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

Stage 3: Urban Design Principles

The urban design issues and analysis explored in stage 2 have highlighted the town centre's strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities for development and improvement. From this, we have formulated a set of strategic urban design 'goals' for Stone town centre and a set of accompanying principles for achieving these goals:

Our Goal for 'Image & Identity':

'To strengthen the positive image and identity of the town centre as a means of improving local community, visitor and investor attraction and use of its facilities.'

Our Goal for 'Access & Movement':

'To create a town centre that encourages the use of public transport, improves the environment for cyclists and pedestrian.'

Our Goal for 'Public Spaces & Activities':

'To improve the quality of the public realm by enhancing the interest, vitality and enclosure of town centre streets and squares as well as preserving, enhancing and integrating quality green open spaces.'

Our Goal for 'Mix of Uses & frontages':

'To provide a coherent mix of uses and frontages, and ensure social and economic vitality throughout the week and in the evenings.'

These proposals constitute an integral part of the Vision for Stone Town Centre and are summarised graphically in the urban design framework (see Stage 4.1). The proposals will be used to inform the production of more detailed design guides, development briefs and masterplans for identified opportunity areas and sites (see Stage 4.2)



➤ *'Image & Identity': Market Square, Stafford ... lessons can be learnt from here.*



➤ *'Access & Movement': Church Lane, Stafford ... lessons can be learnt from here.*



➤ *'Public Spaces & Activities': Exchange Square, Manchester City Centre... lessons can be learnt from here.*



➤ *'Mix Uses & Frontages': Brindley Place, Birmingham ... lessons can be learnt from here.*

3.1 Principles: Image & identity

Our Goal for 'Image & Identity':

'To strengthen the positive image and identity of the town centre as a means of improving local community, visitor and investor attraction and use of its facilities.'

3.1.1 Town Centre Assets

General promotion

P1 Enhance existing 'assets' and develop new roles and reasons for visiting them to encourage greater use by local residents and visitors.

P2 All new development in the town centre should seek to reinforce existing assets and complement and enhance their townscape setting.

Strengthening the civic heart

P3 Consolidate the role of the Market Place as the focus of town centre activities.

P4 Develop a diverse programme of outdoor activities and events for the Market Place to generate social interaction.



➤ P3: Market Square associated with market sales create a local identity, Stafford town centre.

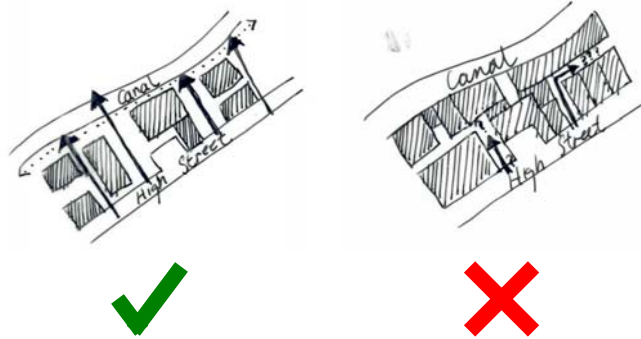


➤ P4: Street performance to increase social interaction, Greengate St, Stafford town centre.

Blue Assets: Trent & Mersey Canal and River Tent

P5 Improve legibility and connections to these 'blue assets'.

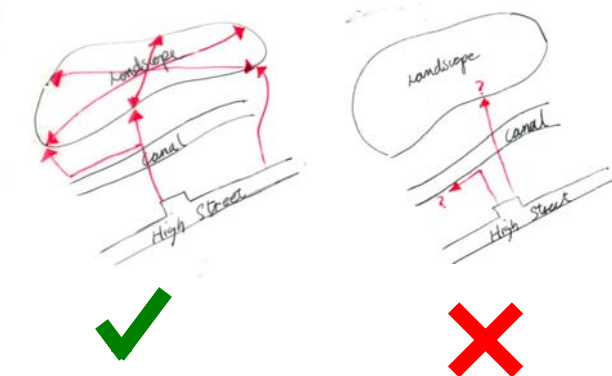
P6 Ensure new development relates to the waterside and maximises use of these assets for recreational and visual amenity purposes.



Green Assets: Landscape

P7 Improve legibility and connections to these 'green assets' e.g. develop a pedestrian route from High Street to green assets.

P8 Develop footpath networks within the landscape.



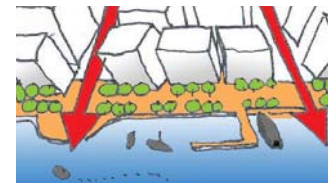
Landmark & Vistas

P9 Develop and enhance landmark buildings or features along major pedestrian routes/squares (e.g. High Street & Market Place) and canal towing path.

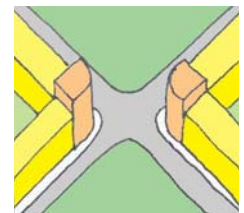
P10 Ensure views and vistas are align with such landmarks to aid orientation.

P11 Create open quality of views across towing path areas, develop a positive visual link between High Street and canal.

P12 Develop buildings with special corner design to create local landmarks particularly where they terminate street vistas.



➤ P11: Direct view to water-edge provide linkage to town centre core.



➤ P12: Corners heightened to create landmark feature.

➤ P12: Corner detailing, Gaolgate retail development, Stafford town centre.



➤ P9: A local landmark, Victoria Park, Stafford.

3.1 Principles: Image & identity

Heritage Attractions

Conserve, enhance and promote the character and fabric of the historic environment in the town centre, ensuring that new development compliments and does not detract from its historic character with regard to use and appearance:

P13 Promote historic and heritage features e.g. repair and re-use vacant/run-down historic buildings along alley ways into apartments, office, retail or public uses etc.

P14 Conserve historic fabric by combining old and new structure/architectural design. New architecture must complement and respect the historic context of Stone town centre.

P15 Establish historic trails to link places together and to attract tourism e.g. link Market Place to historic boat building yard along canal.



➤ P13: Canal basin provides opportunities and a new focus for a new mixed use quarter, Brindley Place, Birmingham.



➤ P13: The Canal-side Mill in Manchester Canal has been converted for high quality flats.

➤ P14: Redevelop redundant warehouse to provide leisure and entertainment space, and public amenity in front of building, Canary Wharf, London.

3.1.2 A Positive Welcome

Approach routes and gateways

Enhance approach routes and gateways for all modes of transport. Consider signage, hard and soft landscaping, lighting and public art as a means of definition and enhancement:

P16 Investigate potential for enhancing approach routes: Stafford Street, Lichfield Street, Church Street, Christchurch Way, Radford Street, Station Road, Newcastle Street and Crown Street.

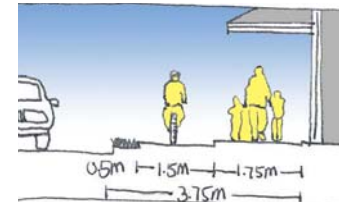
P17 Develop gateway status at G4, 5, 6, 7 & 8.

P18 Develop a design guide to assist in achieving a high quality design of public transport nodes (train station & environs and future bus 'hub') and bus stops in order to raise their status and aid their physical and visual integration within the town centre.

P19 Overcome the physical and perceptual barrier of ring road i.e. Christchurch Way and Crown Street.

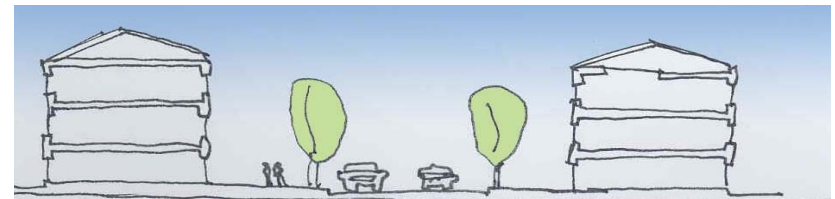
P20 Pedestrian and cyclist priority for enhancement and expand existing High Street pedestrianisation.

P21 Develop clear sight lines to town centre landmarks and activities.



➤ P20: Section showing the separation between cars, cyclist and pedestrians.

➤ P20: Cyclist and pedestrian can live together safely, Stafford.



➤ P16 & 19: Boulevard concept along approach routes can improve the environment for all mode of transport.

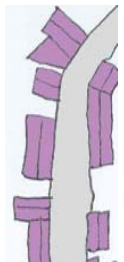
A 'friendly edge'

Provide a 'friendly face' to the edge of the town centre. Avoid and 'design out' blank walls and unsightly surface car parks and service areas where possible:

P22 Ensure that development around the perimeter of the town centre provides a 'friendly edge' to the ring road. Buildings should face onto the ring road and provide an attractive edge; blank frontages and services yards should be avoided.

P23 Ensuring good landscaping along busy traffic routes or mix uses at ground floor to enable a active frontages.

P24 Apply guidance to ongoing and future site briefs and development control negotiations.



➤ Narrow pavement must be avoided...unfriendly edge.



➤ P22: Ensuring efficient space for pedestrians and cyclists movement, and planting to reduce noise from traffic.



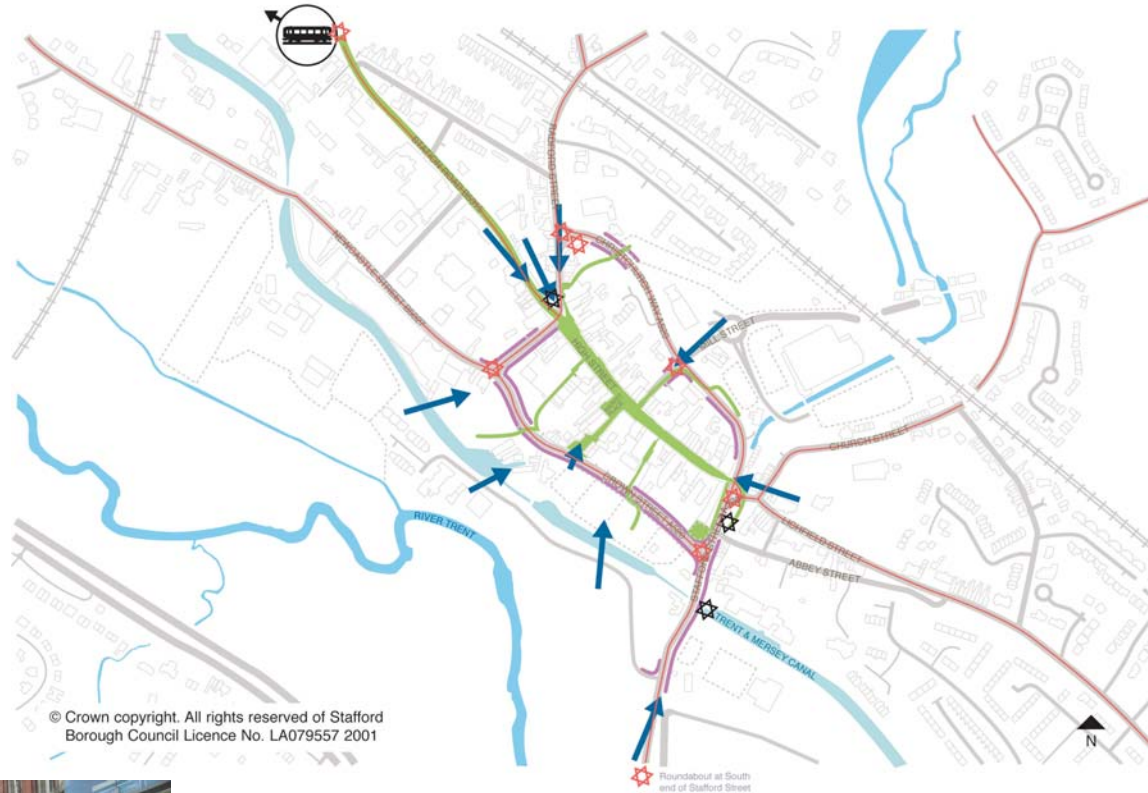
➤ P22: A friendly edge with wide pavement and high quality landscaping, Stafford town centre.



➤ P22: A friendly edge with wide pavement and high quality hard landscaping, Stafford town centre.

Proposal plan 1: Town Centre Welcome

The proposal plan below illustrates a broad 'image & identity' design framework to strength the image and identity of Stone town centre. The framework should be implemented with consideration of detailed urban design principles (P1 – P24).



TOWN CENTRE WELCOME

Approach Routes to be Improved / Enhanced

- Vehicle / Pedestrian
- Pedestrian approach from transport nodes

Gateways

- Existing - Improve enhance
- Potential - Develop

Town Centre Edge

- Create a "Friendly" Edge
- Create / Maintain interesting views into Town Centre

Our Goal for 'Access & Movement':

'To create a town centre that encourages the use of public transport, improves the environment for cyclists and pedestrian.'

Pedestrian friendly town centre

Provide attractive, safe and direct pedestrian routes into town centre. Integrate walking into transport and land use planning (see proposal plan 2 opposite):

P25 Further physical and visual improvement to the pedestrian town centre approaches from the train station, car parks and bus stops e.g. introduce 'raised level crossing'.

P26 Improve pedestrian linkages from the town centre core to the canal, St Michael's Church, river and associate green assets.

P27 Investigate the potential for improving pedestrian crossings and physical links into High Street from Crown Street and Christchurch Way.

P28 Expand the existing High Street pedestrian area to Mill Street and the access route from Crown Street to Market Place.

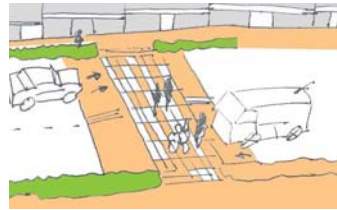
P29 Pedestrianisation of Granville Square.

P30 Establish a network of Street and square (including blue & green assets).

P31 Ensure that streets are open to all people, avoiding creation of dead ends or closures at any time of day.

P32 Introduce shared pedestrian/cyclist/vehicle streets with quality paving in and around town centre e.g. Crown Street and Christchurch Way.

P33 Improve and upgrade secondary route, especially historic alley ways, via surface detailing, planting, signage, street furniture and introduce local shops along it.



➤ P25: 'Raised level crossing' can slow down vehicles and improve the pedestrian environment.



➤ P27: Improve pedestrian crossing, Stafford town centre.



➤ P32: Quality paving, landscaping & street furniture.



➤ Existing historic alleyways are very unattractive and deserted at most of the time. Therefore uncomfortable to walk through.



➤ P33: Improved and upgraded alleyways with local shops, street furniture, clear and safe to walk through.

3.2 Principles: Access & Movement

Cyclists

P34 Provide a cycle network into and around the town centre especially along the canal towing path.

P35 Improve cycle links to green and blue assets and train station.

P36 Provide cycle parking at key destination e.g. Train Station, Safeway superstore and along High Street.



➤ P36: Designated cycle route, Stafford.



➤ P36: Cycle parking can be considered within future development, Stafford.

Access for all

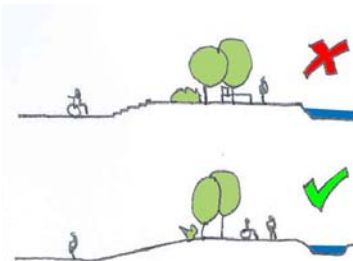
Create a barrier free environment by ensuring transport provision is available to all, improving access, wayfinding and parking facilities for the mobility impaired (elderly, people with disabilities and parents with children):

P37 Improve pedestrian routes with paving and provide ramps where appropriate.

P38 Relocate the existing dedicated parking spaces at the corner of Stafford and Crown Street to Mill Street area.

P39 Address the needs of the mobility impaired through design and construction.

P40 Develop a 'designing for an accessible Stone town centre – access for all' design guide in consultation with appropriate user groups.



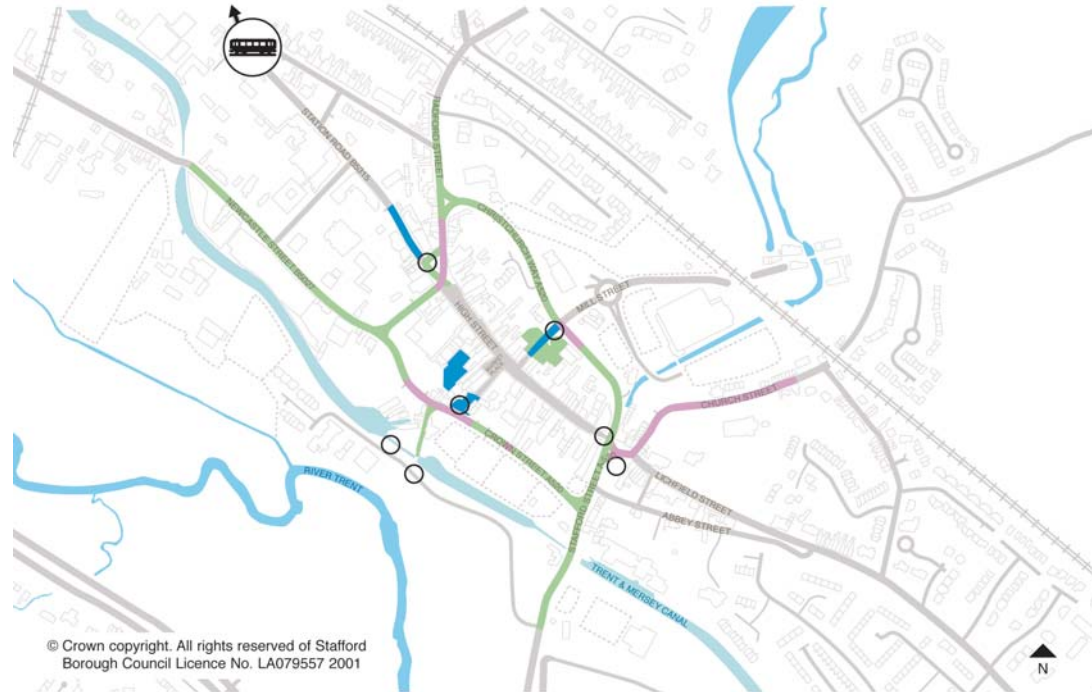
➤ P37: Introduce ramps at right location.







➤ P37: Introduce ramps at towpath to allow people with disabilities access to canal, Stafford.

Proposal plan 2: Pedestrian & Cyclist & Disable Access & Movement

The proposal plan below illustrates a broad 'access & movement' design framework to strength the access and movement of Stone town centre. The framework should be implemented with consideration of detailed urban design principles (P25 – P52).



PEDESTRIAN and CYCLIST and DISABLED ACCESS and MOVEMENT

-  Improve pedestrian environment
reduce perceived vehicle dominance
-  Improve wayfinding
-  Potential pedestrian priority (share surface)
-  Potential pedestrianisation

3.2 Principles: Access & Movement

Public Transport

Encourage greater use of public transport by improving service quality and level of provision:

P41 Investigate the potential for a town centre shuttle bus route that passes the major assets and future development. (see proposals map 3, opposite).

P42 Improve existing bus stops quality and approach route to High Street.

P43 Well designed signage from all bus stops to direct people to the town centre core and attractions places.

P44 Improve the area around railway station (with free parking) and approach routes.

P45 Well-designed sign posting from railway station to direct people to the town centre core.



➤ **P43 & 45:**
Well designed
signage,
Stone town
centre.

Private Transport

P46 Limit vehicular congestion by reducing non-essential vehicle movements within the town centre and giving greater priority to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and buses.

P47 Implement a range of traffic-calming measures such as surfacing, speed tables and smaller corner radii.



➤ **P46: Limit
lorry access at
peak times
e.g. 8-10am &
4-6pm.**

Car Parking

P48 Rationalise and improve the quality of public parking provision:

P49 Provide well-designed sign posting at car parks to welcome and direct people to town centre.

P50 Improve the appearance of the existing surface car parks.

P51 Relocate existing car parks for disabled people to Mill Street.

P52 Redevelopment of excess car parking spaces into other uses to promote mixed uses. The loss of car park spaces should be replaced within or adjacent the new development.



➤ **P50: Landscaping can improve the appearance of surface car park.**

Proposal plan 3: Public Transport & Car Park



3.3 Principles: Public Spaces & Activities

Our Goal for 'Public Spaces & Activities':

'To improve the quality of the public realm by enhancing the interest, vitality and enclosure of town centre streets and squares as well as preserving, enhancing and integrating quality green open spaces.'

Network of street & spaces

P53 All streets whether shared or pedestrianised should be efficient in taking people to a space e.g. Market Place, canal and green assets etc.

P54 All spaces (tow paths or squares) should be well connected by streets.

P55 Avoid dead end streets.

P56 Streets are for people and roads are for vehicles.

P57 A Good network of streets and squares should minimise pedestrian conflict with traffic. Where possible, introduce 'kerb to kerb' (raise level toucan crossing) to slow down traffic and allow pedestrians to cross more safely.

P58 Identify new spaces (especially at the back of the High Street) to fill the existing gaps e.g. new spaces between High Street and canal or link them together with pedestrian streets.

Proposal plan 4: Network of Street & Spaces

The proposal plan below illustrates a broad 'public spaces & activities' design framework to strength the public spaces and activities of Stone town centre. The framework should be implemented with consideration of detailed urban design principles (P53 – P81).



NETWORK of STREET and SQUARE

-  Steets (pedestrianised or share surface)
-  Streets - Improve
-  Squares / Public Space
-  New Square with Mix of Uses
-  Raised Level Toucan Crossing



> P52, 53, 56, 57, 59, 61: Exchange Square in Manchester City Centre is well enclosed by its surrounding buildings, well connected to pedestrian streets and has a high standard of landscape design. It is good example of good network of street & square.



> P56 & 60: Well designed street provide a friendly environment for pedestrian and still accommodate vehicles, Liverpool City Centre.

3.3 Principles: Public Spaces & Activities

Well designed public streets & spaces

P59 Public spaces should be well defined by buildings to provide good enclosure and shelter.

P60 Incorporate good landscape design in all street and spaces e.g. floorscape, planting, water features and changes in levels etc.

P61 Redevelop and redesign all existing poor quality secondary routes (see assessment table on p.21).



➤ *P59 & 60: The Exchange Square in Manchester City Centre is a well designed and well used by shoppers.*



➤ *P60: Water fountain in Canary Wharf is a popular place for children in summer.*



➤ *P60: Another Water fountain in Canary Wharf and it creates visual and audio quality for place.*

In & outdoor activities

Public spaces should be safe provide interest and opportunities for social interaction through the day:

P62 Ensure that public spaces are bounded by active frontages. Buildings should face the street, take their primary means of access from it and promote natural surveillance. Blank windowless walls will be resisted.

P63 Promote existing public streets and spaces to continue to provide interesting environments for social interaction e.g. encourage 'sit-out' café along High Street or Market Place to create active frontages.

P64 Develop new public spaces that provide outdoor activities and indoor activities to cater all weather uses e.g. new covered shopping area with indoor public space at Mill Street could be developed.



➤ *P62 & 66: Active frontages and encourage 'sit-out' café to increase social interaction, Greengate Street, Stafford town centre.*



➤ *P64: Indoor shopping spaces & public spaces, Guildhall Shopping Centre, Stafford town centre.*

Floorscape/surfaces

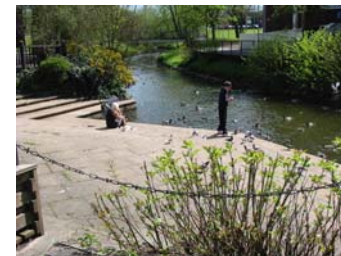
P65 Surfaces or floorscape along key routes (e.g. towpaths and historic alley ways) should be developed and effective to direct pedestrian movement.

P66 Within future development, the choice will be open to reflect the desired character of each development and of the various spaces with them.

P67 In general high quality natural materials will be encouraged and the intention is that these are extended into the public spaces adjacent to the developments.



➤ *P65: Quality paving along towpaths to create excellent riverside, Stafford Victoria Park.*



➤ *P65: Use of quality paving enhances the visual and accessible quality of place...encouraged along High Street and canal-side, Riverside, Stafford.*



➤ *P66: Inserting text to outline the history of the place or into floor paving could enriches the interest of the place, and reinforce local identify. Gaol Square, Stafford town centre.*



➤ *P65: Inserting colour onto floor paving can be attractive and direct people from one place to another...assisting pedestrian movement, public square in British Library, London.*

3.3 Principles: Public Spaces & Activities

Street furniture & signage

Street furniture impacts significantly upon the quality of public spaces, and signage provides information about the place:

P68 As well as addressing issues of durability, maintenance and fitness for purpose, carefully chosen street furniture that is placed with consideration will contribute to the aesthetic and functional qualities of public spaces.

P69 Maintain and expand the use of existing distinctive street furniture and signage throughout the appropriate locations, especially along High Street, Market Place, towpaths and any other new public spaces.

P70 New and well designed street furniture & signage within future developments and spaces are encouraged to create a variety of character areas.



➤ **P68:** Street furniture encourages social interaction and activity, people waiting and use as a meeting place, Canary Wharf.



➤ **P69:** Existing distinctive street furniture should be further promoted throughout the town centre, especially along places with high footfall, Stone town centre.

Planting & Ecology

P71 Unified soft landscaping area throughout public spaces.

P72 Planting should be selected to reflect seasonal changes, including incorporation of trees, flower tubs and displays to provide year-round interest.

P73 The ecological quality of the canal and river should be developed and linked with paths to the town centre core area.



➤ **P71:** Develop unified/linear tree planting along streets and waterside, Salford Quays, Manchester.

Public art

Historical and contemporary examples illustrate the contribution that arts can make to creating a sense of place, stimulating the imagination:

P74 Encourage the commissioning of local artists to create public arts that have local distinctiveness.

P75 Public art proposals should be considered within an overall framework to ensure a balanced and a strategic distribution.

P76 Ensure public arts are visually and physically accessible along streets and within squares.



➤ **P76:** Public art that can be seen and touch, Victoria Park, Stafford.

Lighting

Lighting is an important influence on the character of streets and squares, encouragement of evening activities, as well as a basic security and safety requirement during hours of darkness:

P77 Expand the existing range of distinctive street lighting to the rest of the town.

P78 Encourage creative thinking in the use of new streets, squares and building lighting.

P79 Ensure that the streets and spaces are sufficiently lit to provide a safe environment for all.

P80 Use appropriate lighting to define public art and water features.

P81 Enliven the whole of the area in a visually coherent and interesting manner.



➤ **P78, 79 & 80:** Lit up historic building, Manchester City Centre.



➤ **P78:** Creative thinking in the use of street and square lighting, Market Square, Stafford town centre.

Our Goal for 'Mix of Uses & frontages':

'To provide a coherent mix of uses and frontages, and ensure social and economic vitality throughout the week and in the evenings.'

General use diversity

P82 Encourage mixed use development, especially pedestrian routes and public squares.

P83 Encourage public use (including retail with attractive shop-frontages) on all ground floor level to create active frontage.

P84 Maintain a range of services which are complementary to retail uses, including banks, building societies, solicitors, surveyors and other professional services. Their shop-fronts should be well designed and fit into the Stone Conservation context.

P85 Provide good places to eat and drink available both during the day and night:

- provide more opportunities for small businesses and specialists to set up in the centre; and
- consider licensing to promote street cafés.



➤ **P83:** Ground floor with door and windows should be mixed uses with good soft & hard landscaping (e.g. cafés) to increase footfall and encourage active edges.



➤ **P85:** Section showing the relationship between building, ground floor uses, sitting out area, pedestrian and road...an example of an active friendly edge and friendly environment.



➤ **P83 & 84:** Shop-fronts should be well designed and fit into the Stone Conservation context, Stafford town centre.

Public Amenities

P86 Maintain and promote the following uses within and on the edge of the town centre core areas:

- Community & culture;
- Leisure & entertainment; and
- Education.

P87 Promote the following passive activities with facilities alongside the canal and river areas e.g. with green open spaces:

- Fishing;
- Walking;
- Jogging;
- Cycling;
- Dog Walking;
- Seating; and
- Watching.

P88 Open green spaces can be useable and enjoyable places, and host with rich biodiversity that provide a local area for local educational visit and use.

➤ **P88:** Transform the green open space along the river and canal into a place for...



➤ enjoying...



➤ playing (Cannock Chase, Stepping Stones) ...



➤ learning...



➤ relaxing.



➤ **P87:** Public square along river encourage the public usage.

3.4 Principles: Mix of Uses & Frontages

Residential Uses

Create opportunities for people to move to and live in the town centre:

P89 Encourage housing within and around the town centre.

P90 Improve existing residential stock – upgrade and consolidate as residential blocks.

P91 Develop proposals for conversion of vacant upper floors of shops (along High Street) to residential use.



➤ Comprehensive mixed use scheme with flats above shops, Gloucester Green, Oxford.



➤ A good mixed of uses (including retail units, restaurants and bars) along canal, Brindley Place.

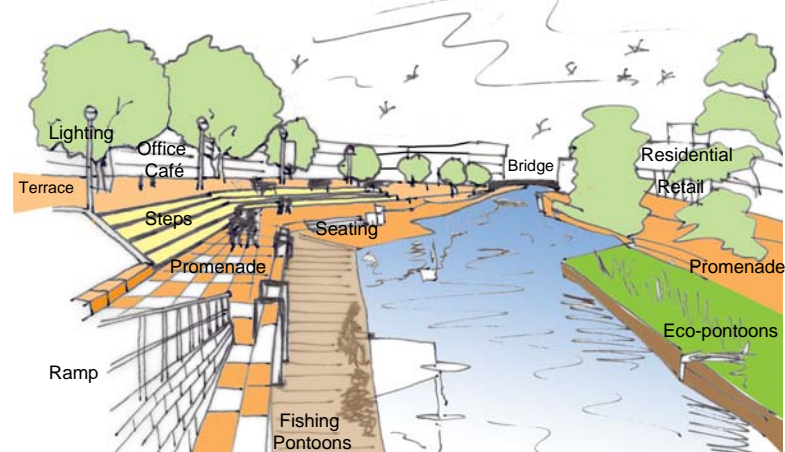
Office Uses

P92 Encourage an increase in the amount of office use in the town centre by clarifying opportunities sites for office development (see 4.2).

P93 Conversion of vacant space above High Street shops into small office units.

P94 Larger commercial comprising solely office uses should be avoided within the town centre core. But, such scale of development may be suitable at town centre satellite locations (e.g. regenerate surface car park along canal), and the ground floor should always be made available for a mixed of uses with outdoor public space to avoid dead area after office hours.

Opening up the waterway would allow greater public access and promote its use for living, working and enjoying.



➤ P94: In the case of large commercial development, it should cooperate with adequate public open space and mix use at ground floor to create lively place at all time.

Retail Uses

P95 Maintain the character, mix and status of the primary shopping core and reinforce/enhance identified secondary shopping areas. (see proposal plan, opposite).

P96 Existing satellite/magnet development (Safeway Superstore) should be supported and new ones encouraged to draw users down new /improved secondary routes. (see proposal plan 5, opposite).

P97 Ensure that shopfronts are designed to respect their host building. (see 'Shopfronts' Adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance).

P98 Encourage the use of vacant shops for temporary displays and community projects.

The Historic Core & Shopping Area

It is important to maintain the status of this strong feature as well as reinforcing and enhancing the wider retail area as a whole. (see proposals plan 5: shopping/retail circuit opposite):

P99 Creation of a Shopping Circuit:

- By promoting a central shopping circuit around the primary shopping area (High Street & Market Place), we can eliminate the need to keep backtracking in order to visit shops on each of the secondary routes.

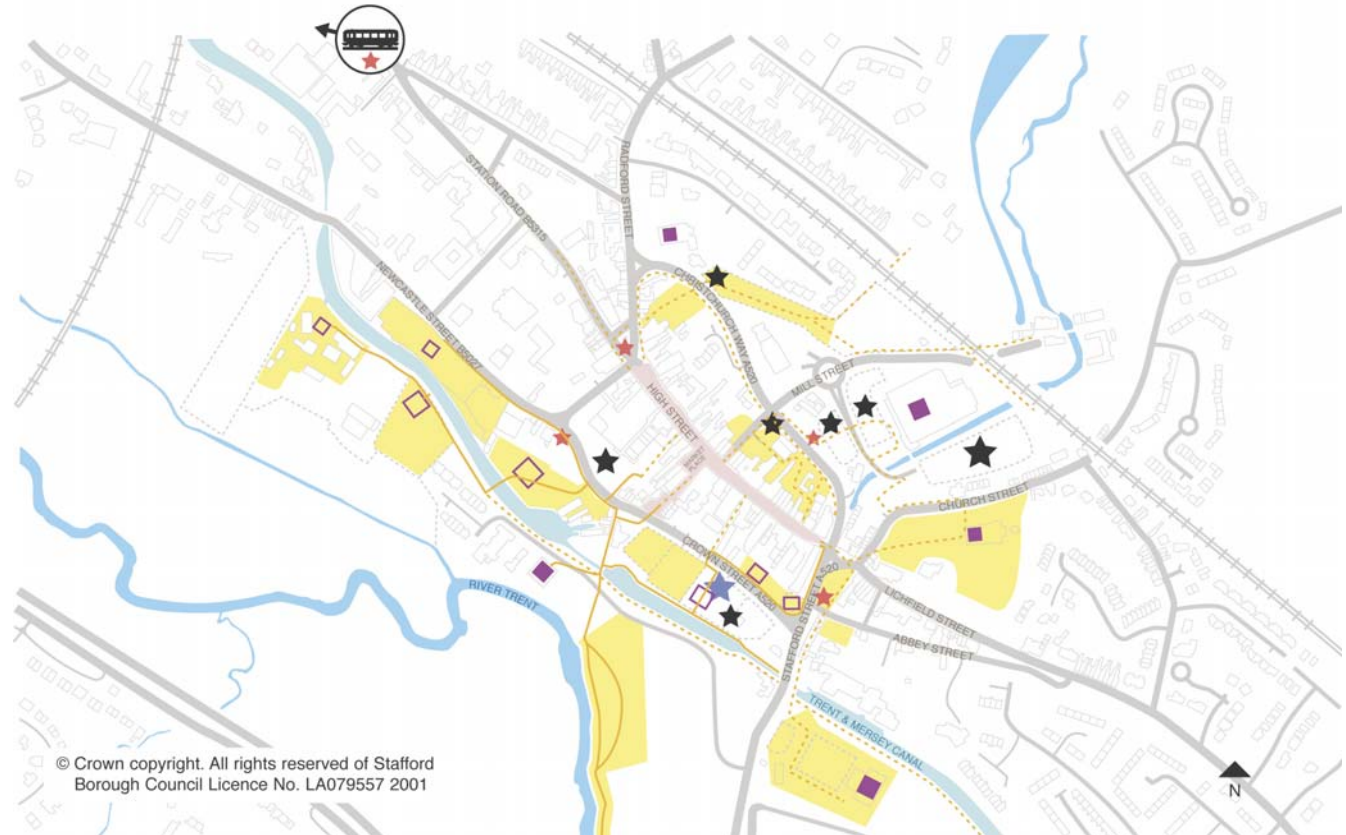
- New sections/infill needed to complete the circuit are identified in the proposal map opposite, as are proposals for renewal/enhancement of existing weaker sections.

- By creating a stronger circuit, 'secondary' declining retail (e.g. historic alley ways) will benefit from increased footfall ultimately strengthening the economic sustainability of these areas.

P100 Use satellite/magnets features, existing use 'magnet/satellite should be maintained and new ones created to draw users down these new/improved secondary routes.

The proposal plan (opposite) illustrates a broad 'mix of uses & frontages' design framework to strength the mix of uses and frontages of Stone town centre. The framework should be implemented with consideration of detailed urban design principles (P82 – P100).

Proposal plan 5: Attraction Trial







ATTRACTION TRAIL



Arrival Points

-  Car Park
-  New Bus 'Hub'
-  Buy Stop

Satellite Facilities

-  Existing
-  Future potential
-  Creation of pedestrian route to connections with town centre core
-  Potential magnet location to encourage footfall

Routes

-  Primary pedestrian routes - retain
-  Existing / potential secondary pedestrian route - enhance / strengthen

+Please also read the leaflet - 'Stone Town Trail' produced by Stafford Borough Council.