

The Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary Regional Park



Arnside and Silverdale Area Action Plan Executive Summary

CIVD706 Spatial Planning In Action



**ARNSIDE AND
SILVERDALE**

'A Landscape of Discovery'

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The Regional Park Proposal

Regional Parks are envisaged to improve the drive for regeneration, ensure the protection of the environment, benefit recreation and leisure activity, and stimulate the economy of an area.

Recently, the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary (MB&DE) area has been recognised for its potential as a regional coastal park due to its expansive landscape and rich diversity underpinned by the designation as a Natura 2000 site. Although the potential of the Morecambe Bay area has been identified, the context for the delivery of the regional park is yet to be delivered.

The Arnside and Silverdale Area Action Plan (AAP) is a key part of the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary Regional Park proposal. The Arnside-Silverdale AAP will establish a strategic framework for the area that will:

- manage growth and change by establishing development and design principles,
- ensure the protection of areas and places sensitive to change; and
- be deliverable and establish implementation mechanisms.

This AAP puts forward the aims and vision for the Regional Park and develops coherent proposals that are practical, actionable and coherent with the policies of decision-makers and potential funders. The AAP also aligns itself with the other Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary AAPs providing a unified and strategic programme for the benefit of the Regional Park proposal.

Arnside and Silverdale

The Arnside and Silverdale AAP encompasses an area of around 20 square kilometres which forms a small but distinctive peninsula at the head of Morecambe Bay. The area is divided between the boundaries of two local and county authorities with Arnside belonging to South Lakeland District Council and Cumbria County Council, whereas Silverdale is

part of Lancaster City Council and Lancashire County Council.

The area incorporates the two local centres of Arnside and Silverdale, the area to the west of the train line, Leighton Moss RSPB Centre and includes the intertidal sands and mud-flats of Morecambe Bay and the Kent Estuary (Figure 1.1).

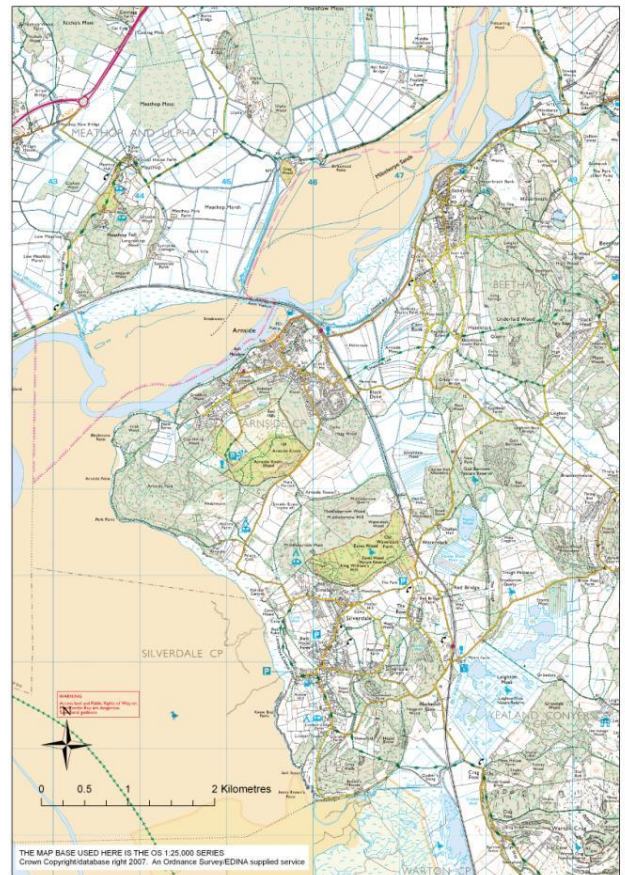


Figure 1.1: The Arnside and Silverdale Area

Within the area, the coastal habitats provide a rich wildlife habitat of international importance and an attractive setting. The limestone hills, mosslands, woodlands, salt marsh, reedbeds of Leighton Moss and limestone pastures combine to form a unique landscape full of diversity. These natural characteristics led to the designation in 1972 of the Arnside-Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which covers a wider area of 75sqm.

Arnside and Silverdale are ideally located by the railway line which runs through both Silverdale and Arnside stations and over the Kent viaduct to Grange-Over-Sands. These regular trains follow a

route from Manchester Airport past Barrow-in-Furness to Edinburgh. The area is also within 10 miles of junction 34 and 35 of the M6.

The population of the area was 4574 at the time of the 2001 census. The Arnside-Silverdale AONB receives an estimated 400,000 visitors each year, of which almost half are likely to visit the Leighton Moss reserve which reports visitor numbers of 200,000 per year.

The Evidence Gathering Report highlighted the apparent struggle with the balance between landscape and recreation. The sensitive landscape, including numerous designations and areas of protection, its distinctive character, cultural and heritage assets create a range of issues for this area.

The challenge of the Arnside and Silverdale AAP is to develop the full potential of the area without compromising its outstanding natural beauty. Consequently this AAP aims to ensure that any future development or strategies are of an appropriate scale, mix and quality to the area and echo the AONBs primary purpose to conserve and enhance.

Drawing on the findings presented in the Evidence Gathering Report an analysis of the areas strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) was undertaken. The key findings are shown below in Figure 1.2. The vision and objectives identified for the area have been formulated with reference to the issues identified within the SWOT analysis.



Figure 1.2: SWOT analysis of the Arnside and Silverdale area

The Arnside-Silverdale Vision

'To conserve and enhance the outstanding natural beauty of the Arnside-Silverdale area so that the distinctive landscape and unique 'sense of place' is preserved for future generations whilst also meeting the needs of today'

The Objectives

Objective 1

To develop a distinctive identity and positive brand image

Objective 2

To conserve and enhance the natural, built and cultural heritage assets within the Arnside-Silverdale area

Objective 3

To develop and promote a wide range of high quality leisure and tourism facilities

Objective 4

To provide sustainable green access across the Arnside-Silverdale area

Objective 5

To sustain economic development and regeneration

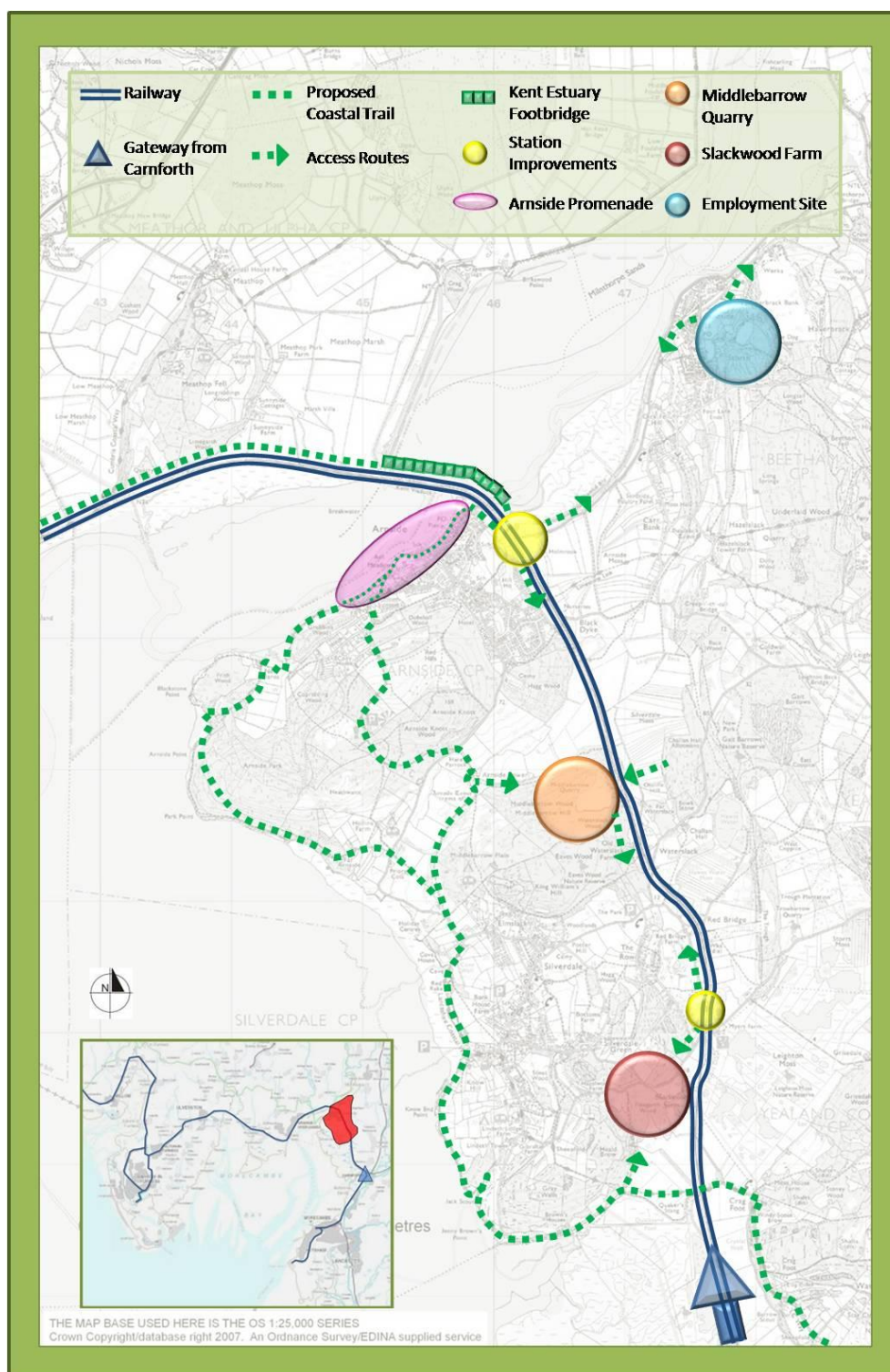
Objective 6

To develop the role of the Regional Park as a unifying and binding force in the area

Key Diagram

The key diagram illustrates the spatial relationships of the proposals contained within the Arnside-Silverdale AAP; these proposals are outlined in more detail in the following sections. This summary will illustrate how

each of the objectives identified have been met through a number of thematic and site based proposals helping to create **‘A Landscape of Discovery’**.



From Vision to Delivery

Objective 1: To develop a distinctive identity and positive brand image

This objective can be seen to run through all proposals for the Arnsdale-Silverdale area, the Area Action Plan centres around the creation of an enhanced, distinctive image for the area. A new image that promotes Arnsdale and Silverdale as a place that:

- encourages sustainable tourism and recreation,
- raises environmental and educational awareness,
- involves its local community, and
- coordinates its activities within the wider Regional Park area



Figure 1.3: Involving the community

This enhanced and refreshed identity is fundamental for the Arnsdale and Silverdale area and its contribution to the Regional Park proposal. It is hoped that a new distinctive identity will reflect and raise awareness of the areas unique 'sense of place' that has been so crucial to the formation of this Area Action Plan.

Objective 2: To conserve and enhance the natural, built and cultural heritage assets within the Arnsdale-Silverdale area.

Education and information provision are viewed as central to the effective conservation and promotion of the areas assets. The AAP therefore proposes the creation of a combined AONB/RSPB visitor information and education centre on the redundant 'Slackwood Farm' site. Figure 1.4 provides an indicative illustration of how this could be developed.



Figure 1.4: Slackwood Farm AONB/RSPB Centre

It is envisaged that the facility will provide an enjoyable and educational visitor centre, a new home for the AONB management team, office space for other environmental groups such as the RSPB, education and conference facilities and a small retail outlet and coffee shop.

This proposal will promote a greater understanding of the Arnsdale-Silverdale area and the wider AONB amongst the public and synergise the economic potential of the area.

Ultimately it is felt that a development such as this will encourage visitors stay longer, gain an understanding of the areas sense of place, contribute more to the local economy, and go away with a better understanding of the countryside as an environment as well as a community.

Objective 3: To develop and promote a wide range of high quality leisure and tourism facilities.

The promotion of tourism and the improvement of the visitor offer within the Arnside-Silverdale are important aspects of the AAP; however, all the proposals also recognise the need for this to be carried out in a sustainable manner.

The proposal to build the ASERT (Arnside & Silverdale Educational Renewable Technology Centre) at Middlebarrow Quarry (Figure 1.5) illustrates how such a sustainability approach has been applied to the provision of leisure and tourism facilities within the area.



Figure 1.5: Middlebarrow Quarry Site

The ASERT facility aims to educate and drive renewable and sustainable technology within the Regional Park area. At the same time this will also provide an educational visitors centre for people from all across the North West Region and the UK to come and see renewable energy in action.

The site as illustrated in Figure 1.6 will host a range of buildings that will show renewable energy in action. It is proposed that the site should incorporate a:

- Visitor and Education Centre,
- Education Learning Centre,
- Micro Renewable Centres,
- Café/shop; and
- Recreational Facilities.

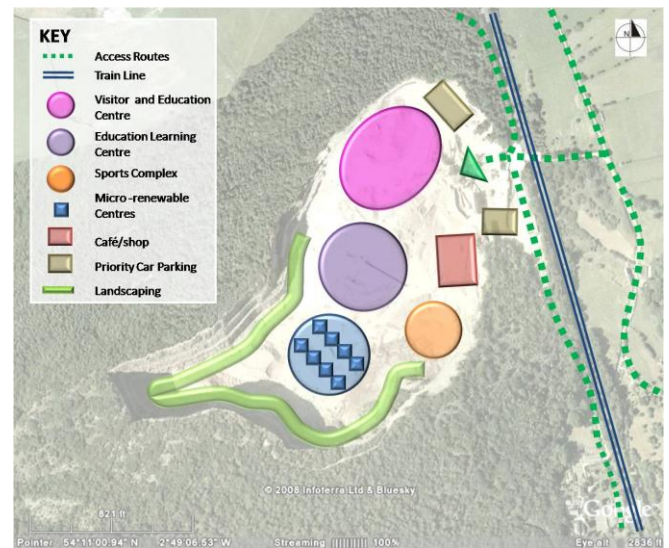


Figure 1.6: Site plan for the ASERT centre

The visitors centre would be the main building on site (Figure 1.6) and would provide for sustainable tourism and recreation in the Arnside Silverdale area and the Regional Park in general.



Figure 1.7: Illustrative example of the visitor centre building

The ASERT Centre is a bold and unique proposal that may conflict with the existing ideals of what constitutes appropriate development. However the benefits for the Arnside-Silverdale area and the wider Regional Park can outweigh the potential for conflict.

Objective 4: To provide sustainable green access across the Arnside-Silverdale area.

Within the AAP, it is identified that access to and within the Arnside-Silverdale area needs to take into account the areas sensitive habitats, wildlife and landscapes. Sustainable green access is therefore a paramount proposal and must encourage harmony between walkers, cyclists, hikers and vehicles.

This aims to sensitively manage the movement patterns of visitors and the community through:

- promotion of cycling and walking (Figure 1.8);
- reduced car usage; and
- an integrated public transport network.



Figure 1.8: Cycle hire scheme

The green access theme is expressed through the following proposals within the AAP:

- The Carnforth Gateway
- Arnside & Silverdale station improvements
- Continuation of the Coastal Trail
- Arnside promenade enhancements
- Kent Estuary Footbridge (Figure 1.9)



Figure 1.9: Visualisation of the bridge design

Objective 5: To sustain economic development and regeneration.

There are two proposals contained in the AAP that address the issue of economic development and regeneration within the Arnside-Silverdale area; these are:

1. The creation of an eco business centre at Sandside.
2. Enhancements to Arnside Promenade.

The creation of an eco business centre at Sandside is proposed to provide suitable facilities for small local businesses, start-up businesses and entrepreneurs. It is envisaged that this facility would address the lack of suitable employment opportunities within the area and the large, unsustainable, travel to work distances for local residents.

An eco business centre aims to provide business facilities in a sustainable and environmentally appropriate manner, as such green building techniques are central to the building design. Figure 1.10 offers an artist's impression of how such a development may look.



Figure 1.10: Artist impression of the eco-business centre.

Arnside's promenade is an outstanding feature and a main attraction for visitors and the local community in the area. The AAP proposes a programme of enhancements along the promenade, the aim of which is to increase the profile of the area, improve visitors' experiences and make facilities more attractive to potential uses.

Improvements to the public realm are proposed in order to restore the vitality of Arnside promenade. Figure 1.11 illustrates how such improvements could be incorporated into the streetscape.



Figure 1.11: Illustration of appropriate public realm improvements.

It is envisaged that the introduction of public art will connect the access and public realm improvements. Utilising artwork that reflects Arnsides' history and character would construct a cohesive 'sense of place' along the promenade.

Improvements to the facilities along the promenade are also proposed including the redevelopment of the old lifeboat station (Figure 1.12)



Figure 1.12: Redevelopment of the old lifeboat station

It is felt that the enhancements proposed for the promenade provide a clear lead as to the improvements thought necessary to instigate a step change in the appearance and vibrancy of Arnside promenade for the benefit of the local community, visitors and future generations.

Objective 6: To develop the role of the Regional Park as a unifying and binding force in the area

The inclusion of the Arnside-Silverdale area within the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary Regional Park is crucial to:

- the overall image
- marketing
- connectivity
- education & awareness and
- sustainable tourism and recreation

As such, it is important that all proposals contained within the Arnside-Silverdale AAP are integrated into the Regional Park strategic framework.

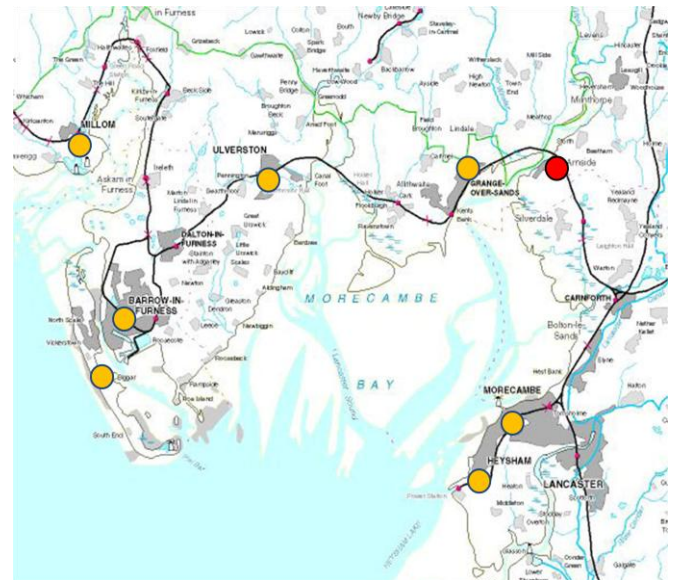


Figure 1.13: The location of the Arnside-Silverdale area within the wider MB&DE Regional Park.

Funding

At the moment, nearly 90% of the area's income is derived from just five sources: Local Authorities, Parish Councils, Natural England, Heritage Lottery and DEFRA, all of which are either public bodies or charities. Opening new and diverse revenue streams would add both stability and capital to the area's financial foundations.

Management Mechanisms

Effective management is fundamental to the comprehensive delivery and implementation of the AAP. It is noted that the current management structure has evolved from past experience and is generally effective in delivering the overall vision for the Arnside and Silverdale Area. Yet there are two challenges – the emerging Regional Park and the call for wider community involvement - that require a review on the current management mechanisms.

Within the proposed management structure illustrated in Figure 1.14, the basic structure has stayed constant but a two-way communication has been emphasised.



Figure 1.14: Proposed Management Structure

Phasing

A comprehensive and coordinated delivery program is fundamental to the realization of the AAP. The holistic and sensitive strategy proposed comprises of a number of complex projects that provides a careful balance between quick wins and long term sustainable development.

The implementation framework proposed will remain flexible to ensure that any key issues encountered during the progression of these projects can be addressed quickly and allow the risks to the proposals to be managed effectively.

Phase 1 Marketing a refreshed image

- Carnforth Gateway
- Employment site at Sandside
- Arnside Train Station
- Slackwood Farm visitor centre
- New distinctive image

Phase 2 Enhancing infrastructure

- Continuation of the Coastal Trail
- Promenade Improvements
- Green Access

Phase 3 AAP realization

- Access over the Kent Estuary
- ASSERT site at Middlebarrow

Conclusions

The AAP has been designed to deliver a balanced and realistic set of proposals that should strike a delicate balance between environment and recreation, residents and visitors and should also ensure that the area makes a significant contribution to the proposed Regional Park. Indeed, by advocating a holistic and sensitive strategy which encompasses environmental, recreational and economic measures, it is hoped this 'landscape of discovery' will be well equipped to meet the challenges of tomorrow without sacrificing the qualities which make it so special today.

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