Assessment Form

All fields marked with * must be completed in order to Sign Off EPIA

Your Information

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Essential Information

Details of proposal *

Using £20m Levelling Up Fund grant, the council is seeking to acquire Billingham town centre and deliver a programme of tenant decant, demolition, repairs and maintenance interventions that will both safeguard the centre and guide future redevelopment aspirations.

What is the proposal and who does it affect? *

Budget/Other Financial Decision ☐	Policy (New or Change) ☐	HR Policy & Practice ☐	Change to Service Delivery ☐
Service Users ☑	Members of the Public ☑	Employees ☐	Job applicants ☐

Other

Identify the main aims and projected outcomes of this proposal and how this aligns to the Stockton on Tees Plan and priorities *

For more information on the Stockton on Tees plan, click here

Billingham was awarded £20million from Round 3 of the Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF) to support delivery of the council's redevelopment proposals for the town centre. Having ownership and control of the centre is a strategic aim for the council and is considered key to its placemaking ambitions for regenerating the town centre. The council is seeking to acquire the freehold interests of the centre, using LUF grant, to enable delivery of the following scheme outcomes: • Decant existing tenants from West Precinct to deliver vacant possession. • Phased programme of demolition and clearance to remove long term vacant and deteriorating buildings at West Precinct, Queensway South and former library sites, to unlock the development potential of the town centre. • Undertake a programme of essential repair and remedial works to safeguard the internal and external fabric of remaining town centre buildings from further deterioration. • Consolidation and reconfiguration of the retail offer into a more compact area across a sustainable amount of floorspace. • Cleared town centre sites will create opportunities to develop inclusive and accessible new spaces that have potential both to respond to the need for new housing and bring about diversification of uses in the heart of the town centre, creating better quality of place. • Gives the private sector confidence to invest in town centre assets. This project aligns with the Council Plan priority to create "a great place to live, work and visit'. Taking control of the centre through acquisition and focusing investment into unlocking the development potential of key sites will contribute to achieving a range of socio-economic benefits, increased civic pride and a robust income base upon which to build future investment in the centre.

How does the proposal link to the key objectives of the Powering our Future programme? *

For more information on Powering Our Future, click here

- [ ] Reduce inequality and prioritise prevention
- [ ] Put communities at the heart of everything we do
- [ ] Enable communities to help and support each other
- [ ] Have a 'place-based' approach
- [x] Have efficient processes and be digital by design
- [ ] Use data and intelligence to inform our decision

The delivery of the LUF scheme in Billingham directly aligns with the objectives of the Council's 'Powering Our Future" programme, specifically the 'place based' design principle, which recognises the importance of investing in town centre assets to reinforce pride in place and attract inward investment and talent to the Borough. For more than a decade, Billingham town centre has experienced a sustained decline in its retail offer, quality of place and built environment. While many town centres have been affected by changing consumer habits and reduced retail demand, these challenges have been particularly acute in Billingham. A prolonged period of underinvestment by successive private sector owners in buildings, retail units, infrastructure and public amenities has contributed to a deteriorating physical environment, rising vacancy rates and growing frustration among local residents as they have witnessed the continued decline of their town centre. Progressing with

acquisition of the centre will enable the council to take control and deliver a range of physical interventions to address market failure. This place based approach will help to change the town centre environment, creating a vibrant, modern town centre that safeguards its traditional retail function and creates quality of place through new spaces, diversification of uses and high-quality new infrastructure in the heart of the town centre. The Council will work effectively with residents, town centre businesses and stakeholder groups when designing and delivering the interventions, which will help to increase local participation and civic pride as outlined in the community design principle of the POF programme.

£ Financial Information

Consider whether your proposal introduces, removes, or changes any charges or budget allocations.

Does this proposal have any financial implications (income, expenditure, savings or budget changes)?
Yes

What type of financial impact does this proposal involve?

Income Increase ☑	Income Decrease ☐	Expenditure Increase ☐
Expenditure Decrease ☐	Budget Reallocated ☑	Indirect Impact ☐

Evidence

Please include any evidence or relevant information that has influenced the decisions contained in this EPIA. This could include demographic profiles; audits; research; health needs assessments; national guidance or legislative requirements and how this relates to the protected characteristic groups and those affected by poverty and how these are mitigated.

Click here to view the Demography and Deprivation dashboard

Quantitative Evidence *

Billingham suffers from significant demographic and

socioeconomic challenges across various factors including employment, income, education and skills and health. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation demonstrates that some 75% of the LSOAs in Billingham were in the most deprived 50% of communities nationally at an aggregate level. Further, almost 20% were in the bottom 10%. The demographic data profile for Billingham North Ward can be accessed here: https://www.stockton.gov.uk/Billingham-central-ward-profile In light of the prevailing demographic challenges, improving the town's appearance and attractiveness through the proposed redevelopment will create a more viable town centre environment and better quality of place, which will provide a basis for addressing some of the socioeconomic inequalities being faced.

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Qualitative Evidence *

A 'Let's talk about our towns' consultation was undertaken in Billingham in January 2020. The consultation lasted for 6 weeks and sought views from the local community and town centre stakeholders on the future of Billingham, to identify what is important to the users of the town centre and to inform future priorities for intervention. The consultation was promoted widely on social media, and online surveys were created for responses as well as a printed questionnaire. The survey received 311 responses, which are provided here and have been used to help inform the proposals: https://www.stockton.gov.uk/media/6100/Billingham-Let-s-Talk-About-Our-Towns/pdf/Lets_talk_about_our_towns__-_Billingham_-_NEW.pdf?m=1710342038497 The open text feedback gave detailed insight into local priorities. Broad support was given for a 'mixed use' development with retail, community, leisure and green spaces identified as the key areas of focus. There was support for more / better shops as well as more investment in the town centre including support to explore improvements to West Precinct such as demolition, redevelopment of

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the site and revising the town centre layout. General concerns were raised about level of crime and antisocial behaviour and policing, which contributes and reinforces negative perceptions around safety and vibrancy in the town centre.

Have you carried out any benchmarking against any neighbouring Local Authorities or organisations? How has this informed your thinking? *

As part of the commercial, valuation, financial and asset management due diligence of scheme proposals, a team of professional advisors have been appointed whose commercial expertise and track record in the regeneration of town centres of a similar scale to Billingham Town will help inform best practice. This includes benchmarking other comparable shopping centre acquisitions and values.

What have you done to determine that the new service/change in policy meets the residents needs, and how have you ensured that these actions align with social value principles (e.g. promoting wellbeing, equality, sustainability, and community benefit)? *

There is an opportunity to have a broader conversation with local communities and businesses, to ensure that any future redevelopment scheme reflects local need and has local buy in. It is proposed that a programme of public engagement is launched in 2027 to capture ideas and establish future uses for Billingham. To further embed the Council's commitment to engage local stakeholders and the community in shaping future regeneration plans it is recommended that we establish a Billingham Regeneration Board, which will act as an advisory group to help ensure proposals for Billingham are developed in a way that meet local need and aspirations and are owned and understood by the local community. The board will provide oversight, challenge, support and advocacy throughout the various phases of regeneration.

Consultation & Engagement

Consultation

A formal process where stakeholders are asked for their views on a proposal, often with a defined timeframe and structured feedback mechanisms.

If you require any advice and support around consultation please email consultationsbc@stockton.gov.uk

Is there a legal requirement to consult?

YES

Has the proposal/policy/project been subject to consultation?

YES

> **Who was formally consulted as part of this assessment? (e.g. service users, staff, community groups)**
>
> Consultation was undertaken with public and statutory consultees as part of the planning process to determine a hybrid planning application that was submitted by the current town centre owners in November 2024. Planning application reference: 24/2028/FUL Land At Billingham Town Centre, The Causeway, Billingham
>
> **What methods were used to consult? (e.g. surveys, public meetings)**
>
> Views on the planning application were invited via: - Putting up site notices - Advertising in local media - Writing to neighbours - Liaising with Statutory bodies
>
> **What were the key findings or concerns raised during the consultation?**
>
> The application received two letters of representation which were considered in full. No objections were raised by statutory consultees that would warrant refusal of the application.
>
> **How have these findings influenced the proposal or decision?**
>
> Planning consent for the hybrid planning application secured planning consent in March 2025
>
> **Were any groups underrepresented or excluded from the consultation?**
>
> NO
>
> **Was the consultation accessible and inclusive? (e.g. formats, languages)**
>
> Yes

Engagement

A broader, ongoing dialogue with stakeholders to build relationships, understand needs, and co-develop solutions — often more informal and iterative.

Engagement with individuals or organisations affected by the policy or proposal must be considered.

Has the proposal/policy/project been subject to engagement?

NO

🔀 Equality & Poverty Protected Characteristics (Assessing the Impact)

Use this section to assess how your proposal may positively or negatively affect different groups. Information on Protected Characteristics can be found here

Age Positive

Please provide evidence of the impact on this protected characteristic via comments / files:

This scheme will have a direct positive impact on the accessibility of all people accessing the town centre regardless of age. Factors relating to age generally relate to physical access such as those using walking aids or pushchairs. The consolidation and reconfiguration of retail space will provide a more compact retail core accessed at ground floor, making it easier for those with mobility needs to navigate around the town centre.

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Disability Positive

Please provide evidence of the impact on this protected characteristic via comments / files:

This scheme will have a direct positive impact on the accessibility of disabled people. Through demolition and clearance of deteriorating town centre buildings, retail space will be consolidated and reconfigured to provide a more compact retail core accessed at ground floor, making it easier for those with mobility issues to navigate around the town centre. The new scheme will include public realm improvements such as access to public facilities and transport links, which will improve ease of access and movement within the town centre and remove existing barriers that affect the overall

visitor experience for disabled people.

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Gender Reassignment	Neutral
Marriage & Civil partnership	Neutral
Pregnancy & Maternity	Neutral
Race	Neutral
Religion or belief	Neutral
Sex	Neutral
Sexual Orientation	Neutral
Poverty †	Positive

Please provide evidence of the impact on this protected characteristic via comments / files:

Investment across the centre and redevelopment of key sites will contribute to a wider range of socio-economic benefits, providing a setting for future investment, increased civic pride and a robust income base upon which to build future investment in the centre. This includes benefits including: economic (increased local spend, higher footfall, business growth, diversification of uses), health (improved accessibility, ease of movement, improved access to town centre amenities) and environmental (improved public realm, demolition of vacant and underused assets, unlocking new development opportunities).

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Substance misuse and addictions †	Neutral
Experience of care †	Neutral
Other, Homelessness, public protections, armed forces community, refugees and asylum seekers etc †	Neutral

† Although these are not legally protected characteristics, there is an expectation that you will give these areas due consideration

What will the impact of implementing this proposal be on people who share characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 or are likely to be affected by the proposal / policy / project? This section allows you to consider other impacts, e.g. poverty, health inequalities, community justice, public protection etc.

Will this proposal in anyway eliminate unlawful discrimination (harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct)? *

The redevelopment of Billingham town centre is intended to benefit people of all ages and backgrounds, regardless of protected characteristics. Throughout the project we will work to mitigate direct or indirect discrimination by: - Keeping stakeholder groups engaged about issues that affect them through regular engagement and communication. - Engaging with affected tenants throughout the decant process, providing appropriate support, including advice, assistance and financial compensation where appropriate and in line with the terms of specific lease arrangements and conditions. - Tailoring consultation methods to meet the needs of all groups.

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Will this proposal in anyway advance equality of opportunity? *

Yes. There is an opportunity to open conversations with local communities and businesses, to ensure that future redevelopment reflects local need and has local buy in. It is proposed that a public engagement exercise is launched in 2027 to capture ideas and establish future uses and the council will consider the needs of all protected groups throughout this process to give people a shared voice.

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Will this proposal in anyway improve / foster good relations or build community cohesion (promoting understanding and reducing prejudice)? *

There is a strong sense of civil society and civic pride in Billingham and a desire to reinforce and extend the town centre's role in creating new socio-economic opportunities and promoting the area as an attractive place to live, work and invest. Whilst there will be unavoidable disruption to local residents, businesses and town centre users as demolition and repair works are undertaken, the temporary adverse effects of the scheme will be outweighed by the creation of a more viable town centre environment that improves the town's appearance and attractiveness to benefit residents, visitors and shoppers. The Council will manage levels of disruption by holding targeted meetings with surrounding residents, businesses and town centre users to provide information on the proposals and phasing programme. Sharing regular communications and updates will help to promote good relations with town centre users. The Council will support affected tenants throughout the decant process, in line with the terms of specific lease arrangements and conditions, to explore potential relocation opportunities. In the longer term, improving the town's appearance and attractiveness will create a more viable town centre environment encouraging footfall and local spend. This approach will foster good relations and help to retain valuable amenities that are valued by the local community.

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You are not taking any action to support or mitigate the impact on protected characteritic. Please complete the section below instead.

Please explain why you do not need to take any action to mitigate or support the impact of your proposals. *

The proposal does not have any negative, long-term impact on any members of a protected group. A detailed communications plan will be delivered to ensure the wider impacts of the scheme on local residents and businesses are fully understood and mitigated as far as possible. This will include targeted engagement with affected groups, which will be carefully considered to ensure no form of direct or indirect discrimination occurs.

Are actions being reported to Members? If so, when and how? * A Billingham town centre report will be considered by Cabinet on 29 October 2026. Group Leaders and Billingham Members will be briefed in advance of this meeting.

Digital Inclusion

Does the solution/policy assume access to digital devices or reliable internet?

YES

How will it support individuals who lack these resources?

The public engagement strategy will be designed to ensure accessibility for all people wishing to share their views and feedback on the regeneration proposals for Billingham. Whilst engagement will be undertaken via digital platform, we will ensure opportunities for in-person discussions are held at a range of venues / locations across Billingham as well as providing access to paper materials.

Have digital literacy levels across different user groups been considered? What support is available for those with limited digital skills or confidence? What support is available for those with limited digital skills or confidence?

Council officers will be available at a range of venues / locations across Billingham to assist users wanting to share their views on the proposals both digitally and via hard copy.

Is the solution/policy designed to be accessible to users with disabilities (e.g., compatible with screen readers, keyboard navigation, etc.)?

YES

Does the solution accommodate users with limited English proficiency or those who rely on alternative communication formats (e.g., Easy Read, BSL)?

YES

Could the solution/policy result in additional costs for users (e.g., data usage, device upgrades)?

NO

Are there non-digital or assisted digital options available for those unable or unwilling to engage digitally?

YES

Have digitally excluded or underrepresented groups been involved in the design, testing, or consultation process?

YES

How will the impact on digital inclusion be monitored and evaluated over time?

We will track the use of online services to understand how people are engaging with digital platforms and identify any barriers to access. Feedback will also be sought from residents, community groups, businesses and partner organisations about their experiences of accessing and using digital services relating to the scheme.

Partnerships and Stakeholders

Which sectors are likely to have an interest in or be affected by the proposal / policy / project?

Councils	NO
Business	YES

Please provide details

Disruption caused by redevelopment activities will have a negative impact on businesses trading within the town centre. To mitigate this, the Council will hold focused meetings with businesses to provide information on the proposals and phasing programme. For directly affected tenants, this will include providing support, in line with the terms of their specific lease arrangements and conditions, to explore potential opportunities for relocation within the town centre. In the longer term, improving the town's appearance and attractiveness will create a more viable and attractive town centre environment encouraging footfall and local spend to benefit local businesses.

Education Sector	YES **Please provide details** The existing Adult Learning & Skills Service is located adjacent to the town centre and views from this sector will be sought through the public engagement programme.
Fire	NO
NHS	YES **Please provide details** The NHS has an established medical centre within the town centre and views from this sector will be sought through the public engagement programme.
Integrated Care Board (ICB)	NO
Police	NO
Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE)	YES **Please provide details** Billingham has an active VCSE community network and views from across the sector will be sought through the public engagement programme.
Town Councils	YES **Please provide details** The Town Council plays an active role in representing the interests of the local Billingham community and views will be sought through the public engagement programme.

Other	NO

Assessment Recommendation

Choose ONE of the following statements which best matches your assessment of this proposal / policy / project and include your reasons. *

No major change required

What is your reason for the above response? *

Acquisition and investment in Billingham town centre will help to secure the long-term regeneration objectives for the centre and contribute to a wider range of socio-economic benefits for the wider community. The current proposals will have a neutral impact on all protected Equality and Poverty Protected Characteristics, apart from age, disability and poverty groups where the proposal has been assessed to have a positive impact. The EPIA will be monitored and updated throughout the development and delivery of the scheme.

Signed Rachel Haycock
— 13/10/2026 22:26:14

EPIA Group Approval

Findings

Has the EPIA demonstrated the use of data, appropriate engagement, identified mitigating actions as well as ownership and appropriate review of actions to confidently demonstrate compliance with the general and public sector equality duties?

UNKNOWN

Please explain your answer

Where adverse impact on diverse communities has been identified and the intention is to continue with the proposal /policy / project, has justification for continuing without making changes been made?

UNKNOWN

Please describe

Has the change been included in the Cabinet/Council decision making processes?

UNKNOWN

Level of Impact

Level

Comments

⚠ Not Yet Approved