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Vision and Options

Vision

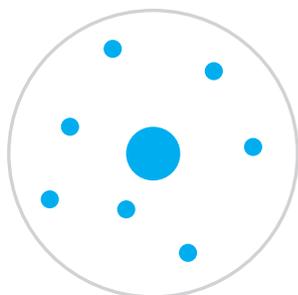
We believe that Stoke Town has the potential to develop as a quarter of the city centre drawing the activity of the Station, Town Hall, University and College into the town centre using the catalyst of the former Spode Works site.

“Stoke Town is looking forward to a bright new future. We’re taking a fresh look at our fascinating past to build a town for today and tomorrow. A town with a real ambience. A town with a distinctive retail, leisure, residential and employment offer. A town that attracts visitors through the creative, contemporary redevelopment of its heritage, including the Spode Pottery works, and the importance of the railway, canal, Minster and flourishing University Quarter. Enjoying the distinctive Stoke Town identity and easy access to the city centre, people will love to live here, and want to put down roots. Students will spot great potential for a higher quality of life. Visitors and daytime workers, enjoying our great transport links, will stay longer and spend more..”

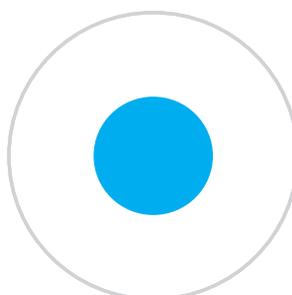
If we are to reverse the cycle of decline described on the previous page we need to develop a vision for the town centre. There have been previous attempts to do this such as the studies by Llewelyn Davies in 2004 and the more recent work by GVA Grimley. The vision in the box opposite was part of the brief for this masterplan and has been the starting point for our work.

This however is a vision that can be paraphrased as ‘a town that will be better than it is now’, something that is difficult to disagree with but doesn’t say a great deal about how to achieve it. One problem is that elements of this vision are very similar to the visions being promoted for the other towns in Stoke-on-Trent and indeed the city centre. It is counterproductive to have each of the six towns competing for the same territory and the over arching strategic presumption is to direct major investment to the city centre.

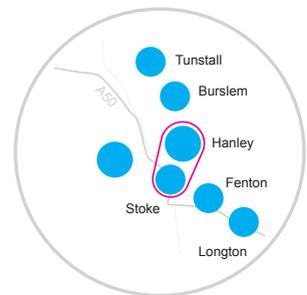
One approach would be to reposition Stoke Town in a way that befits its status in the local hierarchy of centres. The Llewelyn Davis work put Stoke Town on the lowest rung of this ladder behind the City Centre, the secondary centre in Newcastle and the District centres of Tunstall and Longton. Previous work has suggested that it could thus become a ‘21st Century Market Town’.



British City
Tiny town centre surrounded by mostly suburbs with local centres

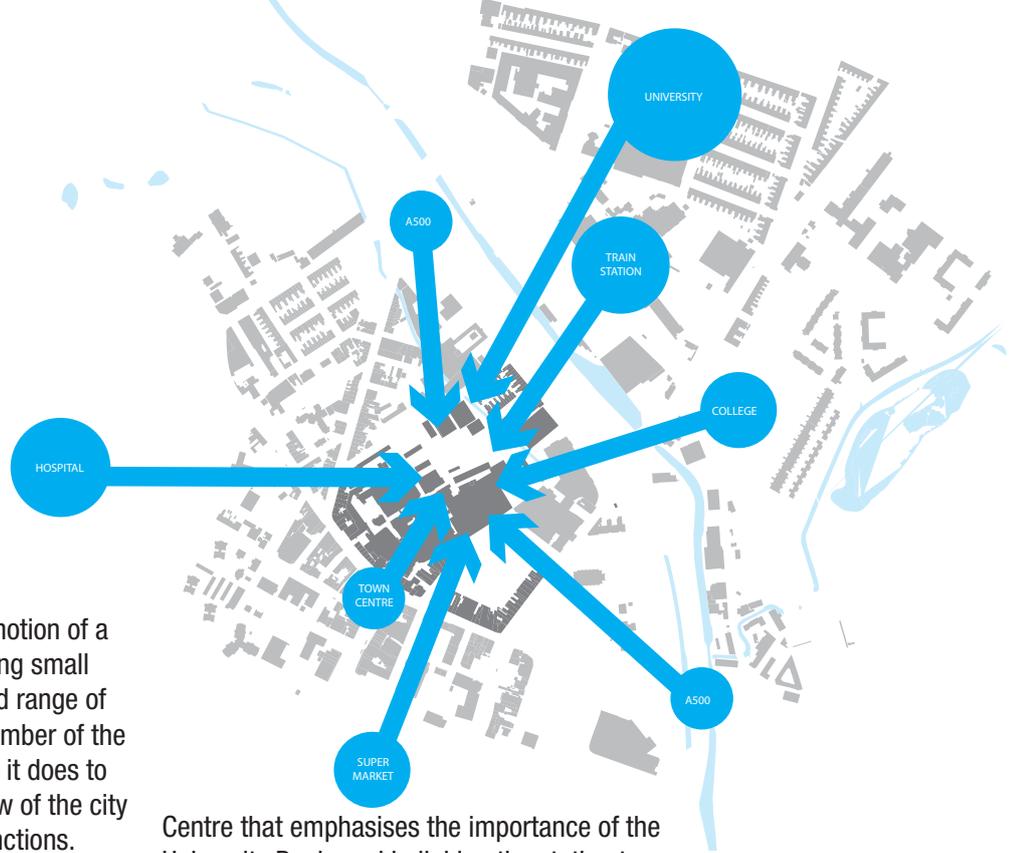


Continental City
Much bigger centre with traditionally less affluent suburbs



Stoke-on-Trent
Six town centres

- Stoke-upon-Trent
Part of city centre
- Station
- College
- University
- Market
- Minster



It is not clear what this means, the notion of a market town suggests a free standing small town with a strong identity and good range of local services. It could apply to a number of the towns in the conurbation more than it does to Stoke Town which sits in the shadow of the city centre and has many city centre functions.

We have therefore started to think about Stoke Town as a sector of the City Centre (as illustrated in the diagram to the left). In the UK we have become used to large conurbations with a very small and compact city. This however would not be the case on the continent where the city centre is far larger and includes a series of quarters each mixing housing and employment with city centre functions such as a University Quarter, Administrative Quarter and Station Quarter.

Stoke is unusual in the UK being a polycentric conurbation that historically did not have a clear city centre. The Council has been right to promote Hanley as a city centre because there is a need for a clear focus for higher order retailing and cultural activities. However, given the unique structure there is no reason to assume that this means that Stoke must adopt the UK model of a compact centre in a big conurbation. Why not adopt a continental model that sees a large city centre with a series of quarters, and indeed a wider conurbation made up of a network of urban villages? The model for this in the UK is of course London which while being on a vast scale has successfully developed a polycentric structure.

In this vision Stoke Town would be seen as a city centre quarter. This is already hinted at in the University's vision for a University Quarter. It could also incorporate elements of an administrative quarter or indeed a station quarter like the area around the Eurostar terminal in Lille. This is compatible with the strategy for the City

Centre that emphasises the importance of the University Boulevard in linking the station to the city centre. The small addition to this strategy that we are suggesting is that the access be continued for another few hundred meters so that the former Spode Works site and Stoke Town Centre is also perceived as a functional city centre quarter.

The vision for Stoke Town is therefore as a city centre quarter including the University, College, Station and administrative hub. The Town Centre and the former Spode Works site will thus become the heart of this quarter and a focus for its activity. This activity does not need to be created, it already exists. Hundreds of people work in the Civic Centre and town hall there are thousands of students at the university and college and many more people travel through Stoke Town on the West Coast Mainline, A500 and indeed the local roads. If Stoke Town could tap into only a small part of this market that already exists on its doorstep it could begin to reverse its decline in fortunes. The town has already started to do this, for example by promoting its bars and venues to Students. The former Spode Works site is however an opportunity to take this to an entirely different level by becoming a magnet for all of this activity and a spur to the regeneration of the Town.



Signage in Stoke

Consultations

The strategy has been informed by consultation with local people and stakeholders. This started with a workshop on the 12th October 2010 followed by a 6 week consultation on options from the beginning of December 2010 and a further six week consultation on the preferred option ending on 22nd March 2011.

The workshop in the Kings Hall was attended by more than 80 stakeholders, local people and council officers. Following this the team developed three options for the town centre. This included the former Spode Works site together with options for London Road, the former Victoria Ground and six other sites within the town centre. The consultation ran for 6 weeks and kicked off with two sessions on URBED's consultation bus on 1st and 4th December 2010. Following this the exhibition boards were on display in the Library and Local Service Centre. The results of this exercise were used to develop a preferred option, which was subject to a further six weeks of consultation ending on 22nd March. Throughout this period there have been a series of face to face meetings and discussions as well as presentations to councillors, local traders and to the North Staffs Design Review Panel. The results of this work are described below;

The Roundtable Workshop

This explored the main issues that affect Stoke Town centre and the things that people wished to see in the town centre. It was informed by a presentation of URBED's winning competition scheme (chosen by Stoke-on-Trent city council from six shortlisted designs back in September 2010). There was a great affection for Stoke Town at the workshop and particularly for its heritage and the amount of creative activity that existed in the town. There was however concern about the extent to which the town centre had declined. Many of the suggestions for the future chimed with the competition plan including space for artists and cultural activities, events and entertainment space.

Options Consultation

In total 73 questionnaires were completed as part of the options consultation. The main findings are summarised in the bubbles to the right. Again these suggest broad support for the creative use of the former Spode Works site and the regeneration of the town centre. The main question however related to potential retail use on the former Spode Works site. Of the responses, 83% favoured Option 2, which was a version of URBED's original competition plan. However, crucially 63% indicated that they could accept Option 3. This was the option that proposed a retail unit at the rear of the site. While a minority of people supported a retail store in its own right many more were prepared to accept it if it allowed the other parts of the strategy to be secured from a financial viability perspective.



The URBED Routemaster bus at the public consultation, 1st December at the University



The consultation material on display inside the URBED Routemaster Bus



Roundtable workshop discussion

Proposed Option Consultation

In February and March 2011 the proposed option was subject to a further six weeks of consultation. This elicited 64 responses plus letters from 8 statutory consultees including the Environment Agency, the National Trust, Network Rail, British Waterways, the Staffordshire Historic Buildings Trust and the Planning Authority.

The results of his consultation showed strong support for the scheme. Overall just under 78% of respondents agreed with the proposed option, 16% were undecided and 7.5% disagreed. On the former Spode Works site in particular 66.7% agreed with all of the proposals, 38.9% with some and 6% disagreed. It is possible that many of the people who didn't agree with all of the proposals for Spode were objecting to the retail store. However even if this were the case they would be a minority of respondents. The consultation also showed strong support for the highway and public realm proposals. The main omissions identified were provision of green space.

Options

The team developed a series of options for the town looking in particular at the London Road sites, the former Victoria Ground and the former Spode Works/Links site. These were the basis of the December 2010 consultations

As part of the options process we looked at the potential future use of all of the sites within the masterplanning area as shown on the plan to the right. In addition to the former Spode Works site, there are a number of sites along the A500 and the railway as well as a series of sites within Stoke Town, the largest of which are the Former Victoria Ground and the area to the east of London Road.

For most of these sites we asked people what they thought they should be used for. However for the larger sites we developed a series of options for comment. The former Spode Works and Links site options are described on the following page.

London Road: London Road includes a number of sites running southwards from the Sainsbury's service station between London Road and Yeaman Street. This includes a small park, a number of underused yards and retailing onto London Road. The latter includes two larger units, a Lidl and an Iceland together with a parade of small units which are in poor condition. The options suggest ways of dealing with this retailing and the density of development.

The first option retains the retail frontage and proposes a series of medium-density family housing/apartment blocks around an enlarged pocket park. The smaller shops to the south would be refurbished to maintain the the shopping presence along London Road. To the north the former Police Station is retained and used for offices, probably for public sector user. The second option is based on the consolidation of shopping around the town centre. The retail frontage to London Road is removed and shops are built fronting onto the Sainsbury's car park (in line with a current planning permission). The third option is a lower density housing scheme modelled on the 'Villas' with a new retail frontage.

The main issues in the consultation related to retailing. There was concern that the retail frontage wasn't sustainable commercially and was unattractive. The proposed option is therefore largely based on Option 1 but proposes the removal of the smaller retail units except

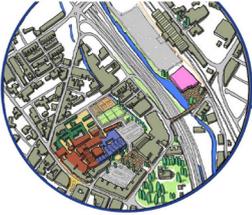
for the three units on the corner of Corporation Street which are of much better quality.

The former Victoria Ground: This site is in the hands of a developer who is actively seeking to bring forward a development. The two options both included housing development on the western part of the site but had alternative solutions to the eastern section next to the A500. In one scheme this was developed for housing and in the other for a range of leisure and office uses accessed directly off the A500. The commercial development could include a hotel, leisure uses and office space. The response to the consultation was generally favourable to the housing development although there were a number of detailed concerns. The main issue relates to the treatment of the river and the desire for as linear park/open space along the River Trent. The eastern part of the site is the most difficult. This is contaminated and is also affected by noise from the A500. The proposed option shows primarily housing, however there is an aspiration to have a range of uses on the site provided that the scheme did not divert potential development from the town Centre.

Options Appraisal Results

	Spode Works			London Road			Former Victoria Ground		
Options:	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Criteria:									
Sustainability Objectives	Medium fit	High fit	Low fit	High fit	Medium fit	Medium fit	Low fit	Medium fit	Medium fit
Masterplan Objectives	Medium fit	High fit	High fit	Medium fit	Medium fit	Medium fit	Medium fit	Medium fit	Medium fit
Financial Viability	Low fit	Low fit	High fit	High fit	Low fit	Low fit	High fit	Medium fit	Medium fit
Deliverability	Low fit	Low fit	High fit	High fit	Low fit	Low fit	Low fit	Medium fit	Medium fit
Community/ Stakeholder Aspirations	Medium fit	High fit	Medium fit	Medium fit	Medium fit	Medium fit	Medium fit	Medium fit	Medium fit
Strategic Fit	Medium fit	Medium fit	Medium fit	Medium fit	Medium fit	Low fit	Low fit	High fit	High fit

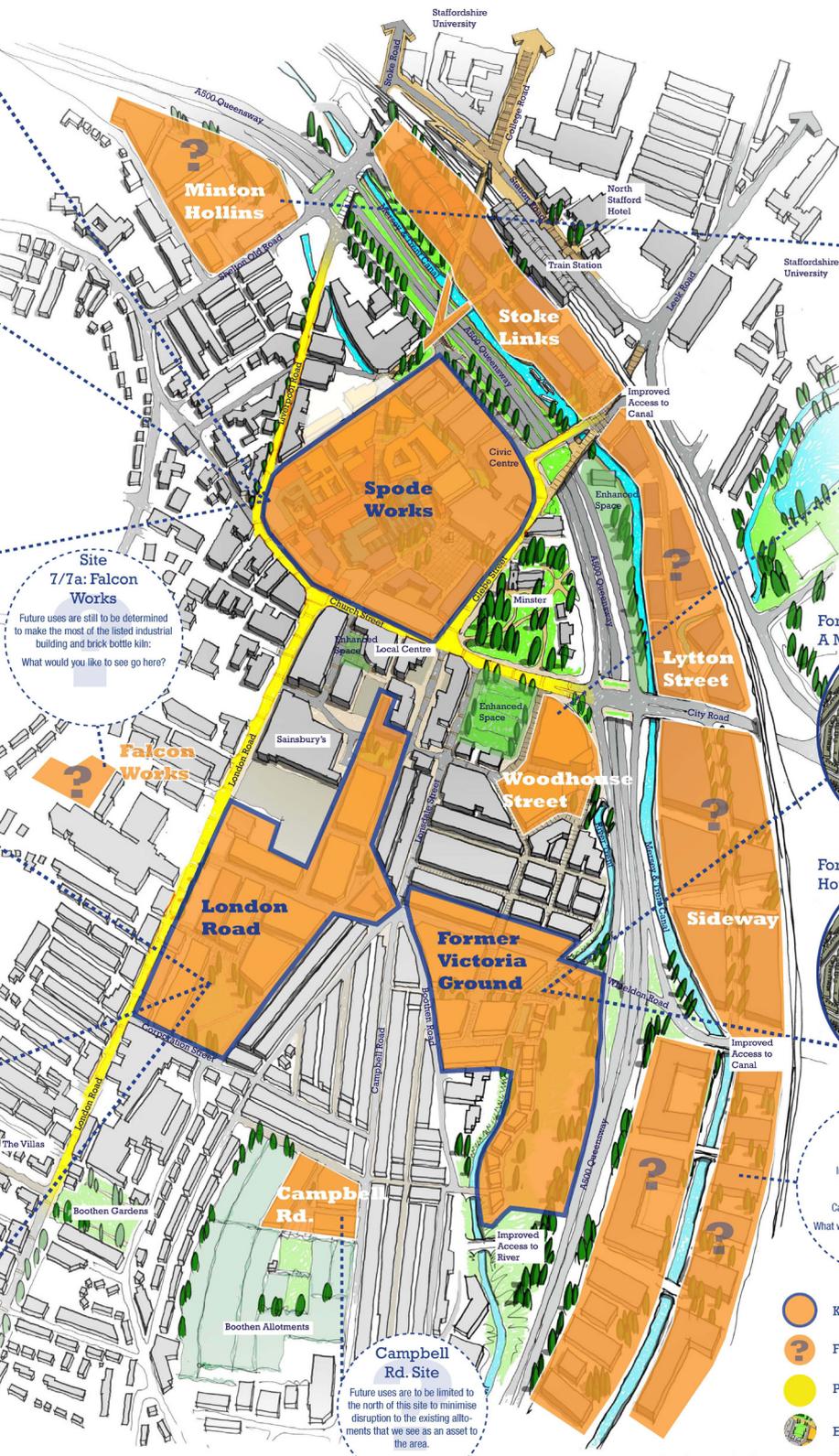
**Spode Works Option 1:
Heritage & Creative Reuse**



**Spode Works Option 2:
A Mix of Uses**



**Spode Works Option 3:
Expanded Town Centre**



Minton Hollins Site
Future uses could be:
Residential
Commercial/Business Units
New Police HQ
Carparking
What would you like to see go here?

Woodhouse Street Site
Future uses are still to be determined - these could be for:
Budget Hotel
Ancillary Retail
Carparking/Green Open Space
Further Residential
What would you like to see go here?

Site 7/7a: Falcon Works
Future uses are still to be determined to make the most of the listed industrial building and brick bottle kiln:
What would you like to see go here?

**Former Victoria Grd. Option 1:
A Mix of Uses**

**Former Victoria Grd. Option 2:
Housing Led**

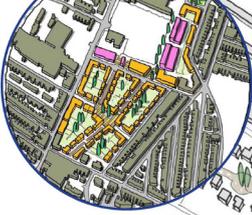
Sideway Site
Future uses could be:
Industrial/Business Units
Canal Moorings
Canal side neighbourhood?
What would you like to see go here?

Campbell Rd. Site
Future uses are to be limited to the north of this site to minimise disruption to the existing allotments that we see as an asset to the area.

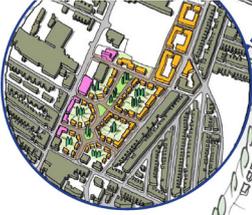
**London Rd. Option 1:
London Road Village**



**London Rd. Option 2:
Family Housing**



**London Rd. Option 3:
The New Villas**



- Key development site
- Future development site
- Proposed key route improvement
- Enhanced network of open space
- Proposed canal & river corridor improvements

Options

Former Spode Works and The Links

At the heart of the masterplan is the Former Spode Works site and the Links site to the rear of the station. The three options for these sites built on the proposals put forward in URBED's initial competition scheme.

The options consultation included three options for the former Spode Works and Links sites. Each of these were based on the three main uses for the retained buildings on the Former Spode Works site. These are shown on the plans to the right; Ceramics retailing and a visitor centre (green), artists' studios (brick red) and the ceramics innovation centre (blue). On each of the options the balance and configuration of these uses is changed but it was clear from the workshop that the majority of people wanted to see the historic buildings retained for this type of mix of uses so the options didn't vary greatly.

The open section to the rear of the former Spode Works site was a different matter and the three options show very different solutions to this. The first includes surface parking and sports uses. In some respect this is an interim solution that could be put in place in advance of a more permanent scheme. Options 2 and 3 show two possible permanent schemes. Option 2 is a mixed-use scheme with housing offices, ground floor cafes and restaurants and a multi-storey car park. Option 3 shows potential retail solutions. One for a row of retail warehouses and the other for a medium sized retail store.

The options show three different levels of development on the Links Site. The first is a modest scheme on Swift House relating to Glebe Street. The second shows a new bridge on the axis of the station together with a new station square and retained public parking to the north. The final option shows the Links site fully developed with a convention center to the north and the new bridge extended to cross the railway line.

It was clear from the options consultations and indeed the options appraisal that there was an appetite for the most ambitious scheme. The preference was for option

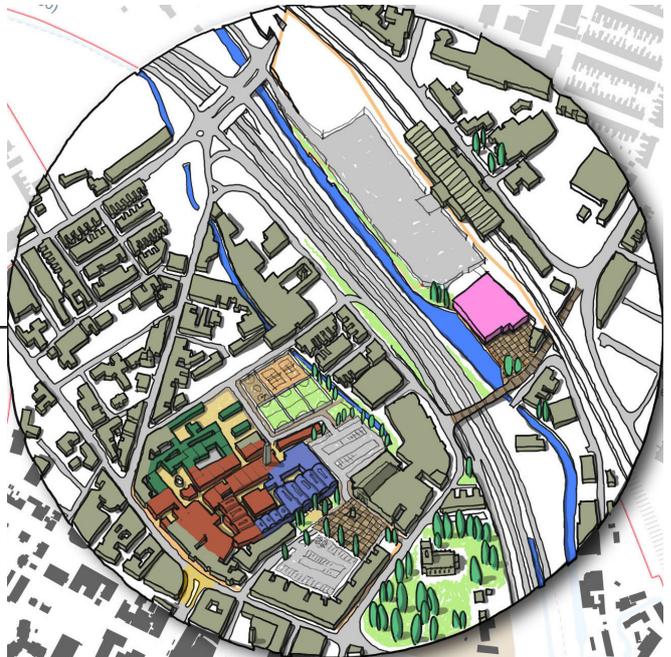
2 on the former Spode Works site and Option 3 on the Links site. There was very strong support for the artistic and visitor related uses of the Spode site and for the idea of a major new bridge and the full development with the convention centre on the Links site.

However, as part of the options appraisal process it became clear that this scheme struggled in terms of its viability. The development on the rear of the former Spode Works Site and the Links site had the prospect of being viable in the future (if not at present) provided that the bridge could be built. However, it was very unlikely that sufficient value would be generated to fund the bridge so that this would have to be funded by some form of grant, something which is currently unlikely. There is therefore a danger that the development would never happen.

In this light the retail element of Option 3 creates an opportunity to create sufficient value to fund the bridge. The key finding from the consultation was that this may not be people's first choice but it is something that the majority could live with if it allowed the other parts of the scheme to happen. This was therefore the basis of the proposed option.



Holdway Round plate design



OPTION 1

Heritage & creative reuse

This option provides for the early reuse of the existing buildings which will over time develop into three creative uses: The Spode Museum and pottery attraction, the Artists community with studios and galleries and the Ceramics Hub. In reality all three will be merged together to include pottery shops, helping to draw people to the site. They will be supported by leisure uses such as bars and restaurants to create a lively destination. The rear of the site would be a combination of open space and parking - the latter allowing part of the Kingsway car park to be turned into a public square. This option could either be seen as a permanent solution or a stepping stone to options 2 or 3. The Stoke Links site is not redeveloped in this option with council owned Swift House refurbished for commercial uses to help provide an improved setting to the canal.



OPTION 2

A mix of uses

This option builds on URBED's competition plan and is based on a long-term vision that envisages the refurbishment of the former Spode Works site and the development of land to the rear for a mix of uses. This includes the three elements of artists, pottery attraction and Ceramics Hub as in options 1 and 3 together with new housing and commercial development. The Stoke Links site is anchored with a convention centre built over a decked car park with new commercial development and station drop off as in option 3. The former Spode Works site includes a new multi-storey car park allowing the removal of the Kingsway car park to allow development to enclose the square by the Town Hall.

OPTION 3

Expanded town centre

This option is based on the promotion of the largely cleared rear part of the site for retail use to include either a medium sized retail store (approx 4,000 sq.m) or number of non food shop units, with car parking and access from the A500 slip road. The existing Spode buildings that are retained are re-used for the three types of use illustrated in option 1 but with the Pottery Attraction occupying a more central location. The Stoke Links site is shown partly redeveloped to include shops and business units to the rear of the station and a single new bridge providing direct access to Stoke Town and the former Spode Works site.



