

**Town and Country Planning Act 1990**

**Acquisition of Land Act 1981**

**Inquiry into:**

**THE ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL (ST HELENS TOWN CENTRE) COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER  
2022**

**St Helens Bus Station**

**Summary of Statement of Evidence**

**of**

**Sam Ainsley**

**14 July 2023**

## 1 Introduction

### Qualifications and Experience:

- 1.1 I am Sam Ainsley, an Associate Director with Jon Matthews Architects (“JMA”). I have a Diploma in Architecture and Bachelor of Architecture from the Mackintosh School of Architecture in Glasgow and a Part 3 Diploma in Architecture from the University of Westminster in London. I qualified as an architect in 2005 and am a member of the Architect Registration Board.
- 1.2 I have worked for JMA for the last 4 years in Manchester. Prior to this I worked for 6 months at 5 Plus Architects, Scott Donald Architects in Manchester for a year, Simon Whitehead Architects in London for 4 years, Seymour Harris Architecture for 8 years in London, Keppie Design in Glasgow for 2 years and Edward Cullinan Architects for 1 year in London.
- 1.3 I have over 21 years professional experience working in both public and private sectors, 18 of which I have been a qualified architect. My early career was mainly in education, then moving into private residential before joining JMA where I have been involved in commercial offices, residential and master-planning.

## 2 Council Vision and Brief

- 2.1 SHBC had in place a core set of documents which lay out the foundations for the redevelopment of the town centre. These documents informed and shaped JMA’s development of the masterplan and included:
  - St Helens Town Centre Strategy, 2017 to 2027 (March 2017) **(CD G5)**
  - St Helens Local Plan Core Strategy of 2012 **(CD G8)**
- 2.2 These documents demonstrated the need for transformational change and that the proposals for the redevelopment of the town centre should be ambitious and creative. A key aspiration for the redevelopment of the town centre is to improve the user experience, boost the viability and vitality of the high street, increase dwell-time and footfall. The vision to achieve this was set out in 3 themes, one ‘Shrink and Link’, two ‘Culturally Centre’ and three ‘An Animated Experience’ **(CD G5)**.
- 2.3 This is a clear vision and strategy to build on the town’s rich heritage of invention, innovation, connectivity, and strong sense of community. To rejuvenate the town centre into a modern, vibrant, and desirable location. Building upon a hot bed of creativity in the town centre that will then radiate out to the widest parts of the area attracting investment, raising its profile and maximize its assets.

### 3 Existing Town Centre

- 3.1 The town centre feels very disjointed, this is due to a poor street pattern that has been created by the locations of 3 large indoor shopping centres, which act as barriers to north-south and east-west movement through the town centre. The location of the indoor shopping centres also impacts negatively on natural wayfinding, blocking vistas and links between key public spaces. This is particularly apparent at key points of arrival, especially by bus and train, where it is not obvious which direction the centre of town is.
- 3.2 A good example how the 3 large shopping centres impact movement played out the first time I visited St Helens to get a feel for the town centre back in December 2019. I tried to follow a route from the train station to the town centre.

### 4 Phase 1 Masterplan

- 4.1 Phase 1 of the masterplan has been carefully chosen to have the most positive impact on the town centre. It is about addressing arrival into the town by public transport, bus and rail, then drawing you into the heart of the town through intuitive natural wayfinding (**Image 20 at Appendix SA1**).
- 4.2 Phase 1 delivers a new bus station (**Image 21 at Appendix SA1**), 50,000sqft of grade A office space, a 120+ bed hotel, new market hall back at the heart of the town, 2 new apartment blocks with retail below plus 8 town houses, creating 56 new homes in total. Plus a wrap to the former M&S Store building, allowing it to be subdivided into smaller retail units appropriate to current market demand in St Helens.

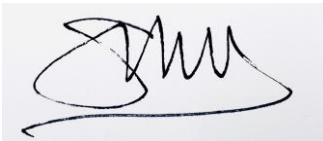
### 5 Conclusion

- 5.1 I have focused my description primarily on the locations of buildings and the spaces they create; streets that link square, historic buildings, creating vistas allowing you to navigate the town centre easily and intuitively. To enhance the experience of using a town centre making it enjoyable and increasing footfall. The quality of the buildings and public realm will celebrate and enhance the town assets and rich history to create a 'beautiful, enduring and successful place' (National Design Guide). The proposed building and public realm needed to satisfy every aspect of the 10 key factors to achieve a well-designed place.
- 5.2 Careful analysis of the town history, scale, massing, materiality, and craftsmanship are woven into the design (Design and Access Statement – **CD C8**). This ensures people of St Helens can be proud of their town centre knowing that it is unique and inspired by its history. Each of the proposed buildings has a story to tell, inspired by key historic buildings or industries that define St Helens, such as Pilkington Glass Works. Taking one example of this is the new hotel design, inspired by the beautiful curves of the 1937 Pilkington Headquarters and use of the blue tiles synonymous with the later 1964 Pilkington Headquarters (**Image 25 at Appendix SA1**).
- 5.3 It delivers on all the 10 factors the National Design Guide sets out to delivering a 'Beautiful and Successful Place':
1. Context - the proposal enhances the surroundings creating space to enjoy the buildings with new green infrastructure.
  2. Identity - its design is grounded in St Helens, enhancing key assets, its an attractive and unique response.
  3. The built form is coherent and of a scale and massing appropriate to St Helens.

4. Movement is improved by breaking down the large building blocks linking key assets with natural and intuitive wayfinding.
  5. Nature is enhanced and optimized within the public realm with new trees and rain gardens as part of a wider sustainability strategy.
  6. Public space, to dwell, orientate yourself, space for all ages, linked and safe.
  7. Proposed uses are mixed to create a truly sustainable development.
  8. Uses - homes and buildings are functional, flexible, robustly designed to be enduring and sustainable.
  9. Resources - carefully chosen materials to reduce the environmental impact, locally sourced, robustly detailed, and resilient.
  10. Lifespan - simple elegant design, timeless, inspired by St Helens to create a sense of ownership and joy.
- 5.4 The masterplan has always set out to work with St Helens key buildings and enhance its assets. The Design and Access Statement submitted as part of the hybrid planning application shows the development of the masterplan (**CD C8, P29 to 31**). Whilst it is acknowledged that very early designs of the masterplan sought to retain the Swan Pub and extend the block it is situated within, such designs were prior to the appreciation of the scale and footprint needed to adequately redevelop the bus station in accordance with Merseytravel and SHBC's vision and brief. Numerous layouts were tested to achieve the bus station brief whilst realizing the masterplan vision, but the space take required meant that it was not possible to retain the buildings between the Gamble Building and Millennium Centre.
- 5.5 The final masterplan (**CD B3**) delivers on all aspects of the SHBC's vision and it builds on the town's rich heritage of invention, innovation, connectivity, and strong sense of community. It will rejuvenate the town centre into a modern, vibrant, and desirable location, creating a hot bed of creativity in the town centre that will then radiate out to the widest parts of the area attracting investment, raising its profile and maximize its key assets.

## 6 Statement of Truth

- 6.1 I confirm that I have made clear which facts and matters referred to in this report are within my own knowledge and which are not. Those that are within my own knowledge I confirm to be true. The opinions I have expressed represent my true and complete professional opinions on the matters to which they refer.



**Sam Ainsley**

Dated: 14 July 2023