

Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan 'A Place For Everyone' Issues and Options **Issues and Options Report**

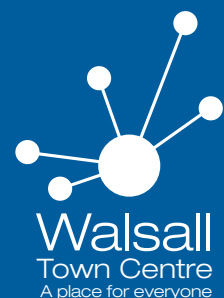


Planning 2026: Have Your Say

Consultation Period: April 22nd – June 3rd 2013



Walsall Council



What is the purpose of the Town Centre Area Action Plan - Issues and Options Report?

The Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan will focus on Walsall Town Centre and will allocate sites for new shops, leisure facilities, and offices, as well as setting out strategies for improvement.

This Issues and Options report gives you the chance to view and comment on the full details of the matters we will be considering and comment on as many sites as you like that are listed in the site summary table in Appendix 1.

We have provided a separate Consultation Summary document which you can use to respond to key questions - the questions use the same numbering as this report and are shown in bold.

Where does the requirement to produce the Area Action Plan come from?

The Council adopted the Black Country Core Strategy in 2011. This sets out the vision for the future of Walsall up to 2026 and includes targets for matters such as the amount of land that has to be provided for new offices and retail space.

The flow diagram below sets out the process we intend to follow to adopt the Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan:



How have we identified sites?

Many of the sites have been identified from our own evidence, but some have also been submitted by land owners and developers in response to a 'Call for Sites' in 2011. The sites and land uses proposed in the 'Call for Sites' may not necessarily be ones that we consider to be suitable and will be considered further at the next 'Preferred Options' stage.

If you would like this information in another language or format please contact Planning Policy on Phone: 01922 658020, Textphone: 01922 654000 or Email: ldf@walsall.gov.uk

List of Acronyms

AAP	Area Action Plan
BCCS	Black Country Core Strategy
CA	Conservation Area
ELR	Employment Land Review
HS2	High Speed 2 (high speed rail network)
IRFT	Intermodal Rail Freight Terminal
LDF	Local Development Framework
LDS	Local Development Scheme
LEP	Local Economic Partnership
LTP	Local Transport Plan
PSA	Primary Shopping Area
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement
SCS	Sustainable Community Strategy
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
UDP	Unitary Development Plan
WHG	Walsall Housing Group
YPV	Young People's Venue

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1. Introduction

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

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

The Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) states that by 2026 Walsall town centre will have delivered 85,000 sqm of additional comparison retail floorspace, 220,000 sqm of additional office floorspace, and 450 new homes. The Area Action Plan (AAP) will build on these targets to help transform the centre and provide a direction for change.

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

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

1.2 The Issues and Options Document

This is the **main** document; it covers the issues and options in detail. A summary of this document has been produced for consultation purposes which can be found on our website. Later sections of this document pose questions which are intended to get you thinking about how you consider Walsall town centre should develop and

what approach should be taken to the different areas within the centre. We have also set out some options for the transformation of the town centre, and have included 'implications' which are intended to provide the reader with a rounded view of both the positive and negative impacts of pursuing particular options. Responses to these questions will be particularly helpful, however you can also make comments on any aspect of the town centre, especially if you think there are other important considerations which should influence the AAP which are not specifically mentioned here. Questions and options that are in bold also appear in the consultation summary document.

The proposals and options have not yet been agreed by the Council. Where we refer to individual sites or possible future uses, this does not imply that the Council will support these. **Appendix 1** of this document provides a summary of the sites we have considered and you are welcome to comment on this too.

We ask throughout the document for any supporting evidence you may have; by this we mean it would be most beneficial if comments could be supported by an explanation, which could include personal experience, facts and figures, or more formal documented evidence. As you work your way through the document please make sure that when providing any response you make it clear which question you are answering and when commenting on specific sites please state the AAP site reference.

We want our residents and other interested parties to inform the development of our plans. Your views are important, and the Council wants to receive them during the 6 week consultation period: **22nd April 2013 – 3rd June 2013.**

You can view these documents and respond online by visiting www.walsall.gov.uk and looking for the 'Planning 2026' button. Paper copies of the documents are also available to view at your local library.

1.3 Structure of the Document

This document is divided into a number of sections so that the key information is clearly structured and presented.

This chapter introduces the AAP by setting out the planning context, including the targets that need to be met. It also explains why an AAP is important and how Walsall town centre will benefit, along with the key points in the AAP process and predicted timescales. Finally the chapter outlines other, more immediate work that the Council is doing alongside the development of the AAP, and how this fits with the Council's corporate priorities.

Chapter 2 looks in more detail at Walsall town centre, including the boundary for AAP policies, and the role of the town centre within the Borough, before outlining important information about Walsall's catchment area and population. It also looks at the challenges currently facing Walsall town centre, and demonstrates how this AAP is needed to reverse current levels of decline.

Chapter 3 presents the vision for Walsall town centre, and the objectives that the AAP aims to deliver.

The next chapters focus on the primary issues facing Walsall town centre. The Council has launched a new brand to market the town centre, 'Walsall: A Place for Everyone', which is supported by five straplines to extend the brand and support key projects and events. The issues facing the town centre are considered using these five straplines. You will see these logos and straplines being used around the town and on material produced by the Council to demonstrate how the AAP fits with other work the Council is doing.

Chapter 4 is about Walsall as a Place for Shopping. It considers the shopping experience in Walsall, and the current situation in the town centre in terms of the type of shops currently available. The chapter then goes on to look at potential areas for major new retail developments.





Chapter 5 focuses on Walsall as a Place for Business. It outlines the need for a diverse economic base, both within the town centre and also to benefit the wider Borough, before discussing the current office market in Walsall and how this market can be strengthened. It then suggests possible locations for major new office developments. The chapter also looks at industrial and other employment uses within the town centre.

Chapter 6 focuses on Walsall town centre as a Place for Leisure. This chapter looks at existing and desirable leisure provision within Walsall, including commercial provision, community and cultural facilities, overnight accommodation, and the evening offer. It then goes on to suggest potential opportunities for new leisure developments.



Chapter 7 looks at Walsall as a Place for Living. This includes housing, education and health, community infrastructure, the character of the town and the quality of the public realm, and the environmental infrastructure of the town centre.

Chapter 8 looks at transportation, access to and movement within the town centre. This is a key chapter because good access to the town is vital to the successful delivery of town centre regeneration. This chapter covers the pedestrian movement,, cycling, public transport, the road network, and parking.

Chapter 9 focuses on Walsall as a Place for Investment. This chapter looks at the four key areas within the town centre which are opportunities for major redevelopment, as well as secondary sites within the town centre. It outlines potential options for each area.



Chapter 10 sets out some details about the Sites in terms of why they have been included and the constraints that we must take into account when considering their future use.

Chapter 11 looks at securing and delivering the AAP, including phasing and constraints to development.

Finally, **Chapter 12** outlines how you can respond to this consultation document and how your responses will be used.

Appendix 1 is a summary of the sites identified in the document and should be considered as part of this document. **Appendix 2** gives a summary of the constraints which impact on the town centre.

Although the final AAP will have to be consistent with the Core Strategy, as well as other local and national policies, as part of the preparation of the AAP we have to consider other options including the possible allocation of sites that we might subsequently reject. We have listed the options we have rejected up to now in **Appendix 3**. The options listed in the Appendix have all been rejected because they are not considered to be “reasonable” options.

1.4 The Planning Context

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

The development plan for Walsall currently comprises a suite of documents as shown in **Figure 1.1**. These form a hierarchy: the lower documents are expected to be in general conformity with the high level ones.



Figure 1.1 Policy Context

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

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

The NPPF sets out core land-use planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision making. These include driving and supporting sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units,

infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs, securing high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings, supporting the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk, contributing to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution, reusing land that has been previously developed, managing patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and taking account of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and delivering sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

This was prepared by the former Regional Assembly but issued by the Secretary of State. It provides the overall spatial vision for the region including the Black Country, Birmingham and the surrounding counties. This includes restraining development in the more rural areas to promote the “urban renaissance” of Birmingham and the Black Country including Walsall.

The Localism Act provides for the RSS to be abolished, although this had not yet taken place at the time of writing.

The Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS)

On a more local level the Black Country authorities (Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Dudley) prepared a Joint Core Strategy, which was adopted by Walsall Council in February 2011. As a strategic plan for the whole of the Black Country, the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) seeks to direct investment in retail, leisure and offices across the area. It emphasises that strategic centres such as Walsall should be the focus of large-scale investment in retail, offices and leisure.

The BCCS proposes that development is shared between the four strategic centres of Brierley Hill, West Bromwich, Wolverhampton and Walsall. **The indicative targets show that by 2026 Walsall will have delivered:**

- **85,000 square metres of additional comparison retail floorspace**
- **220,000 square metres of additional office floorspace**

- **450 new homes.**

The BCCS produced a key diagram which shows the key proposals for the town centre and provides a broad indication of the scale of change that the strategy aspires towards. This diagram is shown in **Figure 3, Section 2.4**.

To secure investment in Walsall town centre on the scale required to fulfil the targets of the BCCS, sites and redevelopment opportunities have to be identified within and where necessary on the edge of the centre. Developments need to be managed so that they complement each other and produce comprehensive results. The sites will also have to be protected from competing uses, and they will be given formal status to be used to defend the centre from competition from out-of-centre and to justify site acquisitions. This requires the preparation of an Area Action Plan, which is a formal and very public demonstration of the Council's commitment to investment in Walsall town centre. This type of plan was chosen because it has statutory weight, meaning it will provide the most robust basis for making major investment and development decisions in the town centre.

1.5 The need for an AAP

The preparation of such a detailed and robust plan reflects the importance of Walsall town centre. The health of the town centre has an impact on the economy of the whole Borough. Walsall town centre is the most accessible location to serve the catchment area and to benefit the maximum number of people, particularly in increased employment and training opportunities. It is therefore, the most sustainable location for development in the Borough.

The Council's civic offices and the Further Education College in the town centre, together with the presence of a major hospital complex and the Arboretum just outside the centre, make the town one of the four most important service centres in the Black Country. However, the town centre economy has significantly under-performed against the national and regional average over the past 10 years.

While there has been a considerable level of regeneration activity in the town centre in recent years, this has tended to focus on a small number of large scale projects. A number of these are now completed or nearing completion, including Asda, the

new College, Tesco, Waterfront South, the Premier Inn and the new whg headquarters, and proposals for other projects are well advanced. Whilst the delivery of these projects is important to the overall regeneration of the town centre, the Council does not yet have an up-to-date coherent strategy or regeneration approach for Walsall town centre as a whole. Advanced proposals for some important parts of the town centre are lacking, and the town centre now needs a long term spatial plan to set out its function in terms of retail, leisure and culture, education, office-based employment and housing set in a high quality environment.

1.6 The AAP Process

Following the publication of this document, comments will be collated and used to inform the next stage of the AAP process. This will be the publication of a Preferred Options Report that will outline more detailed options for areas within the town centre. The flow diagram below sets out the three key stages in which stakeholders and communities can have their say on the AAP and SAD.

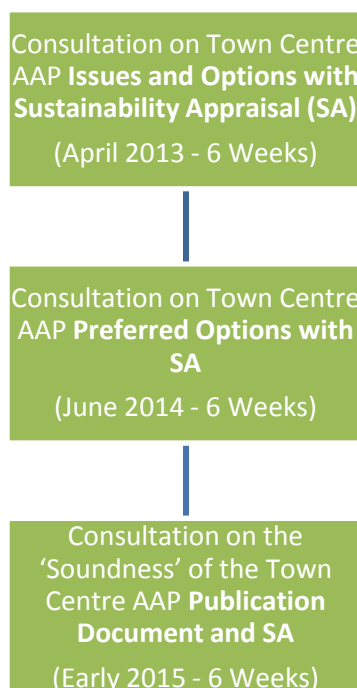


Figure 1.2: Flow diagram setting out the three key stages on consultation

The implications of each policy or proposal in the AAP need to be assessed against broad environmental, social and economic objectives in order to ensure that the AAP is as sustainable as possible. Therefore a **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)** process is

running in parallel with the preparation of the AAP, and this Issues and Options Report should be read alongside the SA Report. The SA is a method of identifying potentially significant environmental, social and economic effects of the emerging proposals in the plan, including alternative options under consideration, so that harmful effects can be identified early on, and addressed where feasible. The SA will incorporate equality and health impact assessments, as the SA Framework has been designed to identify potential equality and health impacts.

Appendix 3 includes rejected options, which are options we have identified as not compliant with current policy or as having unacceptable environmental, social or economic consequences.

The results of the SA are summarised in a separate Options Appraisal Report published alongside this consultation document. This evidence will help to inform the Council's choice of "preferred options" at the next stage. However, before this can happen, people need to be given the chance to comment on the appraisal and to challenge the results. The Options Appraisal Report is therefore also subject to consultation.

INT:Q1 Do you have any comments on the preliminary SA of the options for the AAP? Please refer to the separate Options Appraisal Report for details of the SA carried out at this stage and the results for each "reasonable" Option identified. If you are commenting on the appraisal of a particular Option, rather than the appraisal process generally, please give the Option reference number.

1.7 Improving the Town Centre in the short, medium and long term

Whilst the emerging Area Action Plan for the town centre will take a strategic approach to identify and support development opportunities in the medium and long term, it will also provide the basis upon which particular development opportunities can be promoted. This will help to inform the existing workstreams of delivering social, economic and environmental improvements in the short and medium term through the production of the three key priorities:-

1. Development of a marketing tool, including redesigning Walsall.com, establishing key messages to be promoted to active investors and developers

in order to promote investment and the retention of businesses in the town centre, as well improving the public image, raising the profile of the town centre and tackling negative perceptions

2. A number of both internal and externally-led Town Centre Management groups have been working together for a number of years, focusing on improving the day-to-day operational and management programmes.
3. Business support – Walsall Council works alongside key agents and partners to provide a bespoke package of business support to both existing and potential new businesses to the town centre.

The Council, working in conjunction with the private sector led Town Team and other stakeholders, will produce a yearly Business Plan clearly defining workstreams together with key performance indicators and economic outputs to meet existing and imminent customers' demands and needs.

1.8 Alignment with the Council's priorities

The objectives of the Town Centre AAP support the three corporate priorities set out in the Walsall Council Corporate Plan 'Building Pride in Walsall', as follows.

1.8.1 Communities and Neighbourhoods

- By delivering the basis for a sustainable Borough, in terms of the economy and social inclusion;
- By contributing to housing provision and the choice of housing types and tenures in the Borough;
- By improving facilities and opportunities for the community of the Borough and helping to support the provision and improvement of infrastructure;
- By involving the community (through extensive consultation and participation) in the planning of the town centre and in its place in the Borough; and
- By improving the appearance and functioning of the Borough's 'shop-window', helping to make it more attractive and promoting the Borough as a place where people aspire to live.

1.8.2 Economy

- By providing for retail development to better serve the Borough / catchment area populations and to retain and strengthen the town centre's market share;
- By providing for office development to strengthen and diversify the Borough's economy;
- By providing for educational, cultural and leisure facilities accessible to all sections of the community;
- By providing increased employment and training opportunities in the most accessible location to serve the catchment area and to benefit the maximum number of people;
- By improving the economy and image of the town centre, to increase the prospects for continuing future investment and make the town centre more and more attractive for shoppers, visitors, businesses and investors; and
- By promoting the town centre as the shop-window and service centre for the Borough as a whole to promote investment in Walsall generally.

1.8.3 Health and Wellbeing:

- By encouraging investment in the location in the Borough that is most accessible by a choice of means of transport and where one trip can fulfil several purposes, to maximize access to opportunities and social inclusion whilst minimizing transport emissions;
- By promoting educational, cultural and leisure facilities to offer the maximum possible opportunities to the community;
- By supporting an attractive and safe environment in the place that is the most visited in the Borough; and
- By encouraging civic pride.
-

1.9 Key evidence consulted

A list of key evidence is provided on the Council website at www.walsall.gov.uk/planning_2026

INT:Q2 Is there any other evidence you think should be used to inform the AAP?
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2. What is Walsall Town Centre?

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an introduction into the context of Walsall town centre by looking at its location and role within the wider Borough. It also covers the key challenges which are facing the town centre. This chapter includes options around the proposed boundary for the AAP for your consideration.

Jargon Buster

- **Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS):** a strategic plan which sets out the long term visions and targets for the Black Country.
- **The Primary Shopping Area (PSA):** The area where retail development is concentrated.
- **Catchment area:** The area and population from which a facility or region attracts visitors or customers

2.2 Context

Walsall town centre is located centrally within the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall. This Borough, along with Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Dudley make up the Black Country, which covers 356 km², forming the western part of the West Midlands Metropolitan Area and the largest conurbation outside London. **Figure 2** shows the location of Walsall within the West Midlands.



Figure 2.1: Walsall Town Centre in Borough/ West Midlands context

2.3 The role of the town centre

Walsall is defined as a Town Centre in Walsall UDP (2005) and as a Strategic Centre in the Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 1 (2008) and the Black Country Core Strategy (2011). It plays a sub-regional role as the main centre for the Borough for comparison shopping and other town centre uses. It also serves a role in meeting the needs of adjacent communities for convenience shopping and local amenities and services.

2.4 Walsall Town Centre Boundary

The AAP will need to define the area to which policies in the plan will apply, whilst recognising links to the surrounding area. The extent of Walsall Town Centre is designated by the 'saved' policies of Walsall Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS). The Town Centre Boundary also includes the Primary Shopping Area (PSA), the area in which retail development is focussed.

Figure 2.2 shows the boundary for the strategic centre as used in the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS), and is based on the UDP Town Centre boundary. It would therefore be a logical starting point for the AAP to be based on this boundary. However, there could also be a case for expanding the boundary to include important surrounding areas, or indeed to shrink the boundary to make the centre more compact.

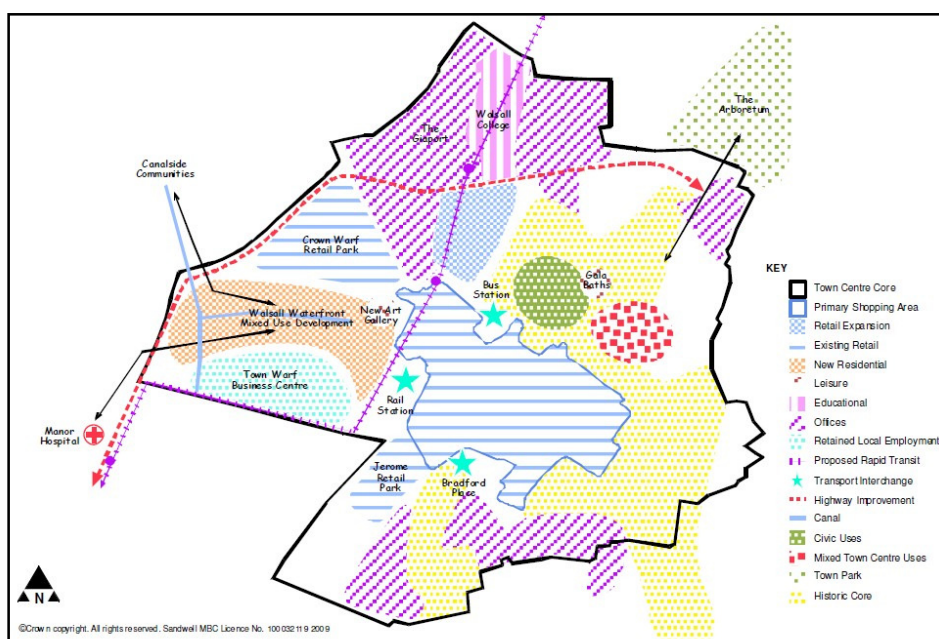


Figure 2.2: Walsall Town Centre BCCS boundary

<u>The Town Centre Boundary</u>	
Town Centre Boundary Option 1: Retain the current extent of the Town Centre Boundary	Implications: The AAP continues to cover the extent of the Town Centre as defined in the UDP and BCCS
Town Centre Boundary Option 2: Increase the current extent of the Town Centre Boundary	Implications :Increasing the area the AAP covers may make it harder to deliver transformational change across the whole of the town centre
Town Centre Boundary Option 3: Decrease the current extent of the Town Centre Boundary	Implications: AAP policies will be concentrated on a smaller area, but it may be harder to achieve floorspace targets as set out in the BCCS

TCB:Q1 Which of the above options do you agree with most, and why?

TCB:Q2 If you think the boundary should be changed please explain to us how and provide any evidence you have to support the need for this change?

2.5 The Catchment area

Walsall town centre serves an extensive primary catchment area that includes most of the Borough, extending to Cannock in the north and to the edge of West Bromwich to the south. In June 2010 the primary catchment area was recorded as having a total population of 417,000, which is significantly above the major town average (GVA Grimley 2010). The centre provides over 650 comparison and convenience shops, as well as service outlets, occupying over 215,000 sq m (2.3 million sq ft) gross floorspace – it is almost seven times the size of the next largest centre in the Borough, Brownhills. It must be noted however that the centre achieves no higher than 45% market share of its retail catchment expenditure, losing the highest loss of market share to Wolverhampton, Birmingham City Centre and out-of-centre developments.

2.6 Profile of the catchment population

Walsall's catchment area is the least affluent of any sub-regional centre in the West Midlands region. There is substantial deprivation in the inner areas of Walsall, affecting those who are most likely to use the centre most frequently. This is a reflection of the area's economy, which has an above average dependence on a manufacturing industry that has been vulnerable to decline.

Walsall also has an above average proportion of the population under 20 years of age and over retirement age, with 20.9% of the population of the Borough under 16 (compared to 18.7% nationally) and 17.6% over the age of 65 (compared to 16.5% nationally) (Office of National Statistics 2010). However the percentage of people aged 20-34 is lower than nationally, indicating that the proportion of residents of working age is low. This suggests a need to ensure services and facilities are provided that cater towards these demographic groups, whilst meeting the needs of all sectors of the population.

2.7 The continuing challenge for Walsall town centre

- The public and some investors currently have a negative view of the town centre that will need to be reversed in order to attract investment
- There is a need to improve the economy – Walsall's economy has significantly under-performed against the national and regional average over the past 10 years. Between 1998-2008, when the UK was experiencing a long unbroken spell of economic and employment growth, total employment in Walsall fell 2.5%, with full-time employment declining by 4.4% (Ekosgen 2010)
- There is a need to improve the affluence of the catchment population – Walsall currently ranks 187th out of 200 comparable centres (GVA Grimley 2010), while 42.8% of residents in the town centre catchment area are categorised in the 'hard pressed' demographic, which is almost twice the national average (LSH 2007)
- There is a need to reverse the rising levels of unemployment – figures state that Walsall's unemployment rate is 10.9% compared to 8.7% regional average and 7.7% national average (July 2010 – June 2011 NOMIS) and therefore we need to create jobs to address this issue. There are also issues with relatively low skill levels, as 19.5% of working age people have no qualifications compared to

15.1% in the West Midlands and 11.3% nationally, meaning that local businesses may have to recruit staff from elsewhere.

- There is a need to reverse the low demand for space – in mid-2009 there were 8 potential retail end users identifying Walsall as a required location (below the average of 21 for other centres), ranking the town 150th out of 200 (GVA Grimley 2009a)
- There is a need to reduce the vacancy rate – at the end of 2010 Walsall had the highest retail vacancy rate amongst large and medium-sized centres in the region, at 26.8% (up 8.2% in 12 months) against the West Midlands average of 19%. It is also the second highest vacancy rate for large towns in the country (national average is 16.9%) (LDC 2010).

3. The Vision for Walsall Town Centre

This chapter introduces the vision and objectives for the town centre before asking stakeholders if this aligns with their aspirations for Walsall.

Jargon Buster

- **Strategic Centre:** Important shopping and service centres defined in the Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands. They are especially important for comparison shopping but often have some convenience shopping and are proposed to be the focus for retail and office growth and to provide major leisure and cultural facilities.
- **Comparison Shopping:** the provision of items not obtained on a frequent basis. These include clothing, footwear and household goods.

3.1 A Vision for the Town Centre

The starting point for the AAP is a clear vision for the future of Walsall town centre which will be driven by the delivery of a series of objectives.

The Vision and objectives will be used as a basis for taking forward the drafting of the AAP and testing the policies. Consistency with the Vision, Sustainability Principles and Spatial Objectives of the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) along with Walsall Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) will be critical.

The BCCS has the following vision for Walsall town centre:

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

AV:Q1 Do you agree with the vision? If not, why not? What is your vision for the Town Centre?

3.2 Area Action Plan Objectives

The AAP proposes **10 objectives** for the future of Walsall town centre:

1. Establish and allocate a series of high quality, ambitious and deliverable proposals for Walsall Town Centre that will enable Walsall to maximise its economic potential creating a thriving and prosperous centre that creates job opportunities for the residents of the Borough,

2. Enhance and maximise Walsall's competitiveness for investment, both in its role as a sub-regional centre and in respect of competing with out-of-centre developments,

3. Increase the choice, quality and diversity of the town centre retail offer in order to meet the needs of all sectors of the population. To secure a mix of occupiers in the town centre through the provision of units of sufficient size and quality in suitable locations to meet the requirements of modern retailers,

4. Diversify and strengthen the economic base, promote new ways of working and deliver a strong office market that provides high standard office accommodation in suitable locations to meet the needs of existing businesses and to attract new businesses to the area, accompanied by training and conference facilities,

5. Strengthen the current cultural offer through increasing the mix of uses within the town centre such as a cinema, performance venues and community facilities (e.g. weddings and banqueting facilities), complemented by leisure uses such as restaurants, cafes and bars in order to provide an attractive centre for visitors both day and night

6. Support businesses to increase employment opportunities, skills and aspirations through high quality jobs in a variety of sectors, supported by good links with education and training providers in the town centre,

7. Improve accessibility to and within the centre for all sectors of the community, through the provision of integrated transport and enhanced cycling and pedestrian links,

8. Protect areas and buildings of historical importance while delivering high quality sustainable design that is well integrated and encourages greater activity in the town centre with innovative and high quality design and architecture at the core,

9. Promote the sustainability of the centre by delivering environmental infrastructure and improvements that will deliver a range of benefits,

10. Transform the experience and perception of Walsall town centre for those who shop, work, visit, invest and live in Walsall through measures such as improved public realm, civic spaces, quality of place, pedestrian access and security alongside the active promotion of the centre and organisation of community events.

AV:Q2 Do you agree with the AAP objectives? If you disagree, why?

AV:Q3 Are there any other objectives that should be considered as part of the AAP?