

10. Walsall Town Centre – The Sites

10.1 Introduction

This section is all about the sites that make up the opportunities in Walsall Town Centre. It includes a summary of where the sites have come from including an overview of the 'Call for Sites' process. There is also a description of how we have worked out the potential for retail and office floorspace on sites and how this could count towards the BCCS targets. The section finishes by looking at the constraints we need to consider when assessing site suitability.

This section is accompanied by **Appendix 1** which provides a summary of the sites and starts to set out what we think are their possible uses along with a brief description of any potential issues. Also included in this appendix is a summary of the sites that were submitted as part of the 'Call for Sites'.

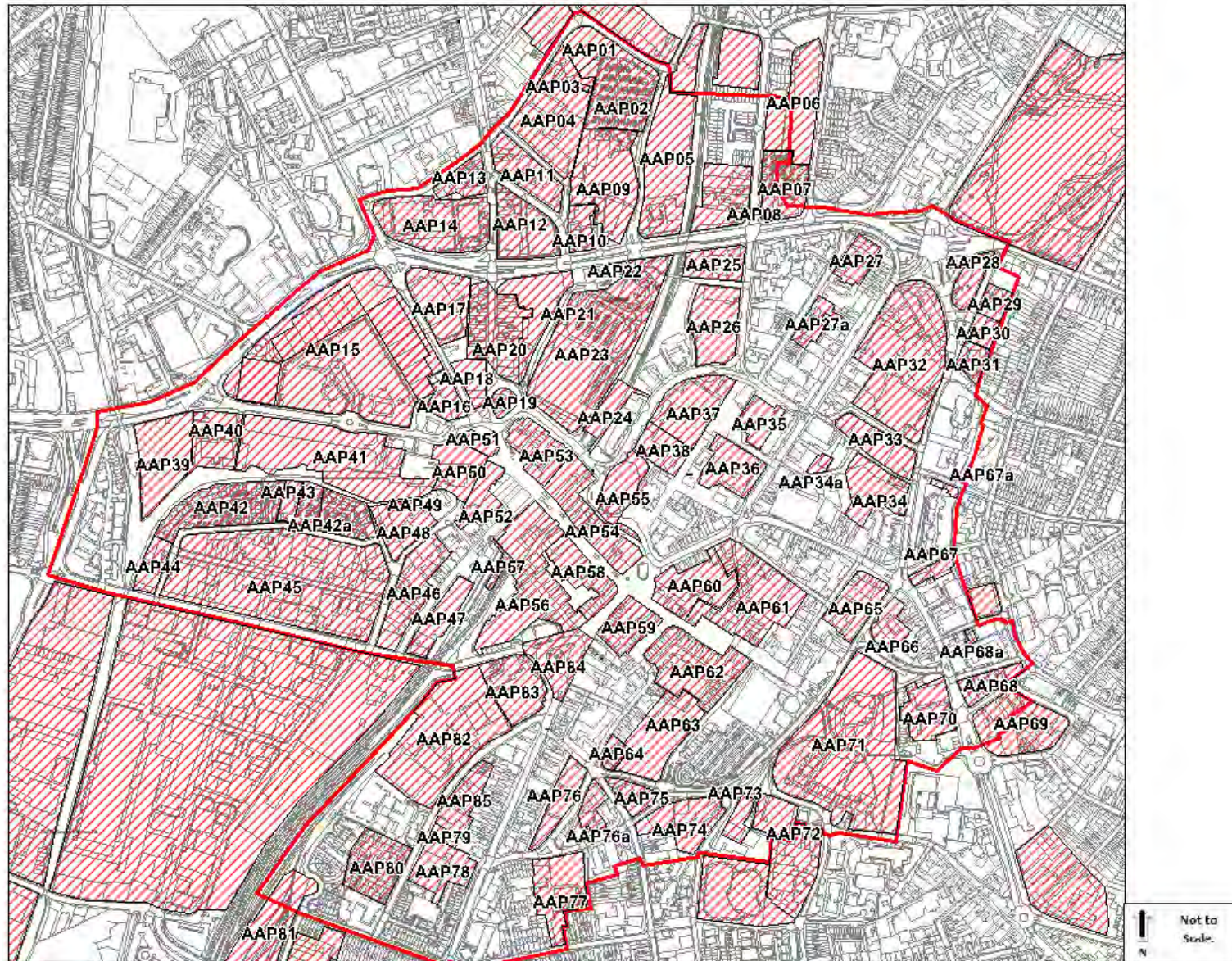
10.2 The sites

The main sources of sites used so far are:

- Sites in the existing UDP Inset Map that have not yet been developed;
- Waterfront Supplementary Planning Document;
- Sites identified in the 2010 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) as updated in the 2012 SHLAA refresh;
- Sites from the latest open space audit which informed the revised Walsall Council Green Space Strategy (2012);
- Planning permissions and masterplans for sites including Gigaport;
- Developer enquiries and pre-applications;
- Sites identified in the Walsall Employment Land Review (ELR);
- Sites submitted during the initial Call for Sites in the autumn of 2011;
- Sites owned by the Council.

Figure 10.1 on the following page sets out the sites we have considered as part of the Issues and Options documents. The map shows all the unique ID numbers which cross reference with all the plans and the site summary tables in the document and appendices.

Figure 10.1: All Sites



SI:Q1 Have we considered all possible sites? If not, what sites have we missed and what do you propose is the possible use for this site? If you would like to submit a site it would be helpful if you could complete a “Call for Sites” submission form from our website.

10.2.1 Call for Sites

Walsall Council held a ‘Call for Sites’ which closed in November 2012. This enabled landowners to submit information on sites they owned that they wished to be considered to be allocated for new development. Through the Call for Sites, landowners could say what types of development they thought appropriate on their site(s). See the Call for Sites table (**Table 7 in Appendix 1**) for details of what was submitted and what our initial responses are. You are welcome to submit further sites for consideration at the Preferred Option stage. If you wish to submit a site please see the website for the Call for Site submission forms.

SI:Q2 Do you agree with our initial response to the Call for Sites submissions? If not, why not?

10.2.2 Site Summary Tables

The tables in **Appendix 1** set out what sites we have considered. These have been presented under each chapter and have been crossed referenced in these chapters. Some sites will be included in more than one table as there is a potential for different or multiple uses. It includes a summary of what we consider to be the key issues for that site, which we will need to explore more as the plan progresses to the next stage. The uses set out in the table are just suggestions at this stage and are not allocations. We want your views on what we have indicated as potential uses for the sites.

SI:Q3 Do you have any comments or further information on any of the sites we have listed in the summary tables? If you wish to comment on these, please list carefully the AAP site reference number and the site address so we can respond to your comments.

10.2.3 Floorspace Calculations

Using the sites identified in the site summary tables, it was felt it would be useful to calculate the potential level of additional floorspace which could be achieved through development on each site. An approach was adopted which proposed an additional floor on existing retail uses (at 80% of total floorspace to allow for storage and other non-retail uses); and 50% of total floorspace multiplied by the number of floors for cleared sites. Sites which were suitable for development were then allocated as either A1 (retail), B1 (office) or both uses. These floorspace calculations are set out in **Appendix 1**.

By adding up these calculations it is possible to consider the maximum level of additional floorspace which could be achieved in the town centre for each land use. These are set out in **Figure 10.2** below:

Total potential additional A1 floorspace	85,120 sqm
Total potential additional A1 floorspace in PSA	67,520 sqm
Total potential additional B1 floorspace	442,875 sqm
Total potential additional B1 floorspace in Gigaport	183,375 sqm

Figure 10.2: Floorspace calculations

It should be noted that these figures represent the total floorspace levels which could be achieved if every site identified for development within the town centre were developed for either retail or office uses, as these are the two uses identified in the BCCS targets. It does not calculate any floorspace needed for leisure or other town centre uses, and it may be that a number of these sites could be best used for town centre uses other than retail or offices.

SI:Q4 Do you agree with our initial approach to calculating floor space figures?
Do you have any suggestions to how we can calculate more accurate figures?

12.3 Key Site Constraints

There are a number of constraints in the town centre, many stemming from the industrial history of the area and historic drainage systems. As such, development in Walsall is often constrained by abnormal development costs. **Appendix 2** set out

some of the key constraints to development in the town centre in more detail with some suggestions of how the AAP will address these.

12.3.1 Flooding

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

The Council are in the process of updating the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the Borough. The Functional Floodplain (Flood Zone 3b) shown on **Figure 10.3** is part of the ongoing work on the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and will continue to be updated as further information becomes available. An updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment will be published in due course.

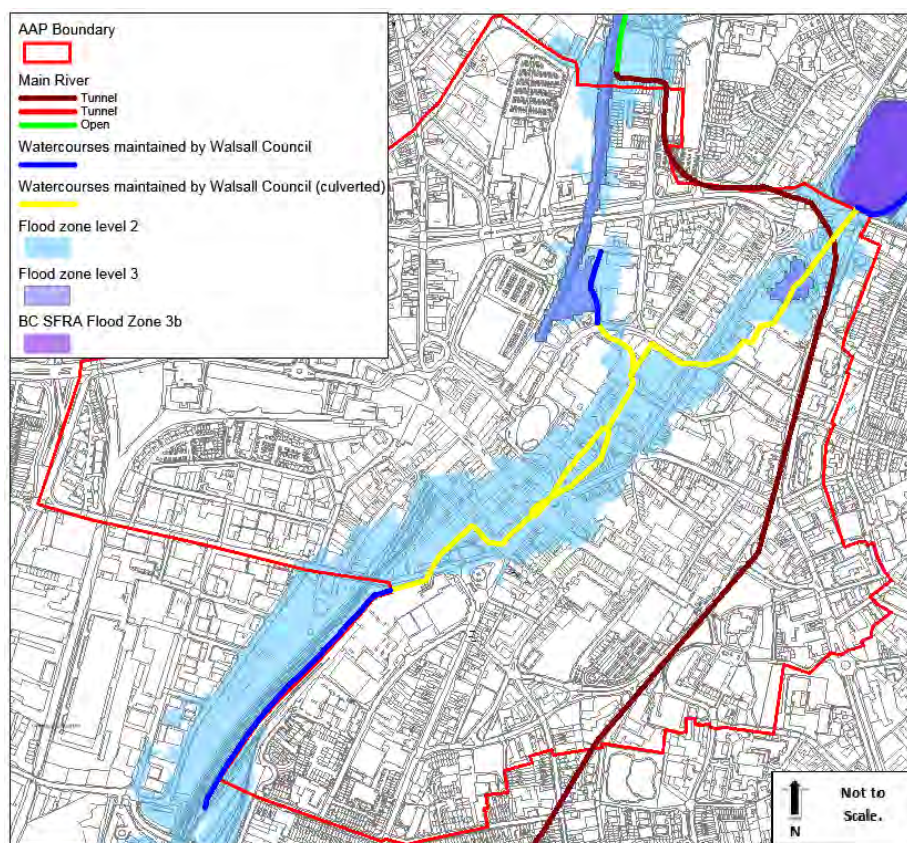


Figure 10.3: Watercourse and flood zone potential constraints

<u>Constraints to Development</u>	
<p>FRM Option 1: The AAP takes a strategic approach to integrating water management infrastructure, such as Sustainable Drainage Systems, into the design of the public realm in the town centre.</p>	<p>Implications: Developers would be required to contribute to such solutions which may affect development costs and viability, although this would reduce the costs of onsite measures. This would provide wider amenity benefit to the urban realm and an opportunity to demonstrate innovative approaches to water management.</p>
<p>FRM Option 2: The AAP considers that water management solutions should be considered on a site by site basis.</p>	<p>Implications: Developers would need to provide drainage on a site by site basis, limiting the potential for more sustainable and innovative solutions to water management given site constraints including the land available for such solutions. There would be little benefit to the operation of the overall drainage network.</p>

SI:Q5 Which of the above options do you agree with most, and why?

12.3.2 Ground Conditions

Significant areas of land within the Borough have been developed and redeveloped over time with consequential impact upon the underlying ground conditions. Areas in the Borough where potentially difficult ground conditions may be encountered have been shown as indicative hatched areas on **Figure 10.4** and for example include:

1. Made Ground (artificially changing the level of land);
2. Landfill; (disposing of waste or unwanted materials by burying)
3. Potentially contaminated ground attributable to previous land use and;
4. Near surface or open cast coal mining

Potential new sites for allocation that fall within these indicative areas may be affected by one or more of the ground conditions set out above and will be considered in more detail when looking at the potential allocation for each individual site. We are aware that the Limestone data on **Figure 10.4** may not be up to date

and will therefore be liaising with the Council's Structural Engineers to ensure limestone areas are taken into consideration when looking at the allocation of sites across the Borough. It should be made clear that the presence of difficult underlying ground conditions may not necessarily prevent development, for example, new development proposals within Coal Mining Development Referral Areas would not automatically be deemed as undeliverable but would be expected to undertake a Coal Mining Risk Assessment. Where difficult ground conditions are present they will be taken into account when assessing development viability. This is covered in **Chapter 11** (Delivery and Viability).

The data shown on **Figure 10.4** has been provided by The Coal Authority, The Environment Agency and the Council's Pollution Control Team. The data is a snapshot in time and may be frequently updated by the data owners. We will therefore be in regular contact with the data owners to ensure we publish the most accurate and up-to-date information throughout the production of the AAP. Information on landfill and areas of potential contamination can be obtained from the Council's Pollution Control Team on 01922 653348.

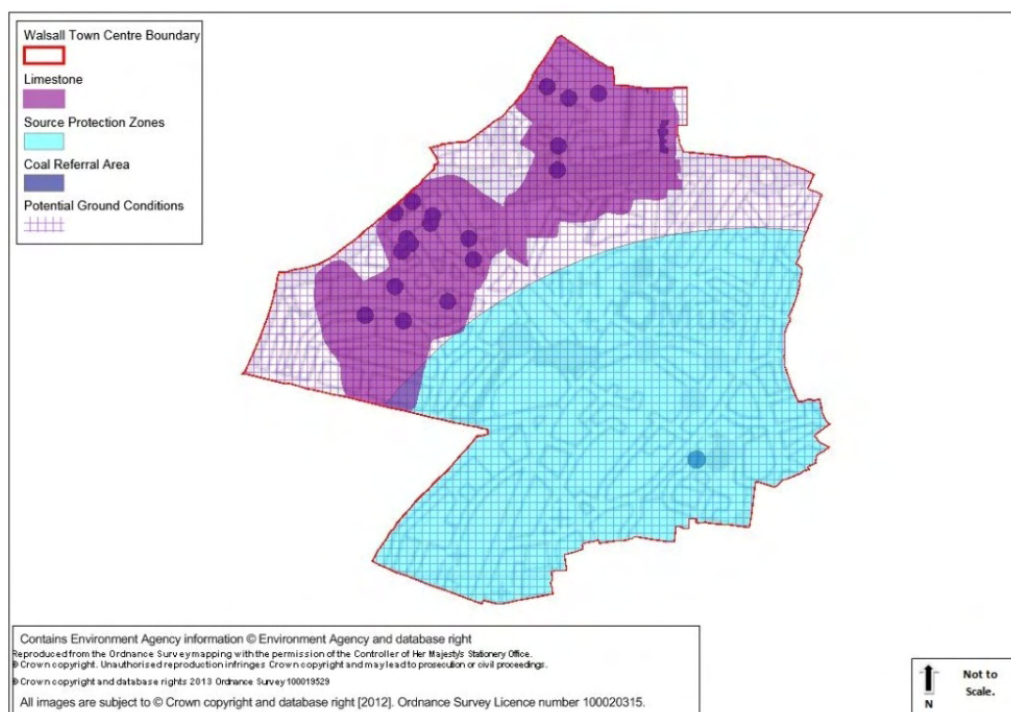


Figure 10.4: Ground conditions

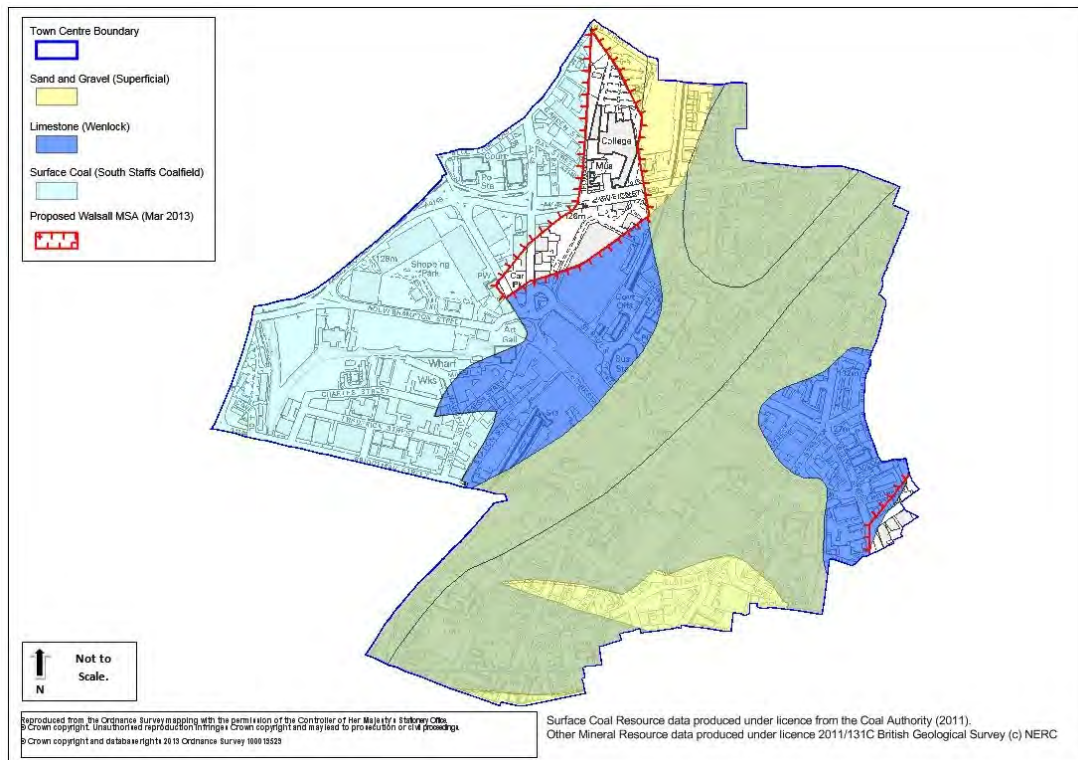


Figure 10.5: Minerals

SI:Q6 Are there any other key constraints the AAP needs to consider?