



Walsall Council



# WILLENHALL FRAMEWORK PLAN

FEBRUARY 2022





## FOREWORD

The Willenhall Framework Plan aims to have a firm focus on the future of Willenhall, to have the aspiration to become a more vibrant, healthy and prosperous community. The delivery of the New Willenhall Rail Station, through the West Midlands Mayor and Government investment, has been the catalyst to launch this ambitious plan. A real plan and vision to tackle derelict sites that have blighted the area for decades, to build back better by developing the sites to create homes, businesses and infrastructure.

Willenhall has a strong identity linked to its proud industrial past including at the heart of the lock making industry. Now is the time to focus on the future, Willenhall's distinct heritage and mixed land uses presents opportunities to boost housing, create a stronger economy and greener and more sustainable environment.

The delivery of regeneration in Willenhall is complex and will require direct intervention by the Council and its public sector partners. The Council's commitment to strong intervention in Willenhall should not be underestimated and will ensure that the area thrives and prospers through housing growth by creating the conditions for private sector investment and delivery to flourish.

The aspirations for Willenhall, and importantly the interventions needed to realise those aspirations, are contained in this Willenhall Framework Plan. This sets out a 10-year ambition for levelling up, creating growth, attracting investment in Willenhall to create a more vibrant, healthy and prosperous community.

**Cllr Adrian Andrew**  
**Deputy Leader Walsall Council**



CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4. SUPPORTING STRATEGIES</b>	<b>40</b>
Introduction		Housing, Employment & Community	
Willenhall Context		Community Infrastructure	
Celebrating Willenhall Today		Movement & Connectivity	
Understanding Willenhall's Challenges		Place Making	
Rediscovering Willenhall's Opportunities		Bringing it All Together	
Stakeholder & Community Engagement			
<b>2. VISION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5. A FOCUS ON DELIVERY</b>	<b>58</b>
Vision for Willenhall		Introduction	
Objectives and Design Principles		Planning Policy	
		Connectivity & Place	
<b>3. AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY</b>	<b>26</b>	Housing Delivery	
Plan Area and Areas of Opportunity		Funding the Gap	
Moat Street and Villiers Street		Land Assembly	
Pinson Road			
North Willenhall			
Station Gateway			





1

# INTRODUCTION



# 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Willenhall has been identified as a key area of sustainable growth within the West Midlands Region due to the imminent arrival of a new train station in the town and opportunities to deliver housing growth. This Framework Plan presents a vision and aspiration for the future of Willenhall aimed at promoting the town and raising its profile within the region. The Framework Plan creates a solid foundation to support coordinated interventions leading to the delivery of high-quality housing and creation of a strong sense of place.

The Framework Plan describes Walsall Council's commitment to facilitate the comprehensive delivery of high-quality homes integrated with movement and place-making interventions. The movement interventions ensure that Willenhall residents capture the benefits of the town centre and a new train station on the edge of the town, which is expected to open in 2023. The investment will see communities of Willenhall being far better connected to Birmingham, Wolverhampton and opportunities across the wider region. The place-making interventions will create greener and healthier environment that encourages residents in Willenhall to capture the benefits of the public green spaces and links.

The Plan builds on the high level design principles of the 'Black Country Garden City' and will help to transform perceptions of the Black Country by the development of attractive and well-designed places where individuals aspire to live.

Following the concepts of this Plan, Walsall Council aims to create a quality, legible, connected town with diverse and cohesive communities where people of all ages and backgrounds choose to live.

## PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK PLAN

The preparation of this Framework Plan is an essential first step to guide future housing development, economic growth and place making in Willenhall. It establishes a context for future due-diligence development briefs, development of local planning policy and planning applications. The Framework Plan sets the vision and the delivery strategy as well as assists to attract partners and investors.

The Framework Plan sets out a 10-year vision for Willenhall which provides an ambition for housing growth and healthy, prosperous communities. This is presented through comprehensive delivery which considers wider supporting connectivity and place making strategies to support the Areas of Opportunity and Plan area to creative an attractive environment to live in.

It is intended that this Framework Plan will be developed into a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which will support the interventions through planning policy. The SPD will be subject to statutory public consultation with a range of stakeholders, agencies, residents and businesses in order to capture and consider all issues and options.

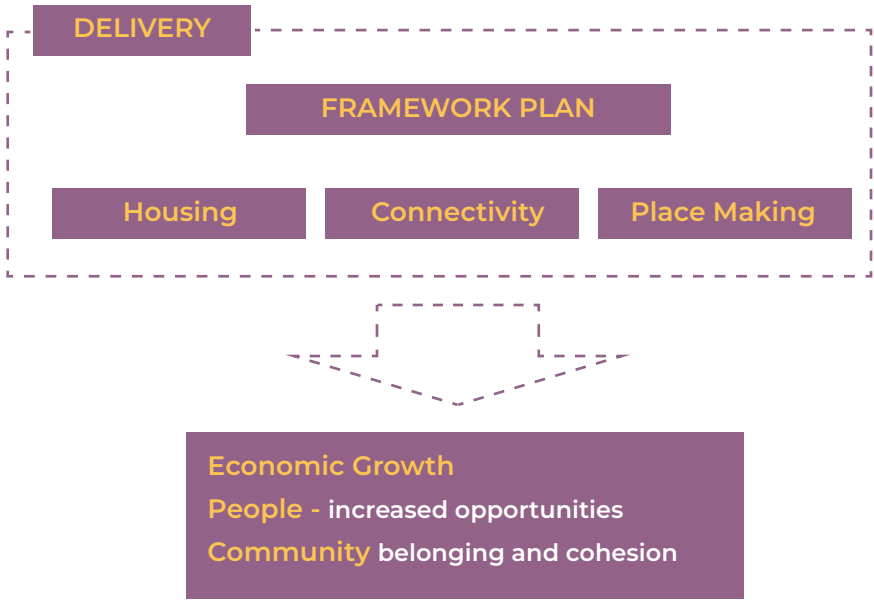


FIGURE 1.1: ELEMENTS OF THE FRAMEWORK PLAN





## WALSALL COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT TO DELIVERY

Facilitating growth and investment in Willenhall remains a high priority for Walsall Council. In 2015, the Council's Cabinet agreed to support the intention to undertake a regeneration approach to a defined area in Willenhall. The report led to the commencement of due diligence and baseline work to understand the opportunities and challenges that would inform this Framework Plan.

The multiple ownerships across the area make comprehensive and coordinated development very challenging. This, together with low property values in Willenhall, results in lower levels of profitability which makes development at scale unattractive to the private sector.

The previously industrial nature of the area adds risks such as significant ground and environmental issues, including contamination, flooding, and mine workings. These high risks lead to poor viability, often acting as a barrier for private sector delivery.

Therefore, Walsall Council and its partners, Homes England and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), recognise that to drive large scale, comprehensive and coordinated growth, the Public Sector must intervene in many ways to ensure that the vision and objectives are delivered, including through investment, planning, provision of infrastructure, and use of its statutory powers.





## 1.2 WILLENHALL CONTEXT

Willenhall, within the Borough of Walsall, is located approximately 2.5 miles west of Walsall town centre, 2.5 miles east of Wolverhampton and 8 miles north-west of Birmingham.

Within the emerging BCP, The Council has identified a pipeline of housing development projects, which will deliver Walsall Borough's housing target.

Willenhall is identified as a location that could accommodate significant housing development on brownfield land. The emerging BCP aims to achieve high quality design and Willenhall is a location where the garden city concept could be applied to new development. The emerging BCP will incorporate many of the existing proposals in the Walsall Site Allocation Document (SAD) which already identifies a number of sites for new homes either on land that is already vacant or which can be considered for release from its current use for employment.

Willenhall contains a mix of residential areas interspersed with industrial areas. Many industrial buildings identified as local quality consider for release within the Plan area have been left empty and derelict, attracting anti-social behaviour and play a limited economic role. Parts of the industrial areas, many of which are dirty and noisy, are located immediately adjacent to housing creating incompatible neighbours. The age of many of the units also means that they may not meet the strengthening minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES) targets in the future and would require significant investment to bring them up to standard.

Some of the existing housing stock such as HMOs is often in poor condition, and social housing is in reasonable condition but in need of upgrades. The aim of Walsall Council, through this Framework Plan, is to drive transformational change in Willenhall through the development of high-quality homes across a broad mix of tenures and affordability levels, including specialist housing where appropriate.

Willenhall will soon benefit from the re-opening of the Walsall to Wolverhampton railway line providing direct rail access to Walsall, Wolverhampton and Birmingham. Due to this infrastructure investment and the town's proximity to the national motorway network, Willenhall has been identified as having significant opportunity for economic growth.

Willenhall Garden City is an aspirational project that aims to promote transformational place-making within and around Willenhall town centre. Willenhall has also been identified as a pilot for the Black Country Garden City concept.

A Willenhall 'vision document' was completed in 2009. However, due to a number of external factors, in particular the impact of the recession, further work was not progressed at that time. However it informed other regeneration and planning policies including the Walsall SAD 2019. In 2015, the Council's Cabinet agreed to support the intention to undertake a regeneration approach to a defined area in Willenhall. The report led to the commencement of due diligence and baseline work to understand the opportunities and challenges that would inform this Framework Plan.

The Walsall SAD (2019) allocates sites for housing, employment and consider for release employment sites which provides opportunities to develop new homes across a number of sites identified as housing or consider for release sites.

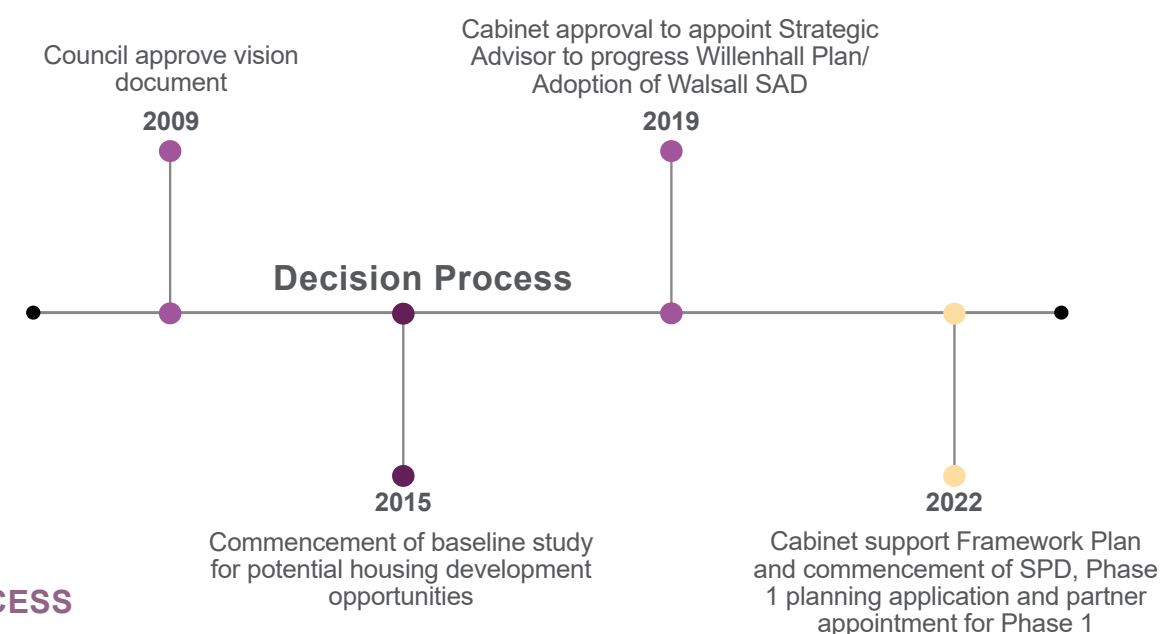


FIGURE 1.2: DECISION PROCESS



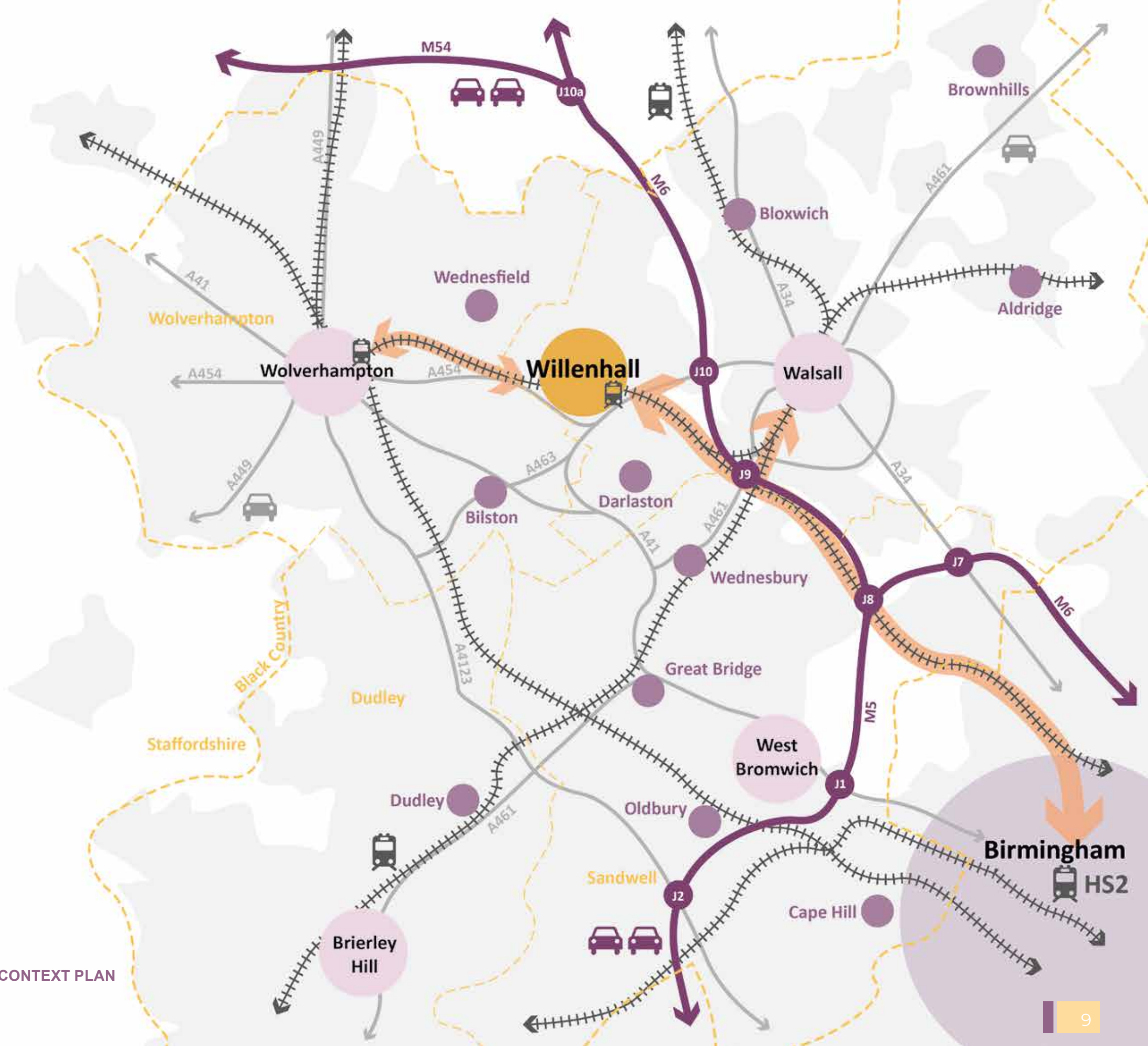


FIGURE 1.3: LOCAL CONTEXT PLAN





## PLANNING POLICY

The statutory development plan for the Willenhall Framework Plan area comprises the following documents:

- Black Country Core Strategy (adopted 2011) (BCCS)
- Walsall Site Allocations Document (adopted 2019 (WSAD)
- Saved policies from the Walsall Unitary Development

Plan (adopted 2005) (WUDP)

- Emerging Black Country Plan (BCP) which, once adopted, will supersede the Black Country Core Strategy.

## HOUSING AND REGENERATION

Planning policy for Willenhall recognises a significant shortfall of housing across the area and leads to the vision and proposals within this Framework Plan which aim to deliver new housing to meet targets set by both the BCCS and the emerging BCP.

The emerging BCP, anticipated to be adopted in 2024, states that there is a requirement to find land to accommodate the local housing need of 76,076 homes over the period 2020-2039 but there is only enough land to accommodate 47,837 homes. In Walsall, the emerging BCP supporting evidence suggests a potential housing shortfall of nearly 8,760 homes up to 2039. This builds on the existing BCCS targets of 1,698 homes from 2009 to 2026 in the Regeneration Corridor 6: Darlaston, Willenhall, Wednesfield.

Through the BCCS, housing may be allowed on sites not allocated for housing in the WSAD where it can ensure a satisfactory residential environment; housing would be suitable with respect to adjacent land uses; and there are no allocated or safeguarded uses on the site.

## WILLENHALL HOUSING MARKET

The Black Country Urban Capacity Review Update 2020 and The Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area (GBBCHMA) Housing Need and Housing Land Supply 2020 Position Statement anticipate an impending housing shortfall with local housing need outstripping housing supply. There is good demand for unencumbered residential development land, with house builders and registered provider's competing for land opportunities to deliver affordable and private sale and rent housing. Supply of vacant, developable land in Willenhall is limited and the Council must intervene to ensure the right land, in the right locations is made available for housing to be delivered.

Relative affordability, excellent connectivity and strong and diverse employment makes the Black Country an attractive place to live. Walsall Borough has a strong and established local housing market and has seen reasonable levels of private sector development over recent years.

Willenhall is regarded as affordable compared to other parts of the Black Country and the wider West Midlands conurbation.

### Willenhall's residential characteristics and demographics demonstrates that:



There is demand for First Time Buyer (FTB) homes caused by a significantly higher young population



Requirement for small family housing



The need for a range of affordable housing which is linked to the lower levels of economic activity.

- Home ownership in Willenhall is generally lower than Walsall and England,
- Shared ownership is higher when compared to Walsall and England
- Requirement for small, private ownership family housing





The following table is taken from the Black Country Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and demonstrates the significant need for open market housing across Walsall.

This shows that nearly 60% of new homes to be provided should be for owner occupation, whilst 13% should be for social or affordable rent.

Table 1 Tenure of new accommodation required in Walsall					
<i>Tenure</i>	<i>Base tenure profile (2020)</i>	<i>Tenure profile 2039</i>	<i>Change required</i>	<i>% of change required</i>	
Owner-occupied	67,765	77,477	9,712	59.9%	
Private rent	17,246	20,282	3,036	18.7%	
Shared Ownership	543	1,846	1,303	8.0%	
Social Rent/Affordable Rent	27,786	29,950	2,164	13.3%	
Total	113,340	129,555	16,215	100.0%	
Table 2 Profile of new accommodation required in Walsall					
<i>Size of home</i>	<i>Owner occupied</i>	<i>Private rented</i>	<i>First Homes</i>	<i>Shared Ownership</i>	<i>Social/ Affordable Rented</i>
1 bedroom	2,017	315	307	351	547
2 bedroom	3,068	216	373	433	206
3 bedroom	2,656	394	456	287	497
4+ bedrooms	1,971	740	233	232	914
Total	9,712	1,666	1,370	1,303	2,164

FIGURE 1.4: HOUSING TENURE

EMPLOYMENT

Industrial businesses have formed a part of Willenhall’s landscape for centuries. These businesses have, in the past, provided significant levels of employment for the local communities. However, several of these businesses, particularly near to the town centre, have already closed leaving empty and derelict buildings. Other industrial buildings create poor neighbours and uses which are incompatible with adjacent housing areas.

There is a need in the emerging BCP to retain and expand the supply of land for industry, although some current and former employment land, including some in Willenhall, may not be suitable for long term retention so is proposed to be considered for redevelopment as part of the regeneration of the area subject to a number of criteria being met. The evidence that supports the emerging BCP has been used to identify the areas to be examined in more detail in this Framework Plan.

The BCCS aims to protect sustainable employment uses saying that Employment land should only be released for other types of development where a number of criterion are met which includes amongst other things.

As part of this study the Council has completed an Employment Land study focusing on Moat Street and Villiers Street. This study has informed the evolving Business Charter which identifies the assurance that the Council will provide to affected businesses in the Framework Plan area.

EMPLOYMENT MARKET

Over the past five years, there has been a substantial increase in demand for warehousing and industrial space across in the West Midlands as the sector continues to benefit from the strong growth in e-commerce.

In terms of manufacturing, the automotive sector is facing challenges, however, the pivot towards electric power has seen investment in battery assembly plants. Increased construction activity has also led to demand for construction products and has seen recent acquisition for large production and distribution sites.

Locally, within 5 miles of Willenhall, there are a number of well-established industrial areas. As at Q4 2020, more than 900,000 sq ft of industrial units are available with several new builds underway. There has been limited new development of smaller unit multi-let industrial estates over the last 5 years, due to higher cost of construction impacting on developer profits and investor returns, in comparison to developing units of 30,000 sq ft plus, leading to greater demand for secondary industrial units in that size range. More development of modern, multi-let industrial accommodation is required in the medium to longer term to enable further growth in this sector and to create carbon neutral, efficient spaces that meet occupier specification requirements.





## 1.3 CELEBRATING WILLENHALL TODAY

### 1 EMPLOYMENT

Willenhall has a long history of industrial business and employment which supported early growth giving the town regional relevance. Recently many of these businesses have closed or relocated to more suitable, fit for purpose locations. The Council has developed a business charter and, where possible, aims to support businesses impacted by this Plan.

### 2 ATTRACTIVE GREEN SPACES

Green spaces within Willenhall include Willenhall Memorial Park and the Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve. Created to commemorate people who died in the Great War, Willenhall Memorial Park is an attractive green space incorporating areas of woodland, a bandstand, play areas and community pavilion. Fibbersley LNR is a wetland area created on former mine workings; now a haven for wildlife, the area is popular for walking and nature watching. These two areas provide a fantastic local resource for people to enjoy whilst promoting bio-diversity.

### 3 CONNECTIVITY

The town is well connected to surrounding areas by road, with links to Walsall, Wolverhampton and the M6. Proposals for a new rail station in Willenhall town centre on the Walsall to Wolverhampton line now have planning permission. Attractive walking and cycling connections include the east-west route to the north of the town centre, passing through Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve and the Willenhall Memorial Park. These assets can be further developed to create a truly connected and active town centre.

### 4 A RICH HERITAGE

The town of Willenhall has a rich industrial heritage, built around a thriving trade in the production of locks and keys. Willenhall has retained the historical character developed during the 17th to 19th centuries, and the sense of a traditional Black Country town. A Heritage Trail, telling the story of Willenhall's past, links the town centre to the Willenhall Memorial Park and Fibbersley.

### 5 DISTINCTIVE TOWN CENTRE

A distinctive place, Willenhall town centre is still dominated by elegant Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian buildings. The Willenhall Townscape Heritage Initiative, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, VIEW and Walsall Council has enabled over £1.3 million to be spent on repairing, restoring and reusing historic properties in the town.

### 6 STRONG COMMUNITY

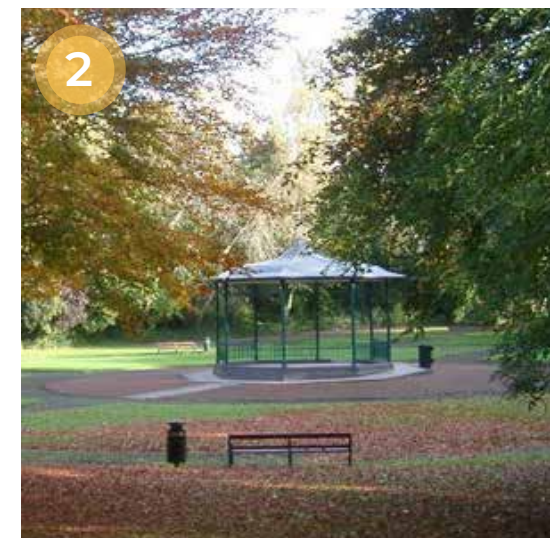
Willenhall is a strong, diverse community, with a population of over 28,000 people and a proud industrial history. The town has a strong community spirit with an active volunteering network and range of community groups



Willenhall Employment



Willenhall Memorial Clock



Willenhall Memorial Park



Market Place



Proposed Train Station







FIGURE 1.5: **CELEBRATING WILLENHALL NOW**

Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara





## 1.4 UNDERSTANDING WILLENHALL'S CHALLENGES

### KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Across Willenhall there are numerous challenges and physical constraints to residential development and to delivering the Council's vision for a coordinated, comprehensive development. The adjacent townscape analysis plan summarises the key physical constraints which have been taken into account in the formulation of the Framework Plan presented later in the document:

- Recognised shortage of owner occupier and private rental housing required to meet identified housing demand according to a market assessment completed in Q4 2020
- Inefficient use of space created by low value industrial buildings making poor neighbours with their adjacent residential areas
- Derelict and unused buildings lead to anti-social behaviour and poor appearance.
- Lack of green in the town centre which fails to connect the town to the green space
- Key arrival points and gateways are indistinct and movement route poorly defined
- Flood risk and utilities e.g sewers/easements/high voltage cables)
- Multiple land holdings across the area making development parcels hard to assemble to ensure comprehensive development in a reasonable timeframe
- Barriers creating severance such as the railway line which presents a movement barrier
- Existing large industrial areas inhibit connectivity to some areas within and out with the study area
- Narrow roads combined with narrow footways throughout the town.
- Ground conditions from historical uses across the area.

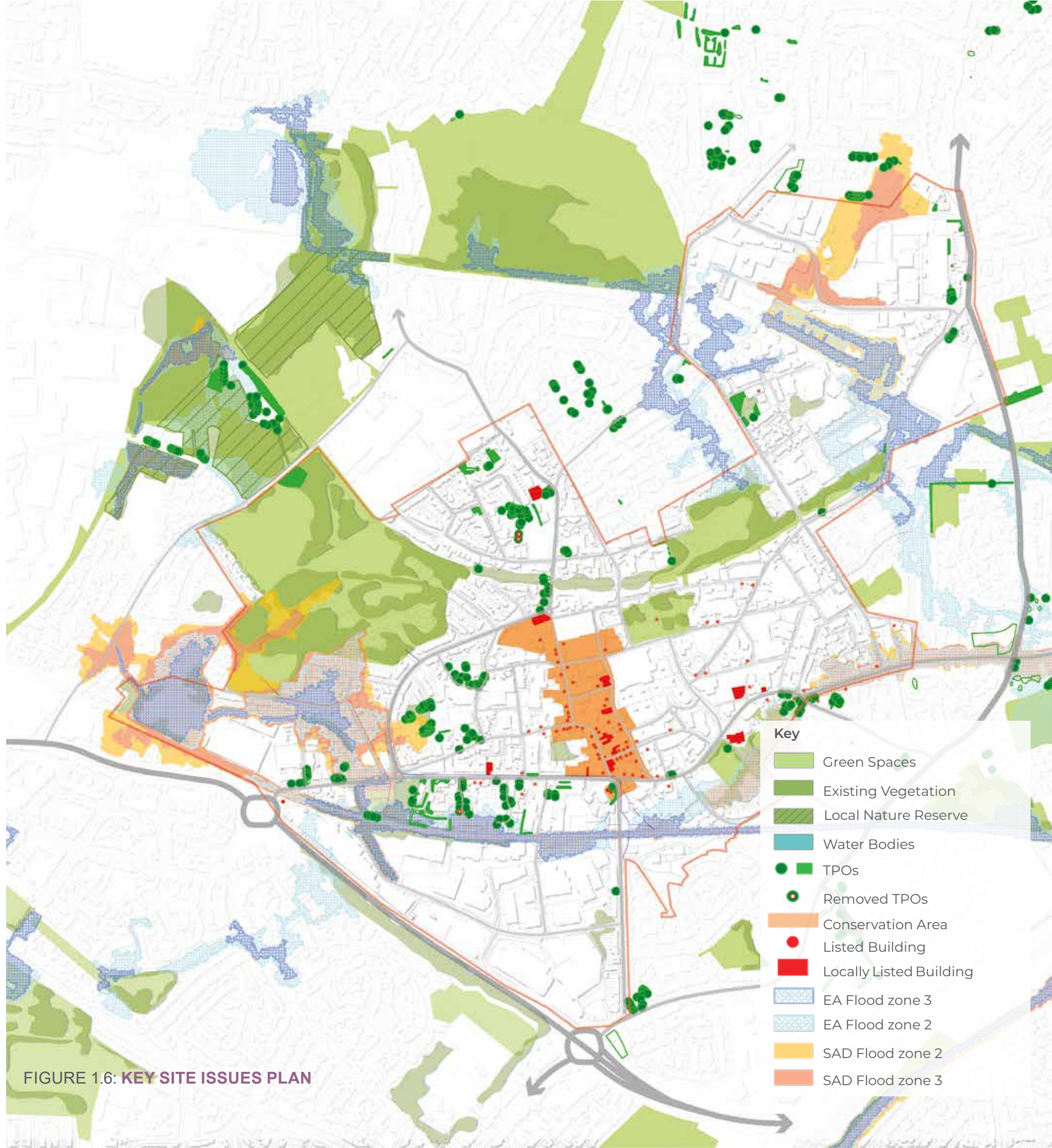


FIGURE 1.6: KEY SITE ISSUES PLAN





## 1.5 REDISCOVERING WILLENHALL'S OPPORTUNITIES

Willenhall presents many opportunities for development and growth from a market perspective and physical nature.

- Opportunity to provide new housing in response to significant housing needs identified for Walsall and the Black Country
- To create a series of new residential areas linked by a network of high-quality public realm and green corridors linking areas of town centre
- Create a high quality residential offer across a range of tenures
- Opportunity to consolidate existing industrial uses into more fit for purpose buildings and locations
- Opportunity to make the area feel safer and provide a cleaner environment
- Opportunity to celebrate local heritage
- Improve cycle and pedestrian connectivity, strengthening existing routes to and from the town centre, new train station and employment areas.
- Opportunity to improve image and change first impressions
- Define key arrival points and gateways through new landmarks
- Improve bus services to the north of the town
- Railway - improve connectivity over railway
- Address potential constraints on development
- Digital connectivity

Across Willenhall it is strategically important to combine new housing with sustainable transport, green infrastructure and employment opportunities.



IMAGES OF WILLENHALL





## 1.6 STAKEHOLDER & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

#### Baseline and Vision Development

At the baseline stage, several key stakeholders were engaged to understand their unique perspectives on the challenges and opportunities facing Willenhall. These stakeholders also helped to shape the vision for Willenhall by providing insight into what should be included. The engagement was completed with various teams at Walsall Council including planning, housing, employment, transport and green spaces. The Council have also engaged with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

Key themes are outlined below.

- The proposed railway station will be important for several reasons:
  - Providing a direct connection to Birmingham will provide better access to a large jobs market that has been performing better than Willenhall, Walsall or Wolverhampton recently.
  - This connectivity will help to attract residents over neighbouring areas such as Darlaston and Wednesbury.
  - The station will help to provide a new focal point and key route through the town centre on to locations such as the market place.
- There is a need to deliver a broad range of housing types and tenures to help diversify Willenhall's housing offer.
- Housing development close to the town centre could help to improve connections between the centre and the rest of the town.

- There are issues with viability on many brownfield sites in Willenhall due to low land values.
- Willenhall should be in a position to benefit from the rollout of full fibre broadband and 5G mobile internet before most places in the country.

#### Development of the Framework Plan

Once feedback from stakeholders has been built into the development of the vision, initial findings and scenarios will be shared with a wider range of stakeholders. These discussions will help to further shape the vision and strategic objectives, develop plans for individual sites, and understand the impact of the proposed development on local services.

Stakeholders to be engaged include:

- Officers at Walsall Council
- Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group
- West Midlands Combined Authority
- Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership
- Homes England
- Walsall Housing Group
- Walsall Economic Board

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

At the baseline stage of the Framework Plan, a public consultation called 'Love Willenhall' was carried out to enable local residents, businesses and community groups to help shape the Framework Plan. This consultation ran from 14 February to 7 March 2021. Further engagement with the local residents, businesses and community will continue throughout the development of the Plan.

170 responses were received. These are summarised below.

-  Over 80% of respondents lived in Willenhall while around 30% worked in the town.
-  When asked what things they loved about Willenhall, respondents frequently mentioned Willenhall Memorial Park, the local people and community spirit, and the town's history and heritage.
-  When asked what things they would change about Willenhall, respondents frequently mentioned better and more diverse retail, restoration or redevelopment of derelict buildings, better public transport, and reduced crime levels.
-  When asked for three words that would best describe a future Willenhall, respondents frequently mentioned words such as "cleaner", "busier", "vibrant", and "safer".
-  When asked about a variety of issues, respondents were most likely to see bringing derelict sites back into use as "very important".





## WHAT DO THE EXISTING COMMUNITIES WANT/NEED?

### PRIORITIES FOR WILLENHALL

Respondents were asked to categorise a number of issues according to level of importance.

- Bringing derelict or redundant sites back into use (81% of respondents)
- Access to a range of employment opportunities (69% of respondents)
- Variety of open and green spaces (63% of respondents)
- Shopping facilities (59% of respondents)
- Community services and facilities (57% of respondents)

“ Small community of shops and organisations reflecting Black Country history ”

“ Friendly, local people always happy to help ”

“ ‘Willenhall is a good town, but I don't feel safe here’ ”

# Understanding Willenhall's Challenges

Love  
Willenhall

There are also challenges and constraints facing the town in terms of ....



## THE BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- Environmental challenges in Willenhall include flood zone areas, particularly in the vicinity of the River Tame to the south of the town centre. Other environmental challenges relate to the need for better links between green spaces and destinations and incorporating green space and planting into residential areas.



## MEETING COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

- There is a need for a better choice of good quality and affordable housing which meets the needs and aspirations of local people.



## EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES

- Unemployment is higher than average and a high proportion of people have no formal qualifications, leading to shortages of appropriate skills for employment. Employment sites vary in quality across Willenhall, with some sites poorly located in terms of connectivity and their effects on neighbouring land uses.



## PUBLIC TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY

- The lack of a station has meant the town has suffered from no rail connections. Public transport arrival points are disconnected, with pedestrian links between them in need of improvement.



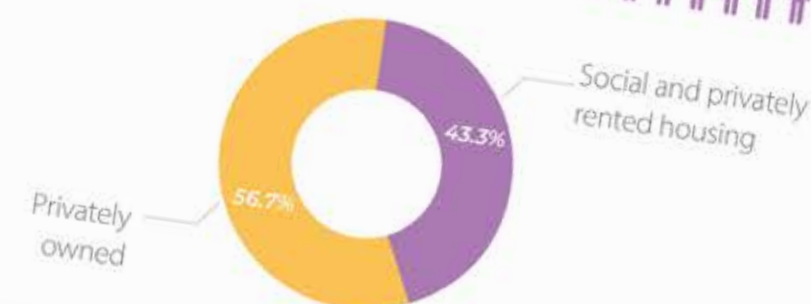
## AREAS OF HIGH DEPRIVATION

- There are pockets of high deprivation across Willenhall, with some parts of the town falling into the 10% most deprived in England. Residents in these areas suffer from low-incomes, poor health outcomes and poor quality living environments.

High population density -  
35.4 people per hectare



Housing Tenure



6.5% of households 'overcrowded'

7.9% of residents in Willenhall are unemployed  
Unemployment claimant numbers are high in Willenhall South (6.9%) (May 2019)

71.6% of adults in Walsall walk or cycle at least once a month



Unemployment has increased for all UK regions due to Covid-19 impacts.







2

# **VISION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**





## 2.1 VISION FOR WILLENHALL

The adjacent objectives and design principles for the Framework Plan build upon the vision and high level design principles of the 'Black Country Garden City': a document produced by Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership and also Walsall's Corporate Plan for 2021-22.

The Black Country Garden City vision is to transform perceptions of the Black Country by the development of attractive and well-designed places where individuals aspire to live. The Black Country Garden City concept includes ten key principles that developers should aspire to deliver against as part of their housing developments to create a new 21st Century Garden City which will connect into existing communities and infrastructure. Walsall's Corporate Plan 2021-22 builds on previous plans and responds to the impact of Covid-19. The Corporate Plan plays an important role in ensuring that the Council's strategic objectives are achieved. The learning will be used in the next Corporate Plan for 2022-25.

### Key principles of the Black Country Garden City

- Greater connectivity by public transport, cycling and walking
- Mixed density, mixed use, mixed tenure neighbourhoods
- Green streets and easy access to green space
- Space for enterprise and the creative industries
- Chances for local people to get involved in managing their communities
- Making the best use of heritage assets like the fantastic canal network.

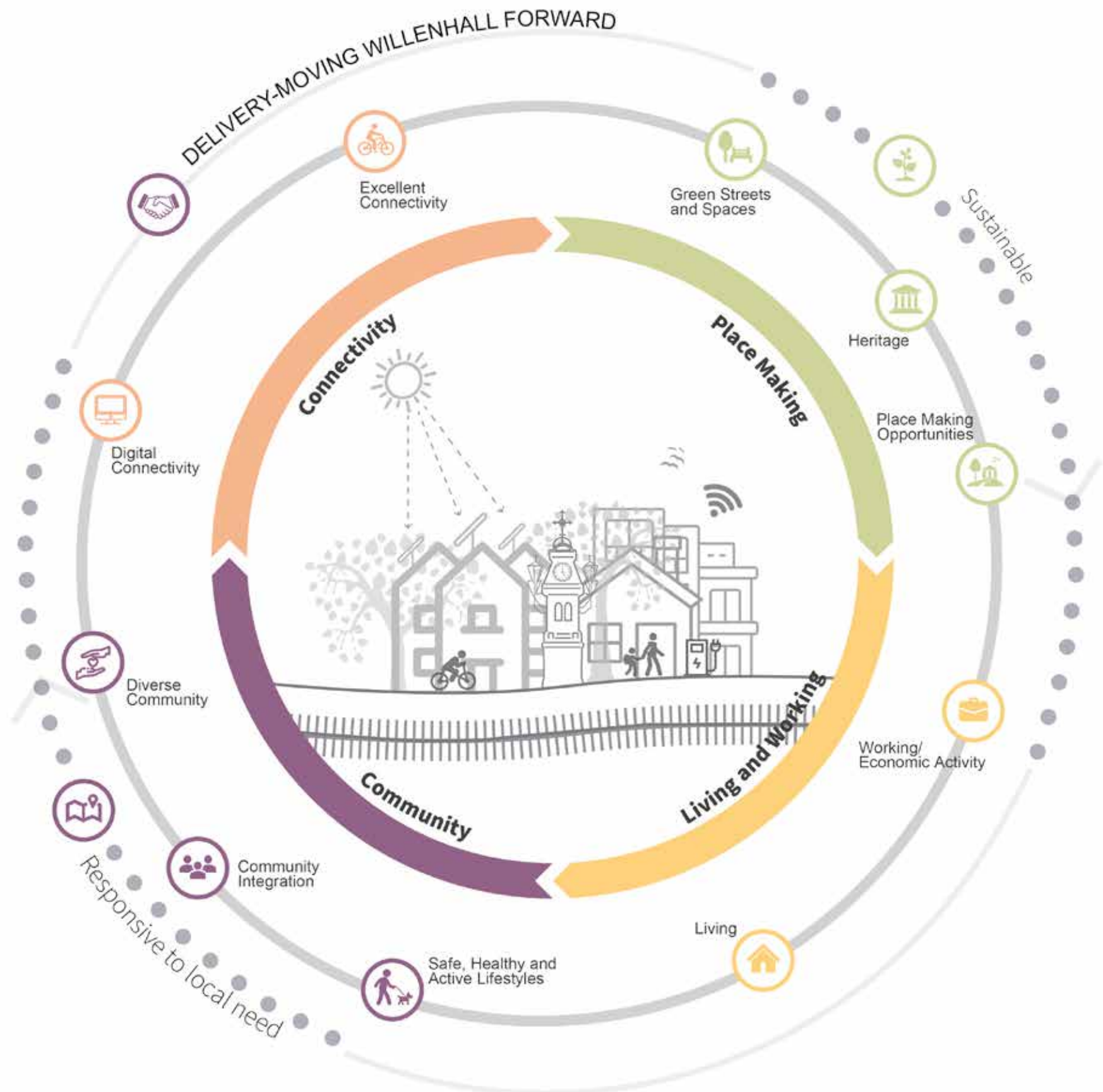
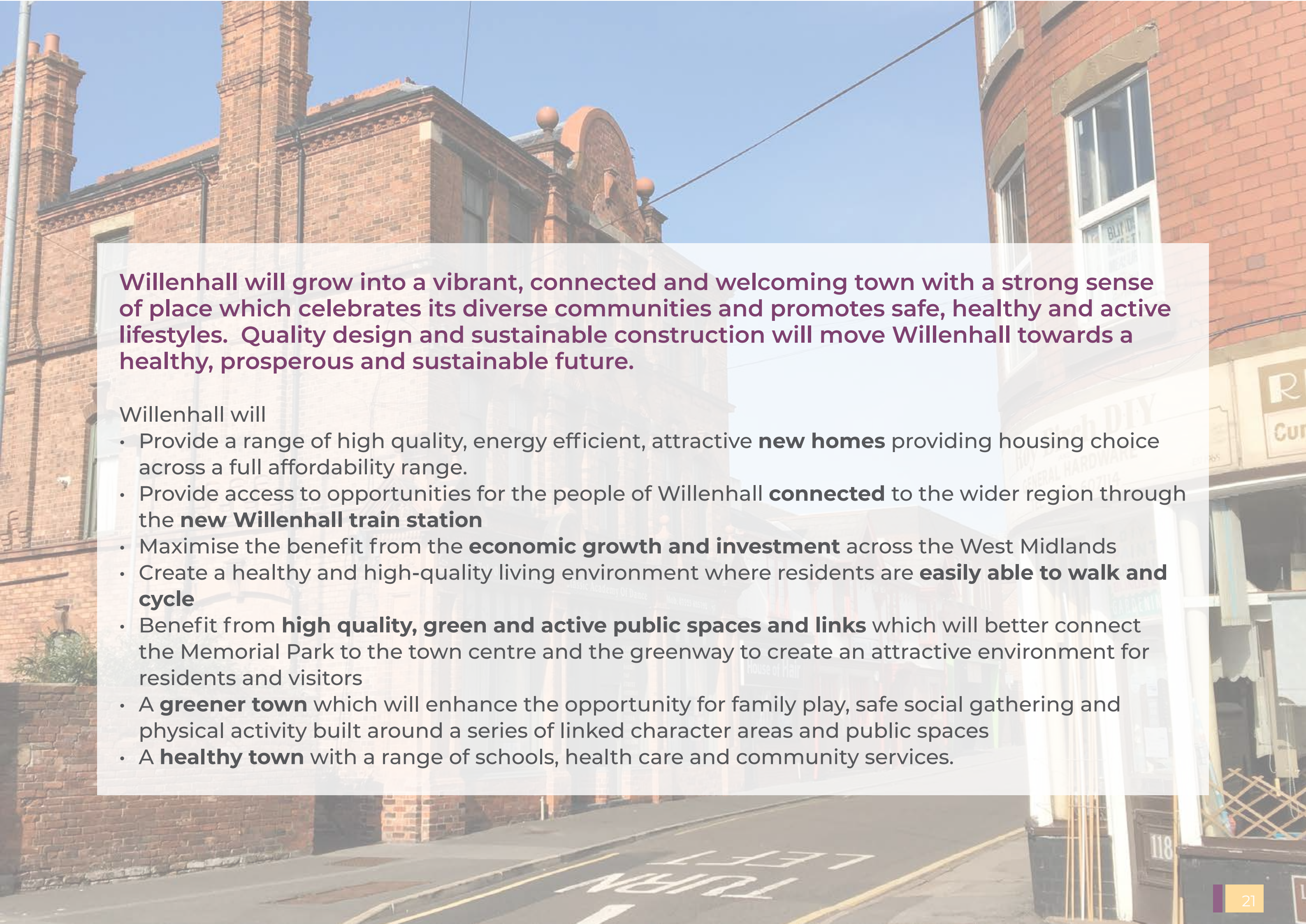


FIGURE 2.1: STRATEGY DIAGRAM





Willenhall will grow into a vibrant, connected and welcoming town with a strong sense of place which celebrates its diverse communities and promotes safe, healthy and active lifestyles. Quality design and sustainable construction will move Willenhall towards a healthy, prosperous and sustainable future.

Willenhall will

- Provide a range of high quality, energy efficient, attractive **new homes** providing housing choice across a full affordability range.
- Provide access to opportunities for the people of Willenhall **connected** to the wider region through the **new Willenhall train station**
- Maximise the benefit from the **economic growth and investment** across the West Midlands
- Create a healthy and high-quality living environment where residents are **easily able to walk and cycle**
- Benefit from **high quality, green and active public spaces and links** which will better connect the Memorial Park to the town centre and the greenway to create an attractive environment for residents and visitors
- A **greener town** which will enhance the opportunity for family play, safe social gathering and physical activity built around a series of linked character areas and public spaces
- A **healthy town** with a range of schools, health care and community services.





## 2.2 OBJECTIVES AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The adjacent objectives and design principles for the Framework Plan build upon the vision and high level design principles of the 'Black Country Garden City'.

Building upon evidence of Willenhall's proud industrial and lock manufacturing history, the Framework Plan will create the foundation for aspirational place making and growth of a cohesive, vibrant and diverse community within Walsall Borough.

Connectivity is a key pillar within the Framework Plan; maximising the benefits of the new train station and promoting active travel and healthy living through high quality public realm which links streets, public spaces and community facilities.

The communities of Willenhall will have access to high quality housing across a range of affordability developed within attractive, safe and green environment and near to schools, health care and supporting services.



### Responding to Local Need

- Contribution towards the unmet housing needs requirements
- A plan which captures the views of existing communities
- Provision of an appropriate range of housing types, sizes and tenures to meet local need
- Inclusion of family friendly environments, activities and facilities and provision for youth and elderly residents
- Provision of wider community facilities and social infrastructure that supports communities



### Excellent Connectivity

- A development where people are well connected and can easily navigate
- Connectivity throughout the Framework Plan with a strong network of footpaths and cycle links integrated into the green spaces and train station
- Promotion of sustainable transport modes which reduce the dependence on car travel



### Place Making Opportunities

- Creation of a strong sense of place
- Create a series of residential character areas that respond to existing townscape, heritage and scale
- Positive image and arrival to the area by defining new gateways
- Provision key local landmarks and areas of interest to enhance legibility
- A seamless transition between existing and proposed through an enhanced public realm



### Green Streets and Spaces

- New or enhanced green space to support new housing areas
- Provision and enhancement of green links to create a strong landscape structure
- Respect the Memorial Park landscape character through adjacent housing development
- Protection and enhancement of existing landscape and ecological features, including Tree Preservation Orders.



PRECEDENT IMAGES





## Heritage

- New housing to create a place with a unique character and identity reflecting the area's industrial history in lock manufacturing
- Respect the setting of the Willenhall conservation area
- Protection and enhancement of existing heritage assets
- Street enhancement proposals to reflect the value of existing heritage in creating 'experiential' streets.



## Living and Working

- A variety of high quality residential provision and new residential uses which creates a strong long term residential community
- Create commercially viable residential developments which can be delivered
- To provide greater choice, quality and diversity of housing across all tenures to meet the needs of residents
- Creation of high-quality public realm and green spaces



## Community Integration

- New housing to promote community cohesion and strengthen the existing strong community feel
- Provide new facilities that are complementary to existing community and facilities
- Strong integration between new and existing residential areas by strengthening and enhancing the existing network of footpaths and cycleways.



## Sustainable Living

- Promote the objectives of sustainable development through layout and design to shift Willenhall to a more sustainable future
- Promote walking, cycling, public transport & user safety
- Promote energy efficient development and maximise low carbon opportunities



## Safe, Healthy and Active Lifestyles

- Promote health and well-being and active lifestyles
- Promoting community safety through building layout and street design
- Community and health facilities located within walkable catchments of existing and new housing in response to local need



## Delivery

- Emphasis on delivery
- Flexible framework which is adaptable to changes to the market and demand and resilient to future requirements
- Promote meaningful engagement and liaison with landowners, the community and key stakeholders
- Establish clear partnerships for delivery
- Intervention by the Council and its partners in the market if required to ensure that they deliver the vision and objectives in a coordinated way



PRECEDENT IMAGES







3

**AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY**





## 3.1 PLAN AREA AND AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

The area of the Willenhall Framework Plan has been identified to deliver comprehensive housing growth across the heart of the town.

This Framework Plan aims to deliver around 500 high quality homes over the next 10 years. The housing delivered will include a mix of styles, types and tenures providing housing choice which attracts people to remain in and relocate to Willenhall.

In parallel, interventions into public realm, movement and green spaces will have significant place making benefits. A step change in housing quality and an improved environment will see Willenhall develop into an attractive, vibrant and cohesive town. Connecting to the wider region through the new train station will provide greater opportunities, attracting new residents to live in the town whilst working in Birmingham, Walsall or Wolverhampton.

The Framework Plan also recognises the importance of industrial businesses in Willenhall. This Plan will consolidate these existing employment uses into more fit for purpose areas and buildings in the proximity of Willenhall and improve residential places and wellbeing.

Identification of this Framework Plan area provides the Council and its partners with a focus for investment into housing, movement, public spaces, employment and community facilities. The plan area encompasses the town centre, industrial zones to the north as well as the predominantly residential area to the west of the town centre.

Within the Framework Plan boundary, focussed **Areas of Opportunity** have been identified which will see direct, intervention by the Council to facilitate housing delivery and economic growth.

Intervention in these Areas of Opportunity will deliver a broader, high quality housing offer and the creation of a cohesive, connected town with a real sense of place.

### THE FRAMEWORK PLAN AREA

The identified area of the Framework plan – shown with a red line in the adjacent plan - was originally endorsed in 2015 by Cabinet. The area surrounds the town centre and is intended to promote development and intervention that will drive economic and social growth across the town. Interventions in this area will see the introduction of a balanced mix of quality homes, improved connectivity and a healthier environment by addressing low quality, derelict and inefficient industrial spaces that are nested close to or within residential areas.

Housing development will be encouraged across the Framework Plan area and it is expected that over the plan period, many development opportunities will be progressed by the private sector. However, it is recognised that to enable and kick start this development, public led intervention is essential.

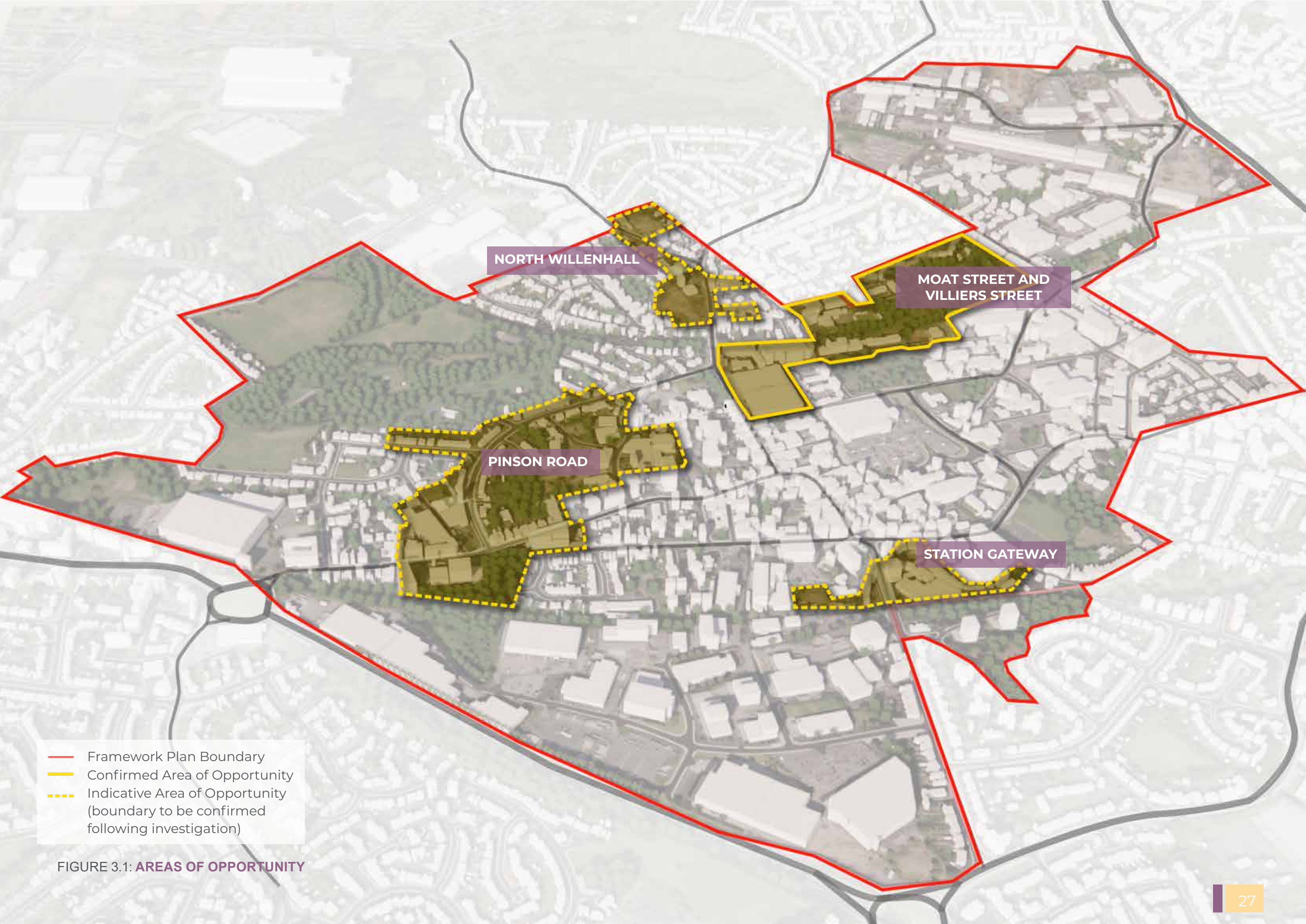
Therefore, through this Framework Plan, the Council has identified four **Areas of Opportunity** where their investment and direct intervention will be focussed.

### AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

The Areas of Opportunity have been carefully selected based on their current use as well as their ability to deliver the vision for Willenhall. Through comprehensive re-development, the Areas of Opportunity will begin to deliver structural change and economic growth in Willenhall.

The Areas of Opportunity have been assessed against a series of criteria and are expected to incorporate new housing as well as green space, community facilities and improved walking and cycle routes creating a comprehensive approach to growth. The criteria ensures that the identified areas deliver towards the vision for Willenhall at this point in time. As the housing market develops and the interventions progress, it may be necessary to re-visit the criteria for future phases to ensure the benefits of this intervention are maximised. The Areas of Opportunity are indicative and not every property in the area will be directly impacted by the interventions.





- Framework Plan Boundary
- Confirmed Area of Opportunity
- - - Indicative Area of Opportunity (boundary to be confirmed following investigation)

FIGURE 3.1: AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY



AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY SELECTION CRITERIA

A rigorous process has been followed to identify four Areas of Opportunity which will see public sector intervention led by Walsall Council and their partners. Areas of Opportunity will either meet the criteria or will complement the criteria.

The criteria is as follows:

Ability to deliver housing	The area demonstrates the ability to deliver a net increase in the number, and quality of housing to support need.
Support the delivery of the planning policy	<p>Provides opportunities to support the policies set out in the Black Country Core Strategy and emerging BCP, Walsall Site Allocations Document and Saved Policies of the Walsall Unitary Development Plan.</p> <p>This includes areas that will support the delivery of housing targets, release of employment land that is of low quality or unsuitable in the long term, and support regeneration.</p>
Enhances the connectivity to the new station	Provides the opportunity for physical interventions that improve movement across the Plan area to the new Willenhall train station through creation of legible connections.
Enhances the connectivity to the town centre and high-quality green spaces	Provides the opportunity for physical interventions that improve movement across the Plan area to the town centre and high quality green spaces through creation of legible connections.
Addressing employment buildings identified as derelict, unsafe or unsuitable	Provides the opportunity to improve the perception of the area by removing derelict and unsafe buildings and relocating businesses that are in unsuitable locations (such as located largely residential communities).

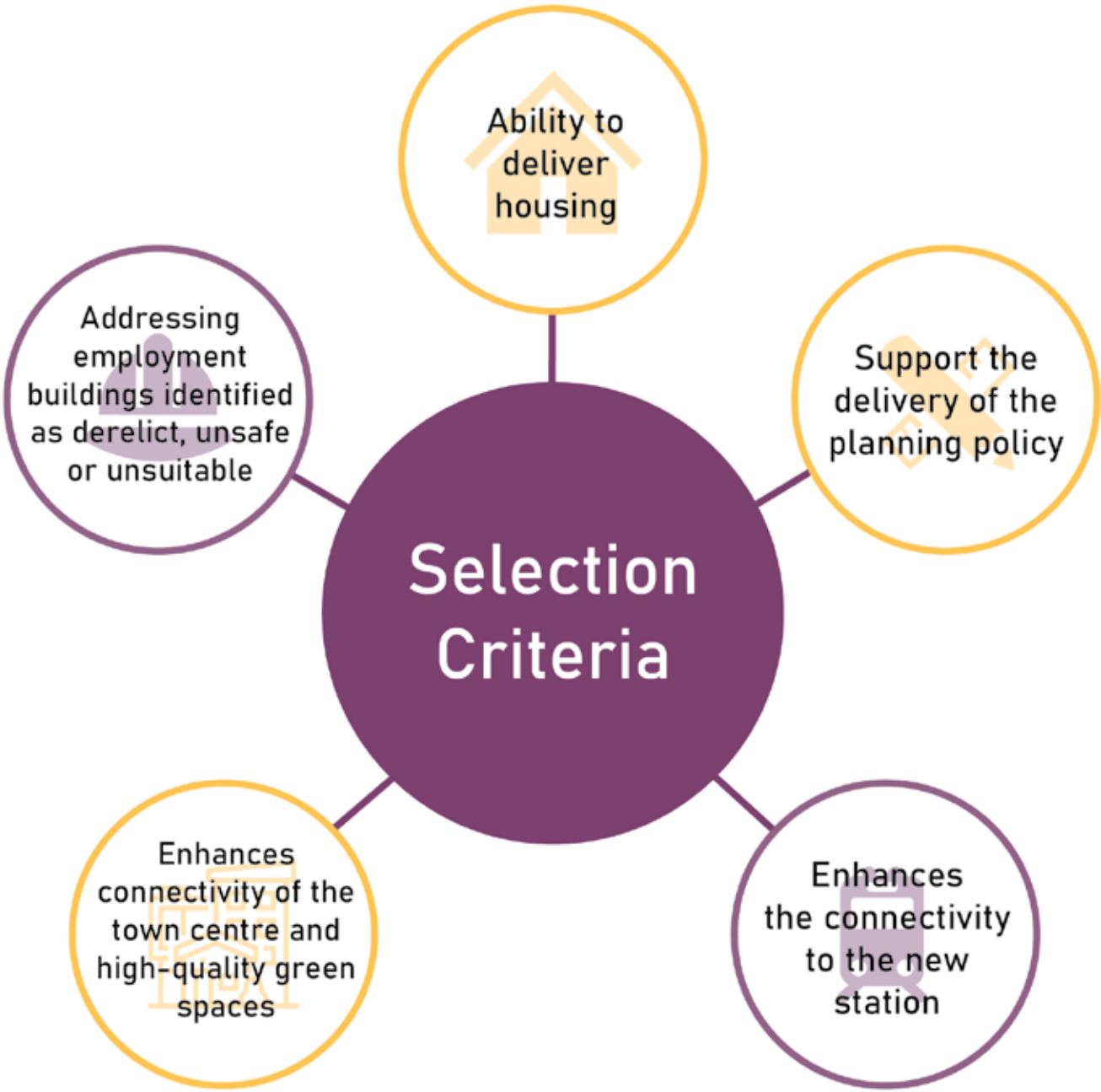


FIGURE 3.2: SELECTION CRITERIA DIAGRAM





## THE IDENTIFIED AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

The assessment criteria has led to the identification of four Areas of Opportunity which will become the focus of intervention by the Council. These are at differing stages of development :

1. Moat Street and Villiers Street
2. Pinson Road
3. Station Housing
4. North Willenhall

Additional investigation has been undertaken in the Moat Street and Villiers Street Area of Opportunity where initial engagement has begun with the owners and occupiers across the site to understand existing ownership and business needs. This has therefore been identified as Phase 1 and will be the initial focus for the Council.

The other Areas of Opportunity are still under investigation and further work is required to fully understand the level of opportunity and impact on properties in the area. The boundaries of these areas may change and the Council will engage with owners and stakeholders in the areas before final decisions are taken.

## RANGE OF INTERVENTION WITHIN THE AREA OF OPPORTUNITY

Delivering new housing to meet local demand and create a step change in quality across Willenhall is the core focus across the Framework Plan. However, these Areas of Opportunity have been identified for their ability to deliver housing, improved connectivity and improved access to green space.

**The interventions proposed in the Plan area will include:**

**Assembly of development sites by the Council and their partners:** Through the assembly and/or acquisition of predominantly underutilised, derelict, inefficient and poorly located industrial premises development sites will be created for the comprehensive delivery of quality, mixed tenure housing.

**Housing delivery:** Walsall Council, in partnership with its delivery partners, is committed to the delivery of quality housing to meet the needs of Willenhall communities and to maximise the benefits of the enhanced connections into the wider region. The Council will actively create and implement planning policies to promote delivery.

**Creating a connected town:** Following the principles proposed in the movement framework, invest in the improvement of walking and cycling across the town; better connecting the Areas of Opportunity with the town centre and the new train station.

**Greening the town:** Green infrastructure that builds on the character of Willenhall Memorial Park and a east-west greenway that links the Plan via a network of multi-functional green space to create a healthy and attractive environment.

**Improving community facilities:** As part of the ongoing investment in Willenhall, Walsall Council and partners will explore the community requirements for the town. A new, health hub is proposed to serve the local area and location for this will be considered within the framework area.



3.2 MOAT STREET AND  
VILLIERS STREET







DESCRIPTION

- The area has many derelict dilapidated buildings alongside some underused and run down sites
- Various smaller scale existing industrial businesses are situated to the west of the area off Temple Bar and at the far eastern end of New Hall Street.
- The northern part of the area around Villiers Street includes a mixture of industrial uses, some derelict industrial sites, Willenhall Liberal Club with a bowling green. The private sector is converting a factory building into residential uses in this part of the area.

KEY SITE CONSTRAINTS

- Existing sub station - Villiers Street
- Geo-tech constraints
- Listed buildings - 2
- Conservation Area in the south

ESTIMATED HOUSING CAPACITY

Up to 150 dwellings

HOW THE SITE MEETS THE CRITERIA

Ability to deliver housing	● Estimated up to 150 new homes including up to 38 affordable
Support the delivery of the planning policy	● In this area the Walsall SAD (2019) allocates housing sites and also 'Local Industry Consider for Release' sites to potential alternative uses such as housing, subject to certain policy criteria within Policy DEL2 of the Black Country Core Strategy being met, before these 'Local Industry' sites are released.
Enhances the connectivity to the new station	● The proposals include enhanced walking routes and cycle networks via the town centre, connecting to the new train station which is due to reopen in 2023.
Enhances the connectivity to the town centre and high-quality green spaces	● The greenway, adjacent to the site, creates the opportunity to provide a safe, green cycling and walking route along this corridor, connecting to Willenhall Memorial Park and the town centre. Part of the Area of Opportunity is within the town centre boundary and within close proximity of the primary retail area. Enhance existing greenspaces such as the bowling green and St Annes Public Open Space at the Summers to create healthy, attractive amenity spaces for residents.
Addressing employment buildings identified as derelict, unsafe or unsuitable	● Proposals include the removal along Moat Street and Newhall Street of significant derelict and dilapidated buildings.  The proposals to reduce the industrial uses in this area will create a more sustainable residential area on the edge of the town.

- Direct Impact
- Complementary Impact



HOUSING CHARACTER

- Potential for medium density housing to create an urban character which reflects the manufacturing character of this area and also positively addresses the adjacent green spaces. There are opportunities to create apartments that act as gateway buildings and potential for specialist housing in this area.



PRECEDENT IMAGE



PRECEDENT IMAGE



### 3.3 PINSON ROAD







DESCRIPTION

- The area transitions from Willenhall town centre uses from the east to residential to the west.
- The northern and western perimeter is predominately residential which borders the Willenhall Memorial Park.
- The central and south west area towards to Somerford Place contains a mixture of residential and existing business, predominately light industrial. There is also an area of mature trees in the centre.
- The northern parcel includes health uses such as The Keys Family Practice.

KEY SITE CONSTRAINTS

- TPO's - Located throughout area
- Flood Zones 2 and 3 - Located throughout area
- Public Rights of Way - Along Round Croft
- Existing housing
- 975mm/450mm Diameter Public Surface Water Sewer
- 275v HV Cable

ESTIMATED HOUSING CAPACITY

Up to 200 dwellings

HOW THE SITE MEETS THE CRITERIA

Ability to deliver housing	● Estimated up to 200 new homes including up to 50 affordable.
Support the delivery of the planning policy	● In this area the Walsall SAD (2019) allocates housing sites and also 'Local Industry Consider for Release' sites to potential alternative uses such as housing, subject to certain policy criteria within Policy DEL2 of the Black Country Core Strategy being met, before these 'Local Industry' sites are released.
Enhances the connectivity to the new station	○ The proposed traffic calmed residential streets, enhanced walking and cycling routes from this area to the new train station help to encourages health and sustainable modes of travel.
Enhances the connectivity to the town centre and high-quality green spaces	● The walking and cycling routes provide accessible links into Willenhall Memorial Park and other existing open spaces.
Addressing employment buildings identified as derelict, unsafe or unsuitable	● Proposals aim to see the lower quality and vacant industrial uses redeveloped to create a housing and community area.  Further exploration is required in this area to assess occupancy of existing uses.

- Direct Impact
- Complementary Impact



HOUSING CHARACTER

- Lower density, family friendly housing with a strong landscape character extending the character of the adjacent park into the residential area.



PRECEDENT IMAGE



PRECEDENT IMAGE



### 3.4 NORTH WILLENHALL







DESCRIPTION

- To the west of Wednesfield Road the southern parcel appears to be unused with industrial sheds at the rear of the area. Otherwise, the remainder is home to existing businesses.
- The eastern parcel of land includes an existing industrial unit and car park with a larger rectangular area which appears to be derelict for more than 10 years..

KEY SITE CONSTRAINTS

- Public Rights of Way - along western boundary
- TPO's - Located in various locations, mainly western boundary

ESTIMATED HOUSING CAPACITY

Up to 70 dwellings

HOW THE SITE MEETS THE CRITERIA

Ability to deliver housing	● Estimated up to 70 new homes including up to 17 affordable.
Support the delivery of the planning policy	● In this area the Walsall SAD (2019) allocates 'Local Industry Consider for Release' sites to potential alternative uses such as housing, subject to certain policy criteria within Policy DEL2 of the Black Country Core Strategy being met before these 'Local Industry' sites are released.
Enhances the connectivity to the new station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The proposed enhanced walking routes, improved cycling network and pedestrianised zone from this area through to the new train station creates great opportunities for health and sustainable travel.</li></ul> <p>○</p>
Enhances the connectivity to the town centre and high-quality green spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The proposal to widen the carriageway and footway creates the opportunity to provide safe cycling and walking route along this corridor, connecting to Willenhall Memorial Park and the town centre. Better access between residential areas and the town centre will increase footfall.</li></ul> <p>●</p>
Addressing employment buildings identified as derelict, unsafe or unsuitable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The area predominantly consists of existing employment units but is set within a largely residential area of Willenhall. The area also consists of a vacant, derelict site.</li><li>• Further exploration is required in this area to assess occupancy of existing uses.</li></ul> <p>●</p>

- Direct Impact
- Complementary Impact



HOUSING CHARACTER

- Housing to reinforce the sense of arrival for this northern gateway
- Opportunity for medium density housing to positively address Temple Bar and to create a boulevard character through new street tree planting.



PRECEDENT IMAGE



PRECEDENT IMAGE



### 3.5 STATION GATEWAY







DESCRIPTION

- The western part of the area includes a mixture of derelict spaces and existing small industrial and commercial businesses. The proposed station will be immediately south of this location.
- The eastern part of the area generally includes existing heavy industrial and manufacturing businesses. Amongst this, there is a run of existing terraced housing. To the west of this area, there are retail units. There appears to be a triangular area of derelict land at the south western corner of this parcel.

KEY SITE CONSTRAINTS

- Railway directly to the south of the area
- Predominantly Flood Zones 2 and 3 area
- Public Rights of Way - Throughout area
- Existing sub station - East of Bilston Street
- 500mm/450mm Diameter Public Surface Water Sewer
- 275v HV Cable

ESTIMATED HOUSING CAPACITY

Up to 100 dwellings

- Direct Impact
- Complementary Impact

HOW THE SITE MEETS THE CRITERIA

Ability to deliver housing	● Estimated up to 100 new homes including up to 25 affordable.
Support the delivery of the planning policy	● This area is within Willenhall Town Centre and whilst there are no housing allocations the adopted Black Country Core Strategy will allow the release of employment land subject to certain policy criteria within Policy DEL2 being met.
Enhances the connectivity to the new station	● The Station Gateway area is adjacent to the new station and pedestrian/cycling friendly routes will be provided from other Areas of Opportunity to the station.
Enhances the connectivity to the town centre and high-quality green spaces	● Station Gateway will be at the heart of the new station and will be the focal arrival point. Quality housing development will provide an alternative housing offer in Willenhall and improve the sense of arrival in the town.
Addressing employment buildings identified as derelict, unsafe or unsuitable	● Further exploration is required in this area to assess occupancy of existing uses.



HOUSING CHARACTER

- Higher density housing to reflect this key station gateway and arrival area with potential for active ground floor uses.



PRECEDENT IMAGES







4

**SUPPORTING STRATEGIES**





## 4.1 HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITY

The Framework Plan promotes the growth of housing around Willenhall town centre. Its focus across the four Areas of Opportunity is to see a significant increase in both the number and quality of homes, driving a mix of tenures to meet local demand. The SHMA suggest that 60% of new homes should be owner occupied. Willenhall will continue to be a town which supports local businesses and this plan retains many business and employment areas across the plan area whilst delivering new build housing to improve quality of life and drive economic growth in the town.

### A STEP CHANGE IN HOUSING QUALITY

Willenhall will become a town where more people choose to call home. It will be a connected and active town which provides high quality housing to suit the needs of current and future residents.

The new development will drive up quality of housing in Willenhall to create healthy, aspirational living. The new homes will be energy efficient, digitally connected to increase the access to opportunities for residents. Use of modern methods of construction will be encouraged to reduce on-site disturbance as well as helping to build local skills capacity.

The new housing will include a combination of contemporary and traditional architecture which respects existing heritage whilst positively enhancing the areas appearance. Market evidence demonstrates that the majority of housing will be aimed at family living with two to four storey housing. However, in some locations – especially in close proximity to the new station – higher density apartments will be appropriate.

**Housing across all tenures:** The aim of this plan is to deliver a more balanced mix of housing tenures across Willenhall. Intervention by the Council will encourage the development of a higher proportion of homes for private ownership and private rent. The proposals aim to promote a change by creating tenure balance which better delivers the housing need identified within the SHMA. The SHMA suggests 60% of new homes should be owner occupied which means a larger proportion of new homes in Willenhall should be developed for owner-occupation.

**Private homes for sale and rent:** One of the key objectives for Willenhall is to create a step change through the introduction of high quality privately owned housing. Around 78% of the new housing is expected to be delivered for either private sale or private rent. This commitment will see Willenhall becoming the location of choice for people across all demographics.

**New, affordable homes:** The delivery of new homes in Willenhall will address the housing requirements for the Borough. The Framework Plan demonstrates the ability to deliver up to 500 new homes over the 10 year period and these will include a mix of house types and sizes to meet housing and market demand. The Framework Plan retains the flexibility to ensure that as the demographic in Willenhall changes – due to natural growth and the arrival of the train station – the mix of housing delivered on each phase can be adjusted to suit demand.

Planning policy dictates that the housing mix must include 25% affordable housing on sites above 15 dwellings or more. The Council is committed to see this policy delivered through a range of affordable tenures which meet the needs of all Willenhall residents.

**Housing with care or support:** Walsall as a Borough has an identified need for both care and supported housing. Willenhall presents a real opportunity to deliver schemes which meet this demand.

**Supporting residents:** Where residential properties are impacted by this Plan, the Council will openly engage with residents to agree solutions.

	Estimated Homes to be Delivered
Moat Street and Villiers Street	Up to 150
Pinson Road	Up to 200
North Willenhall	Up to 70
Station Gateway	Up to 100
Potential Homes Delivered	Up to 520

FIGURE 4.1: HOUSING CAPACITY





## CURRENT EMPLOYMENT USES

Historically, the Willenhall area has proven popular for manufacturing and industrial companies. It has attracted a mix of regional and national companies such as Assa Abloy, DS Smith and AF Blakemore. The town's industrialisation developed close to the town centre. However, much of this development is now dated and no longer suitable for modern industrial and distribution requirements. As such, occupiers have moved to the outskirts of the town to more suitable properties, vacating several historic employment areas within the town centre.

Whilst there are industrial and trade occupiers located on the Areas of Opportunity, there are also vacant plots of land and several empty buildings, which are now beyond their economic life and no longer suited to the requirements of today's industrial occupiers. A number of the smaller workshop units are occupied by automotive repair businesses and trade occupiers who require good roadside prominence. Larger units are occupied by more sizeable businesses.

## SUPPORTING BUSINESS

Industrial businesses are an essential part of the fabric of Willenhall and recognised for their contribution towards future economic growth and community cohesion in the town. Currently, within the Areas of Opportunity and wider Framework Plan area, there are many low-quality industrial buildings making unsuitable neighbours within existing residential areas and often not making efficient use of the land or premises.

Walsall Council will support viable, local businesses; working with owners to understand their needs and explore options. The Council has developed and evolving Business Charter which presents ways of working and demonstrates the commitment to local business.



EMPLOYMENT





## COHESIVE, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

One of the key aims of the Willenhall Framework Plan is to support community cohesion. The following Place Making strategy presents proposals for improvements to walking and cycling in the town and the enhancement of green assets for the benefit of Willenhall residents.

In addition, the Framework Plan recognises the need for wider community assets across Willenhall.

## SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Health and Social Care:** Willenhall currently has four health facilities within the Framework Plan area. Work by the Walsall Together Partnership through the One Public Estate programme has identified the potential for Health and Social Care Hubs to be created which will provide improved and increased services in the locations where they are required. This approach would also free up under-used assets across the borough. Willenhall was identified as a potential location for one of the hubs. Creation of such a hub in Willenhall would be supported by a partnership between the Black Country CCG, health trusts, GPs and the Council to bring services together and collaborate. A well designed health hub within the Framework Plan area would have a positive place making impact; generating footfall and activity and helping to create community integration. Locations for this hub will be considered as the project progresses.

**Education:** The level of housing proposed in Willenhall will lead to an increase in the need for pupil placements. However, through preliminary engagement we understand that the increase can be accommodated in the existing schools. This will be managed and planned through the programme of redevelopment.

**Supported Living:** Walsall Council aims to deliver housing to suit all needs across the Borough. This includes meeting the significant demand for housing with support provision. Demand for a range of support needs has been identified by the Council which is not currently being met by the private sector. Provision of a mix of housing will increase the offer in Willenhall and help build a true, multi-generational community. This approach will help to provide solutions to housing and social care challenges, keep people closer to their families and even provide employment opportunities in the care sector. Some forms of support or care housing can also provide the chance to increase development density with residential developments incorporating other community infrastructure such as health and social hubs thus providing integrated solutions to meet community need.



HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE / EDUCATION









## 4.2 MOVEMENT & CONNECTIVITY

New and potential developments in the Willenhall area will have an impact on the way that people move around the area. In particular, the introduction of the new railway station will create changing movement patterns for all modes. The station will be connecting Wolverhampton in the west to Walsall in the east.

There is also potential for a Multi-modal Transport Link from the station. There is currently a potential site within the Station Gateway Area of Opportunity. This will provide a place with a variety of public, shared and active modes of transport options.

The adjacent figure shows the key potential pedestrian and cycle flow/desire lines in the context of new development proposals.

The diagram reflects the key movement generators and destinations in the area including the following:

- Proposed station and bus interchange
- Green way
- Town centre/Market Place
- Memorial Park

1



2



3



4



1. New Train Station

2. Local Bus Service

3. Summer Street

4. Cycle Routes





FIGURE 4.2: MOVEMENT STRATEGY





## WALKING & CYCLING

The existing level of provision for walking has been appraised by the Council through a Walking Route Audit undertaken in 2018. The WRAT (Walking Route Audit Tool) was used to assess the condition and sustainability of walking routes within the study area. The routes assessed are shown in the adjacent figure (main walking routes to be enhanced). There are also a number of other more minor links which need to be enhanced, such as the links through to Market Place and the Railway Line.

There are a number of opportunities to improve the walking and cycling network in Willenhall to integrate the Areas of Opportunity and extend and enhance the existing rights of way and cycling network.

The east-west greenway through Moat Street and Villiers Street Area of Opportunity, presents an opportunity to create a strategic pedestrian and cycle route. There are currently proposals to create a cycle route along the full length of the route.

There is potential to redesign the street network in the vicinity of new housing areas to create a more traffic-calmed, pedestrian and cycle friendly environment. For more minor access roads, there is potential for a more comprehensive redesign to create a 'Traffic calmed Residential Street' type treatment.

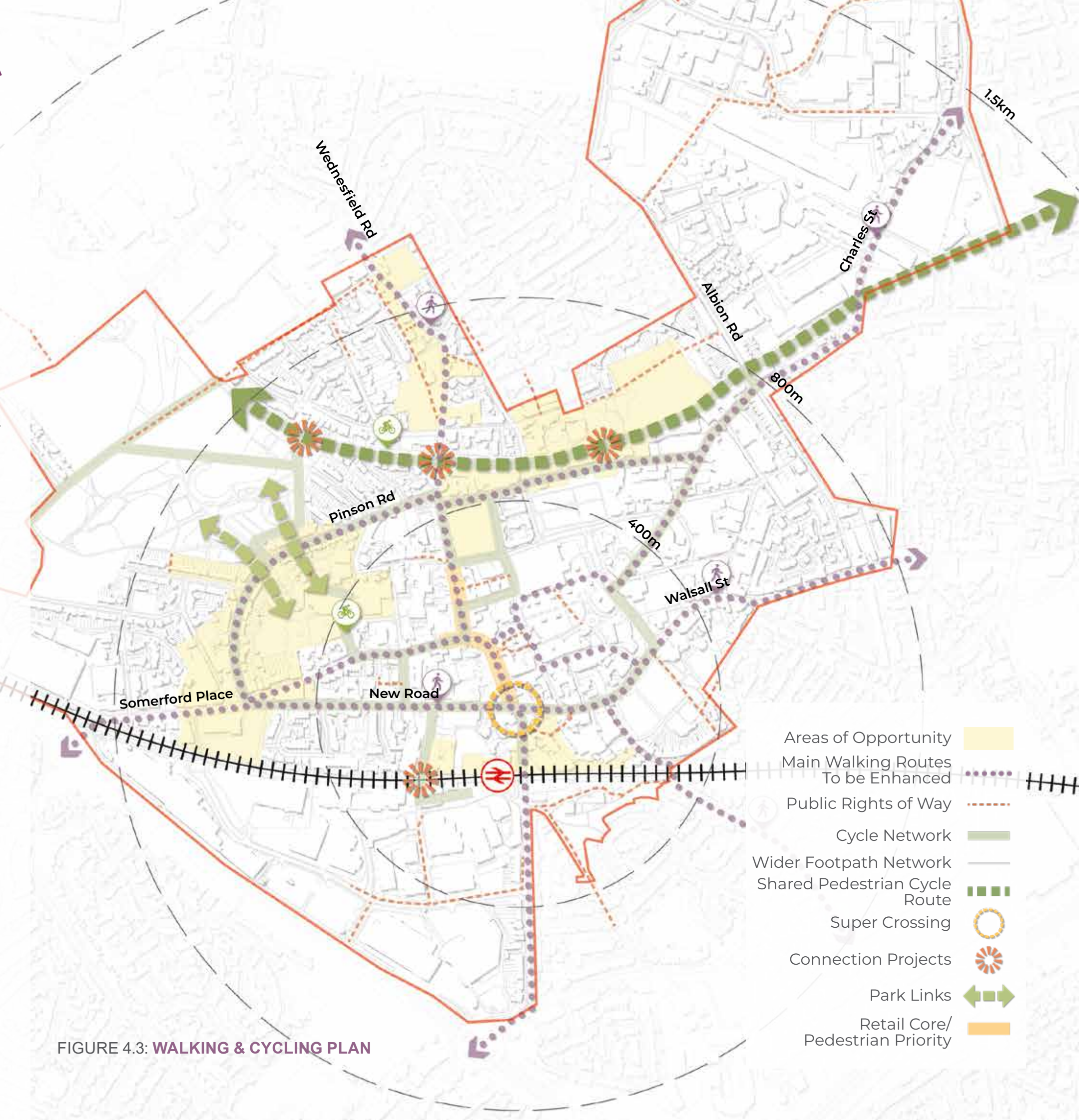


FIGURE 4.3: WALKING & CYCLING PLAN





## VEHICULAR AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Willenhall is connected to Walsall and Wolverhampton by the A454, a strategic road which runs in a west/east direction to the south of the town and is connected to Willenhall by the B4464 Somerford Place and by the B4484 Bilston Street/ Rose Hill. The A454 also connects the study area to junction 10 of the M6 to the east of the study area.

To reinforce the objectives to create a more pedestrian and cycle-friendly road network, and to address these safety concerns, there is an opportunity to create traffic calmed roads.

Throughout the public engagement process, it was clear that many of the respondents felt that existing road and public transport networks needed to be improved.

In terms of public transport, around 8 bus routes serve the study area. Bus stops are in close proximity to the town centre and served by all services. These connect the town with Wolverhampton, Bilston, Wednesbury, Walsall, County Bridge, Bloxwich and Pendeford.

There are plans for to improve access to the new station through highway improvements. The Council have an approved amount of £50,000 in the Walsall Council STP Integrated Transport Block Capital Programme 2021/22 for 'Willenhall Rail Station - Highways Infrastructure Development, with plan for further investments to follow.

In order to maximise the use of the future station and improve even more the mobility of Willenhall residents and visitors, the Plan proposes to relocate existing bus stops nearer to the railway station to create a new multi-modal transport link, providing a place where there are a variety of public, shared and active mode of transport options.

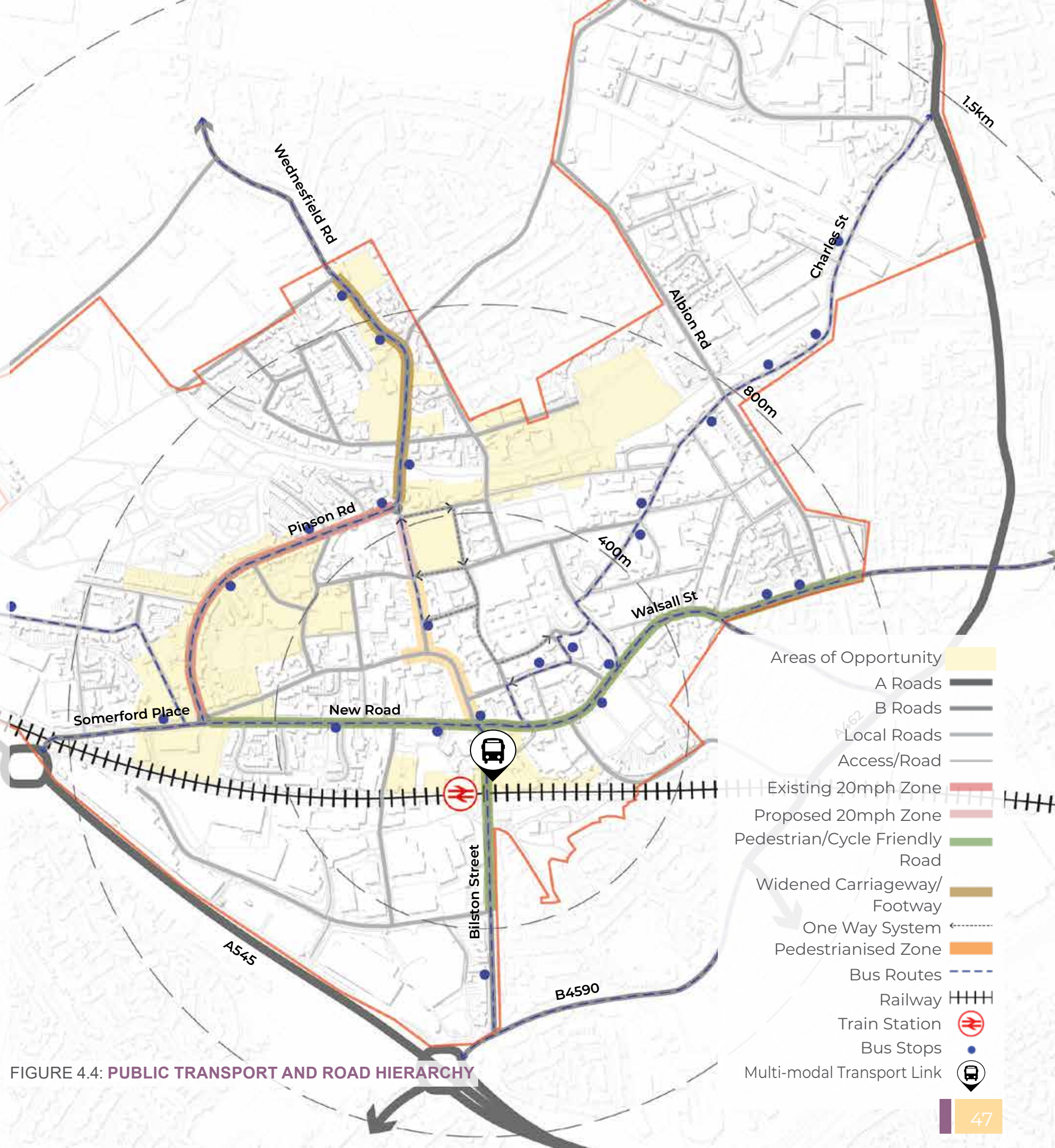


FIGURE 4.4: PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND ROAD HIERARCHY





## 4.3 PLACE MAKING CONTEXT AND LOCAL CHARACTER

The existing character of the area provides important context for place-making and has a key influence on the potential character of future housing proposals, summarised in the adjacent figure.

### 1. NORTHERN BOULEVARD

Northern Boulevard represents the main northern gateway into Willenhall. High-quality architecture coupled with urban greening along Temple Bar and Wednesfield Road will create an attractive arrival point, positively contributing to the connectivity and wayfinding in the area.

### 2. PARKLAND ARC

Development within Parkland Arc will be of a lower density, creating an attractive edge against Willenhall Memorial Park. Slower vehicle speeds and urban greening will help create a leafy, suburban feel that will contribute towards a safe family environment.

### 3. HIGH STREET HERITAGE

This area represents the heart of the community comprising a mix of uses. The character of this area reflects Willenhall's rich heritage, including many unique Victorian buildings and the historic market place. New residential development in this area should respect the town centre character and heritage value.

### 4. STATION GATEWAY

This area will be a key arrival point into Willenhall as a result of the proposed train station and Bilston Street. Development in this area will support the arrival experience to create a positive image for visitors to Willenhall. New residential development will consist of higher density development with the potential for active ground floor uses to provide activity in this area.

The place-making proposals include the following:-

- Green links - linking key green spaces and destinations along the greenway and towards the station. Links also to external green areas
- Key nodes and arrival spaces
- New links to overcome barriers creating severance
- Key buildings and uses promote legibility
- Connectivity between Areas of Opportunity
- Integration of green space into residential areas
- Active travel and movement networks
- Blue infrastructure - explore opportunities for sustainable urban drainage (suds) including swales, rain gardens and blue roofs

The area has a distinctive character combining the heritage assets and the conservation area with the green space network and Memorial Park.

The town's heritage is a key positive factor with the study area containing the Willenhall Conservation Area and listed buildings. All the listed buildings within the town centre are category II, many of which originate from the 17th and 18th century. There are many buildings of local interest many of which are listed including:

- Locksmiths House Museum
- St Giles Church
- The Clock Tower

The framework highlights key nodes and junctions which require a focussed design intervention, to address particular movement or place-making objectives.

In these areas there is an opportunity for new built form to define these key nodes including landmark buildings to reinforce the sense of place. There is also an opportunity to define key arrival points to create a more legible environment.

A number of gateway and arrival points in the town would benefit from enhancement including:

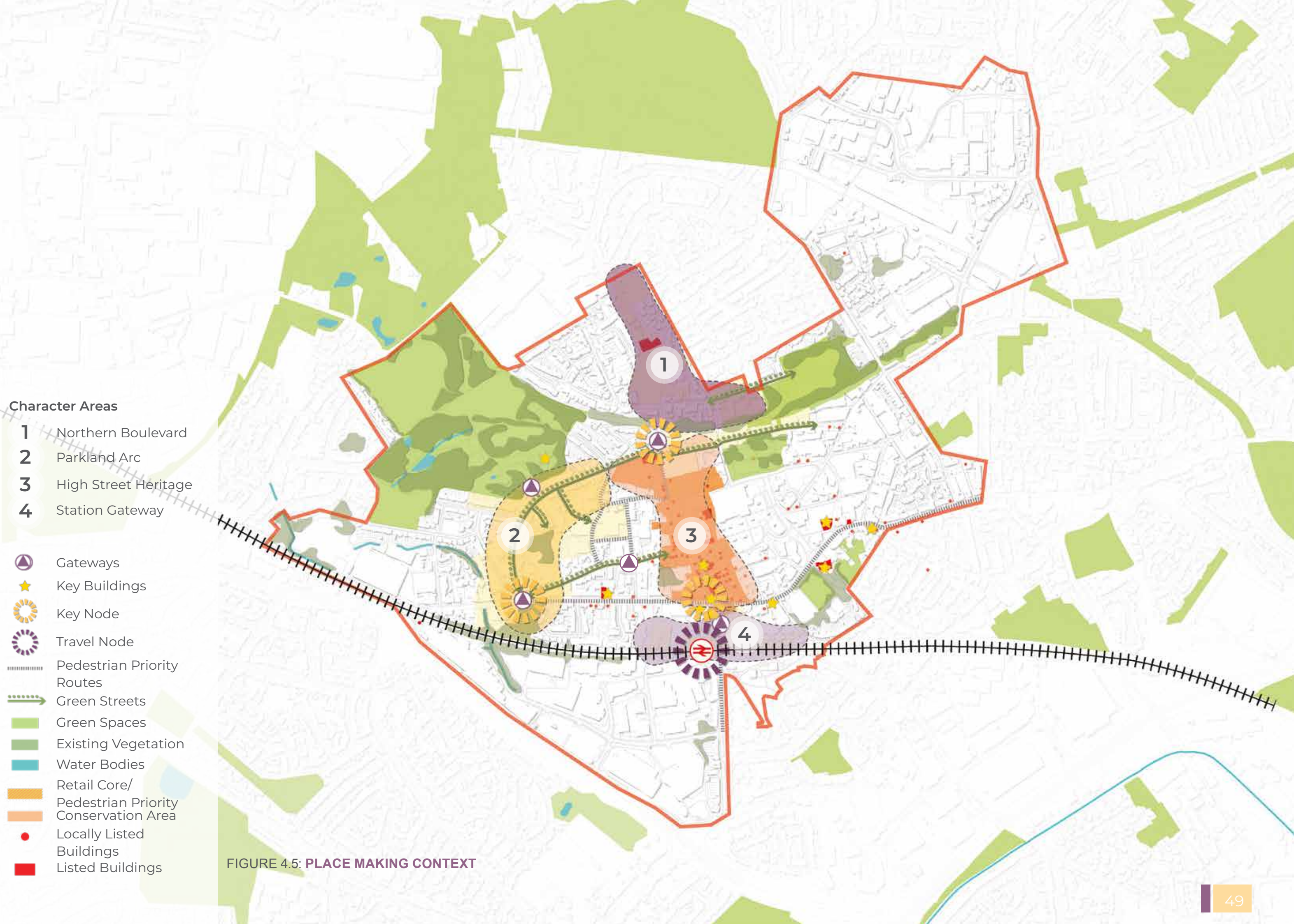
- Pinson Road and Temple Bar roundabout
- Pinson Road and Memorial Park boundary
- Wolverhampton Street into Market Place
- Bilston Street to Market Place
- Somerford Place to Wolverhampton Street

The quality of visitor experience is particularly important between the new station and the neighbourhood centre. Similarly, it is important to create a positive pedestrian and cycling experience between the new residential areas and the town centre.

The aim is to create a more positive experience for both residents and visitors by improvements to the public realm and through new built form development proposals. New residential buildings should front to public space to create a positive relationship and provide active frontages to create an environment which is pedestrian-friendly, more attractive and feels safer.

Moving forward Willenhall can be seen in terms of a number of different character areas which have been identified to reflect both existing townscape and landscape character, and also in terms of future development opportunities.





**Character Areas**

- 1 Northern Boulevard
- 2 Parkland Arc
- 3 High Street Heritage
- 4 Station Gateway

- Gateways
- Key Buildings
- Key Node
- Travel Node
- Pedestrian Priority Routes
- Green Streets
- Green Spaces
- Existing Vegetation
- Water Bodies
- Retail Core/  
Pedestrian Priority  
Conservation Area
- Locally Listed  
Buildings
- Listed Buildings

FIGURE 4.5: PLACE MAKING CONTEXT





## BUILT FORM

Built form plays an important role in defining the character of new housing development.

The National Design Guide describes built form as *"the three-dimensional pattern or arrangement of development blocks, streets, buildings and open spaces. It is the interrelationship between all these elements that creates an attractive place to live, work and visit, rather than their individual characteristics. Together they create the built environment and contribute to its character and sense of place".*

Typically, well-designed places will have:

- compact forms of development that are walkable.
- access to local public transport, services and facilities.
- recognisable streets and other spaces with their edges defined by buildings.
- memorable features or groupings of buildings, spaces, uses or activities that create a sense of place.

The combination of contemporary and traditional architecture, as shown in the adjacent photos, will help respect existing heritage while positively enhancing an areas aesthetic appearance.



PRECEDENT IMAGES





The adjacent photographs present different developments from around the UK which illustrate a range of potential design approaches to the Areas of Opportunity. The photographs illustrate both contemporary and traditional approaches to residential development.







## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The green infrastructure strategy is an integral element of the Framework Plan both in terms of sustainability objectives but also in terms of active travel and healthy living.

The existing green infrastructure network comprises a range of green space typologies including: parks and gardens, churchyards and cemeteries, amenity open space, allotments and outdoor sports facilities. The main green spaces and links within the vicinity of the study area are:

- Willenhall Memorial Park
- Wood Street Cemetery
- Eaton Yale Athletic and Social Club
- Greenway (former railway line)
- Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve is a local authority designation, located in close proximity to the north west of the Framework Plan.

The east-west greenway connects various green spaces within the Framework Plan to the wider green space network, notably Fibbersley LNR to the west and there are proposals to create a cycle route along the full length.

There are a large number of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) comprising groups and individuals within the Framework Plan area which need to be accommodated, where possible, in the Areas of Opportunity. In, addition trees within the Conservation Area are also afforded protection.

The green infrastructure framework seeks to create a linked network of multi-functional green space providing for a range of uses and activities including outdoor sport, play, recreation, movement and drainage.

This network is to be supported by a strong landscape structure focussed on new tree planting to extend the parkland character of Memorial Park into new and existing residential areas and to promote urban greening.

There is an opportunity to strengthen links and create green streets between them to create an extensive network of green spaces. Pinson Road, Wolverhampton Street and adjacent proposed Traffic Calmed Residential Streets have potential for new street tree planting (green streets).

The retention of existing TPOs in the Pinson Road Area of Opportunity creates the potential for a new green space.

There is also potential for sustainable urban drainage (SUDs), such as swales, both within these streets and also within proposed residential plots.

Other green infrastructure elements such as green walls, green roofs should be considered as part of the new residential design. New landscape planting should also promote biodiversity.



WILLENHALL MEMORIAL PARK













Pedestrianised Zone		Landmarks/key buildings	
Green Ways		Cycle Way	
Traffic Calmed Residential Street Links to the park		Play Areas	
Key node		Greenspace	
Travel node		Gateway	

FIGURE 4.6: **GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN**











## 4.4 BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The proposals have been formulated from a range of technical inputs to create a comprehensive framework for development in Willenhall.

Each supporting strategy can be seen as a place making layer which together combine to create the final, holistic Framework Plan. In this way the plan can be seen as a synthesis of urban design, town planning, environmental, infrastructure, transport and property inputs.

The Framework Plan seeks to integrate the proposed Areas of Opportunity with movement proposals to create a connected community. High quality place-making is promoted through high quality design and public realm enhancements. A holistic approach to green infrastructure has been taken promoting urban greening and sustainability objectives. Digital connectivity is also a key objective for the area.

## 4.5 OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES SUMMARY

OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
 AROUND 500 HIGH QUALITY, ENERGY EFFICIENT, ATTRACTIVE NEW HOMES	» <b>£1.3M</b> of additional yearly long term local spend
 3.9HA NEW & ENHANCED PUBLIC & AMENITY SPACES, PARKS AND PLAY AREAS	» <b>£20M</b> local supply chain spend
 NEW MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORT LINK FROM THE STATION	» <b>10</b> new indirect local jobs and <b>450</b> local construction jobs
 10KM OF ENHANCED WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES	» <b>3,000</b> weeks of apprenticeships and work placements
 850M TRAFFIC CALMED RESIDENTIAL ROADS	» Strong sense of place and community cohesion
 CYCLE HUBS AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE POINTS	» Increased footfall to serve the town centre retail, resulting in increased spend.
	» Cross-cutting impacts on long term economic and clean growth

\* Values are indicative and may be subject to change following further due diligence. The outcomes are based on the impact of delivering an estimated 500 homes.





FIGURE 4.7: FRAMEWORK PLAN OVERVIEW







5

**A FOCUS ON DELIVERY**





## INTRODUCTION

The Framework Plan presents a bold and ambitious Vision for Willenhall. It provides the framework of interventions required to overcome the identified challenges and barriers to delivery and presents opportunities for housing delivery which meet housing need and local demand. The proposals seek to deliver and coordinate comprehensive redevelopment across the Framework Plan area to deliver the Council's vision and objectives and will maximise the benefit to the existing and new communities of improved regional and national connectivity.

The proposed approaches to delivery provides a range of identified social, economic and environmental outcomes which will positively impact upon Willenhall's communities and people. Realisation of these outcomes is dependent upon a robust approach to delivery led by the public sector which will create the environment for both public and private investment leading to the delivery of the Framework Plan objectives and vision.

The Council's approach to overcoming the delivery challenges previously discussed and delivering the vision for Willenhall is captured in the following section.

## THE NEED FOR INTERVENTION

This Framework Plan clearly sets out why public led intervention is essential to deliver the aspirational vision for Willenhall. The cost and effort to assemble deliverable housing sites in Willenhall presents a high degree of risk to the private sector which is preventing early involvement of developers. Market testing demonstrates a high demand from the private sector, who, when presented with developable opportunities, will be very keen to build new homes in Willenhall.

All the interventions proposed in this plan are aimed at facilitating development of new homes and high-quality Place Making. Walsall Council is prepared to intervene in the regeneration of Willenhall in the following ways:



FIGURE 5.1: DEVELOPER PROCUREMENT DIAGRAM





## PLANNING POLICY

This Framework Plan will inform the development of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Willenhall. The SPD will be subject to statutory consultation and, alongside other key planning policy documents such as the emerging BCP, will help to inform planning decisions. This approach will provide further certainty and reduced risk to development organisations who wish to deliver housing in the Framework Plan area.

The SPD can be further supported by a Design Code which can guide the aspiration for high quality place making and deliver the objectives of the Framework Plan and Black Country Garden City principles.

Walsall Council will take a lead on developing an outline planning application for Phase 1 – Moat Street and Villiers street, to provide further certainty of delivery. This approach may also be taken on future phases however that decision will follow more detailed investigation.

The Council acknowledges that further review is needed on the application of policy criteria set out in existing and emerging planning policy, specifically relating to the redevelopment of poor quality industrial land for housing. Further work will be undertaken to determine potential impacts on the delivery and approach to achieving the regeneration aspirations of the Framework Plan.

## CONNECTIVITY & PLACE

Walsall Council are committed to securing funding to deliver the proposed connectivity, green space and Place Making interventions proposed through this plan.

Walsall Council are committed to deliver comprehensive development including infrastructure and place making investment. Further work is ongoing to support this investment.

## HOUSING DELIVERY

Walsall Council will pro-actively facilitate the delivery of housing across the Framework Plan area. They will adopt the lead role in the regeneration of Willenhall using a range of approaches to suit the needs of each individual development opportunity.

**Phase 1** - Moat Street and Villiers Street; is further progressed than the remaining Areas of Opportunity and the delivery approach has been identified. Future phases are still in an early stage of exploration and the route to delivery will be agreed when the development opportunities are fully understood.

**Approach to Delivery Phase 1** - In the role of facilitator, the Council will acquire the identified land parcels to create a developable site for housing. The council will obtain outline planning approval and procure a partnership with a suitable private sector delivery organisation to deliver high quality housing and public realm. This partnership approach will allow the Council to retain significant control of the outcome whilst benefiting from the expertise and investment of a private developer.

If suitable, the procurement will make use of an existing public sector procurement framework to accelerate delivery.

**Specialist Housing Need** – Walsall Council has identified a need for supported housing and housing with care across the borough. This need is not being catered for by the private sector. The Council has an opportunity in Willenhall to deliver homes for care and may choose to direct deliver small, stand-alone projects or work with a specialist provider to do so.

## FUNDING THE GAP

Walsall Council is committed to supporting comprehensive development not only of housing but also interventions which will improve connectivity and place making across the town. Each phase of housing development will include elements of the interventions identified within the movement strategy and place making strategy.

The Council Cabinet will need to take a decision in relation to the funding for Phase 1, Moat Street and Villiers Street.

As has been identified, one of the key challenges for Willenhall is viability due to the high costs involved in site assembly and site remediation. In addition, the value of houses is low in Willenhall resulting in an overall viability gap.

Through the interventions of this project there is expected to be a positive impact on house prices, however, the ongoing need to assemble and remediate sites remains. Once due diligence is completed on the further three Areas of Opportunity, the level of potential interventions will be known. The Council continues to work with partners at the West Midlands Combined Authority and Homes England to secure the funding necessary to deliver housing in all Areas of Opportunity. Specific funding arrangements will be agreed as work progresses on the Areas of Opportunity.





## LAND ASSEMBLY

To support the development of housing within a reasonable timeframe the Council is committed to assembling land at appropriate points in the programme. Land assembly intervention has been identified as essential to deliver comprehensive redevelopment leading to the delivery of the identified outcomes and benefits.

It is the Council's intention to work with property owners and existing business occupiers and to acquire the required land by negotiation where possible. The council has developed an evolving Business Charter setting out the support available to businesses that may be impacted by land acquisition. The Council is committed to acquiring land by negotiation but will consider using its statutory powers including compulsory purchase and appropriation if required and where necessary to ensure timely delivery.

### PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT

The Council has a clear understanding of the interventions required within Moat Street and Villiers Street – Identified as Phase 1. In this area the boundary has been defined and engagement has already commenced with landowners and businesses. This engagement will continue with regular information updates and direct one to one conversation taking place throughout the process. Acquisition of property will be supported by the guidance set out in the evolving Business Charter which can be found on the Council's website.

### FURTHER PHASES

Whilst the further three Areas of Opportunity have been identified as having significant potential for new housing and place making interventions, the Council is still investigating the areas in terms of ownerships, occupation and opportunity.

The boundary of these three areas; Pinson Road, Station Gateway and North Willenhall; is currently subject to further investigation and the exact boundaries will be more clearly defined over time. The areas demonstrate some potential for development and through further engagement and discussion the boundaries will be defined.

As the programme progresses, focussed engagement will take place with landowners, businesses and the public within all Areas of Opportunity aligned to the phasing plan.

### BARRIERS TO LAND ASSEMBLY

Walsall Council is aware of the challenges which the necessary relocation will place on existing businesses and is giving consideration to these in the evolving Business Charter.

An Employment Land study has been completed which raised the following challenges:

- Need to identifying suitable type and scale of property to meet occupiers' needs
- Costs of relocation
- Retention of a skilled workforce that rely on local transport links



