

Walsall Unitary Development Plan

Adopted by the Council on 7 March 2005

Paragraphs and Proposals that have been replaced by the Black Country Core Strategy from 3rd February 2011, or that have already been superseded previously, are highlighted in dark grey

Replacement Core Strategy Policies are also indicated: note that in many cases these are not an exact replacement and more than one Core Strategy policy may apply



Walsall Council

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Note:

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1 INTRODUCTION

What is the background to the UDP?

1.1 Unitary Development Plans (UDPs) are a type of development plan that has been produced since 1986. They are, however, to be replaced in the future by Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), as explained further below. Each Metropolitan District has had to prepare a UDP for its area. Regulations for their production require policies and proposals to be limited to land use and transportation, although these can be set within a wider economic and social context. UDPs consist of two parts: Part I contains broad strategic planning policies; and Part II the justification for these policies, together with more detailed policies and proposals.

1.2 Walsall's first UDP was drawn up in the early 1990s and adopted by the Council in 1995. That initial Plan has now been superseded by this present Plan, which was adopted in March 2005. Key stages in the review process which led to the current adopted Plan were consultation on issues and 'the way forward' in 1998, and then on the First Deposit Draft Plan in May 2001 and the Revised Deposit Draft Plan in March 2002. A Public Local Inquiry into objections to the Plan was held between April and August 2003, the Inspector's Report was published in September 2004 and then the Council consulted on its Statement of Decisions and Reasons on the Inspector's Report and the related Proposed Modifications to the Plan in November 2004. A wide range of documentation relating to the preparation of the 2005 UDP is available for inspection and purchase if you want to find out more.

1.3 In producing the 2005 UDP the Council has taken account of relevant national and regional planning policies that were current at the time of its preparation and references to these are included within the text. It should be noted, however, that in some instances these have now been superseded by more recent editions. Where this is the case footnotes are included to clarify matters. In particular, it is important to emphasise that the Plan was prepared in the context of the Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands Region (RPG11), as published in April 1998. Although this has now been superseded by RPG11 (2004) – which provides the current approved Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the region - all references to Regional Planning Guidance in this Plan are to RPG11 (1998) unless otherwise stated.

1.4 One of the key functions of the UDP is its use by the Council in making decisions on planning proposals: Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004 requires that these decisions should be in accordance with the development plan (i.e. in this case the UDP), unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

How is the Plan set out?

1.5 Firstly, Chapter 2 outlines some General Principles that will apply to all types of development. There are then a series of chapters (3 - 10) dealing with particular topics. All these chapters begin with a Strategic Policy Statement setting out the broad approach (the "Part 1" element). There is then a section which explains and justifies the strategic approach and sets out detailed policies and proposals (this constitutes "Part II"). For the complete picture on any topic, therefore, the Strategic Policy Statement should always be read in conjunction with any relevant detailed policies and proposals. The policies and proposals of the Plan are highlighted for

easy identification by shaded boxes. Chapter 11 considers how the Plan will be put into effect and monitored, together with the implications for resources. It includes a table summarising the indicators which are identified in each of the topic chapters.

1.6 Chapters 12 - 17 are Inset Plans for Walsall Town Centre and the District Centres of Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall. These contain detailed policies and proposals, forming part of the Part II policy content of the Plan. Appendix 1 contains information about consultancy studies on retailing and centres; and appendix 2 lists the Supplementary Planning Guidance currently in use by the Council to expand upon the policies and proposals of the UDP in more detail than is possible within the Plan itself. Finally, an index helps you find the relevant policies and proposals that you are interested in.

1.7 The location of proposals is shown on the Proposals Map, which has seven parts. The main part of the Map is at 1: 15,000 scale and deals with the whole of the Borough except the Town and District Centres which are shown on a series of six Inset Maps at the larger scale of 1: 2,500. The Proposals Map is an integral part of the policies and proposals of the UDP. In addition, within the text of this document, there are various figures and diagrams provided purely for information and not forming part of the policy contents of the Plan.

How does the UDP relate to other plans and strategies?

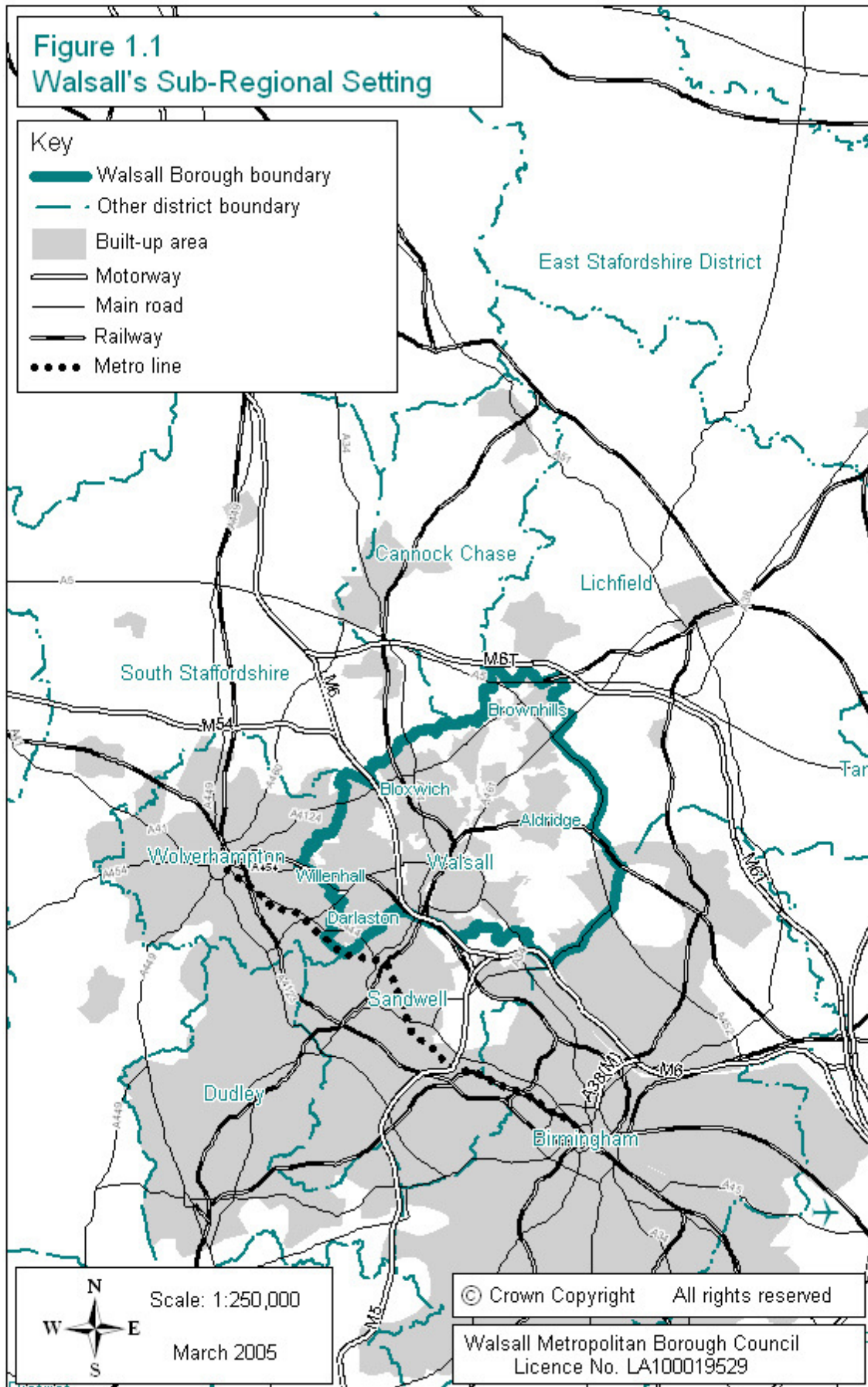
1.8 The Plan will help towards the achievement of many of the aims and objectives of the Council's "Vision 2008", produced in 2004, which has the following priorities:-

1. Ensure a clean and green borough.
2. Make it easier for people to get around.
3. Ensure all people are safe and secure.
4. Make our schools great.
5. Make Walsall a healthy and caring place.
6. Encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall.
7. Make it easier to access local services.
8. Strengthen the local economy.
9. Listen to what local people want.
10. Transform Walsall into an excellent local authority.

1.9 The preparation of the Plan has also been co-ordinated with work on other relevant plans and strategies, including most notably the West Midlands Local Transport Plan and the Council's Housing Strategy.

1.10 The Council has also ensured that the UDP has been prepared in co-ordination with the UDPs, Structure and Local Plans of other authorities in the sub-region (Walsall's sub-regional setting is shown in Figure 1.1). Co-ordination has been achieved through very close working relationships at officer level, and through the more formal mechanisms of the West Midlands Planning and Transportation Sub-Committee and the West Midlands Regional Assembly.

1.11 This UDP will provide a context for producing other plans and strategies within the borough, notably the Regeneration Framework for the Walsall Regeneration Company.



How will the UDP be replaced by the LDF?

1.12 The new planning system, introduced by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, involves the replacement of UDPs (as well as Structure Plans and Local Plans) by Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). The LDF will be a loose-leaf collection of individual plan documents that will be prepared in a phased programme over a number of years (rather than a single plan prepared at one time, as was the case with the UDP). As the first step towards LDFs, all plan-making authorities were required to submit a Local Development Scheme (LDS) to Government by the end of March 2005. The LDS is essentially a project plan setting out the programme for the preparation of other LDF documents. Walsall's LDS is available on our website and as printed copies. Please have a look at the document if you want to find out more about LDF preparation in the future.

1.13 The policies and proposals of the UDP (2005) will be automatically 'saved' under the transitional arrangements of the new planning system for 3 years after adoption. The Walsall LDS, however, explains that it will in fact be necessary to save the UDP provisions for somewhat longer than this until replacement LDF documents are in place. One important factor influencing the programme for preparation of key LDF documents (starting with the new core strategy) is the timetable for completion of a Black Country Sub-Regional Study and the related revisions to the Regional Spatial Strategy.

How can I find out more?

1.14 A range of documentation relating to the preparation of the 2005 UDP is available for inspection and purchase if you want to find out more about how the Plan was prepared. Please contact us or visit our website. The most recent background documents that might be of greatest interest are:-

- The Inspector's Report, published September 2004
- The Council's Statement of Decisions and Reasons on the Inspector's Report and Proposed Modifications, published November 2004
- The Walsall Local Development Scheme, March 2005 which explains how the UDP will initially be saved and then eventually replaced through the new LDF system.

1.15 If you need any further assistance you can:

- Telephone the UDP helpline on (01922) 652504
or for deaf users, the Minicom number (01922) 652415
Fax: (01922) 623234
- Visit the Council's website: www.Walsall.gov.uk
- E-mail: LDF@Walsall.gov.uk
- Write to:
Regeneration Strategy Team,
Strategic Regeneration,
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council,
Civic Centre,
Darwall Street,
WALSALL. WS1 1DG

2 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The JCS Vision, Sustainability Principles and Spatial Objectives, as well as nearly all the specific policies in the JCS, relate to these principles in the UDP

PART I STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT

Overall Strategy

2.1 The mutually interdependent aims of sustainable development, urban regeneration, economic revitalisation, environmental improvement and social inclusion underlie all of the Plan's policies. Development proposals will be evaluated against these fundamental aims.

2.2 Working towards these aims will involve action under the following six key strategic themes:-

- (a) Creating, sustaining and enhancing a high quality natural and built environment throughout the Borough, including a high standard of design.**
- (b) Maintaining and enhancing our established town, district and local centres as the main focus for shopping, services, leisure and most aspects of community life.**
- (c) Strengthening and diversifying the economy of the Borough to maximise the benefits for its people, businesses and visitors.**
- (d) Providing for the right number, type and distribution of new homes.**
- (e) Ensuring that excellent provision is made for leisure, recreation, education, health and other community needs.**
- (f) Developing an efficient and sustainable integrated transport system which promotes public transport, cycling and walking whilst also continuing to cater for journeys that need to be made by private car.**

The Local Dimension CSP4. Also addressed by Statement of Community Involvement

2.3 Also fundamental to the Plan's approach is recognition of the importance of local diversity. Regeneration and environmental improvement initiatives will be targeted on an area basis with the fullest involvement of local communities and partner agencies.

Equal Opportunities and Social Considerations CSP1 - CSP5, EMP5, TRAN2, ENV3

2.4 When considering development proposals, the Council will take account of any social implications including, for example, seeking to ensure equality of opportunity and greater social inclusion; providing sensitively for the requirements of disabled people; and promoting community safety.

PART II DETAILED POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

OVERALL STRATEGY

2.5 The overall strategy set out in the Strategic Policy Statement flows from the vision for the Plan first established in the consultation booklet “The Way Forward?”:-

The development of an attractive, prosperous, accessible and diverse Borough which provides for the needs and aspirations of its residents, businesses and visitors in an increasingly efficient, high quality, equitable and environmentally sustainable way.

2.6 The overall aims of sustainable development, urban regeneration, economic revitalisation, environmental improvement and social inclusion are mutually interdependent and need to be pursued simultaneously, in a ‘virtuous spiral’, to achieve the greatest level of success. Applying the principles of sustainable development - commonly defined as “ensuring that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” - will help to protect and improve our environment which will in turn create the right conditions to encourage investment in the local economy and foster the overall regeneration of our urban areas. Equally, a healthy local economy provides resources which can be directed towards both further improvements to the quality of our environment and engendering greater social inclusion.

2.7 The Strategic Policy Statement also sets out six key themes which the Council will follow in pursuit of the overall aims. These were first outlined in the consultation booklet “The Way Forward?” and received a large measure of support. Those themes underlie all other policies and proposals of the Plan.

2.8 The following three policies set out general principles for the sustainable location of development, the protection of the environment and the use of planning obligations. There are then sections dealing with the Local Dimension and with Equal Opportunities and Social Considerations.



Anchor Brook, Aldridge

Policy GP1: The Sustainable Location of Development

The location of development will be guided by the principles of sustainable development and will involve:-

- (a) Locating facilities where they are accessible to everyone and minimise the need to travel, particularly by the private car. For all development involving a significant generation of personal trips (including retailing, services, offices, leisure, recreation and other key town centre uses) the Council will adopt a sequential approach requiring the location of development in the following priority order:-**
- I. Within the town, district or local centres.**
 - II. On the edge of the town, district or local centres.**
 - III. Other places, in out-of-centre locations, that have, or will have, good accessibility by a choice of means of transport (see also the accessibility standards in Policies T10 - T13 in Chapter 7).**

Development in centres should be of a nature and scale appropriate to the centre concerned. Proposals that fail to satisfy the sequential approach will be refused unless there are weighty additional material considerations.

- (b) Mixed-use developments will be encouraged in order to help minimise the need to travel (by enabling people to live, work and meet other needs locally) and to increase local diversity and vitality. The Council will also seek to encourage greater diversity of uses within the existing urban area. In both cases this will be subject to there being no unacceptable adverse impact on the environment. When granting planning permissions for mixed-use developments the Council may impose conditions, or utilise planning obligations, to ensure that the full range of uses is provided.**
- (c) Maximising the re-use of derelict, vacant and underused urban land and buildings before the release of greenfield sites. To help make best use of urban land and buildings, development proposals should not prejudice the beneficial use of any adjoining land or buildings, or other parts of a building (e.g. upper floors above shops).**
- (d) Making efficient use of existing or proposed infrastructure (e.g. drainage, water and energy supplies, education and community facilities) to minimise the need to provide additional infrastructure.**

2.9 One of the most fundamental functions of the planning system is to ensure that development takes place in the right place. This has become even more important recently with the emphasis that is now placed on sustainable development. Policy GP1 identifies four main ways in which the location of development can help achieve greater sustainability: locating development where it will be accessible to everyone by a choice of means of transport; encouraging mixed use developments and greater diversity within the urban area; maximising the recycling of previously used land; and making the most efficient use of existing or proposed infrastructure.

2.10 Reducing the number and length of motorised trips will have benefits for the environment through energy savings, lower exhaust emissions and air pollution, and

reduced traffic noise and congestion. A number of policies in the Transport Chapter are concerned with how we can improve facilities for public transport, walking and cycling to make them viable and attractive alternatives to the car. The location of development, however, also has a very important role to play in helping to reduce the need for people to travel unnecessarily and making sure that they can get where they need to go by a choice of means of transport. This is recognised in Government guidance, notably PPG6, PPG13 and RPG11.

2.11 Part (a) of Policy GP1, therefore, seeks to locate development within or on the edge of centres or in other places with good access by public transport. This will ensure that facilities will be accessible by a choice of means of transport and, in the case of development in centres, will also make possible 'linked trips' - the ability to satisfy a range of needs in one journey, thus reducing the overall distance travelled. The Council's 'accessibility standards' for development are set out in Policies T10 - T13 in Chapter 7.

2.12 It should be noted that whilst Policy GP1 establishes some general principles for the location of development, other policies in the topic chapters provide more detailed guidance for particular land uses (e.g. retailing, leisure, industry and housing) where appropriate. For the complete picture, therefore, on the locational policies relating to any proposed development reference should also be made to the relevant topic chapter.

2.13 Another way in which the location of development can help to reduce the need to travel is through mixed-use developments. By providing a range of facilities in close proximity the need for people to travel greater distances to meet their various needs will be reduced. This approach also has the advantage of enhancing local diversity and vitality, bringing life to an area throughout the day and evening. Part (b) of Policy GP1, therefore, encourages mixed use developments. It should be noted, however, that bringing different land uses close together might sometimes raise environmental issues due to problems of incompatibility. The environmental checklist set out in Policy GP2 will assist in assessing any environmental conflicts.

2.14 Maximising the reuse of urban land and buildings will enable development needs to be met whilst minimising the need to build on greenfield sites. This is more sustainable not only because it will safeguard valuable green spaces for the enjoyment of future generations but also because urban previously-developed land will usually be better located in terms of minimising the need to travel. Government guidance now places strong emphasis on the recycling of previously- developed land. However, it should be noted that not all previously-developed land (pdl) will be suitable for development. It also needs to be recognised that development for town centre uses should not be utilised simply as a mechanism to bring vacant or derelict land into use, unless it would help to support the vitality and viability of existing centres. The Borough's centres need investment for their own regeneration.

2.15 Locating development in such a way that it can make efficient use of existing or proposed infrastructure (e.g. transport links, public utility supplies, drainage capacity and educational and community facilities) will help to minimise the need to provide additional infrastructure that would in itself have resource and environmental implications. The reuse of urban brownfield sites will usually also have the benefit of making best use of existing infrastructure, although new infrastructure may still be necessary in some cases.

Policy GP2: Environmental Protection

The Council will expect all developments to make a positive contribution to the quality of the environment and the principles of sustainable development, and will not permit development which would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment. The following considerations will be taken into account in the assessment of development proposals:-

- I. Visual appearance (see also Policies ENV32 – ENV38 on Design and Development in Chapter 3).
- II. The creation of, or susceptibility to, pollution of any kind (see also Policies ENV10 and ENV11 in Chapter 3).
- III. Potential problems of land stability, contamination or landfill gas (see also Policy ENV14 in Chapter 3).
- IV. The storage, use or manufacture of any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances, and any danger to health or the environment arising from this (see also Policy ENV12 in Chapter 3).
- V. Proximity to power lines, substations or transformers (see also Policy ENV13 in Chapter 3).
- VI. Overlooking, loss of privacy, and the effect on daylight and sunlight received by nearby property (see also Policy H10 in Chapter 6 in respect of residential development).
- VII. Accessibility by a choice of means of transport; traffic impact, including the adequacy of the proposed access; and the adequacy of parking facilities (see also Policies T1 - T13 in Chapter 7).
- VIII. The effect on the environment of the countryside and Green Belt (see also Policies ENV2 – ENV8 in Chapter 3).
- IX. The effect on land or buildings of archaeological, architectural or historical interest (see also Policies ENV25 - ENV31 in Chapter 3).
- X. The effect on species, habitats and sites of nature conservation or geological interest (see also Policies ENV19 - ENV24 in Chapter 3).
- XI. The effect on the best and most versatile agricultural land (see also Policy ENV6 in Chapter 3).
- XII. The effect on woodland or individual trees on or near the site (see also Policies ENV15 - ENV18 in Chapter 3).
- XIII. The effect on landscape of historic or amenity value, including any proposed changes to land form, levels or land management (see also Policy ENV30 in respect of Registered Parks and Gardens).
- XIV. The effect on open spaces and outdoor recreation facilities, including footpaths, cycleways and bridleways (see also

- Policies LC1 – LC6 in Chapter 8).**
- XV. The implications for water resources including conservation and efficient use of water, and the impact on existing or proposed drainage systems, water courses and aquifers (see also Policy ENV40 in Chapter 3 and Policy LC9 in Chapter 8).**
 - XVI. The provision to be made for energy conservation (see also Policy ENV39 in Chapter 3).**
 - XVII. The provision made for the sustainable management of any waste generated by the proposed development (see also Policy WM4 in Chapter 10).**
 - XVIII. The effect of interference from radio or other transmissions on equipment in the locality.**
 - XIX. The hours of operation of any activities proposed.**
 - XX. Any other factor of environmental significance.**

2.16 The protection and enhancement of the environment is central to the strategy of the Plan. Policy GP2 serves as a checklist of various environmental factors that will need to be taken into account during the consideration of any planning proposal. In many cases these factors are also the subject of more detailed policies elsewhere in the Plan, particularly in Chapter 3: Environment and Amenity, and in these instances Policy GP2 provides the appropriate cross-references.

2.17 For planning proposals of particular significance the Council will require the submission of an Environmental Statement in support of the planning application. The circumstances in which this will be necessary are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations, 1999.

2.18 In many cases the impact of planning proposals which would otherwise be unacceptable in environmental terms can be mitigated by the use of appropriate conditions or planning obligations. Policy GP3 gives general guidance on the use of Planning Obligations.



Green Belt between Pelsall and Walsall Wood

Policy GP3: Planning Obligations

- (a) **These will be used, as appropriate, to secure the provision of any on or off-site infrastructure, facilities, services or mitigating measures made necessary by a development; ensure the implementation of an agreed phasing scheme; or otherwise ensure that development takes place in a satisfactory manner in accordance with the policies of the Plan.**
- (b) **The Council will, in particular, use such obligations to secure additional or improved transport infrastructure; open space and recreational provision; measures for wildlife protection; enhancement and creation (or a mix thereof); forestry planting; utility services, including drainage works; affordable housing provision; community safety schemes; education facilities; healthcare facilities; and other forms of social and community infrastructure.**
- (c) **Negotiations with developers will be based on the principle that the benefits to be secured should be necessary, relevant to planning, directly related to the proposed development, and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development.**
- (d) **Where a choice can be made between the use of planning conditions and planning obligations for the achievement of a given purpose, the Council will normally attach conditions in preference to the use of obligations.**

2.19 Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) enables developers to give unilateral undertakings, or local authorities to reach agreements with developers, for certain works etc. to be carried out in association with a development. Government guidance in Circular 1/97 indicates that such obligations should be necessary, relevant and directly related in scale and kind to the proposed development. They may be required, for example, to:

- Enable the development to proceed.
- Secure related infrastructure and facilities.
- Secure the appropriate balance of uses, for example within mixed use developments.
- Offset or redress the on-site or off-site impacts of the development.
- Secure a higher quality development.
- Secure maintenance.
- Secure the reuse of historic buildings.

2.20 Planning obligations will be particularly useful where developments will generate or increase the need for additional infrastructure, facilities or services or require public bodies to bring forward plans for improvements. In such cases the development should normally bear the full cost of doing that which would not otherwise have been necessary at the time. More specific reference to the use of planning obligations is included in other chapters of the Plan. In some situations, a development may be required to fund a number of related infrastructure improvements.

The JCS Vision, Sustainability Principles and Spatial Objectives, as well as nearly all the specific policies in the JCS, relate to these principles in the UDP

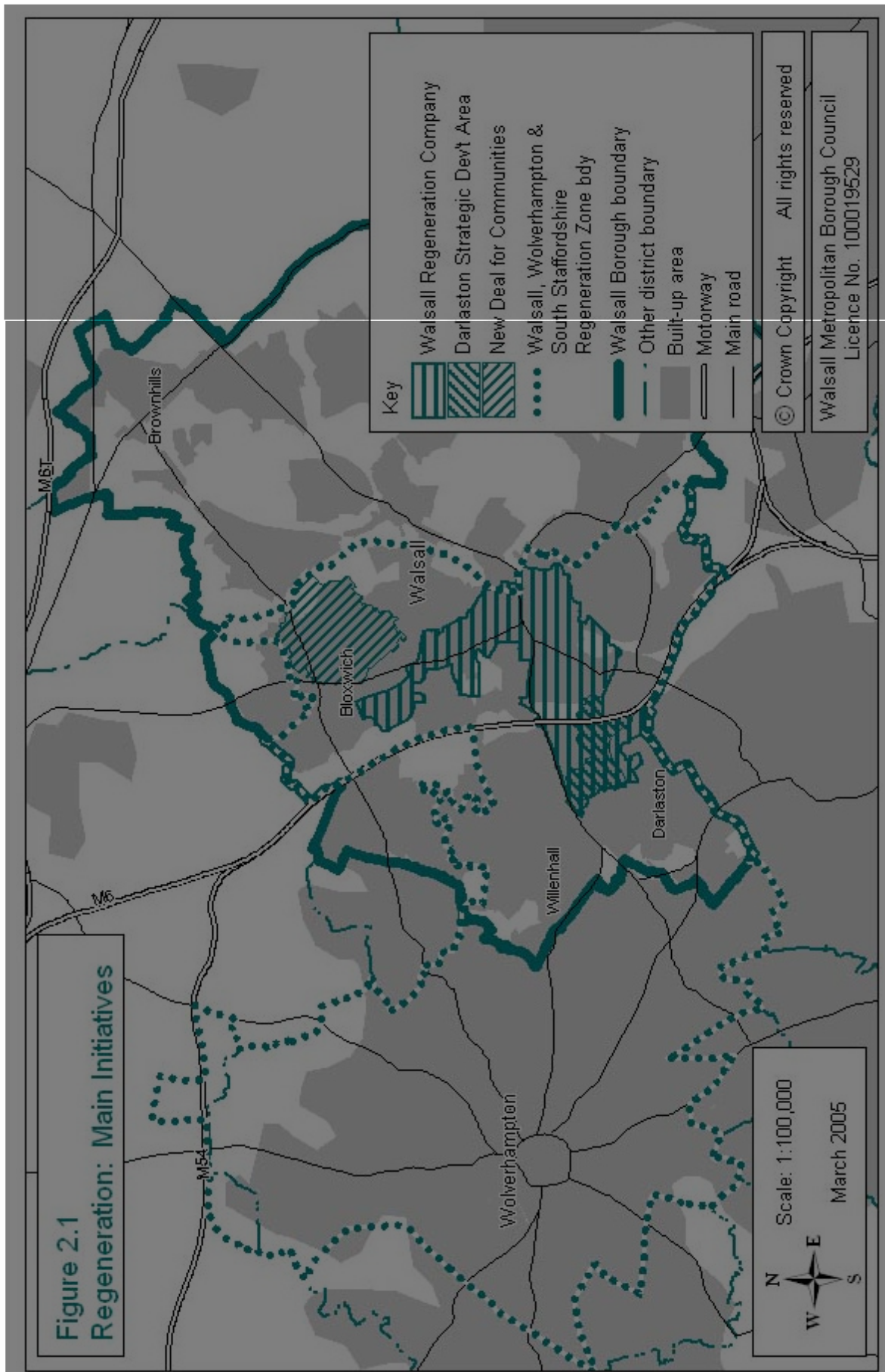
THE LOCAL DIMENSION

Policy GP4: Local Area Regeneration

- (a) The Council will promote and encourage comprehensive local area regeneration initiatives that:-**
 - I. Revitalise the local economy and create / safeguard jobs.**
 - II. Help to sustain established centres.**
 - III. Protect and enhance the natural and built environment.**
 - IV. Help bring forward derelict, vacant or underused land and buildings for new uses.**
 - V. Improve accessibility by a choice of means of transport and reduce the adverse impact of traffic.**
 - VI. Improve the range of local facilities and amenities, and promote access to these by all members of the community.**
 - VII. Improve safety and security.**
 - VIII. Provide for affordable housing and/or the regeneration of the existing housing stock.**
- (b) Priority will be given to areas, including local pockets, having a combination of economic, social and environmental problems, with the emphasis on tackling problems of multiple-deprivation and social exclusion. Local area regeneration schemes will involve local communities (including residents, industrialists and traders) and partner agencies to the fullest extent.**
- (c) The local distinctiveness of the many communities that comprise Walsall Metropolitan Borough will be respected, protected and fostered.**
- (d) Regeneration schemes for particular local areas may be published as Supplementary Planning Documents.**

2.21 This policy sets out the Council's overall approach towards area-based regeneration as a context for more detailed references elsewhere in the Plan - for example, in connection with environmental improvements, industrial areas, housing improvements and town, district and local centres.

2.22 The approach differs from that used in the 1995 Plan, for a number of reasons. The 1995 Plan identified broad "Priority Areas" at the strategic level and a number of "Action Schemes" at the local level. The concept of Priority Areas was largely a legacy of the former West Midlands County Structure Plan and the former Urban Programme (discontinued and replaced by other funding regimes several years ago). It is now considered that a more fine-grained and flexible approach to local area regeneration is needed. The Action Schemes proposed in the 1995 Plan have either been implemented or are to be taken forward in other ways. Area regeneration initiatives include the Walsall, Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire Regeneration Zone, established by Advantage West Midlands (the Regional Development Agency), Walsall Regeneration Company, incorporating the Darlaston Strategic Development Area, New Deal for Communities (see Figure 2.1), and the Health Action Zone and Heritage Economic Regeneration Schemes.



2.23 One of the Borough's great strengths is its diversity, ranging from the tight urban structure of traditional Black Country towns and villages to extensive areas of open countryside, and reflecting the gradual coming together of a number of once separate communities through successive rounds of local government reorganisation in the 1960s and 1970s. This has resulted in a rich heritage of distinct communities, typically focused upon established centres, which retain to a large extent their local identity, culture and character. This diversity will be respected, protected and fostered as a positive asset in the future regeneration and sustainable development of the Borough. One way in which the Council hopes to strengthen local diversity will be through the work of the Local Neighbourhood Partnerships and the Community Empowerment Network.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Policy GP5: Equal Opportunities

- (a) When considering development proposals care will be taken to ensure that the needs of all sections of the community are properly taken into account and that there is no discrimination against any individual or group on the basis of race, gender, age, poor mobility, disability, poverty, or any other factor.**
- (b) Particular attention will be given to the needs of people who are in any way disadvantaged in order to maximise equality of opportunity and engender greater social inclusion.**
- (c) The Council will seek to maximise the opportunities for all sections of the community to participate in the development process.**

2.24 It is vital that the planning system is accessible and responsive to the needs of all sections of the community and treats all fairly and impartially. The preparation of this Plan has involved wide ranging public consultation and procedures are in place to ensure that equal opportunities implications are explicitly recognised in all reports to Council Committees. The Local Neighbourhood Partnership system also provides a valuable way to involve all sections of the community.

2.25 Everyone in the community should have the opportunity to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life of the Borough. Unfortunately, it can happen that individuals or groups are excluded from these benefits through a combination of factors such as unemployment, low incomes, lack of access to a car, bad health, poor housing, disability, racial discrimination or family problems. Often this multiple-deprivation and social exclusion is concentrated in particular localities.

2.26 The Council recognises the need to create greater social inclusion throughout the Borough. The existence of pockets of multiple-deprivation will be one of the key factors in establishing priorities for local area regeneration (see also Policy GP4).

2.27 The particular needs of disabled people are considered in Policy GP6 below. The Housing Chapter considers the need for affordable and special needs housing. The location of development where it will be easily accessible to everyone by a choice of means of transport (e.g. in established centres) is key theme of policies throughout this Plan (see Policy GP1, Chapter 5: Strengthening Our Centres and Policies T10-T13 in Chapter 7: Transport).

Policy GP6: Disabled People

Workplaces; homes; shops and services; schools; leisure, recreation and community facilities; and any other developments to which the public will have access will only be permitted if designed to provide good access for disabled people. Provision should include easily accessible dedicated parking spaces, convenient and safe movement along pathways and an unhindered approach to buildings. Transport facilities should also be designed to ensure easy access for everyone, with convenient interchange facilities. Measures to improve accessibility should be of a high standard of design to protect the visual appearance of buildings and the townscape.

2.28 The Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 places a general obligation on everyone to provide sensitively for disabled people so that they are not in any way disadvantaged. The consideration of proposals for development provides an important opportunity to secure a more accessible environment for everyone including not only people with disabilities, but also those whose mobility is impaired or restricted for other reasons, such as elderly people and parents with young children.

2.29 Access within buildings is not usually a planning consideration but minimum standards for disabled people's access within buildings (including homes) are set out in the Building Regulations (Part M of Schedule 1). Whilst it is not necessary or appropriate for the planning system to duplicate the controls available under the Building Regulations, there are other ways in which the planning system can help, for example, through provision of dedicated parking spaces, the layout of pathways and pedestrian areas, and the planning of public transport systems. The Council will have regard to any relevant good practice advice on these matters.

2.30 Further reference to helping everyone, including disabled people, to get around more easily is made in Policy T1 in Chapter 7. Reference to housing for disabled people is made in Policy H5 in Chapter 6 and Chapter 5 includes Policy S17 on Shopmobility.



Midland Metro stop near Moxley

Policy GP7: Community Safety

- (a) **Development proposals will be expected to have regard for the objective of “designing out crime” through the incorporation of measures such as the following:-**
- I. Promotion of mixed use developments and other schemes that increase the range of activities in an area to ensure a presence of people throughout the day and maximise the opportunities for surveillance. This will be particularly important in the town, district and local centres where there is a need to create a lively, attractive and welcoming environment throughout the day and evening, and increase the number of people living there.**
 - II. Maximising the surveillance of public areas from the living areas of homes and from other buildings.**
 - III. Maximising the amount of defensible space which is controlled, or perceived to be controlled, by occupiers.**
 - IV. Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) surveillance, particularly within centres, business parks and other priority areas.**
 - V. Care in the design and layout of buildings, landscaping and structures to avoid creating hiding places or cover for criminals. Landscaping (e.g. thorny shrubs) might, however, be used positively to reinforce boundaries and deter intruders. Consideration also needs to be given to the functional design of security measures such as fencing, such that they suit the needs of, and pressures on, the site.**
 - VI. A high standard of street lighting and other external lighting, including security lighting as appropriate, and avoiding any unnecessarily obtrusive and/or glaring light which adversely affects the amenities of others.**
 - VII. Alleyways and pedestrian / cycle ways should as far as possible be clear of hiding places, unobstructed, well lit, follow a direct route, offer frequent access points, include safe crossing points at roads, and be capable of good surveillance.**
 - VIII. Particular attention should be given to the security of car parks, including providing limited and controlled access points, a high standard of lighting, surveillance from neighbouring development, and use of CCTV. Any communal car parks within residential areas should be within view of the owners’ homes.**
 - IX. Security shutters will be considered against the principles set out in Policy ENV 35.**
 - X. Bollards, pillars or railings to deter crimes such as ram-raiding should be designed to blend in with the street scene and avoid creating difficulties for people with visual or other disabilities. Other solutions such as using substantial trees, planters or street furniture as barriers or the strengthening of shop fronts should be explored where feasible.**

XI. Measures to combat crime should be sensitive to the need to maintain good pedestrian access and the principles of good urban and landscape design (see also Policies ENV32 and ENV33).

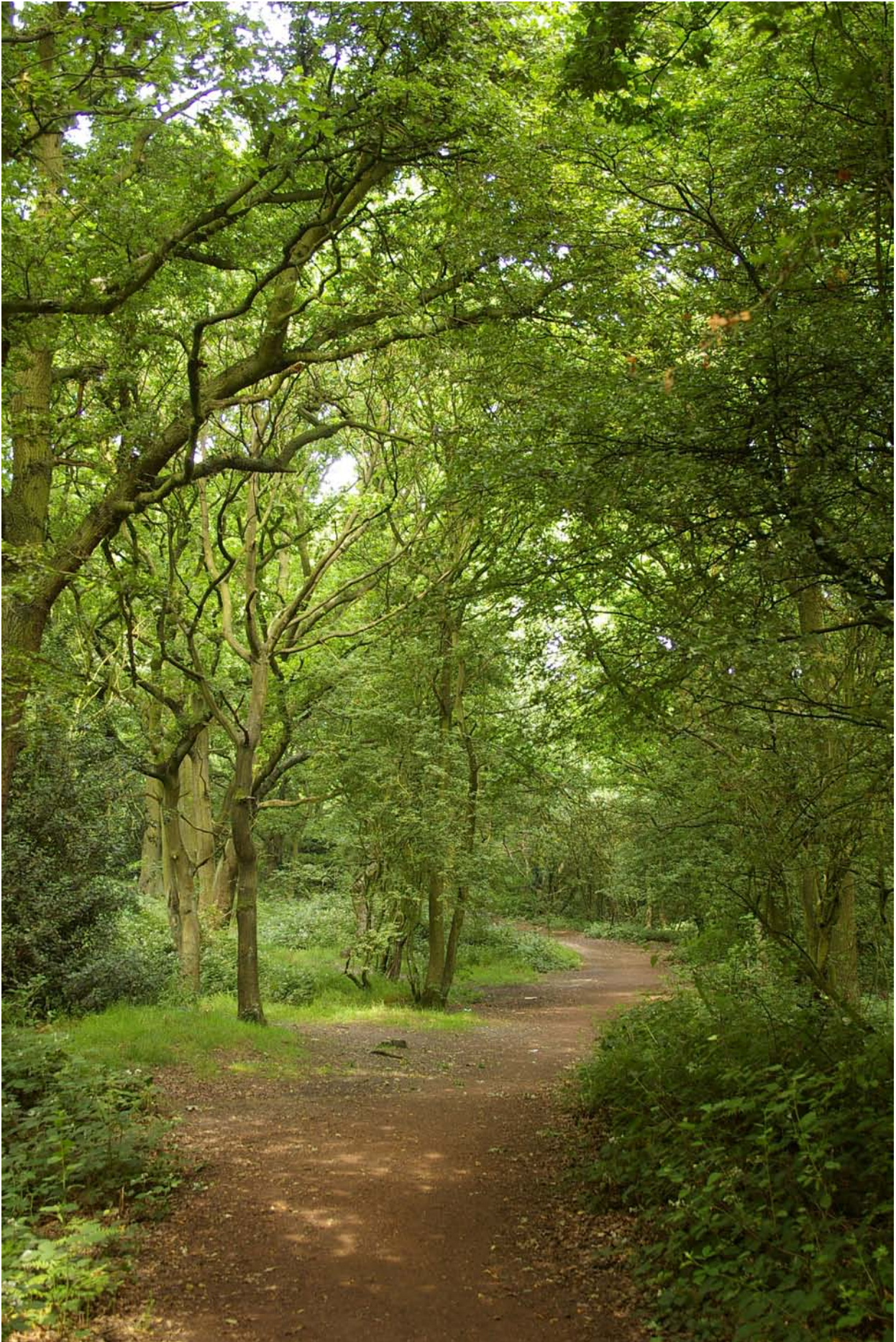
(b) Where appropriate, the Council will use planning conditions or planning obligations to secure the provision of community safety measures. This might involve the use of commuted payments to support the provision of necessary infrastructure.

(c) The Council has adopted the principles of “Secured by Design” and will apply these in the consideration of all relevant planning proposals.

2.31 Government guidance in Circulars 1/84: Crime Prevention and 5/94: Planning Out Crime confirms that crime prevention can be a material consideration in planning decisions and that the planning system can make a significant contribution to deterring crime, as part of a co-ordinated approach. Policy GP7 sets out a checklist of some of the measures that can, where appropriate, help to prevent crime and encourage a greater sense of community safety. The Council will also take account of Government Guidance and any advice from the police when considering individual development proposals. This will include application of the principles of “Secured by Design”, a police initiative designed to encourage the adoption of crime prevention measures to create a safer environment.

2.32 The policy recognises that it will sometimes be appropriate to use planning conditions or planning obligations (under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990) to secure the provision of community safety measures. This might include the use of commuted payments whereby developers make a financial contribution towards the provision of necessary infrastructure such as improved lighting, CCTV coverage and the establishment of neighbourhood watch, community liaison and community education schemes.

2.33 The Council has published a Community Safety Strategy in partnership with a wide range of other agencies in order to develop and co-ordinate projects to reduce crime and the fear of crime. The Strategy provides the context for inter-agency crime prevention and also provides a basis for local neighbourhood community safety schemes in areas currently experiencing significant levels of crime and vandalism. A local Crime Audit has also been undertaken and a Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy put in place.



3 ENVIRONMENT & AMENITY

PART I STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT

The JCS Vision, Sustainability Principles and Spatial Objectives, as well as nearly all the specific policies in the JCS, relate to these principles in the UDP

General

3.1 Sustainable development and environmental improvement are two of the key aims underlying the Plan's Strategy. The Council will conserve and enhance the Borough's natural and man-made environmental assets whilst seeking to eliminate, ameliorate or control any features or activities that have an adverse impact on the environment.

The Countryside and Green Belt

3.2 The conservation, enhancement and management of the countryside will be promoted through the Forest of Mercia, Countryside Area Profiles and agricultural environmental schemes, using the 'countryside character' approach.

3.3 The character and function of the Green Belt (which includes most of Walsall's countryside) will continue to be safeguarded as part of the wider West Midlands Green Belt. Inappropriate development will not be allowed in the Green Belt unless justified by very special circumstances.

3.4 The continued development of agriculture will be encouraged, and the best and most versatile agricultural land will, as far as possible, be protected from loss to other uses. Proposals for the diversification of the rural economy, particularly for forestry and forestry-related enterprises, will be encouraged.

3.5 The use of the countryside for appropriate types of outdoor sport and recreation will also be encouraged. Farmland can provide an appropriate setting and backdrop for countryside recreation.

Environmental Improvement

3.6 Development and redevelopment schemes should, as far as possible, help to improve the environment of the Borough. Relevant considerations to be taken into account are set out in Policy GP2.

3.7 In considering proposals for development or redevelopment, the Council will seek to protect people from unacceptable noise, pollution and other environmental problems. The Council will encourage the relocation of bad neighbour uses from residential and other sensitive areas and will assist the identification of alternative sites.

3.8 The Council and its partners will pursue a programme of environmental improvement initiatives. The identification of these initiatives will involve local communities and/or joint working with partner agencies, and will take account of the strategic priorities identified in this Plan.

Derelict Land Reclamation

3.9 In accordance with the overall strategy of maximising the re-use of derelict and other previously used land, the Council will give a high priority to the reclamation of derelict land for both development and open space use. Account will be taken of any existing features worthy of conservation, eg. built heritage, or

wildlife or landscape.

3.10 The Council will also seek to continue the programme of treatment of abandoned limestone mines and workings.

There is no current programme of treatment

Forestry and Trees

3.11 Urban Forestry is an important part of the Council's regeneration strategy and sustainability objectives and will be promoted and encouraged. The Council supports the creation and sustainable management of the Black Country Urban Forest and the Forest of Mercia. The planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows and the management of the existing urban forest will be carried out in accordance with the Black Country Urban Forestry Strategy and the Forest of Mercia Plan, the England Forestry Strategy and the Government's approach to sustainable forestry as detailed in the UK Forestry Standard.

Nature Conservation

CSP3 and ENV1

3.12 The protection, management and enhancement of the natural environment is recognised as being fundamental to the social, economic and ecological well-being of the Borough and will be promoted and encouraged accordingly. Development proposals should not destroy, damage or adversely affect nature conservation interests and, where possible, should enhance provision for wildlife. The Council will seek to achieve the targets for the conservation of species and habitats set by the Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan and will seek to keep up to date information about local species, habitats, geology, and landform. The Council will seek to identify, protect, and enhance new wildlife sites that are of appropriate quality for designation.



Brownhills Common.

Building Conservation & Archaeology

3.13 The archaeological heritage of the Borough will be safeguarded. This will include:-

- Scheduled monuments, other historic land of national importance (including land registered as of special historic interest) and their immediate settings.
- Sites and monuments of archaeological significance.
- Sites and buildings of industrial archaeological significance.

3.14 Buildings of special architectural or historic interest (listed buildings) will be safeguarded and the Council will not permit their demolition, or alteration in such a way as to cause permanent harm to their character, or proposals which will damage or harm their immediate setting. The Council will maintain and keep under review a list of buildings of local architectural and historic interest, and demolition or alteration to these buildings or their setting will not be permitted to cause permanent damage to their character.

3.15 The Borough's Conservation Areas will be periodically reviewed with a view to consolidating or designating additional areas of special architectural or historical interest. The Council will preserve or enhance the character of each Conservation Area and will not permit demolition, inappropriate alteration or insensitive redevelopment which will harm the individual or group value of buildings, spaces, or townscape.

Design and Development

CSP3, CSP4, ENV2 and ENV3

3.16 The Council will consider development in relation to its setting, with reference to the character and quality of the existing local environment, and will require a high quality of built and landscape design.

Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

CSP3 and ENV7

3.17 Development proposals must take account of the need to reduce, as far as possible, the consumption of energy; proposals for the production of energy from renewable sources will be encouraged.

Water Resources

CSP3, ENV4 and ENV5

3.18 Development proposals must take account of the need to reduce the consumption of water, to protect water resources from pollution, and to provide, where appropriate, for the creation or enhancement of water courses or other water bodies as a positive environmental asset and/or a resource for water based sport and recreation. Development proposals will be expected to reduce potential conflicts between the sports use and the environment and between different uses through good management practice and by the use of codes of conduct.

PART II DETAILED POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

INTRODUCTION

3.19 The consultation booklet “The Way Forward?” established the following policy aim for taking care of our environment:-

To promote the creation and maintenance of a clean, healthy and attractive environment by conserving and enhancing our best environmental assets; tackling environmental problems; and minimising any adverse environmental implications of new development.

3.20 Sustainable development and environmental improvement underlie all the policies and proposals of this Plan and some key principles relating to the sustainable location of development and the protection of the environment have already been set out in Chapter 2. This present chapter provides more detailed policy guidance on a wide range of environmental matters including countryside and Green Belt, environmental improvement, derelict land reclamation, forestry and trees, nature conservation, design quality, conservation of the man-made heritage, renewable energy and energy efficiency, and water resources.

THE COUNTRYSIDE AND GREEN BELT

3.21 Walsall’s Countryside can be described as “countryside in and around towns” (the Countryside Agency) and is the home, workplace and recreation area of many people. It provides the setting for towns, and links them to the wider countryside. Agriculture is still the predominant use, but horse grazing and leisure are increasingly prevalent, and there are considerable pressures on land. Conservation, enhancement and management needs to recognise its special value and character, acknowledge the continued role of agriculture, and utilise the opportunities provided by the Forest of Mercia, special programmes promoted by the Countryside Agency, and agricultural environmental schemes.

3.22 Most of the countryside is defined as Green Belt and this serves the following four of the five strategic purposes recognised in PPG2:-

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of the Borough’s built-up areas.
- To prevent neighbouring settlements from merging with one another.
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- To assist urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

3.23 In addition, the inclusion of land within the Green Belt also has a positive role to play in terms of:-

- Providing opportunities for access to the open countryside for local people.
- Providing for outdoor sport and recreational needs which cannot be met within the urban area.
- Retaining land in agriculture, forestry and related open uses.

- Retaining attractive landscapes.
- Protecting nature conservation interests.
- Providing greater certainty in pursuing the wider conservation, enhancement and management of the countryside.

3.24 Government policy (in PPG2) stresses that an essential characteristic of Green Belts is their permanence and that protection must be maintained as far as can be seen ahead. In drawing Green Belt boundaries, local authorities are required to take into account long term development needs. The Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands (RPG11, 2004) reinforces the principle and purpose of the West Midlands Green Belt.

Proposal ENV1: The Boundary of the Green Belt

The Green Belt boundary is shown on the Proposals Map. This includes the following changes to the boundary in the 1995 Plan:

(a) Additions to the Green Belt:

- I. **“Open Land” North-East of Stubbers Green Road, Aldridge, excepting the developed area comprising the waste treatment works**
- II. **Black Cock Farm, Walsall Wood**
- III. **West of Clayhanger**
- IV. **Off Oakwood Close, Walsall Wood**
- V. **Rear of Castle Road, Walsall Wood.**

(b) Deletions from the Green Belt:

- I. **Site of Disused Reservoir, Shire Oak (see also Proposal H2)**
- II. **Electricity sub-station, Little Bloxwich (see also Proposal H2)**
- III. **Land at Swan Works, Pelsall Road, Brownhills**
- IV. **Land at Manor Arms PH, Park Road, Rushall.**

3.25 In its reconsideration of the Green Belt boundary the Council has continued to have regard to development needs within and beyond the Plan period. In accordance with the strategy of concentrating development on sites within the urban area, however, it has concluded that it will not be necessary to propose any significant changes to the Green Belt boundary to help meet development needs.

3.26 Addition I is the land at Stubbers Green that was left out of the Green Belt and protected as “Open Land” in the 1995 Plan (and before this in the Aldridge / Brownhills Local Plan). The Council now takes the view that physical development constraints are likely to preclude the development of this area and that it would therefore be more realistic to include the land in the Green Belt, except the developed area at the northern end of the land comprising the waste treatment works.

3.27 Additions II and III are the two other areas of “Open Land” in the 1995 Plan and additions IV and V are two greenfield sites which were allocated for housing in the 1995 Plan. As the UDP Review is able to find sufficient capacity for housing over the Plan

period on previously developed land within the urban area, and as the emphasis in RPG11 (2004) is upon continuing this strategy post 2011, all of these greenfield sites have now been added to the Green Belt.

3.28 Proposed deletions I and II are to create a more logical and defensible boundary whilst at the same time facilitating small-scale brownfield housing schemes (see also Proposal H2 in Chapter 6). Proposed deletion III is to exclude from the Green Belt the operational area of Swan Works on the edge of the urban area. Proposed deletion IV is to rationalise the Green Belt boundary in the vicinity of the public house.

Policy ENV2: Control of Development in the Green Belt

- (a) **In the Green Belt there will be a presumption against the construction of new buildings except for the following purposes:-**
- I. Agriculture or forestry.**
 - II. Facilities essential for outdoor sport or recreation.**
 - III. Cemeteries or other uses which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with its purposes.**
 - IV. Limited extension, alteration or replacement of an existing dwelling, provided that this will not result in disproportionate additions, or a new dwelling materially larger than the original dwelling.**
 - V. Limited infilling or redevelopment of major existing developed sites, in accordance with Policy ENV4.**
- (b) **The re-use of existing buildings within the Green Belt will be acceptable provided that:-**
- I. This would not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness and purposes of the Green Belt.**
 - II. It does not involve any building extension or associated uses of land around the building which would conflict with the openness and purposes of the Green Belt.**
 - III. The buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction.**
 - IV. The form, bulk and general design of the buildings are in keeping with their surroundings.**

Re-use for economic development purposes will usually be preferable, but residential conversions may be more appropriate in some locations, and for some types of building. Account will be taken of potential impact on the countryside, landscapes and wildlife; local economic and social needs; accessibility; the suitability of different types of buildings for re-use; and the preservation of buildings of historic or architectural importance or interest or which otherwise contribute to local character - in accordance with other policies of the Plan.

- (c) **The extraction of minerals or the controlled tipping of waste can be appropriate development in the Green Belt provided that it is in accordance with relevant policies in Chapters 9 and 10.**
- (d) **Any engineering or other operation, or the making of any material change in the use of land, is inappropriate development in the Green Belt if it conflicts with the openness and purposes of the Green Belt.**
- (e) **Where development is consistent in principle with the purposes of the Green Belt, the Council will require that its siting, design, form, scale and appearance is compatible with the character of the surrounding area, as explained further in Policy ENV3. Further policy guidance on the riding and stabling of horses and on agriculture is also given in Policies ENV5 and ENV6.**

3.29 This policy sets the overall context for the control of development in the Green Belt by specifying the types of development that would, in principle, be acceptable. All other forms of development are, by implication, considered inappropriate and applications for such development will normally be refused. The policy follows Government guidance given in PPG2.

INDICATOR

The extent to which the Green Belt is protected from inappropriate development will be a monitoring indicator for the UDP. The target will be 100% protection.

3.30 Even when a planning proposal is considered to be appropriate development under Policy ENV2 there will be other more detailed matters that will also need to be taken into account in reaching a decision on its merits. Policy ENV2 should, therefore, be read in conjunction with the following more detailed policies which will be relevant to developments within the Green Belt. Policy ENV3 is of general application and Policies ENV4 - ENV6 relate to particular types of development.

Policy ENV3: Detailed Evaluation of Proposals within the Green Belt

Where development is acceptable in principle in the Green Belt (under Policy ENV2) the Council will also assess proposals for their impact on the Green Belt in terms of the following factors:-

- I. The detailed layout of the site.**
- II. The siting, design, grouping, height and scale of buildings, structures and associated outdoor equipment.**
- III. The colour and suitability of building materials, having regard for local styles and materials.**
- IV. The opportunities to use redundant land and buildings for suitable alternative uses.**
- V. The quality of new landscape schemes.**
- VI. The impact on significant views, viewpoints and topographical features.**
- VII. The cumulative physical effect of proposals in any one area.**

VIII. The implications for local facilities, particularly public services and infrastructure.

IX. Any other relevant considerations identified in Policy GP2.

3.31 Where proposals in the Green Belt are considered acceptable in principle under Policy ENV2, the Council will subject them to more detailed scrutiny using the criteria set out in Policy ENV3. This will ensure that any adverse environmental impacts will be minimised.

Policy ENV4: Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt

(a) The limited infilling of major developed sites in the Green Belt may be permitted provided that:-

I. This will have no greater impact on the purposes of the Green Belt than the existing development; and

II. The height of the existing buildings would not be exceeded.

(b) The redevelopment of major developed sites in the Green Belt may be permitted provided that:-

I. This will have no greater impact (and where possible less impact) than the existing development on the openness and purposes of the Green Belt; and

II. The height of the existing buildings would not be exceeded; and

III. The area to be covered by buildings would not occupy a larger area of the site than the aggregate ground floor area of the existing buildings, unless this would achieve a reduction in height which would benefit visual amenity.

(c) In the case of proposals for either infilling or redevelopment it must also be demonstrated that:-

I. There would be no significant intensification of activities on the site, or significant extra traffic generation, that would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment and amenities of the area; and

II. The proposal is otherwise acceptable in terms of the considerations set out in Policies ENV3 and GP2, and consistent with other policies of the Plan.

(d) This policy will apply to the following major developed sites as shown on the Proposals Map:-

- Industrial Premises at Cartbridge Lane, Rushall**
- Industrial / Warehouse Premises at Station Road, Rushall**
- Goscote Hospital, Goscote Lane**

St. Margaret's Hospital, Great Barr Hall Estate (see Policy ENV8).

3.32 The Green Belt includes a few areas of major existing development. These are typically uses which pre-date the introduction of Green Belt policies. Although it may sometimes be desirable, it is normally unrealistic to expect such sites to be redeveloped for uses more appropriate to the Green Belt. The policy therefore seeks to enable appropriate infilling or redevelopment of these sites whilst ensuring that the functions and amenity of the Green Belt are not prejudiced. The major developed sites to which this policy will apply are identified on the Proposals Map.

Policy ENV5: Stabling and Riding of Horses and Ponies

The development of stabling and riding facilities will only normally be permitted where all of the following are satisfied:-

- I. Adequate grazing land is available for each horse / pony to be kept on the site. The appropriate grazing density will be influenced by the characteristics of individual sites, the season in which grazing is taking place and the use to be made of feed brought in, but the Council will not normally expect grazing densities to exceed 1 horse per 0.6 hectares to prevent overgrazing. Each animal must be provided with a stable of suitable size and design.**
- II. Use is made of existing buildings or where new buildings are proposed they accord with the principles in Policy ENV3. The total number of stables permitted will be limited to the number of horses / ponies that the land can support (see (a)).**
- III. The proposal is accompanied by an acceptable landscaping scheme including boundary treatment appropriate to the local area.**
- IV. Proposals must include a designated area within the site boundary for the exercising of horses / ponies. The area must be fenced off and suitably surfaced. There must also be an area within the site boundary for the safe loading / unloading of animals into horseboxes or trailers.**
- V. There would be no material harm to the environment and amenities of the nearby area according to the criteria set out in Policy GP2. Proposals must show how and where feedstuffs and bedding will be stored and how waste from the site will be properly disposed of.**

3.33 The keeping of horses / ponies for recreational purposes has become increasingly common in the urban fringe in recent years. In many cases, this has occurred without obtaining planning permission. Such development can lead to a proliferation of poorly constructed buildings and associated structures to the detriment of the visual quality of the Green Belt. There is also the risk of over-grazing and deterioration of the grassland surface if animals are kept at too high a density. Policy ENV5 will be used to ensure that any such development takes place in an environmentally acceptable way.

Policy ENV6: Protection and Encouragement of Agriculture

- (a) The Council will seek to protect, wherever possible, the best and most versatile agricultural land from loss to inappropriate development or other uses.**
- (b) Development which would substantially erode the viability of a farm holding or impair farm structure will not normally be allowed. Applicants will be expected to submit details of the effect of the proposed development on farm structure and viability.**
- (c) Proposals for the further development of agriculture, including the erection, extension or adaptation of farm buildings necessary for the efficient operation of agriculture, and the provision of agricultural dwellings, will be supported, subject to the considerations identified in Policy ENV3.**
- (d) In judging applications for new dwellings the Council will have regard to any recent sales of farm dwellings which could have met the needs identified in the application. Any permission for agricultural dwellings will be subject to a condition to restrict its occupancy to people employed, or last employed, in agriculture.**
- (e) Proposals for the diversification of the rural economy, particularly for agriculture, forestry and related enterprises, will be supported provided that the character, scale and location of the proposals are compatible with the surroundings and in accordance with the other policies of this Plan.**



Agriculture near Pelsall

3.34 Walsall's countryside includes some 1,700 hectares of farmland which, as well as providing agricultural produce and employment, makes a valuable contribution to the landscape and character of the countryside. According to the Agricultural Census (1997), about 42% of the total area was in arable use and 54% was used as grassland or rough grazing. Most of the farmland is classified as Grade 3.

3.35 Policy ENV6 is concerned with protecting agricultural land from loss to other uses and supporting the continued development of farming including, where necessary, diversification into related activities. Forestry will be particularly encouraged given the aims of the England Forestry Strategy (Forestry Commission, 1998) and the location within the Forest of Mercia and the Black Country Urban Forest. Whilst the need to diversify the rural economy is recognised it will be important to ensure that proposals are compatible with their surroundings and with the other policies of the Plan: Policies GP2 and ENV2 - ENV5 will be particularly relevant in this respect. A policy for farm shops (S14) is included in Chapter 5.

Policy ENV7: Countryside Character





The Countryside Character approach to landscape assessment, conservation and enhancement, promoted by the Countryside Agency, is recognised and supported. These principles will be extended to the local level through the preparation and revision of Countryside Area Profiles, which have the status of Supplementary Planning Guidance and will be taken into account in the consideration of development proposals. Full public consultation will be undertaken in the preparation of new or revised Countryside Area Profiles.

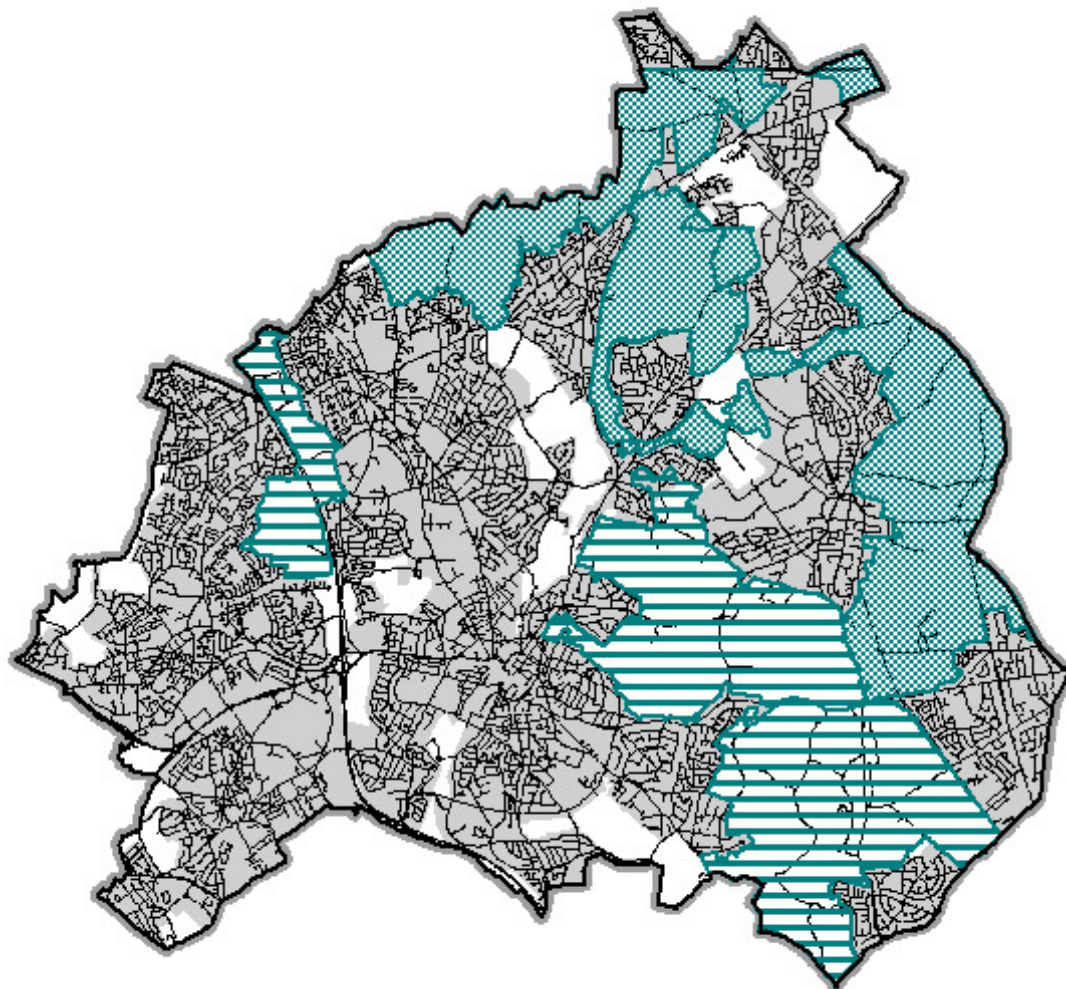
3.36 The Countryside Character approach is based on a comprehensive analysis and understanding of the character of the English landscape. The Countryside Agency, with help from English Nature and English Heritage, has produced a map - "The Character of England: landscape, wildlife and natural features" - which classifies England into 159 distinct Countryside Character areas based upon the natural and cultural dimensions of the landscape. The Midlands Regional volume published in 1999 includes a detailed description of each character area, including broad management opportunities. The whole of the Borough lies within Character Area (67): Cannock Chase and Cank Wood. English Heritage is supporting a programme of Historic Landscape Characterisation across the country to complement the existing work on Countryside Character and Natural Areas.

3.37 The description of the Character Areas is broadly based and sets an overall context. In the case of Walsall, a more detailed application of the same methodology is not considered appropriate because of the fragmented nature of the countryside and the special problems and opportunities that apply in countryside around towns. The Council's approach of preparing Countryside Area Profiles carries this to a more local level of recognising the unique value and character of each area and provides a context for enhancement and management initiatives.

Figure 3.1
Countryside Area Profiles

Key

-  CAP completed
-  CAP proposed
-  Built-up area
-  Roads



Scale: 1:100,000

March 2005

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- 3.38 The aims of Countryside Area Profiles are to:-
- Identify and describe the features that give the area its character.
 - Provide more detailed guidance for the location of appropriate development within the Green Belt.
 - Provide a framework for the enhancement and management of the landscape.
 - Identify opportunities to promote and implement the aims of the Forest of Mercia, the Black Country Urban Forest and the Biodiversity Action Plan.
 - Help co-ordinate the provision of countryside, leisure and recreational activities in each area.

3.39 Profiles will take into account agricultural land interests, and will be prepared with the full involvement of land owners and the wider community. The profiles for Rough Wood Chase, Longwood Gap and Barr Beacon have already been published. Figure 3.1 shows the areas covered by the existing Countryside Area Profiles and the areas to be covered by profiles in the future.



The Green Belt east of Walsall; covered by Barr Beacon Countryside Area Profile

Policy ENV8: Great Barr Hall and Estate and St. Margaret's Hospital

- (a) The area of Great Barr Hall and Estate and St. Margaret's Hospital is shown on the Proposals Map.
- (b) In considering proposals within this area, the Council will particularly take into account:-
 - I. The contribution the proposal makes to the aim of achieving a comprehensive approach to the restoration of Great Barr Hall and the historic landscape, and the re-use and/or redevelopment of the former St. Margaret's Hospital.
 - II. Green Belt policies.
 - III. Government guidelines for the protection of agricultural land, the setting of listed buildings, nature conservation, development in Conservation Areas, and the future use of major developed sites in the Green Belt.
- (c) The Council will encourage the re-use of those buildings of special architectural or historic interest in accordance with Policy ENV4 and other Policies of the Plan.
- (d) New built development other than that which is normally appropriate in the Green Belt will be limited to the replacement of footprint of existing buildings. Such development will be restricted to locations considered to be environmentally acceptable which have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt, and to a footprint and height not exceeding that of the buildings to be replaced. Every opportunity should be taken to locate and design such footprint replacement development so that it has less environmental impact than the buildings it replaces.
- (e) All proposals must provide for:-
 - I. The preservation, enhancement and improvement of the character of buildings of architectural or historic interest.
 - II. The preservation, enhancement and management of the historic landscape, other historic features, the Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and other areas of nature conservation value.
 - III. The preservation and enhancement of the character of the Great Barr Conservation Area.
 - IV. The removal of those features which detract from the character of the Estate.
 - V. Functionally and environmentally satisfactory arrangements for vehicular access from Queslett Road; the Council will require the developer to meet the costs of necessary off-site highway improvements. Any access from Chapel Lane should be minimised for environmental and traffic management reasons.
 - VI. An indication as to how they will contribute and relate to the aim of achieving a comprehensive approach towards the future use and management of the Estate.

- VII. Public transport access to the site which complies with the standards in Policy T12.**
- (f) Developers must demonstrate how schemes will provide for controlled public access to the Estate without detriment to the nature conservation interest, landscape quality and amenity of the site.**
- (g) The Council will ensure that the issues relating to the future of this Estate are considered in a comprehensive and long term manner. To this end, a phasing and implementation plan will be prepared by the Council, developers and all interested parties. Any proposals for enabling development to secure the restoration of Great Barr Hall and Estate including provision for future maintenance and management will be assessed against the guidance in the English Heritage Statement “Enabling Development and the Conservation of Heritage Assets”.**

3.40 Great Barr Hall and Estate comprises a Grade II* listed building and its curtilage, a Grade II Park of Special Historic Interest, 2 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, 3 Areas of Ancient Woodland, a Monument of Regional Importance, and part of the Great Barr Conservation Area. The whole area is also in the Green Belt. The Council’s objective for the Estate is to safeguard its special character and secure its enhancement, in as comprehensive manner as possible, through careful control of development and change of use. The Council recognises the need for major investment in the Hall and Estate and the introduction of new viable uses which are compatible with its character, and the need to consider the re-use of the former St. Margaret’s Hospital.

3.41 The Estate is currently owned in part by the NHS Executive and in part by Receivers, but almost all the land is now surplus to requirements and is available for sale. The above policy is designed to provide a context for proposals for the conservation of the landscape, habitats and Great Barr Hall. The policy particularly takes into account Government guidelines in PPG2 for the re-use of major developed sites in the Green Belt (which will apply to the St. Margaret’s Hospital “footprint” area - see also Policy ENV4), and the restrictions which are placed on the future use of the Estate by difficulties of vehicular access.

3.42 It is now envisaged that the likely development package for the re-use of the site will involve an amount of residential development, focusing on the former St. Margaret’s Hospital. Planning permission for this has been granted on appeal.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT

3.43 The strategic policy statement has emphasised the importance of environmental improvement schemes and the control of pollution. The policies in this section provide more detailed guidance on each of these aspects.

Policy ENV9: Environmental Improvement Initiatives

- (a) **Environmental improvement initiatives will be concentrated in the following general locations:-**
- I. **Town, district and local centres.**
 - II. **Prominent transport routes which create an important impression on travellers to the Borough.**
 - III. **Existing employment areas which fail to meet the expectations of modern industry (see paragraph 4.1 in Chapter 4).**
 - IV. **Housing areas with a poor quality environment.**
 - V. **Areas with a concentration of derelict land and poor quality buildings.**
 - VI. **Future development sites requiring advance landscaping.**
 - VII. **Areas where mixed land uses create environmental problems.**
 - VIII. **Where they will complement other initiatives.**
- (b) **The Council will work with local communities and/or partner agencies to identify environmental improvement schemes, taking account of the principles in part (a) of this policy.**

3.44 Although the Borough has an increasingly good quality environment there are still many areas that need attention. The Council and its partners, therefore, have an active programme for the promotion of environmental improvement initiatives drawing upon a wide variety of funding regimes. In recent years, the identification of local improvement schemes has become much more community-led. This approach will continue in the future although it is considered important that there is also a strategic overview of priorities. The guidelines included in section (a) of the policy are intended to provide this.



Environmental improvement in Pelsall

Policy ENV10: Pollution

- (a) The development of an industry or facility which may cause pollution will only be permitted if it would not:-**
- I. Release pollutants into water, soil or air, whether on site or elsewhere, which would cause unacceptable harm to health and safety or the natural environment.**
 - II. Cause unacceptable adverse effect in terms of smoke, fumes, gases, dust, steam, heat, light, vibration, smell, noise or other polluting emissions.**
 - III. Have an unacceptable adverse effect on nearby land uses and/or restrict the types of new development that could be permitted in the locality, or impose special conditions on them.**
- (b) Development will not be permitted if the health, safety or amenity of its occupants or users would be unacceptably affected by pollution caused by installations or activities that are a source of any form of pollution as identified in part (a) of the policy.**

3.45 Government guidance in PPS23: Planning and Pollution Control deals with the relationship between the planning and pollution control systems and is concerned to ensure that there is no unnecessary operational overlap between the two systems. It identifies a role for the planning system in ensuring that land uses and development are not affected by major existing or potential sources of pollution.

3.46 Following upon the requirements of the Environment Act 1995, the Government has produced the Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (2000), the Air Quality Regulations (2000) and a series of Local Air Quality Management Guidance Notes. Under these provisions, local authorities are required to undertake a review and assessment of air quality within their areas and if necessary declare Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) with associated action plans to secure improvements. This process will improve understanding of local air quality and enable authorities to integrate air quality considerations into their decision making processes, including land-use planning and traffic management. The Council as planning authority will take account of national guidance on air quality and any action plans that are produced for Air Quality Management Areas.

3.47 Noise has grown in importance as an environmental issue to such an extent that a whole PPG (PPG24) is now devoted to it. PPG24 states that plans should contain policies to ensure that, as far as practicable, noise-sensitive developments are located away from existing or planned sources of significant noise; and that potentially noisy developments are located in areas where noise will not be such an important consideration or where its impact can be minimised.

3.48 Policy ENV10 will ensure that susceptible uses will be protected from the effects of pollution, and that uses which may give rise to pollution are properly controlled. These principles have also been followed in the allocation of land in the UDP. Any land allocated for purposes such as general industry, which might attract potentially polluting uses, has been located where the risk to other land uses is minimised. Equally, any land allocated for sensitive uses such as housing is, as far as possible, in places away

from existing or planned potentially polluting uses. Chapter 7: Transport includes policies which aim to reduce pollution caused by traffic by encouraging a shift to other modes of transport.

Policy ENV11: Light Pollution

Applications for development which involve significant external lighting will not be permitted unless they propose the minimum amount of lighting necessary to achieve its purpose and minimise glare and light spillage from the site. Consideration must be given to the effect of the lighting on neighbouring land and premises, vehicle users, pedestrians and wildlife.

3.49 Although not traditionally included amongst sources of pollution there is now increasing recognition of the problems caused by excessive or insensitive lighting schemes. The policy seeks to reduce lighting to the minimum necessary and avoid, as far as possible, glare and light spillage. Reducing the amount and intensity of lighting can help to save energy (see also Policy ENV39). Care must be taken, however, to ensure that lighting is still sufficient to ensure public safety (e.g. on the highway and as a deterrent to crime (see also Policy GP7 in Chapter 2).

Policy ENV12: Hazardous Installations

- (a) **Development involving the storage, use or transport of hazardous substances, as defined in the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990, will only be permitted if it would cause no extra risk to the public or to the natural environment and would not prejudice the use or development of other land.**
- (b) **Permission will not be granted for development in the vicinity of a site known to be used for the storage, use or transport of hazardous substances if there would be an unacceptable risk to the life or health of its users. To inform its assessment of the risk involved, the Council will seek the advice of the Health and Safety Executive.**

3.50 Certain sites and pipelines are designated as dangerous substance establishments by virtue of the quantities of hazardous substance present. The siting of such installations will be subject to planning controls, for example under the Planning (Control of Major Accident Hazards) Regulations, 1999, with the objective, in the long term, to maintain appropriate distances between establishments and residential areas and areas of public use. In accordance with ODPM Circular 04/00: Planning controls for hazardous substances, the Council will consult the Health and Safety Executive, as appropriate, about the siting of any proposed dangerous substance establishments.

3.51 The area covered by this Plan already contains a number of dangerous substances establishments and major accident hazard pipelines. Whilst they are subject to stringent controls under existing health and safety legislation, it is considered prudent to control the kinds of development permitted in the vicinity of these installations. For this reason the Council has been advised by the Health and Safety

Executive of consultation distances for each of these installations. In determining whether or not to grant planning permission for a proposed development within these consultation distances the Council will consult the Health and Safety Executive about risks to the proposed development from the dangerous substance establishment in accordance with ODPM Circular 04/00.

Policy ENV13: Development Near Power Lines, Substations and Transformers

- (a) In order to protect the general amenity of occupiers and users, development for uses other than industry and warehousing will not normally be permitted in close proximity to high voltage electricity transmission lines, substations or transformers.**
- (b) The Council will also apply the appropriate operational safe clearances as published by the electricity supply industry when considering applications near overhead electricity supply lines.**

3.52 The Council considers that there are strong amenity grounds for avoiding development in close proximity to power lines and substations. Pylons and overhead cables have a significant adverse impact on visual amenity and substations can also be unsightly and/or a source of noise nuisance. It will normally be appropriate to seek a zone of separation of at least 50 metres, but this may vary with local circumstances. This policy does not apply to telecommunications equipment, guidance on the development of which is given in Policy ENV38.

3.53 Although the justification for Policy ENV13 is general amenity (and not specifically health) it should be noted that the possible health hazards of exposure to low frequency electromagnetic fields associated with high voltage electricity transmission lines has attracted considerable attention in recent years. In late 1998, the Government published a Draft Circular on “Land-Use Planning and Electromagnetic Fields”. This took the view that there is “lack of convincing evidence of a causal link between exposure to EMFs and cancer” and discouraged the inclusion policies in development plans for any “cordon sanitaire”, on health grounds, around electricity supply or telecommunications equipment. Whilst Policy ENV13 is based upon general amenity rather than health grounds, it will have the by-product of ‘prudent avoidance’ against the possibility that convincing evidence of health effects might be forthcoming in the future.

DERELICT LAND AND PREVIOUSLY-DEVELOPED SITES

3.54 The Strategic Policy Statement emphasises the importance of reclamation of derelict and other previously-developed sites as part of the strategy for recycling land in the urban area. Many of the sites allocated in the plan for development are affected by physical constraints and will require some form of reclamation or remedial action. The Council and its partners will be actively promoting the reclamation of these and other sites making use of a variety of funding regimes. A notable recent example of successful re-use of previously-developed land has been the reclamation of the former Reedswood power station and adjoining land for a major mixed use scheme.

Policy ENV14: Development of Derelict and Previously-Developed Sites

- (a) The Council will encourage the reclamation and development of derelict and previously developed land wherever this is technically feasible and in accordance with other policies of the Plan.**
- (b) Planning proposals involving or adjoining derelict or previously-developed land must be accompanied by information on all known previous uses of the site and adjoining land (unless this information has been submitted as part of a previous application).**
- (c) Where either the site or adjoining land is found to have been occupied or underlain by uses or activities which may have:
 - I. contaminated the site;**
 - II. affected the stability of the site; or**
 - III. led to the generation of landfill gas;****the application must also be accompanied by a site investigation report which identifies the hazards actually present on the site, assesses the level of risk for the proposed development and sets out a strategy and timescale for dealing with them as part of the proposed development.****
- (d) Site investigations should also consider any nature conservation value or historic interest of the site and the implications for this of the proposed development (see also Policy ENV23).**

3.55 Within Walsall, sites often have a long history of development and the pattern of land uses has historically been very mixed. While the redevelopment of previously developed land offers opportunities to develop sites for purposes which better reflect the prevailing character of an area, the legacy of previous uses needs to be suitably addressed as part of new development.

3.56 This policy will help to ensure that decisions on planning applications are taken in full knowledge of previous uses and that development proposals take account of identifiable hazards. Where potentially problematic previous uses are identified, intrusive site investigations and a reclamation strategy will then be required.

FORESTRY AND TREES

3.57 Urban Forestry is concerned with the planting and management of all trees and woodlands within the Borough. This includes street and garden trees, parks and open spaces, woods, copses, scrub and hedgerows. Urban Forestry brings a wide range of visual, recreational, economic, ecological and environmental benefits and is a central element in achieving environmental sustainability. Multi-purpose woodlands can achieve these wider objectives in addition to a long-term timber yield. The England Forestry Strategy (Forestry Commission 1998) sets out the Government's priorities and makes particular reference to the importance of Urban Forestry and Community Forests.

3.58 The Council is a partner in the Forest of Mercia and Black Country Urban Forest initiatives. Both initiatives have a central role in the achievement of the Council's forestry and wider environmental objectives.

Policy ENV15: Forest of Mercia

The creation and management of the Forest of Mercia within the boundaries shown on the Proposals Map is supported. Its development as a community forest providing a wide range of access, outdoor leisure and recreation, biodiversity, timber production and land management benefits will be promoted.

3.59 The Forest of Mercia is one of 12 Community Forests being established around major urban areas throughout the country. The initiative is a Partnership supported by the Countryside Agency, the Forestry Commission, Staffordshire County Council, Cannock Chase District Council, Lichfield District Council and South Staffordshire District Council. The Forest area includes the northern and eastern parts of the Borough, and extends eastwards towards Lichfield, north to Cannock Chase and westwards to the A449 and Codsall.

3.60 The Forest Plan was first published in 1993, and subsequently endorsed by the partners, and is kept under review. The Plan sets out a vision for the Forest and includes an implementation strategy based on the concept of a multi-purpose forest which is a network of woodlands, farmlands, heathland and linear features such as hedgerows. Benefits of the initiative include promoting access to the countryside, providing opportunities for appropriate types of outdoor recreation and leisure, achieving biodiversity aims, providing a source of local timber, and promoting the sensitive management of agricultural land through schemes such as countryside stewardship.

Policy ENV16: Black Country Urban Forest

The Black Country Urban Forest includes all trees and woodlands within the Boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. The creation and management of the Black Country Urban Forest is supported and its development as an urban forest providing a wide range of access, outdoor leisure and recreation, biodiversity, timber production and land management benefits will be promoted.

3.61 The Black Country Urban Forest covers the four metropolitan boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Urban Forestry has been promoted in the Black Country since the mid-1980's and since 1995 the initiative has been managed through the Black Country Environmental Partnership, which consists of the four boroughs and four environmental charities. The award of a substantial grant from the Millennium Commission in 1995 led to the establishment of a Millennium Programme over the period 1995-2001. This has helped enormously in increasing the rate of planting and improving the management of existing woodlands.

3.62 The "Black Country Urban Forest: A Strategy for Its Development" was published in 1995 and has been adopted as the Council's Forestry Strategy. It sets out broad principles and suggests priority areas for new planting. The objectives of the Strategy are endorsed and the Council will participate in initiatives that contribute to its implementation. Key benefits include promoting access to the countryside, providing opportunities for appropriate types of outdoor recreation and leisure, achieving biodiversity aims, providing a source of local timber, and promoting the sensitive management of agricultural land through schemes such as countryside stewardship.

Policy ENV17: New Planting

The planting of new trees, woodlands and hedgerows will be continued to achieve the establishment of the Forest of Mercia and the Black Country Urban Forest provided there is no adverse impact on wildlife, archaeology, amenity, sporting or other recreational interest and it is compatible with the other policies of this Plan. Planting will be promoted particularly in the following areas:-

- I. Parks and schools, subject to there being no adverse impact on the use of any playing field or sporting facility.**
- II. Streets and gardens.**
- III. Town and district centres.**
- IV. Transport corridors.**
- V. Derelict and unused land.**
- VI. Vacant land awaiting development, as advance planting or as an interim use.**
- VII. Employment areas.**
- VIII. Agricultural land within the Forest of Mercia.**
- IX. Adjacent to existing woodland, wherever possible, to increase its nature conservation value.**
- X. Minerals and waste management sites as a condition of planning permission.**
- XI. As part of landscape design around new developments or redevelopment schemes, as a condition of the planning permission.**

3.63 The achievements since 1990 have been considerable, and urban forestry has made a significant contribution to the greening and regeneration of the Borough. The

Council has a long-term commitment to the Black Country Urban Forest and the Forest of Mercia, and will continue to promote new planting as a component of other broader environmental initiatives. The identification and implementation of schemes will involve local communities to the fullest extent.

Policy ENV18: Existing Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows

- (a) **The Council will ensure the protection, positive management and enhancement of existing woodlands, trees and hedgerows. Development will not be permitted if it would damage or destroy trees or woodlands protected by Tree Preservation Order, in a Conservation Area or identified as Ancient Woodland, or hedgerows of significant landscape, ecological or historical value unless:-**
- I. **the removal of the trees or hedgerows would be in the interests of good arboricultural practice and there would be no unacceptable adverse impact on wildlife; or**
 - II. **the desirability of the proposed development significantly outweighs the ecological or amenity value of the woodland, trees or hedgerows.**
- (b) **Where developments are permitted which involve the loss of trees or hedgerows developers will be required to minimise the loss and to provide appropriate planting of commensurate value; wherever possible, this should involve native species of local provenance.**

3.64 Woodlands, trees and hedgerows are an important visual, ecological and historical resource, which should be retained and protected wherever possible. The existing woodlands, trees and hedgerows form the backbone of the Forest of Mercia and the Black Country Urban Forest, and their proper management is a central objective of both initiatives. The use of grant regimes, and the involvement of special environmental agencies to provide advice and assistance will be promoted. The public use and enjoyment of woodlands and the associated open space will be encouraged and public involvement in planning and implementing management and improvement works supported.

3.65 Tree Preservation Orders provide a means of protecting trees and woodlands, and the 'Hedgerow Regulations 1997' offer scope to protect hedgerows meeting certain criteria. However, all hedgerows are important landscape components and many have significant visual, historical or ecological value. All reasonable steps will be taken to minimise hedgerow loss, and encourage proper hedgerow management.

3.66 It is important that if trees or hedgerows are lost in the course of development, they are adequately replaced by well-designed planting of at least equivalent value.

INDICATORS

The planting of trees will be a monitoring indicator. Progress will be assessed in relation to relevant targets in the forest plans and strategies referred to in this section.

Progress towards the achievement of the targets in the Biodiversity Action Plan will be a monitoring indicator for the UDP.

NATURE CONSERVATION

3.67 Nature conservation is concerned with the protection, management and enhancement of the natural environment. It is concerned not only with plants, animals and the habitats where they live but also with geological and other natural landscape features.

3.68 Conserving wildlife is essential. Contact with wildlife has aesthetic, spiritual and emotional benefits and ensuring that people have local opportunities to experience wildlife is an important strand of the Council's nature conservation policy. Places which are good for wildlife are often visually attractive and create a perception that the Borough is a good area in which to live and invest. There are also moral, educational and scientific arguments for conserving wildlife.

3.69 Some elements of Walsall's natural environment are important regionally, nationally and even internationally and the Council will use the powers available to protect and conserve these species, habitats and geological features. Preventing the physical destruction of species, habitats and geological features is not enough to maintain the diversity of the Borough's natural environment. Sites must also be maintained and managed appropriately. The Council will encourage appropriate management and stewardship of the natural environment.

3.70 Wildlife cannot be protected if no-one knows of its existence. Therefore the Council will continue to collect data, and encourage others to do the same in order to keep itself informed of the state of the Borough's natural environment. The Council will also continue to support EcoRecord, the Biological Records Centre for the Black Country and Birmingham as the database for wildlife records for the Borough.

3.71 Wildlife does not respect administrative boundaries and therefore the Council will continue to work with neighbouring authorities, the Wildlife Trust and English Nature to co-ordinate conservation effort in the Black Country and Birmingham and more widely. The Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan (2000) and the Black Country Nature Conservation Strategy (1992) provide wider strategic guidance on nature conservation. The Council will seek to achieve the species and habitats targets within the Biodiversity Action Plan.

Policy ENV19: Habitat and Species Protection:

ENV1

- (a) Development which might directly or indirectly destroy, damage or adversely affect a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) will not be permitted.**
- (b) Development which might directly or indirectly destroy, damage or adversely affect a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) or Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons of overriding regional significance which outweigh its level of nature conservation importance. If development is permitted on a LNR or SINC, compensatory provision of equivalent value will be required for areas destroyed or damaged.**

3.72 There are seven SSSIs within the Borough, covering 70 ha or 0.7% of the total land area. Five are notified for their wildlife and two for geological features. These sites are shown on the Proposals Map and additional sites may be notified by English Nature. These sites are nationally important and the Midlands Plateau Natural Area⁹ has considerably fewer SSSIs than the British average and therefore those designated should have a strong degree of protection. One of the SSSIs, the Cannock Extension Canal, is also a Special Area for Conservation (SAC) because it is an important site for floating water plantain, an endangered aquatic plant.

3.73 There are currently seven LNRs within the Borough, as shown for information on the Proposals Map. These sites, covering a total of 135 hectares, are places where people can enjoy contact with wildlife and have considerable recreational and educational value.

3.74 There are thirty two SINCs within the Borough covering 407 ha or 3.9% of the total land area. Twenty nine are notified for their wildlife and three for geological features. These sites are shown on the Proposals Map and additional sites may be identified in the future. These sites are regionally important.

INDICATOR

The degree to which sites of nature conservation importance are protected from destruction or damage will be a monitoring indicator. The target will be 100% protection.

Proposal ENV20: Local Nature Reserves

ENV1. Most of the sites listed in the UDP have now been declared LNRs

(a) The Council will seek to declare Local Nature Reserves in the following locations as indicated by symbols on the Proposals Map:-

- **Clayhanger, Brownhills**
- **Swan Pool and the Swag, Stubbers Green, Aldridge**
- **Lady Pool, Rushall**
- **Brownhills Common and the Slough, Brownhills**
- **Cuckoo's Nook and the Dingle, Aldridge**
- **Holland Park, Brownhills**
- **Arboretum Extension, Walsall**
- **St Margaret's Hospital/ Great Barr Hall Estate, Aldridge**
- **Merrions Wood, Walsall.**

(b) Where appropriate, opportunities will be taken to extend existing Local Nature Reserves.

⁹ English Nature has divided England into 120 'Natural Areas' each of which share the same characteristic wildlife and natural features. Natural Areas will provide a framework for nature conservation and are not designations. Walsall falls within the Midland Plateau Natural Area which includes the whole of the West Midlands County and parts of all the surrounding counties.

3.75 The designation of these additional Local Nature Reserves will make a valuable contribution to the protection and management of a number of important wildlife sites. English Nature targets indicate a need for 1 hectare of Local Nature Reserve provision for every 1,000 residents. Taking into account the new reserves included in Proposal ENV20, provision in the Borough will exceed this standard.

3.76 Local Nature Reserves are declared by the Council in consultation with English Nature (the government agency responsible for nature conservation) under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Local Nature Reserves can be declared on privately owned land with the agreement of the land owner. The Council recognises the importance of these reserves which are managed for wildlife and provide places where people can experience and learn about nature conservation.

Policy ENV21: Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation

ENV1

Development which would destroy, damage or adversely affect a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC) will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal which outweigh its level of nature conservation value. If development is permitted on a SLINC, compensatory provision of equivalent value will be required for any areas destroyed or damaged.

3.77 The total area of first tier (SSSIs) and second tier sites (SINCs) is about 477 ha or 4.6% of the Borough's land area. Wildlife cannot be conserved, and public access to the local natural environment provided, by these sites alone. There is a need to protect a third tier of sites.

3.78 There are about 80 SLINCs within the Borough covering 324 ha or 3.1% of the total land area. These sites are shown in a separate schedule and additional sites may be identified in the future.

Policy ENV22: Protected Species

Development on sites used by species protected by European law and/or British legislation, or a species which is the subject of a national Biodiversity Action Plan, will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the proposed development will not have an adverse impact on local populations of the species.

3.79 The Borough contains several species protected by European legislation and/or listed within Schedules 1, 5 or 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as well as badgers which are covered by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Protected species (for example, bats and great crested newts) often occur outside designated wildlife sites and there is a need to provide additional protection beyond site protection policies.

This policy has not been "saved" under paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the 2004 Act but is listed here for completeness. Elements of this policy are incorporated in JCS Policy ENV1

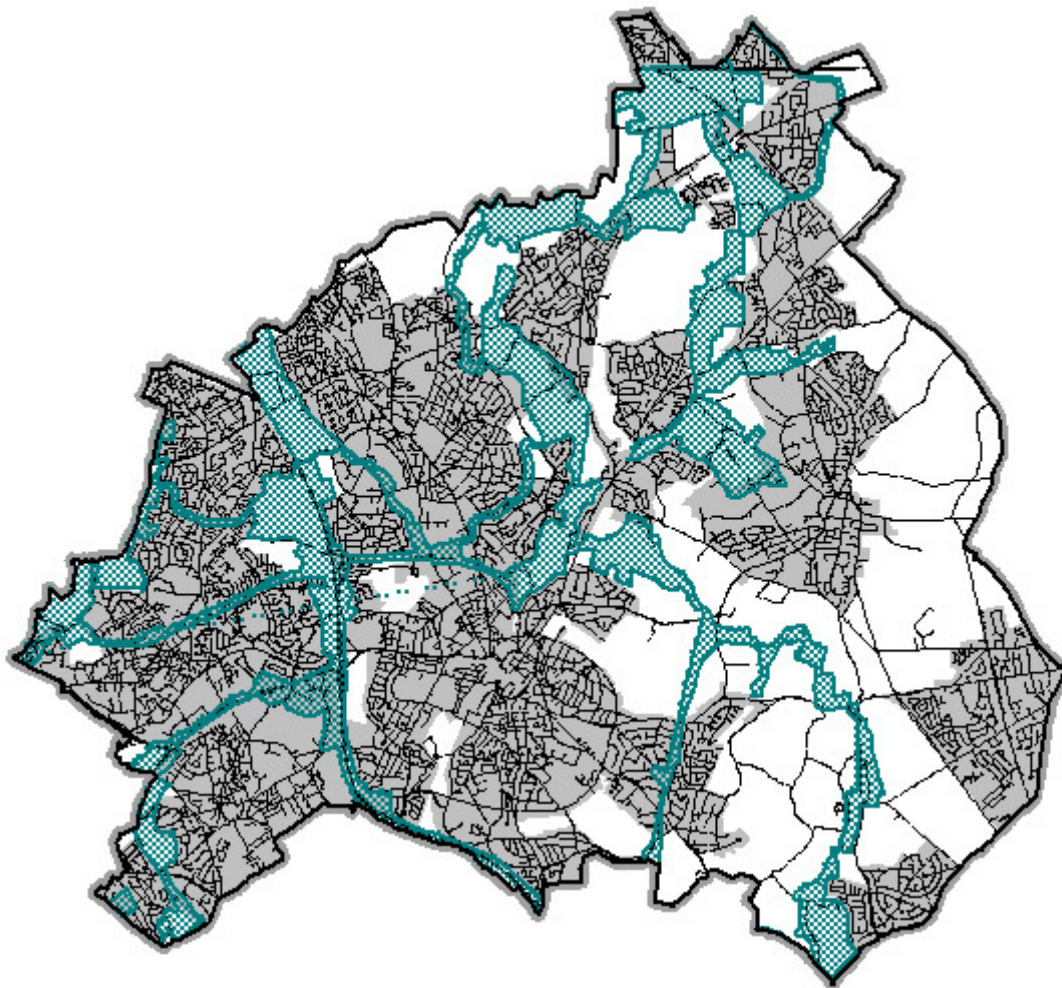
Policy ENV23: Nature Conservation and New Development

- (a) The layout of all new development must take account of:-
- I. The potential for enhancement of the natural environment through habitat creation or the exposure of geological formations.
 - II. The nature conservation opportunities provided by buildings by designing in features which provide roosting / nesting places for bats / birds and other species.
- (b) The Council will require the layout of all new development to take full account of existing features of value for wildlife or geology. Where loss or damage of existing features is unavoidable, the Council will require mitigation measures to which adequately compensate for the features lost. The nature and extent of mitigation works required shall be appropriate to the size and quality of the feature lost or damaged. This part of this policy will apply to sites which meet any of the following criteria:
- I. Within a wildlife corridor.
 - II. Containing a species or habitat for which a national or local Biodiversity Action Plan has been prepared.
 - III. Within a site where wildlife is accessible to the local community, especially in heavily built-up parts of the Borough.
 - IV. Used by species protected by European law and/or British legislation.
 - V. Containing mature or semi-mature trees.
 - VI. Containing linear features such as: rivers, streams, canals, field boundaries, tree belts, green lanes, and road verges or 'stepping stone' features such as lakes, reservoirs, ponds and small woodlands.
- (c) The Council will require habitat creation, enhancement and the implementation of other appropriate measures to encourage the conservation of wildlife. This part of this policy will be applied to all development proposals:-
- I. In proximity to a SSSI, LNR, SINC or SLINC.
 - II. In proximity to or within sites where wildlife is accessible to the local community, especially in heavily built-up parts of the Borough.
 - III. In proximity to or within a wildlife corridor.
 - IV. In proximity to a site containing a species or habitat for which a national or local Biodiversity Action Plan has been prepared.
 - V. In proximity to a site used by species protected by European law and/or British legislation.
- (d) It is the intention of the Council to adopt a supplementary planning document to provide more detailed advice on the implementation of this policy.

Figure 3.2
Wildlife Corridors

Key

-  Wildlife Corridors
-  Built-up area
-  Roads



Scale: 1:100,000

March 2005

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3.80 There are many features of value to wildlife which do not meet the criteria for designation as first, second, or third tier sites but which are required to maintain the populations and diversity of the Borough's wildlife. All development should therefore be required to retain wildlife features where possible. Many important features for wildlife take several years to develop and cannot be quickly recreated and for this reason they must not be lost unnecessarily. Where retention is not practical, compensatory habitat features must be provided.

3.81 Despite the protection policies contained within the 1995 Plan, protected sites have been lost or have deteriorated since that Plan was adopted. Relying on protection policies alone is likely to result in the gradual erosion of the Borough's wildlife resource. Creating new habitats and other features is therefore essential even to maintain the current level of wildlife resources.

Policy ENV24: Wildlife Corridors

- (a) **New development which would sever, or unacceptably harm the integrity of a wildlife corridor will not be permitted. The Council will expect development proposals within wildlife corridors to maintain the integrity of the wildlife corridor concerned and enhance its value for wildlife.**
- (b) **New development which would sever, or unacceptably harm the integrity of linear features such as rivers, streams, canals, field boundaries, tree belts, green lanes, and road verges or 'stepping stone' features such as lakes, reservoirs, ponds and small woodlands will not normally be permitted.**

3.82 Wildlife corridors are shown in Figure 3.2 and form part of a co-ordinated network which extends over the Black Country and Birmingham and beyond. Other smaller scale features such as those described in Policy ENV24(b) are also essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. The importance of wildlife corridors, which provide a network of inter-linked sites is widely accepted. Corridors need not be continuous and 'stepping stone' features can also facilitate the migration and dispersal of wild species. The populations of many species decline as sites are reduced in size or fragmented by development. Within the corridors shown in Figure 3.2 and the other features described in the policy, the Council will encourage protection, management and enhancement of the natural resource. The Council will expect any development within or adjoining the corridors to make full use of the opportunities for habitat protection, management and creation. Development which harms the integrity of a corridor will therefore not normally be allowed.

BUILDING CONSERVATION AND ARCHAEOLOGY

3.83 Historic buildings and other man-made features surviving above and below ground level are a non-renewable resource. If they are damaged or destroyed, the unique information that they contain about the past is permanently lost, to the disbenefit of this and future generations. Such buildings and sites are also often largely

responsible for the unique identity of each community. A well-cared-for and properly interpreted historic environment is a major asset in improving quality of life and economic well-being.

3.84 Conservation of the man-made heritage can also make an important contribution towards sustainable development objectives. Traditional buildings and sites represent an historical investment in materials (e.g. bricks, stonework, tiles, slates, joinery and ironwork) and the energy needed to produce these. This past investment should not be needlessly squandered.

3.85 The Borough's archaeological heritage is rich and diverse. It includes 4 Scheduled Monuments, 35 areas identified as being archaeologically sensitive, and a large number of entries in the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), including other sites and monuments of value and significance. The Borough's industrial archaeology is particularly extensive and important.

3.86 The Borough has 131 entries in the Statutory List of Buildings of Architectural and Historic Interest and also a number of other properties meeting the criterion of 'special architectural or historic interest'. It also has 17 Conservation Areas and many buildings formally recognised as being of "Local Architectural or Historic Interest", and further buildings of this status may be identified through ongoing review work. Such "Local List" buildings make a positive contribution to the character of townscape and landscape and, in many cases, act as local landmarks. The Borough has three entries in the 'Register of Parks & Gardens of special historic interest', both of which are Grade II.

3.87 The Council has a wide range of powers under the Planning Acts, in particular the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. This gives the Council the ability to assist owners, occupiers and managers of the built heritage with advice on technical matters and grant aid. There are also powers which enable the Council to intervene in situations where there is the threat of permanent damage or loss. Comprehensive Government advice currently appears in Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15) and Archaeology & Planning (PPG16). The Council's policies take this advice into account.

Policy ENV25: Archaeology

- (a) The Council will maintain and enhance a database of all known archaeological sites and monuments within the Borough, as part of the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).**
- (b) Proposals for development which affect archaeological sites will normally need to be accompanied by an evaluation of the archaeological resource. An evaluation will normally comprise a desk-based assessment and fieldwork. The scope of the work will be set out in a brief prepared on behalf of the Council. It should be carried out by a suitably qualified archaeologist or professional organisation.**
- (c) Development adversely affecting monuments of national importance, whether scheduled or not, or their setting, will not normally be permitted.**

- (d) Where a site is of less than national importance and the benefits of the development outweigh the need for protection of the archaeological site, development will not be allowed to proceed until it has been demonstrated that the archaeological remains will be preserved in situ or by record. Preservation by record may comprise fieldwork before or during development and will include the publication of a report upon the work. A combination of preservation and recording may be required as part of a mitigation strategy.**
- (e) The Council will promote the conservation, protection and enhancement of the archaeological heritage of Walsall and, where appropriate, its interpretation and presentation to the public.**

3.88 There are, at present, 1198 entries for Walsall Borough on the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record. Many more archaeological sites are likely to exist either buried below the ground or as surface features unrecognised due to lack of documentary research and fieldwork.

3.89 The prerequisite for protection of such sites is that all available evidence is collected and stored on a single database. This has been achieved for Walsall as part of the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record. This record, however, needs constant maintenance and updating as more information is discovered about existing sites, new sites are found, or technological advances for storage and display of information are made. In addition, the record is the principal means of checking for archaeological sites in proposed development and for recording management data.

3.90 PPG16 recommends that, where there is a good reason to believe an archaeological site may be affected by a development, it is reasonable to require an archaeological evaluation of the site and of the impact of the development proposals upon it. The scope of the evaluation should normally be set out in a brief prepared by the Council's archaeologist.

3.91 PPG16 makes it clear that archaeological sites are a material consideration in the planning process and that there should be a presumption against development which would adversely affect monuments of national importance, or their setting. Monuments of regional or local significance should be preserved wherever possible unless there is an overriding benefit of another kind in the development taking place. In this case, archaeological sites should either be preserved within the development area or, where this is not possible, recorded ahead of destruction. Again, the scope of the work should be defined in a brief written by the Council

3.92 In certain circumstances, it will be appropriate for the Council to assist in the management and protection of archaeological sites in order to ensure their preservation for this and future generations and, where appropriate, their use as an educational, leisure and tourist resource.

Policy ENV26: Industrial Archaeology

- (a) The Council will define areas, buildings, structures and sites of industrial archaeology interest. In considering proposals for development, the Council will have regard to the industrial and/or historical importance of the site or building.**
- (b) There will be a presumption against the granting of planning permission for development schemes which involve the demolition or damaging of significant buildings or sites relating to the Borough's traditional industries. Restoration and appropriate adaptation will be encouraged. Where development proposals affect buildings or sites of industrial archaeology interest that do not merit retention, the Council will make positive recommendations for the recording and preservation of artefacts and features.**
- (c) The Council will seek to protect and improve the Borough's canal heritage, including canalside buildings and structures or sites associated with the history of the canal. New development adjacent to canals should:-**
 - I. Where applicable, retain and incorporate surviving canalside buildings, structures and features of heritage value.**
 - II. Take full account of the opportunities created by this setting, in terms of design, layout, landscape detail and boundary.**

3.94 The extensive range of industrial archaeology within the Borough includes many survivals from industries of international and national importance. Examples of the Borough's industrial heritage are:-

- Mining and quarrying of coal, limestone, iron ore, dolerite and brickmaking clays and related industries based on these minerals.
- Part of the Birmingham Canal Navigations waterway system.
- Sections of the Grand Junction Railway (1837), the South Staffordshire Railway (1847-49) and numerous other rail routes.
- Lorinery manufacture (iron and brassware for harness and saddlery).
- Leather tanning and currying, together with saddlery, harness, bridle-cutting, horse-collar manufacture, hame-making and whip-making.
- Nuts and bolts (Darlaston), door locks (Willenhall) and awls (Bloxwich).
- Malting and brewing.

3.95 It must be recognised that the buildings, sites and artefacts associated with the Borough's industrial archaeology are of local and often wider historical significance, yet much of this heritage is unprotected by current statutory designations. Only part of such archaeology is below ground; the vast majority is found in existing buildings, plant and machinery, which may still be in use.

3.96 The Borough's canal network is considered an asset for many reasons, not least because of its enormous historic and heritage value. Several canal structures are

listed buildings. These are intermingled with other structures which are not listed but which provide an essential part of the canal's character. Canalside development should take account of the principles set out in the landscape and design policies ENV32 and ENV33 and also Policy LC9 for Canals in Chapter 8.

Policy ENV27: Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest

- (a) **Alteration, extension or any other form of development involving a listed building or its setting will only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated by the applicant that the internal and/or external appearance, character and value of the building, its curtilage and the contribution the building makes to the surrounding area in which it is situated are not adversely affected by the proposals. This would include the permanent removal of any part or feature that contributes to its special architectural or historic interest, whether or not specifically mentioned in its listing description. The submission of full details of any changes that materially affect the special architectural or historic interest of a listed building and/or its curtilage will be required as part of any Listed Building Consent (LBC) application.**
- (b) **The change of use of a listed building will only be permitted if there will be no detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the building and/or its setting.**
- (c) **The Council regards the demolition of a listed building as a matter of last resort. LBC for the demolition of a listed building will only be granted where the applicant can demonstrate that:-**
- I. The building would be unviable in its existing (or last permitted) use, all reasonable efforts having been made to sustain it.**
 - II. There is no alternative use to which the building can be converted, all reasonable efforts having been made to identify such an alternative.**
 - III. The building cannot be practically incorporated within the proposed development scheme.**
- (d) **Where there is no other option available, the Council will require the applicants to undertake a detailed building recording scheme, to a specified standard, prior to any demolition taking place.**
- (e) **Listed Building Consent and planning permission for “enabling development” - that is, development intended to provide funding for the reinstatement and re-use of a listed building - will only be granted where:-**
- The reinstatement of the Listed Building is guaranteed. This may require some or all of the reinstatement works to take place as part of the first phase of the scheme.**
 - Such development will not harm the building's architectural or historic value, or the building's immediate setting.**
 - A full justification is provided to show that the proposal is both necessary and capable of producing the desired result.**

The development does not compromise other policies of this Plan, including protection of the Green Belt.

3.97 The special architectural and historic value of a listed building can be eroded by inappropriate alterations. Wherever possible, the original features of a listed building should be retained. Where this is not practical, careful attention should be given to replacement details and the use of sympathetic materials. Any necessary alterations should maximise the retention of the historic fabric and, ideally, be reversible.

3.98 The context of a listed building is of equal importance to the fabric of the building itself. Unsympathetic development on adjoining land can spoil the character of a listed building. The settings of listed buildings must be protected or enhanced, and development within the proximity of a listed building must be carefully considered to achieve this.

3.99 The best use for a building is that for which it was designed and built. The Council appreciates that it is not always possible to perpetuate original uses. It may be necessary to encourage alternative uses in order to ensure the survival and maintenance of an historic building. New uses for listed buildings will only be permitted where they will respect the special architectural and historic characteristics that are present.

3.100 Demolition of a listed building will only be permitted where the applicants can prove that there is no acceptable use to which the building can be put, that will ensure its repair and maintenance, or that the building is beyond viable repair. Purely financial considerations will not be accepted by the Council as justification for the demolition of a Listed Building. The Council will not normally allow the removal of a listed building without the agreement of a detailed scheme for the redevelopment of the site. A full programme of recording, to the Council's specification, will need to be undertaken prior to any demolition taking place.

3.101 The Council will continue to provide advice to owners, occupiers and managers of the Borough's stock of listed buildings, including local list buildings (see Policy ENV28), regarding maintenance of the built fabric and special features and to restore lost or altered features, in accordance with current government guidelines and legislation. On occasions where the Council believes that a building of special architectural or historic interest is under threat of damage or loss, the Council will consider the use of its statutory and mandatory powers to try and secure the necessary works to ensure the survival of the building.

Policy ENV28: The 'Local List' of Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest

The Council will not grant planning permission (or Conservation Area Consent, where applicable) for a development scheme which proposes the demolition or adverse alteration of a 'local list' building. Should it be demonstrated, for any reason, that it is impractical to retain a 'local list' building, in whole or in part, then the Council will require that the developer provides for the appropriate recording of the property, to a recognised standard, prior to demolition taking place.

3.102 The Council recognises that some buildings and areas are of local architectural and historic interest but do not benefit from protection under statutory controls. To this end, the Council will continue to compile, publish and update a List of Buildings of Local

Architectural or Historic Interest (a 'Local List'). A Local List building is defined as follows:

- Possessing special architectural or historic interest but not currently enjoying statutory Listed Building status.
- Definite and recognisable architectural interest (including originality of design or rarity as a type specimen).
- Relating to traditional or historic industrial processes surviving in a reasonably intact condition.
- Intact industrial history structures such as bridges.
- Buildings of character acting as landmarks in the townscape.
- Associated with unusual or significant historic events or containing features of definite antiquity (ie. pre-1800).
- Good quality modern architecture.

3.103 Owners, occupiers or managers of Local List buildings are encouraged to conserve their property and technical advice will be provided, where necessary.



Canal Museum, Birchills, Walsall

Policy ENV29: Conservation Areas

- (a) **The Council will determine whether a development preserves or enhances the character and appearance of a Conservation Area in terms of:-**
- I. **The degree of loss or alteration to property which makes a positive contribution to the character of the area.**
 - II. **The impact of any new buildings on the special townscape and landscape features within the area.**
 - III. **The scale, massing, siting, layout, design or choice of materials used in any new building or structure.**
 - IV. **The nature of its use and the anticipated levels of traffic, parking and other activity that will result.**
- (b) **The Council will not grant Conservation Area Consent (CAC) for the demolition of property which makes a positive contribution to a Conservation Area unless the criteria set out in Policy ENV27 (c) have been complied with and satisfied. In the event of the Council granting permission for the demolition of a Conservation Area property possessing discernible architectural or historic interest, the Council will require the applicants to undertake a building recording scheme to a specified standard.**
- (c) **The Council will not permit development within Conservation Areas that incrementally erodes those special features which the Council wishes to preserve and enhance.**

3.104 The Council has a duty to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas. Designation alone does not ensure that the most is made of the individual features and the 'group value' of buildings which form a conservation area. Guidelines and proposals are necessary. These will be provided, in part, through a phased rolling programme of re-appraisals of the existing conservation areas. Revised character statements will normally be published as leaflets for each area and will include advice on the rights and obligations of property owners, occupiers and managers. Details of all Conservation Areas in the Borough are set out in a booklet that is available separately.

3.105 The incremental erosion of those special features in a conservation area which the Council wishes to preserve or enhance will be resisted. There is a presumption against the demolition of buildings within a conservation area which positively contribute to the appearance or character of the area. Where a change in the use of a building is proposed, the Council will seek to ensure that the new use is compatible with the preservation and enhancement of that building and its setting.

3.106 Applications for Conservation Area Consent must be accompanied by a planning application which provides full details of the proposed replacement development. Applications should also clearly identify the nature and extent of the demolition proposed.

3.107 The Council will continue to make bids to relevant external grant providers for funding to achieve the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Area character. Subject to the availability of resources, the Council will make grant aided contributions towards the same objectives.

3.108 The condition of unoccupied and un-Listed property within Conservation Areas is monitored by the Council. Should any such property be in need of works urgently necessary to assure its preservation, the Council will exercise its statutory powers to require or execute these works.

Policy ENV30: Registered Parks and Gardens

The Council will seek to protect the Borough's registered parks and gardens from the effects of inappropriate built development and insensitive alteration. The special character and features contained within the park or garden will be considered when assessing development proposals, with particular reference to the area's origin, design, history, landscape, flora, fauna, management and environmental quality.

3.109 The Borough has three entries on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historical Interest. These are:-

- Great Barr Hall estate.
- The Memorial Gardens, Church Hill, Walsall.
- The Arboretum.

3.110 No statutory controls follow from the inclusion of a park or garden on this Register. However, PPG15 recommends that local authorities protect their registered parks or gardens through the development plan and development control processes.



Arboretum Gatehouse

Policy ENV31: Continued Protection of the Historic Built Environment

The Council will seek to develop the understanding of the historic environment for residents of, and visitors to, the Borough. Technical advice will be provided to owners and managers of property of cultural, architectural or historic interest.

3.111 Widespread understanding and appreciation of the value of our historic built heritage is essential to its future safe-keeping. Its educational potential needs to be 'unlocked' and made accessible to all. In particular, those owning, occupying or managing property of architectural, archaeological, historic or cultural interest need to be aware of the implications of their involvement and responsibilities, know where to go for the best advice, and make management decisions that provide for the satisfactory conservation of the asset under their stewardship.

3.112 To this end, and as resources permit, the Council will continue to affix blue plaques to property of architectural or historic interest; publish guides and trails which include properties of cultural, architectural or historic interest; and erect interpretation panels in appropriate locations.

INDICATOR

The success with which buildings of architectural or historic interest are protected from destruction or damage will be a monitoring indicator. The target will be 100% protection.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

3.113 New development provides opportunities for high quality architectural and landscape design to contribute to the environmental and economic well-being of the Borough for the benefit of residents and visitors, alike. Refurbishment and reuse of buildings often offer similar opportunities. The enhancement of existing and the creation of new landscapes must provide enjoyable, interesting and intriguing environments in which people live, work and play. Good design responds positively and imaginatively to the context in which development takes place whether in an urban or more rural part of the Borough.

3.114 Aesthetic considerations are very important but design also has to be both practical and functional. Good design can discourage crime and increase safety as well as accommodating the access requirements of all sections of the community. Design can also achieve a more sustainable environment by reducing energy consumption through orientation of buildings and careful selection of materials (see also Policy ENV39).

3.115 The design of buildings and structures together with landscape design have a major role to play in the creation of an environment which is distinctive, creates a sense of place and which makes a positive contribution to the quality of life. The Council will therefore ensure that the design of new development conforms to high standards of design.

Policy ENV32: Design and Development Proposals

- (a) **Poorly designed development or proposals which fail to properly take account of the context or surroundings will not be permitted. This policy will be applied to all development but will be particularly significant in the following locations:-**
- I. Within a Conservation Area.**
 - II. Within a Town, District or Local Centre.**
 - III. On a visually prominent site.**
 - IV. Within or adjacent to transport corridors, including canals, railways, motorways and major roads.**
 - V. Water frontages.**
 - VI. Areas with a special character arising from the homogeneity of existing development in the neighbourhood.**
 - VII. In the vicinity of a Listed Building, Building of Local Interest or Registered Parks and Gardens.**
 - VIII. Within or adjacent to Local Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, parks, cemeteries or public open spaces.**
 - IX. Within or adjacent to Green Belt, agricultural or open land.**
 - X. In an priority area for environmental improvement (Policy ENV9).**
- (b) **When assessing the quality of design of any development proposal the Council will use some or all of the following criteria:-**
- I. The appearance of the proposed development.**
 - II. The height, proportion, scale, and mass of proposed buildings / structures.**
 - III. The materials proposed for buildings, external spaces and means of enclosure.**
 - IV. The integration and co-ordination of buildings and external space.**
 - V. Community safety and security.**
 - VI. The visual relationship of the proposed development with adjacent areas, the street and the character of the surrounding neighbourhood.**
 - VII. The effect on the local character of the area.**
 - VIII. The proposed vehicular and pedestrian circulation patterns.**
 - IX. The integration of existing natural and built features of value.**
 - X. The maintenance requirements of the development.**

3.116 Good design should be a feature of all development but there are instances where the location of a proposed development requires a higher standard of design. These situations are set out in the policy above together with the criteria which the Council will use to assess the quality of design. Not all the criteria listed will be relevant to every development proposal and the relative importance of each will depend on the nature and location of individual development proposals. Planning applicants are therefore encouraged to discuss their proposals with the Council at a pre-submission stage. The Council will produce a Supplementary Planning Document on Urban and Landscape Design to describe the Council's requirements in more detail.

Policy ENV33: Landscape Design

- (a) **Good landscape design is an integral part of urban design and the Council will require, where appropriate, planning applications proposing development in the locations described in policy ENV32 to be supported by full details of external layout and landscape proposals.**
- (b) **In addition, development proposals meeting any of the following criteria will also be required to be supported by full details of external layout and landscape proposals:-**
- I. Land which the Council is expected to adopt.**
 - II. Development sites containing natural and built features the Council requires to be retained or enhanced.**
 - III. Residential / nursing homes where residents would benefit from the sensory stimulation provided by a landscape scheme and who are not in a position to secure it for themselves.**
 - IV. Larger development proposals.**

3.117 Landscape design is an integral part of good design and the Council will ensure that development proposals take account of opportunities to create and enhance environmental quality. It involves far more than the planting of trees, hedges, shrubs or grass: it also includes hard surfacing, walls, fencing, water and art features and the shaping of land through earthworks. Landscape design has a number of functions:-

- Enhancing the visual appearance of the urban and rural environment through a combination of creating new landscapes and retaining or reinforcing the existing visual character of a neighbourhood.
- Reducing the visual impact of development by blending it into its surroundings through tree and shrub planting.
- Providing attractive and functional environments for people. Planting often creates enclosure whilst providing sensory stimulation and links with the seasons.
- Other benefits include the conservation of wildlife through the creation of habitats and pollution reduction.

3.118 This policy will be applied to applications for full planning permission. In outline applications the Council will require the applicant to demonstrate that requirements of policy ENV33 can be met at the reserved matters stage. This will apply particularly in applications where access and layout are not reserved matters.

3.119 The Council will produce a Supplementary Planning Document to set out in greater detail the circumstances in which the submission of a landscape scheme will be necessary and the matters to be included.

Policy ENV34: Public Art

The Council will require the provision of public art to enhance the quality and individuality of existing buildings, spaces or new development especially in the following locations:

- I. In public spaces and buildings.**
- II. In important and prominent locations.**
- III. In larger scale developments or refurbishments.**

3.120 The Council has an adopted Public Art Strategy to promote and ensure the provision of individual art works in appropriate locations throughout the Borough. In this context public art could encompass a wide range of features, such as street furniture, building design or imaginative use of materials. The locations described above are the places where the provision of public art will be a high priority. Town, District and Local Centres will often provide suitable foci for public art works but many other opportunities are available; for example, in relation to transportation nodes and corridors. The Council will continue to seek to work with developers to support the commissioning of public art to enrich the Borough's environment.



Brownhills Miner

Policy ENV35: Appearance of Commercial Buildings

The design of frontages to shops and other commercial premises should be appropriate to their setting and sympathetic to the building on which they are situated. In considering proposals for shop fronts, shutters and grilles, canopies, blinds and signs, the Council will take the following factors into account:-

- I. The architectural and historic merits of the building.
- II. The character of the area in which they are located.
- III. The prominence of the building.
- IV. Whether the building is subject to surveillance by CCTV.
- V. Any exceptional justification for the proposal.
- VI. Any proposals and initiatives for the enhancement of the centre in which they are located.

3.121 The Council wishes to enhance shopping centres in its area as places for shopping, working, living and leisure. Shop front alterations, and security shutters and grilles in particular, can have a significant effect on the appearance of an area. This policy seeks to reconcile the need to protect the amenity of an area and the heritage of the Borough with the legitimate interests of business.

3.122 The Council has produced Supplementary Planning Guidance for the installation of shutters and grilles.

Policy ENV36: Poster Hoardings

- (a) **Poster hoardings will not be permitted where they have a detrimental effect on either the amenity of an area and its residents or public safety. The most appropriate locations are likely to be in areas of mainly commercial character. Hoardings are unlikely to be permitted:-**
 - I. In Conservation Areas.
 - II. Adjacent to Listed Buildings.
 - III. In residential areas.
 - IV. In the Green Belt or on areas of open space.
 - V. On sites visible from motorways and on prominent sites on classified roads.
 - VI. Where they would screen attractive views.
- (b) **Where a hoarding is acceptable in principle:-**
 - I. A high standard of design and maintenance will be required.
 - II. The scale of the proposed hoarding should be appropriate to its setting.
- (c) **The Council will consider taking action against existing hoardings that do not meet these criteria.**

3.123 The Council recognises that hoardings can serve a useful function - for example, in screening untidy sites - and that innovative designs can enliven the street scene. However, individually and collectively they also have the potential to damage residential amenity and the character the townscape. This policy seeks to guide them towards suitable locations.

Policy ENV37: Small Poster Panel Advertisements

Smaller sizes of poster panel advertisements will usually have less impact on the street scene and on public safety, although if sited inappropriately this impact can be significant. As they are commercial features, they are unlikely to be acceptable in residential areas, in the Green Belt or on areas of open space. In considering proposals, the Council will have regard to the following factors:-

- I. Possible effect on public safety.**
- II. The impact of the proposal on the appearance of any Listed Buildings.**
- III. The prominence of the proposed advertisement in the street scene and in any long distance views.**
- IV. The degree of visual clutter in the street.**
- V. The scale and design of the proposal in relation to its setting.**
- VI. For freestanding advertisements, the possible effect on pedestrian circulation.**

3.124 Smaller poster panel advertisements need to be sensitively designed and sited to avoid or ameliorate any negative impacts. This policy sets out the factors that the Council will consider in assessing proposals.



Refurbished office in Walsall

Policy ENV38: Telecommunications Equipment

- (a) Large items of telecommunications equipment - e.g., masts, dishes, antennae and cabins - can have a significant detrimental impact on the visual amenity of an area. They are therefore unlikely to be acceptable:-**
 - I. In Conservation Areas.**
 - II. Within the curtilage or affecting the setting of a Listed Building, Ancient Monument or Historic Park or Garden.**
 - III. In low-rise residential areas.**
 - IV. In other visually sensitive locations.**
- (b) When considering proposals for new equipment, the Council will require operators to demonstrate that they have fully investigated the possibility of avoiding the need for the erection of new masts by:-**
 - I. Use of existing high level buildings and structures;**
 - II. Mast and site sharing.**
- (c) Measures to reduce the impact of the equipment, such as screening and mast camouflage, will be required where necessary.**
- (d) All proposals should comply with the radiation safety requirements of the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection and any other relevant guidance that may be published in the future by this body (and accepted by Government), the National Radiological Protection Board or other research findings as may be recommended by the Government.**

3.125 The Council recognises that additional telecommunications apparatus is necessary to cater for the expansion of communications systems including the increased use of mobile phones. However, it is concerned that a proliferation of such equipment can have a significant impact on amenity. This policy seeks to guide proposals towards more suitable locations and make maximum use of opportunities for the use of existing buildings / structures and mast sharing.

3.126 The Council will maintain a mast register in line with PPG8 on Telecommunications. The register will include existing masts and other structures to which apparatus could be attached to assist operators in considering possible antenna sites. If an operator makes a planning application for a location not on the register, the applicant will be expected to demonstrate that no site on the register offers a practicable alternative.

3.127 The Council is also concerned to ensure that telecommunications proposals are subject to adequate publicity and consultation before decisions are taken. This will be particularly important when applications are in residential areas or near schools, hospitals or other sensitive land uses.

This policy has not been “saved” under paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the 2004 Act but is listed here for completeness.
Elements of this policy are incorporated in JCS Policy ENV7

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Policy ENV39: Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

The Council will encourage proposals for the development of renewable energy sources and for the efficient use of energy. In particular:-

- (a) Planning permission will be granted for developments that produce or use renewable energy provided that they would not have a detrimental effect on the character, quality and amenity of the surrounding area, according to the criteria in Policy GP2, and are otherwise compatible with other policies of this Plan**
- (b) For large or significant development schemes, applicants will be encouraged to provide information on the provision to be made for the conservation and efficient use of energy. Appropriate measures might include the siting, orientation and design of buildings to maximise passive solar gain; the recycling of waste heat; the use of landscaping and building layout to reduce energy loss through wind chill; and the use of reclaimed or locally produced building materials which save energy in production and transport.**

3.128 PPS22 “Renewable Energy” (2004) requires local authorities to consider the contribution their areas can make to energy conservation. One way will be through encouragement of greater use of renewable energy sources (e.g. wind, water, solar power and incineration of waste or “biomass” fuels). Although Walsall, given its location, topography and urban form, has limited potential for large scale renewable energy schemes, it is likely that smaller-scale schemes, involving for example solar thermal, photovoltaic cells, biomass, biogas or combined heat and power, could make a valuable contribution. Account will be taken of the findings of the West Midlands Energy Strategy on the potential for renewable energy in the Region. When considering any proposed schemes there must be a careful balance between the potential benefits of renewable energy production and any adverse effects on local amenity. Schemes might potentially include small-scale community level initiatives which benefit local people and organisations and are sensitive to the environment and landscape

3.129 In February 2000, the Government published “New and Renewable Energy Prospects for the 21st Century - Conclusions in Response to the Public Consultation”. This publication confirmed that the Government’s current target is to see 5% of UK electricity requirements being met from renewable sources by the end of 2003, with 10% being achieved by 2010, subject to the costs on consumers being acceptable.

3.130 Another approach is to reduce energy consumption and planning has a role to play in this. Whilst the Building Regulations include detailed specifications for the incorporation of energy conservation measures during construction, the Council as planning authority can also seek, through negotiation, other energy saving features in the design of developments, as set out in the policy.

WATER RESOURCES

Policy ENV40: Conservation, Protection and Use of Water Resources

- (a) Development will only be permitted in areas where adequate water supplies are available or where they can be made available without detriment to the environment.**
- (b) Proposals for development will be encouraged to incorporate measures for the conservation of water resources such as the use of water efficient devices, the on-site recycling of water (including grey water systems), the collection and use of rainwater (e.g. the provision of water butts) and minimising the watering needed to sustain landscaping (eg. through the use of mulching and drought tolerant turf and plants).**
- (c) The quality of all water resources will be protected and, where possible, improved. Development will not be permitted if the drainage from it poses an unacceptable risk to the quality or usability of surface or ground water resources. In particular the Council will need to be satisfied that:-**
 - I. Adequate foul and surface water drainage infrastructure is available to serve the proposed development.**
 - II. Appropriate pollution control measures are incorporated to reduce the risks of any water pollution.**
 - III. Appropriate use will be made of sustainable urban drainage techniques that reduce the volume of surface water runoff by allowing this to replenish groundwater or surface watercourses by natural seepage.**
- (d) The environment of rivers, canals, lakes and ponds will be protected, and enhanced in a comprehensive way. Any developments affecting, or near to, these water spaces should make a positive contribution, as appropriate, to the nature conservation, landscape, heritage, fisheries, amenity or recreational value of the water space. In particular, attention should be given to:-**
 - I. Safeguarding the biodiversity and ecology of the area.**
 - II. Avoiding building over or culverting watercourses unnecessarily and exploiting any opportunities to open-up water courses that are presently culverted.**
 - III. Retaining, improving or restoring public access to riverside corridors and other water spaces, whilst taking all reasonable measures to ensure public safety.**
 - IV. Promoting appropriate recreational uses for water spaces and waterside areas.**
 - V. Safeguarding access for maintenance.**

- (e) **When considering development proposals the Council will take account of flood risk according to the principles set out in PPG25: Development and Flood Risk. This will include the adoption of a sequential approach which, in priority order, favours locations which have little or no risk, then low to medium risk, before those with high risk, subject to other sustainable development objectives including promoting the use of previously-developed. The Council will also take account of any information on flood risk provided by the Environment Agency, including the most recently produced Flood Zone Maps.**

3.131 A good quality water supply is an essential resource for drinking, general domestic needs, and industrial and agricultural purposes. Water spaces are also important for amenity, nature conservation, recreation, fisheries and navigation. The idea of the ‘water cycle’ suggests that we should deal with issues relating to water holistically and the policy seeks to do this by addressing a range of matters relating to the conservation, protection and usage of water resources and water spaces.

3.132 Firstly, parts (a) and (b) of the policy recognise the need to reduce the demand for water, in order to conserve a valuable resource. Development will only be permitted where adequate water supplies can be made available and development schemes will be expected to incorporate measures which will help to save water.

3.133 Secondly, part (c) of the policy seeks to improve the quality of water resources by protecting these from contamination by pollution (see also Policy ENV10: Pollution). Walsall’s water supplies come from a combination of surface water and groundwater sources and it is important that both of these are protected. Groundwater from aquifers presents particular issues because, once polluted, groundwater is very difficult and expensive to clean up. Much of the Borough overlies a “minor” aquifer (the Coal Measures strata) where groundwater is abstracted for industrial purposes and provides base flows to rivers. In addition, areas in the east around Aldridge and Brownhills overlie a “major” aquifer (the Triassic Sandstone strata), which is used for the abstraction of public water supplies.

3.134 Inadequate foul and surface water drainage can have an adverse effect on water quality by leading to pollution. Part (c) of the policy, therefore, includes reference to the drainage infrastructure provision that will be necessary to support new development. Particular reference is made to the concept of “sustainable urban drainage” which aims to minimise the quantity of surface water runoff collected and discharged from a site by promoting natural drainage which allows groundwater and surface water courses to be replenished by gradual seepage.



3.135 Part (d) of the policy provides guidance on the protection, enhancement and usage of water spaces for a variety of purposes. Finally, part (e) deals with the issue of flooding. In July 2001, the Government issued PPG25: Development and Flood Risk; the principles set out in this guidance will be followed by the Council when considering planning proposals that may present a risk of flooding. It should also be noted that the Environment Agency have issued a floodplain map for the Borough which indicates those areas which are susceptible to flooding. This map will be used by the Council in the development control process. Figure 3.3 shows areas of flood risk diagrammatically for general information – but people should refer to the latest maps provided by the Environment Agency for more detailed and definitive information.

**Figure 3.3
Flood Zones**

Note: this map is for illustrative purposes only. For more detail see large scale mapping supplied by the Environment Agency.




KEY

-  Zone 2: Low to Medium Risk; annual probability 0.1-1.0%
-  Zone 3: High Risk; annual probability 1.0% or greater

Based on mapping supplied by the Environment Agency

Scale: 1:100,000



March 2005

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4 JOBS & PROSPERITY

EMP1

PART I STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT

Modernising Employment Areas

4.1 The Council, in partnership with local firms and other agencies for regeneration, will seek to extend the Industrial Regeneration Areas programme, both within estates currently in the programme and elsewhere, in order to:-

- (a) Improve the local environment and enhance the image of the area.**
- (b) Introduce security improvements to reduce crime and vandalism.**
- (c) Create new, and safeguard existing, job opportunities.**

All development in Industrial Regeneration Areas will be expected to work towards the achievement of these objectives.

Meeting the Need for Land and Buildings

EMP1 - EMP3

4.2 In order to promote investment in, and diversification of, manufacturing industry and distribution, a supply of employment land and buildings will be maintained that will meet the needs of both inward investors and existing firms. The emphasis will be on the recycling and fullest use of urban land and buildings. To maintain that supply, land and buildings in employment areas will normally be retained for employment use (see also paragraphs 4.4 - 4.5).

4.3 Land allocated or safeguarded for industrial development should, as far as possible:-

- (a) Be easily accessible by a choice of means of transport.**
- (b) Have good accessibility for freight, including rail where possible.**
- (c) Have a relatively good local environment.**
- (d) Offer a range of opportunities in terms of location, size and market sector.**
- (e) Be free of constraints to development which cannot be readily overcome.**

Core Employment Areas and Best Quality Sites

4.4 Core employment uses are defined as industry and distribution in Classes B1b, B1c, B2 and B8 of the Use Classes Order. Core employment areas are locations of strategic importance and good accessibility which contain major concentrations of these uses, together with better quality buildings and/or development opportunities - referred to as best quality sites. Core employment areas and best quality sites are identified in Policies JP5 and JP6 and will be safeguarded for core employment uses.

Other Employment Areas

4.5 Other employment areas should also retain their overall industrial character, but other uses which assist regeneration and which generate employment opportunities may also be accommodated. In these areas, new development and the reuse of land and buildings will be subject to Policy JP7.

The Service Sector

4.6 The service sector, although largely dependent upon wealth created by manufacturing industry, also contributes greatly to providing jobs and prosperity in the Borough. Investment in this sector, particularly in retailing, leisure and offices will normally be directed towards centres in accordance with the policies in Chapter 5. Proposals for such uses in employment areas away from established centres, other than as allowed for in Policies JP5 and JP7, will be resisted. These uses will not be permitted simply as a mechanism for bringing derelict or vacant sites / buildings back into use - any proposals must comply with other relevant policies of this Plan.



Anchor Brook, Aldridge

PART II DETAILED POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

INTRODUCTION

Policy Aim

4.7 The Council has established the following policy aim:-

To boost jobs and prosperity in the Borough by providing enough land of the right quality to meet the full range of employment needs and by promoting the enhancement of existing employment areas.

4.8 The policies in this Plan are designed to achieve this by satisfying the Borough's needs for investment and employment, particularly in the manufacturing, distribution and service sectors. It should be noted, however, that since most service sector employment will be concentrated in centres this is dealt with mainly in Chapter 5: Strengthening Our Centres. The focus of this chapter is, therefore, on industry and distribution, and those service activities which support them.

Background

4.9 Manufacturing creates wealth in the Borough and directly provides 38% of jobs. There are few elements of the economy which are not at least indirectly dependent upon it. The economy of the Borough relies heavily on a narrow band of low skill, low gross value-added (GVA) activities which are threatened by competition from low wage economies. However, in recent years, GVA in Walsall has been rising as manufacturing productivity has increased. Further inward investment is needed to help continue diversification towards higher skill, more knowledge-based, higher GVA activities, as recognised in RPG11.

4.10 To support this, and existing economic activity, a package of measures is needed, including: provision of sites and buildings, improved highway and other infrastructure, training to further equip the workforce with modern skills, local recruitment policies, a range of housing opportunities, improved educational attainment, better health care and a higher quality environment. Fundamentally, this means improving the image of the Borough as a place to invest, live and work.

4.11 In addition to the action which can be taken through this Plan, the Council continues to tackle these issues by, for example, taking advantage of Assisted Area status, European Structural Funds and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, and through a range of initiatives including the Health Action Zone, New Deal for Communities and Walsall Regeneration Company, working in partnership with a range of public and private sector organisations, voluntary groups and individuals with an interest in promoting the future well-being of the Borough. The Council will also be working with partners in Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire to implement the Action Plan for the Walsall, Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire Regeneration Zone, which will be the focus for regeneration funding from Advantage West Midlands and other sources.

4.12 During the year 1997-98, 42% of the firms in the Borough which relocated moved beyond the Borough boundary, an improvement on the 50% which left during 1988-96. By 1997, there was a gain in distribution companies; attracted by the Borough's location at the hub of the national motorway network. There are many reasons why a company might want to move, but it is the aim of this Plan to ensure that it will not be necessary for firms to leave the Borough to find suitable land or buildings.

MODERNISING EMPLOYMENT AREAS

4.13 This Plan places much more emphasis than before on existing employment areas. This recognises that most employment will continue to be in property that already exists, and that many areas are in need of improvements to help firms survive and compete in the modern world. It is therefore essential that the Council, with its partners, does all that it can to help local firms bring about a range of improvements to the environment in which they operate - see paragraph 4.1 of the Strategic Policy Statement. The improvement of access for workers and others by a choice of means of transport (to reduce reliance on the private car) will make an important contribution to the transport strategy (see also Chapter 7).

4.14 The Industrial Regeneration Areas programme has been successful in bringing about considerable improvements. At present it covers six areas containing about one third of the Borough's industrial firms: Willenhall Business Park, Premier Business Park, Town Wharf Business Park, Phoenix Business Park, Leamore Enterprise Park and Darlaston Central Business Park. These are shown on the Proposals Map for information. This comprehensive and inclusive approach has won international recognition for its effectiveness in delivering substantial improvements to environment and image, job prospects and crime reduction, as well as reducing costs and increasing profits. It is intended to extend the programme to other areas as resources become available. The Council, with its partners, will also seek substantial infrastructure, ground condition and environmental improvements in the Darlaston Strategic Development Area.

MEETING THE NEED FOR LAND AND BUILDINGS

4.15 Forecasting the likely need for employment land is an imprecise science, especially as changes in markets, patterns of demand, the needs of industry, and grant regimes can be unpredictable in both timing and impact. Nevertheless, there needs to be some assessment of likely needs to guide the allocation of land. In assessing future needs account has been taken of factors that would be likely to depress or stimulate take-up of land for employment uses during the remainder of the plan period up to 2011; these include recent trends, the continuing decline of some sectors of manufacturing industry, the M6-Toll and intervention through the Walsall, Wolverhampton, South Staffordshire Regeneration Zone and the Walsall Regeneration Company (WRC). It is estimated that there is a need for about 94 hectares during the period to 2011.

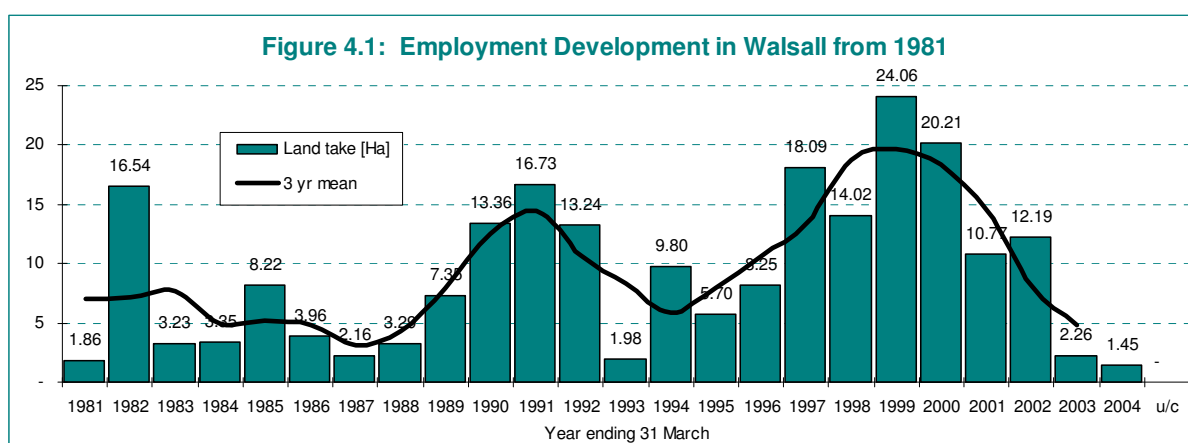
Clusters and Growth Sectors

4.16 Clusters are groups of companies and organisations in related industries that have economic links through, for example, trading, common skills and infrastructure, or other areas of mutual interest. Business development is often stronger where businesses cluster together, creating a critical mass of growth, collaboration, competition and opportunity for investment. It should also be recognised that clusters may not be spatially discrete; they might connect in other ways such as ICT or common customers or suppliers; and they are likely to cross district and sub-regional boundaries.

4.17 The following sectors have been identified by Black Country Investment as having potential to develop innovative clusters in the Black Country, creating growth in investment and employment:

- ICT and Interactive Media Technologies;
- Materials technologies;
- Environmental technologies (including environmentally sustainable products);
- Advanced Engineering technologies;
- Building technologies; and
- Medical technologies.

4.18 The Council will encourage the growth and development of these clusters and will seek to ensure that this is not frustrated by a shortage of land resources, buildings or infrastructure.



To avoid undue skewing towards the recession years of the early 1980s, the calculation of land supply requirements has taken account of take-up from 1986 to 2003.

4.19 The way in which the requirement for 94 hectares of employment land over the remainder of Plan period will be met is summarised in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Employment Land Supply at April 2004

	<u>Ha</u>
Under construction	0.87
With Planning Permission (Table 4.2)	28.60
Allocated in Proposal JP1	47.38
Best Quality Sites not in above	6.13
Small sites	6.93
Expansion Land	7.26
Total	97.17

4.20 Sites over 0.4 hectare already committed by planning permission are listed in Table 4.2: these sites will be safeguarded for employment use under Policies JP5 and JP7. New employment sites allocated in this Plan are identified in Proposal JP1.

Land held by firms for their own expansion, totalling 7.26 hectares, is also included in the above table because, although not generally available to others, it is still an important element of the land supply.

4.21 It should be noted that there is currently no significant surplus of vacant employment land in the Borough. It is all the more important, therefore, that the needs of industry should not be frustrated by the loss of land and buildings to non-employment uses, particularly in the core employment areas and on best quality sites.

Table 4.2: Sites with Planning Permission for Employment Use, April 2004

Site	Ha.	
Armstrong Way	1.43	
Bentley Mill Way / Close**	0.55	
Manor Quays*	0.96	BQ
Maybrook	2.33	
Anglesey Bridge*	2.55	BQ
Carl Street (TWM garage)	5.55	
Stringes Lane	1.26	
Willenhall Road (Copperfield)	1.71	
Anson Junction	0.70	
East of Junction 10 (M6)	2.47	
Darlaston Road (Parallel 910)	3.27	
Westgate One**	1.22	
Middlemore Lane**	1.84	
Walsall Enterprise Park*	2.76	BQ
Total	28.60	

Notes:

* Remains a Best Quality site (Policy JP6).

** Work has since commenced.

BQ Best Quality Site - see Policy JP6.



Modern employment development, Aldridge

Proposal JP1: New Employment Sites

The following sites (of at least 0.4 hectares), as shown on the Proposals Map, are allocated for employment use as defined in Policies JP5 and JP7.

Ref	Site	Ha.	
E1	Watery Lane (North)	0.61	
E2	Watery Lane (South)	1.01	
E4	Bilston Lane (Criterion Works)	0.85	
E5	Armstrong Way	0.45	
E6	Woods Bank	0.98	
E8	Willenhall Road (Garringtons) ¹	1.91	
E10	Bentley Road South	2.03	
E14	Bentley Mill Way (West) (Aspect 2000)	2.92	
E16	James Bridge (Box Pool site)	1.67	BQ
E17	Park Lane (Steelman's Road)	0.76	
E18	Bescot Crescent	1.83	
E20	Hollyhedge Lane ²	0.45	
E21	Reedswood	4.34	BQ
E22	Green Lane / Cable Drive	1.98	
E24	Fryers Road	3.27	
E25	Canalside Close	0.45	
E27	Middlemore Lane ²	2.28	
E28	Northgate/Longleat Rd	0.63	
E29	Walsall Enterprise Park	3.03	BQ
E30	James Bridge (IMI Works) ³	9.50	
E32	Green Lane (Sterling Tubes) ⁴	6.43	BQ
Total		47.38	

Notes:

- 1 Temporary consent for car storage.
 - 2 Sites E20 and E27 are also considered suitable for offices in class B1(a) and leisure uses because of their relationship to the town and district centres. All other sites in this table are safeguarded for employment uses defined in Policies JP5 and JP7.
 - 3 This figure reflects the total site area, but it is recognised that part of the site may be used for non-employment uses; guidelines for the development of site E30 are given in Proposal JP4.2.
 - 4 Planning permission has since been granted and work on site has commenced.
- BQ Best Quality Site - see Policy JP6.

4.22 The sites allocated in Proposal JP1 have been selected with reference to the criteria set out in policy 4.3 and provide a range of opportunities throughout most parts of the Borough.

INDICATOR

The following matters relating to employment land supply will be monitoring indicators:-

- The area of land developed for employment purposes. The target will be an annual average rate of development of 13 hectares.
- The proportion of development that takes place on brownfield sites. The target for this will be 95% of all land developed.
- The extent to which the New Employment Sites allocated in Policy JP1 are successfully protected from loss to other, inappropriate uses. The target for this will be 90% of the total land area, in view of the flexibility allowed in Policies JP4.1 (East of Junction 10) and JP4.2 (E30).

Policy JP2: Improving the Employment Land Supply

EMP1

The Council will continue to work with partner regeneration agencies and developers to remove constraints to the development of employment sites.

4.23 The Borough owes its prosperity to a long industrial past, but sometimes this has led to problems with contamination, dereliction and ground conditions that may hinder new development. The Council will seek resources to overcome these and other constraints, and provide infrastructure, to enable development to proceed. It will continue successful partnerships with agencies for regeneration, in particular Advantage West Midlands and Walsall Regeneration Company, and seek funding from the UK Government and the European Union as appropriate.

4.24 It has been seen in the Black Country Route and Black Country New Road corridors that prior remediation has encouraged exceptional amounts of development for industry and distribution, including a considerable amount of speculative development. This kind of assistance is often needed both to attract inward investment and to satisfy the requirements of indigenous firms.

4.25 Retailing and other uses which command higher land values than industry have sometimes been used in the past to help overcome exceptional remediation costs and catalyse industrial redevelopment. The prospect of the introduction of these uses can, however, also lead to land being withheld from the industrial market if landowners have the expectation that higher "hope values" can be obtained for other uses. Paragraph 4.6 of the Strategic Policy Statement, therefore, makes clear that retailing and other uses will not be permitted simply as a means of bringing derelict or vacant sites / buildings back into use - such proposals must comply with other relevant policies of the Plan.

TRAN3

Policy JP3: Rail-served Sites

Where land or buildings have potential to be served by rail, the Council will encourage their use for activities incorporating rail freight.

4.26 It is an objective of RPG11 and other Government guidance to increase significantly the amount of freight carried by rail, and relevant policies are included in Chapter 7 of this Plan (see paragraph 7.6 and Policy T3). Policy JP3 encourages owners of sites with potential for rail heads, for example Fryers Road (E24), to take advantage of this opportunity.

Policy JP4.1: East of M6 Junction 10

- (a) This site is safeguarded for high quality development which must satisfy all of the following:-
- I. A particularly high standard of design and landscaping.
 - II. Creation of gateway or landmark features which make a powerful statement promoting Walsall as a place for high quality development.
 - III. Enhancement of the nature conservation value of the site.
 - IV. No adverse affect on the amenities of users of land nearby, especially the schools.
 - V. Must be considered as a coherent whole from the outset.
- (b) It must be demonstrated, before development can be permitted, that problems of ground stability and landfill gas will be satisfactorily overcome. Any development proposals must also take into account the potential impact on the M6 and junctions 9 and/or 10, and be consistent with Highway Agency Policies in this regard. (For further guidance on these issues, see Policies T4 and T5).
- (c) This site is allocated for employment uses under Policy JP1, but, exceptionally, will also be considered for other high quality uses including hotels and B1(a) offices, subject to there being no adverse impact on investment in any centre.

4.27 This site is at Walsall's most important arrival and departure point for road traffic. Its superb, gateway location demands a particularly high standard of design and landscaping, of a quality which stands out as a landmark feature. The need for quality is absolute and is reflected in the above policy.

4.28 The site is listed as part of the employment land supply under Policy JP1 and it is possible that employment uses could satisfy the requirement for quality set out in Policy JP4.1. It is recognised, however, that other types of development, such as hotels or Class B1(a) offices, may more successfully achieve the design requirements. To allow some flexibility, therefore, Policy JP7: Other Employment Areas allows specific exceptions in respect of hotel and B1(a) office uses. However, it must be demonstrated that no component of any development package for the site would have an adverse impact on any centre and proposals for other town centre uses, such as leisure or retailing, will not normally be accepted (see also Policy S7 in Chapter 5).

4.29 Nature conservation value is recognised by the designation of a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation along the Sneyd Brook and a wildlife corridor along the motorway. The Council is keen to see the enhancement of the ecological value of both areas as part of any development scheme.

4.30 To achieve the standards required, it is essential that all five elements of part (a) of the policy are given very careful consideration in the conception of any scheme for development.

4.29 The policy notes that there are issues of ground stability and landfill gas to be addressed. It will need to be demonstrated that any proposed development would not adversely affect the surrounding area by, for example, diverting gases beyond the site boundary. Development proposals must also satisfactorily address highway access, in particular the relationship of the site access to the Wolverhampton Road / Bloxwich Lane junction, and the impact of traffic on local roads, especially the motorway junction. See also criteria relating to the operation of the highway network in Policy T4.



New warehouse for TK Maxx, Walsall

Policy JP4.2: James Bridge (Former IMI Works) (site E30)

- (a) This site is safeguarded for high quality development which must satisfy all of the following:-
- I. A particularly high standard of design and landscaping, especially on those parts of the site visible from the motorway, the canal and the adjacent urban open space.
 - II. Creation of gateway or landmark features which make a powerful statement enhancing the image of the Borough.
 - III. A comprehensive, whole site approach that takes account of relationships to the surrounding area and the possibilities of incorporating adjacent land.
 - IV. Maximising the potential for enhancement and positive use of the canal corridor, which crosses, and borders the southern edge of, the site.
 - V. No adverse impact on the amenities of users of land nearby, including residential areas, the schools and the open space.
- (b) Any development must also make a major contribution to the physical and economic regeneration of the Darlaston Strategic Development Area consistent with the objectives of the North Black Country and South Staffordshire Regeneration Zone.
- (c) It must be demonstrated, before any development can be permitted, that any problems of ground stability, contamination, pollution or landfill gas will be satisfactorily overcome. It must also be demonstrated how satisfactory vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access can be achieved and a traffic impact assessment will be necessary. Any development proposals must also take into account the potential impact on the M6 and junctions 9 and/or 10, and be consistent with Highway Agency policies in this regard. (For further guidance on these issues, see Policies T4 and T5).
- (d) The site is allocated for employment use under Policy JP1 and it is envisaged that the greater part of the site (approximately two thirds) will be developed for these purposes. It is recognised, however, that the site may have potential for mixed use and that parts of the site could, therefore, be considered for other high quality uses, subject to other policies of the Plan and there being, in particular, no adverse impact on investment in any centre. Consideration could be given to the provision of some housing in the south of the site along the canal corridor, subject to it being demonstrated that any environmental obstacles to this can be satisfactorily overcome, including the issue of noise and pollution from the motorway.

4.30 This site is highly visible from the motorway, particularly from the southbound carriageway, and the now disused IMI Works has not contributed positively to the image of the Borough. Redevelopment of the site will present an opportunity to enhance considerably the environmental quality of the area, as well as attracting

investment and providing jobs. Consequently, a particularly high standard of design and landscaping is essential.

4.31 The Walsall, Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire Regeneration Zone (RZ) is a major initiative by Advantage West Midlands, Walsall MBC, Wolverhampton City Council and others towards the economic, social and environmental regeneration of large parts of the Black Country. Within the RZ an important focus will be the Darlaston Strategic Development Area, which includes the site at its eastern end. To inform the Regeneration Framework for the Walsall Regeneration Company an extensive study is being undertaken to devise a strategy for the development of the area. The Council will take into account the findings and recommendations when considering development proposals.

4.32 There is no surplus of quality employment land in the Borough so it is important that the majority of this site is safeguarded for employment use within Policy JP5. Nonetheless, the site is relatively large and as such might be able to accommodate a mix of employment, residential and other uses, subject to there being a satisfactory residential environment (see Policy H3) and subject to other policies of the Plan, including Policies S1, S6 and S7.

CORE EMPLOYMENT AREAS AND BEST QUALITY SITES

4.33 The Strategic Policy Statement introduces the concept of core employment uses, core employment areas and best quality sites (see paragraph 4.4). Core employment uses are defined as industry and distribution in Classes B1b, B1c, B2 and B8 of the Use Classes Order. Core employment areas and best quality sites will normally be safeguarded for these uses as set out in the following two policies.

Policy JP5: Core Employment Areas

- (a) **The core employment areas are shown on the Proposals Map. These areas will be safeguarded for core employment uses, permissions for which may be subject to conditions to prohibit change to other uses, such as Class B1(a) offices. Proposals for other uses will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:-**
- I. **A need would be met which could not be satisfied elsewhere in the Borough; or**
 - II. **The range and quality of employment opportunities would be significantly increased.**
- (b) **When windfall sites or buildings in core employment areas come forward for reuse or redevelopment they will normally be safeguarded for core employment uses according to the above policy.**

4.34 The core employment areas on the Proposals Map are defined on the basis that they contain major concentrations of core employment uses and/or good quality buildings or development opportunities. The policy will ensure that these areas, the best industrial areas that Walsall has to offer, will be retained for these uses. This safeguarding policy will apply to any land within these areas, whether allocated in the Plan, already committed by planning permission for employment uses, or windfall sites that may emerge in the future. With respect to sites or buildings where the existing uses are not Core Employment Uses, Policy JP5 will apply when they

become available for an alternative use or for redevelopment. While the existing use continues, other employment uses, as defined by Policy JP7, that are ancillary or complementary to the development of such businesses would be acceptable in principle; for instance development of the EMR site at Bentley Road South as a Recycling Park.

Policy JP6: Best Quality Sites

- (a) **The following sites will be safeguarded for core employment uses. Development of these sites will be expected to achieve a high quality of design and landscaping.**

Sites with planning permission in Table 4.2:

Walsall Enterprise Park

Anglesey Bridge

Manor Quays

Sites allocated in Proposal JP1:

E21 Reedswood

E16 James Bridge

E29 Walsall Enterprise Park

E32 Green Lane (Sterling Green)

Other Best Quality Sites:

Access 10

Anchor Brook

Aldridge Park

- (b) **Future windfall sites that offer similar or better employment development opportunities will also be safeguarded for core employment uses under this policy.**

4.35 These sites represent the best current opportunities in the Borough for high quality industrial or warehouse developments, by virtue of their size, accessibility or environment. Such opportunities are scarce, so the policy seeks to avoid their loss to other uses. To help maintain the supply of best quality sites in the future, windfall sites which present similar or better opportunities will be treated in the same manner. There is no requirement for best quality sites to be in core employment areas, although in practice they do usually coincide.

OTHER EMPLOYMENT AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE SERVICE SECTOR

4.36 The Strategic Policy Statement indicates that other employment areas should also retain their overall industrial character, but other uses which assist regeneration and which generate employment opportunities may also be accommodated. This greater flexibility over the uses that will be permitted would include certain types of service activities which are not appropriate for locations in centres. The following policy sets out the uses that will and will not be acceptable in these areas.

Policy JP7: Use of Land and Buildings in Other Employment Areas

- (a) Uses that will normally be permitted in these areas include:-
- I. Core Employment Uses.
 - II. Car showrooms. Conditions will be attached to planning permissions to prohibit change of use to, for example, Class A1 retail¹.
 - III. Other service uses which are complementary to the functioning of local industry or distribution and would meet a purely local need which would not be better served in or at the edge of a nearby centre.
 - IV. Scrap metal dealing, car breaking, recycling of metals and other materials, waste transfer stations and other activities which are unlikely to be acceptable in non-industrial areas, subject to policy JP8.
 - V. Ancillary retailing of products manufactured on site to the general public, provided the proportion of the gross floorspace of the buildings on site which are used for retailing does not exceed 10% or 100m², whichever is the least. Conditions will be attached to planning permissions to prohibit change of use to, for example, Class A1 retail.
 - VI. Builders merchants which are primarily for servicing the building trade. Conditions will be attached to planning permissions to prohibit change of use to, for example, Class A1 retail.
- (b) Whilst the above uses are appropriate in principle in these areas, not all uses will necessarily be suitable for all sites and buildings.
- (c) The following will not be permitted, except where a purely local need is demonstrated (see Policy S6):-
- I. Retailing (A1), offices (A2), food and drink (A3), non-residential institutions (D1), assembly and leisure (D2), other town centre uses.²
 - II. Hotels (C1) - except at East of Junction 10 (JP4.1).
 - III. Residential (C2 and C3).
 - IV. Offices in class B1(a), except sites E20, E27 and East of Junction 10 (JP4.1).
- (d) When windfall sites or buildings come forward for reuse or redevelopment in these areas they will normally be safeguarded for appropriate employment uses as specified in the above policy. It is recognised, however, that there may sometimes be exceptional circumstances in which it will be more appropriate to consider other uses, such as housing, due to the relationship of the site to surrounding land uses or because the site is not well located to meet the needs of modern industry (as reflected in paragraph 4.3). Any alternative uses must satisfy other relevant policies of this Plan and must not have the potential to constrain the operation of neighbouring businesses or appropriate future commercial investment.

¹ When the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 2005 comes into force on 21st April 2005, such changes of use will no longer be permitted by the Use Classes Order.

4.37 The steadily increasing majority of jobs in the Borough are now provided by the service sector, mainly in shops, offices and leisure. Although this Plan ensures that most service employment will be directed towards centres (see Chapter 5), it is recognised that other employment areas will have a role for service activities that are not appropriate for locations in centres. Service uses which are permitted in employment areas may be subject to conditions restricting, for example, change of use, range of activities and hours of operation to ensure that they continue to meet a purely local need and are not harmful to the strategy for centres. One purpose of the limited degree of flexibility included in Policy JP7 (a) is to enable service provision to meet the needs of workers, e.g. cafes, sandwich shops, pubs and newsagents (see Policy S6).

4.38 There has over recent years been an increase in the selling of goods manufactured on site from industrial buildings. Whilst Policy JP7 allows for this in principle, it needs to be recognised that uncontrolled increases in retailing in employment areas would be likely to lead to interference with the movements of commercial vehicles and in other ways hinder manufacturing and distribution. To avoid this, a limit is imposed on the space which may be used for this.



Industrial units at Walsall Enterprise Park

² When the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 2005 comes into force on 21st April 2005, this will include all uses in Classes A1 to A5 and other town centre uses, e.g. night clubs.

Policy JP8: Bad Neighbour Industrial Uses

- (a) **The location of potentially bad neighbour uses will be given very careful consideration taking into account the particular environmental implications of individual proposals, which must satisfy all of the following criteria:-**
- I. Such uses should be within an existing employment area, but not in a core employment Area, and should not have a detrimental effect on the environmental quality of employment areas.**
 - II. Uses should not have an adverse, or potentially adverse, environmental impact on housing, schools, facilities for sport and recreation, or other sensitive land uses.**
 - III. Sites should be capable of providing satisfactory screening and landscaping.**
 - IV. Uses that are unsightly and cannot be screened satisfactorily will not be permitted in prominent or visually sensitive locations (such as next to a main road, railway or canal).**
 - V. Sites must be subject to stringent operational control to minimise disturbance to nearby firms or other uses.**
 - VI. Proposals should be acceptable in terms of the criteria set out in Policy GP2.**
- (b) **The Council will normally impose conditions on planning permissions covering the following matters:-**
- I. Height of open storage.**
 - II. Location, within the site, of activities with a potentially adverse impact.**
 - III. Hours of operation.**
 - IV. Boundary treatment to include fencing of an approved standard, native trees and shrubs, and earth mounding as required.**
 - V. Proper demarcation of areas for parking, loading and manoeuvring which shall be kept clear of stored material.**

4.39 Bad neighbour uses can pose particular environmental problems for the surrounding area unless properly controlled. They would include scrap metal dealers, car breakers, other open salvage activities and various types of waste management facility (see also Chapter 10), but not landfill sites. These uses encompass a wide variety of processes, each with its own environmental implications. It will therefore be necessary to assess each proposal on its merits. Policy JP8 does, however, establish some general principles to guide the location of these uses.

5 STRENGTHENING OUR CENTRES

PART 1 STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT

CEN1 and CEN2

General

5.1 The Council will encourage the growth and development of the retail, service and leisure sectors, both to strengthen and diversify the Borough's economy and to meet the needs and aspirations of all sections of the community.

5.2 The prime concern will be to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of the Town, District and Local Centres, and to assist these centres to meet the needs of residents, workers and visitors. The concentration of activities in centres will also ensure that services and facilities are accessible by a choice of means of transport and facilitate linked trips (whereby one journey can fulfil a number of purposes). Centres will, therefore, be the preferred location for "town centre uses" (as defined in Policy S1) and public transport interchange facilities.

5.3 Encouragement will be given to the provision of housing within and close to Town, District and Local centres, subject to Policy S8.

The Sequential Approach

5.4 The Council will apply a sequential approach for the location of all retailing, leisure, other town centre uses, and public transport facilities in the following priority order:-

- Within the Town, District and Local Centres; then
- On the edge of the Town, District and Local Centres (see Policy S3); and only then
- Other places, in out-of-centre locations, that have, or will have, good accessibility by a choice of means of transport.

5.5 The relevant centre(s) in which to search for sites will depend on the nature and scale of the proposed development and the catchment which it is intended to serve. A higher order proposal in a lower order centre will not be acceptable if it would adversely affect the prospects for investment in a higher order centre, for example, a major proposal in a district or local centre would not be acceptable if it would adversely affect the trade or prospects for investment in a town centre. Out-of-centre development will only be acceptable if it can be demonstrated that there are no alternative opportunities within or, failing that, on the edge of existing centres. Out-of-centre development may be acceptable where there is a specific local need (see Policy S6); otherwise proposals for additional development for town centre uses outside of established centres will be considered against Policy S7.

5.6 The Council will apply the sequential approach in a flexible, realistic and sensitive manner, and will consider the needs of developers and operators. It will also expect applicants to be flexible about their requirements - in terms of unit sizes, layouts, ancillary facilities, car parking, servicing and design - so as not to preclude the possibility of identifying locations in centres. Where an edge-of-centre or out-of-centre proposal comprises different elements or units,

or involves adding floorspace to or within an existing or permitted development, then each part of the proposal should be considered separately for an in-centre location. In all cases, the key issue will be whether the type of activity proposed - rather than the type of building preferred by the developer or operator - can be accommodated in a more central position.

5.7 The Council will resist proposals for the movement of existing retailing, leisure, other town centre uses and public transport facilities to edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations where this would:-

- Lead to the loss of trade, activity or investment from the centre (taking into account any proposals for the re-use of the existing site); and/or
- Be contrary to Government guidance to improve accessibility to a range of facilities by means other than the car; and/or
- Conflict with Government guidance to reduce dependency on access by car and/or reduce car travel.

5.8 Development proposals in edge-of-centre and out-of-centre locations will also be subject to the provisions of Policy S6 ('Meeting Local Needs') and/or Policy S7 ('Out-of-Centre and Edge-of-Centre Developments').

Opportunities for Development and Investment

5.9 Part II of this Plan identifies opportunities for development and investment in the Borough's centres. It is considered that these are suitable, viable and available for the uses proposed. Where appropriate, the Council will take positive action to help bring opportunities forward, including the use of compulsory purchase and other powers and the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents.

5.10 The sites and opportunities identified, together with existing commitments, are considered sufficient to meet the needs of the Borough for the Plan period. Whilst additional proposals for development within centres will also be encouraged, subject to compatibility with other policies of the Plan, any further proposals for retailing, leisure or other town centre development in edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations will only be acceptable if in accordance with Policies S6 and S7.

Improvements to Centres

5.11 The Council will seek, together with the local community and businesses, to promote functional, transport, environmental and community safety improvements to maintain and enhance the attractiveness and accessibility of established centres as focal points for shopping and other commercial, leisure and community activities. The Council will also require a high standard of design in centres.

PART 2 DETAILED POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

INTRODUCTION

Policy Aim

5.12 The Council has established the following policy aim for strengthening our centres:

To continue to promote our established town, district and local centres as the main focus for shopping, services, leisure and other aspects of community life; and to make sure that these centres are easily accessible to everyone.

Background

5.13 This chapter is about strengthening our centres as the focus for a wide range of town centre uses, including offices, leisure and entertainment, services and community uses. However, retailing is the primary activity which underpins the vitality of centres, and so it will be appropriate to give particular attention to this aspect.

5.14 The past few decades have seen much activity in retailing and some significant changes in policy. The main trend in the 1970s and 1980s was decentralisation to out-of-centre sites in the form of freestanding stores, retail warehouse parks and large “regional” shopping centres. These are primarily aimed at car-borne shoppers and have led to increased reliance on the car, with adverse effects on pollution and energy consumption. They are generally not so accessible for people without the use of a car and can lead to social exclusion.

5.15 Although more recent years have seen continued pressures for out-of-centre retail development, planning policies such as those in the 1995 Plan, backed now even more firmly by Government policy, are turning the tide in favour of established centres once more. The Council has consistently sought to limit the amount of retail (and leisure) space permitted in inappropriate out-of-centre locations (notably within the former Black Country Development Corporation area) and has successfully resisted a proposal to relocate a major food store from the centre of Darlaston to an out-of-centre site allocated for employment uses. Meanwhile, the Borough has been successful in attracting investment to its centres, notably Walsall Town Centre, where the retail park at Town Wharf Phase 2 “Crown Wharf” has been constructed and planning permission has been granted for a major factory outlet centre / retail development at Digbeth.

5.16 On the other hand, considerable out-of-centre development has taken place at some places both within the Borough and in surrounding areas. In addition, general economic and retailing trends mean that there are pressures for growth in some major competing centres, whilst investment interest in the Borough’s centres is less strong. In these circumstances, all relevant investment needs to be directed towards sustaining and regenerating the Town, District and Local Centres. The Council has, therefore, resolved that established centres should be the primary location for all town centres uses and that all available policy mechanisms should be used to prevent out-of-centre development (other than that which meets identified local needs).

Retail and Centres Studies

5.17 In accordance with Government guidance, the Council has commissioned a number of major studies to provide data and expert opinion on current shopping habits and the prospects for retail and other investment in established centres:-

- Shoppers Survey - Donaldsons
- Health Checks for the Town and District Centres - Healey & Baker
- Household Survey of Shopping Habits - Roger Tym & Partners
- Retail Capacity Study - Roger Tym & Partners
- Study of Factory Outlet Proposals - Roger Tym & Partners

5.18 These studies have provided valuable information to support the policies and proposals of this Plan. The key findings of the studies are set out in the Retail and Centres Background Paper prepared with the First Deposit Draft Plan and are summarised briefly in Appendix 1.

Government Guidance

5.19 This Plan reflects Government guidance on retailing and other town centre developments, notably in PPG6 and in subsequent statements, including the Government's Responses to the House of Commons Environment Committee in 1997 and 2000 and Ministerial statements on need (1999) and local food shopping (2000).

5.20 PPG6 emphasises the importance of a plan-led approach to promoting town centres as the main focus for retailing, offices, leisure and other aspects of community life; establishes a "sequential approach" (sites in centres first, then edge-of-centre sites and then, only if these are not available, other locations served by a choice of means of transport); recognises the value of mixed use developments, coherent town centre parking strategies, town centre management and good urban design; acknowledges the contribution of district and local centres; and clarifies tests for assessing the impact of retail proposals.

5.21 The subsequent policy statements refine the guidance in PPG6 - particularly with regard to the sequential approach, introduce the test of whether there is a need for edge-of-centre or out-of-centre developments, and place increased emphasis on local food shopping and local centres.

GENERAL APPROACH

5.22 The Strategic Policy Statement puts the emphasis on the promotion of established centres at the Town, District and Local levels. These centres are seen as the primary focus for town centre uses (as defined in Policy S1). Centres are also recognised as being highly accessible by a choice of means of transport and facilitating linked trips whereby one journey can fulfil a number of purposes.

5.23 A sequential approach is set out in paragraphs 5.4 - 5.7, consistent with Government Guidance in PPG6 and subsequent statements of Government policy. This will ensure that investment is located as far as possible in the most central locations. The policy also recognises the importance of locating facilities, dependent on their scale and nature, in the most appropriate type of centre (see also Policy S2 which defines the hierarchy of centres). Developers will be expected to be flexible in their requirements in order to facilitate the identification of suitable opportunities in appropriate centres. The policy also makes it clear that proposals for decentralisation of town centre uses contrary to the sequential approach will be resisted.

5.24 Other paragraphs in the Strategic Policy Statement set the context for the encouragement of housing in town centres, the promotion of improvements in town centres and the identification of opportunities for development.

Policy S1: Definition of Town Centre Uses

- (a) For the purposes of this Plan, town centre uses comprise the following:-
- I. Retailing of all kinds, including not only convenience and comparison goods shops, but also warehouse clubs that share the characteristics of retail outlets¹, factory and designer outlet centres and retail markets.
 - II. Class A2 (financial, professional and other services) offices.
 - III. Class B1(a) offices.
 - IV. Class A3 food and drink uses and public houses (but see also Policy LC8 on local community uses, including public houses).²
 - V. Hotels, entertainment, leisure, indoor sports, health and fitness centres and other Class C1 & D2 and 'sui generis' uses which attract a significant number of trips³.
 - VI. Public service, cultural, community and health facilities in Class D1 which serve more than local needs in accordance with Policy S6.
 - VII. Higher, further and adult education facilities.
- (b) Where warehouse clubs do not sufficiently share the characteristics of retail outlets, they will be treated as "sui generis" uses, although the tests set out in Policy S7 will apply insofar as they are relevant.

5.25 This policy sets out those uses which the Council regards as town centre uses for the purposes of applying the sequential approach and other policies. The definition is consistent with that used in PPG6.

THE TOWN, DISTRICT AND LOCAL CENTRES

5.26 Taking forward the strong emphasis on established centres in the Strategic Policy Statement, this section sets out detailed policy guidelines for the Town, District and Local Centres. Policy S2 begins by clarifying the functions of centres at each level of the hierarchy. Policy S3 then deals with the way in which new developments should be integrated into centres. A set of general principles for the Town and District Centres is set out in Policy S4 and guidance for Local Centres is given in Policy S5. Shopping provision in Walsall, including the location of the Town, District and Local Centres, is illustrated in Fig. 5.1.

¹ When the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 2005 comes into force on 21st April 2005 retail warehouse clubs will be classed as 'sui generis' uses.

² When the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 2005 comes into force on 21st April 2005 this will also include uses in Class A4 (Pubs and Bars) and Class A5 (Hot Food Take-Aways).

³ When the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 2005 comes into force on 21st April 2005 nightclubs will be classified as 'sui generis' uses.

5.27 It should be noted that more detailed policies for Walsall Town Centre and the five District Centres are set out in Inset Plans (see Chapters 12 - 17).

Policy S2: The Hierarchy of Centres

(a) Main Town Centre - Walsall.

Walsall Town Centre will be sustained and enhanced in its sub-regional role as the main centre for the Borough, and some places farther afield, for comparison shopping and other town centre uses. These should particularly include leisure and entertainment facilities appropriate to the centre's sub-regional role. It is also recognised that Walsall has a local role meeting the needs of adjacent communities for convenience shopping and local amenities and services.

(b) District Centres - Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall.

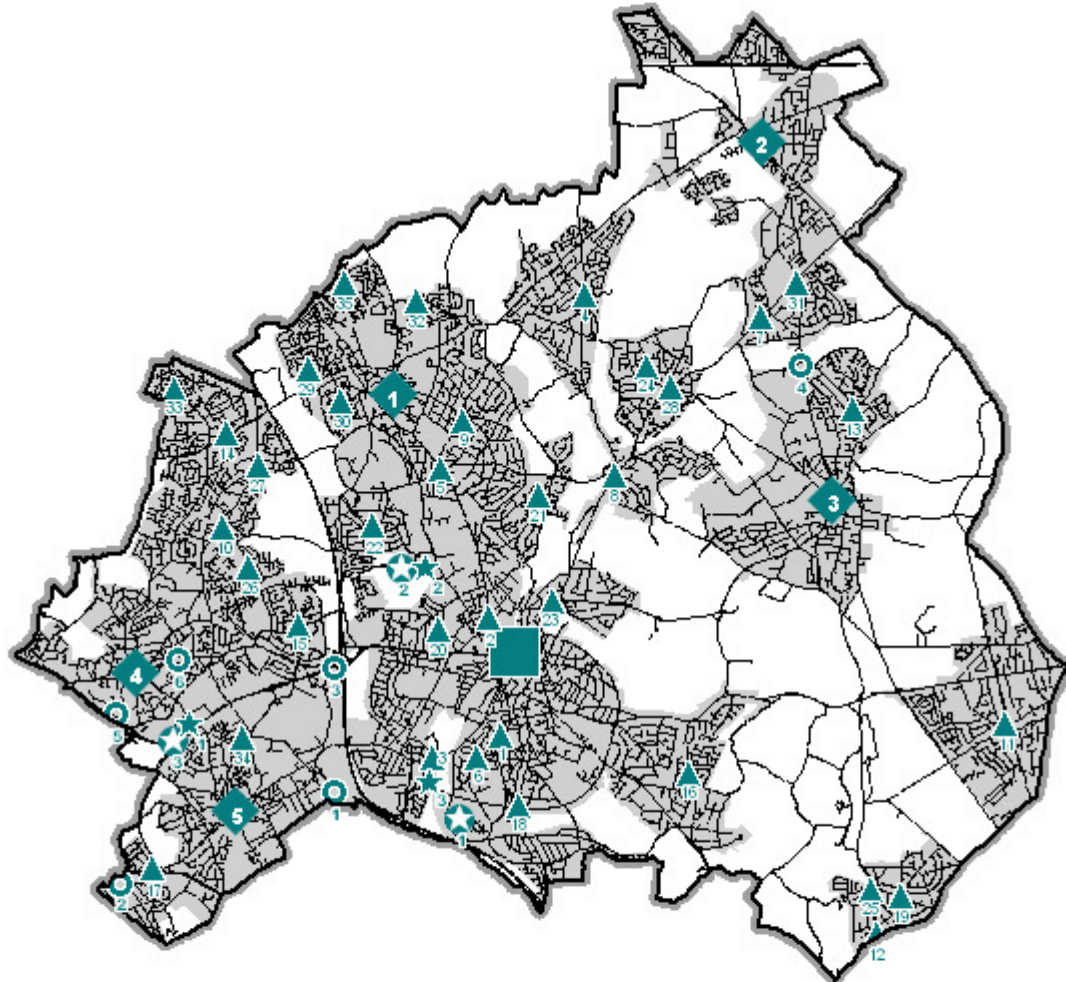
The district centres are smaller than Walsall Town Centre and serve more localised roles. However, they do provide substantial retail, service and other facilities and could be considered as town centres in their own right. Their main role is to meet the needs of their districts for convenience goods, local services and community facilities, although they all have some importance for comparison shopping. The District Centres could also potentially have roles in accommodating facilities of Borough-wide importance which cannot be located in Walsall Town Centre.

(c) The Local Centres - as defined on the Proposals Map.

Their main function is to meet the day-to-day convenience shopping and local service needs of their communities. These centres often have a special importance for certain sections of the community, such as ethnic minorities and the elderly.

5.28 This policy defines the three tiers of the centre hierarchy of the Borough and the functions that will be appropriate at each level. Such a policy is valuable in helping to ensure that developments are located in the type of centre that will be most appropriate to their scale, nature and potential catchment area.

Figure 5.1
Shopping Provision in Walsall Borough
April 2004



Key	
	Walsall Town Centre
	District Centres
	Out-Of-Centre Retail Parks
	Local Centres
	Out-Of-Centre Non-Food Stores
	Out-Of-Centre Foodstores

1. Bloxwich	4. Pelsall	7. High St, Walsall Wood	10. Lale Head	13. Lazy Hill	16. Park Hall	19. Collingwood Drive, Peasey	22. Beechdale	25. Beacon Road, Peasey	28. Silefield
2. Brownhills	5. Leamore	8. Rickhall	11. Streetly	14. New Invention	17. Moxley	20. Birchills	23. The Bricks	26. Brackendale	29. South Mossley
3. Aldridge	6. Palley	9. Blakehall	12. Oreslett	15. Bentley	18. Fallbrook	21. Coalpool / Ryecroft	24. Spring Lane, Silefield	27. Woodlands	30. Dudley Fields
4. Willenhall									31. Streets Corner
5. Darlaston									32. Burba Road, Blowlack
									33. Coppice Farm
									34. Darlaston Green
									35. Tenberry Road

1. Broadwalk	1. Lea	4. Focus
2. Reedswood	2. Coles of Bilston	5. Hooty's
3. Keyway	3. Boundary Mill Stores	6. Comet
		1. Milk Save, etc., Owell Road
		2. Salisbury, Reedswood
		3. Morrison, Fellows Park



Scale: 1:100,000

March 2005

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Policy S3: Integration of Developments into Centres

- (a) To ensure the proper integration of developments in or on the edge of centres, proposals should:-
- I. Be of scale and nature appropriate to the size and function of the centre concerned.
 - II. Be sensitively integrated, in functional and visual terms, with the primary shopping area and other land uses, pedestrian routes, car parking provision, public transport facilities, servicing arrangements, traffic circulation, and the local townscape.
- (b) Development proposals will be considered as in-centre or edge-of-centre according to the following principles:-
- I. Within the Town and District Centres in-centre developments will be within the Inset Plan areas.
 - Additionally, in-centre retail development should be within or directly adjoining the defined primary shopping area, and linked directly to a shopping frontage in that area.
 - Other activities which are likely to be visited on shopping trips should also be located close to the primary shopping area.
 - B1 offices and other uses which do not attract large numbers of visits from members of the public need not necessarily be close to the heart of a centre, but they should still have good pedestrian access to the centre's facilities and public transport links.
 - II. Edge-of-centre developments should satisfy the requirements of Policy S7 and have a positive relationship to a centre, taking into account the nature of the development and its potential users / customers, the location of the site and any barriers to pedestrian movement. In particular, in the Town and District Centres the definition of edge-of-centre will be applied to:-
 - Retail development that is within the Inset Plan area but outside of and not directly adjoining the primary shopping area, or not linked directly to any shopping frontage in that area.
 - Developments for other town centre uses which are located within the Inset Plan area, but are not well related to the defined primary shopping area or public transport facilities, or which are outside the Inset Plan area, but immediately adjoin it or which are or can be well-related to the facilities of the centre.
 - III. Developments in Local Centres will be within the boundaries shown on the Proposals Map. Edge-of-centre developments - for retailing and other uses - should be well located immediately adjoining or close to existing shopping / service provision and should not be more than 100 metres away (see also Policy S5).

- (c) **All developments within and on the edge of established centres should make best use of land and buildings within the centre, including upper floors. Development proposals which would prejudice a comprehensive approach to the use of land and buildings will normally be resisted (see also Policy GP1 in Chapter 2).**
- (d) **Where the impact of a development would otherwise be unacceptable, but can be satisfactorily mitigated by appropriate provision - for example, new or improved transport or social and community facilities - the Council will seek an appropriate planning obligation or agreement to secure the implementation and retention of the necessary measures.**

5.29 It is important that all developments within centres are carefully integrated into the existing urban fabric, both visually and functionally, so that they function properly as part of the centre as a whole and contribute positively towards the local townscape. Policy S3 sets out some general principles that will help to ensure that this is achieved. The policy will be applied at every level of the centres' hierarchy, including Local Centres.



ASDA, Darlaston; all district centres are anchored by a major foodstore.

Policy S4: The Town and District Centres: General Principles

- (a) **The Council will seek to sustain and enhance the range and quality of shopping, leisure and other town centre uses which these centres provide, consistent with the role and function of a centre within the hierarchy defined in Policy S2, in order to meet the needs and aspirations of all who use the centres.**
- (b) **In all centres the priority will be to safeguard the existing level of shopping, leisure and other provision. In some centres there is also scope for an increase in these uses which would help those centres maintain their vitality and viability. Guidance on the appropriate scale, type and location of new development is given in the Inset Plans for each centre. Generally, all new developments should be attractive for modern investment and it is considered that, provided they are acceptable in design and other terms, the creation of larger units should be encouraged.**
- (c) **Development must not be at the expense of the vitality and viability of the centre as a whole, or that of other centres within the Borough or elsewhere in the affected catchment area (within the terms set out in para. 5.5 of this chapter): the Council may require an impact assessment if it considers that a proposal might have adverse effects. Development must also be sensitively integrated into centres as set in Policy S3.**
- (d) **The Inset Plans identify a primary shopping area in the core of each centre. At ground floor level frontages within these areas, the Council will seek to ensure that the retail function is not prejudiced. Non-retail uses will, however, be permitted provided that these will:-**

 - I. Contribute to the vitality of the frontage by attracting additional trade and/or increasing the range of facilities on offer.**
 - II. Not detract from the retail function by creating ‘dead frontage’, or otherwise deterring shoppers, to an unacceptable extent or in an unacceptable location. In particular, non-retail uses are unlikely to be acceptable on both sides of the entrance to a shopping centre.**
 - III. Be open during shopping hours and incorporate a shop front and window display to maintain and enhance the interest and liveliness of the street scene.**
 - IV. Not detract from the amenities of the area in any other way (see also Policy S9 on Amusement Centres and Arcades and Policy S10 on Hot Food Takeaways, Restaurants and Other A3 (Food and Drink) Outlets⁴.**
- (e) **Elsewhere in centres, a mix of uses, including housing (see Policy S8),**

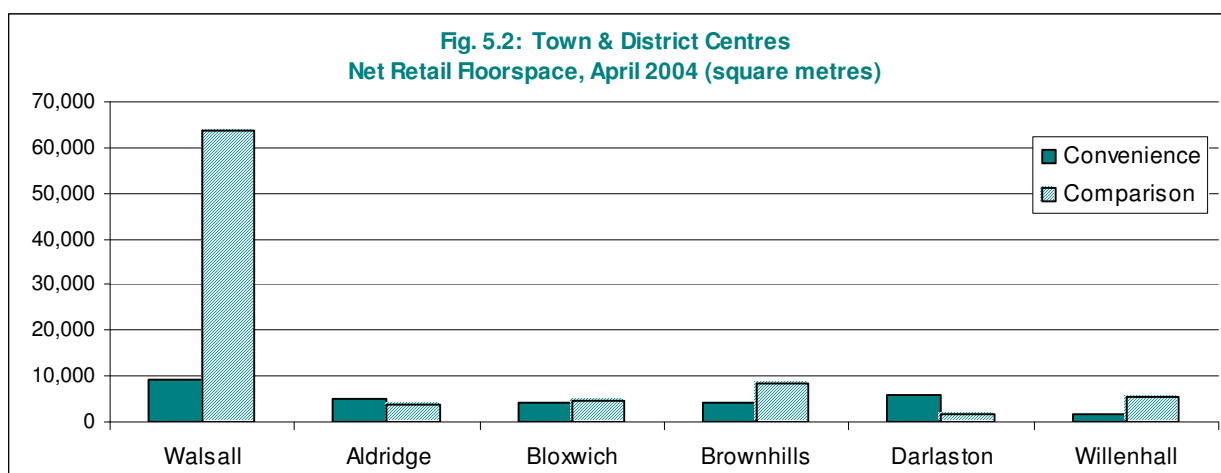
⁴ When the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 2005 comes into force on 21st April 2005 this will include all uses in Class A3 (Restaurants and Cafes), in Class A4 (Pubs and Bars) and Class A5 (Hot Food Take-Aways).

will be encouraged to add to the diversity of activities which is important for vitality and viability. This will include upper floors which will often be particularly suitable for housing provided that a satisfactory residential environment can be achieved. Other potential uses for upper floors include offices, services, leisure and community activities.

- (f) The Council will seek to further improve the environment of these centres, with particular stress on maintaining and enhancing their individual character. Improvements will be sought both through new investments and developments and through the Council's own actions.
- I. Development proposals will be required to have a high standard of design (in accordance with Policies ENV32 and ENV35 in Chapter 3) with special regard to Conservation Areas and commercial frontages and fascias.
 - II. Development proposals will also be required to give particular attention to the principles of designing-out-crime (see Policy GP7 in Chapter 2).
 - III. When considering development proposals, the Council will explore with developers the scope for carrying out improvement works and will also seek, if relevant, the provision of new or improved facilities to meet wider community and social needs.
 - IV. The Council will pursue a programme of improvements to help to make these centres more attractive and will also seek to encourage others to invest in improvements.
- (g) The Council will seek to improve accessibility to these centres by a choice of means of transport, whilst reducing the impact of traffic on the environment. Particular attention will be given to improving facilities for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists and to reducing unnecessary through traffic. While endeavouring to ease access for car borne shoppers and delivery vehicles the Council will also seek to ensure pedestrian access points are not compromised. Particular attention will be given to helping people with mobility problems in accordance with Policies GP6 and T1.
- (h) The Council will maintain, enhance and, where necessary, increase short stay public parking provision for shoppers and visitors to the centre as a whole in accordance with the principles set out in Policy T7.

5.30 This policy aims to give, as far as possible, a common set of guidelines for all the Town and District Centres. Detailed policies for each of the centres are set out in Inset Plans (see Chapters 12-17). Figure 5.2 illustrates the provision of shopping floorspace in the Town and District Centres.

5.31 Whilst the main emphasis in all centres will be on safeguarding and enhancing existing facilities, there are thought to be opportunities for growth in some centres. The UDP is a way of drawing attention to these opportunities but implementation will be dependent on market forces. The identification of opportunities should not be regarded as exhaustive or definitive: the Council will give consideration to other proposals in centres, provided these do not conflict with other policies of the Plan.



5.32 These centres are not only important for shopping. They are focal points for many other aspects of community life; providing entertainment, meeting places, pubs, restaurants, and a range of local services. These uses add to the variety and vitality of centres and are to be encouraged, provided they are appropriately sited.

5.33 One use that can contribute a great deal to centres is housing. This can bring life outside business hours, help meet the Borough's housing needs, help improve the environment, and achieve the fuller use of properties. A number of opportunities for housing are identified in the Inset Plans.

5.34 Within some centres there is considerable potential for the greater use of upper floors of premises. This vacant or underused floorspace can provide valuable opportunities for appropriate uses such as housing, offices or services, and, by making full economic use of premises, can help to finance their upkeep.

5.35 The Council will also seek to enhance the Borough's centres in a variety of ways. It will require a high standard of design from new developments, with particular regard to each centre's individual character and to key features such as shop fronts and fascias, and it will seek to develop Supplementary Planning Documents to clarify its design objectives for individual centres as required. Also, besides carrying out improvement works itself, the Council will encourage others to invest in the upkeep of sites and buildings. Where necessary, it will consider the use of its legal powers to require improvements.

5.36 To support the Inset Plans for the Town and District Centres, the Council is preparing Town Centre Strategies for each centre; those for Walsall Town Centre and Bloxwich, Brownhills and Darlaston District Centres have already been produced. These strategies, which are subject to public consultation and will be up-dated on a regular basis, are intended to:-

- provide Supplementary Planning Guidance / Supplementary Planning Documents;
- set out action programmes of works to help sustain and enhance the centres;
- provide a basis for promotional and marketing activities to attract both customers and investors; and

- put forward a framework for developing the existing town centre management initiative for Walsall Town Centre and extending it to the District Centres.



New apartments under construction close to Walsall's primary shopping area

Policy S5: The Local Centres

- (a) **The boundaries of the Local Centres are defined on the Proposals Map. These boundaries are drawn tightly to concentrate investment and within these areas the retention, enhancement and further development of shops, services and other town centre uses will be encouraged. In centres where retailing and/or services are contracting other uses such as housing will be favourably considered provided that the remaining retail / service function of the centre is not prejudiced. Outside of the Local Centre boundaries, existing retail and other town centre uses are anticipated to remain, but vacant land and premises will be considered for other uses, including housing. Development of town centre uses on the edge of Local Centres, outside the defined boundaries, will only be permitted if the proposed development:-**
- I. Cannot be accommodated within the centre.**
 - II. Is of an appropriate scale for the centre concerned - see also Policy S2.**
 - III. Is well integrated with the centre - see also Policy S3.**
- (b) **The Council will review the need for further Local Centres to serve large new housing developments, or existing residential areas inadequately served by the present pattern of centres.**
- (c) **The Council will pursue a programme of improvements to local shopping centres. This will seek to enhance their shopping and other roles, and will normally be prioritised according to the following criteria:**
- I. Centres which are particularly significant in terms of their size, function or character.**
 - II. Centres which are particularly in need of enhancement due to poor environment, poor building condition, traffic or parking problems.**
 - III. Centres which are potentially threatened by competing developments elsewhere, but whose future vitality and viability can be secured by a programme of positive action.**
 - IV. Centres where it is necessary to plan for decline in shopping and/or services, by promoting other land uses.**
- (d) **The Council has identified a number of opportunities for development and investment in Local Centres and these are set out below. A comprehensive approach should be taken towards the opportunities identified and developments should be at an appropriate scale and accord with the policies of this plan, including with regard to access, servicing and the effect on nearby existing or future residents. In most cases, these opportunities will be suitable in principle for any kind of 'town centre' use (retailing, services, leisure / community uses) or for housing, but where an opportunity is considered most suitable for a particular use this is noted below:-**

Pleck:

Land between 303 and 319 Wednesbury Road - where additional retail development will only be acceptable for uses which cannot be accommodated in existing shop units in the centre.

Pelsall:

- I. Land between 25 High Street and the library.
- II. Land south of 24 Norton Road, excluding the public conveniences.

Leamore:

Land to the north of the former Rosum bingo hall (including 639 Bloxwich Road).

Blakenall:

- I. The Council neighbourhood office site and land adjoining 166 Blakenall Lane - where retail development is to be particularly preferred.
- II. Land at Walker Road adjoining the community centre.

Lane Head:

Land and buildings between 60 and 66 High Road*.

**Planning permission was granted for housing on this site in February 2003.*

Lazy Hill:

Land at the rear of 196-210a Walsall Wood Road.

The Square, New Invention:

Garage court to the north east of The Square - which represents an opportunity for community/ service uses.

Bentley:

- I. Land adjoining the Old Hall public house - where retail uses will only be acceptable if they cannot be accommodated in the existing shopping parade on Queen Elizabeth Avenue. Any development of this site must demonstrate that significant ground condition problems can be overcome.
- II. Land to the rear of the shops in Queen Elizabeth Avenue - which may be suitable for residential development.

Moxley:

- I. Land off Grocott Road - which should be developed for community uses or for housing, or alternatively may be used for car parking.
- II. Land east of 48 High Street, west of Burns Road (excluding the Vicarage and nos. 1 and 3 Burns Road) - here the western half of the site should be developed for housing*.

**The western half of the site was granted full planning permission for housing development in 2001.*

Coalpool/ Ryecroft:

Land on the eastern side of Coalpool Lane, including land adjoining the Methodist Church and the library and health centre.

The Butts:

Mellish Road Methodist Church - which should be retained and re-used*.

**Planning permission has been granted for change of use to offices in November 2001.*

Woodlands:

The Woodlands Centre - this may be redeveloped, provided the existing convenience shopping function is retained and, if possible, enhanced.

Streets Corner, Walsall Wood:

Land fronting the Oak Park Recreation Centre Car Park - which should be used to accommodate an A3 (food and drink) use.

- (e) **The Council will prepare Supplementary Planning Documents, where necessary, to guide the future of selected Local Centres, provide more details of development opportunities listed in this policy, and identify any further opportunities to meet local needs.**

5.37 There are 35 Local Centres defined on the Proposals Map. These centres generally meet day-to-day convenience goods needs, and are especially useful to the elderly and less mobile. Sale of comparison goods tends to be very limited, although this can be significant in some centres which, for example, have a special role in providing a wide range of goods for ethnic minority groups. Local Centres are also often of great importance for services and as the main focal points for the community life of their areas.

5.38 Subject to the availability of financial resources, the Council will pursue a programme of improvements to the environment of Local Centres. In recent years schemes have been funded from a variety of sources including the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and it will seek to use whatever resources are available, including any that might be available through the Walsall, Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire Regeneration Zone. The policy provides a basis for deciding priorities for investment in Local Centres.

5.39 The policy identifies a number of opportunities for development and investment in some of the Local Centres. This list is not to be regarded as definitive or exhaustive and the Council will give favourable consideration to other development proposals that accord with the principles set out in the policy.

5.40 Where appropriate, the Council will prepare Supplementary Planning Documents for Local Centres. This may be necessary, for example, for those centres which are particularly subject to change, those which are considered to be priorities for improvement action under the criteria set out in part (c) of the policy, or those where new investment is needed to meet local needs. As an example, the Council considers there is a need to identify a site for a new convenience store in the Local Centre at Stafford Street.

DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE CENTRES

5.41 Other parts of this chapter make it clear that the primary location for retailing, leisure and other town centre uses will be established centres, in accordance with the sequential approach. However, proposals for these uses may continue to come forward in out-of-centre or edge-of-centre locations. The policies in this section, therefore, provide further guidance on how such proposals will be assessed and determined. Firstly, Policy S6 covers meeting “local needs” in locations away from centres: this relates essentially to small-scale facilities serving a particular local community. Secondly, Policy S7 deals with all other out-of-centre or edge-of-centre proposals, which would include more major schemes.



In Woodlands Local Centre

Policy S6: Meeting Local Needs

- (a) Outside the identified centres, existing local shopping, service, leisure, community and other facilities - in the form of shopping parades, clusters, single shops and other local provision - will be encouraged to continue to meet the day-to-day needs of their communities, unless it can be shown that the requirements of policy LC8 in Chapter 8 would be met.
- (b) The Council will take account of the particular significance of local shops, services and facilities (including the accessibility of alternative provision) when considering applications for change of use of these premises to other activities. Where facilities (such as post offices, pharmacies and banks) are judged to serve an important local need, the Council may seek to restrict such changes of use.

- (c) **There are some areas, away from established centres, which are poorly served in quantitative and/or qualitative terms by existing local provision for convenience shopping, local services, eating and drinking places, and health, community and local education facilities. Out-of-centre development may be appropriate to meet such specific local needs - otherwise proposals for additional out-of-centre development for town centre uses will be considered against policy S7. Therefore, new small-scale local facilities, or extensions to existing facilities, will be permitted if it can be shown that all of the following requirements will be met:-**
- I. The proposal is of a scale and kind to meet a local need for improved facilities.**
 - II. The local need cannot be better met by investment in a nearby centre.**
 - III. There will be no likelihood of an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of any established centre in the Borough or elsewhere within the affected catchment area.**
 - IV. There will be no impact on existing local provision such as to leave some local needs unmet, contrary to efforts to promote social inclusion.**
 - V. The proposal will improve accessibility to facilities by means other than the car and, in particular, will be within convenient, safe walking distance of the community it is intended to serve.**
 - VI. The proposal will help to reduce the need to travel, especially by car.**
 - VII. There must be no significant loss of amenity for neighbouring homes. To ensure this, the establishment of shops or other uses that attract the public in terraced properties adjoining dwellings will not normally be permitted.**
 - VIII. Servicing and parking associated with the proposed use must not create any significant road safety or traffic problems.**
- (d) **The Council will seek to define areas where there is a lack of local facilities, such as residential areas which are more than 500m from a food shop. In such areas it will work with the local community to identify ways of providing new facilities to meet local needs (or improving access to existing facilities) in accordance with the principles set out above.**
- (e) **Where there are suitable vacant premises in the area, the Council will normally prefer that these are used to accommodate new facilities. Otherwise, the Council will normally encourage new facilities to be provided adjacent to existing shop clusters or parades, wherever feasible.**

5.42 The Council's approach is that the Borough's centres should be enabled to meet as many of residents' needs as possible. However, it also recognises that, as set out in recent Ministerial statements, all sections of the community, especially those whose mobility may be limited, should have easy access local shopping and services. Policy S6 seeks to ensure that local needs can be met at a local level and that shopping

and community provision can be improved in areas which are poorly-served at present. In doing this, however, it seeks to ensure that the development of local facilities should not threaten the vitality and viability of established centres, to the detriment of the community as a whole. A policy for shops at petrol filling stations is included as policy S12.

5.43 The Council notes the particular significance of local services such as post offices and chemists shops and, although it has no direct control over the loss of such facilities under planning powers, it will when appropriate seek to encourage their retention in other ways: for example, conditions can be imposed on new developments to exclude elements, such as pharmacies (see Policy S7(c)), which could lead to the loss of similar facilities elsewhere in the local area. Policy LC8 in Chapter 8 seeks to protect local community facilities such as pubs.

Policy S7: Out-of-Centre and Edge-of-Centre Developments

- (a) Proposals for the establishment or expansion of retailing or other town centre uses in out-of-centre or edge-of-centre locations (except where in accordance with Policy S6 or where existing commitments or proposals of the Plan) will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that all of the following tests are fulfilled:-**
- I. There must be evidence to demonstrate the need for the facility. Depending on the nature of the proposal, this should be assessed not only in terms of the availability of consumer expenditure to support a commercial scheme (taking into account not only existing provision, but also committed developments, and also proposals - i.e. the proposals of this Plan, and of other up-to-date development plans and Supplementary Planning Guidance or Documents - in Walsall Borough and in surrounding areas), but also evidence of the adequacy of existing provision in the area (including its accessibility for people within the catchment area of the proposed development) and/or public support for an expression of community need.**
 - II. The development must be shown to accord with the sequential approach (see paragraphs 5.4 - 5.7), there being no more centrally located sites, buildings or opportunities which could be used to serve the catchment area of the use proposed.**
 - III. The proposal must not, individually or in combination with other schemes (including other recently completed developments, outstanding planning permissions, and proposals in this and other up-to-date development plans and Supplementary Planning Guidance or Documents), be likely to have an adverse economic impact upon the vitality and viability of any existing Town, District or Local Centre (within or outside the Borough) through the diversion of trade and/or deterrence of investment which would help sustain and enhance that centre, bearing in mind the strategy for the centre set out in the development plan, and in any Supplementary Planning Guidance or Documents.**

- IV.** The proposal must not have an adverse economic impact on existing or planned provision to meet local needs - convenience shopping, local services, eating and drinking and health, community and local education facilities - which would increase the number of residents who would be deprived of easy access to basic shops and services and which would undermine measures to increase access to local provision under Policy S6, i.e.:
- the effect of the proposal should not be such as to risk leaving any residential area without a food shop within 500m; and
 - there should not be a risk to publicly-funded local regeneration initiatives to provide facilities to meet local needs.
- V.** The proposal must offer genuine and realistic safe and easy access by public transport, walking and cycling for all sections of the community, and from a wide catchment area, to help achieve better access to facilities and development by a choice of sustainable transport modes. Consideration must be given to whether an alternative location in a centre would ensure easier access. Where an out-of-centre or edge-of-centre scheme is to be permitted the Council will require the development to make provision for improvements to public transport and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, as necessary to meet the accessibility standards set out in Chapter 7 of this plan (see especially policies T10, T11 and T12). Thus, whilst accessibility improvements may not be required in every case, it is much more likely that substantial improvements will be necessary to help justify large-scale developments in out-of-centre locations away from established centres and public transport facilities.
- VI.** The proposal should not be designed and located so as to be reliant primarily on access by car and should, insofar as possible, contribute to the objective of reducing the need to travel, especially by car. Again, consideration must be given to whether an alternative location in a centre would facilitate multi-purpose trips and help reduce car use. Where proposals are to be permitted the Council may require a green transport plan (see Chapter 7).
- VII.** The proposal must not have an adverse traffic impact on the local highway network. Where appropriate, the Council will seek necessary highway and access improvements (see Chapter 7).
- VIII.** The proposal must not conflict with policies for the protection of employment land (see Chapter 4) or with any other policies of the Plan.
- (b)** For all applications involving 2,500 sq.m. gross floorspace and over, developers will be required to provide evidence to satisfy all of the tests set out in part (a) of this policy. For smaller schemes, evidence will be required on those tests for which, in the opinion of the Council, the

proposal is likely to have significant adverse implications. In all cases, developers will be required to demonstrate that there is a need for the proposed facility and that the proposal accords with the sequential approach.

- (c) Where necessary, when edge-of-centre or out-of-centre developments are approved, the Council will impose appropriate planning conditions and/or obligations to ensure that such developments will not change their character in such a way as to have an adverse impact in terms of the policies of this Plan. The particular conditions and/or obligations to be attached will depend on the character of individual schemes, but the following principles will be followed for retail developments:-
- I. Maximum and minimum unit sizes will be controlled and, in particular, (apart from external sales and storage areas) no comparison retail units of under 929 sq.m. (10,000 sq.ft.) gross will normally be allowed.
 - II. Sub-division of units will be restricted and internal sub-divisions or sub-lets should not account for more than 10% of any unit allowed and should not give the appearance of multiple occupation.
 - III. The ranges of goods to be sold will be restricted to those which led to the edge-of-centre or out-of-centre development being justified, and in the case of comparison retailing only bulky goods will be allowed.
 - IV. Consideration will be given to the range and proportion of ancillary services and activities proposed and, in particular, post office and pharmacy facilities will not be allowed.
- (d) Where edge-of-centre or out-of-centre developments have been allowed subject to conditions / obligations, the Council will seek appropriate opportunities to ensure that these may be brought into line with current planning policy. Applications to vary conditions to broaden the range of retailing or other activity should be considered against all of the relevant tests set out under part (a) of this policy.
- (e) The Council will encourage proposals for the conversion or redevelopment of freestanding out-of-centre units which are, or have been, used for retailing or other town centre uses to employment, housing or other appropriate uses, subject to environmental and traffic considerations and other policies of the Plan.

5.44 An essential element of the strategy for sustaining and enhancing established centres and facilities to meet the needs of all sections of the community is a firm policy towards out-of-centre or edge-or-centre developments. It is, however, accepted that these developments can sometimes have a role to play, provided that this is strictly complementary to that of established centres. To ensure this, the Council proposes to use all of the planning tests available on the basis of Government policy and to make certain that, where necessary, developers provide evidence to demonstrate that a proposal meets all of the tests set out in the policy. Where the tests are satisfied, it may be appropriate to combine future development with existing schemes and to negotiate

for public transport improvements, although a clearly defined need would have to have been established for development outside of existing centres.

5.45 Several major out-of-centre shopping schemes have been developed in and around Walsall, whilst a number of other significant proposals are already committed. Within the Borough, out-of-centre retail parks have been developed at Bescot, at Reedswood and at the Keyway, whilst there are also several out-of-centre stores (see Figure 5.1). Just outside the Borough, the former Black Country Development Corporation gave permissions for two large out-of-centre retail developments at Axletree Way in Sandwell and Bentley Bridge in Wolverhampton. The very large out-of-centre retail development at Merry Hill in Dudley has also had an impact throughout the sub-region. Given the extent of these existing schemes and commitments, and the potential serious impact on established centres and the implementation of the policies of this Plan, the Council will need to look very carefully at the implications of applications to further expand the scale and range of retailing in edge- and out-of-centre locations, whether these be new developments or expansion of existing facilities. Similar considerations apply to other town centre uses, such as leisure: out-of-centre schemes (again primarily through the BCDC) and major developments in surrounding areas mean that investment in the Borough's centres is vulnerable.

5.46 As growth and change continue in retailing and other sectors, some large free-standing units may no longer be needed for retailing or other town centre uses. These are likely to be older premises which are less suitable in market, policy or environmental terms, and which are isolated from other shopping facilities. In such cases the Council considers that the conversion or redevelopment for other uses would be appropriate.



Walsall Leather Museum

OTHER POLICIES

Policy S8: Housing in Town Centres

- (a) Investment in housing development within and close to Town, District and Local Centres will be encouraged, both on new sites and through the conversion of existing buildings, including upper floors. However, any such proposals must:-
- I. Be able to achieve a satisfactory residential environment, taking account of the considerations set out in Policy ENV10 although it will be recognised that the particular benefits of living in a centre could mean the acceptable level of residential amenity may not be the same as that expected in suburban locations.
 - II. Support, and not prejudice, a centre's retail, commercial and leisure functions, including the growth of the evening economy.
- (b) When granting permission for housing development in an established centre, the Council will normally consider the need for conditions / obligations to:-
- I. Require a design and layout which would minimise potential conflict and disturbance between residents and nearby town centre uses.
 - II. Require sound insulation in properties that are to be used for housing - and, where appropriate, in adjacent properties.
 - III. Restrict the occupation of the proposed housing, where the units provided would be unsuitable for families with children.
- (c) When considering the need for conditions / obligations, the Council will have regard to the extent the measures required would be compatible with the design and / or historic importance of the buildings in question.

5.47 The Council recognises that the provision of housing in established centres offers an opportunity to attract more activity and investment - in a form which helps to develop a sense of identity and keep centres alive outside shopping hours - whilst enabling residents to live close to a wide range of facilities. However, encouragement for housing needs to be balanced against potential conflicts with town centre uses, notably leisure and entertainment and restaurant and take-away uses, so that housing development does not prevent other investment required for the centre to fulfil its role on the one hand, and so that unacceptable residential living conditions are not created on the other. Where the Council does allow housing developments in centres it will have regard to these issues and impose conditions as appropriate.

Policy S9: Amusement Centres and Arcades

- (a) **These uses will be appropriate, in principle, within the Town, District and Local Centres but will not normally be permitted if the proposal would:-**
- I. **Be prejudicial to the predominant retail function of a primary shopping frontage (see also Policy S4).**
 - II. **Adversely affect the amenities of existing or proposed dwellings (including those on upper floors above commercial premises) or other sensitive uses such as schools and places of worship, by reason of noise or disturbance.**
 - III. **Adversely affect the appearance or setting of a Listed Building, or the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.**
- (b) **Where permission is to be granted for a proposal in a retail frontage, the Council will normally require:-**
- I. **Provision of a shop front and permanent shop window display.**
 - II. **Conditions to regulate opening hours to ensure that the use normally operates during shopping hours and that closing times are set so as to limit the impact on any nearby residents - in such situations, the Council will usually impose a condition requiring the premises to close at 23:00 hours Monday to Friday and 23:30 hours on Saturdays - later opening hours and Sunday opening will be considered on their merits.**
 - III. **Noise attenuation measures to restrict the impact on the surrounding area including upon nearby residents.**

5.48 Proposals for these uses can give rise to a number of issues, including displacement of retail uses, disturbance of nearby residents and others, and visual impact on the street scene. The policy seeks, therefore, to direct proposals away from more sensitive locations.

Policy S10: Hot Food Take-Aways, Restaurants and Other A3 (Food and Drink) Outlets⁵

These uses will be appropriate in the Town, District and Local Centres (subject to Policy S4) and in some shopping and commercial frontages elsewhere (if in accordance with Policies S6 and S7), subject to the following considerations:-

- I. **The use proposed must not adversely affect the amenities of existing or proposed dwellings (including those on upper floors above commercial premises) by reason of noise, smell, disturbance or traffic impact. Where there are existing activities which are open during the late evening, the Council will have regard to the cumulative impact on residential amenity.**

⁵ When the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 2005 comes into force on 21st April 2005 this will include all uses in Class A3 (Restaurants and Cafes), in Class A4 (Pubs and Bars) and Class A5 (Hot Food Take-Aways).

- II. Where the Council is minded to grant planning permission, the closing time for hot food takeaways will be considered in relation to the amenities of nearby dwellings - both existing and proposed - where these are likely to be affected. In such locations, the Council will usually impose a condition requiring the premises to close at 23.00 hours Monday to Friday and 23.30 hours on Saturdays. Later opening hours and Sunday opening will be considered on their merits.
- III. Permission will not be granted where the absence of adequate off-street parking would be likely to lead to on-street parking in a hazardous location.
- IV. Permission will only be granted where ventilation and fume extraction equipment can be positioned to avoid potential problems of noise, vibration and/or odour nuisance for nearby occupiers and the equipment would not be detrimental to visual amenity.

5.49 The Council recognises that these uses provide an important local service and can, if in the right places, add to the vitality of centres. However, these uses often pose environmental issues and the policy seeks to direct proposals towards appropriate locations whilst protecting the amenities of local residents and other occupiers, and avoiding road safety hazards.



Victorian Arcade, Walsall

Policy S11: Drive-Through Facilities

- (a) Drive-through or drive-in facilities will be discouraged, unless it can be shown that this format is an absolute requirement of the use proposed, which cannot be met in any other way, rather than simply the preference of the operator. In particular, insistence on the inclusion of a drive-through facility should not be a reason to require an edge-of-centre or out-of-centre, rather than an in-centre, location.**
- (b) Facilities should instead be provided in centres, where they will be accessible by a choice of means of transport, and must be well integrated, both functionally and visually into the centre concerned (see Policy S3), with any parking provision serving the centre as a whole.**

5.50 The concept of drive-through or drive-in facilities usually involves dedicated on-site car parking provision for customers, who may park either whilst they visit the premises or are served in their cars. The format is most commonly applied to fast food outlets but might also be used for other goods and services.

5.51 Since this marketing format is clearly aimed at encouraging car-based trade it is liable to be in direct conflict with Government policies, and the policies of this Plan, for reducing reliance on the use of the private car. For this reason, Policy S11 discourages such facilities and encourages operators to provide goods and services in other ways.

Policy S12: Petrol Filling Station Shops

- (a) Retailing at petrol filling stations should be ancillary to the principal use of the site for the sale of fuel and confined to motoring accessories, newspapers and magazines, tobacco and confectionery, and a limited range of basic food and convenience goods. The gross retail floorspace should not normally exceed 50 square metres.**
- (b) The customer base of such shops should primarily be motorists who are visiting the site to purchase fuel, although it is accepted that some petrol filling station shops also have a small element of walk-in trade from local people. The shop should not seek to trade as a significant retail destination in its own right.**
- (c) Proposals for retailing over and above that allowable under (a) and (b) will be subject to Policies S6 and S7.**

5.52 It is commonplace for petrol filling stations to include small shops selling a limited range of basic items mainly to motorists buying fuel. There is, however, a tendency for these shops to become larger and to sell an increasing range of goods. Some petrol companies and major retailers are developing new retail formats which involve expanding the simple petrol filling station shop into a mini-supermarket which would be attractive to general retail customers, not just motorists buying fuel.

5.53 Whilst the small, ancillary petrol filling station shop is recognised as fulfilling a useful role, larger mini-supermarkets would have significant policy implications, particularly for the objective of concentrating investment in centres, including local centres, under the sequential approach. Policy S12, therefore, places limits on the types of retailing that will normally be considered acceptable at petrol filling stations.

Policy S13: Nurseries, Garden Centres & Builders Merchants

- (a) **Nurseries, garden centres and builders merchants, because of the bulky nature of the products involved, may need to trade from out-of-centre locations. Such uses should, however, be located as far as possible in places accessible by a choice of means of transport.**
- (b) **The Council will impose conditions to ensure that the goods to be sold are limited to an appropriate range of gardening and/or building products and do not include other goods that can more appropriately be retailed in centres.**
- (c) **The establishment of new, or the expansion of existing, nurseries, garden centres and builders merchants in the Green Belt will be subject to policies in Chapter 3.**

5.54 Nurseries, garden centres and builders merchants sell trees, plants and bulky materials which require a large amount of display space (usually outdoors) and are difficult to transport without easy access by cars or vans. As such, it is often unrealistic to expect such uses to be located within, or even on the edge of, centres. Where new facilities are being considered, however, these should as far as possible be accessible by a choice of means of transport to cater for people who do not have the use of a car.

5.55 There is a tendency for garden centres, in particular, to diversify into miscellaneous goods which are not directly related to gardening or building products and which can be sold quite adequately in established centres. The Council will, therefore, impose conditions to limit the range of goods to be sold.

5.56 The ancillary sale to the public of products made on the premises is covered in Policy JP7 in Chapter 4.

Policy S14: Farm Shops

- (a) **The establishment or expansion of farm shops will only be permitted if:-**
 - I. **This involves the conversion of an existing building within the farm curtilage.**
 - II. **Satisfactory vehicular access, and off-road parking, can be provided to safeguard highway safety.**
 - III. **The proposal is otherwise acceptable in terms of policies ENV2, ENV3 and ENV6.**
- (b) **Where planning permission is granted, conditions will be imposed limiting the range of goods for sale primarily to agricultural produce from the general locality.**

5.57 Farm shops are one way of diversifying the rural economy and can provide access to fresh locally grown produce for local people. The Council is concerned to ensure, however, that such shops are sensitively integrated into the countryside through the appropriate conversion of existing buildings and that there will be no threat to highway safety. It will also be important to limit the goods to be sold to locally grown produce in order to prevent the retail of goods that should more appropriately be sold through established centres. Proposals for farm shops to sell a wider range of products will be considered against Policies S6 or S7 as appropriate.

Policy S15: Banking and Cashpoint Facilities

- (a) Banking and ATM facilities will be encouraged in Town, District and Local Centres where appropriate. They will also be accepted in out-of-centre developments where a clear need can be demonstrated and they would not place at risk the continued provision of such facilities in any established centre in terms of Policy S7.**
- (b) In all cases, proposals for these facilities, and particularly for ATM's, should be appropriately located and designed to ensure:-**
 - I. That the amenities of nearby residents are not adversely affected, and the Council may impose conditions to prevent the facility from operating after 23:00 hours Sunday to Friday and 23:30 hours on a Saturday.**
 - II. The facility can be used and accessed safely, in accordance with the principles of designing out crime set out in Policy GP7: Community Safety.**
 - III. Satisfactory, preferably off-street, parking can be provided in the interests of highway safety**

5.58 Financial services have seen considerable growth and change over recent years, notably the increase in cashpoint (ATM) facilities at the same time that local branches in District and Local Centres have been closed. The Council recognises that new patterns of development and activity have created new demands for facilities, but this should not be at the expense of bank branches in centres which are accessible to all sections of the community. Where new facilities are provided they should be acceptable in amenity, and road and community safety terms.

Policy S16: Internet Shopping

- (a) Facilities for the collection of goods ordered from the internet will be regarded as retail outlets if they also sell goods directly to the general public, and they will then be subject to the policies of this plan which apply to these uses.**
- (b) If such facilities are simply for the collection of goods ordered previously, this will be ensured by the use of appropriate conditions / obligations. Such outlets will be regarded as a 'sui generis' use. These facilities should be located where they will be accessible by a choice of means of transport and will lead to a reduction in the need to travel, especially by car.**

5.59 The development of internet shopping, besides affecting existing retailing, is leading to the development of new facilities, particularly collection points for goods. Such facilities are likely to attract significant numbers of the public to collect their goods and it is important that they are located so as to complement policies to increase accessibility and reduce the need to travel. This is likely to mean that sites close to existing centres and other locations which are well-served by public transport and already attract significant trips will be most appropriate. The Council may prepare Supplementary Planning Documents as necessary for these facilities and for other uses which are generated by increasing economic and technological change.

Policy S17: Shopmobility

The Council will give priority to the needs of disabled people in the Town and the District Centres. It will promote and encourage the development of Shopmobility facilities which break down the barriers encountered by disabled and elderly people and between points of access and shops and other Town Centre facilities. Premises should be in, or in close proximity to, the primary shopping area and close to disabled car parking and the public transport interchange. They should also be suitable for the storage of equipment, a workshop and operation area.

5.60 Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, access by disabled people to goods, facilities and services on site is the responsibility of the trader or service provider. Shopmobility projects, which are generally run by access groups with the help of the Council and other interested parties, aim to connect car parks and public transport facilities with shops and services. This benefits individuals by providing increased shopping choice and a focal point for the wider community, and unlocks the potential market that disabled people offer as a whole, thereby generating returns on investment. The main priority for developing shopmobility will be in Walsall Town Centre in view of its status as a focal point with a boroughwide catchment.

5.61 An autonomous shopmobility scheme was established on Walsall Town Centre in 1998. The main problem has however been the lack of premises from which to operate and expand. Apart from assisting such groups to gain access to funding sources, the Council will continue to help them look for such premises, for example through discussion with developers and other interested parties.

INDICATORS

The following will be monitoring indicators for the UDP:-

- The proportion of all development for retailing, leisure and other town centre uses that takes place in established centres. The target will be for this to be at least 90%.
- The extent of vacant floorspace in centres, including in particular that at ground floor in shopping frontages. The target will be for this to be at or below the national average at all times.

6 HOUSING

PART I STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT

The Existing Housing Stock

6.1 The Council will promote and encourage the improvement of the existing housing stock wherever feasible. Except where it is required to make way for other desirable development schemes, demolition will only be favoured where any other solution would not represent good value for money or would be environmentally unsatisfactory. Any decision on demolition will follow an appraisal of alternative options and take account of other relevant considerations, as described in Part II. Where appropriate, environmental enhancement schemes will be carried out to complement improvement works to the housing stock.

6.2 When there is an imbalance between households in housing need and the types of accommodation available, the conversion of dwellings into smaller or larger units will be encouraged, provided that the Council's standards of amenity and design are met. The Council will also seek to reduce vacancies in the existing dwelling stock in order to make best use of available housing resources.

Housing Supply

HOU1, HOU2

6.3 Provision will be made for the accommodation of at least 10,100 additional dwellings over the period 1991 to 2011 (on average 505 per year). In identifying opportunities for new housing the emphasis will be on:-

- A sequential approach which maximises the re-use of previously developed land and buildings within the urban area before the use of greenfield land.
- Locations which have, or will have, good accessibility by a choice of means of transport and which are well related to local facilities. Particular attention will be given to opportunities within or close to town, district and local centres (including upper floors above shops and other business premises) provided that their retail and commercial functions are not prejudiced.
- Utilising the available capacity of existing or potential physical and social infrastructure, including public transport, water and drainage, other utilities, schools and hospitals.
- The potential to build communities to support new physical and social infrastructure and to provide sufficient demand to sustain appropriate local services and facilities.
- Taking account of the physical and environmental constraints on development of land, including contamination, stability and flood risk.

6.4 The Council will aim for the supply of a range of housing opportunities throughout the Plan period. The adequacy of housing land provision, including the balance between the use of greenfield and previously developed land, will be kept under review through the “plan, monitor, manage” approach as outlined in PPG3, and action taken, if necessary, to facilitate the supply of land.

Meeting Housing Needs

HOU2, HOU3, HOU4

6.5 In considering proposals for housing development, the Council will take into account the needs and characteristics of the Borough's population, including the need for affordable housing and the particular requirements of groups such as the elderly, single people, one parent families, large families, disabled people and key workers. To provide information on this, the Council will maintain an up to date housing needs study and will keep such needs, and progress in meeting them, under constant review.

6.6 Attention will also be given to the particular needs of gypsies and other travelling people, including travelling showmen.



New canal side home, Brownhills

PART II DETAILED POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

INTRODUCTION

Policy Aim

6.7 The Council has established the following policy aim for housing:

To promote the provision of the right quantity and type of housing, in the most appropriate locations, whilst minimising any adverse impact on the environment.

Recent Trends

6.8 The population of the Borough at the 2001 Census was 253,499. This was a slight decrease (2.3%) from the figure of 259,488 for 1991. Underlying this trend for decline in Walsall's population is a tendency for net loss through migration, partly offset by a small natural increase in the local population. It should be noted, however, that the net migration figures are made up of a complex pattern of gross flows in both directions.

6.9 Walsall has an age structure which is broadly similar to the national average, but with a slightly higher proportion of children aged up to 14, a lower share of 30-44 year olds and a higher proportion of people aged between 45 and retirement. The population is also increasingly ageing: the numbers over retirement age, particularly over 75 years, have continued to increase significantly in recent years.

6.10 The Borough's ethnic population in 2001 was 13.6% of the total, but with considerable variation at ward level. Most people are of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin, although there is also a significant population of Afro-Caribbean background.

6.11 Despite the fall in population, the number of households in the Borough has continued to increase, from 97,849 in the 1991 Census to 101,333 in 2001. The apparent paradox of more households within a declining population is explained by a reduction in average household size, which in turn is due to a complex set of factors, including the changing age structure of the population and social trends such as fewer marriages and an increasing divorce rate.

6.12 The 1996-based population projections published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) suggested that Walsall's population would continue to fall, to 248,300 by 2011. The projections also consider the future age structure of the population, suggesting that in Walsall, by 2011, there will be notable falls in the 0-15 and 25-44 age groups and significant increases amongst more elderly groups.

6.13 The household projections (DoE, 1992-based) used in the preparation of RPG11 (1998) suggested that the number of households in Walsall would increase to 104,000 by 2001 and 108,000 by 2011. The continued rise in households, despite the projected fall in population, is explained by further reductions in average household size, to 2.38 by 2011. Underlying this were projected changes in the nature of households, including a fall of 12% in married couple households, and an increase of 47% in 1person households by 2011. More recent household projections (DoE, 1996-based) suggested the increase in households would be less than previously thought, mainly due to trends towards higher levels of cohabitation. These projections were one element that was taken into account in the RPG review leading

to RPG11 (2004), but it was the housing provisions of RPG11(1998) that continued to provide the basis for the preparation of this UDP.

6.14 The period since 1981 has seen significant increases in the owner-occupied and registered social landlord (RSL) sectors, a small decline in the private rented sector, and a significant reduction in local authority homes, initially due to the effects of the “Right to Buy” legislation and more recently through the large scale voluntary transfer of all of the Council’s remaining housing stock to RSLs. New dwelling completions over the period 1991 - 2002 have averaged 572 per year.

Policy Context

6.15 In April 1998, the Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands Region (RPG11) was re-issued with a revised chapter on housing. This followed additional Advice to Government on housing submitted by the local authorities in the region in 1997. The RPG11 (1998) provisions for housing provided an important context for the preparation of this UDP, including the proposal that 10,100 additional dwellings should be provided in Walsall over the Plan period, 1991 - 2011.

6.16 The Council has also taken account of other relevant Government guidance including PPG3: Housing (March 2000); Circular 6/98: Planning and Affordable Housing; Circular 1/94: Gypsy Sites and Planning; and Circular 22/91: Travelling Showmen. PPG3 includes a number of key principles such as the emphasis on the re-use of previously-used sites and buildings, the sustainable location of development, the provision of affordable housing and good design which have been reflected in policies of this Plan. At the local level there are important linkages to the Council’s Housing Strategy which is referred to particularly in the sections on the existing housing stock and meeting housing needs.



Enveloping at Walsall Wood

THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

6.17 The UDP and the Housing Strategy both recognise that the condition of the existing dwelling stock is of critical importance. Unfitness is concentrated in pre-1919 terraced homes, but there are also indications of increasing decay in more recent properties. Many owner-occupiers do not have sufficient residual income to undertake the required repair and maintenance work, leading inevitably towards a deterioration in the condition of properties. There is also a significant proportion of the RSL stock which requires action of some kind.

6.18 Although the UDP cannot itself directly bring about the improvement of poor quality housing, it can be part of a framework for action involving the Council as Housing Authority and other agencies. The Council's Housing Strategy outlines the improvement efforts which are being made in both public and private sectors.

Policy H1: Renewal of Existing Residential Areas

(a) The Council will promote and encourage the renewal of existing residential areas. Wherever possible, environmental improvements and other urban renewal initiatives will be designed to complement improvement works to the dwelling stock. The identification of schemes will normally be community-led, and might typically involve:-

- I. Landscape proposals.
- II. Traffic calming measures and appropriate car parking provision.
- III. Improved street lighting and security measures.
- IV. Making better use of vacant or underused land.
- V. Promotion of energy efficiency, recycling and other sustainability initiatives.
- VI. Sport and recreation proposals.

(b) Proposals for demolition will be considered following an appraisal of alternative options and other considerations including:-

- I The quality and historic significance of the housing area;
- II The views of the local community;
- III The potential for adaptation to modern requirements; and
- IV Environmental sustainability issues, e.g. embodied energy in existing structures and the ability to improve thermal performance.

6.19 Poor housing may often be accompanied by a poor environment - for example, lack of green spaces and trees, traffic and car parking problems, or inadequate street lighting. The planning process has a particular role to play in raising the overall quality of residential areas through environmental improvements and other urban renewal initiatives, wherever possible in association with improvements to the housing stock. It should be noted that Policy GP4 in Chapter 2 sets out the Council's overall approach to local area regeneration and Policy GP7 in that chapter also deals with community safety.

INDICATOR

The reduction of vacancies in the existing housing stock will be a monitoring indicator. The aim will be to reduce vacancies to 3% by 2011 in line with RPG11.

HOUSING SUPPLY

6.20 RPG11 (1998) requires provision to be made for 10,100 additional dwellings during the period 1991 - 2011 (or an average of 505 per year). The strategic policy statement includes a commitment to meeting this target. Table 6.1 shows how the target is to be met, taking account of completions between 1991 and 2002, existing commitments, sites proposed for development in the Plan, and assumptions for future windfalls, redevelopment and conversions. The land supply is divided into greenfield and previously-developed to enable comparison with targets relating to this. Further information on various aspects of the housing land supply is set out in a Housing Background Paper and an Urban Housing Capacity Study (David Lock Associates, 2003) which are available separately.

TABLE 6.1: HOUSING SUPPLY, APRIL 2002

Category of Supply	Previously Developed	Greenfield	Total Dwellings
Already completed 1991- 2002 (inc. conversions)	4,262	2,034	6,296
Large Sites (over 0.4 ha.) with Planning Permission	802	249	1,051
Small Sites with Planning Permission	332	10	342
Sub-Total	5,396	2,293	7,689
Sites Allocated in Proposal H2	613		613
Sites Allocated in Proposal DA6 (Darlaston Inset)	61		61
Cumulative Sub-Total	6,070	2,293	8,363
Estimate of additional future capacity based on UHCS (inc. windfalls, conversions, housing redevelopment, increased densities; 9 years supply)	3,000		3,000
Overall Total	9,070	2,293	11,363
RPG11 target			10,100

Note: An amount of additional housing may also come forward through proposals for the Great Barr Hall Estate/ St. Margaret's Hospital (see also Policy ENV8 in Chapter 3). This has not been taken into account in Table 6.1.

Completions

6.21 It will be seen that 6,296 dwellings were completed in the first 11 years of the Plan period, leaving 3,804 to be provided over the remaining 9 years. Completions to date have averaged 572 per year, ahead of the annual average of 505 per year required by RPG11. Some 68% of past completions were on previously developed sites.

INDICATOR

Progress towards the RPG11 target for the provision of additional dwellings will be a monitoring indicator. The residual requirement of 3,804 dwellings implies an annual average target of 422 for the rest of the Plan period.

Committed and Identified Sites

6.22 Capacity for 1,393 dwellings was committed by planning permission at April 2001 (including dwellings under construction at that date). Sites over 0.4 hectare in size which were committed by planning permission, with a total remaining capacity of 1,051 are listed in Table 6.2 and shown on the Proposals Map for information. Small sites committed by planning permission accounted for a further capacity of 342 dwellings. Some 85% of the total capacity committed by planning permission was on previously developed sites.



Traditional homes in Aldridge

TABLE 6.2: SITES COMMITTED BY PLANNING PERMISSION OVER 0.4 HECTARE*Remaining Capacity at April 2002*

Site Name	Green/ Previously Developed	Dwellings
Land South of Heathfield Lane West, Darlaston	PD	85
Former Crabtree Lincoln Works, Walsall	PD	3
Anchor Meadow, Aldridge	G	26
Former Green Rock Tavern, Bloxwich	PD	12
Town Wharf, Walsall	PD	40
St. Thomas More RC School, Willenhall	PD	80
St. Thomas More Comprehensive School, Willenhall	PD	160
Land at Sherlock Close, Willenhall	PD	3
Land at Burnfields Close, Aldridge	PD	90
Smith's Flour Mills, Wolverhampton Street, Walsall	PD	59
Off Sandwell Avenue, Darlaston (former Moxley Tip)*	PD	45
Land off Silver Street, Brownhills	G	209
Sneyd Lane / Kempthorne Gardens, Bloxwich	PD	10
Ivydene, Noose Lane, Willenhall	PD	6
R/O 2/8 Ravenscroft Road, Willenhall	PD	8
Perry Street, Darlaston	PD	20
Former Oakley's, Sneyd Lane, Bloxwich	PD	15
Former Ogle Hay Infant School, Brownhills	PD	26
Temple Bar / Cemetery Road, Willenhall	PD	16
Pleasant Mead, Aldridge	PD	2
100 Mill Road, Shelfield	PD	18
Former Croxdene House, Bloxwich	PD	25
Mc Kecknie, Leighswood Road, Aldridge	PD	28
109-111 Erdington Road, Aldridge	PD	15
Former United Carriers, Brook Lane, Walsall Wood	PD	36
Beechtree Road / High Street, Walsall Wood	G	14
Total		1,051

* *The permission for housing on this site was granted on the basis that the housing is integral to a package of measures to secure the remediation of the adjoining Moxley Tip (proposed for open space under Proposal LC2.1).*

Balance of Provision

6.23 Taking completions and currently identified sites into account leaves some 2,411 dwellings to be provided for by the Plan. To inform decisions about how this remaining capacity might be found the Council commissioned an Urban Housing Capacity Study (UHCS), as required by PPG3. The findings of that study are available separately, in the report produced by David Lock Associates, 2003.

6.24 As a result of the findings of the UHCS, it is proposed that the balance of housing provision will be met through a combination of site specific allocations and an estimate of additional future capacity based on the UHCS (including future windfalls, replacement on redevelopment sites and conversions). The allocated sites are set out in Proposal H2 in this Chapter and Proposal DA6 in the Darlaston Inset Plan (Chapter 16). The following paragraphs explain the basis for the non-site-specific assumptions and further information is also set out in the Housing Background Paper and the UHCS.

Windfall Sites

6.25 Windfall sites are those coming forward in ways other than as development plan allocations. Although, by their nature, individual windfalls can rarely be foreseen, an assessment can be made of the overall rate at which they can be expected to emerge, based on past experience. PPG3 states that an allowance should be made in development plans for future windfalls on previously developed sites. Over the period 1991 - 2001, an average capacity of 307 dwellings per year came forward through windfalls. Actual completions on windfall sites over the period 1991 - 2001 averaged some 258 per year. The majority of these have been on previously developed sites. Based on the Urban Housing Capacity Study an assumption of 275 dwellings per year windfall capacity has been included in the land supply calculation. A policy to encourage previously developed windfall sites is included as Policy H3.

INDICATOR

The future contribution of windfall sites to housing provision will be a monitoring indicator. The windfall assumption of 275 will be used as the annual average target over the rest of the Plan period.

Replacement on Redevelopment Sites

6.26 The assumption for replacement on redevelopment sites is based on work done for RPG11 (1998) and also on the UHCS. For RPG11 (1998) it was assumed that 250 dwellings would be demolished in Walsall during 1995-2001, and 500 during 2001-11. Based on this, estimates were also made of the number of replacement dwellings that might be built on cleared housing sites: 100 for 1995-2001 and 250 for 2001-11. It was cautiously assumed that fewer new dwellings would be built than were cleared to allow for the possibility of redevelopment at lower densities or for the loss of some housing sites to other uses. The UHCS work suggested a slightly lower figure and an estimate based on that has been included in the housing land supply calculation.

Conversions

6.27 The work for RPG11 (1998) also assumed that there would be a net gain of 150 dwellings in Walsall 1995-2011 (i.e. 15 per annum) through the conversion of the existing housing stock and other buildings. Given the strong policy emphasis placed on conversions in RPG11 (1998) and other Government guidance, and the evidence from the UHCS, it is considered that these assumptions were too cautious. An estimate of 24 dwellings net gain through conversions per annum has, therefore, been included in the housing land supply calculation. A policy to encourage dwelling provision through conversions is included as Policy H3.

Greenfield / Previously Developed Sites

6.28 Of the total housing land supply summarised in Table 6.1, 80% is on previously developed sites and 20% on greenfield sites. For the period 2002-11, 95% of the proposed provision is on previously developed sites. This accords well with national and regional targets for increasing the re-use of previously developed land - PPG3 proposes a national target of 60% of dwelling completions on previously developed land and RPG11 (2004) now includes a regional target of 76%, with a target of 79% for Walsall 2001-11.

INDICATOR

The provision of housing on previously developed sites (including conversions) will be a monitoring indicator. The target will be to work towards 95% of dwelling completions 2002-11 being on previously developed land.



Refurbished apartments, Willenhall

Proposal H2: Land Allocated for New Housing Development

The following sites (over 0.4 hectare in size) are proposed for housing and shown on the Proposals Map:-

<u>Ref:</u>	<u>Site</u>	<u>Green/ Prev Devel</u>	<u>Area (Ha)</u>	<u>Dwell²</u>
H2.2	Goscote Road / Brewers Drive, Pelsall ¹	PD	2.16	70
H2.5	Lichfield Road, Highbridges, Pelsall	PD	0.83	30
H2.7	Lichfield Road / Chester Road, Brownhills	PD	1.32	40
H2.8	Howdles Lane / Castle Street, Brownhills	PD	1.28	40
H2.13	Site of 61-83 Shakespeare Cres, Bloxwich	PD	0.41	14
H2.15	Barracks Lane/ Severn Road, Bloxwich	PD	0.76	25
H2.16	Lichfield Road, Little Bloxwich	PD	0.75	25
H2.18	Leamore Ln / Providence Ln, Leamore ¹	PD	0.47	14
H2.19	Depot Site, Bloxwich Road, Walsall	PD	5.14	160
H2.20	Off Gorway Road, Walsall ³	PD	1.65	25
H2.22	R/o Pinson Road, Willenhall	PD	0.40	15
H2.23	Albion Street / Walsall Road, Willenhall ¹	PD	1.45	45
H2.25	Bridle Lane / Aldridge Road, Streetly ⁴	PD	3.6	110
	Total Capacity ⁴			613

Notes:

- 1 Sites granted planning permission since 1/4/02 – some are also now under construction or developed.
- 2 Capacity figures are included for guidance only and should be regarded as minimum (see also Policy H9 on densities).
- 3 Development of site H2.20 shall not commence until the car parking spaces currently on the site have been properly relocated to serve the university complex.
- 4 Development of site H2.25 for housing will only be acceptable if pursued as a comprehensive scheme for the whole industrial area.
- 5 An amount of additional housing may also come forward through proposals for the Great Barr Hall Estate / St. Margaret's Hospital (see also Proposal ENV8 in Chapter 3. This has not been taken into account in Proposal H2).

6.29 These sites provide for a wide range of housing opportunities in terms of location, site size and market sector. Sites H2.2 - H2.5 are proposals carried forward from the 1995 Plan whilst the remainder are new allocations. All sites involve previously-developed land.

Policy H3: Windfall Sites on Previously Developed Land and Conversion of Existing Buildings

- (a) **The Council will encourage the provision of additional housing through the re-use of previously developed windfall sites and through the conversion of existing buildings, including vacant dwellings and the upper floors above shops and other business premises, provided that:-**
- I. **A satisfactory residential environment can be achieved, taking into account the considerations set out in Policy ENV10.**
 - II. **There is no overriding need for the land or buildings to be retained for employment or any other use.**
 - III. **The proposal would have good accessibility by a choice of means of transport and be well related to schools, shops and other social and community facilities.**
 - IV. **Residential development would not unacceptably constrain the development of any adjacent site for its allocated or identified use.**
 - V. **The proposal is acceptable in terms of other policies of the Plan.**
- (b) **When considering proposals for the conversion of appropriate buildings into dwellings the Council will be flexible in the application of standards for parking and amenity space.**

6.30 As well as the sites currently committed by planning permission in Table 6.2 and allocated in Proposal H2, housing proposals will also come forward on other sites that cannot presently be foreseen. This policy provides guidance for the consideration of these proposals as they arise. The overall housing supply calculation (see Table 6.1 and para. 6.25) includes an assumption that previously developed windfall sites will account for some 275 dwellings per year over the rest of the Plan period. There is particular potential to increase the contribution from conversions in centres (e.g. at upper floors). The definition of previously developed sites, reflecting that in PPG3, excludes open space and playing fields. The opportunity to use windfall sites for housing must also be balanced against the need to retain land for other uses, notably employment. If sufficient land is not retained for employment and other uses within the urban area there may be pressure for decentralisation of these uses to peripheral greenfield sites (see also Chapter 4 for policies on the protection of employment land).

MEETING HOUSING NEEDS

Affordable Housing

6.31 RPG11 (1998) emphasises the need for a mixture of dwelling types and sizes to meet the needs of all sections of the community. This includes the provision of affordable housing for people who cannot afford to occupy homes generally available on the open market. The guidance states that development plans should define this

term more precisely in the context of their local areas and make proposals for its provision in accordance with Government policy. Further advice on how the planning system should help with the provision of affordable housing is given in PPG3: Housing and Circular 6/98: Planning and Affordable Housing.

6.32 The West Midlands Local Government Association adopted a definition of affordable housing that was commended to all local planning authorities in the region for use in this round of development plans:

“For the purposes of this Plan affordable housing is categorised into two types:

A. Housing provided by an organisation - such as a registered social landlord or local authority - allocating on the basis of need. While such dwellings will normally be made available for rent, they may also include subsidised home ownership, such as shared ownership, where a registered social landlord or local authority retains a continuing interest; and

B. Low cost market housing, helping to meet the needs of first time buyers, single people, the elderly and other lower income households, who cannot afford to rent or buy houses generally available on the open market”.

6.33 Although RPG11 (1998) does not specify any targets for affordable housing provision, the local authorities' 1997 Advice on the review of the RPG estimated that the region would need about 130,000 additional social sector homes, 1991-2011. The figure for Walsall was 3,600 and this will be taken as the indicative target for the purposes of this UDP. It is considered important to adhere to this figure in the interests of maintaining consistency across the region.

6.34 The indicative target of an additional 3,600 affordable homes relates, of course, to the whole of the Plan period, 1991-2011. Account needs to be taken of completions 1991-2002 to calculate the balance of provision that will be required over the remainder of the Plan period. Shortage of capital resources has prevented the Council from building its own dwellings for rent in recent years, and so the role of main provider of additional affordable homes has fallen to registered social landlords. Over the period 1991-2002, there were 1,658 completions in this sector. The Council does not have any historic data for low cost market housing due to the difficulty of defining this. It is, however, considered appropriate to include conversions against the affordable housing target because most or all of these will relate to this sector of the market: there was a net gain of 286 dwellings through conversions 1991-2002.

6.35 The above figures for housing association completions and conversions add up to a total of 1,944 affordable homes created 1991-2002. This leaves some 1,656 to be provided over the remainder of the Plan period. The provision to date averages 176 dwellings per year, which is close to the 180 per year required by the indicative target. This suggests that satisfactory progress is being made and that this progress needs to be maintained by the continued identification of further opportunities for affordable housing.

6.36 The need for affordable housing in the Borough during the preparation of this Plan was confirmed by the Housing Needs Study (2000); previous surveys of the needs of specific groups such as single persons, ethnic groups and disabled people; various other analyses carried out for the Council's Housing Strategy; and other

information on earnings and unemployment. The importance of regularly updating the Housing Needs Study is recognised in paragraph 6.5 of the Strategic Policy Statement and the Council will publish a new Housing Needs Study in 2005 providing more recent information on the need for affordable housing provision.

6.37 The information on affordable housing needs from the regional analysis underlying the preparation of RPG11(1998), the Housing Needs Study, the Council's Housing Strategy, and other sources, all point to the continuing need for affordable housing provision in the Borough. The following policy sets out the Council's intention to seek provision of affordable housing on appropriate sites in the future.

HOU3

Policy H4: Affordable Housing

- (a) **The Council will seek the provision of some 3,600 additional affordable homes over the Plan period. Taking account of completions 1991-2002, this implies a need for some 1,656 dwellings over the remainder of the Plan period.**
- (b) **For the purposes of this Plan, affordable housing is defined as:-**
- I. **Housing provided by an organisation - such as a registered social landlord or local authority - allocating on the basis of need. While such dwellings will normally be made available for rent, they may also include subsidised home ownership, such as shared ownership, where a registered social landlord or local authority retains a continuing interest; and**
 - II. **Low cost market housing, helping to meet the needs of first time buyers, single people, the elderly, key workers, and other lower income households, who cannot afford to rent or buy houses generally available on the open market.**
- (c) **The Council will negotiate with developers for the provision of an appropriate element of affordable housing in all private housing developments of at least 1 hectare or 25 dwellings in size which are considered suitable for this provision (see the criteria set out in (d) below). Smaller sites which form part of a larger site of at least 1 hectare or 25 dwellings, or which with further land assembly could reasonably be expected to form part of a site of at least 1 hectare or 25 dwellings, will also be subject to this policy. The policy will apply to all sites allocated in this Plan, windfall sites and whenever application is made to renew or extend an existing permission.**
- (d) **Sites will be considered suitable for an element of affordable housing provision unless developers can demonstrate to the Council's satisfaction that this provision would be inappropriate. Factors to be taken into account include the following:-**
- I. **The level of need for, and provision, of affordable housing in the local area;**
 - II. **Any abnormal development costs associated with the site which in combination with the inclusion of an element of affordable housing would prejudice the viability of the development;**

- III. The need to provide for a mix of housing types and sizes which offer a choice of housing and lifestyle and help to create mixed and balanced communities.**
- (e) On sites considered suitable for the provision of an element of affordable housing under (c) and (d) the Council will normally negotiate with developers for 25% of total dwellings to be affordable homes within the terms of the definition set out in (b).**
- (f) There will be a strong presumption in favour of the affordable homes being provided on-site as part of the proposed development. Where this is the case, the Council will negotiate with developers for the affordable homes to be integrated within the development.**
- (g) In exceptional circumstances, the Council may consider provision of the affordable housing element off-site, subject to an equivalent level of housing need being met. This may be either by the developer directly providing affordable units on the alternative site, or by making a financial contribution to enable the provision. The meeting of other policy objectives or the economics of housing provision could provide justification for such off-site provision.**
- (h) Developers must ensure that affordable housing will be reserved for those who need it (these will include people on housing waiting lists and those who cannot afford to purchase a property on the open market) and that it will remain available at low cost for initial and successive occupants. Developers are encouraged to enter into partnership arrangements with registered social landlords whose interest in the property will ensure control over initial and future ownership and occupation. Alternatively, developers must demonstrate how these objectives will otherwise be secured. Where affordable housing is provided under Part II of the definition it will be necessary for developers to prove that such housing will meet the needs of those who cannot otherwise afford rents or prices prevailing in the locality.**
- (i) The provision and continued availability of affordable housing under this policy will normally be secured through the use of Planning Obligations.**
- (j) In addition to the affordable housing to be secured under the foregoing parts of this policy, the Council will also continue to encourage the direct provision of affordable housing in developments promoted specifically for this purpose by registered social landlords or others. These schemes will often be on smaller sites below the size threshold specified in (c) or through conversions.**

6.38 The overall target for the provision of affordable homes over the Plan period is taken from the work carried out by the local authorities in the region for the 1997 Advice on the review of RPG11 (see also paragraphs 6.33 - 6.34). The target is to be regarded as indicative: progress towards it will continue to be monitored and it will be re-assessed as part of the review of the UDP (through the LDF process), in the

light of future work at the regional and local levels. The definition of affordable housing included in the policy is based upon that commended by the WMLGA.

6.39 The policy seeks an element of affordable housing on all sites considered to be suitable for this purpose, above the minimum size threshold established by Circular 6/98. Although there is a clear preference for provision of affordable homes on site, the policy recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances where provision off-site would be acceptable, subject to an equivalent level of housing need being met.

6.40 Although social housing owned and managed by a registered social landlord is regarded as the most effective and reliable means of securing the continued availability of affordable housing, other mechanisms will be considered provided that these can be justified as providing an equivalent degree of control.

6.41 Decisions about precisely what types of affordable homes should be built on individual sites will need to reflect local housing needs as identified through an up-to-date housing needs survey and the Council's latest Housing Strategy, as well as the particular characteristics of each site. The Council is producing a Supplementary Planning Document to assist the implementation of Policy H4.

6.42 It should be noted that in addition to the affordable housing that will be facilitated through larger general market housing developments under parts (c) to (i) of this policy, other affordable housing will continue to be provided directly by registered social landlords and others. Such developments will, by their nature, involve 100% provision of affordable housing and will often relate to smaller sites below the size threshold established by Circular 6/98. In the past, most affordable housing provision in Walsall has come forward in this way and it is likely to continue to make an important contribution. Part (j) of the policy recognises and encourages this form of provision.

INDICATOR

Progress towards the provision of affordable housing will be a monitoring indicator. The indicative target of 3,600 for 1991-2011 implies a residual annual average target of 184 dwellings over the rest of the Plan period.

Special Needs

Policy H5: Housing for People with Special Needs

The Council will promote and encourage the provision of housing for people with special needs, including single people, the elderly, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and any other groups who require specialist accommodation. Further guidance may be included in planning briefs for individual sites as appropriate.

6.43 In addition to affordable housing, there is also the need to recognise other special needs such as those listed in the policy. The Borough's age structure is becoming increasingly more elderly and this will clearly have implications for housing needs. The needs of the ethnic population will also need particular consideration - the rate of household formation will rise faster amongst these groups due to their age structure and, for cultural and religious reasons, there is often a concentration of demand for housing in certain areas. Other special housing needs that have been

identified include people with learning difficulties, mental illness and physical disabilities and/or sensory impairments. These special needs are considered in greater detail in the Council's Housing Strategy. It should be noted that the need to design all new homes to meet the needs of disabled people is now addressed in Part M of the Building Regulations.

6.44 The Council will work with other agencies to secure the provision of suitable accommodation to meet these specialised needs. Recent changes to the Building Regulations will ensure that all new buildings provide for people with physical disabilities (see also Policy GP6: Disabled People in Chapter 2).

Policy H6: Nursing Homes and Rest Homes for the Elderly

(a) General

- I. The provision of nursing homes and homes for the elderly will normally be appropriate in residential and mixed residential / commercial areas.**
- II. Proposals for the provision of nursing homes or homes for the elderly in the Green Belt must be compatible with Green Belt policy.**

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:-

Vehicular access and parking:

- III. The Council will require the provision of vehicular access of sufficient size to accommodate a medium-sized van or ambulance on site. The Council will normally require the provision of a turning space for such a vehicle. It will be desirable in the majority of instances that the hard standing be at the front of the property to minimise inconvenience to adjoining occupiers. Submitted plans will be assessed to ensure that visibility at the site access is adequate to permit safe exit of vehicles.**
- IV. The car parking standards for nursing homes and rest homes for the elderly are set out in Chapter 7. In applying these standards to proposals to extend established homes, the Council will have regard to existing parking provision associated with the home and the surrounding area.**
- V. All car parking should usually be provided on the frontage of the property, and be landscaped so as not to be obtrusive in the street scene. However, where amenity and the functioning of the home would not be prejudiced and/or where other justification can be made, parking on other areas of the site may be acceptable.**

Amenity and landscape:

- VI. Private garden space should be available to residents away from car parking areas, access drive and road. This should not be unduly overlooked and should be at least of comparable size to those in nearby properties.**

VII. In determining applications the Council will have regard to the impact on existing landscape features, the extent to which they will be retained, and the nature of new landscaping proposed, in respect of the contribution made to ensuring privacy; reducing the impact of parking and turning areas; and to the environment in general.

(b) Conversions

Suitable property:

VIII. Larger detached properties are the most obviously suitable for these uses. Permission will not normally be granted for the conversion of terraced or semi-detached dwellings.

IX. Permission will not normally be granted for the conversion of detached dwellings capable of single-family occupation (i.e. with less than 5 bedrooms).

X. The Council will take account of the accessibility of a property to local amenities and public transport.

(c) Extensions and alterations:

XI. The Council will ensure that the character of the property and amenity of neighbours is not spoiled by extensions, fire escapes, balconies or other alterations.

XII. Extensions must be designed so as to complement the character of the existing building, and neighbouring property. They should not result in an unacceptable loss of landscaping, parking or garden space or reduce the amenities of neighbouring properties through overlooking or loss of light.

XIII. Extensions will be expected to comply with the Council's residential standards relating to distances between habitable room windows and distances to blank gable walls. Provision of obscure glazing as a means of overcoming these distance standards will not normally be acceptable.

(d) Other restrictions

XIV. When granting permission the Council will normally restrict permission to the specific use applied for and the number of bed spaces for which permission is sought.

6.45 The number of people in the Borough aged 60 or over is projected to increase by almost 9.3% between 2001 and 2011. There is a well-established trend towards the provision of nursing homes, particularly for the elderly, which the Council expects will continue in the future. The Council recognises that the need for suitable accommodation to be provided, and the above policy provides guidance which responds to this need, but also safeguards the amenity of neighbouring properties.

Policy H7: Hostels and Houses in Multiple Occupation

Proposals for the establishment, enlargement or alteration of hostels or houses in multiple occupation will be encouraged if it can be demonstrated that:

- I. There would be no harm to the amenity of the occupants of neighbouring buildings or the intended occupiers of the proposed accommodation.
- II. There would be no harm to the character and appearance of the building or the surrounding area.
- III. It would not impair the free flow of traffic or highway safety.

6.46 This policy relates to both hostels and houses in multiple occupation (which would include houses divided into flats, bed-sits or shared houses where people do not live together as one household). Although this type of accommodation is important for meeting particular housing needs it can sometimes also create amenity problems. For example, large numbers of residents in one dwelling might adversely affect the amenities of adjoining occupants through noise or on-street parking. The policy clarifies the circumstances where such types of accommodation are likely to be acceptable.



New homes in Walsall Wood

This policy has not been “saved” under paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the 2004 Act but is listed here for completeness. The policy is replaced by HOU4

Policy H8: Accommodation for Travelling People

Proposals for caravan sites for gypsies and other travelling people, including travelling showpeople, will be encouraged provided that sites meet the following requirements:-

- I. An acceptable residential environment for the occupants of caravans.**
- II. Adequate accessibility to schools and other local facilities and services.**
- III. Provision can be made for any related commercial activities.**
- IV. Adequate access to the road network and adequate space on-site for parking and turning.**
- V. No unacceptable adverse impact on nearby uses or the environmental quality of the surrounding area.**
- VI. Suitable boundary treatment is to be provided to provide screening where necessary.**
- VII. Mains water, electricity and drainage is available or can be provided.**
- VIII. The proposal is acceptable in terms of the environmental criteria set out in Policy GP2.**
- IX. Exceptional circumstances must be demonstrated to justify development within the Green Belt or Protected Urban Open Spaces.**

6.47 Circular 1/94: Gypsy Sites and Planning recognises the role of the planning system in helping gypsies to find suitable accommodation, including the importance of including appropriate policies in development plans. There is also Government advice on planning for travelling showpeople in DoE Circular 22/91. Although there are important differences in the circumstances of travelling showpeople as compared with other travelling people (e.g. the seasonal use of sites and the need to store bulky show ground equipment) many of the planning considerations involved in the search for suitable sites are similar. Policy H8 sets out comprehensive guidance for the evaluation of any such proposals.

6.48 Information from the 6 monthly counts of gypsy caravans issued by the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions shows that in July 2001 there were 26 gypsy caravans in the Borough. All of these were on the authorised Council site with none on unauthorised sites or privately operated authorised sites. This was similar to the findings of previous surveys over recent years. The Council operated site is to be refurbished to provide a higher standard of accommodation.

DENSITY, LAYOUT AND DESIGN

HOU2

Policy H9: Minimum Densities

- (a) **The net density of residential development should be at least 30 dwellings per hectare. Densities in the range of 30 - 50 dwellings per hectare net are likely to be suitable on most sites.**
- (b) **Densities below 30 dwellings per hectare may exceptionally be justified to provide larger houses to support urban regeneration. In such cases the Council will still wish to satisfy itself that the layout and design make the most efficient use of the site.**
- (c) **Significantly higher densities, exceeding 50 dwellings per hectare, will be encouraged if the proposal:-**
- I. Is within or close to a town, district or local centre or other location with good accessibility by a choice of means of transport; or**
 - II. Provides small units for people such as single persons or the elderly.**

6.49 This policy seeks to raise densities to make the most efficient use of housing land. Higher densities in centres and other places with good public transport access can also make an important contribution to sustainable transport objectives. In seeking to raise densities, however, care also needs to be taken to maintain privacy and environmental quality (see also Policy H10). The density figures quoted in the policy relate to net densities as defined in PPG3.

INDICATOR

The density of new housing development will be a monitoring indicator. The target will be to achieve an overall average density of new development of at least 30 dwellings per hectare.



New apartments near the New Art Gallery, Walsall

Policy H10: Layout, Design and Dwelling Mix

- (a) **The Council will expect the design of residential developments, including residential extensions to:-**
- I. **Create a high quality living environment, well integrated with surrounding land uses and local character (natural and built) and in accordance with the principles of good design set out in Policy ENV32.**
 - II. **Provide adequate additional open space, or improvements to existing open space, in accordance with Policy LC1.**
 - III. **Provide an appropriate mix of housing types, sizes and tenures with a variety of design.**
 - IV. **Facilitate the efficient provision of public transport services.**
 - V. **Maximise pedestrian and cyclist access to local amenities.**
- (b) **On sites close to major transport corridors, the Council will require careful attention to be given to ways of reducing the impact of noise and vibration on residents by the detailed design and orientation of dwellings, double glazing, and the provision of noise buffers. Some sites will be resisted as being too badly affected by such factors.**
- (c) **All proposals for residential development will also be considered against the more detailed standards and guidelines set out in the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents relating to residential design.**

6.50 This policy sets out general principles relating to layout and design which the Council will take into account when considering proposals for residential development. More detailed guidance for individual sites is given in existing Supplementary Planning Guidance (see Appendix 2) and a Supplementary Planning Document for Design is programmed for preparation in the Local Development Scheme. Policies ENV32: Design and Development, ENV33: Landscape Design, ENV39: Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (all in Chapter 3); Policy GP7: Community Safety (Chapter 2) and Policies T10-T13: Accessibility Standards (Chapter 7) are also relevant to the layout and design of residential developments.

6.51 When considering planning applications for extensions and/or alterations to residential (and other) properties, particular regard will be taken of the effect on adjoining properties to ensure that the amenities and peaceable enjoyment of occupiers of such premises will not be prejudiced.

INDICATOR

The types and sizes of dwellings built will be monitored. The aim will be to achieve a mix of types and sizes appropriate to local circumstances at the time the dwellings are constructed.

7 TRANSPORT

TRAN1 and TRAN2

PART I STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT

General

7.1 The Council will seek to ensure that Walsall's transport system serves the wider aims of economic revitalisation, urban regeneration, sustainable development, environmental improvement and social inclusion, and will continue to work with other organisations to achieve an integrated and efficient transport network. It will also seek to integrate transport and land use planning as fully as possible. Specific transport schemes will be set out in the five year Local Transport Plan covering the whole of the West Midlands Metropolitan Area.

7.2 All transport proposals should be sensitive to the environment and larger schemes will need to be the subject of a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment. Indeed, such projects will be expected to deliver overall positive environmental gains, and promoters should work with the Council to provide such benefits in the corridors and areas proposed for transport improvements. Existing landscape, built heritage and wildlife features should be retained wherever feasible.

7.3 Development proposals will, where appropriate, be required to be accompanied by a Transport Assessment and will be required to fund, or contribute towards, any off-site transport infrastructure improvements (including highways, public transport and facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people) necessary to serve the development; this will be secured by use of Planning Obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990, and agreements under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 as necessary. The Council will also require, where appropriate, the submission of Green Travel Plans to demonstrate how access to developments by more sustainable forms of transport will be maximised.

Accessible Transport for Everyone

7.4 In considering all transport proposals, the Council will take into account the needs of people who find it difficult to get around, for whatever reason. It will seek to ensure that all aspects of the journey from origin to destination are as user-friendly as possible.

Bus Services

TRAN1

7.5 The Council will continue to improve facilities for bus services, such as bus stations and stops, and measures to reduce delays to buses on heavily trafficked routes. It will also promote, jointly with Centro and transport operators, measures to make it easier for passengers to use buses, particularly on journeys which include interchange between bus and other modes of transport. Bus-based park and ride schemes, including strategic park and ride, will be encouraged where they can make a genuine contribution to reducing the use of the car and where they are consistent with policies to protect the environment. New development will be expected to conform to the bus accessibility standards set out in Policy T12.

The Rail Network

TRAN1

7.6 The Council will actively promote new and improved passenger rail, light rail (Metro) and freight services in the Borough, in order to aid economic revitalisation, improve long distance public transport links and reduce car use. Existing and potential rail corridors will be safeguarded for rail and/or Metro use.

Roads

TRAN1

7.7 The Council will adopt a hierarchical approach to the road network which recognises the differing functions of roads which make up the various tiers of the network. Selective road improvements will be promoted to support economic revitalisation, the vitality and viability of established centres and the efficient operation of public transport. Local traffic calming will be promoted as part of a comprehensive approach towards improving the urban environment.

Walking

TRAN1

7.8 Walking is an essential part of all journeys, whatever other modes might be involved. In order to encourage walking as a sustainable and healthy form of transport, the Council will seek to ensure that there is a variety of facilities within easy walking distance of people’s homes. Measures to help pedestrians will be promoted on existing highways and away from the road network, and in the design of existing and new developments as appropriate, with safety and security considerations in mind.

Cycling

TRAN4

7.9 The Council will promote cycling in the Borough as an important and beneficial mode of travel, for both utility trips and for leisure, by providing a range of facilities on and off the road network. In particular, it will seek to integrate cycling facilities with other transport modes, and with other environmental improvements.



Trains on the approach to Walsall

PART II DETAILED POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

INTRODUCTION

Policy Aim

7.10 The Council has established the following policy aim for transport:

To improve accessibility for everyone by promoting public transport, walking and cycling whilst continuing to cater for journeys that need to be made by private car; and, by locating facilities in the right places, make journeys shorter and easier.

Context

7.11 Although this Plan has a significant contribution to make towards the achievement of transport objectives for the Borough it is important to recognise that this must be in tandem with other transport plans and initiatives prepared in conjunction with other bodies. Particularly significant linkages exist with the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (prepared jointly by the seven West Midlands Metropolitan Districts and Centro), the Centro 20-Year Public Transport Strategy, the West Midlands Regional Transport Strategy (prepared for the West Midlands Region as a whole) and the Strategic Rail Authority's Strategic Rail Plan. PPG12 and PPG13 both stress the importance of ensuring that development plans and transport plans are consistent and integrated with one another, with development plans setting out policies and proposals which address the major land use implications of the local transport plan. The Council has sought to ensure that the UDP is consistent with, and complementary to, the West Midlands Local Transport Plan, the Regional Strategy and the plans and strategies of Centro and the transport operators.

7.12 Account has also been taken of relevant Government Guidance on transport, in particular PPG13: Transport which, amongst other things states that local authorities should:-

- Actively manage the pattern of urban growth to make the fullest use of public transport and focus major generators of travel demand in city, town and district centres and near to major public transport interchanges.
- Locate local and day-to-day facilities which need to be near their clients in local centres so that they are accessible by walking and cycling.
- Accommodate housing principally within existing urban areas, planning for increased intensity of development for both housing and other uses at locations which are highly accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.
- Ensure that development comprising jobs, shopping, leisure and services offers a realistic choice of access by public transport, walking and cycling, recognising that this may be less achievable in some rural areas.
- Use parking policies, alongside other planning and transport measures, to promote sustainable transport choices and reduce

reliance on the car for work and other journeys. The PPG includes national maximum parking standards for certain land uses.

- Give priority to people over ease of traffic movement and plan to provide more road space to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport in town centres, local neighbourhoods and other areas with a mixture of land uses.
- Ensure that the needs of disabled people - as pedestrians, public transport users and motorists - are taken into account in the implementation of planning policies and traffic management schemes, and in the design of individual developments.
- Consider how best to reduce crime and the fear of crime, and seek by the design and layout of developments and areas, to secure community safety and road safety.
- Protect sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choices for both passenger and freight movements.

GENERAL

7.13 An efficient transport network is needed to underpin economic revitalisation and urban regeneration and give people easy access by a choice of means of transport to a wide range of facilities. It will be particularly important to improve integration between different transport modes, and between the transport network and the location of development. Policy GP1 in Chapter 2 establishes principles for the sustainable location of development in places with good accessibility by a choice of means of transport, and Policies T10 - T13 in this chapter elaborate upon this by setting out accessibility standards for different modes of transport.

7.14 Where developments have significant transport implications these will be considered through Transport Assessments, prepared according to the guidance in PPG13 and any other published good practice advice. Developers will be required to fund, or contribute towards, the cost of any off-site transport infrastructure works needed to provide or improve access to the development by a choice of means of transport. This could include highway improvements and/or measures to assist public transport, walking and cycling. Planning conditions, or planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), will be used as appropriate to secure the provision of the necessary transport infrastructure. Green Travel Plans will be particularly relevant for developments which are labour intensive and not well served by the public transport network. These plans should not, however, be seen as an alternative to the location of development in accordance with accessibility standards (see Policies T10 - T13). The Council intends to prepare Supplementary Planning Guidance for Green Travel Plans.

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT FACILITIES FOR EVERYONE

7.15 Many people have special transport needs (e.g. disabled people, elderly people and parents with young children) and the Council wishes to ensure that everyone is able to get around as easily as possible by removing barriers to movement. Careful design of all linkages between home, transport facility and ultimate destination is crucial in order to ensure a seamless and trouble-free journey.

Policy T1 - Helping People to Get Around

The Council is particularly concerned to help anybody, including disabled people, who has difficulty in getting around, for whatever reason. It will:-

- I. **Improve access to public transport by working with Centro and the transport operators on the design of stations and stops for trains and buses, giving particular emphasis to easy interchange between different forms of public transport, including the provision of dedicated parking spaces for disabled people.**
- II. **Require the sensitive design of shopping centres, and other large developments, to include convenient parking, unobstructed access, and a range of facilities such as seating areas, accessible toilets and crèches. Support will be given to Shop Mobility projects.**
- III. **Have regard for disabled people (including wheelchair users) in the design of highways, footpaths and Greenways, with particular attention being given to the provision of safe crossing facilities (with dropped kerbs wherever necessary) and ensuring that paths are well maintained and clean, and that street furniture does not inhibit safe and convenient access.**
- IV. **Support and promote door-to-door public transport facilities by providing highway infrastructure as appropriate.**
- V. **Require all development to conform to accessibility standards as set out in Policies T10 - T13.**

7.16 Measures to help improve people's mobility need to be comprehensively planned and relate to the design and operation of facilities and transport modes and the linkages between them. A journey may, for example, have to surmount several barriers at the origin, a public transport facility, the street and the entrance to the destination. It is therefore important that the whole journey is taken into consideration, and, in the case of centres, circulation around a variety of destinations, so that convenience and comfort is assured for all.

7.17 A high standard of design will be expected for all facilities to ensure that ease of use is maximised. Design of facilities should also make a positive contribution to the built and natural environment, especially at entrances to buildings. Poorly designed street furniture, such as lighting, signals, posts, signs and bollards, which inhibit ease of movement, as well as contributing to street-clutter, will be rationalised and moved wherever appropriate. Representatives of disabled people, including wheelchair users, will be consulted on the design of new facilities.

7.18 The concentration of facilities in centres will enable multi-purpose trips, thereby allowing everyone to participate as fully as possible in the life of the community, including those who have mobility problems. Shop Mobility projects, which provide better circulation within centres for disabled people, are the last element in an integrated transport system. They are encouraged by Policy S17 in Chapter 5. Policy GP6 in Chapter 2 also gives an overview of providing for disabled people.

BUS SERVICES

7.19 Bus services will continue to provide for most of the Borough's public transport needs; at the local and sub-regional level. It is important for passengers who are travelling further afield that bus services dovetail with rail services. Bus services will be given priority within and around the Town and District Centres. Major new development sites which attract large numbers of worker, visitor and shopper trips will be expected to be highly accessible to bus users.

Policy T2 - Bus Services

- (a) **The Council will continue to work with Centro and bus operators in designing facilities that improve the quality of services and reduce delays to bus services caused by traffic congestion. Priorities for these improvements will be where they can:-**
- I. Help to promote the vitality and viability of a Town, District or Local Centre as part of a traffic and regeneration scheme and do not prejudice access arrangements to centres for other forms of transport.**
 - II. Assist interchange between buses and other modes of transport.**
 - III. Support proposals for bus "Showcase" schemes as identified in the Local Transport Plan.**
 - IV. Assist buses in other places where traffic congestion causes significant delays.**
- (b) **The design of bus lanes, termini, stops and lay-over areas should aim to maximise the efficient operation of bus services whilst being sensitive to the local environment and the needs of local residents, businesses and road users, including pedestrians and cyclists.**
- (c) **Bus-based park and ride facilities, including strategic park and ride, will be encouraged if it can be demonstrated that they are cost-effective, lead to a genuine reduction in car use and are in accordance with other policies of the Plan.**
- (d) **Developments will be expected to conform to accessibility standards for bus services as set out in Policy T12.**

7.20 Policy T2 sets out a number of ways in which physical planning measures can assist the operation of bus services: the detailed implementation of this will be taken forward through traffic management schemes. Work is continuing on the following Bus Showcase routes:

- Walsall - West Bromwich - Blackheath;
- Walsall - Wolverhampton;
- Walsall - Perry Barr - Birmingham;
- Walsall - Dudley - Stourbridge;
- Bloxwich - Wolverhampton.



Walsall Bus Station

7.21 The Council will particularly seek to promote the best possible interchange between bus services and other modes of transport, especially in centres. It will also encourage operators to provide more frequent services in the evenings and on Sundays, and to introduce through ticketing between buses, trains and light rail services in order to make the public transport system more flexible and responsive to customer needs. Particular attention should be given to the needs of people who find it difficult to get around, including disable people, elderly people and parents with young children: the Ring and Ride Service has an important role to play in this.

7.22 Park and ride facilities for buses need to demonstrate a frequent, attractive service that caters for flexible working hours and is safe and secure. Bus service provision must be additional to other services and not diversions from other routes which can cause inconvenience and delay for other bus users. Park and ride schemes should lead to an overall reduction in car use by encouraging people to use their cars for a shorter portion of their journey, not to drive part of the way when they might otherwise have travelled all of the way by public transport.

INDICATOR

Trends in the use of bus services will be monitoring indicator. The aim will be to increase the number of journeys made by bus in line with the target in the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (an increase of 5% over the period 1998 - 2006).

RAIL SERVICES










7.23 Passenger rail demand in the West Midlands Metropolitan Area has grown by 8% - 9% per annum over the last five years. The Strategic Rail Authority forecasts that passenger demand will rise by 120% between 1998 and 2020. A significant increase in demand for rail freight services is also projected. The expansion of rail infrastructure and services is vital in order to provide for these needs and help to raise the Borough's accessibility and profile in the regional and national context. It will help to encourage inward investment, attract shoppers and visitors to the Town and District Centres, provide long distance public transport options for both non car owners and car owners, and offer greater potential for the transfer of freight from road to rail. In view of this, the Council will give a high priority to rail improvements which will help to deliver these benefits. The existing and proposed rail network in the Borough is shown in Figure 7.1.

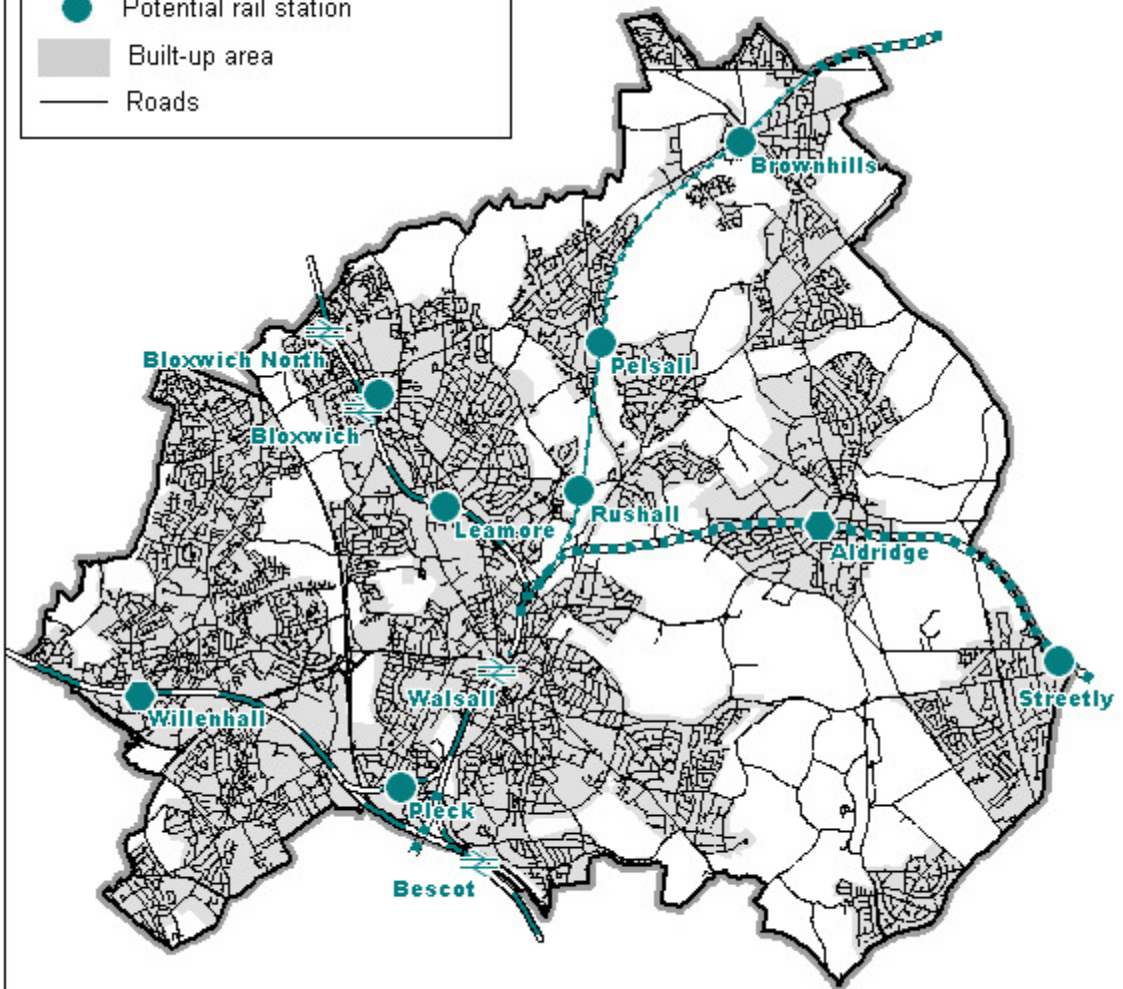


Walsall Rail Station

Figure 7.1
Rail Network
[existing and proposed]

Key

-  Passenger rail line
-  Freight rail line
-  Safeguarded rail formation
-  Rail station
-  Possible relocation nearer to district centre
-  Proposed rail station
-  Potential rail station
-  Built-up area
-  Roads



Scale: 1:100,000

March 2005

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Proposal T3 - The Rail and Metro Network

- (a) **The Council will safeguard land for rail use. It will also promote, jointly with Centro and the rail operators, the improvement of existing services, and the establishment of new, passenger rail, rail freight and/or Metro services as appropriate, on the following routes shown on the Proposals Map:-**

Existing Passenger and Freight Rail Services

- I. **Walsall - Birmingham (with connections to London, the South and the Southwest);**
- II. **Walsall - Wolverhampton (with connections to the west, Wales, the North West and Scotland);**
- III. **Walsall - Stafford (with connections to the North West and Scotland).**

Existing Freight Line with Potential for Passenger Rail Services

- IV. **Walsall - Aldridge - Streetly - Sutton Coldfield – Birmingham.**

Potential Passenger and Freight Rail Services

- V. **Walsall - Wednesbury - Dudley Port - Stourbridge - Kidderminster (possibly as part of a new cross-region service from Worcester to Derby).**

Potential Passenger and Freight Rail and/or Metro Services

- VI. **Walsall - Brownhills (possibly as part of a new cross-region service from Worcester to Derby).**
- (b) **In addition to these routes, the Council supports the construction of a metro link from Wolverhampton through Willenhall, central Walsall and Darlaston to Wednesbury. An indicative alignment is now being promoted, and this will be subject to statutory procedures. This would be additional to the existing passenger rail services.**
- (c) **New or enhanced station facilities will be encouraged wherever possible on existing and potential rail routes. New stations are already proposed for Aldridge and Willenhall (see Chapters 13 and 17) and the opportunity to provide a replacement station for Bloxwich is to be explored (see Chapter 14). Other potential locations for new stations include Brownhills, Pelsall, Rushall, Streetly and Pleck. Opportunities for park and ride facilities, including strategic park and ride, will also be encouraged where they will lead to a genuine reduction in the use of the private car and are consistent with other policies of this Plan.**
- (d) **The Council will encourage the transfer of freight from road to rail. Road / rail interchanges will be encouraged subject to the effect on traffic and the environment of the surrounding area. The provision and retention of private sidings will be strongly encouraged for employment sites where this is operationally feasible, subject again to traffic and environmental considerations.**

7.24 The Council will seek to ensure that the following considerations are taken into account in the assessment of rail improvements and new rail proposals:-

- The strategic benefits to the Borough, including support of economic revitalisation and urban regeneration, the vitality and viability of centres, and social benefits.
- Ensuring good accessibility for all to passenger rail facilities.
- Environmental impact, including the effect on residential areas close to transport routes.
- The relationship to important residential, commercial, retail and employment areas.
- Engineering feasibility and the safety and security of rail users.
- The efficient and safe operation of the highway network.
- The effect on residential, short stay and service parking and access.

7.25 New rail passenger services should serve as wide a range of destinations as possible, and provide good interchange with other forms of transport. There are plans to extend the Midland Metro network in Birmingham and the Black Country, both in the short and long term. The Council will actively promote the benefits of this and assist with development work on suitable alignments, taking account of the considerations noted in the previous paragraph. Route options are still being investigated and it is not possible at this stage for the Walsall UDP to include any more specific proposals. Options could include use of the disused rail formations protected by Policy T3 or other routes involving highways and/or other land, although the Strategic Rail Authority and Network Rail must be consulted when the use of existing or disused rail infrastructure is proposed.

7.26 Improvements to passenger service frequencies, particularly on Sundays and in the evenings, are necessary to provide better rail accessibility. They will help bring people into main centres in the evenings. Interchange with all other public transport modes will be promoted, and buses in particular should be timed to give reasonably frequent onward connections for rail passengers. Operators will be encouraged to introduce simpler and more co-ordinated ticketing arrangements between bus, rail and metro services, as this will form a crucial component of an integrated, flexible and responsive public transport system that is attractive to both car users and non car users.

7.27 The main rail freight operators plan to double or even triple their traffic over the Plan period. Some of this will transfer from the congested road system. Walsall's rail system has enough capacity to form part of a rail freight network that would not only provide for modal switch from road to rail but also avoid the seriously congested passenger rail interchange in central Birmingham, thus delivering major strategic advantages for reliability of both passenger and freight services in the wider area. The expansion of existing rail freight facilities in the Borough, and at Bescot in Sandwell, are supported in principle subject to detailed consideration of issues relating to road access and environmental impact. The Regional Rail Freight Strategy has identified opportunities for rail freight at employment sites in Walsall.

INDICATOR

Trends in the use of rail services will be a monitoring indicator. The aim will be to increase the number of rail passenger journeys in line with the target set out in the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (an increase of 52% by 2006).

THE ROAD NETWORK





7.28 Notwithstanding the emphasis on promoting public transport, the road network will still need to be improved in certain ways, in order to help promote economic revitalisation and urban regeneration, improve access to established centres, assist the operation of public transport and contribute towards a better local environment for residents, shoppers, businesses and visitors. The following policy introduces the approach that the Council will adopt towards the different types of roads that constitute the road hierarchy of the Borough.

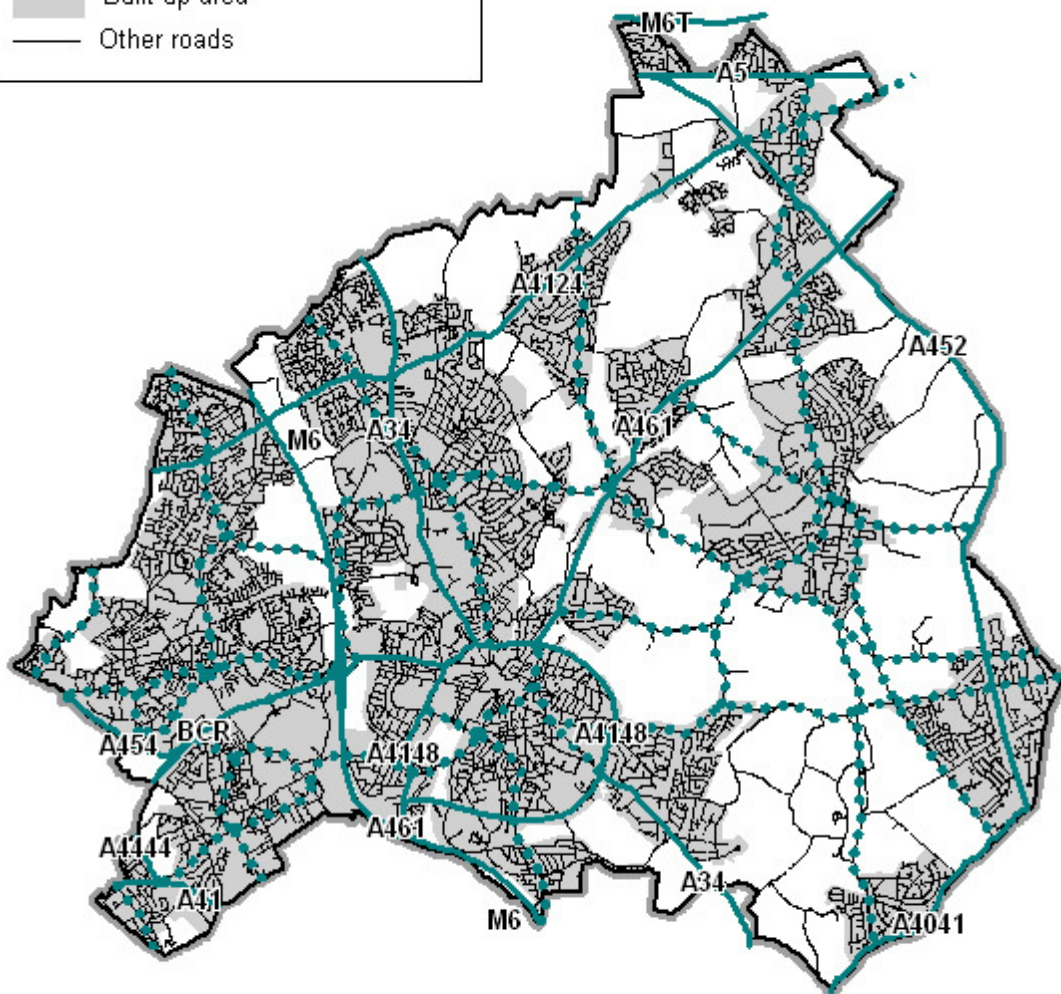


The Black Country Route, towards Darlaston

Figure 7.2
Strategic Highway Network
and District Distributors

Key

-  Strategic Highway Network
-  District Distributors
-  Built-up area
-  Other roads



Scale: 1:100,000

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Policy T4 - The Highway Network

The Council classifies the highway network as follows:

- (a) **The Strategic Highway Network is for long distance and strategic traffic. Street parking and direct frontage access will be kept to a minimum. The Council will give a high priority to improvements and traffic management measures to assist traffic flows on that part of the Strategic Highway Network over which it retains control. It will take account of the Highways Agency's policies relating to the management of the motorway and trunk road network (see also policy T5(c) and paragraph 7.34).**
- (b) **District Distributors, which are important routes connecting the main residential and employment areas of the Borough. Heavy commercial traffic will be allowed (except where subject to HCV restrictions), but will not be encouraged where satisfactory routes exist on the Strategic Highway Network. Street parking and direct frontage access will be strictly regulated.**
- (c) **Local Distributors, which consist mainly of key spine roads within residential and employment areas. Except where these specifically serve employment areas, heavy commercial vehicles will be discouraged. Traffic restraint measures will be used to deter through traffic and reduce traffic speeds. Frontage access will be allowed in principle, subject to local circumstances.**
- (d) **Local Access Roads, which provide direct access to most premises. Where appropriate, stringent traffic calming measures will be used to deter through traffic and reduce traffic speeds. Heavy Goods Vehicles may be prohibited, except where they need to use these roads for access.**
- (e) **Residential Streets are minor roads where traffic volumes and speeds should be quite low. Nevertheless, the Council may sometimes need to employ traffic calming measures to ensure that the environment and safety of these streets is protected. This will be particularly important in the design of new developments.**
- (f) **Development proposals must, where there are significant transport implications, be accompanied by a Transport Assessment which considers the accessibility of the development by all modes of transport, including impact on the highway network in the surrounding area. Such developments will be required to fund, or contribute towards, any necessary off-site transport infrastructure improvements. Wherever possible, measures should be taken to mitigate the impact on the highway network. In the case of the trunk road and motorway network, account must be taken of the Highways Agency's relevant policies and requirements as set out in PPG13, Circular 04/ 2001 and A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England.**

7.29 Due to the complexity of the road network it is only possible to identify the first two tiers of the hierarchy in the UDP. The Strategic Highway Network is shown on the Proposals Map and District Distributors are shown in Figure 7.2. By clarifying

the balance that needs to be struck at each level between measures either to assist or restrain traffic flows, the hierarchy sets the context for highway improvement and traffic calming proposals.

Policy T5 - Highway Improvements

- (a) The Council will seek to implement selective improvements to highway infrastructure to promote the vitality and viability of the Town and District Centres, improve access to employment areas, provide for the needs of strategic traffic, and provide for all highway users, especially disabled people, public transport users, pedestrians and cyclists.**
- (b) Specific schemes will include:-**
 - I. Walsall Town Centre circulatory roads, including the improvement of the Pleck Road / Rollingmill Street Junction shown on the Proposals Map and the schemes set out in Proposal WA17 in Chapter 12.**
 - II. Corridors identified for bus priority measures, including bus “Showcase” routes.**
 - III. Improved access to employment areas.**
 - IV. Improved access to other major new developments.**
- (c) The Council will take into account the impact on highways in the Borough of proposed national road schemes, including the M6-toll and M6 junction improvements.**
- (d) Highway improvement schemes should be designed to minimise any adverse impact on the environment or the amenity of residents (see also paragraph 7.2 and Policy GP2, which will apply to the consideration of proposals for the construction of new highways).**
- (e) In considering highway proposals the Council will ensure that provision for pedestrians and cyclists is maintained and, if possible, improved by the proposals.**

7.30 The Strategic Highway Network within Walsall Borough includes the M6 Motorway for which the Highways Agency is responsible. The A452 and A5 were detrunked respectively in July 2002 and January 2004 - when the M6 Toll (formerly known as the Birmingham Northern Relief Road) came into operation, passing to the north of the Borough in the Brownhills area.

7.31 There is still a need to invest in selective road improvement schemes in order to bring Walsall’s highway network up to date with modern transport requirements, and reduce the delays to all road users, including public transport, caused by congestion. The Council will however ensure that the design of any new highway infrastructure is set within the context of a sustainable transport strategy rather than being simply a “predict and provide” response to projected traffic flows. Highway improvements will be consistent with the overall objective of reducing car-commuting traffic to centres which are accessible by a choice of other means of transport. Development schemes will be required to make a financial contribution towards the provision of improved highway, or other transport, infrastructure if the development will lead to a significant increase in traffic (see also paragraph 7.3 of the Strategic Policy Statement).

7.32 Individual road schemes will be promoted where it can be demonstrated that they:

- Assist public transport, pedestrians and cyclists.
- Improve road user and pedestrian safety.
- Improve links to motorways and the national trunk road system.
- Improve access to industrial areas and, in particular, brownfield sites.
- Relieve Walsall Town Centre of through traffic and improve its environment.
- Divert traffic away from sensitive areas.
- Provide access to major new developments.

7.33 Improvements to the Walsall Ring Road will enhance accessibility to Walsall Town Centre, thereby helping to strengthen its role as the most sustainable location in the Borough for a wide range of services and activities. These works will also improve the environment of a large area to the north of the Town Centre, and improve facilities for cyclists and pedestrians. The Town Centre Transport Package received the Secretary of State for Transport's approval for all the statutory orders in October 2004. The Ring Road proposals are considered in greater detail in the Walsall Town Centre Inset Plan (see Chapter 12).

7.34 There may in future be a need for improvements and rationalisation to take account of the M6 Toll and the Government's proposals for M6 Junction improvements, in so far as they affect the Borough, particularly to protect residents from increased traffic and improve connections to the national network. The effect of these proposals will therefore be closely monitored.

INDICATOR

Changes in the volume of road traffic will be monitoring indicator. The aim will be to keep traffic growth in line with the target in the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (between 10% and 13.5% growth 1996 - 2006).

Policy T6 - Traffic Calming

- (a) **The Council will seek to improve the quality of life of residents through traffic calming projects which will improve health and safety, strengthen community links and reduce fear of crime. It will also ensure that traffic calming measures are consistent with the safe operation of emergency services and public transport.**
- (b) **Priority will be given to areas:-**
- I. Suffering from excessive through-traffic and road safety problems.**
 - II. Proposed for comprehensive environmental improvement.**
 - III. Which form part of, or link to, the cycling and Greenway network.**
 - IV. Proposed for bus priority schemes.**
 - V. Adjacent to major new developments which will generate significant increases in traffic.**
 - VI. Where there is a need to improve walking and cycling links between residential areas and local facilities, including the Town, District and Local Centres.**

7.35 Traffic calming needs to be seen not only as a means of slowing down traffic but also as a way of helping to civilise the urban environment and foster local area regeneration. The Council will develop traffic calming into a comprehensive street-design approach that opens up the street to all its users. The design of works will involve the active participation of the local community as far as possible and early consultation with statutory undertakers, public transport operators and others. Individual measures should be of good design, and should take account of the needs of all road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, public transport (where appropriate), service vehicles and emergency vehicles.

CAR PARKING

7.36 PPG13 states that local authorities should use parking policies to promote sustainable transport choices and reduce reliance on the car for work and other journeys. It also includes national maximum parking standards for certain land uses. Whilst acknowledging these objectives, the Council also recognises that good quality parking for shoppers and visitors is of crucial importance for the vitality and viability of established centres if they are to compete successfully with out-of-centre developments. It is also important to ensure that adequate levels of off-street parking continue to be provided, particularly in residential areas, in order to avoid the environmental and road safety problems that can be caused by the proliferation of on street parking. The Council's parking policies, therefore, seek to strike a careful balance between maintaining adequate levels of parking provision and avoiding any overprovision which would only help to fuel greater car use.

Policy T7 - Car Parking

- (a) **The Council will give priority to maintaining, enhancing and, where appropriate, increasing the provision of short stay parking for shoppers and visitors to the Town, District and Local Centres. Long-stay car parking for commuters will be strictly controlled or reduced, particularly in Walsall Town Centre and the District Centres.**
- (b) **All development should satisfy the car parking standards set out in Policy T13. This will involve providing an adequate level of car parking to meet operational needs whilst not exceeding any maximum parking standards that are specified. Appropriate provision of parking for people with special needs must be included, as set out in Policy T13.**
- (c) **Conditions relating to the operation of parking areas will be imposed as appropriate to ensure their continued use and management for the intended purpose. Except where there is an accepted need for secure dedicated provision, car parking within or on the edge of centres should be generally available to serve the needs of the centre as a whole, and be subject to a charging and management regime agreed with the Council.**
- (d) **Subject to the findings of a Transport Assessment, it may be appropriate for developments in the Town and District centres to make commuted payments towards a general fund which will be used to support a package of transport-related improvements for the centre as a whole - this might include the enhancement and improvement of existing car parks or the promotion of public transport, walking and cycling.**
- (e) **All parking provision should be well designed and sensitively integrated into the townscape or landscape, respecting the character of the local area, and with appropriate use of materials and landscape treatment.**

7.37 This policy outlines the Council's general approach towards car parking provision. It should be read in conjunction with Policy T13, which sets out in detail the parking standards that will apply for various types of development. The approach taken in both policies takes account of Government policy on car parking, including the national maximum parking standards set out in PPG13, whilst at the same time also recognising the necessity of providing adequate levels of off-street parking to avoid road safety and environmental problems.

7.38 Particular attention is given to maintaining and enhancing short stay car parking provision within established centres for shoppers and visitors. This is recognised as being vital to sustaining the attractiveness of these centres to car-borne (as well as non-car-borne) visitors in the face of competition from out-of-centre developments, which typically have ample free car parking. It is also considered important to ensure - through management and charging policies - that parking provision within or on the edge of centres is generally available to serve the needs of the centre as a whole. Dedicated car parking will however be considered in certain cases such as for hotels and housing developments.

7.39 Developments in Town and District Centres will often not be able to provide car parking facilities to meet their own needs on-site, and it is in the interest of centres that space is used as efficiently as possible. In these circumstances, the Council will seek commuted payments towards a general fund, which will be used to finance a range of transport infrastructure, including public car parking, public transport improvements, and measures to assist pedestrians and cyclists. Transport Assessments will be used to examine the transport implications of major developments and to help determine the amount of any commuted payment (see also paragraph 7.3 of the Strategic Policy Statement). The Council will produce Supplementary Planning Guidance on the operation of the commuted payments fund at the earliest possible opportunity.

WALKING

7.40 Walsall's established centres are relatively compact and well located with respect to residential areas, and this helps to make the Borough relatively walking and cycling-friendly compared to many towns of its size. Improvements to the pedestrian environment will encourage more journeys to be made on foot and deliver positive benefits in terms of the increased safety and security of walkers. In centres, these pedestrian improvements should help increase vitality and viability, and it will be particularly important to maintain good evening access, when the need for vitality is greatest. Safe Routes to Schools will also be promoted to improve safety and security for children and reduce the need for parents to use cars for the school run.

Policy T8 - Walking

(a) In order to help existing pedestrians, and to encourage greater use of walking as a healthy and sustainable form of travel, the Council will:-

- I. Provide pedestrian facilities, such as pedestrian-only streets, squares and links, consistent with the needs of disabled people, cyclists and service traffic and with the desire to maintain evening vitality.**
- II. Require edge-of-centre schemes to provide good pedestrian links into the core of the centre.**
- III. Protect and seek to improve, wherever possible, pedestrian routes between the central cores, foodstores and residential catchment areas.**
- IV. Seek to improve, wherever possible, pedestrian links within and between residential and employment areas, consistent with safety and security.**
- V. Require developments and transport projects to address the needs of pedestrians. In particular, developers must provide good pedestrian links within the development and a variety of pedestrian access points to ensure easy access to the surrounding area. All pedestrian links must be safe, direct, convenient and well lit.**
- VI. Continue to safeguard, promote and construct a network of segregated Greenways, as shown on the Proposals Map (see also Policy LC5 in Chapter 8).**
- VII. Seek to safeguard, improve and rationalise the statutory public footpath and bridleway network. Any changes to statutory rights of way should aim to make access to the countryside easier for all concerned and take account of the interests of owners and occupiers; farming and other rural activities; wildlife and landscape; local residents; and other users of the rights of way.**

(b) Developments will be expected to conform to accessibility standards for pedestrians as set out in Policy T11.

7.41 Several new pedestrian spaces (Gallery Square, The Bridge Civic Square, and the area adjacent to St. Paul's Church) have recently been created in Walsall Town Centre, making it more attractive for people on foot. Similar improvements are planned for the District Centres. This will improve an already pedestrian-friendly environment. It will be important to ensure that developments within and on the edge of these centres maximise the potential for improving the quality of pedestrian access (see also the Inset Plans for the Town District Centres - Chapters 12 - 17).

7.42 The Greenway network is providing links for pedestrians away from roads. Greenways are primarily seen as leisure and recreational facilities, and are referred to in more detail in Chapter 8, but they can also provide for local walking and cycling journeys, perhaps as part of Safe Routes to Schools projects subject to safety and security considerations (see also Policy T9: Cycling). It will also be important to

safeguard and improve the statutory public footpath and bridleway network, which in some cases provides important links to Greenways.

CYCLING

7.43 As with walking, cycling can deliver benefits in terms of a more sustainable transport strategy, whilst also helping to improve people's health. Cycling has a particular role to play in local trips to schools and for personal business. The Government has set a target to double cycle usage from the 1996 levels by 2002, and to double it again by 2012. Walsall's settlement pattern is generally cycle-friendly and offers potential to increase cycle use significantly.

Policy T9 - Cycling

- (a) **The Council will assess the suitability of cycle-related improvements according to the following criteria:-**
 - I. **The improvement should provide a functional, direct link within and between different communities, centres and other destinations such as employment and leisure facilities.**
 - II. **The improvements should make cycling an attractive alternative to the private car wherever possible.**
 - III. **The design of cycling infrastructure should be safe and secure for all users.**
- (b) **New developments should meet the accessibility standards for cyclists as set out in Policies T11 and T13. Developers will be expected, wherever possible, to provide links to cycle routes, Safe Routes and Greenways which adjoin the site or pass nearby. Existing cycle routes must not be severed or otherwise adversely affected by new development unless an acceptable alternative is substituted.**
- (c) **General priorities for cycle-related improvements and facilities are as follows:-**
 - I. **Utility trips to schools, as part of the Safer Routes initiative; and to the Borough's Town, District and Local Centres, employment areas, and recreation and leisure facilities.**
 - II. **Links and improvements to the National Cycle Route and other cycle routes.**
 - III. **Cross-boundary linkages.**
 - IV. **Other leisure-related routes, including canal towpaths.**

7.44 The Walsall Cycling Strategy sets out the criteria for assessing cycling-related improvements, and the priorities, in more detail. Dedicated cycle facilities may be the solution in one instance, speed reduction in another, and it will be important to integrate area-wide cycling initiatives with traffic calming and 'home zone' initiatives, in order to play its part in civilising the urban environment.

7.45 Some of the Borough's major highways are narrow and subject to traffic travelling at speeds which are dangerous for cyclists. It will not be sufficient to introduce cycle routes piecemeal at a few locations: they must cater for the whole journey. Proposals for cycle routes should use existing desire lines, and people should feel safe using them for all journeys, including commuting, shopping and personal business.

7.46 The Safer Routes to School initiative will be a high priority in view of its contribution to reducing both the number of child casualties and the congestion caused by people who take their children to school by car. The Greenway network, Safe Routes and the National Cycle Route are intended to provide for cyclists who wish to be segregated from motor traffic as much as possible. Canal towpaths offer particular potential, and the Council will promote, with British Waterways, the upgrading of appropriate sections to cycleway standard. Links from these facilities onto cycle routes which use highways may, provided they are designed to an acceptably safe standard, encourage today's leisure cyclist to make utility journeys in future.

INDICATOR

Trends in cycle usage will be a monitoring indicator. The aim will be to increase the proportion of trips made by bike in line with the target in the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (to 5% by 2006 and 8% by 2012).



Cycle stands at Walsall Central Library and Museum

ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

This section sets out accessibility standards which the Council will apply to new developments to ensure that they are easily accessible by a choice of modes of transport. The standards should be read in conjunction with related policies in the preceding part of this chapter. Policy T10 begins by setting out some general principles; Policy T11 then deals with pedestrian and cycle access; Policy T12 with public transport access; and Policy T13 with parking for cars, cycles and taxis.

Policy T10: Accessibility Standards - General

- (a) **The standards for public transport, cycles, taxis and disabled car parking are minimum ones and developers are strongly encouraged to improve upon them. The standards for non-residential car parking (see Policy T13 C-F) are maximum ones as required by PPG13. The standards for residential car parking should be seen as neither maximum nor minimum but the typical requirement. Certain site-specific and locational circumstances will justify a reduction or increase as necessary (see Policy T13 B and paragraphs 7.62 – 7.63).**
- (b) **The standards will apply to all development proposals with the exception of the following, which are exempt from the standards in Policies T11 for walking and cycling and T12 for public transport:-**
 - I. **Small residential developments within existing residential areas including infill plots, redevelopment, conversions and extensions.**
 - II. **Extensions and infill developments within existing industrial and commercial areas.**
 - III. **Shops, offices, leisure and entertainment, other town centre uses and housing within or on the edge of a centre in accordance with policies in Chapter 5; any such uses which are to meet purely local needs in an out-of-centre location in accordance with Policy S6.**
- (c) **The Council will use planning conditions and/or planning obligations to ensure that accessibility standards for all transport modes continue to be met throughout the life of a development. This might also involve the use of commuted payments to support the provision of transport infrastructure where appropriate. Accessibility standards will be supplemented by Green Transport Plans, Traffic Regulation Orders and Residents' Parking Schemes as necessary.**

7.48 The Council wishes to ensure that all developments are easily accessible to the widest range of people, whether by car, bus, train, on foot, cycle or Ring and Ride services. Maximising accessibility in this way will help to both reduce social exclusion and give motorists a genuine choice of travel alternatives, thereby encouraging modal shift and contributing towards traffic reduction targets.

7.49 Small residential developments within existing residential areas are exempt from the standards because these will make better use of available urban land and

not raise any significant transport implications. Extensions and small infill developments within existing industrial / commercial areas are exempt on the same grounds. The exemption for developments within or on the edge of centres is because these locations are already highly accessible by these transport modes. Small-scale facilities to meet local needs in out-of-centre locations are exempt on the basis that these facilities will not raise significant transport policy implications.

7.50 The measures needed to achieve accessibility standards will be expected to be maintained for the operational life of the facility. This includes the provision of new public transport services to serve some out-of-centre developments. After a period of time these arrangements may need to be reviewed if operators or developers can demonstrate that they have proved to be unnecessary. In these cases, developers will need to agree the monitoring procedure with the Council and Centro.

Policy T11: Access for Pedestrians, Cyclists and Wheelchair users.

- (a) Residential development should be within easy walking / cycling distance of a range of facilities which meet local needs (e.g. shops, pubs and community facilities) and provide convenient, safe pedestrian access points wherever these are required.**
- (b) Developments which generate significant numbers of personal trips should have direct, safe and attractive access for pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users from the building entrance to surrounding residential areas. Seating should be provided at or near the entrances of all large developments.**
- (c) Where pedestrian and cycle links are considered to be sub-standard, measures must be taken to improve them. Greenways and canal towpaths can count towards this provision if they help to provide an acceptable functional link between the development and its catchment area.**

7.51 Walking and cycling need to be encouraged as an alternative to the car for short journeys. These modes of transport do not involve any significant monetary cost to the individual, are non-polluting, and deliver health benefits for people. The accessibility standards in the policy are intended to enable people to walk or cycle from their homes to local facilities. Easy walking / cycling distance will depend on local circumstances, including the topography and the quality of the pedestrian environment: the maximum will normally be regarded as 1000 metres. Pedestrians should not have to cross any roads unless absolutely necessary, there should be unimpeded pedestrian approaches to buildings, and seating should be provided to allow people to rest as necessary. Where pedestrians are obliged to cross major traffic routes adequate crossing facilities should already exist or can be provided to an acceptable standard. If facilities do not make adequate provision for wheelchair users, they should be improved, for example by widening paths where necessary, removing barriers and providing ramps in addition or instead of steps to reach Greenways, canal towpaths and other routes.

Policy T12: Access by Public Transport (Bus, Rail, Metro and Ring and Ride)**(a) General**

- I. The standards are expressed in terms of bus service provision, but rail and metro services can also count towards the standards, provided that:-
 - The rail station or metro stop is not more than 800 metres walking distance from the entrance to the building; and
 - The rail or metro service provides stops within the identified catchment of the facility; and
 - The timing of services, in conjunction with other public transport services, achieves the overall frequency standard required.
- II. If existing bus services are to be diverted to serve the development this should not result in a poorer service for other areas or in significantly longer journeys into the relevant Town, District or Local Centre. Likewise, any additional services should be genuine improvements and must not be at the expense of services for other areas.
- III. All development other than private dwellings (but including residential homes) should provide a suitable dropping-off point for Ring and Ride services at or near the building entrance, together with use of a telephone. These facilities should be shared with taxis as appropriate.

(b) Residential Development (Use Class C3)

- I. The walking distance should be no more than 400 metres to a bus stop which:-
 - Is, or will be, served by a bus service to an established centre;
 - Has a service frequency of at least 1 bus every 30 minutes during the day (between 0700-1900) Monday to Saturday;
 - Has a service frequency of at least 1 bus every hour on Sunday between 1200 and 1900.
- II. Services outside these times to be provided according to demand.

(c) Retail, Office (B1a), Health, Educational and Commercial Leisure Facilities and Nursing and Residential Homes

- I. The walking distance from the entrance of the building to a bus stop should be no more than 400 metres and the bus stop should be as conveniently located as possible to the entrance of the building. Covered waiting and seating areas should be provided if necessary.
- II. Bus services should operate during working hours from all parts of the catchment area directly to the facility, and there should be

pick-up/drop-off points within 400 metres of all housing within the catchment area.

- III. Bus services should be at the level of frequency set out in (b) with additional services for staff outside these hours if necessary.**

(d) Industry (Class B1(b&c), B2, and B8)

- I. Developments should be within 400 metres walking distance of a bus stop or 800 metres of a rail or metro stop, on a route which serves a centre or a transport interchange as defined by Centro. Covered waiting and seating should be provided if necessary.**
- II. The service frequency should be at least 30 minutes during working hours. Special services should be provided if necessary.**

7.52 The aim of these standards is to provide the best possible access to public transport both to benefit people who do not have the use of a car, and to provide car owners with a viable alternative to use of their cars. They are based on, and consistent with, Centro's current accessibility standards. Bus service provision will be the basic yardstick with which to measure public transport accessibility because the bus network is much more extensive and flexible than passenger rail or metro services. However, developers will still be able to count rail or metro services towards meeting the standard, and indeed will be encouraged, subject to the Sequential Approach, to locate near rail and metro stops wherever possible.

7.53 Part (a) of the Policy includes standards for the Ring and Ride Service. Centro's aim, in its 20 Year Public Transport Strategy, is to provide 100% coverage of Walsall, and the other West Midlands Districts, with door-to-door services for origins and destinations within 5 km of each other. Good design of facilities at entrances to buildings is critical to achieving a quick transfer to and from the vehicle at each end of the journey. In many cases - for example housing - the highway itself will be considered a suitable dropping-off point, subject to safety.

7.54 The standard for residential development in part (b) of the policy aims to give every household the opportunity to use public transport to reach a Town, District or Local Centre. This will give access to a wide range of services and facilities and also enable connections to other public transport services, as centres generally tend to be major transport hubs in the transport network. It should be noted that nursing homes and residential homes (Use Class C2) are, for the purposes of these standards, included under commercial development (part c).

7.55 The retail, office, health, educational and commercial leisure uses specified in part (c) of the policy are defined in Policy S1 and PPG6 as "town centre" uses. When located in centres, developments for these uses are deemed to meet public transport accessibility standards and are exempted under Policy T10. The standards included in part (c) are, therefore, for use in circumstances where these uses are proposed in out-of-centre locations - to ensure that they meet the necessary accessibility requirements. The policy refers to the catchment area for the facility - this will be defined by a drive time isochrone. For facilities of Borough-wide importance, the isochrone should be 20 minutes; for facilities of district importance, 10 minutes; and for other facilities, 5 minutes.

7.56 Part (d) sets out standards for industrial uses. If there are gaps in the existing public transport network, special services timed to coincide with shift changes will help staff to reduce journey times. It is desirable that such services are as direct as possible. It should also be noted that staff may need to be picked up / dropped off at a range of origins and destinations other than where they live, for example to or from shopping facilities. Minibuses would be acceptable for staff journeys.

Policy T13: Parking Provision for Cars, Cycles and Taxis

A General

- I. These standards are subject to the thresholds and notes as set out in PPG13 Annex D. Developers must, however, still demonstrate in all cases (including developments below the size thresholds) that the development will provide adequate on-site car parking to meet its own needs, and that there will be no adverse effect on highway safety and the environment. The parking standards for cycles and taxis are minimum standards in order to maintain an adequate level of provision.**
- II. The standard car parking space should be 4.8m by 2.5m. This can be reduced to 4.8m by 2.2m where it can be shown that there is a low rate of turnover during the day. Provision should also be made for adequate circulation space. Parking should normally be visible from the highway; where this is not possible, there should be adequate signing. Parking should also, wherever possible, be visible from buildings, in the interests of security.**
- III. Parking should be allocated for disabled people in all developments as near as possible to the most appropriate entrance to the building. 10% of all parking spaces should be reserved for this purpose, with a minimum of 1 reserved space. Each reserved space should be at least 4.8m by 3.6m. As specified in PPG13, parking for disabled people will be additional to the general level of parking permitted under the maximum parking standards.**
- IV. Certain types of development (as indicated below) will also need to provide facilities for taxis, including a pick-up / drop-off point next to the entrance of the building and a telephone.**
- V. Bike stands should be located near the entrance of buildings, or in other places where they are clearly visible from the building, in the interests of security. Any employment use which provides toilet facilities should also provide shower, changing and locker facilities for the use of cyclists.**
- VI. In the Town and District Centres the Council will negotiate an appropriate level of parking provision with developers, taking into account Policies T7, S4 and the relevant policies in the Inset Plans.**

B. Residential Development

1, 2 and 3 bedroom houses	2 spaces per unit
4 bedroom houses and above	3 spaces per unit
Flats with individual parking spaces	2 spaces per unit
Flats with communal parking	1.5 spaces per unit
Residential homes	1 space per 3 beds
Nursing homes	1 space per 2 beds

C. Retail Development

Food and convenience goods shops	1 car park space per 14m² of gross floorspace. At least 1 bike stand for every 20 car park spaces, and absolute minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.
Other shops	1 car park space per 20m² of gross floorspace. At least 1 bike stand for every 20 car park spaces, with absolute minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.
Hot food takeaways	4 car park spaces for establishments with a gross floorspace up to 50m²; then 1 space per 22m² of gross floorspace. At least 1 bike stand for every 5 car park spaces with an absolute minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.
Garages and vehicle repair workshops	5 car park spaces per service bay. At least 1 bike stand for every 10 car park spaces, with an absolute minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.
Car showrooms	10% of gross site area for car parking. At least 1 bike stand for every 10 car park spaces, with an absolute minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.

D. Industrial and Commercial Developments

Use class B1(a)	1 car park space per 30m² of gross floorspace. 1 bike locker for every 10 car parking spaces. Taxi facilities.
Use class B1(b)	1 car park space per 30m² of gross floorspace. 1 bike locker for every 10 car parking spaces. Taxi facilities.
Use class B1(c)	1 car park space per 30m² of gross floorspace. 1 bike locker for every 10 car

	parking spaces. Taxi facilities.
Use class B2	1 car park space per 50m ² up to 250m ² , then 1 space for every additional 100m ² of gross floorspace. 1 bike locker for every 10 car park spaces. Taxi facilities.
Use class B8	1 car park space per 50m ² of gross floorspace up to 250m ² ; then 1 space per 100m ² up to 2500m ² ; then 1 space for every 500m ² of gross floorspace. 1 bike locker for every 10 car parking spaces. Taxi facilities.

E. Health and Educational Facilities

Hospitals	1 car park space per 4 staff and 1 space per 3 daily visitors and patients. 1 bike locker for every 10 car parking spaces. Taxi facilities.
Health Centres and surgeries	4 car park spaces per consulting room. 1 bike stand for every 10 car parking spaces, with an absolute minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.
Schools	2 car park spaces per classroom. 4 bike lockers for every car parking space. Taxi facilities.
Colleges	1 car park space per 2 staff and 1 space per 15 students. 1 bike locker for every car park space. Taxi facilities.
Other community facilities	1 car park space per 22m ² of gross floorspace. 1 bike stand for every car park space. Taxi facilities.

F. Leisure and Recreation Developments

Cinemas and conference facilities	1 space per 5 seats. 1 bike stand for every 10 car park spaces, with a minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.
Other buildings for public assembly and food and drink	1 space per 22m ² . 1 bike stand for every 10 car park spaces, with a minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.
Sports Halls, swimming pools	1 car park space per 22m ² of gross floorspace. 1 bike stand for every car parking space. Taxi facilities.
Health & Fitness clubs	1 car park space per 22m ² of gross floorspace. 1 bike stand for every car park space. Taxi facilities.

Stadiums	1 space per 15 seats. 1 bike stand for every 10 parking spaces. Taxi and coach facilities.
Other outdoor sports pitches	15 car park spaces per pitch. 15 bike stands per pitch. Taxi and coach facilities.
Golf clubs	1 car park space per 22m² of gross floorspace of clubhouse. 1 bike stand for every 10 car park spaces, with an absolute minimum of 2 stands. Taxi facilities.
Golf driving ranges	1.5 car park spaces per bay. 1 bike stand for every 10 car park spaces. Taxi facilities.
Hotels and guest houses	1 car park space per bedroom, and 1 space per 22m² of remaining gross floorspace. 1 bike stand for every 10 car park spaces, with a minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.

7.57 In preparing these standards the Council has taken into account Government guidance on national maximum parking standards as set out in PPG13. Whilst acknowledging the Government's objectives in using parking control to help to discourage car use, the Council also recognises the need to maintain adequate levels of off-street parking to avoid the road safety and environmental problems that can be caused by the proliferation of on-street parking. The standards, therefore, aim to strike a balance between maintaining adequate levels of parking and avoiding overprovision, which would fuel greater car use. The standards are consistent with the national maximum standards in PPG13.

7.58 The standards are all-inclusive, taking into account the needs of residents, staff, customers and visitors as appropriate. Gross floorspace figures are used, as far as possible, as the basis for provision. The standards will apply Borough wide, but it is recognised that in the case of the Town and District Centres, where it is often not possible or desirable to provide parking on site, it may be more appropriate to use commuted payments to finance general improvements to transport infrastructure for the centre (such as public car parking or public transport improvements).

7.59 Reserved parking for disabled people will be a high priority in order to enable them to park as close to their destination as possible. The spaces will also be wider to cater for special needs. Public facilities, such as schools, will be expected to provide drop-off and collection facilities for disabled people.

7.60 Certain types of development which attract customers, staff and visitors will also need to provide facilities for taxis, as set out in the policy. This will include space for a pick-up / drop-off point next to the entrance of the building, and a telephone. The highway itself might in some cases be able to serve as a suitable pick-up / drop off point, subject to safety considerations.

7.61 The standards include requirements for cycle stands, to assist existing cyclists and encourage greater cycle use. Provision for cyclists varies between different uses in recognition of the fact that cycling is more important for some types of trip than others. In all cases, however, cycling standards are minimum ones, and developers will be encouraged to improve on them. Bike lockers are specified for

developments that attract large numbers of employees who need secure parking for long periods, although they will also be encouraged for other uses. Showers and changing facilities are also essential for employees who wish to cycle to work, and the provision of such facilities should reflect the potential number of users. Suitable cycle locker provision could include a secure, well-designed cycle shed with a number of cycle stands within it.

Residential Use

7.62 The parking provision for housing ranges from 1.5 to 3 spaces per dwelling, depending on size. These standards aim to avoid the road safety and amenity problems which can be caused by the proliferation of on street parking in residential areas. Car ownership is expected to rise and meanwhile people are being encouraged to leave their cars at home and use alternative transport modes. There will, therefore, generally be increasing demand for car parking spaces in residential areas. Notwithstanding this, there will be cases where reduced parking provision will be acceptable. The Council is satisfied that its residential parking standards are consistent with achieving PPG3's objectives in relation to good design and a sustainable environment.

7.63 If it can be demonstrated that particular housing schemes will be occupied by a greater proportion of non-car users than average (e.g. schemes for affordable homes or elderly persons accommodation), a lower level of parking provision may be appropriate. The Council will, however, expect the developer to enter into a Planning Obligation, or the development to be otherwise subject to suitable control, in order to restrict occupation to those groups.

7.64 The standard for communal parking for flats recognises that provision may be reduced to take account of the fact that not all visitors will be there at the same time as every resident. Conditions will be imposed to ensure that communal access is retained. Provision for nursing homes is greater than for residential homes because it is likely that there will be more staff and visitors.

INDICATOR

Car parking provision for new housing development – in line with the standards in Policy T13.

Retail Developments

7.65 The parking standards for food and convenience goods shops and for other shops are consistent with the national maximum parking standards set out in PPG13. The higher standard for food and convenience goods shops recognises the higher levels of parking need associated with this type of retailing. Other kinds of shops include retail warehouses, unit shops and A2 uses. The lower standard applied to these shops accords well with the national average for retail warehouses, and is in line with typical levels of parking for unit shops in town centres. Parking for shops within centres will be expected to serve the needs of the centre as a whole (see Policy T7). Provision for cyclists assumes that 5 in every hundred trips will arrive by bike. This is lower than for other forms of development because of the bulky nature of some goods.

7.66 The standard for hot food takeaways seeks to play its part in promoting such facilities in appropriate locations whilst ensuring highway safety. Any increase in

operational floorspace will need planning consent and additional parking provision. Since garages normally operate on a delivery and collection basis, provision for garages and vehicle repair workshops will be based on the number of service bays. Car showrooms will be expected to provide parking for visitors based on a proportion of display space.

Industrial and Commercial Developments

7.67 The standards for B1 uses are consistent with the national maximum parking standard for B1 set out in PPG13.

7.68 Offices (B1(a)) are a Town Centre use, and therefore subject to the Sequential Approach as explained in Chapter 5. Any parking for offices in centres (over and above strictly operational parking), if deemed necessary, will need to serve the centre as a whole (see Policy T7). Out-of-centre office proposals should provide parking for cars and bikes according to the standards, and the Council may impose conditions relating to the production of a Green Transport Plan.

7.69 The Council recognises that changing industrial uses may affect the need for car parking. If a developer wishes the standard to be adjusted on an individual basis, the Council will expect information on floorspace / employment ratios to be submitted and to be subject to written approval. Standards for bike parking are consistent with targets set by the Government in relation to modal share.

Health & Education

7.70 Parking provision for health facilities takes into account patients, staff and visitors. For hospitals, parking is envisaged for up to 1 in 4 staff and 1 in 3 daily visitors / patients. The figure for health centres and surgeries assumes 1 space per doctor, 1 for a staff member (e.g., health visitor, receptionist or nurse), 1 for a patient undergoing consultation, and 1 for a patient waiting. The doctor's space should be reserved. In centres, parking facilities should serve the needs of the centre as a whole (see Policy T7). Standards for bike parking are consistent with targets set by the Government in relation to modal share.

7.71 For schools, a floorspace measurement is not appropriate; the standard strikes a balance between staffing requirements during the day and leisure and adult education requirements in the evening. The Council will work with schools to restrain the school run, in view of the need to keep the highway system clear during peak hours; consequently children will be encouraged to walk, cycle and use public transport to get to school. The standard for colleges is consistent with that for higher and further education in PPG13. "Other community facilities" include libraries, neighbourhood resource centres and advice bureaux; for community centres see buildings for public assembly (part f). Standards for cycling provision are higher for these uses because of the generally high potential for cycling in relation to personal business, and the huge potential for school and other educational trips.

Leisure & Recreation

7.72 The car parking standards for cinemas and conference centres, other buildings for public assembly (including sports halls / swimming pools and health and fitness centres) and stadiums are consistent with those in PPG13. Parking for these uses in centres will be expected to serve the centre as a whole, except where the operator can justify otherwise (see Policy T7). Provision for hotels and guest houses

is assessed in terms of space for resident guests and space for other patrons, though this can be combined in the car park.

7.73 Although sports halls and health & fitness clubs can attract high numbers of car trips, cycling is particularly appropriate for sport-related journeys. The standards of provision for cycling are therefore intended to reflect this.

7.74 Parking provision for outdoor sports pitches other than stadiums is based on a Sport England standard, with allowance made for car-borne spectators. As with stadia, space for coaches and taxis should also be made available. The standard for golf clubs includes provision for clubhouse related activities and is based on the size of the clubhouse, using the PPG13 standard for buildings for public assembly.



Bus service at New Invention; Bus Showcase route.

8 PROVIDING FOR LEISURE AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

PART 1 STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT

General

8.1 The Council, in collaboration with appropriate partners, will seek to safeguard, improve and expand facilities for:-

- **entertainment and culture;**
- **urban open space;**
- **greenways;**
- **canals and waterways;**
- **sport and recreation;**
- **education, health and community activities.**

CSP1, CSP3, CSP4 (and through individual topic policies)

Entertainment and Cultural Facilities

8.2 Increased and improved provision of entertainment and cultural facilities will be encouraged. Such facilities will generally be directed to the Town, District and Local Centres according to the policies set out in Chapter 5: Strengthening Our Centres.

CSP1 and CEN1 - CEN5

Urban Open Spaces

8.3 The Council will protect, maintain and seek the enhancement of existing urban open spaces. The provision of additional urban open spaces will be encouraged wherever feasible in areas of deficiency and in particular in the more highly built-up parts of the Borough. The aim is that all people will have convenient, safe access to a range of open space facilities, and that they will be encouraged to use them. Criteria for the assessment of proposals which would affect urban open space provision are given in Policy LC1.

Greenways

ENV6

8.4 The Council will continue to construct, safeguard and promote a Greenway network along linear features such as canals, disused rail formations and open spaces, for use by pedestrians and cyclists.

Sport and Recreation

CSP3 and ENV6

8.5 The Council will seek to protect, enhance and expand facilities for sport and recreation, both formal and informal. New sports facilities will, as far as possible, be directed towards Town, District and Local Centres and other places accessible by a choice of means of transport.

Canals and Waterways

CSP3 and ENV4

8.6 The Council will safeguard and seek to enhance the navigation, recreation, nature conservation, heritage and environmental value of the Borough's waterway network, including disused waterway features.

Education, Health and Community Facilities

8.7 The enhancement of existing, and the provision of new, facilities for education, health and other community needs (including those of religious groups and other community organisations) will be encouraged. Particular emphasis will be placed on locations which are accessible to all sections of the community by a choice of means of transport, including locations within or adjoining established centres where possible and appropriate (see Chapter 5). The Council will seek to identify any sites required for these purposes through the local planning process. Any land or premises surplus to the requirements of the education, health and other community services will be considered for suitable alternative uses consistent with other policies of this Plan. Projects which contribute to the objectives of the Health Action Zone initiative will be supported.

8.8 Residential developments will only be permitted where adequate school capacity exists or can be provided. Where residential developments necessitate the provision of new or improved educational facilities or other forms of social and community infrastructure the Council will require developers to make a financial contribution to the costs of providing these facilities: Policy GP3 in Chapter 2 gives further guidance on the use of Planning Obligations for this purpose.

8.9 On housing sites of 1 hectare (or 30 dwellings) or more, developers should ensure that adequate provision exists, or is made available, for accessible community healthcare facilities to serve the development. Where demand for new or enhanced facilities is created by the development, the Council may require developers to contribute towards the cost of such provision through Planning Obligations (see also Policy GP3 in Chapter 2).



Leamore Park

PART II DETAILED POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

INTRODUCTION

8.10 Policy Aim:-

To promote the provision of a wide range of sport, recreation, leisure, entertainment, arts, education, health and other community facilities in locations that are easily accessible by a choice of means of transport.

8.11 The intention of this chapter is to make available to everyone the fullest possible range of leisure and community facilities. The focus for many of these will be the Town, District and Local centres, or other places with good public transport, cycle or pedestrian links. Existing facilities and open spaces will be protected and enhanced, and new facilities provided or encouraged wherever feasible and appropriate.

8.12 The countryside, forestry and nature conservation, which are also important aspects of leisure and recreation, are dealt with in Chapter 3: Environment and Amenity.

ENTERTAINMENT AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

8.13 To build upon the success of recent developments, including the New Art Gallery, which opened in February 2000, the Council will seek further provision of a range of entertainment and cultural facilities in Walsall Town Centre and the District Centres. Appropriate development opportunities are identified in the Inset Plans for these centres (see Chapters 12 - 17).

8.14 Responses to the consultation document "The Way Forward?" suggested that the following facilities would benefit the town and district centres: theatre, performance space, cinema, ice / roller rink, opera house, jazz club, cafés, clubs, night clubs, meeting rooms. The Council will encourage the provision of such facilities where feasible and appropriate.



E M Flint Art Gallery, Walsall

URBAN OPEN SPACES

Policy LC1: Urban Open Spaces

- (a) **The Council will seek to retain and enhance existing urban open spaces and redress any deficiencies in the provision or accessibility of these. Proposals for development which would result in the loss of, or otherwise adversely affect, urban open spaces will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that none of the following functions would be prejudiced:-**
- I. Redressing or avoiding deficiency.**
 - II. Providing for sport and recreation, both formal and informal.**
 - III. Providing for children's play.**
 - IV. Buffering incompatible land uses.**
 - V. Defining community boundaries.**
 - VI. Accommodating greenways and other pedestrian and cycle routes.**
 - VII. Providing for allotment gardens.**
 - VIII. Contributing to biodiversity.**
 - IX. Contributing to the urban forest.**
 - X. Contributing to visual amenity.**
 - XI. Achieving local community aspirations.**
- (b) **When considering proposals which would result in the loss of, or otherwise adversely affect, urban open spaces, the Council take into account any compensatory provision that is proposed. This might take the form of replacement area(s) of open space or the improvement of existing open spaces in the area.**
- (c) **Urban open spaces of 0.4 hectare or larger are shown on the Proposals Map, but this policy also applies to smaller areas of open space (including public spaces in the Town, District and Local Centres) which fulfil any of the functions of urban open spaces identified in part (a) of the policy.**
- (d) **Residential developments will be required to make financial or other contributions which will enable the provision of new, or the improvement of existing, urban open spaces.**

8.15 Urban open spaces are important and valued because they can be used for a range of functions which enhance our quality of life. Some form focal points or links along popular pedestrian routes, and those which are busy and used for a variety of purposes are usually perceived to be safer, more comfortable places. As well as green spaces, urban open spaces can include water areas and paved areas such as squares and pedestrianised streets within centres.

8.16 The aim of paragraph 8.3 of the Strategic Policy Statement is to ensure that people have easy access to open spaces which provide for as wide a range of

amenities as possible, and are encouraged to use them because they are conveniently located, attractive, stimulating and safe. The Council will continue to work with local communities and others, to create a sense of ownership so that urban open spaces are respected, well maintained and well used.

8.17 Policy LC1 will ensure that urban open space is protected from loss to inappropriate development. The onus will be upon prospective developers to demonstrate that there would be no adverse effect in terms of the various functions which urban open spaces fulfil. In some circumstances, the loss of an open space may be considered acceptable if compensatory provision is to be made, either in the form of replacement open space or through the enhancement of existing open space in the area. To enable the assessment of open space needs at the local level, the Council will publish a Supplementary Planning Document, which will set local standards for all types of open space, in accordance with PPG17. The standards will address quantity, quality and accessibility and will be used to guide decision-making on development proposals and the use of resources, including developer contributions and commuted sums.

8.18 Where feasible, the Council will seek the provision of additional urban open spaces to redress deficiencies and/or the enhancement of existing urban open spaces, for example, by increasing the range of facilities or improving accessibility. In practice, resources are likely to be focused on improving existing open spaces rather than creating new ones.

8.19 The following policies LC2 – LC6 provide additional guidance for specific types of urban open space.



Willenhall Memorial Park

INDICATOR

The protection and improvement of urban open space will be monitoring indicators for the UDP. The Council will assess:-

- The extent to which existing urban open spaces have been protected from inappropriate development. The target for this will be 100%
- The extent of provision of any additional urban open spaces. The target will be at least 24 hectares over the Plan period.

Proposal LC2: Proposed Open Space

The following sites are proposed as additional areas of open space, as shown on the Proposals Map:-

<u>Site</u>	<u>Hectares</u>
LC2.1 Moxley Tip, Moxley	7.75
LC2.2 Beatwaste site, Bentley Lane, Willenhall	10.87
LC2.3 Land at Goscote Road, Pelsall	6.27
LC2.4 Land North of Hughes Road, Moxley*	1.55

Site LC2.1 will be protected under Policy LC1. Sites LC2.2 and LC 2.3 are in the Green Belt and will be protected by Green Belt policies (see Policies ENV1-ENV3).

* With possibility of housing on part (see paragraph 8.22).

8.20 Sites LC2.1 - LC2.3 are carried forward from the 1995 Plan as proposed new areas of urban open space. Planning permission has already been granted for LC2.1 and planning applications are under consideration for the other two sites. The proposals for sites LC2.1 and LC2.2 both envisage a combination of public open space and formal commercial leisure facilities. Both sites suffer from very poor ground conditions and require substantial remediation works before being opened up for public access.

8.21 Site LC2.3, at Goscote Road, is linked to the adjacent residential development (see Proposal H2 in Chapter 6). The Council will seek a planning agreement to secure the laying out of this land for open space and nature conservation as part of the wider Goscote Valley project.

8.22 Land for public open space and possible housing is proposed to the north of Hughes Road, Moxley. Ground gas monitoring should take place for a minimum of two years to determine whether levels are sufficiently low to enable development to proceed. If this proves to be possible, the mix of uses within the site will be determined by the land contamination study and remediation measures and the extent of noise buffers required to mitigate the effects of the adjacent industrial premises and the Black Country New Road. Access to the site should be from Hughes Road. The future of the existing play area should be discussed as part of the development proposals.

Policy LC3: Children's Play Areas

- (a) **Wherever feasible, there should be a local equipped play area within easy and safe walking distance of family dwellings. Existing children's play areas will be normally protected and, where appropriate, improved. Proposals which would involve the loss of children's play areas will only be considered favourably where it is demonstrated that this would not cause or exacerbate any deficiency.**
- (b) **The siting and design of new facilities for children's play should have regard to the need for safety and supervision of young children and to safeguarding the amenity of nearby residents.**

8.23 Some parts of the Borough are less well provided for than others. A review is to be undertaken which will identify areas where further provision is required and where alternative uses might be sought for some existing Children's Play Areas. Application of policy LC3 will be guided by that review.

8.24 Some children's play areas are provided by organisations other than the Council, and those which are available for public use will also be covered by Policy LC3. Children's play facilities which are ancillary to other uses and not available for general public use (e.g. those provided for customers' children at pubs) are not subject to Policy LC3.



Children's Play, Aldridge

Policy LC4: Allotment Gardens

Proposals involving the loss of allotment gardens will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated that this would not result in unmet demand for allotments within reasonable walking distance. The importance of some allotment sites for nature conservation and the general amenity of adjacent residents will also be taken into account. The provision of additional allotment sites will be encouraged in areas where there is increasing demand.

8.25 The Council has a statutory obligation to retain allotments designated under the Allotments Acts. However, patterns of demand have changed so that some allotments are underused whilst others have waiting lists. Allotments, in addition to their primary function, often have wildlife and general amenity value and this will be taken into account when evaluating development proposals.

Proposal LC5: Greenways

- (a) The Greenway network, as shown on the Proposals Map, will continue to be created, enhanced and safeguarded. Priorities will be:-**
 - I. Greenways which form part of the National Cycle Route and Safe Routes to Schools.**
 - II. Improving access to open spaces and the countryside.**
 - III. Areas of low car ownership.**
- (b) The design of Greenways should take account of community safety objectives (see Policy GP7) and avoidance of potential nuisance to adjoining residents. Greenways will not be permitted in close proximity to existing or proposed rail lines if this would be prejudicial to safety or rail operational / design requirements.**
- (c) Developers of sites which include or adjoin parts of the Greenway network will be expected to fund the construction or improvement of these, together with any necessary links from the Greenway network into the development. Management and maintenance agreements, which specify responsibilities and revenue sources, must be concluded before development commences.**
- (d) Development which would sever or narrow an existing or proposed Greenway will not be permitted.**

8.26 The main purpose of the Greenway network is to provide safe, attractive, continuous routes which are, as far as possible, separate from the highway network and link built up areas to open spaces and the countryside. Although Greenways are primarily intended for leisure and recreation purposes, some sections may also be useful for utility journeys. Wherever feasible the Council will seek to ensure that Greenways will link up with routes in neighbouring districts.

8.27 The Greenway network shown on the Proposals Map distinguishes between those routes that already exist and other routes to be provided in the future.

Although most of the routes shown are off-highway, it has been necessary in a few instances, where no alternative exists, to show links using relatively quiet roads. The network will take considerable time to implement in full. In the meantime, it will be essential to safeguard the network from development which would sever it.

8.28 Greenways intended for utility trips (e.g. by commuters, shoppers or children going to school) should be safe and secure for use throughout the day. In particular, they should be well lit, and have sufficient access and exit points to make them useful and safe.

INDICATOR

The length of new greenways constructed will be a monitoring indicator. The target will be to construct at least another 10 miles up to 2011.

SPORT AND RECREATION

8.29 Sport and recreation facilities make an important contribution to urban living by enabling people to enhance their health and fitness, have fun and socialise. It is important that they are easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling so that everyone can use them (see paragraph 8.5 of the Strategic Policy Statement).

Policy LC6: Sports Pitches

Proposals which would result in the loss or reduction of sports pitches, public or private, will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that:

- I. **A carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated that there is an excess of sports provision and the site is not of good quality or importance to the development of sport; or**
- II. **At least equal compensatory provision will be made in respect of quality, quantity, suitability of location, and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements prior to the commencement of development.**

8.30 The aim of Policy LC6 is to maintain the current level of sports pitch provision which is the base upon which improved facilities can be developed in the future through the implementation of the Sport and Recreation Strategy.

8.31 Where compensatory provision is to be made this should be like for like replacement. In certain circumstances, where such provision is inappropriate, enhancements of nearby facilities may be considered or other new sports facility provision meeting an identified need may be secured. When considering compensatory provision other than like for like replacement, the Council will be guided by the facilities planning model of Sport England, the Council's playing pitch assessment and the Council's sport and recreation strategy.

8.32 The Council will encourage the fullest use of sports pitches and will not permit loss of pitches simply because a pitch has been allowed to fall out of use or become derelict.

8.33 The DfES, through the School Premises Regulations, sets out standards for playing pitch provision at schools and these will be taken into account when considering development proposals. However, consideration should be given to the potential for surplus school playing fields to meet the identified needs of the local community.

Policy LC7: Indoor Sport including Health and Fitness Centres

- (a) The Council will encourage the widest range of indoor sport and recreation, through improvement to existing facilities and provision of new ones. First preference will be given to enhancing and expanding existing sport and recreation centres which are accessible to the whole community. New major facilities will be directed towards the Town and District Centres in accordance with the “sequential approach” and the other policies set out in Chapter 5. These policies will also be applied to smaller facilities, which should also, wherever possible, be in centres and, otherwise, in places which are easily accessible by a choice of means of transport.**
- (b) Proposals for development that would result in the loss or reduction of existing facilities will be considered favourably only where it is demonstrated that:-**
 - I. There is no need for the facility and a shortage of similar facilities for indoor sport and recreation would not result; or**
 - II. Adequate compensatory sport and recreation provision will be provided to offset the loss of the existing facility in accordance with the identified need in the locality.**

8.34 The policy directs new developments for indoor sport to the Town, District and Local Centres and other places easily accessible by a choice of means of transport in order to minimise the need to travel, particularly by car, consistent with Government guidance in PPG6 and PPG13 and the policy approach set out in Chapters 5 and 7. There has been considerable growth in the popularity of health and fitness centres in recent years and Policy LC7 will also apply to these.

8.35 Provision at the local level will continue to be made mainly by Community Schools, which provide an extensive network of sports halls, swimming pools and other facilities for sport and recreation. These facilities are highly accessible to surrounding communities, with many people living within walking and cycling distance.

Policy LC8: Local Community Facilities

Proposals involving the loss of local community facilities, including public houses, clubs and other meeting places, will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that:-

- I. There are other existing facilities, in an equally or more convenient location, which could accommodate any community activities displaced by the proposed development; or
- II. A replacement facility could be provided in an equally or more convenient location; or
- III. There is no longer a need for the facility, or for any other community use which could be appropriately provided on the site in accordance with other policies of this Plan; or
- IV. It would not be possible to retain the facility, or provide an alternative community facility because, despite all reasonable efforts, this would not be viable.

8.36 This policy applies to all facilities that provide meeting places and focal points for community activities. This includes public houses, clubs and community centres. In view of the importance of these facilities for local community identity, and the difficulties of replacing them when they are lost, it will be important to retain existing facilities wherever possible. This will be particularly important in neighbourhoods where there is a lack of such facilities. Although more typically an issue within residential areas (and the centres serving those), it is also recognised that some industrial / commercial areas contain pubs and clubs that provide valuable meeting places for the industrial community during the working day.



Brownhills boaters' facility

8.37 The policy provides a presumption in favour of retaining community facilities unless it can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for any facility in that area, that any activities displaced can be satisfactorily accommodated elsewhere in the area or that, despite all reasonable efforts, provision of a community facility is uneconomic. When considering applications for redevelopment or change of use of community facilities to other non-community uses, the Council will expect developers to provide detailed evidence to demonstrate compliance with this policy.

8.38 Although there will normally be a preference that community facilities will continue in the same form (e.g. that public houses will remain as public houses), it is recognised that there may be circumstances when this will not be feasible, perhaps for reasons of economic viability. In these instances, all efforts should be made to identify other viable community uses before a change to other uses is considered. The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) has published the Public House Viability Test: Advice for Planners (April 2000) which will be taken into account by the Council when considering proposals for the change of use or redevelopment of pubs.

CANALS

8.39 Canals played an important role in the development of the Borough as a thriving industrial and commercial location. The legacy of these Georgian and early Victorian civil engineering projects is a network of about 30 miles of waterways, and associated structures, which are still in use today. They are important features of the townscape, providing linear open spaces, wildlife corridors and habitats, community boundaries, functional routes for pedestrians and cyclists and architectural and historical interest. One section is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and there are numerous Local Nature Reserves and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation on the network. There are also 14 Listed canal structures and the waterway provides the centrepiece of the Walsall Locks Conservation Area. Canals deserve to be protected and enhanced: they represent a major environmental asset, which should be fully realised through appropriate canalside development that will respect and enhance their special qualities.

ENV4

Policy LC9: Canals

- (a) **The Council will encourage the provision of secure moorings, other canalside facilities and environmental improvements to enhance the attractiveness and recreational potential of the canal network. Particular locations with potential for canalside activities are:-**
- **Gallery Square and Town Wharf in Walsall Town Centre.**
 - **Silver Street, Brownhills District Centre.**
 - **Sneyd Junction, Bloxwich.**
 - **Longwood Basin, Aldridge.**
- (b) **The Council will expect all development alongside and near to canals to positively relate to the opportunity presented by the waterway, to achieve high standards of design, and to be sensitively integrated with the canal and any associated canalside features.**

8.40 A visitor centre, next door to the New Art Gallery and proposed future retail and leisure developments at Town Wharf, will create a focal point for canal-related activities and special events. Gallery Square is highly accessible by a range of means of transport and is an attractive location just off the main shopping street in Walsall town centre.

8.41 The canals in the Borough are classified as ‘remainder waterway’, which means that British Waterways are not obliged to keep them in navigable condition. Nevertheless, the canals are frequently used by touring boats (there is a boatyard to the north of the Borough at the end of Cannock Extension Canal) and they remain an important environmental and recreational asset. The Council will encourage improvements which will foster the increased use of canals for boating, including secure moorings and other canalside facilities, and will support the upgrading of the canals in the Borough to “cruiseway” status. Improved links to the wider canal network outside the Borough will also be encouraged, including restoration of the disused Lichfield and Hatherton Canals. Towpaths are an important part of the Greenway network (see Policy LC5).

8.42 In the past, too many developments have turned their backs on canals. The Council will urge developers to consider from the earliest design stages the relationship of their proposals with canals so that optimum use can be made of their visual and recreational potential. The design of development adjacent to canals should consider the opportunity to incorporate elements of canalside vernacular architecture. The Council will, in appropriate circumstances, use planning agreements and obligations to secure improvements to the canal network.

EDUCATION, HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Policy LC10: Wolverhampton University, Walsall Campus, Broadway, Walsall.

- (a) The Council will encourage the continued use and development of the Walsall Campus of the University (as indicated on the Proposals Map) as an important centre of Higher Education in the Borough.
- (b) Any proposals for additional development must be considered as part of an overall Master Plan for the campus prepared in full consultation with the local community and agreed by the Council. In particular, proposals will only be acceptable if:-
 - I. The uses proposed are of an educational, community, or leisure nature directly related to the use of the remainder of the Campus, and are not uses which should be located in an established centre under policies in Chapter 5 of this Plan.
 - II. The green and open aspect of the Campus as viewed from surrounding areas including Broadway, Delves Road and Highgate Drive is maintained by retaining existing substantial green corridors along frontages and by the sensitive siting of buildings within an attractive parkland setting. This necessitates retaining the designation of adjacent areas of Protected Urban Open Space off Highgate Drive.

- III. **All buildings and structures are of a high standard of design.**
- IV. **There are satisfactory arrangements for vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access to the campus that are sensitive to the amenities of the surrounding residential areas. A Transport Assessment and Green Travel Plan will be required.**
- V. **Adequate provision is made for parking within the University Campus for staff, students and visitors to the University so as to minimise parking in surrounding residential roads.**

8.43 The Walsall Campus of Wolverhampton University, off Broadway and Gorway Road, Walsall is recognised as being an important facility for higher education in the Borough and the Black Country. The University is undertaking a major master planning exercise for the continued use and development of its Walsall Campus. This will include proposals to underpin the provision at the Campus of educational opportunities in the academic subjects of sport, performing arts, leisure, tourism, health (including nursing and midwifery).

8.44 An important feature of the Campus is the green and open aspect it presents to Broadway, which is part of Walsall's Ring Road. Although the Council recognises that the University's future plans might at some time have to involve the development of part of the present playing field area, it will be important, in any development scheme, to maintain the green and open aspect. The prominence of the campus also justifies particular attention being given to the quality of design.

Proposal LC11: Land for Cemetery Extension, Bentley Lane

A site is proposed for the future extension of the cemetery at Bentley Lane, as shown on the Proposals Map.

8.44 The land reserved on the Proposals Map is for the longer term extension of the cemetery. The immediate needs of the cemetery will be met by an extension that has already taken place in recent years.

9 MINERALS

PART I STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT

MIN5

General

9.1 When considering proposals for mineral working, the Council will take into account the justification for the release of further reserves, which will be weighed against the potential impact of extraction and restoration on the environment and the amenities of the area. The environmental and amenity considerations that will need to be taken into account in the assessment of proposals for minerals extraction are set out in Policy GP2.

Safeguarding of Mineral Resources

MIN1, Minerals Key Diagram

9.2 The Council will, where appropriate, define Minerals Safeguarding Areas to protect known resources, within which new development will not be permitted if it is likely to prejudice the future extraction of minerals. Proposals for the extraction of minerals within these areas will be considered on their merits in the context of other policies of this Plan.

9.3 Elsewhere, the prior extraction of minerals in advance of the implementation of approved development schemes will be permitted provided that the mining operation does not prejudice or unduly impede the development and is otherwise in accordance with the policies of this Plan.

Sustainable Use of Minerals

MIN1, MIN4, MIN5, WM4, WM5

9.4 The Council will expect mineral resources to be used in the most sustainable way, recognising the scarce and non-renewable resource that these represent. In particular:-

- The use of recycled and waste materials in place of newly won minerals will generally be preferred and the Council will seek to maximise the use of such materials in its own works projects wherever feasible. The extraction of usable material from mineral waste deposits will be considered in accordance with Policy WM2 (c).
- Proposals for aggregates recycling facilities will be encouraged, but any proposals will be considered and made subject to policies in Chapter 10: Waste Management (see paragraph 10.4 and Policy WM1).
- During mineral extraction the concurrent recovery and use of any other types of minerals to be found in the land will be encouraged in order to ensure that these are not sterilised or wasted, provided that the additional mining activity does not lead to an unacceptably adverse impact on the environment or local community or significantly delay the reclamation of the site.
- The extraction of high grade minerals may be permitted if the Council can be satisfied that their use will be restricted to purposes for which their special qualities are essential.

Over Intensification

MIN5

9.5 In considering proposals for further mineral working in locations where the impact of existing or committed mineral workings is already considerable, the Council will take into account the cumulative effect of the workings and their restoration on the environment and road network in the area. The Council will wish to prevent over intensification of activity in any one area.

Updating of Conditions

MIN5

9.6 The Council will ensure that the conditions attached to existing minerals permissions are updated to meet the latest standards of good practice in the control of mining operations whenever such permissions are due for review under the provisions of the Environment Act, 1995.

Transport of Materials

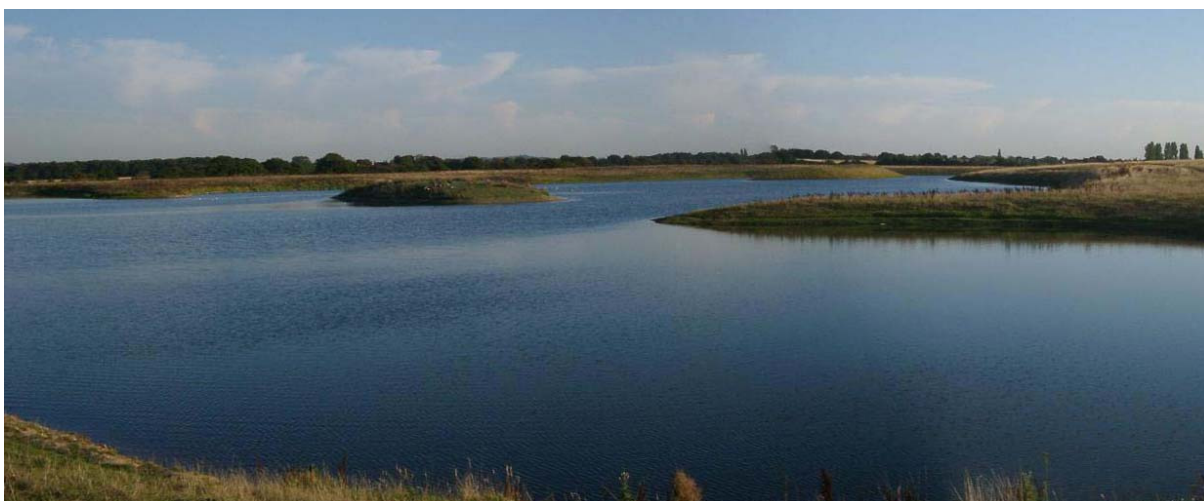
TRAN3, MIN1, MIN5

9.7 Minerals should, as far as possible, be worked close to the communities which will consume them. Where minerals, or waste products associated with mineral working, have to be transported the Council will expect this to be done in the most environmentally acceptable way. Wherever feasible, materials should be transported by rail and the construction of sidings and road / rail transfer sites will be encouraged subject to there being no unacceptably adverse impact on the environment or amenities of the area. Where materials have to be transported by road this will be controlled by vehicle routing agreements.

Restoration

MIN5

9.8 Proposals for new mineral workings, or extensions to existing workings, must demonstrate that the site will be satisfactorily restored to a condition fit for an agreed after-use within as short a timescale as possible. Restoration proposals should include appropriate measures to protect the environment of the area and ensure land stability on and around the site prior to restoration. Particular encouragement will be given to high quality restoration schemes which provide for recreation and amenity areas, new wildlife habitats, forestry or agriculture. Provision should also be made for any necessary after-care of the site, taking account of the guidance given in MPG7.



Ryders Mere, Pelsall: restored open cast coal mine

AggregatesMIN1, MIN2,
WM5

9.9 The Council will, in conjunction with the other West Midlands Metropolitan District Councils, endeavour to maintain the Metropolitan area's contribution towards meeting the regional demand for aggregates and, in pursuit of this, a Metropolitan area landbank of permitted reserves equivalent to 7 years' production, unless overriding environmental constraints prevent the release of sufficient resources to achieve this. The Council will have regard to the advice of the West Midlands Regional Aggregates Working Party and will also take into account the role that recycled and waste materials can play in helping to meet aggregates needs.

Clays

MIN1, MIN3, MIN4

9.10 The Council will seek to ensure a continuing supply of etruria marl and fireclay for local industry, subject to there being no overriding environmental constraints which prevent this and subject also to the provisions of Policy M4.

Coal

MIN1, MIN4

9.11 Proposals for the opencast working of coal will be considered on their merits in the context of Policy M9 and other relevant policies of this Plan.



Ibstock Quarry, Aldridge (with the kind permission of Ibstock Brick Ltd)

PART II DETAILED POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

INTRODUCTION

9.12 The Council's objectives as Minerals Planning Authority are:-

- To enable the Borough to meet its obligations to maintain supplies of minerals for industry within the region, and to prevent the unnecessary sterilisation of mineral resources which may be required to be worked in the future (recognising that minerals can only be worked where they occur).
- To secure the satisfactory restoration of mineral workings for a suitable after use.
- To safeguard the amenity of adjoining land uses, particularly residential and other sensitive uses.

9.13 Mineral extraction in Walsall is currently confined to the working of sand and gravel, etruria marl and opencast coal. There are also potential resources of fireclay. There are no reserves of hard rock being worked in the Borough although limestone and other hard rocks were worked in the past. Sand and gravel are used as aggregates in the construction industry and etruria marl in the local brickmaking industry, which continues to be an important employer in the Aldridge area.

9.14 An important context for the preparation of minerals policies in development plans is provided by the Governments Minerals Planning Guidance Notes (MPGs) and by RPG11 and these have been taken into account by the Council in the preparation of this Plan. RPG11 recognises the importance of the minerals industry in promoting economic growth, creating and maintaining employment, and supporting the construction industry. It notes, however, that minerals planning must also reflect the following objectives of sustainable development:-

- To conserve minerals as far as possible whilst ensuring an adequate supply to meet the needs of society.
- To minimise production of waste and to encourage efficient use of materials, including appropriate use of high-quality materials, and recycling of waste.
- To encourage sensitive working practices and to preserve or enhance the overall quality of the environment once extraction has ceased.
- To protect designated areas of landscape or nature quality from development, other than in exceptional circumstances.

9.15 It should also be noted that Section 96 of the Environment Act, 1995 requires all minerals planning authorities to review and update minerals permissions granted between 1948 and 1982 (previous legislation already provided for the updating of even older permissions). This is in response to the increasing importance attached to the protection of the environment and recognises that there is a need for periodic review of permissions to ensure that the current standards of society are met. The review involves classifying sites into "active" and "dormant". "Active sites" are to be reviewed in a staged programme and for "dormant" sites no minerals can be extracted until a new scheme of conditions has been approved. There is also an

ongoing duty for periodic review every 15 years. The review process is now well underway in Walsall and further reference will be made to the situation on some individual sites later in this chapter.

GENERAL

9.16 The Strategic Policy Statement sets out the general policies that will be used by the Council in the consideration of all proposals for minerals working. It takes account of, but does not seek to repeat, the Government guidance given in RPG11 (1998) and MPGs. The aim is to ensure that the need for minerals can continue to be met, whilst at the same time satisfying the principles of sustainable development and environmental protection.

9.17 All proposals for minerals extraction will, like all other types of development, be subjected to a rigorous assessment against the criteria set out in Policy GP2: Environmental Protection (see Chapter 2). In addition to this, the Strategic Policy Statement includes some other key provisions to ensure that all minerals development is as sustainable and environmentally friendly as possible:

- The conservation of mineral resources by encouraging the use of recycled materials or “secondary” aggregates; ensuring that productive use is made of all mineral and materials uncovered during mining operations (e.g. fireclays liberated by opencasting); and reserving the highest quality materials for purposes that justify their use.
- The environmentally friendly transport of materials, particularly by rail wherever feasible.
- The avoidance of over-intensification of mineral extraction activity in any one area.
- The need to consider the updating of conditions attached to existing planning permissions through the review process under Section 96 of the Environment Act, 1995.
- The importance of speedy and satisfactory restoration and after-care of sites following minerals extraction.

9.18 The detailed policies and proposals in the remainder of this chapter relate to the identification of Minerals Safeguarding Areas and then, within these, particular locations for the extraction of aggregates and clays.

Proposal M1: Minerals Safeguarding Areas

MIN1, Minerals Key Diagram

Minerals Safeguarding Areas are defined on the Proposals Map at:

- I. Branton Hill Lane, Aldridge.**
- II. Birch Lane, Aldridge.**
- III. Stubbers Green Road / Dumblederry Lane.**
- IV. Highfields South.**

9.19 The 1995 Plan identified one other Mineral Safeguarding Area at Highfields North (north-west of the A461 opposite Highfields South). It is proposed to delete the Highfields North MSA through this review of the Plan, consistent with the revocation of the minerals extraction planning permission for this area (see also paragraph 9.39 later in this chapter).

9.20 There are also proposed amendments to the Branton Hill Lane MSA and Birch Lane MSA to establish more logical boundaries. The northern boundary of the Branton Hill Lane MSA is to be drawn to follow the railway line; and the Birch Lane MSA will be defined to the northwest by Lazy Hill Road and to the southeast by Stonnall Road / Birch Lane.

AGGREGATES

9.21 Sand and gravel working is needed to supply aggregates to help meet the needs of the construction industry in the region. MPG6 (April 1994) identifies a need for the production of some 180 million tonnes of aggregates in the West Midlands region over the period 1992-2006. In July 1995, the West Midlands Regional Aggregates Working Party published a sub-regional apportionment of this target, as agreed by the West Midlands Forum of Local Authorities. The apportionment is based on average annual production rates for each County over recent years. The share for the West Midlands Metropolitan county is some 0.54 million tonnes per annum for the period up to 2006 (equivalent to 4.5% of regional production). Walsall and Solihull are the only producers of sand and gravel in the Metropolitan County.

9.22 RPG11 (1998) refers to the need for development plans to meet the regional apportionment of the MPG6 production guidelines, and MPG6 also requires mineral planning authorities to maintain a seven year landbank of sand and gravel resources. The Strategic Policy Statement confirms that the Council will, in conjunction with other Metropolitan Districts, endeavour to maintain a landbank of permitted sand and gravel reserves, and maintain their contribution towards meeting the regional demand for aggregates, subject to any overriding environmental constraints preventing this.

9.23 The sand and gravel in the Borough comes from the Sherwood Sandstone Group, which outcrops from Brownhills in the north to Barr Beacon in the south. There are permitted reserves, and potential additional resources, of sand and gravel at Branton Hill Lane and Birch Lane to the east of Aldridge, and these resources are protected as Mineral Safeguarding Areas (see Policy M1).

9.24 It is considered that the two locations defined as Mineral Safeguarding Areas should contain sufficient resources to enable Walsall to make a satisfactory contribution, in conjunction with other Metropolitan Districts, to the West Midlands County share of regional aggregates production over the Plan period. The Annual Report of the West Midlands Regional Aggregates Working Party (2002) confirmed that the West Midlands County had at 31.12.02 a 7.1-year landbank of sand and gravel reserves in relation to the regional apportionment. The following policies provide further guidance for the two Minerals Safeguarding Areas.

Policy M2: Branton Hill Lane Quarry, AldridgeENV5, MIN2, MIN5, Proposal MA2,
Minerals Key Diagram

Proposals for further extensions to the area of the Branton Hill Lane Quarry will be required to demonstrate that:-

- I. Existing vehicular access problems can be overcome.**
- II. Both old and new working areas will be satisfactorily restored within an acceptable timescale.**
- III. The proposed quarrying and means of restoration would not pose any threat whatsoever to the underlying aquifer.**

9.25 This quarry has a long history. Following the introduction of planning legislation in the 1940s permission was obtained to continue quarrying from 3 hectares of land at the site. Since then a series of small extensions have allowed the quarry to grow to its present size. The existing active permissions on the site have been reviewed under the provisions of Section 96 of the Environment Act, 1995 (see also paragraph 9.15).

9.26 The Council would be prepared to consider proposals for the extension of the quarry provided that the requirements set out in Policy M2 are met. It is particularly important that ground water supplies are protected because these feed the nearby Bourne Vale pumping station. An amendment to the Minerals Safeguarding Area is proposed (see Policy M1) to rationalise the northern boundary so that it accords with the railway line.

Policy M3: Birch Lane Quarry, AldridgeENV5, MIN2, MIN5, Proposal MA1,
Minerals Key Diagram

Any proposal for further extension to the Birch Lane Quarry must ensure the protection of ground water supplies in the aquifer, and provide for reclamation for a use appropriate to the Green Belt status of the site.

9.27 The existing permission for this quarry became subject to periodic review (under Section 96 of the Environment Act, 1995) in 2000. The quarry is approaching exhaustion of the permitted reserves and would cease production during the Plan period unless additional reserves become available. The operators have indicated that they will be seeking permission for the extension of the quarry in an easterly direction towards Birch Lane and the Chester Road, within the Minerals Safeguarding Area identified under Policy M1. Any such proposals will be considered with reference to the guidelines in Policy M3. It should be noted that it is proposed to amend the boundary of the Minerals Safeguarding Area to accord with Lazy Hill Lane to the northwest and Stonnall Road / Birch Lane to the southeast (see also Policy M1).

ETRURIA MARL AND FIRECLAY**Policy M4: Working of Etruria Marl and Fireclay**

Proposals to extend existing quarries or establish new extraction sites will only be permitted if:-

- **It can be satisfactorily demonstrated that new reserves should be released to ensure a continuity of supply.**
- **The exploitation of the new reserves forms part of a phased programme which secures the restoration of existing workings by the earliest possible date.**
- **The proposals do not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment or the amenities of the local community and are in accordance with other policies of this Plan.**

9.28 There are important reserves of etruria marl in a small area bounded by Shelfield, Aldridge and Walsall Wood. It is used mainly by the local brickmaking industry which is a major employer in the Aldridge area. Large permitted reserves of the marl are already in the control of the industry but the companies have indicated that by the end of the Plan period these permitted reserves will be at an unacceptably low level and the applications for quarry extensions and/or a new extraction site are likely to be necessary. There are limited stockpiles of fireclay at Birch Coppice and permitted reserves, as yet unworked, at Brownhills Common. Fireclays, which can be of varying qualities, are also used as an input to the ceramics and brick making industries.

9.29 The Strategic Policy Statement makes a commitment to ensuring continuing supplies of marl and fireclay for the local brick making industry, subject to certain environmental safeguards and Policy M4 provides more detailed policy criteria for the consideration of any proposals.

9.30 The following policies provide guidance for the particular areas of etruria marl and fireclay reserves.

MIN3, MIN5, Proposal MA5, Minerals Key Diagram

Policy M5: Etruria Marl - North of Stubbers Green Road

The Council will encourage the early reclamation of the Barnett & Beddows and Sandown Quarries by the disposal of waste material through a phased programme of mineral extraction, waste disposal and restoration. Any proposal for further extraction must demonstrate how this will contribute towards the earliest practicable restoration of the area.

9.31 This area continues to experience intense quarrying activity and any extension into areas not presently permitted will increase the impact of this. The Council wishes to see the restoration of the area brought to as early a conclusion as is reasonably practicable, but this must not destroy or have adverse effects on either the Swan Pool and The Swag SSSI or the Stubbers Green Bog SSSI. The existing permissions within this area are subject to review under the provisions of Section 96 of the Environment Act, 1995 and will be subject to periodic review in the future.



Brickmaking at Aldridge

ENV1, MIN3, MIN5, Proposal MA5, Minerals Key Diagram

Policy M6: Etruria Marl - South of Stubbers Green Road

Planning permission will only be granted for the extension of mineral extraction within this part of the Stubbers Green / Dumblederry Lane Minerals Safeguarding Area if:-

- I. The requirements set out in paragraph 9.10 of the Strategic Policy Statement are met.**
- II. The Site of Importance for Nature Conservation is protected. In the event of any adverse effect on the SINC, satisfactory compensatory provision must be made on land in the area.**

9.32 This policy relates to the part of the Stubbers Green / Dumblederry Lane Minerals Safeguarding Area to the southwest of Stubbers Green Road. A planning permission covers most of the area, allowing the extraction of etruria marl and restoration by infill to open space and/or woodland. The site will be worked and restored progressively during the Plan period. The existing permission is due for periodic review in 2004.

9.33 The remainder of the Minerals Safeguarding Area, outside the area of the existing planning permission, consists of the Stubbers Green Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The granting of any permission for the extension of mineral working into this area will be dependent on the proposal satisfying the criteria set out in the Strategic Policy Statement and Policy M5.

Policy M7: Birch Coppice

The Council will seek to ensure the restoration of this area to land uses that maintain its openness as soon as is reasonably practicable, and will be unlikely to support any proposal which unreasonably extends the timescale for final restoration.

9.34 Mining has ceased at Birch Coppice, although part of the site is currently used for the stockpiling and processing of excavated clay. A major part of the site has now been restored and there is an approved scheme for completion of restoration of the remaining clay storage areas by 2004. Permissions on the site have been reviewed under Section 96 of the Environment Act, 1995. By virtue of the nature of infilling the site is likely to remain unsuitable for built development and should remain in an open use such as woodland, as it was prior to extraction. The site was included in the Green Belt in the 1995 Plan and it is proposed that that designation will continue, except for the Swan Works, see Proposal ENV1(b)III.

ENV1, CSP2, MIN4, MIN5, Minerals
Key Diagram

Policy M8: Brownhills Common

- (a) **The Council will seek to minimise the environmental impact of any mineral working (and maximise the benefits and quality of subsequent restoration) which might be carried out under the existing planning permission at Brownhills Common.**
- (b) **Consideration will be given to the merits of the extraction of fireclays from an alternative area to the west of Brownhills Common and The Slough SINC if this would, through appropriate legal agreement, lead to the permanent revocation of the mineral working permission at Brownhills Common.**

9.35 Planning permission was granted on appeal in 1954 for the winning and working of minerals in an area between Chester Road and Coppice Lane to the west of the former Walsall Wood Extension Railway. The planning permission required a working programme to be agreed, and one was imposed by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in 1955.

9.36 Since the 1955 permission, the area has been designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and is also proposed as a Local Nature Reserve in Policy ENV20. The Council would not now be able to support quarrying in such a location if presented as a new proposal, and it will therefore, as its primary aim, endeavour to ensure, in considering matters relating to the existing consent, that the potential for environmental impact is minimised. The permission is currently subject to review under Section 96 of the Environment Act, 1995.

9.37 The policy recognises that, as an alternative to implementation of the existing permission at Brownhills Common, there may be merits in considering the option of extracting fireclays from an area to the west of Brownhills Common and The Slough SINC, thereby minimising the impact on areas of nature conservation and public amenity value. Permission for any such proposal would be conditional upon a legal agreement to permanently revoke the existing permission at Brownhills Common.



Marklew's Pool, Brownhills Common

Highfields South and North

9.38 An area at Highfields South, just to the southeast of the A461 between Walsall Wood and Shelfield, is protected as a Minerals Safeguarding Area. Planning permission for mineral working was granted in 1954, and implementation began with the working of clay over a substantial area to a depth of 40 feet, but working ceased in the early 1970s. This permission was included in phase I of the review of old permissions required under Section 96 of the Environment Act, 1995 with new conditions approved by the Council in July 1997. This consent includes the restoration of the site by landfill, with the types of waste to be subject to the approval of the Council.

9.39 An area at Highfields North, to the northwest of the A461 opposite Highfields South, was granted planning permission for mineral working in 1966. Quarrying was never started, although advanced tree planting has been carried out. The site was classified as "dormant" in the review of old permissions required under Section 96 of the Environment Act, 1995 and the permission has been revoked under an agreement associated with the granting of permission for coal extraction at Ryders Hayes - the revocation order was made upon the implementation of the coal extraction permission (see also paragraph 9.42). The Highfields North area is protected as a Minerals Safeguarding Area in the 1995 Plan but this designation is now proposed for deletion in view of the revocation of the permission for working and the conflict with the Jockey Fields Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Vigo and Utopia

9.40 The 1995 Plan included a policy to guide the early restoration of the Vigo and Utopia Quarries in Walsall Wood. This policy is now no longer required because, in May 1995, a new permission was granted for the completion of marl extraction, and restoration by landfill in accordance with the guidelines set out in the 1995 Plan. Work on implementing the permission started in March 1996. A Liaison Committee for local residents has been established. Upon completion of restoration of the clayhole, a valuable new area of informal open space will be created for the communities of Walsall Wood and northern Aldridge.

COAL

9.41 The northern and western parts of the Borough form part of the South Staffordshire Coalfield. The underground mining of coal in the Borough ended in 1971 and there are no proposals to resume deep mining, but there may be proposals for the opencast working of coal in the north of the Borough.

9.42 In September 1996, the Secretary of State for the Environment granted planning permission on appeal for opencast coal extraction on a site at Ryders Hayes (to the east of Pelsall), subject to a Planning Agreement to secure the revocation of planning permissions for mineral extraction at the Highfields North etruria marl site (see also paragraph 9.39). Working of the site began in 1998 and restoration is scheduled to be completed in 2001.

9.43 The Council will consider any further proposals for the opencast working of coal in the context of the Strategic Policy Statement, Policy M9 below, other policies of this Plan and relevant Government guidance, including MPG3.

ENV1, CSP2, MIN4, MIN5

Policy M9: Working of Coal

There will be presumption against opencast or deep mining of coal, and colliery spoil disposal, unless the proposal would meet the following tests:-

- I. It would not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment or the amenities of the local area in terms of the criteria set out in Policy GP2, taking account of the potential to ameliorate any environmental impact through planning conditions or obligations; or**
- II. It provides local or community benefits which clearly outweigh any likely environmental impacts.**
- III. Any proposals within or likely to affect SSSIs will be subject to particularly rigorous examination, taking into account guidance in PPG9 and advice from English Nature.**
- IV. Any proposals within the Green Belt should meet the highest environmental standards, including taking into account the criteria set out in Policy ENV3.**

10

WASTE MANAGEMENT

PART I STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT

Integration & Co-ordination

WM1, WM4

10.1 An integrated approach towards the minimisation and management of waste will be adopted when considering proposals for waste management facilities, having regard to relevant guidance at the national and regional levels and the Council's own Integrated Waste Management Strategy. The provision of waste management facilities will, wherever possible, be co-ordinated with neighbouring local authorities to ensure that maximum use is made of facilities and that transport distances are minimised.

Proximity

WM4, WM5. Also partly superseded by Waste Strategy for England 2007 and PPS10

10.2 The pre-treatment, recycling and disposal of waste should take place close to its source, wherever this is economically viable and consistent with other land use and environmental considerations. Consideration will be given to the merits of small scale facilities which can be more easily integrated into the urban area. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for waste treatment, recycling and landfill facilities to be located together, subject to it being demonstrated that this represents the best practicable environmental option*. Wherever possible, advantage should be taken of opportunities to transport waste by rail.

The Waste Hierarchy

WM1. Also duplicates provisions in Waste Strategy for England 2007 and PPS10

10.3 There will be a progressive movement of waste management methods up the waste hierarchy, with greater emphasis on reduction, re-use and recovery, and an overall reduction in the reliance on landfill. This will, however, be subject to an assessment of the best practicable environmental option* in each case and the Council will apply the principles of life cycle assessment to ensure that the full range of environmental as well as other costs and benefits have been taken into account.

Waste Minimisation, Recycling and Composting

10.4 The Council will work towards the targets for waste minimisation, the reuse of materials, recycling and composting set by national and regional guidance and the Council's Integrated Waste Management Strategy. Initiatives and facilities which will help achieve this will be encouraged. In particular, the Council will:-

- Encourage the maximum use of recycled materials in development schemes (see also Policy ENV39).
- Encourage developments which provide for in-house recycling and treatment of wastes.
- Provide guidance for the location and siting of waste treatment,

WM1, WM3, WM4, WM5. Partly superseded by revised MWMS, Waste Strategy for England 2007 and PPS10

* Wherever the best practicable environmental option is referred to, this will be assessed in relation to the latest guidance available at the time when an application is submitted.

recycling, composting and transfer facilities, having regard for the proximity principle as well as environmental and amenity considerations.

- Require the submission of a waste audit for major development proposals.

ENV7, WM4. Partly superseded by Waste Strategy for England 2007 and PPS10

Incineration with Energy Recovery

10.5 Proposals for facilities for incineration with energy recovery must be accompanied by a study demonstrating that this will be the best practicable environmental option. It will be particularly important to establish that there are no practicable alternatives (such as recycling) higher up the waste hierarchy. Any proposals should also not have any other unacceptable adverse implications for the environment or health (see also Policy WM1).

Landfill

WM1, WM3, WM4, MIN5. Superseded by revised MWMS, revised MWMS, Waste Strategy for England 2007 and PPS10

10.6 The Council will work towards the targets for the reduction of waste going to landfill set by national and regional guidance and the Council's Integrated Waste Management Strategy. No further proposals for landfill will be permitted, except where additional capacity is needed to meet proven local needs, and/or where landfill is necessary to facilitate the regeneration of despoiled land or mineral workings. Proposals for landfill should always be accompanied by a rigorous assessment of the potential for energy recovery.

Safeguarding the Environment

CSP3, WM4

10.7 When considering all proposals for waste management operations, including recycling sites, local transfer stations, pre-treatment plants, incinerators and landfill sites, the Council will give particular attention to safeguarding the environment and protecting the amenities of local residents, taking into account the proximity of the site to existing or proposed housing or other sensitive uses.

PART II DETAILED POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

INTRODUCTION

10.8 The creation of waste is an inevitable consequence of industrial, commercial and domestic activities, and can be a particularly acute problem when people are concentrated in large urban areas. The way in which we manage our waste has, therefore, a critical part to play in moving towards sustainable development, in terms of both reducing our demands on scarce resources, and of minimising the environmental impact of its treatment or disposal. Everyone must share in the responsibility of minimising the waste we produce, and treating or disposing of it safely and without harm to the environment.

National and European Context

10.9 In May 2000, the Government published the Waste Strategy 2000 for England and Wales. This seeks to curb the growth in waste produced and to recognise it as a resource and recover more value from it. The Strategy sets national targets (see paragraph 10.16) and looks to the Regional Technical Advisory Bodies to devise more specific targets for their regions. Further guidance on how the planning system can contribute to these objectives is also given in PPG10: Planning and Waste Management (September, 1999). European guidance is also given in the EC Framework Directive on Waste and the Community Waste Management Strategy.

10.10 From April 1996, the Environment Agency has had responsibility for waste regulation (issuing authorisations for waste management disposal, or exemptions). In addition, the Environment Agency is required to: provide local planning authorities with the information they need as an input to their development plans; provide information to developers and planning authorities on the need for facilities; promote waste reduction amongst waste producers; and advise on the principles of regional self-sufficiency. The local authorities retain responsibilities as Waste Collection and Waste Disposal Authorities and as the former they have to prepare waste recycling plans. The land use and transportation implications of waste management have to be considered through development plans, including UDPs.

Regional Context

10.11 Waste management policies in this Plan were prepared in the context of RPG11 (1998), which noted that waste disposal is an increasingly serious problem in the region in terms of cost, land-take and pollution. It explained the principles of the “waste hierarchy” (which gives preference to waste reduction, re-use, and recovery before safe disposal) and emphasises the importance of regional self-sufficiency and the “proximity principle”, under which waste should be handled close to the point at which it is generated. The Guidance also suggested that development plans should identify sufficient sites or areas of search to satisfy the requirement for recycling, treatment and disposal over the plan period, and provide a framework for the consideration of planning applications. The newly issued RPG11 (2004) now takes forward guidance on waste management at the regional level and will be taken into account in future preparation of the Local Development Framework.

10.12 Both versions of RPG11 underline the importance of waste planning and management at the regional level. It is necessary to co-ordinate matters at this level because waste flows cross administrative boundaries and facilities often need to be considered within this wider context. The West Midlands Regional Assembly has

established a Regional Waste Planning Technical Group and a key task of this group is to prepare a Regional Waste Planning Strategy. This Strategy will seek to ensure that the West Midlands is, as far as possible, self-sufficient in dealing with its waste arisings and will provide guidance to constituent Waste Planning Authorities, Waste Collection Authorities and Waste Disposal Authorities for their land use and waste management plans. Emerging technical work leading towards the production of the Draft Regional Waste Strategy has been taken into account in the preparation of the policies and proposals in this Plan. The finalised Regional Waste Planning Strategy and supporting technical work will inform the future review of waste management policies in the Local Development Framework.

Walsall's Integrated Waste Management Strategy

10.13 A further important context for the development of policies and proposals in this Plan was provided by Walsall's Integrated Waste Management Strategy (draft 1999). This had the aim of providing:

“a high quality waste management service to all sections of the community which is both cost effective and progressively more sustainable in environmental terms.”

10.14 The Draft Integrated Waste Management Strategy also set the following strategic objectives:-

- To inform all sections of the Borough's community about the need to adopt sustainable waste practices, and to work together with residents and businesses to achieve waste minimisation and re-use / recycling.
- To encourage households and businesses in the Borough to minimise the amount of waste they produce, and to minimise the waste produced through the Council's own activities.
- To adopt cost-effective measures which increase levels of composting and re-use / recycling of household waste and the Council's own waste, and to reduce progressively the proportion of this waste which is sent to landfill.
- To establish the long term feasibility of pre-treatment with energy recovery of household wastes which cannot be cost-effectively composted or re-used / recycled, and if appropriate to develop a project for implementation.
- To ensure that waste is collected, transported, managed and disposed of efficiently, cost-effectively and in an environmentally sound way.
- To adopt specific targets for the amount of household waste which is collected, and proportions re-used / recycled, recovered and sent to landfill, to monitor our achievements against these targets, and to review the Strategy periodically.
- To establish a full understanding of household waste arisings patterns (volume, weight, content, household formation) across the Borough, to enable collection and minimisation initiatives to be measured and monitored.

- To adopt an effective cross-cutting approach to waste management practice and service delivery throughout the Local Authority.

THE STRATEGY

10.15 The Strategic Policy Statement sets out the Council's overall approach to waste management taking into account the context provided by the relevant national and regional guidance and Walsall's Draft Integrated Waste Management Strategy. It focuses upon the following main principles:

- Integration and co-ordination at the regional, sub-regional and local levels, including a close relationship with the Integrated Waste Management Strategy.
- Proximity. EC and UK Government policy seeks to ensure that all waste is disposed of, or otherwise managed, as close as practicable to where it is generated. Account should also be taken of the environmental sensitivity of the route over which waste is transported. Wherever possible, advantage should be taken of opportunities to transport waste by rail and water.
- Waste Hierarchy. EC and UK Government guidance also embody a preferential order for waste management options known as the waste hierarchy. The most sustainable options are generally near to the top of the hierarchy: reduction; re-use; recovery (including energy recovery, recycling and composting); and disposal by landfill or incineration without recovery. It is recognised, however, that this hierarchy should not be regarded as an absolute guide for all waste streams in all locations, and there may be occasions when the best practicable environmental option is lower down the hierarchy.

10.16 The Waste Strategy 2000 for England and Wales establishes the following national targets for the recycling of municipal waste and the reduction of waste going to landfill:-

- To recycle or compost at least 25% of household waste by 2005.
- To recycle or compost at least 30% of household waste by 2010.
- To recycle or compost at least 33% of household waste by 2015.
- By 2010 to reduce biodegradable municipal waste landfilled to 75% of that produced in 1995.
- By 2013 to reduce biodegradable municipal waste landfilled to 50% of that produced in 1995.
- By 2020 to reduce biodegradable municipal waste landfilled to 35% of that produced in 1995.

10.17 Regional targets for waste management will be established through the preparation of the Regional Waste Planning Strategy and the forthcoming next review of RPG11 (see also paragraph 10.12). When the Regional Strategy has been adopted the Council will work towards any targets established by that document and the latest position will be reflected in the review of waste management policies in the future Local Development Framework. The Best Value Performance Indicators also contain targets relating to waste management.

10.18 Incinerator capacity within the metropolitan area reduces the household waste which needs to be exported to the surrounding shires for landfill, and the residue from incinerators can be used for construction purposes. There is potential to further increase the energy from waste capacity in the metropolitan area, but careful consideration needs to be given to the relative environmental benefits of this as compared with recycling (recycling normally being preferred to incineration under the principles of the “waste hierarchy”). The Council will have regard to any national and/or regional studies and guidance on renewable energy (see also Policy ENV39 in Chapter 3).

INDICATORS

Progress with initiatives for more sustainable waste management will be monitoring indicators for the UDP. Each year the Council will assess performance with reference to any relevant targets set out in:-

- National Guidance.
- Regional Planning Guidance/ Regional Waste Strategy
- Local Waste Management Strategies
- Best Value Performance Indicators



Recycling facilities, Aldridge

THE PROVISION OF SITES FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

10.19 The following policies will be used by the Council when considering planning proposals for the establishment or extension of facilities for waste management activities. The policies direct these uses towards the most appropriate sites whilst ensuring that the environment and the amenities of nearby residents are protected.

Policy WM1: Consideration of Proposals for Waste Management Activities

- (a) Proposals for the establishment or extension of waste management facilities, including recycling sites, local transfer stations, pre-treatment plants, incineration facilities and landfill sites will be permitted if:-
 - I. The proposal can be demonstrated to be the best practicable environmental option* for the achievement of the Council's strategy for waste management, and
 - II. There will be no unacceptable adverse impact on the environment, amenities or health of the area in terms of the criteria in Policies GP2 and JP8.
- (b) Wherever reasonably practicable, waste management activities other than landfill should be contained within buildings rather than carried out in the open air.
- (c) Where necessary, the Council will require a comprehensive landscape scheme involving, as appropriate, screen mounding, tree and shrub planting and/or fencing to be implemented prior to the commencement of operations.
- (d) Permitted waste management facilities will be protected from inappropriate development in the vicinity which would impose constraints on the operation of the facility.

* Wherever the best practicable environmental option is referred to, this will be assessed in relation to the latest guidance available at the time when an application is submitted.

10.20 When considering proposals for any kind of waste management facility there will be two main factors to be taken into account. Firstly, the proposal must be evaluated in terms of its contribution towards the Council's strategy for sustainable waste management, as set out in the Strategic Policy Statement. It needs to be demonstrated that the proposal represents the best practicable environmental option, taking account of the principles of proximity and the waste hierarchy. Secondly, the Council will need to be satisfied that there will be no unacceptable adverse impact on the environment and amenity of the area according to the criteria set out in Policies GP2 (see Chapter 2) and JP8 (see Chapter 4). Developers will therefore be expected to demonstrate that they have carried out an appraisal of the options having regard to the social, environmental, economic, land-use and resource impacts and that their scheme represents the best available option in the context of the policies of this Plan.

10.21 The policy seeks to ensure that waste management facilities will, as far as possible, be contained within buildings rather than carried out in the open air. This will help to secure higher environmental standards and minimise the impact on adjoining land-uses. Where waste management activities are proposed to take place in the open, applicants must demonstrate why it is not practicable or reasonable for the operation to be contained within a building (e.g. regulations which require the activity to be carried out in the open). Another way in which the impact of proposals can be mitigated is through appropriate landscaping and boundary treatment, as recognised in part (c) of the policy.

10.22 It should be noted that some applications for waste management facilities will require the submission of an Environmental Statement under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations, 1999 (all applications involving hazardous waste require such a Statement).

Policy WM2: Control of Landfill, Land Raising and Other Deposition of Waste

WM4,
MIN5

(a) The establishment of new, or the extension of existing, operations involving landfill, land raising or any other deposition of waste will only be permitted if all of the following are satisfied:-

I. The proposal is acceptable in terms of the requirements of the Strategic Policy Statement and policies WM1 and GP2.

II. The site is an adequate distance from existing development - proposals for landfill within 250 metres of other development will require special attention and may well not be acceptable.

III. A suitable method of infilling, and appropriate types of materials, are proposed to achieve the earliest practicable restoration of the site for an appropriate after-use. Provision should also be made for any necessary after-care of the site, taking account of the guidance in PPG10.

IV. A clear commitment is given to the provision of satisfactory arrangements for the monitoring, control, and venting of landfill gases and the treatment of leachate. The positive utilisation of landfill gas for energy production will be encouraged in principle subject to there being no unacceptable adverse impacts.

(b) Any ancillary waste treatment facilities that are permitted on landfill or mineral extraction sites will be time limited to the operational life of the landfill or minerals site in order not to delay the restoration of the site, unless it can be demonstrated that exceptional circumstances exist justifying a permanent permission.

(c) Proposals for the re-working of deposited wastes will only be permitted if it is demonstrated that this represents the best practicable environmental option, that the restoration of the site will not be unacceptably delayed, and that there will be no unacceptable adverse impact.

10.23 This policy sets out the special considerations that will apply in the case of any proposals for landfilling, land raising or other deposition of waste. The policy should be read in conjunction with the more general requirements set out in the Strategic Policy Statement and policies WM1 and GP2.

10.24 Planning permission was granted in 1995 for the completion of mineral extraction and restoration of the Vigo and Utopia Quarries at Walsall Wood (see Chapter 9). This will provide additional landfill capacity to help satisfy some of the waste disposal needs of Walsall and the West Midlands.

10.25 Although there are also a number of other active and disused mineral workings in the Aldridge / Brownhills area (see Chapter 9) further investigations would be needed to establish whether any of these might prove suitable for landfill operations involving domestic or other types of waste. The geology and hydrology of a site and its surroundings may determine its suitability to accept certain types of materials. The intended afteruse to which a site is to be put after restoration is also an essential consideration in determining the type of materials which can be tipped. It may sometimes be necessary for infilling to take place slowly in line with the availability of waste materials, or the need to restrict traffic volume, and this can conflict with the desire to restore a site as quickly as possible.

10.26 One particular issue is that of landfill gas generation. While Circular 17/89 on Landfill Sites: Development Control states that there can be no hard and fast rule about the appropriate distance between new landfill sites and existing development in relation to the possible migration of landfill gas, it says that a proposal for a site as close as 250 metres from other development would require special attention, and this is recognised in Policy WM2. The policy also ensures that satisfactory arrangements will be made for the monitoring, control, venting and, where appropriate, positive utilisation of landfill gases. The issue of the control of development for other uses on or near to existing or former landfill sites is dealt with in Policy ENV14 in Chapter 3.

10.27 Landfill, and minerals extraction sites may sometimes be an appropriate location for ancillary waste treatment activities. In order to ensure the satisfactory restoration of landfill and mineral sites within the permitted time frame, however, it is important that any secondary waste treatment activities that are permitted do not become permanent uses or delay the restoration of the site. To avoid this, any permission for ancillary waste treatment facilities will be limited to the operational life of the landfill or minerals site unless any other material considerations indicate that a longer time period should be permitted.

10.28 The reworking of deposited waste may sometimes be proposed, for example, to re-engineer a landfill site to resolve pollution problems or because of an interest in re-use or recycling of deposited wastes such as inert waste or pulverised fuel ash. Whilst the Council wishes to encourage greater use of recycled materials to reduce the need for mining of primary minerals (see also paragraph 9.4 in Chapter 9), it is recognised that re-working can delay final restoration of a site and have an impact on the site and its surroundings. It will therefore be necessary to demonstrate that the proposals for re-working represent the best practicable environmental option, will not unacceptably delay restoration of the site, or have any other unacceptable adverse impacts.

Policy WM3: Special Wastes

Applications for new or expanded facilities for the treatment of special wastes (also known as hazardous or toxic wastes), will be required to demonstrate that they can operate successfully without detriment to the environment or the health, safety, general well being and amenity of local people and wildlife.

10.29 The terms “special”, “hazardous” or “toxic” apply to wastes which, by virtue of their composition, present some risk in their treatment or disposal, if handled improperly. The risk may be to the health of humans or animals, the pollution of watercourses or an otherwise unacceptable environment impact.

10.30 The West Midlands Metropolitan area plays a significant role in the treatment and disposal of hazardous and toxic waste within the region. In contrast to the general situation in which the Metropolitan area is a net exporter of waste to the surrounding Shire counties, it is a net importer of hazardous wastes. Walsall, in particular, has become a significant centre for the chemical and physical treatment of special wastes.

10.31 The Council’s experience is that facilities for the treatment of hazardous or toxic waste can have a severe environmental impact as perceived by the communities in which they are located. The Council will, therefore, require prospective developers to demonstrate that they can operate successfully without causing any detriment. This applies to any development which requires planning permission, whether it be at a new location or additional facilities at an existing one.

Policy WM4: Provision of Recycling Facilities in Development Schemes

WM5.
Partly
superseded
by revised
MWMS

The Council require all development proposals to incorporate appropriate provision for the segregation, recovery and recycling of waste generated by the development, commensurate with the scale and nature of that development. Subject to detailed consideration in the light of the Council’s Integrated Waste Management Strategy, provision might include, for example:-

- **Storage areas for recycling bins for individual dwellings and premises.**
- **Centralised recycling points for larger developments.**
- **Schemes for energy recovery from waste where appropriate.**

10.32 Waste streams tend to become mixed as they move away from the source, making recycling more difficult and less viable. It is important, therefore, for facilities to be made available as close as possible to where the waste is produced, in new housing, shopping, commercial and other developments, to enable waste producers to keep waste streams separate and so make recycling as efficient and effective as possible. The need for development schemes to include recycling facilities will be a material planning consideration in the determination of all planning proposals, and planning obligations may be used to secure the provision of these facilities.

11 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Introduction

11.1 If the policies and proposals of this Plan are to be achieved, a close partnership must be maintained between the Council, other public sector bodies, and the private sector. Over many years, the effect of central government policy has generally been to restrict the financial resources available to local government and to place limits on its activities, emphasising its role in enabling the actions of others. Within these constraints, the Council will nevertheless continue to act directly to achieve the objectives of the Plan, and the UDP will be used by the Council to help justify bids to Government, and others, for the necessary resources. Equally important, however, is the Plan's role in acting as a catalyst for the actions of others.

Financial Resources

11.2 The Government requires the Council to take into account the availability of financial resources in preparing its UDP. In view of the general context already noted above, it will be prudent to assume a continuing scarcity of public sector resources in the future.

11.3 Implementation will, therefore, rely to a great extent on the private sector, which is influenced by short and medium term shifts in the national and international economic climate, which cannot be predicted with any certainty. Much of the underlying philosophy of the UDP is to provide the right circumstances to attract private sector investment, of the right kind, to the right places. Scarce public sector resources will, where necessary, be targeted to encourage further investment by the private sector.

11.4 The Council has produced a Plan which is robust in the face of these uncertainties; its implementation in full will take a longer or shorter period, depending on the economic circumstances, but its validity does not depend on any particular level of financial resources.

11.5 The UDP will be an important consideration for the Council when it prepares its annual Capital Programme. In particular, the Plan will provide the basis for determining priorities for environmental and conservation programmes, and the long-term context for the Council's input to the West Midlands Local Transport Plan.

11.6 Significant sources of external funding include the Government's Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), the New Deal for Communities initiative, European assistance through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and grants from bodies such as the Countryside Commission, English Nature and English Heritage. Advantage West Midlands (the Regional Development Agency) will be an important partner in the mobilisation of resources to help meet the objectives of the Plan.

11.7 The Council will use planning obligations under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to secure appropriate improvements to infrastructure, facilities or the environment where these are necessary to support proposed development (see Policy GP3 in Chapter 2).

Supplementary Planning Guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents

11.8 The UDP outlines the Council’s general strategy and in appropriate cases sets out detailed policies and proposals to guide development. In some instances, however, more detailed guidance is provided in the form of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), listed in Appendix 2. Under the new LDF system the Council will prepare additional supplementary planning documents as the need arises and as staff resources permit.

Monitoring and Review

11.9 The Council welcomes the Government’s commitment to maintaining relevant and up to date development plans and will ensure that this UDP, once adopted, is kept up to date through a continuous process of monitoring and review as required by the new Local Development Framework system. The Council will produce an Annual Monitoring Report the purpose of which will be to review progress on implementing the Plan, identify new trends which may influence the Plan, and examine the need for review or alteration.

11.10 Walsall MBC will also continue to work with other local authorities throughout the region to monitor, and keep under review, the provisions of the Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands (RPG11).

11.11 To assist the monitoring of the effectiveness of the policies and proposals of this Plan a number of quantifiable indicators have been identified in each of the topic chapters. For convenience, these are summarised in the table below.

Table 11.1: UDP Monitoring Indicators

Chapter	Indicator
3: Environment & Amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of Green Belt - target 100%. • Tree planting - related to targets in forest plans / strategies. • Progress towards targets in Biodiversity Action Plan. • Protection of nature conservation sites - target 100%. • Protection of buildings of historic or architectural interest - target 100%.
4: Jobs & Prosperity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land developed for employment uses - target annual average of 13 hectares. • Share of all development on previously developed sites - target 95%. • Protection of employment allocations from loss to other uses - target 90%.

5: Strengthening Our Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of all development for retailing, leisure and other town centre uses which takes place in established centres - target at least 90%. • Amount of vacant floorspace in centres - target to be at or below the national average.
6: Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of vacancies - to a level of 3% by 2011. • Progress towards RPG11 dwelling requirement - residual annual average target of 422 dwellings. • Proportion of all development on previously developed land - target of 95% for 2002-11. • Number of dwellings provided on windfall sites - annual average target of 275 windfall completions. • Extent of provision for affordable housing - residual annual average target of 184 dwellings. • Types and sizes of housing provided - a mix appropriate to local circumstances. • Density of new housing - target annual average density of at least 30 dwellings per hectare.
7: Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of buses - increase in line with West Midlands Local Transport Plan (WMLTP) target. • Use of rail - increase in line with WMLTP target. • Road traffic - keep growth in line with WMLTP target. • Cycle use - increase in line with WMLTP target. • Car parking provision for new housing development – in line with the standards in Policy T13.
8: Leisure & Community Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of urban open spaces - target 100%. • Provision of new urban open spaces - at least 24 hectares over the rest of the Plan period. • Protection of playing fields / sports pitches - target 100% • Length of Greenways constructed - target at least 10 miles over the rest of the Plan period.
10: Waste Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress towards targets set out in national guidance, regional guidance, Walsall's Integrated Waste Management Strategy and Best Value Indicators.



The Council House, Walsall

12 WALSALL TOWN CENTRE

INTRODUCTION

12.1 Walsall Town Centre is the premier shopping centre in the Borough and a significant focus of commercial, public service, leisure and community activity. It is also a strong public transport interchange and has good pedestrian and cycle links to surrounding neighbourhoods. The policies in this Inset Plan are based on the following aims:-

- The major enhancement of the Town Centre as a place in which to shop, work, visit and live.
- The identification of important development opportunities, and the establishment of guidelines for them.
- The protection of the identity, character and heritage of the centre.
- The improvement of access by a choice of means of transport.

12.2 As an important sub-regional shopping centre, the Town Centre faces a continuing competitive threat from proposals both within and beyond its catchment area. The Council is determined to ensure a prosperous and attractive Town Centre which will help stimulate confidence in the wider area, present a positive impression to visitors, and provide an improved and wider range of facilities for local people. In recent years, several significant improvements have taken place in the centre, including the first phases of the Town Wharf development (with new shops, canal basin, the New Art Gallery and Crown Wharf Retail Park), the construction of the new bus station and the creation of a Civic Square at The Bridge. The policies in this Inset Plan aim to maintain the momentum for growth and enhancement. It is anticipated that this will be promoted by the inclusion of the Town Centre as a major part of the area covered by the Walsall Regeneration Company.

12.3 The boundary of the centre has been drawn so as to include the main areas where there is significant potential for development which can extend and complement the role of the centre. In the interests of achieving a simple and rational boundary, it also includes industrial and housing areas which are not anticipated to change significantly.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Policy WA1: Primary Shopping Area.

The primary shopping area is shown on the Inset Map. New retail floorspace will be concentrated within and adjacent to this area (see Policy S3 in Chapter 5). Redevelopment schemes for the Digbeth area will be particularly encouraged. Retail schemes will only be permitted away from this 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 such instances, the Council will require the provision of safe, direct and attractive pedestrian links into the primary shopping area.

12.4 The primary shopping area includes the main Park Street / Digbeth / High Street axis and extends into Bradford Street, Bridge Street, Old Square and The Saddlers Centre. The policy is intended to strengthen this area by focusing new retail development within it, wherever possible. The Digbeth area is particularly identified as an opportunity for new retail development in view of its dated appearance and the need to strengthen the shopping role of the area in the context of the level of recent investment in the Park Street / Town Wharf area.

Policy WA2: The Market

The Council recognises the importance of the market as an attraction for visitors and the significant role it plays in meeting the needs of the local community. Where necessary, the Council will carry out improvements to the operation and setting of the market, to maintain and increase its attractiveness.

12.5 The market, in Digbeth / High Street, is an asset to the town. It is a significant shopping draw and contributes greatly to the vitality of the town - both on general market days and on those days when a more specialist market is held. The policy recognises the positive contribution made by the market and reflects a desire to maintain and increase its attractiveness. An important factor in the attractiveness of the market is the setting in which it is held: the Council is specifically encouraging redevelopment in the Digbeth area, which could provide an opportunity to greatly enhance the setting of the market.

Policy WA3: Other Town Centre Uses

Outside the primary shopping area, and on upper floors within it, the Council will encourage business / service uses, offices, leisure, community uses and, subject to the provisions of Policy S8 in Chapter 5, residential development.

12.6 The Council is seeking to increase activity in the Town Centre outside main shopping hours by encouraging a wider range of uses - particularly leisure and residential.

12.7 The Town Centre, because of its high accessibility by public transport, is the most appropriate location for uses which generate a lot of trips - such as leisure. There is an opportunity for large-scale leisure development, well related to the canal, at Town Wharf - see Policy WA12. However, the Council will also welcome appropriate smaller schemes, in suitable locations.

12.8 Residents in the Town Centre could benefit from their proximity to a wide range of services. It is likely that a Town Centre location would be particularly suitable for people without children, given the limited opportunities for the provision of amenity areas. However, there may be opportunities for family housing towards the edge of the Town Centre, on sites large enough to enable an acceptable level of amenity space to be achieved.



Residential and cultural uses in central Walsall

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

- (a) **The Council will support the further development of the Walsall College of Art and Technology as an important centre for Higher Education in the Borough. It is also considered that the development of the college may have important potential to provide other facilities, including sport and leisure facilities, which would benefit the community as a whole.**
- (b) **Proposals for further development of the existing Campus will be acceptable in principle, provided that:-**
 - I. **The development relates positively to the Ring Road.**
 - II. **Any buildings visible from the highways around the site are of a high standard of design and use high quality materials.**
 - III. **Satisfactory servicing arrangements are achieved.**
- (c) **The Council will also encourage the College to consider its long-term land requirements and will facilitate the expansion of the Campus where appropriate.**

12.9 The Council recognises the importance of the College as a centre for Higher Education in the Borough and will facilitate its expansion, where appropriate. This policy sets out the pre-requisites for acceptable development of the campus. The proximity of the site to the ring road offers the opportunity to increase the profile of the College and create a landmark along the route.

ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

Policy WA5: Conservation Areas and Areas of High Townscape Value

- (a) **The areas listed below make a particularly important contribution to the character and/or townscape of the Town Centre:-**
- I. **Bridge Street**
 - II. **The Bridge (particular buildings, the overall scale and the 'space')**
 - III. **Church Hill**
 - IV. **East side of High Street**
 - V. **Digbeth Arcade, Bradford Street**
 - VI. **Bradford Street, from Newport Street to Vicarage place (South side)**
 - VII. **Lichfield Street**
 - VIII. **Leicester Street / Darwall Street**
- (b) **Within these areas, the Council will encourage the sensitive refurbishment of buildings for appropriate purposes. Proposals for redevelopment in such locations will be strongly resisted, except where this involves recent property of inappropriate design. Where acceptable in principle, new development will be expected to conform to the character of the area.**
- (c) **The Council will consider whether it would be appropriate to impose Article 4 Directions in such areas.**

12.10 Extensive areas within Walsall Town Centre are subject to conservation area designation and these areas will be protected under Policy ENV29 in Chapter 3. Policy WA5 identifies those areas which make particularly important contributions to the character of the town and within which the Council will usually resist redevelopment. The Council will continue to seek resources to assist owners to improve properties in these areas. Parts of the Town Centre are also identified on the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record as being of archaeological importance and will be subject to protection under Policy ENV25 in Chapter 3.

Policy WA6: Community Safety - CCTV

Subject to the availability of resources for its installation and maintenance, the Council will seek to extend the coverage of the Walsall Town Centre CCTV system.

12.11 Large areas of Walsall Town Centre are covered by a CCTV system. It is proposed that this will be extended, to include new developments - e.g. 'Walsall Waterfront' - within its area of coverage and to link new developments to areas already covered by cameras. This will assist in reducing crime and the fear of crime in the Town Centre.

DEVELOPMENT / INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Policy WA7: Development / Investment Opportunities

- (a) **These are sites or areas within which there is significant development / regeneration potential. The opportunities identified on the Inset Map are:-**
- I. **Hatherton Street / Littleton Street / Albert Street**
 - II. **Intown**
 - III. **Lower Hall Lane / Digbeth / Old Square**
 - IV. **Upper Rushall Street / Ablewell Street / The Ditch**
 - V. **Town Wharf**
 - VI. **Littleton Street West / Wisemore / Garden Street / Portland Street**
- (b) **Development proposals within these areas / sites must conform with the principles set out in Policies WAL8 - WAL13. The Council will also prepare Supplementary Planning Documents where appropriate.**

12.12 The identification of Development Opportunities is seen as the best way for the Plan to draw attention to, and provide guidelines for, those parts of the Town Centre which the Council believes have the potential for significant change. By setting out clear guidelines for them, the Council aims to encourage appropriate development schemes that will realise their potential and contribute towards the overall strategy for the Town Centre. The potential represented by these sites is substantial. Among the commitments reflected in these guidelines are:

- Major retail development in the Lower Hall Lane / Digbeth area (see Policy WA10) where outline planning permission has been granted for 23,225 sq.m. of comparison retailing, and substantial reserved matters submissions have been approved; and
- Major leisure development at Town Wharf ('Walsall Waterfront') where the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands (AWM), has acquired a substantial area of land. The Council has commissioned studies into the feasibility of certain uses and is promoting development together with AWM, Walsall Regeneration Company and a selected development partner, in the context of a 'master-planning' exercise.

12.13 The areas of development / investment opportunity are generally defined quite widely in order to maximise the potential opportunity. A comprehensive approach to development is encouraged and whilst individual proposals will be considered, the Council will need to be satisfied that a more comprehensive scheme cannot be achieved, and that future more comprehensive development options are not prejudiced. It should be noted that the inclusion of property within one of these areas does not necessarily mean that redevelopment proposals will be made which will affect it. Neither are development proposals outside these areas precluded, if they are otherwise in accordance with the policies of the Plan.

Policy WA8: Hatherton Street / Littleton Street / Albert Street

- (a) This area has a frontage to the route of the proposed Ring Road. It provides a significant development opportunity in a prominent position adjacent to the busy Littleton Street / Hatherton Street junction.
- (b) Given the prominence of the area, a high quality design will be required, which could be of either contemporary or traditional form. A considerable built presence will be required along the Littleton Street and Hatherton Street frontages, in the interests of good townscape. Landmark buildings should be constructed adjacent to the Littleton Street / Hatherton Street junction.
- (c) For the area West of Hatherton Street:-
 - I. Appropriate uses might include leisure; pub / restaurant; hotel; offices; motor vehicle sales or a mix of some of these. Retail uses will not be permitted.
 - II. Vehicular access must be taken from Hatherton Street. The pedestrian link across the railway bridge, between Albert Street and Little Albert Street, need not necessarily be retained. However, if proposed for retention, the footpath and bridge will both require improvement to facilitate their use by all sections of the community;
 - III. The Council will encourage the retention of that part of the former Albion Tannery, which fronts Hatherton Street, and this should be sympathetically reflected in adjoining development.



New foodstore under construction, Walsall

Policy WA9: Intown

- (a) Subject to the relationship with adjoining uses, the area could be developed for leisure; offices; hotel; residential or an appropriate mix of these. There may be potential to include existing public car parks within a wider development scheme, although this would depend on an assessment of their importance in the Council's car parking strategy.
- (b) Links to Lichfield Street might be converted to pedestrian only. The possibility of a direct pedestrian link to Bridge Street should be considered.

Policy WA10: Lower Hall Lane / Digbeth / Old Square

- (a) Major comparison goods retail investment in Walsall Town Centre over the next 5-10 years will be concentrated in the Digbeth / Old Square area in order to strengthen the position and role of this area within the centre.
- (b) There are two significant development / investment opportunities within the area: the Old Square Shopping Centre and property bounded by Digbeth / Lower Hall Lane / George Street.
- I. Within the Old Square Shopping Centre, appropriate proposals are likely to comprise the reconfiguration and refurbishment of the existing property.
 - II. Within the Digbeth / Lower Hall Lane / George Street area¹, the nature of the proposals should reflect the character of the urban fabric. In the south and west of the area - along George Street and Lower Hall Lane - the emphasis should be on the retention of the many buildings of architectural and townscape value. In the north and east, along the Digbeth frontage, the emphasis should be on redevelopment.
- (c) Both developments, whether carried out separately or in tandem, should take a comprehensive approach, to make the fullest use of the development opportunities in each area. In particular, they will be expected to connect and integrate - in terms of internal mall entrances and shopper circulation - with each other as well as the rest of the shopping centre, and generally contribute to improved pedestrian and shopper circulation in the Digbeth area. The provision of urban design guidelines will be introduced to achieve this.
- (d) The developments should provide more modern retail accommodation to meet the requirements of retailers not currently represented in the town centre and those existing retailers who wish to occupy more suitable accommodation.
- (e) The investment proposals at Old Square should seek to retain a quality department store within the development. The improvement / expansion of the existing store will be encouraged, in principle.

¹ Where planning permission has been granted for retail development.

- (f) **At least one quality food supermarket should be retained in the Digbeth / Old Square area.**
- (g) **The Council will seek to reduce conflict between the operation of the market and nearby retail premises through redevelopment / refurbishment schemes, focusing especially on:-**

 - I. **The relationship at shopping malls and other major entrances.**
 - II. **The opportunity to rationalise retail service yards, thereby reducing pedestrian / vehicle conflicts within the market area.**
- (h) **Improved café / restaurant / bar and service sector (Class A2) facilities will be encouraged, to add to the attractiveness of the area in the evening and to complement existing outlets in High Street.**
- (i) **New development will be expected to contribute towards the improvement of security and safety in the area. To achieve this, evening uses and the conversion of upper floors to residential will be encouraged, to ensure a greater presence of people in the Town Centre. Where appropriate, increased CCTV coverage will be encouraged.**
- (j) **Development / refurbishment proposals will be expected to contribute to achieving a significant improvement in the townscape in Digbeth, which will include:-**

 - I. **The removal of the Overstrand, and the possible enlargement of Digbeth Square in association with this.**
 - II. **A high quality design of external facades and internal shopping malls.**
 - III. **External works to complement the paving / street furniture style and quality embodied in the market area scheme and the Civic Square.**
- (k) **Existing car parking should be improved or replaced, as appropriate, and additional car parking provided to serve not only the development but also the town centre as a whole. This should be consistent with the principles in Policy T7 and should be based on the short-stay shoppers' charging and management regime, within the Council's overall town centre car parking strategy, and must incorporate improved accessibility and signing.**
- (l) **The Council will require that development proposals within the Digbeth / Lower Hall Lane / George Street area, which generate significantly greater amounts of traffic than existing, are supported by highway infrastructure improvements. Such improvements should seek to ensure that pedestrian access to the town centre from surrounding areas is maintained and enhanced across Upper Rushall Street / Peal Street / Dudley Street.**

Policy WA11: Upper Rushall Street / Ablewell Street / The Ditch

- (a) The emphasis should be on the retention and refurbishment of the existing properties fronting Ablewell Street and on environmental improvement, to further enhance the Church Hill Conservation Area. Some development within the curtilage of the Ablewell Street properties may be appropriate, to improve views of the rear of the properties from Church Hill.
- (b) Notwithstanding the general emphasis on retention and refurbishment in this area, land to the rear of 92-100 Ablewell Street may have development potential. However, this potential (and the precise definition of the development site) would be dependent on options to reduce congestion at the Upper Bridge Street / Lower Rushall Street / Ablewell Street / Upper Rushall Street junction, which is unsatisfactory and unable to adequately accommodate further traffic growth. There are two highway improvement options each of which would involve some demolition of property:-
- I. Improvement of the existing junction.
 - II. The construction of a new highway between Ablewell Street / The Ditch and Upper Rushall Street.

In either case it will be essential that pedestrian access is maintained and, if possible, improved.

- (c) If the existing junction is improved, the land at the rear of 92 - 100 Ablewell Street might be used for residential development or for other town centre uses, such as a hotel or offices. If a new highway is constructed between Ablewell Street and Upper Rushall Street, the development potential of the remaining land to the rear of 92 - 100 Ablewell Street will be significantly constrained². However, subject to satisfactory access being achieved, development for town centre uses would be appropriate (although these would not necessarily include retailing, which - as this would be an edge of centre site in retailing terms - should satisfy the requirements of Policy S7 in Chapter 5). Residential use might also be acceptable, if satisfactory levels of amenity can be achieved.
- (d) The land to the rear of 92 - 100 Ablewell Street is situated in a prominent location, next to the Inner Relief Road and within the Church Hill Conservation Area. Built development, 2 - 3 storeys in height, would help to improve the townscape in this sensitive location. A high quality design would be required, to maximise the potential of the site and to ensure satisfactory integration with surrounding land. The Council will be particularly concerned to ensure that the amenity value of land on Church Hill and on the other side of the Ditch is protected from adverse impacts.

² The planning permission for retail development in the Digbeth / Lower Hall Lane / George Street area (see paragraph 12.12 and Policy WA10 has been based on this approach).

Policy WA12: Town Wharf (“Walsall Waterfront”)

- (a) The land within this area represents the continuation of the second phase of the Town Wharf development: the possibility exists to consolidate the previous two phases and maximise the opportunity offered by this canalside location. Given the proximity of the area to the New Art Gallery and The Wharf Public House, both of which have received wide acclaim for their high quality contemporary design, the Council will require particularly high standards of design in this area. This should be reflected not only in relation to future construction of buildings, but also in the relationship to the canal, and the quality of public space, with the aim that the development should provide a major ‘gateway’ to enhance the town centre as a whole.
- (b) The area, on both sides of the canal, is considered to be the main location in the town centre for substantial leisure development to serve the Borough and surrounding areas. It should be developed principally for leisure uses which can serve all sections of the community, and examples of uses that would be particularly welcomed by the Council include a cinema, a family entertainment centre and an adventure activity centre. Associated bars / restaurants would also be encouraged, provided they form part of a comprehensive scheme to provide major facilities. Other appropriate uses will include hotel, and conference facilities, cultural uses, and office / business uses (including small scale craft-based activities) to complement development primarily for leisure uses. Retail use, except small-scale, complementary activities, will not be permitted. Generally, the mix of uses and the arrangement of those uses should be such as to ensure the creation of the most attractive possible scheme for investment in leisure facilities.
- (c) Residential uses may be acceptable in appropriate locations as part of a comprehensive scheme, but must be able to provide an acceptable residential environment (in terms of Policy S8 in Chapter 5) without constraining the development of leisure and other commercial uses or the operation of existing nearby industry.
- (d) Should the existing industrial uses in the area south of the canal remain, they will be able to develop and enhance their existing properties - provided that this would not have any greater adverse impact on the development of leisure and other town centre uses around the canal. Where any new development opportunities might arise in the area - for example, through the relocation of existing businesses - then the guidelines set out in this policy (and in any Supplementary Planning Document produced by the Council) will apply.
- (e) The emphasis within the area should be on redevelopment rather than refurbishment. However, within the Marsh Street / Navigation Street area there are a number of buildings of local architectural interest which must be retained.

- (f) The development of the area should relate positively, in visual and functional terms, to surrounding areas and particularly to the rest of the town centre. Strong, and secure, pedestrian linkages will be required both to and within the development to encourage the maximum public access. In particular:
- I. public access must be provided along both sides of the canal arm, with a canalside promenade on the northern side and the retention and appropriate enhancement of the existing link along the southern side; and
 - II. at least one bridge should be provided across the canal arm to link the developments north and south of the canal - this should be designed so that navigation of the canal arm is not restricted unduly.
- (g) Development proposals should be brought forward in a manner which will ensure the comprehensive development of the area and should accord with a Development Brief and Design Guidelines produced by the Council as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Policy WA13: Littleton Street West / Wisemore / Garden Street / Portland Street

- (a) Acceptable uses may include retail; residential; B1(a) offices; hotel and/or leisure uses, or a suitable mix of these. However, as this is not an in-centre site for retailing and it is an edge-of-centre site for other town centre uses, proposals for retailing and other town centre uses must comply with the policies in Chapter 5 of the plan, especially Policies S3, S4 and S7. In addition, leisure uses should complement and not conflict with the uses being pursued for 'Walsall Waterfront' under WA12.
- (b) Redevelopment will require a new vehicular access to have been created onto Littleton Street West. This should be the main vehicular access onto the site, although a secondary access onto Portland Street would also be acceptable.
- (c) The developer will be required to make financial contributions towards the enhancement of pedestrian routes into the Town Centre, including Stafford Street and Hatherton Street. The developer must provide a Greenway between Littleton Street West and Portland Street, broadly as indicated on the Inset Map.
- (d) The appearance of the site from the ring road and railway is particularly important. Significant amounts of hard and soft landscaping will be required along the ring road frontage and high quality built development should be brought forward as close as possible to the ring road. The large number of mature trees on the site should be incorporated within any development, although a proportion of these will need to be removed to facilitate access to the site.
- (e) The Leather Museum must be retained as part of any development. Any development must relate positively to the Museum and should provide

parking and coach drop-off facilities.

- (f) **The Council will require the retention of the listed Wisemore House and it will encourage the retention of the former Slipper Baths within any development.**

ACCESSIBILITY AND CIRCULATION

12.14 Walsall Town Centre is the subject of a Town Centre Transport Package, which is included as a major scheme in the West Midlands Local Transport Plan. It is also the focus of a public / private funded Integrated Transport Project, which is being considered by the Department of Transport. These projects aim to deliver improvements for all transport users, by:-

- Tackling overloaded highways and junctions, especially on the Ring Road.
- Improving bus services, by prioritising road space where appropriate.
- Making the Urban Traffic Control system more comprehensive.
- Improving the walking and cycling environment.
- Improving car parking facilities to aid the overall regeneration of the centre.

12.15 Specific transport issues affecting the Town Centre, and policies to address these, are set out below.

Policy WA14: Town Centre Transport Interchange

The Council will seek to further improve interchange between all forms of transport in the Town Centre.

12.16 Walsall Town Centre is already a major transport interchange. Car parks, the bus station and rail facilities are all within easy walking distance of each other, and all transport interchange points are also well located in relation to shopping, leisure and cultural facilities. This compact arrangement helps to maintain the vitality and viability of the centre and maximises accessibility by sustainable transport modes. The Council and its partners will work to improve the situation further.

Policy WA15: Bus Services

The Council will give bus services priority on highways within and on the approaches to the Town Centre, as part of the Bus Showcase initiative, and will seek the improvement of bus stops and terminus facilities.

12.17 Walsall's new bus station, which caters for most of the bus services operating in the Borough, opened in Summer 2000. This has not only improved provision for bus users: it has made a contribution to the overall architectural quality of the Town Centre and helped increase its vitality and viability. The Council will seek improvements to other bus terminus points, such as Bradford Place, in order to benefit all bus users. The successful Bus Showcase initiative, of which the Council is a partner, will be extended to serve other routes into the Town Centre, as part of the

West Midlands Local Transport Plan. Policy T2 in Chapter 7 includes further guidance on the design of bus lanes, termini, stops and lay-over areas.

Policy WA16: Rail Services

The Council will seek to improve the accessibility of Walsall Town Centre by rail to the widest possible range of destinations. It will particularly encourage inter-city rail operators to serve the Town Centre, and develop the town's rail station as a local and longer distance rail hub. This may involve increasing capacity and improving facilities to deal with increased rail services. The provision of additional parking to serve the station will be considered as part of the overall strategy for parking in the Town Centre.

12.18 Walsall Town Centre needs a better range of rail services to improve its accessibility by a sustainable means of transport and to help boost its vitality and viability by bringing more people into the centre. Inter-city and long distance services would be particularly important because they would help to raise the profile of the centre and attract investment in a wider range of leisure and commercial uses. The Council will encourage the provision of rail capacity improvements to meet these objectives.

Proposal WA17: Road Improvements

- (a) **Improvements or modifications to the road system around the town centre are proposed in the following locations, and these will improve the highway corridor around the north and west of the centre as indicated diagrammatically on the Inset Map:-**
- I. **Pleck Road / Bridgeman Street junction.**
 - II. **Wolverhampton Street / Pleck Road junction.**
 - III. **Wolverhampton Street / Blue Lane West junction.**
 - IV. **Green Lane / Blue Lane West junction.**
 - V. **Stafford Street / Littleton Street junction.**
 - VI. **Dudley Street / Caldmore Road junction.**
 - VII. **Littleton Street / Hatherton Street junction.**
 - VIII. **the Arboretum Island.**
- (b) **Other highway works may also be necessary to serve the development / investment opportunities identified in Policies WA8 - WA13.**

12.19 Improvements to the circulatory roads around the town centre are proposed as part of the Town Centre Transport Package. These improvements are essential for a number of reasons. Firstly, they will help to remove through-traffic from the core of the centre, freeing road-space for service traffic, public transport and town centre visitors and shoppers. Secondly, they will ease the bottleneck encountered by long distance traffic using the A461 corridor. Thirdly, they are necessary to improve the environmental quality of the area to the north of the centre. Fourthly, they will provide better access for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. The Inset Map shows the corridor for the road improvements in general terms, whilst a further

improvement which is required - at Pleck Road / Rollingmill Street - outside of the Inset Plan area is similarly indicated on the Proposals Map. Details of the current highway improvement lines can be inspected on request at the Council's offices. Details of the Town Centre Transport Package improvements can also be inspected. The Town Centre Transport Package received the Secretary of State for Transport's approval for all the statutory orders in October 2004.

12.20 The policy also notes that other highway improvements may be necessary to serve the development / investment opportunities identified in Policies WA8 - WA13. The guidelines set out in those policies include reference to this, as appropriate.

12.21 Road improvement schemes should be sensitive to the environment and townscape (see paragraph 7.2 in Chapter 7), consistent with other policies for the Town Centre, and consistent with the overall objective of reducing car use.

Policy WA18: Provision of Car Parking

- (a) Priority will be given to maintaining, enhancing and increasing provision of short stay parking for shoppers and visitors, including suitable dedicated parking for disabled people. Long-stay parking for commuters will be strictly controlled or reduced.**
- (b) New car parks will generally be located where they have good access from the roads which encircle the Town Centre. The Council will also seek to ensure that car parks are well distributed around the Town Centre. Any development proposals which would remove existing public parking provision will be considered in the context of the overall parking strategy for the centre, and any benefits that might arise from the development.**
- (c) Parking provision in the Town Centre should also be consistent with the principles set out in Policy T7 in Chapter 7.**

12.22 Although the town centre is highly accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, the Council recognises that good car parking provision for shoppers and visitors is essential if the Town Centre is to successfully compete with nearby out-of-centre developments where car parking is freely available. Furthermore, unlike most out-of-centre developments, centres such as Walsall can cater for multi-purpose trips thereby leading to an overall reduction in car travel. Whilst parking provision for shoppers and visitors will therefore be given priority, long stay parking for commuters will be strictly controlled or reduced to encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of transport. The Council will monitor and keep under review the adequacy of parking provision across the Town Centre.

12.23 Any new car parks will need to be conveniently located to serve the various sectors of the town centre and be well related to the main access roads. Where a car park fulfils an essential role in the Council's strategy for Town Centre parking, there will be a strong argument for retaining provision in that location. Equally, there may be existing car parks which do not fulfil a key role and which could be usefully developed for other purposes.

Policy WA19: Pedestrians, Cyclists and Disabled People

The Council will give priority within the primary shopping area to disabled people, pedestrians and cyclists. It will also seek to improve public spaces, and improve significant pedestrian and cycle routes, both within the Town Centre and linking with surrounding areas.

12.24 The Town Centre's compact nature, and proximity to surrounding residential areas, is user-friendly for pedestrians and cyclists as well as disabled people. Everyone who uses the centre is a pedestrian for some part of their journey, whatever other transport mode they may use to get there. The Council is determined to improve provision for those with limited mobility and for pedestrians and cyclists still further. Such improvements will need to be consistent with the objective of achieving a safe, secure and lively Town Centre in the evenings. The Council will also seek to improve signposting and remove barriers to pedestrian movements where possible. The improvement of pedestrian routes between transport interchange points will be a priority.

12.25 Walsall Town Centre lies on the National Cycle Network, and the Council will seek to improve the route as it passes through the Town Centre, and link it with other Greenways and cycle-friendly routes.

12.26 The Council also recognises the importance of ensuring the best possible access for all sections of the community and, under Policy S17 in Chapter 5, Walsall Town Centre is recognised to be the main priority for the development of Shopmobility facilities to break down the barriers encountered by disabled and elderly people seeking to make the fullest use of the range of shops and services available. The Council is currently assisting interested bodies to find suitable premises in the town centre.



Civic Square, Walsall

13 ALDRIDGE DISTRICT CENTRE

INTRODUCTION

13.1 Aldridge is a relatively attractive and affluent District Centre. It contains a large superstore; a shopping precinct which includes many familiar retail chains selling mainly convenience goods; and the High Street and Anchor Road areas which, as well as shops, includes several banks and service uses. The level of vacancies of premises is extremely low reflecting the stability of the centre.

13.2 There are, however, a number of opportunities, within or directly adjacent to the centre, to improve both the environment and the range of facilities available. For example, the refurbishment / redevelopment of the Precinct and its environs would greatly transform the shopping environment of the centre. There is also the opportunity to provide retailing, with office or residential development above, on land at the corner of High Street and Little Aston Road; this prominent parcel of land has remained undeveloped for many years and has become overgrown and unsightly. Policies for these opportunities are included in this Inset Plan.

13.3 It should also be noted that adjacent to the District Centre (and just outside the area of this Inset Plan) there is a significant opportunity to improve the leisure and community facilities on Anchor Meadow for the Aldridge community as a whole. This area is protected as urban open space under Policy LC1 (see Chapter 8). The current leisure / community buildings have a generally poor appearance and fall significantly short of accommodating the range of potential uses which the site could provide; a new leisure / community centre could, for example, be provided. The Croft also provides an opportunity to enhance the leisure facilities of the centre.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Policy AL1: Primary Shopping Area

- (a) **The primary shopping area is shown on the Inset Map. This consists of the Precinct with its frontages to the High Street, Anchor Road and Croft Parade, plus existing shopping areas at the northern end of Anchor Road, along the High Street and at the northern end of Rookery Lane. New retail development and investment will be concentrated within this area and the Precinct is identified as an opportunity for new investment (see Policy AL4), whilst another development opportunity is identified at High Street / Little Aston Road (see Policy AL5).**
- (b) **Outside the primary shopping area the Council will encourage service, leisure, community or other town centre uses. Retail development will be acceptable where it can be linked directly to the primary shopping frontages.**

13.4 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that any additional retail development or investment is directed towards the primary shopping area at the heart of the centre in the interests of maintaining the compactness of the centre and ensuring that new facilities are properly integrated with the existing shopping centre. At the same time, it also allows for the diversification and expansion of other town centre facilities.

ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

13.5 The centre of Aldridge has a long history of settlement and includes both land of archaeological significance and a conservation area. The nucleus of a former medieval village is believed to have been in the area around St. Mary's church. The Croft reveals visible markings, suggesting the existence of previous human activity, when viewed from the air. Land in this area, including The Croft, properties either side of High Street and land to the east including the Manor House, the church and Cooper and Jordan Schools, is registered as being of archaeological importance on the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record and will be subject to protection under Policy ENV25 in Chapter 3.

13.6 The conservation area includes land around the core of the historic centre and also extends beyond the Inset Plan boundary into the adjacent residential area. The conservation area will be protected under Policy ENV29 in Chapter 3.

Policy AL2: Environmental Improvement

The Council will seek to improve the environment and appearance of the centre, including encouraging landowners to improve their land and premises. The following sites, as identified on the Inset Map, are considered as priorities for environmental enhancement:-

- I. Land corner of Aldridge by-pass and Portland Road.
- II. Land fronting Anchor Parade adjacent to Anchor Road.
- III. Car park off Rookery Lane.
- IV. Corner land adjoining Aldridge Social Club, High Street.
- V. Parking forecourt to the front and rear of 1-27 Anchor Road.
- VI. Land corner of Walsall Wood Road and Little Aston Road.

13.7 The District Centre generally has a good environment and appearance. It includes The Croft open space in the east and is bounded to the west by the Anchor Meadow playing fields. Properties are generally viable and well maintained. Nevertheless, there are some small areas of land which require enhancement. The co-operation of private landowners will be required to achieve many of these improvements.

Policy AL3: The Croft

The Croft, as identified on the Inset Map, will be protected as an area of Urban Open Space under Policy LC1 in Chapter 8 of this Plan.

13.8 The Croft is a valuable urban open space providing a "village green" close to the heart of the centre. It includes a children's play area and also a number of important pedestrian routes linking the centre to nearby residential areas.



The Croft, Aldridge

DEVELOPMENT / INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Policy AL4: The Precinct

- (a) **The Council will encourage the refurbishment or redevelopment of the Precinct and its immediate environs, as identified on the Inset Map.**
- (b) **Refurbishment should provide a glazed roof over the pedestrian walkways / square within the Precinct. Consideration should be given to the creation of an additional shop unit through the relocation of the market to The Square, subject to the agreement of the market and other traders and the local community. Other refurbishment works should include appropriate paving, the removal of canopies, the removal of ‘clutter’, particularly along Anchor Parade, which currently impedes the free flow of pedestrians, and the rationalisation of parking and servicing provision.**
- (c) **In the event of redevelopment of the Precinct, the Council would consider favourably the inclusion of other uses such as housing and leisure facilities within an overall shopping scheme.**

13.9 The Precinct offers a relatively poor shopping environment at present, having a rather dated and bleak appearance. The square and the parades leading to it would benefit from glazed roofing to give weather protection and repaving of the

whole area is desirable. Anchor Parade is cluttered with canopy supports, advertising hoardings, and bins etc., which impede the free flow of pedestrians. The main entrance to the Precinct off Anchor Road particularly requires soft and hard landscaping to improve its visual quality. Refurbishment of the Precinct in these ways would help to transform it into a modern, attractive shopping environment. Redevelopment would be another option which could transform the area, providing the opportunity for an improved shopping environment and possibly incorporating leisure and housing uses, and also the rationalisation of the service yards and car parks which currently are highly visible and unsightly along Rookery Lane.

Policy AL5: Land at High Street / Little Aston Road

This site, as identified on the Inset Map, offers the opportunity to provide retail units with office or residential space above. It occupies a prominent location within the District Centre and Conservation Area and as such requires a high quality of design. Car parking to the rear for private / public use will be required.

13.10 This site offers the opportunity for retail, with office or residential uses above, although a previous planning permission for retail and office use has now lapsed. The site occupies a prominent corner location which requires good design in order to contribute positively to the character of the District Centre and the Conservation Area.



Traditional town centre use, Aldridge

ACCESSIBILITY AND CIRCULATION

Policy AL6: Rail Station

The Council supports the provision of a railway station for Aldridge, with associated park and ride facility, on land at Anchor Meadow as identified on the Inset Map.

13.11 The introduction of passenger rail services by the creation of a new station would be of enormous benefit to the District Centre. The West Midlands Local Transport Plan includes a proposal for the introduction of passenger rail services from Aldridge to Walsall and Wolverhampton, subject to the availability of resources. The Council also wishes to see services extended to other destinations, including Sutton Coldfield and Birmingham, for the station to reach its full potential. Outline planning permission has been granted for the station at Aldridge. As well as having a park and ride facility, it is also important that the station has good pedestrian links to the core of the District Centre and bus services.

Policy AL7: Pedestrian and Cycle Routes

The Council will seek to improve pedestrian and cycle routes both within the centre and linking it to the surrounding area. Particular attention will be given to improving:-

- I. **Croft Parade (as identified on the Inset Map); and**
- II. **Routes from Anchor Road to the health centre and proposed station at Anchor Meadow, including the crossing facilities on the by-pass.**

13.12 Pedestrian routes through the District Centre are well established. At night when the Precinct is closed, Croft Parade provides a useful east west route between The Croft and Anchor Road. Some improvement works to provide better lighting, renew fencing, and provide gates to enclose a rear service yard would make the path more attractive and safe for pedestrians.

13.13 As noted in Policy AL6, it is important that the proposed new station and the health centre at Anchor Meadow are well linked to the core of the District Centre and bus services. There is potential to improve access for pedestrians and cyclists across the by-pass.

Policy AL8: Traffic Circulation and Bus Priority

Traffic in Anchor Road will be restricted to buses and access to existing premises only; general through traffic will be prohibited. The Council will support the introduction of a Bus Showcase scheme to serve Aldridge and will undertake any highway works necessary to facilitate this.

13.14 Construction of the Aldridge by-pass has greatly improved traffic circulation around the District Centre. Traffic surveys indicate, however, that excessive amounts of through traffic are still using Anchor Road. In order to protect highway safety and

ensure that Anchor Road does not become a barrier to pedestrian movement between different parts of the centre it is important that traffic using Anchor Road is kept to a minimum. Aldridge is to be served by a Bus Showcase scheme in Centro's 20 Year Public Transport Strategy; implementation of this may require some works to highways in the centre to assist bus movement and improve terminus facilities. Policy T2 in Chapter 7 includes further guidance on the design of bus lanes, termini, stops and lay-over areas. Early consultation will be undertaken with statutory undertakers, public transport operators and others in considering bus priority in the district centre.

Policy AL9: Car Parking

The provision of additional surface-level car parking for shoppers and visitors will be encouraged and existing provision enhanced, wherever possible. Parking provision in the centre should be in accordance with the principles in Policy T7.

13.15 The District Centre lacks sufficient convenient ground level car parking and the Council will seek additional provision through its own actions and/or as part of development proposals.

14 BLOXWICH DISTRICT CENTRE

INTRODUCTION

14.1 Bloxwich District Centre not only has a strong local catchment, but also a wider catchment area to the north, including the adjoining parts of southern Staffordshire. The centre is, however, now facing increasing competition, particularly from Reedswood Retail Park and out-of-centre retail developments to the north of the Borough boundary. The New Deal initiative is helping to bring new investment to the Bloxwich area.

14.2 In accordance with its broader regeneration objectives for the District Centre, the Council has prepared a Strategy for its improvement in parallel with this Inset Plan. Although this will be consistent in terms of land use policy, the Strategy will also cover additional matters outside the scope of the Inset Plan.

14.3 The boundary of the Inset Plan includes not only the core shopping area of High Street and adjoining streets with mixed uses, but also reflects the wider function of the centre for recreation and social activity. It therefore includes the Leisure Centre to the south, and Bloxwich Park and Promenade Gardens to the north of the primary shopping area.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Policy BX1: Primary Shopping Area

- (a) **The primary shopping area is shown on the Inset Map. New retail and service development will be concentrated within this area. Locations which are identified as having particular potential for new retail development include the Market Centre (see Policy BX7) and Queens Parade (Policy BX6).**
- (b) **Outside the primary shopping area the Council will encourage investment in service, leisure, community or other town centre uses. Retail development will be acceptable in the form of the redevelopment / improvement of the Asda foodstore on land southeast of the High Street (see Policy BX8), and where it can be linked directly to the primary shopping area.**

14.4 The primary shopping area is focused upon the central part of High Street and the Market Centre. The aim is to sustain and enhance the viability and vitality of the centre as a whole by maintaining the compactness of the centre for the convenience of shoppers and ensuring that new facilities are properly integrated with the existing shopping centre. The policy also allows for the diversification and expansion of other town centre facilities to help support the centre and enable it to meet the range of needs of the community it serves.

14.5 Further guidance on the opportunities for new retail development identified in part (b) of the policy are set out in the section on Development / Investment Opportunities.

Policy BX2: The Market

The Council will seek to maintain and enhance the market as one of the centre's main attractions, and to retain its central location. This will include a commitment towards its improved operation, appearance and management as well as action to enhance the setting in which the market takes place.

14.6 The market is an important asset to the centre which contributes to its vitality on market days. It does, however, give rise to some disadvantages, notably the unattractive appearance and lack of activity within the Market Square on non-market days, litter and servicing issues. The policy reflects an intention to tackle these and other issues as part of the general environmental improvement of the centre. The market will need to be considered in detail in relation to any proposed development within the Market Centre Opportunity Area (see also Policy BX7).

ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

14.7 The centre of Bloxwich has a long history of settlement and includes both land of archaeological significance and three conservation areas. The area identified as being of potential archaeological interest - in the vicinity of High Street and Church Street - is recorded on the Black Country Sites and Monument record and will be subject to protection under Policy ENV25 in Chapter 3. The established Elmore Green and Bloxwich Park Conservation Areas cover parts of the centre in the south and north, and an additional Conservation Area has been designated in the heart of the centre during the period the UDP Review has been in preparation. These Conservation Areas will be protected under Policy ENV29 in Chapter 3.



Refurbished Bloxwich Market prior to reopening

Policy BX3: Conservation Areas

The Council will prepare appraisals to guide the future enhancement of the conservation areas in the District Centre.

14.8 Besides designating a third Conservation Area, the Council has also secured heritage-based regeneration funding from English Heritage to repair and re-instate buildings in the centre. When this scheme has run its course, the Council will undertake Conservation Area appraisals to guide and to seek future investment in the historic fabric of the centre.

Policy BX4: Urban Open Spaces

The sites identified on the Inset Map will be protected as urban open spaces under Policy LC1 in Chapter 8.

14.9 The Inset Map identifies urban open spaces at Bloxwich Park, the Promenade Gardens and Elmore Green. These large green spaces make an important contribution to the quality of the environment of the centre and there is potential to increase their value and use for recreation. These areas are included in the priorities for environmental improvements listed in Policy BX5.

Policy BX5: Environmental Improvements

The following parts of the District Centre, as identified on the Inset Map, will be targeted for environmental improvement:-

- I. Bloxwich Park**
- II. Market Centre**
- III. Park Road / Wolverhampton Road**
- IV. Elmore Row / Elmore Green**
- V. High Street south of Church Street**
- VI. Somerfield Road / Reeves Street**

14.10 Although the Bus Showcase scheme has resulted in recent environmental improvements along its route, there is further scope for environmental enhancement within the centre, for example to paved areas, hard landscaping and street furniture, including seating, planting and improved signage. There is also a particular opportunity for enhancement of the large green spaces, to the north and west of the centre, identified under Policy BX4. The areas listed in Policy BX5 will be initially considered for environmental enhancement, subject to detailed design of schemes and funding. Several improvements are underway, following recent enhancement work to the Promenade Gardens.

14.11 The major development opportunities at Market Centre and south east of High Street will also offer the potential for significant environmental improvement of the those parts of the centre (see also Policies BX6 - BX8 below).

DEVELOPMENT / INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Policy BX6: Development / Investment Opportunities

The Council will encourage the appropriate development / reuse of the following sites / areas in and around the District Centre, as shown on the Inset Map:-

- I. **Market Centre** - see Policy BX7.
- II. **South East of High Street** - see Policy BX8.
- III. **Queens Parade / Wolverhampton Road**. This area may be suitable in principle for shopping, office, service and residential uses subject to amenity considerations.
- IV. **Elmore Green Road / Station Street**. This site may be suitable for business, leisure, community or residential use.
- V. **Park Road (North)**. This area may be suitable for residential, business or leisure use.
- VI. **Park Road (South)**. This area may be suitable in principle for shopping, office, service and residential uses subject to amenity considerations.
- VII. **High Street / Reeves Street / Somerfield Road / Stokes Street**. This area may be suitable for residential, business, leisure or community uses.

14.12 This policy identifies those parts of the centre which could accommodate change most readily and provides broad indications of the Council's vision for these areas. The Council wishes to encourage developers and others to put forward schemes that will realise the potential of these areas to contribute to the overall strategy for the centre. Where appropriate, the Council will prepare a Supplementary Planning Document or Documents in order to provide more detailed guidelines for developers and ensure that the development potential is realised and development proceeds in the most satisfactory way.

14.13 The areas of development / investment opportunity are generally defined quite widely in order to maximise the potential opportunity. A comprehensive approach to development is encouraged and whilst individual proposals will be considered, the Council will need to be satisfied that a more comprehensive scheme cannot be achieved, and that future more comprehensive development options are not prejudiced. It should be noted that the inclusion of property within one of these areas does not necessarily mean that redevelopment proposals will be made which will affect it. Neither are development proposals outside these areas precluded, if they are otherwise in accordance with the policies of the Plan.

14.14 Detailed policies for areas I and II are set in Policies BX7 and BX8 below. Areas III & VI comprise blocks of shops / service premises of varying age and condition. These are key locations to the north of the centre adjacent to the bus interchange where suitable redevelopment will be encouraged. Area IV is currently a builders' merchant; if redevelopment proposals come forward these should be of high quality design, taking account of its location within the Elmore Green Conservation Area.

14.15 Area V to the north east of the centre comprises occupied commercial premises and residential property. It is separated from the main shopping centre and is within the Bloxwich Park Conservation Area. If the area becomes available for redevelopment, a comprehensive scheme which would retain and enhance the character of the conservation area and Promenade Gardens will be encouraged. Area VII is a prominent location to the south of the centre which currently includes a mixture of uses. If redevelopment takes place, a high quality of design will be required to reflect its location within, and affecting the character of, the Elmore Green Conservation Area.

Policy BX7: The Market Centre

The Market Centre has potential for a comprehensive development scheme¹, based on the following broad principles:-

- I. Retailing will be encouraged as the primary use. Other uses may be considered where:-**
 - **The mix of proposed uses is compatible and will not be detrimental to the amenities of the adjoining residential area.**
 - **They would not conflict with the primary shopping function of the Market Centre.**
- II. Bloxwich Market should be retained as an integral part of the development.**
- III. A high standard of design will be required.**
- IV. The development should relate functionally and visually to High Street.**
- V. Pedestrians links between Elmore Row / Market Place, Samuel Street and High Street are to be retained and enhanced.**
- VI. Parking should meet both the needs of the development and serve the centre as a whole.**
- VII. Access for parking and servicing of the development should be via Elmore Green Road and Elmore Row. New Street should not be used for servicing.**
- VIII. Bloxwich Post Office should be retained within the development, but if that is not possible than it will be required to be relocated to suitable premises within the primary shopping area.**

14.16 The Market Centre, originally developed in the mid-1980's, has a key role within the District Centre in maintaining a choice of convenience shopping within a compact area, and in particular in providing for the less mobile members of the community. By setting out guiding principles, the Council aims to encourage a scheme which will contribute towards the overall strategy for the centre. If, in the opinion of the Council, the proposals would be likely to have significant traffic

¹ Planning permission was granted in September 2003 for the improvement and extension of part of the Market Centre, and construction commenced in 2004.

impacts, the developer will be required to submit a transport assessment and may be required to contribute towards necessary transport infrastructure (see Policy GP3 in Chapter 2, and Chapter 7, especially paragraph 7.3 and Policy T10). The Council will also seek to ensure - insofar as possible - that the functioning of the centre, and of the businesses and services within it, is maintained not just after the development, but also whilst construction is taking place. If further detailed guidance is required for this site, the Council will prepare an appropriate Supplementary Planning Document in consultation with businesses and landowners as well as the local community.

Policy BX8: South East of High Street

This area is suitable for a comprehensive redevelopment scheme based on the following broad principles:-

- I. The development should include a single large convenience store of high quality design, with the principal entrance to the building on the part of the site nearest to, and readily accessible on foot from, High Street.**
- II. Development proposals must relate sympathetically and positively to the Elmore Green Conservation Area to the west side of High Street.**
- III. Improvements to vehicular access will be sought as part of the development.**
- IV. Parking provision should both meet the needs of the development and serve the centre as a whole.**
- V. If the existing bowling green on the site is to be lost then this must be compensated for by replacement and / or improvement of existing facilities in the Bloxwich area.**

14.17 This area, at the edge of the centre, is dominated by the Asda store built in the early 1970's. Redevelopment of the site to include a large convenience store would provide the opportunity of improved linkages between this area, High Street and the Market Centre. The servicing and access arrangements for the existing store have given rise to problems, particularly in the Woodall Street area, which would need to be addressed if the area is redeveloped. The developer will be expected to submit a transport assessment for any major proposals and will be required to contribute towards necessary transport infrastructure (see Policy GP3 in Chapter 2, and Chapter 7, especially paragraph 7.3 and Policy T10). A retail assessment will be required to accompany any proposals for retailing which, in the opinion of the Council, differ significantly from those envisaged in the policy.

14.18 The Health Trust previously identified a need to replace the existing Health Centre at Pinfold and the development of this facility has been secured during the period the UDP Review has been in preparation. Now that construction of a new Health Centre has started on the site the development opportunity has been redefined to exclude the new facility.

ACCESSIBILITY AND CIRCULATION

Policy BX9: Improved Passenger Rail Facilities

The Council will, in partnership with Centro and the rail operators, explore the potential to relocate Bloxwich rail station to a site closer to the District Centre, as indicated on the Inset Map. There should be secure parking for rail users and good integration with other public transport services.

14.19 A new station in a more accessible location would encourage greater rail patronage, and contribute towards the overall strategy for public transport. The Council, Centro and the rail operators will together investigate the feasibility of relocating the station.

Policy BX10: Improvements to Bus Facilities

The Council in partnership with Centro and bus operators, will seek to promote improvements to bus facilities at High Street / Wolverhampton Road / Park Road and to upgrade bus facilities throughout the centre.

14.20 Bloxwich continues to be an important bus interchange. The Walsall to Bloxwich Bus Showcase route was introduced in 1998, and a second Showcase has subsequently been implemented between Wolverhampton and Bloxwich. The routes particularly impact on the northern part of the centre, as both terminate in this location. This provides the opportunity to improve bus facilities in this area. Subject to agreement with the operators, the opportunity will also be taken to improve other bus stop locations throughout the centre. Policy T2 in Chapter 7 includes further guidance on the design of bus lanes, termini, stops and lay-over areas.

Policy BX11: Pedestrian and Cycle Routes

The Council will seek to improve pedestrian and cycle routes within and around the centre and linking with the surrounding areas. In particular, this will require adequate and safe provision for pedestrians and cyclists crossing the roads around the centre.

14.21 The main shopping area attracts significant pedestrian flows. This policy reflects the need to ensure ease of movement and access within the centre and to improve pedestrian access for nearby residents. At the same time, opportunities should be taken to make cycle access to the centre easier and safer.

Policy BX12: Traffic within the District Centre

The traffic management system will be kept under review as part of the Strategy for Bloxwich District Centre.

14.22 Reducing the level of traffic congestion in High Street, also the main A34 route, has long been considered a desirable objective. However, any major diversion of traffic on to the surrounding road network is likely to result in increased levels of traffic on adjoining residential streets. In the short term, more limited measures for reducing traffic, such as restriction of delivery hours, will be considered.

14.23 However, the emergence of major development proposals (see Policies BX6 - BX8) in the short to medium term is likely to have a significant impact on the road network within and around the centre, and the traffic management system will, therefore, need to be kept under review in order to take account of changing circumstances. Developers will be required to submit transport assessments in relation to any major proposals and particularly for the development south east of High Street (Policy BX8) and possibly for the redevelopment of the Market Centre (Policy BX7). Early consultation will be undertaken with statutory undertakers, public transport operators and others in considering traffic management measures in and around the centre of Bloxwich.

Policy BX13: Car Parking

The provision of additional, preferably surface-level, car parking for shoppers and visitors will be encouraged. Where opportunities arise, additional parking capacity should be concentrated to the north and east of the primary shopping area, provided this would not result in increased traffic congestion. In addition, existing parking provision should be enhanced, wherever possible. Parking provision in the centre should be in accordance with the principles in Policy T7.

14.24 Bloxwich is notably lacking in sufficient parking for shoppers and visitors. Additional short stay parking spaces, particularly to the north and east side of the centre, would reduce pressure on the limited parking available elsewhere, and also contribute to the alleviation of traffic congestion in High Street. There may be opportunities to increase capacity through the shared use of private car parks to the north and east side of the centre; this may involve formal agreements between the Council and owners to allow the use of their car parks by the general public when spaces are not otherwise in use, and to cover maintenance.



New Police Station, Blowxich

15 BROWNHILLS DISTRICT CENTRE

INTRODUCTION

15.1 The Council, together with the local community and partner agencies, is working towards the regeneration of Brownhills centre. To this end, Brownhills Neighbourhood Committee was established and the centre has received resources from Central Government's Single Regeneration Budget, whilst the Council is now seeking further funding from European and other sources. Work to date has resulted in the production of a "Community Vision For The Future", or Action Plan, and a Townscape Masterplan for the centre. The Action Plan aims to provide for and guide new development and new investment, for the benefit of the local community, whilst recognising that physical regeneration must go hand in hand with other social and economic initiatives. The Masterplan provides a practical vision for improving the centre. These documents represent Supplementary Planning Guidance which should be read in conjunction with this Inset Plan.

15.2 The Inset Plan draws upon this work. It aims to: increase the provision of comparison shopping, whilst recognising the need to rationalise the extent of the centre; increase leisure and community provision; promote environmental enhancement; address the level of traffic along High Street, whilst improving access to the centre for cars and buses; enhance pedestrian circulation; and promote the re-opening of the Walsall to Lichfield railway, with a railway station for Brownhills.



New Shops under construction, High Street, Brownhills

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Policy BR1: Primary Shopping Area

- (a) **The primary shopping area is shown on the Inset Map. New retail and service development will be concentrated within this area and locations which are considered as having particular potential for new retail development are identified in Policy BR8.**
- (b) **Outside the primary shopping area the Council will encourage investment in service, leisure, community or other town centre uses, and locations for such investment are identified in Policy BR9. New retail development will not normally be acceptable unless it could not otherwise be accommodated within the primary frontages and would increase the centre's market share without an adverse impact on any other centre.**

15.3 Within the centre, retail investment will be directed towards the primary shopping area to consolidate the main shopping area, rather than perpetuating the centre's length along the High Street. In the light of the recent consultants' studies, it is clear that the expenditure potential to support new retail provision is limited. Therefore, the Council has resolved that substantial new retail investment should not be considered, unless this would meet a particular local need and enable the centre to accommodate new retailing which could not otherwise be provided. On the other hand, it is clear that Brownhills is particularly lacking in leisure provision and there is a need to add to the centre's facilities to serve the local community.

Policy BR2: Brownhills Market

The Council, together with the market operators, will seek the improved operation, appearance and management of the market and an enhancement to its setting. Particular attention will be given to:-

- I. Crime prevention and safety measures, particularly on non-market days.**
- II. Improved pedestrian linkages to the rest of the centre.**
- III. Car parking for both shoppers and traders.**
- IV. The effect of highway improvements to Silver Street.**

15.4 The market plays an important role in sustaining the vitality and viability of the centre. However, it also gives rise to problems. Parking and litter are particular problems on market days whilst on non-market days the permanent nature of the market stalls effectively sterilises a large area, which becomes a focus for antisocial behaviour. The policy reflects an intention to tackle these and other issues as part of the general environmental improvement of the centre.

Policy BR3: Neighbourhood Resource Centre

The Council will promote the provision of a neighbourhood resource centre for the people of Brownhills to provide health, training, library, and meeting facilities. The former town hall site off Chester Road North, shown on the Inset Map, has been identified for this purpose.

15.5 The Council, together with partner agencies and the community, has identified the need for a resource centre to provide improved health care and community facilities. The use of the former town hall site will complement the enhancement of the adjoining Holland Park. It will be important to ensure that pedestrian links between the site and the rest of the centre are strengthened.

ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

Policy BR4: Redevelopment / Refurbishment Schemes

The Council will encourage and promote suitable schemes for redevelopment or refurbishment of properties in Ravenscourt and High Street.

15.6 It is important that the image of the centre is improved in order to attract visitors and shoppers. The centre contains a mix of 'traditional' 19th century properties and 1960's and 1970's developments. Many of these properties, particularly on High Street and in Ravenscourt, are in need of redevelopment or improvement. The Townscape Masterplan includes a schedule of works recommended for properties on High Street. The Council will consider any redevelopment or refurbishment schemes for appropriate town centre uses.

Policy BR5: Heritage

Development proposals should seek to reflect the heritage of Brownhills, as identified in the Townscape Masterplan.

15.7 Whilst Brownhills centre is not rich in built heritage, such as Listed Buildings, it has an industrial heritage based on mining, the canals and railways. Wherever possible, proposals should build upon and reflect this heritage.

Policy BR6: Public Art

The Council will encourage the provision of public art features throughout the centre which reflect Brownhills heritage. Suitable opportunities for such features identified in the Townscape Masterplan are:-

- I. **The paved area outside Tesco.**
- II. **The provision of gateway features at the Silver Street development.**
- III. **A focal feature on Clayhanger Common, visible along both the Pier Street axis and Clayhanger by-pass (this is outside the Inset Plan area but would be an important feature visible from the District Centre).**

15.8 Public art will play an important role in raising the interest and image of the centre and will also be used to inform the overall design and development process.

A gateway feature has already been completed at the junction of Silver Street and High Street.

Policy BR7: Environmental Enhancement

The Council will encourage the implementation of the environmental enhancement proposals identified for the six target areas of the Townscape Masterplan. These are:-

- I. High Street**
- II. Pier Street and Kirkside Grove**
- III. The Canal / Silver Street**
- IV. Area adjacent to Tesco**
- V. Rear of Ravenscourt / Aldi car park**
- VI. Short Street**

15.9 A key element of the Townscape Masterplan is the identification of six target areas for environmental enhancement. These areas will be the priority for environmental funding, with the intention of not only improving the visual appearance of the areas but also security and the more effective use of land. Details of the improvements sought within each target area are set out in the Masterplan, although improvements have already been undertaken at 'I' High Street and 'VI' Short Street. The enhancement of these areas may also be achieved through redevelopment or refurbishment schemes.



Mooring on the Wyrley & Essington Canal, Brownhills

DEVELOPMENT / INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

15.10 The areas of development / investment opportunity identified below are generally defined quite widely in order to maximise the potential opportunity. A comprehensive approach to development is encouraged and whilst individual proposals will be considered, the Council will need to be satisfied that a more comprehensive scheme cannot be achieved, and that future more comprehensive development options are not prejudiced. It should be noted that the inclusion of property within one of these areas does not necessarily mean that redevelopment proposals will be promoted which will affect it. Neither are development proposals outside these areas precluded, if they are otherwise in accordance with the policies of the Plan.

Policy BR8: Retail Development Opportunities

The following sites and buildings, within the primary shopping frontages, are identified on the Inset Map as opportunities for retailing or other development appropriate to a town centre location:-

- I. Land in High Street, north of Pier Street (adjoining Kwik-Fit).
- II. Nos. 72-86 High Street,
- III. Nos. 12-28 High Street.
- IV. Ravenscourt Precinct.

15.11 The identification of retail development opportunities within the primary shopping frontages will strengthen their retail role. Consolidating and diversifying the retail base to ensure Brownhills remains an attractive place in which to shop is a primary concern for the Council. By identifying development opportunities, deficiencies in the existing range of stores in the centre may be overcome. At the same time, the Council will adopt a flexible approach towards the location of other uses normally considered to be appropriate in town centres.

Policy BR9: Leisure, Service and Community Development Opportunities

The following locations are identified on the Inset Plan as opportunities for leisure, service and community developments:-

- I. Land at Pier Street and Kirkside Grove.
- II. Land corner of Church Road and Short Street.
- III. Former post office site, High Street.
- IV. Land corner of High Street and Brickiln Street.
- V. Former town hall site off Chester Road North.
- VI. Land at Silver Street - with residential development on part, excluding the canalside site.

15.12 The vitality and viability of a centre is not only dependant upon retail uses but other uses for the community, leisure facilities and services. The Healey and Baker Health Check has found that there is a lack of restaurants and pub / wine bars within the centre. Such uses lend vitality to the centre and assist the evening economy.

Although the policy identifies some particular opportunities, other sites or premises may be equally appropriate for such uses. The land at Silver Street provides a major development opportunity for some leisure and community development.

ACCESSIBILITY AND CIRCULATION

Policy BR10: Transport Interchange

In view of the potential for the re-opening of the Walsall to Lichfield railway for heavy rail and/or Metro and the proposed major housing / leisure development at Silver Street, the Council will promote the provision of a ‘transport interchange’ at the northern end of Silver Street. This is likely to include:-

- I. A rail / Metro station - it is envisaged that this could be accommodated within the existing rail corridor.**
- II. A ‘park and ride’ facility - the Council will work with the developers of the Silver Street site to ensure that the use of parking areas provided for the leisure / commercial development can be managed for this purpose.**
- III. A bus ‘pick up and drop off point’ - it is envisaged that this can be accommodated within the highway.**
- IV. Cycle parking and cycle links to the centre and the National Cycle Route to the north of the rail corridor.**
- V. Pedestrian links to the centre which are convenient and secure.**

15.13 Policy T3 of this Plan safeguards the Walsall to Lichfield rail formation, with a view to the re-introduction of rail and/or Metro services. This, together with the Silver Street development, provides an opportunity for the development of a railway station. It is important, however, that the railway station is not developed in isolation, but well integrated with other modes of transport. The provision of a transport interchange will, therefore, encourage the use of modes other than the car, whilst linking and integrating the station to the centre. The proposal is, therefore, in keeping with the transport policies of this Plan, the Local Transport Plan for the West Midlands, and Central Government.

Policy BR11: Traffic Within the Centre

- (a) The Council will investigate the provision of a modified traffic system which reduces the level of through traffic along High Street (A452), whilst improving access for buses. This is likely to involve:-**
 - I. The removal of north bound traffic from High Street, except buses, with a diversion along Silver Street.**
 - II. The re-design of sections of Silver Street, particularly on the bend adjoining the Market.**
- (b) Improvements to the traffic system will be considered in relation to development proposals for the Silver Street site.**

15.14 The development of the M6 Toll to the north of Brownhills provides opportunities for the reduction of through traffic using High Street and its

environmental enhancement. Highway improvement works will be required to Silver Street, in order that it may accommodate diverted traffic. The development of the site at Silver Street will clearly impact upon the local highway network. Development proposals must therefore be considered in relation to, and may influence, changes to the traffic system.

Policy BR12: Bus Facility Improvements

The Council, in association with Centro, will seek to promote the improvement of bus services and facilities within the centre, particularly in the light of the proposed Silver Street development and ‘transport interchange’, and the modified traffic system, which will open up opportunities to provide improved bus facilities along High Street.

15.15 The centre should be accessible by means other than the car. Buses have a major part to play in reducing congestion, but services and facilities must meet the needs of passengers. The provision of a transport interchange and modified traffic system will raise the profile and priority given to buses in order to provide an attractive service. The West Midlands Local Transport Plan identifies Brownhills as being on a high volume corridor suitable for a Bus Showcase scheme and this should complement the measures proposed in this Plan. Policy T2 in Chapter 7 includes further guidance on the design of bus lanes, termini, stops and lay-over areas.

Policy BR13: Pedestrian Routes

The Council will seek the provision and improvement of pedestrian routes to, and throughout the centre. Routes identified on the Inset Map are:-

- I. High Street.**
- II. Pier Street, from High Street to the canal and Clayhanger Common beyond. This may include a newly defined pedestrian crossing across High Street to link to Short Street; a defined crossing to Kirkside Grove and Silver Street; and a new bridge across the canal.**
- III. Kirkside Grove to the pedestrian area adjoining Tesco, through to High Street (including enhancement to the pedestrian area to create a ‘mini town square’).**
- IV. Tesco car park to provide an easier and more defined route through the car park, linking the market with Ravenscourt.**
- V. High Street to Silver Street (and the Silver Street site and canal beyond) via a hoarding site adjacent to Ravenscourt and upgrading the rear access to Ravenscourt.**
- VI. High Street to the proposed Resource centre on Chester Road North.**

15.16 The Masterplan has shown that there are strongly defined lines of pedestrian movement along High Street (North - South) and Pier Street (West - East). However, other pedestrian movements are not so well defined. For example, cross movement within the open area to the rear of High Street is confused leading to weak links

between parts of the centre, such as the Market and Ravenscourt. It is also important that pedestrian routes to the centre, such as from Clayhanger Common, are safe and convenient. The design of pedestrian routes will be encouraged to follow criteria set out in the Masterplan, for continuity.

Policy BR14: Cycle Access and Parking

The National Cycle Route is located just to the north of the centre. Proposals for the improved pedestrian routes will therefore take account of cyclists' requirements, where these can be safely combined with pedestrian use. The Council will seek the provision of secure cycle parking at the transport interchange, appropriate locations along the pedestrian routes and, where appropriate, in new developments.

15.17 It is important that the centre is easily accessible by cyclists, particularly given the proximity of the centre to the National Cycle Route and open space to the north and southeast. Improvements to pedestrian routes will therefore include facilities for cyclists, where appropriate. The policy also seeks the provision of secure cycle parking.

Policy BR15: Car Parking Provision

(a) Whilst reviewing the traffic system within the centre, the Council will examine the provision of shoppers and visitors car parking, with particular regard to its accessibility, quality and management. The Council will seek to undertake appropriate improvements to its car parks at:-

- I. Church Road.**
- II. Short Street.**

(b) Car parking provision in the centre should be in accordance with the principles in Policy T7 in Chapter 7.

15.18 The centre must provide secure, good quality, accessible parking if it is to attract car borne visitors. Many of the car parks within the centre are privately owned. Where the Council does own car parks, it will seek to make improvements subject to the availability of resources.

16 DARLASTON DISTRICT CENTRE

INTRODUCTION

16.1 Darlaston Town Centre is identified as a District Centre in the UDP. It has a strong local catchment area, which has been maintained since the centre's main foodstore was redeveloped and re-opened in 2002. However, like other District Centres in the Borough, Darlaston faces increasing competition from other centres and out-of-centre developments.

16.2 The Darlaston Town Centre Plan was produced in August 1999 following a consultant's study and considerable public consultation. Besides providing Supplementary Planning Guidance, it also forms the basis of this Inset Plan which incorporates the key policies and proposals of the Town Centre Plan.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Policy DA1: Primary Shopping Area

- (a) **The primary shopping area is shown on the Inset Map. New retail and service development will be concentrated within this area.**
- (b) **However, it is recognised that the shopping role of the centre needs to be consolidated, and outside the primary shopping area:-**
 - I. **The Council will encourage investment in service, leisure, community or other town centre uses (see Policy DA6).**
 - II. **In locations such as Church Street and Pinfold Street, the appropriate conversion or redevelopment of out-moded shop units will be encouraged to introduce new uses. These can include housing and opportunities for housing development are identified in Policy DA5.**
 - III. **New retail development will not normally be acceptable unless it could not otherwise be accommodated within the primary frontages and would increase the centre's market share without an adverse impact on any other centre.**

16.3 In Darlaston, it is recognised that a contraction of the main shopping area is necessary, to consolidate existing uses and to encourage and control inward investment around a new anchor foodstore. The primary shopping area, identified on the Inset Map, is concentrated on the pedestrianised area of King Street / High Street and represents a smaller retail core area than has existed in the past.

16.4 Service and other town centre uses can contribute to the vitality of the shopping centre and help reduce the number of vacant properties. The Council will therefore adopt a flexible attitude towards the location of non-retail uses in the centre, particularly outside the primary shopping area. Housing development will also be encouraged within and around the centre.

Policy DA2: Darlaston Market

The Council will seek to maintain and enhance the importance of the market as one of Darlaston's main attractions.

16.5 Darlaston Market is an important asset to the town which contributes to its vitality. The pedestrianised area was refurbished in 1993/4 with the market as a key feature in the design. Although in need of some attention, it still provides an attractive and practical setting for the market.

16.6 The 1997 shopping survey revealed that the market was significant in attracting visitors to the town and was the major attraction, second only to the main foodstore at that time. The decline of the town centre, at least up to that time, was reflected to an extent in the operation of the market. However, its tradition has persisted and this provides the opportunity to retain and enhance this important and attractive asset.



In Darlaston District Centre

ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

16.7 The centre of Darlaston has a long history of settlement and includes both land of archaeological significance and a conservation area. The area of archaeological interest, as recorded on the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record, will be protected under Policy ENV25 in Chapter 3.

16.8 The Darlaston Conservation Area is focussed upon the northern end of King Street, the Town Hall and St. Lawrence's Church. The area includes some of Darlaston's most attractive buildings and is an area with a distinct character. The attractive buildings contribute to a sense of place and represent many people's image of Darlaston. The conservation area will be protected under Policy ENV29 in Chapter 3 and the Council has secured heritage-based regeneration funding from English Heritage to support investment in the fabric of the centre.



The Fold, Darlaston

Policy: DA3 Environmental Enhancement

Positive approaches will be sought for the improvement of existing buildings, development sites, and paved and other open areas. In particular, the Council will:-

- I. Undertake a programme of environmental enhancements.
- II. Seek to ensure that new developments make a positive contribution towards the environment of the centre.
- III. Encourage property owners to invest in the maintenance and improvement of their land and premises.

16.9 Opportunities for environmental enhancement have been identified in the Darlaston Town Centre Plan. Other opportunities will also be considered as they arise or are identified by the local community. These will be pursued through various funding programmes and through the contribution that may be made by new developments. A large number of properties in Darlaston are in a state of neglect or disrepair and projects to improve them will be encouraged.

Policy: DA4: Urban Open Spaces

The green spaces shown on the Inset Map at Victoria Park, the Linear Walkway and Owen Memorial Park will be protected as urban open spaces under Policy LC1 and, where appropriate, enhanced and improved.

16.10 It is important that the urban environment should have sufficient parks and green spaces, augmented by the tree planting along roads and by smaller areas of landscaping. Unusually for a town of its size, Darlaston still has a number of significant green spaces. Victoria Park, the War Memorial and children's play areas are examples of successful open spaces. Linked to the linear walkway, these represent significant and well used facilities. The Owen Memorial Garden, which was previously rather isolated from the rest of the centre, has been improved in association with the development of the new Asda store on the adjoining site.

DEVELOPMENT / INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITES

16.11 The 1997 shoppers' survey found that a major reason for people disliking Darlaston Town Centre is the lack of, and poor range of, shops in the centre. Top of the list of suggested improvements was the need for a greater variety of shops.

16.12 A number of development opportunities were identified in the August 1999 Town Centre Plan. Detailed design guidance for each site is provided in a separate document, and demonstrates how general principles for urban design may be applied. Some sites are already committed or available immediately but others may not become available for some time. Now that the site of the former foodstore has been redeveloped to provide a new Asda store, the priorities are the housing sites in the centre (see Policy DA5).

NEW FOOD STORE

16.13 Darlaston Town Centre lacked a major foodstore between 1997 and 2002. The shopping survey in 1997 found that, before it closed, the Asda store was the major draw of business in the town centre, encouraging linked trips to other shops and services. Whilst people had to shop elsewhere in the absence of a large foodstore, the previous store was able to draw upon a primary catchment area containing almost 40,000 people.

16.14 The First Draft for Deposit of this UDP Review reflected the work of the Darlaston Town Centre Plan in identifying the site of the former foodstore for redevelopment to provide a modern new store. Since that time a new store – for Asda – has been developed and it opened in November 2002. This new store will be crucial in sustaining the role of Darlaston as a District Centre and in meeting the needs of the local community. The Council will be careful to ensure that such vital investment is protected when considering retail development proposals elsewhere.

HOUSING AND ‘OTHER TOWN CENTRE USES’

Policy DA5: Housing Developments

- (a) **The provision of housing within and around the centre will be encouraged by means of new building and the conversion of suitable premises including upper floors above shop and service outlets.**
- (b) **Specific opportunities identified for residential developments are:-**

	<u>Dwellings</u>
DA5.1: Land at Church Street	6
DA5.2: Land at corner of Church Street and Bilston Street	6
DA5.3: Land at 1 - 16 Pinfold Street	18
DA5.4: Land at Pinfold Street (fmr. Black Horse Pub)¹	31

16.15 The existence of homes close to the town centre will contribute to the vitality of the centre outside shopping hours. A number of sites have been identified in and around the town centre which are suitable for residential development. Advice on how these may be developed is contained in Appendix 2 to the Darlaston Town Centre Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance. Other opportunities will be encouraged and assessed on their merits in relation to all relevant policies of this Plan.

16.16 Within the retail core and edge of centre, conversion of upper floors to other uses, especially housing, can make a particular contribution. Generally, family accommodation would not be suitable within the town centre unless sites become available where an environment more suited to family housing can be established, for example on the edge of the centre.

Policy DA6: Other Town Centre Uses.

New and improved leisure and entertainment, health, and community facilities will be encouraged within and close to (i.e. within easy walking distance of) the centre wherever feasible and appropriate, to serve the needs of the local community.

16.17 The vitality of the town centre would undoubtedly improve if additional non-shopping uses were introduced. This would have the effect of bringing people into town for other purposes and at times outside shopping hours. Proposals for such uses should be encouraged and assessed on their merits having regard to the existing uses and the contribution that the use will make to the community.

16.18 The Deposit drafts of the UDP Review included a proposal for the development of a new health centre on the site of the former bingo hall in Pinfold Street, but this has now been completed.

¹ Much of this site was under construction for housing at April 2004.

ACCESSIBILITY AND CIRCULATION

Policy DA7: Bus Facilities

The Council will work with Centro to continue to progress plans for a co-ordinated public transport strategy for the area.

16.19 The development of a new foodstore and associated car park (see para. 16.14) provided the opportunity to improve the bus terminus facilities in Darlaston. This supported the identification, in the West Midlands Local Transport Plan, of Darlaston as being on a high volume route suitable for a Bus Showcase scheme, and encouragement for - amongst other things - better public transport interchanges in Town and District Centres. Policy T2 in Chapter 7 includes guidance on the design of bus lanes, termini, stops and lay-over areas.

Policy DA8: Pedestrians and Cyclists

Improvements to existing links and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists in and around the centre will be pursued. Improved provision for pedestrians and cyclists should, where appropriate, be included in new developments.

16.20 New developments should encourage access by walking and cycling, rather than simply catering for continuing high car ownership. In the Town Centre core, pedestrians will be given priority over other road users, and their needs in terms of safe and convenient links will be considered of paramount importance.

16.21 Links with surrounding areas will also be improved - in particular the links to the linear walkway and residential areas surrounding the town centre.

Policy DA9: Car Parking

(a) The Council will seek to improve car parking provision for shoppers and visitors to the centre, in terms of both the numbers of spaces provided and the quality and security of these. Such improvements may be achieved through:-

- I. Investment in existing facilities.**
- II. New developments, which may provide additional parking and/or contribute to enhancement works.**

(b) Parking provision in the centre should be consistent with the principles in Policy T7 in Chapter 7.

16.22 Whilst, during the period the centre was without an anchor store, the number of parking spaces in Darlaston was sufficient to meet the needs of the existing shoppers, the quality of the provision was poor and people had little confidence in using it. Now, however, the parking provided with the new Asda store is managed to serve shoppers and visitors using the centre as a whole, although – whilst attractive - the new car park is of a limited size compared to those in competing destinations. Other smaller car parks on the outer edges of the centre should be retained for car parking, their safety and security assessed, and improvements made where appropriate.

17 WILLENHALL DISTRICT CENTRE

INTRODUCTION

17.1 Willenhall has been fortunate in avoiding the extensive redevelopment that has affected many other settlements in the conurbation and is widely regarded as one of the most intact and unaltered small town centres in the Black Country. While mainly comprising nineteenth and twentieth century buildings, there are some earlier survivals and the irregular street pattern reflects the town's medieval origins. Much of the Town Centre is a designated conservation area and the Town Centre and surrounding area is also of potential archaeological significance. The area of archaeological interest, as defined on the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record, will be protected under Policy ENV25 in Chapter 3; and the conservation area will be protected under Policy ENV29.

17.2 Historically, Willenhall has specialised in the production of locks. The decline in the fortunes of this and other local industries, together with increased competition from other centres and out-of-centre developments, means that the centre is likely to contract over the Plan period. These policies will help to manage necessary changes and to guide new development into appropriate locations.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Policy WH1: Primary Shopping Area

- (a) **The primary shopping area is identified on the Inset Map. New developments, at an appropriate scale, for shopping and services will be directed towards this area, to sustain the health and vitality of the centre. A particular opportunity for new shopping development is identified at Union Street / Stafford Street / Market Place (see Policy WH4 VII).**
- (b) **Outside the primary shopping area the Council will encourage investment in service, leisure, community or other town centre uses and also housing. Retail development will be acceptable, provided that it is of a scale which could not otherwise be accommodated within the primary shopping area and would increase the centre's market share without an adverse impact on any other centre. Such developments should be located as close as possible to the primary shopping area, well-integrated with it, and with safe, direct and attractive pedestrian links. A number of development opportunities are identified in Policy WH4.**

17.3 The role of the District Centre is changing, due to a combination of factors: the decline of traditional industry; increased competition from other centres and changing lifestyles. It is likely that the health of the centre will at best remain static as a result. Current indications are that the number of vacant units in the centre is steadily increasing - particularly in more peripheral locations. The Council will therefore ensure that any new development of town centre uses is concentrated within the heart of the centre, wherever possible. However, development within the primary shopping area is generally likely to be feasible only for small-scale

development. Larger developments which could enhance and diversify the role of the centre should be located as close to this area as possible, in order to maintain the compactness, attractiveness and accessibility of the centre.

Policy WH2: The Market

The street market will be retained and, subject to resources, enhanced.

17.4 The street market is a popular attraction and contributes greatly to the atmosphere and character of the centre. Some enhancements have been undertaken, but further improvements should maximise the benefits the market brings and reduce problems associated with its operation.



Willenhall Market

ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

Policy: WH3: Environmental Enhancement

Positive approaches will be sought for the improvement of existing buildings, development sites, and paved and other open areas. In particular, the Council will:

- I. Undertake a programme of environmental enhancements.**
- II. Seek to ensure that new developments make a positive contribution towards the environment of the centre, with particular regard to the character of the Conservation Area.**
- III. Encourage property owners to invest in the maintenance and improvement of their land and premises.**

17.5 The Council, together with the local community, will seek to identify needs and opportunities for environmental enhancement. These will be pursued both directly by the Council and through the contribution that may be made by new developments. New developments should protect and enhance the character of the centre of Willenhall, and particularly the conservation area. Within the conservation

area the majority of buildings are of traditional design and appearance and the installation of more sympathetic styles of shop fronts and fascias could play a key part in reinforcing Willenhall's historic character. The Council will seek to develop a Supplementary Planning Document or Documents, to clarify its design objectives for the District Centre. The Council has previously secured heritage-based regeneration funding through English Heritage, to support investment in the historic fabric of the centre, and it will continue to seek such funding as opportunities arise.

17.6 Untidy sites and vacant poorly maintained buildings have a negative effect on the image of the District Centre and deter further investment. The Council will therefore work with owners to encourage the improvement of sites and buildings in their control. Where necessary, the Council will also consider the use of its legal powers to require the improvement of land.



Investment Opportunity, east of Willenhall District Centre

DEVELOPMENT / INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Policy WH4: Development / Investment Opportunities

The Council will particularly encourage the appropriate development / reuse of the following sites in and around the District Centre, as shown on the Inset Map:-

- I. **74 - 77 Stafford Street.** These properties consist of a number of small retail units and are predominantly vacant. They offer the opportunity for conversion into larger retail units, for community uses, or possibly into residential units. Redevelopment may also be acceptable.
- II. **Indoor market, Union Street.** This site relates well to the Primary Shopping Area and offers potential for leisure or retail use, possibly combined with 5-7 Union Street and 12-15 Stafford Street. Any redevelopment must relate positively to the adjacent public footpath, Malt House Lane.
- III. **Wolverhampton Street.** This land should be developed to provide additional public car parking, for residential use, or for purposes in connection with the adjacent medical / community facilities. The development opportunity has been defined to include the existing buildings on the frontage, numbers 9-11 Wolverhampton Street, but the retention and enhancement of these properties is encouraged.
- IV. **R/o 58 Wolverhampton Street.** The site provides an opportunity to extend the adjacent public car park and to improve its access.
- V. **South of New Road / West of Bilston Street.** The site is currently occupied by a number of employment uses: these could remain. However, the site also offers investment opportunities for retail (through an extension to the existing supermarket) and/or leisure development. Redevelopment of parts of the area in isolation may be acceptable, providing that it would not prejudice wider redevelopment opportunities. Any redevelopment of land to the south and east of the existing supermarket must not prejudice the opportunity for a bus interchange facility and should ensure a good functional relationship with the proposed railway station. The amenities of nearby residential properties must be protected.
- VI. **East of the District Centre.** This area has a wide range of uses, including employment, services and car parking. It has the potential for great change, given the changing requirements of many traditional industries and general social trends. Although the Council will encourage existing employment uses to remain and will facilitate their expansion where appropriate, when sites are vacated other forms of development might be appropriate in principle - for example leisure, residential or non-food retail warehousing (for outlets which might not be accommodated in the primary shopping area). The extent to which these alternative uses could be satisfactorily accommodated within the area will be determined by a number of factors including: their functional

relationship with the Primary Shopping Area; adjacent land uses; and the improvement of vehicular access to and within the area. Any redevelopment must retain, and preferably enhance, public car parking in the area, in terms of quality, quantity and location. The Council will explore with developers the possible closure of redundant highways and their inclusion within development sites. It will also seek improvements to other highways to enhance access to the area.

- VII. 2-10 Union Street, 1-7 Stafford Street and 24-28 Market Place. The existing units are of modern construction and contrast markedly with the traditional design of other buildings in the centre. Ideally, the Council would wish to see the units redeveloped or refurbished in a more sympathetic style. Redevelopment would also provide the opportunity to accommodate a greater variety of unit sizes in an important location within the Primary Shopping Area. However, proposals to amalgamate existing units, to produce units of a size not adequately represented within the centre, will also be supported, in principle. If the area is proposed for redevelopment, this should be done comprehensively. All servicing must be taken from the rear of the units, accessed from either Union Street or Upper Lichfield Street. The impact of any proposed redevelopment on the Conservation Area and on nearby listed buildings needs to be carefully considered.**

17.7 This policy identifies those parts of the centre which could accommodate change most readily and provides broad indications of the Council's vision for these areas. The Council wishes to encourage developers and others to put forward schemes that will realise the potential of these areas to contribute to the overall strategy for the centre. Where appropriate, the Council will prepare Supplementary Planning Documents to provide more detailed guidelines for developers and ensure that the development potential is realised and that development proceeds in the most satisfactory way. Development and associated traffic works should take account of the need for public transport and service access whilst minimising the environmental impact of this. Access for pedestrians should also be maintained and enhanced.

17.8 The areas of development / investment opportunity are generally defined quite widely in order to maximise the potential opportunity. A comprehensive approach to development is encouraged and whilst individual proposals will be considered, the Council will need to be satisfied that a more comprehensive scheme cannot be achieved, and that future more comprehensive development options are not prejudiced. It should be noted that the inclusion of property within one of these areas does not necessarily mean that redevelopment proposals will be made which will affect it. Neither are development proposals outside these areas precluded, if they are otherwise in accordance with the policies of the Plan.

TRANSPORT

Policy WH5: Rail Station and Transport Interchange

The Council will strongly encourage Centro to construct a passenger railway station to serve the District Centre, as a matter of priority. This should include provision for interchange with other public transport modes and park and ride. Land required for the station and associated facilities, as identified on the Inset Map, will be protected for that purpose.

17.9 A railway station would increase the profile and accessibility of the District Centre and would open up wider employment opportunities for local people. A site for a station has been identified off Rosehill / Bilston Street. The site can also accommodate a small car park. However, the Council believes that the provision of a significant Park and Ride facility is necessary if the station is to be used to its full potential. The Council will therefore encourage the inclusion of adjacent land to provide a Park and Ride facility. The frequency of services and the number of destinations served are also important factors in ensuring that the station is well used and has the maximum regenerative benefit. The Council will, therefore, encourage both Centro and the rail operator to provide as frequent a service as possible to as many destinations as possible.

Policy WH6: Buses

The Council will seek, with Centro, to improve facilities for bus users in the centre, including good interchange between different bus routes, the proposed rail station and other transport modes. Measures to reduce delays to buses caused by congestion will be explored through the Bus Showcase initiative.

17.10 Over 35% of visitors to the District Centre arrive by bus; it is the mainstay of public transport in the area. However, facilities for bus users are currently poor: lack of information; scattered terminus points etc. The bus route between Walsall and Wolverhampton, passing through Willenhall, has recently been the subject of works to upgrade it to Bus Showcase standard. Centro is also considering the possibility of a new bus interchange facility - see WH4 (v). These improvements will make the bus a more attractive way of travelling into the District Centre. Policy T2 in Chapter 7 includes guidance on the design of bus lanes, termini, stops and lay-over areas.

Policy WH7: Pedestrians

The Council will consider whether the main pedestrian routes into the centre and to transport terminus points from nearby residential and employment areas can be improved. Measures to improve pedestrian circulation within the centre will also be considered.

17.11 The Council is seeking to improve accessibility for all sections of the community and to discourage people from making short journeys by car (see also Chapter 7). Over 25% of visitors to the centre arrive on foot, emphasising its importance for local people and the need to provide safe, attractive and convenient pedestrian routes. Pedestrian circulation routes within the centre need to be kept clear of obstacles, to maintain convenience and safety. The current pedestrianised areas will be retained.

Policy WH8: Provision for Cyclists

The Council will install facilities for cycle parking at appropriate locations. Links to established cycle routes will be improved. The possibility of improving on-highway cycle facilities will be investigated.

17.12 Given the very local catchment of the centre and the nature of many of the shopping trips, there is potential to increase use of cycles. The Walsall - Willenhall Cycle Route passes to the north of the centre and is predominantly off-highway: the Council will seek to maximise the opportunity this provides for safe cycle travel. On-highway facilities - cycle lanes, crossings - would complement this provision.

Policy WH9: Traffic Management

The Council will keep under review the need for road improvements and/or other traffic management measures to assist the circulation of traffic in and around the centre. Particular attention will be given to:-

- I. Assisting the free flow of buses.**
- II. Improving the traffic circulation in the eastern fringes of the centre.**
- III. Measures to support new investment and development.**

17.13 Despite the emphasis on encouraging people to travel into the centre by public transport, walking and cycling it is recognised that there may be a need to carry out minor road improvements and/or other traffic management measures to improve traffic circulation for all road users, including buses. There is a particular need to review the situation in the eastern fringes of the centre where roads accessing the centre also serve the adjacent industrial / commercial area.

Policy WH10: Parking

The provision of additional surface-level car parking for shoppers and visitors will be encouraged and existing provision enhanced, wherever possible. Parking provision in the centre should be in accordance with the principles in Policy T7 in Chapter 7.

17.14 Currently, over 36% of visitors to the District Centre arrive by car. Whilst the Council is seeking to encourage greater use of other modes of transport, a large number of people will continue to use the private car to access the centre. The amount of car parking needs to reflect the demand for spaces from shoppers and visitors and the quality of the parking provided should help to sustain the attractiveness of the centre.

APPENDIX 1

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INFORMATION FROM CONSULTANTS' STUDIES TO INFORM WALSALL'S UDP REVIEW

Shoppers Survey - Donaldsons, 1997

A1.1 This was based upon street interviews in the town and district centres and provides information on a range of issues, including:

- The centres' catchment areas;
- Modes of travel to centres, access to a car, and travel times;
- Purposes of visits to the centres;
- Likes and dislikes about centres, and improvements desired.

Town and District Centre Healthchecks - Healey & Baker, 2000

A1.2 Healey & Baker were commissioned to provide a market view of the economic health and investment prospects of Walsall town centre and the district centres of Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills and Willenhall (Darlaston was the subject of a separate exercise, relating to efforts to secure a new anchor store). The consultants concluded that all of the Borough's centres are weaker than would be wished and:

- It should be accepted the comparison shopping role of the district centres will continue to decline, but the Council should encourage a range of uses to contribute to their viability and support identified development opportunities;
- Walsall town centre does have the potential to attract investment and this should be maximised to prevent it going elsewhere - with a need to manage and support development; and
- Further out of centre development should be resisted.

A1.3 The consultants also proposed measures to support the Borough's centres:

1. Support town centre management and extend it to all the Borough's centres;
2. Reduce the impact of traffic, with highway improvement and management measures, especially in certain centres;
3. Enhance car parking for shoppers and visitors;
4. Improve town centre environments and security;
5. Encourage a diversity of uses, including services and leisure;
6. Encourage housing close to centres; and
7. Attract high spending households.

A1.4 The Council's Planning and Town and District Centres Committee considered a detailed report on the consultants study and - with a number of refinements - agreed that its analysis should be supported.

Household Survey, Retail Capacity Study and Study of Factory Outlet Centre Proposals - Roger Tym & Partners, 2001

A1.5 The household survey covered a wide area extending beyond the Borough boundaries and provided information which included:

- Patterns of food and grocery shopping, including linked trips and modes of travel;
- Patterns of comparison shopping - for clothes and shoes, furniture / carpets / DIY / white goods, and specialist items - again with reference to linked trips and modes of travel;
- Patterns of leisure visits - to cinemas, restaurants, pubs / bars, theatres, concert halls and other facilities; and
- Use of the Borough's town and district centres.

A1.6 The household survey results were used as a basis to assess the performances of retail centres and developments in the area. Spending patterns were then projected forward and account taken of future claims on expenditure growth to arrive at the consumer expenditure capacity to support future retail development. Under the 2 most favourable scenarios (assuming that committed and proposed developments in the Borough's centres would be successful):

- There would be a significant deficit in comparison expenditure up to 2006, which may be offset by subsequent expenditure growth, to provide the capacity for about 4,740 sq.m. net up to 2011, provided town centre schemes were successful in increasing Walsall's market share.
- For convenience retailing, there would be a deficit in expenditure (equivalent to 2,695 sq.m. sales) right through the UDP Review, so that committed developments would have an impact on existing retailers

Roger Tym and Partners concluded that:

1. Generally, all new retail and leisure development should be of an appropriate scale for the centre where it is located, and that the UDP hierarchy is the most sustainable framework for meeting the Borough's needs.
2. The Borough's centres have more than enough vacant and under-used land to meet all needs for town centre uses and there is a pressing need to regenerate these centres and to strengthen and diversify the Borough's smaller centres.
3. In terms of comparison shopping, the Town Wharf Phase 2 and Digbeth developments in Walsall town centre should be vigorously supported. As these would have to be successful for an increased market share to be achieved, there is no need to plan proactively for further comparison developments and out-of-centre development should be resisted strongly.
4. For convenience shopping, the first priority is to secure a new anchor foodstore for Darlaston, after this there is a need to improve the

market share of Willenhall, and then encouragement should be given to extending existing anchor stores elsewhere. Beyond commitments, there is no quantitative case for any new large foodstore and out-of-centre proposals should be resisted strongly. Local needs should be met through convenience stores primarily in local centres, although there should be a policy to meet particular local needs which arise outside of centres.

5. For leisure uses, Walsall town centre is considered the best location in planning terms for a multiplex cinema, whilst proposals elsewhere should be resisted. Generally, the opportunities identified in the town and district centres offer the best prospects for leisure investment to serve the community and increase participation rates - and, again, out-of-centre proposals should be resisted. Encouragement should be given to restaurants and bars within centres to add diversity. Finally, the Council was recommended to pursue the development of a theatre / concert hall in Walsall town centre.

A1.7 The consultants also advised on competing factory outlet centres in Walsall and at Brownhills and Burntwood. They recommended that the proposal for Walsall town centre should be supported, whilst the other 2 schemes should be resisted. Since that advice the development in Walsall, 'Shannon's Mill', has been given planning permission, whilst the application at Brownhills was withdrawn and that at Burntwood was refused by the Deputy Prime Minister.

A1.8 The Roger Tym & Partners study was completed in tandem with work on the First Draft for Deposit of the Review and the consultants' work was incorporated into the Plan.

A1.9 These studies - together with a study by Deloitte Touche, which cast light on trends in commercial leisure, and the results of the Council's annual floorspace surveys of the town and district centres - are described more fully in the Retail and Centres Background Paper prepared with the First Deposit Draft Plan. For the fullest information, reference should be made to the consultants' studies themselves.

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

This Appendix lists all items of existing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) produced by the Council which are currently in use. SPG does not form part of the UDP (and is, therefore, “non-statutory” in status) but is used, as appropriate, as a material consideration in making planning decisions. It includes topic-based guidance, area-wide guidance and site-specific planning briefs. In the future, the Council will be preparing Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) under the new planning system. The Council’s Local Development Scheme includes details of the new SPDs that are currently programmed for preparation.

<u>Title of SPG</u>	<u>Date Approved</u>
Topic-Based	
Biodiversity Action Plan	2000
Shutters and Security Grilles	1998
Area-Wide	
Walsall Town Centre Strategy	1998
Strategy for Bloxwich Town Centre	2000
Brownhills Town Centre Action Plan	1999
Brownhills Town Centre Townscape Master Plan	1999
Darlaston Town Centre Plan	1999
Barr Beacon Countryside Area Profile	1993
Longwood Gap Countryside Area Profile	1994
Rough Wood Chase Countryside Area Profile	1996
Area of Special Townscape Character, Thornhill Road / Middleton Road / Foley Road East, Streetly	2003
Site Specific Planning Briefs	
Butts Centre, Butts Road / Cecil Street, Walsall	2001
Land at Castle Street / Booth Street, Darlaston	1988
Strategy for Digbeth / Old Square, Walsall Town Centre	2000
Planning Brief for Site G, Land to West of Essington Road, New Invention, Willenhall	1988
Land at Granville Street, Willenhall	2001
Revised Development Guidelines – Land at High Bridges, Lichfield Road, Pelsall	2002

Land at Hollyhedge Lane, Walsall (Revised)	1998
Development Brief: Former Site of Kings Hill JMI School, Old Park Road, Darlaston. (Revised)	2000
Design Guidelines - Land at Littleton Street East / Hatherton Street / Lower Forster Street, Walsall	1998
Land at Middlemore Lane, Aldridge	2002
Land at Mill Street / Cannon Street, Walsall	2001
Noose Lane Opportunity Area: Planning Brief	1992
Planning Guidelines For Former Portobello School, School Street, Willenhall	2002
Development Guidance – Land at Roebuck Road (Revised)	2003
Planning Guidelines for the Rowley View Nursery Site, Moxley	2003
Land at Sherlock Close, Lane Head, Willenhall	1993
Development Guidelines – Land West of Sherlock Close, Lane Head, Willenhall	2002
Revised Development Guidelines – Land West of Sherlock Close, Willenhall	2004 (Draft)
Development Guidelines – Land at Stroud Avenue, Willenhall	2003
Development Guidance – Land at Sunningdale Way	2004
Development Brief – Land at Taylor Avenue/ Walker Road/ Well Lane/ Guild Avenue, Walker Road, Victoria House/ Church Place, Blakenall Close (Blakenall New Deal for Communities)	2003
Development Guidelines – Land at Turnberry Road	2004