

Supplementary Planning Guidance



**LAND OFF
TIPPING STREET**

STAFFORD



Stafford
BOROUGH COUNCIL

June 1999

Foreword

Stafford has seen many changes and I want to ensure that future change improves and adds to what has already been achieved.

Over the last few years our community has enjoyed the transition to the pedestrian environment in the centre of town. People can now roam freely and safely through the heart of the town. This has not only helped to improve business and stimulate private sector investment, but has also created a distinctive and positive image of the town as a whole.

But there is room for more improvements. We must move on and try to take our renaissance another step further. Often I have heard people say that new building has been poorly detailed, insensitive to its surroundings, difficult to walk through. The town is expanding and it is important to ensure that the centre grows the right way. At the heart of our town centre there is an opportunity here to create a new complex of buildings and transform the Tipping Street area as something to be proud of at the south end of the town centre for our community and its visitors. I want to see developers invest in quality buildings and spaces. We have this opportunity to strengthen and revitalise this part of the town centre creating an environment that we can be proud of today, and which our children and grandchildren can value tomorrow.

What happens in the town centre where we live and work concerns everyone. Let us all contribute to the debate about the kind of place we want to see.

This supplementary planning guidance shows the kind of framework for development that should be possible with some thought, care and imagination. It is an easy to read document and the ideas it puts forward can hopefully be seen and understood at a glance.

Roy Osborne

*Deputy Leader Planning and Regeneration
Stafford Borough Council*



Introduction

The town of Stafford continues to grow and places increasing pressure on the town centre to develop to fulfil the changing needs of the population, tourists and other visitors. The site identified in this design guidance occupies an important position in the centre bounded on three sides by major buildings of a civic character but now presenting a major “gap” in the town centre’s built fabric within the historic core of the town.

The site represents a unique opportunity for a major town centre development of which the residents of the Borough may be proud. It is the only area of such a scale available for development in the core of the County town of Stafford. Around the site are smaller areas which could be developed or improved in association with the main site to add to its attraction and setting.

Development of the site provides an opportunity for significant buildings on a site with three prominent frontages. A variety of uses would be acceptable in this area of the town centre. Mixed uses including residential are envisaged to contribute to the activity, security and vitality of the town centre; particularly in the evening.

Vision

The Borough and County Councils wish to promote:-

- A dynamic and prosperous town centre, whose character meets the aspirations of our community and reflects Stafford’s role as a vibrant County and university town.
- A partnership approach to new development with developers and the community to secure positive improvements in the town centre.



View across the site

The Councils have made significant investment in the town centre to increase its attraction. In the future we intend to:-

- Ensure through partnership that the town centre retains the best of its traditional values and character as a County and university town whilst confidently utilising the best of innovation to take us into the new century;
- Enhance a thriving town centre by offering a maximum range of facilities and activities for all, continuing to make Stafford town centre a pleasant place in which to live, shop, visit, work and play;
- Ensure that the town centre is designed, built, landscaped, managed and maintained to a high standard that provides an environment which enhances the quality of life of our citizens and visitors;
- Ensure access for the disabled and by a choice of transport modes, whilst encouraging walking, cycling and use of public transport;
- Ensure that Stafford continues as a safe town centre that has a reputation for excellence, for quality customer care and courtesy and a continuing partnership approach;

The heart of Stafford is its people. We think that the town centre provides valuable services to the 60,000 people living in the town and 150,000 in a wider catchment area surrounding Stafford.

Stafford town centre provides employment for a significant number of people in a whole series of activities, including retailing, the public sector, commerce and leisure.

The town centre has evolved as a unique urban place since the 10th century. Evidence for its rich and varied past can be seen along each street and within each frontage. The churches, the almshouse, town walls, gates, bridges, mills, lockup, Shire Hall and Ancient High House, as well as numerous other listed buildings and areas of archaeological importance, all contribute towards the character of the town.

The pleasantness and safety of the town centre are essential to the town centre's success. If people "feel good" about visiting or working somewhere, they will value it and wish to return. One of the Stafford town centre's key strengths is its human scale. The Councils wish the development of the site to reinforce and build on the existing strengths of the centre and complement Stafford's features and fabric.

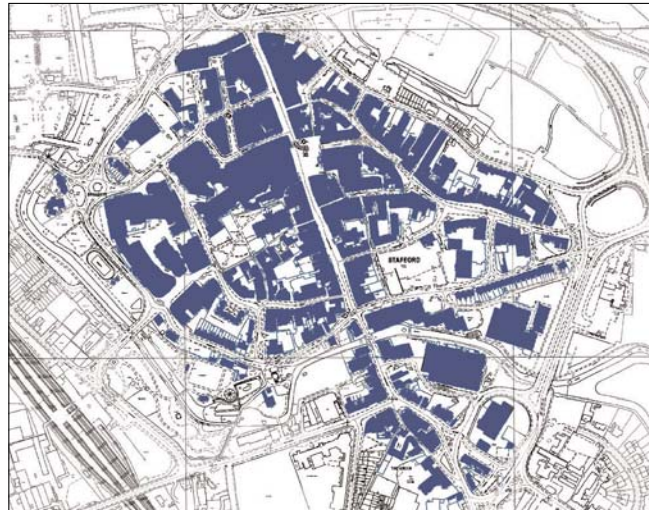


Figure-ground of the Town Centre © Crown Copyright . Stafford Borough Council Licence No. 079537

The Site

The site comprises the Staffordshire County Council and Stafford Borough car parks between South Walls and Tipping Street in Stafford. It is bounded on the west side by Greengate Street Service Road and on the east side by the separate car park area in front of the Magistrates Court. The site also includes No.15 Tipping Street, a Listed Building converted for office use, and the adjacent No.14 which has no particular architectural merit.

The area of the core site is 0.65 hectares



Plan of the site © Crown Copyright . Stafford Borough Council Licence No. 079537

Adjacent Areas

■ The Site ■ Adjacent Areas □ Public Highway Areas

Proposals could also include adjacent areas such as the car park in front of the Magistrates Court and the Probation Office with access off Appleyard Court, and the County Council car park and adjacent areas on the north side of Tipping Street and partly facing Pitcher Bank.

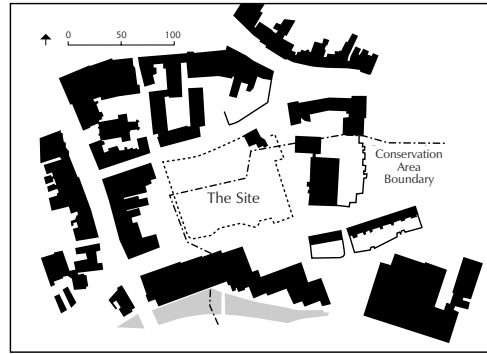
Other sites that could be included through discussion, are the Borough Council's South Walls service yard and the access to the Riverside Recreation Centre. The Borough Council would also wish to have regard to the impact of any scheme on the Nos. 63-66 South Walls. Similarly the owners of Nos. 18-25 Greengate Street could become part of a larger scheme to link the site to Greengate Street, as long as the attractiveness of the frontages is not diminished.

Acceptable Uses

Good retailing contributes to the vitality and viability of town centres. But such attributes depend on more than retailing; they stem from the range and quality of activities in town centres, and their accessibility to people living and working in the area.

Variety and activity are essential elements of the vitality and viability of town centres. The Councils wish to encourage diversification of compatible uses on the site and in the town centre as a whole. Different but complementary uses, both during the day and in the evening, can reinforce each other, making the town centre more attractive to local residents, shoppers and visitors. In addition to retail uses entertainment facilities, museums, hotels and conference centres, restaurants and cafes can add variety and interest at ground level.

The town centre of Stafford already has a rich mix of uses. Although the buildings on three sides of the site are in office/Council use the Councils consider that a range of uses including a variety of retail, leisure, cultural, education or office uses would be acceptable. Mixed uses that include a degree of quality and affordable residential use combined with small businesses would be acceptable. The site should become a significant pedestrian attraction in the day and evenings.



Physical context around the site



View across the site towards South Walls

Existing Uses

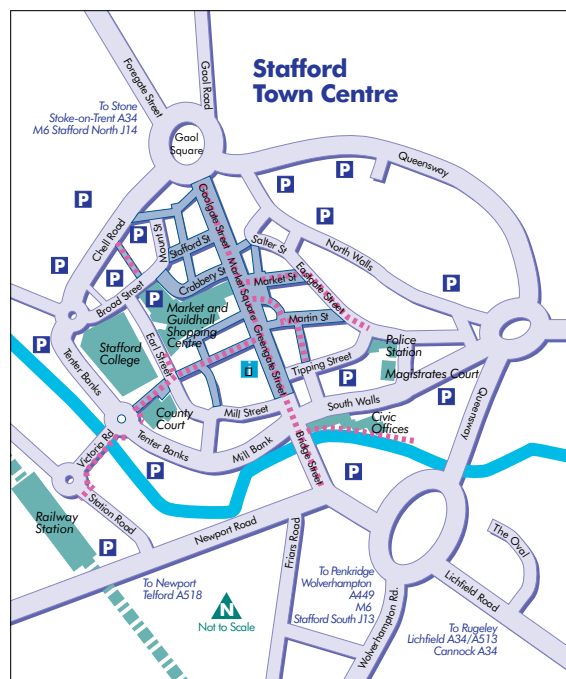
The site is currently in the ownership of Staffordshire County Council mainly in use as car parking for about 220 cars; as a public car park with about 50 spaces, leased to the Borough Council, and for about 170 parking spaces for the County Council staff (available for use by the public in the evening and at weekends).

The loss of the car parking on the site will inevitably cause inconvenience to existing users although the impact may be reduced by the availability and enhancement of car parking elsewhere e.g. ASDA. A recent survey found surplus capacity at the County Council's staff car park at North Walls and at the public parking facility at Bridge Street which would provide for the displaced parking. Public car parks in the vicinity of the site include the Civic Centre (short stay) within 100 metres, Bridge Street multi-storey within 150 metres, Tenterbanks (short stay) and North Walls (Queensway long stay) within 350 metres.

The remaining office use at 15 and 14 Tipping Street could be retained or incorporated in any scheme. Number 15 must, however, be retained as part of the scheme as it is a Grade II Listed Building. The trees on the site have generally been seriously damaged by previous excavation but redevelopment schemes for the site should look at the potential to retain those of significance.



View from Greengate Street along Tipping Street



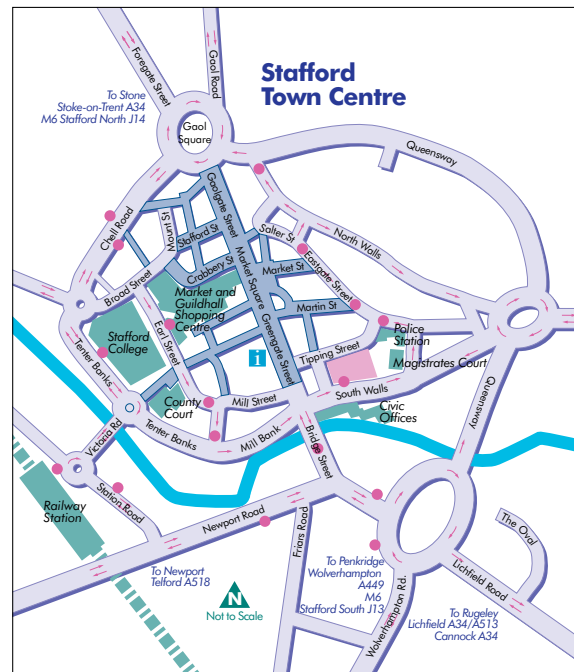
Existing pedestrian circulation

Pedestrian Access

The Councils consider that the site lies within the heart of the town centre where the pedestrian should predominate and wish to severely limit all private vehicles into the site. Car parking other than for residential users or vehicles essential to the needs of the development would be strongly discouraged. The existing owners wish to retain some spaces for their own use within any proposal for the site that includes redevelopment of the adjacent areas. A 'car-free' development is a possibility.

Pedal Cycles

The Councils would wish to see provision made for the parking of cycles within the site. A network of cycle routes is being developed in the town. At present, there are no dedicated cycle routes in the immediate vicinity of the site.



Existing public transport

Public Transport

The site is well located for access to bus routes with a bus stop adjacent to the site on South Walls and a number of stops on Pitcher Bank close to the site.

Existing Service Accesses

Existing or amended service arrangements for Greengate Street retailers and County Buildings in Tipping Street and vehicular access for the Police compound and Magistrates Court car park will have to be accommodated.

Traffic management measures in the town centre are under review, with the aim of reducing unnecessary vehicular traffic and favouring pedestrians, cycling and public transport.

Built Form

The Councils wish to avoid being too prescriptive or too general in this guidance regarding the balance of uses or detailed elevational treatment but would wish to see:-

- A design-led approach inspired by the contents of this SPG.
- The use of built form to enclose and enhance the public spaces (Appleyard Court, Pitcher Bank and South Walls service yard) to repair the urban fabric and highlight the distinctiveness of the four streets to support variety in the town centre.
- The introduction of special architectural features/treatment for the visible corners.
- Care and attention being applied to any internal spaces (e.g. courtyards) that could be created.
- Provide quality in additional hard and soft landscaping to the public spaces associated with this development (including lighting).
- Minimal environmental harm from materials, technologies and practices that reduce reliance on non-renewable energy-sources. Reference should be made to the Government publications like 'Planning for Passive Solar Design' (Dti) and 'Planning for Sustainable Development – Towards Better Practice' (DETR).

Specifically

Tipping Street

The scheme should highlight the curved building line from Greengate Street to Pitcher Bank. The continuous elevation should integrate the listed building and generally be of high architectural quality within the town centre conservation area. The building line forms a setting for Greengate Street and Pitcher Bank.

For the adjacent area: access and servicing of the County buildings is to be accommodated. The enclosure of Pitcher Bank should be addressed. Some consideration could be given to extend the pedestrian priority zone.



View from Pitcher Bank

Pitcher Bank - (if a scheme extending outside the site is considered)

The gaping corner between the Police Station (site of Izaak Walton's birth place) and the Shrewsbury Arms Public House should need a comparable volume of building (three storeys and sloping roof) to enclose the square-like space of Pitcher Bank.



View of Magistrates Building

Appleyard Court

The new configuration of the building line should accommodate existing access arrangements for the Police compound. It is possible that a new urban space can be created with the Magistrates Court and the Civic Centre as enclosure. Private vehicular access to the Court's car park may be accommodated from South Walls. The visual link from South Walls to Pitcher Bank should remain in place.



View from South Walls service yard

New Square

The public functions (Civic Centre, Magistrates Court and Recreation Centre) of this area would benefit from an appropriate civic urban space to complement them. Some vehicular traffic including buses, will pass through and the pedestrian activity will increase substantially once the scheme is completed.

South Walls

A revised carriageway/footway arrangement could produce more attractive pavements and remove or reduce the car dominance. The site should establish a relationship with the ground floor uses thereby creating a pleasing environment for pedestrians. Substantial improvements to the bus stop would have benefits for this part of town.

For the adjacent area: Review of the access arrangements and lay-out of the Borough Council's service yard and recreation centre would help to create a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Junction South Walls/Greengate Street Service Road

The role and function of this T-junction in a future development proposal will determine its appearance. Minimum requirement is a pleasant pedestrian/cycle link to Tipping Street/St. Chad's Place and adequate turning facilities for any essential vehicles.

Greengate Street Service Road

If pedestrians are provided for elsewhere, consideration could be given to discouraging pedestrian use. If the service function is to remain and the one-way vehicular through-route is to be integrated, the informal character of a shared surface may be most suitable.



View of Greengate Street service road

Crossing Tipping Street/Greengate Street Service Road/ St. Chad's Place

Three corners are firmly established. The fourth corner on the site has become very important as it will be visually significant, particularly when approached from Greengate Street. It will enclose the junction and need to accommodate any technical requirements regarding traffic.



View from St. Chad's Place towards South Walls

Conclusion / Seeking a Comprehensive Approach

Stafford Borough Council & Staffordshire County Council will be looking for solutions which:

Add an Urban feel	Site lay-out designed to enhance the town centre character.
Provide quality and variety	Application of street pavement patterns, sculptures, treatment of colours and materials.
Include adjoining landholdings	A more comprehensive regeneration effort is possible with an improved environment as a result.
Insert quality street designs	The emphasis is on returning as many parts as possible to the town centre to pedestrians (including the disabled), cyclists and public transport users.

Illustrations /

These illustrations are to encourage thoughts on alternative approaches and are not intended to represent proposals.

South Walls



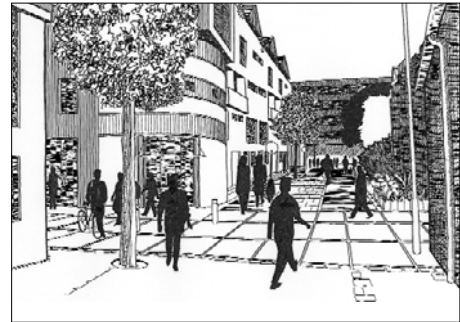
The scale and impact of existing buildings needs a pleasant counteraction to fill the gap. A distinctive frontage could help in this respect. Colour, choice of materials but especially the lay-out and form are important.



Greengate Street Service Road & St. Chad's Place



Corner situations have to be very recognisable in the town centre. A distinctive image is required here as this junction is very visible from Greengate Street. Neighbouring Borough and County offices have set the scene for a challenging response.



Tipping Street



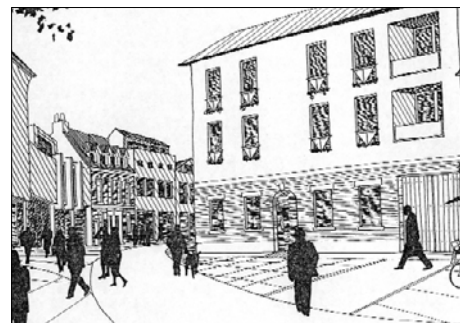
The varied roofline helps to accentuate a vertical balance introduced by the parcelisation. Attention to details can help continue the relaxed atmosphere from Greengate Street and Market Square.



Pitcher Bank



New development will provide enclosure for the streets and square and integrate existing buildings into a pleasant scene. Imitation and pastiche are not welcome. Contrast is part of the towns rich heritage.



Appendix / The Wider Planning Context

Technical Requirements:

- There is a clearly identified need for an archaeological evaluation prior to this site's re-development.
- Re-routing of SCC computer cable link underneath present car park.
- Off-site improvements to sewers and detailed investigation whether historical contamination of groundwater systems requires a remediation strategy.

Planning Policies:

The development is required to comply with all relevant planning policies of the Borough Council as published in the Local Plan (Adopted 1998). Particular attention is drawn to the sections covering General Principles for New Development (material considerations: conservation area and listed building), Housing, Shopping, Stafford Town Centre, Movement and Parking Standards.

The Borough Council will also take into account Central Government advice such as that included in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)1 "General Policy and Principles" and PPG 6 "Town Centres and Retail Developments", PPG 15 "Planning and the Historic Environment", PPG 16 "Archæology and Planning" and other appropriate Government advice.

The Councils recognise that on this town centre site self-contained parking is neither achievable nor desirable without reducing essential town centre qualities. Residential uses on the site will not be required to provide on-site private parking to fully meet the normal Borough Council Parking Standards. Other uses will either require the parking standards to be met off-site, by payment of commuted sums for the provision or enhancement of public car parking or, as an alternative, consideration may be given to contributions to new or enhanced means of travel other than the private car.

Any future planning application will be the subject of full public consultation process.

Other Legislation:

In addition all development must comply with Building Regulations, Licensing Authority and Health and Safety requirements and all other relevant legislation (e.g. access).

Any views expressed by the LPA are those which represent current policy and may be changed by the LPA as a result of any re-assessment of appropriate planning policies or briefings for the area at any time.



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