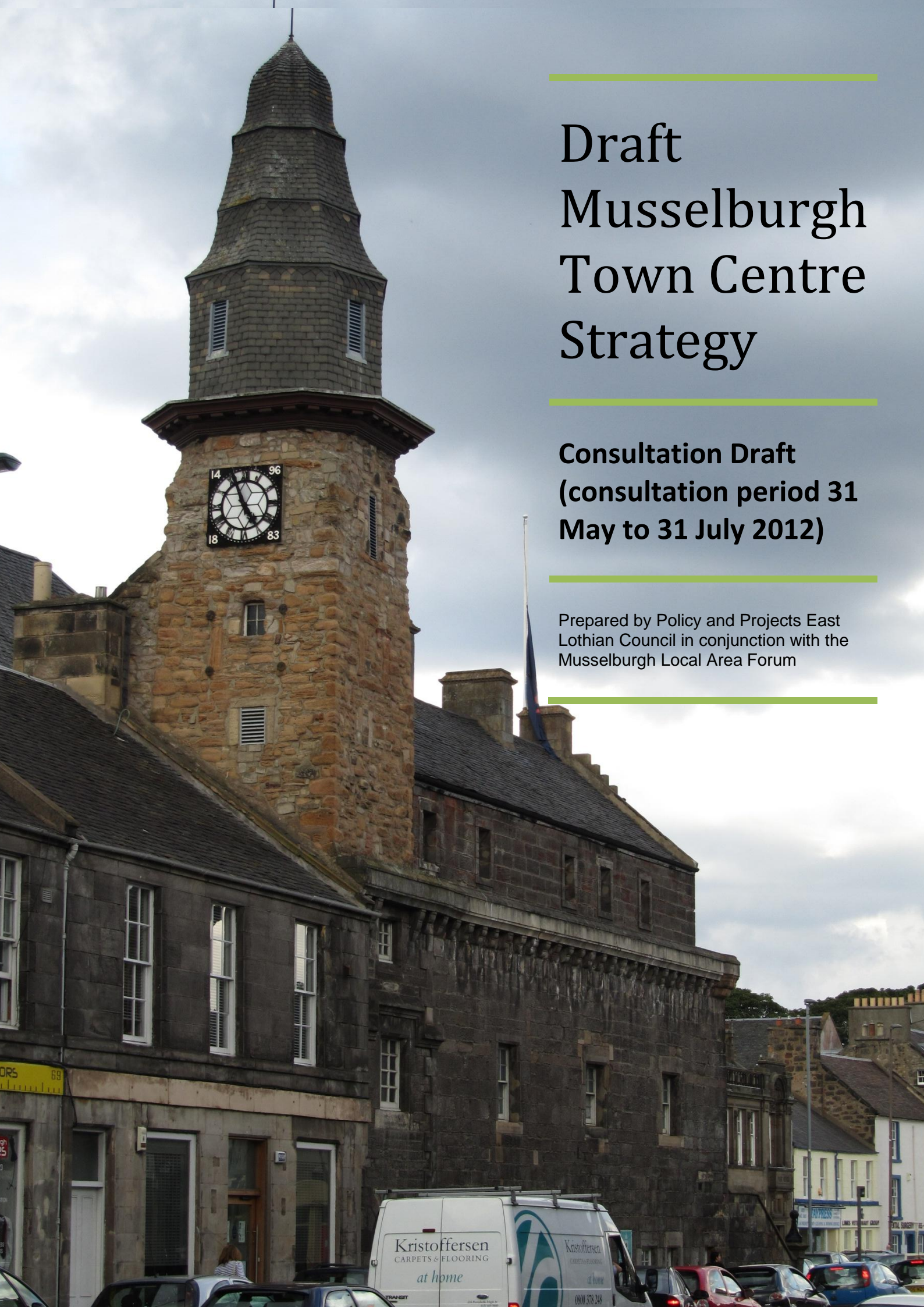

Draft Musselburgh Town Centre Strategy

**Consultation Draft
(consultation period 31
May to 31 July 2012)**

Prepared by Policy and Projects East
Lothian Council in conjunction with the
Musselburgh Local Area Forum



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This draft Town Centre Strategy has been prepared in conjunction with the Musselburgh Local Area Forum Town Centre Task Group. It is the subject to further public consultation prior to final approval.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Town Centre Strategy has been prepared following extensive discussion at the Musselburgh Town Centre Task Group, a sub-group of the Musselburgh Local Area Forum. The group has representation from Musselburgh and Inveresk Community Council; Windsor Park Tenants and Residents Association; Musselburgh Conservation Society; Inveresk Village Society; Queen Margaret University; Musselburgh Business Association; local ward members of East Lothian Council among others. The strategy has been informed by a town centre engagement exercise undertaken in 2011 which, using a *Planning for Real*[®] methodology complimented by a survey, involved around 1,200 local people making comments on how they use the town centre and identifying what they think the issues are with the present town centre and their aspirations for the future of the area.
- 1.2 The strategy suggests ways in which all those who have an interest in Musselburgh town centre can undertake economic and physical improvement to it.

The **VISION** for Musselburgh Town Centre

In 2018 Musselburgh town centre will be a clean and pleasant environment that attracts people to the town for shopping, business and leisure. Musselburgh's central streets will be attractive and well maintained and people will enjoy using the town's public spaces. The town's extensive history and heritage will be able to be better understood by its visitors and Musselburgh will be marketed as a destination with easy to find parking, a good range of cafes, pubs and restaurants, places to visit and be a pleasant place to visit and in which to spend time.

- 1.3 This strategy has four broad aims:
1. To keep Musselburgh town centre busy and vibrant whilst taking actions that promote additional business in Musselburgh town centre.
 2. To encourage improvements to support existing businesses and town centre users and encourage investment into the town centre.
 3. To enhance the setting of the local town centre, which is the unique selling point of the town.
 4. To build on the unique identity of Musselburgh by explaining more of its history and heritage.

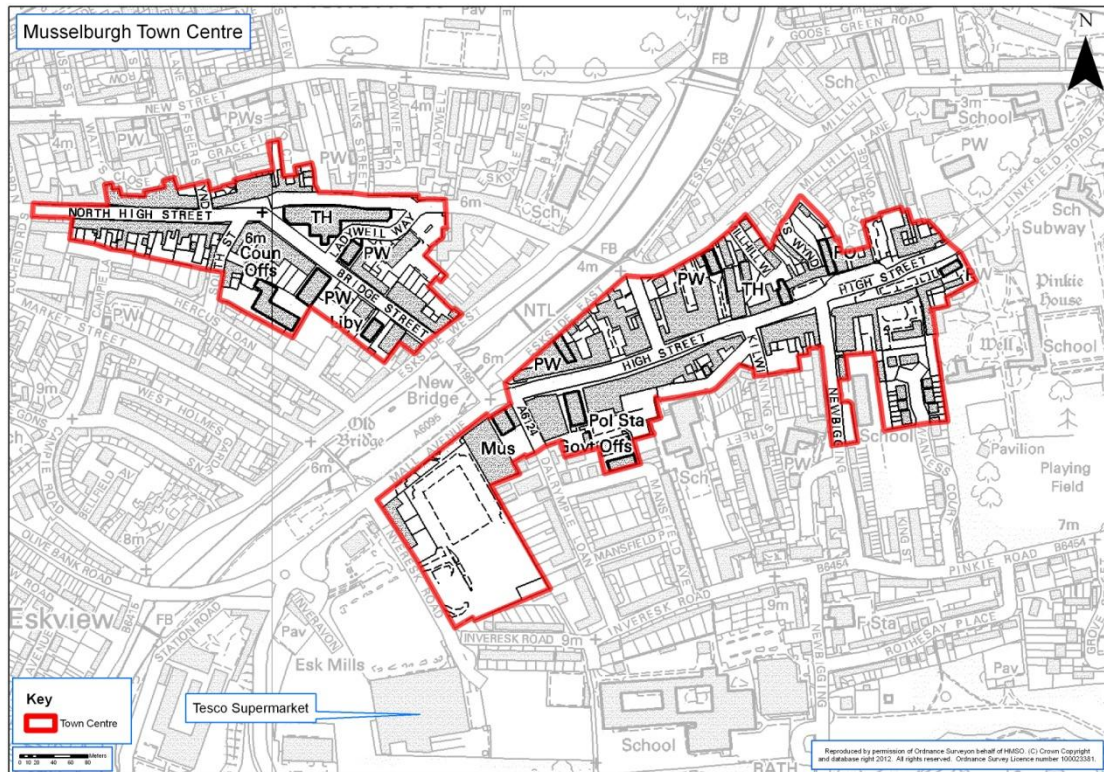
2 Background and Context

Profile of the Town Centre

- 2.1 Musselburgh lies approximately 7 miles east of Edinburgh city centre. Its location between East Lothian's coastal villages and Edinburgh means it is a busy town and there are only two main road crossings over the River Esk; the A1 Musselburgh bypass and the town centre route of High Street in conjunction with either Bridge Street and North High Street or Mall Avenue and Olivebank Road. This brings people and trade to Musselburgh town centre but also traffic volume and associated management issues.
- 2.2 The town is set to grow with around 1,500 new houses due to be built at Pinkie Mains (under construction 2012) and Wallyford. This will provide additional population to be served by the town centre. The development industry continues to see Musselburgh as a commercial location for further house building with a speculative planning application for a non-allocated site at Goshen farm for approximately 1,200 houses submitted in 2012.
- 2.3 Compared with the other towns in East Lothian, Musselburgh has the most commercial units, the greatest concentration of larger commercial units, the largest proportion of nationally owned shops and services and the highest footfall. In terms of its town centre offering, it is therefore the main town centre in East Lothian.
- 2.4 Musselburgh supports 6,170 jobs¹ and attracts people in from surrounding areas as well as having working residents commute out to work. Its proximity to Edinburgh also has an influence on the range of goods and services that the town centre is able to offer. In addition to town centre retail, Musselburgh has a supermarket at Mall Avenue/Olive Bank Road and three small food retailers at Olivebank on the edges of the town centre.
- 2.5 Musselburgh town centre extends from Pinkie Pillars at its eastern edge west along High Street, Bridge Street and North High Street. Like all town centres it is used by all sections of the community. Its designated area² is shown below.

¹ NOMIS Business Register and Employment 2011

² Designated in the East Lothian Local Plan 2008



National Economic Context

- 2.6 Whilst there is no doubt that High Streets will change in future, it remains difficult to be certain of the nature, extent and timing of that change. In a five year strategy it is considered too early to look ahead to long term structural issues with town centres, such as reducing their area by permitting alternative changes of use on the fringes of the town centre.
- 2.7 With low vacancy rates and quick turnover of vacant units, current indications are that Musselburgh town centre is weathering the poor economic conditions reasonably well. While there is no guarantee that this will continue, with the town's population planned to increase there should be more demand in future for the commercial facilities provided in its town centre. The challenge will be for businesses to market themselves to new residents to establish early patterns of town centre use.
- 2.8 Within the five year period of this strategy a series of planned interventions to improve the overall environment of the town centre and attract investment should help to maintain the busy town centre, the first overarching aim of the strategy.

Economic Performance of Musselburgh Town Centre

- 2.9 The town centre contains 178 ground floor commercial premises providing retail, service and leisure uses. The 2012 footfall survey showed that the average number of people visiting Musselburgh town centre was 9,130 per week with Saturday being the busiest day with

2030 users.³ However, the busiest commercial location was on the edge of the town centre at the 24 hour Tesco supermarket which opened in autumn 2010, replacing a smaller non-24 hour supermarket. The average weekly footfall by the supermarket was 37,840, just over four times that of the town centre. High Street, between Dalrymple Loan and Kilwinning Street, is the busiest section of the main town centre.

- 2.10 This new supermarket clearly has a strong influence on the town centre, but it has not resulted in closure of town centre units, as was feared by some. While some commercial units in the town centre have closed and others opened since the supermarket opened, in 2012 more commercial units are occupied and trading in the town centre than before the supermarket opened. Footfall in the town centre has been measured on a single weekend at the same time each year since 2008 and has averaged 9,570. The 2012 figure is 4.4% down on 2011 and 4.8% lower than the average since 2008. The supermarket opened in 2010 and coincided with a significant drop in town centre footfall when it opened, but which has subsequently increased. Whilst this cannot be proven to be a direct consequence of the opening of the supermarket without further analysis, the location of the supermarket allows for walking trips between it and the town centre and given that shop occupancy is higher and footfall relatively stable, the town centre can be considered to be adapting to trade successfully alongside it.
- 2.11 Many of the jobs in Musselburgh are within easy distance of the town centre. A key aspect of the town centre is to market itself to the residents and workers in the town; if people do not use the shops and services in the town centre, it will not prosper. Marketing campaigns can help in this regard.

Key Points/Issues

- ***Musselburgh is the main town centre in East Lothian;***
- ***Musselburgh is a growing town therefore the town centre has the opportunity to trade to more residents;***
- ***Commercial unit vacancy rates have fallen and footfall has increased;***
- ***The town centre appears to be coping with the new supermarket on the edge of the centre and, at present, with national economic conditions;***
- ***Regular marketing campaigns are required to encourage people to use Musselburgh town centre – the Christmas Shop Local campaign run by East Lothian Council Economic Development is a good example.***

³ Pedestrian Flowcount 2012 Musselburgh, Pedestrian Market Research Services, St.Albans for East Lothian Council, 2012

Proposed Actions

- **Monitor town centre economic performance through annual land use and footfall surveys and business surveys (Aim 1);**
- **Regular marketing campaigns such as Shop Local are required to encourage use of the town centre (Aim 1).**

3 Diversity of Land Use in the Town Centre

Land Use Trends

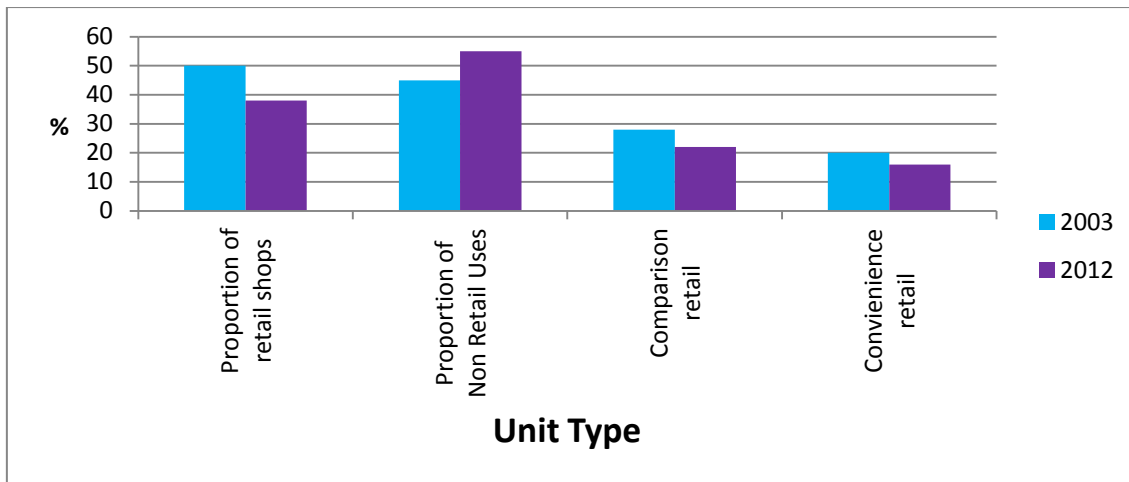
- 3.1 Scottish Government research identifies that successful town centres have a mix of retail, leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities. Their own identity and sense of place is defined by quality of design and focus on public realm. A healthy retail sector has a good retail mix, choice, diversity, anchor stores and preferred shopper formats, low vacancy rates, low turnover, good physical fabric and fascias, competitiveness and capacity for change.⁴
- 3.2 Analysis of annual retail surveys of Musselburgh town centre undertaken since 2003 shows that the overall number of commercial units currently has risen slightly since 2003, due to subdivision of some larger units. The overall amount of ground floor commercial floorspace in the town centre is approximately 22,500sqm, excluding food and drink premises.
- 3.3 The proportion of retail shops in the town centre has gradually declined, from approximately 50% in 2003 to 38% in 2012 with a corresponding increase in units occupied for non-retail purposes from 45% in 2003 to 55% in 2012. Since 2007 more units have been occupied for non-retail use rather than retail use. The proportions of shops and services are balanced at 38% and 40% respectively. Since 2003, comparison⁵ retail has fallen by 6% to 22% and convenience⁶ retail by 4% to 16%. In 2012, 40 units were classed as comparison retailing with 28 as convenience retailing.⁷

⁴ Scottish Government Housing, Regeneration & Planning Literature review, (2009) “Policies Adopted to Support a Healthy Retail Sector and Retail Led Regeneration”.

⁵ Comparison shopping is those goods that the purchaser will compare on the basis of price, quantity and quality before a purchase is made e.g clothes, gifts, electrical and furniture.

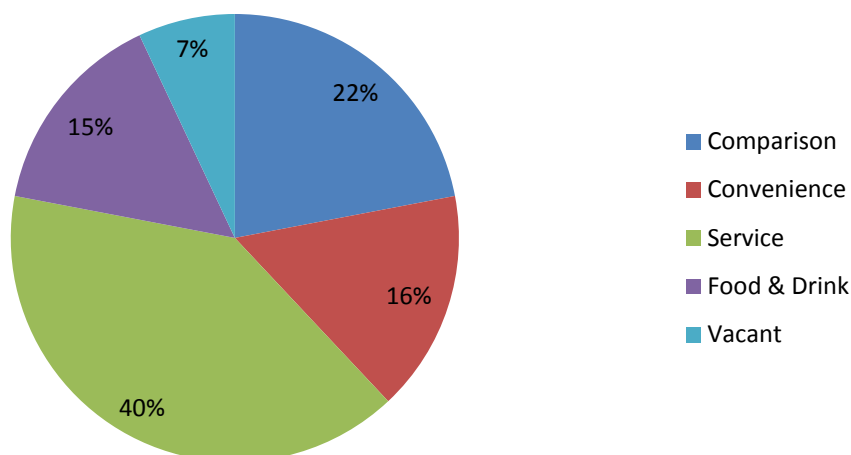
⁶ Convenience shopping is food shopping, drinks, newspapers, confectionery purchased readily for immediate consumption.

⁷ Retail Survey Musselburgh, Policy & Projects, East Lothian Council, 2012



- 3.4 The proportion of independent and nationally owned businesses has remained fairly consistent with almost one third nationally owned and two thirds independent. This mix indicates that the town centre offering is broad, with a representative spread of nationally recognised names as well as local independents. This is a strength of the town centre which should not be over dependent on one sector. Musselburgh's larger retail premises currently include national chains such as M&Co., Store Twenty One, Poundland and B&M Bargains. In comparison with other East Lothian towns, Musselburgh is able to accommodate larger units because of past redevelopment, mainly in the central part of High Street, that resulted in modern retail units that are not constrained in size by older buildings.
- 3.5 The 2012 survey identified that Musselburgh has a good range of smaller convenience shops including, for example, three butchers, three bakers and a fish shop and specialist comparison shops such as the Fine Wine Company, Ideal Flooring and Furniture, Di Rollo and Luca. While respondents to the town centre survey would prefer to see an increased range of shops and services (e.g. a shoe shop), these depend on the market to provide and cannot be influenced by East Lothian Council. Since the start of the recession, and in line with a national trend, there has been an increase in the provision of shops that market themselves as discount stores. Musselburgh has a concentration of these shops in the High Street. The number of charity shops has also increased from 4 in 2003 to 10 (6% of the total number of commercial units) in 2012 and the town is, arguably, a good destination for those seeking a bargain.
- 3.6 Commercial premises that provide services such as banks, dry cleaners, vets and property services occupy around 40% of all units. Leisure uses, principally food and drink, occupy a further 15% of units. The proportion of non-retail uses in the town centre has steadily increased from 45% in 2003 to 55% in 2012. There are 4 licensed pubs and hotels (excluding clubs) within the designated town centre, with a further 4 currently (August 2012) closed, and 9 licensed restaurants.

Breakdown of Ground Floor Uses 2012



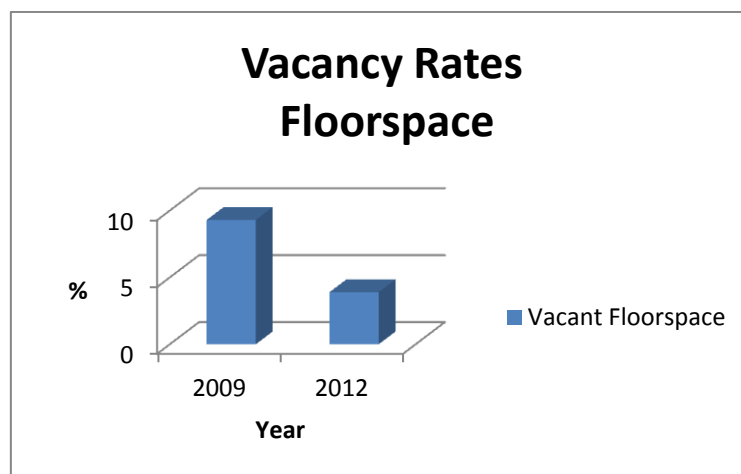
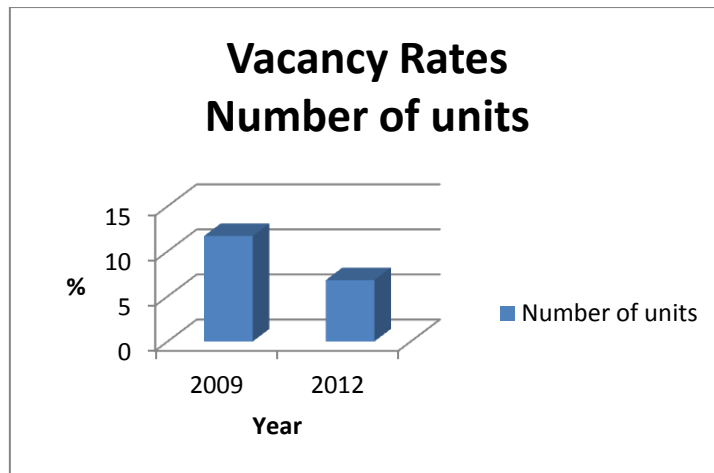
- 3.7 In 2010, the town centre survey noted the opening hours of commercial businesses. The results showed that only a very small proportion, 3%, closed at lunchtime, 40% traded on Sundays and 30% opened in the evening (food and drink premises, some convenience shops and bookmakers). Some 25% of non-retail businesses, for example, banks, did not open on a Saturday and around 10% of shops closed for a half or whole day on a Monday or Wednesday.⁸ This indicates that Musselburgh is a town centre that is open for business.
- 3.8 For town centres to survive and maintain vibrancy and vitality there needs to be a range of reasons to visit them. Shopping is part of that but by no means the only reason; visits to commercial services, cafes, restaurants, transport, visitor attractions and events all bring people to a town centre. If people are in the town centre, for whatever reason, then there are commercial trading opportunities for town centre businesses. When footfall declines, commercial businesses suffer accordingly.

Vacant Units

- 3.9 The proportion of vacant commercial units in Musselburgh town centre rose from 2007 and peaked in 2009 at 11.7% (or 21 units). Since 2009 it has reduced to 6.8% (12 units) in August 2012. Measured as vacant floorspace rather than number of units the 2009 peak was 9.3% and the 2012 figure 3.9%. The Scottish average vacancy rate based on percent of vacant units was 10.5% in July 2012 (UK rate 14.5%).⁹ Given national trends and the closure of a number of national chains such as Clinton Cards and Peacocks which were represented in Musselburgh, the town, in 2012, is performing well relative to other town centres in terms of having lower vacancy rates.

⁸ Retail Survey Musselburgh, Policy & Projects, East Lothian Council, 2010

⁹ Local Data Company 2012



- 3.10 Of the main issues associated with vacant shop units (length of time vacant; state of repair; prominence of location), few of the units vacant in Musselburgh stay vacant for long. Most are in a reasonable state of repair and few are in the busiest and most prominent central part of High Street.
- 3.11 The licensed trade sector has seen a significant number of pubs and small hotels close in Musselburgh town centre. Nationally, public houses in towns, small hotels and restaurants have suffered decreasing demand with consequent effects on viability: forecasters predict further decline in this sector. Musselburgh seems particularly badly hit given that many of these premises are prominently located on High Street and North High Street. Prominent buildings such as the former Musselburgh Arms Hotel, vacant since 2007, The Stand and The Burgh public houses, all in High Street, affect the overall quality of the town centre environment when they lie empty and boarded up. The limited range of licensed public houses in Musselburgh may be a contributory factor; arguably there was an over supply of premises offering a similar product for current demand. Evidence suggests that this has been the recent situation where the number of public houses in the defined town centre has declined from 8 in 2004 to 4 in 2012. This includes the addition of a new establishment, the David Macbeth Moir owned by national chain JD Wetherspoon. They

invested in the conversion of the long vacant former Hayweights club building in Bridge Street to reopen it as a public house and restaurant in 2012. Where former licensed premises have ceased trading there is no requirement to retain them as licensed premises and they can be converted to other town centre uses, such as retail or other leisure use in line with local plan policy.

Upper Floor uses

- 3.12 Many shops and commercial premises in the town centre have vacant space in the floors above. This may be used as storage or as an empty or infrequently used flat or office. If more of this space were permanently occupied, bringing more people in to the town centre, this would benefit the town centre economy. Most buildings in the town centre are tenements with commercial uses on the ground floor. The most common use of upper floors is residential which enables people to live in the town centre. A street level survey, followed up by further investigation, undertaken in 2012 showed a number of upper floors in Musselburgh town centre not currently in use as residential. In some cases a slow property market has led to property being on the market and vacant for lengthy periods. In other situations property is left vacant but not marketed. Because of past redevelopment in the central part of High Street many premises do not have residential space above them. The town centre needs people to live in it and where there is residential space it would benefit the town centre if it was occupied.
- 3.13 As part of its Empty Homes Initiative, East Lothian Council aims to help owners who have empty property to bring them back into residential use. The survey will be followed up by contacting property owners to see if there is anything that can be done to either renovate vacant residential or convert vacant storage to encourage more occupied housing in the town centre.

Musselburgh Town Centre – Extent of Influence by East Lothian Council

- 3.14 The Council as local planning authority cannot influence the type of shop that trades in the town centre. Planning permission is required for the change of use of a shop to another use such as a café or other non shop use. Current planning policy seeks to prioritise retail uses, requiring premises to be marketed for a reasonable period and no reasonable offers for use as retail to have been received before an alternative use is permitted.¹⁰ There are no restrictions on the number of non retail uses permitted in any part of the town centre other than consideration of the cumulative effect of hot food take-aways in any one area.¹¹
- 3.15 As an owner of a small number of commercial premises in the town centre, the Council requires to secure best value market rentals. Business rates are charged at a rate set by the Scottish Government, not

¹⁰ Policy ENV2: Town and Village Centres, Other Retail or Mixed Use Areas, East Lothian Local Plan 2008

¹¹ Policy R3: Hot Food outlets, East Lothian Local Plan 2008

East Lothian Council. Currently, that includes the small business bonus scheme where lower rated properties are eligible for varying discounts.

- 3.16 The range of options for the Council to influence the type of commercial trading, its location and the cost of premises for trading is therefore limited. Some Planning Authorities seek to restrict the number of non retail uses trading alongside each other to no more than three before a retail unit must remain, others define parts of the town centre as prime retail areas, allowing non prime areas to have a greater range of uses. Where the present policy of prioritising retail has been discussed at consultation meetings on the forthcoming East Lothian Local Development Plan, the prevailing opinion has been that the restriction should be relaxed to permit a faster change to a non retail use and that the unit is quickly reoccupied. These are all matters for the East Lothian Local Development Plan, which will replace the East Lothian Local Plan 2008, to consider. Any commercial landlord could use one or more of their trading units as a subsidised start up business location for trial 'pop-up shops' but this would be at the expense of a market rental, and might introduce a distortion to the rental market, it could only be considered if a property is proving exceptionally difficult to let. The Council owns only a small proportion of commercial units in the town centre and currently has little difficulty in letting these when they become vacant.

Key Points/Issues

- ***Musselburgh has a solid base of commercial units and a reasonable diversity of retail, service and leisure uses. In common with national trends, the number of shops, particularly convenience shops, is slowly reducing and the number of units offering services is increasing;***
- ***The proportion of nationally owned multiple units at around one third is a strength of the centre, emphasising its diversity and difference from other East Lothian town centres;***
- ***Commercial shop and service unit vacancy rates are currently relatively low and are re-occupied quickly. This is contrary to national trends and may not continue;***
- ***The on-sale licensed trade has suffered decline in line with national trends. It is likely that some public house and small hotel premises will be converted to other uses;***
- ***There is a reasonable range of commercial businesses open throughout the day and evening and the town centre does not close down for a half day or at lunchtime;***
- ***East Lothian Council will review its town centre planning policies contained in the East Lothian Local Plan 2008, including that which prioritises retail use over other town centre uses;***

- ***Vacant or underused space above commercial premises has potential to supply additional residential accommodation to bring new residents into the town centre.***

Proposed Actions

- ***Encourage the reuse of vacant upper floor spaces above commercial units by contacting owners to establish what might be needed to re-introduce residential accommodation into the town centre (Aim 1);***
- ***Review local development plan policies that affect the town centre (Aim 2).***

4 Tourism and leisure

- 4.1 Whilst Musselburgh is not generally regarded as a tourist town, it does experience a significant number of day visitors, for example, those attending Musselburgh Races or visiting Levenhall Links. In addition the John Muir Way coastal walk and National Cycle Route 76 pass through the town. Other attractions include Newhailes House, Brunton Theatre, museums, and golf. In 2008 Queen Margaret University opened and, whilst the majority of staff and students are day visitors, the University has accommodation for 800 resident students. Loretto independent school also has around 500 pupils. These add additional visitors to the town. The Musselburgh Museum which opened in 2011 experienced a higher than expected number of visitors, almost 6,000, in its first year despite limited 3 days per week opening.
- 4.2 Specialist retailers and quality restaurants also attract people to a town and two of the most famous names in ice cream, Di Rollo and Luca, are good Musselburgh examples for which the town is popularly known. Specialist retailers can improve market awareness and footfall by grouping together with similar businesses to create niche marketing areas.
- 4.3 Tourist information is provided at The Brunton where it benefits from long opening hours. Most marketing is done by attractions like the racecourse and theatre themselves and there is scope for more coordinated town marketing, particularly in encouraging more day visitors from Edinburgh and the rest of East Lothian. Those using the long distance walking and cycle routes need to be encouraged to divert into the town centre and, when in the town centre, visitors need to be able to learn more about the town's extensive history and heritage. This was a theme noted in the town centre consultation along with a need for a general information board on High Street. There are a series of interpretation boards throughout the town centre and these could be complemented by a more in depth town heritage trail that could start and finish at the museum or old Town Hall.

- 4.4 Musselburgh is a large town but currently has no regular markets or commercial events to draw people in. There has been interest in establishing a farmer's market but this would ideally require a serviced venue in the town centre. Such events have proven useful draws in other towns, with Haddington Farmer's Market attracting around 1,000 people each month, increasing footfall in its town centre and offering existing traders potential additional sales.
- 4.5 Walking and cycling routes exist throughout the town with links to the town centre. However not all are signposted and some would benefit from, for example, a crossing point on Mall Avenue that could link up with access paths to the Eskmills complex. Around 500 people work at Eskmills, modern offices located in an historic industrial complex that is a visitor attraction in its own right and a part of the town's heritage. Improved path links between Eskmills and the town centre could be mutually beneficial.

Key Points/Issues

- ***Musselburgh may not be a recognised tourist town but has a range of attractions and should be better marketed, particularly as a destination for a day visit;***
- ***A town trail to celebrate the history and heritage of the town could take advantage of both traditional leaflets and new technology;***
- ***Path links from other parts of Musselburgh, including the long distance routes to the town centre, should make it easy for people to find their way to the town centre.***

Proposed Actions

- ***Encourage better marketing of Musselburgh by bringing together Musselburgh attractions that do their own marketing and encouraging 'day out in Musselburgh' visits. Develop a distinctive branding for the town (Aim 1);***
- ***Review the existing heritage information available to visitors in Musselburgh and develop a town trail incorporating the use of modern communication (Aim 4);***
- ***Review path links to Musselburgh town centre; improve directional signage and identify small scale improvements to routes (Aim 2);***
- ***Encourage more commercial and community events and attractions in Musselburgh town centre.***

5 Transport and Parking

- 5.1 Musselburgh is located between the East Lothian coastal settlements and Edinburgh and consequently accommodates high traffic volumes.

The number of crossings over the River Esk is limited to the A1 trunk road (Musselburgh bypass) and the town centre route of High Street in conjunction with either Bridge Street and North High Street or Mall Avenue and Olivebank Road. Not all through traffic uses the A1 bypass however leading to an estimated 30% of traffic in High Street that is passing through.¹² The only alternative routes to the main streets would be to re-connect Inveresk Road to Olive Bank Road or to use New Street/Millhill utilising the 'electric bridge' to through traffic. This bridge was built to facilitate the construction of Cockenzie power station but was not adopted as part of the local road network, although it is used on a temporary basis to facilitate traffic flow on race days at Musselburgh Racecourse. Whilst it would provide another crossing of the River Esk, its re-opening would attract through traffic to residential streets. Similarly to use Inveresk Road would attract through traffic to the detriment of residential areas and the likelihood is that High Street will remain the main through route within the town.

- 5.2 Traffic queuing is commonplace at certain times and places within Musselburgh. However, the recently installed SCOOT (Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique) Urban Traffic Control system is designed to improve traffic flow throughout the town centre. Sensors positioned in the road detect vehicle numbers at each set of traffic signals and automatically adjust signal timings to accommodate the detected traffic. It can be programmed to favour particular routes, delay 'rat-runs' and to position traffic queues away from the main shopping street. The system includes the Mall Avenue/High Street junction, the busiest junction in East Lothian at 25,000 vehicles per day, and allows greater control over traffic flow through the town centre.
- 5.3 Air quality is continually monitored in Musselburgh town centre with nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate material (PM₁₀) being the main pollutants. Detailed assessment of NO₂ levels was undertaken in 2012 and resulted in additional monitoring at locations on High Street and Bridge Street where dispersion modelling had indicated that exceedences of NO₂ had occurred in 2011. If monitoring results indicate it is necessary then an Air Quality Management Area must be declared and an action plan prepared to identify measures to reduce NO₂ levels. The SCOOT system can help reduce air pollution by restricting vehicle queues in sensitive parts of the main streets.

Public Transport

- 5.4 Public transport is important to Musselburgh. There are three railway stations in or close to Musselburgh at Wallyford, Musselburgh and Newcraighall, but none are in the town centre. Wallyford is well connected to the town centre via frequent bus services from its large park and ride car park as well as some other through bus services from elsewhere in East Lothian. Musselburgh and Newcraighall station, close by Queen Margaret University, are served by a less frequent bus but

¹² Musselburgh Development Study Halcrow, November 1999

links to the town centre are provided. Musselburgh town centre is served by frequent buses provided by Lothian Buses and First Group. The former's services are informed by real time bus information signs. The frequency of buses is such that the town centre is rarely to be seen without one or more buses in it at any one time. This brings people into the town centre and is therefore good for business but adds to the congestion and air quality issues in the centre. The town centre survey showed that congestion at bus stops, both from people and queuing buses, is an issue. Provision of additional bus stops would help to alleviate this problem.

Parking

- 5.5 Parking was an issue for many of the respondents to the town centre survey. Some 47% stated that improved access to parking and more parking in the town centre would encourage people to use the High Street more. Many respondents also objected to the introduction of pay parking by the owners of the town centre car park on Kilwinning Place, which is privately owned.
- 5.6 An analysis of parking within Musselburgh identified that on street parking in the town centre worked generally well, although there were some issues of long stay parking even where 90 minute restrictions were in place. Where time restrictions were in place there was evidence of displacement to nearby side streets that had no restriction. Off-street car parks seemed to be poorly managed with poor turnover of spaces along with a lack of awareness and usage. Poor directional signage meant that people unfamiliar with the area were unlikely to make use of off-street car parks. Temporary parking restrictions on race days worked well and caused few problems to the local area.¹³
- 5.7 The importance of parking availability is highlighted by the respondents to the town centre survey. The implication is that if parking is not available people may not stop to use town centre services. The main town centre car parks are at Gracefield off North High Street, Kilwinning Place, Mall Avenue and Shorthope Street, in addition to the on street parking. On street parking is time limited but most off street car parks are currently freely available with unlimited stay. To encourage greater availability of parking, town centre spaces and those at the Shorthope Street car park and the southern part of the Gracefield car park should be better managed with time restrictions put in place to increase parking turnover and reduce all day parking. People who currently leave a car in a town centre car park all day should be encouraged to use alternative parking, for example, at the Wallyford park and ride (337 spaces) where there is a regular bus service to the town centre and beyond. Parking infringement needs to be enforced to achieve this; this is a matter for East Lothian Council to address (except at the privately owned Kilwinning Place car park).

¹³ East Lothian Parking Strategy December 2009 MVA Consultancy

- 5.8 Car parks, including those at train stations, offer their own marketing opportunities for the town centre; for example, orientation maps with key shops and services identified.

Key Points/Issues

- *Air quality is being closely monitored at identified locations in the town centre to establish whether an Air Quality Management Area requires to be declared;*
- *Traffic levels in Musselburgh are high because there are few alternative routes;*
- *Bus stop congestion arises from the number of buses serving particular stops. Additional stops would help to alleviate this problem;*
- *There is a need to better manage and enforce the supply and turnover of short stay parking facilities in the town;*
- *Time restricted parking should be introduced to some town centre car parks to deter all day parking and free up availability for town centre users;*
- *Parking enforcement will be undertaken by East Lothian Council at public car parks;*
- *Directional signage to town centre car parks should be reviewed;*
- *There are marketing opportunities for the town centre at car parks.*

Proposed Actions

- *Monitor air quality issues in Musselburgh town centre and extend the operation and influence of the SCOOT system to improve traffic flow in the town centre (Aim 3);*
- *Review the number and location of bus stops throughout Musselburgh town centre to reduce bus stop congestion and build up of buses at a single stop (Aim 3);*
- *Review Musselburgh town centre car park operation to introduce short stay to increase turnover and parking availability at some car parks. Review associated parking enforcement. (Aim 1).*

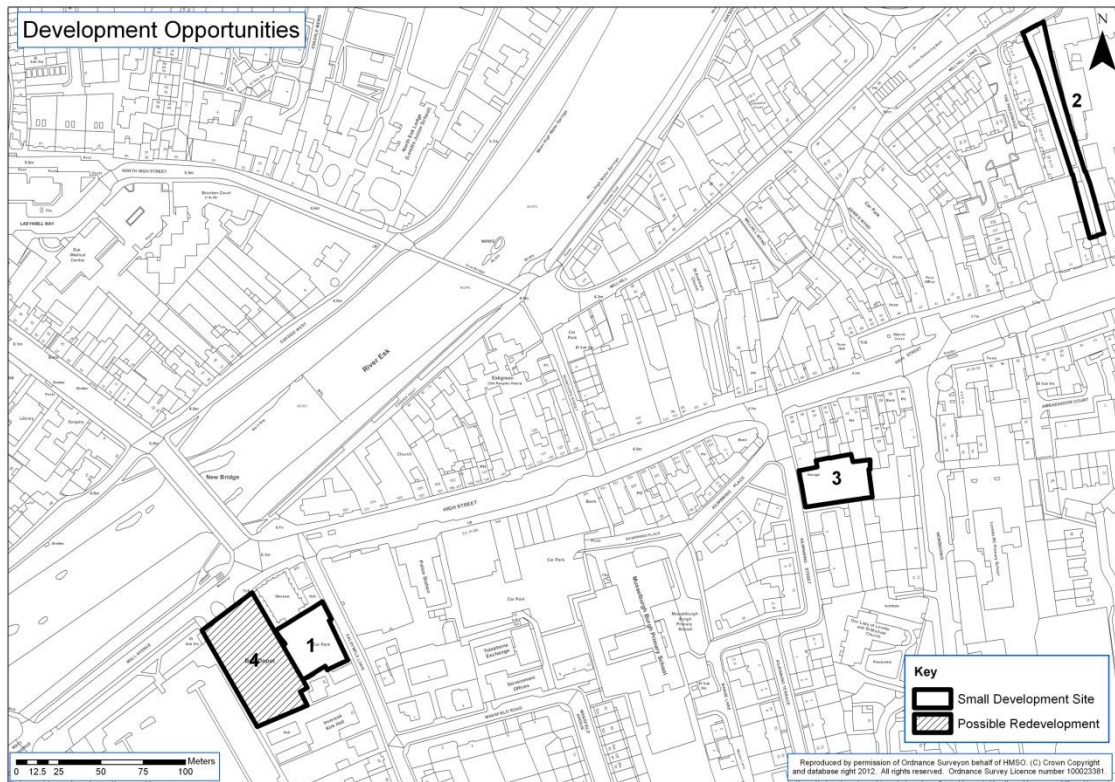
6 Development Opportunities

- 6.1 There are a limited number of small development sites within Musselburgh town centre. None face the main streets directly, though most lie close to the main streets. Redevelopment can offer opportunities to bring new residents, employment or parking provision into the town, all

of which benefit and support the local town centre economy. The sites are:

1. **Former Somerfield car park, Dalrymple Loan** – this rectangular site accessed from Dalrymple Loan is in private ownership but was marketed in 2011. It is suitable in principle for car parking, or housing/commercial development in line with East Lothian Local Plan policy.
2. **Former Millhill stables** – this long and narrow site has a vehicular access from Millhill and a pedestrian right of access to High Street. The site is ELC owned and is available for redevelopment, while not being an easy site to develop. It may be suitable in principle for a limited housing or car parking development. The site could accommodate around 30 car parking spaces. The Council has prepared development guidelines for the site.¹⁴
3. **1-2 Kilwinning Street** – This is the site of a former garage and has been acquired for affordable housing development by East Lothian Council. Work has commenced on 22 flats plus an additional 6 units on a separate small site in Kilwinning Street due to be completed in 2013.
4. **Bus Depot, Mall Avenue** - should the depot no longer be required in the future then it offers an opportunity for redevelopment in support of the town centre. This should provide commercial use on the ground floor, in line with East Lothian Local Plan 2008 policy, to extend the town centre and give a further reason to encourage more walking trips between the supermarket and the town centre.

¹⁴ Design Guidelines, The Stables, Millhill Musselburgh, 2010



Key Points/Issues

- ***There are few redevelopment opportunities in Musselburgh town centre with those sites that there are being small. Every opportunity that brings new residents or employment or supports the town centre in other ways should be encouraged.***

Proposed Actions

- ***East Lothian Council to review the potential use of the vacant Millhill Stables (Aim 2).***

7 Built Environment and Public Spaces

7.1 The overall quality of any town centre is an important indicator of how well it is performing and of its potential to attract residents and visitors to it. The public consultation survey showed that 78% of local people use the High Street at least once a week with 33% visiting daily. The appearance of the town centre is therefore important as it is the unique environment that town centre users experience and in which businesses operate.

7.2 The town centre survey identified that most respondents thought that the town centre was in need of a 'makeover', in particular this referred to a general desire for streetscape improvements and the improvement of key local buildings such as the vacant Musselburgh Arms Hotel. Respondents also mentioned the need for shop fronts to be smartened up and for more attractive and consistent street furniture and decorative planting along the High Streets. Issues with footway condition and

overcrowding at particular points were identified, as was the need to make more of the town's assets. This included highlighting historic buildings and enhancing the riverside setting, making better links between the river and the High Street.

- 7.3 The Town Centre Task Group has undertaken a street clutter survey to highlight redundant or broken items of street furniture, temporary signs and areas suffering from litter which have subsequently been dealt with by East Lothian Council. A second survey was completed in autumn 2012 and regular surveys will keep on top of the situation.
- 7.4 The 2012 sample survey of privately owned housing stock identified that in Musselburgh town centre dwellings are older and suffer from more disrepair than average for East Lothian with 58% requiring some repair.¹⁵
- 7.5 Musselburgh is a historic burgh and has many of the characteristics of an old burgh including the tolbooth, mercat cross and the wide street for trading. Its oldest building is the tolbooth dating from 1590 with its 15th century steeple. However, most buildings in the High Street are 18th and 19th century with some 20th century infill development. Parts of the town centre are within the designated Musselburgh Conservation Area; this includes High Street east of Kilwinning Street, Bridge Street and the former High Church. The main section of High Street between Kilwinning Street and the High Church is not in the conservation area. The town centre contains 74 listed buildings including the category A listed tolbooth and town hall.
- 7.6 The spaces between buildings in Musselburgh town centre have changed little in recent decades. Because the town centre is based on a major traffic route the street is dominated by vehicles, including buses. Parking is provided on street and little of the space between buildings in the centre is given over to the pedestrian. Pedestrian congestion was even noted in the town centre survey responses at two points on High Street where bus stops are located; outside the Citizens' Advice Bureau and outside the police station. Bus stops here are located in wider parts of the street; the issue seems to be where people stand to wait for buses.
- 7.7 Whilst maintaining the free flow of traffic is important, and provision of bus stops is clearly necessary, there are still options for creating more pedestrian friendly space within the town centre. For example, there is no public gathering space, a point picked up in the town centre survey with 65 responses suggesting that the area by the mercat cross be made into a town square. This area was originally a civic space for Musselburgh, created by the town council in 1753, and provided with the mercat cross that still stands today. Old photos show it used for civic ceremonies.

¹⁵ Private Sector Stock Condition Report 2012



Gathering at the Mercat Cross and Musselburgh Arms Hotel in 1935

- 7.8 Most towns have at least one public gathering place for pedestrians where civic ceremonies are held and markets and other commercial activity takes place. These are a focus of the town and can become its defining image. Recent town centre improvements in Haddington and Dunbar created pedestrian areas outside public buildings where markets and gatherings can be held, information displayed and the setting of important town buildings improved.

High Street, East of the Tolbooth/Town Hall

- 7.9 That part of High Street where the Town Hall and the buildings of 41-61 High Street form a corner is an old gathering place in Musselburgh and could be suitable for that function again, as a landscaped pedestrian space. This would enhance the setting of the historic buildings of the area, especially the mercat cross, and allow the history and heritage of the town to be interpreted and displayed in a location that is very close to the new town museum. It would fit with plans by the Community Council to floodlight the tolbooth to highlight its architectural character. It could be designed to be a high quality place with natural stone paving, coordinated street furniture and small trees to complement other trees in the street. Underground services could be provided to supply electricity, water and a Christmas tree mounting socket. There would be sufficient open space to park a promotional vehicle and to accommodate continental, farmers, community or other markets and promotional or community events. To provide a sense of enclosure in the square, a low stone wall with railings and gatepiers at entry points or contemporary railings could separate the square from the main carriageway, or the area kept more open.

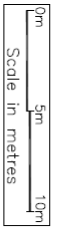


Tolbooth/Old Town hall and Mercat Cross dominated by parked vehicles

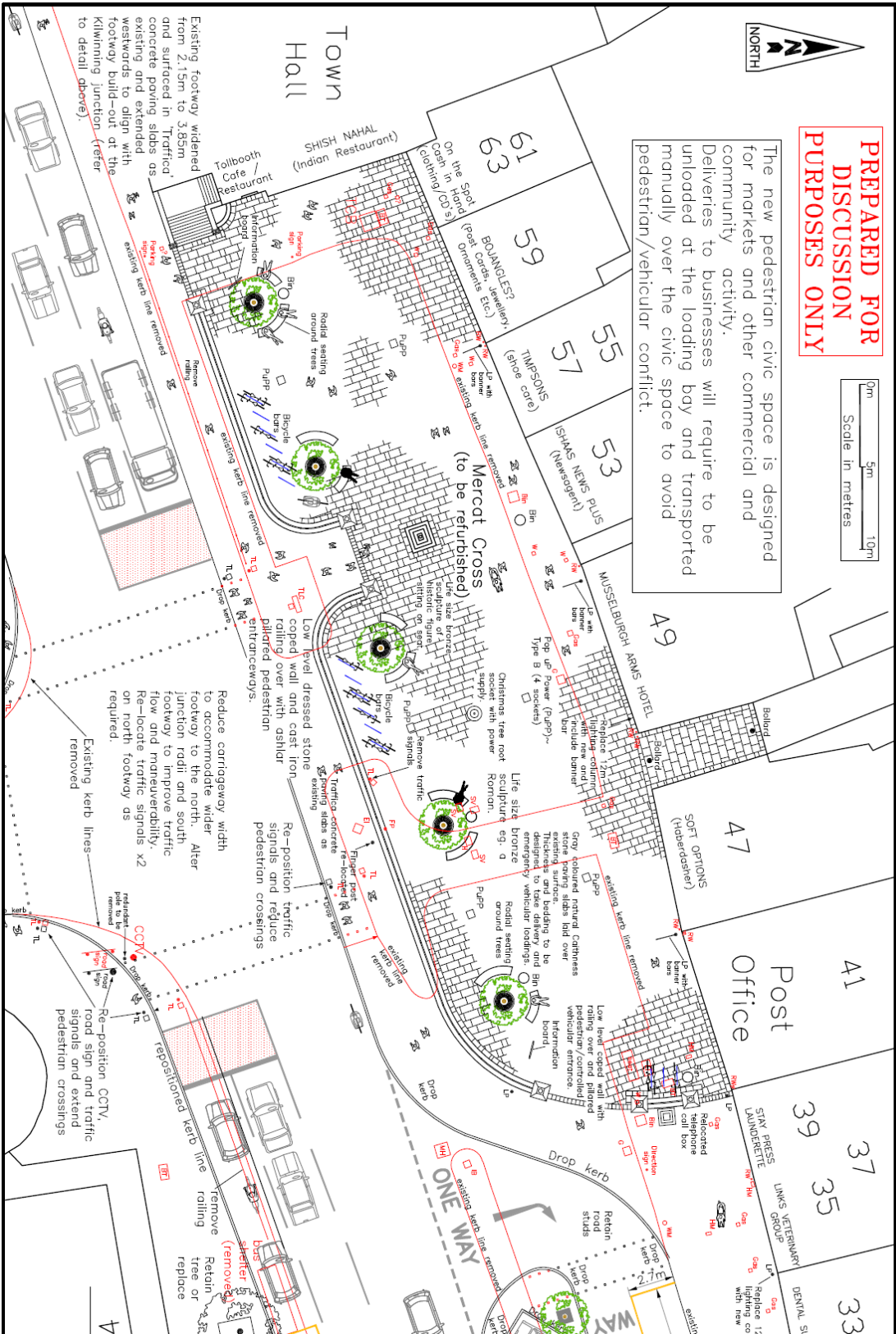
- 7.10 Cafes and restaurants might set out seats within the square and it should help to encourage the reuse of the vacant hotel that fronts on to the area. The plan below gives some idea of what the square might look like with a pedestrian area extending from outside the former post office at 41 High Street to the tolbooth/town hall. The new area could accommodate artwork to reference the town's history and heritage. An example might be a full size figure of a Roman soldier or civilian as a reminder of the town's Roman past when it serviced a Roman Fort around AD 140. Such artworks can generate interest, leave lasting memories of a place and help with marketing. To encourage people to the square and to stay longer, public wi-fi could be made available and it could be the start and finish of a historical town trail that could be accessed using a leaflet or through information provided by a modern phone application.
- 7.11 The present image of this area is of one that is devoted to the car. There is parking around and adjacent to the mercat cross, and pedestrians are required to walk the long way round by the buildings rather than cross into a road. An open landscaped square would enhance the setting of the buildings and encourage people to use the space more. Such public spaces can leave a lasting legacy in changing the perception and image of a town. It would provide a space that will attract commercial and community activity and encourage footfall to this part of the town centre to the benefit of local business.
- 7.12 However, car parking is important to the town centre. As the creation of a square would lead to the loss of parking, a redesign of the street east towards the Pinkie Pillars would have to be an integral part of the proposed project. This would see additional parking separated from the road by a centrally positioned kerbed footway on which trees would be placed to complement the cherry trees on the south side of the street. The part-time taxi rank would remain, the bus stop repositioned to the main road, motorbike, cycle and disabled parking provided and the

HIGH STREET EAST OF THE TOLBOOTH/TOWNHALL: INDICATIVE PLAN SHOWING CIVIC SPACE

**PREPARED FOR
DISCUSSION
PURPOSES ONLY**



The new pedestrian civic space is designed for markets and other commercial and community activity. Deliveries to businesses will require to be unloaded at the loading bay and transported manually over the civic space to avoid pedestrian/vehicular conflict.



Existing footway widened from 2.15m to 3.85m and surfaced in 'Trotfired' concrete paving slabs as westwards to align with footway build-out at the Kilwinning junction (refer to detail above).

Reduce carriageway width to accommodate wider footway to the north. Alter junction radii and south footway to improve traffic flow and manoeuvrability. Re-locate traffic signals on north footway as required.

Re-position traffic signals and reduce pedestrian crossings

Re-position CCTV, road sign and traffic signals and extend pedestrian crossings

- 7.13 existing vehicle parking reprovided. There would also be an opportunity to relocate the northmost Pinkie Pillar closer to the middle of the street, where it is understood it used to be, when it formed a more noticeable historic gateway feature.
- 7.14 Other parts of Musselburgh town centre would also benefit from environmental improvement to reorganise and enhance space and improve the overall quality of the streetscape. The following locations are suggested for improvement and are shown on the map below:

High Street, Kilwinning Street to Rennie Bridge

- 7.15 Street furniture in High Street should be coordinated. The simple use of black poles for traffic signs and street lighting columns and the grouping together of street furniture where possible usually prove the most visually effective. Where there are seats, such as outside the Hollies, these should also coordinate, rather than the present use of different seat styles. Low walls or decorative planting could help provide a sense of enclosure in front of seats in this area. Planting two or three street trees in the wide pavement in front of the modern row of shops on the south side of the street would enhance the streetscape. Lighting columns could be provided with banner arm kits to allow for promotional or advertising banners. The larger wynds and closes such as Kerr's Wynd and Fish Close would benefit from coordinated street furniture including signage and repainting.



High Street

Bridge Street

- 7.16 Bridge Street is within the designated conservation area but does not require major improvement. However, coordinated street furniture should be provided when replacement is required, using black painted poles for traffic signs and street lighting columns. Street furniture should be grouped together where possible which should minimise visual impact. Some individual buildings, including shops, would benefit from reinstatement of original glazing patterns as recently installed at 7-9 Bridge Street. Shopfronts would also benefit from improved signage, and where front boundary walls have been removed in front of Georgian buildings at 18-20 Bridge Street, their reinstatement would improve the appearance of the street.



18-20 Bridge Street

- 7.17 At the High Street side of the bridge the area around the war memorial requires some improvement. This could include the provision of a disabled access to the riverside walkway along with the repair of the stone steps and retaining wall.



Steps and wall at War Memorial

- 7.18 The Brunton complex was the subject of a £3.7m refurbishment in 2012. The external landscape around the building and its junction with North High Street would also benefit from comprehensive relandscaping to enhance the area. This could include replacement coordinated street furniture, new areas of paving and a ramped access to the theatre.

North High Street

- 7.19 North High Street is part of the busy main traffic route yet has its own range of shops and services on both sides of the street. With parallel parking on both sides and widely spaced controlled pedestrian crossings it is not an easy street to cross between shops. It is also a broad street lined with cars and without street trees. To make it easier to cross, a series of wider pavement areas, usually referred to as 'blisters', paired with another on the opposite side of the street would allow a shorter crossing and clearer sight of oncoming vehicles. These could be marked with a bollard and/or a street tree to add visual interest to the street. As with High Street, street furniture in North High Street should be coordinated, provided when a replacement is required, ensuring the simple use of black poles for traffic signs and street lighting columns and

grouping together of street furniture where possible to minimise visual impact.

- 7.20 North High Street lies in the area of Musselburgh known as Fisherrow reflecting its past as a significant fishing port. Fisherrow is a commonly used name but does not appear in the town centre: for example, the main street in Fisherrow is simply named North High Street, leading to potential confusion with High Street, particularly as both are shopping streets with some premises, Ladbrokes and Baynes Bakers for example, represented in both streets. To strengthen links with the heritage of the area, and make it more distinctive from Musselburgh High Street, it is proposed that North High Street be rebranded as either Fisherrow High Street, or as North High Street, Fisherrow, Musselburgh. This might only require an additional sign on buildings below 'North High Street' with the addition of the word, 'Fisherrow'.

Shorthope Street

- 7.21 Shorthope Street is a narrow street connecting the High Street to the pedestrian footbridge over the Esk to Fisherrow and busy, particularly with pedestrians. There are two small, popular car parks at the riverside end of the street and public toilets. The area by the river is a popular location to watch swans on a small island in the river and also contains a slipway to the river. This car park and the amenity area by the river has recently been improved by East Lothian Council but the south car park and Shorthope Street itself require further improvement. The south car park would benefit from general tidying up and provision of boundary railings, or in part, a wall to help screen the recycling bins.
- 7.21 The older buildings on the street would benefit from enhancement by some basic repairs to gutters and downpipes and repainting walls to a coordinated colour scheme. These are privately owned buildings, some are flats and others commercially owned.



Shorthope Street: South car park and buildings on west side

Condition of Buildings

- 7.22 The private sector housing stock condition survey identified that there is a higher concentration of privately owned houses in the town centre that are in need of repair than in other parts of Musselburgh. This is common to many town centres. Most buildings in Musselburgh town centre are traditionally constructed and stone finished. However, there is a small number which could be described as blighting the overall appearance of the town centre in their present external condition. In addition there are other buildings which could contribute better to the overall appearance of the town centre. Often these are painted buildings which require regular maintenance to keep them in presentable condition. It is the owners responsibility to maintain their buildings, which would benefit from a revised colour scheme to enhance their architectural features and help to visually distinguish them from their neighbouring properties to help revitalise the area.
- 7.23 East Lothian Council could prepare suggested colour schemes as guidance and make this available to property owners for consideration. In some areas, for example, Shorthope Street, several buildings, if sensitively painted to highlight their architectural features, would have a strong cumulative enhancement effect on the town centre.

The Conservation Area

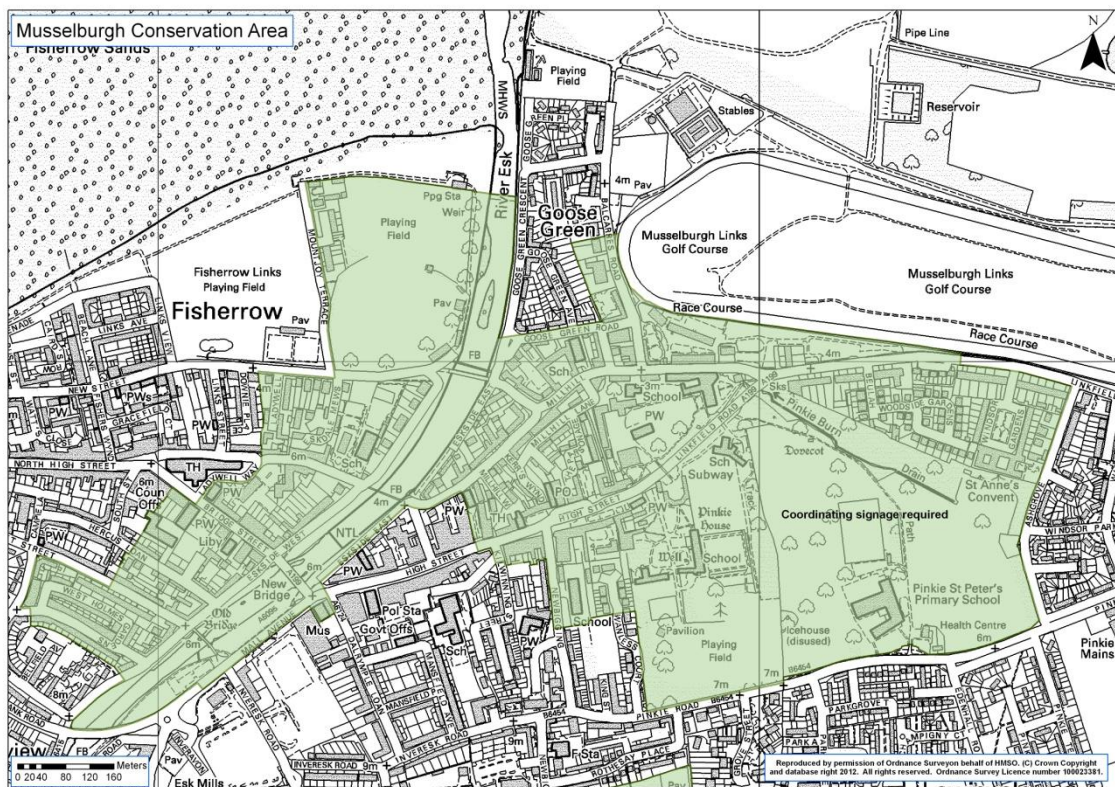
- 7.24 Musselburgh Conservation Area covers a large part of the historic town including the eastern end of High Street and Bridge Street. In addition to works to the public realm, the High Street would benefit from the repair and restoration of the Musselburgh Arms hotel at 49 High Street (included on the national Buildings at Risk register¹⁶) and the Stand at 72-74 High Street, both listed buildings. Some individual shops in this area would benefit from restoration of original features and groups of shops from more coordinated signage. Small scale restoration work such as the reinstatement of the original window style with small pane glazing would enhance the overall conservation area as well as restore many of the flats and houses in the area. This work may be eligible for national funding programmes from Historic Scotland or the Heritage Lottery Fund and this should be explored.

¹⁶ <http://www.buildingsatrisk.org.uk>



Musselburgh Arms Hotel and The Stand

7.25 The conservation area requires a full character appraisal to be undertaken to identify its special architectural and historic character and review its boundary in detail. This should be undertaken by East Lothian Council but with community support from Musselburgh Conservation Society.



Appearance of Shops and other Commercial Premises

7.26 Many shops and businesses could make a significant improvement to the streetscape by adopting revised paint colour schemes and signage. Where shops are located within the conservation area this would enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, but

within High Street a greater consistency with shop signage would also have an overall benefit to the streetscape. This issue was raised by respondents to the town centre survey and has been discussed by the Musselburgh Town Centre Task Group. The Musselburgh Conservation Society has suggested some draft guidelines for shop signage to encourage more coherent fascias. A key issue with any new businesses is be noticed as soon as trading commences and some signs are commissioned before the necessary advertisement consent and/or planning permission and listed building consent is obtained from East Lothian Council. Retrospective planning applications can lead to compromise design solutions and, if not subsequently approved, to a waste of money by applicants. The best solution in such circumstances is usually the erection of a temporary banner as a sign and an early submission for the necessary consents.

- 7.27 However, it is important that, when considering a new sign, a business should be well advised. Whilst free planning advice is available from East Lothian Council through the daily Duty Planner (Tel 01620 827216 Mon - Fri 9.00am - 1.00pm) additional guidance should be made available to business owners to advise them on quality signage. It is proposed that East Lothian Council prepare a shopfront and advertisement design guide and makes this available to prospective businesses.
- 7.28 Planning law permits advertisement consent to be granted for only a maximum period of five years. This allows for deteriorating signs to be replaced in the interests of the overall quality of the streetscape. However, not all businesses renew their advertisement consent after the time period expires. A survey of businesses in Musselburgh town centre identified that 39 business premises had external signage that had lapsed after five years and had not been renewed and 78 premises had no permission for the present appearance of their premises. Businesses that were part of nationally owned companies were more likely to have the necessary permissions than independent businesses.
- 7.29 The annual retail survey undertaken by East Lothian Council includes a subjective assessment of the condition and appearance of ground floor business premises in the town centre. Most are classified as in good or fair condition with only 4% classified as in poor condition.
- 7.30 It is proposed that once guidelines have been prepared, approved and publicised, a process of planning enforcement action is undertaken to ensure that business premises obtain or renew planning permission or advertisement consent as necessary. Painting a property that lies within a designated conservation area a different colour also requires planning permission and some commercial premises do not have a current permission for their colour schemes. Putting this right will allow an opportunity for commercial property owners and occupiers to revise their signage and contribute to an overall improvement in the appearance of the town centre.

7.31 An example of the type of improvements that could be made to shops is illustrated below using existing premises at High Street as an example. This was prepared by Musselburgh Conservation Society as an example of how signage could be improved to help the overall appearance of the town centre:



Maximising Funding Opportunities

- 7.32 Where projects are proposed that would enhance the overall environment of Musselburgh town centre, all potential sources of funding should be explored. East Lothian Council needs to make its money go as far as it can by drawing in private and other funding partners to achieve maximum investment. To implement all the project ideas outlined for the town centre streets would require more funding than is likely to be available. Consequently, not all projects may be able to be implemented in the lifetime of this strategy. However, the inclusion of projects within an overall strategy will help to make the case for additional funding if opportunities arise.

Key Points/Issues

- ***Musselburgh lacks a pedestrian gathering place and the most suitable location for a new town square is at the mercat cross outside the tolbooth/Town Hall. A comprehensive public realm improvement between Pinkie Pillars and the Town Hall would help to improve the image of Musselburgh and encourage footfall and interest in the east end of the town centre;***
- ***The other main streets in the town centre require regular maintenance work to footways; small scale enhancement including street furniture coordination and limited tree planting;***
- ***The area surrounding the Brunton complex would benefit from an environmental improvement scheme;***
- ***The riverside from the war memorial by the Hollies to Shorthope Street requires environmental improvement to upgrade the path, repair the retaining wall at the war memorial and provide a disabled ramp down to the path;***
- ***Improvement to the link between High Street and the riverside along Shorthope Street, including its south car park, would help to encourage people to use the link and better integrate the riverside to the town centre as well as enhancing the appearance of the town centre;***
- ***The street clutter survey has resulted in a reduction in the amount of redundant street furniture, fly posting and litter in the town centre.***

Proposed Actions

- ***Identify long-term environmental improvement actions for the area between the tolbooth and town hall that can create a high quality pedestrian civic space as well as reproviding parking (Aims 1,2,3);***
- ***Identify an environmental improvement action plan for each of the main streets in the town centre for coordinated street***

furniture and small scale environmental improvement work. Depending on availability of resources these may be implemented in phases as and when replacement is required. (Aim 3);

- *Develop ideas for environmental improvement around the Brunton Hall in association with the community and businesses for implementation when resources permit (Aim 3);*
- *Develop ideas for environmental improvement at the war memorial including disabled access to the riverside path in association with the community and businesses for implementation when resources permit (Aim 3);*
- *Identify small scale environmental improvements to the south car park on Shorthope Street to improve its appearance and make it more attractive to users. Encourage building owners in Shorthope Street to undertake guttering repairs and repainting to a coordinated colour scheme to substantially enhance the appearance of the street. (Aims 2,3);*
- *Undertake an annual street clutter survey to identify where small scale improvement is required to improve the appearance of the town centre. (Aim 3);*
- *Prepare a Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Musselburgh Conservation Area*
- *Prepare and publicise shopfront and advertisement design guidelines.*

8 Community Facilities and Safety

- 8.1 There is an extensive range of community facilities in Musselburgh town centre. The main buildings are the recently refurbished Brunton, including its halls and theatre, the Town Hall and tolbooth and the Fisherrow Centre. There is also the Musselburgh Library in Bridge Street and a number of church halls. Whilst the Brunton complex is well used the Town Hall is less so. The town hall complex comprises the old steeple, the old tolbooth, its Georgian extension and the Town Hall from 1900 that lies behind. The tolbooth in particular is an underused, but historically interesting building dating from 1590 and features in most images of Musselburgh town centre. It used to house the town cells and court room and the cells remain in the building. As a tall, narrow building with vaulted ceilings it is a difficult building to reuse. East Lothian Council does not have any current plans for the Town Hall/tolbooth complex other than to continue to rent out the commercial units on its ground floors, but the building offers opportunities for additional use.
- 8.2 The town centre survey identified that people were concerned about groups of young people particularly in the vicinity of the Brunton, and weekend evenings were perceived as a time when a number of

respondents felt threatened in the town centre. There are general concerns about drug taking.

- 8.3 Crime statistic analysis for the year to November 2011 showed that 27% of all crime in Musselburgh happened in the town centre. The most common are crimes of dishonesty followed by minor assault/breach of the peace and fire raising/vandalism. The most common street for crime is North High Street.¹⁷
- 8.4 Crime is the responsibility of the Police and specific locations raised in the town centre survey have been the subject of increased police activity. It may be possible to help to design out crime as part of environmental improvement work and where this is proposed consultation with the police should assist the design process.
- 8.5 Musselburgh town centre is covered by closed circuit television cameras controlled by East Lothian Council linked to a 24-hour control centre.

9 Management of Musselburgh Town Centre

- 9.1 East Lothian Council is responsible for managing much of the overall environment of Musselburgh town centre. Street clutter, litter, tree maintenance, fly posting, potholes, damaged street furniture, graffiti, noise nuisance and dog fouling can all be reported direct to the Council and will be passed to internal departments to respond to. The Council operates a Community Warden scheme and contact can be made via the Safer Communities Team with the local warden who patrols the town centre to raise any issues of concern.
- 9.2 Musselburgh town centre is cleaned and inspected on a daily basis with litter picking on green areas and regular grounds maintenance in the summer. Commercial waste is collected either by an authorised commercial waste company or by East Lothian Council. There are several recycling points in the town centre including at Shorthope Street.
- 9.3 Matters relating to planning and economic development and business start up are dealt with by East Lothian Council's Services for Communities and Support Services departments. Economic Development provide advice, support and training opportunities for existing businesses through the Business Gateway service at Queen Margaret University's Business Innovation Zone in Musselburgh.
- 9.4 From time to time sources of funding become available, usually on a bidding basis, from funders such as the lottery or agencies of the Scottish Government. Timescales are usually tight and it is important to have potential projects identified that can be included in funding bids. A number of the projects identified in this strategy fall into this category and can be put forward, either by East Lothian Council or by local community groups, for funding as resources become available.

¹⁷ Musselburgh Town Centre 1 November 2010 to 31 October 2011, Lothian and Borders Police and East Lothian Council

Key Points/Issues

- ***Much of the town centre environment is managed by East Lothian Council and it is important that stakeholders and the public know who to contact to report issues.***

Proposed Actions

- ***Develop and publicise a key contacts list for issues with regard to the management of Musselburgh town centre (Aims 1,2).***

10 Conclusions

- 10.1 Musselburgh town centre is a busy and vibrant area. However, much of the traffic and associated activity that contributes to its busy feel is through traffic and therefore may not be contributing to the town centre economy. A 24 hour supermarket opening on the edge of Musselburgh's designated town centre has altered the dynamics of retailing in Musselburgh but so far the town centre appears to be coping. The presence of the new supermarket within Musselburgh means that some of its customers who may previously have shopped out of Musselburgh at the Jewel or Fort Kinnaird may now find what they want within Musselburgh. The proximity of the new supermarket to the town centre, where it is within easy walking distance, allows people to use both. For the town centre to thrive it needs footfall, people on the street able to use its services. The independent annual footfall measure undertaken in 2011 indicated that Musselburgh increased its weekly footfall by 5% over 2010. Figures since 2008 show a broadly static footfall. However, the trend throughout the UK is of decreasing footfall in town centres so Musselburgh should not be complacent.
- 10.2 The challenge for the centre is therefore to make itself more appealing to people to use it. The town has many advantages - day visitors to the races, Levenhall Links, golf, the theatre for example, plus those who are attracted to the town for walking or cycling and for its particular form of retail – Musselburgh has more larger stores and discount stores than the other towns in East Lothian and attracts people from other parts of East Lothian in addition to the small independent shops that attract people for their particular goods and services. A further challenge is to ensure that more of the traffic that is in the town centre is encouraged to be there for business rather than just passing through.
- 10.3 To do so, a series of planned interventions are required to make the town more attractive to users, to allow for appropriate redevelopment and new town centre uses that can support the town centre, to attract and retain visitors for longer, to make its car parks more available and to market itself better. If these opportunities are taken then over the next five years Musselburgh town centre should continue to perform well and keep its ground floor shops and services in business, contributing to a lively local economy. The new residents that are coming to Musselburgh to live in

houses at Pinkie Mains and Wallyford will then provide further marketing opportunities for the town centre, where it will be important to encourage them to make Musselburgh town centre their preferred shopping area rather than use other out of town facilities.

10.4 Paragraph 3.1 referred to Scottish Government research based criteria for a successful town centre and the following section compares Musselburgh town centre with these criteria. The successful town centre:

1. Contains a mix of retail, leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities.

Musselburgh has a good mix of retail, cultural facilities in the form of the racecourse and the theatre. Leisure activities include 17 pubs, restaurants and cafés. Musselburgh fares well on this count.

2. Has its own identity and sense of place defined by quality of design and focus on public realm

Musselburgh has its own distinctive town centre buildings, particularly at its east end and in Bridge Street and these contribute to its image and identity. However, it lacks a public gathering place and a place of distinct quality in public realm, which is something that should be rectified by the proposals for a new civic town square at the tolbooth/town hall. With defining visual elements including the possibility of a Roman figure, this would help emphasise the sense of place and identity that the town currently lacks.

3. Has a good retail mix, choice, diversity, anchor stores and preferred shopper formats

Musselburgh has a good mix of national and independent stores though choice is limited in some areas. Its main anchor stores are Tesco, M&Co., Boots and B&M Bargains. Boots and M&Co. have been in Musselburgh for many years whereas the discount stores are more recent but are the preferred shopper formats of today and are anchor stores in many town centre across the country.

4. Low vacancy rates, low turnover, good physical fabric and fascias, competitiveness and capacity for change.

Musselburgh currently has a low vacancy rate and turnover of businesses is also fairly low. However, the physical fabric of some of the town centre buildings could be significantly improved. Shop fascias in some cases are out of proportion to the size of the commercial unit and collectively fail to exhibit much uniformity. There is room for improvement for the town on this measure. With regard to competitiveness, Musselburgh would appear to have demonstrated this by increasing footfall at a time of economic recession. The fast turnover of premises when they become vacant is a further indicator of its competitiveness.

10.5 With regard to capacity for change, the Musselburgh town centre offering has changed over time, with less retail and more services, all within the same geographical area. The physical appearance of the streets has

changed little and there is capacity within the eastern end of the town centre to accommodate change by introducing a pedestrian civic space. This would provide a setting to the townscape around the tolbooth/town hall, encourage people to stay in the area and create an improved image for the town centre. It would also provide a good opportunity for additional events in the town centre. There are few redevelopment opportunities that would bring in new commercial premises. If any opportunity arose, units of a different size to those available in the town centre would offer the opportunity for change that would enhance the town's offering.

- 10.6 Musselburgh will not be immune to wider social and economic trends that will be very challenging for at least the initial part of the strategy period. Because it is on a busy through route and is well served by public transport, the town centre will always have people in it. The challenge for the town centre is to encourage them to spend time and money in the centre to the benefit of its local economy. With additional public and private investment it can ensure that it retains its position as the main town centre in East Lothian. The Action Plan shows the actions that should be taken forward to implement the strategy over its 5-year period.

11 The Way Forward for the Town Centre Strategy

- 11.1 The Town Centre Strategy for Musselburgh has been drawn up and prepared following extensive discussion with the Musselburgh Town Centre Task Group and has been informed by the public engagement undertaken as a *Planning for Real*[®] exercise which involved around 1,200 people.
- 11.2 Notwithstanding the involvement of Forum members and public in the earlier consultation and survey, further consultation with the wider public and business community should also be undertaken on this draft strategy to ensure everyone has an opportunity to make their views known and for these to be considered prior to its final agreement.
- 11.3 Once approved, some of the actions will be within the gift of East Lothian Council to deliver. Others will not and those organisations that will be expected to contribute towards the implementation of the strategy should also be involved in monitoring its effectiveness, with a view to helping to advise on its eventual replacement. This might be done by the establishment of a local steering group or town team with community, business and East Lothian Council membership.
- 11.4 East Lothian Council will seek opportunities for its capital funding to go further by highlighting suitable projects that support the town centre for any additional funding that may be available from other sources such as the National Lottery; Historic Scotland; Central Scotland Green Network; European and other Scottish Government sources.
- 11.5 The actions contained in the action plan all have financial implications whether for East Lothian Council, private property owners, businesses or the community. Major environmental improvement work, such as that

proposed between the tolbooth/town hall and the Pinkie Pillars, is expensive and likely to be in the range of £700-900k.

- 11.6 In the current economic climate there is much speculation about the future of town centres such as Musselburgh. By agreeing a strategy, all those concerned with the future of Musselburgh town centre can work together to achieve the same aims to ensure that the town centre will be in a better position to meet the challenges of the next five years.

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Musselburgh Town Centre Strategy 2013-2018

Proposed Action Plan

| | ACTION | DELIVERY | HOW | WHEN |
|---|--|---|--|-----------|
| 1 | Public consultation on the Town Centre Strategy. | ELC (Policy & Projects) | Four week period for comments. All comments received to be considered and amendments to the strategy proposed where accepted. Final Approval by East Lothian Council | 2013 |
| | Viability of Musselburgh Town Centre | | | |
| 2 | Monitor town centre economic performance through annual land use surveys; business surveys and footfall measures | ELC (Policy and Projects and Economic Development) Teams | Annual Commercial Ground Floor Survey undertaken by East Lothian Council; Annual Footfall Measure undertaken by Independent Company. | 2013-2018 |
| 3 | Regular marketing campaigns, including branding, to encourage people to use the town centre | Business Community ELC (Economic Development) | Develop a regular series of marketing campaigns for the town centre | 2013-2018 |
| | Diversity of Land Uses in Town Centre | | | |
| 4 | Encourage the re-use of vacant upper floor floorspace above commercial premises | Private Owners and ELC (Housing Strategy and Development) | Empty Homes Officer role to contact property owners and encourage through advice and any grants that may become available. | 2013/14 |
| 5 | Review Local Development Plan planning policies that affect town centres | East Lothian Council (Policy & Projects) | East Lothian Local Development Plan Main Issues Report followed by Proposed Plan. Opportunities for public representation following consultation. | 2013 |
| | Tourism and Leisure | | | |

| | ACTION | DELIVERY | HOW | WHEN |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|-------------|
| 6 | Encourage better marketing of Musselburgh and develop a distinctive branding for the town | Community Business Community East Lothian Council (Economic Development) | Community, business community and East Lothian Council working together to coordinate and develop marketing and branding proposals | 2013-2018 |
| 7 | Review the existing heritage information available to visitors in Musselburgh and develop a town trail using new technology where appropriate | Community East Lothian Council (Culture and Community Development; Policy and Projects and Economic Development) | Review existing heritage information available in Musselburgh town centre. Consider feasibility of developing an additional town trail using new technology where appropriate as well as more traditional methods | 2014/15 |
| 8 | Review path links to Musselburgh town centre and improve directional signage and other small scale improvements | ELC (Transportation; Landscape & Countryside) | Survey of existing path routes to identify where improvements are required. Implementation as resources permit. | 2014/15 |
| 9 | Encourage events and attractions in Musselburgh town centre | Community Business community East Lothian Council (Economic Development) | Working together to encourage more events and attractions in Musselburgh town centre throughout the strategy period | 2013-2018 |
| 10 | Installation of town centre information and marketing boards at car parks | Business Community | Business Community to evaluate benefits of marketing to visitors and users of town centre | 2013-15 |
| Transport and Parking | | | | |
| 11 | Monitor air quality issues in Musselburgh town centre and extend the operation and influence of the SCOOT system to improve traffic flow in the town centre | East Lothian Council (Environmental Protection; Transportation) | Continuous monitoring underway and will inform actions to improve air quality issues including adjustments to the SCOOT system | 2013-2018 |
| 12 | Review the number and location of bus stops throughout Musselburgh town centre to reduce bus stop congestion and build up of buses at a single stop | East Lothian Council (Transportation) | Review of existing bus stops and proposals for additional stops as necessary | 2013 |
| 13 | Review Musselburgh town centre car park | East Lothian Council | Review of car park operations. | 2013/14 |

| | ACTION | DELIVERY | HOW | WHEN |
|----|--|--|---|-------------|
| | operation to introduce short stay to increase turnover and parking availability at some car parks. Review associated parking enforcement. | (Transportation) | | |
| | Development Opportunities | | | |
| 14 | Review the potential use of the vacant Millhill Stables site. | East Lothian Council (Estates; Policy and Projects) Community | Consider the practicality of potential uses for this town centre site | 2013 |
| | Built Environment and Public Spaces | | | |
| 15 | Environmental Improvements: High Street East of the Tolbooth/Town Hall: | East Lothian Council (Policy and Projects; Transportation and Landscape and Countryside) | Develop proposals for a high quality pedestrian civic space in the area between the Town Hall/Tolbooth and the old post office and relocation of existing parking to the area between the old post office and the Pinkie Pillars. Detailed consultation with affected residents and businesses and wider public consultation. Implementation will depend on the availability of resources and prioritisation of projects. | 2013-15 |
| 16 | Environmental Improvements: High Street, Kilwinning Place to Rennie Bridge: Prepare an environmental improvement project to consider and include the following works; Street furniture coordination; planting street trees in the wide footway on the south side of High Street; banner arms to lamp posts; improvements to public wynds and closes. | East Lothian Council (Policy and Projects; Transportation) | Plan to be prepared following detailed consultation. Implementation will depend on the availability of resources and prioritisation of projects. | 2013-18 |
| 17 | Environmental Improvements: Bridge Street: | East Lothian Council (Policy | Plan to be prepared following detailed consultation. | 2013-18 |

| | ACTION | DELIVERY | HOW | WHEN |
|----|---|--|--|-------------|
| | Prepare an environmental improvement project to consider and include the following works; Street furniture coordination; banner arms to lamp posts; improvements to the access to the river at the war memorial and steps and wall repair work; environmental improvement to the area around The Brunton and the junction with North High Street. Encourage reinstatement of boundary walls at 18-20 Bridge Street | and Projects; Transportation; Culture and Community Development; Landscape and Countryside) Private owners of property | Implementation will depend on the availability of resources and prioritisation of projects. | |
| 18 | Environmental Improvements: North High Street: Prepare an environmental improvement project to consider and include the following works; Street furniture coordination; banner arms to lamp posts; installation one or two sections of wider pavement blisters to facilitate crossings. Consider rebranding North High Street to recognise Fisherrow in its name. | East Lothian Council (Transportation; Policy and Projects; Landscape and Countryside) | Plan to be prepared following detailed consultation. Implementation will depend on the availability of resources and prioritisation of projects. | 2013-18 |
| 19 | Environmental improvements: Shorthope Street Prepare an environmental improvement project to consider and include the following works; Improve the appearance of the south car park to make it more attractive to users by way of wall or railings and general tidying up; encourage repairs as necessary to private buildings and a coordinated colour scheme to enhance the appearance of the street. | East Lothian Council (Policy and Projects; Transportation and Landscape and Countryside) Private Owners | Plan to be prepared following detailed consultation. Implementation will depend on the availability of resources and prioritisation of projects. Discuss ideas for environmental improvements to private property on Shorthope Street for discussion with private owners. | 2013-15 |
| 20 | Encourage the owners of some painted buildings to | East Lothian Council (Policy | Identify key painted buildings and prepare advisory | 2014-17 |

| | ACTION | DELIVERY | HOW | WHEN |
|----|---|---|---|-------------|
| | consider alternative colour schemes to enhance the town centre | & Projects) Private Owners | colour schemes for consideration by private owners. | |
| 21 | Undertake an annual street clutter survey to identify where small scale improvement is required to improve the appearance of the town centre. | East Lothian Council (Landscape and Countryside; Transportation) Community | Annual walk around survey by East Lothian Council officials and local community representatives to identify and rectify identified problems. | Annually |
| 22 | Undertake a Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Musselburgh Conservation Area to include a review of its boundaries | East Lothian Council (Policy & Projects) with support from Musselburgh Conservation Society | Preparation of conservation area appraisal for approval by East Lothian Council. | 2013-14 |
| 23 | Encourage the improvement of shopfronts and signage throughout the town centre. | East Lothian Council (Policy and Projects and Economic Development) Business Community | Prepare and publicise shopfront and advertisement design guidance for commercial properties in the town centre. | 2013-17 |
| | Community Facilities and Safety | | | |
| 24 | Develop, publicise and maintain a key contacts list for issues with regard to the management of Musselburgh town centre | East Lothian Council (Economic Development) | Contact list to be prepared by East Lothian Council and publicised locally by community and business community. Make available on East Lothian Council web page | 2013 |
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