasibility work to assess the potential for development of a new motorway junction and strategic site at Charnock Richard will be given consideration by the Council.

Key Delivery Partners

- 5.40 In delivering improvements in transport infrastructure and accessibility, Chorley Borough Council will work closely with Lancashire County Council and with adjacent local authorities (particularly within the Core Central Lancashire Sub-Region). Other key delivery partners in realising the strategy will be:
- ❑ Developers (through Section 106 Agreements);
 - ❑ Public Transport Operators;
 - ❑ Highways Agency;
 - ❑ Government Office for the North West; and
 - ❑ Key Employers.

Providing a Portfolio of Sites and Premises

- 5.41 Despite Chorley's strategic location at the heart of Lancashire and connected both within and beyond the region by arterial road and rail routes, take-up of employment land has been historically poor. Over the last five years take-up has averaged just 0.9 hectares per annum. Vacancy levels for industrial and commercial premises are over 7.5%: above those in competing centres such as Preston. This is a function of:
- ❑ Site Location – with the distribution of sites/ premises partly reflecting past industrial geographies (e.g. canal locations; small brownfield sites within predominantly residential areas) which ill-suit the requirements of modern businesses;

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- ❑ Quality Issues – a wide incidence of floorspace in a poor state of repair and shortage of decent, modern office and industrial space in accessible locations. Evidence of recent new floorspace, such as Matrix Park, indicate relatively strong demand for good quality products where these are brought forward;
 - ❑ Availability – just 3.16 hectares of land is development-ready, representing 2% of total supply. Investment is clearly required to bring sites to the market in suitable locations;
 - ❑ Type – local stakeholders indicating a particular shortage of managed workspace facilities offering accommodation of flexible lease terms for Small and Medium Enterprises.

5.42 Collectively these factors have functioned as a constraint on the borough's economic prospects and its ability to accommodate investors. If Chorley is to realise rather than displace economic growth, it needs to address each of these issues and ensure an appropriate supply of sites and premises is in place.

Key Delivery Actions

5.43 The future economic success of the borough is dependent upon ensuring a portfolio of development-ready land and premises to meet a range of requirements. This portfolio will need to cater for the requirements of both strategic investors and indigenous businesses looking to expand or upgrade their business premises; and to cater for a range of cost, size and locational requirements.

5.44 **Enabling Action 12: 'The Bridge of Commercial Opportunity.'** The key employment site in the borough is the Regional Investment Site at Euxton, located between the M6 and M61 motorways to the north of Chorley town. Fifty hectares of land on this site are designated as a Regional Investment Site in the Regional Economic Strategy and Regional Planning Guidance. The site is of regional importance and is regarded as key to inward investment and future employment in the borough and sub-region over the next decade.

5.45 The Council see the Regional Investment Site as being particularly suitable for manufacturing and research and development (R&D) activities in the following sectors: environmental technologies; life science industries (biotechnology and pharmaceuticals); medical equipment and technology; automotive; food and drink; textiles; aerospace; mechanical and other engineering; and energy. Employment attracted to this site is intended to contribute to economic diversification and growth within both the regional and sub-regional context.

5.46 This site will be considered within the context of a range of opportunities available within the immediate area. Chorley offers a cluster of employment land opportunities focused on the Regional Investment Site, Matrix Park (a successful business park falling just across the borough border in South Ribble) and M61 Junction 8 sites (Botany/ Great Knowley and M61/ Botany). Significant investment in infrastructure in the area is planned, potentially including construction of a new rail station on Euxton Lane to serve both the Royal Ordnance Regional Investment Site and the Buckshaw Village development (a mixed use development scheme which will include over 2,000 new homes when complete). Further the area boasts significant healthcare, education and training infrastructure at Runshaw College's Euxton Lane Campus (which includes the College's Business Centre) and Chorley and South Ribble General Hospital.

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- 5.47 Collectively the area provides a critical mass of opportunity. There is significant scope to conceive the area, running from M61 Junction 8 through to Matrix Park and the M6, as a cluster or *'bridge of commercial opportunity.'* Promoting and planning for the area as a whole will have significant benefits in terms of raising its profile as a prestigious commercial location; ensuring the complementarity of investment in the area; and supporting the case for investment in infrastructure. The Statutory Planning Framework for Chorley will guide future development.
- 5.48 **Enabling Action 13: Employment Land Review.** Chorley's future economic success is dependent upon ensuring the supply of a portfolio of development-ready land and premises to meet a range of occupier requirements. It will need to cater for the requirements of both strategic investors and indigenous businesses looking to expand or upgrade their business premises. A portfolio of opportunities is required to cater for a range of cost, size and locational requirements.
- 5.49 However it is currently Lancashire County Council's view, as the Structure Plan authority, that Chorley has an over-supply of employment land. The key issue is that demand for employment land is assessed on the basis of past take-up. This approach is too simplistic, making no consideration of site quality, site readiness and future economic prospects.
- 5.50 A critical review of employment land provision across the borough is required. This will build upon the recent economic forecasts undertaken for the Core Central Lancashire sub-region and will also incorporate market testing/ commercial perspectives. The assessment will consider the appropriateness of sites for the modern economy and consider a balance of sites can be maintained to cater for a range of requirements (in terms of cost, size and location). Sustainable development principles will inform the site assessments.
- 5.51 The Employment Land Review will consider de-allocating sites where there is little likelihood of development coming forward. It should also include a detailed action plan for addressing site constraints and bringing forward opportunities which meet the requirements of both strategic investors and indigenous businesses. A proactive approach can then be taken to addressing constraints, working with landowners, developers and public sector partners. The Council will also engage representatives of the target sectors in order to understand the requisite conditions for investment.
- 5.52 **Enabling Action 14: Portfolio of Workspace for Small and Expanding Businesses.** Chorley demonstrates a stronger entrepreneurial spirit, with strong levels of business start-ups as measured by VAT registrations than peer benchmarks. Over the five year period to 2003 business starts in Chorley come out at 34 per 10,000 population against 28 per 10,000 for the sub-region and region. The challenge going forward is both to maintain and further improve levels of start-ups and to shift activity towards higher value-added operations.
- 5.53 To achieve this the Council will work to maintain a supply of a both industrial and office premises suitable for small businesses designed to meet demand from both start-ups and businesses looking to expand. A key consideration in small business decisions is cost and the managed workspace concept may work well in overcoming barriers to higher rates of business formation. This will be taken forward through both the development of new product and refurbishment/ investment in the existing stock in partnership with the North West Development Agency and other funding partners.
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- 5.54 Working with the owners/management agents of business estates in addition to the NWDA, the Council will pursue targeted refurbishment of existing business premises (both industrial and office) and implementation of enhanced management regimes. Longer-term the Council will take a strategic view working with partners in encouraging and achieving regular stock refurbishment cycles.
- 5.55 In respect of developing new products, supply will be brought forward in the Southern Commercial Area at Buckshaw Village. Looking beyond this, development of new supply will be taken forward through preparation of development briefs for key employment sites and through future masterplanning work in Chorley Town Centre.
- 5.56 **Enabling Action 15: Considering the Next Generation of Commercial Opportunities.** While Chorley has an adequate supply of sites in the medium term to meet anticipated demand, no sites have been identified for the longer-term, looking ten or more years hence. Long-term planning needs to start now to bring forward the next generation of prestige employment sites and opportunities in the borough.
- 5.57 Sites will be identified through the Employment Land Review process, linked to the locational and property requirements of indigenous businesses and inward investors and important among these will be the Camelot site at Charnock Richard.

Key Delivery Partners

- 5.58 Chorley Borough Council will take the lead in ensuring a portfolio of sites and premises is maintained and will work closely with developers to ensure that its objectives are met. Partners will have a complimentary or enabling role to delivery. These include:
- ❑ Local Landowners;
 - ❑ Lancashire County Developments Limited; and
 - ❑ North West Development Agency.

A Thriving Town Centre

- 5.59 The town centre symbolises to the outside world how well Chorley is performing. But its function is much more than that of an attractive “front door” to the town. It should play an important role in the civic and community life of the town. It should offer opportunities for businesses to flourish alongside high quality retail, housing, leisure and recreation uses. It should act as an economic driver for the town in its own right.
- 5.60 It is therefore imperative that the town centre and its environs are developed and maintained to the highest standard possible in order to support Chorley’s vision as “the most sought after place to live and work in the North West”.
- 5.61 Recent investment in the towns rail and bus stations (£137,000 and £3m respectively) have boosted the quality of the primary arrival points in the town, however there are many other challenges to overcome in order to successfully reposition the town centre.

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- 5.62 In developing this strategy, GVA Grimley have considered the Chorley Town Centre Retail and Leisure Study and endorse the findings. The Economic Regeneration Strategy builds upon this work.
- 5.63 The Retail and Leisure Study has developed understanding of the future contribution that retailing can make to the town centre. Key landholders are showing a strong interest in committing investment to the Town Centre. However the prosperity of the town centre is dependent on more than investment in the retail offer – there are other towns in the immediate vicinity and further afield that are equally competitive. A comprehensive approach, combining retail investment with a wider mix of uses and environmental improvements is required. The urban renaissance agenda has clearly established that vibrant, engaging urban spaces are by definition mixed use in character. The aim is to improve the visitor experience, leisure offer and quality of the public realm as well as the retail offer.
- 5.64 This is a key challenge for the Economic Regeneration Strategy as it necessitates joint working across a diverse group of town centre business, public and civic interests. Most importantly it involves innovative financing arrangements to deliver progressive change on a number of fronts with a role for the private sector alongside public investment.

Key Delivery Actions

- 5.65 There are many interventions required to boost the performance and appeal of the town centre. The Regeneration Strategy recognises the need to diversify and enhance the town centre but it does not prescribe detailed spatial interventions to the physical fabric. Rather it suggests priorities for intervention in order to guide future investment and maximise its positive impact.
- 5.66 The priorities in relation to the town centre have been identified as follows:

Location Specific Priorities

- ❑ **The A6 corridor** – The A6 provides some of the key gateways to the town centre. Currently the land uses surrounding it are configured around major highway infrastructure and do not reflect the quality of the experience within the town centre. A tree-lined boulevard would be a memorable front door to the town for those travelling in from the south. There is a particular priority to invest in the quality and environment of the corridor in relation to Market Street and the approaches around Bolton Street to the south and to consider redevelopment of key gateways.
- ❑ **The Town Centre Bypass** should be reassessed and provision made to improve the quality of the environment along this route. Measures should be implemented to change the quality of the bypass with development, uses and landscaping configured to a human scale to project a more attractive image of the town.
- ❑ **St George's Street** is a fine example of Georgian townscape comprising an intimate row of terraces framing the magnificent church, with a number of 'hidden' courtyards behind the Georgian facades. First impressions of current uses, such as parking and office space, do not sufficiently emphasise the strong sense of place or its conservation area status. The street environment is currently of an average quality. This is a priority location for investment as a high quality cluster of pavement cafes

and associated 'crafts' or specialist shopping' uses^G, encouraging a trend already underway by clarifying planning rules to emphasise a greater mix of uses and improving the public realm.

- ❑ **The Town Hall 'Square'** – dominated by traffic and appearing tired, the area in front of the town hall at the junction of Market Street, High Street and St Thomas' Street is never-the-less architecturally significant with the church, town hall and former cinema framing a civic route leading to the landmark gates of Astley Park and Hall. A redesigned public realm should give pedestrians far more priority, and act as a setting for more active public use to be made of the buildings and their ground floors. The area from the top of Market Street through to Astley Park should be designated for environmental improvement.
- ❑ **Astley Park** should be linked more robustly to the town centre, perhaps by street greening to emphasise the route. It is an important piece of the town's civic space that has lost its centrality due to the migration of the town's retail and civic functions westward.

Pan-Town Centre Priorities^H

- ❑ **Events and activities** – This investment priority spans the entire town centre. The success of the new retail and market area in the north east of the centre (Market Walk and Booths) is very welcome but should not overshadow other quarters of the town – occasional events should be promoted to attract people into the areas of lower footfall in order to maximise trade potential in currently peripheral locations.
- ❑ **Mix of uses** – Given the success of adjacent residential areas, a concerted effort to introduce some contemporary 'town centre living' could prove very successful and an important part of a strategy to regenerate the town centre.
- ❑ **Paving and public realm** – Investment in the public realm helps to define the image of a place. The present designs are no longer sufficiently noteworthy and a rethink should be given to the roll out of a new design which signals and communicates the quality of the town centre. This needs to be of a high quality and hard wearing.

Enabling Actions

- 5.67 **Enabling Action 16: Establishing a Spatial Framework for the Town Centre.** In order to successfully address all aspects of developing the town centre it will be necessary to develop a clear and robust spatial framework which will ensure that the quantum and quality of development contributes to the required enhancement. To be most effective, this framework will ultimately be consolidated in local planning policy.
- 5.68 The preparation of the Chorley Local Development Framework (LDF) provides an opportunity to review the spatial framework for the town centre and roll out a strategic masterplanning approach.
- 5.69 The North West Development Agency is a prospective delivery partner.
- 5.70 **Enabling Action 17: Town Centre Management.** The ongoing success of the town centre requires effective management and a decision making structure which utilises commercial intelligence and best

practice. Currently the Town Centre Forum provides a strategic direction for investment and development. Parallel to this, Market Walk is managed and administered under a separate arrangement. The feasibility of creating a consolidated town centre management group incorporating commercial interests from Market Walk Management Team, members of the LSP sub-group and other strategic partners will be investigated.

5.71 The Council will take a lead role in engaging partners and obtaining the necessary contributions to the consolidated group.

5.72 **Enabling Action 18: Investing in Public Realm.** Investment in the quality of the public realm and civic environment is a complementary action to private investment in the retail stock. A masterplan (see Enabling Action 16) will provide a spatial focus for investment in qualitative aspects of the town. Subject to the preparation of a masterplan for the town centre, the Council will proactively engage funders to ascertain the potential to obtain public sector funding support. The range of sources which might be applicable to the town centre environment include:

- Single Programme - as part of a package of measures to boost Chorley's economic performance and its' contribution to the regional economy;
- Townscape Heritage Initiative – potential to utilise this funding source to regenerate Chorley's historic market town and civic areas
- Public Parks Initiative – potential to access this funding source to improve access to the historic Astley Park from the town centre, in addition to investment in its facilities

5.73 Quality of environment, visitor and shopper experience is a core objective of the Economic Regeneration Strategy. The private sector has an important role to play in delivering the quality and character of public realm/ development which is demanded. A clear spatial development framework for the town centre coupled with design guidance will provide a robust basis to engage private sector partners and to obtain contributions to public realm quality where appropriate.

Key Delivery Partners

5.74 Among the key delivery partners in realising these interventions will be:

- North West Development Agency
- Traders Association
- Chamber of Commerce
- Passenger Transit Executive/ First North Western/ Lancashire County Council/ Network Rail
- Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board
- CABA Space

❑ Private developers

❑ Landowners

Improving Skills and Addressing Worklessness

5.75 The Borough is performing exceptionally well in terms of its primary and secondary school education. High performance continues to A-level qualifications. This is undoubtedly a function of the nationally recognised Runshaw College. The borough has higher than average proportions of people with NVQ levels 2, 3 and 4. The proportion of people without any qualifications is also below the Lancashire Learning and Skills Council¹ average.

5.76 However, significant workforce development needs to occur if Chorley is to attract the type of employers which will pay comparable wage levels to those available in surrounding conurbations. Among the challenges which the borough remains to address are those associated with the value and resources that existing employers put in place to support lifelong learning. Chorley's businesses appear to be investing less in workforce development than their counterparts elsewhere in Lancashire⁷.

5.77 This culture of reluctance towards investment in workforce development has been a recurrent theme in the consultations which informed the Economic Regeneration Strategy. In particular it was a noted observation of the Runshaw College Business Unit. It is clear that addressing investment in workforce development should be a priority within the Strategy:

5.78 **Enabling Action 19: Demonstrate a Business Case for Workforce Investment.** One of the major barriers at work in Chorley is the perception of workforce investment as a cost. Business Link should investigate the feasibility, working with training and business support providers, of developing a pilot programme to illustrate the operational and financial benefits of undertaking training and skills development. Through such a programme there is the potential to disseminate findings widely within the local business community and to alert them to the commercial benefits of such investment.

5.79 Runshaw Business Centre (part of Runshaw College) is one of the North West's leaders in training an business development. It offers bespoke training packages tailored to individual businesses needs, in addition to a curriculum of more traditional business training activities. The Council will work with business to maximise use of this resource.

5.80 **Enabling Action 20: Incentivise Workforce Investment.** There is potential to link business grants, such as those provided through Business Link, to a requirement to undertake workforce training and development activity. The Council will engage business grant providers, particularly Business Link, with a view to influencing eligibility criteria.

5.81 **Enabling Action 21: Better Promotion of Existing Programmes.** There are many national programmes operating within Chorley which could be better promoted to local businesses, potentially through joint promotional activity. This will ultimately serve to raise awareness and participation levels in the following programmes:

⁷ Source: Lancashire LSC (2005) - online

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- ❑ Skills for Life;
 - ❑ Investors in People;
 - ❑ Apprenticeships; and
 - ❑ The Employer Training Pilot.

Key Delivery Partners

5.82 Key delivery partners in realising these interventions will be:

- ❑ Lancashire Learning and Skills Council;
- ❑ Adjacent Local Authorities;
- ❑ Business Link;
- ❑ Training Providers; and
- ❑ Chamber of Commerce.

Marketing Chorley to the World

5.83 Part of the aspiration for Chorley is in addressing its external image – both as a location for business, and as somewhere to visit and shop. Currently, its image deters wider patronage and investment. This is borne out in the level of retail expenditure leakage that the borough currently experiences and in relative levels of inward investment secured.

5.84 Attracting economic investment will play a particularly important part in maintaining the borough's economic momentum and reducing current levels of out-commuting. There is also clear potential for developing sustainable tourism and leisure. A comprehensive approach will be adopted both in developing the borough's assets and marketing these. This will support the success of other themes of the strategy: in attracting businesses and investors to the borough and in delivering a thriving town centre.

Enabling Actions

5.85 There are several different scales at which marketing will need to be undertaken, each reflecting the intended target audience. However for each the Council needs to make a firm commitment with budgetary provision to marketing Chorley. Effective marketing will require the following enabling actions:

5.86 **Enabling Action 22: Marketing Core Central Lancashire.** In seeking to benefit from investment from companies without an existing Lancashire base, the Council will consider to what extent Chorley is 'recognised' and can be placed as a location. In many respects there is significant mileage to be gained from working with partners and agencies in Central Lancashire to communicate the key assets and opportunities of the sub-region to a wider audience, and to capitalise upon a Core Central Lancashire brand. Chorley Borough Council should fully endorse and throw its weight behind the marketing of Core

Central Lancashire and the County more widely through the Lancashire Economic Partnership Investment Marketing Group. This will involve close working with the adjacent local authorities of South Ribble and Preston, with the County Council and North West Development Agency.

5.87 **Enabling Action 23: Marketing Chorley – “The Modern Market Town.”** A number of components of this strategy, when implemented, will improve the leisure and retail offer in Chorley – and in particular the town centre offer. The Council is also working to enhance the borough’s visitor and tourism offer, capitalising on elements such as:

- ❑ Proximity to the Pennine Lancashire foothills (Rivington Pike and Lever Park);
- ❑ The Historic Astley Park and the linking Valley Park;
- ❑ The historic Georgian Quarter of the town centre; and
- ❑ The Leeds Liverpool Canal.

5.88 The Council will communicate investment secured and improvements to its assets and general environment/ lifestyle opportunities. This will be taken forward in two ways:

- ❑ A branding exercise focusing on Chorley as a “Modern Market Town” (see strategy provisions under Town Centre); and
- ❑ Developing a marketing strategy aimed at communicating improvements and raising the profile of the town, its facilities and programme of events through a range of media.

5.89 The marketing programme will provide an opportunity to communicate the unique quality of life aspects that distinguish Chorley from elsewhere in South and Central Lancashire.

5.90 **Enabling Action 24: Design Focus.** Perceptions and image will be critical to attracting people to shop, visit and do business in Chorley. The borough needs to build upon its distinctive nature, building upon the key attributes outlined in paragraph 2.14. The Council will demand high quality urban design and architecture in all new development - demonstrating a positive new direction and local ambition and supporting the vision of Chorley as the most sought after place to live and work in the North West. Heritage-based regeneration will also be promoted across the borough.

5.91 In Chorley Town Centre, high quality design and conservation will be promoted through the Town Centre Area Action Plan and preparation of Development Briefs for key opportunity sites.

5.92 Communicating a change in the quality of the built environment, and a rediscovery of its heritage will also be important, and be key attributes of an effective marketing strategy.

Key Delivery Partners

5.93 Delivery of this objective will be taken forward by a range of partners, and will be co-ordinated by the planned Chorley Marketing Group (a sub-group of the LSP) in partnership with the Lancashire Economic Partnership. The opportunity to tap into current marketing activities of Botany Bay along with planned

investment of Deutsche Bank Group in the Market Walk Shopping Centre will be fully explored. Key delivery partners include:

- ❑ Adjacent local authorities (particularly Preston and South Ribble);
- ❑ Lancashire County Council;
- ❑ Town Centre Forum/ Retail Interests;
- ❑ Botany Bay;
- ❑ Key Local Businesses.

5.94 Throughout, the opportunity to engage the business community will be fully explored.

6 Summary Action Plan

- 6.1 The purpose of this section is to bring together the key activities set out in the strategy and to present them in the form of a summary action plan. This is the first step in action planning to achieve the objectives of the Economic Regeneration Strategy.
- 6.2 The Council and its partners will further investigate the scope and types of projects appropriate. Detailed consideration of the feasibility of individual projects and partnership arrangements will be taken forward as a part of the implementation of the Strategy.

Strategy Theme	Enabling Actions	Key Delivery Partners
Supporting and Developing Enterprise	Enabling Action 1: Maintaining and growing levels of Entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Runshaw College
	Enabling Action 2: Becoming Investor Ready.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business Link (Lancashire) ▪ Lancashire Economic Partnership
	Enabling Action 3: Building a Business Support Infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lancashire County Developments Ltd (Rosebud Fund)
	Enabling Action 4: Boosting Value-Added Activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ North West Development Agency
	Enabling Action 5: Supporting Opportunities for People to Work for Longer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business Representatives/ Chamber of Commerce
	Enabling Action 6: Supporting Home Working	
	Enabling Action 7: Rural Diversification	

Improving the Transport Infrastructure & Accessibility	Enabling Action 8: Improving Sub-Regional Public Transport Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developers (through Section 106 Agreements) ▪ Public Transport Operators ▪ Highways Agency ▪ Government Office for the North West ▪ Lancashire County Council ▪ Adjacent Local Authorities ▪ Key Employers.
	Enabling Action 9: Improving Public Transport Services for Rural Settlements	
	Enabling Action 10: Addressing Congestion	
	Enabling Action 11: Opening Up New Areas to Development	
Providing a Portfolio of Sites and Premises	Enabling Action 12: 'The Bridge of Commercial Opportunity.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Landowners ▪ Lancashire County Developments Limited ▪ North West Development Agency
	Enabling Action 13: Employment Land Review.	
	Enabling Action 14: Portfolio of Workspace for Small and Expanding Businesses	
	Enabling Action 15: Considering the Next Generation of Commercial Opportunities	

A Thriving Town Centre	Enabling Action 16: establishing a Spatial Framework for the Town Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ North West Development Agency ▪ Traders Association ▪ Chamber of Commerce
	Enabling Action 17: Town Centre Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Passenger Transit Executive/ First North Western/ Network Rail ▪ Lancashire County Council ▪ Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board
	Enabling Action 18: Investment in Public Realm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CABE Space ▪ Private developers ▪ Landowners
Improving Skills and Addressing Worklessness	Enabling Action 19: Demonstrate a Business Case for Workforce Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lancashire Learning and Skills Council ▪ Adjacent local authorities
	Enabling Action 20: Incentivise Workforce Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business Link (Lancashire) ▪ Training Providers
	Enabling Action 21: Better Promotion of Existing Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chamber of Commerce

Marketing Chorley to the World	Enabling Action 22: Marketing Core Central Lancashire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adjacent local authorities (particularly Preston and South Ribble)
	Enabling Action 23: Marketing Chorley – “The Modern Market Town.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lancashire County Council ▪
	Enabling Action 24: Design Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Town Centre Forum/ Retail Interests ▪ Botany Bay ▪ Key Local Businesses

7 Monitoring and Review

7.1 To be determined in liaison with Chorley Borough Council

8 Glossary

- A. Core Central Lancashire Sub-Region** – the area represented by the boroughs of Preston, South Ribble and Chorley. Defined as a highly functional sub-region through the Core Central Lancashire Sub-Regional Strategy, the area contains the origins and destinations of 84% of journey to work trips;
- B. Sub Region** – refers to the Core Central Lancashire Sub-Region.
- C. Peer Benchmarks/ Benchmarks** – comparable levels for the Core Central Lancashire Sub-Region and the North West region;
- D. Central Urban Belt** – the built-up area at the centre of the borough lying between the M6 and M61 motorways. It contains the settlements of Chorley, Adlington, Coppull, Clayton-le-Woods, Euxton and Wittle-le-Woods.
- E. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)** – companies with no more than 250 employees which have either an annual turnover not exceeding €40 million, or an annual balance-sheet total not exceeding €27 million;
- F. Property Supply-Side Measures** – interventions to ensure a supply of appropriate business premises to meet the requirements of a range of occupier requirements including new and expanding businesses;
- G. Specialist Shopping Uses** – individual shops, rather than multiples, often although not exclusively trading in niche markets.
- H. Pan-Town Centre Priorities** – priorities which are not locationally specific but which apply across the town centre;
- I. Learning and Skills Council** – government body responsible for planning and funding education and training for over-16 year olds.

Appendices