



STAFFORD

TOWN CENTRE VISION

URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK SEPTEMBER 2002



Stafford
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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The Purpose of the Framework

- 1.1 The Draft version of the Stafford Town Centre Vision (June 2001) identified the key features of Stafford's town centre: its strengths and weaknesses and the way it is used and perceived by people visiting, shopping and working in the area.
- 1.2 The Draft Vision outlined a number of ways to help reinforce the positive qualities of the town centre and to reduce the impact of negative aspects.
- 1.3 This document has three main purposes:
 - > To provide a clear statement of the Council's aspirations for the town centre and to generate a comprehensive and coherent input into the statutory planning process;
 - > To inform those who live and work in the area that the Council is considering the future development of the town centre in a comprehensive manner, and providing an opportunity for them to comment; and
 - > To inform future investors and stakeholders as to the intended direction of Stafford's potential development, providing a context within which they can plan ahead and invest.
- 1.4 The Urban Design Framework builds on the analysis undertaken in the Draft Version with the aim of consolidating and enhancing the established visual character of Stafford town centre as represented by its major buildings, townscape, spaces and street patterns.
- 1.5 The contents of this document, once formally adopted by the Borough Council, will form the basis of discussion with applicants for sites in the town centre.
- 1.6 Having provided the context against which development proposals will be judged, the document identifies specific sites and areas around the town centre that would benefit from further detailed work in the form of Development Briefs or 'action plans'.
- 1.7 These Urban Design Development Briefs, as well as establishing broad architectural guidelines and possible potential uses for a site, will enable the exploration of opportunities for the enhancement or creation of public space in the proximity of the development site.

2 THE FUTURE AN URBAN DESIGN VISION

- 2.1 The design and planning objectives set out in this document operate alongside the Borough Council's economic development objectives for the town as part of a strategic 'joined up thinking' approach to effective regeneration.
- 2.2 As towns throughout the UK compete increasingly with one another for shoppers, businesses and jobs, Stafford must ensure that it can continue to encourage and accommodate the needs of such activities into the future.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 To this end, the document has three key themes:
 - > Improving the quality of the approach routes, gateways and edges to the town centre with a view to enhancing the first impressions of visitors.
 - > Recognising the structural elements of Stafford town centre and the identification of sites whose re-development will reinforce efforts to enhance the image and identity of this compact and historic town centre.
 - > To provide general guidance on town centre-wide issues that contribute to the maintenance of a strong, positive image for Stafford town centre.
- 2.5 These themes are summarised graphically in the Urban Design Framework diagram overleaf.
- 2.6 More detailed work will be undertaken on each of these themes in the form of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) notes.

DIAGRAM 1
Urban Design Framework



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IMAGE AND IDENTITY

- APPROACH ROUTE ENHANCEMENT
- GATEWAY ENTRANCE FEATURES
- 'FRIENDLY FACE' TO THE EDGE OF TOWN
- TREE CORRIDORS / ROADSIDE PLANTING
- REINFORCED CONSTELLATION OF POSITIVE VISUAL LANDMARKS AND GREEN ASSETS

ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

- PUBLIC TRANSPORT NODES
- KEY PEDESTRIAN LINKS FROM SATELLITE DEVELOPMENTS / TRANSPORT ARRIVAL POINTS
- PEDESTRIANISED STREETS
- PEDESTRIAN / VEHICULAR SHARED STREETS

PUBLIC SPACE NEW IMPROVED NETWORK OF...

- PUBLIC SPACES
- GREEN SPACES
- RIVERWALK

MIX OF USES

- SHOPPING CORE REINFORCED

3 TOWN CENTRE CURRENT ATTRIBUTES

3.1 Stafford town centre has a number of notable attributes that the Vision recognises as crucial to establishing the image and identity of the town firmly in the minds of its visitors and inhabitants. Proposals for change and redevelopment within the town centre must build upon and enhance the existing townscape with its distinctive landmarks and reference points in order to sustain a memorable environment for its users.

A CIVIC FOCUS / Market Square

3.2 In traditional towns like Stafford, the Market Square provides the focus for civic activities and events which are central to establishing the town's image and identity.

3.3 The Market Square, in association with Greengate and Gaolgate Streets, has been significantly enhanced by the various phases of the town centre pedestrianisation programme. The area now hosts a variety of events that contribute positively to the perceptions of the town centre by shoppers and visitors alike.

'GREEN' STAFFORD / River Sow and Victoria Park

3.4 Together, the River Sow and Victoria Park form a valuable green asset and are an integral part of the town centre's identity.

3.5 The River Sow, running through the heart of the town, provides a valuable visual and recreational amenity, as well as being host to a wealth of wildlife interest.

3.6 A positive relationship with the river must be achieved in any new development within its proximity through; site layout, orientation, the scale and massing of buildings and appropriate uses which create positive activities along the riverside.

3.7 Victoria Park is a well presented 19th century park and an

important gateway to the town centre for visitors arriving by train. Although modest in size, the Park offers a variety of amenity opportunities, both active and passive, for a wide range of age groups.

LANDMARKS

3.8 Landmarks are generally defined by permanent or distinctive buildings, spaces or features. They perform a function of characterising locations and places and can be focal points for activity. Landmarks contribute to the image people have of a town and aid orientation in relation to surroundings.

3.9 Stafford town centre possess a range of landmarks. It is critical that views of these landmarks are maintained and improved, wherever possible, in making Stafford a memorable experience. Landscape management and enhancement is an important issue to be considered in strengthening these settings.

3.10 Several of the church spires and towers can be seen from key locations within the town centre as well as from outlying areas. St.Mary's church tower in particular is a principal landmark feature and thus an important means of orientation.

3.11 However, a number of Stafford town centre landmarks need to be 'revealed' as they currently have poor visual presence where wider views are blocked or their settings are compromised. This will be negotiated where redevelopment opportunities arise.

3.12 A number of prominent buildings, such as the railway station, fail through poor design to capitalise on their landmark potential.

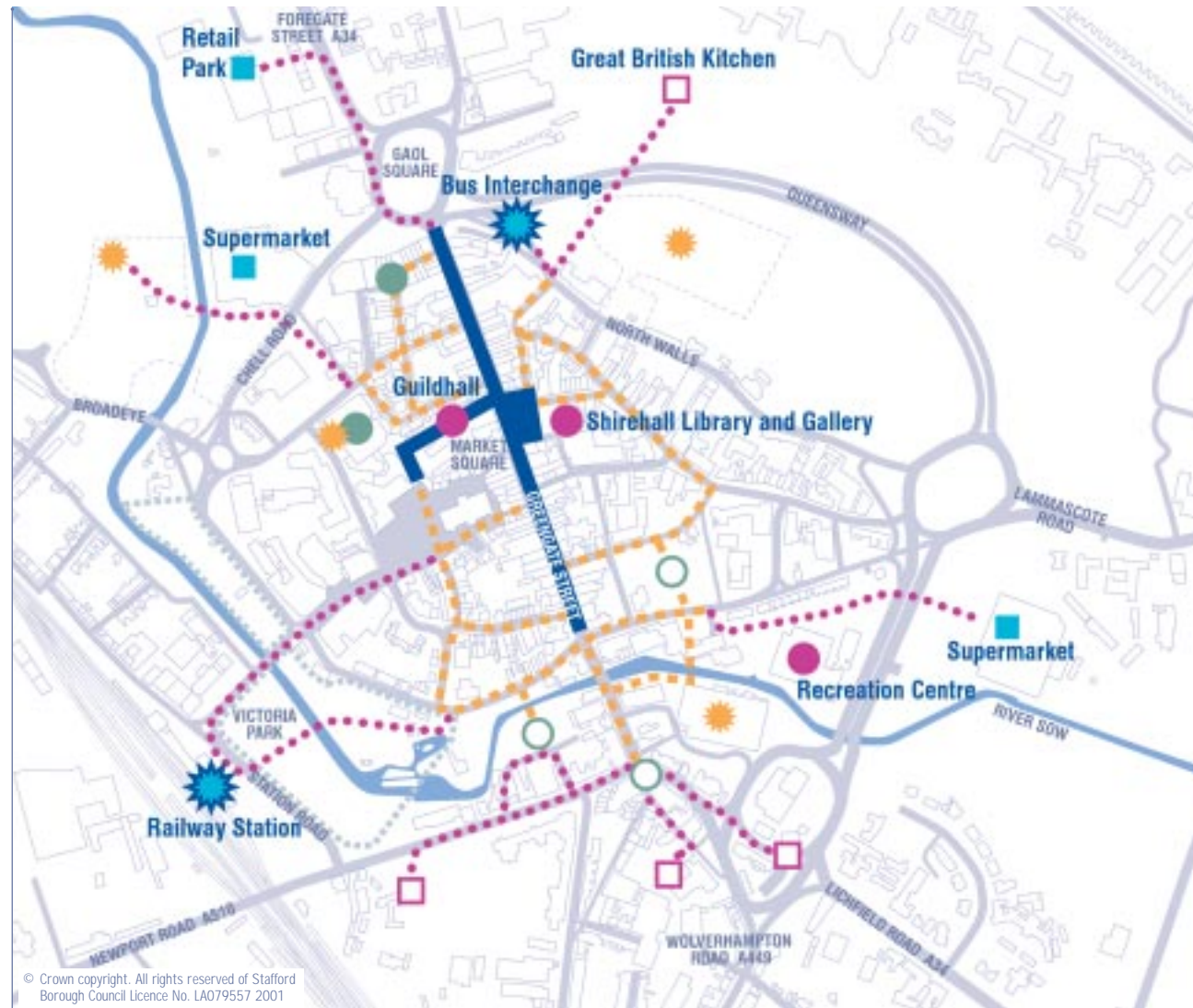
HISTORIC FABRIC

- 3.13 Stafford is fortunate in having within its centre a wealth of historic buildings and spaces. This is recognised by the designation of the town centre conservation area.
- 3.14 There are a number of listed buildings dating from the 16th century onwards, with subsequent developments mostly respecting the town's medieval street layout. The pattern established by these structural elements therefore requires detailed consideration when new proposals are submitted. Any future development within the town centre should therefore be seen as opportunities to enhance the heritage assets of Stafford.

SHOPPING / A Regional Centre

- 3.15 Stafford town centre has a good representation of national retailers, proportionally higher than nearby Hanley or Wolverhampton. The town's role as a shopping centre is, however, limited to some extent by their proximity.
- 3.16 A small number of national retailers have relocated to larger premises outside the town centre. The loss of proximity to these large retailers makes shared shopping trips more difficult, increasing car use and the likelihood of shopping elsewhere.
- 3.17 The Chesterton Retail Study (March 2000) suggests that Stafford town centre will need further retail floorspace in order to both meet anticipated demand and to maintain its current position in the regional hierarchy. It is suggested that this is achieved on an incremental and sensitive basis so as not to damage the balance of supply and demand that currently exists in the town.
- 3.18 Existing traders in the town centre will be supported through enhanced town centre management, the wider promotion of Stafford's key strengths and enhancement programmes to improve the overall shopping experience.

DIAGRAM 2
Shopping / Retail Circuit



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LINKS WITH EDGE OF TOWN CENTRE / SATELLITE FACILITIES

ARRIVAL POINTS

- Car Park
- Public Transport

SATELLITE FACILITIES

- Existing
- Potential
- Creation / Strengthening of Pedestrian Route Connections with Town Centre Core

TOWN CENTRE CORE RETAIL AND PUBLIC AMENITY CIRCUIT

USE MAGNETS

- Existing Primary Attractions - Retain
- Existing Secondary / Weaker Attractions - Enhance Status and Linkages to Improve 'Magnetism'
- Potential Magnet Locations to Encourage Footfall Down Secondary Routes

ROUTES

- Primary Pedestrian Shopping Route - Retain
- Existing / Potential Secondary Pedestrian Route - Enhance / Strengthen

- 4.1 The first impressions gained by visitors as they approach the town centre are fundamental to them developing a positive sense of place. The quality of the approach routes and the presence of attractive 'gateways' and 'edges' are important aspects in meeting the expectations of those arriving at the town centre.
- 4.2 Certainly many of the consultation respondents considered that currently, the poor environmental quality of several of the approaches and gateways are significant factors in creating a less than positive impression of the town centre.

APPROACH ROUTES

- 4.3 Stafford town centre approach routes, both vehicular and pedestrian, vary considerably in their visual qualities - the tree-lined Lichfield Road has a distinctly different feel to the decidedly more 'urban/industrial' atmosphere of Foregate Street.
- 4.4 Nevertheless, all the routes do require some level of improvement in order to enhance their overall environmental quality, and so contribute towards presenting a more welcoming face to visitors.

SUMMARY OF APPROACH ROUTES

A1 / Foregate Street

- > Visually incoherent street scene. Variable building styles, heights and lines. Limited landscaping, lack of landmarks or focal points.
- > Retail units have side road access and parking, removing activity from the main street frontage, reducing it to a movement corridor, hostile to pedestrians and cyclists.

A2 / Doxey Road

- > Predominantly industrial feel, contrasting with open views across Doxey Marshes and Sainsbury's car park, limits on street activity.

A3 / Newport Road

- > The presence of 19th century villas and view of Victoria Park offer potential for enhancement.
- > Derelict buildings and open forecourts detrimental to this potential.
- > Buildings lack visual coherence in places.

A4 / Wolverhampton Road

- > Predominantly residential area, attractive 19th century terraced housing - strong sense of enclosure.
- > St.Austin's Church group adds quality to the street scene.
- > Little available space for additional landscaping.

A5 / Lichfield Road

- > Attractive tree-lined route with presence of imposing traditional buildings, modern infill developments closer to town centre compromise street scene.

A6 / Lammascote Road

- > Pennycrofts Tower dominates messy mix of vacant and infill units - does not encourage pedestrian activity, traffic route only.

GATEWAYS

- 4.5 There are five entry points into the town centre that are considered to perform the role of 'gateways'. These locations can be improved as part of any enhancement to the approach routes. In doing so, the following factors will need to be considered:

Identity. For gateways to be effective in confirming a sense of arrival, a distinctive design approach will need to be taken to highlight its role clearly as an entrance. The historic 'walls' and 'gates' of Stafford offers an interesting design opportunity that could be developed.

Enclosure. Gateways framed by buildings and streets have a strong element of enclosure, ie. surrounded by buildings with views through that are limited.

In the light of the above, only two approach routes have existing gateway features of any significance:

G1 / Gaol Square

- > Both a meaningful open space (Falklands Memorial Garden) as well as a traffic roundabout, it could however, benefit from a prominent central feature.

G2 / Broadeye Roundabout

- > Good enclosure by prominent town centre buildings, but the large roundabout and the old mill would benefit from enhancement, with potential for a public sculpture.

The remaining town centre approach routes do not have distinctive gateway features.

G3 / Railway Station - Victoria Park

- > Significant potential to create a welcome gateway feature for those arriving by train.

G4 / Newport Road - Station Car Park

- > The Potential of this area is compromised significantly by traffic.

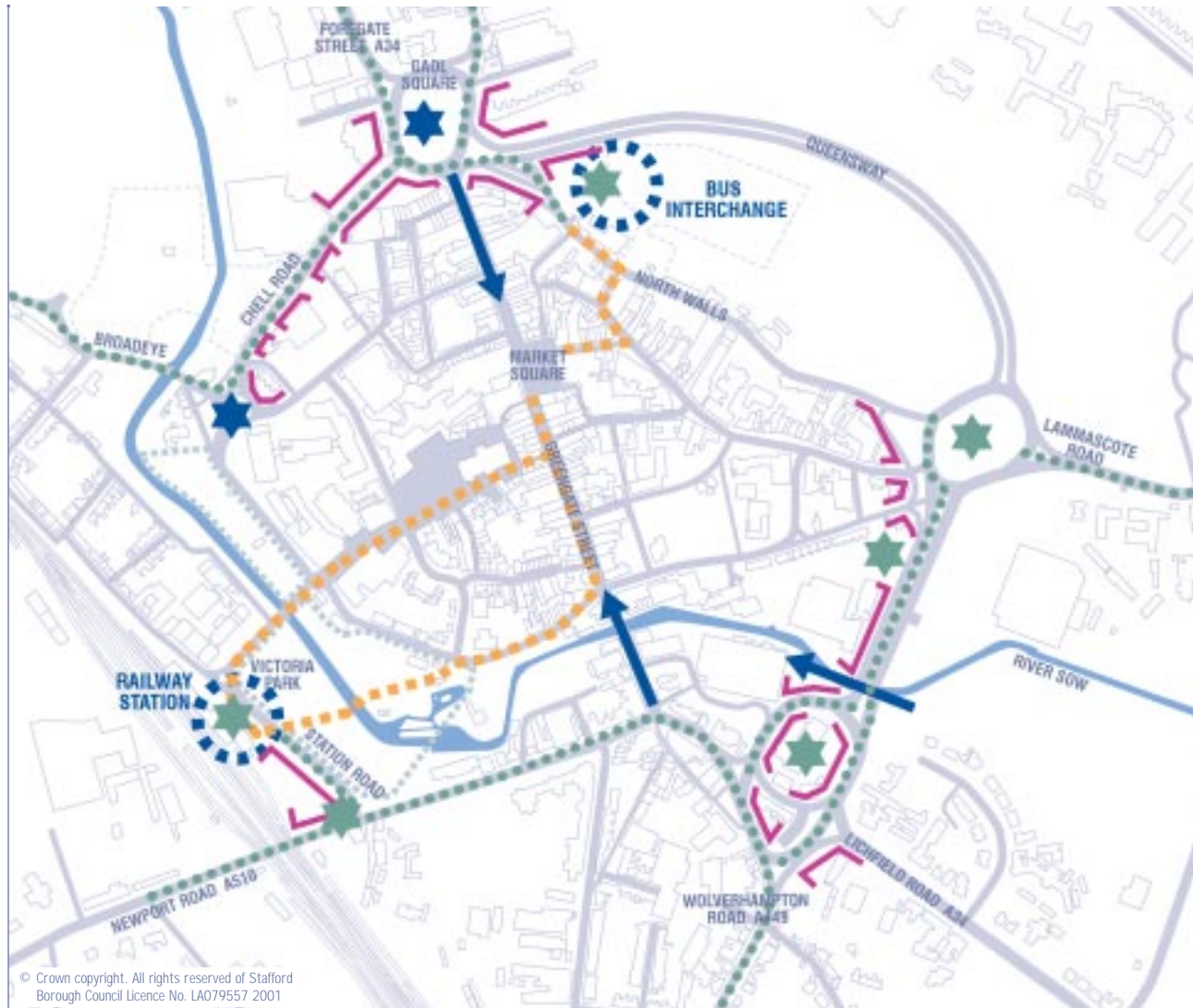
G5 / Lichfield Road Gyrotory

- > Its gateway status would be much enhanced by the presence of a new landmark building group of significant scale and design.

G6 / Lamascote Roundabout

- > Dominated by marshland, existing landscape treatment to be retained.

DIAGRAM 3
Gateways to Stafford



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APPROACH ROUTES TO BE IMPROVED / ENHANCED

- VEHICLES / PEDESTRIANS
- PEDESTRIAN APPROACH FROM PUBLIC TRANSPORT NODES
- PUBLIC TRANSPORT NODES
- GATEWAYS**
- ★ EXISTING - IMPROVE / ENHANCE
- ★ POTENTIAL - DEVELOP
- TOWN CENTRE EDGE**
- CREATE A 'FRIENDLY' EDGE
- ➔ CREATE / MAINTAIN INTERESTING VIEWS INTO THE TOWN CORE

EDGES

- 4.6 'Friendly' or 'active' edges, whilst defining the town centre, also reduce the psychological barriers between the town centre and the surrounding areas. The presence of interesting shopfronts, street level entrances, windows and lighting all contribute to creating a human scale of activity that will help draw people through the edge and into the centre.

Conversely, inactive edges, consisting of blank walls, surface car parks and service yards are hostile and discourage pedestrians from crossing such barriers.

ACTIVE EDGES INCLUDE:

Wolverhampton Road – lined with housing, retail and commercial uses which combine to generate the necessary pedestrian activity throughout the day.

Earl Street – entrances to college and Victoria Park generate daytime activity.

INACTIVE EDGES INCLUDE:

Tesco side elevation and **Riverside Recreation Centre** rear elevations possess featureless expanses of wall in a setting of parked cars; little activity generated creating a perceived lack of user-friendliness.

Gaol Square - Chell Road route – rear of properties and service areas on North Walls, featureless laboratory building, Sheridan Centre and Sainsbury's service area walls etc. provide an unattractive first view of the town centre when approached from the North.

- 5.1 This section examines the existing and potential routes and connections with a view to optimising choices for moving around the town centre. Traffic management, the design of street furniture and surfacing will contribute to making the environment as pedestrian friendly as possible.
- 5.2 The Stafford Urban Area Management Study (SUATMS) has been prepared on behalf of Staffordshire County Council and Stafford Borough Council in response to concerns over future operational difficulties on the highway network in Stafford. It proposes a strategy of measures that can be taken forward for consultation. The outcomes of the SUATMS study will inform the production of Development Briefs and or 'action plans' within the town centre.
- 5.6 A number of town centre cycle routes are fragmented with links missing between designated sections. This is particularly true in the town centre, where lack of space and pedestrian safety requirements limit the viable connection of cycle routes.

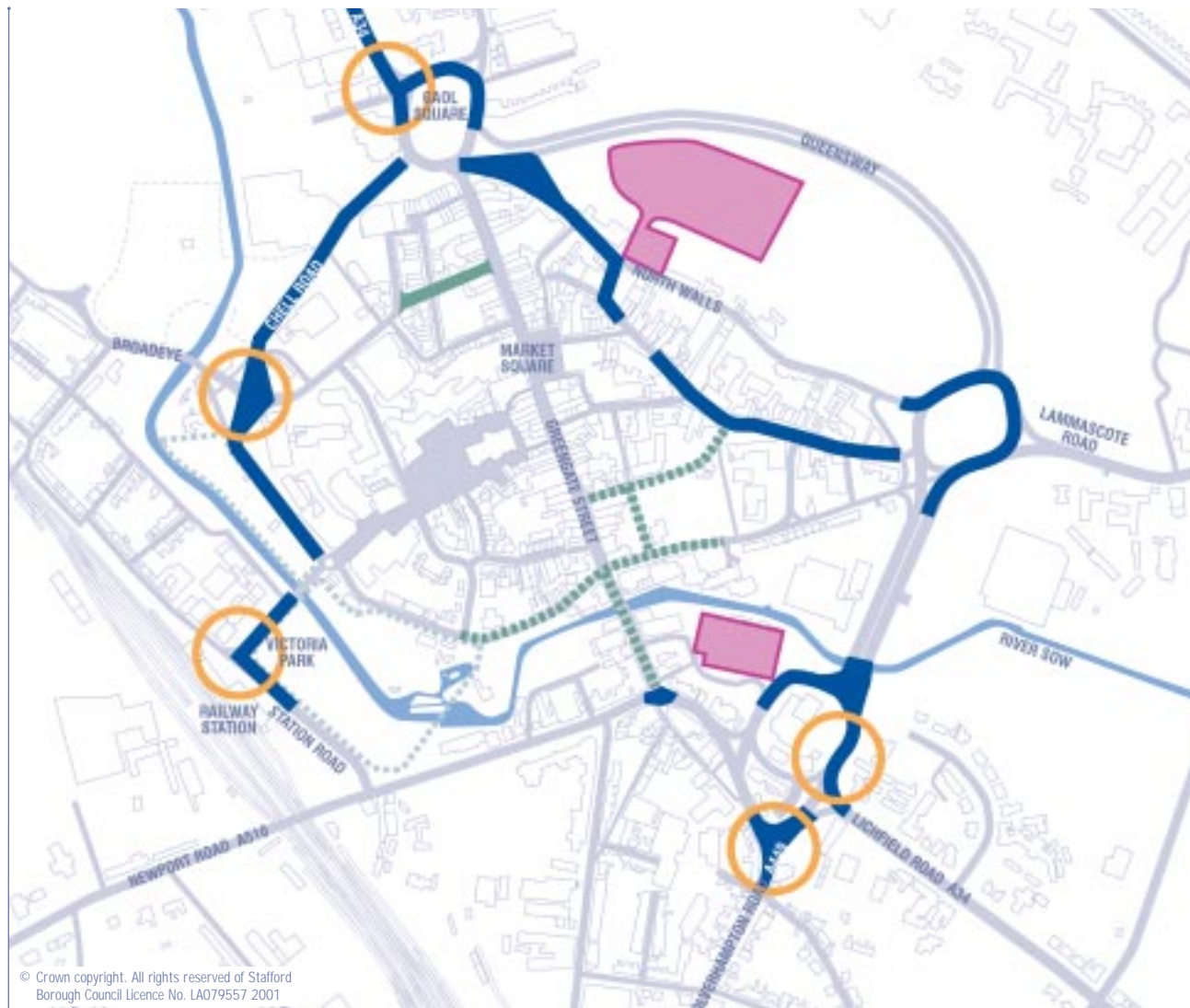
PEDESTRIANS

- 5.3 Generally, most routes into the town centre are both easy and safe to use. There are however, a few routes and entry points where the potential for 'conflict' between pedestrians and vehicles occurs. Foregate Street and Gaol Square, for example, are wide carriageways dominated by fast moving vehicles. This creates a rather intimidating environment where movement for pedestrians across the streets is constrained and circuitous.
- 5.4 The compact nature of the town centre results in most shops and services being within a relatively short walking distance. The pedestrianisation of the main shopping route and a number of the side streets provides for a safer and more enjoyable shopping experience.

CYCLISTS

- 5.5 Existing and proposed town centre cycle routes serve to improve cycle access into and around the town centre along a significant number of primary and secondary routes. Links are also being made with the National Cycle Route Network.

DIAGRAM 4
Pedestrian Access and Movement



- IMPROVE PRDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT - REDUCE PERCEIVED VEHICLE DOMINANCE
- IMPROVE SIGNAGE TO TOWN CENTRE ATTRACTIONS / PARKING
- - - POTENTIAL PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY (SHARED SURFACE)
- POTENTIAL PEDESTRIANISATION
- IMPROVE CAR PARK SAFETY

CAR PARKING

- 5.7 Stafford town centre currently offers a good choice of parking. Several of the town centre car parks are however perceived to be unattractive and would benefit significantly from a general improvement in their appearance.
- 5.8 Linked to this is the general perception of 'difficulty' in accessing town centre car parking. This is probably related to poor understanding of the best place to park in order to meet destination requirements, as a number of the gyratories sign several options, making navigation difficult for those unfamiliar with the road layout. Improved signage would reduce the scope for confusion.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- 5.9 Stafford is well placed for passenger rail services, both local and national, and the station is within short walking distance of the town centre.
- 5.10 The town centre also offers a comprehensive bus service to outlying areas. There is also an 'easy access' bus service, designed to meet special needs, promoted by the 'Bus Quality Partnership' between Stafford Borough and Staffordshire County Councils and the bus operator Arriva.
- 5.11 The current absence of a designated bus terminus or public transport 'hub' means that facilities are not as comprehensive as they should be for a town of this size. Also, the town has no internal bus circuit or 'loop' to serve key town centre destinations.
- 5.12 Taxis and private hire vehicles are a significant component of the public transport provision. They can be particularly important for those with mobility problems who may have no other means of accessing the town centre.

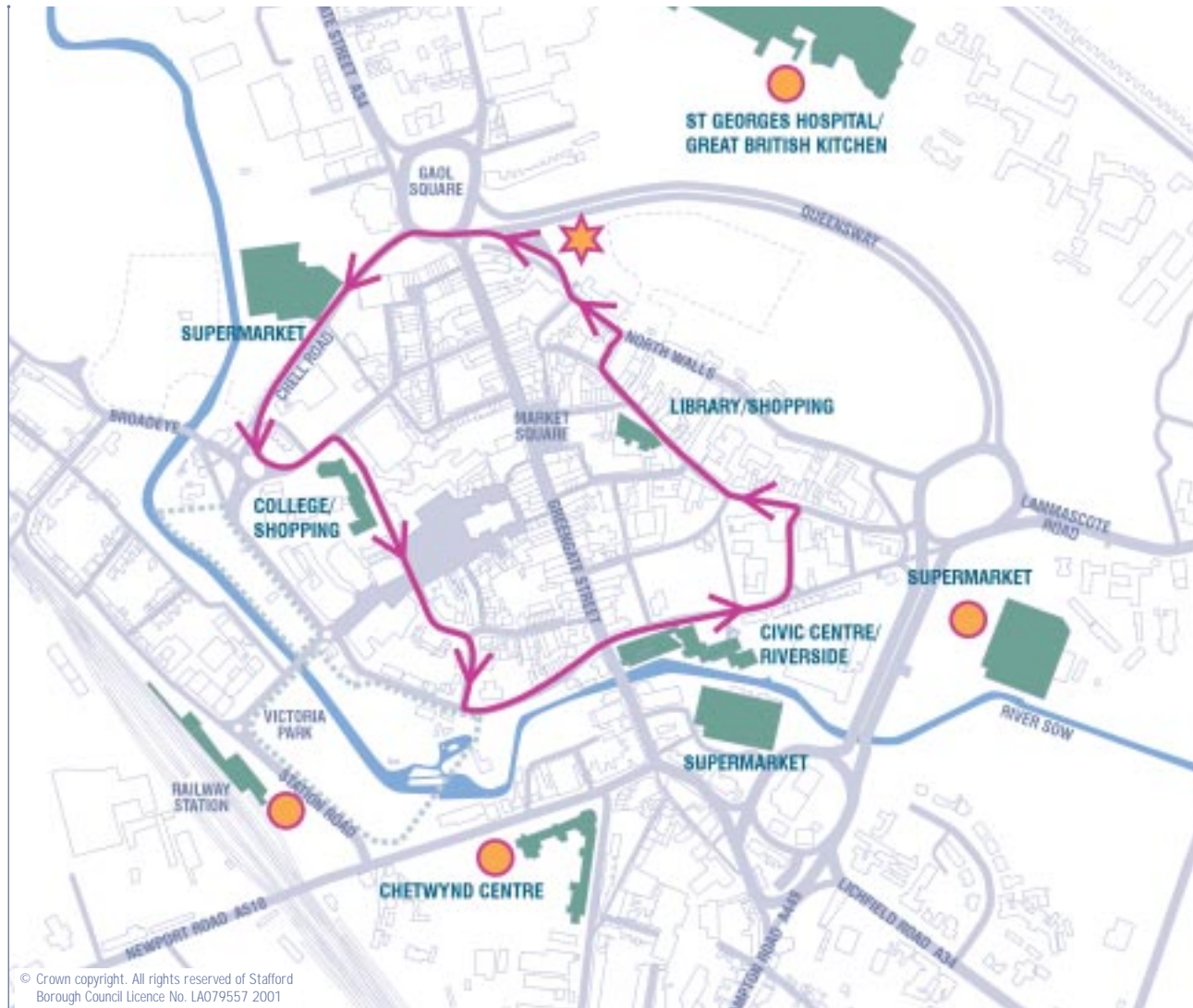
PRIVATE TRANSPORT

- 5.13 There are a number of direct and legible approach routes into the town centre. The town centre also benefits from the new 'Urban Traffic Control' traffic signal management system that improves the efficiency of traffic flows whilst giving buses greater priority.

MOVEMENT WITHIN TOWN CENTRE

- 5.14 Traffic calmed and shared surface areas (eg Salter Street and Eastgate Street) successfully slow vehicular traffic. This maintains access whilst creating a better environment for pedestrians.
- 5.15 A significant, if localised, problem is traffic attempting to short cut through the town centre, avoiding the main roads and potential congestion. This vehicular intrusion in pedestrian dominated areas compromises pedestrian safety, and adversely affects the quality and character of the environment. The need to enforce limitations on vehicles must be balanced with the need for vehicular entry for practical reasons (servicing, disabled, emergency vehicles etc.).
- 5.16 The internal one-way system within the town centre may appear indirect and confusing, which may contribute to the short-cutting issue. Problems also occur with inconsiderate and obstructive parking, eg delivery vehicles parking on pavements.

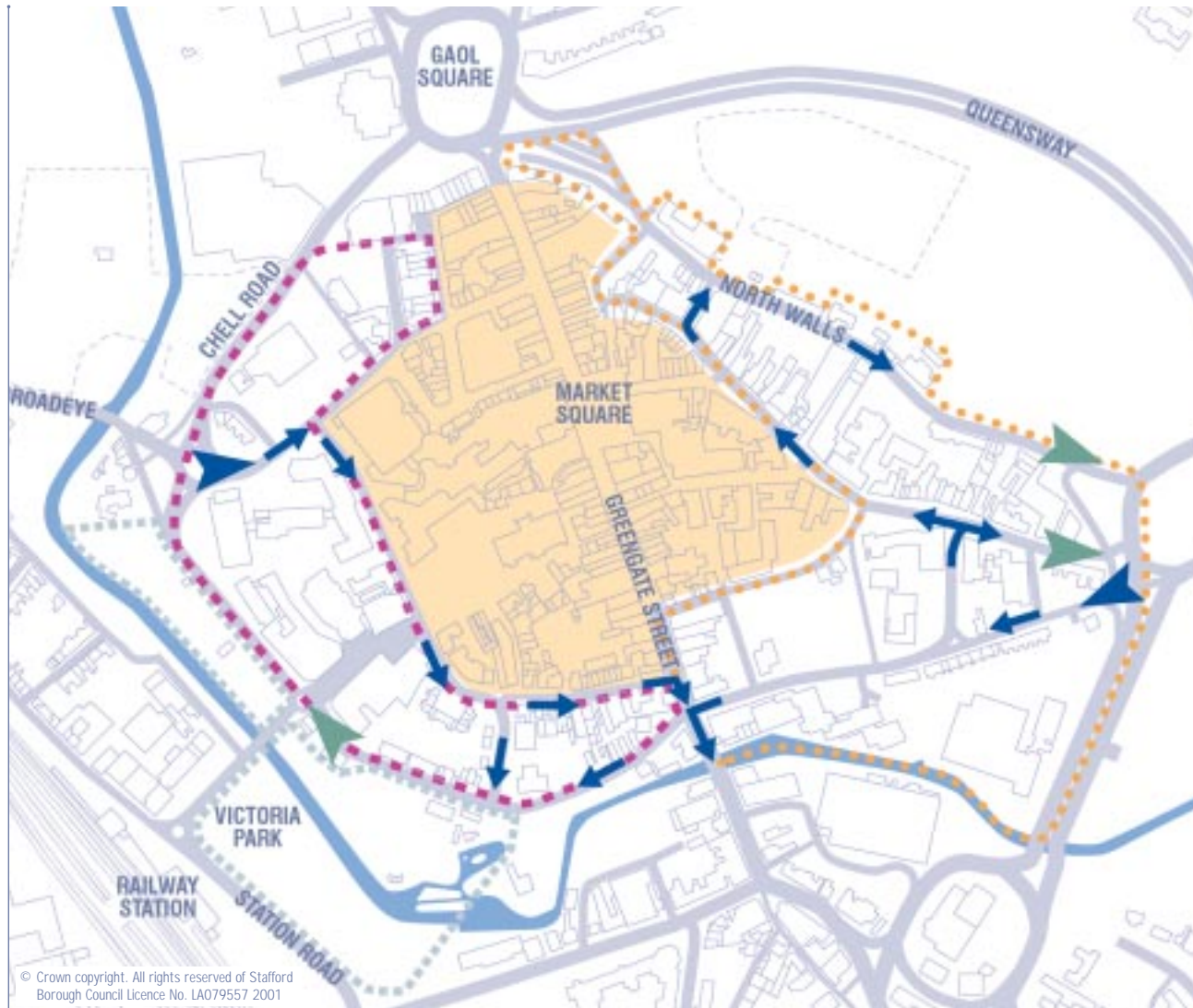
DIAGRAM 5
Public Transport / Potential Bus Loop



- ★ POTENTIAL LOCATION FOR BUS INTERCHANGE
- ➔ POTENTIAL TOWN CENTRE SHUTTLE BUS ROUTE AND STOPS
- ALTERNATIVE / ADDITIONAL SHUTTLE STOPS

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DIAGRAM 6
 Vehicular Traffic Management and Car Parking



RATIONALISED TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

- WEST SERVICE AREA
- EAST SERVICE AREA
- PEDESTRIAN ZONE
- ▶ ENTRY AND EXIT POINTS FROM TOWN CENTRE
- ▶ TRAFFIC CIRCULATION

PRINCIPLES

- 6.1 The following development principles have been devised to provide parameters aimed at the creation of successful buildings and places. They form a set of practical guidelines to enable new development to contribute to a vibrant town centre that improves the quality of life for all stakeholders. The following should therefore be considered and demonstrated in any future proposals.
- 6.2 **Density**
As a general rule, higher densities in the town centre are required in order to sustain a variety of uses that add to its vitality and viability. Increasing residential densities in particular within the town centre will improve the general perceptions of safety and security in the area outside office hours.
- 6.3 **Mix of forms and uses**
Successful places are largely derived from a mixture of uses and built forms, which in turn create a varied and interesting townscape. Again, a mix of uses enhance vitality of town centres by extending the hours of activity into the evening. Single use areas or 'quarters' can be rather sterile and unnecessarily restrict levels of use and activity.
- 6.4 **Movement**
It is vital that the town centre should be accessible to all users. In providing choice and responding to pedestrian desire lines, development proposals should enable pedestrians to take a variety of routes through a connected town centre. A logical and attractive pedestrian circuit will underpin the viability of the retail core.
- 6.5 **Character and Quality**
The clear recognition and acknowledgement of the general character of the town is the key to achieving the right level of quality. Proposed schemes will need to relate to the local context with the highest quality of materials and designs.
- 6.6 **Vistas**
The creation and preservation of satisfying vistas, long views of key landmarks and maintaining the sense of enclosure for public spaces are vital in underpinning the image of Stafford.
- 6.7 **Legibility**
Landmark structures, gateway points and clarity of signage will need to be promoted to improve people's ability to find their way around the town centre.
- 6.8 **Microclimate**
Proposals should work with the natural elements to provide sufficient shelter and exposure to sunlight and prevent the creation of underused public areas.
- 6.9 **Value**
The creation of an attractive environment will help maintain and enhance value, which is fundamental to supporting a successful town centre. The generation of value will encourage further investment raising the quality of developments and the environment still further.
- 6.10 **Safety and Security**
The perception of safety is fundamental to encouraging people to use the town centre, particularly outside normal business hours. A 'designing out crime' approach and the installation of effective street lighting can help improve feelings of security and safety.
- 6.11 **Sustainable Development**
This is at the heart of the Local Plan Review and its principles (environmental, social and economic) must be adhered to in formulating proposals for the town centre.

- 7.1 The following range of environmental improvements are seen as an integral part of future opportunities for the enhancement of the town centre.

These include:

- > lighting
- > signs and information
- > street furniture
- > art and sculpture
- > festivals and events
- > hard and soft landscaping

- 7.2 Some issues are related to implementation and maintenance, whilst others are to do with the management of existing programmes.

LIGHTING

- 7.3 The atmosphere created in the town centre at night is as important as the daytime. As well as creating a perception of safety, a sense of drama should be an overall objective of any lighting scheme which illuminates buildings, within the town centre. The use of white light sources will be encouraged to highlight colours more clearly

SIGNS

- 7.4 A comprehensive information system of signs and noticeboards can aid movement for both pedestrians and drivers around and through the town centre to key locations such as shops, civic amenities and car parks.

STREET FURNITURE

- 7.5 A consistent range of furniture, such as litter bins, seating and bollards needs to be carefully integrated into the streetscene in such a way as not to visually dominate public areas.

- 8.1 The points discussed throughout this document are encapsulated in the Urban Design Framework. This key diagram summarises graphically the broad structure envisaged for the town centre through the gradual implementation of future developments and enhancement initiatives. It is also a strategic overview to guiding smaller scale interventions that can so easily undermine the quality of the town centre if not carefully managed.
- 8.2 It is not intended that this Framework should be a utopian masterplan for the town centre at some fixed future date, but rather as a mechanism to encourage judicious interventions in the design and development process, achieving the aims of the Vision in an evolutionary fashion.
- 8.3 The framework is therefore intended to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate a range of different development and planning scenarios. Nevertheless, development proposals for the town centre must demonstrate clearly how they contribute to the overall objectives of the Urban Design Framework in securing a high quality environment for Stafford in the 21st Century.

9.1 This section indicates a number of key opportunity sites and areas within the town centre. These locations offer the potential to underpin the objectives of the Urban Design Framework in strengthening Stafford's image and identity.

s11. The Old Library
s12. Lichfield Road Gyrotory
s13. Former Burgess site
s14. Chetwynd / Friars Terrace

9.1 It is intended that detailed Development Briefs or 'action plans' will be produced for the key opportunity sites identified (and others as they emerge). These will help to ensure that development proposals make positive and defined contributions to the overall enhancement of Stafford town centre (see appendix 1).

CHARACTER AREAS

9.3 The following character and functional areas of the town centre have been identified:

- a1. Historic core and shopping area
- a2. Town centre riverside and Bridge Street area
- a3. St.Mary's Place and associated historic buildings
- a4. Stafford Railway station and environs
- a5. North Walls area and future public transport 'hub'.

OPPORTUNITY SITES

9.4 Within Stafford town centre, several sites have been identified as possible subjects for Development Briefs:

- s1. St.George's Hospital
- s2. GEC Laboratory site
- s3. North Walls car Park
- s4. Indoor Market
- s5. Tipping Street
- s6. T.A. Centre
- s7. Riverside Recreation Centre
- s8. Tesco and car park
- s9. Land off Newport Road
- s10. Railway Station

DIAGRAM 7
Stafford Town Centre / Opportunity Areas and Sites



- CHARACTER AREA 1 - 5
- OPPORTUNITY SITES 1 - 14

INTRODUCTION

In adopting the Urban Design Framework for Stafford town centre, the following list outlines the additional guidance needed on more detailed matters.

- > Site-specific development briefs;
- > Character area design briefs; and
- > Thematic Design Guides for the detailed design of parking, signage, street furniture etc.

The aim of these documents is to establish the relevant design principles and indicate how the Borough Council seeks to implement its planning and design policies at a variety of scales.

The core of a site specific development brief will be to provide a comprehensive contextual analysis and set of design principles relating to the site and its surroundings within the framework of the Vision: It will also need to address the following:

- > Outline and justify the urban design and architectural concept.
- > Establish detailed design objectives for the site;
- > Show how the Local Plan's design and planning policies can be applied to the site; regarding layout, density, scale, visual appearance, landscaping and uses;
- > Convey the Borough Council's wider expectations for the site; and
- > Set out the requirement for planning obligations where appropriate

An effective brief will involve landowners and developers in its production, providing accurate information on economic and market conditions. Local people and interest groups will also be consulted to highlight expectations, concerns, needs and local issues.

A Character Area design brief relates more closely to works to public areas and the development of schemes capable of being resourced through planning obligations.

Thematic briefs provide detailed guidance for elements of buildings or streetscape design that can be applied Borough wide.

The format of additional guidance will be expected to follow the guidelines set out in the Urban Design Groups publication. 'Urban Design Guidance'

The following headings provide the range of issues to be addressed.

CONTENTS

As each of the briefs will have a specific purpose and set of objectives (or planning policies) in relation to whether it is a site, area or theme based brief, these will determine the contents of the brief. The following headings will therefore be addressed as appropriate.

Consultations on brief

- > internal
- > landowners
- > county council
- > utilities
- > interest groups
- > general public

SITE ANALYSIS

Key views and vistas

- > views into the site from surrounding areas
- > views within the site
- > visible external landmarks

Landscape and ecology

- > important natural features or habitats
- > trees, hedges, etc.

- > topography

Existing built environment

- > key buildings on site
- > important frontages
- > relationship to surrounding areas
- > sensitive edges

Local history

- > site archaeology
- > local historic townscape
- > planning history
- > legal restrictions
- > utility easements

Movement

- > policy background
- > character of existing routes
- > potential vehicular access points
- > pedestrian and cycle routes
- > related bus routes

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Depending on the nature of the site and the outcome of the preceding analysis, a proposed development strategy is prepared. The rationale for the strategy is provided under the following headings.

The built form

- > siting and layout
- > height and density
- > scale and massing
- > materials and detailing
- > edges and frontages
- > potential mix of uses
- > 'secured by design' issues

The landscape structure

- > soft landscaping

- > floorscape
- > street furniture
- > public open space

Access and movement

- > footpaths and cycle routes
- > vehicular access
- > parking
- > public transport

SUSTAINABILITY

New development has more than just a visual impact on the environment. Its location in relation to other uses, its materials and method of construction, the behaviour of the people who use the resultant development; all are significant factors in assessing its 'ecological footprint'. All new development should minimise its impact on the environment. This implies developers of every site taking measures to minimise total energy consumption through the following.

Recycling, Energy Saving

- > of materials used in construction
- > of production of waste
- > transportation
- > reducing car use
- > minimising traffic generation
- > public transport as a viable choice
- > provision of facilities for cyclists
- > pedestrian routes that are
 - > safe
 - > direct
 - > attractive
- > proximity to local amenities

Land uses

- > mix of uses
- > flexibility of buildings
- > widening accessibility

Energy efficiency

- > siting and microclimate of buildings
- > thermal insulation and heat recovery
- > use of low embodied energy materials
- > passive and active solar design
- > water conservation systems

IMPLEMENTATION

- > form of submission required
- > design statement requirements
- > phasing
- > section 106 agreements

A draft Version of the Stafford Town Centre Vision was made available for public consultation during the summer of 2001. An analysis of the written responses reveal a wide range of issues of concern to people, but few overall themes emerge as of paramount concern. These can be summarised in no specific order under the following headings:

TRANSPORT

Improved signage for town centre and other attractions.

Provision of integrated/sustainable transport access to town centre - bus / rail interchange.

More and better car parking and information.

More cycleways and secure cycle parking.

Improve bus information.

Encourage delivery services.

Retention and maintenance of car parks.

Improve car park flood defences.

Direct and well-lit pedestrian/cycle routes.

All car parks to 'Secured Car Parking' Standards.

Comfortable main bus stop for out-of-town services - waiting room, refreshments, secure cycles, information etc.

Information on bus stops/routes at stops TIC, library and railway station.

Link bus timetables to rail times.

Re-develop ALSTOM site and Sheridan centre to improve pedestrian links with town centre.

Introduce Park and Ride.

ACTIVITIES

Increase usage of Market Square and other town centre facilities.

Create vibrant atmosphere.

Develop schedule of events within different areas of the town centre.

More activities in the Market Square.

Bring life to the town centre.

Drunkenness discourages people from the centre - criminal, social and health problems.

Ensure town centre is inclusive, catering for the disabled and all age groups and backgrounds.

Retail / Commercial.

Encourage niche / local specialist retailers.

Improve retail mix.

Zoning of retail uses.

Promotional use of vacant shops by local organisations.

Sunday opening hours to prevent retail migration.

Attract better evening activities/venues ie. winebars / restaurants

Attract 'bluechip' anchor stores/retail companies.
ensure a variety of shops and economic activities.
Encourage street cafes / cybercafes.
Outdoor market.
No more pubs / licensed premises.
Town feels in economic decline.
Restrict delivery vans in pedestrianised areas.

ENVIRONMENT

Ensure safe environment.
Ensure clean environment.
Encourage greener environment.
Little emphasis on sustainability.
More public access to the river.
Improve / re-develop Riverside Recreation Centre and its setting.
Enhance and protect wildlife, preserve bio-diversity.
Footpath / cyclepath full length of river.
Development near river to be attractive and orientated towards it.
Reduce perception and fear of crime.
Require active frontages to streets.
Rationalise street furniture to limit vandalism.
Conserve distinctive buildings and local character.
Promote higher architectural standards.
Replace eyesores, multi-storey car parks, Asda and BT on South Walls.
More squares in the town centre with different characters / activities including evening uses.
More permanent planting and trees.
Extend pedestrianisation within the town centre.
Railway station area and links to town are poor.

USES AND FACILITIES

More housing over shops in the town centre.
Greater housing choice in the town centre.

Purpose-built public library.

Rationalise public buildings to accommodate library research facilities

Develop Environment Centre to include Drop-in advice and exhibition space.

Put more seats in the Guildhall Centre.

Larger Cinema to compete with multiplex in Stoke.

One public toilet to be open at least 16 hours per day.

Host more cultural activities.

SELECTED RESPONDENT QUOTES

".....ensure Stafford evolves into 'destination' for shoppers rather than 'desperation'." (MIKE THOMPSON OF PEUGEOT)

".....reduce the sameness created by national and regional chains." (STAFFORD FOE)

".....the use of clear signage and well-defined routes channelling pedestrians create a safer environment through numbers and reduce the fear and risk of crime." (STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE)

"More diversity attracts more shoppers. Small shops create more employment opportunities." (BETHANY PROJECT)

"Make it easier for shoppers to travel to work by bus." (BETHANY PROJECT)

"Plenty of activities in Market Square - generally more of what happens now: varied to suit all ages." (AGE CONCERN - STAFFORD AND DISTRICT)

"Create a 'vibrant atmosphere' to attract all sectors of the community into town, set with a clean and greener environment." (LA21 CO-ORDINATOR)

"Improve road signage - very few key destinations within the town centre are signposted on roundabouts / junctions. Something that

every visitor I receive comments on." (GUILDHALL CENTRE MANAGER)

"Footpath by full length of river to enhance the environment and promote health." (BERYL METCALFE)

"Promote higher architectural standards - aesthetically, environmentally, functionally." (STAFFORD FOE)

SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES

Clean, quality environment.

Improve signage / information for car parks.

Improve signage / information for attractions / town centre services.

Provision of integrated / sustainable transport in town centre.

Street cafes to bring life to streets.

Improve retail mix.

Greater housing choice in the town centre.



HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES

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