

Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan

Draft Plan



Planning 2026: Have Your Say

Preferred Options Consultation

Consultation Period: 7th September – 2nd November 2015



Walsall Council



Walsall
Town Centre
A place for everyone

What is the purpose of the Town Centre Area Action Plan?

The Area Action Plan (AAP) is a long term plan which allocates sites within the town centre for the development of new shops, leisure opportunities and offices, as well as setting out strategies for other aspects of the town centre, including transportation and the environment. It gives a clear vision for the town centre that we can all work towards together. The AAP will form part of the Local Plan for Walsall within the framework provided by the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS).

This Preferred Option Consultation gives you the chance to comment on the Draft Plan.

Alongside this 'Draft Plan', we have produced a Town Centre Policies Map. You can also view the 'Preferred Option Document' which sets out how we developed this draft plan. You can view these documents and all the evidence on our website.

What is the Area Action Plan process?

The flow diagram below sets out the AAP process. This Preferred Option is the second stage in the production of the AAP. The consultation period runs between **Monday 7th September and Monday 2nd November 2015**.



Where can I find more information?

Visit our web site at www.walsall.gov.uk/planning_2026

Email planningpolicy@walsall.gov.uk

Phone (01922) 658020

Textphone 01922 654000

Visit the First Stop Shop in the Civic Centre and ask for the Planning Policy Team

If you would like this information in another format please contact us.

List of Acronyms

AAP	Area Action Plan
BCCS	Black Country Core Strategy
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
ELR	Employment Land Review
EI	Environmental Infrastructure
HA	Housing Association
LDF	Local Development Framework
LDS	Local Development Scheme
LEP	Local Economic Partnership
LTP	Local Transport Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PSA	Primary Shopping Area
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SAD	Site Allocations Document
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement
SCS	Sustainable Community Strategy
SHLAA	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
UDP	Unitary Development Plan
Whg	Walsall Housing Group

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP)

The AAP is a long term plan which allocates sites within the town centre for the development of new shops, leisure opportunities and offices, as well as setting out strategies for other aspects of the town centre, including transportation and the environment. It gives a clear vision for the town centre that we can all work towards together. The AAP sets the planning framework for the town centre, and once adopted it will be the basis on which planning and investment decisions within the area are made. **Chapter 2** sets out the boundary for Walsall Town Centre AAP.

Once it has been adopted by the Council, the AAP will be a legal document. It will form part of the Development Plan and will be used as the basis for determining planning applications. It will also help to promote sites for development and identify Council Priorities.

1.2 The Draft Plan

This is the Draft Plan which sets out what we think Walsall Town Centre AAP should include for you to comment on. A number of the policies relate to allocations or designations on the Draft AAP Policies Map and this should be considered alongside the Draft Plan.

In addition to this Draft Plan there is the Preferred Options Document, which includes the background details to explain how we developed this Draft Plan including a summary of how the Issues and Options consultation, which took place in 2013, has informed the plan. It also provides an overview on how the Sustainability Appraisal has impacted on the decision making process

The AAP is being produced in parallel with **Walsall Site Allocation Document (SAD)** which allocates sites for development for housing, employment and other uses across the Borough, and an **Infrastructure Plan and a Charging Schedule**, to support the introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regime to levy charges on certain types of development. Your thoughts are also being sought on these documents and they can be accessed on our website: http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/index/environment/planning/planning_policy.htm

1.3 How can comments be made about the plan?

Your views are important. Please read through this document and the supporting information. We have asked a series of questions throughout the document and we welcome your responses. In order to make sure we have recorded your views correctly, you must submit them in writing. You can do this by filling in the questionnaire, either in paper form or online, or by submitting a letter or email. If you are submitting a letter or email, please make it clear which site(s) or policy(ies) you are referring to. You should submit any representations during the consultation period between **Monday 7th September and Monday 2nd November 2015**. Comments received after the latter date may not be taken into account.

1.4 The Planning Context

The AAP will form part of the “Local Plan”. This is the plan for the future development of the Borough which is drawn up by the Council in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the “development plan”.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹ sets out the Government’s position on the role of the planning system in both plan-making and decision-taking. It states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, in economic, social and environmental terms. The Framework must be taken into account in the preparation of plans.

The NPPF sets out core land-use planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision making. These include driving and supporting sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs, securing high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings, supporting the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk, contributing to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution, reusing land that has been previously developed, managing patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, taking account of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and delivering sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

On a more local level the Black Country authorities (Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Dudley) prepared a Joint Core Strategy, which was adopted by Walsall Council in February 2011. As a strategic plan for the whole of the Black Country, the

¹ The NPPF can be viewed at <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS)² seeks to direct investment in retail, leisure and offices across the area. It emphasises that strategic centres such as Walsall should be the focus of large-scale investment in retail, offices and leisure.

Walsall's local plan also includes **Walsall Unitary Development Plan (UDP)**³. Most of the UDP policies are 'saved' policies; however, some were removed as a result of changes to planning legislation in 2004 or have been superseded by policies within the BCCS. Some of the 'saved' policies within the UDP are referenced within this AAP as they still provide a good policy basis to assess proposals against and the AAP avoids repeating existing policy where possible. It is intended that the UDP 'saved' policies will remain in place until a new Development Management Plan is developed for Walsall.

However, once adopted, this AAP will supersede some of the UDP policies, especially those within the Inset plan that covers Walsall Town Centre. The AAP will also supersede the information within Appendix 2 of the BCCS (SC3) which sets out an indicative spatial plan for Walsall Town Centre. The Preferred Options AAP documents set out the relationship between each AAP policy and the current planning framework.

1.5 The need for an AAP

The preparation of such a detailed and robust plan reflects the importance of Walsall town centre. The health of the town centre has an impact on the economy of the whole Borough. Walsall town centre is the most accessible location to serve the catchment area and to benefit the maximum number of people, particularly in increased employment and training opportunities. It is therefore the most sustainable location for development in the Borough. However, the town centre economy has significantly under-performed against the national and regional average over the past 10 years.

While there has been a considerable level of regeneration activity in the town centre in recent years, this has tended to focus on a small number of large scale projects. Whilst the delivery of these projects is important to the overall regeneration of the town centre, the Council does not yet have an up-to-date coherent strategy or regeneration approach for Walsall town centre as a whole. Advanced proposals for some important parts of the town centre are lacking, and the town centre now needs a long term spatial plan to set out its function in terms of retail, leisure and culture, education, office-based employment and housing, set in a high quality environment.

² The BCCS can be viewed at:
http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/index/environment/planning/planning_policy/local_development_framework/df_core_strategy.htm

³ The UDP can be viewed at:
http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/index/environment/planning/planning_policy/unitary_development_plan.htm

1.6 The AAP Process

In 2013 we consulted on the Issues and Options. This set out what we thought were the issues that the AAP would need to address, and possible solutions, including a range of different sites that the Council and other parties including landowners and developers thought might be suitable for development. The consultation responses to this stage of the plan have been taken into account when producing this Draft Plan. The consultation responses and how the Council have addressed these can be found as part the Preferred Option document.

Following the publication of this document, consultation comments will be collated and used to inform the next stage of the AAP process – Publication. The flow diagram (Figure 1.1) below sets out the three key stages in which stakeholders and communities can have their say on the AAP and SAD.



Figure 1.1 Flow diagram setting out the three key stages on consultation

The implications of each policy or proposal in the AAP need to be assessed against broad environmental, social and economic objectives in order to ensure that the AAP is as sustainable as possible. Therefore a **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)** process is running in parallel with the preparation of the AAP, and this plan should be read alongside the SA Report and accompanying technical documents. The SA is a method of identifying potentially significant environmental, social and economic effects of the emerging proposals in the plan, including alternative options under consideration, so that harmful effects can be identified early on, and addressed where feasible. The SA has included an evaluation of the sustainability of the AAP Objectives (section 2.2), an appraisal of the Options for the AAP, and an appraisal of the Draft AAP policies and proposals. The SA has included equality and health impact assessments, as the SA Framework has been designed to identify potential

equality and health impacts. The results of the SA are summarised in a separate SA Report which is published alongside this consultation document. The SA Report and the Preferred Options Document explain how the Draft AAP has taken account of the emerging results of the SA.

SA Question

Do you have any comments on the sustainability appraisal (SA) of the Draft AAP?

Please give reasons for your comments, and where appropriate please provide supporting evidence.

1.7 Structure of the AAP

This chapter introduces the AAP by setting out the planning context. It also explains why an AAP is important along with the key points in the AAP process and anticipated timescales.

Chapter 2 sets out the boundary for the AAP, presents the vision for Walsall town centre, and provides the objectives that the AAP aims to deliver.

The rest of the document is divided into the key elements that make the centre, as summarised below. Each chapter has a number of policies which will deliver the vision and objectives of the AAP. For each policy there is a policy justification section and a question asking for your feedback. The Draft Plan also provides a list of the key evidence used to inform the plan along with an overview of how the policy will be delivered. Further details of how the plan will be delivered can be found in the Site Allocation Document and Town Centre Area Action Plan Delivery Document which can be viewed on our evidence page. Finally, for each policy there is an indication of how the policy will be monitored. Where possible current indicators have been used from the BCCS or the UDP but where a new indicator may be necessary this has been highlighted.

Chapter 3 is about Walsall as a Place for Shopping. It provides policies for the Primary Shopping Area, new retail investment including retail floorspace targets and a policy for the new Walsall Market.



Chapter 4 focuses on Walsall as a Place for Business. It provides policies for new office floorspace and for investment in the current office stock along with proposing a social enterprise zone. The chapter also covers the current industrial land within the centre,

looking to protect any active businesses while providing opportunities for redevelopment if the industry relocates.

Chapter 5 focuses on Walsall town centre as a Place for Leisure. This chapter has a policy for new leisure development along with a policy to protect and enhance current sport and cultural facilities. It also includes a policy promoting further hotel investment in the centre. Finally the chapter includes a policy on the Canal to ensure it is protected whilst offering a high quality leisure destination in Walsall.



Chapter 6 looks at Walsall as a Place for Living. This chapter includes policies on housing, education and health, community facilities, the character of the town and the quality of the public realm, and the environmental infrastructure of the town centre.

Chapter 7 looks at transportation, access to and movement within the town centre. This is a key chapter because good access to the town is vital to the successful delivery of town centre regeneration. This chapter includes policies on linkages, cycling, public transport, the road network, and town centre parking.



Chapter 8 focuses on Walsall as a Place for Investment. This chapter provides policies for the key areas within the town centre which are opportunities for major redevelopment, as well as secondary development opportunity sites within the town centre. This chapter also includes a policy around overcoming constraints in the centre.

Finally **Chapter 9** provides a summary of how people can get involved and have their say on the plan.

There are questions after each of the policies within the Draft Plan on which we would welcome your feedback. We would also encourage any general comments or comments on how we propose to deliver and monitor the plan. Also please let us know if you think we have missed anything or if you have any comments on the AAP Policies Map.

1.8 Key evidence consulted

A wide range of background documents have been prepared for or taken into account in the production of the documents. These include a list of sites put forward at Issues and Options stage and our response to comments made by respondents. All of this evidence is available to view at www.walsall.gov.uk/planning_2026

2. Walsall Town Centre

2.1 The vision

The vision for Walsall Town Centre is as follows:

By 2026 Walsall Town Centre will have been regenerated as a sub-regional focus for the local economy and the community. It will provide its catchment area with an attractive choice of comparison shopping and leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities, as well as supporting a thriving office market. Walsall will also support modern town centre living. The centre will bring all of these activities together in a vibrant, safe, attractive and accessible environment that combines local heritage with modern design.

AAP Vision Question

Do you: a) Support the vision b) Support the vision with suggested changes c) Disagree in principle with the vision d) Disagree with the vision wording

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

2.2 Area Action Plan Objectives

To ensure that the vision is achieved, the following spatial objectives have been identified:

- 1. Establish and allocate a series of high quality, ambitious and deliverable proposals for Walsall Town Centre that will enable Walsall to maximise its economic potential creating a thriving and prosperous centre that creates job opportunities for the residents of the Borough;**
- 2. Enhance and maximise Walsall's competitiveness for investment, both in its role as a sub-regional centre and in competing with out-of-centre developments;**
- 3. Increase the choice, quality and diversity of the town centre retail offer in order to meet the needs of all sectors of the population. To secure a mix of occupiers in the town centre through the provision of units of sufficient size and quality in suitable locations to meet the requirements of modern retailers;**

- 4. Diversify and strengthen the economic base, promote new ways of working and deliver a strong office market that provides high standard office accommodation in suitable locations to meet the needs of existing businesses and to attract new businesses to the area, accompanied by training and conference facilities;**
- 5. Strengthen the current cultural offer through increasing the mix of uses within the town centre such as a cinema, performance venues and community facilities, complemented by leisure uses such as restaurants, cafes and bars in order to provide an attractive centre for visitors both day and night;**
- 6. Support businesses to increase employment opportunities, skills and aspirations through high quality jobs in a variety of sectors, supported by good links with education and training providers in the town centre;**
- 7. Improve accessibility to and within the centre for all sectors of the community, through the provision of integrated transport and enhanced cycling and pedestrian links;**
- 8. Protect areas and buildings of historical importance while delivering high quality sustainable design that is well integrated, and encourages greater activity in the town centre with innovative and high quality design and architecture at the core;**
- 9. Promote the sustainability of the centre by delivering environmental infrastructure and improvements that will deliver a range of benefits; and**
- 10. Transform the experience and perception of Walsall town centre for those who shop, work, visit, invest and live in Walsall through measures such as improved public realm, civic spaces, quality of place, new homes, pedestrian access and security alongside the active promotion of the centre and organisation of community events.**

AAP Objectives Question

Do you: a) Support the objectives b) Support the objectives with suggested changes
c) Disagree in principle with the objectives d) Disagree with the objectives wording

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

2.2.1 Policy Justification

The BCCS provides the basis for the AAP vision, ensuring that the very starting base for the AAP is in accordance with the BCCS. The AAP objectives therefore build on this vision to provide clear aims for the policies and proposals in the plan to aspire to.

At the Issues and Options stage of the AAP we proposed some objectives which set out how the AAP will achieve the vision of the plan. We asked for views on these and the responses have been considered when developing these Preferred Option objectives. These objectives have to align with the NPPF and the BCCS. They build on these documents to provide a Walsall town centre specific dimension. The objectives have also been reviewed to ensure they align with the objectives of the sustainability statement.

For each chapter the plan indicates which of the objectives the policies within the chapter will look to achieve. However, whilst the objectives each deal with a separate issue they must be considered together when assessing if a proposal in the centre will support the vision of the plan.

2.3 Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan Boundary

The AAP defines the Town Centre Boundary, which is the area to which the policies in the plan will apply, whilst recognising links to the surrounding area.

Policy AAP1: Walsall Town Centre Boundary

a) The AAP Boundary is set out in the Town Centre AAP Policies Map. The boundary of the centre has been drawn so as to include the main areas where there is potential for development which can extend and complement the role of the centre. The town centre area provides the main focus for investment in retail, leisure, office, cultural, and service activities.

b) It is important that all development within the centre is carefully integrated into the existing urban fabric, both visually and functionally, so that they function properly as part of the centre as a whole. All developments will be expected to show flexibility in their format and layout in order to ensure a positive relationship with the centre as a whole. Developments in the centre will also be expected to take a comprehensive approach to the use of land and buildings. To ensure the integration of developments in or on the edge of the centre proposals will need to be in accordance with UDP Policy S3: Integration of Developments into Centres.

2.3.1 Policy Justification

The town centre boundary not only sets out the area which the AAP covers but also the area in which town centre uses should be focussed – it is therefore crucial it reflects as accurately as possible the areas in which such uses would be appropriate. The AAP boundary has therefore been altered from the boundary as allocated in the UDP Proposal Inset Map, to reflect changes in the centre since 2005. The changes have been made to remove areas that no longer relate well to the centre and to include sites which could have potential for development or that already strongly relate to the centre's function. More details on the exact changes made to the boundary can be found in the Preferred Options document on our website.

Whilst in principle the boundary acts as a guide to where centre uses are and are not acceptable it's important that developments towards the edge of the boundary are well integrated with the rest of the centre. This is crucial in supporting the vitality and viability of the Primary Shopping Area and key regeneration schemes. It's also important that all development is accessible by public transport so the integration of all schemes with the town centre as a whole is an important consideration.

The integration of development within the centre as a whole is crucial to creating a well connected vibrant centre. All proposals will be expected to consider how they relate to the centre and to positively contribute to the objectives of the AAP. It is not accepted that the format requirements of specific proposals should mean that development cannot relate well to the centre overall including proposals for drive-through facilities, convenience or bulky goods retailing and community facilities. Where proposals are considered to fail to integrate well a statement of justification will be required which should demonstrate accordance with this policy and 'saved' UDP Policy S3 stating how the proposal is integrated and comprehensive in the approach to the use of land or buildings. Development proposals which would prejudice a comprehensive approach to the use of land or buildings or result in a poorly integrated scheme will be resisted.

It is recognised that there may be times when proposals for centre uses or for uses that should relate to the town centre are on the outside or very edge of the town centre boundary. When such proposals occur applicants will be expected to demonstrate that the development will contribute positively to the town centre.

It is also important that connections are maintained between the town centre and the rest of the Borough; in particular to the Manor Hospital, Walsall Arboretum and the surrounding residential areas. The AAP will therefore look to strengthen these links and to ensure the town centre remains the most accessible location in the Borough.

Policy AAP1 Question

Do you: a) Support the boundary b) Support the boundary with suggested changes c) Disagree with the boundary d) Support the policy e) Support the policy with suggested changes f) Disagree with the principle of the policy, or g) Disagree with the wording.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

2.3.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.
- Walsall Town Centre Characterisation Study (August 2015) Walsall Council

2.3.3 Delivery

- Through the appropriate consideration of planning applications and the implementation of all policies within this plan along with the BCCS and 'saved' UDP Policies to direct investment in town centres uses into the town centre.

2.3.4 Monitoring

- BCCS indicator LOI CEN1 which monitors the amount of additional floorspace for town centre uses within the Town Centre Boundary

3. A Place for Shopping



Shopping is one of the key functions of a town centre, and a healthy economy requires a diverse range of shops that meet the needs of the community. The policies and proposals in this chapter contribute to the delivery of a strong shopping offer in Walsall and reflect AAP Objectives 1, 2, 3, 6, 8 and 10.

3.1 Primary Shopping Area

The AAP designates the Primary Shopping Area and looks to protect its role as the main shopping destination.

Policy AAPS1: Primary Shopping Area

It is crucial that investment in retail is concentrated within the heart of the town centre and that the area provides an attractive shopping destination. The Primary Shopping Area, as shown on the AAP Policies Map, forms the main focus of activity in the centre and the approach to development in and around the town centre should be to protect and enhance its function as the heart of Walsall Town Centre. This will be achieved by:

- a) Concentrating new retail floorspace and investment within or immediately adjacent to the Primary Shopping Area boundary;**
- b) Expecting all development within the Primary Shopping Area to provide an active and well designed frontage to positively contribute to the street scene. Any proposal for non-retail use will have to demonstrate that the retail function is not prejudiced (as in accordance with UDP Policy S4);**
- c) Only permitting retail development away from the Primary Shopping Area where it can be demonstrated that there are no suitable development sites or vacant premises within or immediately adjacent to it (in accordance with UDP Policy S7, BCCS Policy CEN7 and AAPS2). When proposals come forward that can demonstrate there are no suitable alternatives the Council will require the**

provision of safe, direct and attractive pedestrian links into the Primary Shopping Area; and

d) Encouraging developments for other uses in Walsall Town Centre to improve connections to the Primary Shopping Area where possible and expecting any development for town centre uses which generate significant visitor numbers to accord with Policy AAPT1 in improving linkages throughout the centre and to show that there would be no negative impact on the Primary Shopping Area in terms of investment and footfall.

3.1.1 Policy Justification

The Primary Shopping Area (PSA) includes the main shopping streets within Walsall town centre. This policy is intended to strengthen this area by focussing new retail investment within it and by ensuring that no other developments impact negatively on the health of the PSA. Focusing retail investment within the PSA is essential to delivering the BCCS strategy for regeneration and growth.

It is crucial that the PSA provides an area where existing investment can be consolidated and protected whilst allowing for potential new investment in retail. This PSA boundary is therefore slightly consolidated compared to the current adopted PSA as set out in the UDP Town Centre Inset Map, to remove areas where retail is unlikely to come forward, providing a clear focus for new retail development and improvements to the centre. More details on the exact changes made to the boundary can be found in the Preferred Options document on our website.

The NPPF requires local planning authorities to define the extent of the PSA, based on the primary and secondary frontages. Given the level of vacancies and increased role leisure plays in supporting the function of town centres it is not considered appropriate to designate primary and secondary frontages in policy as this would be ineffective and unnecessarily restrict changes of use. It is also not considered helpful to be too onerous about uses other than A1 (A2, A3, A5 etc) being allowed in the PSA as this would be inflexible and potentially deter investment. A mix of uses is needed within the PSA to provide a vibrant centre, especially in the evenings. The approach is instead to allow individual applications to be measured on their own merits in regards to how they impact on the primary function of the PSA as a shopping destination. This will be measured in terms of the risk of diluting the shopping offer and reducing the ability to meet the retail targets set (see Policy AAPS2).

The PSA, as the retail core and focus for future retail investment, is also the key area identified for a high quality public realm, as set out in Policy AAPLV7.

Policy AAPS1 Question

Do you: a) Support the boundary b) Support the boundary with suggested changes c) Disagree with the boundary d) Support the policy e) Support the policy with suggested changes f) Disagree with the principle of the policy, or g) Disagree with the wording.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

3.1.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.
- Walsall Town Centre Characterisation Study (August 2015) Walsall Council

3.1.3 Delivery

The PSA is the heart of the centre and as such the Council will prioritise investment that will support its vitality and viability. The main tool the Council has to deliver a strong PSA is through the use of planning policy to attract investment into the PSA and to deter developments that will have negative impacts on the centre's health through drawing away investment and spending. The Council will also support the PSA in the following ways:

- Securing funds, where possible, for investment in the PSA to improve the shopping environment;
- Supporting business to invest and relocate within the PSA;
- Where considered necessary and if feasible, the Council will consider further direct involvement (in addition to the Primark scheme) in the development of retail opportunities in the PSA; and
- Where appropriate, for development permitted in an edge-of-centre location requiring developer contributions to improving linkages to the PSA.

3.1.4 Monitoring

- Through BCCS indicator LOI CEN3 which records the amount of additional retail floorspace within or immediately adjacent the PSA. This also records the amount of retail in edge-of-centre and out-of-centre locations, allowing for comparisons to be made on the level of investment in all locations.
- Other indicators such as unit vacancy rates and pedestrian footfall levels will also be used to draw conclusions on the health of the PSA.

3.2 Attracting New Retail Development

In order to maintain its role as a strategic centre and to reverse the decline of the high street there is a need to retain current retailers and to attract new retail investment in the right locations to support the vitality of the centre.

Policy AAPS2: New Retail Development

a) The Council aims to deliver 6,000sqm gross new comparison goods floorspace and 1,500sqm gross new convenience goods floorspace (in addition to existing commitments) by the end of 2026. This will be achieved by:

i) Focussing new retail development in the Primary Shopping Area as required by Policy AAPS1;

ii) Prioritising the development of sites identified on the AAP Policies Map for retail investment:-

- St Matthew's Quarter (TC01, TC02 and TC03) (See also Policy AAPI2)
- Park Place (TC05) (See also Policy AAPI5)
- Saddler's Shopping Centre (TC04) (See also Policy AAPI5); and

iii) Ensuring new retail development provides large, flexible units to meet retailer requirements.

b) Convenience retailing and bulky goods will, where possible, be located in the Primary Shopping Area in accordance with the sequential approach (BCCS CEN7 and UDP S7). Where retailing cannot be accommodated within or immediately adjacent to the Primary Shopping Area the Council will expect the following sites to be considered in order:-

1. Jerome Retail Park (TC19);
2. Former Shannon's Mill Site (TC26) (see also Policy AAPI2);
3. Crown Wharf (TC07);
4. Wisemore (TC55) (see also Policy AAPI3);
5. Challenge Block (TC41) (see also Policy AAPI3(b)); and
6. Day Street (TC50) (see also Policy AAPI3(c)).

c) Any edge-of-Centre proposals will be expected to:

i) Link directly link to active frontages in the Primary Shopping Area, or if not possible, to improve linkages functionally and visually to the Primary Shopping Area; and

ii) Show that there is no adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre and planned investment for its future (as in accordance with BCCS CEN3 and CEN7).

d) Where proposals for retail are permitted away from the Primary Shopping Area planning conditions will be applied to minimise the impacts of the development on the centre by, for example, controlling the broad range of goods to be sold.

3.2.1 Policy Justification

The key to ensuring the future health and Strategic Centre status of Walsall town centre is securing new retail development within the PSA in addition to existing commitments. This is needed to help increase the town centre's market share of retail expenditure and therefore its ability to compete with other shopping destinations, including those in edge/out-of-centre locations (as defined by the NPPF).

The AAP sets out retail capacity forecasts for both comparison and convenience goods, which are defined as follows:

- Comparison goods – Clothing, footwear and other fashion goods; Furniture; Domestic appliances; Personal and luxury goods e.g. books, jewellery, cosmetics.
- Convenience goods – includes food and beverages, tobacco, newspapers and magazines, and non-durable household goods.

The new target figure for comparison retail is to deliver 6,000sqm gross additional floorspace by 2026. Whilst this figure is lower than the BCCS target of 85,000sqm gross, it maintains and supports the BCCS regeneration strategy by providing a realistic and deliverable figure. These targets are dependent on Walsall increasing its market share and investment being directed into the centre. Planning for Town Centre growth in line with the new forecasts will provide developers and investors with certainty and confidence. This will also help to counter the threat of proposals for edge/out-of-centre retail development. The existing commitments at Digbeth and St Matthew's Quarter in Walsall Town Centre absorb much of the forecast growth in expenditure (DTZ have forecasted this as 4,596sqm A1 comparison floorspace) and the new retail capacity forecasts account for this committed development.

The AAP also sets targets for convenience retail to allow for future growth of food retailers in the centre. This target is set at 1,500sqm gross, having taking into account the existing Co-op foodstore commitment. DTZ have advised that there is no capacity to support new retail investment beyond the current planning

permissions until after 2021, meaning that new development may result in turnover being diverted from existing stores.

Accommodating forecast retail capacity on priority sites within the PSA is crucial to improving the health and performance of the centre. It is therefore crucial that Walsall town centre provides the right type of units to meet modern retailer requirements in order to prevent retailers choosing out-of-centre or edge-of-centre locations instead. The policy therefore requires, where practical, all new development to provide large scale and flexible units. A minimum of 500sqm is suggested as a guide to developers.

The priority sites selected in part aii) of Policy AAPS2 have been identified as they are considered the most appropriate for reconfiguration and amalgamation to create larger units and accommodate retail investment.

Part aii) of Policy AAPS2 sites:

Site Reference	Site Name	Allocation	Justification
TC01	Old Square Phase 2	Retail opportunities for investment/ reconfiguration	Shopping Centre within the PSA suitable for retail investment. Has a current consent for retail.
TC02	Old Square Phase 3	Retail opportunities for investment/ reconfiguration	Shopping Centre within the PSA suitable for retail investment
TC03	Digbeth/ Lower Hall Lane	Retail opportunities for investment/ reconfiguration	Shopping Centre within the PSA suitable for retail investment. Has a current consent for retail.
TC05	Park Place	Retail opportunities for investment/ reconfiguration	Shopping Centre within the PSA suitable for retail investment
TC04	Saddler's Shopping Centre	Retail opportunities for investment/ reconfiguration	Shopping Centre within the PSA suitable for retail investment

There is a need for strong control over new development in edge/out-of-centre locations in order to ensure the future health of the centre. It is however, recognised that there may be some need for large sites which are unable to be accommodated within the PSA and in order to provide guidance for applicants the AAP gives an indication of the preferable sites for such proposals. The sites selected in part b) of Policy AAPS2 have been chosen in order of how well they relate to the PSA and for their ability to accommodate retail investment.

All applications for retail uses outside of the PSA will have to accord with the sequential assessment and it is not accepted that simply because a retailer sells bulky goods that an out-of-centre location is justifiable. BCCS Policy CEN3 states that any proposed development in an edge-of-centre location exceeding 500 sqm gross floorspace will only be considered favourably if the retail assessments contained in the most recent guidance are satisfied. Any proposals for edge-of-centre retail developments will need to take this into account the forecasted retail capacity when undertaking an impact assessment.

Part b) of Policy AAPS2 sites:

Site Reference	Site Name	Allocation	Justification
TC19	Jerome Retail Park	Retail opportunity for convenience/ bulky goods	Connected to the PSA visually and has units which would be suitable to accommodate convenience retailing and bulky goods. Should form part of comprehensive redevelopment providing a prominent frontage and surface level car parking.
TC26	Former Shannon's Mill	Retail opportunity for convenience/ bulky goods along with mixed use opportunity including housing and live/work	Front of the site is connected to the PSA physically and visually. A well designed scheme could provide an active frontage linking directly to the current PSA retail offer. The site provides opportunities for car parking along with other uses on upper floors and on the remaining site such as residential.
TC07	Crown Wharf	Retail opportunity for convenience/ bulky goods	Close proximity to the PSA and has units of sizes that would be suitable to accommodate convenience retailing and bulky goods if traffic impacts could be overcome.
TC55	Wisemore	Retail opportunity for convenience/ bulky goods	Development opportunity site close to the PSA opposite to Tesco
TC41	Challenge Block	Retail opportunity for convenience/ bulky goods along with multi storey car park and Community Hub.	Development opportunity that could accommodate the unit size required. Linkages to the PSA would need to be improved.

TC50	Day Street car park	Retail opportunity for convenience/ bulky goods	Development opportunity that could accommodate the unit size required. Linkages to the PSA and across Littleton Street would need to be improved.
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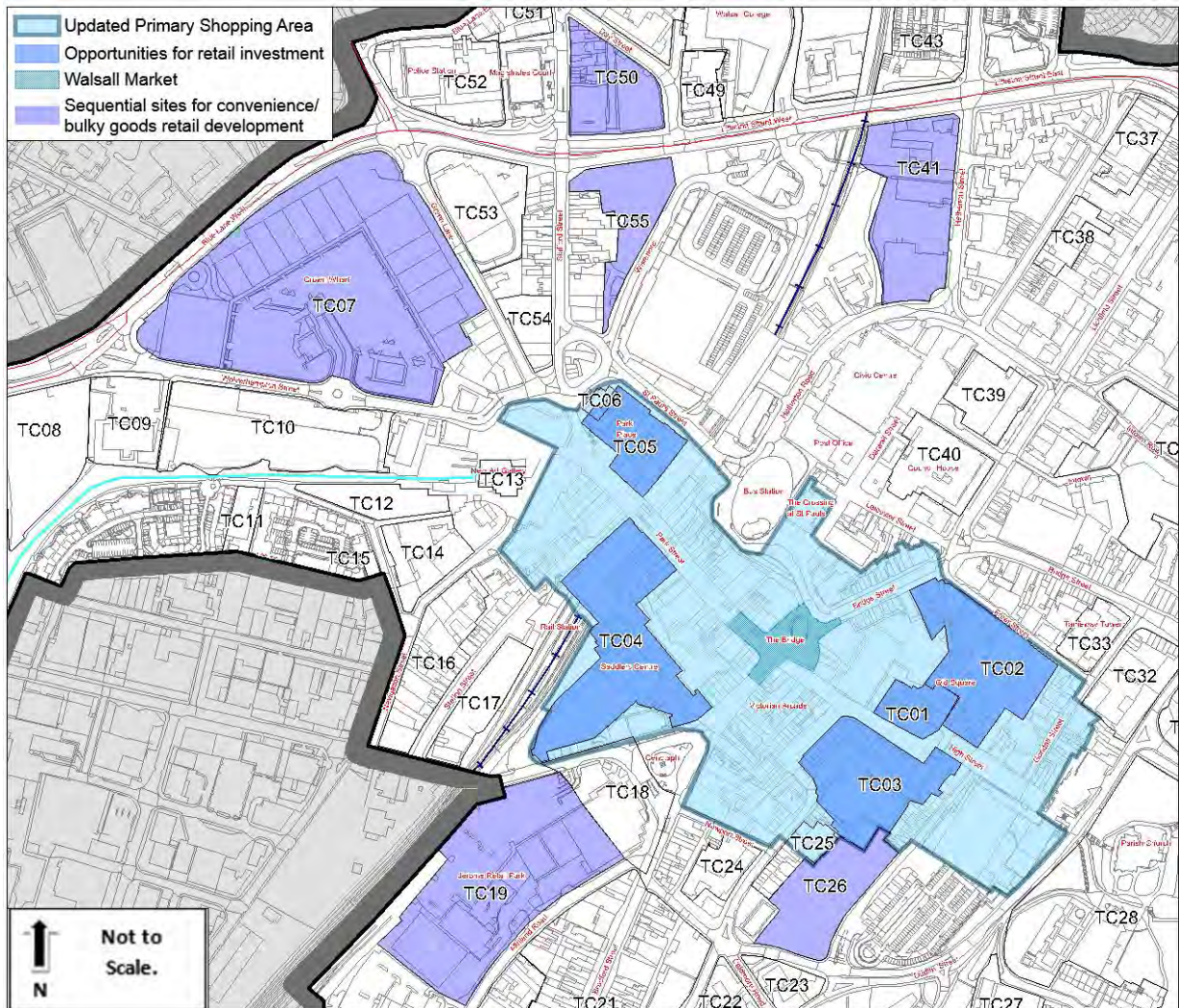


Figure 3.1 A Place for Shopping Allocations

Policy AAPS2 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

3.2.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.
- Current planning permissions for retail developments

3.2.3 Delivery

St Matthew's Quarter is identified in the AAP as a priority location where the Council looks to concentrate change and investment (Policy AAPI1: Regeneration Strategy). The Council has already demonstrated its commitment to securing new retail floorspace through the direct investment made to the Primark scheme. It is anticipated that this development will act as a catalyst for further investment in retail by the private sector. The Council will support this in two main ways. First, through the strong use of planning policy which acts to encourage investment in the PSA and deter development that will have a negative impact on the health of the centre or planned investment. Second, through Council interventions, including:

- Utilising the ownership at Old Square to continue to work with developer(s) to promote retail development at this end of the Town Centre, to help anchor the east end of Park Street and create a strong retail circuit; and
- Where considered necessary and if feasible direct involvement in the development of retail opportunities in the PSA in a similar way to the Primark development.

3.2.4 Monitoring

- Through BCCS indicator LOI CEN3 which records the amount of additional retail floorspace within and immediately adjacent the PSA. This will be monitored against the floorspace targets as set out in the policy to track progress.

3.3 The New Walsall Market

Walsall market is an important part of the centre historically and in terms of providing vitality to the shopping area. The AAP looks to ensure the future of Walsall Market and to protect the investment the Council has committed to the market.

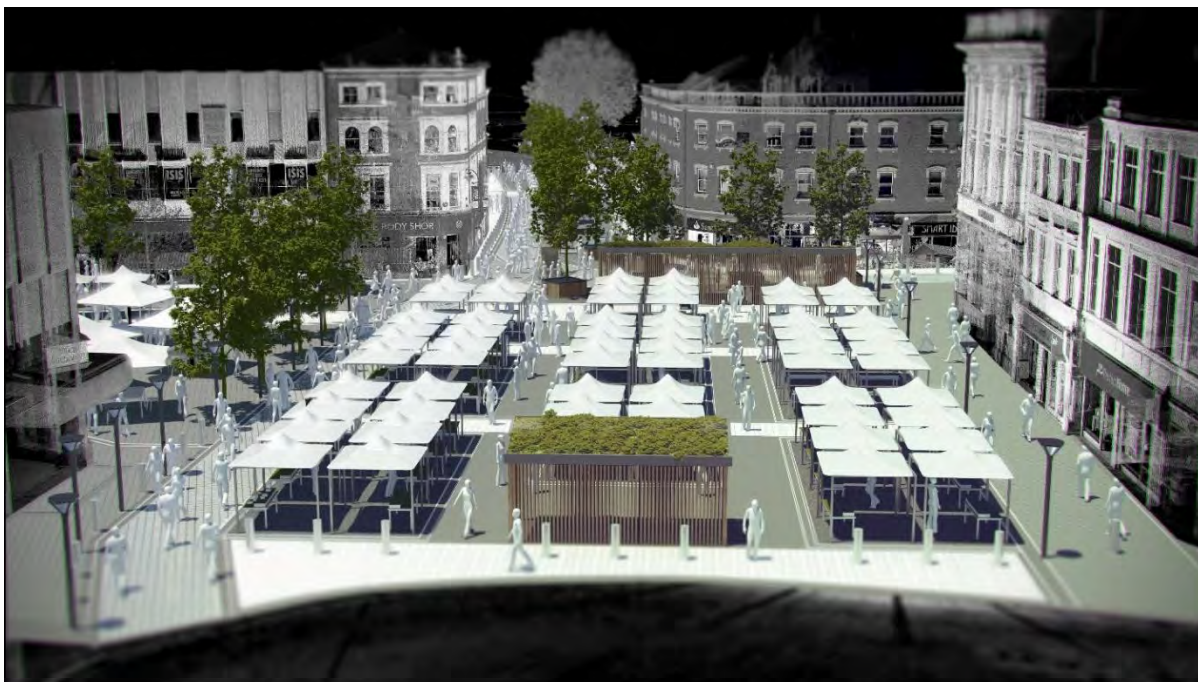


Figure 3.2 Visualisation of the new Walsall Market at The Bridge.

Policy AAPS3: The New Walsall Market

a) The new Walsall market will provide a high quality shopping environment that supports the vitality of the town centre. The market will be protected and where possible enhanced in its allocated location as shown on the AAP Policies Map. Any proposals that result in the loss of market trader space or have a negative impact on the market's viability or vitality will be discouraged.

b) The area around The Bridge will be flexible so that it can also be used as a site for community events and performances. Investment in the attractiveness of the market and in specialist markets will be encouraged.

3.3.1 Policy Justification

The Council recognises the importance of the market as an attraction for visitors and the role it plays in meeting the needs of the local community. It is also recognised that the market is a historic feature of the centre and plays an important role in its character. The Council has committed to investing in the new market at The Bridge, including public realm improvements (as per planning application 14/1871/FL) and

this planned investment is reflected in the allocation on the AAP Policies Map. The policy also recognises this investment and looks to ensure the market's attractiveness is maintained and increased in the future. Proposals for edge-of-centre and out-of-centre retail developments will be expected to consider the impact on the market as part of impact assessments to ensure there is no detrimental impact on the market's viability.

An important factor in the attractiveness of the market is the setting in which it is held and the Council will encourage developments in the surrounding area to enhance the setting of the market. The market scheme has been designed so that the stalls can be demounted, allowing the Bridge area to be used as a public space. Given its central location the site is considered the most suitable place for town centre activities and this has been reflected in Policy AAPLE2 where it is promoted as a space for public performances and events.

Policy AAPS3 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the boundary identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

3.3.2 Evidence

- Information provided in support of planning application for the new market – planning reference 14/1871/FL

3.3.3 Delivery

The new market is a Council scheme and it will be delivered through the implementation of the planning application with Council capital spending.

3.3.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator of Take up of market stalls is proposed.

4. A Place for Business



We need to provide for more jobs and bring new businesses into the Borough in order to ensure Walsall's economy is more resilient to changes in the wider economic environment. A diverse economic base is also key to ensuring income levels are maintained and increased for local residents. The policies and proposals in this chapter look to create an environment in the town centre where businesses can thrive, and reflect AAP objectives 1, 2, 4 and 6.

4.1 Delivering New Office Development

Delivering new office space and encouraging businesses into Walsall town centre is crucial for the health of the Borough. New office developments will create jobs, diversify Walsall's economy and result in more people spending money in the town centre.



Figure 4.1 Jhoots Pharmacy headquarters, Littleton Street

Policy AAPB1: Office Developments

The Council aims to deliver of 73,000sqm gross of offices by the end of 2026. This will be achieved by:

- a) Focussing new office investment in the Gigaport area as identified by Policy AAP13: Walsall Gigaport;**
- b) Identifying sites where town centre uses, including office development, is appropriate as shown by mixed use development opportunities on the AAP Policies Map;**
- c) Encouraging the refurbishment of existing office stock especially in the areas identified on the AAP Policies Map:-**
 - TC06 Townend House**
 - TC24 Lower Hall Lane/ Newport Street**
 - TC32 Regina Court**
 - TC33 Tameway Tower**
- d) Encouraging the use of upper floors for offices; and**
- e) Requiring applications for new office developments above 500sqm outside of the Gigaport area to be supported by an impact assessment demonstrating there will be no negative impact on the delivery of the Gigaport.**

4.1.1 Policy Justification

The development of a strong office market is crucial to improving the centre. It will provide more employment, increase footfall and enhance consumer spending power. It can also act as a catalyst for other developments in the leisure and retail sectors.

Walsall needs to prioritise the development of office and other commercial space for private sector occupiers in the town centre, in order to attract new investment and jobs and retain skilled employees. Alongside this, it needs to improve the broader town centre offer to create an attractive environment for employment in finance, professional and business services.

The BCCS set an ambitious target of 220,000sqm of additional office space in Walsall between 2006 and 2026 which equates to circa 11,148 sqm of additional office space per annum. This is an enormous amount of office space, particularly considering that the existing office stock in Walsall and the recent levels of demand. DTZ have therefore revised the target to provide a figure that is still aspirational but

which is more achievable. An office development provision of 3,700 per annum equates to approximately one-third of the BCCS Local Plan figure on an annual basis (73,000sqm by 2026). This target is still very ambitious and will require significant and sustained public sector support. Whilst the main priority for the delivery of offices in the centre is B1a, office uses for research and development of products or processes (B1b) and for light industrial (B1c) uses will also be acceptable in the town centre as part of mixed use or office developments.

The Gigaport is the main location for new office development and the AAP has a specific policy to ensure this is a high quality office development – see Policy AAP13. Other sites may be suitable for offices and these have been represented by the mixed use development opportunities as shown on the AAP Policies Map. Any proposals for new office developments above 500sqm will need to be supported by a statement evidencing there is no impact on the delivery of Gigaport. This policy does not apply to refurbishments of current office stock or the conversion of current buildings. The Council will be flexible when applying this policy and will take into account the requirements of individual businesses looking to locate or relocate in Walsall Town Centre, especially if it helps to sustain local business and create local jobs.

There are office vacancies in the town centre at present and pressure to convert or redevelop offices to residential use. However it is important to take a long-term perspective when considering the level and location of office provision in the town centre. As such, where possible, the Council will look to protect vacant office blocks from development for other uses and instead promote them for refurbishment. The AAP has identified sites where this would be particularly encouraged as set out in the table below:

Part c) of Policy AAPB1 sites:

Site Reference	Site Name	Allocation	Justification
TC06	Townend House	Opportunities for investment in office stock	Office tower that would benefit from refurbishment
TC24	Lower Hall Lane/ Newport Street	Opportunities for investment in office stock (also could form part of a mixed use development)	Office building that would benefit from refurbishment
TC32	Regina Court	Opportunities for investment in office stock (also could form part of a mixed use development)	Office building that would benefit from refurbishment
TC33	Tameway Tower	Opportunities for investment in office stock	Office building that would benefit from refurbishment. A proposal for conversion to flats is yet to be implemented.

Policy AAPB1 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

4.1.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.

4.1.3 Delivery

Gigaport is identified in the AAP as the priority location for office development and it is considered that through concentrating office development into one location a high quality office location can be created (Policy AAP11: Regeneration Strategy and AAP13: Walsall Gigaport). The Council has already demonstrated its commitment to securing new office development in the Gigaport through the support it provided in delivering the Jhoots Pharmacy development – this included site acquisition and assembly, demolition, site investigation and ground remediation works, provision of infrastructure/ access works, and supporting the developer to secure in excess of £1m of grant funding. . This recent development, along with Walsall College Businesses and Sports Hub and the whg headquarters, are helping to create a corridor of high quality developments which it is anticipated will act as a catalyst for further investment in the office sector within Walsall.

The Council will support the further development of office in Walsall by:

- Creating the right environment through public realm, road improvements and improved linkages (see Policy AAPLV7: Enhancing the Public Realm, all the policies within Chapter 7: Transport, Movement and Accessibility and also Policy AAP13: Walsall Gigaport);
- Promoting the town centre for inward investment for public and private sector office relocations;
- Delivering the other improvements to the town centre as proposed in the Plan, including increased leisure provision and an improved retail offer to make the centre an attractive place to invest in but also to work in;
- Using the WMBC's covenant in order to improve scheme viability (i.e. acting as the rental guarantor to encourage development);
- Strategic acquisitions / assembly of development opportunity sites (using the Council's powers of compulsory purchase where necessary) to enable delivery;

- Securing funding (under the SEP for the Black Country) to intervene proactively to de-risk sites to support delivery, including site clearance and remediation;
- Taking a direct development role (repeating the role the Council played in successfully delivering the Primark/Co-op scheme)
- Developing strategies to ensure that occupiers and developers have the right infrastructure and where necessary supporting the provision of town centre infrastructure.

4.1.4 Monitoring

- Through BCCS indicator LOI CEN3 which records the amount of additional office floorspace within the centre. This will be monitored against the floorspace targets as set out in the policy to track progress.

4.2 Walsall Social Enterprise Zone

Social enterprises play a key role in Walsall through engaging in economic, environmental and social regeneration. They provide a mix of services and facilities, which respond to the needs of the communities.



Figure 4.2 The Goldmine Centre, Lower Hall Lane

Policy AAPB2: Social Enterprise Zone

The Council will support and promote the expansion of social enterprises in the town centre by:

a) Designating the area around the Goldmine Centre as shown on the AAP Policies Map as a Social Enterprise Zone. Within this area the following uses will be acceptable as part of social enterprise development:-

- Community and cultural uses;**
- Small scale office developments; and**
- Live work units.**

b) Supporting in principle proposals for social enterprises in other areas and buildings around the centre which are suitable for such uses and where they accord with other relevant policies in Walsall Local Plan.

4.2.1 Policy Justification

The zone is based around the existing Vine Trust, which provides a range of social enterprise initiatives. The designation of a social enterprise zone is in recognition of the work already being undertaken in the area and to enable the future growth of such uses. The Goldmine Centre is the hub for Walsall Studio School and focuses on business social enterprise and a broad range of Creative and Digital disciplines. There are proposals to expand the work of social enterprises in this area to include live-work spaces and the designation has been drawn to reflect this ambition. This aligns with AAP proposals for the former Shannon's Mill site as set out in Policy AAP12: St Matthew's Quarter. This policy is designed to support social enterprises but, in recognition that there are other areas within the centre where such uses are suitable, the Council will be flexible when considering proposals for alternative uses in this area where they are acceptable.

Policy AAPB2 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

4.2.2 Evidence

- Black Country LEP Social Enterprise Prospectus

4.2.3 Delivery

The social enterprise zone has been identified to build on the work of the Vine Trust which already has a proven track record delivering enterprise initiatives in Walsall. The Vine Trust has to date secured £4.4 million of investment from the public and private sector. The purpose of this policy is to allow for the space for social enterprises to grow and to continue delivering in Walsall.

4.2.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator is proposed to record the number of social enterprises active in Walsall town centre.

4.3 Protecting Walsall's Industrial Uses

Walsall is an industrial town and there are a number of industrial uses within the town centre boundary. The AAP will protect active industry whilst still allowing for the growth of centre uses within the town centre boundary.

Policy AAPB3: Town Centre Employment Land

The Council will protect active industry within the town centre boundary through:

a) Allocating Albert Jagger (TC53) site as High Quality industry for safeguarding. The provisions of BCCS policy EMP2 and saved UDP policy JP8 will apply. Proposals for non high quality industrial uses will be discouraged if they compromise the overall quality. If the current use relocates proposals for town centre uses will be considered acceptable.

b) Allocating and safeguarding local quality industry as “consider for release” to other uses under the provisions of BCCS policy DEL2, and subject to the need to ensure that the stock does not fall below the minimum requirement set out in BCCS Policy EMP3. Town centre uses will be acceptable in principle provided that any remaining industry can be relocated satisfactorily, there are no physical constraints that would make the site unsuitable, and other relevant policy requirements are satisfied.

Site Reference	Site Name
TC11	Kirkpatricks, Charles Street
TC15	FE Towe Ltd, Charles Street
TC16	Station Street
TC20 / 21	Midland Road / Bradford Street area
TC20	Midland Road
TC22	Vicarage Place/ Caldmore Road

TC23	Caldmore Road/ Upper Hall Lane
TC27	New Street
TC30	Ablewell Street east (Bank Street)
TC30	Ablewell Street east (Paddock Lane)
TC30	Ablewell Street east (Acorn Centre)
TC30	Ablewell Street east (Balls Street)
TC34	Intown area
TC34	Intown area (Intown Row/ Lower Rushall Street)
TC35	Upper Rushall Street/ Holtshill Lane
TC38	Lower Forster Street
TC46	Portland Street area (Eccles Foundry)
TC46	Portland Street area (north of Portland Street)
TC46	Portland Street area (John Street)
TC46	Portland Street area (Corner of Portland Street)
TC46 / 48	Portland Street (Garden Street) / 12 Portland Street

4.3.1 Policy Justification

Although much of the employment land in the town centre is of poor quality, Albert Jagger in Green Lane is of high quality as it meets several of the criteria set out in BCCS paragraph 4.7 and 4.8. This site is therefore expected to remain in the centre and will be protected as a key employment use.

The remaining industrial land in the town centre is allocated as “consider for release” from employment use and appropriate town centre uses are suitable if the current uses relocate. Generally the movement of industry out of the town centre is supported as this will allow for centre uses such as offices. There may, however, be some cases where sites for research and development of products or processes (B1b) and for light industrial uses (B1c) will be acceptable in the town centre as part of mixed use or office developments.

Any change of this land from employment would be subject to BCCS policies EMP 1-5 and DEL2 (bullet points 1 and 2 and the final paragraph) which act to protect employment.

Policy AAPB3 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

4.3.2 Evidence

- Walsall Employment Land Review (August 2015) Walsall Council
- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.

4.3.3 Delivery

The Council aims to protect active industrial uses within the centre, as set out in the policy, but where appropriate will provide support in finding alternative suitable premises or sites to aid in the relocation of industry out of the centre. This will be a particular priority for the Council where the location of industry is preventing the comprehensive approach to redevelopment of sites for centre uses. The identification of appropriate sites is supported by the Site Allocation Document which provides a portfolio of sites for industrial development. The delivery of former industrial sites within the centre for appropriate town centre uses will be supported by the Council in a number of ways as set out throughout the plan.

4.3.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator is proposed that monitors the changes in the employment land supply within the centre to ensure it is in accordance with the policy.



Figure 4.3 Albert Jagger

5. A Place for Leisure



Walsall needs to offer a combined shopping and leisure experience, including restaurants, cafés and bars which attract shoppers and encourage longer stays. The provision of cultural, visitor, entertainment and leisure facilities are a vital component in ensuring the town functions well, particularly in the evening. Attracting visitors to the town is an effective way of boosting Walsall's economy. The policies and proposals in this chapter look to develop Walsall's leisure offer and protect the current facilities, reflecting AAP objectives 1, 2, 5, 7, 8 and 10.

5.1 Making Walsall a Leisure Destination

Delivering new leisure facilities in Walsall town centre is crucial for its attractiveness. The centre currently lacks a major leisure facility and there is demand for more family friendly restaurants.



Figure 5.1 Visualisation of The Light cinema, Wolverhampton Street

Policy AAPLE1: New Leisure Developments

Support will be given to proposals which strengthen, expand and diversify the leisure, visitor, cultural and evening economy functions of the town centre. This will be achieved by:

- a) Focussing new leisure developments at Walsall Waterfront as in accordance with Policy AAPI4: Walsall Waterfront;**
- b) Supporting leisure investment in other areas within the AAP boundary where it can be shown that the proposals will not jeopardise the delivery of Walsall Waterfront; and**
- c) Encouraging A3 uses that are compatible with existing A1 uses throughout the town centre including within the Primary Shopping Area as in accordance with Policy AAPS1: Primary Shopping Area.**

Residential and other developments that prejudice the centre's commercial, leisure and evening economy will not be supported.

5.1.1 Policy Justification

Leisure uses are performing an increasingly important role in town centres as a result of changes in consumer habits, with people increasingly seeking a varied experience from their trips into town centres. For example, visitors to leisure attractions often contribute significantly through 'spin -off' trade to retail in the centre. A vibrant evening economy with a mix of bars and restaurants will contribute to enhancing the town's vitality and viability and is also important in supporting a residential offer in the centre, making it an attractive place to live, as well as making it feel safer, particularly at night. The night-time offer in Walsall town centre is currently dominated by drinking venues, and more is needed to encourage workers to remain in the town centre after work, or to encourage families to stay after visiting the town centre for other purposes such as shopping. The AAP looks to address this issue by building on the cinema development which is currently under construction, to promote Walsall Waterfront as a leisure destination providing family orientated restaurants and a leisure offer that differs from the current provision.

There may be however some leisure developments that cannot be accommodated at Walsall Waterfront. Specific locations for further large scale leisure developments have not been allocated through the AAP as there is no evidence of further demand beyond securing a cinema in the centre. It is hoped that in the future the centre will secure further leisure investment and the AAP takes a flexible approach to uses on a number of sites to allow for this eventuality. In such locations the Council will

support these proposals as long as there is no concern that this will result in leisure investment being diverted away from Walsall Waterfront. For the purpose of this policy leisure uses include D2 Assembly and leisure along with some D1 uses which attract a large amount of visitors such as a museum. There are other uses which fall into no specific planning class order, such as night clubs which will also be considered as leisure. A3 Restaurants and A4 Drinking establishments are also considered as ancillary leisure uses in this context. The AAP Policies Map identifies a number of secondary development opportunities as set out in Chapter 8: A Place for Investment and many of these will be suitable for leisure developments.

Policy AAPLE1 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

5.1.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.
- Waterfront Cinema planning application – planning reference 13/0440/FL

5.1.3 Delivery

A key part of improving Walsall's leisure offer is well underway with the construction of a new cinema at Walsall Waterfront. This scheme includes family orientated restaurants and will create a high quality location at the canalside, building on the surrounding leisure uses of the Art Gallery and hotel. It is anticipated that following the opening of this new facility further leisure development will be attracted to the area, securing the second phase of the Waterfront cinema scheme. The Council will support the delivery of this scheme by resisting any developments which would compromise the scheme's delivery by spreading the leisure offer too thinly throughout the centre. This is because it is considered that creating a leisure hub through focusing leisure provision in one area there is the greatest chance of creating a leisure destination and therefore sustaining such uses. Once the cinema scheme is delivered in full the Council will look to support further leisure-led schemes where necessary in the following ways:

- Using the WMBC's covenant in order to improve scheme viability (i.e. acting as the rental guarantor to encourage development);
- Securing funding (under the SEP for the Black Country) to intervene proactively to de-risk sites to support delivery including site clearance and remediation;

- Strategic acquisitions / assembly of development opportunity sites (using the Council's powers of compulsory purchase where necessary) to enable delivery;
- Developing strategies to ensure that developers have the right infrastructure and where necessary supporting the provision of town centre infrastructure.

5.1.4 Monitoring

- Through BCCS LOI CEN3 which records the amount of additional leisure floorspace within the centre.

5.2 Enhancing Walsall's Sports and Cultural Facilities

The town centre offers an accessible location to provide a wide variety of facilities for the community and to draw visitors from a wider area. It is important that these facilities are, where possible, enhanced and protected.

Policy AAPLE2: Sport and Cultural Facilities

The centre is the most accessible location for key sport and cultural facilities serving the Borough as a whole. The centre's role as a key location for facilities will be supported by the following proposals:

- a) Gala Baths (TC39) will be protected and invested in as the key location for sport provision in the centre;
- b) Walsall Library (TC39) will be protected and where possible invested in as a key cultural facility in the centre;
- c) Walsall Leather Museum (TC49) will be expanded at its current location to include Walsall Museum and Walsall Local History Centre;
- d) The Town Hall (TC40) will be promoted as a venue for events and concerts;
- e) Walsall Art Gallery (TC13) will be protected as a key visitor attraction and cultural destination. The Council will look to enhance the environment in which the building sits and protect views to the building (Policies AAPLV6 and AAPLV7); and
- f) The public space at The Bridge will be promoted as an area for community events and performances as protected by Policy AAPS3: Walsall Market.

5.2.1 Policy Justification

Walsall's current sport and cultural facility offer consists chiefly of the New Art Gallery, Gala Baths, Walsall Museum, the Leather Museum, and the Local History Centre. This needs to be protected and where possible enhanced.

As part of the commitment to get *more people, more active, more often*, the Council has invested £24m into the building of Bloxwich and Oak Park Active Living Centres. In addition, a further £1m has been committed to improving Walsall Gala Baths. The explicit intent of the Gala Baths scheme is to extend the life of the facility to secure town centre active leisure provision for at least the next 10 years. The project focuses on reconfiguring and renovating the facility to make it capable of meeting modern standards and customer expectations.

Key elements of work include: permanently sectioning the old 33.3m pool into a standard-sized 25m pool and learner pool, redevelopment of the changing rooms into a modern changing village and the refurbishment of the reception area. Work commenced in May 2015 and is being phased to keep closedowns to a minimum; the project is scheduled to be complete by the end of 2015.

The Council is also looking to secure funding for a consolidated Heritage Centre bringing together Walsall Museum, the Leather Museum and the Local History Centre. Significant work has been done to prepare a Stage One application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop a single Heritage Centre for the Borough on the site of the Leather Museum. This will be the focus for heritage services and provide an integrated, accessible centre for all Walsall's history resources and their display. The collections of Walsall Museum (currently inaccessible to the public), the Leather Museum and the Local History Centre and Archives will all be accessible at this location. The Heritage Lottery bid was submitted on 6th August, and we will hear if we have been successful in November. This shows the Council is committed to such facilities remaining in the centre and this policy looks to encourage this approach.

Policy AAPLE2 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

5.2.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.

5.2.3 Delivery

All of the buildings included in the above policy are Council-owned and as such any improvements/investments are likely to be led by the Council. As such the delivery of schemes will be subject to budget restrictions and the delivery of large scale projects is likely to be limited. The Council is committed to investing in improving the Gala Baths in recognition that having a leisure centre within the town centre is crucial to serving the community. The Council is also committed to providing a new Walsall Market which will provide a location for community activities in the centre of town.

There may also be circumstances where external funding is available to secure improvements to such cultural and leisure facilities and the Council will look to utilise such funding streams where possible. An example of this is with the Leather Museum scheme where the Council is submitting a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

5.2.4 Monitoring

- The loss of facilities in the centre is monitored through BCCS indicator LOI EMP6 Loss of sub-regionally significant visitor or cultural facilities. Any new floorspace developed for town centre uses will be captured as part of the overall breakdown of uses within the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The AMR could also be used to capture the level of investment into facilities by the Council or through funding.

5.3 Hotel Provision

Hotel provision is a key part of the leisure offer within a town centre. Walsall town centre is currently only served by one national hotel chain and it is considered that the centre would benefit from a wider offer in hotel provision.

Policy AAPLE3: Hotel Provision

The Council will support proposals for a hotel development within the town centre boundary. Areas that are considered most suitable for hotel provision are:-

- Sites near the Walsall Waterfront leisure development (Policy AAPI4: Walsall Waterfront)
- Sites near Walsall Railway Station
- Sites near or within the Gigaport area (AAPI3: Walsall Gigaport)
- Sites near Walsall ring road (Littleton Street)

5.3.1 Policy Justification

Although there is significant hotel provision outside of the town centre, in particular towards M6 Junctions 10 and 7, there is a clear lack of hotel space within the town centre, and the limited current provision is of varying quality. Hotel provision helps the regeneration of Walsall by supporting the visitor economy and existing and future leisure assets. There is a 100-bed Premier Inn hotel with bar/restaurant facilities which opened in December 2012. However, whilst welcome, this development represents the only national hotel chain found in the town centre, and it is considered that another major chain, preferably of 4 star quality with leisure and conferencing facilities, is required for the town centre to move forward as a serious business and tourism centre. There is however, a lack of clear demand at present but it is anticipated that future developments of office and leisure uses in the centre will trigger demand. The areas considered most suitable have been chosen because:

- Sites near the Walsall Waterfront leisure development will build on the leisure facilities being developed and the Canal provides the opportunity for a high quality scheme.
- Sites near Walsall Railway Station would allow for easy access via train and help create a gateway to the centre. This area is also in close proximity to the Walsall Waterfront, building on the leisure offer in this location.
- Sites near or within the Gigaport area would serve the office developments and the College. Indeed the Gigaport outline permission includes allowance for a hotel.
- Sites near the ring road (Littleton Street) outside of the Gigaport area could also be appropriate as they provide good access not only to the road but also to other uses.

Policy AALE3 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the areas identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

5.3.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.

5.3.3 Delivery

The delivery of further hotel developments in the centre is likely to be triggered by the delivery of other schemes such as the cinema as these will create the further

demand needed. The Council will support the development of hotels in the centre through:

- Using the WMBC's covenant in order to improve scheme viability (i.e. acting as the rental guarantor to encourage development);
- Securing funding (under the SEP for the Black Country) to intervene proactively to de-risk sites to support delivery including site assembly, site clearance and remediation;
- Developing strategies to ensure that developers have the right infrastructure and where necessary supporting the provision of town centre infrastructure.

5.3.4 Monitoring

- Number of hotel developments (RSS monitoring captures larger developments already)

5.4 Walsall Canal

The Canal is one of Walsall's most defining historical and environmental assets, and so its preservation and enhancement is considered to be crucial. This policy aims to protect the Canal but also promote it as a place for leisure and a destination in Walsall for visitors and residents.



Figure 5.2 Walsall Canal

Policy AAPLE4: Walsall Canal

The Canal will provide a focus for future development through its potential to attract investment as a high quality desirable environment. This will be achieved by:

- a) Encouraging the provision of secure moorings, other canalside facilities and environmental improvements that will enhance the attractiveness and recreational potential of the canal network;
- b) Ensuring all development alongside and near the Canal positively relates to the opportunity presented by the waterway, to achieve high standards of design, and to be sensitively integrated with the canal. Where applicable, retain and incorporate surviving canalside buildings, structures and features of heritage value;
- c) Expecting development to protect or enhance the water quality, visual amenity, ecological, and built environmental value of the Canal as in accordance with BCCS Policy ENV4;
- d) Requiring development opportunities adjacent to the canal to maintain or improve access to and along the canal network, particularly for walking and cycling, and where possible improve or connect to the Borough's wider Greenway Network; and
- e) Where possible, incorporating Green Infrastructure as part of development proposals that will complement the Canal network environment by providing a natural setting and improving the ecological value of the network.

5.4.1 Policy Justification

The canal forms an important network for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate into the town centre; it has high ecological value and provides linkages to areas of the Borough's industrial heritage. As such, it forms a crucial part of the environmental infrastructure network in Walsall. The area also provides an opportunity for recreation and leisure as the setting to the New Art Gallery and other Waterfront developments. At the same time, it provides links between the town centre and surrounding areas, especially via the historic Walsall Locks Conservation Area and through the use of the allocated Greenway (see also Policy AAPT1: Pedestrian Movement, Access and Linkages).

These important environmental assets provide multi-functional benefits including, for example, providing leisure and recreational facilities, forming part of wildlife corridors, providing space for pedestrian and cycle routes, and offering opportunities for climate change mitigation. The policy therefore looks to maximise the canal's potential as a high quality location for development and leisure, whilst at the same time ensuring that its setting and environment is protected and enhanced as a result of any future development.

Policy AALE4 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

5.4.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ
- Walsall Town Centre Characterisation Study (August 2015) Walsall Council
- Black Country Environmental Infrastructure Guidance (2011)

5.4.3 Delivery

Much of the canal side land in Walsall town centre has already been subject to redevelopment, such as the waterfront housing schemes and the hotel development. There is also a scheme underway for a canalside leisure development anchored by a new cinema. The environment around the canal has therefore been significantly improved over the past few years and any further development will be expected to build on this success. The Council will support this through:

- Detailed pre-application with developers to ensure the impact on the canal is considered from the outset;
- Partnership working with the Canal and River Trust (CRT) on specific canal schemes and planning applications;
- Developer contributions as in accordance with the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) and/or other relevant legislation or policy;
- Council-led schemes to improve and maintain linkages, such as the Wayfinding project, in which consultants looked at the way the town was used by pedestrians, produced a Wayfinding Strategy of improvements, and implemented 2 artworks designed to improve the ways pedestrians navigate the town centre.

A key issue however, is not just delivering new schemes that have a positive impact on the canal environment but also maintaining the environment. The Council will therefore look to ensure continued improvements and maintenance to the canal in partnership with the Canal and River Trust (CRT).

5.4.4 Monitoring

- BCCS indicator LOI ENV4b which records the proportion of planning permissions granted in accordance with Canal and River Trust planning related advice.

6. A Place for Living



Encouraging people to use the town centre is vital to its success and so it is necessary to provide high-quality facilities that meet the needs of the catchment population in an attractive environment. A high quality environment also improves the experience for all users and can dramatically enhance the perception of Walsall for both regular users and people visiting the town centre for the first time. The policies and proposals in this chapter look to provide homes, education and health facilities in centre. It also looks at the character and quality of buildings and public space in the town, and community and environmental infrastructure, meeting AAP Objectives 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

6.1 Providing New Homes in the Town Centre

Delivering new homes in Walsall town centre supports the vitality and viability of the centre by ensuring the centre is a lively and welcoming place.

Policy AAPLV1: Residential Developments

a) The town centre will be an inviting, safe and pleasant place to live. New homes in the town centre will be supported by:

i) Allocating the following sites for residential as shown on the AAP Policies Map:-

- TC11 Kirkpatricks, Charles Street
- TC15 FE Towe Ltd, Charles Street;

ii) Encouraging residential uses on other sites as part of mixed used developments, especially on upper floors of schemes; and

iii) Encouraging the conversion of existing buildings, especially upper floors throughout the centre where it does not jeopardise the commercial function of the centre and where proposals accord with Policy AAPB1 which looks to protect office uses in the centre,

b) Residential developments in the town centre will be high quality and desirable, this will be achieved by ensuring all residential developments provide:

i) High quality living environments where people choose to live;

ii) Safe and secure environments;

iii) Access to amenity space. The Council will be flexible in applying the numerical guidance set out in Appendix D of the Designing Walsall SPD to proposals in the town centre, provided developers have demonstrated consideration for the amenity of existing and future residents in the design process; and

iv) Sufficient protection against air (AAPI7b) and noise pollution (AAPI7c) through design and orientation of dwellings along with other appropriate measures.

c) In most locations developments will be expected to be of high density (60 + dwellings per hectare) but there may be some locations where lower densities such as town houses will be appropriate, taking into account the existing townscape and to allow for a wider variety of housing needs to be met in the centre.

d) In all areas of the centre, residential uses will support and not prejudice the centre's retail, commercial and leisure functions – in particular the evening economy.

e) Schemes (other than the two sites allocated) that propose solely residential uses will be required to demonstrate that the proposal supports and does not prejudice the centre's retail, commercial and leisure function.

6.1.1 Policy Justification

The BCCS does not set a target for the amount of new housing to be delivered in the town centre, but it recognised the existing commitments for 450 new homes. These homes have now been completed and include the Waterfront South development that has created a new neighbourhood of high quality residential units. However, creating sustainable residential communities through encouraging an increased resident population in the centre, particularly through the use of upper floors, is important to bringing life into the centre. Residential uses in the town centre also increase the vitality and help improve surveillance and activity. It is therefore considered that the allocation and promotion of further residential development in the

centre is appropriate and will support the strategy for regeneration. The AAP looks to maximise the potential for commercial development in the centre and as a result sites have only be allocated for housing alone when no other uses are considered to be appropriate for allocation. These allocated sites are set out below:

Part a) of Policy AAPLV1 sites:

Site Reference	Site Name	Allocation	Justification
TC11	Kirkpatricks, Charles Street	Consider for release employment land. Allocated for housing.	This is the only remaining industrial use in an area that has been redeveloped for houses, flats and supported living accommodation.
TC15	FE Towe Ltd. Charles Street	Consider for release employment land. Allocated for housing.	This is the only remaining industrial use in an area that has been redeveloped for houses, flats and supported living accommodation.

Outside of these specific sites residential uses are supported in principle where they do not jeopardise the function of the town centre as a place of work, leisure and shopping. Developers will be expected to take a comprehensive approach to development and residential uses should be considered as part of mixed schemes to make the best use of land and to bring life into the centre. In order to maximise the potential of town centre sites, schemes proposing solely residential uses will need to demonstrate that a mixed use scheme, incorporating other town centre uses, has been considered and that a residential scheme is the best option for delivering the site.

The BCCS encourages higher density housing in town centre locations with good transport connections as this is the most sustainable approach. There are some sites that may provide an opportunity for types of residential development other than flats, such as town houses or individual homes, especially at sites towards the edge of the centre. This would allow for a wider variety of housing needs to be met in the centre and help create a diverse centre community. Housing for people with special needs, nursing homes and care homes are also all considered suitable residential uses for the town centre.

The higher levels of activity associated with town centres can have an impact on the living conditions of residents in or near the centre. Therefore a careful balance needs to be made between residential environments and other centre uses, especially night-time activities, to ensure that residents have a high quality amenity, safety, and reasonable access to services and facilities. Some town centre housing can be of poor quality, especially where it involves the conversion of existing

buildings or provides little or no amenity space for residents to enjoy. The policy therefore sets out some requirements to ensure a high quality living environment in the centre. Residential uses are considered as a sensitive use in terms of air quality and developers will need to accord with AAPI7b and BCCS ENV8 Air Quality.

Policy AAPLV1 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

6.1.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Housing Land Supply Update (2014) Walsall Council

6.1.3 Delivery

The majority of new housing will be delivered by the private sector. However, there may be some sites which will be developed by Housing Associations (HAs). The Council has a successful partnership with Walsall Housing Group (whg), other locally based HAs and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) which has already succeeded in delivering several hundred new affordable homes in recent years. A good example in the town centre can be seen at the Waterfront canalside residential development which was delivered using HCA funding. Where necessary the Council will look to support housing delivery in the town centre through:

- Using the WMBC's covenant in order to improve scheme viability (i.e. acting as the rental guarantor to encourage development);
- Securing funding (under the SEP for the Black Country) to intervene proactively to de-risk sites to support delivery including site assembly, site clearance and remediation;
- Developing strategies to ensure that occupiers and developers have the right infrastructure and where necessary supporting the provision of town centre infrastructure.

6.1.4 Monitoring

- Through BCCS LOI HOU1 which monitors the net housing completions in the centre.

6.2 Promoting Educational Facilities



Figure 6.1 Walsall College, Littleton Street West

The centre should be the main focus of key educational facilities that serve the Borough and surrounding area. The Council recognises the importance of the College as a centre for Higher Education and adult education and will facilitate its expansion, where appropriate.

Policy AAPLV2: Education

a) The Council will support the further development of Walsall College at the following sites and as shown on the AAP Policies Map:-

- TC47 North of Portland Street
- TC48 21 Portland Street

b) The above sites and any further expansion of the College will be expected to:

i) Support the creation of a high quality education campus;

ii) Be of a high quality design and have a comprehensive approach to land and building use;

- iii) Provide strong and safe links to the centre – especially across the ring road and to the Primary Shopping Area;**
 - iv) Relate positively with the surrounding Gigaport development;**
 - v) Promote sustainable transport methods and links to public transport; and**
 - vi) Where appropriate provide community access to facilities.**
- b) Other higher or further educational facilities and ancillary accommodation will be supported within the centre. Proposals will be expected to:**
- i) Support the creation of a high quality education campus;**
 - ii) Be of a high quality design and have a comprehensive approach to land and building use;**
 - iii) Provide strong and safe links to the centre – especially across the ring road and to the Primary Shopping Area;**
 - iv) Promote sustainable transport methods and links to public transport;**
 - v) Where appropriate provide community access to facilities; and**
 - vi) Be consistent with Policy AAPLV1 if providing living accommodation.**

6.2.1 Policy Justification

The College provides Walsall's high proportion of young people with access to vocational courses, and offers education and training for adults. It has undertaken a number of large scale building schemes in the centre over recent years, most recently the Business and Sports Hub. It's important that the College has space to continue to grow and that other educational facilities that serve a wide catchment area are also accommodated in the centre. Space has been allocated for the growth of the College in the AAP and the Council's aspiration is for the creation of a campus with all the education and training uses well connected and providing a safe and desirable learning environment.

Other educational facilities will be supported in the town centre including Further Education provision. The criteria are provided to ensure a high quality learning environment is created and that facilities are safe and accessible. Educational uses may be considered a sensitive use in terms of air quality and developers will need to accord with policies AAP17b and BCCS ENV8 Air Quality.

Site Reference	Site Name	Allocation	Justification
TC45	Walsall College	Education	Existing educational use, unlikely to change
TC44	Walsall College Business and Sports Hub	Education	Educational facilities under construction , unlikely to change
TC47	North of Portland Street	Office Education	Site anticipated for expansion by Walsall College
TC48	21 Portland Street	Office Education	Site owned by Walsall College with consent for training workshop

Policy AAPLV2 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

6.2.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.

6.2.3 Delivery

Walsall College has a proven track record in delivering high quality developments in Walsall town centre, the most recent of which is the Business and Sports Hub which will significantly improve the facilities available to the students. The delivery of further improvements to the College is crucial in ensuring it provides a high quality learning environment attracting increased numbers of students to study in the centre. The Council will support the College's future development by:

- Involvement in land assembly as previously demonstrated with the Walsall Campus scheme;
- Detailed pre-application discussions from the start to develop high quality schemes;
- Supporting the College with submissions for funding.

6.2.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator is proposed to record the amount of new educational floorspace in the centre

6.3 The Provision of Health Care Facilities

It is important that the communities in and surrounding Walsall town centre have access to healthcare and that current facilities are protected.

Policy AAPLV3: Health Care Provision

It is important that the town centre meets the healthcare needs of the surrounding community; this will be promoted by:

- a) Supporting the further development of healthcare facilities within the centre;**
- b) Discouraging the loss of any healthcare facility from the town centre;**
- c) Ensuring the links to Manor Hospital are maintained and where possible enhanced; and**
- d) Supporting proposals for uses linked to the hospital where appropriate.**

6.3.1 Policy Justification

There is a current planning consent to relocate the NHS Walk-in Centre from its current location in Digbeth (TC01) to a new location in the Saddler's Centre on Bridgeman Street, which is consistent with this policy. Healthcare facilities such as the NHS Walk-in Centre, doctors' surgeries, dentists and other facilities, need to be in accessible locations so that the whole community can access them. There are also a number of households within the town centre who will need access to healthcare facilities on a regular basis. The retention and improvement of healthcare facilities within and on the edge of the centre will therefore be promoted by the Council. The hospital is a short distance from the centre and there are already strong pedestrian links via the Canal. There is also the potential that the close proximity of the hospital could trigger linked healthcare uses within the centre boundary and this policy looks to encourage such schemes. Healthcare uses may be considered a sensitive use in terms of air quality and developers will need to accord with policies AAP17b and BCCS ENV8 Air Quality.

Policy AAPLV3 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

6.3.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.

6.3.3 Delivery

The Council will support the funding of proposals for new healthcare provision and expansion to current healthcare facilities through its Public Health function in co-ordination with Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group to secure NHS and other appropriate sources of funding.

6.3.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator is proposed to record the amount of new healthcare facilities in the town centre along with the loss of any significant healthcare facilities.

6.4 Community Facilities in the Town Centre

It is important that the town centre meets the needs of Walsall's community. It is also the most accessible location in the Borough so should be at the heart of community activity. There are a number of community facilities already operating in the centre which should be protected but there is also the opportunity to bring groups together, providing a holistic approach to community activities in the centre.

Policy AAPLV4: Community Facilities

a) The Council will protect and enhance community facilities in the centre by ensuring any proposals that involve the loss of community facilities contribute to the overall provision of community facilities in the centre and accord with UDP Policy LC8: Local Community Facilities,

b) The development of a new community hub in the town centre will be promoted to bring together community facilities and services into an accessible building serving the whole community. The priority site is

Challenge Block (TC41) as this provides an accessible and prominent location (see policy AAP13(b)). Others sites will be considered appropriate where they meet the following criteria:

- i) Good links with public transport;**
- ii) Provision of, or close proximity to, car parking;**
- iii) High visibility in a prominent location; and**
- iv) Highly accessible design.**

6.4.1 Policy Justification

Community infrastructure provides an important role in the economic and cultural diversity of the town centre, and is important to both town centre residents and those from across the Borough. Community facilities include places of worship, community centres and other meeting places. Any proposal that would result in the loss of a community facility would have to meet the requirements of saved UDP Policy LC8: Local Community Facilities, which in summary requires proposals to show that the community needs can be met elsewhere, there is no longer a need for the facility or that the facility is no longer viable.

The proposal for a community hub aims to provide a focal point for facilities, to foster greater community activity and bring residents, the local business community, current community facility providers and smaller organisations together to improve the viability of such facilities in the centre. Whilst there are no firm proposals for this development it is a scheme the Council fully supports and as such needs to be represented in the AAP. Challenge Block has been identified as the most suitable location for a community hub as it is well located in terms of both visibility and accessibility. Criteria has been developed for considering proposals at other sites to ensure that the hub is accessible given it is likely to be used by visiting members of the public.

Policy AAPLV4 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

6.4.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.

6.4.3 Delivery

The main priority for the delivery of community facilities in the centre is to provide a community hub, bringing together community organisations. This is considered to be the most sustainable way to ensure the future of community groups as resources can be shared in an accessible central location. The Council will work in partnership with the public sector and community groups to support the delivery of the hub, providing assistance in applications for funding, Council expertise and encouraging the use of Council land to aid with delivery. Other community facilities will also be supported in the centre and the Council will where appropriate support community groups in finding suitable sites/buildings for community uses and with applications for funding.

6.4.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator is proposed to record the number of new community facilities in the town centre along with the loss of any significant community facilities.

6.5 Protecting the Character of Walsall Town Centre

Walsall's historic environment is a unique asset that showcases the evolution of the town through its historic growth, industrial legacy and the influence of various styles of architecture which have created the vibrant townscape that we see today.

Developments which embrace the optimal viable use of heritage assets should be secured or encouraged in order to enable sustainable development, especially in the Conservation Areas, which will lead to socioeconomic benefits such as an improved environment for residents and increased investment in the town centre.

Policy AAPLV5: Protecting and Enhancing Historic Character and Local Distinctiveness

a) New developments should be designed to strengthen local character and identity, with particular reference to the Characterisation Analysis and Sensitivity Plans featured in the AAP Characterisation Study. Developments should also respect any heritage assets (both surviving buildings/ features and buried archaeological deposits) identified in the Characterisation Study, on the Heritage List for England or at the Wolverhampton and Walsall Historic Environment Record.

b) Development proposals affecting sites identified as heritage assets or as areas of high sensitivity to change should demonstrate how they will be conserved and enhanced including, where appropriate:

i) Consideration of the need to protect views and enhance the setting of heritage assets;

ii) Consideration of the sensitivity to change, opportunities and constraints of the area as defined by the Town Centre Characterisation Study;

iii) Opportunities to promote the enjoyment of and access to the cultural heritage of the area for the benefit of the local community, such as improving access and providing interpretation; and

iv) Ensuring good design standards are addressed, with reference to Policy AAPLV6 and the Characterisation study.

c) The Council will encourage the re-use of those buildings of special architectural or historic interest in accordance with BCCS Policy ENV2 and other Policies of the Local Plan.

d) Development that would result in substantial harm to or demolition of a Heritage Asset will not be permitted unless, in addition to any requirements contained in national guidance, either it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following criteria are met:

i) All reasonable alternatives that would avoid harmful adverse impacts have been fully explored and are not feasible or viable;

ii) The proposed development is of high quality and designed to reinforce and enhance local character and distinctiveness;

iii) All options to secure the future of the asset have been fully explored, including grant funding and disposal to a charitable organisation or community group; and

iv) A mitigation strategy has been prepared to minimise harm and provide for an appropriate level of salvage and/or recording.

6.5.1 Policy Justification:

The historic environment is a finite resource that makes an important contribution to the character and sense of place of Walsall town centre, and has the capability to provide a positive contribution to the economic, social and environmental viability of the town centre. This should be facilitated and encouraged through the creation of a distinctive, visually attractive town centre which integrates new development into the historic environment through the innovative use of design reflecting the heritage of the area, local materials and high quality architectural design.

Applications which enhance the character of the Conservation Areas should be encouraged in order to improve their significance and protect and enhance their contribution towards the local character and distinctiveness of the area.

A detailed Characterisation Study of the town centre has been carried out to evidence the AAP. The aims of the study were to define the local character and distinctive features of the area and recommend the capacity for change and opportunities afforded by these as ways that sub-character areas and their associated assets can contribute towards the regeneration objectives of the AAP.

The Characterisation Study can be used by everyone involved in planning for the future of the town centre AAP area to ensure that developments take into account the known heritage assets and locally distinctive elements of the area, as well as their sensitivity to change. It includes a gazetteer of the sub-character areas identified through the study providing information on the make up of the area, its significance, its sensitivity to and capacity for change and the potential opportunities afforded by each of the areas.

The sensitivity analysis (figure 6.2) and character analysis plan (figure 6.3) give an idea of the areas of the town centre that have potential to be catalysts for regeneration. Information from the Characterisation Study has been provided against the sites within Chapter 8: A Place for Investment to provide a summary for developers.

The Characterisation Study provides information that should be used in conjunction with other sources of heritage data, including the Walsall Historic Environment Record, to inform site appraisals and development proposals. Design and Access Statements should clearly set out, explain and justify design solutions and demonstrate how these will achieve locally responsive outcomes that will contribute towards strengthening the local character and identity of the town centre, in line with BCCS Policy ENV2. This will ensure that new development acknowledges the past and respects rare survivors of earlier times. Where there is no alternative to loss,

recording must be carried out by a qualified professional and the Historic Environment Record updated.

Where there is potential for archaeological deposits to be present, in accordance with Local Plan policies, a detailed desk-based assessment will be required, and potentially evaluation, excavation or a watching brief if preservation in situ is not possible.

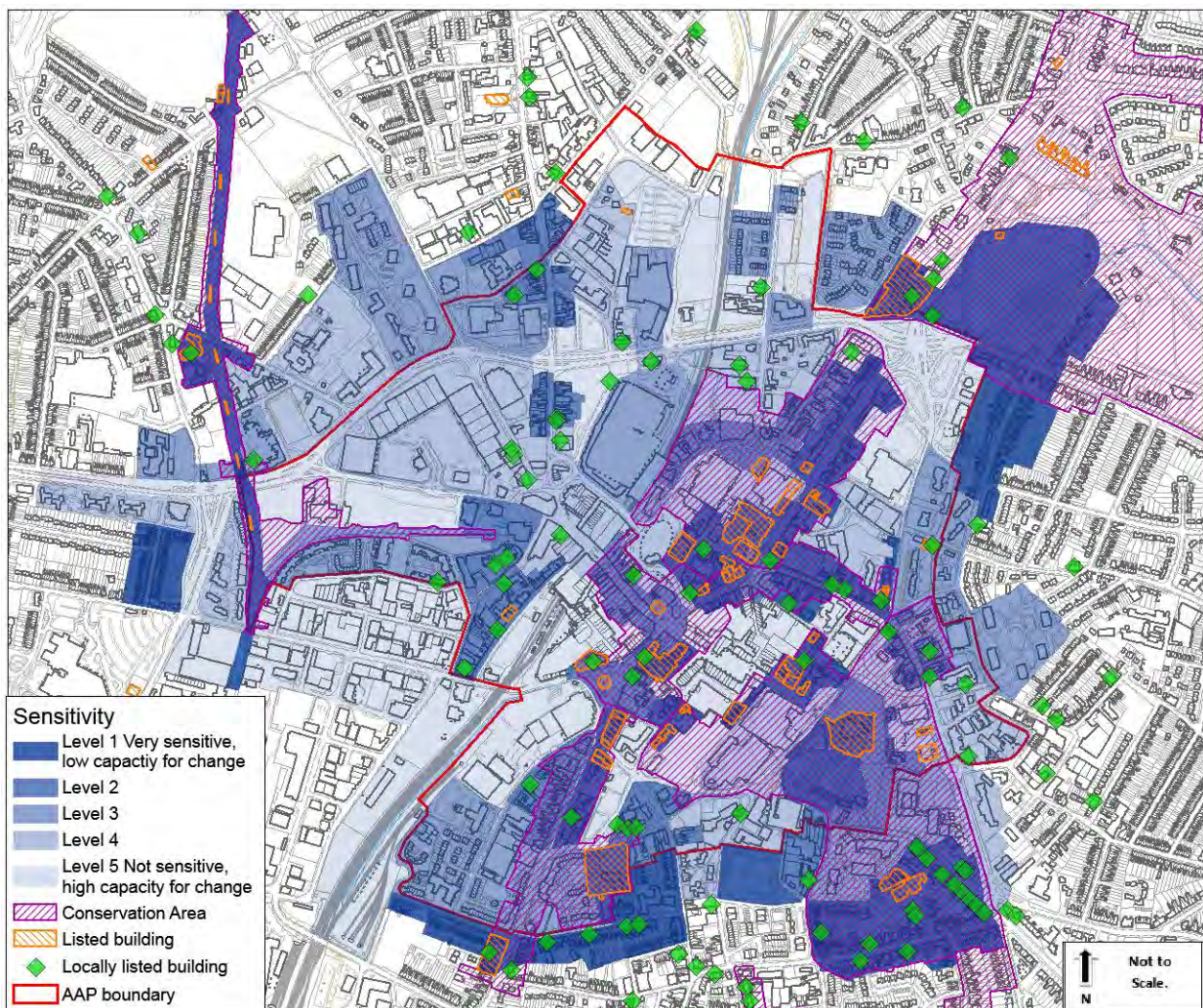


Figure 6.2 Historic sensitivity and heritage assets

6.5.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Characterisation Study (August 2015) Walsall Council
- Conservation Areas boundaries
- National Heritage List for England – Historic England
- Heritage at Risk Register – Historic England
- Wolverhampton and Walsall Historic Environment Record

6.5.3 Delivery

The Town Centre Characterisation Study has been developed as a direct tool to aid the delivery of schemes that will enhance the character of the centre and the Council will work with developers and investors to ensure that the character of Walsall is reflected in schemes. The Council will also look to secure funding through partnership working with Historic England and the Heritage Lottery Fund to improve historic and listed buildings, such as the Bridge Street Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme which provided grants to repair, restore and reuse its historic buildings between 2007-2011. £800,000 of public sector funding was spent on 9 retail and residential properties to create 7 new jobs, 3 new businesses and 1,000sqm of refurbished floorspace.

6.5.4 Monitoring

- Through BCCS LOI ENV2 which records the proportion of planning permissions granted in accordance with Conservation / Historic Environment Section or Advisor recommendations.

6.6 Securing Good Design in Walsall Town Centre

New buildings in the town centre should improve and enrich the quality and image of the Borough through high quality design which is sensitive to Walsall's historic character.

Policy AAPLV6: Securing Good Design

a) New development must create a positive environment with an identity that relates to the specific character of Walsall and its historic context. New buildings should:

- i) be of appropriate scale and massing to the streetscene;**
- ii) provide active, distinctive frontages, avoiding blank elevations;**
- iii) consider safety and security, referencing 'Secure by Design' principles; and**
- iv) consider the need to protect views of landmark buildings as identified in the AAP Policies Map, and enhance the setting of sites.**

b) Except where it can be proven that a development will not proceed, any proposal of more than 4 storeys in height will have to demonstrate that there will be no adverse effects on views of any landmark buildings (as identified in

the AAP Policies Map) or the character of any Conservation Area, and that the highest possible quality of design has been achieved.

c) Developments at locations identified in the AAP Policies Map as a 'Gateway site for high quality design' will need to demonstrate that the scale, massing, and building layout is of sufficient quality for a prominent site, and that the highest possible quality of design has been achieved.

6.6.1 Policy Justification

As shown in the AAP Policies Map and discussed in section 6.5.1, much of Walsall town centre is covered by Conservation Areas, which are subject to national and local policies to protect their character and distinctiveness. New developments should be designed to complement the historic elements of the town with high quality, visually attractive buildings and spaces.

A Shopfront Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted by the Council in April 2015. This sets out design principles for shopfront proposals and should be adhered to where appropriate.

The Characterisation Study highlighted key buildings which serve as local landmarks, and the setting and views of such buildings should be protected in order to retain their landmark nature. The study also identified certain prominent sites which should be the focus for new landmark buildings. On these sites high design standards will be required in order to improve the image and identity of the town centre. Policies AAP12-6 set out policies for specific areas of the town centre, including any design and scale considerations.

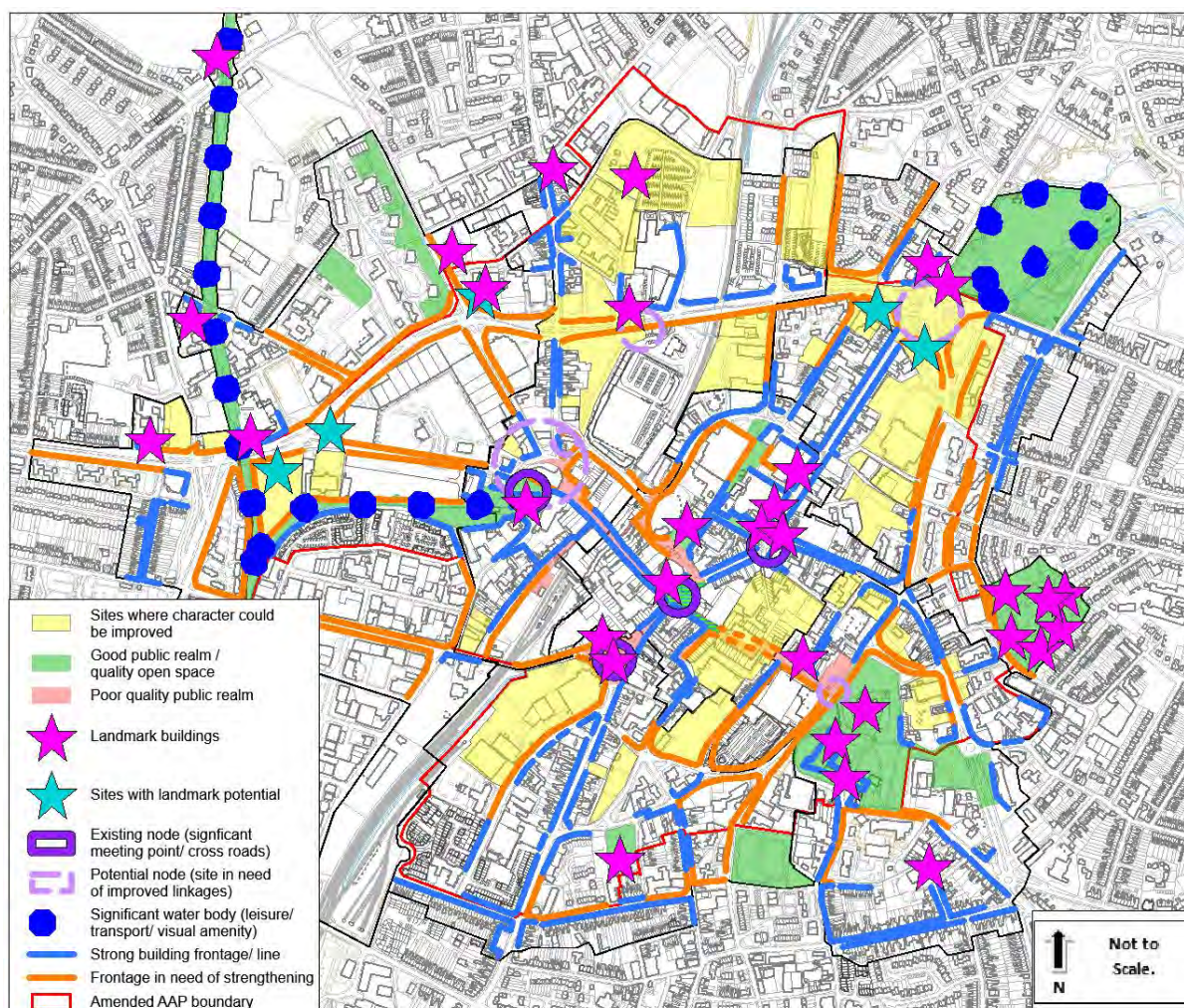


Figure 6.3 Analysis of the character of the town centre.

Policy AAPLV6 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

6.6.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.
- Walsall Town Centre Characterisation Study (August 2015) Walsall Council
- Walsall Council Draft Public Realm study (September 2015) Walsall Council
- Walsall Shop Front SPD (April 2015) Walsall Council

6.6.3 Delivery

The Town Centre Characterisation Study has been developed as a direct tool to aid in the delivery of high quality design in the centre and the Council will work with developers through pre-applications to ensure the design of schemes is given full consideration. The 2015 Shop Front SPD will also provide guidance to developers to aid the delivery of high quality schemes for retail.

6.6.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator is proposed recording the proportion of major planning permissions adequately addressing the Town Centre Characterisation Study

6.7 Enhancing the Public Realm

Public realm comprises the streets and spaces which are available for use by everyone, to walk, meet, rest and interact. The town centre's public realm influences how people perceive and experience the town centre, and improvements to the environment are required in order to attract both visitors and investment.

Policy AAPLV7: Enhancing the Public Realm

a) The Council will seek to implement a programme of improvements to key streets and spaces, as per the priority areas identified in the AAP Policies Map. Public realm improvements can include, but will not be limited to:

- i) creating routes that are direct, convenient, safe, and accessible to all;**
- ii) using good quality hard landscaping materials which complement the setting and are easy to maintain; and**
- iii) where appropriate, providing high quality street furniture and soft landscaping, whilst minimising street clutter.**

b) The Council will seek to maintain new and existing areas of high quality public realm, in order to protect this investment and maintain a good quality environment.

c) Proposals for new development within the town centre will be expected to contribute towards the improvement and maintenance of the public realm in that vicinity.

6.7.1 Policy Justification

An attractive public realm enhances people's quality of life and the perception of a place. It is an integral part of the urban fabric and should make a positive contribution to reinforcing the local distinctiveness of the built environment of Walsall. Public space should be accessible to all members of the community.

The public realm in Walsall town centre suffers from a lack of consistency and a wide variation in quality. While recent developments such as Waterfront South and Tesco have led to some improvements in certain areas, on the whole the public realm across the town centre would benefit from comprehensive public realm improvements, which have regard to upcoming developments in the town centre.

The public realm has a significant impact on the perception of the town centre and there are recognised economic benefits in providing a high quality environment. Furthermore, in recent discussions with agents, developers, and consultants, public realm improvements have been identified as critical investments which should not be overlooked.

Recent developments in certain parts of Walsall town centre have altered footfall patterns and have highlighted key priority areas for public realm improvements. These are shown on the AAP Policies Map and include the majority of streets and spaces within and adjacent to the PSA. Other areas within the town will be subject to environmental improvements either as new developments come forward or on a case by case basis, as budgets allow, once the priority areas have been delivered. Major schemes, including those within the Gigaport, will be expected to create a high quality public environment within and around their buildings and spaces, as set out in policy AAP13.

The Bridge area will be subject to public realm improvements as part of the implementation of the planning consent for the permanent relocation of Walsall Market, and this area, along with the Civic Quarter, the space around the New Art Gallery, and any areas subject to environmental improvements in the future, will be the focus for a continuous maintenance regime in order to maintain a good quality environment going forward.

Improvements to pedestrian legibility are also required and are considered as part of Movement policy AAPT1.

Policy AAPLV7 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

6.7.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.
- Walsall Council Draft Public Realm study (September 2015) Walsall Council
- Information provided in support of planning application for the new market – reference 14/1871/FL

6.7.3 Delivery

In recognition of the crucial role the quality of environment plays in the success of the centre not only in terms of people's experience but also in attracting investors, the Council is committed to funding the delivery of its public realm improvements programme. The programme of delivery of public realm schemes will relate to the priority areas identified, starting with the area around the Bridge which the Council has committed to through the planning consent for the market, followed by further improvements to Park Street. This will build on successful schemes such as the Wayfinding project and the Council will look to fund improvements when capital funding is available. Funds will also be sought from the private sector through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and other mechanisms such as grant programmes.

6.7.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator is proposed to monitor the delivery of public realm improvements.

6.8 Delivering Environmental Infrastructure

The amount, location and quality of environmental infrastructure is key to securing the sustainable regeneration of Walsall town centre. This includes protecting and enhancing the current environmental network within the centre, creating and improving links to environmental sites outside of the centre, and ensuring new development contributes to the environmental infrastructure of Walsall.

Policy AAPLV8: Environmental Infrastructure

Existing environmental networks, environmental infrastructure, including identified ecological networks, will be protected and enhanced.

Existing Assets:

a) The two Urban Open Space sites as shown by the AAP Policies Map (TC12 and TC28) will be protected and enhanced. Proposals that would result in the loss of open space will only be permitted if they are in accordance with paragraph 74 of the NPPF.

b) The Canal network will be protected and enhanced as set out in Policy AAPLE4.

c) Existing trees within the town centre will be protected and maintained where feasible and additional trees and planting will be encouraged.

d) The Council will look to improve links to Walsall Arboretum for all the community as it offers a high quality open space within close distance of the centre for leisure, sport and recreation as well as being a key part of the environmental network (see policy AAPT1).

New Developments:

e) New developments of 1,000sqm floorspace or more will be required to provide Green Roofs to reduce the impact of the heat island effect unless it can be demonstrated that is not viable or feasible to do so.

f) All development proposals and public realm improvements should consider the use of green walls, green roofs, street trees and sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) (see also Policy AAP17) in new development, particularly where there are known surface water flooding issues or where wildlife habitat connectivity could be enhanced.

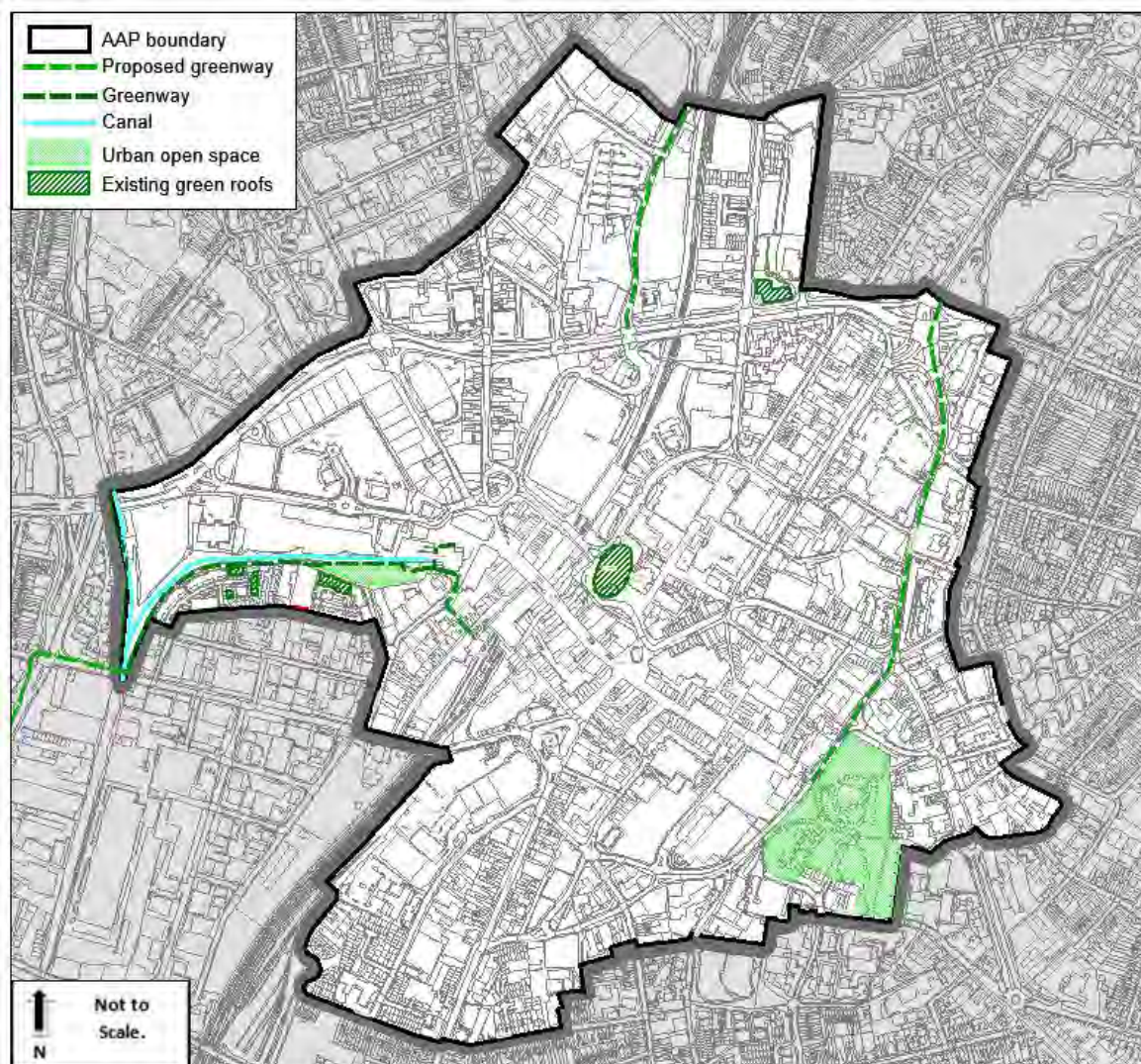


Figure 6.4 Existing Environmental Infrastructure

6.8.1 Policy Justification

A high quality environment improves the experience of using the town centre for all users, increases property values, attracts inward investment and can dramatically enhance the perception of Walsall for both regular users and people visiting the town centre for the first time. The environmental infrastructure network in Walsall should focus on protecting and, wherever possible, improving features of the town centre such as the Town Arm of the Walsall Canal, the Open Space or connectivity to the Arboretum. These important environmental assets collectively provide multi-functional benefits including, for example, providing leisure and recreational facilities, forming wildlife corridors, providing space for pedestrian and cycle routes, or offering opportunities for climate change mitigation and adaptation. An important priority for improving the environment of the town centre should be to improve the linkages between environmental features in and around the town centre.

Policy CSP3 of the BCCS requires development proposals to demonstrate how the network of Environmental Infrastructure (EI) will be protected, enhanced and expanded at every opportunity. This is supported by other strategic environmental policies on, for example, nature conservation (BCCS ENV1). Environmental infrastructure covers open space, sport and recreation facilities, areas of biodiversity and geodiversity importance, wildlife corridors, the canal network, watercourses, energy efficient buildings, renewable energy generation, pedestrian and cycle routes, areas and buildings of high design quality, and the special character and historic aspects of locally distinctive elements of the Black Country.

The BCCS also provides the strategic approach to Climate Change adaptation and mitigation issues in the Black Country through these environmental policies. The main issues the AAP needs to address are flood risk, urban heat island effect, strengthening ecological networks, providing and supporting renewable energy (including the potential for district heating), energy efficient buildings and improving sustainable transport. Improving green infrastructure can increase wildlife resilience, reduce flooding, reduce the urban heat island effect and increase the amount of carbon absorbed by trees.

Open space is capable of providing several multifunctional green infrastructure benefits simultaneously. These include protecting and improving ecosystems and biodiversity, improving mental and physical wellbeing through facilitating exercise, outdoor activity and community interaction; and supporting sustainable land and water management. The Council does not envisage any changes to the two sites identified as Urban Open Space and the policy looks to protect them in their entirety.

Walsall Arboretum is the Borough's flagship park and is a key location for leisure activities. Although not technically within the current town centre boundary, it is just a short walk away from the centre, and developments here will be of such significant value to the town centre that it cannot be overlooked in the AAP. The proposed Greenway in the town centre as shown on the AAP Policies Map and set out in Policy AAPT1 looks to promote better connections between the Arboretum and St Matthew's Church Open Space (TC28) as these provide the main areas of amenity open space for the surrounding community.

Policy AAPLV8 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

6.8.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.
- Black Country Environmental Infrastructure Guide (2011)

6.8.3 Delivery

Some of the green infrastructure requirements set out in the above policy are required to mitigate against the impact of development and as such the inclusion of green infrastructure into schemes and/or developer contributions may be required. The impact of such requirements on the viability and therefore deliverability of schemes will be considered on a site by site basis and the Council will work with developers to understand any impacts. The Council will also look to secure green infrastructure, where appropriate, as part of public realm schemes funded by the Council especially in regards to green planting.

6.8.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator the proportion of major planning permissions including appropriate green infrastructure

7. Transport, Movement and Accessibility

The town centre is the most accessible location in the Borough, where the arterial transport routes meet and public transport hubs are located. Improving transport in Walsall town centre provides an opportunity to increase access to employment, education and training along with retail and leisure activities, increasing its position as the most sustainable location in the Borough, and meeting AAP Objectives 1, 7 and 10.

7.1 Improving Pedestrian Movements and Linkages throughout the Town

The movement of pedestrians into and around the town centre is critical to its economic success. There is a need to improve the quality of some of these routes and to continue maintaining existing pedestrian areas across the town centre.

Policy AAPT1: Pedestrian Movement, Access and Linkages

a) All new development will be expected to be well integrated in the centre, providing strong pedestrian linkages to and throughout the town centre. Key locations where improvements to linkages are needed have been identified on the AAP Policies Map and new development will be expected to:

i) Support the provision of new linkages particularly to key regeneration initiatives, the Primary Shopping Area and public transport facilities,

ii) Improve linkages across the ring road to ensure the safe movement of people throughout the centre and to reduce the perception of physical barriers to access,

iii) Give consideration to the ease of movement for those with limited mobility; and

iv) Where appropriate provide enhanced signage, journey information, lighting and security,

b) The Council will look to maximise the potential for safe, attractive links between open space and environmental assets through the following existing and proposed Greenways as shown on the AAP Policies Map and in accordance with UDP Policy LC5: Greenways by:

- i) Protecting and maintaining the Greenway along the Canal between Manor Hospital and Walsall Arboretum;**
- ii) Extending this current Greenway to Walsall Railway station;**
- iii) Promoting a Greenway through Walsall College to Rue Meadow Open Space; and**
- iv) Promoting a Greenway that connects St Matthew's Urban Open Space (AAPLV8) with Walsall Arboretum.**

7.1.1 Policy Justification

Safe, efficient and convenient pedestrian movement into and within the centre is fundamental to supporting economic development, and attracting investment, employers and employees.

Ease of movement around the centre and quality public realm also plays a role in giving the town centre a strong sense of place, and linkages between uses will encourage visitors to spend more time in the town. This is particularly important in terms of linkages between and to the PSA to support the retail offer and develop a desirable shopping experience in the centre. The areas where the Council wishes to see improvements to linkages are shown on the AAP Policy Map and set out below:

- pedestrian access across the ring road, so that sites to the north of Littleton Street are well connected to parts of the town south of the ring road
- routes from the ring road/ Gigaport area to the Primary Shopping Area
- pedestrian links between Crown Wharf and the Primary Shopping Area
- pedestrian links between the Arboretum and the core of the town centre
- pedestrian access at the junction between Bridge Street, Lichfield Street and Leicester Street
- pedestrian links between St Matthew's Church and the core of the town centre.

The movement of people within the town centre is largely influenced by the location of the three transport hubs. Accessibility between these areas needs to be improved so pedestrian journeys are quicker, safer and easier. An important component of this would be further way-finding improvements to ensure that, in particular, new visitors to the town arriving by public transport can easily navigate and find key destinations such as the Arboretum, Art Gallery, Leather Museum, Park Street, and Crown Wharf.

The AAP Policy Map sets out one maintained Greenway and two proposed Greenways. The main purpose of the Greenway network is to provide safe, attractive, continuous routes linking built up areas to open spaces and the Countryside (saved UDP Policy LC5: Greenways). The maintained Canal Greenway connects the centre to the hospital and makes the most of the Canal as a leisure destination. It is proposed to extend this Greenway to connect the route to Walsall Railway station, via Marsh Street and Little Station Street. The proposed Greenway from the UDP that ran across the College site has been amended to reflect the building and road layout whilst still providing a route from Littleton Street to Rue Meadow open space which lies just outside the town centre boundary. A new proposed Greenway has been included on the AAP Policies Map to provide an opportunity to improve links between the Arboretum and St Matthew's Church open space (TC28), along Upper and Lower Rushall Street. The approach also reflects the aims of AAPLV8 which looks to make the most of environmental infrastructure in the town centre and AAPLE4 which promotes the canal as a leisure destination. Greenways also provide opportunities for improved cycle access into and around the centre as set out in policy AAPT2.

The Council is determined to improve provision and access for those with limited mobility and applicants for schemes are expected to work with disability groups to ensure their proposals are accessible to all.

Policy AAPT1 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

7.1.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.
- Walsall Town Centre Characterisation Study (August 2015) Walsall Council

7.1.3 Delivery

The delivery of improved pedestrian movement, access and linkages throughout the centre will be achieved in two main ways. The first is through the appropriate consideration of planning applications to ensure that developments are in accessible locations and that full consideration is given to how schemes link to other key centre uses and the Primary Shopping Area (PSA). If the Council consider that

improvements to linkages are needed developer Contributions may be sought to deliver these schemes.

The second is through Council funded schemes such as the Wayfinding project. This project combined developer contributions for recent developments to appoint consultants to look at the way the town is used by pedestrians, produce a Wayfinding Strategy of improvements, and implement 2 artworks designed to improve the ways pedestrians navigate the town centre. The Council will prioritise improvements in areas that will have the greatest impact on the town as a whole such as between public transport interchanges or improvements to links with the PSA. The Council will also look to implement improvements in the centre's accessibility as part of overall public realm schemes.

7.1.4 Monitoring

- New indicator to record number of schemes delivered to the improve linkages

7.2 Promoting Cycling

The development of sustainable modes of transport and encouraging people out of their cars is important to the sustainability of Walsall. Cycling is a key mode of transport for local journeys and for commuters, meaning it should be an integral part of transport in the centre.

Policy AAPT2: Cycling

Places need to be well connected with attractive, convenient, direct and safe routes available to make cycling a reasonable and realistic option.

a) This will be achieved by protecting the current cycle routes and utilising the Greenways as shown on the AAP Policies Map and set out in AAPT1.

b) Improvements will also be made between Walsall Railway Station and Bradford Place Bus Interchange as shown on the AAP Policies Map to improve access for cycle users and pedestrians.

c) Current cycle parking will be protected and major schemes within the centre are expected to provide for additional parking or improve current facilities.

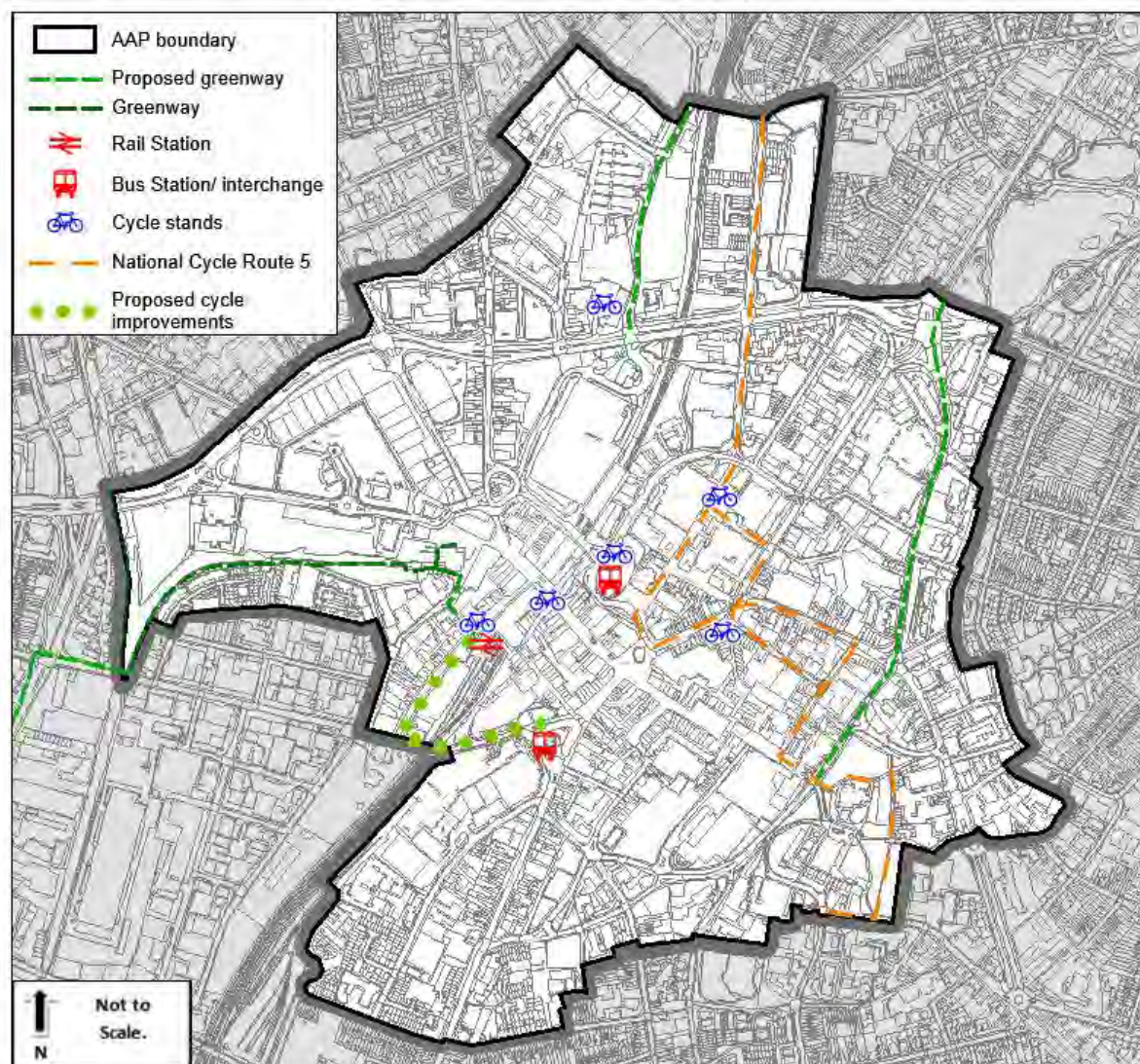


Figure 7.1 Cycling and public transport facilities

7.2.1 Policy Justification

Walsall town centre benefits from being served by National Cycle Route 5, which runs from Oxford to Derby via Bridge Street, Walsall. The National Cycle Route is shown on the AAP Policies Map and the Council will look to protect and promote this route. The Council will also seek to improve the route as it passes through the Town Centre, and link it with other Greenways and cycle-friendly routes. It is proposed that the current Greenway that runs along the canal is extended to connect to Walsall Train Station (see policy AAPT1). It is also proposed that the route between Walsall Train Station and Bradford Place Bus Interchange is improved allowing for better cycle and pedestrian access. This is crucial for cycle users as routes through the Saddler's Centre or through Park Street are not necessarily appropriate for cycling. The improvements will apply to Station Street and Bridgeman Street, as shown on the AAP Policies Map.

There are currently 30 separate cycle parking locations around the town centre, situated at key trip generators, such as the railway station, library and supermarkets. These spaces are well used and the Council would promote the provision of further facilities. Cycle parking should be integrated into the street scene and not add to street clutter.

Policy AAPT2 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

7.2.2 Evidence

- West Midlands Local Transport Plan 2011-26 (LTP) (note: this is due to be replaced by the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan in 2016) Centro.

7.2.3 Delivery

The Council will, where possible, secure funding to improve current cycle routes or to create new ones. This will be achieved through partnership working with Centro and other relevant bodies to unlock funding. Major new developments will be expected to provide facilities to support cycle use in the centre including cycle parking.

7.2.4 Monitoring

- BCCS indicators LOI TRAN4 which records any Increase in cycle use of monitored routes and BCCS indicator LOI TRAN4b which records the implementation of proposed Local Cycle Network identified in the Cycle Network Diagram.

7.3 Improving Public Transport

Public transport is crucial for many residents; particularly given Walsall's population with its higher than average proportion of residents aged under 16 and over 65, who are most likely to rely on public transport. Public transport must strive to offer an attractive alternative to the car.



Figure 7.2 Bus serving Walsall town centre

Policy AAPT3: Public Transport

The following improvements to public transport hubs will be sought:

- a) Bradford Place Bus Interchange as allocated on the AAP Policies Map (TC18) will be increased in capacity with improved public realm and accessibility,
- b) Walsall Railway Station as allocated on the AAP Policies Map (TC17) will be expanded to accommodate future investments in rapid transit connecting the

Black Country Strategic Centres to each other. Improvements will be made to the access and visibility on Station Street.

c) Other improvements to public transport will be encouraged and new developments will, where appropriate, be expected to support the delivery of public transport improvement schemes.

7.3.1 Policy Justification

Public transport is very important in allowing residents to access jobs and education, as well as travel for leisure purposes.

Improvements to Bradford Place Bus Interchange will create a larger and more modern facility to allow for future increases in bus services and patronage. This would result in the loss of some of Jerome Retail Park in order to allow for the increased capacity. The Council will actively work with landowners to discuss the impact of this and to explore the relocation of affected businesses. It is considered that the benefit of increased bus capacity and a more user friendly bus interchange will greatly improve the accessibility of the town centre, therefore having a positive impact on the viability and attractiveness of the town centre. Further work will be undertaken around this proposal in consultation with neighbouring businesses.

In addition the electrification of the Chase (Walsall to Rugeley Trent Valley) rail line will bring potential for services to destinations further afield to be introduced. Along with improvements to rail services, Walsall train station would also require its capacity to be increased to facilitate new services, as well as to accommodate a potential rapid transit service between Walsall and Wolverhampton. Direct travel between Walsall town centre and Wolverhampton city centre is limited by public transport to bus travel. This journey of 35 minutes could be reduced to 15 minutes by introducing a rapid transit service between the two strategic centres.

As developments within the town centre are delivered the need to maintain and expand an efficient public transport network is imperative.

]

Policy AAPT3 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

7.3.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.
- West Midlands Local Transport Plan 2011-26 (LTP) (note: this is due to be replaced by the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan in 2016). Centro.

7.3.3 Delivery

The Council will work with public transport providers such as Centro and Network Rail to develop schemes for improvements to transport infrastructure in the centre.

This will include:

- Support with bids for funding from Central Government (Local Sustainable Transport Fund), Black Country LEP, Local Growth Fund,
- The safeguarding of land for transport improvements
- Support with land assembly if necessary
- Facilitate discussions on schemes with land owners and interested partners.

Where appropriate developer contributions such as CIL will be used to fund public transport improvements.

7.3.4 Monitoring

- A new Indicator is proposed to record the delivery of public transport schemes. Other indicators such as number of people using public transport could also be used to monitor the success of public transport in the centre.

7.4 Road Network

Improvements to the roads in and around the centre are essential to ease congestion which could deter visitors and investors from the centre. This is also crucial to improve the environmental quality of the town and provide better access for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.

Policy AAPT4: Road Improvements

a) Improvements or modifications to the road system around the town centre are proposed in the locations identified on the AAP Policies Map.

b) Other highway works may also be necessary to serve future development/ investment opportunities.

c) Where appropriate developer contributions will be sought to mitigate the negative impacts of proposals on the highway network.

7.4.1 Policy Justification

Walsall has 845km of main roads that connect people to jobs, services and other activities, with excellent links from the national strategic highway network. M6 junctions 7, 9 and 10 all lie within or just outside the Borough, providing access for long distance travel and bringing visitors and goods to the Borough. Within the town centre boundary, the local roads can at times experience congestion due to large traffic flows, the impact of new developments and occasional diverted traffic from the M6 motorway.

The AAP Policies Map includes a number of proposed improvements to highway junctions. The key priority is the ring road which suffers from congestion. Without improvements to increase capacity, there are likely to be further issues with both traffic and air pollution levels. Furthermore businesses looking to locate in Walsall town centre may consider congestion to be a potential issue. These improvements may require changes to pedestrian movement across the ring road as the way junctions operate is altered to increase capacity on the road network. There may be some areas along the ring road, for example the junction of Hatherton Street and Littleton Street, where land is needed to make improvements to the ring road and the Council will work with landowners and developers to minimise the impact of this on developments. The other junctions identified are less of a priority than the ring road junctions but the Council will look to improve these as resources become available.

Air pollution remains a major issue in the Borough with road traffic being the main contributor to adverse air quality, a significant issue in the town centre. Poor air quality affects the health and well-being of local people living along key corridors which carry high volumes of traffic. The review and assessment of air quality is a statutory function that all local authorities must undertake. The purpose of this is to demonstrate to central government that action is being taken to improve poor air quality and meet UK and EU standards. In a national context, outside of London, the West Midlands conurbation has the worst nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) problems in the UK.

The West Midlands Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) aims to reduce transport emissions in the West Midlands and surrounding areas. The seven West Midlands metropolitan authorities are currently developing a Low Emissions Towns and Cities Programme. This aims to deliver a series of integrated projects designed to reduce road transport emissions that will address national air quality objectives. The outcome of this project will likely inform the management of air quality in Walsall town centre in the future.

The transition to low emission vehicles is an important factor for moving towards a low carbon economy. Walsall Council has joined the Midlands' Plugged in Places

consortium and work is continuing to seek out opportunities regarding the introduction of electric vehicle infrastructure within the town centre.

Over the past few years, the strategic routes leading to Walsall town centre have all undergone significant upgrades to improve traffic flow, reduce congestion and partly address air quality. However there are still significant challenges relating to the management of traffic and how users access the town centre. Walsall Council works with Centro Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) and public transport operators to encourage town centre users to arrive on sustainable transport. However we also recognise that this is not always possible and that a balance needs to be found between encouraging public transport use, and making the town accessible for private car users and HGVs.

Policy AAPT4 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

7.4.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.
- Road network modelling data

7.4.3 Delivery

Where possible, the Council will look to secure funding from Central Government (Local Sustainable Transport Fund), Black Country LEP, Local Growth Fund to support highway improvements in the centre. If necessary the Council will consider funding some of the improvements through capital funding. The Council will also look to safeguard land to deliver improvements where there is no alternative solution. Developer Contributions may be sought to combat the negative impact of schemes on the town centre road network and also through CIL to fund wider/larger town centre infrastructure improvements.

7.4.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator is proposed to capture the number of highway improvements implemented

7.5 Improving Town Centre Car Parking

Car parking has a significant role to play in how people experience the town centre. The location, type and quality of car parking can impact on decisions like where in the centre people visit and how long they stay. It is also one of the key considerations for investors and businesses when making decisions about a site's suitability. It is therefore important to provide effective car parking to support the viability and vitality of the town centre.

Policy AAPT5: Car Parking

a) The Council will ensure the provision of an appropriate quantity, quality and type of convenient car parking, as set out in the Car Parking Strategy, including high density short stay parking within the centre. This will be achieved by:

i) The delivery of at least one new multi-storey car park as identified on the AAP Policies Map at Challenge Block (TC41) or if this site is not deliverable Day Street (TC50). If and when a further multi-storey car park is required it will be located at Intown (TC34);

ii) Except where there is a demonstrated need for short stay dedicated provision, car parking within or on the edge of the AAP area will be available to serve the needs of the centre as a whole;

iii) Where new office developments come forward in the Gigaport area dedicated car parking can be provided as in accordance with the standards set in Policy AAP13: Walsall Gigaport. Consideration will be given to applying the same standards to other developments when justified;

iv) All new parking provision will be in accordance with the standards set out in relevant Local Plan documents and technical guidance, including provision of disabled, motorcycle and cycle parking and recharging facilities for low emission vehicles where feasible;

v) All parking will be subject to a charging and management regime agreed by the Council and in line with the Car Parking Strategy.

vi) All new parking will be of high quality, well-signed and secure, linking well with the rest of the town centre, in particular key destinations.

vii) New developments that include car parking should be well integrated with the centre and not have an adverse visual impact on the surrounding area.

Building layout should take priority over any car parking so that it does not dominate and where possible, should be overlooked to promote security.

viii) The effective use of planning conditions will be applied to ensure compliance with the town centre car parking strategy and AAP policies.

b) The Council will support the release of existing car parks for redevelopment, for uses identified on the AAP Policies Map, as appropriate and provided a suitable provision can be maintained. Once new multi-storey provision has been provided (see point (i) above) all Council car parks identified can be released for redevelopment.

7.5.1 Policy Justification

A balance is needed between providing sufficient amounts of car parking with a sustainable pricing regime that supports development, whilst promoting the use of sustainable travel to the centre. Significant changes are needed to short stay public parking arrangements in the Town Centre AAP area. These changes are necessitated by the need to respond to widely expressed concerns about the adequacy of car parking provision in the town centre and to meet the needs of future development in the town centre as set out in this AAP.

Evidence shows that shortcomings in car parking provision is one of the factors which undermines the competitiveness of Walsall Town Centre. The solutions lie, however, not just in improving parking, but also improving the appeal and ease of using alternatives to the private car, including public transport, cycling and walking.

In total, the AAP proposes in the order of 726 additional short-stay public spaces. The additional and replacement short-stay parking provision will be in at least one new multi storey car park in the locations identified on the AAP Policies Map. Any new car parks should include electric vehicle recharging infrastructure to help meet air quality requirements. A number of locations have been identified as appropriate for a new multi story car park to serve the centre. It is considered that one multi story car park is needed in the short term, with a potential second being needed in the latter parts of the plan period. The locations are in preference order and set out in the table below:

Part a) of Policy AAPT5 sites:

Site Reference	Site Name	Allocation	Justification
TC41	Challenge Block	Mixed use, including convenience retail/ bulky goods Multi storey car park	This is the preferred location given its proximity to services and facilities within the town centre and within the ring road. Pedestrian linkages to these services and facilities are already fairly well established and pedestrian flows will not impact adversely on the operation of the ring road. This solution may require improvements to the junction of Hatherton Street and Littleton Street.
TC50	Day Street car park	Office Convenience retail/ bulky goods Multi storey car park	If the Challenge block cannot be delivered for the multi-storey car park this site is considered the next preferable location due to its position in an area of considerable investment and location on the strategic highway network. Pedestrian linkages across the ring road and to within the core of the town centre will have to be enhanced.
TC34	Intown area	Mixed use, Multi storey car park	If either site TC41 or TC50 is delivered for a multi-storey car park and demand for parking provision still exceeds supply then this site close to the Civic Quarter and within the ring road is considered an appropriate site for further car parking investment.

It is recognised that some developments will require their own car parking and the AAP makes provision for this at the Gigaport as set out in Policy AAPI3. The Council will be flexible when considering other sites where this approach to designated parking would be suitable when justified by the applicant. The Council does however, aim to move away from each development having its own parking and is therefore proposing to meet some of the needs of new developments through the delivery of the multi-storey car park(s). It is envisaged that 60% of the spaces

provided of the upper floors of the multi-storey car park delivered at either Challenge Block or Day Street will be long stay to serve office developments, with a designated area on the top floors with 40% serving the needs of short stay visitors. Intown is envisaged to have 40% of its spaces dedicated to long stay and 60% to short stay.

To ensure that no adverse effects on the strategy for the town centre arise from developments also providing short stay public spaces, the Council proposes to require all short stay car parks within the AAP area, or intended to serve the AAP area, to be priced and managed in line with Council policy.

The Council has reviewed its current car parking provision and concluded that the location and quality of a number of the Council-owned car parks are poor. Where appropriate these car parks can therefore be developed for other uses as indicated on the AAP Policies Map. The suitable sites are set out in the table below.

Part b) of Policy AAPT5 sites:

Site Reference	Site Name	Allocation	Justification
TC21	Bradford Street area (Mountrath Street)	Mixed use	If one or more of the multi-storey car parks is delivered then a number of Council owned car parks, many poorly located and under-utilised, become surplus to requirements. It is therefore possible to allocate these for other uses.
TC30	Ablewell Street east (Warewell Street)	Mixed use	
TC30	Ablewell Street east (Paddock Lane)	Mixed use	
TC30	Ablewell Street east (Tantarra Street)	Mixed use	
TC31	Upper Rushall Street/ Town Hill	Mixed use	
TC34	Intown area (Whittimere Street)	Mixed use, Multi storey car park	
TC34	Intown area	Mixed use, Multi storey car park	
TC34	Intown area (Intown Row)	Mixed use, Multi storey car park	
TC35	Lower Rushall Street	Mixed use	
TC41	Challenge block (Hatherton Street)	Mixed use, including convenience retail/ bulky goods Multi storey car park	
TC50	Day Street car park (Bate Street)	Office Convenience retail/ bulky goods Multi storey car park	
TC50	Day Street car park	Office Convenience retail/ bulky goods Multi storey car park	
TC54	Stafford Street/ Green Lane	Mixed use	

Policy AAPT5 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

7.5.2 Evidence

- Walsall Draft Car Parking Strategy (August 2015) Walsall Council
- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.

7.5.3 Delivery

The Council is committed to improving the car parking offer in the town centre. The Council will explore all options to delivering a new multi storey car park and will work with the private sector in developing a viable scheme. If necessary and feasible the Council will consider directly supporting the development of a new car park and will explore the following solutions:

- Partnership working with private investors and car parking providers,
- Using the WMBC's covenant in order to improve scheme viability (i.e. acting as the rental guarantor to encourage development);
- Strategic acquisitions / assembly of development opportunity sites (using the Council's powers of compulsory purchase where necessary) to enable delivery;
- Securing funding (under the SEP for the Black Country) to intervene proactively to de-risk sites to support delivery, including site clearance and remediation;
- Taking a direct development role (repeating the role the Council played in successfully delivering the Primark/Co-op scheme)
- Developing strategies to ensure that occupiers and developers have the right infrastructure and where necessary supporting the provision of town centre infrastructure.

The Council will also support where necessary and feasible the redevelopment of the Council car park stock that is not considered to be required, especially where the sites form part of a larger development opportunity or are considered essential to the overall regeneration strategy.

7.5.4 Monitoring

- New indicator proposed to monitor the number of publically available long stay and short stay parking places

8. A Place for Investment



Much of the regeneration activity in the town centre in recent years has been focused around three development opportunities – St. Matthew’s Quarter, Gigaport and Waterfront – and along with Park Street, it is these areas which should remain the focus for change and investment within the town centre. There are also some secondary sites which provide development opportunities to help support the regeneration of Walsall. There are however some constraints in the town centre that need to be addressed. This chapter sets out the vision and specific policies for these key areas along with providing guidance on dealing with constraints in the centre, reflecting AAP objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10.

8.1 Walsall Town Centre Regeneration Strategy

Providing an overarching regeneration strategy to meet the objectives in the plan is an important element of the overall approach to the regeneration of Walsall town centre. The policy outlined below seeks to guide investment in a way which makes these objectives deliverable.

Policy AAPI1: Regeneration Strategy

a) The objectives in Chapter 2 will be met through applying the Council’s regeneration strategy for Walsall town centre which seeks to concentrate change and investment in the following areas:-

- **St Matthew’s Quarter – shopping destination (Policy AAPI2)**
- **Walsall Gigaport – office corridor (Policy AAPI3)**
- **Walsall Waterfront – leisure destination (Policy AAPI4)**

Further to these three priority areas, Park Street will play an important role as the retail core (Primary Shopping Area) in the town centre, as a key location for attracting retail investment and the reconfiguration of units (Chapter 3) and as an area for improvements in the public realm (Chapter 6).

Other areas of the town centre represent secondary development opportunities where a mix of appropriate town centre uses will be encouraged in accordance with other policies in the plan (Policy AAPI6).

The concentration of investment and resources in the geographical areas above is supported by improvements in the transport infrastructure (Chapter 7), and the environment of the town centre (chapter 6).

b) Any proposals for development which are inconsistent with this regeneration strategy are unlikely to be supported, unless it can be demonstrated that there would be significant economic, social or environmental benefits to the town centre as a whole. There may be circumstances where a proposal is supportable at the time it is determined but is not in accordance with the long term regeneration strategy for an area. In this situation and where appropriate the Council will use temporary permissions to allow investment to come forward without jeopardising the AAP strategy.

c) All proposals will be expected to:

- i) Be comprehensive in the approach to the use of land and buildings;**
- ii) Address any adverse impacts on the highway; and**
- iii) Have consideration for the character of the area and be of high quality design.**

d) Schemes that involve the clearance of sites for development will be expected to give full consideration to how the treatment of the site visually and functionally impacts on the centre. The greening of cleared sites, including sites that form later parts of phased schemes, will be actively encouraged and developers and / or owners will be expected to maintain such sites throughout until development is completed. Developers and / or owners will also be expected to give proper consideration to the impact of boundary treatments on the amenity of the centre.

8.1.1 Policy Justification

Much of the regeneration activity in the town centre in recent years has been focused around three geographical locations – St Matthew’s Quarter, Gigaport and Waterfront – and along with Park Street, it is these areas which remain the focus for change and investment within the town centre. The concentration of investment and uses in particular areas is considered the most effective approach to securing investment and economic growth in the town centre. These areas are now recognised by developers as key opportunities building upon the £370 million worth of investment secured in Walsall town centre since 2007.

The Council can demonstrate a strong track record of delivering, facilitating or enabling town centre investment through a range of interventions, having a key role in most of the projects which have attracted £370 million of investment in the town centre. There are currently 5 schemes on site in the town centre which will deliver an additional £39 million of investment. The Council has played a key role in each of these schemes as direct developer or in other facilitating roles, all of which are geographically located in the Council's priority areas noted in the policy. Where necessary, the Council will continue to play an active role in delivering sites that support the regeneration strategy of the town centre. The AAP is supported by a delivery plan that sets out the range of interventions at the Council's disposal.

The Council will utilise temporary (i.e. 5-year) planning permissions as a mechanism to manage areas and secure interim viable uses whilst more strategic development is being promoted and delivered over the longer term. Such permissions are already being used in the Gigaport area and this approach has recently been upheld at Appeal (decision ref. APP/V4630/W/15/3009493). However, the use of temporary planning permissions will not be allowed to delay or inhibit longer term investment decisions.

A fundamental part of delivering the regeneration strategy for the town centre is ensuring that there is a comprehensive approach to sites and that there are development opportunities for investors. In some cases this may result in sites being cleared for phased development or site assembly. Where sites are cleared and especially in prominent locations the Council will expect developers to consider the visual impact on the cleaned sites on the centre. Solutions such as greening the site will be encouraged to reduce the visual impact and to provide more green infrastructure. Developers will also be expected to give consideration to the boundary treatment of sites and the visual impact this has on the centre as a whole.

Policy AAPI1 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

8.1.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.

8.1.3 Delivery

The Council has identified a number of priority sites and it will be within these areas that the Council concentrates its resources to support delivery. It is considered that this strategy of prioritising sites is the best approach to delivering the regeneration of the centre. The full range of intervention mechanisms will be explored when looking for ways in which to assist in the development of sites which are considered to have the potential to act as a catalyst for further investment in the centre. This will include:

- Creating the right environment through public realm, road improvements and improved linkages (see Policy AAPLV7: Enhancing the Public Realm, all the policies within Chapter 7: Transport, Movement and Accessibility and also Policy AAP13: Walsall Gigaport);
- Promoting the town centre for inward investment for public and private sector businesses;
- Using the WMBC's covenant in order to improve scheme viability (i.e. acting as the rental guarantor to encourage development);
- Strategic acquisitions / assembly of development opportunity sites (using the Council's powers of compulsory purchase where necessary) to enable delivery;
- Securing funding (under the SEP for the Black Country) to intervene proactively to de-risk sites to support delivery, including site clearance and remediation;
- Taking a direct development role (repeating the role the Council played in successfully delivering the Primark/Co-op scheme)
- Developing strategies to ensure that occupiers and developers have the right infrastructure and where necessary supporting the provision of town centre infrastructure.

8.1.4 Monitoring

- As this policy brings together the strategy within the AAP it will be monitored through drawing together the findings for all the monitoring indicators in the plan. This will also be reflected in terms of how the plan is delivering against the AAP retail and office floorspace targets.

8.2 St Matthew's Shopping Quarter

Ensuring the shopping heart of Walsall is vibrant and viable is one of the key aims of the AAP. A key function of the town centre is to provide a shopping destination and St Matthew's Quarter along with Park Street (see AAP15) provide the main shopping locations in Walsall town centre.

Policy AAP12: St Matthew's Quarter

a) St Matthew's Quarter is the main location for retail investment in Walsall town centre, largely falling within the Primary Shopping Area, with the opportunity to provide new larger space retail units to meet the needs of modern retailers. These larger space units will complement the current provision in Park Street and the rest of the Primary Shopping Area.

Any application within this area needs to accord with the following policies:

- **Policy AAPS1: Primary Shopping Area**
- **Policy AAPS2: New Retail development**

b) New retail development will be required, wherever possible, to provide large, flexible units to meet retailer requirements.

c) All development within the area will be expected to provide an active and well designed frontage which positively contributes to the street scene. Leisure uses will be supported to bring life to the area, particularly in the evening, where they can be shown not to prejudice the retail function of the Primary Shopping Area. All development will be expected to provide linkages with the rest of the Primary Shopping Area and other parts of the town centre, and in particular St Matthew's Church.

d) All development within the area will be expected to have consideration of the Conservation Areas and listed and locally listed buildings within the area. In particular, the Council will seek to promote the listed Victorian Arcade as a destination for smaller independent retailers.

e) The former Shannon's Mill site (TC26) is allocated as a potential sequential site for convenience or bulky goods retailing along with a mixed used allocation. Any proposal for retailing would need to be strongly integrated with the Primary Shopping Area providing an active pedestrian frontage. Other uses such as car parking for a retail unit could be provided along with residential use and live/work units on upper floors and to the rear of the site.

8.2.1 Policy Justification

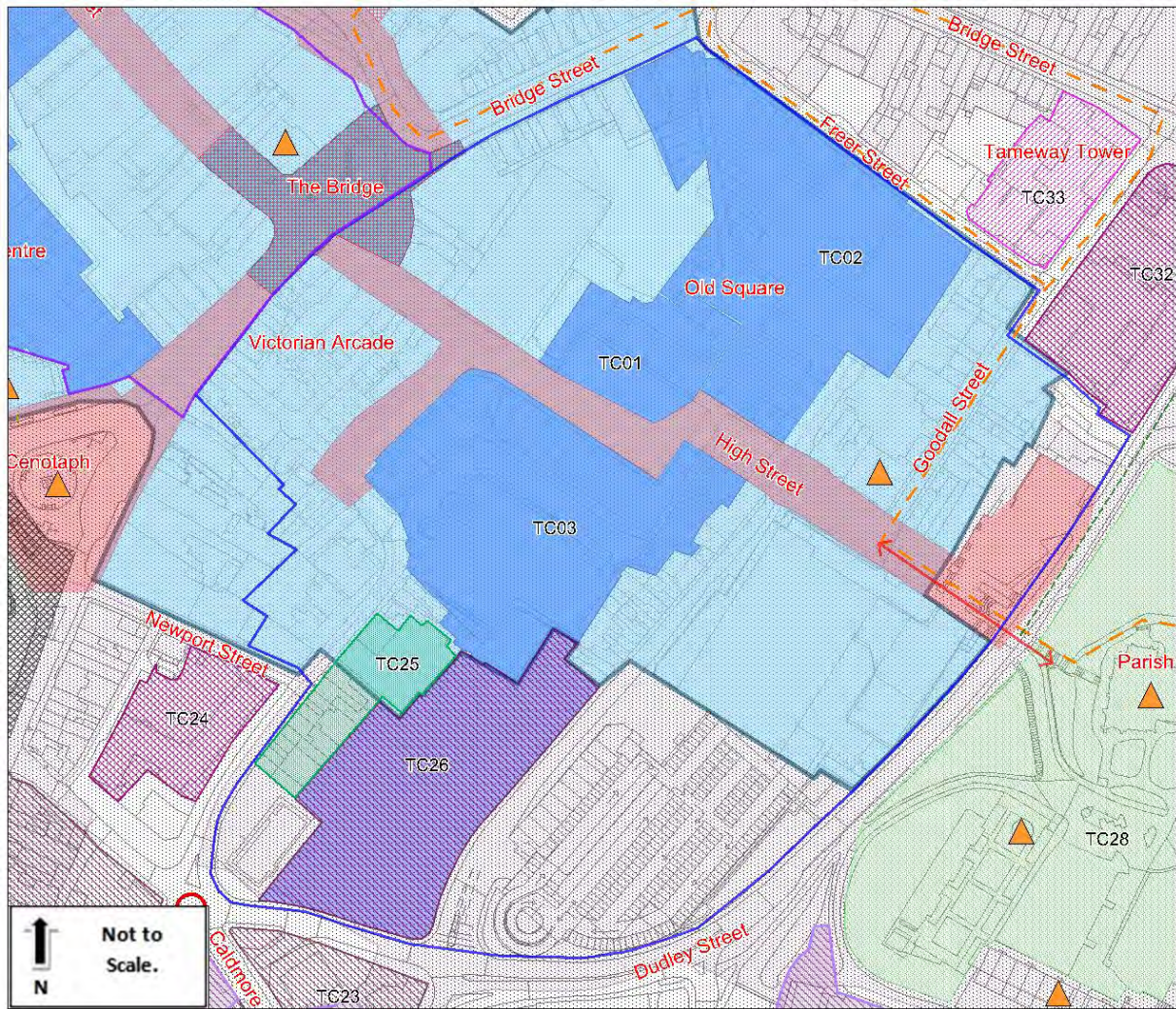
The Council's delivery of new retail premises for Primark and Co-op should improve footfall in St Matthew's Quarter and has worked as a catalyst to encourage neighbouring landowners to move forward with plans for their redevelopment proposals. The owners of the Old Square shopping centre (TC01) and land in Digbeth/ Lower Hall Lane (TC03) have both progressed their proposals for major retail investment, providing larger format stores to meet modern retailer requirements. It is anticipated that both of these schemes will commence on site in the next 12 months, further enhancing the retail offer in the town centre.

The former Shannon's Mill site (TC26) has been removed from the Primary Shopping Area boundary to reflect its peripheral location and the site's development constraints. Residential development (including live/work) is considered more appropriate and will support the regeneration of St Matthew's Quarter by bringing more life, vibrancy and footfall into the area. The site therefore has a mixed use allocation and would be suitable for a number of town centre uses. The site is also considered to be a sequential site for convenience retailing and bulky goods as allocated in Policy AAPS2 due to its proximity to the PSA. It would be possible for a high quality well designed scheme to connect well to the retail core of the centre and strengthen the retail offer in St Matthew's Quarter, provided that it links visually and functionally with the PSA.

The table below sets out the development opportunities within St Matthew's Quarter:

Site Reference	Site Name	Allocation	Justification	Capacity	Timescale	Further Information
TC01	Old Square Phase 2	Retail opportunities for investment/reconfiguration (Policy AAPS2: New Retail development)	Within the PSA	1,000 sqm additional retail floorspace (from planning consent)	Medium term (2-5 years)	Upper floor residential to be retained
TC02	Old Square Phase 3	Retail opportunities for investment/reconfiguration (Policy AAPS2: New Retail development)	Within the PSA	15,657 sqm (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Should be designed so Debenhams is fronting the high street. Part of site covered by flood zone 2. Part of site is high sensitivity (levels 1 and 2) as per town centre

						Characterisation study.
TC03	Digbeth/ Lower Hall Lane	Retail opportunities for investment/reconfiguration (Policy AAPS2: New Retail development)	Within the PSA with a current application	8,247 sqm additional retail floorspace (from planning consent)	Short term (0-2 years)	Part of site within Church Hill Conservation Area
TC26	Former Shannon's Mill site	Convenience retail/ bulky goods (Policy AAPS2: New Retail Development) Mixed use including residential and work/live units.	Front of the site is connected to the PSA physically and visually proving an opportunity for edge of centre retailing.	14,852 sqm over 4 storeys (estimate)	Medium term (2-5 years)	Change in levels. Within Church Hill Conservation Area. Air pollution issues at Upper Hall Lane. Any proposal for retail would need to be integrated with the PSA and provide an active frontage



<p>Chapter 2 Walsall Town Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AAP boundary (AAP1) <p>Chapter 3 A Place for Shopping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Shopping Area boundary (AAPS1) Opportunities for retail investment (AAPS2) Sequential sites for convenience/bulky goods retail development (AAPS2) Walsall Market (AAPS3) <p>Chapter 4 A Place for Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for office development (AAPB1) Opportunities for investment in existing office stock (AAPB1) Social Enterprise Zone (AAPB2) High quality employment land (AAPB3) Consider for release employment land (AAPB3) 	<p>Chapter 5 A Place for Leisure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for leisure investment (AAPLE1) Sports, community, cultural facilities (AAPLE2) Canal (AAPLE4) <p>Chapter 6 A Place for Living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for residential development (AAPLV1) Education investment (AAPLV2) Conservation Area (AAPLV5) Landmark buildings (AAPLV6) Gateway sites for high quality design (AAPLV6) Public realm areas for improvement (AAPLV7) Public realm areas to be maintained (AAPLV7) Urban open space (AAPLV8) 	<p>Chapter 7 Transport, Movement and Accessibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for improved pedestrian linkages (AAP1) Existing greenway (AAP1) Proposed greenway (AAP1) National Cycle Route 5 (AAP2) Proposed cycle improvements (AAP2) Opportunity for public transport investment (AAP3) Railway line (AAP3) Location for junction improvements (AAP4) Strategic highway network Potential location for super car park (AAP5) <p>Chapter 8 A Place for Investment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> St Matthew's Quarter boundary (AAP2) Gigaport masterplan boundary (AAP3) Waterfront area boundary (AAP4) Park Street area boundary (AAP5) Opportunities for mixed town centre uses (AAP6) Mineral Safeguarding Area (AAP7)
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Figure 8.1 St Matthew's Quarter area

Policy AAP12 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

8.2.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.
- Planning applications for the area

8.2.3 Delivery

The Council has already shown its commitment to the development of St Matthew's Quarter through its direct involvement in the Primark scheme. It is anticipated that Primark will act as a catalyst for further retail development and the site opposite has permission for a retail scheme which is envisaged to start construction within the next 12 months. The Council will provide further support to the development of St Matthew's Quarter through:

- Utilising the ownership at Old Square shopping centre to continue to work with developer(s) to promote retail development at this end of the Town Centre, to help anchor the east end of Park Street and create a strong retail circuit;
- Where considered necessary and if feasible, direct involvement in the development of retail opportunities in the PSA in a similar way to the Primark development;
- Working with the land owners and interested parties for the former Shannon's Mill site on a scheme to unlock the site's potential; and
- Funding public realm improvements and pedestrian linkages through the centre to ensure pedestrian movement towards this end of town (see Policy AAPLV7: Enhancing the Public Realm and all the policies within Chapter 7: Transport, Movement and Accessibility).

8.2.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator is proposed to monitor development in St Matthew's Quarter that accords with the policy along with the level of development within the area. This will also be reflected in terms of the area's contribution towards the retail target set out in Policy AAPS2: New Retail Development.

8.3 Walsall Gigaport – Walsall’s Office Destination

Creating an office location in Walsall town centre is crucial to developing an attractive environment that encourages further investment. This policy sets out the overall aim of the Gigaport and sets requirements for developers to ensure the Gigaport is a high quality, well integrated development.

Policy AAPI3: Walsall Gigaport

The Gigaport will be a series of high quality office developments designed to meet the evolving needs of business and enterprise.

a) The sites considered appropriate for office development are allocated on the AAP Policies Map and included below:-

TC36 Ward Street area

TC41 Challenge Block (see section b of this policy below)

TC42 Teddesley Street

TC42a Royal Mail car park in Hatherton Street

TC43 Former Noirit site

TC46 Portland Street area

TC50 Day Street car park (see section c of this policy below)

TC51 Blue Lane East/ Stafford Street

TC52 Green Lane Police Station

TC54 Stafford Street/ Green Lane car park

There are also certain sites that are in the vicinity of the Gigaport area and so could be suitable for office uses, but which are not located within the Gigaport boundary and therefore do not have the benefit of outline planning consent:

TC37 Jabez Cliff

TC55 Wisemore

Office development will be prioritised at sites fronting Littleton Street West. Within other areas of the Gigaport the following uses will be supported in principle when they facilitate the function of the Gigaport as an office location:

- Business Incubation Units,**
- Hotel with conference facilities (use class C1),**
- Live/work space at the rear of the Gigaport area,**
- Ancillary retail and/or restaurant uses (use class A1/A3).**

b) In addition to the above, Challenge Block (TC41) is allocated for the following uses:

- Multi-storey car park (AAPT5)**
- Community hub (AAPLV4)**

- Convenience retail/ bulky goods, if sequentially preferable sites cannot be delivered (AAPS2).

Proposals for any uses will be expected to demonstrate that the multi-storey car park and community hub can also be accommodated at this site, and that the scheme will support and not prejudice their delivery.

Delivery of some or all of the allocated uses may require improvements to the junction of Hatherton Street and Littleton Street.

c) In addition to the above, Day Street car park (TC50) is allocated for the following uses:

- Multi-storey car park, if Challenge Block can't be delivered (AAPT5)
- Convenience retail/ bulky goods, if sequentially preferable sites cannot be delivered (AAPS2).

d) All proposals will be expected to:

i) Be comprehensive in the approach to the use of land and buildings;

ii) Address any adverse impacts on the highway;

iii) Improve pedestrian links to the centre across Littleton Street West and in particular to the Primary Shopping Area and Walsall Arboretum;

iv) Consider sustainable transport improvements such as links to public transport, electric car charging points and cycle provision;

v) Improve the public realm of the Gigaport area; and

vi) Demonstrate that there will be no adverse impact on existing occupiers and that where necessary businesses will be relocated.

Unless justified any car parking proposed would be expected to serve the Gigaport area as a whole, with the maximum car parking ratio for office development being: 1 space per 60 square metres.

8.3.1 Policy Justification

The Gigaport is located on the edge of the town centre's retail and commercial core, and evolved as the preferred location for office investment due to the availability of under-utilised land, investment secured in the new college facilities and an environment enhanced by improvements to the town centre transport package. Critically it is within easy walking distance of town centre shops and services, the

railway station and bus stations, and those facilities will benefit from having Gigaport developments within such close proximity.

Historically the Gigaport area was defined by a masterplan outline planning consent, first approved in 2008, to provide 127,000 sqm of office floorspace plus other complementary uses. This was designated as a response to the BCCS expectation that all strategic centres plan for the delivery of 220,000 sqm office floorspace by 2026. This BCCS requirement has been reviewed by DTZ who concluded that a more realistic, but still aspirational, target of 73,000 sqm of office floorspace should be allocated within the AAP. Taking this revised figure, the Gigaport policy now seeks to allocate sites for office development, as indicated in the table below. If all of the sites noted in the table below are developed to their full capacity, then this revised figure of 73,000 sqm will be exceeded, and it is therefore recognised that some of the sites will not be delivered for office use within the plan period.

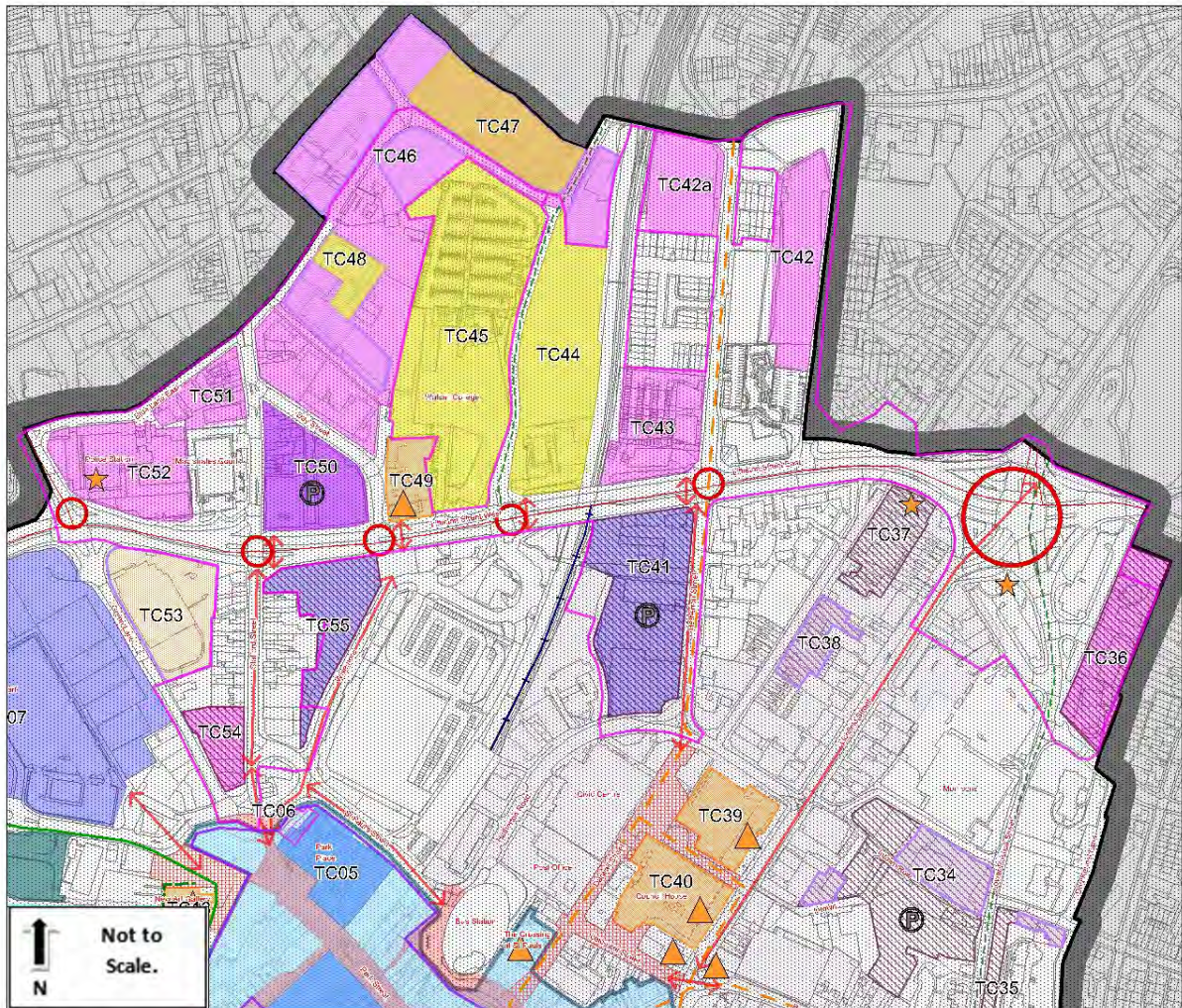
Major schemes such as the Gigaport will be expected to create a high quality environment, including improving pedestrian links to the centre and providing high quality public realm in its streets and spaces (see AAPLV7).

Sites that are allocated for mix use are suitable for a variety of town centre uses apart from A1 retailing when they are outside of the Primary Shopping Area (AAPS1: Primary Shopping Area). All developments will be expected to consider main town centre uses before solely residential schemes in order to protect the function of the town centre and to help realise the potential of sites in supporting the regeneration strategy.

The table on the following page sets out the development opportunities within the Gigaport area:

Site Reference	Site Name	Allocation	Justification	Capacity	Timescale	Further Information
TC36	Ward Street area	Mixed use	Under-utilised site	9,223 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Part of site in flood zone 2. Frontage could be strengthened (as per town centre Characterisation study). Air pollution issues at Lower Rushall Street. Potential noise issues at Broadway North
TC37	Jabez Cliff	Mixed use	Vacant site	7,378 sqm over 4 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Within Lichfield Street Conservation Area. Consider design and massing due to prominent location – part of site is high sensitivity (level 2) and has landmark potential, as per town centre Characterisation study. Access issues. Air quality issues along Littleton Street.
TC41	Challenge Block	Multi storey car park Convenience retail/ bulky goods Mixed use	Under-utilised site	23,812 sqm over 4 storeys (estimate)	Medium term (2-5 years)	Part of site covered by flood zones 2 and 3. Part of site is high sensitivity (level 2) and frontage could be strengthened, as per town centre Characterisation study. Part of site in Limestone consideration area. Air quality issues along Littleton Street.
TC42	Teddesley Street	Office or mixed use	Under-utilised site	10,186 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Frontage could be strengthened, as per town centre Characterisation study
TC42a	Royal Mail car park in Hatherton Street	Office or mixed use	Under-utilised site	7,226 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Site is covered by flood zone 2. Part of site in limestone consideration area.
TC43	Former Noirit site	Office	Partially delivered site with outline consent for further office uses	4,566 sqm office floorspace (from planning application)	Short term (0-2 years)	Part of site covered by flood zones 2 and 3. Site within Limestone consideration area. Air quality issues along Littleton Street.
TC46	Portland Street area	Office	Included within	61,650 sqm over 3	Long term (5-10 years)	Wisemore House is listed. Part of site covered by flood zone 2.

				Gigaport masterplan area	storeys (estimate)			
TC50	Day Street car park	Office and multi storey car park	Included within Gigaport masterplan area	9,942 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Part of site is high sensitivity (level 2) as per town centre Characterisation study. Part of site in Limestone consideration area. Air quality issues along Stafford Street and Garden Street.	The occupied commercial units along Station Street could form part of a scheme if they are positively integrated. If the units are redeveloped the proposals will need to show how the businesses have been relocated within the town centre. Alternatively if a scheme comes forwards that excludes the units, consideration will need to be given to the boundary treatment. Part of site is high sensitivity (level 2) and frontage could be strengthened, as per town centre Characterisation study. Air quality issues along Littleton Street and Day Street.	
TC51	Blue Lane East/ Stafford Street	Office		4,560 over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	High sensitivity (level 2) as per town centre Characterisation study. Part of site in Limestone consideration area. Air quality issues along Stafford Street and Blue Lane.		
TC52	Green Lane Police Station	Office	Included within Gigaport masterplan area	19,567 sqm over 5 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Peripheral location but prominent on ringroad. Frontage could be strengthened (as per town centre Characterisation study). Air quality issues along Littleton Street and Green Lane. The site could include the Walsall Magistrates Court if this was to relocate.		
TC54	Stafford Street/ Green Lane car park	Mixed use	Included within Gigaport masterplan area	3,546 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Part of site in Limestone consideration area.		
TC55	Wisemore	Bulky goods/ convenience retail, Mixed town centre uses	Adjacent to Gigaport masterplan area	8,380 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Medium term (2-5 years)	Frontage could be strengthened (as per town centre Characterisation study). Site within Limestone consideration area. Air quality issues along Littleton Street.		



<p>Chapter 2 Walsall Town Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ AAP boundary (AAP1) <p>Chapter 3 A Place for Shopping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Primary Shopping Area boundary (AAPS1) □ Opportunities for retail investment (AAPS2) □ Sequential sites for convenience/bulky goods retail development (AAPS2) □ Walsall Market (AAPS3) <p>Chapter 4 A Place for Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Opportunities for office development (AAPB1) □ Opportunities for investment in existing office stock (AAPB1) □ Social Enterprise Zone (AAPB2) □ High quality employment land (AAPB3) □ Consider for release employment land (AAPB3) 	<p>Chapter 5 A Place for Leisure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Opportunities for leisure investment (AAPLE1) □ Sports, community, cultural facilities (AAPLE2) □ Canal (AAPLE4) <p>Chapter 6 A Place for Living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Opportunities for residential development (AAPLV1) □ Education investment (AAPLV2) □ Conservation Area (AAPLV5) □ Landmark buildings (AAPLV6) □ Gateway sites for high quality design (AAPLV6) □ Public realm areas for improvement (AAPLV7) □ Public realm areas to be maintained (AAPLV7) □ Urban open space (AAPLV8) 	<p>Chapter 7 Transport, Movement and Accessibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀▶ Opportunities for improved pedestrian linkages (AAPT1) --- Existing greenway (AAPT1) --- Proposed greenway (AAPT1) --- National Cycle Route 5 (AAPT2) --- Proposed cycle improvements (AAPT2) □ Opportunity for public transport investment (AAPT3) --- Railway line (AAPT3) ○ Location for junction improvements (AAPT4) --- Strategic highway network Ⓟ Potential location for super car park (AAPT5) <p>Chapter 8 A Place for Investment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ St Matthew's Quarter boundary (AAPI2) □ Gigaport masterplan boundary (AAPI3) □ Waterfront area boundary (AAPI4) □ Park Street area boundary (AAPI5) □ Opportunities for mixed town centre uses (AAPI6) □ Mineral Safeguarding Area (AAPI7)
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Figure 8.2 Gigaport Area

Policy AAPI3 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified and the uses proposed.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

8.3.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.
- Gigaport outline planning permission - planning reference 07/2659/OL/W7

8.3.3 Delivery

Gigaport is a well established priority for the Council and a number of sites have already been delivered or are under construction within the area including the Jhoots Pharmacy office. The outline Gigaport permission provides the planning framework to give applicants the confidence that office uses will be supported and the Council will help in the delivery of an office corridor by:

- Creating the right environment through public realm, road improvements and improved linkages (see Policy AAPLV7: Enhancing the Public Realm and all the policies within Chapter 7: Transport, Movement and Accessibility);
- Prioritising the sites fronting Littleton Street West in order to develop a corridor of high quality developments that will attract further investment and create a gateway to Walsall;
- Promoting the town centre for inward investment for public and private sector offices;
- Delivering the other improvements to the town centre as proposed in the Plan, including increased leisure provision and an improved retail offer to make the centre an attractive place to invest in but also to work in;
- Working to deliver a multi-storey car park that will provide parking for office workers and visitors along with being flexible to allow some level of individual parking for office developments (see Policy AAPT5: Car Parking);
- Working to overcome issues around congestion on the ring road and to make improvements to the road network (see Policy AAPT4 Road Improvements);
- Using the WMBC's covenant in order to improve scheme viability (i.e. acting as the rental guarantor to encourage development);
- Strategic acquisitions / assembly of development opportunity sites (using the Council's powers of compulsory purchase where necessary) to enable delivery;
- Securing funding (under the SEP for the Black Country) to intervene proactively to de-risk sites to support delivery, including site clearance and remediation;
- Taking a direct development role (repeating the role the Council played in successfully delivering the Primark/Co-op scheme)
- Developing strategies to ensure that occupiers and developers have the right infrastructure and where necessary supporting the provision of town centre infrastructure.

8.3.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator is proposed that monitors the amount of new development within the Gigaport boundary that accords with the policy along with the level of development within the area
- The amount of new office floorspace will also be monitored against the floorspace targets as set out in Policy AAPB1: Office Developments.

8.4 Walsall Waterfront – Walsall’s Leisure Destination

Creating a leisure destination in Walsall is crucial for the future vitality and viability of the centre.

Policy AAPI4: Walsall Waterfront

Walsall Waterfront will become a gateway destination in Walsall for leisure, work and living, providing opportunities to build on the historic canal frontage and creating a unique waterside development.

a) Waterfront North (TC10) will deliver a successful and vibrant cinema-anchored leisure hub with family orientated restaurants. This site is considered to be the main location in the town centre for substantial leisure development to serve the Borough and surrounding areas. The Council will prioritise the delivery of leisure uses as set out in the planning permission (07/2659/OL/W7) and will not allow other schemes to jeopardise the scheme.

b) Appropriate uses for Waterfront Lex site (TC08) include hotel and conference facilities, commercial office use, healthcare related uses and further leisure uses to complement the planned investment currently under construction. Residential use would be acceptable if an appropriate level of residential amenity and suitable access arrangements could be achieved.

c) Appropriate uses for secondary sites (Holiday Hypermarket (TC09), William House and Stafford Works (TC14)) include hotel and conference facilities, cultural uses and further leisure uses that complement the planned investment. Residential will also be appropriate where an acceptable residential environment can be provided without constraining any leisure uses.

d) Waterfront South provides the opportunity to create a canalside community which supports the vitality of the centre and provides a high quality living environment. Residential uses will be suitable at the Kirkpatrick's site (TC11),

William House and Stafford Works (TC14), and FE Towe Ltd, Charles Street (TC15) if the criteria in Policy AAPLV1(f) can be met.

Retail use, except small-scale complementary activities, will not be permitted on any of the Waterfront sites.

All development must be of high design quality complementing the New Art Gallery, the Canal (Policy AAPLE4) and the Conservation Area.

The development of the area should relate positively, in visual and functional terms, to surrounding areas and particularly to the rest of the centre. Strong, and secure, pedestrian linkages will be required both to and within the development to encourage the maximum public access. In particular public access must be provided along the Canal and at least one footbridge provided across the canal arm.

Development opportunities adjacent to the canal will be expected to contribute towards the improvement and maintenance of the canal infrastructure and towpaths.

8.4.1 Policy Justification

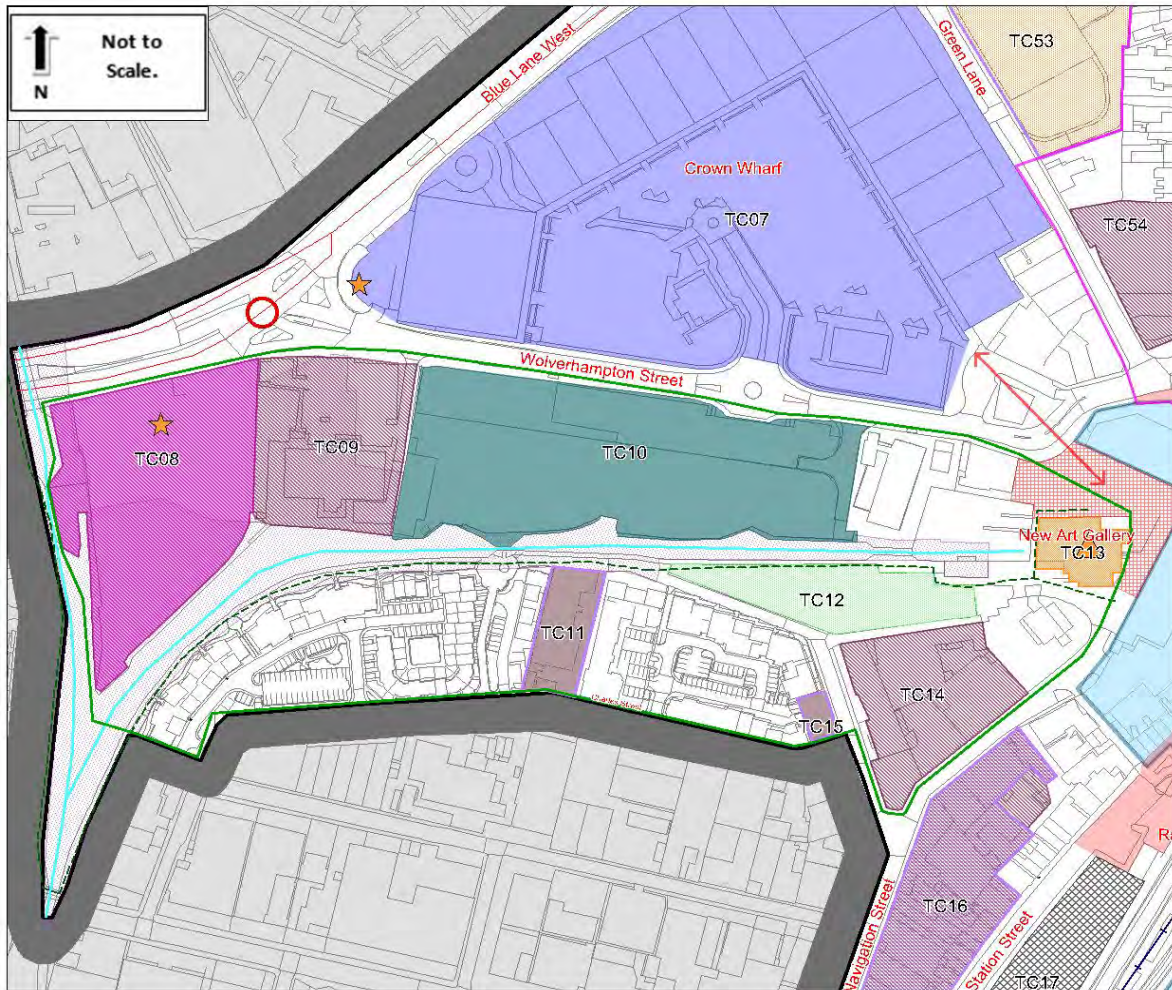
Waterfront North has been the location where the Council has sought to attract leisure development in the town centre, as per the Walsall Waterfront SPD, and the delivery of the 100-bedroom Premier Inn hotel and associated restaurant is the first investment of this nature. The next challenge therefore is to deliver major leisure and entertainment uses on the remainder of the site. Waterfront North needs to build on its location and its links to the town centre and Park Street with high quality public realm and improved east to west movements.

Waterfront Lex site has been the subject of an intrusive site investigation which has narrowed down the remediation costs associated with the site, and it was acquired by the Council in January 2015. Its dual canal frontage and gateway location makes this site a prime development opportunity. Better connections with Waterfront North could be achieved by the inclusion of the Holiday Hypermarket into a more comprehensive development opportunity.

The table on the following page sets out the development opportunities within Walsall Waterfront:

Site Reference	Site Name	Allocation	Justification	Capacity	Timescale	Further Information
TC10	Waterfront North	Leisure	Planning consent (13/0440/FL) granted June 2013 for multi-screen cinema and associated leisure uses. Material amendments granted July 2014 (14/0779/FL)	7,005 sqm leisure scheme (from planning consent)	Short term (0-2 years)	Adjacent to Canal Locks Conservation Area. Frontage could be strengthened (as per town centre Characterisation study). Site within Limestone consideration area.
TC08	Waterfront Lex	Mixed use – including office		4,824 sqm over 5 storeys (estimate from potential end user)	Medium term (2-5 years)	Access issues from Wolverhampton Road. Contamination & remediation issues. Southern part of the site falls within Walsall Locks Conservation Area. Frontage could be strengthened and potential location for landmark building (as per town centre Characterisation study). Part of site in Limestone mine consideration zone. Air quality issues along Wolverhampton Street.
TC09	Holiday Hypermarket	Mixed use		8,454 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Potential noise issues at Wolverhampton Road. Part of the site falls within Walsall Locks Conservation Area. Limestone mine consideration zone. Site within Limestone consideration area. Air quality issues along Wolverhampton Street.

TC14	William House and Stafford Works	Mixed use		8,538 sqm over 4 storeys (estimate)	Medium term (2-5 years)	High sensitivity (level 2) as per town centre Characterisation study.
TC11	Kirkpatricks site	Housing	Consider for release employment land	Approx. 40 residential units over 4 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Part of site in Limestone consideration area. Site within Limestone consideration area.
TC15	FE Towe Ltd, Charles Street	Residential	Consider for release employment site, within predominantly residential area	Approx. 20 residential units over 3 storeys.	Long term (5-10 years)	



<p>Chapter 2 Walsall Town Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AAP boundary (AAP1) <p>Chapter 3 A Place for Shopping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Shopping Area boundary (AAPS1) Opportunities for retail investment (AAPS2) Sequential sites for convenience/bulky goods retail development (AAPS2) Walsall Market (AAPS3) <p>Chapter 4 A Place for Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for office development (AAPB1) Opportunities for investment in existing office stock (AAPB1) Social Enterprise Zone (AAPB2) High quality employment land (AAPB3) Consider for release employment land (AAPB3) 	<p>Chapter 5 A Place for Leisure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for leisure investment (AAPLE1) Sports, community, cultural facilities (AAPLE2) Canal (AAPLE4) <p>Chapter 6 A Place for Living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for residential development (AAPLV1) Education investment (AAPLV2) Conservation Area (AAPLV5) Landmark buildings (AAPLV6) Gateway sites for high quality design (AAPLV6) Public realm areas for improvement (AAPLV7) Public realm areas to be maintained (AAPLV7) Urban open space (AAPLV8) 	<p>Chapter 7 Transport, Movement and Accessibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for improved pedestrian linkages (AAPT1) Existing greenway (AAPT1) Proposed greenway (AAPT1) National Cycle Route 5 (AAPT2) Proposed cycle improvements (AAPT2) Opportunity for public transport investment (AAPT3) Railway line (AAPT3) Location for junction improvements (AAPT4) Strategic highway network Potential location for super car park (AAPT5) <p>Chapter 8 A Place for Investment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> St Matthew's Quarter boundary (AAPI2) Gigaport masterplan boundary (AAPI3) Waterfront area boundary (AAPI4) Park Street area boundary (AAPI5) Opportunities for mixed town centre uses (AAPI6) Mineral Safeguarding Area (AAPI7)
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Figure 8.3 Waterfront Area

Policy AAPI4 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

8.4.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ.
- Waterfront Cinema Planning Permission – planning reference 13/0440/FL and 14/0779/FL

8.4.3 Delivery

Much of Walsall Waterfront, such as the hotel, has been completed or are under construction, as in the case of the Cinema development. The Council will look to protect the cinema scheme by resisting any proposals that may compromise its delivery and directing further leisure developments to the Waterfront area to create a leisure hub. Furthermore, the Council will also look to support the delivery of the remaining waterfront sites. This includes:

- Pre-applications discussions with owners and interested parties on Waterfront Lex and William House / Stafford Works;
- Implementing the required remediation works at Waterfront Lex, following successful application for LGF funding
- Support with finding suitable alternative sites / premises for industry within the waterfront boundary (see Policy AAPB3: Town Centre Employment Land));
- Working with the Canal and River Trust to maintain the quality of the canalside environment and where appropriate utilising developer contributions to improve and maintain the waterfront environment to ensure it remains a high quality leisure development (see Policy AAPLE4: Walsall Canal);
- Protecting and enhancing the links between Waterfront and the rest of town, especially in regards to maintaining the canal towpath through Council investment, partnership working with Centro and where appropriate developer contributions (see Policy AAPLE4: Walsall Canal and Policy AAPT1: Pedestrian Movement, Access and Linkages); and
- In the longer term looking to realise the potential of the Holiday Hypermarket site so that the full potential of the canal location is fulfilled.

8.4.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator will record the amount of new development within the Waterfront boundary that accords with the policy.

8.5 Park Street

Park Street is the core of the town centre where the prime rental levels are achieved and the majority of the big high street names are congregated. Its position moving forward should remain as the retail core where retailers and complementary service providers are encouraged to locate. However if this position is to be maintained in the long term, Walsall's attractiveness to retail investment needs to be improved.

Policy AAPI5: Park Street Shopping Core

- a) **Park Street shopping core, which includes the Saddler's shopping centre and Park Place shopping centre and other surrounding streets, will be protected and enhanced as the primary retail location. This will be achieved by directing retail investment into vacant units and through working with landlords to reconfigure units to meet modern retail requirements, where appropriate (Policy AAPS2).**
- b) **Developments in Park Street will be expected to positively contribute to the street scene and create active frontages, complementing the existing built environment, particularly those buildings which are listed or locally listed and those which fall within Conservation Areas (AAPS1, AAPLV6).**
- c) **Park Street will also be the area where the Council seeks to maximise investment in public realm improvements, connected to the delivery of the new market (Policy AAPS3) and the implementation of the Council's public realm strategy (Policy AAPLV7). The Council will seek to ensure that new developments improve the linkages between the Park Street shopping core and Crown Wharf, Waterfront and public transport interchanges (Policy AAPT1).**
- d) **There are currently significant areas of under-utilised space at upper floors in the Park Street shopping core and the Council will encourage landowners to bring this space back into economic use for appropriate town centre uses, including residential if amenity is not compromised (AAPLV1).**

8.5.1 Policy justification

Park Street shopping core is the heart of Walsall town centre, it is therefore crucial that all policies and proposals in the plan look to protect and enhance this part of the centre. Whilst the Park Street area offers fewer opportunities for large scale change due to the smaller retail units and diverse land ownership there will be opportunities

to maximise its potential. The Council will actively look to reduce vacancies and promote the use of upper floors to bring further life into the centre.

There are some opportunities for reconfiguration as set out in Policy AAPS2 within the Saddler's Centre and Park Place. These shopping centres play a crucial role in supporting Park Street through the provision of larger indoor units offering routes through to other parts of the centre and public transport hubs. Leisure uses such as A3 and A5 will be permitted in this area to bring life into the centre, as in accordance with policy AAPS1.

It is recognised that improvements are needed to Park Street's public realm to create a high quality shopping destination. The Council has therefore identified this as the key area for schemes and will look to build on the public realm implemented as part of the new Walsall Market (as per Policy AAPLV7).

Improving the linkages between Park Street and other areas of the centre is fundamental to ensuring its vitality and viability. All new large scale development is required to consider its relationship with the Primary Shopping Area, in which the Park Street shopping core falls (AAPS1). Particular areas in need of improvements have been identified on the AAP Policies Map and the Council will look to prioritise links between Park Street and attractions in the centre that generate significant footfall such as edge-of-centre retail parks (particularly Crown Wharf), food stores and public transport hubs to encourage movement throughout the centre.

Site Reference	Site Name	Allocation	Justification	Capacity	Timescale	Further Information
TC04	Saddler's Centre	Retail opportunities for investment/reconfiguration (Policy AAPS2: New Retail development)	Within the PSA	22,794 sqm (refurbishment)	Long term (5-10 years)	Part of site is within flood zone 2. Part of site is high sensitivity (level 2) as per town centre Characterisation study.
TC05	Park Place	Retail opportunities for investment/reconfiguration (Policy AAPS2: New Retail development)	Within the PSA	7,210 sqm (refurbishment)	Long term (5-10 years)	Frontage could be strengthened (as per town centre Characterisation study).

TC06	Townend House	Investment in existing office stock (Policy AAPB1:Office Developments)	Under-utilised office building	4,472 sqm (refurbishment)	Long term (5-10 years)	Frontage could be strengthened (as per town centre Characterisation study).
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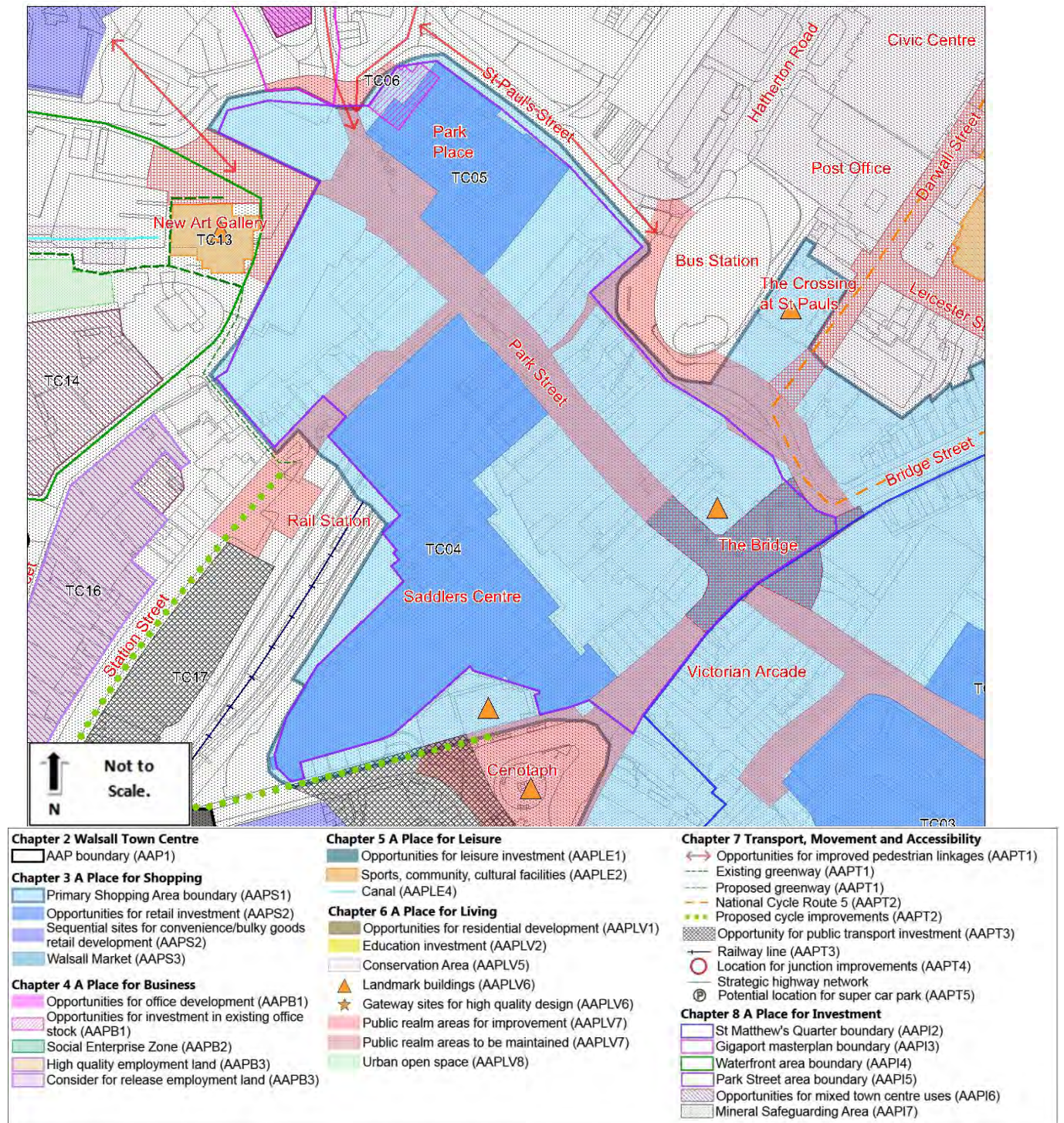


Figure 8.4 Park Street area

Policy AAPI5 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

8.5.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ
- Information provided in support of planning application for the new market – planning reference 14/1871/FL

8.5.3 Delivery

The key short term priority for the Park Street area is to deliver the new Walsall Market scheme (see Policy AAPS3: The New Walsall Market) and the Council is committed to delivering this scheme. The improved market layout should attract new stall holders and increase the level of footfall in the area. Park Street should also benefit from the recent Primark investment which should draw further investment into the centre and provide an improved shopping offer. The Council will further support the development of the Park Street area by:

- Continuing the public realm improvements from the New Market along Park Street (see Policy AAPLV7: Enhancing the Public Realm);
- Improving linkages, especially to Crown Wharf to encourage footfall throughout the centre (Policy AAPT1: Pedestrian Movement, Access and Linkages);
- Utilising planning policy to attract investment into the PSA and to deter developments that will have negative impacts on the centre's health through drawing away investment and spending;
- Supporting business to invest and relocate within the PSA;
- Working with land owners and investors to explore opportunities for the reconfiguration of retail units to provide larger modern units;
- Further direct involvement (in addition to the Primark scheme) in the development of retail opportunities in the PSA; and

8.5.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator is proposed to record the amount of new development with the Park Street boundary that accords with the policy along with monitoring the amount of retail floorspace against the targets set out in AAPS2: New Retail Development.

8.6 Secondary Development Sites

In addition to the Big Three, there are a number of other development opportunities. These sites are secondary opportunities, some of which are individual sites whilst others are made up of a number of smaller sites. They have been identified because they are either Council owned, consider for release employment sites, or vacant opportunities.

Policy AAP16: Secondary Development Sites

- a) Secondary Sites provide a key role in meeting other needs in the centre such as community facilities, conferencing and banqueting facilities, residential, car parking and smaller leisure facilities. All proposals for these sites should:
- i) Accord with all other policies within the plan;
 - ii) Demonstrate that where there are active uses on the sites making up the development opportunities that these can be positively relocated;
 - iii) Be a comprehensive scheme which makes the best use of land; and
 - iv) Have consideration for the character of the area and be of high quality design.

b) In order to maximise the potential of town centre sites, schemes that propose solely residential use will need to demonstrate that the proposal supports and does not prejudice the centre's retail, commercial and leisure function. Proposals will need to demonstrate that a mixed use scheme incorporating other town centre uses has been considered and that a residential development is the best option for delivering the site.

The table below sets out the sites identified in the plan and the proposed use.

c) There may be other sites that aren't specifically identified at this time which would be suitable as a development for appropriate town centre uses. Where these schemes come forward they will be expected to be in accordance with the principles and policies set out in the AAP.

Site Reference	Site Name	Allocation	Justification	Capacity	Timescale	Site Requirements
TC16	Station Street	Town centre uses other than A1 retail. Suitable location for hotel, banqueting or conference facilities. Residential uses will be supported where a high quality living environment can be created. Station Street Car Park (TC17) adjacent is allocated for the expansion of railway services.	Consider for release employment land. Gateway site due to close proximity to the rail station, and opportunity to redevelop former Boak site.	10,500 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Part of site is within flood zone 2. High sensitivity (level 2) as per town centre Characterisation study.
TC20	Midland Road	Town centre uses other than A1 retail. Suitable location for banqueting facilities. Residential uses will be supported where a high quality living environment can be created.	Consider for release employment land.	14,095 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Some parts within Bradford Street Conservation Area. Part of site is high sensitivity (level 2) as per town centre Characterisation study. Air quality issues along Wednesbury Road.
TC21	Bradford Street area	Town centre uses other than A1 retail. Residential will be supported on upper floors.	Mountrath Street Council owned car park provides redevelopment opportunity.	34,326 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Some parts within Bradford Street Conservation Area. Most of site is high sensitivity (levels 1 and 2) as per town centre Characterisation study.

				Bradford Street is busy route into the town centre.					Air quality issues along Wednesbury Road and Mountrath Street.
TC22	Vicarage Place/ Caldmore Road	Town centre uses other than A1 retail. Residential uses will be supported where a high quality living environment can be created.	Consider for release employment land	6,090 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Part of site within Bradford Street Conservation Area. High sensitivity (level 2) as per town centre Characterisation study. Air quality issues along Mountrath Street.			
TC23	Caldmore Road/ Upper Hall Lane	Town centre uses other than retail. Residential uses will be supported where a high quality living environment can be created.	Consider for release employment land	3,373 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Part of site within Church Hill Conservation Area. High sensitivity (level 2) as per town centre Characterisation study. Air quality issues along Upper Hall Lane.			
TC24	Lower Hall Lane/ Newport Street	Opportunities for investment in office stock Town centre uses other than A1 retail.	Office building with vacancies that would benefit from refurbishment or redevelopment.	3,327 sqm over 3 storeys (refurbishment)	Long term (5-10 years)	Air quality issues at junction of Mountrath Street/ Upper Hall Lane.			
TC27	New Street	Town centre uses other than A1 retail. Residential uses will be supported where a high quality living environment can be created.	Consider for release employment land	4,047 sqm over 2 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Air quality issues along Dudley Street/ Peel Street.			
TC30	Ablewell Street (east)	Town centre uses other than A1 retail. Residential uses will be supported as part of a	Parts of the site are consider for release employment sites.	41,592 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Part of site within Church Hill Conservation Area. Part of site is high sensitivity			

		comprehensive scheme for the area including other centre uses and where a high quality living environment can be created.				(level 2) and some parts of the frontage could be strengthened, as per town centre Characterisation study. Some air quality issues at Ablewell Street.
TC31	Upper Rushall Street/ Town Hill	Town centre uses other than A1 retail. Residential uses will be supported where a high quality living environment can be created.	Council owned vacant site, located on a key route in the town.	3,997 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Part of site within Church Hill Conservation Area. Part of site is high sensitivity (level 2) and frontage could be strengthened, as per town centre Characterisation study. Some air quality issues along Upper Rushall Street.
TC32	Regina Court	Town centre uses other than retail, Investment in existing office stock	Largely Council owned and partly vacant.	14,708 sqm over 4 storeys (refurbishment)	Long term (5-10 years)	Some air quality issues along Upper Rushall Street.
TC33	Tameway Tower	Investment in existing office stock	Vacant/ under-utilised office building	9,432 sqm (refurbishment)	Long term (5-10 years)	
TC34	Intown area	Town centre uses other than A1 retail, Multi storey car park. Residential uses will be supported as part of a comprehensive scheme for the area including other centre uses and where a high quality living environment can	Council owned car parks and consider for release employment sites.	19,113 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Part of site is within flood zone 2. Small parts of site are high sensitivity (level 1) as per town centre Characterisation study. Some air quality issues along Lower Rushall Street.

		be created.					
TC35	Lower Rushall Street/ Holtshill Lane	Town centre uses other than A1 retail. Residential uses will be supported where a high quality living environment can be created.	Council owned car park and consider for release employment sites.	2,850 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Frontage could be strengthened (as per town centre Characterisation study). Some air quality issues along Lower Rushall Street.	
TC38	Lower Forster Street	Town centre uses other than retail. Residential uses will be supported where a high quality living environment can be created.	Consider for release employment sites.	3,429 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	High sensitivity (level 2) as per town centre Characterisation study.	
TC47	North of Portland Street	Education Office	Consider for release employment land within Gigaport masterplan area and close proximity to Walsall College	11,026 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Part of site is within flood zone 2. Site within Limestone consideration area.	
TC48	21 Portland Street	Education Office	Consider for release employment land within Gigaport masterplan area. Walsall College has consent for conversion to educational facility.		Medium term (2-5 years)	Site within Limestone consideration area. Some air quality issues along Portland Street.	

8.6.1 Policy Justification

The AAP has adopted an approach around concentrating development in three key locations (St Matthew's Quarter, Gigaport and Waterfront) along with the Park Street core shopping area, in order to provide the best strategy for regeneration (see policies AAPI2-5 above). There are however, a number of other secondary sites in the town centre which provide opportunities for development. These sites are still important to the regeneration of the town and many provide key opportunities for main town centre uses. The sites have mainly been identified because they are:

- Consider for release employment sites (see policy AAPB3: Town Centre Employment Land)
- Council owned car parks that could be redeveloped (See policy AAPT5: Car Parking)

Generally these sites will be suitable for a mix of town centre uses apart from A1 retailing as they are outside of the Primary Shopping Area (AAPS1: Primary Shopping Area). Mixed use developments will be encouraged including the provision of residential on upper floors. All developments will be expected to consider main town centre uses before solely residential schemes in order to protect the function of the town centre and to help realise the potential of sites in supporting the regeneration strategy.

Although the sites are called secondary it may be that some come forward for development before other sites identified by the Council as priorities. This will be supported where the development of secondary sites does not undermine the regeneration strategy – in particular the delivery of Gigaport for offices or Waterfront for leisure (see AAPI3: Walsall Gigaport and AAPI4: Walsall Waterfront).

There are other sites within the town centre that are suitable for development and the Council will be supportive of proposals that accord with the principles and policies set out in the AAP.

Policy AAPI6 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the sites identified

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

8.6.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ

8.6.3 Delivery

Whilst these sites are not considered as the Council's main priorities, the Council is keen to work with developers and investors to bring forward the sites for suitable uses that support the regeneration strategy of the plan. This will include:

- Creating the right environment through public realm, road improvements and improved linkages (see Policy AAPLV7: Enhancing the Public Realm and all the policies within Chapter 7: Transport, Movement and Accessibility);
- Delivering the other improvements to the town centre as proposed in the Plan, including increased leisure provision, an improved retail offer and an office corridor to make the centre an attractive place to invest in but also to work in;
- Promoting the town centre for inward investment for public and private sector businesses;
- Where necessary using the WMBC's covenant in order to improve scheme viability (i.e. acting as the rental guarantor to encourage development); and
- Strategic acquisitions / assembly of development opportunity sites (using the Council's powers of compulsory purchase where necessary) to enable delivery on sites the Council consider as crucial to the centres regeneration.

It must be noted however that the Council has limited resources and the plan has set out properties which are considered to have the most potential for knock-on benefits for the centre as a whole. It is anticipated that through the concentration of efforts and resources there will be further investment in the town centre as a whole and these secondary sites will come forward through the private sector. Once the priority sites have been developed the Council will review its regeneration programme to focus on those secondary sites which are considered to be in prominent locations or most suitable for development.

8.6.4 Monitoring

- Amount of secondary sites developed in accordance with the policy.

8.7 Addressing Potential Site Constraints

There are a number of constraints in the town centre, many stemming from the industrial history of the area and historic drainage systems. As such, development in Walsall is often impeded by abnormal development costs. The Council is proactive at working with developers and landowners to address site constraints wherever practicable and the policy below provides the information to developers to allow these to be fully considered.

Policy AAPI7: Addressing Potential Site Constraints

The Council will work with developers, agents and landowners to understand the constraints of individual sites and where possible provide support in addressing constraints that prevent the delivery of sites.

a) Flood Risk

Development proposals will be determined in accordance with the NPPF and BCCS Policy ENV5 UDP Policy ENV40 and government advice.

The Council require Flood Risk Assessments (FRAs) to be provided in support of planning applications for:

i) all development proposals within Flood Zone 1 of 1 hectare or more and all proposals for development in Flood Zones 2 and 3;

ii) Developments in other areas with critical drainage problems;

iii) all other proposals for major development with the exception of those that are not affected by any source of flood risk and that have a site area less than 1 hectare.

Development that cannot be located in zones with a lower probability of flooding, or within the appropriate Flood Zone for the proposed use, the application of the 'Exception Test' may be required and should meet the requirements of NPPF Paragraph 102 and national planning practice guidance.

The Council requires that:-

iv) major development proposals incorporate a sustainable drainage system (SDS) to manage surface water runoff, unless the applicant can demonstrate it is inappropriate to do so.

v) a drainage strategy based on SuDS principles, in accordance with the NPPF, non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems and / or any other local standards or SPDs, is provided for all major proposals that are not affected by any source of flood risk and that have a site area of less than 1 hectare.

b) Air Quality

Developments need to accord with BCCS Policy ENV8 Air Quality and the NPPF. Where schemes for either sensitive uses (residential, education, healthcare and education facilities and places of work) are proposed in areas where air quality does not meet national air quality objectives, or cause an exceedance of national air quality objectives, or otherwise bring about an increase in pollutant burden in areas of existing poor air quality, an appropriate detailed air quality assessment will be required. Measures may be necessary in some locations to permit development provided satisfactory mitigation can be achieved and developers will be expected to consider the siting and design of schemes to address air quality issues.

c) Noise Pollution

There may be some areas in the town centre where developments need to have consideration to the level of noise. Proposals for residential developments and other sensitive uses such as healthcare and education facilities should be designed in a way to ensure impacts of environmental noise are at an acceptable standard. Noise producing development will be required to control and mitigate noise to avoid significant adverse impacts on sensitive receptors, and to reduce to a minimum all other impacts.

d) Ground Contamination and Ground Conditions

Developers will be expected to undertake ground contamination and condition assessments and where necessary address them as part of the scheme. The Council will where possible work with developers to overcome any issues which are preventing the delivery of development. Where difficult ground conditions and/or contamination is present, this will be taken into account when assessing development viability and appropriate mitigation strategies.

e) Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA)

A minerals safeguarding area (MSA) is defined on the AAP Policies Map. Where non-mineral development is proposed in the MSA, which falls within the thresholds identified in BCCS Policy MIN1, applicants will be expected to

consider the feasibility of extracting any minerals present in advance of the development (“prior extraction”). It is recognised that in Walsall “prior extraction” of the above minerals will rarely be feasible. The Council will therefore support non-mineral developments within the MSA where it can be demonstrated that “prior extraction” is not feasible, such as in the situations described in BCCS Policy MIN1.

8.7.1 Policy Justification

AAP17(a) Flooding: The main watercourse under the town centre (Ford Brook) was culverted in the late 1970s/ early 1980s, and whilst this provides a reasonable degree of flood protection, in extreme events or if a blockage occurs, the town centre could be affected by flooding. With climate change, the risk of flooding is likely to increase and the long-term sustainability and management of watercourses in the town centre needs to be considered as part of the AAP.

The Council is in the process of updating the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the Borough. The Functional Floodplain (Flood Zone 3b) shown in the technical appendices is part of the ongoing work on the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and will continue to be updated as further information becomes available. An updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment will be published in due course.

Flooding poses a costly risk to property and can also pose a risk to life and livelihoods. It is essential that future development is planned carefully so that areas most at risk from flooding are avoided where possible, ensuring that known flooding issues are not exacerbated and new ones are not created elsewhere.

Section 10 of the NPPF, and particularly paragraph 100, requires the Council to concentrate development within areas of lower risk from flooding following the application of a sequential test. Following the Pitt review (2008) significant changes have been made to national policy and guidance relating to flood risk, in particular, emphasis has been placed on the planning system as a delivery mechanism for flood mitigation measures as part of new major development (as defined in the Development Management Procedure Order – SI 2015/595) through the installation of sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS). There may also be a need for mitigation measures to be delivered in the centre such as an early warning system to reduce the impact of flooding on the town centre.

The policy applies the provisions of the NPPF and BCCS and takes into account local circumstances that aren't mentioned in the NPPF by requesting that major development less than 1 hectare (e.g. 10+ houses) provide a drainage strategy. Walsall is susceptible to surface water flooding and the requirement for major

developments of less than 1 hectare to consider and provide a sustainable means of drainage will contribute towards mitigating flood risk from a source of local concern.

AAPI7(b) Air Quality: Air pollution is a major concern in the Borough with road traffic being the main contributor to adverse air quality, a significant issue in the town centre. Poor air quality affects the health and well-being of local people living along key road corridors which carry high volumes of traffic. The technical appendices show the areas of air quality (nitrogen dioxide, NO₂) exceedence in the town centre. The AAP has identified for the development sites included in the plan where air quality may need to be a consideration but this may not be a definitive list and it may change over the plan period; air quality will therefore need to be considered on an individual site basis in consultation with the Council. For some developments a basic screening assessment of air quality may be all that is required whereas other developments may need a full air quality assessment.

AAPI7(c) Noise: There may be some areas in the town centre, such as along the ring road, where road traffic generates levels of noise that could impact on amenity. Developments for residential uses or other sensitive uses will need to consider the impact of noise if they are located next a busy road or existing noise-producing development, and include mitigation methods such as the siting and design of buildings. Some leisure and commercial uses in the centre, especially those which operate in the evenings and night-time, may also create higher levels of noise. Proposals for noise-sensitive development will not be supported near to such uses unless it can be demonstrated that any impacts can be mitigated to an acceptable level. Securing a high quality residential environment is crucial to creating a centre where people want to live, however a balance is needed as the centre is the main location for leisure and residential developments should not be allowed to negatively impact of these uses.

AAPI7(d) Ground Contamination and Ground Conditions: Significant areas of land within the Borough have been developed and redeveloped over time with consequential impacts upon the underlying ground conditions. Based on historical usage, areas in the Borough where potentially problematic ground conditions may be encountered have been shown as indicative areas in the technical appendices and for example include:

- Made Ground (artificially changing the level of land);
- Landfill; (disposing of waste or unwanted materials by burying)
- Potentially contaminated ground attributable to previous industrial or commercial operations;
- Near surface or open cast coal mining

Potential new sites for allocation that fall within these indicative areas may be affected by one or more of the factors set out above and where the Council is aware

of adverse site conditions these have been included as part of the site information tables. The presence of difficult underlying ground conditions may not necessarily prevent development, for example, new development proposals within Coal Mining Development Referral Areas would not automatically be deemed as undeliverable, but would be expected to undertake a Coal Mining Risk Assessment. Where difficult ground conditions are present they will be taken into account when assessing development scheme viability.

AAPI7(e) Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA): The purpose of the MSA is to safeguard mineral resources from needless sterilisation by non-mineral development in accordance with BCCS Policy MIN1 and national policy guidance which states that minerals planning authorities should not normally permit other development proposals in mineral safeguarding areas where they might constrain future mineral extraction.

The policy therefore requires planning applications for non-mineral development within the MSA, which fall within the BCCS Policy MIN1 thresholds, to demonstrate that “prior extraction” of minerals has been considered and applicants are expected to provide justification if “prior extraction” is not proposed. The term “prior extraction” means the extraction of minerals in advance of a redevelopment scheme, as a means of avoiding further “sterilisation” of the resource. However, “prior extraction” is only likely to be feasible where minerals occur close to the surface, and where significant land remediation is required.

The recent viability and delivery study by Amec Foster Wheeler has considered the potential for “prior extraction” in Walsall. The study has identified situations where “prior extraction” of sand and conglomerate may be able to provide a source of construction aggregates for use on-site or for sale, which may help offset the costs of individual development. However, “prior extraction” of coal is only likely to be feasible in the urban areas of Walsall on very large sites where extensive remediation is required. Overall, the study concurs with the Council’s view that “prior extraction” is rarely likely to be feasible or economically viable in Walsall. The policy therefore adopts the same pragmatic approach as the BCCS, recognising that in the urban areas of Walsall, the need for new development will often outweigh the need to safeguard any minerals that remain present beneath the ground, even if it is feasible in practice to extract them.

Policy AAPI7 Question

Do you: a) Support the policy b) Support the policy with suggested changes c) Disagree with the principle of the policy d) Disagree with the wording or e) Disagree with the data we have used.

Please give reasons for your answers and where possible provide evidence and suggested changes.

8.1.2 Evidence

- Walsall Town Centre Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment (July 2015) DTZ
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the Black Country (Level 1), (2009) Jacobs
- Walsall Council Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment, (2011) Walsall Council
- Walsall Council SAD & AAP Minerals Project: Review of Evidence Base for Minerals and Viability and Deliverability of Mineral Development Options (July 2015), Amec Foster Wheeler
- West Midlands Low Emissions Towns and Cities Programme Planning Guidance (May 2014) West Midlands Low Emissions Towns & Cities Programme

8.1.3 Delivery

Any potential issue around constraints will need to be addressed on an individual proposal basis. Council teams will work with land owners, developers and investors to understand the constraints on sites and the impact this has on a site's delivery. More specifically the Council will:

- Look to deliver through CIL an early warning system for the centre to reduce the impact of flooding on developments and the cost of mitigation on developers;
- Work in partnership with the other Black Country authorities to consider produce an air quality SPD that will look to mitigate against the impacts of air pollution, especially from vehicle emissions;;
- Support with understanding the impact of noise on developments and the possible mitigation methods; and
- Where necessary support the development of sites through undertaking work on contamination remediation, such as the Waterfront Lex site which the Council is remediating with Local Growth Fund assistance.

8.1.4 Monitoring

- Floodrisk will be monitored through BCCS indicator COI ENV5 which records the number of planning permissions granted in accordance with EA advice on flooding and water quality ground along with a new indicator of the number of planning permissions granted in accordance with Lead Local Flood Authority advice. Also the number of major developments with SuDs will also be monitored.
- Air quality will be monitored though BCCS indicator LOI ENV8 which records the proportion of planning permissions granted in accordance with Air Quality/Environmental Protection Section's recommendations.
- Noise and contaminated land will also be monitored by a new indicator that records the proportion of planning permissions granted in accordance with Environmental Protection Section's recommendations.
- Finally the MSA is monitored through BCCS indicator LOI MIN1 which records if non-mineral development proposals approved within the MSA (falling within the policy thresholds) will sterilise mineral resources

9. Get Involved

We want our residents and other interested parties to inform the development of our plans. Your views (where possible, supported by evidence) are important, and the Council wants to receive them during the 8 week consultation period from **September 7th – November 2nd**

You can view these documents and respond online by visiting **www.walsall.gov.uk/planning_2026**. Paper copies of the documents are also available to view at your local library.

What happens next?

Following the consultation period, a consultation report will be produced which will outline the comments which were received and how they have been used to inform the next stage of the AAP. This document will be available to view using the 'Planning 2026' tab as above.

The responses received during consultation will be an important source of information which will be used to help shape the final version of the plan. This will be submitted to the Secretary of State and will be subject to an Examination by an independent Planning Inspector who will test the soundness of the Plan and produce a report setting out what changes, if any, are required.

Throughout the AAP process the Council will continue to collect evidence, react to currently unknown development proposals and evaluate the options. This will help to ensure that the emerging planning policy is up to date, robust and considered deliverable.

Winners of Children's Drawing Competition

Children were invited enter a drawing competition to let us know what they would like to see in Walsall in the future as part of the consultation at Issues and Options stage in 2013. Three winners were selected out of a total of 21 fantastic entries and received vouchers courtesy of Walsall's Smyth's toy store and were on display at the Walsall Art Gallery. The winning entries are published below.



WINNER - Alice aged 9 from Lichfield

I want to see...



RUNNER UP - Chantel aged 11

I want to see... More thing to play with in my local park



RUNNER UP - Ameera aged 7 from Pheasey Park Farm

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