

# City Growth Strategy

St. Helens

# City Growth Strategy

St. Helens

## CONTACT

City Growth St. Helens  
Waterside  
St Helens  
WA9 1UB

Tel: 01744 742019  
Fax: 01744 742001  
info@citygrowthsthelens.com  
www.citygrowthsthelens.com



st.helens

St. Helens | Nottingham | Plymouth | London South Central | Haringey | Heathrow | London City Fringe |

purpose, vision & strategy



# City Growth Strategy

St. Helens

St. Helens | Nottingham | Plymouth | London South Central | Haringey | Heathrow | London City Fringe |

## Contents

1	SUMMARY .....	4
2	INTRODUCING THE CITY GROWTH STRATEGY FOR ST.HELENS .....	14
3	ST.HELENS: INTRODUCING THE AREA .....	18
4	ST.HELENS: KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES .....	22
5	OVERVIEW OF THE CITY GROWTH STRATEGY .....	28
6	THEME A: TRANSFORMING OUR BUSINESS BASE .....	30
7	THEME B: ACHIEVING A CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION .....	39
8	THEME C: ACHIEVING A PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION .....	50
9	THEME D: TRANSFORMING PERCEPTIONS OF ST.HELENS .....	62
10	MEASURING SUCCESS .....	66
11	IMPLEMENTATION .....	67
12	APPENDIX A: OUTLINE CGS ACTION PLAN .....	69
13	APPENDIX B: LIST OF ST.HELENS CGS BOARD MEMBERS .....	80
14	APPENDIX C: LIST OF RESEARCH CARRIED OUT FOR ST.HELENS CGS .....	81
15	REFERENCES .....	82

## Partner Endorsements



**Paul Holme,**  
Chief Executive, Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council



**Chief Superintendent Andy Ward,**  
Merseyside Police, St.Helens



**Councillor Marie Rimmer,**  
Leader of St.Helens Council/Chair of St.Helens Local Strategic Partnership



**Nick Rushbrooke,**  
Chair, St.Helens Chamber



**Neil Scales,**  
Chief Executive, Merseytravel



**Mike O'Brien,**  
Executive Director, Groundwork St.Helens, Knowsley, Sefton & Liverpool



**Tom O'Brien,**  
Chief Executive, The Mersey Partnership



**Andrew Smith,**  
CGS Board Chair



**Terry Atherton,**  
Acting Chief Executive, Greater Merseyside Enterprise



**Kieran Gordon,**  
Chief Executive, Connexions Greater Merseyside



**Steve Broomhead,**  
Chief Executive, North West Development Agency



**Kate Williams,**  
Chief Executive, St.Helens Council for Voluntary Service



**Pat Bacon,**  
Principal, St.Helens College



**Steve Brogan,**  
Chair, Town Centre Partnership

# I Summary

## Introducing the City Growth Strategy for St.Helens

**1.1** In the spring of 2002, St.Helens was chosen as one of four areas in England to act as a pilot for a new approach to economic development via the preparation of a City Growth Strategy (CGS). Based on a successful US model, the CGS process involves extensive private sector engagement and draws on the unique strengths of urban areas. St.Helens was chosen as a pilot for several reasons, but in particular due to our excellent track record of public-private sector partnership working.

**1.2** The CGS Board was set up in April 2002. The Board, which is almost exclusively drawn from local business leaders, has been instrumental in driving forward the CGS with energy and momentum. The work of the Board has included designing research briefs, meeting with consultants working on the development of the CGS, attending away day brainstorm sessions, a field study visit to the US, as well as regular Board meetings.

**1.3** For the first 12 months the CGS Board focused on commissioning research and filling in gaps in the information needed to take forward the CGS. The centrepiece of

our research was a major strand of work identifying key business issues and cluster development opportunities in St.Helens.

**1.4** Since March 2003 we have been working on preparing our Strategy and Action Plan for St.Helens for the next ten years. A Consultation Draft was published in early June 2003. After an extensive and very positive consultation process in June and July, the CGS has been finalised. There has been widespread support for the themes and action areas of the Strategy and the key projects. The Strategy sets us all a challenging agenda for the future, and one which will ensure that the area reaches its full potential. This summary document presents an overview of the full Strategy.

## Introducing St.Helens

**1.5** The Borough of St.Helens comprises the town itself and surrounding settlements (such as Haydock, Newton-le-Willows and Billinge). It is roughly 12 miles from Liverpool city centre and 25 miles from the centre of Manchester. We have a population of around 175,000 (3% of the total in the North West region) and 56,000 employees are employed in the Borough (around 2% of the NW total). There were 3,040 VAT registered firms in St.Helens at the start of

2002. This equates to 212 firms per 10,000 adults, which is approximately 30% below the North West and 40% below the UK averages.

**1.6** St.Helens has already undergone a massive period of industrial change and restructuring. Three decades ago St.Helens was a highly specialised industrial town,

### Key Competitive Advantages

We can draw advantages from our strategic location in the North West region – situated in the middle of a market of some 7 million people and the second largest economy in the UK outside London and the South East.

St.Helens is a relatively low cost place to do business. In spite of the centrality of our location, industrial and commercial rents in St.Helens are between 25% to 30% lower than Warrington and labour costs and house prices are also significantly lower.

We have the opportunity to offer brownfield sites for development in the heart of the region for both housing and industry.

The expertise contained within our business base is a key asset. Research carried out on behalf of CGS indicates a high level of specialist knowledge and expertise within five local clusters.

We have strong business and economic development organisations and partnerships to build on and help deliver the CGS.

### Key Competitive Disadvantages

The legacy of our environmental problems poses a number of key challenges. These include significant areas of industrial dereliction and areas where the quality of the building stock is poor and ageing.

Our industrial past has left a cultural legacy with a relatively low incidence of entrepreneurial activity per head of population. As new firms are a key source of wealth creation and employment opportunities, this is a cause for concern.

Our external image as a business location is also something we need to address transforming people's perceptions of a run down environment and problems associated with our industrial past.

Overall, the business base lacks substantial representation in the knowledge economy sectors and the rate of innovation within firms is lower than in many of our competitor areas.

Broadening the range of housing is another key challenge – increasing our ability to attract higher skilled workers and their families (which in turn impacts on local spending power and the enterprise culture).



particularly dependent on glass-making (in Pilkington and other firms), but also on coal mining and other manufacturing industries. At their peak, coal mining and glass manufacture between them employed around 50,000 people (mainly men) in St.Helens, or well over half the workforce. The fall in employment in key sectors from the 1970s through to the early 1990s led to the loss of over 20,000 jobs (between 1978 and 1995). By 2000, employment in the core glass sector had fallen to just over 2,000 jobs.

**1.7** The industrial past and rapid change over the last 20-30 years have left important challenges for St.Helens - an obvious physical legacy to overcome and less obvious, but potentially more challenging, cultural and business structure legacies.

**1.8** The last ten years, however, have seen a real shift in St.Helens' fortunes, with the beginnings of a significant transformation of the Borough. Some of the changes have been led by the public sector, through the provision of new infrastructure, some by



the private sector via new investment, and some through excellent public-private sector partnerships.

**1.9** Key investments have included the new St.Helens M62 link road that created for the first time a direct link to the M62, both to the town centre and to a string of development opportunities and sites along the way, and major land reclamation of brownfield sites to bring them into productive use or to landscape them for public benefit (275 hectares reclaimed in the last four years).

**1.10** The last five years of the 1990s saw the creation of around 5,000 new jobs in St.Helens, an increase of 10%. A significant proportion of these were created in public sector services. However, the private sector has been a net creator of employment through major investment in distribution activity – concentrated around Haydock and the M62 link road - new retail and leisure employment, the new Ravenhead Retail Park and new facilities in the town centre, such as the Hilton Hotel, and additional construction employment related to the wider growth of opportunities across the region.

### Cluster Development Opportunities

**1.11** The development of a more competitive and larger business base is a key objective of the CGS. The CGS Board has invested a considerable amount of time and resource in developing our understanding of the opportunities St.Helens has to enhance and develop areas of business specialism – or local clusters.

**1.12** Extensive research work carried out for the CGS has helped prioritise five local clusters where we are exploring opportunities for action, complementing what is proposed at a regional and sub-

regional level. The five clusters are:

- ▶ **Building materials technology** – covers the manufacture and wholesaling of materials for construction (including manufacture of bricks, timber, mortars and glass, and insulation work and building completion). Links directly to the sub-regional and regional target sector/cluster of construction.
- ▶ **Tourism and leisure** – covers a wide range of activities from hotels (e.g. Hilton, Holiday Inn and Haydock Thistle), museums/visitor attractions (e.g. World of Glass) and sports facilities (e.g. Haydock Park Racecourse and St.Helens Rugby League Ground), to bars and restaurants. Links to the regional/sub-regional tourism target sector/clusters and to the opportunities presented by the 2008 Capital of Culture status of Liverpool. It also links to the sports and, to a lesser extent, the creative industries sectors/clusters.
- ▶ **Distribution and logistics** – covers road haulage, storage, distribution, warehousing and wholesaling. This activity does not have a direct comparison in the sub-region or region. However, there are strong links with businesses in Warrington, Wigan and Knowsley which are likely to face many of the same issues. The work in St.Helens will need to pay particular regard to these other areas.
- ▶ **Furniture and furnishings** – covers preparation of raw materials used in furniture and furnishings, their manufacture and subsequent retailing. Clear links to important regional textiles sector.
- ▶ **Technical testing and R&D** – covers a diverse set of activities. The main strengths in St.Helens are technical testing and analysis, instrument manufacture

(particularly for the medical industry) and R&D in engineering. Links to a number of regional/sub-regional target sectors/clusters, most notably chemicals, environmental and food and drink. (All sectors where analytical services and testing are important.)

**1.13** All five clusters are currently represented on the CGS Board giving us an excellent insight into the issues and opportunities locally. By focusing activity on these local clusters we plan to increase productivity of companies through better access to employees and specialised technical information, increase innovation and profitability through improved access to suppliers for new ideas and new products and more intense peer pressure, and stimulate the formation of new businesses via an increasingly concentrated customer base.

### The Strategy

**1.14** St.Helens has much to offer. As an area we have many strengths and have seen an encouraging transformation of our economy. Our vision for the future is that this transformation continues and accelerates. Our key aspirations are to be:

- ▶ A more entrepreneurial and enterprising location
- ▶ A model of post-industrial innovation and transformation
- ▶ A more diverse location with a wider business and social mix
- ▶ Recognised as a key regional centre for commerce, leisure and tourism
- ▶ Perceived as a modern, forward-looking location, respecting our past but embracing the future

**1.15** Our ten year vision for the CGS is that St.Helens will be widely recognised as:

“ A vibrant, modern place for enterprise and a regional location of choice ”

**1.16** The central tenet running through the St.Helens CGS is that of "Transforming St.Helens". There are four theme areas where the CGS will help this transformation:

- ▶ **A. Transforming Our Business Base**
- ▶ **B. Achieving a Cultural Transformation**
- ▶ **C. Achieving a Physical Transformation**
- ▶ **D. Transforming Perceptions of St.Helens.**

**1.17** The central purpose of the CGS is greater wealth creation and economic growth in St.Helens. The CGS is therefore opportunity-focused. It is quite deliberately not an all-encompassing regeneration strategy for St.Helens. The CGS does not tackle directly the many and varied issues associated with social exclusion and the whole raft of factors which limit the

employability of some of our residents. We are fully supportive of other strategies and actions that tackle these issues and recognise the need at a project level to ensure a joined-up approach.

**1.18** Under each theme we have developed a series of Action Areas (A1, A2, A3, etc.)

**An Overview of the Action Areas**

**1.19** As part of the process of developing the CGS, a sustainability appraisal was carried out. The CGS Board supports the key recommendation which is that as a matter of good practice all projects supported by the CGS should have a sustainability appraisal built into the project development process. In addition the Board is very keen to ensure that appropriate actions are built into projects to ensure widespread access to the opportunities and benefits created.

**Theme A : Transforming Our Business Base**  
**1.20 A1 – Laying the Foundations for Local Cluster Development.** This Action Area will involve setting up and implementing the structures and organisations necessary to develop our local clusters. We need to harness the imagination and ideas of key businesses in each of the local clusters. To make this happen we are in the process of setting up Local Cluster Action Teams (LCATs), led by members of the CGS Board.

**1.21 A2 – Developing Our Local Clusters.** We will be developing a range of projects to enhance the competitiveness of, and help grow, our five target local clusters. This will involve the delivery of tailored, bespoke support services across the clusters (embracing networking, collaborative marketing, profile raising, skills development, etc.)



**1.22 A3 – Enhancing Business Competitiveness.** This Action Area will include activity across all sectors in St.Helens aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of existing firms. Research has identified a lack of competitiveness in many firms in St.Helens across a range of sectors, based particularly on a low rate of innovation and poor investment in skills and training. The CGS Board recognises the need to achieve a step-change in the competitiveness of businesses in St.Helens.

**Theme B : Achieving a Cultural Transformation**  
**1.23 B1 – Creating an Enterprise Hotspot.** We have identified the alarming enterprise gap in St.Helens where there could be up to 1,600 missing firms – a key challenge we will be addressing. There are a multitude of explanatory factors, but the most significant are the cultural factors driven by several generations of experience of working for very large (and benevolent) employers. The lack of family, friends and neighbour role models and encouragement, means that enterprise/entrepreneurial activity is far less

Themes	Action Areas
<b>Theme A: Transforming our Business Base</b> To increase the number of, and employment levels in, competitive local firms and to increase the proportion of our economic base in sectors with the best long-term profitable growth prospects.	<b>A1:</b> Laying the Foundations for Local Cluster Development <b>A2:</b> Developing Our Local Clusters <b>A3:</b> Enhancing Business Competitiveness <b>B1:</b> Creating an Enterprise Hotspot
<b>Theme B: Achieving a Cultural Transformation</b> To substantially increase the participation rates of St.Helens' residents (especially younger residents), now and in the future, in enterprise, in investing in their skills and in accessing wider employment opportunities.	<b>B2:</b> Creating the Conditions for Enterprise <b>B3:</b> Developing Learning for Life <b>B4:</b> Plugging St.Helens into Wider Opportunities
<b>Theme C: Achieving a Physical Transformation</b> To improve the physical appearance of St.Helens and our amenities, and to make St.Helens a much more attractive location for residents, for investors and for visitors.	<b>C1:</b> A Revitalised Town Centre <b>C2:</b> Becoming a Leisure Borough for the Region <b>C3:</b> Creating Public Spaces and Inviting Gateways <b>C4:</b> Becoming a Residential Location of Choice <b>C5:</b> A Connected St.Helens
<b>Theme D: Transforming Perceptions</b> To raise and transform our profile, to be seen as a modern, vibrant and exciting place, and to shed our historic, industrial image.	<b>D1:</b> Creating Greater Pride in St.Helens <b>D2:</b> Projecting a Modern St.Helens

common in St.Helens than in other areas.

**1.24 B2 – Creating the Conditions for Enterprise.** There are some significant supply-side constraints on enterprise locally. A property study carried out for St.Helens CGS identified the lack of small, better quality industrial and office accommodation in the Borough, including workspace/starter units and grow on space. This property issue is one factor impeding new business starts and, more importantly, will make it more difficult to encourage those from outside St.Helens to relocate a growing business into the Borough. A range of activities will be put in place to address this.

**1.25 B3 – Developing Learning for Life.** There are two particular issues which we will tackle through the CGS. First, the issue of better preparing young people to enter the world of work aged 16 or 17 (as opposed to the cohort who go onto higher education), a significant concern amongst employers in St.Helens. The key gap here is the quality of key skills held by new entrants to the labour force. Second, there is the issue of a lack of appetite for lifelong learning, particularly in the established workforce – a historical legacy



from the large employer culture of the town. Although not tackled directly by the CGS, we support the work of the Lifelong Learning Partnership in addressing employability.

**1.26 B4 – Plugging St.Helens into Wider Opportunities.** The employment opportunities locally in St.Helens may not necessarily match the skills and aspirations of those living in the Borough. Yet at the same time St.Helens is adjacent to a key regional growth centre (Warrington), and a large scale economic development scheme (Omega), and is a relatively short journey time from the rapidly growing city centres of Liverpool and Manchester (and their airports). Traditionally, those in lower skilled jobs and young people have not been keen to consider employment options outside St.Helens (in contrast to those living in some surrounding areas). We want to address this as part of the CGS.

#### Theme C : Achieving a Physical Transformation

**1.27** Our physical transformation of the Borough will, where possible, embrace the use of glass in all design and construction. We are attracted by the obvious connection to our industrial past (and present), combined with the innovative and exciting ways in which this material can be used in both buildings and the public realm.

**1.28 C1 – A Revitalised Town Centre.** The town centre is the heart of St.Helens. It defines the sort of place we are and our aspirations. If we are to deliver our vision, then the town centre needs to move up a gear and be addressed on a number of fronts. The development of the town centre is an absolutely key element of the CGS for St.Helens. Although much improvement work has been undertaken (for instance the

growth of the night-time economy has been very successful), the town centre generally needs to become a more dynamic, vibrant place. The central idea in the CGS is to create an exciting town centre of five quarters that mutually re-enforce each other – cultural, business, day and night leisure, retail and residential.

**1.29 C2 – Becoming a Leisure Borough for the Region.** One of St.Helens' assets is the centrality of its location and excellent access to the motorway network. It starts therefore with an inherent advantage as a potential leisure destination for many parts of the region. The leisure and tourism offer in St.Helens is currently underdeveloped (with a few notable exceptions) and we see the development of St.Helens as a key regional sporting, leisure and tourist destination as a fundamental part of the CGS.

**1.30 C3 – Creating Public Spaces and Inviting Gateways.** Great strides have been made in recent years in improving the general public realm within St.Helens. Public spaces have been improved, derelict sites brought back into use, and work is ongoing in improving the key arrival gateways into the Borough. The CGS will, through this Action Area, strive to position St.Helens as considerably better than our competitors in terms of the quality of the public realm.

**1.31 C4 – Becoming a Residential Locality of Choice.** A key aspiration of the CGS is the further diversification of the residential offer in the Borough. We will be seeking to strengthen the residential base and encourage additional spending power; new perspectives and a new wave of entrepreneurial activity.

**1.32 C5 – A Connected St.Helens.** Relatively poor passenger rail links have served to deter some investment locally and will, in the future, certainly hamper our

attempts to promote St.Helens as a modern, vibrant and well-connected Borough. Improved rail connectivity to the main urban centres in the North West region, and, more importantly, to the West Coast Mainline, will be important as we strive to grow and strengthen the economy of St.Helens. Continuing the connectivity theme, the CGS Board will also seek to ensure that firms, residents, communities and public sector institutions benefit from first-class ICT infrastructure.

#### Theme D : Transforming Perceptions

**1.33 D1 – Creating Greater Pride in St.Helens.** The people of St.Helens are its greatest ambassadors and we will aim to ensure that all residents (and future residents) share our ambitions for the Borough. If we succeed in engaging the whole community, we can create a mood of confidence, ambition and excitement about St.Helens, with people that look to the future with optimism.

**1.34 D2 – Projecting a Modern St.Helens.** This Action Area will include carefully designed physical measures to make St.Helens more visible, together with



mechanisms to help us promote the Borough more effectively. Proactive marketing of towns, cities and districts

across the UK is now a fundamental part of the urban regeneration toolkit.

### Some of our key projects

To achieve the transformational change we need in St.Helens, the CGS Board has identified a series of *key projects* in which we intend to invest time and energy taking forward. Around 50 projects have been identified, spanning the various Action Areas. An insight to some of the projects is provided below.

#### Local Clusters

A centrepiece of the CGS. Phase 1 will see the implementation of *five Local Cluster Action Teams* to develop further the ideas for growing and developing our target local clusters. Subsequent phases will see the delivery of a range of tailored, bespoke support services across the local clusters (embracing networking, collaborative marketing, profile raising, skills development, etc.)

#### Sowing the Seeds of Enterprise

A range of discrete activities, pulled together by an *Enterprise Commission*. The project will involve a large scale and co-ordinated programme of exposure to and awareness-raising on the potential of enterprise and self-employment.

#### Business Partners Team/Business Buddies

Two projects focused on better linking business need and the wide panoply of support potentially available. Developed on the principle of face-to-face contact and using local knowledge, the project will deliver *intensive, proactive resources to seek out business problems* and channel firms to appropriate support.

#### Omega Linkages

A *major programme of awareness-raising, training for skills and improving transport linkages* to enable the benefits of one of Europe's major new business locations to be accessed by people and firms from St.Helens. Varying estimates suggest that Omega could eventually yield between 15,000 and 40,000 new jobs.

#### Graduate Greenhouse

An innovative project, involving the creation of a *micro live-work environment for graduates* wishing to start their own businesses, with full support and with financial support in the form of write off of student loan debt.

#### Sherdley Park Outdoor Events

We intend to make much better use of one of St.Helens' hidden assets and revitalise the Park to become a *major outdoor events venue*. Our aspiration is for Sherdley Park to host a range of high profile outdoor events (trade shows, music concerts, etc) and to rival Tatton Park near Knutsford and Roundhay Park in Leeds.

#### Beacons of Glass

Two *eye-catching landmark sculptures* made out of glass on the M62 and M6 approaches to St.Helens and Merseyside. These iconic markers would involve creative use of glass and innovative lighting, and will celebrate arrival to the Borough.

#### Town Centre Transformation

Major programme of work to revitalise St.Helens town centre. Projects will include the reopening of part of the canal, the provision of new areas of residential accommodation and new visitor attraction(s). The works would be co-ordinated under a new *Town Centre Development Framework*, which will investigate the potential to recreate St.Helens as an intriguing town of five quarters.

#### Linking to the Canal System

A longer term project to restore the Sankey Canal and build a *new link to the national canal network*, to encourage tourism in the Borough, and to facilitate regeneration in the town centre and along the canal corridor.

#### Kew Gardens of the North

An exciting project in its formative stages. The project will deliver a *major horticulture-based visitor attraction* (on the scale of the historic Kew Botanical Gardens in Surrey or the Eden Project in Cornwall).

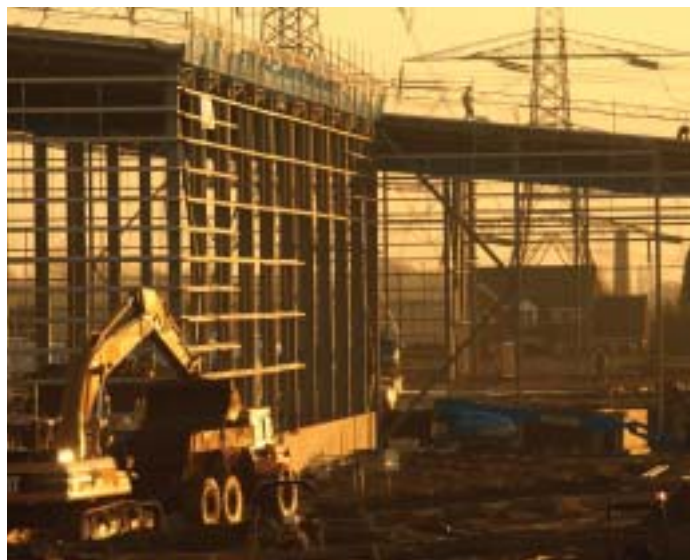
#### Destination St.Helens

This project involves a concentration of *linked attractions providing opportunities for the leisure experience in its fullest sense*. The development, which would be unique to the region, would have at its heart a multipurpose sports/leisure complex with a range of activities under one roof (including, potentially, skiing, water sports, rock climbing, skateboarding, indoor football and ice skating). The complex would also have conference and exhibition facilities. The sports/leisure village concept could include a significant element of related retail space.

## 2 Introducing the City Growth Strategy for St.Helens

"...Past initiatives have treated the inner city as an island economy, and failed to appreciate opportunities to attract spending power and export beyond the community. A robust and coherent strategy, with input from business people, community activists and the public sector, is therefore required to provide the framework for economically viable companies and employment opportunities to flourish. This should begin with the premise that inner city businesses can be profitable and compete on a regional, national and even international scale, and then identify the competitive advantages and disadvantages instrumental in this process..."

Professor Michael Porter, Harvard Business School



### What is CGS and Why is it Different ?

**2.1** In the spring of 2002 St.Helens was chosen as one of four areas in England to act as a pilot for a new approach to economic development – the City Growth Strategy (CGS). Based on an approach developed successfully in the United States, the CGS process involves a strong private sector lead and builds on the strengths of inner urban areas.<sup>1</sup>

**2.2** In 2001, in his Budget speech, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown said that he "...sees our inner cities and old industrial communities not as no-go areas for new enterprise but as places of untapped potential...". The Government decided in 2001 to pilot the CGS approach in the UK. In June 2001 the Small Business Service (SBS) launched a prospectus for City Growth Strategies.

**2.3** The CGS approach aims to:

- ▶ Forge links on the ground between economic development and regeneration, putting enterprise and business at the core of the Strategy;
- ▶ Link inner urban area and regional economic development agencies;
- ▶ Bring together key partners to encourage enterprise, including business, government and community players;
- ▶ Build a fact base of the competitive advantages and disadvantages of urban locations;
- ▶ Develop locally driven action plans for business development and growth.

**2.4** Many of the ideas underpinning City Growth Strategies come from the US-based

Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC). ICIC was originally established as an independent but not-for-profit economic development organisation by Professor Michael Porter of Harvard Business School. ICIC have played a supportive role in all the CGS pilots, including St.Helens, over the past 18 months. In addition, the SBS has recruited a Resource Team of expert advisors who have helped the various pilots.

### Why was St.Helens Selected as A Pilot?

**2.5** St.Helens was chosen as a pilot for several reasons, but in particular due to its successful track record of public-private partnership working. Of the four areas chosen in England as pilots, St.Helens is unique in three respects:

- ▶ First, it is the only one of the CGS pilots to cover a single whole local authority area.
- ▶ Second, it is the only area that is not (officially at least) a city or part of a wider conurbation area. The Borough of St.Helens has a relatively small population.
- ▶ Third, it is the only area from the north of England, one of a group of northern industrial towns that are still grappling with the process of structural change as their traditional manufacturing-dominated economic base has declined and altered.

**2.6** The whole of the Borough is covered by the CGS. This includes the town of St.Helens and smaller settlements such as Haydock, Newton-le-Willows and Billinge. Although St.Helens is not a city, it is a substantial urban area. It does not have a

discernible inner area with a separate set of problems and issues, and so it makes sense for the CGS to cover the whole Borough. Working across the whole Borough also makes sense in terms of the agencies involved, the wide spread of businesses across the Borough and coverage of existing partnerships. Our CGS provides benefits and opportunities for residents and businesses across the whole of the local authority area.

### Our Approach to Developing the CGS

**2.7** The CGS Board was set up in April 2002.<sup>2</sup> The composition and modus operandi of the Board has followed the spirit of CGS and has been truly private sector led. Indeed 14 of the 17 places on the Board are filled by local business leaders. The Board has been instrumental in driving forward the CGS with energy and momentum. The work of the Board has included designing research briefs, meeting with consultants working on the development of the CGS, attending away day brainstorm sessions, a field study visit to the US, as well as regular Board meetings (on average, 1 meeting per month).

**2.8** For the first 12 months the CGS Board focused on commissioning research and filling in gaps in key information needed to take forward the CGS. The centrepiece of our research was a major piece of work identifying key business issues and cluster development opportunities in St.Helens.<sup>3</sup>

**2.9** The process of developing the CGS now has the support of a full-time CGS Manager, appointed in September 2002, and

a CGS Officer – appointed in April 2003. Until this point, St.Helens Council and St.Helens Chamber had managed the day-to-day development process.

**2.10** The CGS Board has received advice and support from ICIC throughout the process. We have modified the ICIC-defined approach to CGS to take account of our local circumstances and key issues as identified by the CGS Board. At all times we have sought views and perspectives from our partners, including local delivery agencies and a range of sub-regional and regional partners such as the North West Development Agency (NWDA).

**2.11** In June 2003 a Consultation Draft of the CGS was launched and we embarked on an extensive consultation process. A total of five formal consultation events were held in St.Helens, which over 200 representatives of private sector firms, public agencies and voluntary and community sector groups attended. A multimedia presentation of the Strategy was made at each event. Numerous other presentations and meetings were also held. The Consultation Draft was posted on our website and made widely available.

**2.12** The Board was extremely heartened by the responses received, the vast majority of which were very positive. The CGS has obtained strong support from the

businesses and organisations of St.Helens, which recognise the analysis of the issues and opportunities, support the key themes and projects and welcome the ambition of the step-change put forward. We have revised and fine-tuned the CGS in the light of the very constructive feedback received, although the Board has not picked up on all the points made in order to retain the key thrust of CGS.

### Role of the Strategy

**2.13** In St.Helens, the partners involved in the CGS, including St.Helens Council, have taken the view that the CGS should provide a relatively wide vision and sense of direction for the economic regeneration of St.Helens. The Strategy does not only focus on business development and land and property issues, but also skills, education and factors affecting the overall quality of life within the Borough. There is already much activity and action underway supporting the main themes of our Strategy and the intention wherever possible is to enhance and build upon this.

**2.14** The central purpose of CGS is to lead to greater wealth creation and economic growth in St.Helens. The CGS is therefore unashamedly opportunity-focused. It is quite deliberately not an holistic economic development strategy for

St.Helens. The CGS does not tackle directly the many and varied issues associated with social exclusion and the whole raft of factors which limit the employability of some of our residents. The CGS recognises the importance of complementary actions aimed at regenerating neighbourhoods, tackling social exclusion and improving the employability of our residents. We are fully supportive of other strategies and actions that tackle these issues and recognise the need at a project level to ensure a joined-up approach.

### Sustainability

**2.15** The sustainability of the CGS in economic, social and environmental terms is important. We have had a sustainability appraisal carried out on the draft CGS by the Sustainability St.Helens Forum.<sup>4</sup> The Board welcomes the key points set out in the appraisal and we have reconsidered the Strategy in the light of the comments. In practice many of the specific points can only be picked up in the project development and implementation phases. We fully endorse the recommendation that a sustainability appraisal should be conducted in the development of individual project proposals. Indeed we would see this as a matter of good practice.

**2.16** The Integrated Appraisal Toolkit focuses on all aspects of sustainability, covering economic, social inclusion, and environmental impacts. Therefore, this will ensure that the opportunities to work alongside existing actions designed to tackle employability and social inclusion can be built into project design.

**2.17** Finally, although this is a Strategy for St.Helens, we recognise the need to work with our partners in neighbouring areas on many of the projects and issues.



## 3 St.Helens: Introducing the Area

**3.1** The Borough of St.Helens comprises the town itself and smaller settlements such as Haydock, Newton-le-Willows and Billinge and is situated on the Lancashire plain in the heart of the North West region. It is roughly 12 miles from Liverpool city centre and 25 miles from the centre of Manchester. The local authority is administratively in Merseyside and so falls within the Merseyside Objective 1 Programme area (2000-2006).<sup>5</sup> The M62 runs through the south of the Borough, the M6 to the east and the A580 (East Lancs Road) runs through the north part of the Borough. There is no mainline railway station in St.Helens. The nearest stations are Warrington Bank Quay and Wigan North Western.

**3.2** The basic facts on the area covered by the St.Helens CGS are as follows.<sup>6</sup>

► **Demographics:** Our resident population was estimated as 176,800 in the 2001 Census, the 81st most populous borough in England, and 15th in the North West

(3% of the region's population). According to the Census it had declined by 1.8% (3,200 over the ten years to 2001). Only 1.2% of our population are from ethnic minorities and only 1.0% were born outside the European Union (both some of the lowest proportions in England and Wales).

► **Labour force:** According to the 2001 Census there were some 71,000 residents in work, one of the lowest proportions of adults in England. St.Helens is a net exporter of labour as there are 56,000 employees employed in the Borough (2001), and a further 5,000 residents are self-employed (2000), or 6.4% of those in work (compared to 11.4% in GB).

► **Unemployment:** There were 3,380 registered claimants in July 2003 (equivalent to 3.1% of the workforce, compared to 2.6% in GB and 2.8% in the region). The ILO defined<sup>7</sup> number of unemployed is nearer 5,000.

► **Skills and Education.** The proportion of St.Helens (working age) residents qualified to NVQ 3 (37%) and NVQ4 (17%) is considerably lower than the national averages (43% and 24% respectively, 2002 data). Whilst significant absolute improvements in the overall levels of qualifications held by St.Helens' residents have been witnessed between 1997 and 2002, the gap in the proportion of those holding higher level qualifications has increased relative to both national and regional benchmarks. School performance in St.Helens has, however, improved both in relative and absolute terms over most of the last eight years. For those pupils who stay on for full-time education in

Carmel College or school 6th forms, St.Helens does well overall, outperforming the regional and national averages.

► **Deprivation and social exclusion:**

St.Helens was, according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2000), the 36th most deprived local authority area in England.<sup>8</sup> There are a number of particular problems in St.Helens. The proportion of our population, particularly men, who have a limiting long-term illness is very high (23.6% of the total population), as is the proportion of those with general poor health. St.Helens contains a number of particularly deprived wards. Seven out of our 17 wards are in the top 10% most deprived wards in England (Parr and Hardshaw, Broad Oak, West Sutton, Marshalls Cross, Queen's Park, Thatto Heath Grange Park).

► **Business stock:** There were 3,040 VAT registered firms in St.Helens at the start of 2002 (2% of regional total). This equates to 212 firms per 10,000 adults, which is 30% below the North West and 40% below the UK averages. The rate of increase in the last five years has been similar to the regional rate but from a considerably lower base. The gap is most noticeable in the financial/business services sector. Roughly 300 new firms register for VAT each year. The rate of new business starts (per head of population) is even lower, at 32% below the regional and 46% below the UK averages. Just 6% of those in work are self-employed, well below the regional (10%) and national rates (11%).

► **Land and property issues:** There is around 12 million ft<sup>2</sup> of industrial property in

St.Helens (20% of the Merseyside total) and around 1.7 million ft<sup>2</sup> of office floorspace (8% of the Merseyside total). There is a substantial stock of older, poor quality accommodation and low levels of speculative development (although this has improved in recent years). Consequently, there is a limited supply of modern industrial and warehouse property of various sizes which is available for inward investors and expanding local businesses. Most of the office stock is secondary in nature, with little modern office stock outside a limited number of grant-aided developments.<sup>9</sup> There is a large stock of office accommodation, with a significant share of the available stock (at least a third) of poor quality and typically in need of refurbishment. At the last count there were 354 hectares of unused, previously developed land across the Borough.<sup>10</sup> and this figure is being added to continually as older factories shut down. However significant strides are also being taken to tackle this problem - 275 hectares were reclaimed over the four years to April 2001. Overall, it is likely that the total area of derelict land is now falling.

### Industrial decline (1970-1990)

**3.3** St.Helens has already undergone a massive period of industrial change and restructuring (in common with many other towns and cities in the north of England). Three decades ago St.Helens was a highly specialised industrial town, particularly dependent on glass-making (in Pilkington and other firms), but also on coal mining and other manufacturing industry (e.g. chemicals and pharmaceuticals

manufacture). At their peaks, coal mining and glass manufacture between them employed around 50,000 people (mainly men) in St. Helens, or well over half the workforce. The fall in employment in key sectors from the 1970s through to the early 1990s led to the loss of over 20,000 jobs (between 1978 and 1995), with most of the fall occurring in the early 1980s. By 2000, employment in the core glass sector<sup>11</sup> had fallen to just over 2,000 jobs.

**3.4** Not surprisingly, this loss of employment led to a significant fall in population (in common with the rest of Merseyside and many towns in the North West). Between 1981 and 1991, the population of St. Helens fell by around 10,000 (or 5%), far faster than the North West as a whole (1%). However, during the 1990s there was some stabilisation in population decline to just 2% over the decade, at the average rate of decline across the region and below the falls in many surrounding areas (e.g. Halton, Wigan and Knowsley).

**3.5** The industrial past and rapid change over the last 20-30 years have left three important legacies in St. Helens - an obvious physical legacy, a less obvious, but potentially more challenging, cultural legacy, and a business structure legacy.

► *The Physical Legacy.* The rapid and largely haphazard process of industrialisation during the 19th century followed by rapid employment loss and factory closures towards the end of the last century has left a range of physical/environmental problems. These include large areas of industrial dereliction (a number of which have already been turned into areas of opportunity by reclamation) and many small industrial estates and areas (often inappropriately located near or in

residential areas) where the quality of the building stock is poor and ageing.

► *The Cultural Legacy.* The historic dependency on large employers (with a mainly male workforce) in St. Helens is common to other former coal mining, shipbuilding and steel-based communities. In all cases such areas have tended to lack a tradition of small firms and entrepreneurship and still today exhibit low rates of new firm start-ups and stock of businesses. This is both due to weak demand (relative lack of spending power), but more specifically to a lack of entrepreneurial tradition. If St. Helens had the same number of firms per adult as the North West average, there would be more than 40% more firms (or around 1,600 extra businesses.)<sup>12</sup>

► *Business Structure Legacy.* The other feature of St. Helens, which has stemmed from its industrial past and location (with other surrounding towns/cities providing some of the specialist support), is the low proportion and number of financial, professional and business services firms in the Borough.

### Starting the transformation (the 1990s onwards)

**3.6** The last ten years have seen a real shift in St. Helens' fortunes, with the beginnings of a significant transformation of the Borough. Some of the changes have been led by the public sector, through the provision of new infrastructure, some by the private sector via new investment, and some through excellent public-private partnerships.

**3.7** There has been large-scale investment to improve the physical fabric of St. Helens. Key investments have been:

► The new St. Helens M62 link road that creates a direct link to the M62, both to

the town centre and to a string of development opportunities and sites along the way. The road was completed in 1994 and enables much more of St. Helens to capitalise on its strategic location. The road provides vastly improved visitor access to the town centre and business access to several key sites. It was instrumental in helping developments take place at Sherdley Park, Lea Green Farm and Ravenhead Park.

► Major land reclamation of brownfield sites to bring them into productive use or to landscape them for public benefit (275 hectares reclaimed in the last four years). For instance, Groundwork Trust acquired the Bold Colliery site from British Coal and major improvement works have continued apace over the years, with the reclamation of over 116 hectares of formerly derelict land for use as public open space.

**3.8** The last five years of the 1990s saw the creation of around 5,000 new jobs in St. Helens, an overall increase of 10%. A significant proportion of these were created in public sector services. However, the private sector has been a net creator of employment through major investment in three areas:

- Distribution activity – concentrated around Haydock, the M62 link road (e.g. the new 50,000m<sup>2</sup> Wincanton distribution centre at Lea Farm East) and Newton-le-Willows
- Town centre and related retail and leisure – the new Ravenhead Retail Park and new facilities in the town centre, such as the Hilton Hotel
- Construction employment - related to the wider growth of opportunities across the region

**3.9** The demand from the private sector has led to on average 12 hectares of employment land being taken up each year, although the take-up has been variable because of the large nature of some requirements (from the distribution sector) and the new supply becoming available. The take-up of employment premises has also shown steady growth, with a clear upward trend from 1997 onwards. In comparison, land take-up in Warrington over the period 1997/8 to 2001/2 was around 15 hectares per annum.

## 4 St.Helens: Key Opportunities and Challenges

**4.1** The work in carrying out the baseline has helped establish a clear view of the key advantages to build upon, as well as some of the difficult challenges we face to become a more competitive business location. Our key competitive advantages (and their potential implications) are summarised in Table 4.1 and the competitive disadvantages in Table 4.2. In summary, St.Helens has very considerable potential as a key business, visitor and residential location potential which we want to fully exploit.

**4.2** The analysis of issues and advantages has been informed not only by the baseline, but also by other recent work such as the Merseyside Economic Review, published by The Mersey Partnership in February 2003, and the new North West Regional Economic Strategy.



### Key Competitive Advantages

**4.3** Our main competitive advantage is our strategic location in the North West region, situated in the middle of a market of some 7 million people and the second largest economy in the UK outside London and the South East (this factor has been a key to the growth of our near neighbour Warrington).<sup>13</sup> We have immediate access to the M62 and M6 motorways and sit between the region's two principal cities of Manchester and Liverpool (both with growing international status). To date we have been able to exploit this location largely through the growth of a significant logistics and distribution sector. However, there are other features we are well placed to develop:

- ▶ As a location for firms servicing regional markets (business services, construction and engineering support, etc.)
- ▶ As a highly accessible regional visitor destination (either for business tourism or leisure visits)
- ▶ As a convenient residential location for workers to commute elsewhere in the region, especially if supported by better public transport links

**4.4** This central location also makes St.Helens readily accessible to a large labour pool (including highly skilled labour) living outside (as well as inside) the Borough, from Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Lancashire. The economic geography of St.Helens changed fundamentally in 1994 with the completion of the M62 link road from the town centre

direct to Junction 7 on the M62. Sites have been subsequently prepared and developed along this route.

**4.5** There are three specific new opportunities located in or close to St.Helens:

- ▶ The massive proposed Omega Business Park<sup>14</sup> astride the M62, just south of St.Helens – one of the region's key strategic sites
- ▶ The recent welcome success of Liverpool against stiff national competition to be the European Capital of Culture in 2008, and the programme of tourism and cultural events and activity leading up to 2008, provides an opportunity for the businesses and residents of St.Helens
- ▶ As part of the national expansion of NHS services, the St.Helens and Knowsley Hospitals NHS Trust is working with local health partners on a complete redesign of its main hospital facilities at Whiston, St.Helens and Newton, and the redevelopment of four primary care resource centres in a major programme costing over £200 million

**4.6** St.Helens has a competitive advantage as a relatively low cost place to do business. In spite of the centrality of our location, industrial and commercial rents in St.Helens are between 25% to 30% lower than in Warrington, and labour and house prices are also significantly lower. The additional development planned in the Warrington area, especially at Omega, will place further pressure on the labour and property market of this neighbouring area. St.Helens

sits within Merseyside, which is an area where businesses are, currently, able to obtain the highest level of state support in Europe.<sup>15</sup> This further increases the cost-competitiveness of our location.

**4.7** One advantage is our ability to offer brownfield sites for development in the heart of the region for housing and for industry (therefore, one of our challenges highlighted below can also be seen as a strength).

**4.8** The expertise contained within our business base is another key advantage. The research carried out on our potential clusters indicates some very significant concentrations of specialist firms in the materials technology (including building on our tradition in glass manufacture),<sup>16</sup> technical testing and furniture and furnishings sectors.

**4.9** Our labour force is a positive feature. Traditionally workers from St.Helens have been imbued with a strong work ethic. Employers in the town have a workforce who are hard working and loyal. Rates of labour turnover are low and loyalty to employers is high. Standards of education and skills have improved rapidly in our schools and we have two very successful further education colleges that draw students from a wide catchment area, well beyond St.Helens.

**4.10** Finally, we have strong business and economic development organisations and partnerships to build on and help deliver the CGS. We have a history of the public and private sectors working together. The business support organisations in St.Helens

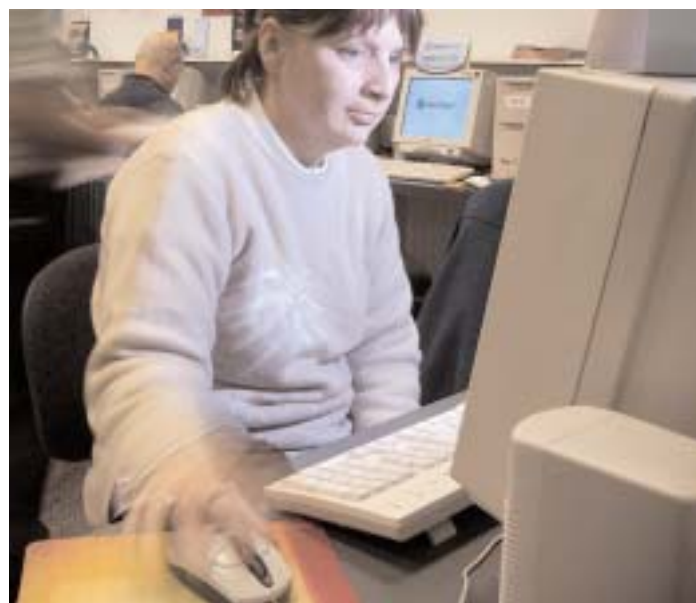
have an excellent track record of partnership working and delivery and, with St.Helens Chamber, have an organisation which has a particularly high penetration of members and take-up of services (higher than anywhere else in the country).

**4.11** To date, St.Helens has not been able to exploit fully this potential. Although the development of new business areas has occurred in parts of the Borough (Haydock for commercial offices in The Parks and the Woodlands Business Park developments) and now along the M62 Linkway, we have not developed our area as a regional leisure destination, as a centre for regional business services firms, nor yet as a business tourism location.

**Key Competitive Disadvantages**

**4.12** St.Helens continues to face several key challenges which, in part, explain why we have not been able to exploit our potential. Our two biggest challenges both relate to tackling the legacy of our industrial past (see section 3).

**4.13** The rapid employment loss and factory closures towards the end of the last century have left a legacy of



physical/environmental problems. These include:

- ▶ Large areas of industrial dereliction, often in prominent locations
- ▶ Many small industrial estates and areas where the quality of the building stock is poor and ageing, with these industrial estates often inappropriately located cheek by jowl with residential accommodation

**4.14** The historic dependency on large employers (with a mainly male workforce) in St.Helens is common to other former coal mining, shipbuilding and steel-based communities and has left a cultural legacy which has several manifestations.

▶ Overall, on all indicators, St.Helens has a relatively low incidence of entrepreneurial activity per head of population.<sup>17</sup> As new firms are a key source of new jobs, wealth creation and employment opportunities, this is a cause for concern. The baseline suggests that if the business density per adult were the same in St.Helens as the regional average there would be some 1,300 to 1,700 extra firms in our Borough.<sup>18</sup> The recent Merseyside Economic Review identified this as a pan-Merseyside issue.

▶ Another feature of St.Helens appears to be the relative lack of interest in learning amongst adults in the workforce. Given the future path of skills needs in the knowledge-driven economy, this is a cause for concern. Although there is some higher education provision via St.Helens and Carmel Colleges, St.Helens lacks a direct presence on the ground of a higher education institution.

**4.15** The issue of our environment is linked with the challenges we face in terms of our

external image. As a business location, where we register in people's perceptions, it is in terms of having a rundown environment and associated problems of our industrial past. These perceptions have a strong grain of truth but lag behind many of the improvements we have made. There are also other external perceptions, such as having high crime rates relating to business, which are not necessarily borne out by the available evidence.

**St.Helens - Negative perceptions**

- ▶ The slightly run down nature of the area
- ▶ The traditional, declining industrial image and lack of a professional and service sector business base
- ▶ A perception that local amenities are poor (e.g. lack of specialist retailers)
- ▶ High rates of crime

Source: "Research into Inward Investment Perceptions of St.Helens" Ecotec, February 2003 for CGS

**Table 4.1: St.Helens – Key Advantages**

Key Opportunity	Implications for the CGS
<b>Central Location</b>	
▶ Accessible to wide range of consumer and business markets	▶ Excellent location for distribution and logistics (a target local cluster). Also strong location for facilities serving or aiming to reach the whole regional market (of 7 million people), especially leisure facilities
▶ Accessible to large regional labour pool (inc. skilled labour), yet low cost housing area	▶ Potentially an attractive housing location, along the lines of Warrington, for two earner households working in different parts of the region
▶ Adjacency to key regional growth hotspot (Warrington and now Omega), yet highly cost-effective location	▶ Good location for firms servicing business activity and staff at Omega; potential to capture firms based in Warrington looking for a more cost-effective location
▶ Mid-way between the two major conurbations of Liverpool and Manchester	▶ Again, good opportunity for firms to service business activity in main conurbation cores. Plentiful (and growing) supply of jobs for St.Helens residents, good access to tourism-related jobs in Liverpool, especially in light of its successful Capital of Culture bid
<b>Other Factors</b>	
▶ Very well established local business support agency (Chamber) with high membership penetration and business awareness	▶ Cost-effective delivery vehicle in place for local cluster support and additional business support activity. Also opportunity to increase penetration rate of business support services

Table 4.1: St.Helens – Key Advantages Continued

Key Opportunity	Implications for the CGS
<b>Other Factors</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement of the private sector (via CGS Board)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An opportunity to drive St.Helens forward, with the backing and energy of the local business base</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excellent further education colleges in the Borough (with several Centres of Vocational Excellence), and improving school attainment with a range of good schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Much of the training infrastructure is in place to support local business and to enhance the delivery of training. The local education provision could be a selling point for liveability</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some important sporting/leisure/recreational assets (e.g. Haydock Park Racecourse, the World of Glass, etc) and several potentially significant outdoor leisure facilities (Sherdley Park, Carr Mill Dam, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The area has the beginnings of a cluster of leisure activities and an opportunity to build on these, exploiting its central regional location</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving image (an "up and coming" view emerging)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This provides a marketing platform and message to build on and highlights the need to continue to invest in improvements</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding availability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major incentive for firms to locate (and grow) activity in St.Helens</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Range of site development opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although many are complex and brownfield, they are deliverable and St.Helens potentially has the capacity to provide locations for significant levels of additional employment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing and emerging local clusters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The business strengths identified through the cluster work</li> </ul>

Table 4.2: St.Helens – Key Disadvantages

Key Challenge	Implications for the CGS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor overall quality of the physical environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acts as deterrent to business investment and to residential investment and location in the Borough, or at least parts of it</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited range of modern property (office and industrial) for smaller firms in the Borough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limits the available property offer, especially to firms in the more knowledge-intensive sectors, and so chances of persuading them to stay in/relocate to St.Helens</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited attractiveness of the town centre to shoppers and leisure visitors (in terms of environment and range of amenities)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The town centre is a key part of the liveability equation for St.Helens as a whole. There is a need to improve the range and quality of the "offer" to enable a broader-based town centre and wider economy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited (but improving) range of housing across much of the Borough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The range of housing affects the people who choose to live in St.Helens and the ability to attract higher skilled workers and their families (which in turn impacts on local spending power and the enterprise culture)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative external perceptions of St.Helens as having a run-down environment with crime problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acts as deterrent to business investment, residential investment and location in the Borough, or at least parts of it. These perceptions need to be tackled head on</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low visibility and awareness of St.Helens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limits consideration of area for future investment. Will require some eye-catching and headline-grabbing changes to raise the profile</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of public transport connectivity (especially external train links to the national rail network)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A deterrent to investment and adds to perception of isolation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small share of economy in sectors with stronger growth prospects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Means growth prospects are limited. Need to encourage new firms through the general improvement of property offer, environment and image as well as the cluster work</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very low rate of new business starts per head of population and lack of an entrepreneurial culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limits employment growth and the dynamism/flexibility of the business base. Needs tackling via demand stimulation and "importing" new firms</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lagging skill levels of the adult workforce – both in terms of absolute levels and rate of increase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the long term could act as a serious constraint on growth. Needs action to increase investment by employers/employees in training</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor adult basic skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impacts on children's learning aspirations and acts as a drag on recruitment possibilities, training and employability.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of a strong lifelong learning culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See above</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited direct higher education presence in the Borough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unlikely to be able to tackle in the short -term. Need to make more of the existing links with higher education and the proximity to several higher education institutions</li> </ul>

# 5 Overview of the City Growth Strategy

**5.1** The CGS Board recognises we have much to be proud of in St.Helens. As an area we have many strengths and have seen an extraordinary transformation of our economy. Our vision for the future is that this transformation continues and accelerates. Our key aspirations are to be:

- ▶ A more **entrepreneurial** and **enterprising** location
- ▶ A model of **post-industrial innovation** and **transformation**
- ▶ A more **diverse** location with a wider business and social mix
- ▶ Recognised as a key **regional** centre for commerce, leisure and tourism
- ▶ Perceived as a **modern, forward-looking location**, respecting our past but embracing the future



**5.2** Our ten year vision for the CGS is that St.Helens will become:

“ A vibrant, modern place for enterprise and a regional location of choice ”

Transforming St.Helens

**5.3** The central tenet of the CGS for St.Helens is that of "Transforming St.Helens". There are four theme areas where the CGS will help this transformation.

- ▶ **A. Transforming our Business Base**
- ▶ **B. Achieving a Cultural Transformation**
- ▶ **C. Achieving a Physical Transformation**
- ▶ **D. Transforming Perceptions of St.Helens.**

**5.4** Under each theme we have developed a series of Action Areas which are in turn supported by a series of projects. Figure 5.1 summarises the overall CGS for St.Helens. Transforming St.Helens requires a concerted push on a number of important fronts and the four themes will be strongly linked. In all cases projects will be subject to a sustainability appraisal, including an assessment of how new opportunities can be linked to areas and communities in need.

**5.4** Under each theme we have developed a series of Action Areas which are in turn supported by a series of projects. Figure 5.1 summarises the overall CGS for St.Helens. Transforming St.Helens requires a

concerted push on a number of important fronts and the four themes will be strongly linked. In all cases projects will be subject to

a Sustainability Appraisal, including an assessment of how new opportunities can be linked to areas and communities in need.

**Table 5.1: St.Helens City Growth Strategy 2003-2013**

Vision: "A vibrant, modern place for enterprise and a regional location of choice"	
Themes	Action Areas
<p><b>A. TRANSFORMING OUR BUSINESS BASE</b> To increase the number of, and employment levels in, competitive local firms and to increase the proportion of our economic base in sectors with the best long-term, profitable growth prospects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ A1: Laying the Foundations for Local Cluster Development</li> <li>▶ A2: Developing Our Local Clusters</li> <li>▶ A3: Enhancing Business Competitiveness</li> </ul>
<p><b>B. ACHIEVING A CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION</b> To substantially increase the participation rates of St.Helens' residents (especially younger residents), now and in the future, in enterprise, in investing in their skills and in accessing wider employment opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ B1: Creating an Enterprise Hotspot</li> <li>▶ B2: Creating the Conditions for Enterprise</li> <li>▶ B3: Developing Learning for Life</li> <li>▶ B4: Plugging St.Helens into Wider Opportunities</li> </ul>
<p><b>C. ACHIEVING A PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION</b> To improve the physical appearance of St.Helens and our amenities to make St.Helens a much more attractive location for residents, for investors and for visitors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ C1: A Revitalised Town Centre</li> <li>▶ C2: Becoming Leisure Borough for the Region</li> <li>▶ C3: Creating Public Spaces and Inviting Gateways</li> <li>▶ C4: Becoming Residential Location of Choice</li> <li>▶ C5: A Connected St.Helens</li> </ul>
<p><b>D. TRANSFORMING PERCEPTIONS OF ST.HELENS</b> To raise and transform our profile, to be seen as a modern, vibrant and exciting place, and to shed our historic industrial image.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ D1: Creating Greater Pride in St.Helens</li> <li>▶ D2: Projecting a Modern St.Helens</li> </ul>

## 6 Theme A: Transforming Our Business Base

### Overall Objective

To increase the number of, and employment levels in, competitive local firms and to increase the proportion of our economic base in sectors with the best long-term profitable, growth prospects.

**6.1** The development of a more competitive and larger business base is a key objective of the CGS. The CGS Board has invested a considerable amount of time and resource in developing our understanding of the opportunities St.Helens has to enhance and develop areas of business specialism – or local clusters.

### Developing the St.Helens Target Local Business Clusters

**6.2** The whole area of business development in the UK has been bedevilled by confusion over terms. In particular, there is no uniformly used definition of what constitutes a cluster (and how it differs from a sector), or indeed over what

geographical area it is most sensible to consider the business concentrations and networks which typify clusters.

**6.3** In St.Helens we have focused on identifying particular concentrations of business activity that are linked either by local business networks and interlinkages, or by common technological issues. We really are less concerned over what these concentrations are called than by what we need to do! However, to avoid confusion with the wider regional (and sub-regional) target clusters we have styled these groups as local clusters.

**6.4** During 2002 and early 2003 we went through an exhaustive and heavily researched process to identify the most significant "local clusters" in St.Helens and to narrow these down to five target areas.<sup>19</sup> The work carried out for the CGS Board included:

- ▶ An extensive literature review
- ▶ Consultations with local and wider stakeholders
- ▶ A detailed review of statistics on the business base in St.Helens

- ▶ A review of the external policy environment and potential growth prospects

**6.5** The five local clusters were finally selected based on the current degree of concentration in St.Helens, the scale of the cluster and future growth opportunities locally and nationally. The clusters are all ones in which St.Helens has or could develop a comparative advantage. A wide range of other possible clusters were considered.

**6.6** The five selected local clusters are (with key statistics in Table 6.1):

- ▶ **Building materials technology** – covers the manufacture and wholesaling of materials for construction (glass, bricks, timber, steel and insulation) and elements of construction activity itself (including off-site manufacturing and prefabrication technology). The cluster includes the glass manufacturing sector, which has historically been a key part of the local economy. Although overall employment has fallen (almost entirely due to the most recent contractions in glass-making) this is confined to one part of the cluster and recent investment by Pilkington suggests that there is a reasonable bedrock of manufacturing capacity in St.Helens. Clearly, firms in this cluster face considerable challenges in terms of cost-competition and the need to innovate technologically to remain competitive.
- ▶ **Tourism and leisure** – covers a wide range of activities from hotels (e.g. Hilton, Holiday Inn and Haydock Thistle), museums/visitor attractions (e.g. the World of Glass) and sports facilities (e.g.

### What are the benefits of clusters/business concentrations?

- ▶ Increasing productivity of companies in the locale through better access to employees and suppliers, access to specialised technical information, the existence of complementary businesses and access to research institutions.
- ▶ Increasing innovation through local access to suppliers for new ideas and new products, the ease of making site visits to examine new developments, peer pressure and constant comparisons made within a cluster.
- ▶ Stimulating the formation of new businesses because there is a concentrated customer base for suppliers, individuals can easily perceive gaps in the market place which can be exploited. Barriers to entry are lower than elsewhere and skilled staff are available to input into the new business.

Source: Professor Michael Porter, Harvard Business School

Haydock Park Racecourse and St.Helens Rugby League Ground) to the bars and restaurants concentrated in the town centre. Caters both for residents of St.Helens and for visitors (largely from elsewhere in the region). The sector has been growing rapidly in St.Helens but is still relatively underdeveloped. It is a target cluster both for Merseyside and the wider North West for which recent tourism



strategies have been produced, and there is a key opportunity to capitalise on Liverpool's successful Capital of Culture bid for 2008. The development of the sector directly benefits the economy (more visitors and spend and jobs), but also improves facilities for residents and improves the quality of life offer.

- Distribution and logistics** – covers road haulage, storage, distribution, warehousing and wholesaling. Medium-sized firms are particularly important. The sector has grown significantly in part due to the location of large distribution centres (Sainsbury's at Haydock and now Wincanton/Somerfield at Lea Green), attracted because of St.Helens' central location within the region and ready access to the M6 and M62. Given St.Helens' excellent location and cost advantages, there is significant further growth potential for distribution and logistics in St.Helens on existing sites and through the development of the former Parkside colliery site as a regionally significant rail freight-linked distribution centre.<sup>20</sup>
- Furniture and furnishings** – covering the preparation of materials used in furniture and furnishings, their manufacture and specialist retailing. The cluster is dominated in St.Helens by a large number of small

firms (e.g. Leech Bedrooms and Caldeira Ltd – both of whom featured in the Inner City 100 Index).<sup>21</sup> There is intense competition in this sector nationally and locally. Firms have to compete in terms of cost, quality of design, speed of supply and in some cases use of new technology and materials.

- Technical testing and R&D** – covers a diverse set of activities. The main strengths in St.Helens are technical testing and analysis, instrument manufacture (particularly for the medical industry) and R&D in engineering. To some extent these industries are processes that can be applied across several sectors. There are relatively few firms in this cluster, but several have growing international reputations.

**6.7** The opportunities for cluster development relate both to existing firms and to the creation of new firms and attraction of inward investment. There are also firms who are located in adjacent areas who could and in many cases should be involved as they could both add to and benefit from the actions. We do not intend to pursue an approach to local clusters which is overly constricted by local authority boundaries.



**Table 6.1 St.Helens – Scale of Target Local Clusters**

Local Cluster	Nos. of Employees			Nos. of Firms (2000)*	Degree of area specialisation**
	In 2000	% of all employment	% change (95-00)		
Building materials technology	6,200	11%	-7%	395	Very high
Tourism and leisure	3,900	7%	+7%	422	Low to average
Distribution and logistics	3,900	7%	+18%	246	Very high
Furniture and furnishings	1,800	3%	+72%	106	Very high
Technical testing and R&D	1,200	2%	+30%	46	Low to average
<b>All above</b>	<b>17,000</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>+9%</b>	<b>1,215</b>	
<b>All sectors in the economy</b>	<b>55,900</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>+10%</b>	<b>4,290</b>	

Source: Ecotec, 2003

Notes:

\*These figures are based on nos. of establishments in St.Helens from the Annual Business Inquiry, not VAT registered firms (where there is no detailed sectoral breakdown at a local authority area level).

\*\* This indicates the extent to which the proportion of St.Helens' employment is accounted for, by showing the cluster is equal to or above the UK average.

**Key Issues and Opportunities**

- 6.8** The process of selecting the target business groupings was, in part, driven by considering the relationships to the Merseyside and North West target clusters/sectors (see Table 6.2). There is of course no reason why St.Helens as an area should focus on the same business concentrations as our wider sub-region or region – our business base and opportunities are different. What may be a significant concentration locally may not figure at a regional level. The key points are:
- D** Building materials technology has a large construction-related element and therefore links quite directly to the sub-regional and regional target sector/cluster of construction (currently the subject of an NWDA-led mapping study).
  - D** Tourism and leisure links similarly to the

regional/sub-regional tourism target sector/clusters. It also links to the sports target sector/cluster, and the creative industries to some extent.

- D** Distribution and logistics does not have a direct comparison in the sub-region or region. However, there are some (slightly tenuous) links to the maritime sector. There are strong links with businesses in Warrington, Wigan and Knowsley who are likely to face many of the same issues. The work in St.Helens will need to pay particular regard to these other areas.
- D** Furniture and furnishings also does not have a related sub-regional/regional sector, although there are clearly links to the important regional textiles sector.
- D** Technical testing and R&D links to a number of target sectors/clusters, most notably chemicals, environmental and food

Relationship of Target St.Helens Business Concentrations to Sub-Regional and Regional Targets

Table 6.2

St.Helens CGS Targets	Merseyside/Objective 1 Target Sectors	North West Target Cluster	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▮ Building materials technology</li> <li>▮ Tourism and leisure</li> <li>▮ Distribution and logistics</li> <li>▮ Furniture and furnishings</li> <li>▮ Technical testing and R&amp;D</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▮ Automotives</li> <li>▮ Aviation</li> <li>▮ <b>Construction</b> ✓</li> <li>▮ Creative industries ✓</li> <li>▮ Environmental technologies ✓</li> <li>▮ Food and drink ✓</li> <li>▮ Health ✓</li> <li>▮ ICT</li> <li>▮ Life sciences</li> <li>▮ Maritime ✓</li> <li>▮ Professional services</li> <li>▮ Sport ✓</li> <li>▮ <b>Tourism and leisure</b> ✓</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▮ Aerospace</li> <li>▮ Automotive</li> <li>▮ Aviation</li> <li>▮ Chemicals ✓</li> <li>▮ <b>Construction</b> ✓</li> <li>▮ Creative ✓</li> <li>▮ Digital</li> <li>▮ Energy</li> <li>▮ Environmental ✓</li> <li>▮ Financial &amp; professional services</li> <li>▮ Food and drink</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▮ Healthcare/ biotechnology ✓</li> <li>▮ Maritime ✓</li> <li>▮ Sport ✓</li> <li>▮ Textiles ✓</li> <li>▮ <b>Tourism</b> ✓</li> </ul>

Note: ✓=direct link to St.Helens target; ✓=less direct link

and drink (all sectors where analytical services and testing are important).

6.9 Of our target business areas, tourism and leisure is by far the most advanced in networking terms. St.Helens Tourism Business Network has already been set-up<sup>22</sup> and is already working on the key growth opportunity markets for St.Helens. Other Local Cluster Action Teams (LCATs) are in the process of being set-up with businesses yet to be recruited.

6.10 The development of these local clusters, and indeed the success of the CGS in St.Helens more generally, will provide a wider opportunity for all other local business, especially the business and professional services sector.

Action Areas

6.11 The CGS has three action areas under this theme, which are:

- ▮ A1 – **Laying the Foundations for Local Cluster Development**
- ▮ A2 – **Developing Our Local Clusters**
- ▮ A3 – **Enhancing Business Competitiveness**

A1 – Laying the Foundations for Local Cluster Development

Why is this important?

6.12 Although a lot of excellent research has been carried out into our local cluster opportunities and we have a clear framework for action, we need to harness the imagination and ideas of key businesses in each of the local clusters. To make this happen we are in the process of setting up Local Cluster Action Teams (LCATs), where

these do not exist, led by a member of the CGS Board. It is very important that the projects developed are fully founded in the practical issues and opportunities facing businesses in each case.

What is happening already?

6.13 In the case of tourism and leisure, the Tourism Business Network (chaired by the General Manager of Haydock Park Racecourse) is already carrying out this function and developing a Borough action plan to develop the sector. This group has met five times in the last 12 months, in part to ensure St.Helens provided an effective input into the new Merseyside and North West tourism strategies. Cluster champions have been identified for the other four local clusters.

What will the CGS deliver?

6.14 Cluster action plans will be developed for each of the five LCATs by early 2004, supported by external consultants and the CGS team. The key principles of these Action Plans will be:

- ▮ The actions set out will emanate from and fully reflect business issues
- ▮ They will provide clear signals for the activity of local providers of business support and training on priorities and

opportunities

- ▮ They will be complementary to and add value to any sub-regional or regional cluster actions (in the relevant cluster)

6.15 The development of the Cluster Action Plans will need to take place in the context of the ongoing work of The Mersey Partnership in developing sub-regional sector action plans. It will also be vital for many of the local clusters to pick up obvious common issues with businesses in adjoining areas. The CGS Board already has commissioned consultancy support for the LCATs during this formative process and they will be supported by the CGS Officer.

Project A1.1

Cluster Action Plans

A short-term project to put in place local cluster action teams (LCATs) for each of our five local clusters (this is already being actioned). Each LCAT will then be required to develop a cluster action plan, setting out the agreed agenda for developing and growing that particular cluster (see above).



## A2 – Developing our local Clusters

Why is this important?

**6.16** The extensive research carried out for the CGS Board indicated that there are considerable growth opportunities across the five local clusters targeted. Having these target local clusters will help provide a focus for the activities of a whole range of bodies operating in St.Helens (whether inward investment, property development or business support) and allows the exploration of opportunities for inter-firm collaboration and networking. However, we certainly do not suggest that all firms who happen to fall outside the cluster boundaries lack growth potential or are not worthy of support.

What is happening already?

**6.17** There is already some specialist provision relevant to most of the local clusters (which is no surprise as this is in response to clear needs). For instance, St.Helens College is a partner in the recently launched North West Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in logistics, and there is strong training provision for the construction and glass industry and an advanced manufacturing centre at the Technology Campus. The College has facilities for environmental technology training and has foundation degree courses in science, and offers an HNC in the analytical testing field. Both St.Helens and Carmel Colleges offer a range of tourism sector training opportunities. However, this and other provision has not been assessed systematically to ensure it matches the needs of firms in the local clusters and whether there are additional opportunities.

**6.18** In tourism and leisure, there is already a tourism strategy for the Borough and, as

we have seen, a local business-led partnership. At a sub-regional level, The Mersey Partnership (TMP) leads on tourism promotion and marketing. TMP is also responsible for the development of the sub-regional target sectors (see Table 6.2 above), although work on many of these clusters is at an embryonic stage or has not started.

What will CGS deliver?

**6.19** The work by research consultancy ECOTEC provides an extremely useful framework and set of potential actions which need to be tested by the LCATs. Part of what the LCATs will deliver is an action agenda around common opportunities and challenges. For each local cluster these possible actions could revolve around:

- ▶ **Leadership** of the local cluster to take forward actions
- ▶ Opportunities to increase the rate of **innovation** and use of ICT
- ▶ Developing the **skills** and **expertise** needed (looking particularly at existing skills gaps and predicting future requirements within the cluster), working closely with the Lifelong Learning Partnership and key providers such as St.Helens College
- ▶ Specific collaboration and **networking** (both nationally and internationally)
- ▶ Developing **collaborative marketing** activities to improve access to markets
- ▶ Investment in **infrastructure** – including property and business incubation provision
- ▶ Sharing and exchanging **best practice**
- ▶ **Profile** raising

**6.20** Clearly, the rate of development and extent of opportunities will vary across the

## Project A2.1

Developing Our Local Clusters.

**A range of different development needs will be identified in the individual Local Cluster Action Plans (see above for likely scope of activities). Project A2.1 will comprise the delivery and implementation of these activities, over perhaps an initial five year period. This is more a series of projects than a single project – it will be difficult to describe the true scale and cost of activity until the cluster action plans have been completed.**

clusters. The CGS Board will review progress once the Cluster Action Plans have been developed and consider appropriate prioritisation and, potentially, sequencing of actions, especially in light of progress in the sub-regional and regional context. This review will be carried out by summer 2005 and will also consider the choice of existing and new local cluster priorities.

## A3 – Enhancing Business Competitiveness

Why is this important?

**6.21** The baseline has identified that there is evidence of a lack of competitiveness in many firms in St.Helens across a range of sectors, particularly in the rate of innovation, investment in skills and the extent to which they operate in national/international markets. Having said this, there are of course many world-beating firms in St.Helens, some part of major multinational groups, others independent and not all are in the target local clusters. Nevertheless, the evidence from research for the CGS indicates there

is a need to generally achieve a step-change in the competitiveness of firms in St.Helens. For instance, levels of innovation and investment in skills and recognition of future challenges appear from the business survey to be worryingly low.

What is happening already?

**6.22** The provision of business support is complex. There is a whole raft of activity delivered locally, sub-regionally, regionally or nationally, some generic, some highly specialist.<sup>23</sup> Firms in St.Helens are, at present at least, fortunate in that because of Objective 1 funding the rates of assistance for businesses in St.Helens are higher than most other parts of the region as is the range of support provided. We are also fortunate in St.Helens in having an excellent Chamber, which is widely known and used by local businesses and which has a well-developed infrastructure for the delivery of business support.

**6.23** At the sub-regional level, Greater Merseyside Enterprise (GME) is the current franchise holder for the Small Business Service (SBS) activities. Increasingly, NWDA



will take an active role in the management and co-ordination of SBS activities through the new regional Joint Pilot Initiative.

What will the CGS deliver?

**6.24** The research undertaken for the CGS has identified that the main gap is not in terms of what provision and support is available. The challenge is really connecting better this provision into businesses and business into this provision. We do not seek to add further to the potential confusion around the proliferation of support but instead our key projects are aimed at recruiting and connecting and sharing experience. This is an area of activity that the Chamber has carried out in the past, but has been unable to fund recently, so that their service has essentially become reactive.



### Project A3.1

#### Business Partners Team

The purpose of this project is to pilot the impact of an intensive period of proactively seeking out businesses, identifying their problems and channelling them to solutions. The project would consist of a team of four staff, based at St. Helens Chamber with different cluster specialisms, who would visit a quota of companies on a regular basis to make them fully aware of the opportunities for support (and to bring back to the Chamber/other providers key issues not met by current provision). The role of this team would not be to "sell" particular solutions or products to firms. It would work in partnership with the new, inward investment, aftercare post supported by The Mersey Partnership.

### Project A3.2

#### Business Buddies

Linked to Project 3 in Theme B1 but using local existing business people in St. Helens who have experienced different business issues and used different services to share experiences and help in an informal way through processes of change. The key to the success of this project will be to recruit and enthuse the business buddies. The Chamber would facilitate this project, building on its existing work with a mentoring programme, the Business Club and Professional Network.

## 7 Theme B: Achieving a Cultural Transformation

### Overall Objective

To substantially increase the participation rates of St. Helens' residents (especially younger residents), now and in the future, in enterprise, in investing in their skills and in accessing wider employment opportunities.

**7.1** The theme of cultural transformation gets to the heart of the key challenge for the CGS in St. Helens. Our aspiration is nothing less than a radical change in the attitude of residents towards considering new opportunities and raising aspirations.

**7.2** Much has already happened and much activity is already underway. However, we recognise that our objectives here cannot be achieved overnight and the work under this theme will be a long-term process.

**7.3** At this stage, we have set out projects under this theme that are deliverable and work largely with the grain of existing organisations. However, during the

consultation process the potential of a substantial on-the-ground higher education (HE) presence to help effect a significant cultural change in St. Helens was raised. The CGS Board shares the desire for a much larger HE presence in St. Helens, not least as experience elsewhere has shown how this can help contribute to cultural change and the development of the knowledge economy. As the CGS unfolds and St. Helens prospers, it is not inconceivable that an HE institution from a surrounding area would want to develop facilities in St. Helens, probably in conjunction with St. Helens College.

#### Action Areas

**7.4** The CGS has four action areas under this theme which are:

- ▶ B1 – Creating an Enterprise Hotspot
- ▶ B2 – Creating the Conditions for Enterprise
- ▶ B3 – Developing Learning for Life
- ▶ B4 – Plugging St. Helens into Wider Opportunities



## B1 – Creating an Enterprise Hotspot

### Why is this important?

**7.5** We have already identified the alarming enterprise gap in St.Helens where there could be up to 1,700 "missing" firms. There are a multitude of explanatory factors, but the most significant are the cultural factors driven by several generations of experience of working for very large (and benevolent) employers. The lack of family, friends and neighbour role models and encouragement mean that enterprise/entrepreneurial activity is far less common in St.Helens than in other areas.

**7.6** The relative lack of new firm start-ups is a serious challenge for several reasons. First, an increased number of small firms would clearly bring added employment and wealth to the Borough. An additional 1,300 to 1,700 small firms would bring a much larger number of jobs. Second, and more importantly, the flexibility and vibrancy of the economy, and so its ability to respond to opportunities and challenges, would be very much helped by a larger base of smaller firms. We want to see a bubble pool of enterprise activity in the Borough. Third, many of the economic opportunities around St.Helens (see B4 below) would be best captured through small firms (e.g. construction, servicing and supply opportunities).

### What is happening already?

**7.7** Overall, St.Helens is already fairly well served by supply-side support for those wishing to start new firms. St.Helens Chamber is funded (via SRB, SBS and Objective 1) to provide a package of training, advice and mentoring to new business starts (circa 140 per year). There are many Merseyside-wide programmes and organisations also offering support, such as the Merseyside Special Investment Fund. For

young people the Prince's Trust, which operates nationally, is well-established in the Borough. St.Helens has a close-knit professional and financial community which is able to offer business start-up advice. Indeed, NatWest Bank has a particularly large presence in St.Helens for business banking (in part due to historic links with Pilkington). Also, the recent increase in house prices in St.Helens has provided many residents with the potential collateral to borrow to start businesses either from banks or by remortgaging their property.

**7.8** In the area of encouraging enterprise and stimulating demand, there is also a significant degree of activity. Young Enterprise is active in St.Helens, holding annual competitions and awards in which several of the high schools and Carmel College participate and has ambitious plans for the expansion of its successful programmes. A number of St.Helens' schools have embraced the business enterprise agenda, for instance, St.Cuthbert's High School in Parr is aiming to have specialist college status in business enterprise. In the adjoining borough of Knowsley an "enterprise academy" is being established.

**7.9** Supported by the SBS's Phoenix Fund, the Chamber is supporting the creation of five viable social enterprises over a two-year period (including businesses in plastics recycling, computer recycling and horticulture). There is scope to increase the rate of creation of such enterprises.

### What will the CGS deliver?

**7.10** The added value of the CGS will give a much stronger impetus to the whole area of demand stimulation for enterprise from St.Helens' existing residents building on the good work already underway.

**7.11** We will be seeking to import

international best practice in enterprise development (particularly from the US). Success will be dependent on a concerted approach on a number of fronts and

working intensively with a range of different groups (particularly young people, but also older workers).

**7.12** The key projects are:

## Project B1.1

### Sowing the Seeds

A programme of co-ordinated activity across educational bodies to continue to introduce young people to the concept and potential of being your own boss and start to provide some practical training in the key tools and concepts (market analysis, business planning, etc.). Young people can of course also learn much about the world of enterprise via working for small firms. The programme would need to be agreed with individual schools/colleges and have their buy-in and would focus on:

- ▶ Introducing more elements of enterprise into the 14-19 academic and vocational curricula (which are being revised nationally and being reviewed in St.Helens by a group led by the Learning Partnership) and could link to the new citizenship elements of the curriculum. St.Helens College is currently reviewing the vocational curriculum for its 16-19 year old students to see whether there is scope to introduce a more explicit enterprise element.
- ▶ A more intensive programme of marketing enterprise introducing relevant role models (via schools, colleges, youth clubs, etc.) of young people who have set-up their own firms (local people and former residents of St.Helens), expanding the excellent work of enterprise projects

in schools led by Young Enterprise and raising the profile via a St.Helens Young Business Challenge<sup>24</sup> for all young people under the age of 25. This would involve a substantial expansion of YE activity across all schools in St.Helens including the Primary Programme, Project Business, Company Programme, Team Programme and Enterprise master classes.

- ▶ Specifically promoting enterprise to young girls/women, a key issue given the lack of local female role models and the traditional male culture of St.Helens, by a series of workshops, counselling and support for a young female entrepreneur of the year award.

These projects will need to be worked up with all the key parties involved to ensure they build on and add value to activity already taking place in St.Helens. The projects' intention is simply to introduce the idea of self-employment and starting a firm as a serious option for young people. We do not expect it to have an immediate effect on business start-up rates in St.Helens. The aim would be to ensure that by the time every student has left full-time education they have participated in a positive learning experience related to enterprise. To help develop the project and

### Project B1.1 continued

programme the CGS intends to set-up and co-ordinate an Enterprise Commission for St.Helens, taking advice from those involved in support and past and present entrepreneurs. This

Commission would be charged with the task of integrating, targeting and showing where enterprise-supporting activities could be enhanced. It could be chaired by a CGS Board member.

### Project B1.2

**Graduate Enterprise Greenhouse**  
Working with existing firms and residents will inevitably be a slow process. We also want to deliver an accelerated approach of injecting new businesses via a special pilot programme aimed at graduates looking to start new businesses. The project idea is to offer incubator-style living/working facilities which provide housing and serviced work accommodation all rolled into one (with state-of-the-art built-in IT connections) and with the support of St.Helens Chamber on tap. The target market is graduates from universities in the North West and former St.Helens school and college students. To make St.Helens as a location really attractive (where at present it really struggles to compete with the big cities), we would like to pilot a student debt write-off

scheme (which may need Treasury approval, depending on how we developed the scheme) for those former students who set-up businesses and live in St.Helens. The aim is to offer 20-30 live/work rental units. As part of this project, we will work with local universities to encourage the take-up of graduate placements in firms in St.Helens, working with the Business Bridge and the Graduate into Employment projects led by Merseyside's higher education institutions.

The first step for this project is a detailed demand assessment and feasibility study that would also identify potential project champions.

### Project B1.3

#### Business Mentoring

The success of many projects requires the active involvement of business people. St.Helens Chamber has found in the past that recruiting business mentors (for small existing and start-up firms) is difficult. Two full-time mentors are currently employed by the Chamber. Through CGS, we aim to

recruit a pool of (say 300 or 10% of the exiting business stock) enterprise ambassadors, with a support team housed in the Chamber, to provide hands-on, informal mentoring to early start-ups and to be twinned with all the secondary schools and colleges in the Borough. Would be linked to project A3.2.

### Project B1.4

#### Business 'Red Tape' Busting Package

Building on and enhancing the service already offered by the Chamber to provide a practical advice orientated package dealing with "red tape", environmental regulations, employment considerations and, in particular, IT issues. As well as providing advice on how to tackle these issues, it also offers

a two year initial support package at a subsidised cost to handle all these issues for the starter firm, aimed at c. 100 new firms a year. The project would build on the existing Enterprise Kick Start programme run by St.Helens Chamber (which supports 100 new firms per annum).

### Project B1.5

#### Developing Social

#### Enterprise Opportunities

Intermediate (or semi-commercial) enterprise activity in social/community businesses can act as an extremely useful mechanism for engendering greater interest in self-employment. We want to put in place additional resources to ensure that in St.Helens

we offer first class opportunities for the development of social enterprise opportunities and more than double the rate of creation. Currently five new enterprises are in the process of being helped by a team at St.Helens Chamber in what is an intensive process. A further ten over a two year period are proposed.

## Project B1.6

### General Enterprise Awareness

Whilst we want to ensure the spirit of enterprise is embedded firmly within our younger generations, we must not overlook the huge potential of greater enterprise activity amongst older age cohorts. The CGS proposes to put in

place bespoke (proactive) awareness-raising campaigns for older people in the Borough (this will be ever more important given current issues in the pensions systems that may require many older people to continue earning beyond official retirement age).

**7.13** Another possible longer term project would be to develop through St.Helens College and the Chamber an Entrepreneurship School, with training, access to business start-up advice and material (via the Internet) that would serve St.Helens and a wider catchment.

## B2 – Creating the Conditions for Enterprise

### Why is this important?

**7.14** Although we have indicated that the key enterprise issue in St.Helens is on the demand side, there are still some significant supply-side constraints. The property study carried out for the St.Helens CGS identified the lack of small, better quality industrial and office accommodation in the Borough, including workspace/starter units and grow on space. This property issue is one factor impeding new starts and, more importantly, will make it more difficult to attract those from outside St.Helens to relocate a growing business into the Borough. There is national evidence that property linked to business support (incubation space) is an effective means of supporting the growth of small firms.

### What is happening already?

**7.15** At present St.Helens has a relatively large managed workspace centre at Bold

Business Centre (a former colliery site), where there are 48 units and a total of 35,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of space with central reception which is in perennial high demand. We benefit from the Signature House Business Centre in Rainhill and the Catapult Centre (successful managed start-up space for a range of creative industries). There are also some small office units at the Technology Campus and the NWDA is considering investing in an expansion of this accommodation.

### What will the CGS deliver?

**7.16** Three main projects are proposed here, building in many cases on existing plans.

## Project B2.1

### Catapult Too.

The creation of serviced office/incubator space in the town centre (in the George Street Quarter), including basic units to allow flexibility to provide office or workshop accommodation. The business accommodation space will create 21 units ranging from 10m<sup>2</sup> – 65m<sup>2</sup> with most units being 10-20m<sup>2</sup> and a total area of c. 600m<sup>2</sup> plus reception. Catapult Too would be managed by St.Helens Council.

## Project B2.2

### Managed Workspace

The creation of second and third managed workspace centres of around 2,000m<sup>2</sup>, replicating the successful Bold Business Centre, one is planned at Centrix Court in Newton, and the other possibly in the Sutton Fold Industrial Estate. Workspace would provide a degree of support including reception. At Centrix Court, the centre is being built by Langtree Developments. At the other development, it is envisaged at this stage that NWDA will develop and build the site with the workshops to be managed by St.Helens Council.

## Project B2.3

### Growing on Space

Linked to three of the local target clusters (building materials technology, technical testing and R&D and furniture and furnishings), grow on space for SMEs developed via spinouts or inward investment into St.Helens. There are two likely locations for this development: (1) The Lea Green West site, which could comprise around 25,000m<sup>2</sup> of office/light industrial space. However, as the site is greenfield it is unlikely that the development work would start in the near future, and (2) the former colliery site at Old Boston (in Haydock), a 5ha site able to accommodate units of varying sizes where some 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of new/refurbished business space is proposed on this brownfield site.

**7.17** These proposals are in addition to the idea of the graduate enterprise greenhouse.

## B3 – Developing Learning for Life

### Why is this important?

**7.18** There are two particular issues here of concern to the CGS.

- ▶ First, the issue of better preparing young people to enter the world of work aged 16 or 17 (as opposed to the cohort who go on to higher education) is a significant concern amongst employers in St.Helens. The key gap here is the quality of key skills held by new entrants to the labour force. Indeed, gaps in key skills were the main area of skills need identified by recent skills surveys.
- ▶ Second, there is the issue of a lack of appetite for lifelong learning, particularly in the established workforce – a historical legacy from the large employer culture of the town.

**7.19** There are other important strands of lifelong learning, such as the poor record on basic skills (numeracy and literacy) in St.Helens and serious employability issues affecting those not in work. These are not tackled in any detail by the CGS, but we



recognise their importance if the benefits of growth in St.Helens are to be spread widely. There is a need to join up approaches and ensure that skills development work, for instance, led by the local clusters, looks at how the skills development escalator (from basic skills through to NVQ Level 3 skills and beyond) can work in St.Helens.

#### What is happening already?

**7.20** There is an Education Business Partnership (EBP) in St.Helens managed by the Connexions service and various other bodies involved in working with young people to prepare them for the world of work.<sup>25</sup> A range of activity takes place including support for mock interviews, workshops for school students on employability issues/job search and a relaunched Compact scheme (focussing on agreeing goals for students). The Greater Merseyside LSC is currently in the throes of a Merseyside-wide review of EBP support and is considering future delivery and funding needs, which are likely to have significant implications for St.Helens.

**7.21** There is also a mass of training and learning activity post-16. St.Helens College has three campuses, 750 full-time equivalent staff and 20,000 students (full and part-time) and a wide range of provision

including Centres of Excellence in Purchase and Supply, Business and IT, Logistics (part of a wider North West consortium) and Building Services (with Liverpool Community College). St.Helens Chamber contracts with 400 Modern Apprenticeships per annum. Carmel College is also active in this field. There are many training providers active in St.Helens, including Waterside Training (for engineering). St.Helens College has a series of local learning centres and is very active in supporting on-line learning (through links to Learn Direct), as well as providing training programmes at employers' premises. We also benefit from the Starting Point facility, which provides a range of advice and guidance services around learning and employment.

**7.22** There has been a recent St.Helens Area Wide Inspection of 16-19 Provision by Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate and an Action Plan response has been prepared. The Greater Merseyside LSC has earmarked a fund of £3 million to help implement the actions.

**7.23** St.Helens has a well-developed Lifelong Learning Partnership, with whom the CGS Board needs to work closely in taking forward elements of the learning agenda. Under this Partnership there are separate groups on Workforce

Development and on the 14-19 Strategy which are responding to the many changes announced by government in the recent Green Paper, especially on matters relating to curriculum development.

**7.24** Although there is no higher education presence or higher/management skills centre in St.Helens, both colleges have strong links to regional universities (Liverpool John Moores and Salford Universities) and offer foundation elements of a wide range of degree courses. New business and IT training facilities are being

developed by St.Helens College at their town centre site in the listed former Beecham Building. There is a further opportunity with the roll out by the Learning and Skills Council, Greater Merseyside, of the new £10m Skill Works fund to support employer training<sup>26</sup>

#### What will the CGS deliver?

**7.25** The role of the CGS should be to help expand and extend provision and, in particular, encourage greater demand. The suggested projects are:

#### Project B3.1

##### EBP Plus Project

This picks up and substantially extends existing EBP activity in St.Helens (and is linked to project B4.1 below), including developing a series of formal employer/school student Compacts with employers in and outside St.Helens.

#### Project B3.2

##### Invest in Yourself Campaign

Aimed at those in work, a collective case study/role model led local campaign to increase participation in lifelong learning. Including recruiting a series of employers/employees who could demonstrate that investment in learning means more money as well as greater long-term job security. (There are a number of national campaigns underway but these generally fail to "connect" with local circumstances.)

#### Project B3.3

##### SME Awareness-Raising

There is an excellent opportunity for local businesses to access support for training via the recently launched Skill Works fund – and a range of other incentives (some already in place, others in the pipeline). The key challenge is to ensure maximum take-up by St.Helens' firms. St.Helens College and St.Helens Chamber have both won contracts to deliver Skill Works.

#### Project B3.4

##### Curriculum Development for Local Clusters

The idea of this project is to use the opportunities in the five target local clusters and work jointly with employers, training providers and the 14-19 Strategy Group to develop and roll out new learning and curriculum opportunities for young people linked to the local clusters.



**7.26** Although not a CGS project as such, there is an immediate opportunity with the new St.Helens College management and business training facility (to be opened in the Beechams Building) to use this as a chance to brand it as a centre for business training and development.

#### B4 – Plugging into Wider Opportunities

**Why is this important?**

**7.27** The employment opportunities locally in St.Helens may not necessarily match the skills and aspirations of those living in the Borough. Yet at the same time St.Helens is adjacent to a key regional growth centre (Warrington), a specific, potential economic hotspot (Omega) and a relatively short journey time from the rapidly growing city centres of Liverpool and Manchester (and the two airports). Traditionally, those in lower skilled jobs and young people have not been prepared to consider employment options outside St.Helens (in contrast to those living in some surrounding areas)<sup>27</sup>.

**7.28** The scale of job opportunities surrounding St.Helens is much greater than those in the Borough. For instance the potential scale of additional employment

around the Omega development (12,000 to 15,000 jobs)<sup>28</sup> which is just outside St.Helens, equates to 25% of all current employment based in St.Helens and up to a third of private-sector employment. Given the particularly tight labour market conditions in Warrington, there will be a real demand from new operators on Omega for labour from surrounding areas. The likely growth in tourism-related opportunities linked to Liverpool's successful Capital of Culture 2008 designation could also be a significant employment opportunity.

**7.29** There are two main reasons for the relative lack of wider job search. For young people access to transport is a key issue. Although very accessible by car, most parts of Warrington (especially the outer business parks and industrial estates where a lot of employment growth has taken place) are difficult to access by bus (and, as it stands, this will be true for the Omega site). Similarly public transport links to Manchester are poor, although they are considerably better into the centre of Liverpool. However, more widely, there is a noticeable lack of interest in and awareness

of wider opportunities – a cultural legacy of the past.

**What is happening already?**

**7.30** There is a Skills Challenge Group set up to consider the future skills and employment needs of the Omega site. St.Helens College has entered into initial discussions with Warrington Collegiate Institute with a view to seeing what scope there is for joint provision, potentially linked

to opportunities at Omega. There are also a number of (generic) transport initiatives in Merseyside involving Merseytravel to help people access jobs (e.g. Jobs Links and SHIFT which provide dedicated transport to new jobs for a time-limited period). What will the CGS deliver?

**7.31** There are four main projects proposed (all of which relate to the developments at Omega<sup>29</sup> and other identifiable opportunities outside St.Helens).

#### Project B4.1

**School/Omega Links**

A schools and college-based awareness-raising programme for young people about the likely future opportunities at Omega, especially those accessible through a work-based learning route and the type of occupational areas (especially around IT skills).

#### Project B4.2

**Rising to the Omega Skills Challenge**

The development, with training providers in surrounding areas especially Warrington, of an Omega skills development programme linked to the identified skills (the Skills Challenge Group is currently in the process of trying to identify these skills). Although many will be graduate level, others are likely to require NVQ 3 level qualifications in IT and technician work.

#### Project B4.3

**Omega and Wider Bus Links**

Far better bus transport links from all parts of St.Helens onto the Omega site and to other out-of-town industrial estates/business parks in Warrington are needed. This will require joint working between Merseytravel, St.Helens Council, Warrington Council and transport agencies/operators in Warrington. The two Councils and Merseytravel are already looking at ways of strengthening transport links between the two areas.

#### Project B4.4

**Omega and Other Supply Chain Opportunities**

A series of supply chain awareness raising seminars for SMEs based in St.Helens about the opportunities at Omega, the expanding NHS, Liverpool's Capital of Culture status and other developments in the region.



## 8 Theme C: Achieving a Physical Transformation

### Project A2.1

To improve the physical appearance of St.Helens and our amenities to make St.Helens a much more attractive location for residents, for investors and for visitors.

**8.1** St.Helens is not just a place for work where businesses are located and business activity is carried out. St.Helens is a place where people live, including many of those who own and manage businesses here. All businesses have a stake in the creation of a much more attractive and liveable St.Helens (see Figure 8.1).

**8.2** In particular, the CGS Board sees improving the liveability of St.Helens as an absolutely essential element of taking forward the cultural transformation of the area by encouraging the development of new forms of housing and attracting a range of new residents.

**8.3** Our physical transformation of the Borough will, where possible, embrace the use of glass in all design and construction. We are attracted by the obvious

connection to our industrial past (and present), combined with the innovative and novel ways in which glass can be used in both buildings and in the public realm.

### Key Issues and Opportunities

#### Action Areas

**8.4** The CGS has five proposed action areas under Theme C - Achieving a Physical Transformation:

- ▶ C1 – A Revitalised Town Centre
- ▶ C2 – Becoming a Leisure Borough for the Region
- ▶ C3 – Creating Public Spaces and Inviting Gateways
- ▶ C4 – Becoming a Residential Area of Choice
- ▶ C5 – A Connected St.Helens

**8.5** Within these action areas are a number of key projects that will radically transform St.Helens' living environment and business image. We want to become an area whose physical image is modern/contemporary, clean, exciting and efficient.

**8.6** Some of the major projects within this theme include:



- ▶ Radically developing St.Helens town centre (into a distinctive town centre of five quarters)
- ▶ Developing the 'Town in the Forest' – with green arrival routes of quality all the way into the town centre
- ▶ Developing key nodes of leisure and sporting facilities – a unique package making St.Helens a 21st century regional playground (both indoor and outdoor) including the "Kew of the North" concept

### C1 – A Revitalised Town Centre

Why is this important?

**8.7** The town centre is the heart of St.Helens. It defines the sort of place we are and our aspirations. The development of the town centre is an absolutely key element of the CGS for St.Helens. Although much has been done to improve the town centre (for instance, the growth of the night-time economy has been very successful), it needs to become a more dynamic, vibrant place. The challenges it

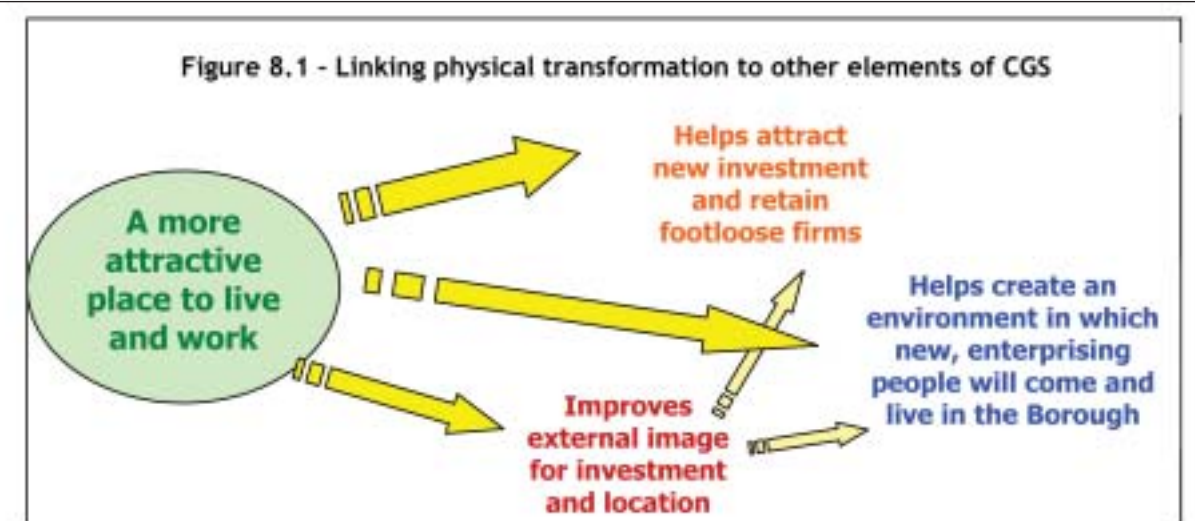
faces are:

- ▶ Transforming the range of attractions and broadening and enhancing the retail offer, which will pull visitors and shoppers from beyond the local area and so stretch the existing catchment area.<sup>30</sup>
- ▶ Concentrating activity within certain quarters and improving the sense of navigation around the town centre
- ▶ Improving the uncared for feel (for instance, in the car parks and in public spaces)

What is happening already?

- 8.8** Numerous investments have taken place in St.Helens town centre in the last five years or so.
- ▶ The George Street Quarter development. Condensed collection of historic buildings with recent designation as a Conservation Area. SRB-supported regeneration activity, co-ordinated by Ravenhead Renaissance, is already beginning to transform this area
  - ▶ Recent investment in the shopping

Figure 8.1 - Linking physical transformation to other elements of CGS



centres and associated facilities (car parks)

- ▶ A range of environmental improvements
- ▶ Production of a range of strategic documents and frameworks to guide development activity:
  - Eastside Masterplan – a detailed masterplan and implementation programme for the Eastside area of St.Helens on the fringes of the town centre
  - Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan

What will the CGS deliver?

**8.9** The vision of the CGS is to develop a revitalised town centre. This requires co-ordinated effort across a wide range of investments and effective day-to-day management activity. There are a range of linked projects which we need to take forward (this is not a definitive list, but simply those which have emerged through the CGS preparation process as priorities):

### Project CI.1

#### Canal Reinstatement/Reopening

A key project is the reinstatement and extension/enlargement of the existing canal through the Eastside area of the town centre, with the creation of a canal basin. This initiative, which could have various component parts, will act as a focal point for further development (predominantly residential) activity in this part of the town centre.

### Project CI.2

#### New Town Centre Housing

Linked to the canal reinstatement would be an ambitious programme of town centre residential development (as part of a mixed use scheme) aimed at young people, some retirement homes and an element of key worker housing. This would have strong links to the graduate greenhouse project, which could be located near the Technology Campus. Some town centre fringe opportunities for new residential communities could be (a) the Pocket Nook/Hollybank area and (b) the former British Lead Mill site.

### Project CI.3

#### Groundwork eco centre

Groundwork is considering the feasibility of an innovative and iconic eco-centre in the town, or on the edge of the town centre. The organisation is seeking to relocate to the ecologically sound building which is also to offer office space for SME businesses, as well as education/visitor facilities. The building will seek to use environmentally friendly energy generated on-site and demonstrate energy and environmental conservation which is to be designed in to the building. The building will also link to other tourist facilities in the area and utilise glass technology in the designs of the building. A feasibility study has just been commissioned. The centre and project could be called Planet St.Helens.

### Project CI.4

#### Church Square

Detailed proposals are currently being worked up for Church Square and the surrounding streets. Our aspiration is to realise the true potential of this area – and to ensure it contributes fully to our overarching goal of revitalising St.Helens town centre.

### Project CI.5

#### Car Park Improvement Programme

A co-ordinated programme to improve the quality and environment of the town centre's car parks – where many visitors get their first impression of the area.

### Project CI.6

#### Signage and Navigation Improvements

Develop consistent signage with a recognisable St.Helens brand (linked to Theme D) and improve pedestrian links into the town centre.

### Project CI.7

#### Development of Markets and Niche Retail

Two related projects: (1) Retail incubator. The indoor market area has considerable potential and part of it could become a retail incubator for craft-based businesses. (2) New market. A further idea is that of developing a large-scale weekend/Sunday antique and craft market.

**8.10** It is suggested that to provide the strategic context for these developments a new overarching Town Centre Development Framework is produced (to refresh and 'raise the game' of the developing Town Centre Strategy which is being considered by the Town Centre Partnership). At this stage, the aspiration of the CGS Board is to develop St.Helens town centre as a distinctive town of five quarters.

- ▶ Cultural – built around the George Street area where much is already happening
- ▶ Business - particularly business, professional and financial services as well as education and learning services in the area between the Town Hall and the core retail area
- ▶ Day and night leisure
- ▶ Retail – creating new niche retailing opportunities and exploring the scope to enhance retail capacity in the town as other changes take place
- ▶ Residential – particularly within the Eastside area where the canal wraps around the town centre and where a detailed masterplan has already been developed (see above)



**8.11** To take this forward will require the delivery of a variety of projects in a co-ordinated way, a dedicated and well-resourced town centre management team and significant core funding.

## C2 – Becoming A Leisure Borough for the Region

Why is this important?

**8.12** One of St.Helens' assets is the centrality of its location and excellent access from the highways network. It starts therefore on the front grid as a potential leisure destination for many parts of the region. However, at present, there is relatively little by way of product to visit. Existing facilities that are in place are not well-linked together and do not constitute a full day out destination. We see the development of St.Helens as a key regional sporting and leisure destination as a logical part of the CGS for several reasons. It is one of our target local clusters because of the following:

- Our central location and availability of sites for development



- Existing attractions which can build upon a strong sporting tradition with the St.Helens Rugby League Club and Haydock Park Racecourse
- Under-utilised assets such as Sherdley Park and Carr Mill Dam

**8.13** Visitor attractions in surrounding areas have established themselves as regional attractions (e.g. Gullivers World in Warrington, Knowsley Safari Park, Wigan Pier, etc.), building on their accessibility. St.Helens is as accessible, if not more so, than these locations.

**8.14** The development of St.Helens as a leisure Borough for the region also meets several objectives simultaneously.

- It would provide enhanced facilities for the existing residents and workers in St.Helens.
- It would increase and enhance the range of employment opportunities in the town (many of which would be in the town centre and so highly accessible).
- Spin-off facilities, such as hotels and restaurants, would also come, increasing the range of facilities for local businesses.
- It would greatly increase the liveability of St.Helens, particularly, but not exclusively, around the town centre.
- It would enhance the external image and help put us on the map.

**8.15** The proposals for St.Helens are entirely complementary and consistent with the recently published North West and Merseyside Tourism Strategies. Our intention at this stage is not for St.Helens to develop as a brand and destination for visitors from outside the North West. Rather, it is to develop as a location largely for the leisure day trip market for residents

from the region. For visitors from outside the region, in the parlance of the regional tourism strategy, it will become a "Slipstream Brand". Many of our proposals for St.Helens support the target themes of the regional tourism strategy, including a "sports Mecca", "powerhouse" (industrial heritage) and "family fun".  
What is happening already?

**8.16** The main development in recent years has been the launch of the World of Glass visitor attraction (incorporating a new Tourist Information Centre). A flagship town centre attraction, the centre explores glass-making throughout history and has a range of interactive features.

**8.17** Other recent/pipeline developments within the Borough include:

- Growing reputation of the Citadel Arts Centre (based on recent refurbishment work). A cultural beacon in the North West – a live arts venue exploring genres such as blues, folk, stand up comedy, children's theatre and arts and disability performance. Recently voted one of the top ten jazz/blues venues in the UK.
- Current refurbishment of the St.Helens Theatre Royal
- Major feasibility study on future uses for Sherdley Park
- Feasibility assessment of Carr Mill Dam

into its possible role as a sub-regional water/countryside sports venue

- Further feasibility works on the development of the St.Helens Transport Museum

**8.18** Attempts so far to provide a high quality 21st century stadium for St.Helens RLFC and other spectator sports have not been successful, and the current rugby league ground at Knowsley Road is widely acknowledged as being of poor quality, lacking in facilities and presenting a very poor impression to visiting fans.

**8.19** The Club is actively pursuing the possibility of developing a new stadium either on the Knowsley Road site or in a new location. Should a development opportunity arise in a new location which could include facilities for the Club, the CGS Board will make every effort to assist in securing a satisfactory outcome.

What will the CGS deliver?

**8.20** As part of the CGS development process, a number of additional new projects have been identified. Successful implementation of these initiatives, together with existing attractions, will move us towards our aspiration of becoming a 21st century regional leisure playground.



### Project C1.3

#### Destination St.Helens – a Multipurpose Sports/Leisure Village

Building on St.Helens' strategic location, the CGS Board is excited by the prospect of developing an entirely new regional visitor destination in St.Helens, built on commercial foundations. The concept is to provide a concentration of linked attractions, providing opportunities for the leisure experience in its fullest sense. The development, which would be unique to the region, would have at its heart a multipurpose sports/leisure complex with a range of activities under one roof (including, potentially, skiing, water activities, rock climbing, skateboarding, indoor football and ice skating). The sports/leisure village concept would include a

significant element of related retail to help pay for the development, and could extend to spectator venues for music and a wide range of sports.

There is also an opportunity to develop much needed conference facilities in and around the attractions. Ideally we would want the village to be accessible from the town centre and/or other parts of the Borough's leisure offer. The development would really put St.Helens on the map and could attract upwards of half-a-million visitors a year. St.Helens Council is considering a range of potential sites in the Borough. Any development would need to resolve planning, transport and funding issues. It could help provide enabling funding for wider community leisure facilities.

### Project C2.2

#### Kew of the North

A major project idea. The concept would be for a large-scale, horticulture-based visitor attraction. Our ambition would be a project on the scale of the historic Kew Botanical Gardens at Richmond in Surrey, or akin to the Eden Project in Cornwall. The scheme would centre on a huge glass arboretum. There is already momentum on this project idea via Professor Graham Ashworth and early discussions have taken place with experts in the fields of horticulture and horticulture-based visitor attractions.

### Project C2.3

#### Sherdley Park Outdoor Events Arena

This project (building on the existing feasibility study) would involve substantially improving the basic infrastructure of Sherdley Park and marketing. It would also entail introducing a commercial management company for the Park and its events. Our aspiration is for Sherdley Park to host a range of high profile outdoor events (trade shows, music concerts, etc.) and to rival Tatton Park near Knutsford and Roundhay Park in Leeds.

### Project C2.4

#### Canal Linkages

A longer-term project (subject to securing funding) would be the complete connection of the Sankey Canal to the national canal network. This would involve opening up linkages to both the Leeds-Liverpool Canal and the Mersey. The overall cost of the scheme could be in the order of £100m (although large parts would come from contributions from landowners on adjacent sites).

### Project C2.5

#### Enhancing the Outdoor Leisure Offer

This project would involve development of further outdoor leisure facilities at Carr Mill Dam (water sports) and, potentially, Sankey Valley Park, as well as other locations in the Borough, and developing a package of joint ticketing approaches for these attractions.

### C3 – Creating Public Spaces and Inviting Gateways

Why is this important?

**8.21** Great strides have been made in recent years in improving the general public realm within St.Helens. Public spaces have been improved, derelict sites brought back into use (or at least made to look more attractive), and work is ongoing in improving the key arrival gateways into the Borough.

**8.22** The baseline report and work by Urbed for the CGS have identified the challenge of continual improvement required to position St.Helens as not just as good as but considerably better than its competitors in terms of the quality of the public realm. The general quality of the environment will be a key factor in our success in attracting various forms of inward investment (not just new businesses but also whole new cohorts of residents). What is happening already?

**8.23** Considerable work has been undertaken in recent years, much of it under the auspices of the successful Mersey Forest community forest initiative. This includes:

- ▶ Initial Southern Corridor environmental improvement works, funded via SRBI, which included a range of treatments to roundabouts/verges along this key route into the Borough
- ▶ Wasteland to Woodland schemes
- ▶ Development of Community Forests in Bold and Sutton on former coal mining sites
- ▶ The work of Groundwork in St.Helens (more generally)



**8.24** As noted in the next section, work is already progressing in terms of improving the environment on the main entry corridors into St.Helens (M62 Linkway and the A580). A wide ranging strategy for radically improving the face of the M62 Linkway has been prepared by Gillespies for St.Helens Council. In addition, conversion of the A580 into a tree-lined boulevard is proposed.

**What will the CGS deliver?**

**8.25** A range of project ideas are proposed under the CGS (some of which already have a degree of momentum via other sources):

**8.26** The CGS Board wishes to explore mechanisms to improve the (largely) negative perceptions given by our pre-1919 housing stock. It is likely that efforts will include both selective demolition and innovative ways of overhauling the built environment in and around the pre-1919 stock – new Home Zones, etc.

### Project C3.1

#### Town in the Forest

This wide ranging scheme would involve the implementation (and possible extension) of both the Linkway environmental improvement strategy and the A580 tree-lined boulevard. The overarching concept would be that St.Helens town centre, in 10-15 years time, would be at the heart of a maturing series of linear forests, connecting with the newly-developed community woodland areas.

### Project C3.2

#### St.Helens Central Station

Following the recent upgrade of St.Helens Junction Station (SRB funded), major improvements are now programmed for the design and rebuild of St.Helens Central Station. Implementation of these works will enhance a critical gateway to the town centre and is a key priority for the CGS Board.

### Project C3.3

#### Grot Spot Audit

A quick win project to identify 50 worst 'grot spots' in the Borough and to propose a series of remedial measures to cover them up or at least alleviate the negative perceptions (e.g. temporary wraparound hoardings).

### Project C3.4

#### Projection Art and Illuminating St.Helens

A visionary lighting strategy for St.Helens could completely overhaul the night-time image of the town centre. The strategy would involve a range of architectural lighting measures to emphasise landmark buildings and features. There are large industrial structures in St.Helens (chimneys, etc.) which are likely to be permanent parts of the landscape. We wish to explore the prospect of using some of these structures for imaginative lighting schemes and, potentially, visual projects or wraparound installations.

### C4 – Becoming a Residential Area of Choice

**Why is this important?**

**8.27** A key aspiration of the CGS is the further diversification of the residential base of the Borough. We will be seeking to broaden the residential offer and attract new residents who will bring with them:

- ▶ Additional spending power
- ▶ Fresh perspectives, aspirations and demands
- ▶ A new wave of entrepreneurial activity

**What is happening already?**

**8.28** There are several major proposals already underway or being planned to broaden the residential base of St.Helens:

- ▶ *Lea Green Urban Village*. This scheme is being promoted by the private sector to create a major new residential scheme. A masterplan has recently been submitted to St.Helens Council and could involve in the region of 300-400 new residential units.
- ▶ *Worsley Brow Urban Village*. The masterplan for this scheme is currently being prepared by BDP (Building Design Partnership). This exciting new proposal has the potential to generate up to 1,200 new residential units.
- ▶ *Vulcan Urban Village*. As with the Lea Green site, this scheme is being promoted by the private sector (St.Modwen and Ashtenne). The scheme masterplan is currently being prepared and it is envisaged that the project could involve the creation of some 500-600 new residential units, together with enhanced local sports facilities.
- ▶ *Rainhill Retirement Village*. Proposed £17m development scheme (with construction just commenced). The proposed village will offer 200 self-contained flats and

bungalows to people aged over 55.

Communal facilities will include a health and fitness gym, jacuzzi, arts and crafts room, technology suite, restaurant and bar. Purchase, part-purchase and rental options will be available.

**What will the CGS deliver?**

**8.29** There are a wide variety of housing needs across St.Helens, including the need for good quality, affordable social housing, which is accepted as an important issue by this Strategy. The actions supported elsewhere in the CGS will help attract new groups of residents to St.Helens (through new leisure and cultural attractions and growing employment in attractive, knowledge-based industries). The continued improvement of our schools at primary and secondary level is as important as new housing to encourage the inward-migration and retention of mobile workers with children.

**8.30** The focus of the Action Area C4 is on meeting the particular accommodation requirements of these groups.



### Project C4.1

#### Implementing the Urban Villages

**A key priority for the CGS Board is to see the successful implementation of all three new Urban Village proposals. Collectively these could deliver in the region of 2,000 additional residential units in an attractive environment. Schemes of this nature will enable us to both retain and attract higher earning, aspirational residents.**

**8.31** A key aspiration of the CGS Board is that all partners place a premium on ensuring the provision of a significant level of high quality, new build housing for higher earning families. We wish to see the Council working in a proactive way to continue to help continue to diversify the housing mix of the Borough and attract new entrepreneurs. One way forward could be to encourage the development of a range of high quality housing via the use of agreed masterplans for the larger housing sites in the Borough.

### C5 – A Connected St Helens

#### Why is this important?

**8.32** One of the strengths of St.Helens is the connectivity to the regional motorway network, with quick and easy access to the principal east-west (M62) and north-south (M6) routes. However, St.Helens lacks quick and efficient passenger connectivity to the regional and national rail infrastructure, although there are stations in adjacent areas on the West Coast Main Line (Warrington Bank Quay and Wigan North Western).

**8.33** Relatively poor passenger rail links have served to deter some investment locally and will, in the future, certainly

hamper our attempts to promote St.Helens as a modern, vibrant and well-connected Borough. For a number of our target business growth areas (tourism and leisure, technical testing and R&D, and building materials technology) quick and efficient rail linkages will be a key locational requirement, enabling staff, clients, and collaborators easy access to and from the workplace or venue.

**8.34** Improved rail connectivity to the main urban centres in the North West region, and more importantly to the West Coast Mainline, will be important as we strive to grow and strengthen the economy of St.Helens. It will enable quicker movement of people, products and raw materials to and from the workplace.

**8.35** In addition, we can make more of our proximity to the regional airports at Manchester and Liverpool. Road links are reasonably rapid and efficient, although peak hour congestion can make a big impact on journey times. Rail links could, however, be improved significantly, especially to Manchester Airport.

**8.36** This Action Area will need excellent lobbying and leadership for successful implementation. Many of the key decisions relating to improved rail infrastructure/services within the Borough will be taken externally, and any gains will only emerge from a sustained attempt from a range of partners to make the case for St.Helens.

**8.37** Plans for an improved road link north of the town centre (the Blackbrook Bypass) towards the A580 are progressing well.

**8.38** The CGS Board will also seek to ensure that firms, residents, communities and public sector institutions have first class ICT connectivity. For example, broadband (always on) communications between

companies, suppliers and clients offer a range of opportunities to streamline supply and distribution chains. It can also enable SMEs to collaborate more efficiently on the design and control of manufacturing processes. Similar benefits will accrue to individual residents, community groups and public sector institutions across the Borough.

#### What is happening already?

**8.39** St.Helens Council has, in the past,

### Project C5.1

#### Rail Shuttle Link Feasibility Study

The project would involve a fresh re-assessment of the feasibility of (a) an improved (i.e. more co-ordinated timetabling, better marketed) shuttle rail service between St.Helens Central and Wigan North Western (and hence, the West Coast Main Line) and (b) the more substantive challenge of linking St.Helens Central to St.Helens Junction via a new rail link (and hence frequent, direct services from St.Helens town centre to Manchester). Merseytravel has indicated that this could be considered as part of the next Local Transport Plan for Merseyside. Merseytravel and St.Helens Council would also seek to lobby rail networks to ensure more co-ordinated timetabling and a better marketed rail service between St.Helens Central, Wigan North Western and Manchester.

commissioned a number of studies looking at improved rail connectivity from St.Helens. In particular, the reopening of a link between St.Helens Central station and St.Helens Junction has been the subject of numerous investigations over many years. There are special bus services supported by Merseytravel related to tourism and leisure activity (the Saintsbus and Haydock Park Xpress) linked to the central railway station.

#### What will the CGS deliver?

### Project C5.2

#### Haydock Helipad

A feasibility study to look at the viability of commercial helicopter services to/from St.Helens. The study would look at both the extended use of the existing Haydock racecourse helipad for commercial use, and also other potential sites for a similar concept. The study would need to examine the market demand for commercial/corporate helicopter usage.

### Project C5.3

#### Broadband Lobbying Work

A low cost (or even zero cost) project which would see the CGS Board championing the issue of broadband connectivity (and crucially, usage) across the Borough. The CGS Board could adopt a scrutiny role, looking at how best to stimulate demand within the business base.

## 9 Theme D: Transforming Perceptions of St.Helens

### Overall Objective

To raise and transform our profile, to be seen as a modern, vibrant and exciting place, and to shed our historic, industrial image.

### Key Issues and Opportunities

9.1 There have been some clear messages on external perceptions of St.Helens. The first and key point is that external awareness of St.Helens outside the North West is extremely low (and even in the North West this is true). St.Helens is not a place that many people have visited or hold strong views about. There is, in effect, low brand recognition for St.Helens. This is clearly a weakness in one sense; it is also a potential strength in that there do not appear to be strong negative external perceptions of St.Helens.



9.2 Improving the way in which St.Helens is perceived externally is a key challenge for the Strategy. There are a range of physical measures that can be undertaken to change perceptions (particularly around the main arrival gateways to the Borough). There are also a number of other actions that will need to be advanced such as selling the changing face of St.Helens to the national and regional media and a range of other influential agencies/individuals. The energy and momentum of the private sector built up in the process of preparing the St.Helens CGS can be harnessed to help us achieve this goal.

9.3 Internal perceptions of St.Helens are also key. We need to awaken in people a new sense of civic pride and increased responsibility in the future development of the Borough. More engagement from the local community with the challenges that affect the future of their town and Borough is a key aspiration for the CGS Board.

### Action Areas

9.4 Within Theme D, two specific action areas have been identified:

- ▶ D1 – Creating Greater Pride in St.Helens
- ▶ D2 – Projecting a Modern St.Helens

### D1 – Creating Greater Pride in St.Helens

Why is this important?

9.5 As noted earlier, we need to try and engender a greater sense of pride in the Borough of St.Helens. The people of St.Helens are its greatest ambassadors and it is important to ensure that all residents

(and future residents) share our ambitions for the future of the Borough.

### What is happening already?

9.6 St.Helens' citizens are already encouraged to take part in consultation exercises about life in the Borough and it is our task to ensure that people continue to play an active part in planning for their future.

9.7 Our ambition is to continue transforming the economy of St.Helens and to find new ways of achieving this. Our approach is bold and ambitious. We recognise, however, that the people of

St.Helens have to be proud of selling this agenda. If we succeed in engaging the whole community we can create a mood of confidence, ambition and excitement about St.Helens, with people that look forward to the future with optimism.

### What will the CGS deliver?

9.8 The CGS will seek to add value to the activities outlined above. In particular we will be seeking to ensure that local residents share our sense of desire for St.Helens and that they too 'buy-in' to the transformational changes we seek to achieve.

### Project D1.1

#### Dissemination Strategy/Programme

A quick win project (operating within the first 12 months of the Strategy implementation phase). The idea is for a concerted effort on publicity and awareness-raising (locally and further afield) to enhance the profile of the CGS and some of the big ideas contained within it. A possible option (which may have a resource implication) is the ongoing involvement of the CGS Board in this process. Resources should be devoted to a series of 'lively' presentations – involving a virtual reality fly through of a remodelled town centre, a non-technical overview of our key business growth areas, raising awareness and anticipation, etc.

### Project D1.2

Borough Tours – 'See the Changing Face of St.Helens'.

Continue and extend the use of the successful borough tours (used mainly for potential inward investors to date). A tour for residents highlighting the main areas where change is envisaged (this could extend to the Omega site, raising awareness of the opportunities that will emerge here). Tours could also involve a free video/DVD showcasing St.Helens in ten years time (this could also be used by those promoting new Urban Villages, executive housing areas in the Borough, etc.). The CGS website could also be used creatively in this respect.

## D2 – Projecting a Modern St.Helens

### Why is this important?

**9.9** It is generally accepted that much can be done to improve the sense of arrival in St.Helens. The first impressions of St.Helens, principally from the M62 and M6 entry routes, can be strengthened considerably. These first impressions are the images that tend to stick with investors and wider 'influencers' as they either visit or pass through Merseyside and the Borough. We need to ensure that:

- ▶ Visitors are correctly navigated to our principal entry gateways (signposting for those entering the Borough from the M6 northbound is a particular issue)
- ▶ Visible markers are in place that celebrate your arrival in the Borough

**9.10** Proactive marketing of towns, cities and districts across the UK is now a fundamental part of the economic development toolkit. It is essential that developers/investors and regeneration professionals more generally across the North West region are fully conversant with

our ambitions for St.Helens.

**9.11** There is a feeling that historically St.Helens has tended to back away from celebrating its success stories and be somewhat shy in outlining its aspirations for the future. It is important that as part of the CGS this mindset is challenged. If we are to succeed, then the message about our key assets and how we propose to harness them in the future needs to be more widely understood, both across the North West region and the UK more generally. What is happening already?

**9.12** Work is already progressing in terms of improving the environment on the main entry corridors into St.Helens (M62 Linkway and the A580). A wide ranging strategy for radically improving the face of the M62 Linkway has been prepared by Gillespies for St.Helens Council. In addition, conversion of the A580 into a tree-lined boulevard is proposed as part of the NWDA's New Approaches programme in Merseyside.

**9.13** A range of new marketing materials has recently been prepared by St.Helens

Council under the strapline of 'Challenge your Perspective' of St.Helens. These informative and eye-catching booklets mark a step-change in the quality of marketing materials produced locally. The Invest in St.Helens team has recently launched a new website to complement these materials (<http://www.investinsthelens.co.uk>) and a new tourism website is in the design stage ([www.visitsthelens.com](http://www.visitsthelens.com)).

**9.14** There are many existing mechanisms through which people make the case for St.Helens in regional and national arenas.

Senior officers from St.Helens Council regularly promote the Borough and its assets, as do elected members of the Council. In addition, there are a range of informal ambassadors for the Borough (past and present senior executives from the private sector) who will, in a variety of settings, advocate for St.Helens.

### What will the CGS deliver?

**9.15** A number of specific ideas have emerged.

### Project D2.1

#### Beacon(s) of Glass

The idea is for two iconic markers that celebrate entry into the Borough of St.Helens and Merseyside from the main road network (one on J7: M62, one on J23: M6). It is envisaged that these will be glass structures, illuminated at night (possibly through the use of innovative lighting mechanisms generated by sustainable energy sources). We would aim for low maintenance structures, with good environmental credentials. A key first

step (which is already underway) would be discussions with Pilkington Glass Laboratory on innovative designs and creative use of glass. Part of the funding is already secured from the Forestry Commission (for the Sutton Manor site adjacent to the M62), with promising discussions with the Arts Council and Objective I. It is envisaged that the image of the Beacon could be more widely used in marketing materials for the Borough (on letterheads, marketing materials, etc.).

### Project D2.2

#### Strategic Signage

St.Helens Council is progressing plans to redesign the roadside entry markers in the Borough. The firm who designed the Challenge your Perspective marketing materials will be designing the new markers. (The funding will allow for six to eight new markers of this nature.)

### Project D2.3

#### Challenge your Perspective II

This project would involve the roll out/extension of the Challenge your Perspective marketing materials. This could include a cutting-edge website (partly in progress), CD Rom, corporate DVD, etc. The initiative would ensure St.Helens is keeping pace with promotional activities in other competing NW locations and would involve a concerted effort to look at new, creative ways of spreading good news on St.Helens (email news alert, etc.).

### Project D2.4

#### St.Helens Ambassadors Team

The project would identify and then engage with a series of ambassadors for St.Helens. These ambassadors could include famous old residents of St.Helens or influential business leaders (past and present). The ambassadors would be called upon from time to time

to lobby for St.Helens and would be kept in touch with developments via periodic email bulletins. The project is designed to formalise the many informal ambassadorial functions already undertaken. It could be taken forward as part of the Mersey Champions team developed by The Mersey Partnership.

## 10 Measuring Success

**10.1** The CGS Board is developing ways of measuring the overall success of the CGS in St.Helens. We will monitor progress and evaluate success at two levels: first at the individual project level, assessing the effectiveness of the outcomes and impact of key projects, and we are also in the process of developing metrics of success at the overall level of each of our four themes.

**10.2** We will, where appropriate, seek to

utilise the indicators emerging from recent Audit Commission publications: (Audit Commission – ‘Quality of Life Indicators’ and Audit Commission – ‘Economic Regeneration Indicators’ (March 2003)).

**10.3** At this stage, we have identified the following indicators (see Table 10.1) and desired direction of change. In due course, we will be developing formal targets for each of the indicators in table 10.1.

**Table 10.1 St.Helens CGS – Measuring Success**

Theme	Measures
OVERALL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased employment/more businesses</li> <li>Overall population increase</li> </ul>
A. TRANSFORMING OUR BUSINESS BASE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased employment in our five target local clusters</li> <li>Increased profitability and productivity</li> </ul>
B. ACHIEVING A CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An improved rate of business start-ups</li> <li><b>Improved satisfaction with the area as a business location</b></li> <li>Higher levels of adult participation in training and learning</li> </ul>
C. ACHIEVING A PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More day and overnight visitors to St.Helens</li> <li>Improved footfall in town centre</li> <li>Increased average commercial and industrial property values</li> </ul>
D. TRANSFORMING PERCEPTIONS OF ST.HELENS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>More positive media coverage</b></li> <li><b>Improved perceptions amongst investors</b></li> <li><b>Improved perceptions of St.Helens by residents</b></li> </ul>

**Note:** shaded boxes indicate those where there is a limited quantitative baseline currently available. However they are all areas where existing mechanisms can be used to track changes over time.

## 11 Implementation

**11.1** This City Growth Strategy sets out the Board's aspirations for St.Helens. Having been through an extensive consultation process, we are confident that partners share these aspirations. However, there is still much work to be done in turning these ideas and projects into reality. In some cases the development of the projects is well advanced and the CGS is building on what is already happening and is planned in St.Helens. In other cases, the projects are ideas which will need considerably more development work and discussion with partners.

**11.2** The Action Plan in Appendix A sets out a brief summary of each of the projects identified in this Strategy. It covers:

- ▶ Name of project
- ▶ Main delivery organisation
- ▶ Indication of cost and potential sources of funding
- ▶ Key milestones or next steps

**11.3** The successful delivery of the CGS will require a mix of public and private funding. Some of the projects are not likely to require any public sector funding, some have funding already identified and committed, whilst others will require concentrated effort and time to get the necessary funding in place. We are confident that all the projects are potentially fundable and deliverable, although not all projects will progress and develop as anticipated at this stage, and detailed feasibility work may bring out new issues.

### Delivery Structures

**11.4** The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for St.Helens has formally accepted and

endorsed the CGS as forming a key plank of the economic regeneration strategy for St.Helens. Ultimately, it will be the responsibility of the LSP to oversee the successful delivery of the CGS over the next ten years, in conjunction with the many other strategies for St.Helens, as part of the successful delivery of the Community Strategy. The Economic Prosperity Sub-Group of the LSP will have particular responsibility for reporting on progress with the CGS and identifying and tackling any blockages or difficulties in the delivery of the CGS. This role of the LSP is very important as it ensures that the CGS will be fully embedded in the overall development of St.Helens.

**11.5** The CGS Board has agreed to continue after the launch of the CGS. It will ensure that the delivery arrangements for key projects are all in place. On the CGS Board there will be private sector cluster champions for each of the five Local Cluster Action Teams. The CGS Board will report on progress to the Economic Prosperity Sub-Group of the LSP and identify any important delivery blockages that need attention.

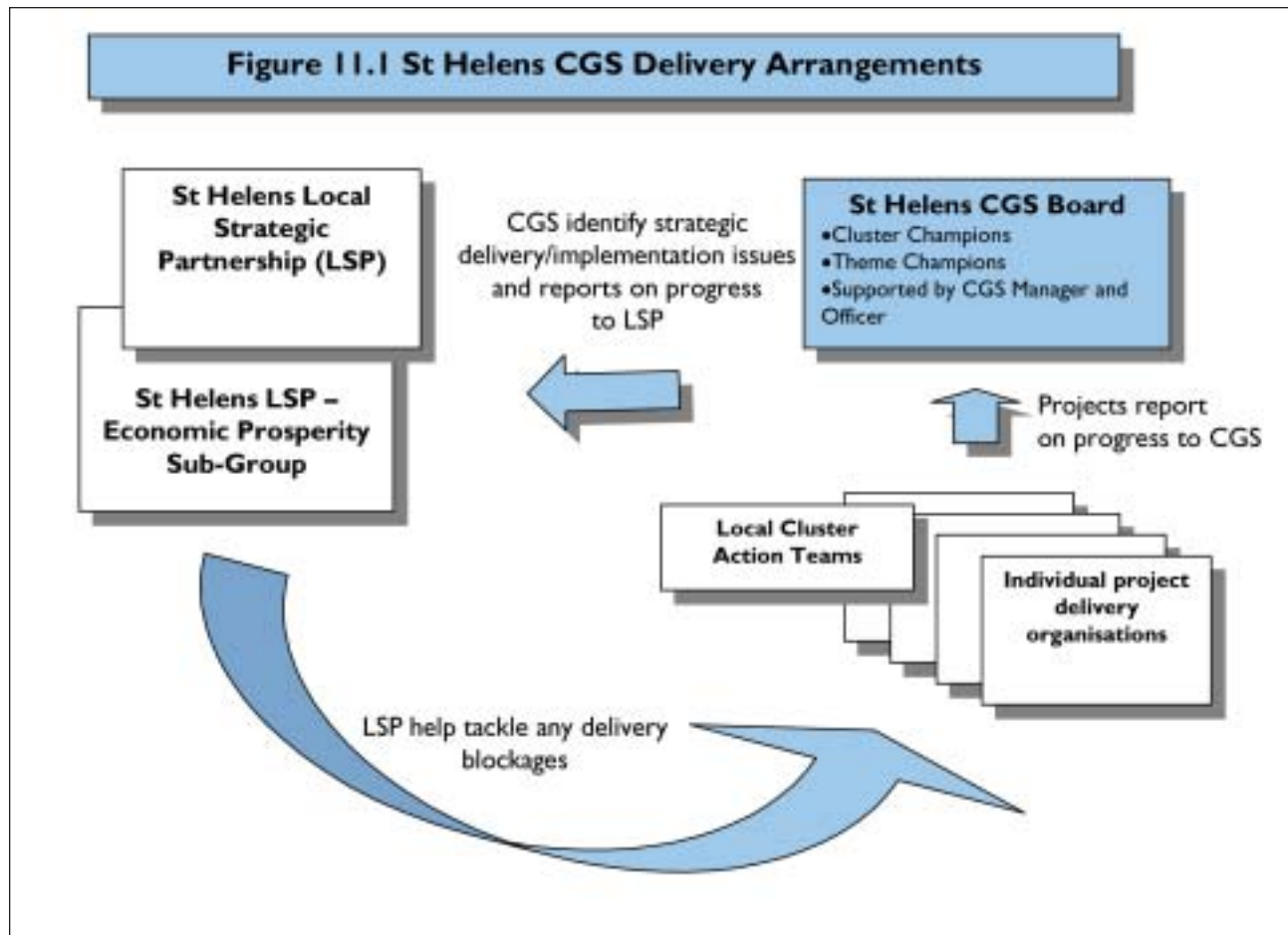
**11.6** The actual delivery of the projects identified in this Strategy will of course remain the responsibility of the identified delivery organisations.

### Involvement and Engagement

**11.7** The CGS consultation process has identified the strong enthusiasm and support for the CGS amongst those consulted and a desire to get involved. We wish to continue this process indeed a key part of transforming perceptions involves

working with local people and businesses. Moving forward after the launch of the CGS:

- A key role of the CGS Board will be to organise, with St.Helens Council, St.Helens Chamber and St.Helens CVS, further dissemination of the CGS into community and other groups.
- As part of the engagement process, we wish to see local schools and community groups involved in the development of key projects (such as the Beacons of Glass).
- We will work with the local media to disseminate the CGS and encourage a debate about some of the key ideas.



**Summary of Action Plan for City Growth Strategy DRAFT JULY 2003**

Action Area	Action	Cost*	Funding	Lead Delivery Organisation (and others)	Timescale and next steps
A1: Laying the Foundations for Local Cluster Development	A1.1: Cluster Action Plans	£40k	CGS	Local Cluster Action Teams (facilitating support from consultants)	• Complete LCAPs by early 2004
A2: Developing Our Local Clusters	A2.1: Developing Our Local Clusters	£150k pa (this is just the cost of ongoing facilitating support)	NWDA, TMP	Local Cluster Action Teams (facilitating support via St.Helens Chamber, TMP, NWDA)	• Roll out LCAPs during 2004 and 2005 • Review progress in 2005
A3: Enhancing Business Competitiveness	A3.1: Business Partners Team	£200k pa (4 officers)	NWDA and Objective 1	St.Helens Chamber, GME	• Prepare funding bid for Objective 1 and NWDA • Recruit staff
	A3.2: Business Buddies	£100k pa (overlap with A3.1)	NWDA and Objective 1	St.Helens Chamber, GME	• See A3.1
B1: Creating an Enterprise Hotspot	B1.1: Sowing the Seeds	£800k over 3 years	GMLSC, Objective 1, private sponsors	St.Helens LEA, Young Enterprise, St.Helens Chamber, EBF, GME, St.Helens Council, schools, colleges	• Select and appoint an Enterprise Commission to develop overarching strategy (St.Helens LEA) • Prepare funding applications to expand work of Young Enterprise in St.Helens (Young Enterprise)
	B1.2: Graduate Enterprise Greenhouse	£60k (for feasibility study)	NWDA and Objective 1	St.Helens Chamber (for feasibility study)	• Generate interest amongst potential partners • Secure funding to support feasibility study • Commission a feasibility study to determine development options
B1.3: Business Mentoring	B1.3: Business Mentoring	See A3.2	See A3.2	St.Helens Chamber, GME	• See A3.2

Summary of Action Plan for City Growth Strategy DRAFT JULY 2003

Action Area	Action	Cost*	Funding	Lead Delivery Organisation (and others)	Timescale and next steps
B1: Business 'Red Tape' Busting Package	B1.4: Business 'Red Tape' Busting Package	£450k per annum	SBS Phoenix Fund Objective 1	St.Helens Chamber, GME	Apply for additional funding for Entrepreneur Kick Start
	B1.5: Developing Social Enterprise Opportunities	£100k pa (2 years)	SBS Phoenix Fund Objective 1	St.Helens Chamber, St.Helens CVS	Apply for additional funding from SBS Develop new social enterprise ideas
	B1.6: General Enterprise Awareness	Costs built into other projects (B1.1 and B1.4)	GMLSC, Objective 1	St.Helens Chamber, Prince's Trust, St.Helens College	Work across St.Helens to ensure there is a co-ordinated approach to raising the profile of enterprise
B2: Creating the Conditions for Enterprise	B2.1: Catapult Too	£900k	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (50%) and ERDF (50%)	St.Helens Council	Feasibility study and business plan completed by Lambert Smith Hampton. The feasibility study identified clear need and demand in St.Helens for units of this type Feasibility Study recommended that the project be taken forward in partnership with private sector development partner NWDA and St.Helens Council are taking this forward Work could start on-site early 2004 Units to be completed mid-2005
	B2.2: Managed Workspace				
	(A) Sutton Fold	£2 million	NWDA	St.Helens Council, NWDA	
	(B) Centrix Court	£2.9 million	Langtree Plc NWDA and St.Helens Council (land value)	Langtree Plc, St.Helens Council	Work to start on-site September 2003 Workspace to be completed July 2004

Summary of Action Plan for City Growth Strategy DRAFT JULY 2003

Action Area	Action	Cost*	Funding	Lead Delivery Organisation (and others)	Timescale and next steps
B2.3: Growing on Space	(A) Old Boston	£11 million (Old Boston) public sector cost	English Partnerships (National Coalfield Programme), Objective 1, NWDA	NWDA St.Helens Council, English Partnerships	Secure EP and NWDA funding for Old Boston redevelopment (end 2003) Secure Objective 1 funding (early 2004) On-site end 2004 Development completed 2007
	(B) Lea Green West	£4.8m (site preparation and infrastructure works only)	English Partnerships (National Coalfield Programme), Objective 1, NWDA	NWDA, English Partnerships, St.Helens Council	Feasibility studies completed October 2003 Economic appraisal will be submitted to ODPM December 2003 Planning application submitted 2004 Preferred developer selected 2004
B3: Developing Learning for Life Project	B3.1: EPB Plus Project	£300k pa (current expenditure is £200k pa)	GMLSC, Objective 1	Connexions, GMLSC, Lifelong Learning Partnership, Education Business Partnership, Trident, St.Helens LEA	GMLSC to complete review of EBP activity, agree focus of future strategic support and clarify delivery arrangements with organisations in St.Helens
	B3.2: Invest in 'Yourself' Campaign.	£50k per annum	GMLSC, Objective 1	Lifelong Learning Partnership, St.Helens LEA, St.Helens Chamber, St.Helens College, other training providers	September/October 2003: Bring together marketing representatives from all partners within the Learning Partnership to formulate the details of a borough-wide campaign October/November 2003: Investigate possibility of securing funding to support a dedicated project officer to lead the campaign, co-ordinate with other agencies and tie-in with national campaigns November-December 2003: Secure funding for the project

## Summary of Action Plan for City Growth Strategy DRAFT JULY 2003

Action Area	Action	Cost*	Funding	Lead Delivery Organisation (and others)	Timescale and next steps
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January-April 2004: Preparatory work on marketing campaign</li> <li>May-July 2004: Delivery of campaign across the Borough</li> </ul>
B3.3: SME Awareness-Raising		£1 million (to March 2005)	GMLSC, Objective 1 (from The Skill Works Fund)	St.Helens Chamber, St.Helens College, GMLSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roll out delivery of The Skill Works schemes.</li> </ul>
B3.4: Curriculum Development for Local Clusters		£40k pa	GMLSC	Lifelong Learning Partnership, Local Cluster Action Teams, St.Helens LEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Liaison between Local Cluster Action Teams and the Lifelong Learning Partnership's 14-19 Group (Spring 2004)</li> <li>Develop new curriculum material and appoint a curriculum development manager (Autumn 2004)</li> </ul>
B4: Plugging St.Helens into Wider Opportunities	B4.1: School/Omega Links	c. £20k per annum	GMLSC	Lifelong Learning Partnership, EBP, St.Helens LEA, Connexions, local schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EBP to commence dialogue with partners and Omega</li> </ul>
	B4.2: Rising to the Omega Skills Challenge	Scale of programme will depend on pace and nature of development at Omega	GMLSC, Objective 1	Lifelong Learning Partnership, GMLSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue dialogue with Omega development, building on existing work completed through the Workforce Development Group</li> </ul>

## Summary of Action Plan for City Growth Strategy DRAFT JULY 2003

Action Area	Action	Cost*	Funding	Lead Delivery Organisation (and others)	Timescale and next steps
B4.3: Omega and wider bus links		£30k (initial study)	Merseytravel/local authorities	St.Helens Council, Merseytravel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultant brief to be put out to tender. Commission work late 2003</li> <li>Study to outline options to improve transport links to Omega site to be completed late 2003</li> <li>St.Helens Council to take forward preferred option</li> </ul>
B4.4: Omega and Other Supply Chain opportunities		£25k pa (part post NWDA and direct cost of events)	NWDA, Objective 1	St.Helens Chamber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare funding bid</li> <li>Design events and seminars as opportunities develop</li> </ul>
C1: A Revitalised Town Centre	C1.1: Canal reinstatement/reopening	£750k	SRB, NWDA, ERDF	St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commission design study for the 200m of canal in town centre by August 2003 (at a cost of £60k)</li> <li>Complete design phase by January 2004</li> <li>Seek funding for preferred design option in early 2004</li> <li>Start work mid-2004</li> </ul>
	C1.2: New Town Centre Housing	Uncertain – depending on the sites, the developments may stack up commercially	Private developers	St.Helens Council, private residential developers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of capital project by end of 2004</li> <li>Identify key opportunity sites</li> <li>Market to developers</li> <li>Prepare planning briefs for key sites (in Eastside masterplan areas)</li> <li>Select preferred developers</li> </ul>
	C1.3: Groundwork Eco Centre	£1.5-£2.0 million (capital cost of new centre)	ERDF (50%) plus NWDA	Groundwork, St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete feasibility study funded via Objective 1 (November 2003)</li> <li>Secure interest from funding partners (Autumn 2003)</li> <li>Progress funding bids (early 2004)</li> <li>Secure site for building and commission design work (Autumn 2004)</li> <li>Groundwork to relocate to new Eco-Centre premises (Autumn 2006)</li> </ul>

## Summary of Action Plan for City Growth Strategy DRAFT JULY 2003

Action Area	Action	Cost*	Funding	Lead Delivery Organisation (and others)	Timescale and next steps
	C1.4: Church Square	£3.5 million	ERDF/NWDA local authority	St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure ERDF funding</li> <li>Commence work early 2004</li> <li>18-month period of work to be completed by Autumn 2005</li> </ul>
	C1.5: Car Park Improvement Programme	£2.8 million	Local Authority, private sector and SRB	St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement refurbishment of North St.Johns Street Car Park</li> <li>Secure funding for Chalon Lane Car Park (£0.5m), St.Mary's and Tontine multi-storey car parks (£2m), and Hardshaw Centre Car Park (c.£1.50k)</li> <li>Hardshaw Centre Car Park pedestrian access improvements to be completed before opening of the Millennium Centre in Autumn 2004</li> </ul>
	C1.6: Signage and Navigation Improvements	Included in C1.5	Included in C1.5	St.Helens Council	See C1.5
	C1.7: Development of markets	Included in C1.5	Included in C1.5	St.Helens Council	See C1.5
C2: Becoming a Leisure Borough for the Region	C2.1: Destination St.Helens – Sports and Leisure Village	c. £150k for initial feasibility works	Private developer	Private developer, St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commission detailed feasibility study</li> <li>Pursue private sector development partner</li> </ul>
	C2.2: Kew of the North	c. £90 million for eventual scheme (based on Eden Project)	Heritage Lottery Objective 1, NWDA	St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue dialogue with NWDA and others to secure funding for feasibility work</li> <li>Commission initial architect inputs, ground condition surveys, etc., and detailed market demand assessment (throughout 2004)</li> </ul>

## Summary of Action Plan for City Growth Strategy DRAFT JULY 2003

Action Area	Action	Cost*	Funding	Lead Delivery Organisation (and others)	Timescale and next steps
	C2.3: Sherdley Park Outdoor Entertainment Centre	£9.6 million	NWDA, ERDF	St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subject to positive outcome from feasibility work, submit funding applications (earliest possible start date for capital works would be 2006)</li> <li>Autumn 2003: Secure funding to support dedicated project manager to take project forward (to be an externally funded post)</li> </ul>
	C2.4: Canal Linkages	c. £250k for full feasibility study c. £100 million for private sector capital works	ERDF/NWDA, private sector	St.Helens Council, surrounding local authorities, Sankey Canal Restoration Society British Waterways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete pre-feasibility study which has been conducted by British Waterways and paid for by the six local authorities with interest. NWDA are also funding economic impact assessment of project to inform feasibility. The pre-feasibility study cost £19k and is to be completed Summer 2003</li> <li>Commission full feasibility study (at an estimated cost of £250k) to start in Autumn 2003</li> <li>If positive recommendations come from feasibility study, funding will then need to be secured to progress the project in 2004</li> </ul>
	C2.5: Enhancing the Outdoor Leisure Offer	£2 million	ERDF/NWDA	St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One strand would be feasibility study to determine most sustainable option for development of Carr Mill Dam</li> <li>As Groundwork funding ends in March 2004, it is envisaged that future management arrangements and work will be secured and started by this point (dependent on recommendations coming out of the feasibility study)</li> </ul>

## Summary of Action Plan for City Growth Strategy DRAFT JULY 2003

Action Area	Action	Cost*	Funding	Lead Delivery Organisation (and others)	Timescale and next steps
C3: Creating Public Spaces and Inviting Gateways	C3.1: Town in the Forest	£100k-£200k (cost of annual management only). Restoration of sites to community forest cost c. £50k per acre	NWDA, ICER Forestry Commission, Objective 1	St.Helens Council Mersey Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure funding from NWDA to commence preparatory work on the plan</li> <li>Identification of the opportunities to link the various strategies into a coherent plan for implementation with targeted appraisals for sites, together with costing for implementation, identification of employment generation opportunities and development of a landscape framework to aid future planting and maximise the impact of the image improvements</li> <li>Identify and secure sources of funding to enable implementation of elements of the plan</li> </ul>
	C3.2: St.Helens Central Station	£4.9 million	Merseytravel, Objective 1, SRB	Merseytravel, St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A preferred option for development has been selected. However, more detail is needed to direct the project development</li> <li>Design detail of the building to be completed Autumn 2003</li> </ul>
	C3.3: Grot Spot Audit	£20k	CGS funding	St.Helens Council, CGS team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultants engaged to complete audit. September 2003</li> </ul>
	C3.4: Projection Art and Illuminating St.Helens	£200k (provisional)	NWDA	St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work completed late 2003</li> <li>Secure funding and work up project detail</li> </ul>

## Summary of Action Plan for City Growth Strategy DRAFT JULY 2003

Action Area	Action	Cost*	Funding	Lead Delivery Organisation (and others)	Timescale and next steps
C4: Becoming a Residential Area of Choice	C4.1: Implementing the Urban Villages	Costings only available when master-plans complete	Private developers	Private developers, St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Merseytravel to work on options for improving services and possibility of linking up St.Helens Central and St.Helens Junction</li> <li>Continual lobbying rail networks to improve and co-ordinate services to St.Helens</li> <li>Inclusion in the next Local Transport Plan 2006-2012</li> <li>Development of project within Local Transport Plan</li> </ul>
	C5.1: Rail Shuttle Link Feasibility Study	c. £50k	Merseytravel	Merseytravel, St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Merseytravel to work on options for improving services and possibility of linking up St.Helens Central and St.Helens Junction</li> <li>Continual lobbying rail networks to improve and co-ordinate services to St.Helens</li> <li>Inclusion in the next Local Transport Plan 2006-2012</li> <li>Development of project within Local Transport Plan</li> </ul>
	C5.2: Haydock Heilpad	£25k	Objective 1, NWDA	St.Helens Council, Haydock Racecourse,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare brief for initial feasibility work (early 2004)</li> <li>Commission external consultants. Work completed summer 2004</li> </ul>
	C5.3 Broadband Lobbying Work	No initial cost		St.Helens CGS Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board to receive presentations from co-ordinators of Merseyside Broadband Action Plan and St.Helens Council IT staff</li> <li>Agree main priorities for action and utilise ambassador team lobbying functions</li> </ul>

## Summary of Action Plan for City Growth Strategy DRAFT JULY 2003

Action Area	Action	Cost*	Funding	Lead Delivery Organisation (and others)	Timescale and next steps
D1: Creating Greater Pride in St.Helens	D1.1: CGS Dissemination Strategy/ Programme	£20k	CGS funding	CGS team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A quick win project operating throughout the remainder of 2003 and 2004. Will involve production of a CGS CDROM, presentation in schools of key elements of the Strategy, select number of CGS billboards in the Borough, dissemination via area forums</li> </ul>
	D1.2: Borough Tours – See the Changing Face of St.Helens'	£5k	CGS funding	St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A free tour for residents highlighting the main areas where physical change is envisaged. Tours could also involve a free video/DVD showcasing St.Helens in ten years time. Project should be operational in early 2004</li> </ul>
D2: Projecting a Modern St.Helens	D2.1: Beacon(s) of Glass	£1-£2 million	Forestry Commission, Art Council, ERDF, NWDA	St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalise brief for feasibility study</li> <li>Secure funding for feasibility study through NWDA (if not successful, Forestry Commission funds will be used)</li> <li>Feasibility study completed late 2003</li> <li>International design competition launched February 2004</li> <li>Implementation and completion mid-end 2005</li> </ul>
	D2.2: Strategic signage	£50k	St.Helens Council	St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultants commissioned to redesign boundary markers</li> <li>New markers in place by late 2003</li> </ul>

## Summary of Action Plan for City Growth Strategy DRAFT JULY 2003

Action Area	Action	Cost*	Funding	Lead Delivery Organisation (and others)	Timescale and next steps
	D2.3: Challenge your Perspective II	£50k	St.Helens Council	St.Helens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilisation of all materials and tools from first Challenge your Perspective project with seamless transition into Challenge your Perspective II</li> <li>Refresh marketing materials with updated images and statistics of the area (Spring 2004)</li> <li>Seek to disseminate more widely than first marketing programme (Spring 2004)</li> </ul>
	D2.4 St.Helens Ambassadors Team	£5k/per annum (to cover expenses, etc.)	Objective 1	St.Helens CGS Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Liaise with Mersey Champions group</li> <li>Establish feasibility of St.Helens sub-group</li> </ul>

## I 3 Appendix B: List of St.Helens CGS Board Members

**13.1** The Board (which has an exceptionally strong input from the local business base) has been instrumental in driving forward the CGS with energy and momentum. The work of the Board has included designing research briefs, meeting individually with consultants working on the development of the CGS, attending away day 'brainstorm sessions', a field study visit to the US, as well as periodic board meetings (on average, one meeting per month). The members of the CGS Board as at August 2003 were as follows:

**Mr John Barr, Site Manager**  
Alfred H. Knight Holdings Ltd

**Miss Kath Boullen, Chief Executive**  
St.Helens Chamber Ltd

**Cllr Andy Bowden, Executive Member**  
for Urban Regeneration, St.Helens Council

**Mr Andrew Brown, Managing Director**  
Brendon Phipps

**Mr John Downes, Managing Director**  
Langtree Group plc

**Mr Karl Hart, Finance Director**  
Temploy Recruitment Ltd

**Mr Bob Hepworth, Chief Executive**  
St.Helens Local Strategic Partnership

**Mr Dieter Koch, General Manager**  
Hilton St.Helens

**Mr David Lord, Consultant**  
David Lord Consultants Ltd

**Mr Alistair Poole, Marketing Manager**  
NGF Europe Ltd

**Mr Barrie Potter, Managing Director**  
Ena Shaw Ltd

**Mr Andrew Smith,  
(Chair) Managing Director**  
ST Group Ltd

**Mr Phil Thornton, Director**  
NatWest Commercial Banking

**Mr Allan Tilbrook, Managing Director**  
White Building Services Ltd

**Mr Adam Waterworth, General Manager**  
Haydock Park Racecourse Company Ltd

**Mr Mustafa Yousef, Managing Director**  
Logic System Consultants

## I 4 Appendix C: List of Research Carried Out for St.Helens CGS

- ▶ Economic Development Actions and Actors, Arup Economics and Planning, 2002
- ▶ Research into Growth Business and Possible Clusters in St.Helens, Ecotec, 2003
- ▶ Benchmarking St.Helens, URBED, March 2003
- ▶ Research into Inward Investment Perceptions of St.Helens, Ecotec, 2003
- ▶ St.Helens City Growth Strategy Property Study, Regeneris, 2002
- ▶ St.Helens City Growth Strategy Baseline, Regeneris, 2003

Note: This last document can be found on the St.Helens City Growth Strategy website (<http://www.citygrowthsthelens.com>).

## 15 References

- 1 Identified by ICIC as clusters, access to a wide range of human resources, local market demand and strategic location.
- 2 See Appendix B for a full list of current and past Board members.
- 3 "Research into Growth Business and Possible Clusters in St.Helens", Ecotec, 2003.
- 4 Using the North West Integrated Appraisal Toolkit - <http://set.iarna.co.uk/afs/downloads/documents/iat.pdf>
- 5 A major source of public sector funding for the Merseyside sub-region between 2000-06. Total EU funds available are in the region of £830 million.
- 6 Note: a more detailed résumé of the Borough is set out in the Baseline report, April 2003.
- 7 The broader measure of unemployment used for international comparisons which, unlike the claimant count rate, is not based on whether people are officially registered as unemployed.
- 8 On the basis of average of ward ranks.
- 9 The Parks and The Woodlands Business Park, Haydock, and the Technology Campus, near the town centre.
- 10 Source: National Land Use Database, 2001 figures (note that out of this total 268 hectares are classified as "derelict" land).
- 11 Defined in 1992 Standard Industrial Classification terms as part of "manufacture of other non-metallic products".
- 12 The precise figure depends on how the business stock is defined.
- 13 Where it is no co-incidence that the region's first (and at present only) IKEA store was built. However, Warrington, as a former New Town, has also benefited from substantial investment in sites, premises and marketing.
- 14 Omega, a 206-hectare site straddling the M62 near Warrington, is one of Europe's most important strategic development sites. It will be a mixed-use development comprising offices, industrial space, leisure facilities and hotel and conference facilities. The development has the potential to create over 650,000m<sup>2</sup> of new floorspace and 12,000 jobs for the region over the next 25 years.
- 15 At least until the end of 2006 via the Merseyside Objective 1 programme.
- 16 The Pilkington Technology Centre at Latham, Ormskirk is located just outside St.Helens.
- 17 There are many reasons for this. In part it reflects the social and occupational composition of St.Helens (business start-up rates tend to be higher amongst the better qualified and those working in managerial and professional occupations), and in part the lower levels of affluence reduce the demand for local personal services compared to other areas, but it is also a cultural feature of areas that have, in the past, been dependent on a few large employers.
- 18 If the business density in St.Helens were at the regional average (42% higher than that in St.Helens), there would be 1,300 extra VAT registered firms in the Borough and 1,700 extra employment establishments. The estimates come from two sources.
- 19 "Research into Growth and possible Clusters in St.Helens", Ecotec, 2003.
- 20 The brownfield site is owned by Network Rail and has been identified by the NWDA as a regional strategic site. It does, however, currently lie in the Green Belt. It has been the subject of an outline planning application for a major inter-modal distribution facility with 168,000m<sup>2</sup> of rail-linked warehousing.
- 21 The index identifies the 100 fastest growing companies located exclusively in Britain's inner cities, in order to raise their profile and act as a catalyst for growth. The project is backed by the Royal Bank of Scotland and NatWest.
- 22 Chaired by the General Manager of Haydock Park Racecourse (Adam Waterworth), who is also a CGS Board member.
- 23 In St.Helens as well as the Chamber, organisations involved in the organisation, funding and delivery of business support include Greater Merseyside Enterprise, The Mersey Partnership (through sector development bodies), and specialist sector, technology and other bodies.
- 24 There is some interesting work in Sefton, led by the EBP that could be used as a model in St.Helens
- 25 Including the Connexions careers advice service, Project Trident, which provides work experience placements, Young Enterprise, CITB, Business Dynamics, etc.
- 26 This new fund is to be demand-led and based on the training needs of small and medium-sized firms in Merseyside. Only 20% (cash) match funding from the firm is required and the training need not link to NVQs. Contracts for delivery have already been agreed with St.Helens College and St.Helens Chamber. Details from [www.theskillswork.co.uk](http://www.theskillswork.co.uk).
- 27 The St.Helens UDP Issues Paper, December 2001, identified this issue with the public. 64% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Borough residents should be prepared to travel to neighbouring areas for employment" compared to the 18% who disagreed.
- 28 Although some predictions are as many as 40,000 jobs eventually in 7 million ft<sup>2</sup> of development.
- 29 This does not of course stop partners from developing similar awareness-raising initiatives for emerging opportunities elsewhere (e.g. Liverpool John Lennon Airport, Manchester city centre, etc.).
- 30 The 2000 Retail and Leisure Study identified capacity for an additional 21,000m<sup>2</sup> of comparison retail space up to 2016, which could equate to a department store, the need for which has been flagged up by public consultation.

Notes

