

**Urban Design**

'The art of making places. Urban design involves the design buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes, in villages, towns and cities, and the establishment of frameworks and processes that facilitate successful development'.

**Landscape**

'The appearance of land, including its shape, form, colours and elements, the way these (including those of streets) components combine in a way that is distinctive to particular localities, the way they are perceived, and an area's cultural and historical associations'.

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*'A Framework document to set out ideas for environmental improvements to enhance the Stone Town Centre'*

# Stage 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of urban design & landscape framework

The aim of 'Stone Town Centre Vision - Urban Design & Landscape Framework' is to provide a proactive and creative discussion document leading towards the creation of a broad, long term, framework for the future of Stone Town Centre, within which detailed policies and proposals can be further developed through future development briefs and/or masterplans for specific sites.

This document aims to stimulate thinking and discussion, to apply 'joined up thinking' and to help decide how town centre issues could be tackled. The Borough Council cannot do this alone, to be successful we must build a shared vision with existing and potential business, investors, public bodies, a wide range of service providers, residents and users of the centre; all of whom make vital contributions to continued success.

This document has four main purposes:

- To provide a clear statement of the Council's aspirations for Stone town centre;
- To inform those who live, work and play in the area that the Council is considering the future improvement and development of the town centre in a comprehensive manner, and provide an opportunity for them to comment;
- To inform future investors and stakeholders as to the intended direction of Stone's potential development, providing a context within which they can plan ahead and invest;
- To promote high standards of design throughout the town centre.

The content of this document, once adopted by the Borough Council, will form the basis of discussion with relevant planning applicants for sites in Stone town centre.

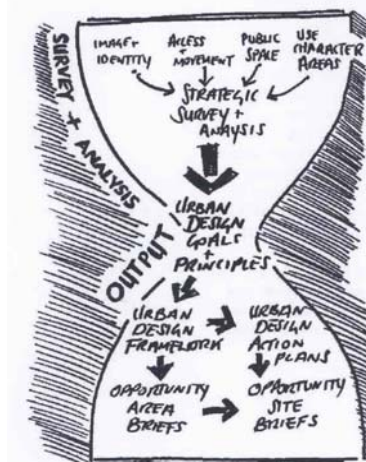
## 1.2 Methodology

This Urban Design & Landscape Framework will **define the study area** and will be focused on the physical fabric of Stone town centre – *its built forms, spaces, associated activities, pedestrian and traffic movements*, as a means of understanding how Stone town centre functions and continues to evolve at a *strategic* level.

**Extensive survey and analysis** will be carried out to provide an insight into the physical design strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing Stone town centre both today and in the future. The framework will highlight the underlying historical urban design elements/issues that have shaped the town centre.

After identifying the urban design issues from survey and analysis, the document will establish broad **urban design principles and actions** that provide opportunities for tackling those issues, consolidating the town centre environment and improving its physical boundaries.

The **urban design & landscape framework** will provide a starting point for urban design thinking at the detailed level, guiding development/design decisions, area/site specific development briefs and masterplans, which will be undertaken in the future as the need arises for development **opportunity and landscape enhancement areas/sites**.



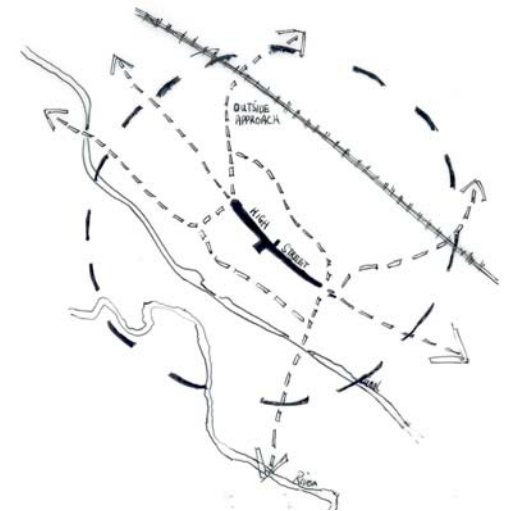
➤ Diagram showing the methods.

## 1.3 Defining the study area

As a starting point for this study, the town centre is roughly defined as an circular area extending outwards from the central point (Market Place) in a 400 metre radius. This spatial measure is commonly used to define a comfortable walking distance for a pedestrian, allowing the analysis to response to the human scale and social needs from the outset.

However, this definition of the town centre should not be considered fixed. Town centre activities are likely to extend further along main transport corridors under the influence of town centre activities and will generally evolve over time with incremental development changes.

The study area is show on the concept plan below and aerial photograph on the opposite page.



➤ An conceptual diagram of the study area.



➤ An aerial photograph of Stone town centre showing the study area.

## 1.4 Past & present

The Town of Stone was named after the pile of stones raised on the graves of the Princes killed in 665 AD by their father, King Wulfhere of Mercia, because of their conversion to Christianity.

Stone is a small market town situated in the Trent Valley, midway between the Potteries and Stafford. Its origins are probably attributable to the Augustinian Priory established in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century. Although, its development was subsequently associated with respectively the coaching route, the canal and the railway. The modern town retains a lively and pleasant character although it has experienced many changes throughout its development.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the town served as an important resting place along the London to Chester highway. To accommodate the traveller, many inns were established in the High Street. The most important was the Crown Hotel, now Listed as a building of historical and architectural importance.



➤ *The Crown Hotel – Grade II\* Listed Building (before pedestrianisation), designed by Henry Holland in 1780.*

The Trent and Mersey Canal, was opened to link the navigable River Trent to the Bridgwater Canal at Preston Brook and hence to the River Mersey. From 1771 onwards, the town grew and prospered as an important commercial centre on the canal.

The main hub of activity is along the High Street with its many groups of buildings. In the past, the High Street was shorter, extending only from the top of Stafford Street to the Crown Hotel, and was known as Market Street. Market Place then occupied the area where the road originally turned south to join Crown Street. In 1998, the entire High Street and Market Place were pedestrianised.

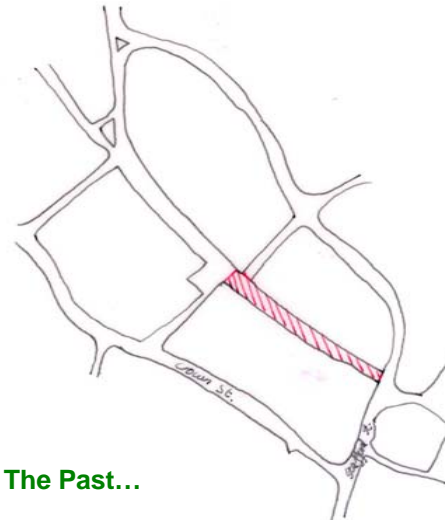
The town centre core area is within the Stone Conservation Area and provides a unique and varied inheritance of buildings and public spaces.



➤ *1974 High Street.*

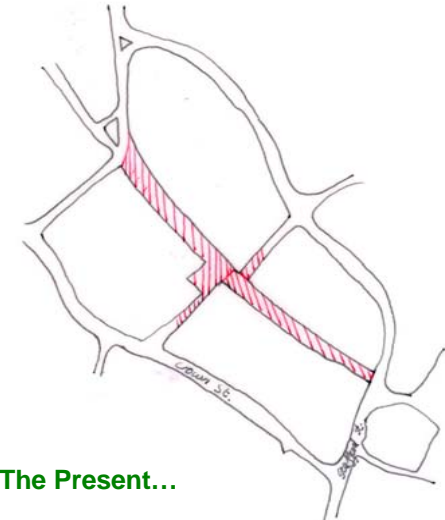


➤ *1975 Photo of Stone Town Centre taken from St. Michael Church.*



### The Past...

➤ *Prior to 1998, High Street was shorter, extending only from the top of the present Stafford Street to the Crown Hotel, and was known as Market Street.*



### The Present...

➤ *After 1998, the entire High Street and Market Place were pedestrianised.*

Stone town centre continues to play an important part in the economy of the Borough. The town acts as a focus for retail, commercial and industrial uses. Support services have also developed in the town.

Recent developments have included; the 'pedestrianisation of High Street', 'Waters Edge – a canal-side residential development', 'The Moorings – canal-side residential development', 'Trent Court & Trentside Clinic', 'Safeway Superstore' and 'Refurbishment of Earl St.Vincent Square'.

Today, Stone is still a thriving market town with an expanding population of 14,500.



➤ Pedestrianised of High Street.



➤ The Moorings – canal-side residential development.



➤ Trent Court & Trentside Clinic.



➤ Waters Edge ( old Trent hospital) – canal-side residential development...conversion of the old Trent hospital (Grade II Listed) to residential.



➤ Safeway Superstore.



➤ Refurbishment of Earl St.Vincent Square.

## 1.5 Vision of the future

As towns (including market towns) throughout the UK compete increasingly with one another for shoppers, businesses and jobs, Stone must ensure that it can continue to encourage and accommodate the needs of such activities into the future.

However, the ongoing process of development and change within Stone town centre can **either add to or detract from the existing character and ultimately determine the social, environmental and economic sustainability of the town.** It is this process that we seek to understand and influence in order to ensure a better quality town centre for all.

This Urban Design Framework is a useful tool for developing and promoting a sustainable town centre for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. **This document will provide a clear design vision to reinforce and support the physical structure of the town centre, building upon its strengths as a historic market town.** This can be achieved by recognising the strengths and weaknesses of the town centre, as well as identifying specific development and enhancement opportunities. These opportunities will be framed to reflect and build upon the distinctive historic character of the town centre.

### Our Vision:

*'To create Stone town centre as a quality place for shopping, working, living and playing and to promote an economical, social and environmental sustainable town centre for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' and beyond.*