

Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan

Preferred Options Document



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 'Preferred Options Document', we have produced a Town Centre Policies Map. You can also view the 'Draft Plan' which provides the plan as we think it should be without the explanation text included in this document. 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

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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 Preferred Options Document

This is the Preferred Options document, it includes our Draft Plan which is what we think Walsall Town Centre AAP should include, along with the background details that explain how we developed the Draft Plan. **The additional text is in blue throughout the document.** A number of the policies relate to allocations or designations on the Draft AAP Policies Map and the reader should review the Draft Map alongside the plan. This is the second stage in the preparation of the final AAP. The first stage – Issues and Options – was subject to public consultation in 2013. This document provides a summary of how the Issues and Options consultation responses informed the Draft Plan. It also provides an overview on how the Sustainability Appraisal process 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 views are also being sought on these documents and they can be accessed on our website:

www.walsall.gov.uk/planning_policy

1.3 How can comments be made about the plan?

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 diagram below sets out the relation between this AAP and the current planning framework.



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 **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

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

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

'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.

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 of this 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.

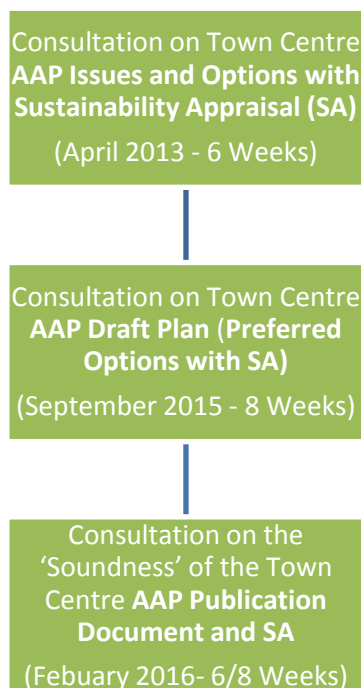


Figure 1.1 Flow diagram setting out the three key stages on consultation

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.

Subject to the outcome of the current consultation, the next stage in the preparation of the SAD and AAP will be Publication, which is expected to take place in early 2016. After public consultation on the Publication version, the documents will go forward for examination by a planning inspector. If the examination is successful, the Council will then adopt the documents.

1.6 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.

This Preferred Option Document also includes a summary of the consultation responses and how this has informed the plan, an overview of the SA outcomes for the policy and other options considered, and finally an explanation of how the policy relates to other policies with Walsall's local plan.

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.

1.6 Key evidence consulted

A wide range of background documents have been prepared for or taken into account in the production of the AAP and SAD 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 online 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 ~~respect of~~ 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 (~~e.g. weddings and banqueting 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.

2.3.1 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. **(The changes to the objectives that have been made since the Issues and Options stage are shown in blue above).** 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.

2.2.1 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
General overall support for the vision including support for references to creating a modern retail offer, green spaces and historic environment (8 consultees)	Objectives have been kept as before with additions made to take into account requests from consultees where suitable.
Questions raised about using the BCCS strategy as some consider the targets to be ambitious especially in regards to office space given the current demand.	The targets have been reviewed to provide updated realistic targets.
Need an objective to cover ensuring safe and secure communities and environments	Objective 10 includes reference to security and the vision also includes making the centre safe. The plan as a whole looks to bring more people into the centre which will help create more natural surveillance and make the centre feel safer especially in the evenings. Also Policy AAPLV6: includes reference to considering safety and security.
A request to include convenience shopping in the vision and to include a reference to Walsall being unique	Not necessary, the vision is taken from the BCCS. The objective does not distinguish between different types of retailing and is open enough to allow for convenience retailing to be covered. Policy AAPS2: New Retail Development includes a target for convenience in recognition of the role it plays in the centre.

English Heritage request a separate objective on the historic environment	Objective 8 is considered sufficient. The points are included together to reflect the point that both the historic environment and the design of new buildings impact on the character of Walsall. In recognition of the importance of historic assets the plan includes a specific policy (AAPLV5: Protecting and Enhancing Historic Character and Local Distinctiveness)
A request for an objective that covers links to the Arboretum and the canal.	Objective 9 is considered sufficient. There is an individual policy on the Canal AAPLE4: Walsall Canal and a number of references to improving links to the Arboretum in the plan. AAPT1 also looks to improve and maintain links to both assets.
Reference to the centre needing to be suitable for the elderly as this is a growing demographic.	Objective 7 is considered to incorporate all ages and sectors of society.

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 below.

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.

The map below shows the areas that have been added or excluded along with the justifications.

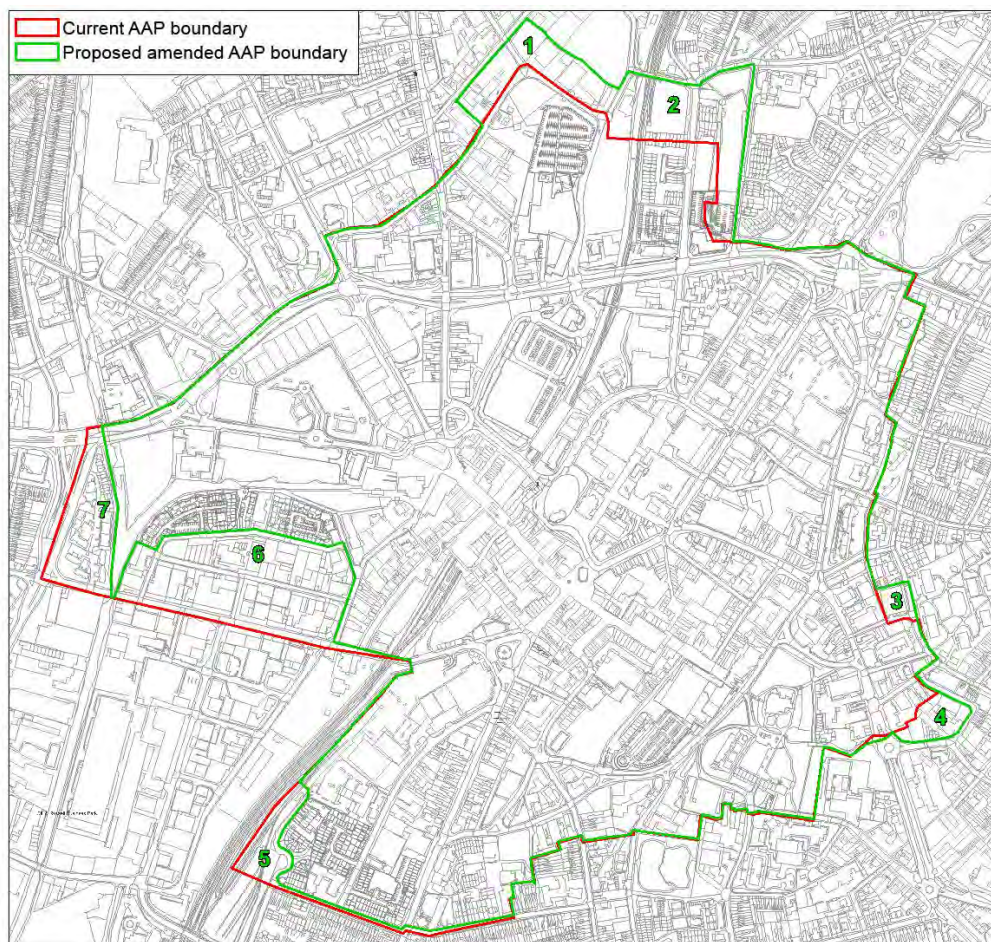


Figure 2.A Proposed changes to the town centre boundary

1. Extended to include the areas around Portland Street, to include Consider for Release industrial sites.
2. Extended boundary at the north to include full extent of Gigaport masterplan consent (North Street/ Butts/ Teddesley Street).
3. Include Council owned car park at Paddock Lane, as this could be a future opportunity site.
4. Extend boundary at Bank Street/ Pool Street to include extent of this Consider for Release industrial site and give a more natural boundary.
5. Amend boundary to follow Woodcutter Close and exclude the railway sidings which are not a development opportunity and do not relate to the town centre.
6. Remove Town Wharf business park from the town centre, and move boundary line to Charles Street. This business park operates successfully and should be retained as such, but will be covered under industry sections in the SAD.
7. Remove residential development at Pleck Road from the town centre and move boundary line to the canal. This site is not a development opportunity area and does not really relate to the rest of the town centre.

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

2.3.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
The Town Centre boundary should stay as set out in the UDP (6 consultees)	The UDP was used as a starting point and the proposed changes are based on evidence.
One consultee expressed concerns about the negative impact on investment if the town centre boundary was extended.	Agree that there could be a risk if the town centre was expanded too much. Any expansions have been made with strong reasoning and will be counterbalanced by the removal of some sites from the boundary.
Need to consider sustainable transport links to and from the centre.	There are policies and proposals to address links with transport.
Concern over the targets and aspirations of the BCCS resulting in an unrealistic plan.	The targets have been reviewed to provide updated realistic targets.
Calls for a Historic Characterisation Study to help determine boundaries and allocations.	A characterisation study has been undertaken in consultation with Historic England.

2.3.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document included three options on the AAP boundary:

- **Option 1: Retain the current extent of the Town Centre Boundary (as defined in Walsall UDP 2005).** This was rejected as there is evidence to support boundary changes.
- **Option 2: Increase the current extent of the Town Centre Boundary.** This was rejected as the boundary is being expanded in some areas to incorporate development opportunities and current town centre uses but is also being contracted in some areas to remove non-centre uses. It is therefore a mix of options 2 and 3.
- **Option 3: Decrease the current extent of the Town Centre Boundary.** This was rejected as the boundary is being expanded in some areas to incorporate development opportunities and current town centre uses but is also being contracted in some areas to remove non-centre uses. It is therefore a mix of options 2 and 3.

All three options have been rejected because the Preferred Options Draft Plan is progressing with a **mixture of Options 2 and 3**, as the boundary is expanded in some areas and contracted in others. This new option offers the most realistic approach to ensuring the boundary reflects the changes to the town centre since 2005 and the potential development opportunities within the centre.

2.3.7 Summary of the SA findings

The Town Centre Area Boundary and the policy on development within the Town Centre Boundary have been appraised separately.

The proposed changes to the boundary will allow the expansion of "town centre" uses in areas where there is more likely to be a market demand for them, and in areas where there is likely to be space for them, while excluding areas of industry and other land uses that are less appropriate in the town centre. The businesses and jobs within these areas will therefore be able to remain in place. This will also help to create conditions for expanding the range of facilities and services available in the strategic centre, making it more attractive for residents and visitors, and therefore more competitive with other centres of a similar size and scale. As the Town Centre is a highly accessible location it may also reduce the distance people need to travel to shop, to work or for leisure. There is potential for increased visitor numbers to generate more traffic and congestion and related air quality problems,

which would need to be addressed through improved access for pedestrians and cyclists and more effective management of road traffic through the town centre. There is also potential for new developments to be vulnerable to air pollution, flood risk and other climate change effects, depending on where development would take place.

In regards to the policy the main requirements are for new development to be integrated into the existing urban fabric both visually and functionally, and to adopt a comprehensive approach towards development in line with the BCCS sustainability principles and spatial strategy, and "saved" UDP policy on integration of development into centres. This will ensure there are adequate pedestrian linkages between peripheral development and the Primary Shopping Area, which is already highly accessible to a wide range of people by a choice of transport modes.

2.3.8 Relationship with other policies

- Replaces the Town Centre UDP Inset Map
- 'Saved' UDP Policy S3: Integration of Developments into Centres is referenced in the policy and needs to be retained (also used for proposals in Local Centres and District Centres).
- The AAP will build on Appendix 2 of the BCCS Policy SC3 Walsall Strategic Centre, superseding the indicative diagram and text.

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. Focussing 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.

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.

3.1.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
A request to include Jerome Retail Park in the PSA and to allocate it for retail development.	Evidence work commissioned reviewed the PSA and given the new retail targets expanding the PSA is not considered sustainable.
A request to include Crown Wharf in the PSA.	Evidence work commissioned reviewed the PSA and given the new retail targets expanding the PSA is not considered sustainable.
Suggestions that the AAP shouldn't be too specific about uses within the PSA as this allows for flexibility which encourages vitality.	Agree – the AAP sets no specific requirements but allows for applications to be judged on an individual basis.
Suggestion that the AAP needs to control non-retail uses in the PSA to protect the centre.	Agree that some control is needed to ensure that the retail function of the PSA is not compromised but consider that specific requirements would be inflexible and potentially damaging to investment.

3.1.6 Explanation of other options considered

There were four options in the Issues and Options document regarding the PSA. The following three options were rejected:

- **PSA Option 1 (UDP Boundary) Retain the current PSA boundary (i.e. as defined on Walsall UDP Town Centre Inset Map).** Rejected as changes are needed to ensure the PSA is a robust boundary that reflects the potential for retail developments.
- **PSA Option 2 (Expanded Boundary) Expand the current PSA boundary.** Rejected as it could result in a shift of investment away from Park Street and St Matthew's Quarter which could in turn lead to an increase in empty units within these locations, and poor pedestrian links as the retail offer is diluted. Also since the targets for retail floorspace have been reduced expanding the PSA would not be sustainable.
- **PSA Option 4 (Phased Expanded Boundary) Expand the PSA once all development opportunities within the current Primary Shopping Area have been maximised.** Rejected as it would result in the same risks as option 2 and given the revised retail targets there is no need to allocate for sites outside of the current boundary. Sequential sites for convenience retailing or bulky goods retailing have been identified in the plan to allow for such developments to come forward in the most suitable locations.

The option which the AAP is progressing is **Option 3** which is to reduce the current PSA boundary, removing sites which are less central. This is in response to the reduced retail floorspace targets and DTZ recommendations to consolidate the PSA. The DTZ work concluded there was limited spending capacity and therefore the centre would be unable to attract considerable retail investment beyond the current commitments. It is therefore considered that a consolidated PSA is the best way to ensure that there are fewer vacancies in the centre, through focussing investment and encouraging the reconfiguration of floorspace rather than spreading the retail offer further throughout the centre. This means that footfall is concentrated in a smaller area, supporting the current and planned retail offer.

The figure below shows the areas that have been excluded along with the justifications.

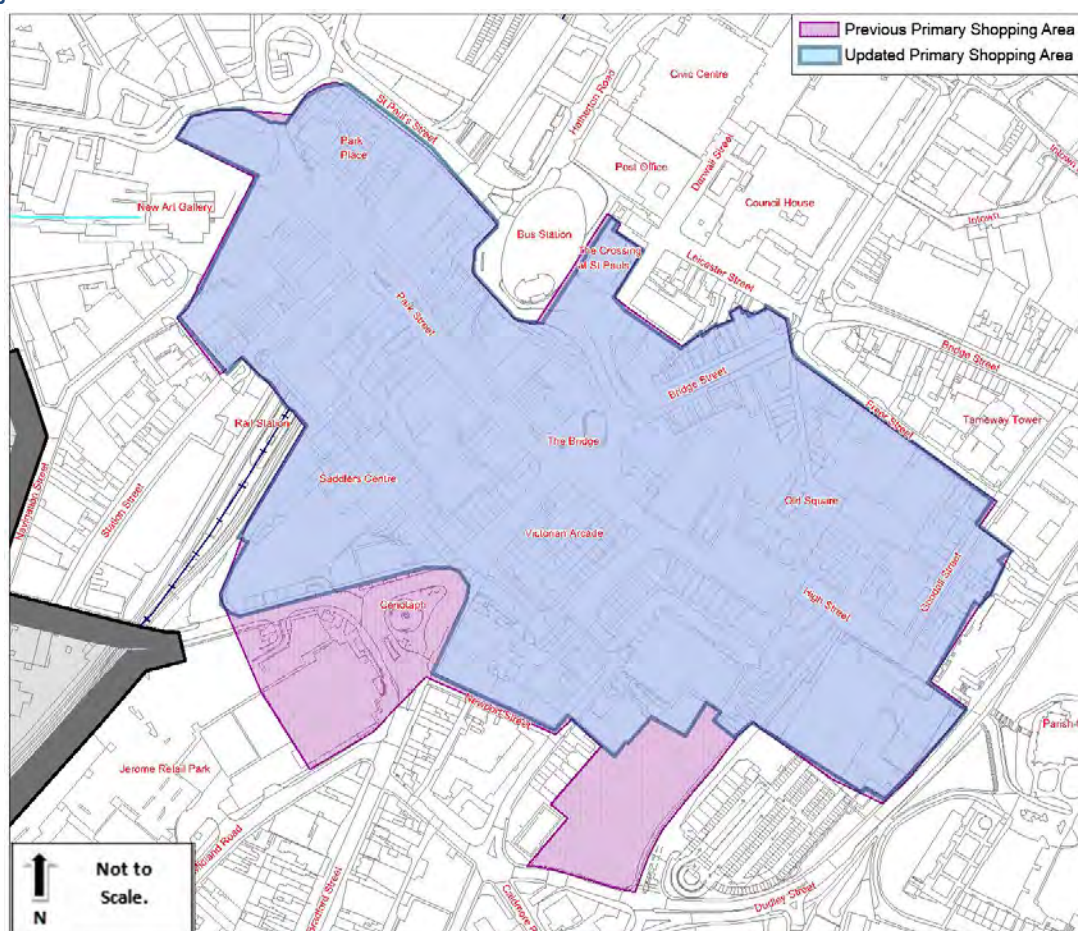


Figure 3.A Previous and updated Primary Shopping Area boundaries

- The former Shannon's Mill site has been removed as it turns its back on the shopping core and is constrained by site levels. It is therefore more suitable for other uses such as residential led schemes. It has been identified as a sequential site for convenience or bulky goods retailing as the front of the site is connected to the PSA physically and visually.

- Jerome Retail Park has been removed as whilst the current uses are supported and the site is considered suitable for convenience retail, the front part of the site is allocated for expansions to the bus interchange.

3.1.7 Summary of the SA findings

The Primary Shopping Area Boundary and Primary Shopping Area Policy have been appraised separately.

The reduction of the PSA is likely to have positive effects overall – by concentrating retail investment a stronger shopping environment is created which supports existing retail and planned retail through concentrating footfall and spending. This has an uncertain impact on the townscape as it may mean that buildings are redeveloped and also that some sites outside of the PSA remain undeveloped. This is likely to have an overall positive impact in the long term as there are less vacant units in the centre of the town which has a knock-on impact on development in the surrounding streets. The concentration of investment should also mean that outdated buildings in the PSA are replaced. The PSA is the most accessible location in the centre, served by car parks and public transport, so by concentrating development here it ensures the centre remains accessible.

The policy also requires any retail development that cannot be accommodated in the centre to apply the sequential approach and be as well linked with the PSA as possible. Furthermore any new developments for town centre uses which generate a significant amount of visitors are also expected to improve links to the PSA and to show they do not have a negative impact on the PSA in terms of investment and footfall. The policy therefore ensures that the heart of the centre is strong and that all large new developments in the centre are well linked and accessible, having an overall positive effect.

3.1. 8 Relationship with other policies

- Replaces 'saved' UDP Policy WA1: Primary Shopping Area.
- The policy references 'saved' UDP Policy S4: The Town and District Centre: General Principles, 'saved' UDP Policy: Out-of-Centre and Edge-of-Centre Developments and BCCS Policy CEN7: Controlling Out-of-Centre Development.

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 500sqm 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 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.

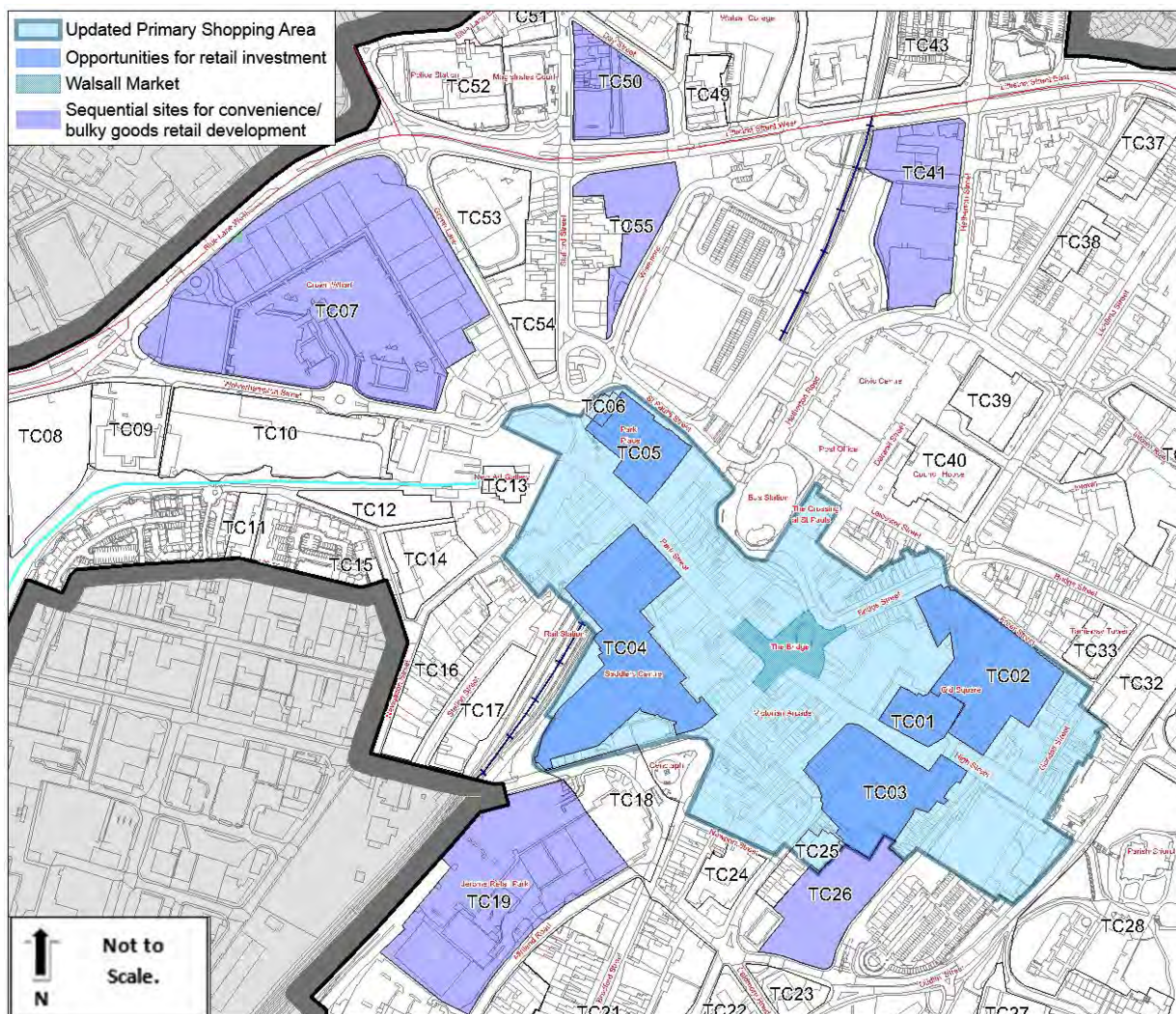


Figure 3.1 A Place for Shopping Allocations

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 deters 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.

3.2.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
Need for more larger units to meet retailers' requirements	Minimum requirements are set in the policy
Concern that the retail floorspace targets are over ambitious and will damage the current retail offer, a call for the Council to undertake an impact assessment of the impact of that amount of retail on the centre.	Targets have been revised to take into account recent evidence.
Support the option of concentrating retail development within the PSA (6 consultees).	Policy promotes this approach
Support a phased approach to the location of new retail development once all opportunities within the PSA have been delivered (4 consultees).	Given the new retail figures it is not necessary to allocate sites for future retail development, however some sites have been identified that are considered the best in terms of their connections with the PSA. The sequential approach will be applied to any retail that cannot be accommodated in the PSA and applicants will be expected to consider the sites identified in the AAP.
One consultee felt the AAP shouldn't be controlling the location of retail development within the centre at all.	This would not be in accordance with national policy and would also damage the centre as investors could choose sites that have no relationship with the current retail offer, weakening the centre's offer.

3.2.6 Explanation of other options considered

There were three options identified in the Issues and Options document. The following two were rejected:

- **Location of New Retail Option 2 (Park Street & St. Matthew's Quarter Then Other Locations)** Once opportunities have been maximised for Park Street and St Matthew's Quarter, development opportunities elsewhere in the Town Centre will be allocated for retail development. Rejected as given the new retail figures it is not necessary to allocate sites for future retail development. The sequential approach will be applied to any retail that cannot be accommodated in the PSA.
- **Location of New Retail Option 3 (Market-Led – No Opportunities Identified in AAP)** The location of major retail development is uncontrolled through the AAP and the location of key retail is left to the market. Rejected as the Council would have little control over the location of new retail development and the heart of the centre would be at risk of further

decline as investment is attracted to edge-of-centre locations which may be seen as easier to develop.

The AAP Preferred Option document has progressed with **Option 1 that looks to concentrate retail investment in Park Street and St Matthew's Quarter**. Sites within this area that are considered most suitable for retail investment in terms of redevelopment and reconfiguration are identified on the AAP Draft Policies Map. This is considered to be the option that is most likely to protect and enhance the centre's economy through concentrating retail into a defined area, creating a high quality, accessible shopping destination.

A new option has also been identified to provide guidance to developers of convenience and bulky goods retailing that cannot be accommodated in the PSA as in accordance with the sequential approach. The approach means that the policy provides a list of sequential sites, encouraging development to be as closely linked to the PSA as possible, reducing the negative impacts edge-of-centre retail developments can have in terms of drawing investment and footfall away from the PSA. The Council is aware of demand for convenience and bulky goods retailing and this is considered a positive approach to plan for this demand, strengthening the Council's position on the sequential approach and encouraging investment in the sites that link best to the PSA. Identifying opportunities should help to defend against applications for poorly connected edge-of-centre developments or out-of-centre developments which damage the Primary Shopping Area.

3.2.7 Summary of the SA findings

Part a) of the policy which looks at new retail development within the PSA has been appraised separately to parts b), c), and d) which focus on edge-of-centre development.

Part a) is likely to have positive effects overall, as by concentrating retail investment a stronger shopping environment is created which supports existing retail and planned retail through concentrating footfall and spending. Providing new retail targets to the BCCS targets allows the plan to remain ambitious but also be more realistic about the amount of floorspace to plan for, which should have a more positive economic impact than unachievable targets which could mean the retail offer is spread out resulting in increased vacancies within the PSA. This could have an uncertain impact on the townscape as it may mean that buildings are redeveloped and also that some sites outside of the PSA remain undeveloped. This is likely to be positive overall however, as there are less vacant units in the centre of the town which has a knock-on impact on development in the surrounding streets. The concentration of investment should also mean that outdated buildings in the PSA are replaced. The sites identified in part ii) have been chosen as they have more

potential for change that will have a positive impact on the character of Walsall without impacting negatively on buildings which have a strong character or a historic listing. The PSA is the most accessible location in the centre served by car parks and public transport, so by concentrating development here it ensures the centre remains accessible.

Parts b), c), and d) which focus on edge-of-centre development are also likely to have positive effects overall, by providing sites and policy requirements that mean any edge-of-centre development is as well linked to the PSA as possible and that the AAP plans for these larger unit requirements as much as possible in order to secure investment in the centre and reduce the amount of out-of-centre development. It is not possible however, to say for sure what the impact of edge-of-centre developments would be as there are a number of locations identified which could be developed or indeed an applicant could prove that none of the sites are suitable and therefore find a site located further from the PSA. The policy aims to mitigate against this with requirements to show there is no adverse impact and to improve linkages. The policy also allows for the use of conditions to reduce any impact by controlling the range of goods sold.

3.2.7 Relationship with other policies

- Replaces 'saved' UDP Policy WA10: Lower Hall Lane/ Digbeth / Old Square
- The policy references 'saved' UDP Policy: Out-of-Centre and Edge-of-Centre Developments, BCCS Policy CEN3: Growth in the Strategic Centres and CEN7: Controlling Out-of-Centre Development.

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 – 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.

3.3.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
Most consultees were opposed to the favoured location of the Market on The Bridge and in Bradford Sheet, they felt the	The location issue was addressed through the planning application process that involved public consultation along with

Council needed to consider the options again and a number wanted the market to return up the hill (7 consultees).	evidence about which locations would be the most viable and deliverable.
Support for the need for a permanent location, investment in the market and its surrounding offer and generally agreed it needed to offer a higher quality of goods	Recognised in the policy.

3.3.6 Explanation of other options considered and summary of the SA findings

There was one other option considered at the Issue and Options stage which was rejected as it would cause uncertainty and delay the investment in the new market.

- **Walsall Market Option 2 (Other Indoor/ Outdoor Locations) The Council reconsiders other potential indoor and outdoor locations for the market.** Rejected as the outcomes of work commissioned by the Council as part of the planning application concluded that the market should be located permanently on The Bridge and in Bradford Street. This proposal now has planning permission and the Council is committed to implementing the new market in The Bridge location.

In the time between the Issues and Options stage and the Preferred Options stage a planning permission has been granted for the new market scheme at The Bridge. The AAP has therefore progressed with **Option 1** and looks to allocate the space identified in the permission for the Market and has a policy that looks to support the market in this location.

3.3.7 Summary of the SA findings

The allocation and policy for the market is likely to have positive effects overall. By investing in the market at the most accessible location in the centre this should have positive impacts on the market's sustainability and the economy of the centre. Bringing life into the centre of town should also support the surrounding uses and bring vitality to the centre. The market is a historic part of the centre's character and ensuring its future should have a positive impact of the centre's cultural heritage as well as the overall townscape. The investment in public realm and the potential for the area to be used for community events and performances should also encourage more visitors and further investment in the surrounding areas.

3.3.8 Relationship with other policies

- Replaces 'saved' UDP Policy WA2: The Market.

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:

i) Focussing new office investment in the Gigaport area as identified by Policy AAP13: Walsall Gigaport;

ii) Identifying sites where town centre uses, including office development, is appropriate as shown by mixed use development opportunities on the AAP Policies Map;

iii) 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**

iv) Encouraging the use of upper floors for offices; and

v) 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 3,700sqm 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 iii) 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.
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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.

4.1.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
The issue of the current office stock being out-dated and unsuitable was raised by a few consultees	Addressed by part C of Policy AAPB1 which looks to address current office stock
Many consultees raise concerns over the office floorspace targets, the lack of demand for offices and the impact of the targets on planning for the centre	The office floorspace targets have been revised as a result of new evidence
Suggestions that we need to build start up units for businesses and create an atmosphere in the centre that encourages business growth	The College's new Business and Sports Hub will provide some small units to encourage business growth. The policy around a social enterprise zone will also help to promote new businesses in the centre.
Suggestion that we develop a high quality park and ride service for businesses or locate a train station at the Gigaport. Also a request that we look at the red route in that area and to improve pedestrian links	Addressed as part of the Movement chapter and in the Gigaport policy
Some consultees (2) support the idea of having offices spread out around the centre to reduce the impact on traffic whilst others think concentrating offices (5) at the Gigaport provides Walsall with a strong selling point.	The strategy is to focus on the Gigaport to help create an office market whilst addressing any traffic impacts. Office developments in other areas will be supported if appropriate.

4.1.6 Explanation of other options considered

There were two options in the Issues and Options document around new office development. The following option was rejected:

- **Location of New Offices Option 2 (Dispersed Locations) Offices are dispersed around the centre.** Rejected as office accommodation could be spread across the town centre, missing out on the opportunity to create a business district and therefore making the offer less attractive to investors and businesses. The policy is however flexible enough to allow for office to be located elsewhere when appropriate.

The Preferred Option Draft Plan has progressed with **Option 1, directing office development to the Gigaport area.** This is considered the most effective way to create a high quality attractive office environment that will trigger further investment. The SA has identified that there are some possible negatives of concentrating office development in this location including the potential air quality issue and the risk of increasing the congestion along the Ring Road. The plan therefore aims to mitigate these through policies on air pollution which requires developers to consider this issue when designing schemes and by identifying areas on the Ring Road that will need highway improvements. Furthermore the benefits of concentrating development are considered to outweigh these potential negatives as the creation of an office market is seen as key to unlocking further investment in other uses. The proposals for the Gigaport also include requirements for improved linkages to other areas of the centre and the creation of a high quality business environment, both of which will have wider benefits to the centre overall.

A new option has now been identified to address the approach towards current office blocks in the centre which are in need of investment because they are outdated and in some cases under-used. The AAP Draft Plan identifies current office developments that would benefit from investment with the aim of improving these so they remain as offices helping to support the economic viability of the centre. This is a direct result of the pressure on such office buildings to be converted to residential. There have been a number of proposals to convert existing offices in the centre to residential, such as with Tameway Tower, and due to permitted development rights the Council has no power to prevent this. It is hoped that this approach will encourage the redevelopment in current office stock as opposed to the alternative option which would be to allocate such buildings for redevelopment for residential which is considered to not promote either the vitality of the economy or high quality living in the centre. Office block conversions within Walsall may not always achieve a high quality residential environment due to their design and the lack of amenity space so retaining them as office space is considered to be the most desirable option.

4.1.7 Summary of the SA findings

All sections of this policy have been appraised separately.

Part a) is likely to have positive effects overall. Gigaport provides enough sites that are suitable for office development in an accessible and visible location. By having a specific area to encourage office development it is hoped this will create a high quality business environment in the centre, triggering further investment. There may be some increase in traffic along the ring road which already suffers from congestion and some increase in emissions in the area. Some developments may need to be set away from the road to reduce the impact of air quality on the scheme.

Part b) should also have an overall positive effect as it will encourage further investment and bring more sites forward in the centre. Some impacts are more uncertain such as the impact on transport and air quality as there is less certainty about which sites will come forward for offices. The impact on townscape is also unknown but large new office blocks in non-office areas could impact in the character of the centre. There is a risk that by allowing office development in other areas the effect of the Gigaport allocation is weakened. The policy aims to mitigate against this with part e) of the policy.

The AAP identifies current office stock that may be outdated and in some cases under-used, which would benefit from investment to make it more suitable for occupiers. Improved office stock as set out in part c) could help attract new businesses into the centre which should have a positive impact by supporting the economy and creating jobs. This will bring vacant or underused buildings back into life but it may take longer than conversion to other uses as the office market could take time to develop in Walsall so buildings may remain vacant for longer.

Part d) also looks to provide further office floorspace through encouraging the use of upper floors, improving this office stock which will help to attract new businesses into the centre which should have positive impacts by supporting the economy and creating jobs. As with part c) this will bring into life vacant or underused floors but it may take longer than conversion to other uses such as residential, as the office market could take time to develop in Walsall so buildings may remain vacant for longer.

Finally part e) should have a positive impact by helping to protect the Gigaport proposals whilst allowing for office development to come forward when it can be demonstrated there is no negative impact. It may mean that some office developments will be resisted where there is an adverse impact on Gigaport, which could mean some sites remain undeveloped for longer but this is considered necessary to secure the delivery of Gigaport as an office location in Walsall.

4.1.8 Relationship with other policies

- All of the UDP town centre site specific policies will be replaced including those which cover office investment

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 (TC25) 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 of 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.

4.2.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
Some support for social enterprise and live work units in the centre	Addressed by this social enterprise policy and the Gigaport policy.

4.2.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document of the AAP did not include options around social enterprises, opting to raise the issue through a question around if the AAP should promote social enterprises through the plan and whether there was any evidence of need to allocate specific locations or buildings for such uses. In light of the LEP Social Enterprise Prospectus it is considered that the Preferred Option should look to promote the work of the Vine Trust and to provide opportunities for growth. The alternative would be to not show the area on the map or not have a policy but this is considered to not be addressing their needs for expansion sufficiently and would not be promoting their work in the plan.

4.2.7 Summary of the SA findings

The allocation and policy are being appraised separately to the policy on social enterprises locating elsewhere in the centre.

The allocation should have a positive effect as social enterprise will hopefully grow offering more opportunities for skills to help young people access work. Other social enterprises focussing on different needs will also be encouraged into area.

Supporting such uses in other locations should also have a positive impact as social enterprises will be encouraged throughout the centre helping to provide further positive social and economic impacts. There may however, be some uncertain impacts on the cultural heritage and townscape as the locations where developments may be proposed are unclear until proposals come forward. There may be some areas where this use would be unsuitable unless there is mitigation against the impact of air pollution.

4.2.7 Relationship with other policies

- N/A

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

4.3.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
Walsall Business Parks Ltd expressed concerns over the proposals for office in Town Wharf Business Park and the impact of any proposals on industry in the centre including the cost of relocations	Town Wharf business park is being removed from the town centre area in terms of the AAP so will remain as an employment area. It is protected as employment land through the SAD.
Some support for industry that is poorly located in the centre to be relocated and for the AAP to promote a certain type of industry such as research and development but all agreed that the protection of business should be the priority (4 consultees). Others argued that current industry in the centre should be protected and enhanced (2 consultees)	The policy promotes the protection of existing employment land in the centre. The AAP looks at what uses will be most appropriate if the industrial occupiers leave the area but doesn't rely on this land to achieve the overall regeneration strategy.

Concerns over the cost and impact of relocating industry	Noted as a concern and will use the BCCS to ensure businesses are not negatively impacted upon.
A number of comments on the need to locate industry where it is accessible to the motorway as well as public transport	Noted – the SAD looks at the locations where industry will be promoted.

4.3.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document presented three options to address industry in the town the centre. The following two options were rejected:

- **Industrial Uses Option 1 (Safeguard Existing Industrial Areas)** The AAP protects and enhances the current industrial uses within the Town Centre boundary. Rejected as employment uses are protected but not necessarily in the right location. This may constrain the businesses, conflict with surrounding uses and stop areas being used for the development of town centre uses especially offices.
- **Industrial Uses Option 3 (Target Specific Industrial Sectors)** The AAP aims to attract particular industrial sectors, for example those that would utilise the close location to the hospital could be allocated sites for the promotion of Research and Development or other related uses. Rejected in part as there is not sufficient evidence to support a targeted approach in terms of a land allocation or individual policy. The plan does however, support in the office policy (Policy AAPB1) B1b use which is research and development of products or processes and B1c light industry where these uses are suitable in a town location. Furthermore the healthcare policy (Policy AAPLV3) looks to promote uses which are linked to the hospital which may well entail some research and development uses.

The Preferred Option Draft Plan is progressing with **Option 2 which looks to protect active industry in the centre whilst providing a long term regeneration vision for the areas as part of town centre uses schemes.** This allows jobs and businesses to be protected through the planning policy framework of the BCCS DEL2 whilst also meeting the regeneration vision for the town centre which looks to create a high quality shopping, office, leisure and residential destination.

4.3.8 Summary of the SA findings

Part a) and part b) are being appraised separately as they deal with different types of industrial land.

Part a) protects Albert Jagger as high quality industrial land ensuring that jobs are protected as long as the business remains in operation. Many of the impacts are

neutral as this is not proposing anything new for the site. However, proposals for any surrounding uses will be resisted if they would restrict the industrial operations at the site.

Part b) identifies, allocates and safeguards land that could be released from employment to town centre uses because they are constrained and isolated, and surrounded by non-employment uses, making them less suitable for industry in the long term. However they currently provide a good source of local quality employment, and should only be released subject to Core Strategy Policy DEL2, and when it is clear it will no longer be required for industry. However it is also the case that should industry vacate these sites, there will be benefits in local amenity, given that most of these sites are surrounded by housing. It will also help to deliver the town centre uses needed to ensure the future of Walsall town centre. The policy therefore has an overall positive impact.

4.3.7 Relationship with other policies

- Replaces 'saved' UDP Policy JP6: Best Quality Sites and UDP JP7: Use of Land and Buildings in Other Employment Areas
- Policy references BCCS Policy EMP3: Local Quality Employment Areas and BCCS DEL2 which protects active industrial uses.

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 AAP14: 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 AAP1: 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 however be 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 nightclubs 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 by 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.

5.1.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
There was much support for development of a cinema which will benefit the town in either location, but in general support was greater for the Waterfront scheme (6 respondents) – near the Art Gallery, canalside location, and natural progression of Park Street. The option to allow leisure elsewhere in the town once Waterfront is delivered was supported next. Two respondents disagreed – one was Cordwell Property Group, the other felt that new leisure should complement existing leisure uses at Bradford Street/ The Bridge.	Addressed by the policy which promotes Walsall Waterfront as the main location but will allow for leisure uses elsewhere in the centre.
Swimming baths, gym/ exercise facilities, indoor ice skating and bowling facilities are the leisure facilities people would most like to see in the town centre.	Gala Baths is being invested in by the Council and is protected through policy AAPLE2. There is no evidence that there is sufficient demand to allocate for a large scale leisure facility above delivering the cinema permission.
There was some support for zoning night time uses in order to create a critical mass and keep policing in one area, although a recognition that some existing businesses might suffer if excluded from the zones, and should not be relocated to fit in with the new zones.	Zoning has not been taken forward in the Preferred Option, which takes a flexible approach towards the location of evening economy uses in recognition that leisure uses would be suitable in many locations throughout the centre and there is already some grouping of such uses, therefore zoning is not considered practical or necessary. The AAP does however look to promote new leisure development at Waterfront.
The Police asked for specific policies around the evening economy to deal with crime, safety and ASB.	The plan does not have a specific policy regarding the evening economy as this topic covers a number of different policy areas and is therefore covered in a number of locations (Policy AAPLE1, AAPLV1, and objective 10).

There was a feeling that the current night time economy is dominated by YPV, and that there was a need for more variety and a higher quality of bars and in particular restaurants in the town centre.	Agreed, this has been addressed in the policy as far as it can be via planning.
Lichfield Street, Waterfront, Bradford Street and the Bridge were all suggested as locations for new evening economy outlets. Waterfront was suggested as a good location for a cinema and associated eating and drinking venues, however another respondent feared that creating new developments would leave to a vacuum between Waterfront and the existing NTE areas around the Bridge.	The policy recommends Waterfront as the primary location for new leisure developments including evening economy outlets, but is flexible to allow such uses in other areas so long as they will not jeopardise the delivery of Waterfront.

5.1.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document presented a number of options around leisure uses in the town centre. This covered two main areas, first the location of new leisure development and second the approach to evening economy uses.

There were three options on the location of new leisure developments. Two of which were partly rejected:

- **Location of Leisure Option 2 (Waterfront Then Other Locations) Leisure development is allocated elsewhere in the Town Centre only when Waterfront is fully delivered for leisure or other uses.** Partly rejected – there is not sufficient demand for sites to be allocated for leisure uses alone although there are a number of sites that are identified as mixed use where leisure uses would be suitable. The AAP states that no leisure use would be supported if it would jeopardise the delivery of Walsall Waterfront.
- **Location of Leisure Option 3 (No Leisure Locations Identified) Leisure development is not allocated and the location of such development is left to the market.** Partly rejected – Walsall Waterfront has been allocated as the leisure destination. However no other site has been identified solely for leisure uses leaving the rest to the market.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan has progressed with **Option 1 which allocates Waterfront as the primary location for large scale leisure developments.** This reflects the current Cinema proposal that is under construction and the second phase of this scheme which needs to be supported by the plan through directing leisure investment towards the waterfront. As such the plan does not allocate any other sites for leisure uses, given that the DTZ work concluded that there was no evidenced demand. The plan does however need to be positive about promoting

further leisure uses in the centre and has therefore taken a flexible approach which allocates a number of sites for a mix of town centre uses which could include leisure. The policy for leisure development (Policy AAPLE1) takes the approach of promoting the Waterfront in the first instance then supporting leisure development in other areas as long as this does not jeopardise the delivery of Waterfront. This is why the above two options have only been partly rejected as the plan has a flexible approach towards leisure development but has also identified sites that are suitable for developments such as leisure.

In regards to the evening economy 2 options were included:

- **Evening Economy Option 1 (Zones Identified for Investment).** The AAP identifies particular zones within the Town Centre in which to focus investment in the evening economy. Partly rejected – there are no zones in the AAP for evening economy uses but Walsall Waterfront is allocated as a leisure destination and new leisure uses will be directed to this location.
- **Evening Economy Option 2 (Dispersed Development).** The location of evening economy establishments is not zoned. Partly rejected – there are no zones in the AAP for evening economy uses but Walsall Waterfront is allocated as a leisure destination and new leisure uses will be directed to this location.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan is taking a flexible approach towards the location of evening economy uses such as bars and clubs in recognition that leisure uses would be suitable in many locations throughout the centre and there is already some grouping of such uses, for example along Bridge Street. Therefore zoning is not considered practical or necessary. The AAP does however, look to promote new leisure development at Waterfront and as such the leisure chapter policies focus new leisure investment towards the Waterfront location followed by supporting leisure in other locations as long as the proposals do not jeopardise the Waterfront development.

5.1.7 Summary of the SA findings

The three parts of this policy are appraised separately. Part a) will have an overall positive impact as directing leisure uses to Waterfront will provide an attractive area of leisure uses located together, improving viability of individual elements and creating an attractive area of public space. It should also have a positive impact on the canal environment and encourage further investment in the area.

Part b) allows for leisure developments elsewhere where it can be demonstrated that there will be no adverse impact on delivering the Waterfront scheme. This provides opportunities for leisure development without jeopardising the cinema scheme

resulting in an overall positive benefit. The impacts of leisure schemes in other locations on the townscape and traffic along with other site specific issues will not be known until a scheme comes forward.

Finally part c) would allow for leisure uses that support other uses in the centre such as retail. This will result in a centre that is attractive to visitors and that meets the needs of residents, providing positive impacts. A diverse offer within the heart of the centre is needed to allow Walsall to compete with surrounding centres by providing a leisure experience.

5.1. Relationship with other policies

- All of the UDP site specific policies will be replaced including those which cover leisure investment especially 'saved' UDP Policy WA12: Town Wharf
- Walsall Waterfront Supplementary Planning Document

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 of 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 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.

5.2.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
The majority of the responses (7) supported keeping the Baths open (or opposed its closure), with the next best option to have some other sort of swimming/ leisure facility in the town centre. One person felt that the changing facilities needed cleaning and modernising, but did not select a particular option.	The Gala Baths is being invested in at the current location and the AAP looks to protect it as a key leisure facility.
Lex was suggested as a possible location for sport facilities to complement the proposed cinema development, however it was also felt be beneficial to keep Council sports facilities in the Civic Quarter. There was a strong view that such facilities should be kept within the town centre.	Gala Baths is to be protected and the AAP is not looking to allocate another sport facility as there is no evidence of the need or deliverability of such a use.
Agreement that in general existing sport, leisure and entertainment and community facilities should be protected, however AEW UK felt that Gala Bingo did not need to be protected.	The AAP will look to protect all current commercial uses in the centre when they are an appropriate use, although agree that uses such as Gala Bingo do not need to be designated for protection or have a specific

	policy.
General support for combining the Museum, Leather Museum and Local History Centre provided it doesn't impact on their individual functions or livelihoods. The Leather Museum was identified as a facility to be protected.	The AAP looks to allocate the site to allow for this proposal to come forward and will protect the Leather Museum.
Support for a performance venue, but need to understand why other venues have not prospered. Also support for protecting and promoting existing venues (with the addition of the Goldmine to the examples given in the document) and promoting more live music, comedy etc in existing venues.	There is no evidence that there is sufficient demand or a scheme that is deliverable which could justify the allocation of a site for a new performance venue. As such the AAP looks to encourage the greater use of current facilities.
Welcome more events in the town centre, but a need to be aware of public safety issues. Suggestions include more night markets, German markets etc along Park Street, canal boat events, carnival, music or theatre events, festivals of culture at Gallery Square. Support for allocating space(s) for outside performances and events, in particular the Bridge.	The proposals for the new market include demountable stalls which will result in a public space that would be well suited to community events and performances. As this is at the heart of the centre The Bridge is considered the most suitable location for such events. See Policy AAPS3. The AAP therefore does not allocate any further sites for such uses.

5.2.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document presented a number of options around sport and cultural facilities. The first five options focussed on sports facilities, four of which have now been rejected:

- **Leisure Facilities Option 1 (No Change to Gala Baths). The Council does not invest in the Gala Baths.** Rejected – the Baths was recognised as being in need of investment to secure its future.
- **Leisure Facilities Option 3 (Close Gala Baths and Invest in Other Facilities). The Council invests in leisure facilities elsewhere in the Town Centre.** Rejected – the Council has committed to invest in the Baths for refurbishment. Securing funding for a new site would be difficult as would finding a new deliverable use for the current Gala Baths site.
- **Leisure Facilities Option 4 (Replace Gala Baths with New Leisure Centre). The Council seeks partner and/or private sector investment to deliver leisure facilities in the Town Centre.** Rejected – the Council has committed to invest in the Baths for refurbishment. Securing funding for a new site would be difficult as would finding a new deliverable use for the current Gala Baths site.

- **Leisure Facilities Option 5 (No Leisure Facilities in Town Centre).** The Council does not provide any leisure facilities in the Town Centre. Rejected – maintaining the Gala Baths is considered a priority for the Council.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan is looking to protect and promote the Gala Baths as a key sports facility within the town centre and has therefore allocated it for protection (**Option 2**).

There was also eight different options around cultural and community facilities. The first two options focussed on the future of the Leather Museum and the “do nothing” option was rejected:

- **Cultural and Community Facilities Option 2 (Do Not Allocate Any Site).** The AAP does not allocate a specific site for a combined museum and local history centre. Rejected – having the site identified in the AAP is seen as advantageous to delivering the scheme.

Instead the Preferred Options Draft Plan allocated land to allow for Walsall Leather Museum to be expanded to include Walsall Museum and Walsall Local History Centre (**Option 1**). This is considered the best option to help deliver this aspiration by showing the Council’s commitment to the scheme through the plan.

There were then four options around performance space. Only one of these options (**Option 3**) has been rejected due to the lack of evidence:

- **Cultural and Community Facilities Option 3 (New Large Performance Venue).** The AAP allocates land for a large performance venue. Rejected – there is no evidence that such a facility could be delivered.

The Preferred Option Draft Plan has progressed with the other three options. The first of which (**Option 4**) protects uses such as the Town Hall and New Art Gallery through allocating the uses under Policy AAPLE2. This option is considered the best way to protect the current uses within the centre and promote these to be used more in the future.

In regards to new cultural facilities such as performance spaces both options have been progressed in the Draft Plan. As there is no demonstrated demand for such uses to justify allocating sites, the location of cultural facilities has to some degree been left to the market as set out in **Option 5**. The Draft Plan does however also allocate a number of sites which are suitable for a range of town centre uses which could include cultural facilities as set out in **Option 6**.

Finally there were two options around space for outdoor performances and events. Option 7 was rejected as it is considered that there is enough space in the town centre for such uses already.

- **Cultural and Community Facilities Option 7 (Identify Spaces for Outdoor Events)** The AAP allocates space(s) for outside performances and events that is to be protected, enhanced and promoted through the redevelopment of the Town Centre. Rejected – there is public space which could be used for public events and the Market permission has been designed so that the stalls can be demounted allowing for the Bridge area to be used for public spaces. These areas are already protected through the market policy (AAPS3) and public realm policy (AAPLV7).

The Preferred Option Draft Plan does therefore not include a policy or specific allocation for outdoor space and instead protects the area of the market proposal through the market policy (Policy AAPS3) as the location for such uses.

5.2.7 Summary of the SA findings

All parts of this policy have been appraised together apart from part c) due to the common aim of protecting and enhancing facilities in the centre. This policy will have positive impacts by protecting and enhancing current cultural and sports facilities in the centre; it allows the community to access these facilities providing health and wellbeing benefits. Investing in these facilities should also encourage more visitors to the centre with the potential for linked trips. Many of these buildings positively contribute to the historic character of the centre and the overall townscape.

Part c) has been appraised separately as it looks to allocate land for the expansion of the Leather Museum to include Walsall Museum and Walsall Local History Centre. This policy will have an overall positive impact by providing the opportunity for a new consolidated Heritage Centre which would bring the less accessible Local History Centre into the town centre and support Walsall Museum through relocating it as part of Walsall Leather Museum. This will create a larger visitor attraction in the centre which should encourage more users to the facilities and more visitors to the centre overall. The site is on the ring road so there may be some uncertain impacts from and to air quality; also the new facility may generate more traffic than the current facilities due to being in one location, impacting on traffic and parking.

5.2.8 Relationship with other policies

- N/A

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 AAPLE3 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)

5.3.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
A policy for additional hotel accommodation in particular areas would be welcomed. Suggested areas include: around the rail station, town hall, Mountrath Street, and George Street.	Agreed and some proposed locations have been suggested within the policy.

5.3.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document included two options around overnight accommodation.

- **Overnight Accommodation Option 1 (Zones Identified for Investment)** The AAP identifies particular zones within the Town Centre in which to focus investment in overnight accommodation. Partly Rejected – there is not considered to be sufficient demand to allocate a specific location for hotels but areas that are suitable for hotel investment have been identified in the policy.
- **Overnight Accommodation Option 2 (Dispersed Development)** The location of overnight accommodation is not zoned but is dispersed around the Town Centre to support different elements of the Town Centre offer. Partly Rejected – there is not considered to be sufficient demand to allocate a specific location for hotels but areas that are suitable for hotel investment have been identified in the policy.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan has therefore progressed with **Option 1** to some degree as some areas which are considered more suitable for hotel development have been identified. These suggested areas have not been allocated in the policies so cannot be considered zones as such so option 2 is considered partly rejected.

5.3.7 Summary of the SA findings

The suggested locations within the policy have been appraised separately.

A hotel at Waterfront should help to support the planned leisure developments in the area and the canalside location could create a high quality hotel development. It is unknown if there is enough demand to support another hotel in this location.

A hotel near Walsall Railway Station would be accessible and create a stronger welcoming image than presented by Station Street at the present time. This site is within walking distance of Waterfront as well as the rest of the centre so could support the leisure uses proposed. There are a number of listed buildings on Station Street and a large scale development could change the character of the area. There are some active industrial uses which could conflict with a hotel proposal if located close by and not mitigated against during the application process.

A hotel near the Gigaport could support the office developments proposed and also the college. The area is suitable for large developments making a hotel scheme in keeping with the changing character of the area. The ring road does have higher levels of air pollution so a hotel scheme would need to be designed to mitigate

against any impact. There could be some potential access issues due to the congested road network. However having a hotel well connected with other uses in the centre should reduce car trips overall.

Finally a hotel anywhere along the ring road within the centre would support other use such as leisure and offices. A hotel right on the edge of the centre may not be as accessible as some of the other locations proposed so may reduce the number of linked trips and result in more car travel as public transport is less accessible. Again, the ring road does have higher levels of air pollution so a hotel scheme would need to be designed to mitigate against any impact. There could be some potential access issues due to the congested road network. However having a hotel well connected with other uses in the centre should reduce car trips overall.

5.3.8 Relationship with other policies

- N/A

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 AAPLE4 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 canalside 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.

5.4.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacting on the preferred policy?
The CRT requires development here to not adversely or detrimentally affect the water quality, landscape and ecological character, and should relate appropriately to the waterway.	Noted and addressed in policy wording.
CRT felt development opportunities adjacent to the canal are sustainable but will lead to increased liabilities and maintenance issues such as increased wear and tear of the towpath and access points, litter and discharging of surface water into the network etc. The Council should look to prioritise securing contributions to improve the canal infrastructure and towpaths as part of development proposals and to mitigate any other issues that may arise from developments due to the extra liabilities and demands associated with waterside development.	Agreed – a statement has been included in this policy and the policy that states developer contributions will be sought.

5.4.6 Explanation of other options considered

There were two options included in the Issues and Options document. Option 2 was rejected:

- **Canal Option 2 (Development Not Required to Enhance Canalside Environment) No specific requirements are set for development fronting the Canal within the Town Centre.** Rejected – a specific policy is needed to ensure the issue is given significant weight.

This “do nothing” option has been rejected in favour of **Option 1 that sets standards for developments on the Canal**, as it is considered that there is a need to set a detailed policy for the canal to ensure sufficient consideration is given to the impact of development on the canal and to ask for developer contributions towards its maintenance and enhancement.

5.4.7 Summary of the SA findings

All elements of the policy have been assessed separately.

Part a) which looks to increase canalside activities should have a positive impact overall as it creates a more desirable leisure attraction bringing further investment and visitors to the centre. There are uncertain impacts on the biodiversity and water quality as increased activity may have some impact, however more activity should mean the environment is better maintained as part of surrounding developments and uses. There are also positive impacts on the townscape and character of the centre as the canal provides a key feature in the centre.

Part b) should have positive impacts overall as it promotes a high quality of design next to the canal encouraging further investment and visitors. Enhancing the cultural features will also have a positive impact on the cultural heritage of the centre. There are uncertain impacts on the increased costs to developers but generally good design doesn't cost more and should help schemes be successful.

Part c) looks to mitigate against any negative impact from development or increased activity preserving the canal as an asset for the future. There are uncertain impacts on the increased costs to developers but generally ensuring the canal remains a pleasant and functioning environment will have positive impacts overall as it attracts investment and people to the centre.

Part d) will have a positive impact overall as the canal acts as a key pedestrian and cycle link to and from the centre to residential areas and the Manor hospital. This has positive impacts on how people access the centre, the health of the community and how sustainable the centre is. There are uncertain impacts on the biodiversity and water quality as increased activity may have some impact, however more activity should mean the environment is better maintained as part of surrounding developments and uses. There are also positive impacts on the on townscape and character of the centre as the canal provides a key feature in the centre. There may also be some cost on developers but ensuring developments are accessible should have positive impact on the scheme's viability.

Finally part e) which looks to secure green infrastructure as part of developments is more likely to have a neutral impact as the cost on developers may make schemes undeliverable, impacting on the centre's ability to perform economically and meet the needs of the community. Also the amount of green infrastructure delivered means the policy is likely to have limited impact.

5.4.8 Relationship with other policies

- Policy references BCCS Policy ENV4: Canals

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. Many of the occupiers of such housing have limited mobility, so town centre sites that provide good access to services will be particularly suitable for them.

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 of housing delivery 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.

6.1.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
Encouraging flats over shops or other vacant floorspace for housing was the most popular option, followed by including housing as part of mixed developments. No one favoured that no further land is allocated for housing, although only one person supported allocating further sites for housing – and that only alongside options for above shops and mixed developments.	The policy follows this approach but where sites are only really suitable for residential uses the plan has allocated as such.
The standard of new homes was felt to be a problem that needs to be addressed. Town centre living was generally seen as a good thing to be further encouraged, providing there are good public transport links.	Agreed and the policy includes reference to creating a good quality of living environment. Other policies look to create better public transport links.
One respondent felt that the AAP should set out requirements for residential environments. 4 respondents suggested what makes a good residential environment: safe, attractive, clean, not intimidating, with good surveillance, well designed, built to last and using good quality materials.	The policy includes requirements around living standards.

6.1.6 Explanation of other options considered

There were four options within the Issues and Options document around new housing in the town centre. The following option has been rejected:

- **Housing Option 4 (No New Housing Provision) No further land is allocated through the AAP for housing development.** Rejected – whilst the BCCS suggested figure has been delivered the creation of more homes in the centre is considered to support the centre's vitality and there are sites which would be suitable.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan uses a combination of the other options in its approach to housing in the centre. As set out in **Option 1 the AAP does allocate some further sites for housing**, although only 2 sites have been allocated as housing sites alone. This is because they are surrounded by housing and other uses may therefore be conflicting. The AAP then promotes both **Option 2 and Option 3 in encouraging residential uses as part of mixed use schemes and in vacant upper floors of existing buildings.**

There were also two options around residential environments in the Issues and Options document, asking if there should be requirements around satisfactory residential environments within the plan. Option 2 was rejected:

- **Residential Environments Option 2 (No Specific Requirements) No specific additional requirements are set for residential environments in the Town Centre.** Rejected – given the importance of ensuring development is high quality, further guidance is considered useful.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan includes within policy AAPLV1 a set of requirements for housing in the centre in order to ensure all housing is a high standard and that the centre is a desirable place to live, as set out in **Option 1**.

6.1.7 Summary of the SA findings

All parts of the policy have been appraised separately.

Allocating suitable sites for residential development and encouraging residential uses at upper floors, thereby increasing the number of residents within the town centre boundary, will have a positive effect on the vitality and viability of the town centre by increasing numbers of residents who use the shops and services on offer. Impacts such as increased levels of traffic or pressure on services needs to be carefully managed.

Setting standards for new residential environments will have a positive impact on the quality of life of town centre residents, by ensuring that proposed housing is high quality, safe and accessible. It will also ensure that housing is attractive to residents and will not remain vacant.

Housing density in town centres should be high, in order to maximise the benefits of town centre living. However, the policy is flexible to allow different types of housing in certain circumstances where they might be more suitable, for example due to the townscape. The policy is therefore positive overall.

Parts d and e focus on ensuring that new housing developments within the town centre support the centre's primary retail, commercial and service function. This is required in order to ensure that the delivery of residential schemes does not jeopardise the centre's ability to provide sufficient retail and commercial provision, and will therefore have a positive impact on the economy and vitality of the town centre.

6.1.8 Relationship with other policies

- N/A

6.2 Promoting Educational Facilities

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.



Figure 6.1 Walsall College, Littleton Street West

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.

c) 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

6.2.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacting on the preferred policy?
One respondent felt that the AAP should allocate land to allow for the future expansion requirements of health and education providers.	The AAP is looking to allocate space for the College.

6.2.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document combined options around health and education together presenting basically a ‘do nothing’ option (Option 2) or an option to allocate land for expansion. Option 2 was rejected in regards to education:

- **Education and Health Option 2 (No Provision for Education and Health)**
The AAP does not allocate land for the future expansion requirements of the Hospital, other health providers, and the College. Rejected – allocating space for the College is considered the best option for delivering a high quality educational campus that links well to the centre.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan progresses with **Option 1** and allocates land for the college to expand into. This is the best option as it promotes the development of a high quality learning environment in the centre giving the College opportunities to grow as a well connected campus.

6.2.7 Summary of the SA findings

Parts a and b refer to the expansion of Walsall College into identified sites north of the ring road. The College is a major education provider to young people across the borough and its continued expansion should be supported. This would have positive impacts on the educational attainment across the borough and will also benefit the town centre as students make use of town centre shops and facilities. Setting standards for new developments will ensure that buildings are high quality and accessible, relating well to nearby buildings and providing a high quality educational ‘campus’.

Part c sets standards for additional further or higher education facilities or ancillary accommodation within the town centre, which would be positive for the town centre as it would increase footfall and therefore use of shops and services. Setting standards will ensure that new developments are high quality and accessible,

however it is difficult to fully understand the impacts until specific locations are known.

6.2.8 Relationship with other policies

- Policy WA4: Walsall College of Art and Technology – St. Paul's Campus.

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.

6.3.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
One respondent felt that the AAP should allocate land to allow for the future expansion requirements of health and education providers.	The AAP is looking to allocate space for the College but there is no evidence of future healthcare requirements so no sites have been allocated for such uses.

6.3.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document combined options around health and education together presenting basically a 'do nothing' option (Option 2) or an option to allocate land for expansion. Option 1 was rejected in regards to health:

- **Education and Health Option 1 (Allocate Land for Expansion of Existing Education and Health Facilities).** The AAP is allocating space for the

College but not for healthcare provision as there is no evidence of need for such uses.

This option was rejected because there is currently no evidence of need to justify the allocation on land for healthcare facilities. The Preferred Options Draft Plan has therefore progressed with **Option 2 and hasn't allocated land for the future expansion requirements of the Hospital or other health providers.** Instead the Preferred Options Draft Plan has a supportive policy that looks to protect current healthcare facilities in the centre, supports proposals for new healthcare facilities and looks to build on the links to the Manor Hospital. This is therefore a new option for the AAP compared to the 'do nothing' option.

6.3.7 Summary of the SA findings

The SA looks at parts a and b and parts c and d separately.

Supporting healthcare facilities in the town centre and resisting the loss of existing healthcare facilities is considered to have positive effects on the health and well-being of Walsall's residents. The town centre is the most accessible location in the borough and is therefore the most appropriate location for healthcare facilities.

The Manor Hospital is an important healthcare facility which has recently received significant investment, as such its key location within close proximity of the town centre should be further enhanced and promoted. Uses linked to the hospital are encouraged within the town centre to further support this facility.

6.3.8 Relationship with other policies

- N/A

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 AAPI3(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.

6.4.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
Interest in some sort of Community Infrastructure Building or 'hub' which could bring together a number of voluntary and community organisations into one building. A lot of these organisations are already based in the town centre, beneficial to locate together. Interest in the Challenge building.	The plan reflects this aspiration and allocated Challenge Block

6.4.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document included no options around community facilities but instead asked a question around what the Plan should do to protect and promote

such facilities. Since this document was published the Council has considered there is a need for a community hub to bring community uses together in the most accessible location for the borough, the town centre. The Preferred Options Draft Plan therefore looks to allocate land for a community hub and provide criteria for its location should this site not be delivered. The other option would be to do nothing and let the community hub location be decided outside of the plan. This is not considered a suitable option as this may mean the community hub is not located in the most accessible location and it may also make it less deliverable as a site has not been allocated for its development.

6.4.7 Summary of the SA findings

The SA considers the two parts of the policy separately.

The protection of existing community facilities will have positive impacts on the local community, by restricting the loss of key facilities. This part of the policy does not promote new facilities, although these would be encouraged, but looks to resist the possible loss or relocation of existing facilities outside of the town centre, as it is the most accessible location for people to be able to access the facilities.

It is considered that a single 'hub' for community facilities within the town centre to bring these uses together into a single, accessible location will be positive as it will enable users to access the facilities more easily. There may be impacts regarding traffic and air quality which will need to be considered and possibly mitigated against.

6.4.8 Relationship with other policies

- N/A

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 Core Strategy 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.

This is reflected in policies ENV2 and ENV3 of the BCCS which aim to protect and promote the cultural identity and distinctiveness of the Black Country through providing guidance on Historic Character and Local Distinctiveness and Design Quality. Additionally BCCS policy ENV4 which provides for the protection and enhancement of the designated and undesignated heritage assets associated with the canals should be considered in the relevant areas of the town centre.

The town centre features a number of designated heritage assets which are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. These include five conservation areas, three of which are on the 2014 Heritage at Risk register; 47 listed buildings (out of a total of 151 in the Borough as a whole) of which three are Grade II* (Guildhall, Church of St Mary and Presbytery and Church of St Matthew). The Church of St Matthew is the only listed building in the town centre on the 2014 Heritage at Risk Register. A further 46 buildings are included on the local list and should be afforded the same level of importance and consideration as those on the national list because of their contribution to the distinctive local character of the town centre. This consideration is in line with the NPPF definition of a heritage asset as “*A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage Asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).*” (NPPF Glossary).

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 Study divides the area into six locally distinctive character areas which are then sub divided into sub-character areas. The sub-character areas have been assessed in terms of building types, connections and urban grain, uses, materials, positive and negative characteristics, significance, sensitivity, capacity for change and potential opportunities for development, in order to understand the origin of the present character, the influence of the historic development and the survival of historic fabric. 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.

Previously unrecognised and undesignated heritage assets have been identified by the Characterisation Study, these are not covered by listing or local list designations and include buildings, sites, archaeological features and open spaces, which contribute towards the overall character and distinctiveness of the area.

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.

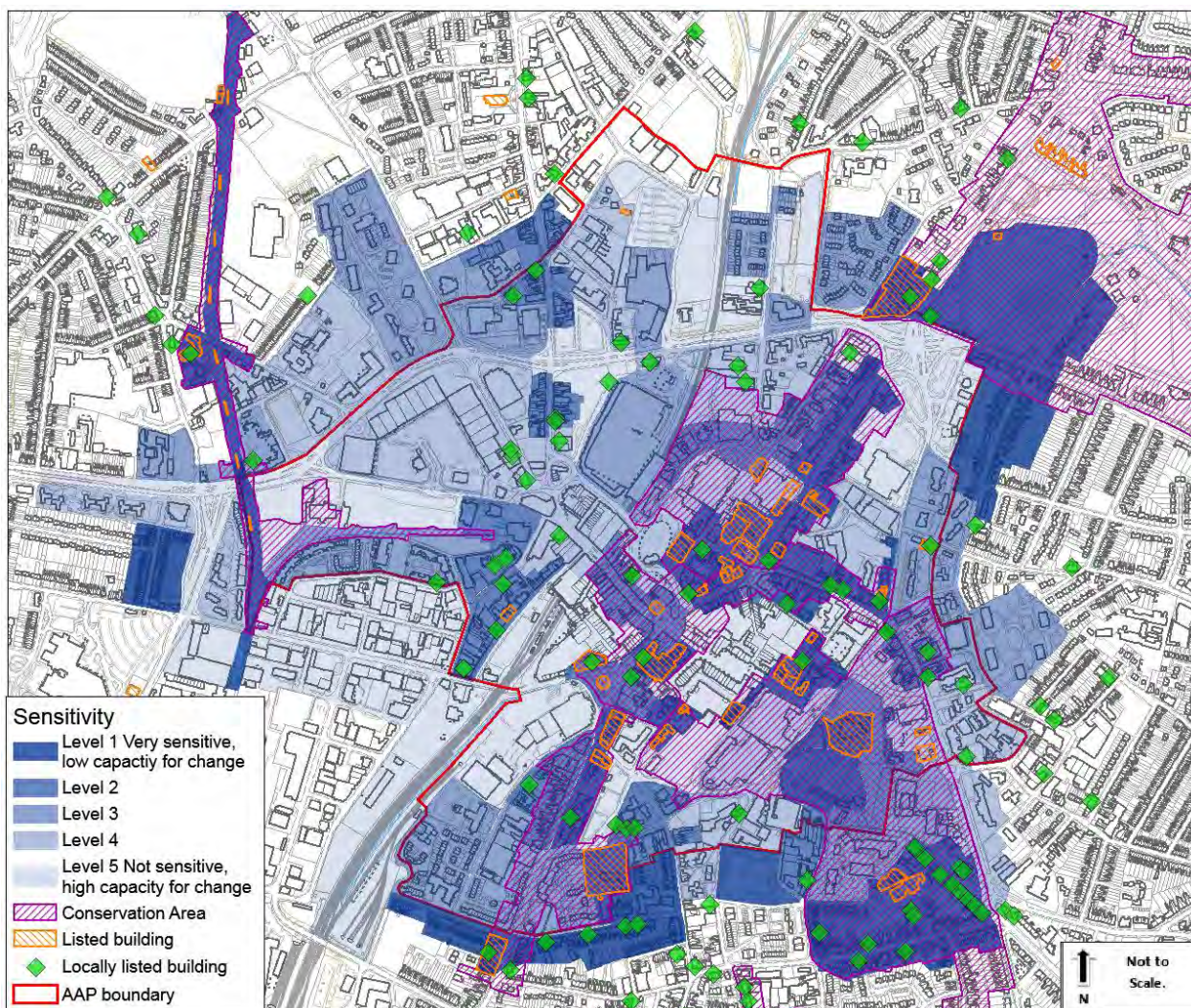


Figure 6.2 Historic sensitivity and heritage assets

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.

6.5.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
<p>3 respondents supported identifying buildings that enhance the character of the town centre and protecting them. It was felt too many heritage buildings had already been lost and a strong policy was needed to stop any further losses. 2 respondents did not support the option to identify buildings and spaces that are positive to the town centre and seek to ensure they contribute to future development as it was felt not to provide sufficient protection to heritage buildings. The option to consolidate and enhance the four character zones was supported by 1 respondent. One respondent felt that a flexible approach to undesignated assets was needed and that each new development should be assessed on individual merits.</p>	<p>The Characterisation Study identifies areas of the town which need to be protected and those which have greater capacity for change.</p>
<p>English Heritage stated that the conservation and enhancement of the town's historic environment and heritage assets should be a central part of the strategy as well as inform decision-making on the options for development. There is a need to be informed by an adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence base on the area's historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF. An effective approach would be to undertake a historic characterisation study of</p>	<p>These comments have been taken on board and a Characterisation Study for the Town Centre AAP area has been undertaken. This forms a key piece of evidence used to inform evidence and applications within the town centre and has been used to inform the policies of the AAP.</p>

the plan area. They believe an appropriate level of characterisation of the town centre would help inform decisions to secure sustainable development, including the conservation and enhancement of the area's heritage assets including historic character.	
2 respondents felt that the heritage of Walsall was very important to its character and more should be done to protect these buildings from antisocial behaviour, damage or arson, and to encourage their use. One respondent stated that all development proposals must be assessed against the necessary national and local policy to protect and enhance any existing heritage assets, and advised of the need to maintain a historic environment record (HER).	By providing positive policies for the historic environment, referenced against the NPPF and Core Strategy the Council aims to try and ensure a viable future for the heritage assets in Walsall Town Centre. The Walsall HER archive forms part of the Wolverhampton and Walsall HER which is based at the City of Wolverhampton Council.
3 respondents supported the option to use policies to address specific aspects of delivering in conservation areas. 2 respondents supported the option to prepare a policy to facilitate learning and interpretation of the historic environment. 2 respondents said that they support the review of the Conservation Area boundaries as outlined in option 1, but felt that the 'implications' implied that this would result in a reduction in the areas, and this was not supported. Likewise, grading listed buildings was not supported if it led to a reduction in their protection (option 3).	The Options for conservation areas and listed buildings are considered in full below, but are generally in agreement with the answers provided through the consultation. The Characterisation Study will be made available for public consultation and a copy will be held at the HER. Additionally, where suitable, approaches for education will be considered on a site by site basis

6.5.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document included three options around the character of Walsall. Two of the options have been rejected:

- **Character option 1 (identify buildings that enhance the character of Walsall town centre and protects them)** Rejected – many are protected under Listing or Local Listing designations as well as large areas of the town centre being designated as Conservation Areas. This option alone would not look at the character of areas overall so may result in some character of the centre being lost. The Characterisation Study takes a more holistic approach to character.
- **Character option 3 (Seek to consolidate and enhance the four identified character zones)** Rejected – the Characterisation Study has identified six character areas in the town Centre AAP area which map the character based on the features of the townscape, these are a more accurate representation than the 'Clover Leaf' character zones suggested in Character option 3.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan has progressed with **Option 2 which looks at buildings and places that are positive in character to contribute to future development**. This option was chosen following responses from English Heritage (now Historic England), which suggested that the best approach to understanding the character of Walsall was to produce a Characterisation Study. This study has identified the key buildings, features and materials present and their impact on the character of the town centre (both enhancing and detracting) and graded their sensitivity to change. The Characterisation Study will be used as an evidence base for new developments and other planning applications in the town centre as well as providing the opportunity to help enhance the understanding of the historic environment of the town centre through its publication on the Council website.

The Issues and Options document also included five options around conservation areas and listed buildings. **Option 1 was around Conservation Areas and reviewing their boundaries**. Whilst this option was not been pursued in the Draft Plan it is still a long term aspiration of the Council, however it has not been possible to review them at this stage. Conservation Areas are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the NPPF. The Council will look to review the current Conservation Area boundaries, appraisals and management plans when able to do so and the Characterisation Study provides a good evidence base from which to start this process.

Option 2 was to prepare policies that address specific aspects of decline in Conservation Areas, such as poor advertisement, poor shop fronts or low quality materials. This option has been rejected but the AAP Policies covering the Historic Environment and Good Design are intended to cover the whole of the town centre AAP area and address the issues faced by the Conservation Areas. The Characterisation Study can be used to identify sites that are less sensitive to change and therefore have the potential to enhance the Conservation Areas as well as the highly sensitive to change sites which form the key focus of the Conservation Areas.

Conservation Areas **Option 3 which would introduce grading for locally listed buildings** was also rejected as this would involve a comprehensive survey of the locally listed buildings and other buildings that could be considered as candidates for local listing. If the grading was to use the same style of system as Listed Building grades, it would also prove difficult to be consistent as building types that are important in one Conservation Area may not have the same importance or weight in another Conservation Area. For example a Victorian factory building would have greater importance to a Conservation Area designated for its Victorian features than it would in one designated for Georgian features.

Conservation Areas **Option 4 which looked at preparing a policy to facilitate learning and interpretation of the historic environment** around the town centre

has been progressed in the Preferred Option Draft Plan to some extent as the Characterisation Study will be published on the Council website and provides the opportunity to help enhance the understanding of the historic environment of the town centre.

Overall the Preferred Options Draft Plan will be progressing with **Option 5 which is continuing to manage the historic environment under the current legislation** however this will be considerably aided by the Characterisation Study which will add information to the decision making process and help to protect the character of the centre overall.

6.5.7 Summary of the SA findings

The different parts of the policy have been appraised separately.

Part a is positive as setting standards for new developments in order to ensure that they strengthen local character and identity will protect and enhance the existing historic character of the town and will improve the townscape of the centre. Attractive buildings and environments will have positive impacts on the economy of the town centre.

Part b sets criteria for new developments affecting sites identified as heritage assets; again this will have a positive impact on the townscape of the centre and will ensure attractive buildings and environments which will have positive impacts on the economy of the town centre. It is unclear at this point whether the design criteria will add costs to developments therefore affecting their viability.

Part c will again have positive impacts on the townscape of the centre, as bringing architecturally or historically interesting buildings back into use means they will be invested in and well maintained, and therefore reducing the opportunity for vandalism or anti-social behaviour. However bringing older buildings into modern use can be expensive for developers who may prefer a vacant site, and therefore this policy could be difficult to enforce.

Part d of the policy has many positive impacts in terms of preserving the heritage and cultural identity of the town centre, by resisting the demolition of heritage assets unless certain criteria can be fulfilled. However, it may be that such buildings are too expensive to refurbish and if they cannot fulfil the set criteria this may lead to heritage assets standing vacant and derelict for some time which is unattractive and unhelpful to the economy of the town.

6.5.8 Relationship with other policies

- None

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.

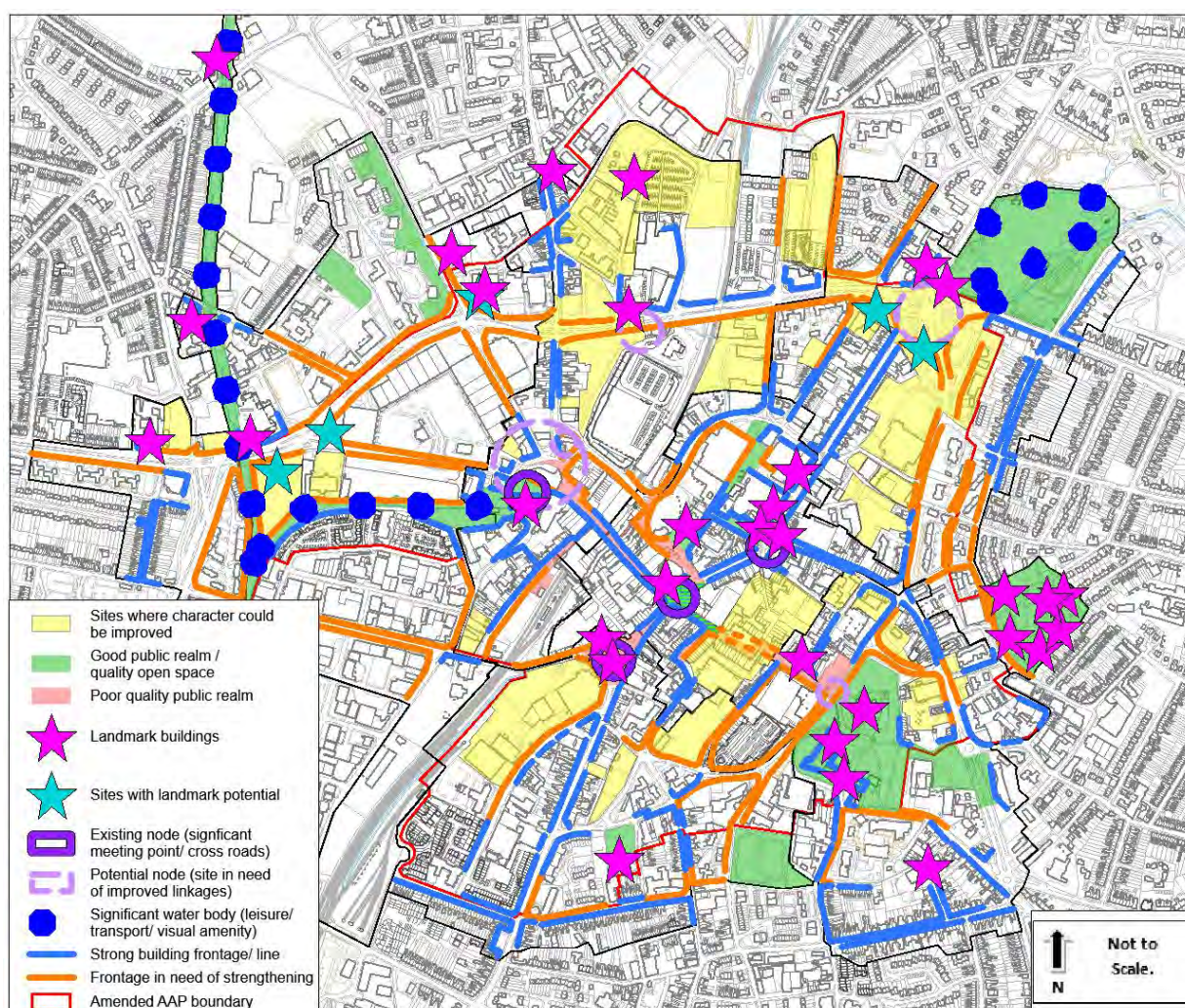


Figure 6.3: Analysis of the character of the town centre.

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

6.6.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
1 respondent supported design codes requiring high quality design and identifying locations for exemplar buildings (option 2), and 2 supported exemplar design standards for new buildings in prominent locations to set a precedence for the town (option 3). Another stated no option but felt design codes should be used for strategic sites or large schemes (implying support for options 2 and 3), whilst ensuring they are not over restrictive but focus on guiding the scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access. The Environment Agency also supported option 3, believing that high quality design and sustainable development would help to enhance the character, environment and image of the TC.	High quality design for new buildings in prominent locations is set out in the policy.
3 respondents felt that the AAP should set out policies for protected views, in particular the views of the Art Gallery, St Matthew's	It is considered that part ii of the policy will adequately protect landmark buildings.

church and St Mary's the Mount church.	
The Police felt that crime prevention should be considered in the design of all town centre development proposals, and provided suggested text for such a policy: 'Development proposals should promote safe and secure communities by applying 'secured by design' principles. All Design and Access Statements should include information to demonstrate how proposals address community safety and crime prevention.'	This is covered in part i(a) of the policy.

6.6.6 Explanation of other options considered

There were two options included in the Issues and Options document that considered having a policy around protecting views in the town centre. Option 2 was rejected as this proposed not protecting any views within the centre which could have a considerable negative impact on the character of Walsall town centre overall. The Preferred Options Draft Plan has a requirement within the design policy for developments over 4 storeys to demonstrate that there would be no adverse impact on landmark buildings. The policy does have a caveat to prevent this policy making schemes unviable.

In regards to the design of new buildings the Issues and Options document included three options. Two options were rejected:

- **Design Option 1 (No design requirements above what is already needed in current planning policy)** Rejected – there is a need to ensure high quality design across the town centre and in particular for buildings in prominent locations.
- **Design option 2 (design codes are set for the town centre requiring high quality design, setting out what level is expected and identifying key locations for exemplar buildings)** Rejected – it is not felt that there is sufficient need for strict design codes, but the policy does identify through the AAP Policy Plan sites where only developments of high quality design will be allowed.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan has progressed with **Option 3 to seek exemplar design in prominent locations** by including a design policy which provides an overview of the requirements including the need to be of an appropriate scale and provide active frontages. It also identifies gateway sites which are shown on the AAP Policies Map that require high quality design. The Investment chapter includes more detailed guidance around design in the priority development areas such as Waterfront and Gigaport.

The Issues and Options design options also covered renewable energy and there were three options covering this issue, two of which have been rejected:

- **Design option 5 (requirements for on-site renewable energy generation are set where appropriate from town centre developments that goes beyond the BCCS requirements)** Rejected – there is insufficient evidence of need for on-site renewable energy generation.
- **Design option 6 (actively allocates land for large scale renewable energy projects)** Rejected – it is not considered necessary to allocate specific sites for large scale renewable energy projects.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan is progressing with **Option 4 which sets no further requirements for renewable energy above the BCCS**. The BCCS is considered to already place sufficient demands on developers and placing further burden could risk making developments unviable. Securing investment within the most accessible location within the borough in accordance with the regeneration strategy is considered as the most effective way to reduce the impact of development of the environment.

6.6.7 Summary of the SA findings

The parts of this policy have been appraised separately.

Setting standards for the design of new developments will have a positive impact on the townscape of the centre, improving the environment and aesthetic of the town, therefore encouraging further investment and expenditure and improving the economy of the town centre. However it should be considered whether design standards will increase costs of developments which can impact on viability.

Part b looks to protect views of important buildings, which will have a positive impact on the townscape of the centre, as well as improving and reinforcing the image and identity of the town, and having a positive impact on legibility. However the policy incorporates a level of flexibility as it is recognised that that storey heights can impact on the viability of a site and this policy needs to strike a balance between protecting important views and ensuring sites are viable development opportunities.

Part c looks to ensure the highest standard of design in sites in prominent or gateway locations. This will again have positive effects on the townscape and identity of the town centre, which should encourage further investment and expenditure and improve the economy of the town centre. However it should be considered whether design standards will increase costs of developments which can impact on viability.

6.6.8 Relationship with other policies

- N/A

6.7 Enhancing 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.

6.7.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
4 respondents supported allocating areas for public realm improvements, to enhance existing infrastructure and attract investment, and as the most viable option.	This has been incorporated in the policy and on the AAP policies map.
The current market square was identified as an area for improvements, as was Bradford Place, the link between Park Street and Crown Wharf, links between Lichfield Street and the Arboretum, and the Leicester Street/Bridge Street junction. It was felt that public realm enhancements should focus on areas of high footfall, gateways and key linkages. One respondent commented that currently town centre is very shabby – broken paving, litter, empty units – and appears run down.	A number of these areas have been identified on the AAP policies map as the priority areas for public realm improvements. The linkages with the Arboretum are covered in Policy AAPLV8, as are junction improvements in Policy AAPT3.
One respondent agreed that a BID could be used to support public realm improvements; however, there is a need to take into account the current economic situation. No other mechanisms for funding public realm improvements were suggested.	A BID has been considered previously and would be considered again in the future, however it is not felt that this needs to be reflected in the policy.
One respondent felt that access within the town was ok but that improvements were	Legibility and accessibility will be considered as part of the public realm improvements, as

needed to the access routes into the town, including ensuring surfaces are safe for wheelchairs. Another respondent felt that the street furniture affected accessibility, and that the black 'box' benches should be replaced by standard benches. The junction of Leicester Street/ Bridge Street was mentioned as being difficult to move around.	well as being considered in movement policy AAPT1.
Re. linkages, 3 respondents agreed we should continue to improve legibility in Park St through removal of planting beds, seats, light, using signs and paving improvements. However 2 respondents felt while that it was important to improve legibility and declutter the environment, this should not necessarily mean the removal of all the planting and seating, which is well used.	The type, location and level of street furniture and soft landscaping will be considered as part of the process of delivering public realm improvements.

6.7.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document included three options around public realm; the following two have been rejected.

- **Public Realm Option 2 (sites are allocated for new proposed public realm)** Rejected – the Council will focus on improving existing areas of public realm rather creating new ones. The implementation of the permanent relocation of Walsall Market will deliver a high quality public space at The Bridge.
- **Public Realm Option 3 (The AAP recognises the importance of public realm but does not identify specific areas for improvement)** Rejected – this would not allow the Council sufficient control to be able to implement public realm improvements in the areas which require it most.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan has progressed with **Option 1 which identifies areas of priority for investment in public realm** on the AAP Policies Map. This is in recognition of the important role public realm has to play in the regeneration of Walsall town centre and to show how committed the Council is to delivering these improvements. It is anticipated that allocating these areas will strengthen the argument for securing external funding and Council spending to deliver the schemes.

There were also four options within the Issues and Options document around linkages. The first set of options (Linkages **Options 1 and 2**) looked at the quality of environment along Park Street, considering whether improvements should be made to improve its legibility by the removal of planting beds, seats, lights etc. As Park Street is allocated as a priority area for public realm improvements the option of

making no further alterations has been rejected and the Draft Plan looks to ensure it is a high quality accessible street that provides a welcoming shopping experience.

The second set of options addressed the issue of improving links between Park Street and the rest of the centre. The first of these options (**Linkages Option 3**) proposed demolishing the building currently occupied by Poundland if improvements to public transport networks are delivered. As the proposals around public transport have since changed (see **Chapter 7**) this option has been rejected. The demolition of a large occupied retail unit with the Primary Shopping Area was not considered to be the best option if other ways to improve linkages could be secured. The Preferred Options Draft Plan has therefore progressed with **Linkages Option 4** that looks for other ways to improve linkages. The AAP Policies Map has shown areas where improvements are needed and policy AAPT1 in **Chapter 7** looks to deliver these.

6.7.7 Summary of the SA findings

The SA looks at each part of the policy separately.

Part a will have positive impacts on the townscape and identity of the town centre by improving the public realm in the core of the town centre. Improving the environment of the town will increase the attractiveness of the centre to both potential investors and visitors to the town, therefore improving the economy of the town. Public realm investments will need to be prioritised and phased, and could cause short term disruption while they are undertaken, although this will be minimised as far as possible.

Part b looks to ensure that current areas of quality public realm, and areas which are improved going forward, are maintained to a high quality. This will again have positive impacts on the townscape and identity of the town, and secondary positive impacts on the economy of the centre.

Part c looks to new development to contribute to the implementation and maintenance of public realm improvements, which will again have positive impacts on the townscape and identity of the centre, and therefore positive impacts on the economy of the centre. Discussions will need to be undertaken with developers to ensure that this policy can be implemented effectively without jeopardising the viability of schemes.

6.7.8 Relationship with other policies

- N/A

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.

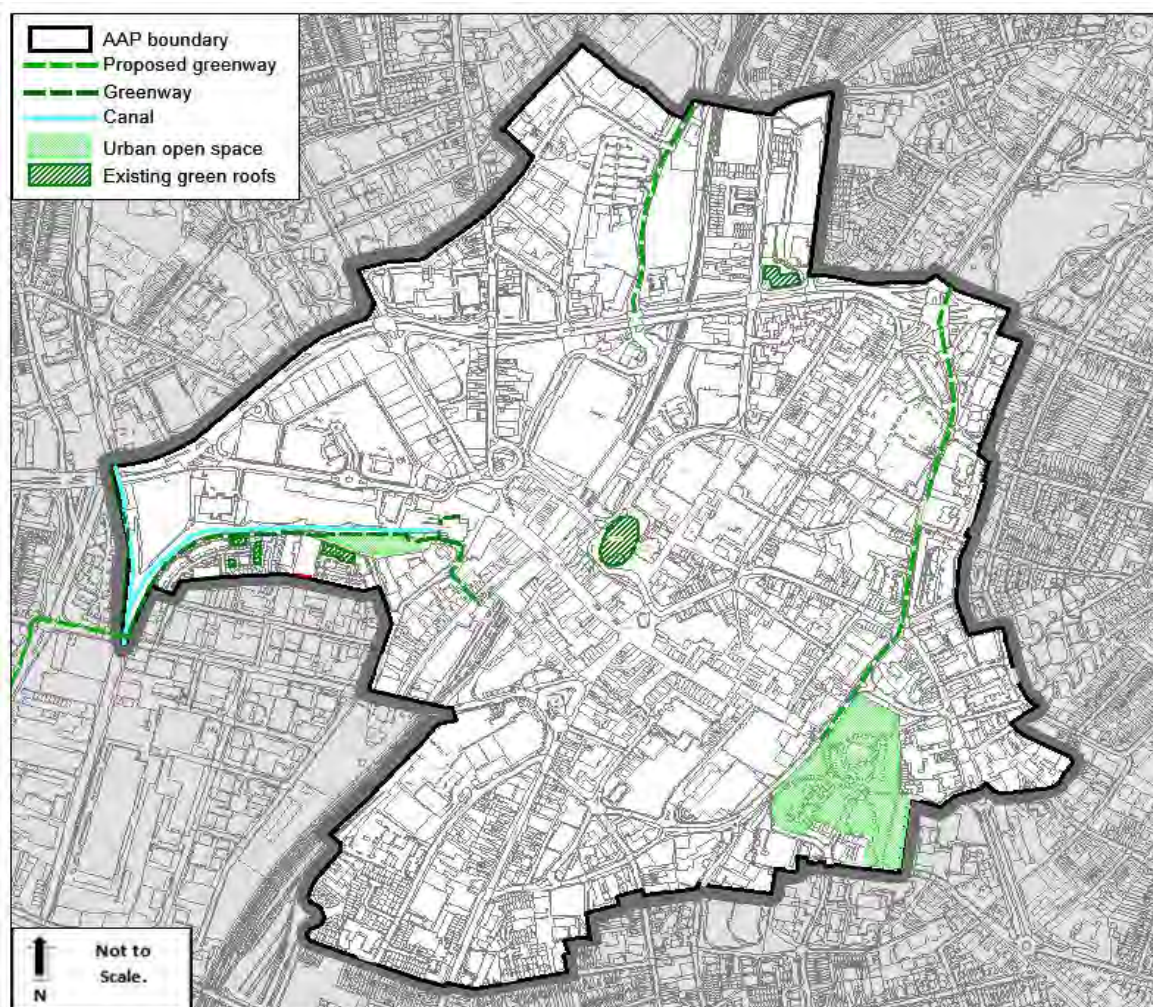


Figure 6.4 Existing Environmental Infrastructure

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

6.8.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
Regarding environmental infrastructure, 3 respondents supported highlighting existing key environmental assets where improvements will be sought. There was no support for option 2.	The policy looks to support the existing assets and provides guidance for new developments to contribute to the environmental infrastructure.
In terms of environmental assets to be improved, the CRT highlighted the potential of the canal.	Noted and the Canal is referenced here and has its own policy (AAPLE4).
Many respondents felt the link between the arboretum and the town centre should be strengthened, with suggestions including: increasing the prominence of cycle and pedestrian pathways, more signage or a trail, investing in the pavements and public realm, and providing a shuttle bus or town train. Also improving the quality of shops and restaurants on Lichfield Street to encourage linked trips. The road layout here was raised by multiple respondents as a particular barrier for pedestrians accessing the arboretum.	The policy seeks to promote links and references developments where we would expect improvements to be made to linkages with the Arboretum.

6.8.6 Explanation of other options considered

There were two options in the Issues and Options document around environmental infrastructure in the town centre. One of these has been rejected:

- **Environmental Option 2 (Rely on Existing Policy to Deliver Environmental Improvements)** The AAP sets out no specific assets for improvement or mechanisms to deliver the improvements. Rejected – improving current and providing new environmental infrastructure is crucial in achieving a sustainable town centre that is visually attractive.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan has progressed with **Option 1 which looks to highlight existing infrastructure where improvements will be sought** including open space within the centre, the canal network, and existing trees.

The Draft Plan has actually taken a stronger approach than the original options by requiring developments over a certain size to include green roofs and requiring all developments to consider the use of green walls, trees and sustainable urban drainage systems. This is considered the best approach towards delivering new green infrastructure without placing too high a burden on developers. The other option set out above of not requiring any new green infrastructure is not considered sufficient to deliver a greener centre and a high quality environment that attracts further investment.

The Draft Plan also looks to allocate a new piece of urban open space by the canalside. There was a question within the Issues and Options document around any open space that should be allocated but no option was included. The allocation of this green space as urban open space is considered the best option to protect it from development creating a green area along the canal. This creates a high quality environment which will provide amenity space for the canalside residents and contribute to the Waterfront leisure destination on the other side of the canal. It also links the Greenway and existing green roofs providing a more connected green corridor for wildlife. The alternative would be to not allocate the site and whilst this may mean it could be developed for a town centre use which may have a more direct economic benefit, the negative impact on the amenity of the area for residents and on the environment are considered to outweigh this positive.

6.8.7 Summary of the SA findings

The parts of the policy for existing assets and requirements for new developments have been appraised separately.

Parts a, b, c, and d look to protect a number of existing green infrastructure assets within the town centre. The impacts here are wide ranging and broadly positive, including protecting and improving green routes, green spaces, and trees. This will have positive impacts on air quality, climate change, biodiversity, accessibility, and townscape and landscape.

Parts e and f set standards for new green infrastructure for new developments, which will have positive impacts on air quality, climate change, and biodiversity. However discussions will need to be undertaken to understand whether such standards will increase costs of developments and potentially affect scheme viability.

6.8.8 Relationship with other policies

- N/A

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 Policies 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 Policies 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 policies 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 considers 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

7.1.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
Links between the town centre and nearby residential areas could be improved using better design, signage and crossings. Links to hospital could be improved, particularly along the canal	This is addressed through the policy wording and the Canal policy (AAPLE4).
Respondents agreed that links between Crown Wharf and Park Street and key transport interchanges need to be improved.	Agreed – this is represented through the Policies Map and policy wording
2 respondents support pedestrianising area between Park St and Crown Wharf, and while WC Traffic Management did not oppose this option they expressed concern over lack of public transport provision to Waterfront. HUT did not state a preference but support the objective to enhance links between Crown Wharf and Park Street which implies support for this option. Centro were the only respondent who supported partial de-pedestrianisation of the Bridge; however 2 respondents strongly opposed this idea. 3 respondents supported option 3 – no further areas of pedestrianisation.	The link between Crown Wharf Retail Park and Park Street would benefit from pedestrianisation; however this would impact on vehicle access to the businesses in the vicinity as well as have wider implications for the movement of traffic through the town centre. Separate options for improving the link between these two locations have been explored and evaluated. These options account for the need to create a safe and convenient link for pedestrians whilst retaining access to businesses as well as maintaining existing bus routes. De-pedestrianisation of the Bridge would impact upon the relocation of the market. The Bridge has been determined as the best location for Walsall market, additionally, the use of the space for buses to travel through

	the town centre may result in severance which would have a detrimental effect on the movements of pedestrians through the town.
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7.1.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document included three options around the pedestrianisation. Two of these were rejected:

- **Pedestrianisation Option 1 (Area Between Crown Wharf and Park Street)** Rejected – enhancing the route between Crown Wharf Retail Park and Park Street would encourage greater movement between the two popular shopping areas. Due to the location of Crown Wharf Retail Park many visitors may not be aware of its proximity to the town centre and therefore solely shop on the retail park. However, pedestrian patterns of movements are influenced by new developments; this has been seen with the opening of Tesco and the College. At present the Old Square Shopping Centre is being redeveloped to house several new retail units including the Co-op and Primark. Additionally the Lower Hall Lane/ Digbeth site (TC03) has consent for retail redevelopment, which in turn would completely transform the retail opportunities for the High Street/Digbeth area of the town centre. With so many new stores located in such a small zone of the town centre adjusted pedestrian movements will become established. Redevelopment of the High Street/Digbeth shopping area may see those visitors using Crown Wharf Retail Park travelling further into the town to visit new stores. It is therefore not considered necessary to pedestrianise the area at present until the impact of new developments and changes in footfall is understood.
- **Pedestrianisation Option 2 (Partial De-Pedestrianisation to Allow Bus Access to The Bridge/ Park Street)** Rejected – the consultant’s study found The Bridge to be the best location for Walsall Market and Policy AAPS3 has allocated the Bridge for the market’s development. The area will also provide a space for public events on non-market days. As such, depedestrianising The Bridge as a route for bus services to utilise would jeopardise the future of Walsall market. Additionally the use of the space for buses to travel through the town centre may result in severance which would have a detrimental effect on the movements of pedestrians through the town.

The Preferred Option Draft Plan has therefore progressed with **Option 3 in not proposing any further areas of pedestrianisation**. The Draft Plan has also progressed with a new option which requires developments to be well integrated and provide strong pedestrian linkages. This approach also identifies locations where improvements are needed to linkages for example between Crown Wharf and Park

Street and from the Gigaport across the ring road. This is considered the best option to achieve improvements in linkages across the town centre as a whole but especially in the priority areas shown on the Policies Map. The alternative option of not addressing the linkages issues within the centre could mean developments fail to benefit the centre as a whole and may have an adverse impact on some areas in the centre as footfall is not spread across the centre. This may also mean less people use public transport which could have a negative impact on the environment and traffic congestion.

7.1.7 Summary of the SA findings

The designation of areas where linkages need to be improved as shown on the Policies Map, the policy in part a) and the greenway allocations in part b) are appraised separately.

The designation of areas where linkages need to be improved is likely to have a positive impact, by improving linkages throughout the centre there are more opportunities for linked trips and increased spending as people find it easier to navigate from one destination to another. It can also make the centre more sustainable as people find public transport easier to use as well as walking and cycling becoming a more desirable option.

The policy in part a) is likely to have a positive impact, by improving linkages throughout the centre there are more opportunities for linked trips and increased spending as people find it easier to navigate from one destination to another, this is especially the case for strengthening the Primary Shopping Area. The improvements across the ring road will also help the Gigaport proposals support other uses such as retail and leisure as office workers find it easier to access the entire centre. It can also make the centre more sustainable as people find public transport easier to use as well as walking and cycling becoming a more desirable option. The policy specifically looks to ensure that new developments are accessible for those with limited mobility. There is an uncertain impact on cultural heritage as some improvements may result in more signage or changes to historic layout of the centre.

Part b) which allocates existing and proposed Greenways is likely to have a positive impact overall by making the centre more accessible and by linking the centre to green spaces which offer amenity space for communities. Increased pedestrian and cycle use will have health benefits and reduce car dependency. There are some uncertain impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity as increased activity along the canal and in open space could have some impact on the natural elements of these spaces, however increased usage may also mean they are maintained and invested in which could result in improvements to their biodiversity and geodiversity.

7.1.8 Relationship with other policies

- WA19: Pedestrians, Cyclists and Disabled People

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.

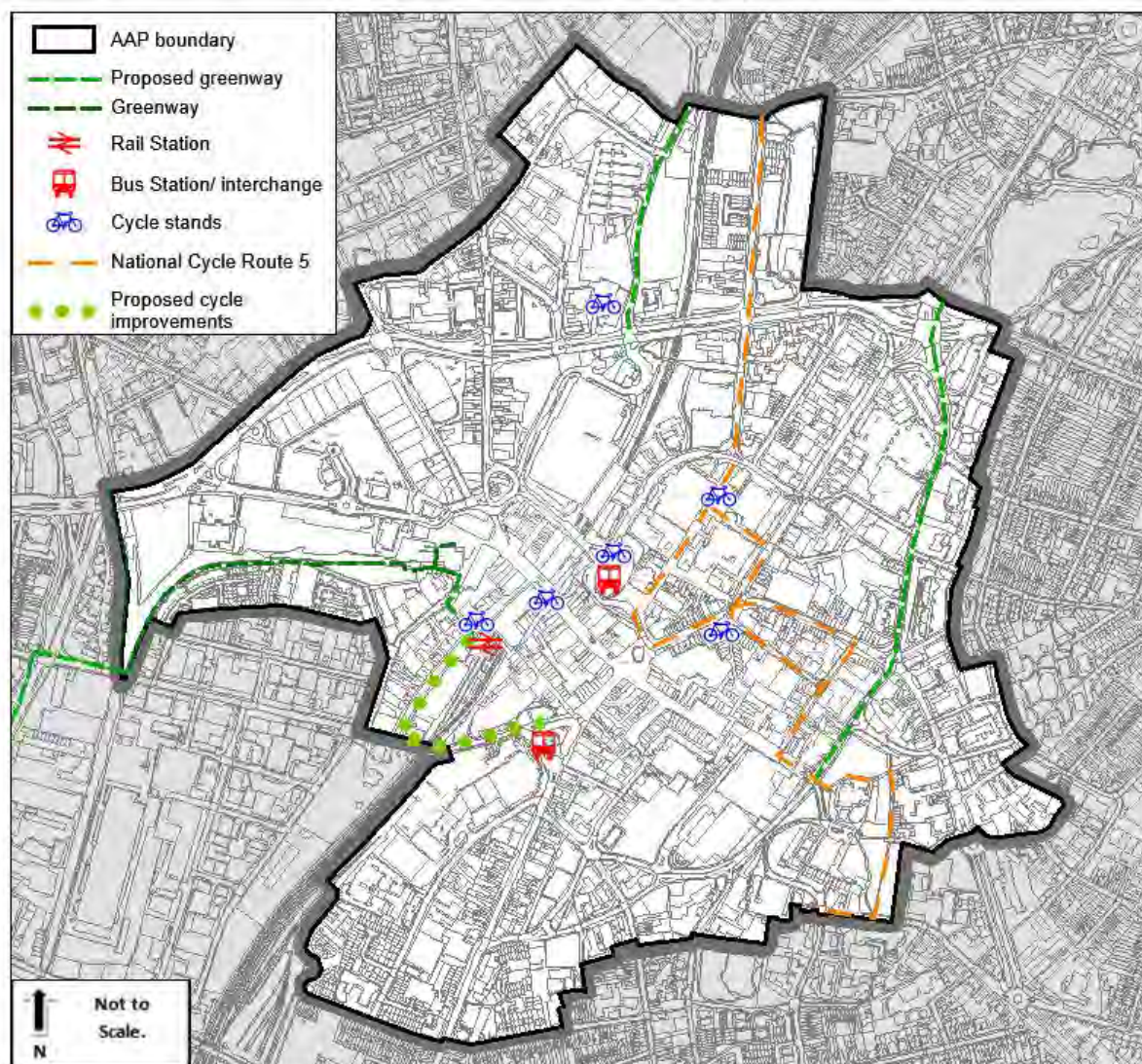


Figure 7.1 Cycling and public transport facilities

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.

7.2.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
No reps regarding the need for additional cycle routes in the town centre. No reps regarding where additional parking for cyclists / motorcyclists should be provided.	N/A

7.2.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document didn't include any options around promoting cycling but did include a question on whether there is any need for additional cycle routes. As part of the overall work towards the Preferred Option document around what improvements are needed to linkages in the town centre it is considered that there are indeed some areas where improvements in cycle routes would be beneficial. It is also considered that the AAP should look to protect and enhance current cycle routes. Improvements to cycle routes will help link the centre and encourage more sustainable transport which has positive environmental and health impacts. The protection of the canal footpaths for cycle routes also protects the canal's historic environment and ensures it continues to provide a positive environment for communities and wildlife. This was therefore considered the best option for promoting cycling into and around the centre. The alternative of not proposing any protection or improvements could over time mean there is a reduction in cycle users which could result in a less sustainable centre and not deliver connected environmental and health improvements.

7.2.7 Summary of the SA findings

Parts a) and c) are appraised together as they look to protect current cycle routes and parking, part b) is appraised separately as this looks to improve a specific route.

Parts a) and c) are likely to have a positive impact, as protecting cycle routes ensures the centre remains cycle friendly, promoting this healthy and sustainable mode of transport. Protecting the current cycle parking is also positive as it supports the use of the cycle routes and people commuting to work or to public transport hubs then travelling on to other areas for work. There could be some cost on developers who are required to provide cycle parking but this will be minimal and have no impact on the overall positive impact of an accessible centre.

Part b) which looks to improve connections between transport hubs will have a positive impact as it makes cycling for work and leisure a more desirable option, increasing the number of people cycling which has health and environmental benefits.

7.2.8 Relationship with other policies

- WA19: Pedestrians, Cyclists and Disabled People.

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 the 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.

7.3.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
<p>There were no responses in support of expanding St Paul's bus station and 1 respondent strongly opposed relocating the rail station. 4 respondents support Station Street facility, on the basis that it would free up the congested Bradford Place interchange and improve linkages between bus and train stations. 2 respondents supported expanding Bradford Place interchange into Jerome retail park, including Centro, and AEW UK, although not selecting an option, are interested in entering into discussions about the potential use of Jerome RP. 2 respondents supported no major public transport changes and a further 1 did not state a preference but felt that significant changes to location and routing of public</p>	<p>In order to create a facility with extra capacity and an improved experience for passengers the redevelopment of Bradford Place, to allow it to expand into Jerome Retail Park would be the best solution. Concept designs have explored the best option for expanding the bus facility into a larger, safer and more modern bus station which will ease congestion and improve reliability. The AAP Policies Map shows the proposed location of the new Bradford Place bus station. A new bus station would require land which is currently utilised as part of Jerome Retail Park. A new road alignment for Bradford Street would result in the creation of a larger area for the fit-for-purpose bus station. Locating the bus station here would produce</p>

<p>transport would be hugely expensive without delivering a significant increase in usage.</p>	<p>public space surrounding the Cenotaph with pedestrianised access to it as well as to the new bus station. The proposed bus station would have sufficient bus stands, as well as much needed bus lay-over spaces. The design of the station means that buses can move more freely within the space and it would not be necessary for pedestrians to walk within the carriageway. As a purpose-built facility, waiting environments for passengers would be enhanced, with journeys made more reliable as bus services would be able to circumnavigate the station with ease.</p>
<p>3 respondents felt that St Paul's bus station is poorly designed and that Bradford Place was too congested and unsafe for pedestrians. The policing and enforcement of bus lanes was felt to be an issue, and the 5Ws route felt to be unrealistic. A joined up approach to bus, rail and taxis in a central location and safe environment, linked to shopping and evening markets is desirable.</p>	<p>Creating one centralised bus station by redeveloping St Paul's would require buses to take a long detour from the south side of the town centre to a new enlarged facility. This would result in lengthened journey times making the bus less attractive to passengers. Alternatively, bus services would have to travel through The Bridge, which as discussed previously would not be a viable option. In addition to the issues relating to routing, in order to create a larger facility additional land would be required. St Paul's is currently constrained by land which is in use by businesses and services. These factors would make it difficult to expand the site.</p>
<p>6 respondents supported the redesign and expansion of the rail station. No respondents supported option 2, but one suggested the rail station should be relocated to Hatherton Road. Topland supported improving and modernising rail infrastructure in principle however wanted to understand more clearly the impacts on the Saddler's Centre.</p>	<p>At present the Chase (Walsall to Rugeley Trent Valley) rail line is undergoing electrification, once completed it will bring benefits such as faster and quieter journeys, more seats, and improved reliability. Electrification of the line may see services to destinations further a field introduced, which would in turn require the rail station's capacity to be increased. Increasing capacity may require an additional platform to be created along with improvements to the station's passenger facilities. Due to the location of the rail station and its integration into the Saddler's Centre further consideration would be required as to how improvements could be achieved.</p>
<p>Centro also state that a supporting transport strategy is required to ensure good connectivity between new and existing land uses, to identify transport infrastructure and service requirements, and set out how transport is intended to be delivered, phased and funded, and taking into account cross boundary links and interconnectivity between</p>	<p>Further work regarding connectivity within the town centre is to be undertaken. In addition a revision of Walsall's Transport Strategy and the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan will provide details on factors such as delivery of schemes as well as cross boundary links and interconnectivity. These documents are due to be released later on in</p>

developments.	2015.
<p>Re. Rapid Transit links, Centro has identified routes where tram-train operation may be appropriate to create a high-quality, high frequency “Black Country Transport Spine”, connecting with the existing heavy rail and Midland Metro networks. These schemes would upgrade the key transport corridors and provide high quality public transport, and would help to support a number of residential, employment and retail developments both within the Town Centre and beyond. In addition, Centro aspires to a Rapid Transit Route which includes stations at Walsall – Willenhall – Wolverhampton.</p>	<p>Work continues on the creation of a rapid transit link between Walsall and Wolverhampton. This includes the determination of a preferred route, including additional stops at key locations between the two strategic centres.</p>

7.3.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document included four options around improvements to bus services, three of which have been rejected:

- **Public Transport Option 1 (Expansion of St. Paul's Bus Station)** Rejected – creating one centralised bus station by redeveloping St Paul’s would require buses to take a long detour from the south side of the town centre to a new enlarged facility. This would result in lengthened journey times making the bus less attractive to passengers. Alternatively, bus services would have to travel through The Bridge, which as discussed previously would not be a viable option. In addition to the issues relating to routing, in order to create a larger facility additional land would be required. St Paul’s is currently constrained by land which is in use by businesses and services. These factors would make it difficult to expand the site and this option has not been included in the plan as it is unlikely to be delivered in the plan period.
- **Public Transport Option 2 (New Multi-Modal Interchange Facility)** Rejected – creating a multi-modal facility at Station Street would allow passengers to easily interchange between different modes however this option does present several issues. Bus services travel into Bradford Place either via Bridgeman Street or Bradford Street. For those accessing Bradford Place via Bridgeman Street the rail bridge presents a height issue for double decker vehicles. Therefore this would limit the routing and fleet that bus operators could utilise. Changes to bus routing could result in detrimental effects to services and significantly impact upon journey times and reliability. Additionally, to accommodate bus services in this location land currently used

as the rail station car park would be lost. These factors would make it difficult to deliver this scheme in the plan period.

- **Public Transport Option 4 (No Change to Public Transport Infrastructure)** Rejected – providing no improvements to public transport interchanges within the town centre would impact in many different ways. To sustain and grow bus patronage, services need to be reliable. If no improvements were to be made to Bradford Place then it would become further congested hindering the operation of bus services. If, overall, public transport were to become less reliable, this could result in modal shift, or even reduction of trips and potentially impacting upon the economic growth of the town centre. Bus travel is an important mode of transport for residents in Walsall, therefore preventing growth and improvement would be detrimental to not only the economy of the town centre but also social aspects of daily life.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan has therefore progressed with **Option 3 which looks to redevelop Bradford Place interchange to create larger capacity by expanding into Jerome Retail Park**. This option is considered the most deliverable as the site is the least constrained and already has good access for buses. The amount of land needed from Jerome Retail Park will be fully determined as the scheme progresses, with the Council working with landowners to relocate businesses.

The Issues and Options document also included two options around improvements to Walsall Railways Station. **Option 1 was to redesign the station create greater capacity** and **Option 2 was to promote the station as a transport hub but not seeking to enhance its capacity**.

At present the Chase (Walsall to Rugeley Trent Valley) rail line is undergoing electrification, once completed it will bring benefits such as faster and quieter journeys, more seats, and improved reliability. Electrification of the line may see services to destinations further a field introduced, which would in turn require the train station's capacity to be increased. Increasing capacity may require an additional platform to be created along with improvements to the station's passenger facilities. Due to the location of the rail station and its integration into the Saddler's Centre further consideration would be required as to how improvements could be achieved.

Walsall is fortunate to have a railway station located in the heart of the town, meaning visitors immediately arrive amongst the core retail and services zone. Enhancing the existing facility would impact positively on potential economic growth as well as allowing residents to receive enhanced rail services to destinations not currently available.

As well as improvements to the rail station, option testing for the introduction of a rapid transit service between Walsall and Wolverhampton has been undertaken. 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. At present there is a heavy rail passenger line between Walsall and Wolverhampton which, although not officially closed has no regular passenger service operating on it (one direct 'parliamentary' train runs on Saturdays only at 06:38 from Wolverhampton). The route is utilised as a diversionary route for West Coast Mainline services when necessary.

Creating a new rapid transit service between Walsall and Wolverhampton would require an island platform to be formed alongside the current platform 1. This is shown in the Policies Map (TC17). The platform would allow full integration with the current rail station and nearby bus interchanges. Part of the existing rail station car park would be required to create the island platform and siding, however a large portion of the car park would be obtained. A definitive route for this rapid transit service is still to be determined, however the stop within Walsall town centre would be located in the same position.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan has therefore progressed with **Option 1 by allocating the car park at Station Street for the expansion of the railway station to accommodate future investment in rapid transit.**

7.3.7 Summary of the SA findings

All parts of this policy have been appraised separately.

Part a), the allocation of Bradford Place Interchange is likely to have a positive impact overall, the ability of the centre to cater for bus services that make Walsall town centre as accessible as possible is crucial to the centre viability. Many people access the centre by bus for work, shopping, leisure and to access other public transport hubs. There will be some impact on the businesses that will need to relocate but this should be short term and the Council will manage the process so the impact is as small as possible. This will be likely outweighed by the improved bus services which bring more footfall to the area in an improved environment. Ensuring the centre has a good bus service is also good for the environment as it reduces car dependency, so whilst there may be some increase in air pollution within that area the overall decrease in emissions will have a positive impact. There will be some uncertain impact on the townscape as some buildings may need to be demolished.

Part b) which allocates Station Street Car Park for the expansion of the train station to include rapid transit is likely to have a positive impact overall through connecting the strategic centres to each other and making Walsall as accessible as possible. Ensuring the centre is accessible reduces car dependency and emissions. There will be some uncertain impact on the townscape around the station street area which could impact on the historic character of some of the buildings on the street. However given the run down nature of Station Street investment in the station is likely to attract further investment in the access to the station and properties/development opportunities on Station Street which will have a positive impact overall.

Finally part c) is also likely to have positive impacts as an accessible centre is more viable and better meets the needs of the community who access the facilities and services. However, as the improvements are unknown there are uncertain impacts on the cultural heritage and townscape of the centre. There may be some developer contributions sought for transport improvements but these would be set at a level that will have limited impact on schemes viability.

7.3.8 Relationship with other policies

- Policy WA14: Town Centre Transport Interchange, Policy WA15: Bus Services and Policy WA16: Rail Services

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.

7.4.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
Centro feel that any junction and highway improvements should not adversely affect the current and future safe and efficient operation of bus services and where possible, bus priority should be incorporated into any improvements.	Travel into the town centre via public transport is continually encouraged and work towards creating a balance between the private car and public transport continues.
WC Traffic Management stated that a full and thorough transport assessment should be carried out to determine individual and collective impacts of changes in traffic patterns on the highway network. It was also felt that the current town centre transport model needed to be updated throughout the AAP process to understand the transport implications of new developments (eg. impact of new offices along ring road).	A strategic traffic model of Walsall town centre is currently being undertaken. This will allow options from the AAP to be modelled.
2 respondents supported setting stringent air quality standards for buses within the TC and 1 person supported working with businesses and bus operators to encourage the use of cleaner low carbon and low emission vehicles. No support for option 3.	Setting air quality standards may not have the desired results in that they are not the most significant contributor and it may result in less services serving Walsall. The Council is considering the production of an air quality SPD with the other Black Country Authorities which will look to mitigate against the impacts of air pollution, especially from vehicle emissions which will offer a better solution to addressing emissions.

7.4.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document included three options around the road network which focussed on air quality, two of which have been rejected:

- **Road Network Option 1 (Air Quality Standards for Buses)** Rejected – bus emissions are not considered the most significant contributor to poor air quality in the centre. There is a real risk of detrimental effects on air quality overall if the result of this option would be fewer bus routes running into and from Walsall because of higher standards being applied. That would be likely to encourage more car use and/or development locating elsewhere as the centre becomes less accessible.
- **Road Network Option 2 (Introduce Measures to Encourage Low Emission Vehicles)** Rejected – whilst it is desirable to work with businesses and bus operators to encourage the take up of cleaner, low carbon and low emission vehicles, this is not considered to form part of the plan making

process. Instead the plan has included within the car parking policy (Policy AAPT5) a requirement for the inclusion of recharging facilities for low emission vehicles where feasible. The Council is considering the production of an air quality SPD with the other Black Country Authorities which will look to mitigate against the impacts of air pollution, from vehicle emissions.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan has therefore progressed with **Option 3 by recognising the issues around air quality but setting no standards or processes through the plan to reduce emissions within the centre.** This is considered the most practical option as it is better to encourage the use of cleaner vehicles and public transport than to set higher standards which could result in the centre becoming less accessible.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan includes proposals for improvements to the road network within the centre. This was not included as an option in the Issues and Options stage but is considered necessary in order to improve the congestion issues within the centre and to mitigate against the impact of future development on the road network. The option of not identifying any improvements could potentially be detrimental to the plan as the road network is in need of improvements to ensure it can sustain future traffic generated by schemes such as the Gigaport. Improvements to the road network are considered essential to ensuring future investment in the centre as investors and businesses may be deterred by the congestion. Although improvements in the road network may result in some increase in car emissions the town centre is the most accessible location and it is therefore considered as the most sustainable approach to regeneration, as development locating elsewhere because of a poor road network would only disperse traffic without having the wider economic benefits of creating a strong centre.

7.4.7 Summary of the SA findings

All parts of this policy have been appraised together. In balance this policy will have a positive impact, as identifying improvements to the road network will help to secure any funding available, preventing the congestion and access issues to road network from deterring future investment and visitors from the centre. By improving the road network more development could be attracted to the centre especially within the Gigaport area. Moving the traffic reduces the impact of air pollution along the corridor, although there may be an increase in car emissions overall resulting in the impact being unknown. There may be some developer contributions sought for road improvements but these would be set at a level that will have no impact on scheme viability.

7.4.8 Relationship with other policies

- Proposal WA17: Road Improvements

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 AAPI3: 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 storey car park to serve the centre. It is considered that one multi storey 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	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 AAP13. 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

7.5.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
2 respondents supported allocating super car parks taking into account proposed development. AEW do not object to their current car park being designated as a super car park. 2 respondents agreed with rationalising current parking provision without providing super car parks. 1 respondent also supported setting a consistent approach to parking charges. 2 other respondents felt	The Draft Plan has allocated land for multi storey car parks that serve the town centre as this is the best way to provide accessible, safe and attractive parking in the centre to meet the needs of visitors and shoppers. The locations identified have been selected to serve the new development proposed therefore helping to encourage further investment.

car parking needed to be improved without stating specific options	
Suggestions for new/super car parks were Day Street car park, and at or near to Tesco. Traffic Management felt that whilst locations will need to mirror demand, they can equally be used to dictate traffic and pedestrian movements across the town. Footfall benefits could be gained by providing strategic parking locations that link employment locations through the retail sector.	Day Street is the second choice for the location of a new multi storey car park. The impact on pedestrian flows has been taken into account and linkages will be improved.
5 respondents stated that currently the parking costs were too high and this needed to be addressed to attract more people into the town centre. It was felt that current parking provision was ample but that it needed to be in the right locations and for the right cost.	The plan looks to provide a standard approach to car parking in the centre that would make the centre as accessible as possible. The charges will be set outside of the AAP in allow for changes to make in necessary over time.
1 person supported allocating additional taxi ranks and 2 respondents for revising the locations of all taxi ranks. The conflict between buses and taxis at Bradford Place was identified. Additional taxi ranks could be located on Station St or outside the Council House. 2 respondents supported identifying locations for coach stopping facilities. No respondents support option 2. One person suggested linking with proposed new bus station at Station Street.	Taxi rank demand is likely to change over time so they have not been allocated in the AAP. There is no demand for further coach parking stops so no further sites have been identified.

7.5.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document set out five options to consider car parking in the centre. The following options have been rejected:

- **Car Parking Option 2 (AAP sets out an approach to rationalising current car parking provision without providing for ‘super’ car parks)** Rejected – it is considered necessary to develop a new multi storey car park if there is to be an adequate approach towards the provision of car parking. It is considered that only once the new multi storey car park is delivered that all the less well located car parking can be released. Until this point the development of car parks will need to be considered on an individual basis.
- **Car Parking Option 3 (No Strategic Approach Towards Town Centre Car Parking)** Rejected – not having a strategic approach to car parking could deter visitors and investors, having a significant effect on the economy of the centre and its ability to deliver new retail and office floorspace.

- **Car Parking Option 5 (No Standard Approach for Off-Street Car Parking Charges)** Rejected – it is considered beneficial to the economy of the centre to have a standardised approach to car parking charges. This means that all car parks (unless justified) provide for the centre as a whole, encouraging linked trips and therefore supporting the centre's vitality and viability.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan has progressed with **option 1 that looks to allocate land for super car parks to serve the town centre** as this is the best way to provide accessible, safe and attractive parking in the centre to meet the needs of visitors and shoppers. The locations identified have been selected to serve the new development proposed therefore helping to encourage further investment. This should prevent individual developments needing their own car parks which in turns means the best use is made of land within the centre, supporting the regeneration strategy of delivering new retail, office and leisure floorspace.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan has also progressed with **option 4 which looks to set a consistent approach to parking charges for all off-street parking**. Whilst the charging figures and details are not within the plan itself the policy sets a requirement for all parking to be subject to a charging and management regime agreed by the Council. The details will sit within the Car Parking Strategy which can be reviewed when necessary, ensuring that the parking regime is always fit for purpose.

The Issues and Options document also included options around **Taxi Ranks** and **Coach Parking Facilities**. In both cases the decision has been made that the plan shouldn't allocate for such uses. Taxi ranks are located to meet the needs of their users with consideration for impacts on the highway and safety. As such the location demand for ranks is likely to change over time as new developments open and footfall changes. The location and amount of taxi ranks is therefore better dealt with outside of the plan process so it can meet the demands of customers and taxi providers. The plan hasn't allocated for coach parking facilities as there has been no evidence of further demand that cannot be met by the current arrangements of parking along Hatherton Road.

7.5.7 Summary of the SA findings

The locations identified for a new multi storey car park have been appraised separately – Part a) i. The rest of the policy wording around car parking have been appraised together then Part b) is appraised on its own.

The allocation of locations for a new multi storey car park (Part a.i) will enable car parks to support investment anticipated in the town centre, making it more attractive to a wider range of potential users therefore having an overall positive impact. It will also improve the strategic highway network and improve user safety. There will be

some negative impacts as this may attract more people into the centre by car resulting in more emissions. These impacts are considered to be outweighed by the overall negative impact of investors and visitors being deterred from visiting Walsall because the centre does not have the right parking to meet customer needs. A reduction in investment and spending in the centre will have an impact on all elements of the centre including the overall economy of Walsall. There are some uncertain impacts on the health of communities from the possible reduction in air quality, however ensuring the centre is accessible including for those with mobility issues should have a positive impact on equalities as this ensures town centre services and facilities are accessible. There is also an uncertain impact on the townscape as a new multi storey car park could change the character of an area and be a difficult development in integrate with the urban fabric. This may mean there is increased car usage but as the centre is the most accessible location in the centre to meet the needs for the community for shopping, leisure and work improving access to the centre is considered the most sustainable approach. Therefore the overall impact will be positive.

The policy in part a) should have a positive impact overall by ensuring car parking in the centre best meets the needs of users and that linked trips are encouraged, increasing spending. This policy also looks to ensure car parking is high quality, safe and accessible with limited impact on visual amenity of the surrounding area. The policy also looks to provide recharging facilities for low emission vehicles where feasible which will have a positive impact on encouraging the use of low emissions vehicles in the centre. There are some uncertain impacts on the townscape of the centre from car parking but the policy has tried to mitigate against this.

Finally part b) should have a positive impact overall, as redevelopment of surplus car parking for alternative uses provides more opportunities for investment in town centre uses creating jobs, facilities and homes in the centre. There are some uncertain impacts on equalities and access as there may be some individual members of the community who use these car parks to meet a specific need, however given the car parks have been identified for redevelopment due to low levels of usage this impact is likely to be limited. Furthermore a new multi storey car park in a location that better serves the centre as a whole will help to mitigate against this potential impact.

7.5.8 Relationship with other policies

- Policy WA18: Provision of Car Parking.

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 of the cleared 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 AAP11 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.

8.1.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacting on the preferred policy?
<p>1 respondent supported promoting the Big 3 & Park Street as key development opportunities as the overall approach to regenerating the town centre, and another stated this approach was welcomed although didn't select a specific option. 1 person supported exemplar environmental standards for Big 3 and 3 people supported exemplar design standards for Big 3. There was no stated support for options 2 and 3. 1 respondent did not agree with any of the options, stating they were prescriptive and could prevent other suitable sites coming forward for development.</p>	<p>The AAP is progressing with the prioritisation of the three key areas and has set some further design requirements for these sites. The Council has been conscious to not be onerous in these requirements in case this deters investors from these sites. Whilst there have been uses listed for the priority areas the approach is deliberately flexible in allowing other uses where they complement the overall vision for that area.</p>

8.1.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document included five options around the approach towards regeneration, four of which have been rejected:

- **Approach Option 1 ("Big Three" and Park Street Identified as Development Opportunities)** Rejected – this option doesn't provide enough guidance to developers and investors to help deliver the regeneration strategy which is focussed around creating destinations for shopping, leisure and office.
- **Approach Option 3 (No Specific Guidance for "Big Three" and Park Street)** Rejected – this doesn't provide enough guidance to developers and investors to help deliver the regeneration strategy which is focussed around creating destinations for shopping, leisure and office.
- **Approach Option 4 (Environmental Standards for New Development within "Big Three")** Rejected – this is considered to be potentially damaging to delivery as developments could go elsewhere where there are less requirements, undermining the regeneration strategy.
- **Approach Option 5 (Design Standards for New Development within "Big Three")** Rejected – this is considered to be potentially damaging to delivery as developments could go elsewhere where there are less requirements, undermining the regeneration strategy.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan is progressing with **Option 2 which provides a vision and land use policies for "Big Three" and Park Street** as this is

considered as the best approach to provide a strong vision for the centre to deliver the sites for uses which build on their locations such as leisure by the canal and an office corridor on the ring road. This approach offers guidance to developers which should help to shape proposals that accord with the regeneration strategy, creating a town centre that is attractive, accessible, legible and sustainable.

8.1.7 Summary of the SA findings

Part a) has already been appraised in the shopping, business and leisure chapters and will be appraised again as part of the SA for other policies in this chapter. Part b) has been divided into two appraisals addressing the proposals that are not in accordance with the plan and the use of temporary permissions separately. Part c) and d) are appraised separately.

The resistance of proposals that are not in accordance with the regeneration strategy in the AAP as set out in the first part of b) should have an overall positive impact as these proposals could be detrimental to the delivery of priority sites and uses such as the Primary Shopping Area for retail or the Gigaport for offices. It may mean that some sites remain vacant for longer but this will be outweighed by the knock-on impacts of a successful regeneration strategy which will result in more investment overall. This possible delay in sites coming forward means there is an uncertain impact on the townscape. The second part of b) which addresses temporary permissions will also have a positive impact as it allows development to come forward without having a long term impact on delivering the regeneration strategy. This provides a positive economic impact in the short term and in the long term. This means fewer sites remain undeveloped in the short term, having a positive impact on the townscape of the centre. As these schemes are not included in the plan there are uncertain impacts on the accessibility of these and as such on air pollution and climate change.

Part c) which sets requirements for developments to be comprehensive, address highway impacts, have consideration of the character of the area and be of high design will have positive impacts by ensuring that schemes make the best use of land and are high quality. It also looks to create a town centre that is accessible and attractive, encouraging further investment. Some of these elements may add additional costs to developers however, this is likely to be limited and the improvement to the centre overall is likely to be a positive.

Finally part c) requires cleared or vacant sites to be managed and looked after, including possible greening of such sites, having an overall positive impact as this provides environmental and visual improvements to the centre. Whilst there is likely to be some cost on developers the impact of this should be limited and will be

considered by the Council in terms of viability. Furthermore a more attractive centre should attract further investment and visitors. There is also an uncertain impact on biodiversity and geodiversity as whilst the greening of sites will have a short term benefit the ultimate development of such sites will mean this benefit is limited.

8.1.8 Relationship with other policies

- Replaces the UDP Inset map which allocates sites in the centre.

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 AAPI5) provides the main shopping locations in Walsall town centre.

Policy AAPI2: 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

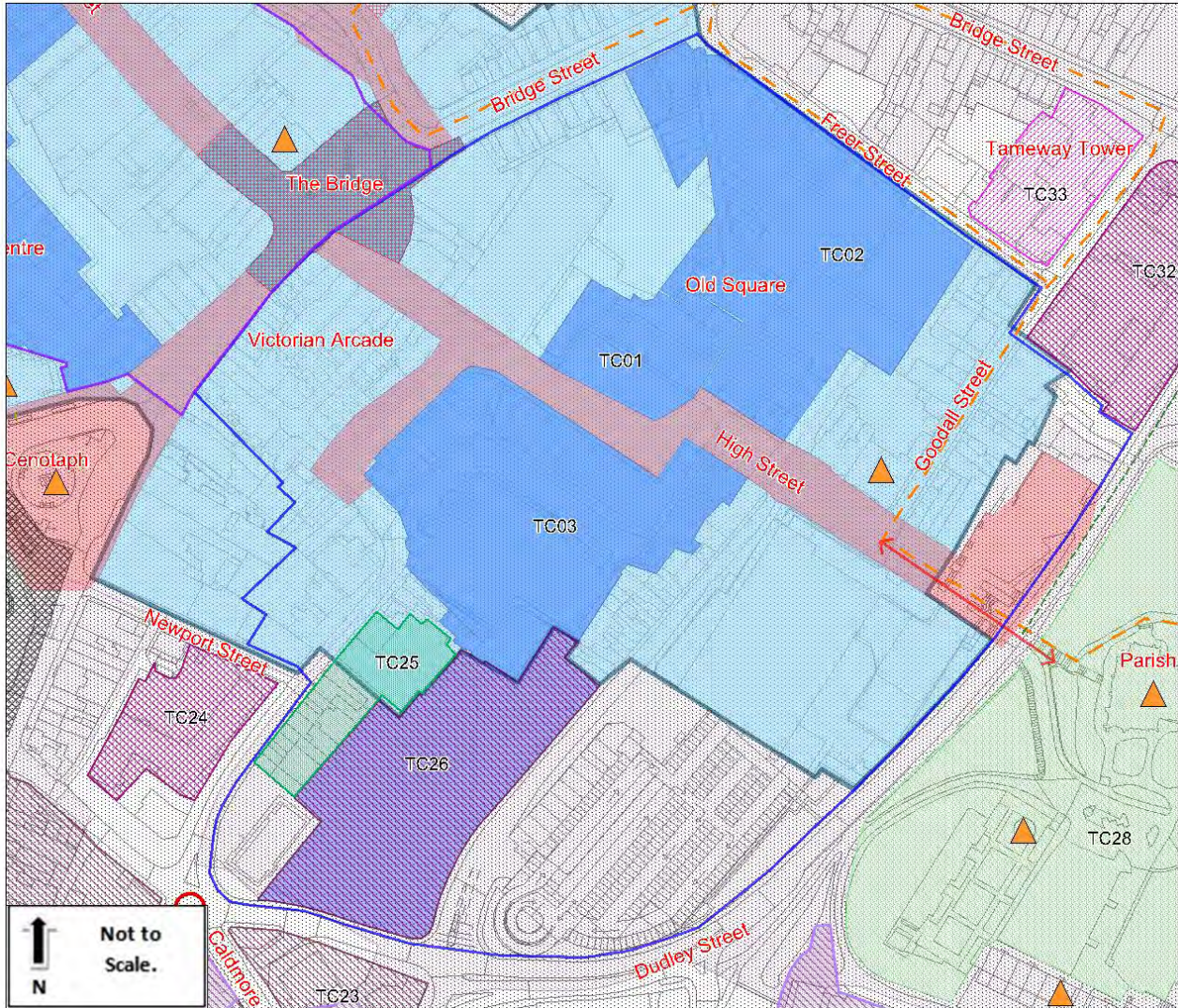
The Council’s delivery of new retail premises for Primark and Co-op should improve footfall in St Matthew’s Quarter and has worked as a catalyst to encourage neighbouring landowners to move forward with plans for their redevelopment proposals. The owners of the Old Square shopping centre (TC01) and land 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	Retail	Within the	15,657	Long term	Should be

	Square Phase 3	opportunities for investment/reconfiguration (Policy AAPS2: New Retail development)	PSA	sqm (estimate)	(5-10 years)	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 (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 8.1 St Matthew's Quarter area

Policy AAPI2 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).

8.2.6 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.

8.1.4 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacting on the preferred policy?
1 responded supported options 1 and 2 (Old Square remains a retail location, and Old Square is an opportunity to be expanded/redeveloped into larger units). Another also supported option 2. A third stated that larger units are not always favoured by users.	The plan is looking to direct retail investment to St Matthew's Quarter and whilst there are requirements for new developments to consider creating larger units no figure has been set in recognition that this is not always possible or desirable.
Regarding Shannon's Mill, 1 respondent supported it remaining primarily a retail location.	The plan has proposed a flexible approach for the former Shannon's Mill site in light of the reduced retail targets and need to concentrate investment. The site is considered as a sequential location for retail and the Council would consider retail uses at this site should there be demand.

8.2.5 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document included five options around St Matthew's Quarter. The first three covered in detail Old Square Shopping Centre, one of which was rejected:

- **Old Square Option 3 (Identify as Mixed Use Development Opportunity)**
Rejected – it is considered that areas within the Primary Shopping Area should be promoted in the first instance as retail opportunities to help deliver the retail floorspace target and strengthen the centre's role as a shopping destination. Other uses, where they don't impact on the primary function of the area as a shopping destination, will be supported, such as leisure uses including restaurants and cafes.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan has progressed with **Option 1 which identifies the site to remain as primarily a retail location** and **Option 2 which allocates the site for expansion and/or redevelopment for larger retail units**. These options have been chosen as they best support the regeneration strategy of strengthening the retail core of the Primary Shopping Area (PSA) and providing retail units that attract retailers seeking larger unit sizes which are not generally available elsewhere in the town centre. Larger units are needed to meet modern retailer requirements so by identifying opportunities this should help defend against edge or out of centre developments which have impacts on the health of the Primary Shopping Area.

The second two options focussed on the former Shannon's Mill site, **Option 1 suggested that the front of the site should remain primarily a retail location** whereas **Option 2 looked to promote the rear of the site as a Mixed Use Development Opportunity**. The Preferred Options Draft Plan has removed the site

from the Primary Shopping Area and allocated it all as a development opportunity for a range of town centre uses and as a site which should be considered as sequential for convenience retailing and bulky goods retailing. This is a new option and was not suggested at the Issues and Options stage. This is in response to the reduced retail floorspace targets and the need to consolidate the PSA to protect current and planned retail developments. The former Shannon's Mill site is on the edge of the PSA and there has been little retail interest in the site over recent years meaning that other uses for the site need to be considered.

8.2.7 Summary of the SA findings

All parts except part e) have been addressed together as they deal with the retail nature of the area. Part e) is separate as it addresses the former Shannon's Mill site and has been further divided into the two different allocations for the site.

This policy will have a positive impact; St Matthew's Quarter has secured some delivery in the area already but further is needed to secure the future of the area as a retail destination and to secure the delivery of the planned investment. Creating active retail frontages and allowing a flexible approach to other uses that support rather than prejudice the retail function will help to create a lively and attractive shopping destination. This will help to deliver the targets for retail floorspace and protect the core of the town centre. It therefore supports the regeneration strategy and provides opportunities for investment. Whilst this is likely to result in changes to the townscape much of this area will benefit from updating and the areas have been identified for the ability for change that will positively impact on the town's character.

Part e) which allocates the former Shannon's Mill site for bulky goods or convenience retailing is likely to have a positive impact overall as it will prevent the location of such uses further away from the PSA which will mean more linked trips and concentrated spending inside the Primary Shopping Area. Such uses may generate more car trips and the related negative impacts however the closer the stores locate to the rest of the centre the more accessible they are, encouraging the use of public transport and reducing the need to travel. There are uncertain impacts on the townscape as a large store in this location could change the character of the area.

The second allocation for the former Shannon's Mill site for other town centre use or a mix of centre uses will have a positive impact bringing investment and life into the area. Uses such as residential will mean there is more footfall in the area and increased natural surveillance making the area feel safer. Live/work units could connect well with the social enterprise area and provide a new form of living in the centre. Many of the impacts are uncertain as there is no certainty over the proposed use and scale.

8.2.8 Relationship with other policies

- Replaces the UDP Inset map which allocates sites in the centre

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 mixed uses 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		10,186 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	
TC42a	Royal Mail car park in Hatherton Street	Office	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	Office	Partially	4,566 sqm	Short term (0-2)	Part of site covered by flood zones 2 and 3.

	site		delivered site with outline consent for further office uses	office floorspace (from planning application)	years)	Site within Limestone consideration area. Air quality issues along Littleton Street.
TC46	Portland Street area	Office	Included within Gigaport masterplan area	61,650 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Wisemore House is listed. Part of site covered by flood zone 2. 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.
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)	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 forward 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.
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.

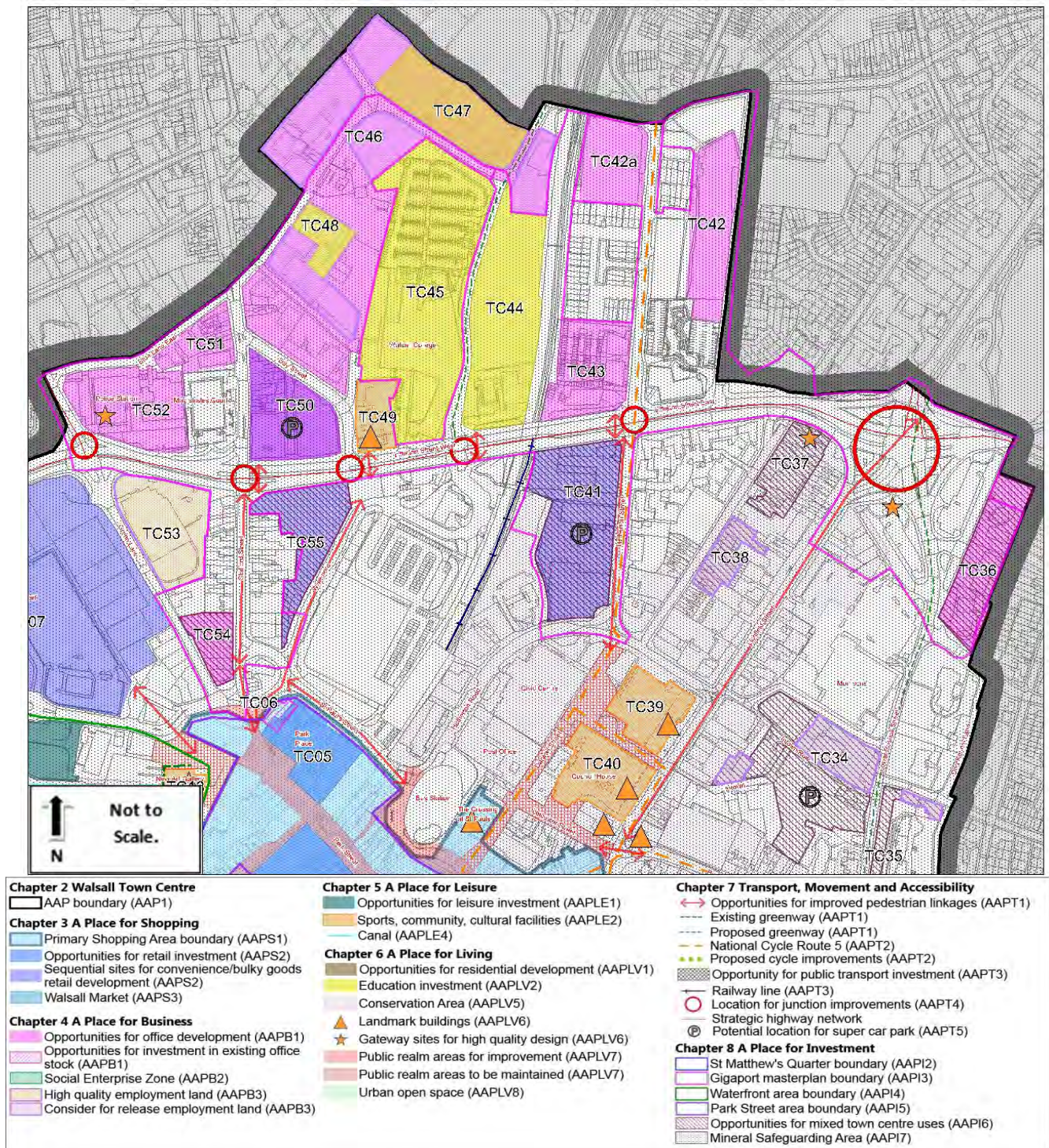


Figure 8.2 Gigaport Area

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

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 (07/2659/OLW7)

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.

8.3.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacting on the preferred policy?
Suggestion that we develop a high quality park and ride service for businesses or locate a train station at the Gigaport. Also a request that we look at the red route in that area and to improve pedestrian links	The issue of improved links to the Gigaport is included in policy AAPB2 but new public transport provision at the Gigaport site is not considered deliverable.
1 respondent supported the sites adjacent to Littleton Street being promoted as the first phase of sites delivered in Gigaport, as it was felt that much of this frontage is derelict and unattractive to the primary function of the locality.	The policy includes reference to prioritising Littleton Street sites.
1 respondent did not agree with any of the options, saying that the promotion of office development should not prevent other uses coming forward in this location where they would be complementary	Uses that support the main function of the area as a location for office investment and business development will be supported.

8.3.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document included three options around Gigaport, one of which was rejected:

- **Gigaport Option 2 – Identify Gigaport for Other Town Centre Uses**
Rejected – being located away from the heart of the centre, the area may not

be suitable for other town centre uses. It could also be more difficult to meet the floorspace targets using a collection of smaller sites. Furthermore a dispersed office market is less likely to attract similar levels of investment.

The Preferred Options Draft Plan has progressed with **Option 1 and allocated Gigaport as Walsall's office location**. This is considered as the best approach for promoting office investment in Walsall as the Gigaport provides enough sites suitable for office development in an accessible and visible location. Through having a specific area to encourage office development it is hoped this will create a high quality business environment in the centre triggering further investment. **Option 3 to promote sites located adjacent to Littleton Street as the first phase of development** has also been progressed in the Preferred Options Draft Plan. This allows for the more prominent sites to be developed first creating an office corridor that is visible along the ring road. This should act as a catalyst to encourage the development of the remaining sites within Gigaport.

8.3. 7 Summary of the SA findings

Part a) has been appraised separately whereas parts b) and c) have been divided into the different uses proposed to allow these to be assessed separately. Part d) has been appraised as a whole apart from the last section that looks at car parking in the Gigaport.

Part a) which allocates sites for office development will have a positive impact overall as it will attract investment and create jobs. It will also help to diversify the economy of Walsall overall. Gigaport provides enough sites suitable for office development in an accessible and visible location. Through having a specific area to encourage office development it is hoped this will create a high quality business environment in the centre triggering further investment. There are some uncertain impacts from the generation of car parking and the location of Gigaport on the road network. The centre is still the most accessible location and provides opportunities for more sustainable modes of transport which limits the negative impact of traffic increase. This is why there are allocations for improved linkages to encourage the use of public transport to the Gigaport. Some developments may need to be set away from the road or be designed in a way to reduce the impact of air quality on the scheme.

Part b) which allocates the Challenge Block for a multi-storey car park has overall positive impacts. It will enable car parks to support investment anticipated in the town centre, making it more attractive to a wider range of potential users therefore having an overall positive impact. It will also improve the strategic highway network and improve user safety. There will be some negative impacts as this may attract more people into the centre by car resulting in more emissions. These impacts are considered to be outweighed by the overall negative impact of investors and visitors being deterred from Walsall because the centre does not have the right parking to

meet customer needs. A reduction in investment and spending in the centre will have an impact on all elements of the centre including the overall economy of Walsall. There are some uncertain impacts on the health of communities from the possible reduction in air quality, however ensuring the centre is accessible including for those with mobility issues should have a positive impact on equalities as this ensures town centre services and facilities are accessible. This proposal may mean there is increased car usage but as the centre is the most accessible location in the borough to meet the needs of the community for shopping, leisure and work, improving access to the centre is considered the most sustainable approach. There is also an uncertain impact on the townscape as a new multi storey car park could change the character of an area and be a difficult development to integrate with the urban fabric.

Part b) also allocates Challenge Block for a community hub which will have a positive impact by ensuring a new facility is provided in an accessible location. This will have positive impacts on equality and the community as they can access services and facilities. This may however, make the delivery of other uses on the site identified difficult. There is uncertainty around how the uses proposed will be located on the site and the resulting scheme.

Challenge Block is also allocated for convenience retailing or bulky goods retailing which has a less certain positive impact. Delivering a retail unit here could jeopardise the delivery of the multi-storey car park and community hub and the plan looks to ensure that any scheme does look to accommodate these uses in the first instance. Whilst a retail store in this location could have less negative impacts than an out-of-centre development it is one of lesser sequential sites and does not relate as positively with the Primary Shopping Area as some other sites identified, meaning it could draw some footfall away from the retail core especially if it has its own car parking that doesn't serve the centre as a whole. The economic impact is therefore uncertain. The proposal would therefore need to show that other benefits could be delivered that would reduce any negative impact on the centre such as the development of the car park and/or community hub. The location of a retail unit here could also generate more car trips and congestion on the busy ring road.

Part c) allocates Day Street for a multi-storey car park which has overall positive impacts. It will enable car parks to support investment anticipated in the town centre, making it more attractive to a wider range of potential users therefore having an overall positive impact. It will also improve the strategic highway network and improve user safety. There will be some negative impacts as this may attract more people into the centre by car resulting in more emissions. These impacts are considered to be outweighed by the overall negative impact of investors and visitors being deterred from Walsall because the centre does not have the right parking to meet customer needs. A reduction in investment and spending in the centre will

have an impact on all elements of the centre including the overall economy of Walsall. There are some uncertain impacts on the health of the communities from the possible reduction in air quality, however ensuring the centre is accessible including for those with mobility issues should have a positive impact on equalities as this ensures town centre services and facilities are accessible. There is also an uncertain impact on the townscape as a new multi storey car park could change the character of an area and be a difficult development to integrate with the urban fabric. This may mean there is increased car usage but as the centre is the most accessible location in the borough to meet the needs for the community for shopping, leisure and work, improving access is considered the most sustainable approach.

Again an allocation for convenience retailing or bulky goods retailing has a less certain positive impact. Whilst a retail store in this location could have less negative impacts than an out-of-centre development it is the last sequential site listed and does not relate as positively with the Primary Shopping Area as some other sites identified, meaning it could draw some footfall away from the retail core especially if it has its own car parking that doesn't serve the centre as a whole. The economic impact is therefore uncertain. The location of a retail unit here could also generate more car trips and congestion on the busy ring road.

Part d) which provides guidance for developments in the Gigaport area has a positive impact as it looks to provide a desirable, accessible and high quality business environment that meets the needs of workers and the community whilst attracting further investment. There are also policy requirements that look to improve linkages to public transport and encourage electric car use and cycle use which help to mitigate some of the impacts on the ring road location and increased traffic generated by more people accessing the area. There may be some additional costs to developers but this negative is outweighed by the positive impact of a more desirable location that attracts visitors and investors.

Finally part d) includes a reference to allowing individual schemes to have their own car parking, setting a maximum ratio. This is because some development will require its own parking and to be inflexible around this could potentially deter investment. However this part of the policy has a potentially neutral impact as the positive impact of securing investment that wouldn't locate in Walsall without on site car parking are reduced by the negative impacts on creating more traffic, deterring the use of public transport, adding to air pollution along with not making the best use of land which could mean there are less sites for town centre developments. Too much car parking in the centre also makes delivering a high quality townscape difficult.

8.3.8 Relationship with other policies

- All of the UDP Inset policies will be replaced including those which cover office investment

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

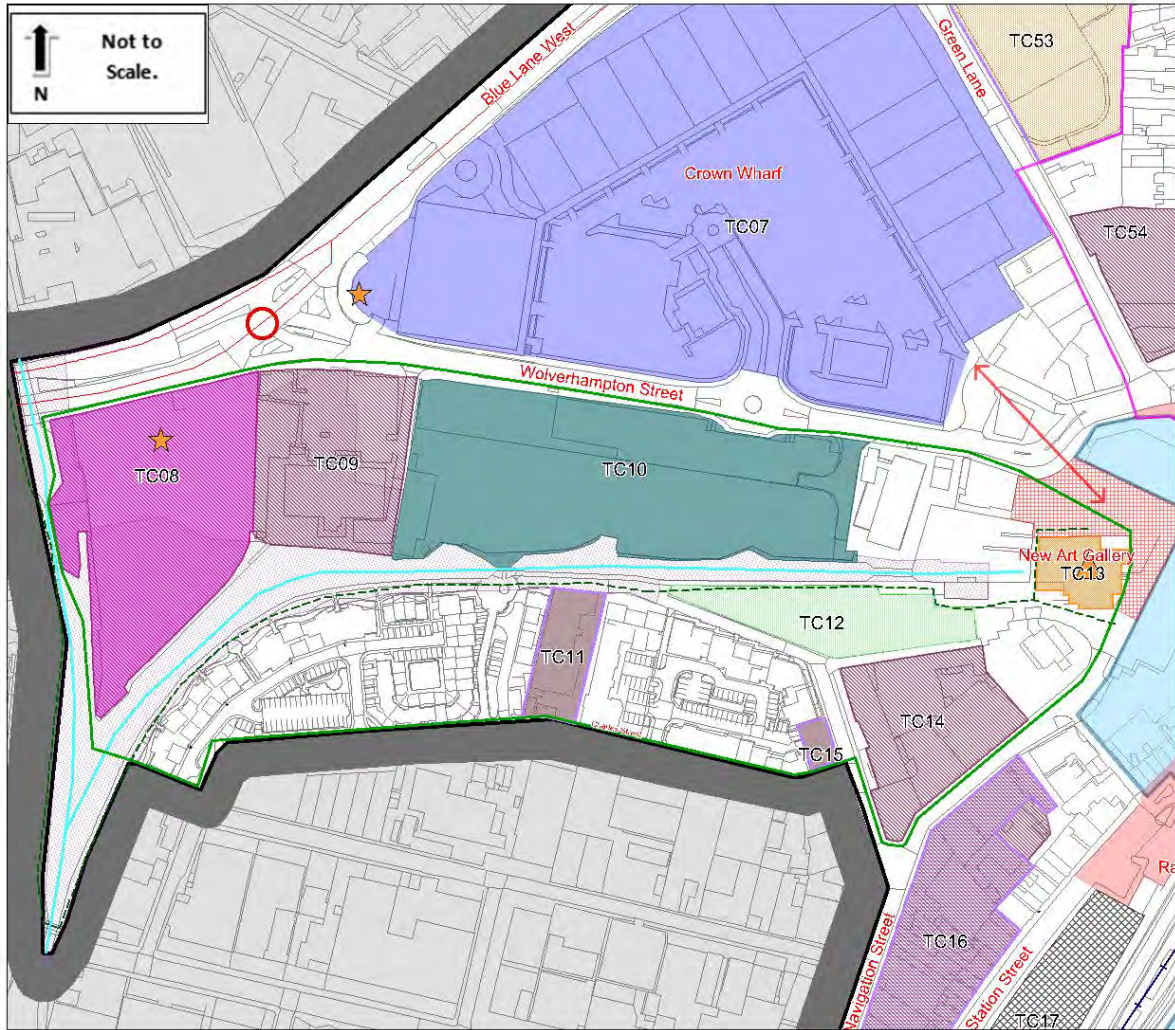
Waterfront North has been the location where the Council has sought to attract leisure development in the town centre, as per the Walsall Waterfront SPD, and the delivery of the 100-bedroom Premier Inn hotel and associated restaurant is the first investment of this nature. The next challenge therefore 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. Potential noise issues at Wolverhampton Road.
TC09	Holiday Hypermarket	Mixed use		8,454 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	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. Part of site in Limestone consideration area.

TC11	Kirkpatricks site	Housing	Consider for release employment land	Approx. 40 residential units over 4 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	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 (13/0440/FL and 14/0779/FL)

8.4.3 Delivery

Much of Walsall Waterfront, such as the hotel, has been completed or is 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.

8.4.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
2 respondents supported allocating Waterfront North for leisure e.g. cinema and conferencing, and 2 respondents (including	The site is being allocated for leisure uses with other uses being acceptable if they accord with the leisure uses planned.

Cordwell) supported allocating it for any appropriate town centre use.	
The CRT requires development here to not adversely or detrimentally affect the water quality, landscape and ecological character, and should relate appropriately to the waterway.	There is a specific Canal policy that will address these issues further but the policy includes references to development relating to the Canal (AAPLE4).
Re. Lex, one respondent supported leisure facilities, and 2 respondents supported any appropriate town centre use or mixed use proposal. There were no responses regarding the type of leisure use that should be promoted (other than that it should be consistent with Waterfront North), or regarding any other uses which should be promoted here.	Lex is being promoted for a range of uses that would complement the rest of Waterfront.
No responses re. any further improvements needed at Waterfront South, or what the remainder of the site should be used for if an appropriate office user could not be secured. No responses regarding appropriate uses for William House, Stafford Works, Station St.	N/A.
CRT felt development opportunities adjacent to the canal are sustainable but will lead to increased liabilities and maintenance issues such as increased wear and tear of the towpath and access points, litter and discharging of surface water into the network etc. The Council should look to prioritise securing contributions to improve the canal infrastructure and towpaths as part of development proposals and to mitigate any other issues that may arise from developments due to the extra liabilities and demands associated with waterside development.	Agreed – a statement has been included in this policy and the Canal policy that states developer contributions will be sought.

8.4.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document looked at the options on Waterfront in terms of the different areas. There were two options for Waterfront North, **Option 1 to allocate the area as a leisure destination** and **Option 2 to allocate the site for any town centre uses**. As part the site is now being developed for a cinema, Option 1 is considered the best approach to support this investment and create a leisure destination that maximises the potential of a canalside location.

There were three options around **Waterfront Lex: Option 1 allocates the site for leisure uses** or **Option 2 allocates the site for residential use**. The Preferred Options Draft Plan has rejected both of these options. The DTZ evidence suggests that there is limited demand for other leisure uses beyond the cinema scheme and

therefore a strict leisure allocation is not considered suitable. However, securing investment in office, leisure and other town centre uses is crucial to the economic health of the centre and as a key site, restricting the site to residential uses alone is considered to not maximise the site's potential. As such, a flexible approach to allocation is needed for the Lex site and **Option 3 has been progressed allowing for a mix of centre uses.**

8.4.7 Summary of the SA findings

All parts have been appraised separately.

Part a) allocates Waterfront North as a leisure hub having an overall positive impact. The Waterfront area has traditionally been the area promoted as the key site for leisure investment in the town centre. Directing leisure uses here will provide an attractive area of leisure uses located together, improving viability of individual elements and creating an attractive area of public space. This should have a positive impact on the canal environment and encourage further investment in the area.

Part b) allocates Lex for a mix of uses meaning it is not possible to say what all the impacts will be. Generally overall there is a positive impact from securing investment in a key site. The site is located on the road network so some uses may need to be sited away from the road. The location does have the potential to create a high quality development. There is a need to ensure the development is accessible and that links along the canal are improved.

Part c) allocates the secondary sites at Waterfront for a mix of uses again meaning it is not possible to say what all the impacts will be. Generally there is a positive impact from securing investment in a key site. The location does have the potential to create a high quality development. There is a need to ensure the development is accessible and that links along the canal are improved.

Finally part d) which allocates sites for residential within an already residential area will have a positive impact by providing a high quality living environment. It also means that the former industrial uses have relocated away from housing. More housing in the centre helps to support the centre's vitality and will increase demand for leisure uses. Centre living is sustainable and should help to reduce car trips as there is access to public transport.

8.4.7 Relationship with other policies

- UDP Policy WA12: Town Wharf (Walsall Waterfront)
- Waterfront SPD

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

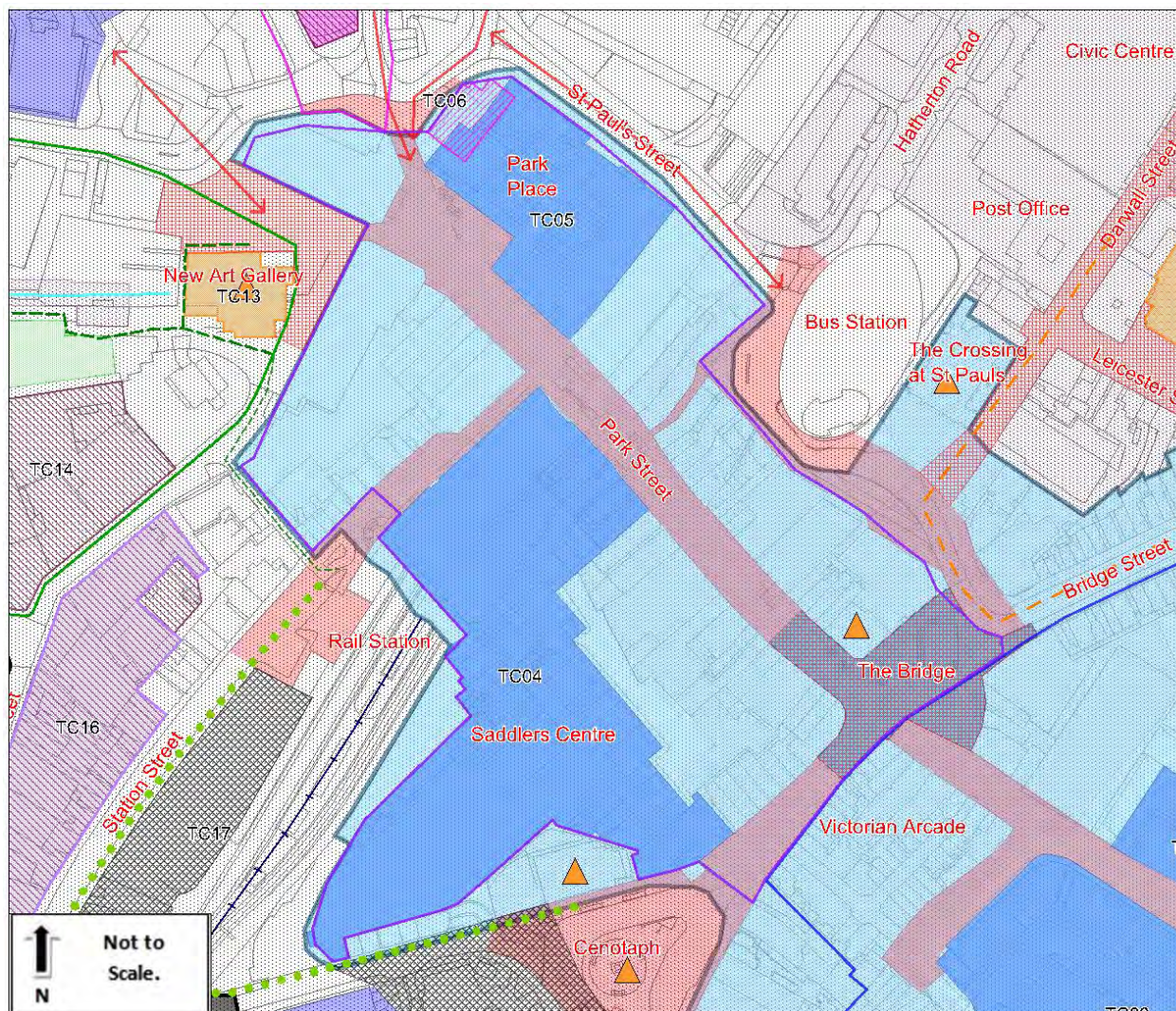
to maximise its potential. The Council will actively look to reduce vacancies and promote the use of upper floors to bring further life into the centre.

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 public realm schemes and will look to build on the public realm implemented as part of the new Walsall Market which will act as a focal point for the centre (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)	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)	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)	Under-utilised office building	4,472 sqm (refurbishment)	Long term (5-10 years)	Frontage could be strengthened (as per town centre Characterisation study).



<p>Chapter 2 Walsall Town Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AA1 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 8.4 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 – 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. This will provide a new central focus for the town and 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 to the rest of the centre, 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;
- 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.

8.5.4 Monitoring

- A new indicator is proposed to record the amount of new development within 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.

8.5.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacting on the preferred policy?
3 respondents supported allocating/promoting Park Street as key location for town centre retail uses. 1 person conditioned this on the basis it does not damage the architectural and historical interest.	Welcome the support for this approach. A Characterisation Study has been undertaken for the centre which will ensure there is no adverse impact on the character of the centre.

8.5.6 Explanation of other options considered

There were two options considering Park Street, **Option 1 which proposed allocating Park Street as the key location for retail uses** and **Option 2 which proposed allocating Park Place and Saddler's Centre as the focus for retail-led development**. The Preferred Options Draft Plan has actually progressed with both options as both Park Street and the two shopping centres are within the Primary Shopping Area and therefore suitable for retail developments. In recognition of the greater potential the shopping centres offer in terms of redevelopment for larger units they have also been identified on the Policies Map for retail investment.

8.5.7 Summary of the SA findings

All parts have been appraised together.

This policy will have a positive approach by maximising the retail potential of the area and ensuring it provides a high quality shopping environment. This will help to attract further investment in retail and in other uses such as leisure and increase the number of visitors. The strength of the retail core determines how Walsall performs and competes with other centres for investment and spending. This approach will have a positive impact on the townscape as there are less vacant units and investment in the public realm. The use of upper floors also brings more life to buildings meaning they are better looked after. It also makes the best use of the land in the centre. There are uncertain impacts around air quality and climate change as improvements to the shopping offer should result in more people visiting the centre. The town centre and especially the Park Street area are very accessible and are served by public transport hubs which should mean that the impact is less than retail investment locating in a less accessible location which will generate more car trips.

8.5.8 Relationship with other policies

- Replaces the UDP Inset map which allocates sites in the centre

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 AAPI6: 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 development sites that aren't identified which would be suitable as a development for appropriate town centre uses. Where these schemes come forward they will be expected to be 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	Mountrath Street Council owned car park provides	34,326 sqm over 3 storeys (estimate)	Long term (5-10 years)	Some parts within Bradford Street Conservation Area.

		supported on upper floors.	redevelopment opportunity. Bradford Street is busy route into the town centre.			Most of site is high sensitivity (levels 1 and 2) as per town centre Characterisation study. 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/ Peal Street.
TC30	Ablewell Street (east)	Town centre uses other than A1 retail.	Parts of the site are consider for release	41,592 sqm over 3 storeys	Long term (5-10 years)	Part of site within Church Hill Conservation Area.

		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 be created.	employment sites.	(estimate)		Part of site is high sensitivity (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	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.

		where a high quality living environment can 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.

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 priorities 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.

8.6.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacted on the preferred policy?
Those representing Jerome Retail Park welcomed the inclusion of the site as a development opportunity. They stated that	The retail park is allocated as a sequential site for convenience retailing or bulky goods retailing as it connects to the Primary

the retail park has potential to form part of the Park Street retail area so they would not wish the park to be earmarked for specific alternative, non-retail uses. They would welcome an opportunity to discuss the potential for expanding the bus interchange into the retail park site.	Shopping Area and could accommodate larger retail proposals. It is also partly allocated for the bus interchange and the Council will look to discuss the impacts on this proposal as part of the consultation process.
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8.6.6 Explanation of other options considered

There were no options included in the Issues and Options document around secondary sites although there were a number of questions related to other sites. The Preferred Options Draft Plan has progressed with a policy to allocate a number of secondary sites for development with suggested uses. This is considered the best option to ensure there is sufficient development opportunities in the centre to address needs from investors and to provide schemes that meet the community's needs. There are a number of sites which are vacant which would benefit from redevelopment and it is hoped that by identifying these that this will promote their development. The alternative would be to not allocate the sites which wouldn't necessary mean that they don't come forward but rather that this may take longer and that the developers would have less certainty over what schemes would be supported.

8.6.7 Summary of the SA findings

All parts of the policy have been appraised separately.

Part a) which allocates and sets out guidance for the development of the secondary sites identified. This policy will have a positive impact as it should result in more sites being developed in the centre that support the priority sites identified and the regeneration strategy. Many of the sites identified are Council car parks which are considered surplus or 'consider for release' industrial land, meaning that the best use will be made of land in Walsall town centre to bring them into life for town centre uses. As these are secondary sites the uses and scale are less well known so there are some uncertain impacts in terms of traffic generation, air pollution and impact on cultural heritage. However, the town centre Characterisation Study will ensure there is no adverse impact on the character of the centre and the air quality policy will mitigate any negative impacts on development proposals. BCCS Policy ENV8 and the AAP policy on air quality (AAPI7) will ensure that any impacts from new development on air quality standards are addressed.

Part b) requires developers to consider sites for town centre uses before solely residential uses. This will have a positive impact overall as whilst it may mean that

fewer houses are built, the Site Allocation Document allocates for sufficient housing in other areas of the borough meaning that there will be no negative impact on communities. The policy also doesn't mean that no housing proposals will be acceptable or that they cannot come forward as part of mixed use, meaning that new homes can be built in the centre. The policy is written this way to ensure the centre fulfils its commercial role as the heart of Walsall for shopping, office and leisure in order to support Walsall's economy, provide jobs and meet the needs of communities. This policy looks to protect the role of the centre and to make the best use of land ensuring where possible that town centre uses are delivered. This is considered to have a positive impact on communities and the economy. There are some uncertain impacts from air quality as more centre uses are likely to produce more traffic than housing but BCCS Policy ENV8 and the AAP policy on air quality (AAPI7) will ensure that any impacts from new development on air quality standards are addressed.

Finally part c) which allows for other sites to come forward should also have a positive impact as any proposal would need to be in accordance with the other policies in the plan, which has been appraised to have a positive impact overall. Schemes will only be acceptable if they do prove to have a positive impact on the centre and accord with the regeneration strategy. However without the locations being known site specific details such as the impact on traffic, flood risk, townscape, and historic culture are all unknown.

8.6.7 Relationship with other policies

- Replaces the UDP Inset map which allocates sites in the centre

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.

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.

AAP17(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. The minerals most commonly exploited in this way are coal and construction aggregates. 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 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
- 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

- Flood risk 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.

8.1.5 Consultation Responses

Summary of comments	How has this impacting on the preferred policy?
<p>The Environment Agency supported option 1 (a strategic approach to integrating water management infrastructure, such as SuDS, into the design of the public realm in the town centre). They welcome the review of current flood risk information and the updating of the strategic flood risk assessment to allow a detailed understanding of flood risk to be determined and for recommendations for developers to consider when designing new buildings. Flood risk advice recommends raising floor levels but this is generally not favoured by developers who prefer to avoid creating ramps or steps.</p>	<p>The AAP policy is in line with the guidance and reflects the EA approach requiring major developments to consider flood risk.</p>
<p>The Coal Authority stated that coal resources which are capable of extraction by surface mining operations extend into the AAP area. Such resources should not be unnecessarily sterilised by new development. Where this may be the case, The Coal Authority would seek prior extraction of the coal. Within the AAP area there are approximately 19 recorded mine entries and further mining legacy in the form of coal outcrops and past recorded surface coal mining. Mine entries and mining legacy matters should be considered by Planning Authorities to ensure that site allocations and other policies and programmes will not lead to future public safety hazards.</p>	<p>The plan includes a Minerals Safeguarding policy which addresses this issue and a ground conditions policy which looks to ensure any issues are remediated.</p>
<p>Mining legacy is a potential constraint on development; in particular The Coal Authority does not generally support the building over of mine entries. As such this can be a factor which reduces the potential capacity of sites and/or affects layout options. The Coal Authority has provided the LPA with data indicating where mining legacy is present which should be utilised by the LPA to identify which specific sites are affected by mining legacy features. The Coal Authority is satisfied that the LPA has had due regard to the broad issue of the mining legacy at this stage but would suggest that further assessment be included within the AAP indicating precisely which proposed allocations are affected by mining legacy.</p>	<p>The mining legacy has been taken account and has been included in the Technical Appendices. The DTZ work has also taken account of mining and other ground conditions issues.</p>

8.1.6 Explanation of other options considered

The Issues and Options document only included options around flood risk, considering if there should be a **strategic approach to integrating water management infrastructure as set out in Option 1** or as **Option 2 suggests that water management solutions are dealt with on a site by site basis**. Option 1 has been rejected because developments come forward at different times making delivering a physical solution to flood risk difficult. The Preferred Options Draft Plan looks to address the risk on an individual basis (option 2) but will also look to provide an early warning system for the centre which will reduce any potential risk of flooding having an economic impact.

As well as flooding the Preferred Option Draft Plan has also included guidance in the constraints policy around air quality, noise pollution, ground contamination and ground conditions and the minerals safeguarding area. This policy looks to provide guidance for developers on what will be expected from them in terms of addressing constraints and connects to the evidence we have on constraints in the centre. The alternative would be to rely on other planning policy and guidance, but given the impact of constraints on development viability it is considered that the AAP needs a strong and positive approach to addressing them, providing developers with as much information as possible.

8.1.7 Summary of the SA findings

All parts of the policy have been appraised separately.

Part a) looks to mitigate against the impact of flood risk. The policy operates in conjunction with UDP policy ENV40 and ENV5 of the BCCS, and incorporates the latest national guidance. Although its effects are likely to be positive, particularly for climate change, communities, health and well-being and the water environment having incorporated the recent changes to national guidance on flood risk. The policy's impacts on economic growth are less certain as there are likely to be a cost implication for development, although the longer term economic benefits are likely to be significant some sites within Walsall are likely to be on the margins of viability and any additional construction costs may influence delivery.

Part b) addresses air quality and should have a positive impact as it looks to mitigate against the impact of poor air quality on developments, reducing any risk to health or negative impact on amenity. It means that sites are not undevelopable because of their location on key roads and that developers have guidance on how to approach this constraint. There are some uncertain impacts on the economy of the centre because it may mean that the design costs more or that the site is not able to be fully

developed as a result of having to be set back from the road. This may also have some impact on the townscape.

Part c) which addresses air pollution will have a positive impact as it looks to mitigate against the impact of noise pollution on developments, reducing any risk to impact on amenity. This should reduce any conflict between uses such as residential and leisure, resulting in the best use of land in the centre. There are some uncertain impacts on the economy of the centre because it may mean that the design costs are higher.

Part d) provides a policy for ground contamination and ground conditions, having an overall positive impact as it looks to ensure that any ground contamination is remediated to an acceptable level. This will enable development to go ahead on sites where there is contamination and will have knock-on impacts for the environment of the centre. This will also have positive impacts on the health of communities. There are some uncertain impacts on the economy of the centre because the cost of remediation is a real barrier to developer viability. However development would not be able to come forward if contamination was not remediated and this would have a larger negative impact on the centre overall. The Council is committed to working with developers to overcome barriers to development.

Finally part e) covers the Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) and is likely to have a positive effect, because it would not prevent essential non-mineral development from taking place where there would be no impact on winnable mineral resources, and where winnable minerals are present and it is feasible to extract them in advance of development, this may provide a source of aggregate minerals that can be used on-site or a source of other minerals that can be sold to help offset the cost of development.

8.1.8 Relationship with other policies

- These policies will be used in conjunction with the BCCS.

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 which runs from **7th September to the 2nd November 2015**.

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.

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