



A report by DTZ & URBED

Stafford Town Centre **Healthcheck and Future Vision**

February 2015



This report has been produced by DTZ and URBED
on behalf of Stafford Borough and Staffordshire
County Councils.

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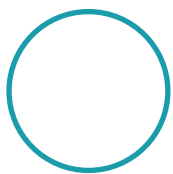
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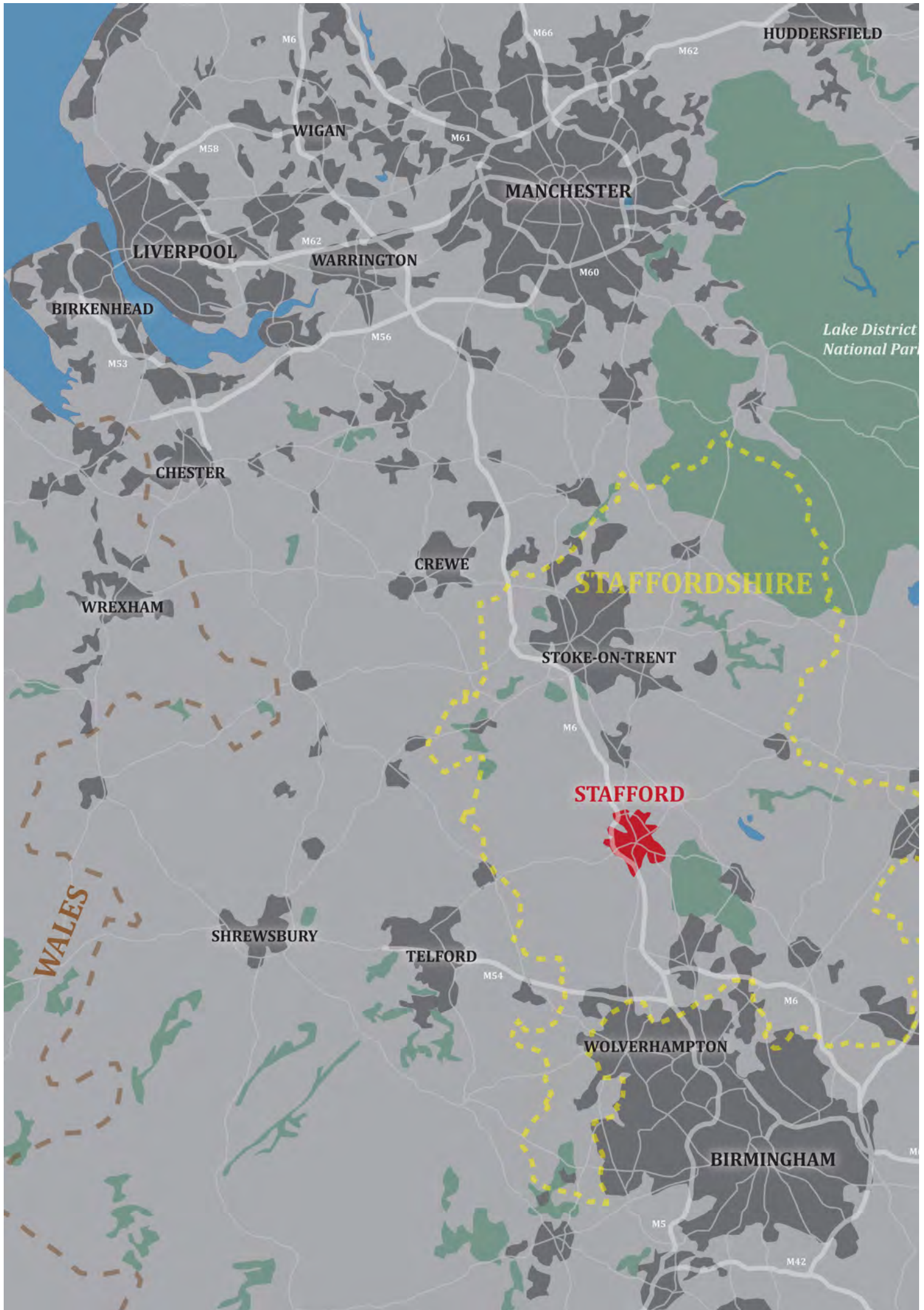
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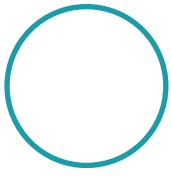
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INTRODUCTION



Stafford Town Centre is undergoing a renaissance of new investment and environmental improvements that will underpin its growth as a major County Town.

The £70 million redevelopment of the Kingsmead and Riverside sites currently under construction will provide 243,000 square ft of new retail floorspace and follows the recent £30million investment in new County Council offices.

Stafford Borough Council (SBC) and Staffordshire County Council (SCC) are keen to ensure that the benefits this new investment brings will be spread across the Town Centre in terms of raised profile, increased trade and footfall and secondary investment. They are also keen to ensure that other areas of the town do not suffer as a result of the new redevelopment.

As such SBC and SCC have commissioned urban design and masterplanning consultants URBED and property experts DTZ to develop a future vision for Stafford Town Centre.

Part of the commission has focused on undertaking a Health Check of the town centre. As part of the Health Check we have looked at a number of indicators including the town's current retail offer, it's catchment, and it's urban structure - roads, building form and open space.

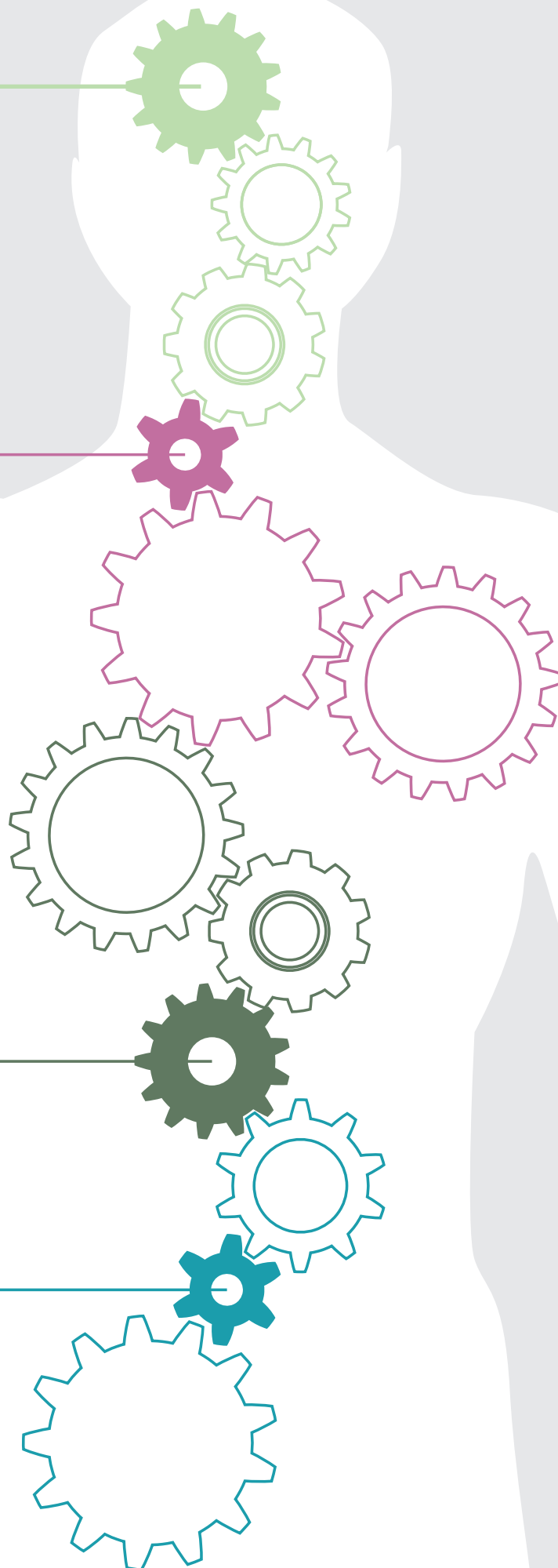
We have also undertaken a benchmarking exercise to understand how Stafford is performing in comparison to similar County Towns. We conclude the health check by setting out our diagnosis of the town centre and propose an approach for the next stage of the commission.

OPEN SPACE

HERITAGE

LEISURE

PEOPLE

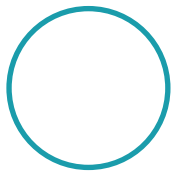


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TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK

In this section we set out the findings of the baseline analysis and benchmarking process.





CATCHMENT



The primary retail catchment area for Stafford is based upon the results of the CBRE National Survey of Local Shopping Patterns. The area is defined on the basis of the Market share of the town and includes all postal sectors where the proportion of people who use the town as their main non food shopping destination exceeds 15%. Based on this definition the total population within the primary retail catchment area for Stafford is 157,000.

Catchment Area

The number of people within the primary catchment population who regard Stafford as their main shopping destination is 103,000 according to the CBRE Survey. This is the estimated shopping population.

In the short-term, Stafford is projected to see below average population growth and the total population of the primary retail catchment area is estimated to grow from 157,000 to 161,000 by 2017. Stafford will see greater population growth in the medium term with up to 7,000 new homes to be delivered in the town up to 2031.

The White Young Green Retail Capacity Study presented to the Council in May 2013 concluded that there is no capacity for major new comparison goods

development up to 2021, based on existing Market share being retained.

Socio-Economic Profile

The Stafford catchment population has a high proportion of adults aged 45-64 and age bands 0-14 and 15-24 are under-represented. The population is moderately affluent and contains above average proportion of AB social groups. The average house price for the area was £171,500 at Q4 2013.

The level of car ownership is significantly above average with a high proportion of 2 car households. The service sector (including Public Sector, Financial & Business Services) accounts for 77% of total employment in Stafford. Growth in employment to 2017 is forecast to be significantly below average.



◀ Guildhall Shopping Centre

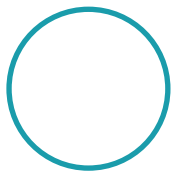
Gaolgate St
- northern
high street
▼



▲ Greengate St
- southern
high street

Vacant shop
units at
Greengate St ▶





RETAIL PROVISION



Town Centre Retail Provision

In its most recent survey (August 2013), GOAD estimated retail floorspace in the town centre at 1,007,500 sq. ft. The Guildhall and Gaolgate Place shopping centres account for 185,000 sq. ft. Multiples accounted for 38.7% of the space with 67 non-food multiples in 2012.

Retailer Representation

Marks and Spencer is considered the main department store on the high street. Other key fashion multiples include J D Sports, Monsoon, New Look, River Island, Topshop/ Topman and Wallis. Key non-fashion multiples include 3 Store, Accessorize, Argos, The Body Shop, Boots, Brighthouse, Card Factory, Claire's Accessories, Home Bargains, Poundland, Sportsdirect, Superdrug, Waterstones, WH Smith and Wilkinson. Since 2007, the percentage of A3 multiple units in Stafford town centre has increased moderately. Food multiples are well represented with Asda,

Sainsbury's and Tesco Extra all having stores on the ring-road and a new Morrisons under construction. Stafford Riverside will add a further 243,000 sq. ft to the supply chain at its town centre location. Pre-lets include Marks & Spencer, Primark, River Island and Arcadia.

Retailer Demand

According to PROMIS, which gathers data on town centres, Stafford has a low level of demand for a town of its size and status. As at May 2014, there were five reported requirements for Stafford, against a PROMIS average of 12. This figure is 'net' of the pre-lets which have been agreed for Riverside. In August 2013, GOAD recorded 149,600 sq. ft of vacant floorspace across 44 units in Stafford town centre although we have been provided with more recent data collected by the Council which suggests that there were 35 vacant units in March 2014.

Rents and Yields

Agent sources estimate prime rents in Stafford at £55-65 per sq ft Zone A, which are 30% below the pre-recession peak. Agent sources placed prime retail yield in Stafford at 7.25% at end 2013. Prime yields remain 225 basis points above the pre-recession peak.

Retail Warehousing

Out of town retail warehousing in Stafford is estimated at 518,000 sq. ft. The Stafford area is over represented for most goods categories in terms of provision per household. 81% of total retail warehousing floorspace in the Stafford area is on retail parks, significantly above the PROMIS level. Key operators include B&M Bargains, Carphone Warehouse, Costa Coffee, Mothercare, New Look, Next, Next Home, and Poundland at the Queens Retail Park; Argos, B&Q, Maplin and Pizza Hut at the Hough Retail Park; and Laura Ashley, PC World and TK Maxx at the Friary Retail Park.



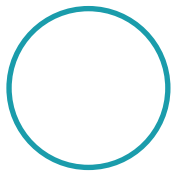
Key

Building Use

- Retail/ Restaurants/ Leisure
- Offices/ Workplace
- Places of Worship
- Healthcare Facilities
- Cultural/ Recreational Buildings
- Industry
- Residential
- Education
- Other

■ Train Station

--- Town Centre Study Area



COMMERCIAL ANALYSIS

Leisure

Nationally leisure floorspace has increased from 9.5% in 2008 to 11.6% in 2013 illustrating the growth of this Market. The proportion of leisure floorspace in Stafford is below the national average. At present, Stafford's cinema provision is weak for a town of its size and it is suffering from leakage to competing locations. Stafford's only cinema has recently been taken over by the Curzon Group.

There are limited national restaurateurs in the town centre with Bella Italia having recently moved out of the town. However the restaurant Market remains buoyant and should be considered integral to new retailing along with the proposed new leisure scheme, with potential to change shopping patterns to maximise spend, increasing dwell time and creating more opportunities for consumer spending.

Office

The Stafford office Market is limited in both size and context. Its main competitors include Wolverhampton, Stoke-on-Trent and Telford.

Edge of town and out of town locations include Staffordshire Technology Park and Greyfriars Business Park which provide further competition to the town centre.

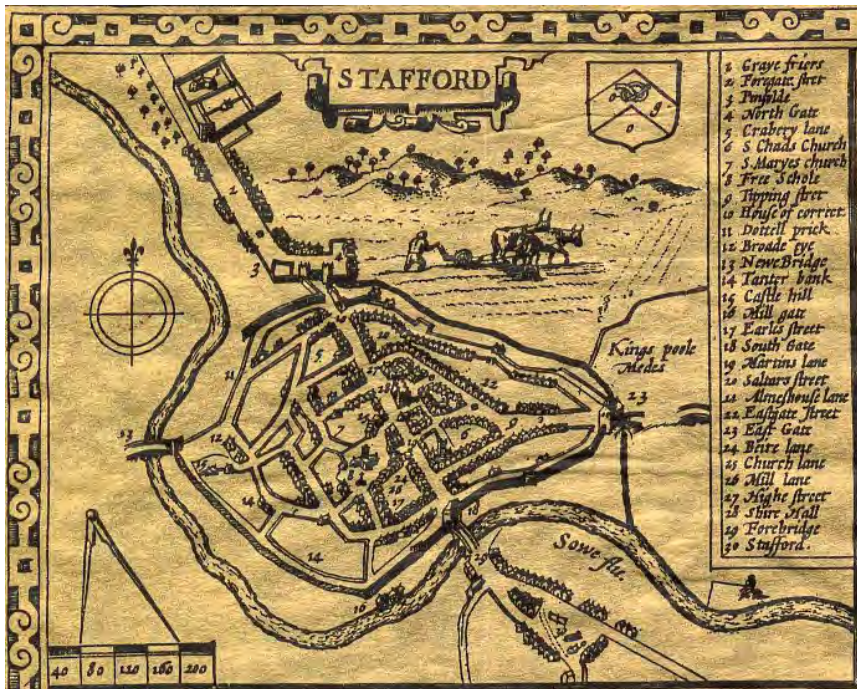
Headline rents on business parks have fallen from pre-recession peaks of £12.50 per sq. ft and have stabilised at between £8.00-10.00 per sq ft. Town centre office stock is mostly of a secondary nature with upper floors above retail converted to office use. Much of this space remains vacant, some of which is being marketed from as low as £3.00 per sq. ft to encourage occupancy. A number of planning consents for conversion of upper floor town centre office space to residential have been approved but not all have been implemented.

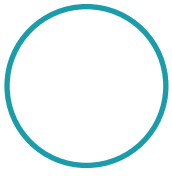
The most recent town centre office development has been Staffordshire County Council's new office completed in 2014 which provides approximately 155,000 sq ft. Indeed, town centre office occupation is largely by public sector bodies, a trend set to continue with the development of the new Entrust office facility to be situated just outside the town centre at Riverway.

Residential

The average house price in the Stafford area was £171,500 at Q4 2013 with the level of owner occupation above average. Recent consents and developments include:

- Detailed consent granted for 346 new homes to be built at Beacon Barracks.
- Detail consent granted on 257 new homes at Beaconside. Outline consent approved for another 100 units.
- 250 new homes being developed on the former St George's hospital site.
- 44 Sheltered apartments currently being developed on Foregate Street, close to the north of the town centre.
- Planning consent submitted on Greenhall, Lichfield Road for conversion to retirement living for 56 units.
- Outline consent for 630 units at two sites to the north and south of Tixall Road.
- The Local Plan allocates 1,200 houses to surrounding villages, several of which are in the Stafford catchment.





HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT



The name Stafford means 'ford' by a landing place. The original settlement was on a peninsula providing a strategic crossing point over the marshy valley of the River Sow. A large area of marshland still exists to the northwest of the town.

During the middle ages Stafford was a market town mainly dealing in cloth and wool. In the late Saxon period when the country was divided into shires it was chosen ahead of Tamworth as the County Town.

The 18th century saw Stafford develop as a town of trade and production. A minor pottery industry had developed and a much larger shoe industry flourished. The shoe industry dominated Stafford's industry until the late 19th century and put Stafford on the map as a major town in England.

The railways first came to Stafford in 1837 when the Grand Junction Railway built the Birmingham to Warrington Line providing easier access to Manchester, Liverpool and London.

As the shoe industry declined during the 20th Century this was replaced by larger scale industries including steam industries, glue manufacturers and electrical companies.

Much of the latter growth of Stafford has occurred as suburban development outside of the town centre.



William Salt Library

Shire Hall

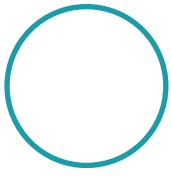
Church of St Chad

Collegiate Church of St Mary

Key

- Townscape & Heritage
- Water
- Conservation Area
- Town Centre Study Area

- Building Heights (Predominantly)
- Up to 8 Storeys
 - 4 Storey
 - 3 Storey
 - 2 Storey



TOWNSCAPE & HERITAGE



Historically the growth of the town centre has been constrained by the River Sow to the south and west of the town centre and marshlands to the north and east. The result of this is the town has developed a tight and compact town centre.

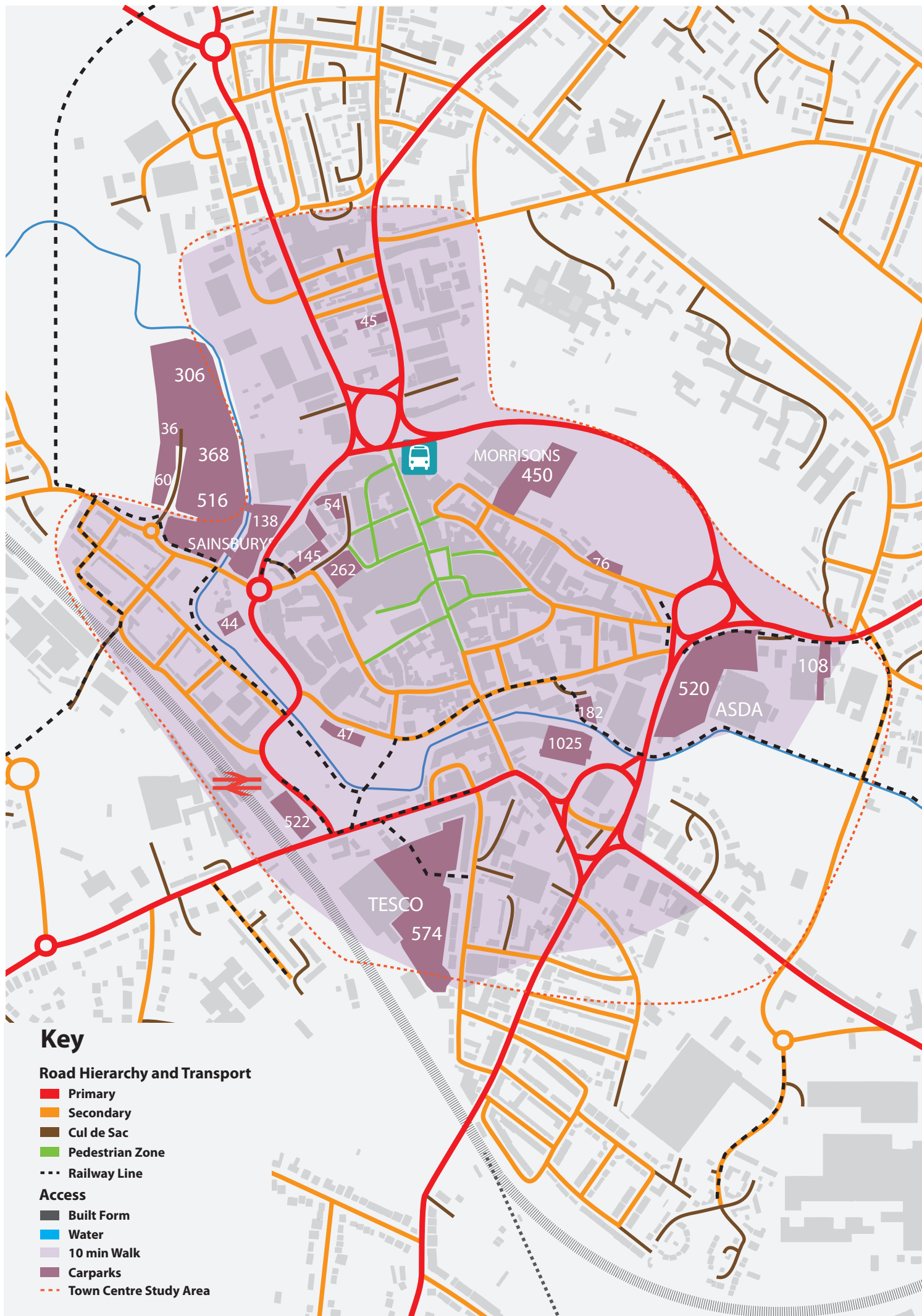
A significant portion of the historic fabric of the town centre remains today as Stafford avoided much of the large scale infrastructure and planning projects of the 60s. Those projects that were implemented such as the ring road were located in the largely undeveloped ring around the historic core.

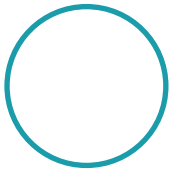
The large ring of undeveloped land around the centre means that there is a reduced catchment of people able to walk into the town centre when compared to similar sized towns such as Bedford.

In and around the town centre there are 3 conservation areas.

There are also a number of important listed buildings in the town including the Grade 2* Shire Hall Gallery, the William Salt Library, Collegiate Church of St Mary's and the Church of St Chads.

These sit within a tight network of streets and alleys. The majority of streets have a strong building line of predominantly 3 storey buildings. There are a series of taller buildings closer along the River Sow.





ACCESS & PARKING



Stafford town centre has a strong network of legible and permeable streets and alleys that provide excellent provision for pedestrians.

The largely pedestrianised area along with restrictions on vehicle movement means that the majority of vehicular traffic has been pushed out onto the ring road circulating the town. This has assisted in creating a pleasant town centre but has also contributed to congestion on the ring road.

The majority of the car parks that service the town centre are located outside of the ring road. Demand for parking in the town centre is high with 86% occupancy on the short stay parking.

The Riverside development will provide 1025 extra spaces. However, this will be offset by the loss of approximately 400 spaces on the current privately managed Riverside car park.

The new Kingsmead complex will result in the loss of 882 spaces (382 public spaces and 500 SCC staff spaces).

In its place, there will be a new privately managed 450 space surface car park for Morrisons, which will be free but time limited, as per other food stores in the town.

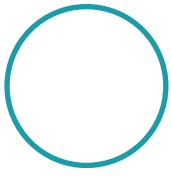
This will result in a net increase of 193 spaces in the town centre.

The train station is conveniently located within walking distance of the town centre with regular services through to Birmingham, Manchester and London.

The majority of bus routes can be accessed from the edge of the town centre with a number of routes running into the centre along Eastgate Street and Earl Street.

National Cycle Route 5 and Route 55 provide good access into the town centre from the West, North West and East. There are limited designated cycle routes connections from the South West and North East into the town centre.





OPEN SPACE & AMENITY



Victoria Park is the pride of the town centre and forms a magnificent entrance into the town for those visiting by train.

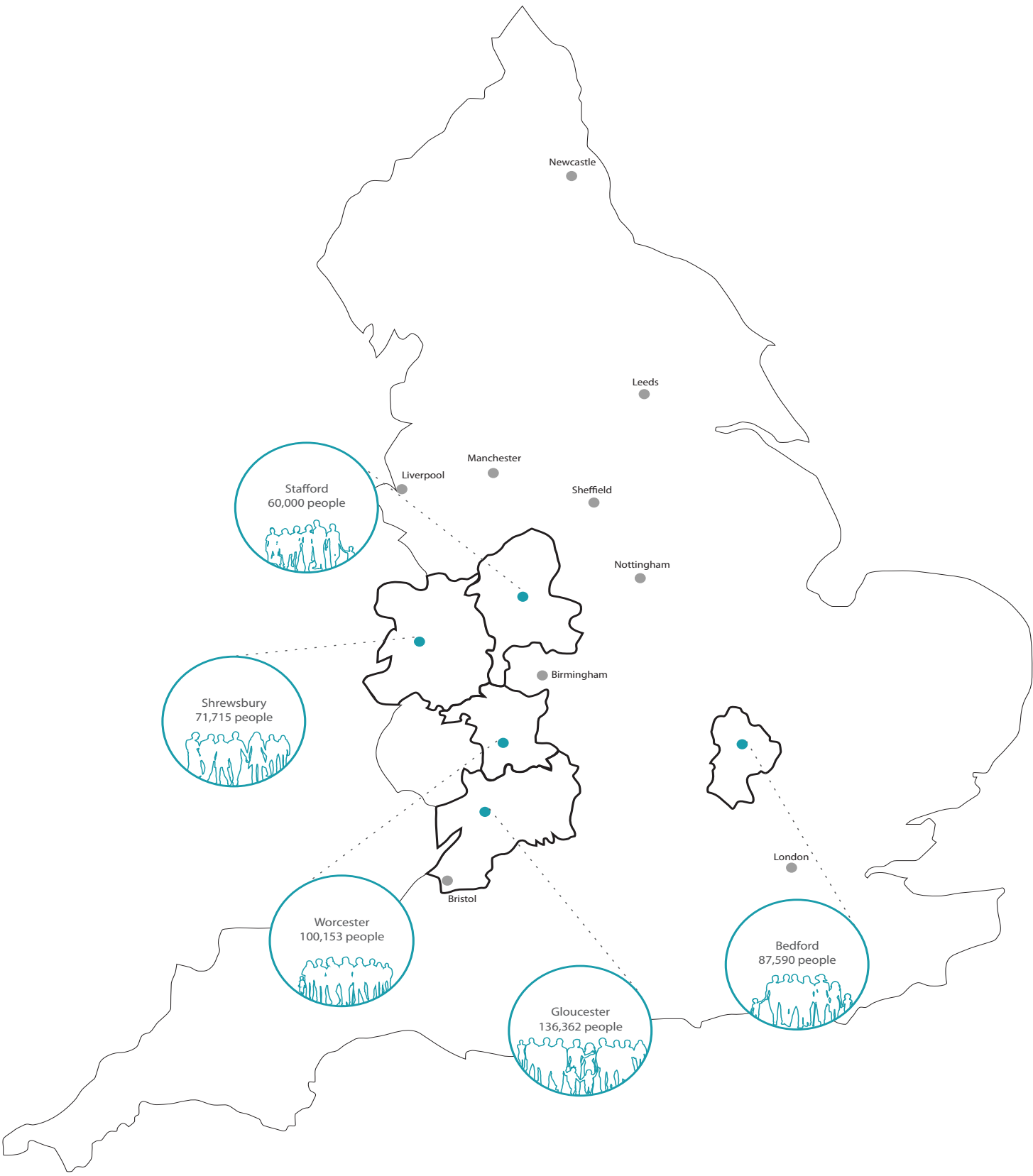
The Park forms one of a string of open spaces along the River Sow which combine to create a high quality waterfront setting that is easily accessible from the town centre. The river is very well maintained and a number of buildings benefit from being located along the banks.

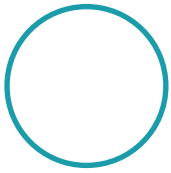
The town also benefits from a series of high quality public realm and pedestrian areas within the town centre (as highlighted in brown on the plan opposite). The quality of these public realm projects creates a pleasant and attractive setting for the retail units within the town.

The Market Square marks the heart of the town centre and is used on a regular basis for Markets and civic events.

Overall the scale and quality of the building fabric and public realm make Stafford an attractive setting within which to walk and cycle. The presence of open spaces along the River Sow also means the town centre has good provision of green space.

In addition, Stafford plays host to a number of events throughout the year including a music festival, cycling festival, cheese and ale festival and the pancake day race.





BENCHMARKING



In order to understand how Stafford is performing nationally we looked at 4 comparable towns. Selection criteria were: size- town centre population, location - a commuting distance away from a city centre; and they had to be the County Town.

On this basis we selected Bedford, Gloucester, Shrewsbury and Worcester. We used these towns to compare the location and amenity of the high street, locations and types of supermarkets, commercial and retail figures, key institutions and travel times. We also looked at perception of place by analysing websites such as trip advisor and the local tourism web pages.

- Retail Provision
- Supermarket vs High Street
- Colleges/ Universities
- Museum/ Galleries
- Travel Times

BENCHMARKING

RETAIL PROVISION

	Stafford	Bedford	Gloucester	Shrewsbury	Worcester
Total Units	348	425	452	591	637
Floorspace	1,007,500	927,000	1,172,000	1,077,000	1,222,900
Vacant Units	44	52	72	86	108
Vacant Units %	12.6%	12.2%	15.9%	14.5%	16.9%
Vacant Space sqft	149,600	98,900	139,700	189,400	196,600
Vacant Space %	14.8%	10.6%	11.9%	17.5%	16.0%
Multiple Units	135	145	161	176	188
Multiple Units %	38.7%	34.1%	35.6%	29.8%	29.5%
Comparison Units	153	171	190	305	286
Comparison %	43.9%	40.2%	42.0%	51.6%	44.8%
Requirements	5	6	8	21	13
Zone A rents psf	£65	£75	£75	£100	£125
Prime yields	7.25	7.25	7.25	6.25	5.75
Town Centre supply chain	243,000	480,000	212,000	480,000	215,000

We started the benchmarking exercise by looking at the quantum of retail provision within each of the town centres. Drawing on GOAD data, we compared the size and composition of each of the centres.

Overall Stafford's performance is about par with the other town centres in terms of occupation. Whilst only Bedford has a lower vacancy rate than Stafford in terms of number of units, the percentage of vacant space is higher suggesting that Stafford has more larger, and potentially valuable, units vacant.

The percentage of multiple units is the highest for the five towns, indicating that Stafford may be considered

less attractive to independent retailers when compared with the other benchmarking centres.

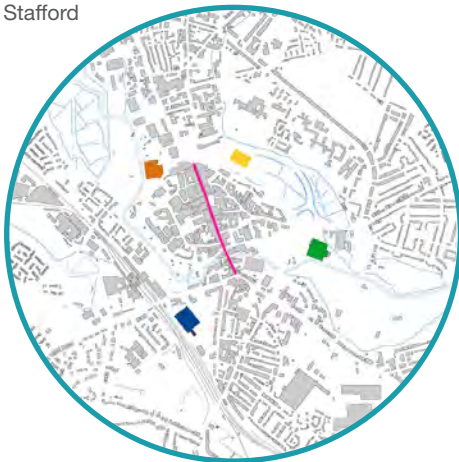
The percentage of comparison units is about average. Stafford has the lowest Zone A rent per square foot and number of known requirements for the centre.

This suggests that retailers with a requirement for floorspace have been satisfied by locating to the Riverside development.

BENCHMARKING

SUPERMARKET VS HIGH STREET

Stafford



As part of the benchmarking exercise we looked at the urban form of each town and then identified the primary high street and the major supermarkets located within a 30 minute walk of the centre. The colours of the blocks are the different supermarkets (Blue- Tesco, Orange - Sainsbury's, Green- Asda and Yellow- Morrisons)

Stafford's map is striking in that the centre is surrounded by the big 4 supermarket chains (Morrisons is yet to be built). The other factor affecting the centre is the wetlands which have restricted development. Shrewsbury is similar in that the river has restricted the centre, but different as the larger supermarkets are much further out. Gloucester has the largest stores close to the high street, but it looks as if people would use these stores and then walk into the centre. The danger is always that people drive to the supermarkets and then drive home, without engaging with the town centre. Observational evidence suggests that this may be the case with the Asda and Tesco stores, as these are further out (though there is high footfall through the day from Asda and along South Walls) but less of a case with the Sainsburys car park, which is served by an existing large town centre short stay car park and the new Morrisons store that is being built, on what is currently the short stay car park of choice for the town centre.

Bedford



Gloucester



Shrewsbury



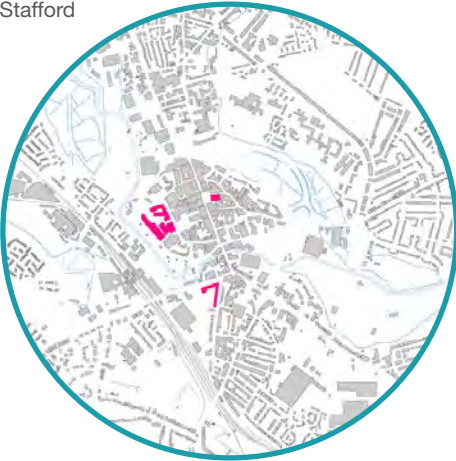
Worcester



BENCHMARKING

COLLEGE / UNIVERSITY

Stafford



We also looked at the sense of place of the 5 towns. Educational institutions are an important factor in this; they deliver training and also bring younger people into the town. The educational picture in Stafford is currently in flux. The college has recently completed works to their campus in the town centre and the University of Wolverhampton launched a new facility in the Shire Hall in August 2014. This investment is offset by Staffordshire University's announcement that they are relocating the departments in their Stafford campus to Stoke.

The other towns have centrally based colleges. Stafford College has been recently extended and is an asset to the town. Shrewsbury and Bedford's colleges are housed in dated buildings and are the furthest away from the centres. Shrewsbury has no university campus. Gloucester's college is located in the regenerated waterside area, the town also has some facilities of the University of Gloucestershire.

Bedford



Gloucester



Shrewsbury



Worcester



BENCHMARKING

MUSEUM / GALLERIES

Stafford



Bedford



Gloucester



Shrewsbury



Worcester

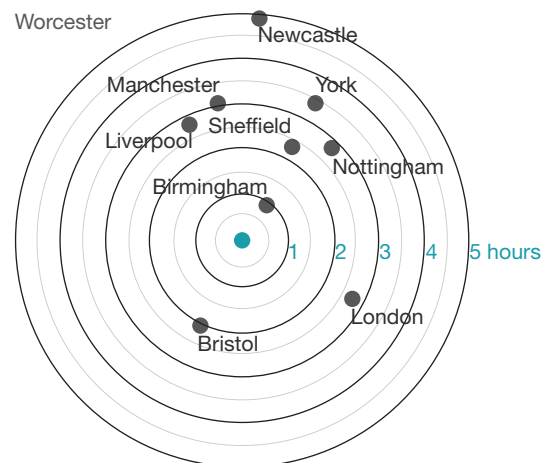
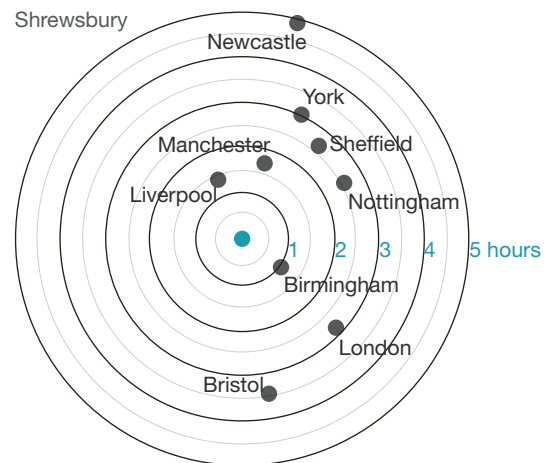
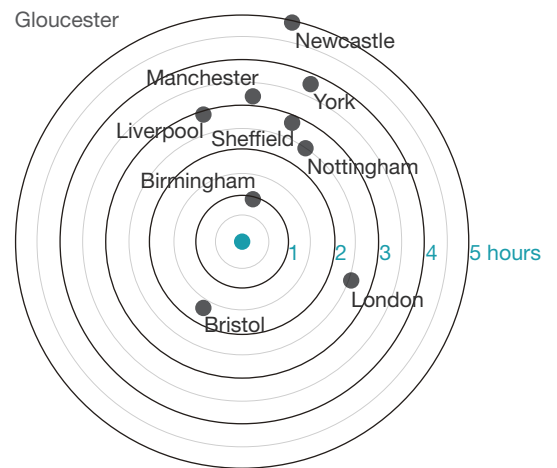
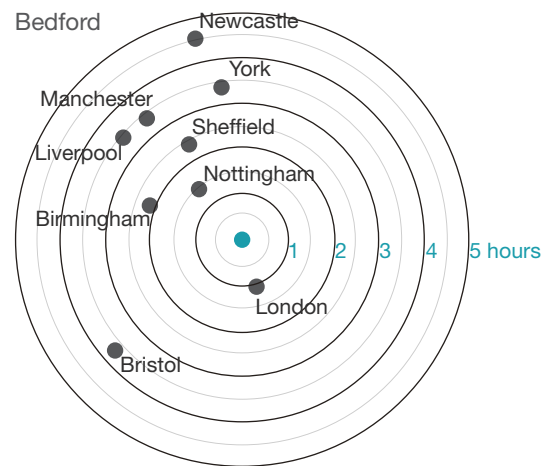
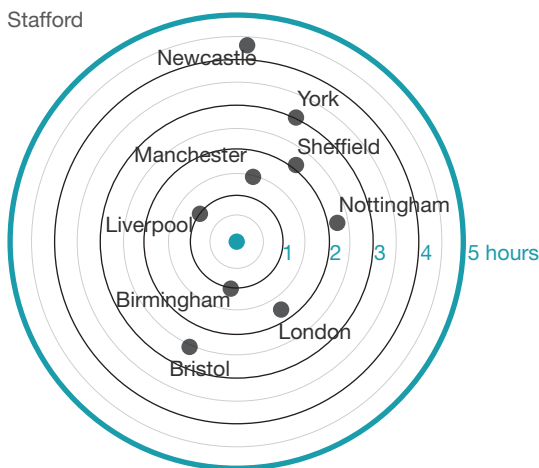


Another benchmark is attractions for tourists. Museums and galleries are important in bringing people into towns and demonstrating the culture of the town. Stafford has the marvellous Shire Hall right in Market Square and while the Ancient High House is the high street's jewel, the discount shop below does not sit well.

The benchmarked locations do much better in this category. Gloucester has five museums and galleries, all centrally located. Shrewsbury does very well for tourist attractions as well as having great town centre amenity. Bedford has only three cultural buildings but they are all quite small in scale. Worcester has seven cultural museums and galleries, some touching on the porcelain heritage of the area which must attract tourists and visitors to the town centre for more than just shopping.

BENCHMARKING

GRAVITY TIME MAP PUBLIC TRANSPORT



In order to assess each place in terms of travel times and commuting ability we have drawn gravity time maps. These are constructed as if the central location is pulling other places in by the amount of time it takes to reach the central location. The ten main cities in England were used to demonstrate commuting distances.

In these diagrams we look at public transport. Stafford has four cities within two hours on the train, this means it is incredibly well connected, but it also means that the town centre has a lot of competition, especially for shoppers who will invariably choose the larger centres with more stores. Shrewsbury has the three main centres of Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester all within two hours. Both Bedford and Gloucester have two main centres within two hours whilst Worcester only has one.

BENCHMARKING

GRAVITY TIME MAP DRIVING

Stafford

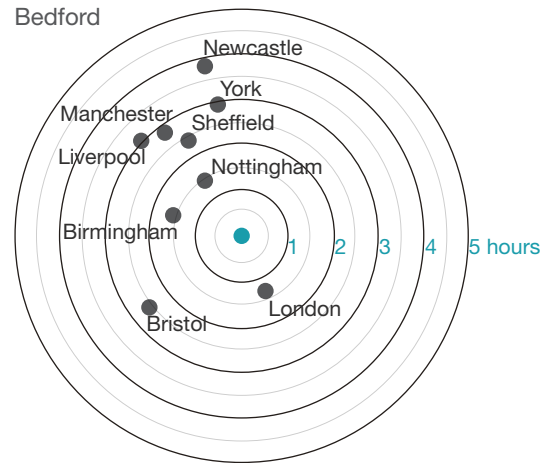


These maps look at driving distance to the ten major cities in England. Here Stafford does even better than on the public transport time map. It is in close proximity to the M6 as well as linking to the M54 and M42. The motorways mean six cities are within a two hour drive. This makes Stafford an attractive prospect for commuters.

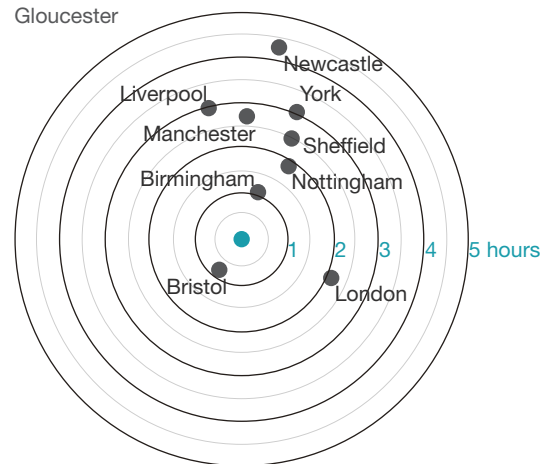
Worcester and Shrewsbury are also very well connected by roads and five major cities can be accessed by car in two hours. Bedford and Gloucester are only commutable to three major cities using the two hour criteria.

Being so well connected by road and rail has its advantages but it also brings a downside as the town and especially shops face competition from larger, more attractive and vibrant city centres. Despite this Stafford has traditionally maintained a self contained economy with 73% of the Borough's economically active population living and working within its boundary.

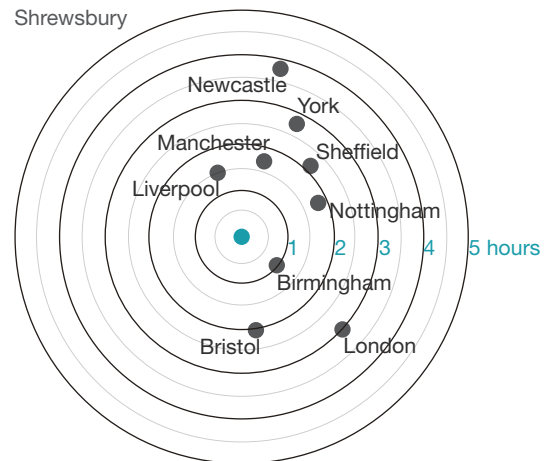
Bedford



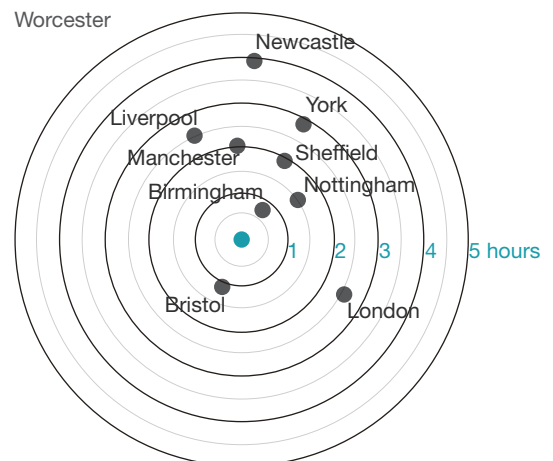
Gloucester



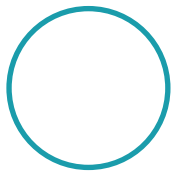
Shrewsbury



Worcester







THE 4 A'S



URBED was responsible in the 1990s for devising the Government's methodology for town centre health checks. These involve a large range of factors as covered in this baseline report so far. However their conclusions can be summarised as the 4 'A's as illustrated on the facing page.

The first 'A' is for **Attractions** because there has to be a reason for people to come into town. Certain shops, facilities and events act as primary attractions that people will make a special trip to visit. However, many town centre activities are secondary attractions that rely on existing footfall. Some of the best attractors are supermarkets if they are positioned to reinforce the town centre. There is also a difference between attractions for the existing catchment population and those able to attract visitors from further afield.

The second 'A' relates to **Access**. This is linked to the strength of a town's attractions. Places like York with very strong attractions can make access difficult and people will still come. Other places with weaker attractions need to be careful because difficult

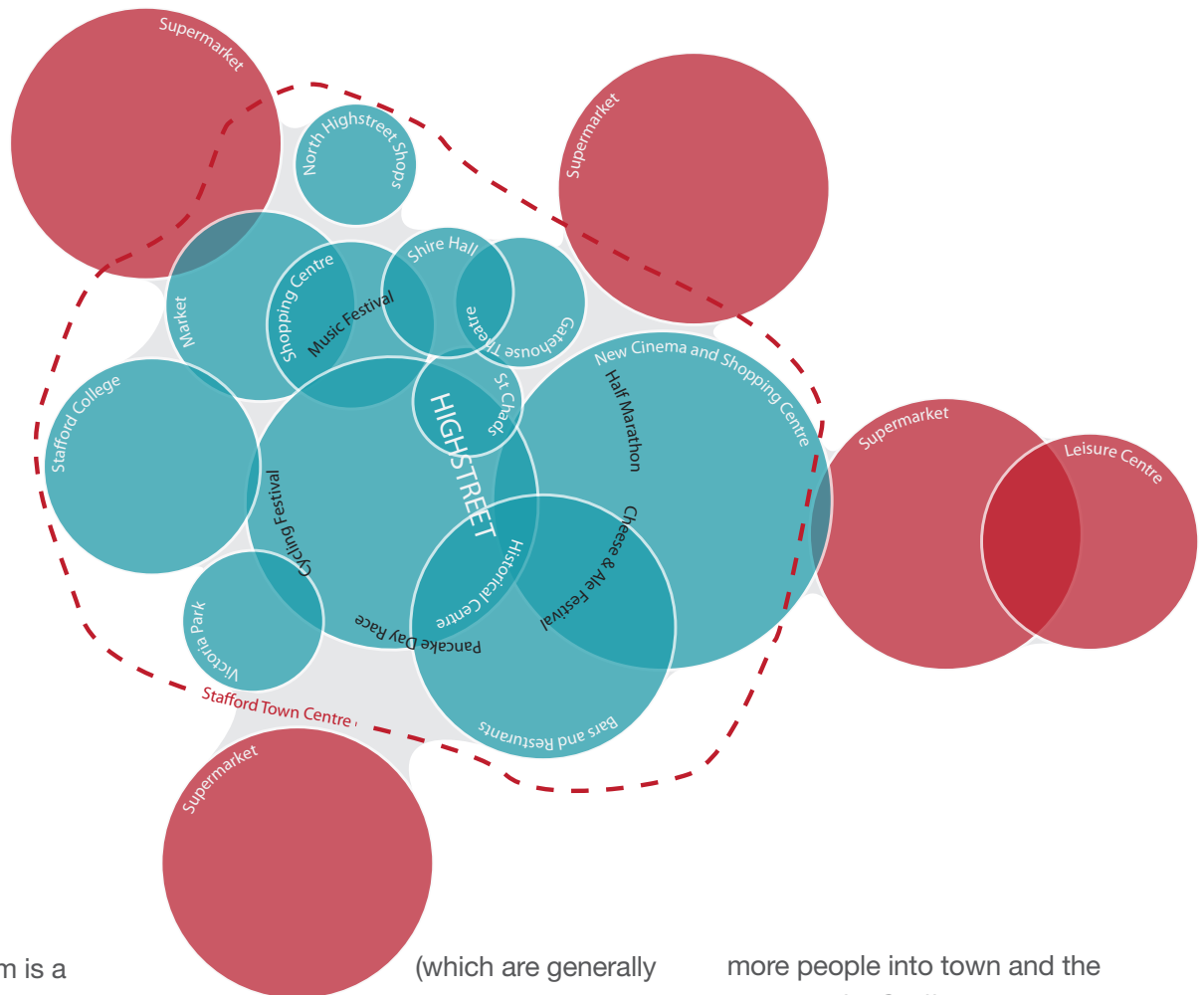
access, expensive parking etc. can put people off.

The third 'A' relates to **Amenity**, by which we mean the quality of the environment in the town. People have now become used to the quality of management in shopping centres which are clean, warm, safe and hide their vacancies very well. Towns can seem cold and wet, strewn with litter, (or worse) and with very visible vacancies. They do however have the advantage of authenticity and history, and the strongest towns are able to compete very well with the sanitised environment of the shopping centre.

The final 'A' is **Action** which relates to the ability of the town to do anything about this through town centre forums, town centre management etc. These are the issues that we explore on the following pages.

A

Attractions



This diagram is a representation of the attractions of Stafford with the size of the circles representing roughly the strength of these attractions.

The conclusion is that the town centre has many potential attractions but most of them are secondary. There are not enough primary attractions to pull people into town, the main ones being the supermarkets

(which are generally well linked to the centre), the evening economy, festivals and events.

The diagram also shows the Riverside Shopping Centre which will provide a primary retail and leisure attraction and will have a significant impact on the attractiveness of the centre. This will allow Stafford to catch up with the competition (if not to give it a significant lead). It will however attract a lot

more people into town and the question for Stafford will be how to use these visits to the benefit of the whole town.

Stafford has very few tourist attractions and these provide only a very limited draw for people to come into the town centre. Unlike most county towns it has no Cathedral. The Castle and Cannock Chase are both potential tourist attractions but they are too far away to benefit the centre.

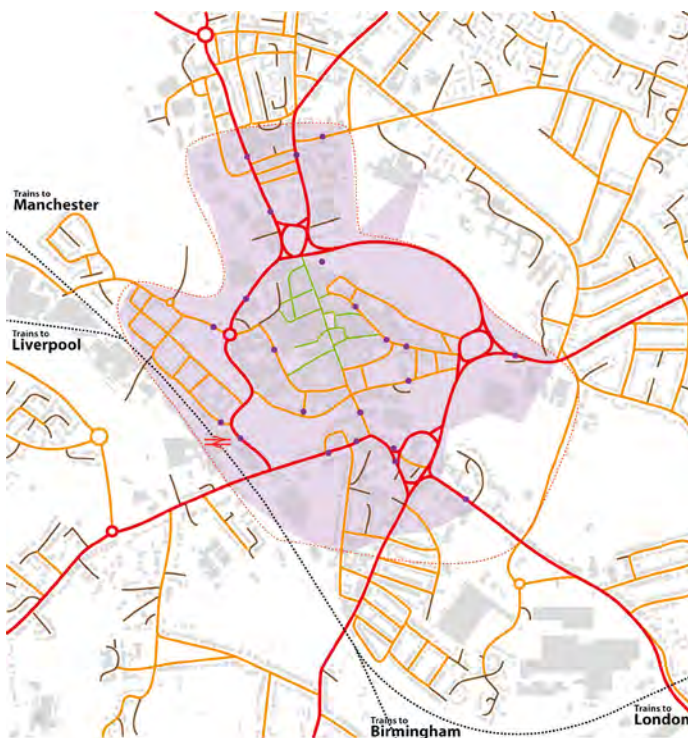
A

Access

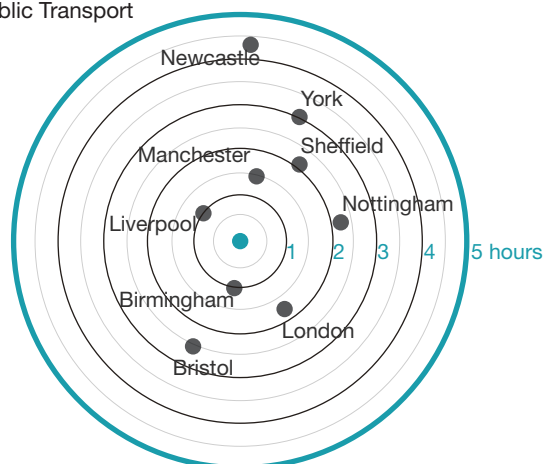
Access needs to be considered at a number of levels. At the macro scale Stafford has excellent connections. As the diagrams below show, it has excellent connections by road and rail. These of course work in both directions so are not always a benefit. While links to Birmingham may attract inward investment and commuter traffic it also makes it easy for people to go there shopping.

More locally, access relates to the road network, parking, public transport and walking and cycling. Here the town has more issues. The way that the town is configured puts a lot of pressure on the ring road as illustrated to the left which suffers congestion. It is not however clear whether this congestion is any greater in Stafford than similar towns elsewhere. There can be severe problems when there is an incident on the M6 but other than that we suspect that Stafford's congestion is not unusual. The short stay parking is however running at above 80% occupancy and overall parking is nearing saturation. There are also concerns about the efficiency and legibility of the public transport system and a worry that people really have no alternative to the car.

Because of Stafford's weak attractions it is important that access is made as easy as possible, including by car. Therefore the report needs to include a parking strategy.



Public Transport



Driving



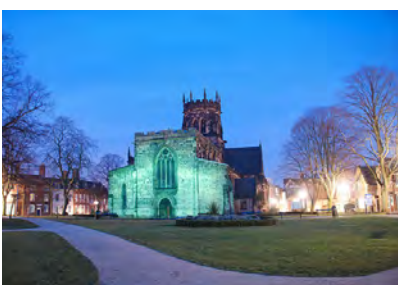
A

Amenity

As the photographs below illustrate, Stafford has a beautiful town centre and has huge potential to use its built heritage, parks and public spaces to attract more people to the town. It is also clean and well kept (the quality of maintenance in Victoria Park is exemplary) with the main issue being the quality of some shop units and vacant units that are often unsightly.

However Stafford does not have as strong an image as the other benchmark towns that we have looked at. This is partly because it does have a stock of poor quality buildings from the 1960s to the 1980s that in places overwhelm the more attractive historic townscape. As was pointed out at the workshop, there is a huge difference between the attractiveness of views within the town centre and the impression that it gives from the outside, on the approach roads and from the train. This is partly about its undistinguished skyline but also because of the quality of development around the town centre.

A selection of images from the website Flickr, to show what people photograph when they are in Stafford - this provides an indication to how Stafford may be represented online.



A

Action



The final 'A' relates to the ability of the town to address these issues. Here we believe that Stafford has many strengths. The Borough and County Councils have been successful in securing the Riverside Shopping Centre at a time of very challenging Market conditions. The County has shown its commitment with a high quality new headquarters complex in the town centre and has shown a willingness to work pro-actively with the Borough Council.

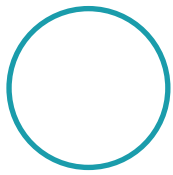
The town has an effective town centre manager and a growing roster of events and festivals throughout the year. The Market Square in particular has activities most weekends throughout the summer including a monthly farmers market. The town also has an active Town Centre Partnership and many of the independent retailers are actively engaged. While there is always room to further expand these activities there is a strong foundation on which to build.

Responses from the Round Table

	Theme	Observation	Next Steps
1	North end of the high street	The Guildhall and Gaolgate Street are under performing. The arrival of the Riverside and Morrisons developments will present opportunities.	The masterplan needs to decide how to mitigate the impact of the Riverside Development on the north of the high street.
2	A need to improve the Market	The Market is currently performing okay with most stalls being occupied, however the building is dark and is not visible from the high street.	A strategy to develop the Market either through animation or a new scheme all together.
3	Stafford is 'alright'	Stafford town centre is a pleasant place for anyone to spend time and enjoy the good stock of heritage and open space.	The main problem is the town centre has a limited number of attractions to bring in tourist trade and loses out to other county towns and cities in the surrounding area. Develop ideas for a Lottery funded visitor attraction.
4	Night time economy	The night time economy is underachieving and could capitalise on the affluent catchment area around Stafford.	Consider how the night time economy could be developed. This should consider the impact of the new proposed cinema connected to the Riverside Development.
5	Parking provision	The town centre's overall parking provision is reaching capacity and with major redevelopment happening this shall only increase the demand.	Updated Parking Strategy for the town centre.

Responses from the Town Centre Partnership's Questionnaire

	Theme	Observation	Next Steps
1	North end of the high street	As with the workshop session, there was concern that this side of town would become less used and footfall would reduce.	The masterplan needs to decide on how to mitigate the impact of the Riverside Development on the north of the high street.
2	Attract more shoppers	There was an emphasis on attracting more footfall to the north end of town through providing a mix of services, shops, offices, restaurants and attractions.	Establish a range of projects which could provide this mix of uses within the masterplan.
3	More support for independent shops	Participants were keen to see business rates reduced to make sure shops weren't empty. They also wanted to see better promotion for independent shopping in the centre.	The masterplan needs to include a strategy to get businesses back into empty shops and help them to stay there.
4	Parking	As with the workshop, a number of issues with parking were highlighted. There was a perception that parking was expensive and participants wanted to see cheaper and more convenient parking provided.	Develop a parking strategy for the town.



ROUND TABLE



Photos of participants at the roundtable workshop

On the 26th June 2014, local businesses and stakeholders were invited to take part in a roundtable workshop at the Gatehouse Theatre.

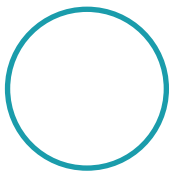
The aim of the workshop was to gauge local opinion on what the vision for the town centre should be and to get ideas and comments on priority projects for the centre.

A presentation discussing results from the baseline was presented to participants at the beginning of the session, and there was general agreement that the diagnosis was correct.

A summary of comments which were prevalent during the workshop are provided in the top table on the previous page.

A questionnaire was also sent out to members of the Stafford Town Centre Partnership (TCP) group, of which we received 10 replies. The results were similar to those expressed in the workshop and are summarised in the grey table on the previous page.

A short summary of information gathered from the round table and TCP survey is available in the Appendix.



DIAGNOSIS



Our diagnosis from the baseline analysis and benchmarking process is as follows:

1. Stafford is not doing badly – It is a reasonably prosperous Market town that has weathered the recession well and, while its retail figures are slightly lower than some of its competitors, there is nothing drastically or fundamentally wrong with its performance or with the town centre.

2. But it is not doing as well as it wants to – However there is a feeling in the town that it is underperforming. It is an historic county town and should rank alongside county towns like Gloucester, Shrewsbury etc.

The benchmarking analysis suggests that Stafford is indeed underperforming in terms of the

size, value and performance of its retail centre compared to these benchmarks.

3. Why is this? – We address this question through our 4 A's analysis (Attractions, Access, Amenity and Action) as developed by URBED in its work on town centre health checks. While there are some small issues with regard to Access, Amenity and Action our conclusion is that these are not the main problem. This lies with the Attractions of the town centre and the number of people that it is able to draw into the centre.

4. A modest catchment – The first problem is that Stafford's catchment population is relatively small. The population of the town is modest, and the catchment is eroded

by the influence of other centres. While this catchment population is relatively affluent, it is also very mobile and the accessibility of Stafford means that the catchment population has many other choices about where to take their trade.

5. Lack of primary attractions – The second problem is that there are insufficient attractions to persuade enough people in its catchment area to bring their trade to Stafford.

Attractions come in two sizes: There are primary attractions that bring people into town and cause them to choose Stafford rather than neighbouring towns or cities. Then there are the secondary attractions that rely on people already being there.

Stafford has plenty of the latter but not enough of the former. Its primary attractions currently include; the supermarkets, the evening economy and a number of events such as the Cheese and Ale festival which was very successful in its inaugural year.

Attractions like the Castle and the Chase are too distant to benefit the town centre, and it has no cathedral or major museum or gallery attraction and therefore limited tourist trade.

6. Impact of the Riverside Centre – This is being addressed by the Riverside Shopping Centre that will elevate Stafford's retail, and to a lesser extent leisure, attractions into a different league. Primark and M&S will

anchor the centre and become primary comparison retail attractions. This will have a knock-on effect on the town, it will increase its share of its catchment population spend and make it attractive to a wider range of retailers creating a cycle of improvements.

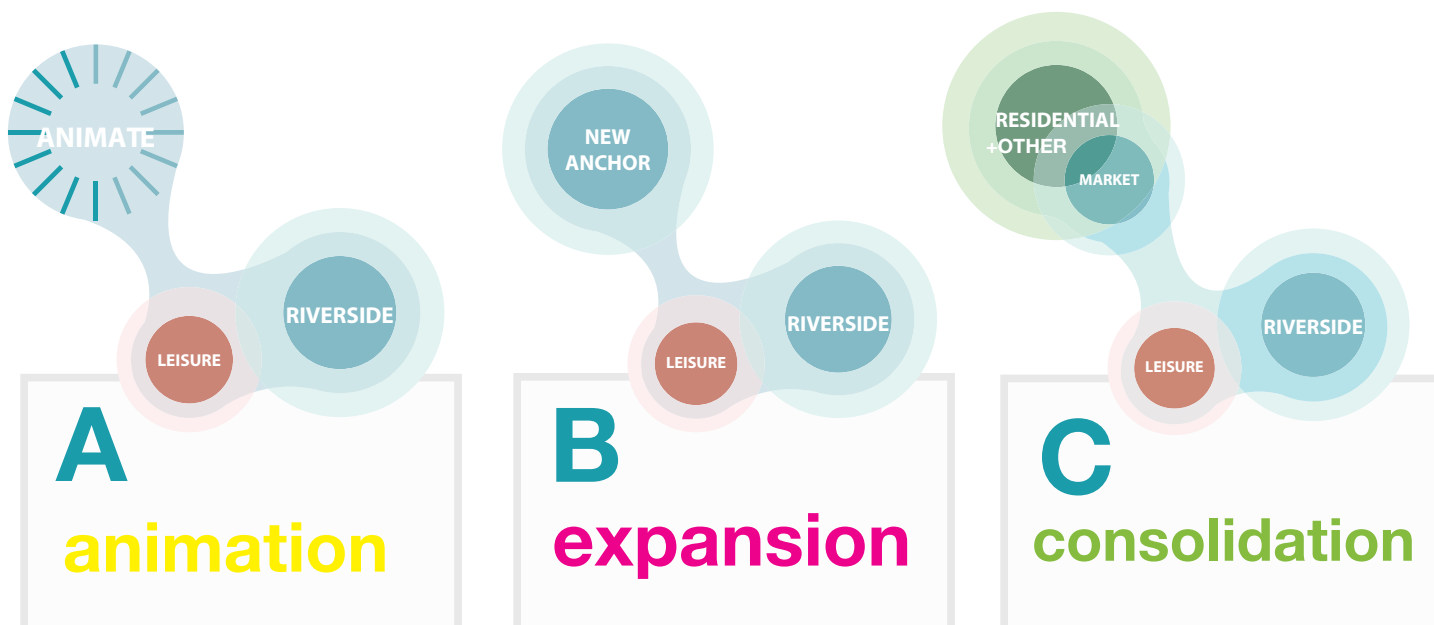
7. Not the whole solution–

However we shouldn't get carried away. The new retailing will not appeal greatly outside the existing catchment area and will not attract tourists. In many ways it brings Stafford onto a par with its competitors rather than putting it ahead of them.

8. Wider impacts – Riverside will also impact on the northern end of town, which will lose some of the retail attractors.

While the Riverside Shopping Centre will increase the number of people and the amount of spending in the town centre we do not believe that these positive effects will be sufficient to compensate for the loss of the attractors at the northern end of town. Our concern is that problems will manifest in this area, particularly on Princes Street and in the Guildhall Shopping Centre.

This is the main issue that the study needs to address. We need to rethink the northern end of town, partly to balance the impact of the Riverside development but more importantly to add to the attractions of the town so that it continues to improve its offer. There seem to be three potential responses to this:



- **Animation:** We could animate the northern end of town as an alternative attractor to the more conventional retail offer of the Riverside Shopping Centre. This is likely to involve making greater use of the Market, perhaps bringing it partly out into Market square together with more extensive events and activities and the creative use of vacant shops. It might also be possible to introduce more life into the area by attracting a retail anchor into the Guildhall or through the introduction of other non retail uses such as higher education.

- **Expansion:** Promote a retail scheme in the north of the town that can provide a balancing attraction to the Riverside. There is a possibility that it could be anchored with a food store. While the retail capacity study shows that there is no scope to further increase the retail floor area of the town, there may be scope to redevelop existing retail space.

- **Consolidation:** An alternative approach would be to accept that the retailing at the northern end of town will naturally contract and that we should be open to transfer land to other uses. The most likely option from our demand work is a mixed-use scheme (predominantly residential with some retail). This is the sort of high quality scheme that many similar towns have pursued in recent years.

These scenarios for the northern end of the Town Centre were used as the basis for discussion at the round table workshop. They have fed into the future vision options described on the following pages. However these plans need to be set within the context of the wider town centre where we have also explored the following proposals:

- A series of infill residential schemes around the town centre to increase the number of units in the immediate catchment area
- A possible major lottery-funded visitor attraction e.g. the Broad Eye Windmill, Ancient High House or something based on Anglo Saxon history etc.
- An animation campaign for the town centre as a whole
- An updated parking strategy

The overall aim will be to play into the authentic appeal of a traditional county town, helping Stafford supplement the conventional retail appeal of the Riverside Centre with something more locally distinctive.

INTRODUCTION

STAFFORD TOWN CENTRE

What's this all about?

The boards have been posed as **questions** to all how the town centre might develop, and should be composed. On boards 4-6 we propose 3 different towns and of the High Street. On the final 2 boards, we ask for ideas for other sites across the town centre.

If you think Stafford should change over the next June, we held a workshop with local businesses and discover what people thought of the town centre and to see delivering. Further details on this session are

GO TO
BOARD 2

5 **OPTION**
North on

7

PROJECT

what should

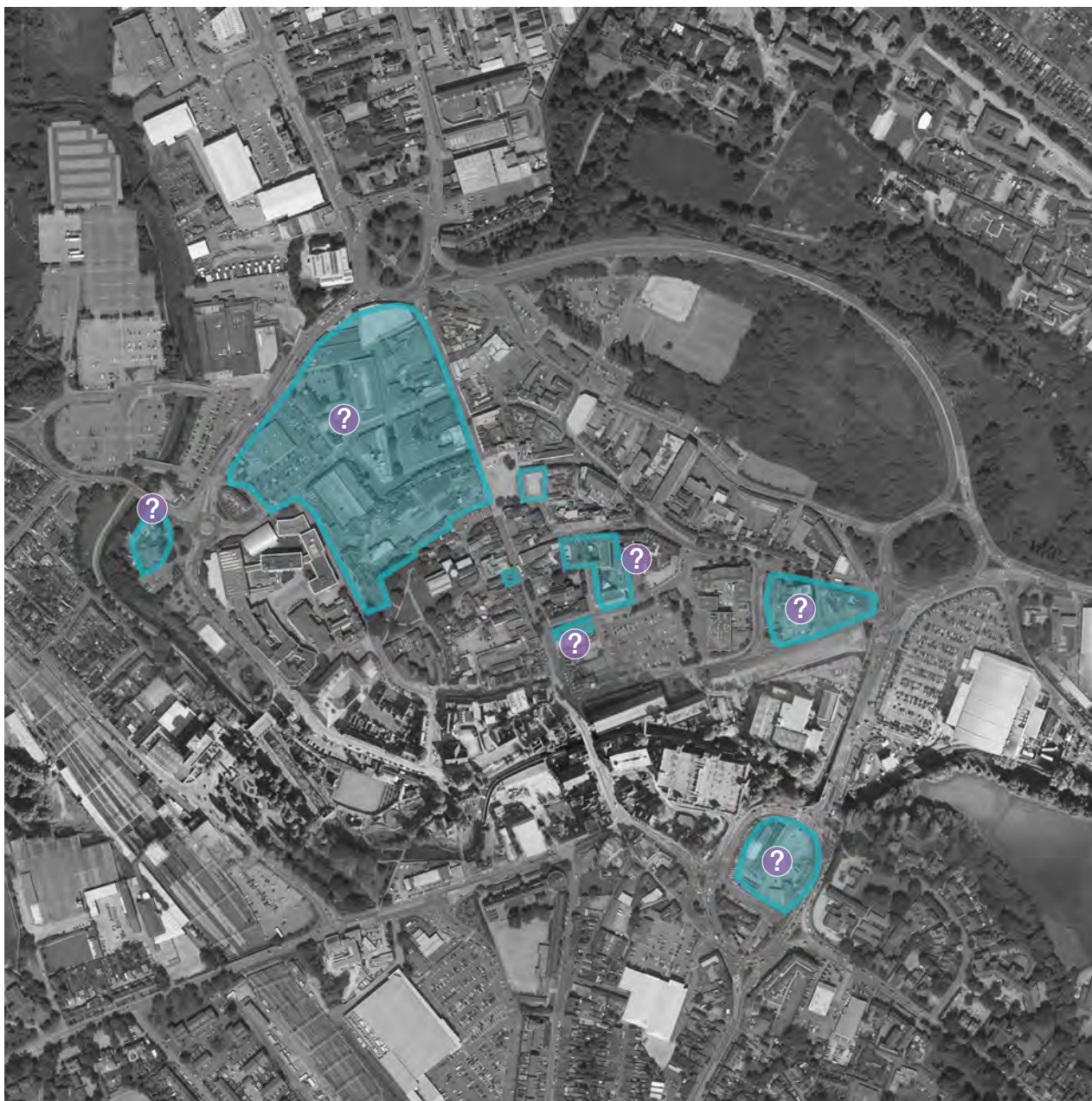
AS IT IS STAFFORD TOWN CENTRE

What to Wh...

2

Possible Futures

In this section we set out a series of options that explore how the town centre could develop.



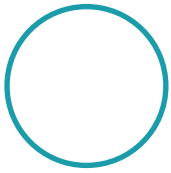
? What should happen to the Market?

? Where will people park?

? What will attract me into the town centre?

? What do I want to see improved?

? Should we provide some housing?



AREAS OF CHANGE



As part of the baseline study a series of potential 'areas of change' were identified. These are illustrated on the map opposite.

This map is based on a 'hard and soft' approach where areas which were beneficial to the town centre and should be retained (the hard areas) are identified along with areas which provided an opportunity or necessity for change (the soft areas) shown in blue on the plan.

The main opportunity for transformation in the Town Centre has been identified as the area surrounding the Guildhall Shopping Centre, Princes Street and Gaolgate in the northern end of town.

For the consultation we developed three different strategies for this area that are set out on the following pages.

These were:

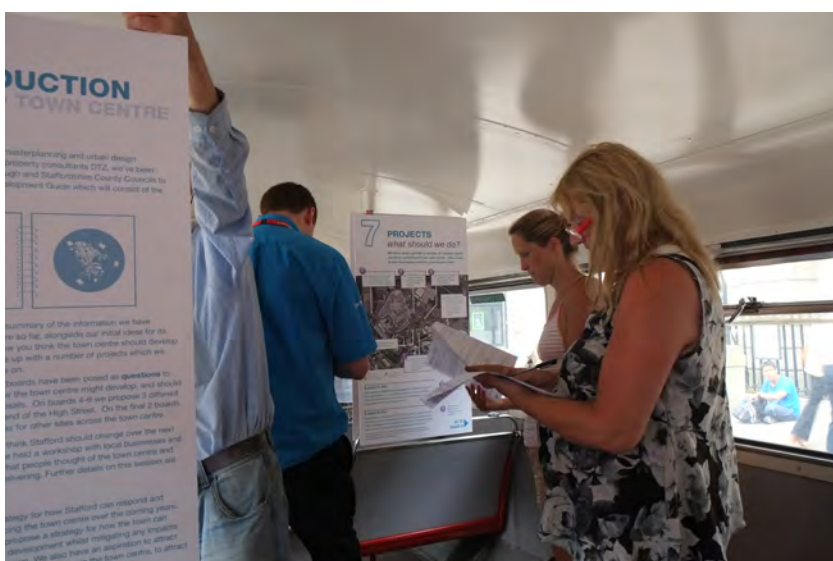
- Animation
- Re-model
- Consolidation

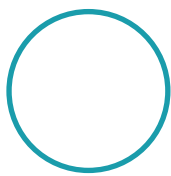
The BT site on Eastgate Street was identified as another potential site for redevelopment, alongside two sites off Tipping Street.

The Shire Hall, Ancient High House and Broad Eye Windmill were also highlighted as potential investment projects.

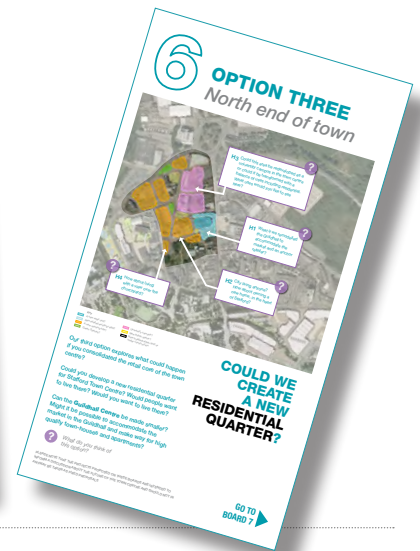


Photos taken on the consultation day in Market Square





RED BUS CONSULTATION



On Saturday 26th July 2014, we held an exhibition in Market Square aboard the URBED Bus, to get people's ideas and opinions on our options for the town centre.

148 people were counted entering the bus, with members of the team talking to a further 10 participants outside the bus in Market Square. Members of the public were encouraged to fill out a questionnaire asking for their opinions and thoughts on the project proposals and the three options for the north end of the town.

We received 56 questionnaire responses in total, and the results from these were summarised into a consultation report.

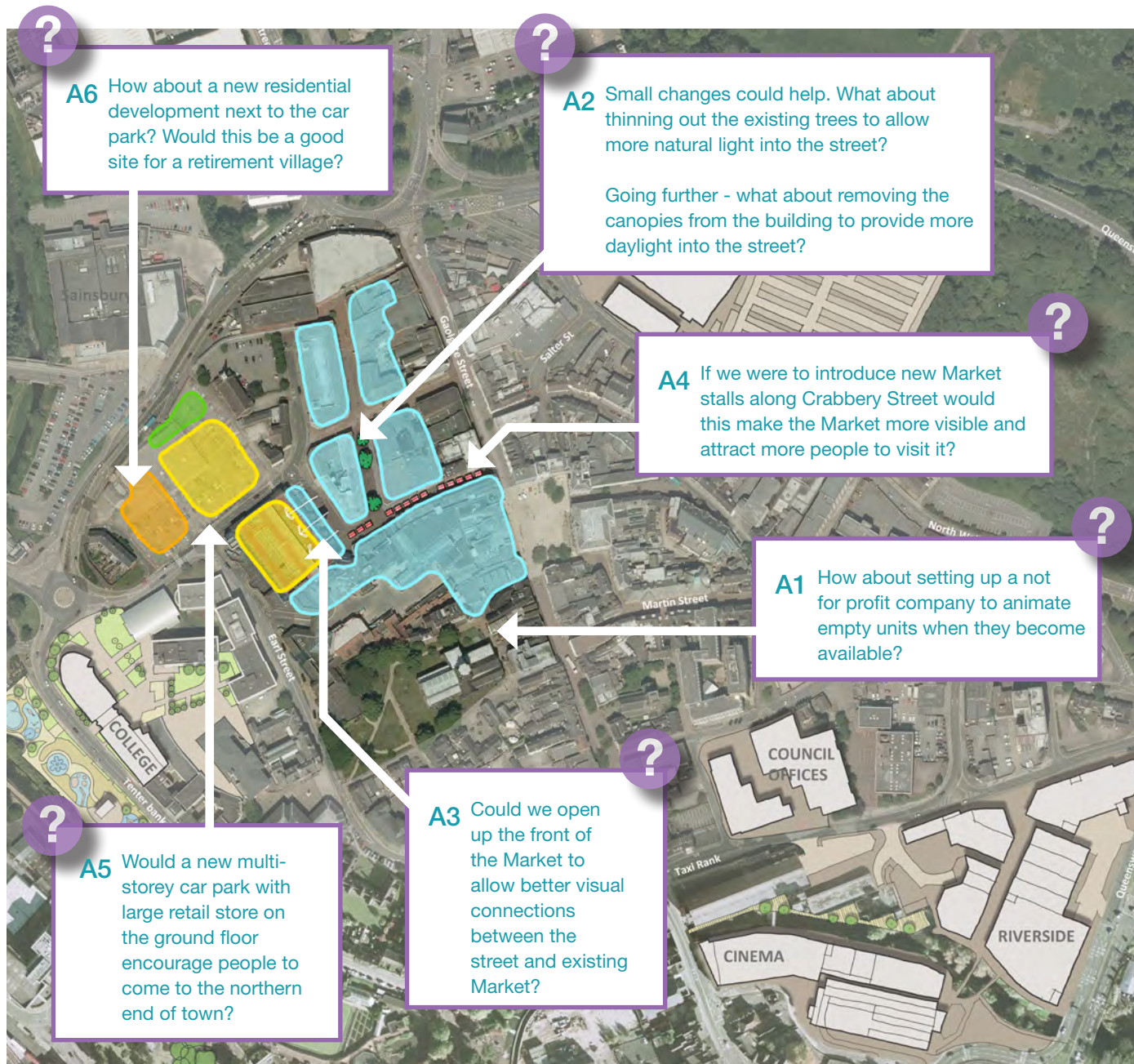
Whilst people at the event had strong views on how the town should develop there was no general consensus on a preferred option for the north end of town, with participants highlighting both positive and negative comments on each option.

There was however general support for the smaller projects to improve Stafford including

increasing the number of visitor attractions, the proposed public realm improvements being brought forward by Stafford Borough Council and the proposals to provide additional parking for the town centre.

The following pages provide details on each proposal in detail, followed by the general responses from the red-bus consultation.

Please note, a full summary of responses is available in the Appendix.



What could it feel like?



A pop up shop fills an empty shop unit

Source: <http://www.popupcreativeglobal.co.uk/pop-up-experiences/pop-up-shops-short-duration/>



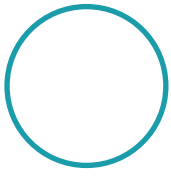
Bury Market opens out onto the street

© Copyright N Chadwick



Talbot Road, Blackpool, multi-storey with shops beneath

Source: <http://building-projects-news.blogspot.co.uk/2013/01/landmark-building-redevelopment-marks.html>



NORTHERN END OF TOWN

COULD WE ANIMATE THE EXISTING AREA?

Our first option covers the area around the Guildhall Shopping Centre and along Princes Street. It examines the idea of bringing life and vitality back to this end of town through a strategy of **animation**.

This option proposes to bring additional footfall to the area by introducing a new multi-storey car park on Broad Street, with a new retail unit on the ground floor. This would increase the number of people parking in the north end of town, and walking through the area, which would in turn increase the likelihood that they would stop to shop or visit the Market.

The option also proposes that the Market elevation on Chapel Street be opened up to bring more light into the Market and improve its visual connection with the street.

New Market stalls could be provided along Crabbery Street to provide a stronger link between the Market and the high street. Such interventions would make the Market more attractive to visitors and thus increase footfall.

The option could include a strategy to encourage take up of any vacant units through a pop-up retail initiative, providing an active frontage onto the street.

DTZ have carried out a viability assessment for this option, which is provided on the next page, along with a summary of responses from the red bus consultation.



- **A1** - A not for profit company would need to be funded by the public sector. Any management and maintenance costs associated with the animation of empty units would need to be funded.
- **A2** - Tree thinning would be a cost effective solution to improve the feel of Princes Street but would have a negligible effect on rental values. The removal of canopies would require landlords approval and would also need to be funded as nonessential works.
- **A3** - There is a question over funding which could be delivered by the Council as head lease holder. This could help to improve occupancy rates and footfall which would have a positive impact on values.
- **A4** - New Market stalls along Crabbery Street could be delivered quite easily and would be cost-effective assuming temporary structures/ stalls are used. Query whether there are enough Market traders to make this viable? Could it be more like the Farmer's Market? Risk that external traders will detract from the current Market and increase competition.
- **A5** - A new retail store and MSCP is a high cost intervention and would require the acquisition of the Wilkinsons site. This assumes Wilkinsons could be accommodated elsewhere.
- **A6** - This site would become available as part of the Wilkinsons acquisition. Residential development has the potential to generate high values but could be abnormal costs given the location and constrained nature of the site.

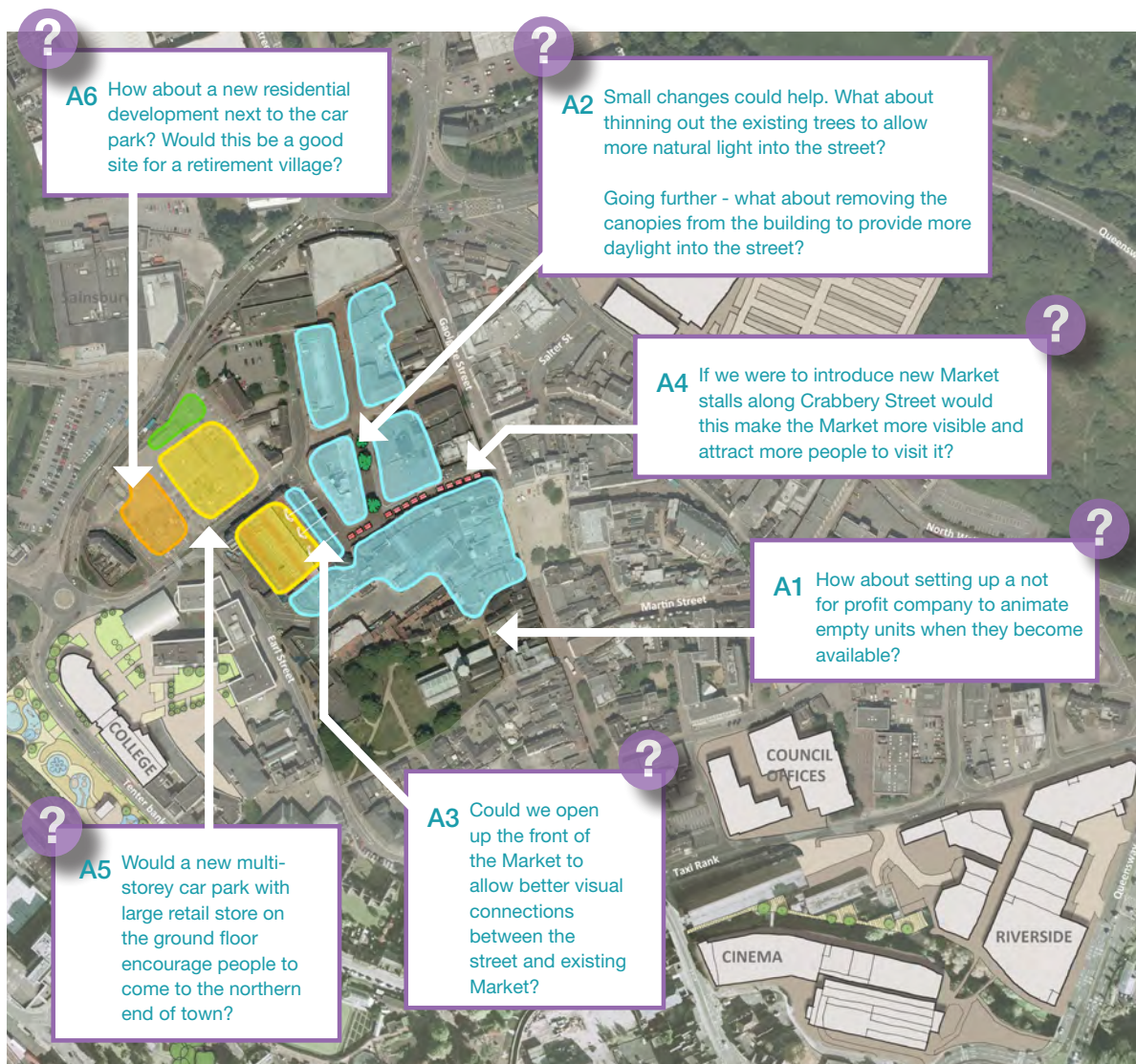
RED BUS CONSULTATION

ADVANTAGES

- Participants were keen to see empty shop units filled, to make the area look better;
- 66% of respondents thought it was a good or definitely a good idea to open up the front of the Market onto Chapel Street and agreed this could attract more shoppers;
- 78% of respondents thought new Market stalls on Crabbery Street were a good or definitely a good idea for the area.

DISADVANTAGES

- 53% of participants didn't want to see trees removed;
- There was a split in opinion about a new multi-storey car park being provided. This could have been because people do not like the look of multi-storey car parks rather than that they didn't feel more parking needed to be provided here;
- There was also a split in opinion about housing in the centre.



Animate Option Proposals



Key			
	A new retail unit?		New public space?
	Remodelled existing retail?		Car parking?
	A new housing site?		New building either built or under construction
	Greenspace?		

What could it feel like?



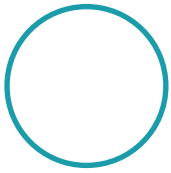
Townhouses in Brighton New England Quarter



High end food store in Kendall



New Urban Housing



NORTHERN END OF TOWN

COULD WE RE-MODEL WHAT WE ALREADY HAVE?



Our second option looked at **re-modelling** the Guildhall Shopping Centre to provide a new food store as an anchor and potentially re-house the Market. This could allow retail units along Princes Street to be redeveloped to provide housing.

This option could involve providing a new food retailer on the ground floor of the multi-storey car park - which would then act as an attractor for the northern end of town and bring in more footfall.

A new surface car park is shown to the north of Broad Street to service the food store and provide extra parking for those visiting the town centre. The option also shows the retail areas around the west of Princes Street and along Stafford Street redeveloped for housing.

This option accepts that retail is no longer viable in the northern end, and by providing housing, the area could be redeveloped in a more attractive way and an increase in the local population would mean an increase in the number of potential shoppers.

Again DTZ carried out a viability assessment for this option, which is provided on the next page, along with a summary of responses from the red bus consultation.



- **R1** - Remodelling the Guildhall is a high cost intervention and relocating the Market back to its original location could lead to a net loss of retail floorspace. This approach however recognises and responds to the national trend in the contraction of town centres. Possible that the yields could be improved through better occupancy and better tenants so more attractive asset. There is an opportunity to work with the new owners to add value through remodelling.
- **R2** - A new high end retailer is not deliverable in the current Market based on known operator requirements. If this became an option in the future, then it could create a valuable asset and drive footfall to this end of the town but may require a capital contribution to secure the right operator. Another option could also be to relocate the Wilkinsons store here, to bring it closer to the main high street.
- **R3** - Additional parking is likely to be required. The car park will have to be paid for and potentially managed by the Council. Revenue potential would be reduced as supermarket users would park for free.
- **R4** - New residential development of this scale at the North end of the high street is a high cost intervention. Unlikely that values would sustain the high cost of land assembly at the current point in time.
- Looking at the site from an overall perspective, while retail floorspace would reduce, if successfully modelled and let to better covenants, comparative yields may improve. Loss of income from a reduced floor area could be offset against the sale of a proportion of the site for residential and re-modelled units in the existing Market building which could attract better covenants.

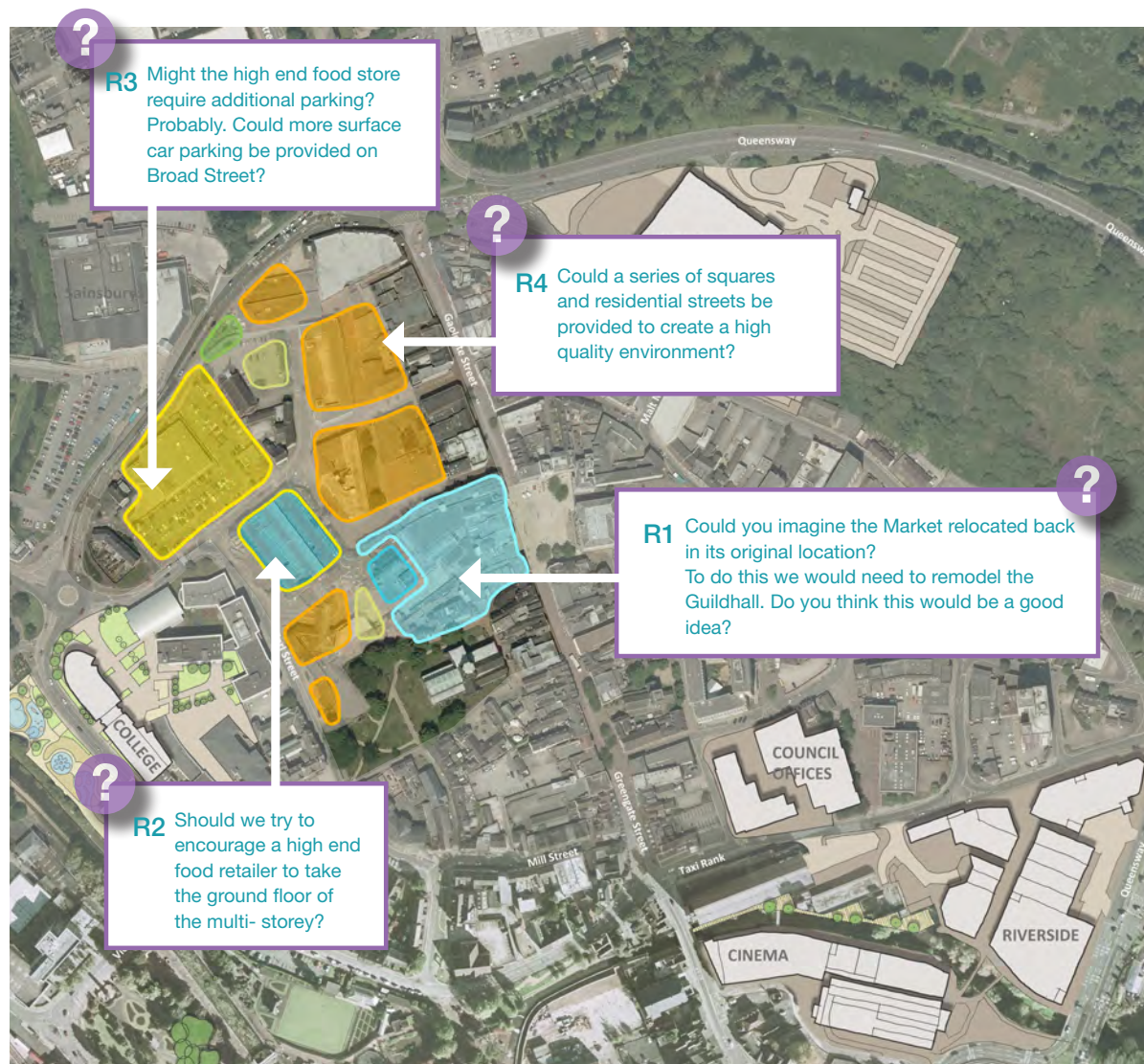
RED BUS CONSULTATION

ADVANTAGES

- 56% of participants liked the idea of the Market being relocated closer to the main high street;
- 57% of participants liked the idea of a new surface car park to provide more parking spaces.

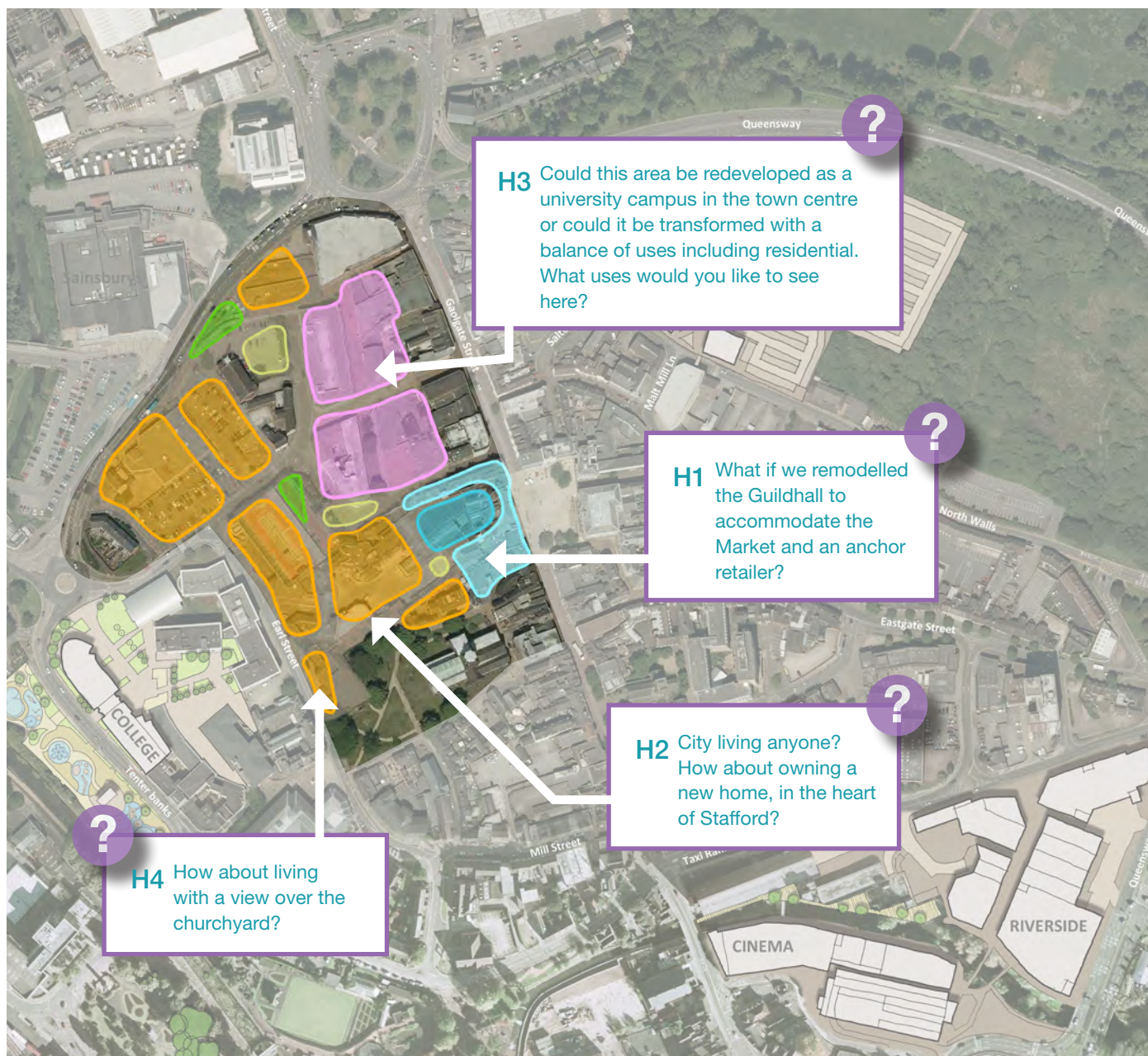
DISADVANTAGES

- Many participants argued that there were already plenty of food retailers in or near to the centre;
- There was a split in opinion as to whether housing was a good idea in the centre;
- There were concerns over the logistics of moving the Market.



Key	
 	A new retail unit?
 	Remodelled existing retail?
 	A new housing site?
 	Greenspace?
 	New public space?
 	Car parking?
 	New building either built or under construction

Re-Model Option Proposals



- Key**
- A new retail unit?
 - Remodelled existing retail?
 - A new housing site?
 - Green Spaces?
 - University campus?
 - New public space?
 - New building either built or under construction

What could it feel like?



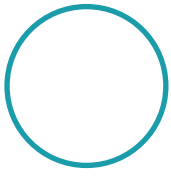
Apartments with a cafe on the ground floor, Brighton New England Quarter



Contemporary townhouses with green space in Malmö



More traditional style town housing in Upton, Dorset



NORTHERN END OF TOWN

COULD WE CREATE A NEW RESIDENTIAL QUARTER?



Our third option explored **consolidation** of retail in the north end of town to provide high quality housing and new public spaces. Participants were asked whether they thought housing was a good idea and if they would want to live here, to gauge their opinion.

This option accepts that the north end of town would not be able to compete with the new Riverside Centre and should instead offer an alternative but complementary use to retail.

The option shows a new residential quarter with townhouses and apartments, providing a new set of streets which framed Trinity Church and St Mary's.

The option also showed a consolidated version of the Guildhall Shopping Centre with the Market accommodated within it. Revamping the Guildhall in such a way could strengthen its position on

Market Square and allow easy access to the Market to attract more shoppers.

The increase in the local population should provide more potential shoppers and increase footfall.

As an alternative to housing, the provision of a university campus here was also suggested to gauge participants thoughts.

DTZ carried out a Viability Assessment which is provided on the next page. Responses from the questionnaire are also summarised on the following pages.



- **H1** - Remodelling the Guildhall is a high cost intervention and relocating the Market back to its original location could lead to a net loss of retail floorspace. This approach however recognises and responds to the national trend in the contraction of the high street. Possible that the yields could be improved through better occupancy and better tenants so more attractive asset. There is an opportunity to work with the new owners to add value through remodelling.
- **H2** - New residential development of this scale is a high cost intervention. Unlikely that values would sustain the high cost of land assembly at the current point in time.
- **H3** - We are not aware of any latent demand for university use in the town. This option needs to be explored with the local institutions. Significant quantum of public sector funding required to assemble the site and deliver this use.
- **H4** - New residential development of this scale is a high cost intervention. Unlikely that values would sustain the high cost of land assembly at the current point in time.

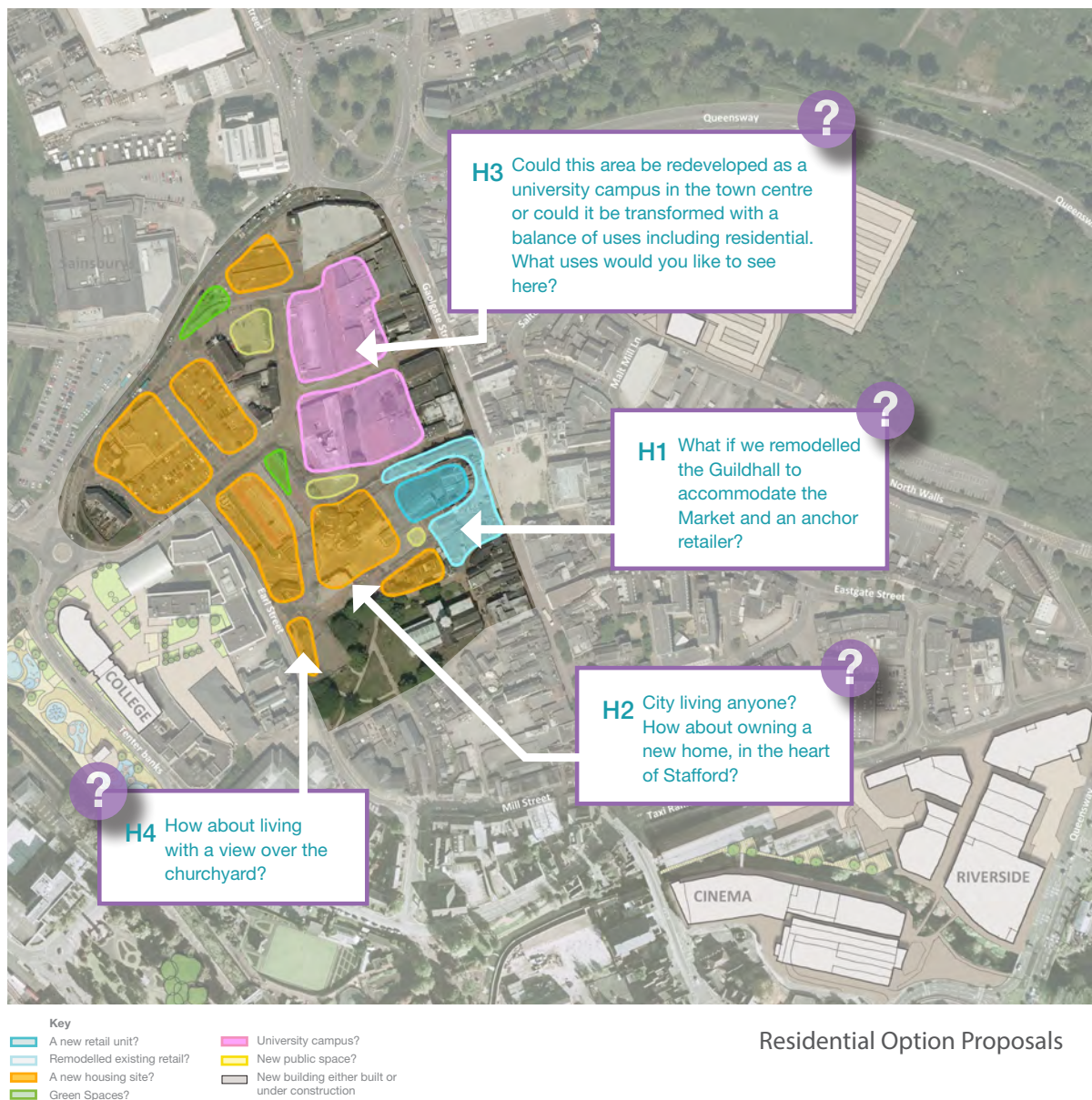
RED BUS CONSULTATION

ADVANTAGES

- 62% of respondents were interested in seeing the Guildhall Shopping Centre updated and remodelled to re-house the Market in its previous position;
- There was a mixed reaction to housing on this option - with 50% of respondents believing housing was a good or definitely a good idea.

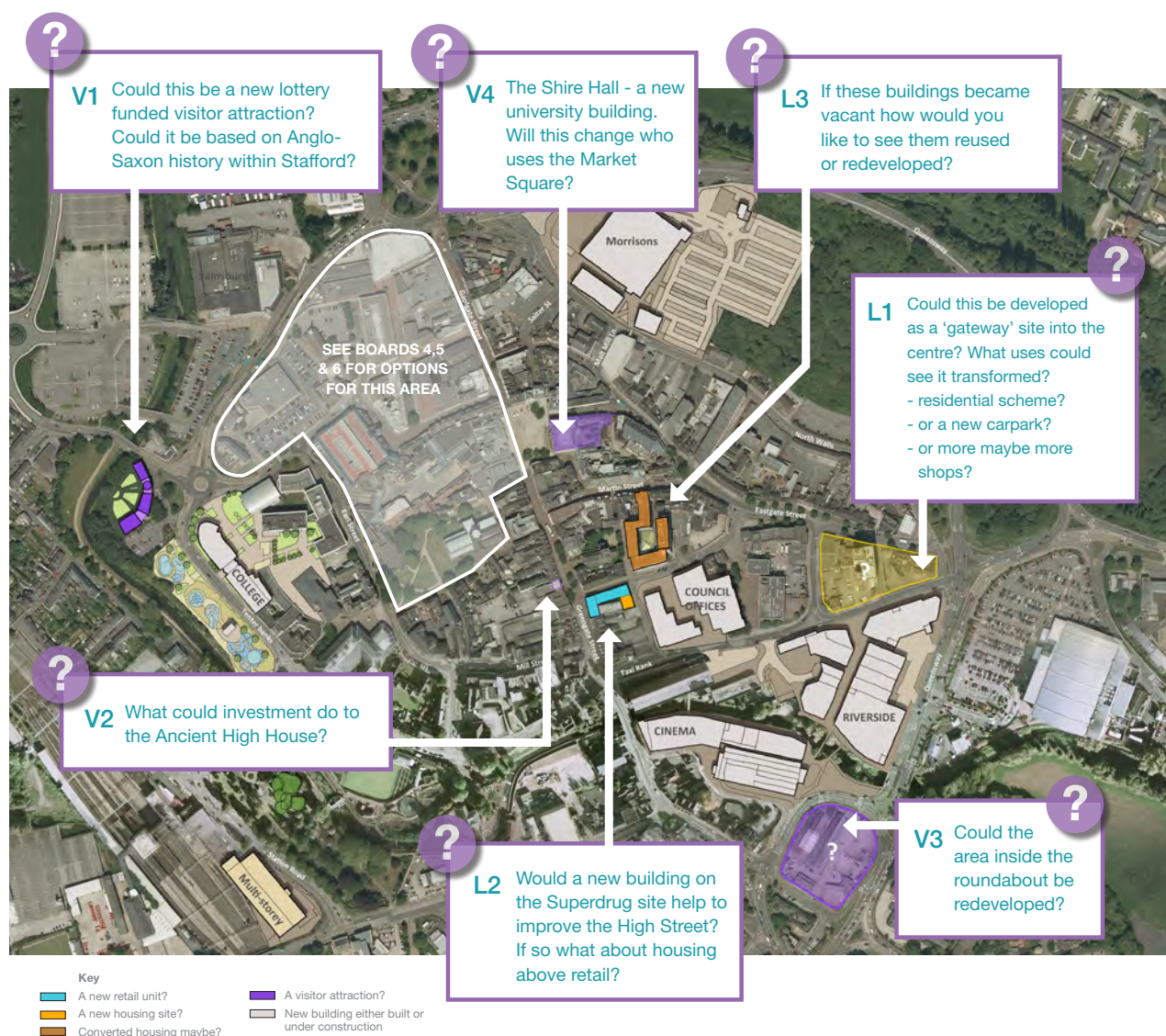
DISADVANTAGES

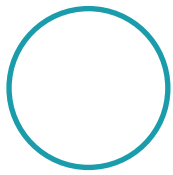
- Participants were unsure about a university campus in the area, although many acknowledged that students could bring more business to the area;
- Participants were unsure about housing looking onto the church yard areas.



A Place to Visit and a Place to Live

Project Idea	Summary
V1 - A new lottery funded visitor attraction. Is this the right place and what could it be?	The majority of people were positive about a new or updated visitor attraction in Stafford but many suggested it should be located in the Shire Hall Library or the High House, rather than the Broad Eye Windmill.
V2 – Is it worth investing in the Ancient High House?	The general consensus was yes it should be invested in and it should be more of a tourist destination. It was also mentioned that the space at the street level currently used as a shop should be part of the visitor attraction and should be accessible for disabled people.
V3 – Could the area inside the roundabout be redeveloped? What might go there?	There was no consensus on the answer to this question. Some people mentioned how it needed to be related to the Riverside scheme.
L1 – What would you like to see on this site?	The majority of people would like to see independent shops and restaurants on this site.
L2 – Would a new building on the Superdrug site improve the High Street?	There was no consensus on this question, but people who wanted to see a new building emphasised the need for it to be architecturally attractive and in keeping with the street facade
L3 – If these buildings became vacant how would you like to see them reused or redeveloped?	The majority of people wanted to see the area used for small restaurants or residential buildings.





PROJECTS



The following projects were identified for other areas within the town centre, in line with the recommendations from the baseline. These are listed on the preceding page alongside the results from the questionnaire.

A Place to Visit and a Place to Live

Respondents were keen to see the Ancient High House made into a more welcoming visitor attraction as it was in the centre of the town. One prevalent response was the need to convert the retail unit(s) on the ground floor into a gift

shop or cafe that could entice people in at the street level.

The area on Queensaway Island (V3) was also identified as a potential re-development area. There was no consensus on whether this should be brought forward or what it could be brought forward for, but many respondents mentioned that it should tie in with the new Riverside scheme.

The buildings off Tipping Street (L3) were identified for potential redevelopment, and participants were keen to see small restaurants and housing here.

A Parking and Public Realm Strategy

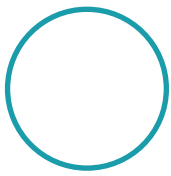
There was a positive response to the parking and public realm strategies proposed for the rest of the town centre.

These included a new car park on North Walls and environmental improvement projects alongside the stretch of River next to the civic centre.

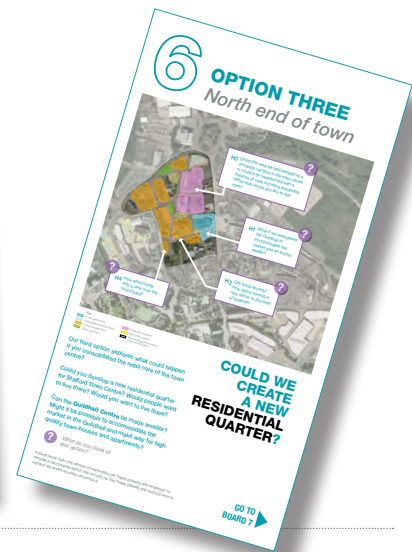
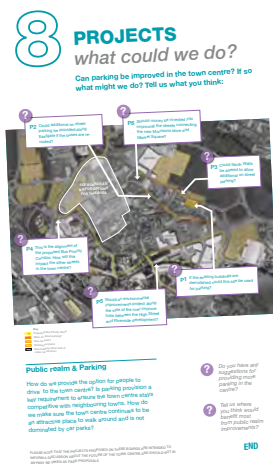
People were generally pleased with the attractiveness of the town centre but mentioned the need for cheaper parking in more locations.

Public Realm and Parking Strategy

Project Idea	Summary
P1 – New car park on North Walls?	Respondents were in agreement with all to the projects proposed. A number of respondents mentioned the need for a park and ride like similar town centres in the local area and others mentioned the need for free parking and better facilities for disabled people, such as level pavement surfaces and kassel kerbs to help them get from bus stops into the town centre.
P2 – Additional on street parking along Eastgate Street?	
P3 – Additional on street parking along North Walls?	
P5 – Environmental improvement project to side of River next to Civic Centre?	
P6 – Improve connection from Market Square and Morrisons?	



COLLEGE CONSULTATION



Members of the Stafford Borough Council team displayed the exhibition boards at Stafford College on Thursday 10th September, to coincide with the fresher's fair which was taking place. Students were invited to answer the questionnaire and a total of 98 responses were received.

Students responses to **Option 1: Animate** were positive, with the majority of participants agreeing that opening up the front of the Market and having Market stalls on the street, more parking and new housing in the centre were good ideas.

Responses to **Option 2: Re-model** were also positive with the majority of participants agreeing that relocating the Market and providing a new high end food store were good ideas.

Regarding **Option 3: Housing**, participants were mainly unsure about the projects, but

were positive about the idea of remodelling the Guildhall and providing a new university campus in the area.

Prevalent answers in response to what the key priorities for Stafford should be were, the need for a variety of new shops, better cultural attractions and more places to eat.

A brief summary of responses to the place to live, visit and the parking and public realm projects has been provided on the next page.

Responses to Proposed Projects from the College Consultation

A Place to Live and a Place to Visit Project Idea	Summary
V1 - A new lottery funded visitor attraction. Is this the right place and what could it be?	Many respondents were not sure about this idea or felt this should not be the main visitor attraction in the centre.
V2 – Is it worth investing in the Ancient High House?	There was no consensus on this question.
V3 – Could the area inside the roundabout be redeveloped? What might go there?	Many respondents were unsure or answered no to redeveloping this area. A number of respondents mentioned that trees or greenery would benefit this area.
L1 – What would you like to see on this site?	There was no consensus on what should be provided on this site, with a range of answers mentioning new shops.
L2 – Would a new building on the Superdrug site improve the High Street?	Many respondents agreed a new building would benefit this area.
L3 – If these buildings became vacant how would you like to see them reused or redeveloped?	Many respondents mentioned cheap restaurants and clothes shops.

Responses to ‘Key Priorities for Stafford’ - Quotes

“More cheap and healthy food shops”

“More areas where you can eat outside”

“ A pleasant environment and shopping experience”

“Preservation of our older heritage buildings so that the character of the town remains intact”

“More landmark places and tourist attractions”

“Cultural events that engage the community particularly young people and families”

“Wider variety of shops”

“More greenery”

“More parking or free parking for students”

“More housing and shops”

Public Realm and Parking Project Idea	Percentage of Response
	FOR (over 50% marked as a Definitely or Good Idea)
P1 – New car park on North Walls?	63%
P2 – Additional on street parking along Eastgate Street?	66%
P3 – Additional on street parking along North Walls?	62%
P5 – Environmental improvement project to side of River next to Civic Centre?	61%
P6 – Improve connection from Market Square and Morrisons?	66%



CHURCH
EVANGELICAL
CHURCH

TEAS
& HOVIS
Bakery & Butchery

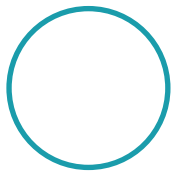
Sing Malters

3

VISION

In this section we set out a strategy for the town centre





VISION



Stafford is a vibrant Market town with a good retail offer that is soon to be enhanced further when the Riverside Development is completed. Both Stafford Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council are keen to build on this recent investment and continue to develop a vision for the town to meet the challenges that the town centre will face in the future.

To meet these challenges we believe that Stafford Town Centre should develop in line with its Market town heritage whilst providing the variety of shops and services you would expect in a county town.

The recurring message from the baseline study and the consultation sessions was that Stafford needed to make the most of its **historic Market town** status. It needed to protect the setting of its heritage assets, enhance its visitor attractions, increase its access and amenity and support retail and promote and celebrate its Market at the

heart of all of its town centre activities.

In line with this vision, the strategy, set out over the following pages focuses on four key aspects;

- Attracting footfall to the north end of town;
- Transforming the Eastgate Gateway;
- Improving access to parking and;
- Providing a visitor attraction which puts Stafford on the map.



NORTHERN QUARTER

As the retail core is drawn southwards by the Riverside Development we believe it is important to address the northern end of the High Street.

Possible intervention could include remodelling the Guildhall and Wilkinson's site to provide:

- New retail anchor stores
- Additional parking
- A new site for the market
- New housing



EASTGATE GATEWAY

The Eastgate site which is the triangular shaped site bounded by Eastgate Street and South Walls forms a gateway point into the town centre from the A34.

Currently the home of the BT building, the site could be assembled and re-developed as a mixed use scheme containing a mix of residential units and ground floor retail facing onto the new Primark store, to connect the area with the Riverside scheme.



PARKING STRATEGY

Ensuring the town centre is easily accessible is essential to the ongoing success of the town centre. As such additional opportunities to increase the level of parking in the town centre have been identified making it easier for people to drive into and park in the town.

Two new surface car parks and a new multi-storey could be developed in the northern quarter. Additional on street parking will be provided on North Walls and Eastgate Street.

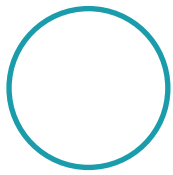


VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

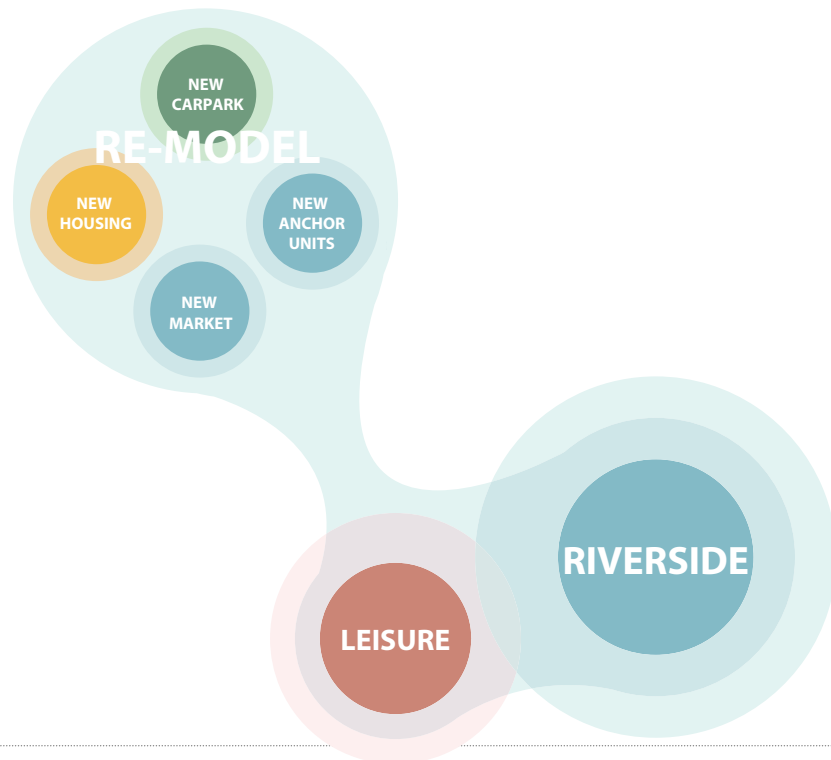
Investment opportunities should be explored to restore the Ancient High House as an important visitor attraction.

As a key landmark building the Ancient High House could become the front door to the town. The existing retail units on the ground floor could be remodelled to provide a new entrance and visitor centre.

Investment could also be considered to enhance the existing heritage trail, which would connect the attractions of Stafford together through a series of upgraded street maps to complement the Victorian style signposts which have recently been installed in the centre.



STRATEGY



The strategy will promote a number of complementary changes with the ultimate goal of increasing footfall into the town centre, especially the northern quarter and enhancing its market town aspirations.

Retail could be consolidated closer to the main high street, with additional parking provided in the northern quarter to encourage people to park and then walk through the area.

New retail units could be provided in the northern quarter to establish a new anchor for the north end of town, further amplifying footfall.

The Guildhall could be re-modelled to incorporate the new retail units as well as the market building. This will be an exciting and interesting space, which will create a buzz and draw people in from the high street.

A heritage trail with interactive street maps at different points could guide locals and tourists alike through the centre, allowing them to explore and understand the heritage of significant buildings within the centre. Smartphone Apps could be produced to provide commentary along the walk.

New residential areas could be provided of a height and scale in keeping with the setting of the town. This could provide housing within walking distance of the shops and restaurants.





ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

List of Projects

Project Description

Guildhall Shopping Centre

G1	Guildhall re-model to incorporate market
G2	New housing on Earl Street
G3	New Anchor store on Chapel Street

Northern Quarter

N1	Surface car park on Broad Street
N2	Multi-storey car park on Broad Street
N3	Surface car park on Broad Street
N4	Public Realm Improvements

Eastgate Gateway

E1	New housing on Eastgate Street
E2	Mixed-use retail on South Walls

A Space to Park

P1	On street parking on North Walls
P2	Surface car park on North Walls
P3	On street parking on Eastgate Street

A Place to Visit

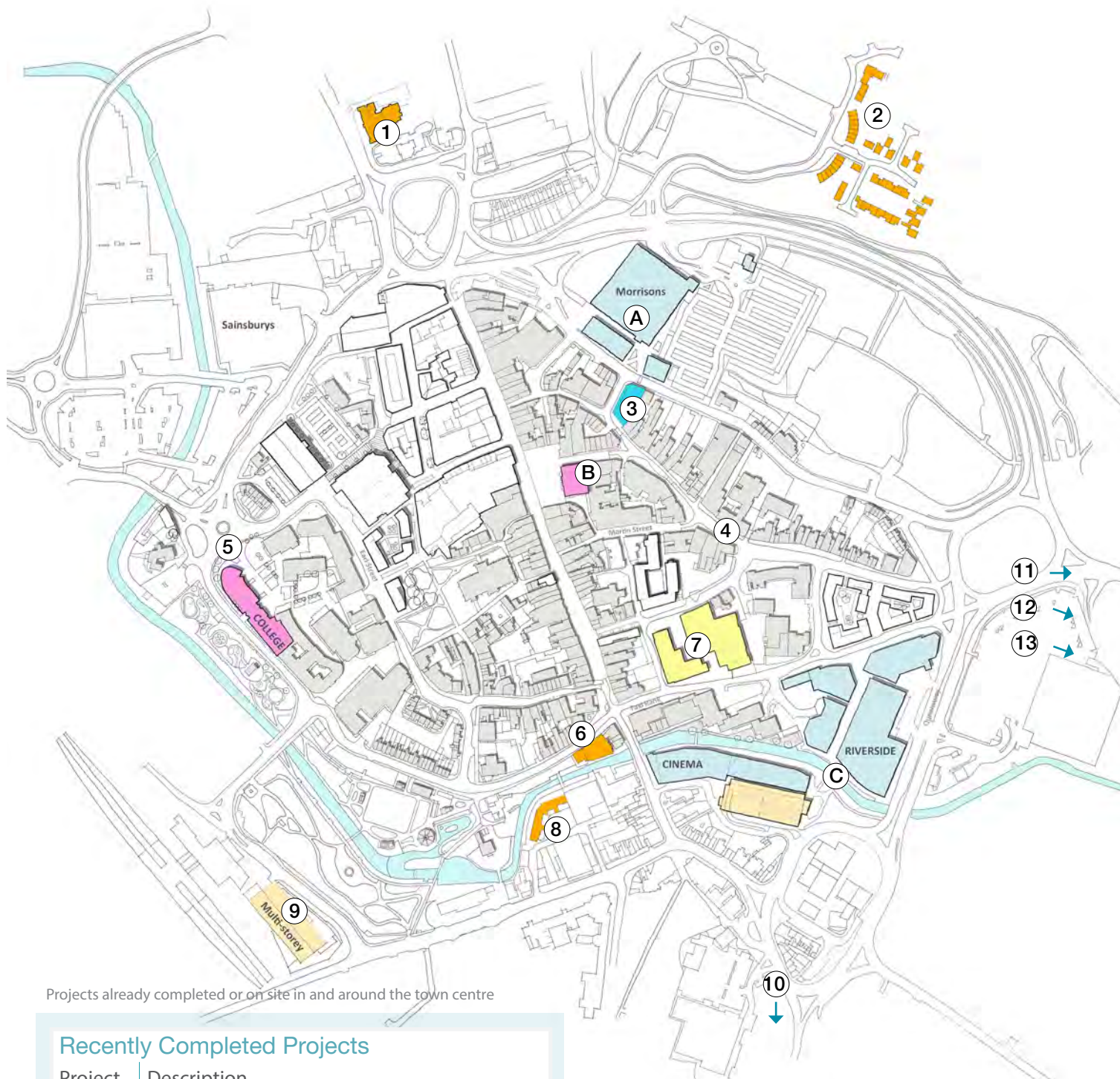
V1	Investment in Ancient High House
V2	Investment in Shire Hall
V3	Investment in Broad Eye Windmill
V4	Relocation of library into ground floor units under new SCC offices

A Place to Shop and Enjoy

R1	Animation Strategy
R2	Public realm improvements to access between Gaolgate and Market Square to new Morrisons and along Market Street
R3	Weekly open air market
R4	Environmental Improvements to River
R5	New retail frontage onto Tipping St

A Place to Live

L1	Residential conversion of buildings on Martin Street
L2	Conversion of the Wedgwood Building



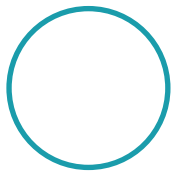
Projects already completed or on site in and around the town centre

Recently Completed Projects

Project	Description
1	SARH accommodation on Foregate Street
2	St George's Park Housing
3	Retail parade on Malt Mill Lane
4	New VAST community services hub
5	Stafford College
6	The Mills Housing, Millbank
7	Staffordshire Place
8	Espleys Yard Housing
9	Stafford Station MSCP
10	SARH proposed development on former library HQ, Friars Terrace
11	The Leisure Centre
12	Adjoining extracare proposal on Riverway
13	Entrust office on Riverway

Projects currently on site

Project	Description
A	Kingsmead Development - including new Morrisons Supermarket
B	University of Wolverhampton moving into the Shire Hall.
C	Riverside Development - retail and cinema complex



A CHANGING TOWN



Riverside development



Stafford College by CPMG Architects



Kingsmead development
by the Harris Partnership

In the town centre, there are a number and variety of projects which have recently been completed or are currently in the pipeline. These are creating momentum and show people things are happening to make Stafford Town Centre even better.

Key projects currently taking place or completed in the town centre include the Riverside Development (C), a £70 million, 18 unit retail development which will house a new M&S store and Primark.

Stafford College opened the Riverbank Building (5) in 2012. Located on it's campus off Earl Street in the town centre, the building provides outstanding learning environments for

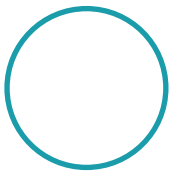
students on hospitality and beauty therapy courses as well as new library resources to support all college courses.

The Kingsmead development (A) will provide a 70,000 sq ft Morrisons store alongside new retail units to include B&M and Just for Pets. The development will provide 458 car parking spaces and will help to strengthen the economy of the town centre.

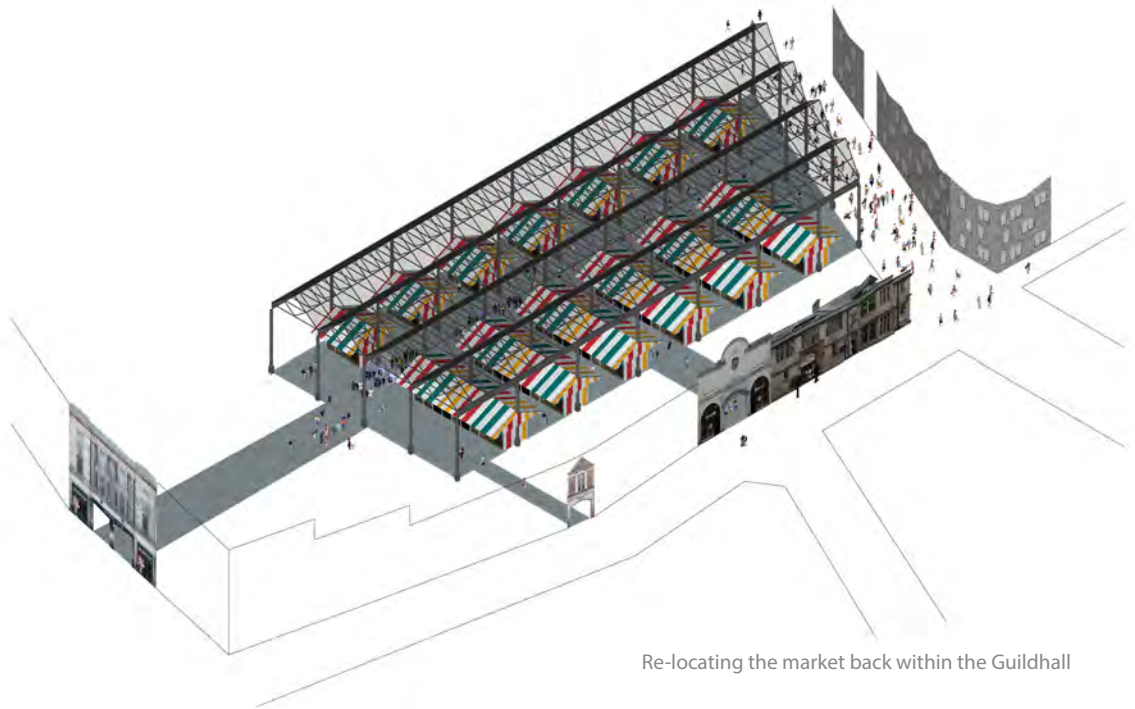


Guildhall Projects

Project	Description	Area
G1	Remodel Guildhall to accommodate indoor market and reduce the overall number of units. Potential to also accommodate larger anchor store as part of remodelling work	5,300m ²
G2	New residential development as part of the remodelling of the Guildhall. Views looking on to Churchyard	0.36ha
G3	New anchor store within existing market building. Building to be re-skinned as part of redevelopment. Carpark above to be retained as part of re-development	3,000m ²



NORTHERN QUARTER: GUILDHALL



Re-locating the market back within the Guildhall

The remodelling of the Guildhall Shopping Centre could be a significant project for the north end of town, and we discuss how this was done, albeit on a much larger scale in Birmingham on the following page. It will strengthen its position on Market Square and re-house the market, to provide an improved shopping experience.

At the centre of the redevelopment of the Guildhall will be the vision for promoting Stafford as a market town. The market will be anchored in a new beautiful space and the Guildhall will be anchored by new larger retail units. We have included an example of a market building in Penistone to suggest the level of aspiration which should be achieved.

The building which currently houses the market would then be re-skinned to provide an

open and attractive frontage onto the street. This could provide space for up to three large retail units. These would act as the new anchor stores for the area, drawing people into the area to shop and increasing footfall.

A new residential development could also be developed on Earl Street. This would help to frame the churchyard and re-create the historic setting of the church.



GRAND CENTRAL PRECEDENT

- Birmingham City Council acquired the headlease of the Pallasades shopping centre in March 2009 using prudential borrowing
- Two options for refurbishment:
 - i) minimal intervention based on existing format; and
 - ii) comprehensive redevelopment to create a new anchor store
- Further prudential borrowing secured to fund comprehensive redevelopment
- John Lewis secured as anchor tenant for a 250,000 sqft store and 60 new shops, restaurants and cafes
- Centre has remained open throughout construction works



The Market Barn, which is the largest public oak frame building in the country won the South Yorkshire and Humber LABC Building Excellence Awards

Source: <http://www.wcec.co.uk/news/124/Green-Oak-Market-Building-Penistone.html>



On Market Day, its position next to the Tesco Car Park makes it easier to get to, and draws footfall from those shopping at the store (and vice-versa)

Source: <http://www.visit-barnsley.com/barnsley-district-markets>

PRECEDENT: PENISTONE MARKET BARN

- Penistone is a small market town in the Metropolitan Borough of Barnsley in South Yorkshire.
- In 2011, the council commissioned the design and build of an Oak Frame market structure to house a weekly market and the monthly Penistone Local Food and Farmers' Market.
- The structure was completed by Carpenter Oak of Totnes in 2011, and sits on the land adjacent to a Tesco's car park - with Section 106 contributions from the development of the Tescos being used to fund the scheme.
- The venue can be used for a variety of functions from Wedding fairs to charity events.

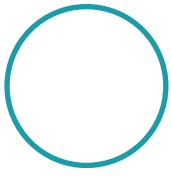
Lessons for Stafford

- The structure really enhances the atmosphere - market days feel special, emphasising the value of the market in the town.
- Stafford needs to be aspirational in re-housing its market - the building or space in which the market is held needs to be of an exceptional quality and presence to draw people in.



Northern Quarter Site Projects

Project	Description	Area
N1	New surface carpark off Broad Street on former Wilkinsons Site	28 spaces
N2	New multi-storey carpark on former Wilkinsons Site	135 spaces
N3	New surface carpark off Broad Street on former Wilkinsons Site to service new anchor store in R2	97 Spaces
N4	Public realm improvements to provide improved pedestrian access between new anchor retail store and surface carpark and new multi-storey and town centre	0.12ha



NORTHERN QUARTER: NORTHERN QUARTER



Multi-storey Carpark designed by Hypostyle



Multi-storey Carpark in Soissons, France



Multi-storey Carpark in Sheffield

The current Wilkinson's site could be redeveloped to assist the strategy for consolidating retail closer to the high street and to provide the car parking necessary to alleviate parking pressures and draw people to the north end of town.

A new surface car park off Broad Street could be developed alongside a new multi-storey carpark and a new surface car park off Broad Street.

These could be developed alongside a public realm scheme for Broad Street and Chapel Street to provide an attractive and continuous connection for pedestrians travelling from the car park

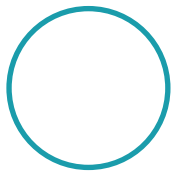
towards the new anchor store site and the Guildhall and market.

The pictures above show precedent images of the types of car parks which could be developed on the site, with the idea being that they don't actually look like car parks, but provide variety and interest within the townscape.



Eastgate Projects

Project	Description	Area
E1	New residential development onto Eastgate Street	0.32ha
E2	New retail units with accommodation above fronting onto South Walls	0.2ha



EASTGATE: EASTERN GATEWAY



Residential development with retail on the ground floor at the New England Quarter, Brighton, Sussex



Energy efficient housing at BedZed, Hackbridge, Greater London



More traditional townhouses in the Bishops Mead development, Chelmsford, Essex

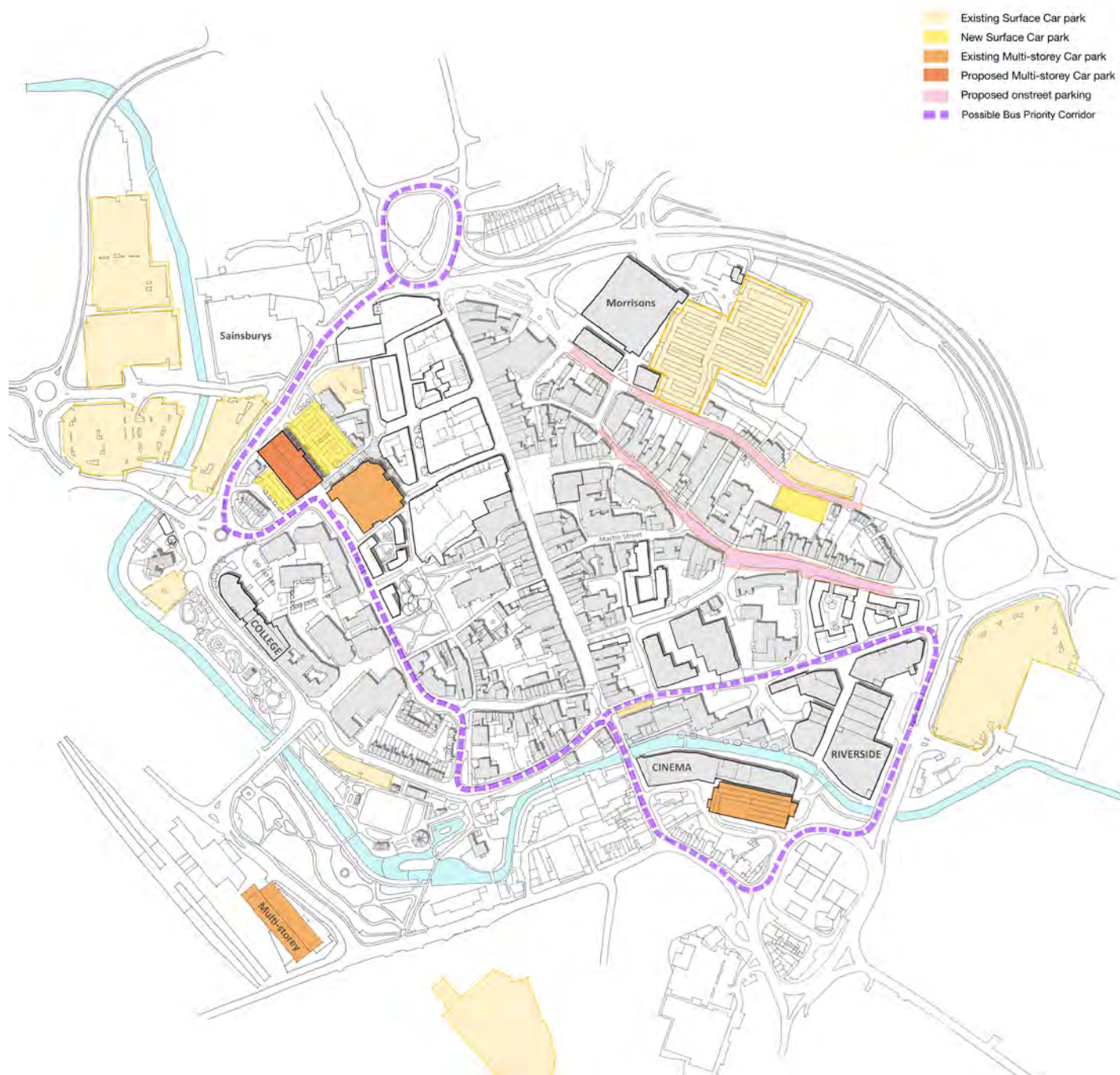
This site could be re-developed with blocks of housing which line the pavement edge and provide communal green spaces within.

These will be in keeping with the surrounding areas, so as not to dominate the existing parade of shops and offices along Eastgate Street.

A new parade of shops could be provided along South Walls to face onto the retail uses which will be provided in the Riverside scheme on the opposite side of the road. This will strengthen the retail edge, but also provide a mixed use development with housing above and to the rear.

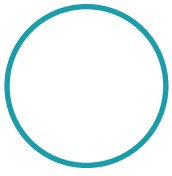
Housing could comprise of high quality apartments and town houses of a more traditional design which will be much more in keeping with the area than the existing buildings on the site.

While the proposed scheme would be an attractive gateway to the town, there could be challenges with site assembly due to the potential high costs of relocating the BT Exchange.



A Space to Park

Project	Description	Area
P1	Re-routing of buses along bus priority corridor to provide additional opportunities for on street parking along North Walls	circa 15 spaces
P2	Surface car park on North Walls	to be advised
P3	Re-routing of buses along bus priority corridor to provide additional opportunities for on street parking along Eastgate Street.	circa 15 spaces



A SPACE TO PARK



An important feature of the strategy is to increase the level of parking in the town centre to ensure those visiting by car choose Stafford over competing local towns.

There are a limited number of opportunities to provide additional parking in the town centre. Within this strategy the Northern Quarter has been identified as a potential location for a new multi-storey car park that could provide a significant amount of additional parking in the north end of town.

Plans by SCC to provide a bus priority corridor around the western end will provide the opportunity for additional

on street parking and blue badge parking to be created along North Walls and Eastgate Street.

The Borough Council are also in the process of assembling a site for a new surface car park off North Walls as well as looking into decking the existing Lammascote Road car park to provide a new tier of parking spaces that will provide additional parking provision to the east of the town centre.



ANCIENT HIGH HOUSE

The Ancient High House could fulfil its full potential as the ‘front door to Stafford’.

The retail units on the ground floor could be transformed into a visitor centre and cafe for the High House to re-establish its visual connection with the street and to attract passers by to visit the exhibition upstairs.

This could be brought forward by investment from lottery funding.

A Place to Visit

Project	Description
V1	Lottery funded investment to High House to provide new ground floor entrance and shop.
V2	Gallery to be re-opened in the Shire Hall as part of works to building to accommodate Wolverhampton University
V3	Investment in the existing windmill to form new visitor attraction



BROAD EYE WINDMILL

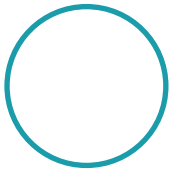
Investment could be encouraged to enhance the windmill as an attraction and incorporate it as part of the new heritage trail. Artisan type independent shops and restaurants will be encouraged in close vicinity to the windmill to complement the attractions history within the early modern period.



SHIRE HALL

The gallery will be re-opened in the Shire Hall as part of works to the building to accommodate Wolverhampton University.

This will re-establish Stafford’s status as a county town with an appropriate collection.



A PLACE TO VISIT



The baseline study and consultation exercises highlighted the lack of tourist attractions and tourist information and publicity in the town centre. A number of projects have been proposed to put Stafford back on the map:

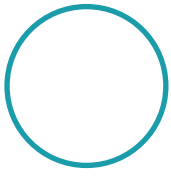
A single updated tourist website in partnership with existing websites such as the Stafford Town Centre Partnership and Enjoy Staffordshire websites, could be created to advertise events in the town centre and provide online material all in one place.

The new website could provide information on the heritage tour of the city centre designed to guide locals and tourists alike through the town centre to different points of interest. These will be based on the existing heritage tour of the centre and will be pin pointed by upgraded street maps and information points.

The trail will direct visitors around the centre and provide a short history of each attraction on a sign post at each site. The trail could include but is not limited to the following attractions:

- The train station
- Victoria Park
- The county war memorial
- The 16th Century Soup Kitchen
- The Collegiate Church of Saint Mary
- The market
- Market Square
- The Shire Hall
- The Ancient High House
- St Chads
- William Salt Library
- The Broad Eye Windmill





CONCLUSION



Managing a town centre is an ongoing task. The start on site of the Riverside Centre and the Kingsmead developments together with the expansion of the College and the opening of the County Council offices are major achievements.

However, the reality is that they just allow Stafford to keep pace with the competition. Over the years Stafford has done this very well. Our analysis is that the town's performance is on par with its competitors and peers. However local people want it to do better.

The proposals in the report could allow Stafford to take the next steps. The re-modelling

of the northern end of town together with new visitor attractions and more people living in and around the centre could help Stafford capitalise on the momentum created by the Riverside and Kingsmead developments.

It could help ensure that the benefits are spread and that new customers attracted by these schemes explore and use the whole of the town centre.

APPENDIX

Stafford Development Guide

Round Table Workshop + Town Centre Partnerships Questionnaire

Summary

This document has been produced by URBED to summarise the consultation workshop which took place on Wednesday 25th June 2014 (in Part A) and collate results from a questionnaire sent out to members of the Stafford Town Centre Partnerships group, between 15th and 21st July 2014 (in Part B).

This work will direct the production of development options for Stafford Town Centre.

Contents

- Introduction
- Part A: Format
- Part A: Session One
- Part A: Session Two
- Part A: Summary of Findings
- Part B: TCP Questionnaire
- Part B: Summary of Findings
- Next Steps

INTRODUCTION

DTZ and URBED were appointed by Stafford Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council in March 2014 to create a Stafford Town Centre Development Guide. For this project we teamed up with property consultants DTZ. Public Consultation is a key part of all of URBEDs work and for this project we intend to hold two consultation events to direct the development of our options.



The first event, set out in this summary, is the roundtable workshop. This has been designed to engage with council leaders and stakeholders to appreciate their views and aspirations for Stafford. Responses from the workshop have been set out in **Part A** of this document.

It was acknowledged that not all local businesses were able to attend the event and so an online questionnaire was also sent out separately to members of the Stafford Town Centre Partnerships Group to gauge further opinion. The results from this questionnaire are set out in **Part B** of this document.

FORMAT AND PARTICIPANTS

Workshop Format

The roundtable workshop took place on Wednesday 25th of June 2014 in the Gatehouse Theatre with participants from Staffordshire County Council, Stafford Borough Council, the Guildhall shopping centre and high street shop owners from 7 different businesses.

The event was well attended with 20 participants. The attendees were split into four roundtable groups, each had a facilitator from the team.

The evening was divided into two sessions, the first involved a short introduction to the team from Robert Gatensbury and David Rudlin.

The groups were given a chance to introduce themselves and discuss the first question on Stafford today which involved listing likes and challenges of the area. The second stage of the evening consisted of a short presentation by David who set out the teams findings to date.

Urban design analysis maps were displayed to reiterate the abundance of heritage and

walk-ability of the centre, the high quality transport links and the general notion 'is doing well' however under achieving when compared to other similar towns.

Groups were then asked to discuss the second question on a Future for Stafford. The workshop was rounded up with feedback from each table so that everyone could see what the other groups had been discussing.

The group of 20 were spread over 4 tables, each with their own facilitator to guide discussion and gather ideas from participants.

The session was attended by a mixture of High Street Traders and Councillors and officers from Staffordshire County and Stafford Borough Councils.

Email addresses were gathered upon registration in order to notify participants of the conclusions and outcomes of the session.

TEAM

URBED
David Rudlin
John Sampson
Callum Henderson
Esme Walker

DTZ
Jonathan Turner
Katherine Price
Nick Phillips

Staffordshire County Council
Bridget Cowen
Annabel Chell
Kay Arblaster
Maureen Compton

Stafford Borough Council
Steve Allen
Lisa Clemson
Melissa Kurihara
John Holmes
Frances Beatty
Robert Gatensbury

STAKEHOLDERS

Hilary Foster
– The Post House Restaurant
Dennis Foster
– The Post House Restaurant
Martin De Saeger
– Boots Chemist
Sarah Edge
– Mincherloket Opticians
Nikki Ratchford
– Vision Express
Chris Lewis
– The Swan Hotel
George Demetriou
– DTZ, Guild Hall
Sue Wyke
– NHS Trust
James Nixon
– Parliament
Jane Gratton
– Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce

SESSION ONE: STAFFORD TODAY



The participants were asked to identify, in their opinion, what is good about Stafford, what are the challenges facing Stafford and what sort of place Stafford is like?

The First Session

The key assets of the town, listed by the stakeholders, revolved around the attractiveness of town, including the heritage sites, parks and the river Sow. People also mentioned that: they felt safe on the high street; that there was a strong sense of community, and that the area was at a walkable scale.

One group had a strong dislike for the high number of charity shops on the high street and lower-end chains with a poor shop frontage. Other stakeholders took pride in the number of independent retailers and showed a fondness for the charity shops.

Parking provision and congestion were also raised as a series of concerns for the majority of the stakeholders

What is good about Stafford?

Social:

- The town centre feels safe during the day and night.
- There is a strong local community and people have a good attitude towards the town centre.
- The town centre is compact, with all amenities in a walkable distance from one and another
- Really strong public transport links means it is easy to access the centre from the railway and bus station.

Economic:

- There are a number of independent shops and a good variety and choice for people.
- A night time economy is present with students from the borough travelling to the bars Stafford has to offer.

Physical:

- Stafford has a large stock of historical buildings around the town centre creating a pleasant place to visit. The Conservation of the heritage is good.
- The open space in the town centre is very good, with Victoria Park being Stafford' crown jewel. The park brings many people to the centre during the summer.
- The River Sow offers a great cycle route in and out of the town centre, away from road traffic
- Attractive scenery
- Well defined natural boundary contains the town centre
- There is opportunities for cycling to be more involved in the town centre

What are the challenges?

Social:

- Students entering the town for the night time economy.
- Charity chuggers were unpopular.
- It was felt the council has a 'Slow reaction to problems'
- Bus routes – this is undergoing rerouting
- Some street traders around Market Square detract from the image and quality of the town centre

Economic:

- Low number of offices and industries within the town. With the town centres main workforce being employed by the County and Borough Councils
- Degradation of the northerly end of the high street.
- There is a lack of a department store to create a key anchor for the town centre shopping and bring more footfall into Stafford.
- People felt there was high business rates and these have not been reviewed since 2008.
- Queensvile Retail Park draws trade out of the town centre

Physical:

- Heavy traffic on Lichfield Road and the ring road around the town centre create a difficult means to walk or cycle into the centre.
- There are poor shop fronts in the north of town and this could be addressed to liven up the town.
- St Chad's Church on the high street is hidden by buildings either side. Possibility for another square on the high street.
- Queensvile has drawn trade away from the town centre.
- Limited Parking provision within the town centre. Demand due to increase once the new developments are built
- The town centre is moving towards the south end of the high street.

Where is Stafford similar to?

A good place to start looking where improvements can be made is to look at town or cities which Stafford can aspire to be more like in some aspects.

A few suggestions arouse included:

- Shrewsbury
- Winchester
- Worcester
- Chester

SESSION TWO: A FUTURE STAFFORD



The second session encouraged participants to discuss what the future was for Stafford and what the role of the town centre was.

The Second Session

There was an over riding feeling in the session that Stafford is doing okay. It was also recognised that Stafford needs to continue to develop the town centre in the face of out of town supermarkets and to avoid not getting left behind by competing towns such as Telford. David Rudlin (URBED) highlighted that building density around the town centre of Stafford is atypical due to the large open spaces that circulate the centre and separate Stafford's residential areas from the centre. In a modern era, where the majority of a household's weekly needs can be met in a supermarket, this means that there are few incentives for people to travel into town.



The consensus in the room was that, in order to keep the vitality of the centre, people from a wider catchment area needed to be drawn in. Members of the council strongly believed that a high end department store was needed in order for people in the county to consider visiting. A department store would, in turn, encourage further upgrading of shops on the high street and attract more business to open in the town.

Overall the consultation established that there were very weak incentives for people to visit the town.

Members from other groups explained that there was once an ornate and thriving indoor market which attracted people from across the borough and had been demolished to make way for the guildhall shopping centre. There was a desire to reinstate a similar market or an equivalent attraction.

It was highlighted in the presentation that Stafford could not afford to make parking in the centre less appealing, something they do for example in York where park and ride schemes cater for those driving in. This was due to competition from neighbouring towns and out of town shops which had adequate parking and might draw customers away.

Instead parking close to the town centre was advised. Participants raised a desire for 'pay on exit barriers' because they would be able to spend as long as they choose in town, rather than rushing back to renew the parking meter. This was widely regarded as good for high street business and would enable people to enjoy the pop up festivals, events and markets.

What is the vision for Stafford?

- The stakeholders felt Stafford had real potential to perform and compete against similar county towns
- To have regular festivals and market fairs to attract footfall into the centre
- Increase the popularity of the town centre to the local community throughout the day and evening
- To provide convenient places to park for those driving in
- To consider improved parking in any new schemes to make it easier for visitors to access the town centre and also visit other attractions in the area

What is the role of the High Street?

- Stafford has already a good stock of independent shops which can be used as a base to improve upon. Provisions could be made by the council to make this easier for start up businesses, following strategies used by companies who promote pop-up shops and meanwhile uses.
- Plug the gap of a missing major department store in the town in the north of the High Street
- Redevelop the market into something more appropriate



How will the new centre impact Stafford?

- An improved economy in the city centre spanning from the daytime to the nighttime
- The south end of the high street will become more animated
- Demand on parking shall increase in the town centre when parking is currently at high capacity.
- Increased traffic on the ring roads
- The guildhall will suffer severely as trade moves to the south.
- A number of people felt that business rates were too high.
- The town centre will start to compete against out of town shopping centres and other major cities surrounding Stafford.

What should be done to improve the town centre?

A few possibilities arise to what could be done to improve the centre. These were:

- Animation to the north of the high street, improved streets and shop frontage to make it a more desirable place to be along with provisions to make it easier for new independent shops
- A new department store development at the opposite side of the new retail centre to create two anchors so people will transverse the High Street and increase footfall
- Improved short stay parking with pay-on-exit.
- Bring in new users to the town centre through constructing a pensioners village and / or more residential.
- A new visitor attraction about Stafford.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Theme	Observation	Next Steps
1 North end of the high street	The Guildhall and Gaolgate Street are under performing. The arrival of the Riverside and Morrisons developments will present opportunities.	The masterplan needs to decide how to mitigate the impact of the Riverside Development on the north of the high street.
2 A need to improve the market.	The Market is currently performing okay with most stalls being occupied, however the building is dark and is not visible from the high street. ies.	A strategy to develop the Market either through animation or a new scheme all together.
3 Stafford is 'alright'	Stafford town centre is a pleasant place for anyone to spend time and enjoy the good stock of heritage and open space.	The main problem is the town centre has a limited number of attractions to bring in tourist trade and loses out to other county towns and cities in the surrounding area. Develop ideas for a Lottery funded visitor attraction.
4 Night time economy	The night time economy is underachieving and could capitalise on the affluent catchment area around Stafford.	Consider how the night time economy could be developed. This should consider the impact of the new proposed cinema connected to the Riverside Development.
5 Parking provision	The town centre's overall parking provision is reaching capacity and with major redevelopment happening this shall only increase the demand.	Updated Parking Strategy for the town centre.

TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP'S QUESTIONNAIRE



Following the workshop, a questionnaire was sent out to 150 members of the Stafford Town Centre Partnership group, to gauge further opinions and ideas for the centre. There were 10 replies to the questionnaire, and these have been summarised in the table below. A summary of findings has also been provided.

	Question	Summary
1	What is good about Stafford Town Centre?	Respondents had a lot of positive things to say about Stafford, highlighting the heritage buildings, pedestrianised main street and well maintained flowers and green spaces, as well as the central railway station as key points.
2	What are the challenges facing Stafford?	<p>One respondent cited the competition from bigger towns such as Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Hanley and competition from online retailers and out-of-town retail parks as key challenges facing Stafford.</p> <p>Others were concerned that the retail hub was moving away from Market Square and this might result in the north end of town becoming derelict. It was also mentioned that high business rates were making it difficult to keep local businesses and resulting in empty shops further exacerbating the problem.</p> <p>One respondent mentioned there was a lack of diversity and independent shops in the centre and there were several points on lack of parking, however one point suggested that this was a perception, and actually parking was fine.</p>



	Question	Summary
3	Thinking about a vision for the town centre, what do you think this should be focused on?	The key point made was that the town centre needed to attract more shoppers. A range of solutions were identified from encouraging a larger variety of attractions - not just shopping to providing more small independent stores. One respondent highlighted that the centre shouldn't be segregated into different areas.
4	What do you think the role of the high street should be?	The majority of respondents emphasised the need to provide a good mix of services - shopping, business, entertainment, socialising and civic activities.
5	What impact do you think the new Riverside centre will have on the rest of the town centre?	The majority of respondents were very concerned that the north end of town would become emptier as shoppers were drawn to the Riverside, with shops moving out of the north end of town. One respondent was positive about how it would boost the economy of the town centre, but mentioned it may be affected by the cost and convenience of parking.
6	Do you have any suggestions for improving the town centre?	<p>Respondents mentioned the need for cheaper and more convenient parking as their main suggestions.</p> <p>Other respondents mentioned the need to reduce business rates and help build the network of independent shops to help them promote themselves and fill empty shops.</p> <p>Another suggested more investment in marketing campaigns and that more county council activities should take place in the town centre and community involvement should be better coordinated.</p>

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



Theme	Observation	Next Steps
1 North end of the high street	As with the workshop session, there was concern that this side of town would become less used and footfall would reduce.	The masterplan needs to decide on how to mitigate the impact of the Riverside Development on the north of the high street.
2 Attract more shoppers	There was an emphasis on attracting more footfall to the north end of town through providing a m ix of services, shops, offices, restaurants and attractions.	Establish a range of projects which could provide this mix of uses within the masterplan.
3 More support for independent shops	Participants were keen to see business rates reduced to make sure shops weren't empty. They also wanted to see better promotion for independent shopping in the centre.	The masterplan needs to include a strategy to get businesses back into empty shops and help them to stay there.
4 Parking	As with the workshop, a number of issues with parking were highlighted. There was a perception that parking was expensive and participants wanted to see cheaper and more convenient parking provided.	Develop a parking strategy for the town.

NEXT STEPS

The comments from the roundtable session and Town Centre Partnerships questionnaire will be used to draw up several options for the town centre.

These will then be displayed at our second event, a public exhibition in the town centre in July, aimed at getting further comments and feedback.

These comments will then be used to decide the preferred option and prioritise projects for Stafford Town Centre.



Stafford Healthcheck and Future Vision Red Bus Consultation Summary

This document has been produced by URBED to summarise the consultation exhibition which took place on Saturday 26th July 2014.

This work will direct the production of the final development options for Stafford Town Centre.

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INTRODUCTION

Masterplanners and Urban Designers URBED and Property Consultants DTZ were appointed by Stafford Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council in March 2014 to create a Healthcheck and Future Vision for Stafford Town Centre. Public Consultation is a key part of all of URBEDs work and for this project we intended to hold two events to direct the development of our options.

The first event, was a roundtable workshop with local businesses and stakeholders and is summarised in a previous note. The second event, which this document summarises, was an exhibition on our red bus in Market Square which sought to engage people's views on what they wanted to see improved or changed in the town centre.

Consultation Format

The red bus exhibition took place on Saturday 26th July 2014 in Market Square. The event was well attended with **148** people counted entering the bus and a further 5-10 consulted outside of the bus.

9 Exhibition boards were displayed detailing the project and results from the baseline analysis and first workshop consultation then asking what people thought about possible projects for the town centre.

Three boards each displayed an option for the north end of town, and asked participants to give their opinions, the 3 options included:

1. **Animating** the northern end of town - looking at a strategy for getting empty shops filled and opening up the market elevation on Chapel Street to improve its visual connection to the street.
2. **Re-modelling** the northern end of town - looking at consolidating the Guildhall Shopping centre and re-locating the market and encouraging a high end retailer into the space left by the market.
3. Creating a **new residential** quarter in the northern end of town - consolidating the retail offer and re-locating the market to make way for high quality town houses and apartments.



A list of team members who attended the event is detailed below. The team were on hand to take participants through the proposals and encourage people to write their thoughts down on a questionnaire. The results from which have been summarised in this document.

Team

URBED

David Rudlin

John Sampson

Sangeetha Banner

Callum Henderson

Stafford Borough Council

Robert Gatensbury

Participants and Results

Approximately 148 people entered the bus on the day, with 5-10 more participants talking to the team outside in Market Square.

The session was attended by a mixture of people in the town centre including shoppers, local business owners, retail workers and the general public.

For those unable to attend on the day, a link to the exhibition material and questionnaire was made available online.

56 questionnaires were completed in total. 44 questionnaires were completed on the day or posted back to the URBED office. 12 questionnaires were completed online.

The next section of this report summarises responses to individual projects and then goes onto discuss people's thoughts on the three options in more detail. Overall thoughts about the project which were prevalent are then provided at the end.

A copy of the questionnaire detailing each question can be viewed in the appendix at the end of this document.



Q1. RESPONSES

OPTION 1: ANIMATE

The response to Option 1: Animate, for changes to the North End of the High street have been detailed below. The consultation board can be viewed on the following page. These have been categorised based on how the majority (that is greater than 50%) of participants voted:

Project Idea	Percentage of Response			Option 1 Summary
	FOR (over 50% marked as a Definitely or Good Idea)	No clear majority (percentage for / percentage against)	AGAINST (over 50% marked as Probably or Definitely not a good idea)	
A1 - Setting up a not for profit company to manage empty units?	62%			Participants were fairly supportive of this option, although most people disagreed with removing the trees on Princess Street.
A2 - Removing the canopies and thinning out the existing trees on Princes Street?			53%	
A3 - Open up the front of the market?	66%			
A4 - New market stalls along Crabbery Street?	78%			Respondents were equally schewed on whether to build a multi-storey car park and provide new housing.
A5 - A new multi-storey car park?		43% / 40%		
A6 - New Housing?		39% / 37%		

Proactive Ideas:

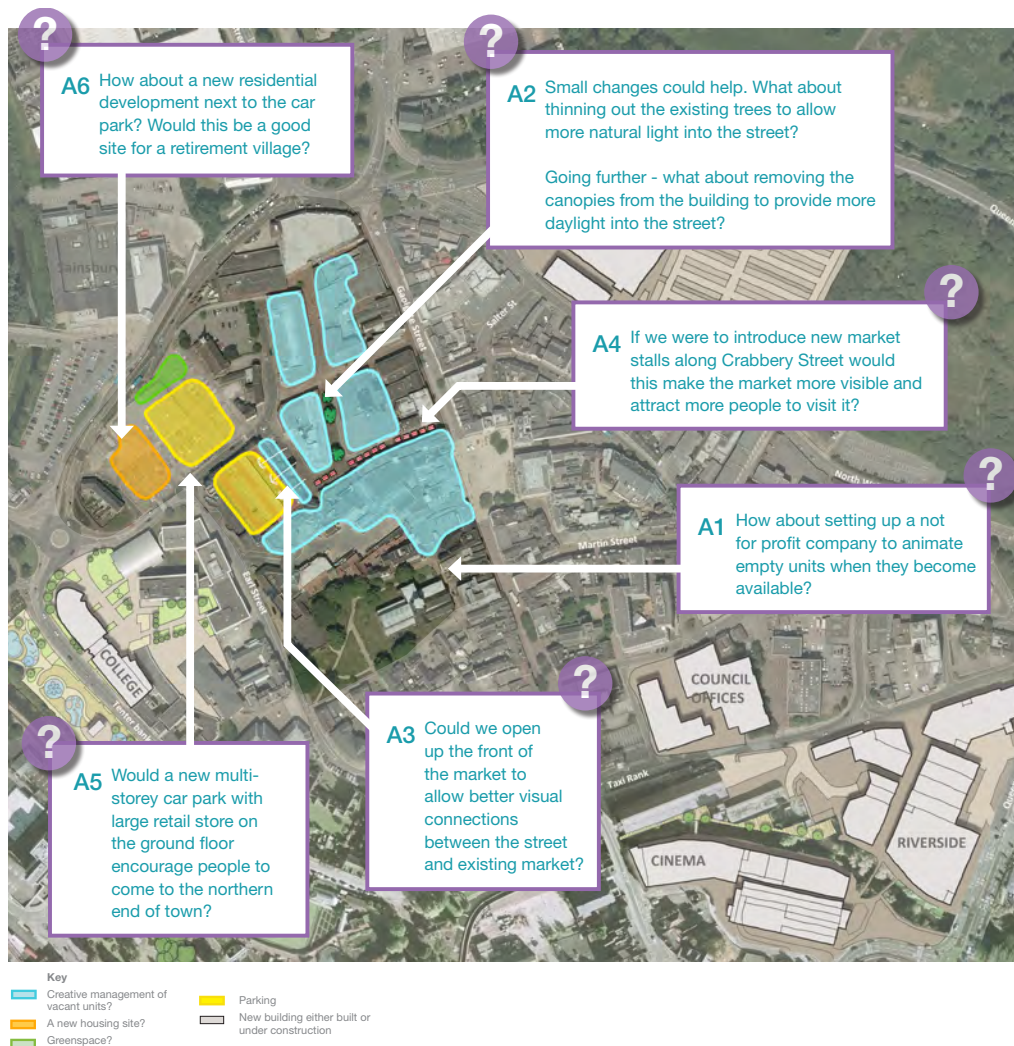
1. Use Shrewsbury market as a good example
2. The area around Mill Street, St Mary's and the lanes around Market Square could be promoted as the 'old town' with specialist and boutique shops

Prevalent/ common answers:

1. Market needs attention/ modernisation
2. Rates need to lowered to keep - businesses there
3. Free parking would attract people to this area

OPTION ONE

North end of town



Q2. RESPONSES

OPTION 2: RE-MODEL

The response to Option 2: Remodel, for changes to the North End of the High street have been detailed below. The consultation board can be viewed on the following page. These have been categorised based on how the majority (that is greater than 50%) of participants voted:

Project Idea	Percentage of Response			Option 2 Summary
	FOR (over 50% marked as a Definitely or Good Idea)	No clear majority (percentage for / percentage against)	AGAINST (over 50% marked as Probably or Definitely not a good idea)	
R1 - Relocate the market nearer the High Street?	56%			Respondents were interested in seeing the market relocated closer to the high street and having a new surface car park created. There was a split in opinion on whether to provide housing in the centre and whether to provide a new high end food retailer.
R2 – A new high end food retailer?		42% / 44%		
R3 – A new surface car park?	57%			
R4 – A series of new residential areas?		48% / 36%		

Proactive Ideas:

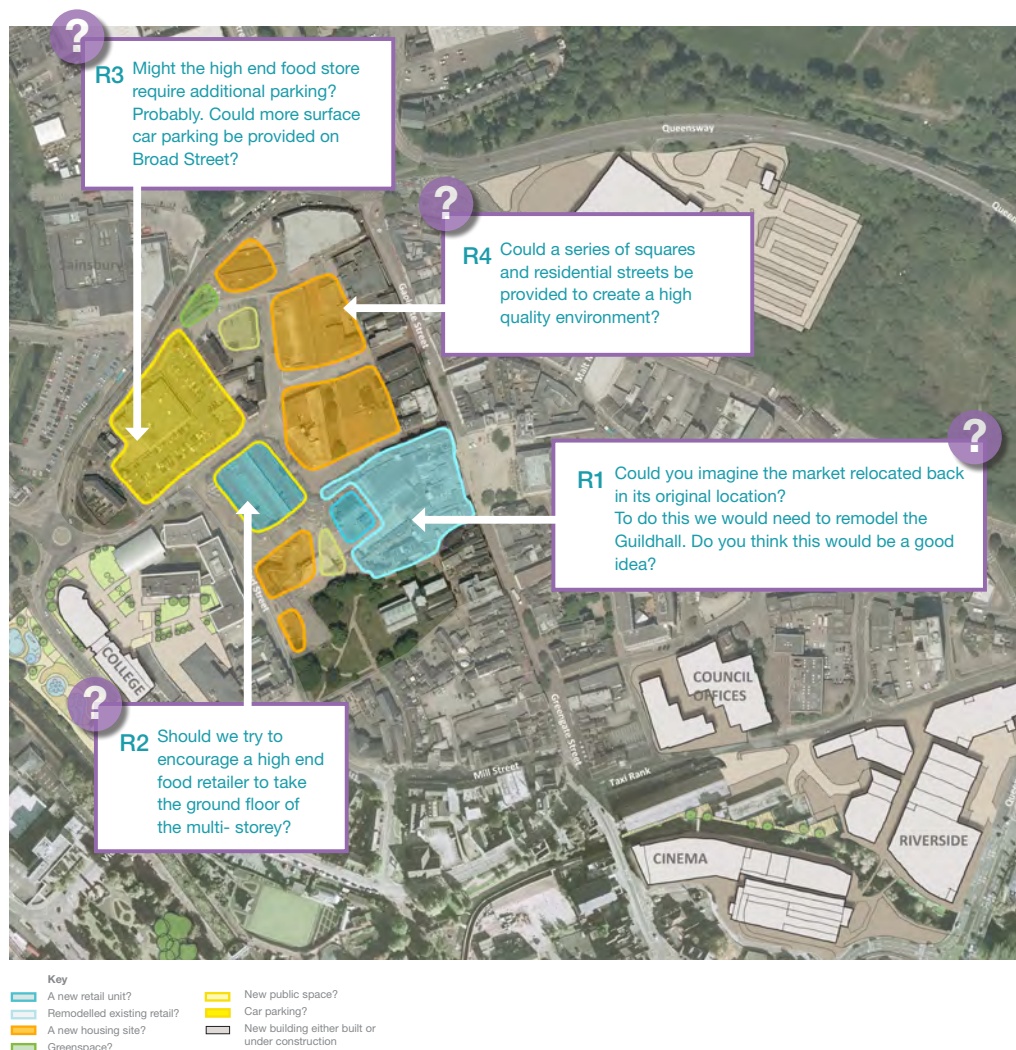
1. The area could be promoted as a food quarter with new restaurants

Prevalent/ common answers:

1. There are already plenty of food retailers in the centre
2. Equal split of for and against comments on providing housing
3. Concerns over moving the market

OPTION TWO

North end of town



Q3. RESPONSES

OPTION 3: RESIDENTIAL

The response to Option 3: Residential, for changes to the North End of the High street have been detailed below. The consultation board for this question is provided on the following page. These have been categorised based on how the majority (that is greater than 50%) of participants voted:

Project Idea	Percentage of Response			Option 3 Summary
	FOR (over 50% marked as a Definitely or Good Idea)	No clear majority (percentage for / percentage against)	AGAINST (over 50% marked as Probably or Definitely not a good idea)	
H1 - Remodelled Guildhall containing the market and a new anchor retailer?	62%			Respondents seemed to be in favour of remodelling the Guildhall, and this option got a more positive response with regard to housing.
H2 –New residential area?	50%			
H3 – A university campus?		34% / 37%		There was a split in opinion with regards to a new university campus or housing looking onto the church yard.
H4 – Housing looking onto the churchyard?		46% / 46%		

Proactive Ideas:

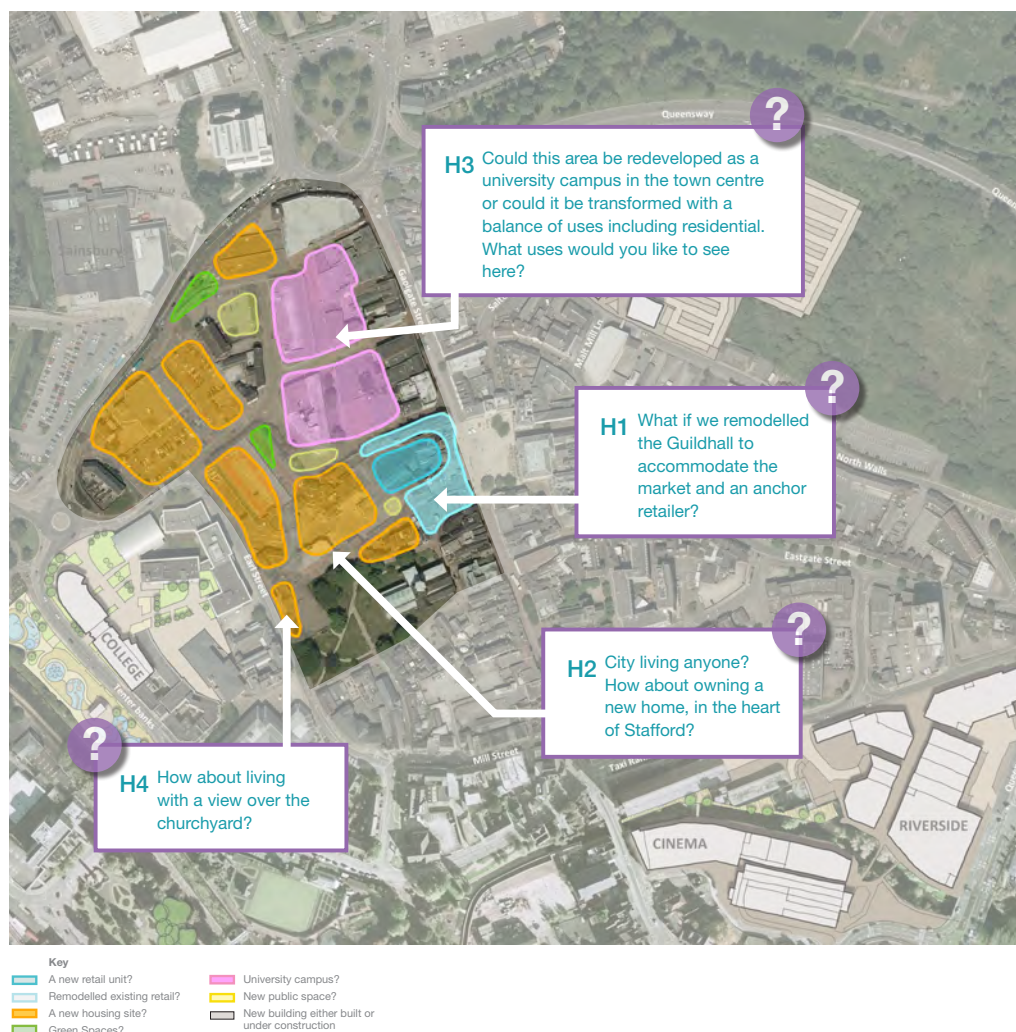
1. The old Education office could be redeveloped for housing

Prevalent/ common answers:

1. The guildhall needs re-modelling
2. Empty offices could be turned into flats
3. Students could be a good source of income for retailers
4. Confusion over the creation of a university campus

OPTION THREE

North end of town



Q4. RESPONSES PROJECTS

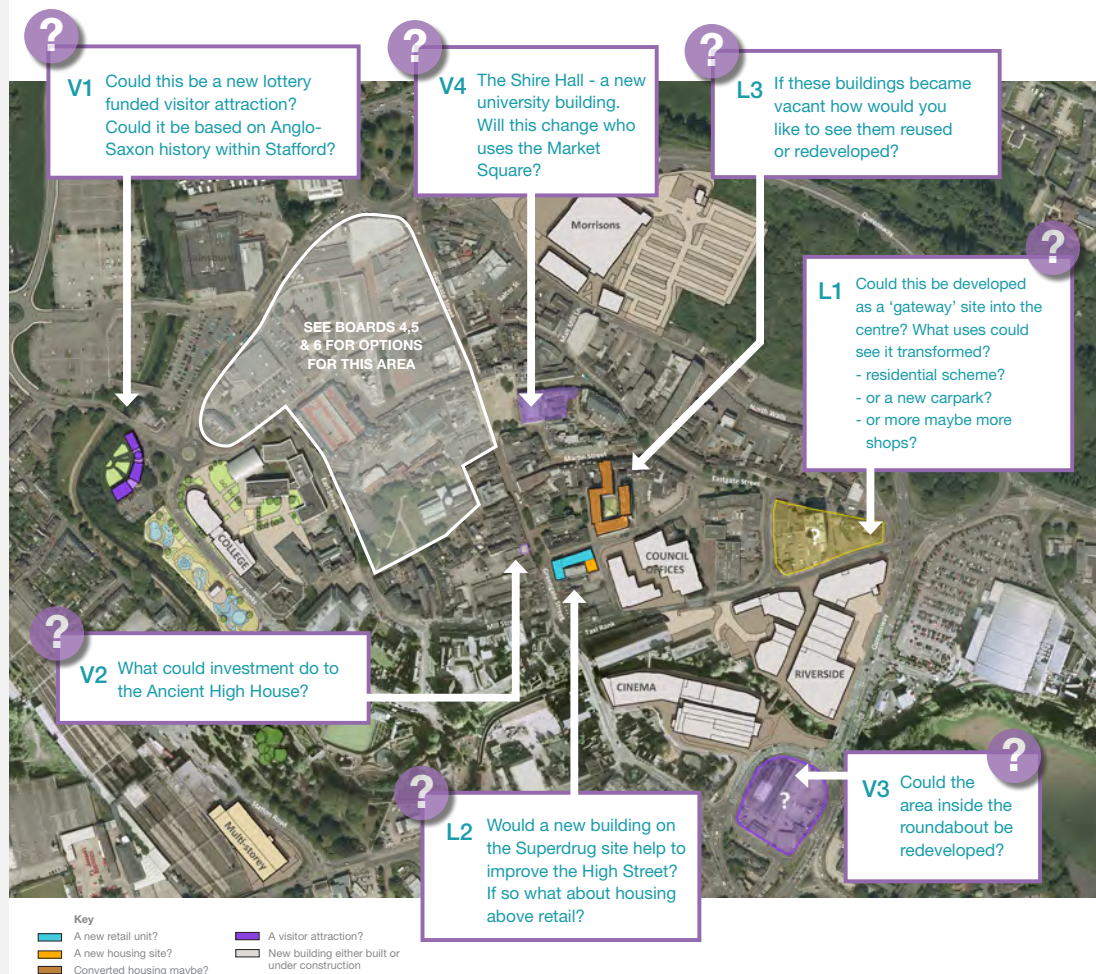
Question 4 put forward a number of potential projects on attracting people to visit and live in the centre, that could be delivered in the town centre. Responses are summarised below:

Project Idea	Response		Summary
	Common	Proactive	
V1 - A new lottery funded visitor attraction. Is this the right place and what could it be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Should be located in the Shire Hall - Yes this is a good idea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New art gallery and craft centre in the Shire Hall - Restore the windmill sails - Bring back exhibitions in the Shire Hall library 	The majority of people were positive about a new or updated visitor attraction in Stafford but many suggested it should be located in the Shire Hall Library or the High House, rather than the Boradeye windmill.
V2 – Is it worth investing in the Ancient High House?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Needs to be clearer about what's inside and attractive to visitors - Yes it should be invested in - The space at the street level needs to be part of the visitor attraction and made more attractive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One suggestion mentioned giving the House to the National Trust to create an exhibition similar to the <u>Birmingham Back to Backs</u>. - Create a tourist trail which links the High House, Broadeye Windmill and the Shire Hall. 	The general consensus was yes it should be invested in and it should be more of a tourist destination. It was also mentioned that the space at the street level currently used as a shop should be part of the visitor attraction and should be accessible for disabled people.
V3 – Could the area inside the roundabout be redeveloped? What might go there?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landscaping/ green area with water fountains/ wildflowers - Car park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Garden with a war memorial or gate guardian to act as a gateway into the centre 	There was no consensus on the answer to this question. Some people mentioned how it needed to be related to the Riverside scheme.
L1 – What would you like to see on this site?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independent shops - Restaurants - Bars - Leisure centre with sports pitches/ courts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shops which are more appealing to teenagers and young people, e.g. Forbidden planet 	The majority of people would like to see independent shops and restaurants on this site.
L2 – Would a new building on the Superdrug site improve the High Street?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes - but replaced with something architecturally attractive 		There was no consensus on this question, but people who wanted to see a new building emphasised the need for it to be architecturally attractive and in keeping with the street facade
L3 – If these buildings became vacant how would you like to see them reused or redeveloped?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restaurants - Residential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could house a comedy club and music venue 	The majority of people wanted to see the area used for small restaurants or residential buildings.

PROJECTS

what should we do?

We have come up with a number of projects which we think could benefit the town centre. Take a look at the sites below and tell us what you think:



Q5. RESPONSES PROJECTS

Question 5 put forward a number of potential projects concerned with parking and the public realm, that could be delivered in the town centre. Responses to each project are below, and the exhibition board detailing the projects is provided on the next page:

Project Idea	Percentage of Response			Analysis
	FOR (over 50% marked as a Definitely or Good Idea)	No clear majority (percentage for / percentage against)	AGAINST (over 50% marked as Probably or Defiantly not a good idea	
P1 – New car park on North Walls?	75%			Respondents were positive about all the projects listed under parking and public realm improvements.
P2 – Additional on street parking along Eastgate Street?	55%			
P3 – Additional on street parking along North Walls?	61%			
P5 – Environmental improvement project to side of River next to Civic Centre?	85%			
P6 – Improve connection from Market Square and Morrisons?	69%			

Proactive ideas:

1. Car parking should be provided in multi-storeys above a ground floor, not at the ground level
2. The river should be made more of a feature, with boats, seating and a river festival

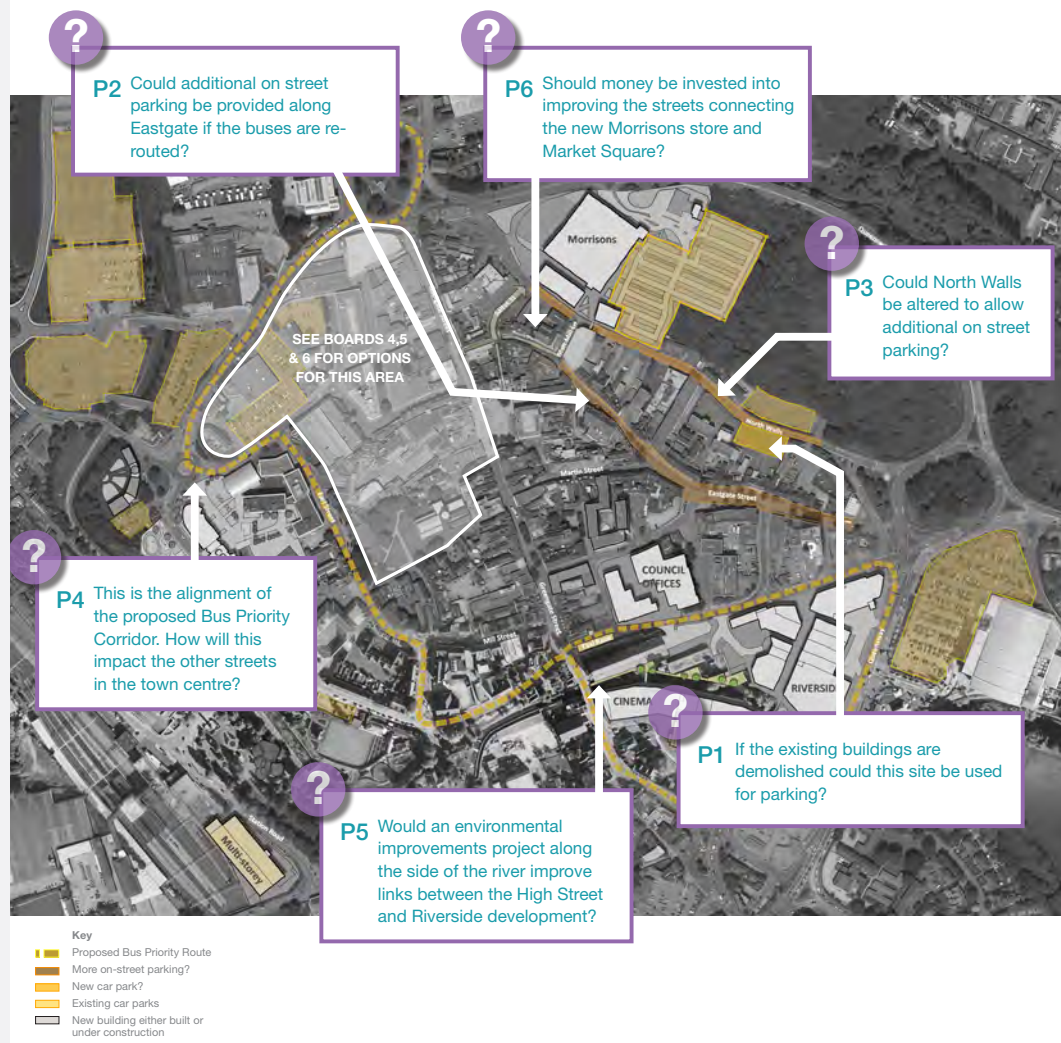
Prevalent/ common answers:

1. Need a better bus station
2. Free car parking
3. Bus priority scheme needs to better incorporate needs of those who are less mobile, to get them to the centre of town easily
4. Would like to see a park and ride

PROJECTS

what could we do?

Can parking be improved in the town centre? If so what might we do? Tell us what you think:



Q6. ANY OTHER COMMENTS

Prevalent/ common answers:

1. Need to capitalize on the heritage and historic attractions in Stafford, e.g the castle
2. More evening and night time economy uses, e.g bars and restaurants
3. Need to reduce shop rates
4. New bus station is needed
5. Interactive street maps
6. Prioritise pedestrian movement in the centre
7. New Art Venue to replace the Shire Hall
8. The market should be open later, to get trade from people leaving work

Q8. RESPONSES

KEY PRIORITIES FOR STAFFORD TOWN CENTRE

Question 8

Prevalent themes:

1. Encouraging footfall in the north end of town
 - > Need for more independent shops
 - > Encouraging more tourists
 - > Evening destination for all age groups
 - > The centre is empty at around 3/4pm - needs to keep people for longer and offer more things to do
 - > New anchor - Debenhams/ John Lewis
 - > More places to eat and drink
 - > Protect market square and heritage assets within the centre
2. Sorting out parking
 - > Free car parking
 - > Reduced parking charges/ more flexible parking options
 - > Free parking after 3pm
 - > More parking
3. Sorting out the market
 - > Market needs to be more attractive
 - > Market should open longer
 - > Reduce rates to attract more businesses
4. Providing good quality new housing
 - > More residential areas where shops don't work anymore
 - > Provide new housing for families and young people
5. Improving access
 - > Better connect Stafford to the river/ more cycle routes/ more pedestrian routes
 - > Improve the bus station and pedestrian route.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



A review of the results emphasises that there was no general consensus on what the best option was for the north end of town, but a number of points were prevalent:

- > Respondents were concerned about the market and the Guildhall, which confirmed our diagnosis about the north end of town needing to compete with the new Riverside Centre.
- > There was also repeated concerns about parking and the need to provide cheaper or even free parking to get more people shopping in the centre.
- > The idea of providing new housing in the centre divided opinions, with some thinking it was a good idea, and others feeling it should be provided elsewhere.
- > There was an agreement that the centre needed to attract more visitors and a better attraction should be made of the Ancient High House, as it was in the centre of the town.

Respondents were in agreement about the parking and public realm projects suggested for the town.

Regarding priorities for the town centre, respondents were most concerned about how the area around the Guildhall would attract footfall and what could be done to attract more people to the town centre, ideas included:

- > Encouraging a new anchor store such as Debenhams or John Lewis
- > Providing cheaper and more flexible parking options
- > Improving the market to attract more shoppers
- > Providing more independent shops and restaurants

NEXT STEPS



The comments from this consultation will be used to justify the preferred option for Stafford Town Centre. A masterplan will be created which provides a vision for the future of the town centre.

Please join our mailing list if you would like to be kept updated on progress:
<http://eepurl.com/XchvH>

APPENDIX

> Questionnaire Form

What next?

Please put your completed questionnaire in the box provided.

Your comments will be used to identify the best option for the future of Stafford Town Centre.

Thank you for you time!

If you would like to fill this questionnaire out at home, or would like to give it to a friend or family member to fill out, please visit our website: www.urbed.com/projects/stafford-town-centre to view the exhibition boards, then pop it in an envelope and post it to our freepost address below once completed:

FREEPOST
URBED
5th Floor
10 Little Lever Street
M1 1HR

Keep up to date!

visit our website for more information on the project

www.urbed.com/projects/stafford-town-centre



Tell us what you think!

Stafford Town Centre Development Guide - Exhibition of Options - July 2014
Please take a look at our exhibition boards, labelled 1 to 8 and answer the questions below. We want your feedback on options which will provide new developments in Stafford Town Centre. This survey should take no more than 10 minutes.

OPTION 1

Could we **ANIMATE** the high street?

The questions in this section refer to the questions posed on Board 4

Q1 What do you think about the following ideas?

Please tick:

	Definitely	Good idea	Not sure	Probably not	Definitely not
A1 – Setting up a not for profit company to manage empty units?					
A2 – Removing the canopies and thinning out the existing trees on Princes Street?					
A3 – Open up the front of the market?					
A4 – New market stalls along Crabbeby Street?					
A5 – A new multi-storey car park?					
A6 – New Housing?					

Do you have any further comments on this option?

OPTION 2

Could we **RE-MODEL** the high street?

The questions in this section refer to the questions posed on Board 5

Q2 What do you think about the following ideas?

Please tick:

	Definitely	Good idea	Not sure	Probably not	Definitely not
R1 – Relocate the market nearer the High Street?					
R2 – A new high end food retailer?					
R3 – A new surface car park?					
R4 – A series of new residential areas?					

Do you have any further comments on this option?

OPTION 3

Could we create a new **RESIDENTIAL QUARTER**?

The questions in this section refer to the questions posed on Board 6

Q3 What do you think about the following ideas?

Please tick:				
Definitely	Good idea	Not sure	Probably not	Definitely not

Do you have any further comments on this option?

A Place to VISIT / A Place to LIVE?

The questions in this section refer to the questions posed on Board 7

Q4 What do you think about the following ideas?

	Comments
V1 – A new lottery funded visitor attraction. Is this the right place and what could it be?	
V2 – Is it worth investing in the Ancient High House?	
V3 – Could the area inside the roundabout be redeveloped? What might go there?	
L1 – What would you like to see on the site bounded by Eastgate Street and South Walls	
L2 – Would a new building on the Superdrug site improve the High Street?	
L3 – If the buildings off Tipping Street became vacant how would you like to see them reused or redeveloped?	

Any further comments on the projects suggested on board 7?

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Public Realm and Parking

The questions in this section refer to the questions posed on Board 8

Q5 What do you think about the following ideas?

Definitely	Good idea	Not sure	Probably not	Definitely not

Do you have any further comments on this option?

Q6 Do you have any other comments? i.e Have we missed something important?

Q7 Why are you in Stafford Town Centre today? Please tick:

To go shopping	To go to work	To meet someone	I live in the centre	To visit this exhibition	Other - please specify below

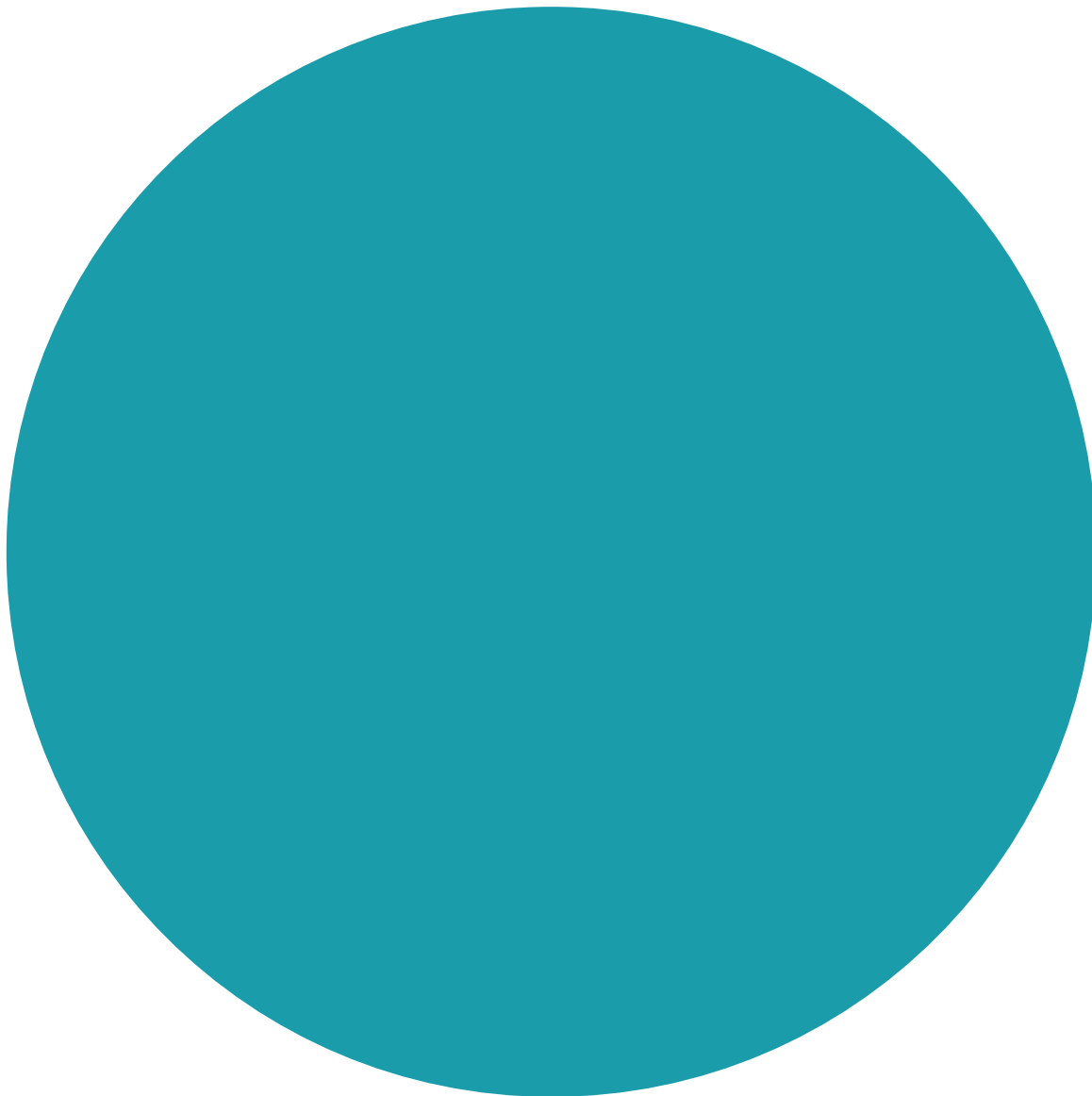
Q8 What do you think are the key priorities for Stafford Town Centre?

Priorities for Stafford				
1				
2				
3				
4				

Q9 Would you like to be kept informed on the progress of the Stafford Town Centre Development Guide? If so, please provide your name and email address below:

name _____ email address _____

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This report has been produced by DTZ and URBED
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