

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

CORE DOCUMENTS LIST

A	LEGISLATION, GOVERNMENT AND OTHER CENTRAL GUIDANCE	PAGE NO.
Legislation		
1.	Land Compensation Act 1961	
1.1	Section 6(A)	1 - 2
2.	Town and Country Planning Act 1990	
2.1	Section 226	3 - 9
2.2	Section 70(2)	10 - 13
2.3	Section 61W	14 - 15
2.4	Section 61X	16
3.	Human Rights Act 1998	
3.1	Schedule 1, Part I The Convention	17 - 21
3.2	Schedule 1, Part II The First Protocol	22 - 23
4.	Equality Act 2010	
4.1	Section 149(1)	24 - 25
5.	European Convention on Human Rights, as amended 1 August 2021	26 - 59
6.	Compulsory Purchase (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 2007	60 - 87
Government Guidance		
7.	National Planning Practice Guidance – Extracts	
7.1	Town Centres and Retail	88 - 100
7.2	Historic Environment	101 - 140
8.	The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Guidance on Compulsory Purchase and The Crichel Down Rules 2019	141 - 295
9.	National Planning Policy Framework 2021	296 - 370

Additional Legislation		
10.	Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill	
10.1	Section 170	371
11	Acquisition of Land Act 1981	
11.1	Section 6(4)	372 – 373
11.2	Section 12	374 – 377
12.	Local Government Act 1972	
12.1	Section 12A	378 - 379
13.	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976	
13.1	Section 13	380 - 381
14.	Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004	
14.1	Section 38	382 – 384
15	Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure)(England) Order 2015/595	
15.1	Article 15	385 – 388
15.2	Part 4	389 – 405

B	REGIONAL GUIDANCE	
1.	St Helens Together: Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030	406 – 444
2.	St Helens Borough Local Plan Up To 2037, 12 July 2022 – Extracts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ LPA01: Spatial Strategy ○ LPA02: Development Principles ○ LPA03: A Strong and Sustainable Economy ○ LPA04: Meeting St Helens Borough’s Housing Needs ○ LPA06: Transport and Travel ○ LPA07: Infrastructure Delivery and Funding ○ LPA08: Green infrastructure ○ LPA12: Health and Wellbeing ○ LPB01: St Helens Town Centre and Central Spatial Area ○ LPC04: Retail and Town Centres ○ LPC11: Historic Environment 	445 – 537
3.	St Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework	538 - 596
4.	St Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework Plan	597

5.	St Helens Town Centre Character Zones Plan	598
6.	Draft Masterplan Development Framework (dated 20 October 2021)	599 – 758

C	PLANNING PERMISSION AND RELATED PLANNING APPLICATION DOCUMENTS	
1.	St Helens BC Hybrid Planning Permission Ref: P/2022/0212/HYBR dated 31 March 2023	759 – 771
2.	Section 111 Agreement (counterpart) between: (1) St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council; and (2) English Cities Fund (Acting By Its General Partner ECF (General Partner) Limited) dated 30 March 2023 (P/2022/0212/HYBR)	772 – 814
3.	Site Location Plan	815
4.	Existing Site Plan	816
5.	St Helens BC Planning Committee Report in respect of Planning Permission Ref: P/2022/0212/HYBR dated 27 September 2022	817 – 850
6.	St Helens BC, Statement of Community Involvement – Addendum, Temporary measures in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, May 2021	851 - 854
7.	Development Area Schedule dated 8 July 2022	855 – 856
8.	St Helens Town Centre Development Design and Access Statement dated 28 July 2022	857 - 951

D	COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER AND RELATED DOCUMENTS	
1.	Order and Schedule	952 – 1038
2.	Sealed CPO Map	1039
3.	Statement of Reasons	1040 - 1078
4.	Statement of Case	1079 – 1140
Committee Decisions		
5.	St Helens BC Cabinet Report and resolution of meeting relating to the "in principle resolution to use compulsory purchase powers dated 2 February 2022	1141 - 1456

6.	St Helens BC Cabinet Report and resolution of meeting authorising the making of the Order dated 9 November 2022	1457 – 1620
Objections		
7.	Schedule of Objections	1621
8.	Letter of Objection – Angela Hindley dated 10 January 2023 (Obj 1)	1622
9.	Letter of Objection – Punch Partnerships (PML) Limited dated 11 January 2023 (Obj 2)	1623 - 1624
10.	Letter of Objection – Scott Hindley dated 14 February 2023 (Obj 3)	1625 - 1626
11.	Letter of Objection – Amy Lewis dated 14 February 2023 (Obj 4)	1627 – 1628
12.	Letter of Objection – Noel Hesketh dated 14 February 2023 (Obj 5)	1629 - 1630
13.	Letter of Objection – Merseytravel dated 12 January 2023 (Obj 6)	1631 – 1632
14.	Letter of Objection – Mark Ashcroft dated 12 January 2023 (Obj 7)	1633 – 1634
15.	Letter of Objection – Michelle Thomas dated 8 January 2023 (Obj 8)	1635 – 1643
16.	Letter of Objection – Stefan Kwasek dated 24 January 2023 (Obj 9)	1644
17.	Letter of Objection – Andey Cheetham dated 30 January 2023 (Obj 10)	1645 - 1646
18.	Response to Angela Hindley (Obj 1) dated 12 April 2023	1647 – 1650
19.	Response to Punch Partnerships (PML) Limited (Obj 2) dated 12 April 2023	1651 – 1654
20.	Response to Scott Hindley (Obj 3) dated 12 April 2023	1655 – 1658
21.	Response to Amy Lewis (Obj 4) dated 12 April 2023	1659 – 1662
22.	Response to Noel Hesketh (Obj 5) dated 12 April 2023	1663 – 1666
23.	Response to Mark Ashcroft (Obj 7) dated 25 April 2023	1667 – 1669
24.	Response to Michelle Thomas (Obj 8) dated 12 April 2023	1670 – 1673
25.	Response to Stefan Kwasek (Obj 9) dated 12 April 2023	1674 – 1677
26.	Response to Andey Cheetham (Obj 10) dated 12 April 2023	1678 – 1681

27.	A Hindley email to M Gove, dated 5 January 2023	1682
Withdrawal of objections		
28.	Merseytravel withdrawal dated 20 March 2023	1683
29.	A Hindley withdrawal dated 30 June 2023	1684
30.	Noel Hesketh withdrawal dated 30 June 2023	1685
31.	Scott Hindley withdrawal dated 30 June 2023	1686
32.	Amy Lewis withdrawal dated 30 June 2023	1687
Further Cabinet Reports		
33.	St Helens BC Cabinet Report (extract – Agenda item 3) and Minutes of meeting dated 20 October 2021	1688 – 1766

E	MISCELLANEOUS	
Reports		
1.	St Helens BC, Retail and Leisure Study Final Report, May 2017 (Publication date January 2018 to incorporate the latest Experian Data)	1767 – 1886
2.	St Helens BC, Community Impact Assessment of Relevant Policies, Decisions or Functions, 16 September 2022	1887 – 1894
3.	St Helens BC, Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-2025 & Revenue and Capital Budget 2022/23	1895 – 2028
4.	St Helens BC, Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-2026 & Revenue and Capital Budget 2023/24	2029 – 2158
Compulsory Purchase Guidance		
5.	Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government Compulsory Purchase and Compensation – Guide 1 – Compulsory Purchase Procedure	2159 – 2186
6.	Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government Compulsory Purchase and Compensation – Guide 2 – Compensation to Business Owners and Occupiers	2187 – 2209
7.	Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government Compulsory Purchase and Compensation – Guide 3 – Compensation to Agricultural Owners and Occupiers	2210 – 2233
8.	Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government Compulsory Purchase and Compensation – Guide 4 – Compensation for Residential Owners and Occupiers	2234 – 2257

9.	The outcomes of the Thinking Place Engagement online survey	2258 - 2354
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F	BUS STATION DOCUMENTS	
Reports		
1.	St Helens Town Centre Multi-Modal Interchange: RIBA Stage 3 Report	2355 – 2434
2.	St Helens Bus Technical Note (part of Green Bus Routes Commission), Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Limited (July 2020)	2435 – 2487
3.	St Helens Bus Options Review (part of Green Bus Routes Commission), Watermans (August 2020)	2488 – 2530

G	ADDITIONAL REPORTS	
Reports		
1.	St Helens Inclusive Growth Strategy 2023-2028	2531 – 2572
2.	Retail Market Overview report (CBRE, 2021)	2573 – 2587
3.	St Helens Market Feasibility Study & Defined Vision (Market Curators, 2022)	2588 – 2612
4.	St Helens Towns Fund Final Business Case 'Town Centre Regeneration & Living' (July 2022)	2613 - 2692
5.	St Helens Town Centre Strategy: Draft for Consultation (September 2017)	2693 - 2716
6.	Invest St Helens 'Town Investment Plan'	2717 - 2810
7.	Liverpool City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (2022/2023 – 2026/2027)	2811 – 2838
8.	St Helens Local Plan Core Strategy (October 2012)	2839 - 3044
9.	St Helens Towns Fund Business Case 'Connected Places - St Helens Multi Modal Interchange' (July 2022)	3045 - 3099

H	HERITAGE DOCUMENTS	
Heritage Planning Application document		
1.	Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment, St Helens Town Centre	3100 – 3232
2.	St Helens Town Centre Development Environmental Statement Chapter 8: Built Heritage (July 2022)	3233 – 3249

Heritage Policy documents		
3.	St. Helens Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document: List of Locally Important Buildings (June 2011)	3250 – 3275
Heritage Legislation		
4.	Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:	
4.1	S.66	3276
4.2	S.72	3277
Case Law		
5.	<i>Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Limited v East Northamptonshire DC</i> [2014] EWCA Civ 137	3278 – 3294
Correspondence and Reports		
6.	Email from St Helens BC, Planning and Regeneration dated 27 June 2022	3295 – 3297
7.	Letter from Historic England to St Helens BC dated 30 August 2022	3298 – 3299
8.	Letter from St Helens BC Contaminated Land, Development Management Advice dated 21 July 2022	3300 – 3309
9.	Historic England, Reject at Initial Assessment Report, 16 January 2023	3310 – 3311

I	Book of Plans	
Plans		
1.	Demolition Plan	3312
2.	Parameters Plan – Development Plots	3313
3.	Existing Site Plan Overlay Plan Showing Development Plots	3314
4.	Parameters Plan - Access and Movement	3315
5.	Parameters Plan – Public Realm	3316
6.	Illustrative Phasing Plan	3317
7.	Strategic Acquisitions Plan	3318
8.	Parameters Plan – Upper Floor Uses	3319
9.	Parameters Plan – Ground Floor Uses	3320
Photos		
10.	Existing Town Centre Photographs	3321 - 3357



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

OUR BOROUGH STRATEGY

2021-2030



#STHELENSTOGETHER



FOREWORD

MESSAGE FROM THE LEADER

Our borough can be proud of the way we've responded to the huge challenges of COVID-19. Local residents, businesses, charities and organisations have come together to offer unprecedented support to each other. We've shown our resilience and our kindness.

Before the pandemic we were already working on plans to modernise the council and to make our approach more collaborative. It was in that spirit that at the start of the pandemic we worked with partners to develop the St Helens Together brand which has now come to encompass the entire approach we want to take from now on: not only coordinating the large-scale community response to the pandemic delivering help and support where it is most needed, but also looking ahead to lay the foundations for our reset and recovery and transforming the council and wider borough.

This document, our new Borough Strategy, shows the key strategic priorities for the council and the borough, and sets out how we can achieve better results for our communities by working together and supporting each other. It will be supported by a more detailed delivery plan which we will monitor and report on to make sure we are on track.

To develop these priorities and the whole strategy the council has been listening to residents, communities, businesses and stakeholders to understand their experiences of dealing with the pandemic and planning how we can all build a more prosperous and successful borough, support the changing needs of its communities and unlock our full potential.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to contribute their thoughts and ideas and helped to shape this document. Your input has informed and shaped our "bonds for a better borough". As we implement this strategy together, we will continue to engage with our communities as we strive to make St Helens Borough a great place by continuing our conversation and building a new relationship of trust and respect with residents, businesses, partners and council staff. We will also rethink and reshape service delivery considering our experiences during the pandemic and invest more time in co-designing services with residents.

By working together to develop and strengthen our bonds I am confident that we can achieve our vision to be a better borough, with people at the heart of everything we do.



David

Councillor David Baines
St Helens Borough Council Leader



CONTENTS

Our Vision	6
Our Priorities	8
Case Study: St Helens Together	10
Our Borough	12
Consultation Findings	16
COVID-19 Response	18
Community Engagement	19
Priority One: Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	21
Priority Two: Promote good health independence and care across our communities	29
Priority Three: Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	37
Priority Four: Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	45
Priority Five: Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	53
Priority Six: Be a responsible council	61
How we will deliver and measure progress	68
How we will continue to engage with residents	74

INTRODUCTION

OUR VISION

Working together for a better borough, with people at the heart of everything we do by improving people's lives together and creating distinct, attractive, healthy, safe, inclusive, and accessible places in which to live, work, visit and invest.

This strategy sets out our vision for St Helens Borough, the themes that identify our place, the priorities we will focus on and the outcomes we will strive to achieve. We have developed this strategy by listening and engaging with people and this is starting point for resetting our relationship with residents, neighbourhoods, businesses and partners. We have also made a commitment to support the UN Sustainable Development Goals to embed sustainability at the heart of everything we do.

During COVID-19, St Helens Together brought together our communities with a shared purpose and common goals. This strategy embeds St Helens Together as our way of working, recognising that we all have a role to play in making St Helens a better borough.

We have developed this strategy in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the profound impact this has had in almost every area of people's lives. Through our recent engagement activity "St Helens Together: Have Your Say" we asked people to share their experiences of the pandemic, how they thought the council had

supported communities through the crisis and what they think are the most important things to focus on in the future.

As a result of the consultation, our existing priorities have been reshaped and reviewed as we move from a period of COVID-19 response, through to reset and recovery.

In 2016 we launched the "St Helens Story", to express why St Helens Borough is the choice of many, the essence of the area and what makes St Helens a great place in which to invest, live, work and visit. Our story is not only about where we have come from and where we are now, but also illuminates our vision for the future.

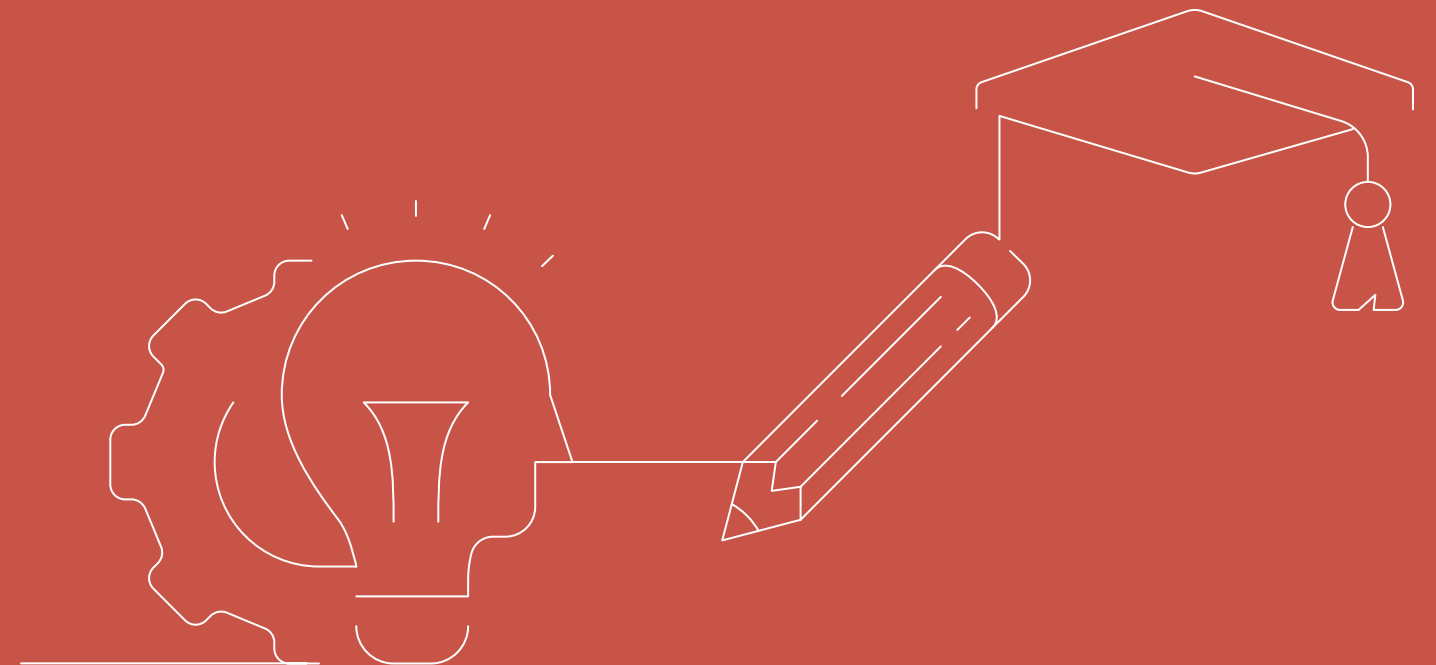
Three key themes were identified as "from industry to ingenuity", "culturally centred" and the "educated choice". Therefore, our vision for our place is based around the three key strengths of St Helens Borough:

- **Innovate**
- **Create**
- **Educate**

INNOVATE

CREATE

EDUCATE



OUR PRIORITIES

To ensure we can deliver our ambition for the borough we have developed six borough priorities.

St Helens is a large and significant borough at the heart of the North West of England which came to prominence during the industrial revolution. St Helens was once a highly industrialised area and has a proud heritage of coal mining, railways and world-famous glass and chemical industries. The decline of these industries led to significant economic restructuring and a resultant reduction in jobs and business opportunity the legacy of which is still seen today. Despite considerable positive change in recent years, particularly in the reduction in the number of economically inactive residents and significant improvements in skills, economic inactivity remains higher than the UK average, fuelled by high levels of long-term sickness, reflecting poor health in the population.

The borough strategy sets out a refreshed ambition and direction to address these challenges and to ensure that the history and heritage of St Helens Borough is part of building back an exciting future. Running through this strategy is the recognition that to address the social, economic and health challenges we are facing as a borough and as a council we need to do things differently.

Our conversation with residents and stakeholders told us that we need to work more closely with partners and with residents, we need to focus on supporting and empowering communities to find and develop joint solutions to our problems and to put more trust in the people of the borough.

We know from the response to the pandemic, demonstrated by St Helens Together comms that there is tremendous community strength in the borough, and much can be achieved by working together, and we will continue to build on this as we go forward.

We also must build a fairer and more sustainable borough for the benefit of future generations. A key intention within this strategy is to set out the foundation for a new relationship with our communities and partners as we recognise that the council cannot deliver the outcomes that communities deserve without working much more closely and forming a new agreement with residents.

As part of this new approach we want to involve people more in shaping the services they need, and empowering and enabling residents and community organisations to play a more active role in delivery.

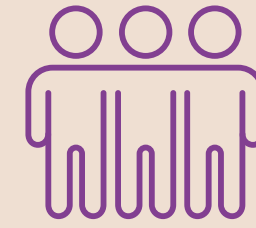
EMPOWER AND ENABLE RESIDENTS AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS TO PLAY A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN DELIVERY.



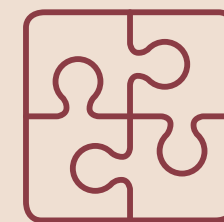
ENSURE CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE
HAVE A POSITIVE
START IN LIFE



PROMOTE GOOD
HEALTH, INDEPENDENCE
AND CARE ACROSS
OUR COMMUNITIES



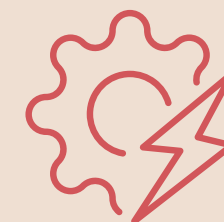
CREATE SAFE
AND STRONG
COMMUNITIES AND
NEIGHBOURHOODS
FOR ALL



SUPPORT A STRONG,
THRIVING, INCLUSIVE
AND WELL-CONNECTED
LOCAL ECONOMY



CREATE GREEN
AND VIBRANT PLACES
THAT REFLECT OUR
HERITAGE AND CULTURE



BE A
RESPONSIBLE
COUNCIL

CASE STUDY:

ST HELENS TOGETHER

The community response to COVID-19 was co-ordinated through the #StHelensTogether campaign bringing together a range of partners including the council, St Helens Clinical Commissioning Group, and Torus with the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector, local businesses and individual residents.

A response infrastructure was swiftly established including a telephone helpline, a community hub to deliver food parcels and essential items to the vulnerable, support to school children, a volunteer portal, to bring together volunteers and match these with people requiring help, support for homeless people, and a 'St Helens is Open' database.

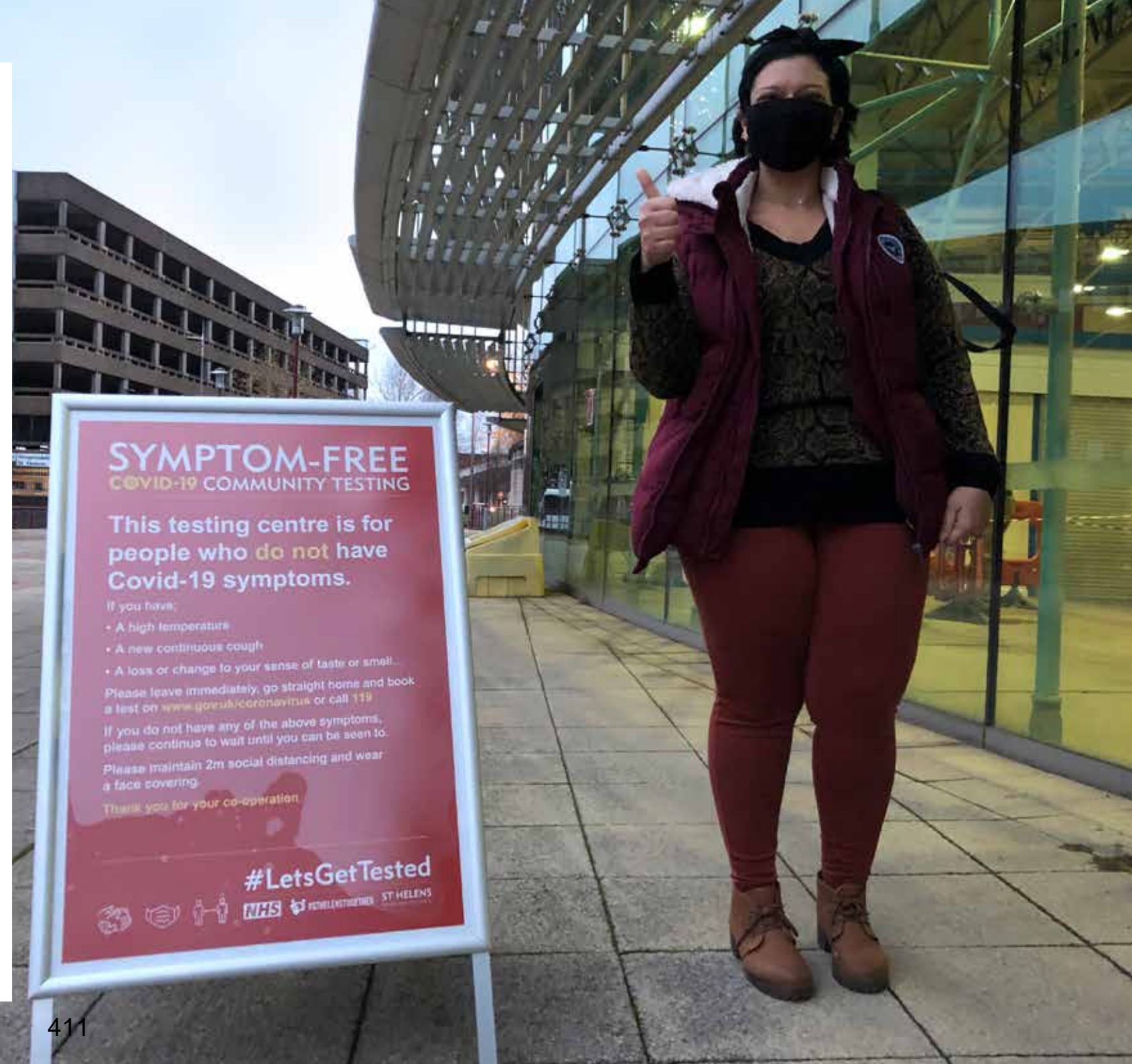
Since March 2020, we have received over 2,000 enquiries per week to our helpline. A wide range of residents have been supported by St Helens Together. 1,744 community volunteers have offered 8,688 hours of their time to support over 32,000 people. Over 37,000 meals and food parcels have been provided and over 16,000 well-being calls have been made. This was made possible by harnessing the skills, experience, and expertise of a wide range of people and the incredible goodwill of the community.

After seeing the impact the coronavirus pandemic was having on her own family, friends and local community, Nicola Karunaratne Diver from Thatto Heath wanted to support the #StHelensTogether campaign and registered to volunteer with Halton & St Helens VCA to help out and make a difference.

Commenting on her reason to volunteer in a bid to encourage others, Nicola, who - as well as carrying out errands such dog walking and picking up shopping and prescriptions - worked on the lateral flow testing centre at St Mary's Market over Christmas - said: *"When coronavirus happened, my husband and I were made redundant. I was sort of still in between jobs but my time is better spent helping out in my community."*

"I thought volunteering would be a nice way to give something back. I know resources in our community are struggling at the moment because of the pressures on the NHS and council - but we, the residents, are part of the resources of our community, and the more effort we put in gets us back to where we want to be."

"Volunteering also helps me maintain and learn skills, You never know what opportunities can come from it."



OUR BOROUGH

Our borough is situated in Merseyside and is proud to be part of the Liverpool City Region. It covers an area of 136 square kilometres and is home to over 180,000 people with 4,800 businesses based in the borough. It is a place with a strong identity and cultural history, rooted in our world-famous rugby league team and our proud industrial heritage including England's first canal, a section of the world's first passenger railway, pharmaceutical, coal and glass industries.

It is also a place of great potential with many strengths and opportunities. Our strategic position at the heart the North West provides excellent connections to and from our borough. Its semi-rural nature, with over 65% of the area green belt, makes for a very attractive place to live, with strong growth in new housing and increasing numbers of people choosing to live here.

Our greatest asset is the spirit and strength of our close-knit community, never more evident than in the way it has come together during the coronavirus pandemic to support our most vulnerable residents. You have also told us that the pandemic has brought opportunities in terms of communities getting to know each other better, an increase in digital skills, people starting new businesses and closer relationships between people and organisations across the borough.

Strengths

- **Community spirit** – our borough is a caring place with many local people volunteering or helping support their family and neighbours.
- **Strong, lasting partnerships** – alongside our vibrant local voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector we are part of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority unlocking opportunity for enhanced autonomy and devolution.
- **Green parks and open spaces** – over half of our borough is green open space, with parks, woodlands, and waterways to enjoy.
- **Heritage and culture** – our borough has a rich heritage and growing reputation for the arts and culture.
- **Integrated health and care** – St Helens Cares is our nationally recognised approach to delivering joined up health and social care services for local people.
- **Well connected** – our borough sits at the heart of the North West, with good road and rail connections.
- **A Growing Population** - more than 180,000 people living in our borough. There has been strong housing growth and increasing numbers of people choosing to come to live here.
- **A Place to Call Home** – a wide range of housing to meet everyone's needs, good schools and colleges, and a calendar of sporting and cultural events.



We recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the everyday lives of our communities from work, school, health, to the way we interact with each other. The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated some of the existing health and social inequalities faced by our communities and we know that some of our most vulnerable residents are likely to need more support as a result.

Despite considerable positive change in recent years to our borough, the local economy struggled to recover from the last recession and the new economic outlook presents a significant challenge. At the same time, there is still great potential for positive transformation.

Our position within the Liverpool City Region, strong partnerships and the strength of our community bring many opportunities to work together to improve our borough and the lives of all who live here.

Challenges

- **Economic recovery and growth** – more businesses and jobs are needed, particularly to support those people and business sectors most affected by the pandemic's impact on the economy.
- **Low attainment and skills** – school attainment and adult skills levels are lower than national averages and need to improve so that people can take advantage of new opportunities in a changing world.
- **Deprivation** - relatively high levels of deprivation and inequality exist within the borough. Our most deprived communities must not become more marginalised through the effect of the pandemic.
- **An ageing population** - our population is ageing faster than many other areas, creating high demand for health and care services.
- **Poor health** – too many of our population suffer from poor physical and mental health, making them potentially more vulnerable to COVID-19 than people in other areas. Life expectancy is comparatively low and wide health inequalities exist.
- **Children's services** - there are too many children we need to look after, and children and families who require social care support. Our support and services to them need to improve.
- **Climate change** - to protect the local environment and address climate change there is the challenge to reduce car use, increase sustainable transport, reduce our waste, and recycle more.
- **Feeling safer** – crime rates are generally lower than those of similar areas. However, we need to make sure people 'feel' safer in their neighbourhoods.



CONSULTATION FINDINGS

Over the summer 2020 extensive community engagement was undertaken to give local people the opportunity to shape the long-term vision for the borough, give their views on how local services should be delivered and how residents could play a greater role in this delivery.

There were four main ways in which people participated:

1. Digital online surveys were completed by residents and St Helens Borough Council staff.
2. Reopened St Helens Borough libraries.
3. There were a number of focus groups held virtually through Zoom and Microsoft Teams with the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector, local businesses, care leavers, local councillors, Parish councils and St Helens Borough Council staff.
4. The organisation "PLACed" undertook some online engagement sessions and also two face to face socially distanced engagement sessions on Church Street in St Helens Town Centre. These sessions involved people sharing their ideas and writing them onto the shop windows.

"People thought that it was positive to be spoken to, listened to and engaged with"

The consultation and engagement process was well received and people commented they felt that had not been spoken to or listened to enough over the last few years. It was clear that people want to be part of the conversation about our borough and want to be involved and have a greater influence in the local decisions that affect them. The people of the borough are the greatest asset we have and it is clear that the council must enable and empower them to shine.

A key question posed at focus groups was ***"how do you want to describe the borough in 2030?"*** There were many words used repeatedly over several focus groups.

TOGETHER, WE WANT ST HELENS BOROUGH TO BE A PLACE THAT IS...



COVID-19 RESPONSE

As part of the conversation with our community we wanted to understand the experiences of residents during the pandemic and how they felt the council, working with partners, managed the response during this time.

The success of St Helens Together has shown us that we can achieve things quickly by all working together for the same goals. We will continue this legacy by maintaining our strong relations with our partners, local businesses and residents. We will continue the conversations we started with residents so that we can develop solutions to challenges together. We want to strengthen the close bonds we have formed during these challenging times.

Throughout this strategy we set out our “Bonds for a Better Borough”. The bonds show what the council can contribute, what others can contribute and how, together, we can achieve the priorities for our place.



83% of people surveyed said they were satisfied with the council's response to COVID-19



59% rated it as “good” or “excellent”



61% of people had heard of St Helens Together

PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

During COVID-19, St Helens Together united our communities with a shared purpose and common goals. This strategy makes St Helens Together our way of working, recognising that we all have a role to play in making St Helens a better borough.

To make this a reality we have committed to help people to do more for themselves, for each other and for their community putting people at the heart of everything we do.

When community engagement is strong:

- Residents understand and trust the work of the council
- Residents play a part in decision making
- The relationship between the council and residents is mutual, instead of residents being passive recipients
- More residents get involved in work to support their area and shape changes to how we deliver services
- The council develops a richer understanding of the community wants and needs
- Residents are empowered and valued for their community spirit

We will work in partnership with our residents, partners and businesses to further develop the St Helens Together approach through a clear, consistent and joined up approach to community engagement, and by developing our St Helens Together Bonds which set out the mutual expectations of the council and the community.

Localities

As part of our St Helens Together ambition is to explore opportunities for greater locality working within the borough. Locality working focuses on involving local people, organisations and partners in shaping and delivering local services.

The council is committed to working more closely with communities and partners to deliver high quality, efficient and effective public services through new and enhanced ways of working which contribute to improving the quality of life and well-being of local people. Ensuring that residents can access services in the right way, at the right time, in the right place.



PRIORITY ONE



ENSURE CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A
POSITIVE START IN LIFE



PRIORITY ONE

We want to make a difference to the lives of children and young people who live in the borough, improve outcomes for all children, whilst tackling deprivation and child poverty and protecting children from vulnerable backgrounds.

What we heard

- Children and young people should have more involvement in designing support and services
- The borough has good schools and colleges with caring and nurturing staff
- We need to raise aspirations for all children to encourage them to meet their full potential
- We must build stronger links between young people and local businesses, with support to develop vocational skills
- Young people would like more opportunities and facilities
- Improved mental health support is needed for children and young people
- The majority of children in St Helens are relatively happy with their lives, although 9% of children and young people in St Helens reported low overall well-being which is significantly higher than children nationally (Good Childhood Inquiry)
- Primary aged girls had the highest well-being, while secondary aged girls had the lowest.
- Children who self-identified as having a special educational needed or disability and children who reported having caring responsibilities also had lower well-being than their peers did.



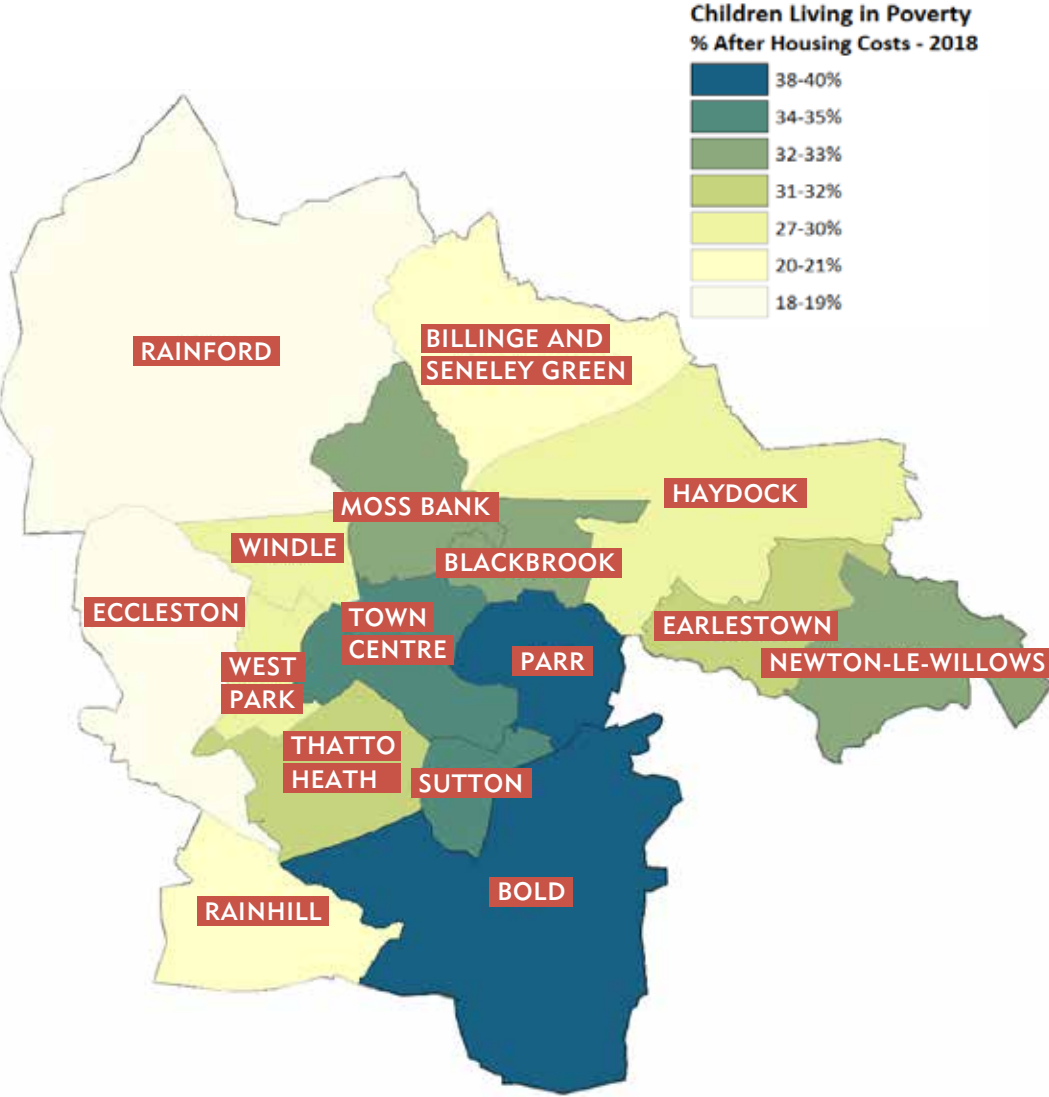
Together we can achieve the following outcomes:

Children and young people are safe from harm and the lives of children in care improve.

Children and young people’s aspirations, attainment and opportunities are raised.

Children and young people are healthy, resilient, confident, involved and achieve their potential.

THIS MAP SHOWS THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY BY WARD



PRIORITY ONE

OUR BONDS FOR
A BETTER BOROUGH

TOGETHER WE WILL

The council will	You can
Involve children and young people in shaping services, listen to their feedback and implement the recommendations of the Good Childhood Inquiry	Take time to be supportive parents or guardians, encouraging children to be the best they can be
Support children and families with early help and improve our services for looked after children	Go to school/college ready to learn and take opportunities to develop and share your skills
Work with local schools as well as National Government to review the curriculum and help those in greatest need to catch up and promote educational attainment	Take advantage of training and job opportunities, setting high aspirations for yourself and your family
Reduce child poverty and inequality	Let us know if you or a family you know could benefit from some additional help or support to look after a child better.

Key Strategies, Plans and Programmes

The delivery of this priority will be supported by a range of strategies, plans and programmes including:

- Children’s Services Improvement Plan
- St Helens Borough Education Recovery Plan

- Ofsted Ready Action Plan
- Care Leavers Strategy
- Children’s Services Demand Strategy
- SEND Strategy



Over **70%** of 5-year-olds achieved a good level of development in the early years learning goals, **better** than the North West average



Almost **33%** of adults have level 4 (degree level) qualification, a 30% increase in 10 years. The number of people without any qualifications has decreased over the same time period



CASE STUDY:

REWRITE THE STARS

“Rewrite the Stars” is a programme that recognises the skills and achievements demonstrated by young people in care and leaving care in St Helens. The “Rewrite the Stars” programme was initiated and designed by local young people as the outcome of 12 weeks of confidence building workshops. They felt this title represented them in that they are the stars, they want to rewrite their futures and leave the past behind. The event was a showcase of the talents and skills of young people and over 250 nominations were received for the 10 award categories.

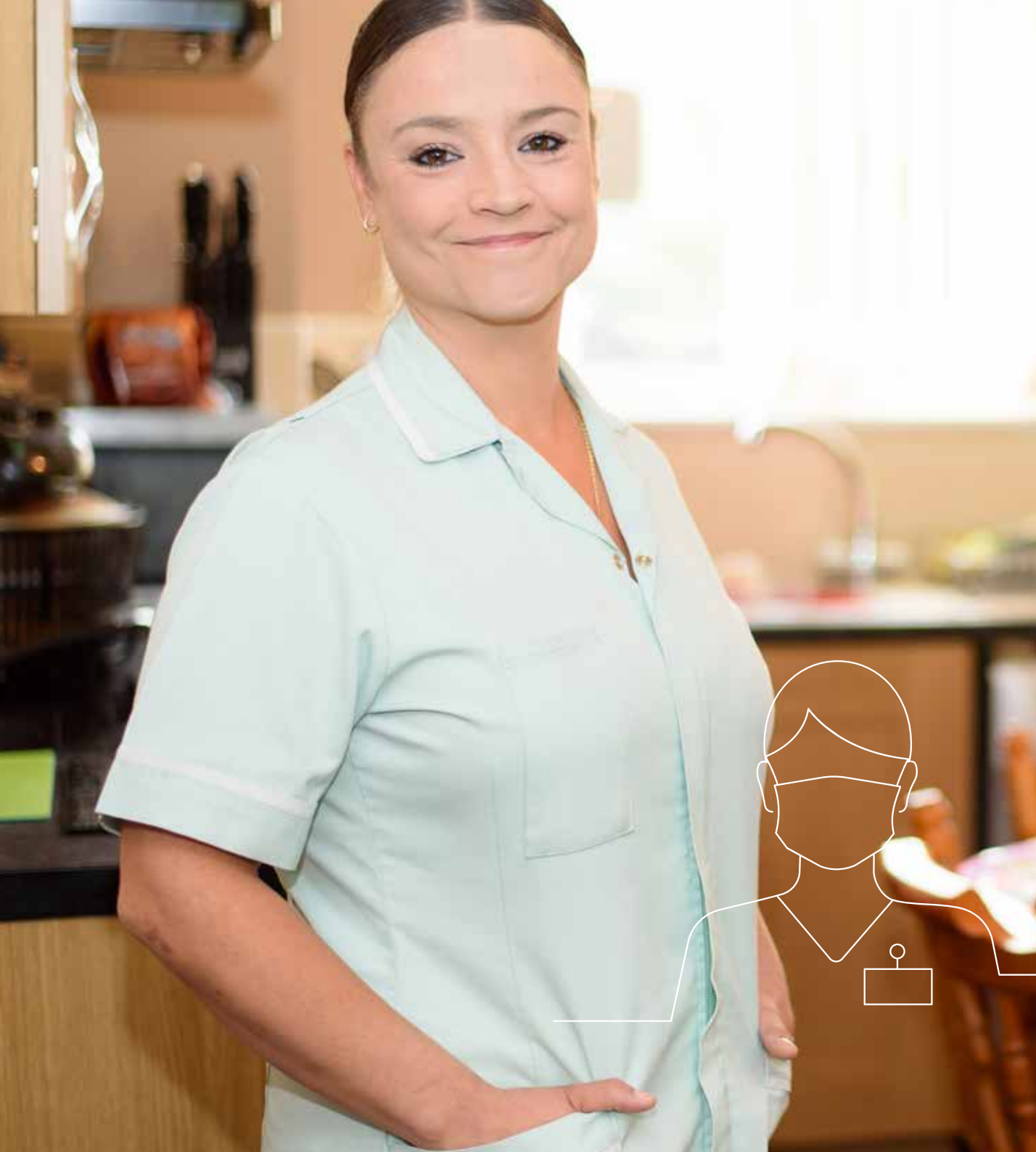
“Rewrite the Stars” has achieved significant outcomes for the young people in terms of raising aspiration and ambition, raising confidence, self-esteem, mental health and physical activity. The cost of this programme to date has been met by community contributions, local businesses and schools, rather than the public purse, and in the long term the savings to the local authority and health services will be significant as these young people grow. The aim is that these early interventions will develop a future generation of people who we hope are able to flourish and thrive independently.

Over 150 local, national and international businesses signed up as St Helens Borough Ambassadors have enabled this programme to flourish. The ambassadors have not only supported “Rewrite the Stars” but also several other successful initiatives to support our children and young people, including:

- Raising £25,000 over the last three years to deliver Christmas hampers for Care Leavers
- The “Believe & Achieve” careers event delivered to looked after children in secondary schools
- Supporting job interview preparation and guidance provided for Care Leavers
- Establishing the Care Leavers Covenant - working with Ambassadors to encourage guaranteed interviews for Care Leavers
- January 2021- Partnership project delivered with Ambassadors to support 271 young people in St Helens without access to IT devices – in excess of £20,000 raised from ambassadors

Our St Helens Together ethos will continue to develop relationships between the council, local businesses and our children and young people to ensure they have a positive start in life.





PRIORITY TWO



PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH INDEPENDENCE AND CARE ACROSS OUR COMMUNITIES



PRIORITY TWO

Good health, independence and care starts with people, our connections with communities, the respect and compassion we show one another, and the lifestyle choices we make. We want to continue to deliver excellent integrated services to make sure residents can access help and support in the right place at the right time as part of our ‘One Place, One System, One Ambition’ vision for the St Helens Integrated Care Partnership.

What we heard

- We must continue to drive integrated care services through development of St Helens Cares, our Integrated Care Partnership
- Greater recognition is needed for the social care workforce, health services, the voluntary sector and across education
- More could be done to encourage healthier lifestyles
- Greater support is needed to address mental health, suicide and addiction
- There needs to be a holistic approach to physical, mental and spiritual well-being
- Food poverty should be addressed
- A local Health and Wellbeing Charter for businesses should be developed



Together we can achieve the following outcomes:

People’s physical and mental well-being improves

People live well independently

People have a positive experience of health and social care services



PRIORITY TWO

OUR BONDS FOR
A BETTER BOROUGH

TOGETHER WE WILL

The council will	You can
Deliver excellent, responsive, place based integrated services through St Helens Cares by working closely with partners	Continue to invest in your own health and well-being by making healthy choices and seeking help and support when you need it
Improve health, reduce health inequalities	Get active and enjoy leisure services and the parks and open spaces we have in our Borough. Get involved with the local sports sector by taking part or volunteering
Develop health and social care services that meet the needs of communities now and in the future.	Have your say about the services you want and need
Support people to manage their own health conditions in the community	Keep in touch and offer support to family, friends, neighbours, and the community

Key Strategies, Plans and Programmes

The delivery of this priority will be supported by a range of strategies, plans and programmes including:

- St Helens Cares Place Plan
- Vision for Adult Services

- Outbreak Management Plan
- Active Lifestyles Plan
- Neglect Strategy



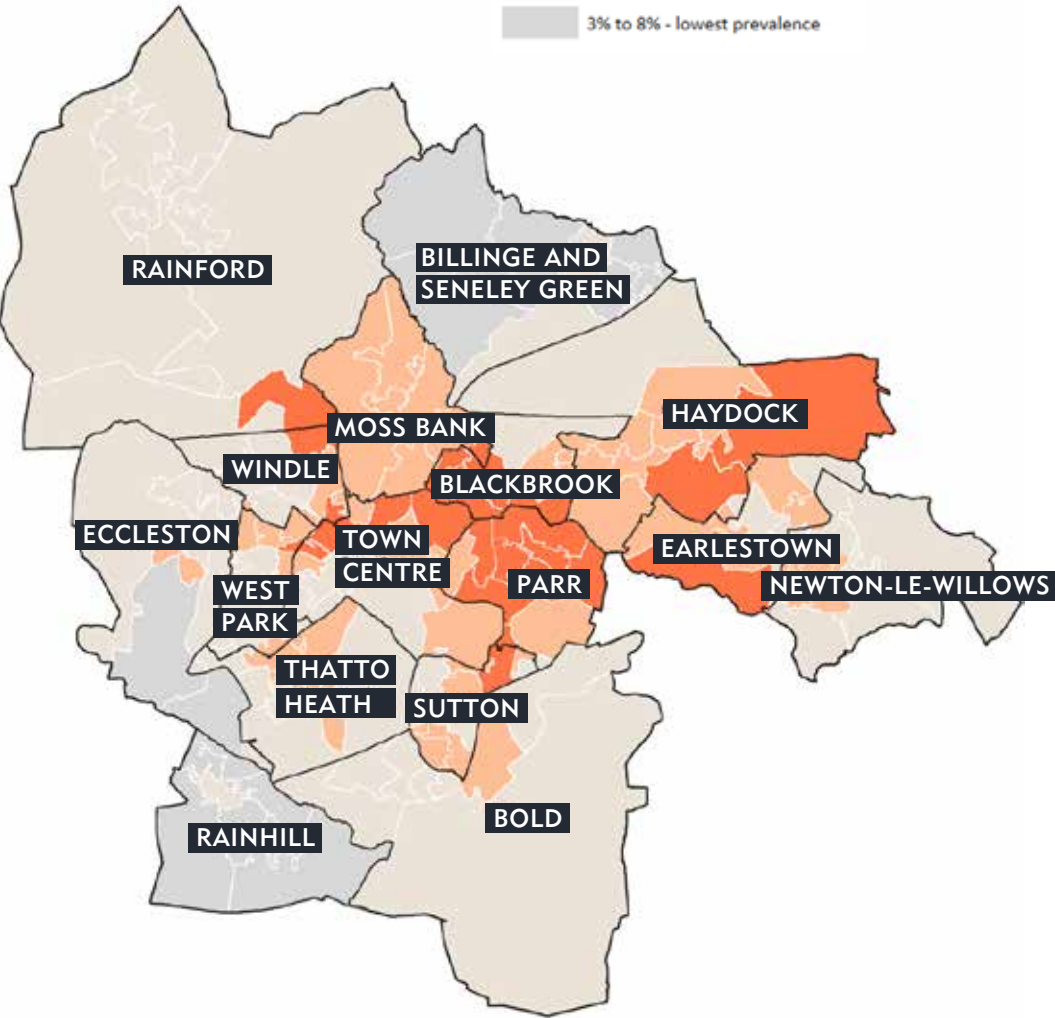
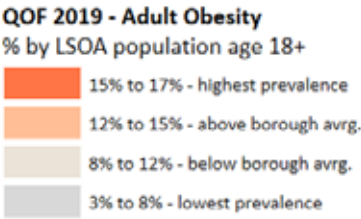
Life expectancy
at birth

77.8
years - Male
(79.6 years -England)

81.2
years - Female
(83.2 years - England)



69.2%
of adults are
overweight or obese
(62.3% - England)



CASE STUDY:

CONTACT CARES

Contact Cares is the 'front door' health and care service which gives customers access to a wide range of services and provides advice and support from a health and care professionals, who are all located in one place. Contact Cares provides care and support built around the needs of the individual, their carers and family.

Contact Cares was an essential element of the community response to COVID-19. From the 23rd March until 21st June 2020 Contact Cares received 31,860 enquiries.

An electronic referral link has been established which enables residents to be directed to the voluntary sector, and to individual resident volunteers in a seamless way. Contact Cares supporting teams to work well together and seamlessly sharing information through customers shared care record.

Amanda Wilde is one resident who has benefited from the Contact Cares service. Having lost her leg she was unable to return to her accommodation due to her disability.

She moved to a care home where she spent two years – not going out and despairing of the future.

"I didn't go out of my room. I was just in there watching telly all the time. And that's all I did. I think you just give up cause I thought I'm never going to get out of here," she said.

With Contact Cares health, social care and housing staff work together as a team to make sure people don't end up in hospital or homeless if they become disabled.

Amanda was offered a place in a transitional tenancy flat, which meant she has made friends and gained confidence.

"I met Barbara because we were going out on a trip. Having Barbara as a friend has given me confidence really because I can have a laugh with her. Friendships are really important - having someone to talk to or just sit with. She's brought the best out of me really."

And is able to look to the future where she can have her independence back again.

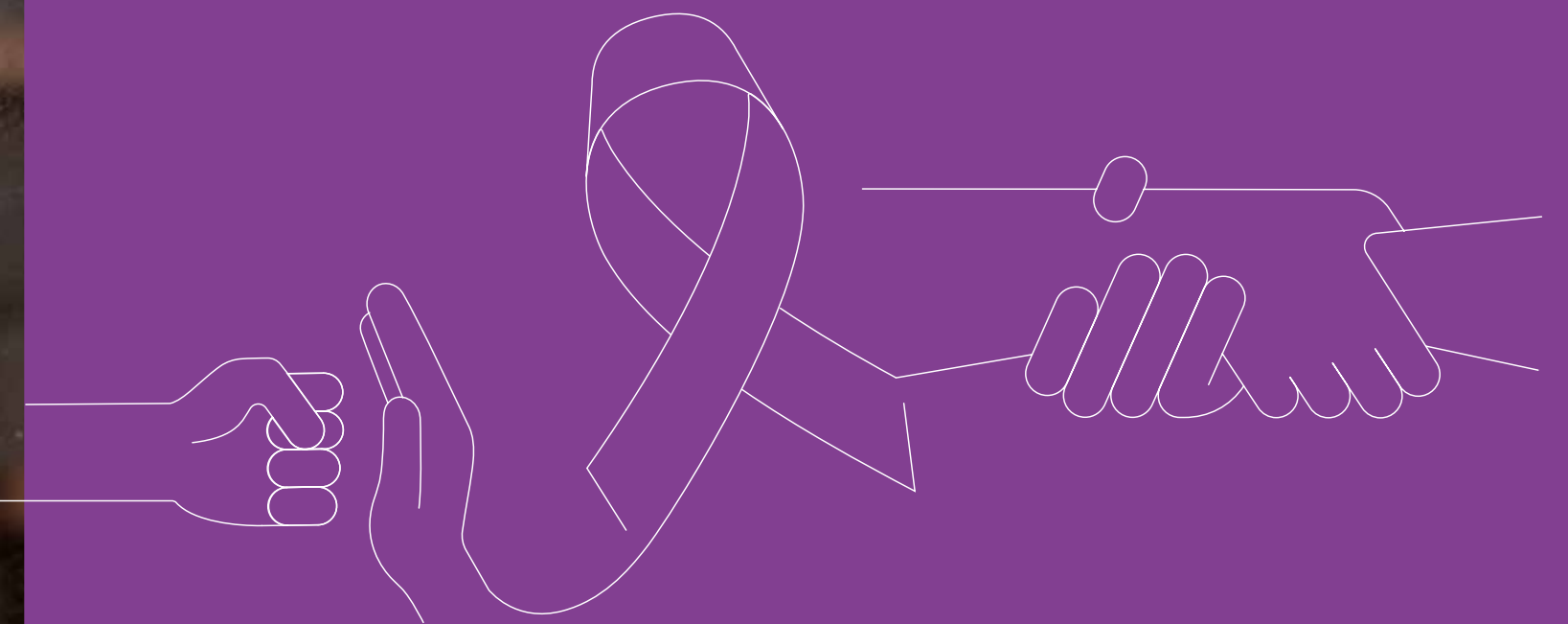




PRIORITY THREE



CREATE SAFE AND STRONG COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS FOR ALL

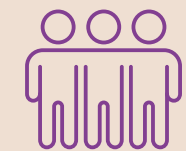


PRIORITY THREE

We want St Helens to be a welcoming borough for all, where people get on with each other and feel part of their local neighbourhood. To achieve this, we need to increase community engagement and build thriving, resilient communities that make the best use of their strengths and assets.

What we heard

- Overall there is a good range of affordable, high quality housing in the borough
- We have a large number of skilled and committed volunteers
- We need greater, more joined up support for homeless people
- Services need to be developed that are closer to the communities they serve
- There need to be more positive opportunities for young people in our neighbourhoods
- Create an online hub for community groups, events and activities

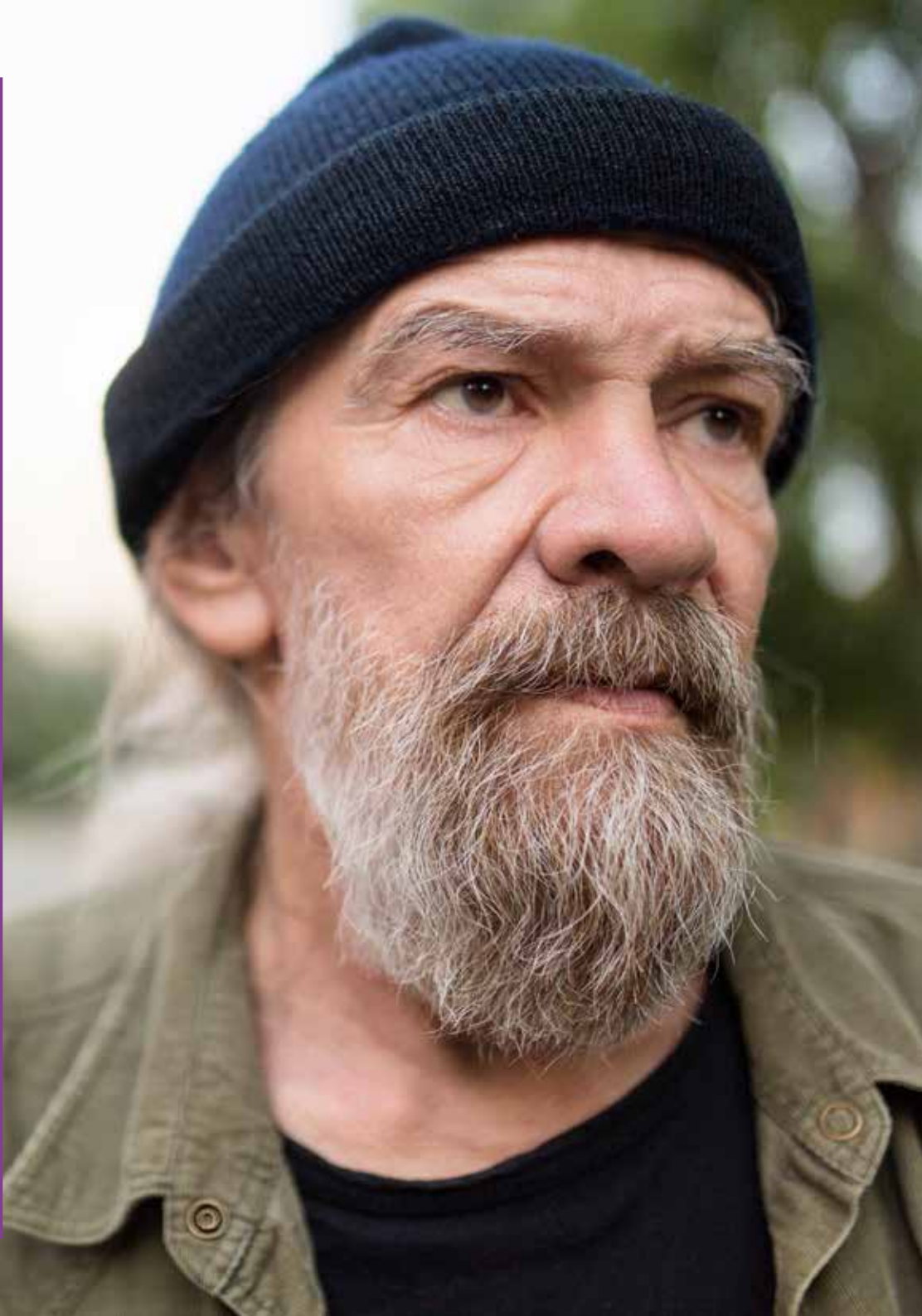


Together we can achieve the following outcomes:

Our Communities and neighbourhoods are safe, strong and caring.

Our voluntary and community groups are empowered and supported to make a difference.

Our neighbourhoods provide the right homes for all.



PRIORITY THREE

OUR BONDS FOR A BETTER BOROUGH

TOGETHER WE WILL

The council will	You can
Engage with and support our most vulnerable residents and those living in our most deprived communities	Look out for your neighbours, friends or vulnerable people in your community
Retain our registered volunteers and determine how best to mobilise and utilise their diverse skills and experience	Become a volunteer to share your skills and help other people in your neighbourhood.
Work with partners to understand the equality impacts arising more fully from COVID-19 and how adverse impacts can be minimised	Support local voluntary and community groups
We will continue to ensure there are enough quality and accessible homes to meet the needs of the population, and maintain our work on affordable warmth	Let us know any concerns that you have about your home or local area

Key Strategies, Plans and Programmes

The delivery of this priority will be supported by a range of strategies, plans and programmes including:

St Helens Borough Housing Strategy

St Helens Borough Homelessness Strategy

St Helens Borough Voluntary Sector Strategy

St Helens Borough Community Safety Plan

Domestic Abuse Strategy



566 dwellings
completed in 2019/20,
34% were
affordable housing



Almost a quarter of
St Helens residents
live in the **10%**
most deprived
neighbourhoods in
the country



£141k
Average house
price in St Helens
(£262k - England)



CASE STUDY:

EVERYONE IN INITIATIVE

In response to the pandemic, in March 2020 the Government requested that local authorities support people who were rough sleeping to come into safe accommodation, with the aim that no residents should be living without accommodation during the pandemic. The initiative, called 'Everyone In' required a partnership approach between the council and the agencies engaged in delivering support to rough sleepers.

During this time more than 150 vulnerable people were helped off the streets and into emergency accommodation, the goal being long-term housing with wraparound support. Both hostels in the borough, St Helens YMCA and the Salvation Army, worked to maintain their existing residents in accommodation, with a local hotel commissioned to provide emergency accommodation, despite most hotels being closed. As the lockdown in March resulted in almost total closure of non-urgent services, partners such as the Hope Centre and Teardrops provided daily hot meals to the residents of the hotel. Whitechapel provided outreach services to engage people who were residing on the streets to encourage them to come into services. Agencies worked together to ensure that the needs of residents were met, including health services, who ensured that residents have access to primary

care services. Change, Grow, Live (CGL) also supported residents to access recovery services during this time if required.

This provision has enabled some of the most entrenched rough sleepers to engage with services and to receive the support required. Among them is Client D, a rough sleeper who had slept out on the streets for over a year and consistently refused every offer of support and accommodation, even under the new "everybody-in" initiative. Despite this the Housing Services Team within the council continued to check on him daily as his health was a great concern.

Then in October 2020, Client D surprised officers by saying yes. Since then, he has been living in temporary accommodation with the right support and help to apply for long-term tenancy, claim the benefits he needs and open a bank account. Client D now has an opportunity for a bright, stable and healthy life.

Services have continued to support people just like Client D, to prevent rough sleeping, including offering emergency accommodation over the winter period. The council continues to work in partnership to increase the number of properties available for people who have experienced homelessness as part of the wider Homelessness Strategy for the borough.

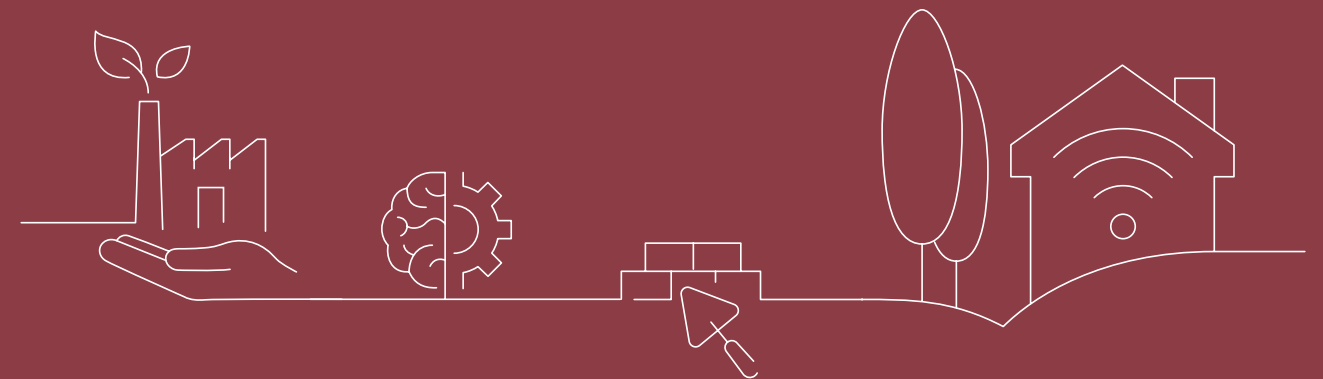




PRIORITY FOUR



SUPPORT A STRONG, THRIVING, INCLUSIVE AND WELL-CONNECTED LOCAL ECONOMY



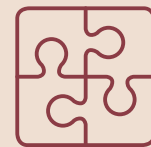
PRIORITY FOUR

The borough has a strong identity and sense of pride that is rooted in its history and heritage and there is a confidence in the future, reflected by increasing business investment, more jobs and opportunities. However, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on every aspect of society, not least the local economy. Improving long term economic resilience and addressing long-standing issues such as poverty and unemployment remain a priority.

To address inequalities and deliver inclusive growth we will focus on developing and supporting our business ecosystem, people and skills and invest in place and a green recovery to drive growth and transformation. This will include the transformation of the former Parkside colliery site into a major logistics hub and employment site and the delivery of our Town Investment Plan to develop a town centre that matches the potential of the borough. We will also maximise opportunities presented by flagship programmes such as Glass Futures, a world-class research and development sustainable, low carbon glass manufacturing facility.

What we heard

- We have great independent community enterprises and should enable the growth of this sector
- Our retail parks are good
- St Helens Town Centre requires radical transformation, ambitious plans should be made and implemented, considering the offer for families and the daytime and night-time economies
- Should consider offering hot desk facilities for businesses and individual workers
- Encourage local shops with local products
- Invest in the public realm



Together we can achieve the following outcomes:

Our local economy recovers and grows and people's skills and access to jobs improves.

Our town and neighbourhood centres are vibrant places for all to use, value and enjoy.

Our places are well-connected place with accessible transport and digital networks.



PRIORITY FOUR

OUR BONDS FOR
A BETTER BOROUGH

TOGETHER WE WILL

The council will	You can
Use our place leadership role to help businesses survive and grow and work closely with Liverpool City Region to maximise opportunities for St Helens	If you're a local business, engage with local networks
Embed social value within our plans and strategies to make the most of all opportunities	Support local businesses including the town centres and high streets by using the shops and facilities there
Ensure that the right green, transport or digital infrastructure is provided to support economic prosperity.	If you're a local business, create a healthy workplace and provide opportunities for apprenticeship positions, training and work experience
Review our proposals for the regeneration of the Town Centres in St Helens and Earlestown in order to create jobs, attract business, and create vibrant high streets that attract visitors.	Take part in consultations and give us your feedback and views
The council will encourage inward investment to create jobs for local people	Take up opportunities to develop new skills

Key Strategies, Plans and Programmes

The delivery of this priority will be supported by a range of strategies, plans and programmes including:
St Helens Borough Local Plan 2020-2035

Town Investment Plan
St Helens Borough Economic Recovery Plan
LCR Building Back Better Economic Recovery Plan



26 Total enterprises
per 1,000 population
(42 - England)



74.8%
of people in St Helens
are in work, higher
than the NW (74.2%)



The number of jobs
per 100 people.
(0.87 - England)

CASE STUDY:

NEWTON LE WILLOWS HIGH STREET

Newton le Willows High Street is booming. Recent years has seen it transform into the bustling hub of Newton-le-Willows, with a great variety of independent businesses that really give the high street that community vibe. Businesses happy to call it home, include artisan delis and cafés, a craft beer and ale shop, quality pubs, up market restaurants, trendy home and women's wear stores, hairdressers, and beauty salons, among others. There's even great connectivity linking the town to both Manchester and Liverpool, with a brand new, state of the art train station and bus interchange at one end of the high street.

Rewind a few years back, and it was a different story. Local councillors realised the potential of their high street and together with local businesses formed a High Street Business Hub. Over the years the hub has gone from strength to strength, putting on community events such as a scarecrow festival and trail, food, drink and craft fayres and an annual town show. Funds made from these events are then further invested into a rolling annual events calendar. These events, together with an increasing number of local

independent shops, has helped to make Newton le Willows High Street the beating heart of the local community once more.

One such thriving independent business on the high street is The Firkin. A micro pub, run by brothers Phil and Daniel Cunliffe, The Firkin emerged on to the street seven years ago, offering a selection of real ale and craft beer to try inside or take away and has proved to be a huge hit with customers.

"With a decent footfall, we could see the potential in the high street as a place to invest a business," said Phil, who is the pub's director and native to Newton-le-Willows. "The key to our success, which is something I'd pass onto anyone else considering launching their own local independent business, is to know your customer. "It's obviously been tough this year with a number of lockdowns and restrictions forcing us to close – but we're passionate about what we do and post-Covid, when things go back to some form of normality, we hope that more people come out to support local businesses like us which are the heartbeat of high streets and communities."

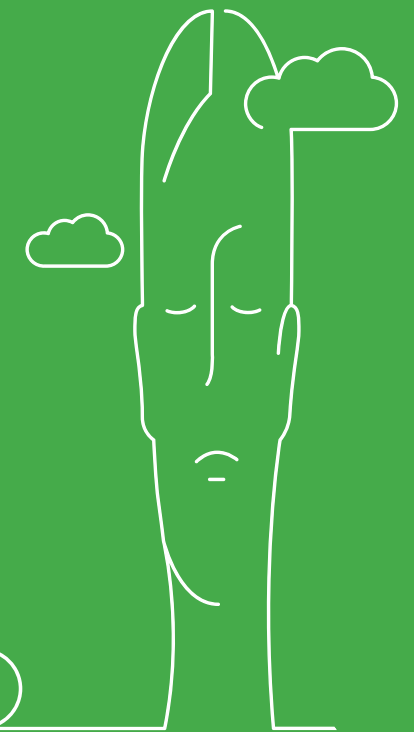
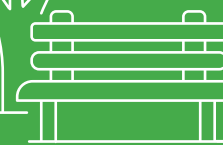
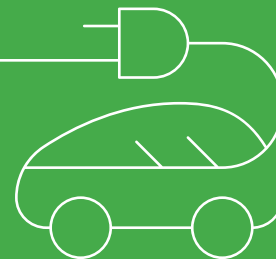




PRIORITY FIVE



CREATE GREEN AND VIBRANT PLACES THAT REFLECT OUR HERITAGE AND CULTURE



PRIORITY FIVE

We want St Helens to be a better, healthier and more sustainable place that proudly celebrates our culture and heritage whilst embracing new opportunities. However, like all areas the borough faces a number of challenges, including adapting to climate change, linking communities to services and employment, ensuring good access to open space and increasing the number of people choosing active travel and public transport.

In order for the borough to remain a great place to live, work in and visit we must strive to deliver a green recovery. The greatest threat the borough faces is climate change, we have set an ambitious target to achieve our zero carbon target by 2040 and have committed to the delivery against the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We also want to enhance our arts, culture and heritage offer to ensure every resident can contribute, experience and benefit from an uplifting cultural encounter.

What we heard

- The borough has high quality green spaces and parks
- We must celebrate our partners including our recognised Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations and create more arts, culture, and heritage opportunities
- We want new development to create new quality neighbourhoods that we can be proud of. They must respect the environment and existing communities
- We want to improve our recycling rates by making it easier to recycle.
- We want to encourage people to make healthy and sustainable transport choices. Promoting walking, running, and cycling. We want everyone to respect our environment by reducing litter and fly- tipping
- We want to grow more trees to make our environment a positive experience and tackle climate change



We want to create new and exciting green environments accessible for all. Together we can achieve the following outcomes:

Our environment is protected for the future

Our green and open spaces are enjoyed and looked after by us all

Our spirit and identity are celebrated through our heritage, arts and culture



PRIORITY FIVE

OUR BONDS FOR
A BETTER BOROUGH

TOGETHER WE WILL

The council will	You can
Deliver our strategies for arts, culture and recreational services	Be proud, celebrate and enjoy our arts, culture, heritage and recreational facilities in the borough
Use funding opportunities to invest in projects that promote alternative means of travel, maintain air quality and reduce our carbon footprint.	Walk, cycle and use public transport where you can
Review our waste management processes to improve our services to residents	Help to keep where you live clean and tidy and recycle as much as you can
Establish a Climate Change Commission to tackle climate change and become carbon zero by 2040 and support delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals to reduce inequalities and build a more sustainable future	Make simple lifestyle changes like buying more locally produced food to reduce your carbon footprint

Key Strategies, Plans and Programmes

The delivery of this priority will be supported by a range of strategies, plans and programmes including:

St Helens Borough Heritage Strategy
St Helens Borough Arts Strategy
St Helens Borough Libraries Strategy



St Helens Borough covers 136sqm,
65% is green space. There is a good motorway, train and bus network



92 public parks and green spaces (720 hectares)



7m recycling and waste collections made per year

CASE STUDY:

BOLD FOREST PARK

For nearly three decades, The Mersey Forest has brought together a range of partners to transform an area of St Helens previously dominated by colliery spoil heaps into a burgeoning Forest Park and natural asset.

St Helens Borough has faced significant social, economic and environmental challenges since the demise of the local coal mining industry.

However, the creation of a cluster of community woodlands spanning 220 hectares, including Sutton Manor, Clock Face Country Park and Griffin Wood, has dramatically improved the image of the area and offers a future source of economic development.

Landowners are working together with the local community as part of The Mersey Forest to harness the collective potential of the maturing woodlands under the banner of Bold Forest Park.

The woodlands are already proving a popular local resource, attracting 200,000 visitors per year. In an area where health and well-being are important considerations, the Forest Park provides a valuable space for walkers, cyclists and families.

The ambition is to now develop it to attract visitors from further afield – in turn helping to support local businesses. Working together with the local community, St Helens Borough Council has created a formal area action plan for the Forest Park, using neighbourhood planning principles.

Whilst the area has already been transformed, additional funding will help to further deliver the action plan to increase green spaces for recreation, improve access and create visitor infrastructure.

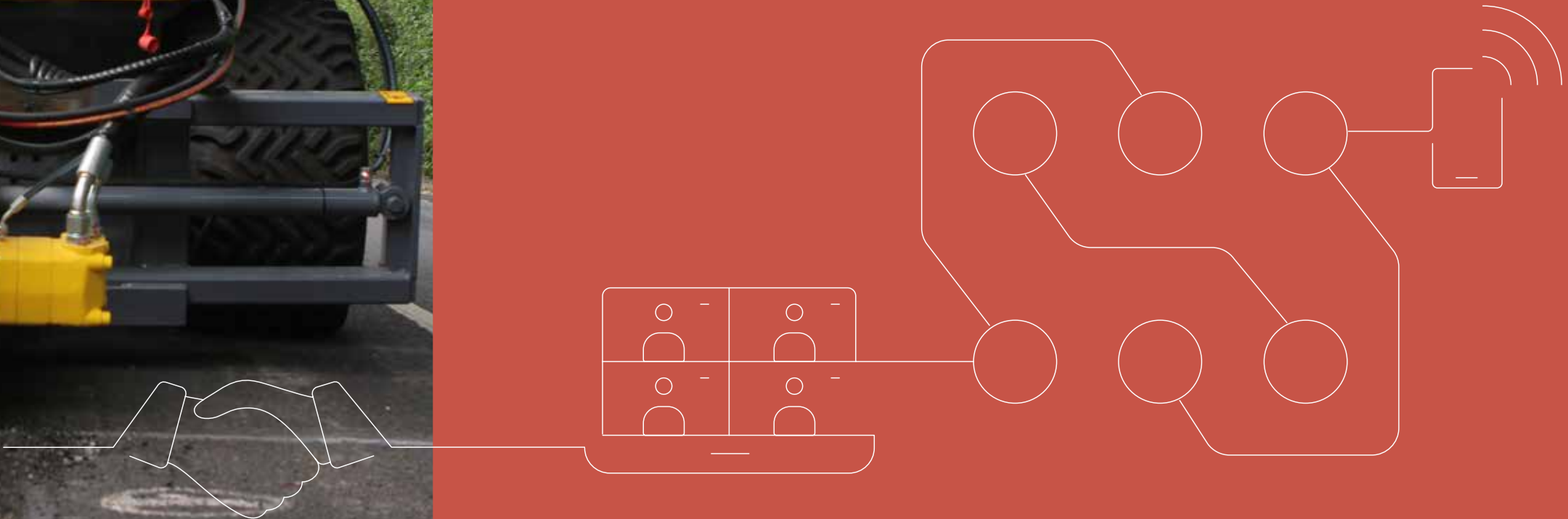
The vision for the Forest Park is to provide a high-quality setting to stimulate tourism and provide a platform for local businesses to grow and develop, as well as assisting the creation of new businesses. The area will also provide opportunity for a diverse range of outdoor activities to support the local economy and improve the health and well-being of its local residents.





PRIORITY SIX

BE A
RESPONSIBLE
COUNCIL



PRIORITY SIX

We want the council to work much more closely with communities and partners to shape and strengthen the prospects of the borough and its residents. Despite growing demand and an unprecedented period of budget reductions for local government, the council has continued to deliver high quality public services and value for money for residents.

What we heard

- The council has been more responsive over the pandemic and needs to continue being more proactive and responsive
- Enable and support the residents, community groups and businesses with a positive attitude
- Increase online services
- Increase trust through greater involvement of citizens
- Publicise more good news and local successes
- More community events and promotion of local activities



Together we can achieve the following outcomes:

Communicate, listen, engage, and work in partnership well with our residents, communities, local organisations, and partners recognising the strengths and skills in our community

Invest in developing the strengths and skills of our workforce and elected members

Embrace innovative ways of working to improve service delivery and the operations of the council

Meet our community's needs by delivering accessible and responsive services

Provide value for money and ensure we are financially resilient and sustainable



PRIORITY SIX

OUR BONDS FOR A BETTER BOROUGH

TOGETHER WE WILL

The council will	You can
Adopt new ways of working and reshape services to be more responsive, rationalise our operational estate and reduce costs	Use your vote in local and national elections
Create further opportunities to co-design, engage and involve residents, community groups and local businesses	Get involved and engage with us on shaping local services
Develop further digital services	Make the most of our online services

Key Strategies, Plans and Programmes

The delivery of this priority will be supported by a range of strategies, plans and programmes including:

St Helens Borough Council
Budget Strategy

St Helens Borough Council
Ways of Working Programme

St Helens Borough Council
Commercialisation Strategy

IT Strategy

Organisational Development Strategy

Community Engagement Strategy



£149m
council budget



48 councillors
representing the
borough



2963
council employees



CASE STUDY:

REIMAGINING OUR PUBLIC BUILDINGS

The COVID-19 pandemic almost overnight changed the way that many organisations operated, but even before the pandemic, St Helens Borough Council was determined to introduce a more modern, flexible way of working for staff – reducing costs and freeing up council buildings and assets for other uses.

St Helens has many beautiful and historic buildings, including St Helens Town Hall, the Gamble building and Earlestown Town Hall, and like many local residents, the council is committed to retaining our historical buildings, and safeguarding their future public use. Future plans will see buildings such as St Helens Town Hall and Earlestown Town Hall become a more familiar place for residents, with investment in improving areas such as the Assembly Halls to make them a suitable venue for wedding ceremonies, civil partnerships, concerts, events and conferences. As office space in the Town Hall would no longer be required, this would allow for the potential development of commercial opportunities and increased community usage. This would make the building more accessible to local people, as well as retaining the heritage of the building and its place within the town centre and residents' lives.

In March 2020 a public consultation was held on the potential future use of The Gamble Building, with feedback showing an overwhelming desire by local people to see the building used as a community arts, cultural and educational space.

With this in mind, and taking the first steps towards this realisation, office accommodation has now been moved out of the building, with just the Archives Service remaining, while plans are drawn up.

These plans would also support the wider regeneration of St Helens Town Centre and the borough. English Cities Fund (ECF) plan for the town centre includes a £200m commercial and leisure investment that would completely transform the town centre, including the addition of top-quality office space. In the medium term the council could potentially look to develop a new building in the town centre within the regeneration area, to coincide with the expiry of the lease on Atlas House. As well as housing council services this building could also co-locate other local services and partners, further supporting the council's wider One Public Estate vision, to rationalise and re-imagine some of the public sector buildings in the centre.

The council has also recognised its need to look wider than St Helens Town Centre to the district centres, and the plans provide further opportunity to examine locality working, allowing services to be provided closer to the communities and residents who use them and facilitating a greater understanding of the needs of residents in that particular area. These locations could again provide a hub in which various local services and partners could be based.



HOW WE WILL DELIVER AND MEASURE PROGRESS

This strategy will be supported by a delivery plan to support implementation. We will also monitor progress against the outcomes framework using the following measures of success and will report our progress to residents.

Outcomes Framework

ENSURE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A POSITIVE START IN LIFE	
Outcome	Measures of Success
Children and young people are safe from harm and the lives of children in care improve	Effective early help for children and families
	Reduced numbers of children in need
	Children and young people are effectively safeguarded
	Safely reduced numbers of children we look after
	More children and young people looked after by foster carers
	Care leavers have suitable accommodation and opportunities for education and employment
Children and young people's aspirations, attainment and opportunities are raised	Improved educational attainment of our children and young people; in particular our vulnerable and cared for
	Increased opportunities for our young people who are not in education, employment or training
	More schools are graded 'Good' or 'Excellent'
	The needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are met
	Children and young people's mental health is improved

Children and young people are healthy, resilient, confident, involved and achieve their potential	Children and young people's physical health is improved
	Fewer teenage conceptions
	Children and young people express their views, feel heard and are fully involved in decisions that affect their lives
	Fewer young people become involved in the youth justice system and reoffending
PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH, INDEPENDENCE AND CARE ACROSS OUR COMMUNITIES	
Outcome	Measures of Success
People's physical and mental well-being improves	Increased healthy life expectancy
	Reduced differences in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between communities
People live well independently	People are well supported to live independently at home
	Fewer people needing long-term social care support
People have a positive experience of health and care services	High levels of satisfaction with health and social care services
	Carers are effectively supported
	Adults are effectively safeguarded
	More people with self-directed social care support
	More services based around localities and primary care networks

CREATE SAFE AND STRONG COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS FOR ALL	
Outcome	Measures of Success
Our communities and neighbourhoods are safe, strong and caring	Reduced levels of anti-social behaviour
	Fewer incidents of domestic abuse
	Road safety improves
Our voluntary and community groups are better supported to make a difference	More people volunteering in the community
Our neighbourhoods provide the right homes for all	Reduced levels of homelessness
	Fewer people sleeping rough
	Increased numbers of homes and affordable homes
	Fewer empty properties
	Support to end fuel poverty

SUPPORT A STRONG, THRIVING, INCLUSIVE AND WELL-CONNECTED ECONOMY	
Outcome	Measures of Success
Our local economy recovers and grows and people’s skills and access to jobs improves	Local businesses are well supported to recover and grow
	The local economy is strengthened and diversified
	Investment in St Helens Borough increases
	People are supported into work
	More residents with higher level qualifications
	Employment needs are met
Our Town and neighbourhood centres are vibrant places for all to use, value and enjoy	We protect and enhance our town, district and local centres
	Perceptions of our town and district centres improve
Our places are well-connected place with accessible transport and digital networks	We improve our sustainable travel infrastructure
	We deliver advanced digital infrastructure and networks

CREATE GREEN AND VIBRANT PLACES THAT REFLECT OUR HERITAGE AND CULTURE	
Outcome	Measures of Success
Our environment is protected for the future	Our Carbon emissions reduce year on year
	Our recycling increases
	We produce less waste
	We increase active travel and use of sustainable transport
Our green and open spaces are enjoyed and looked after by us all	Fewer incidents of flytipping
	High levels of street cleanliness
	Greater community ownership of green spaces
	More people reporting environmental issues and concerns
Our spirit and identity are celebrated through our heritage, arts and culture	Increased opportunities for people to engage in arts, heritage and culture
	More people participating in arts, cultural and leisure activity leading to improved health and well-being

BE A RESPONSIBLE COUNCIL	
Outcome	Measures of Success
Communicate, listen, engage, and work in partnership well with our residents, communities, local organisations, and partners recognising the strengths and skills in our community	There is growing trust and confidence in the council
	We communicate positive messages and behaviours that increase community resilience
	We promote our borough to create improved perceptions and pride in the area
	We respond to residents and communities concerns in a prompt manner
Invest in developing the strengths and skills of our workforce and elected members	Our workforce is agile, skilled, and motivated
	We increase training and development opportunities for our workforce and elected members
	The health and well-being of our workforce is well supported
	Our shared values and behaviours promote a positive work culture
Embrace innovative ways of working to improve service delivery and the operations of the council	Increased use of new technology to support customers and communities
	Increased customer engagement with digital and online services
Meet our community's needs by delivering accessible and responsive services	Levels of customer satisfaction are high
	More services delivered in localities, based on where and how customers need them
Provide value for money and ensure we are financially resilient and sustainable	Our budget is sustainable and delivers the best possible outcomes for our communities
	Cost effective use of resources and performance improvement

HOW WE WILL CONTINUE TO ENGAGE WITH RESIDENTS

In order to deliver our vision to make St Helens a better borough, with people at the heart of everything we do we must continue our engagement with residents, neighbourhoods, local businesses and partners as our success in delivering this vision will ultimately be judged by those who live, work and study in the borough.

By engaging communities in shaping how we deliver the vision and priorities for the borough and raising awareness and understanding of the choices we face, we will be better placed to succeed together.

Our future is dependent on an open and honest two-way conversation about what we are trying to achieve and the role that residents, neighbourhoods, businesses and partners must play to help us reshape how we deliver.

Our first review of progress against the borough strategy will take place in September 2021.





ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL



ST HELENS BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN UP TO 2037

A BALANCED PLAN FOR A BETTER FUTURE
JULY 2022



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. St Helens Borough Profile	6
3. St Helens Borough in 2037	12
4. Core Policies.....	16
5. Area Policies.....	96
6. Homes and Communities	102
7. Environment and Resources	121
8. Development Management Policies	167

Appendices

Appendix 1: Glossary	
Appendix 2: Development Plan Policies to be replaced by the Local Plan	
Appendix 3: Strategic Aims, Objectives and Policies	
Appendix 4: Monitoring Framework	
Appendix 5: Site Profiles – Allocated Employment and Housing Sites	
Appendix 6: Site Profiles – Allocated Gypsy and Traveller Sites	
Appendix 7: Site Profiles – Safeguarded Employment and Housing Sites	
Appendix 8: Sites of Biodiversity and Geodiversity Importance	
Appendix 9: Nature Improvement Areas	
Appendix 10: Mineral Resources and Licence Areas	
Appendix 11: Town, District and Local Centre Boundaries	
Appendix 12: Existing Employment Areas	

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: St Helens Borough and its sub-regional context	6
Figure 3.1: Interrelationship of Vision, Aims and Objectives	15
Figure 4.1: Key Settlements Plan.....	21
Figure 4.2: Key Diagram	27
Figure 4.3: Housing Trajectory – Year to Year	54
Figure 4.4: Parkside East and Parkside West.....	84
Figure 6.1: Affordable Housing Zones.....	110
Figure 7.1: Potential New Greenway Routes	133
Figure 7.2: Sankey Catchment Action Plan - Strategic Approach	152

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Labour Market Indicators in St Helens Borough.....	8
Table 4.1: Allocations for Employment Development.....	33
Table 4.2: St Helens Borough Estimated Employment Land Needs 2012-2037 ...	35
Table 4.3: Objectively Assessed Need for New Employment Land - 2012-2037 ..	36
Table 4.4: Residual Employment Land Requirement 2021-2037 (as of 31.03.2021)	36
Table 4.5: Sites allocated for new housing development	47
Table 4.6: Residual Housing Land Requirement 2021-2037	51
Table 4.7: SHLAA Housing Land Supply 2021-2037.....	51
Table 4.8: Green Belt Land Supply 2021-2037	51
Table 4.9: Total Supply over the Plan Period 2021-2037	52
Table 4.10: Housing Trajectory	53
Table 4.11: Local Plan 5 Year Supply Position 31.03.2021	54
Table 4.12: Local Plan 5 Year Supply as of 31.03.2021	55
Table 4.13: Safeguarded Land for Employment.....	60
Table 4.14: Safeguarded Land for Housing	61
Table 6.1: Estimated Size of Homes Needed 2014-2037	104
Table 6.2: Projected Change in Population of Older Persons (2016 to 2033).....	105
Table 6.3: Affordable Housing Zone Requirements	111
Table 7.1: Local Nature Reserves in St Helens.....	129
Table 8.1: Open Space Standards	177

Schedule of Plan Policies

Policy LPA01: Spatial Strategy	16
Policy LPA02: Development Principles.....	28
Policy LPA03: A Strong and Sustainable Economy.....	31
Policy LPA03.1: Strategic Employment Sites.....	43
Policy LPA04: Meeting St Helens Borough's Housing Needs.....	46
Policy LPA04.1: Strategic Housing Sites.....	58
Policy LPA05: Safeguarded Land.....	60
Policy LPA06: Transport and Travel.....	67
Policy LPA07: Infrastructure Delivery and Funding	72
Policy LPA08: Green Infrastructure	76
Policy LPA09: Parkside East	79
Policy LPA10: Parkside West.....	85
Policy LPA11: Bold Forest Garden Suburb	88
Policy LPA12: Health and Wellbeing	93
Policy LPB01: St Helens Town Centre and Central Spatial Area	96
Policy LPB02: Earlestown Town Centre	100
Policy LPC01: Housing Mix.....	102
Policy LPC02: Affordable Housing.....	107
Policy LPC03: Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.....	113
Policy LPC04: Retail and Town Centres.....	117
Policy LPC05: Open Space	121
Policy LPC06: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.....	125
Policy LPC07: Greenways	131
Policy LPC08: Ecological Network.....	134
Policy LPC09: Landscape Protection and Enhancement.....	136
Policy LPC10: Trees and Woodland	138
Policy LPC11: Historic Environment	143
Policy LPC12: Flood Risk and Water Management.....	148
Policy LPC13: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development	155
Policy LPC14: Minerals.....	158
Policy LPC15: Waste	165
Policy LPD01: Ensuring Quality Development.....	167

Policy LPD02: Design and Layout of New Housing	172
Policy LPD03: Open Space and Residential Development.....	174
Policy LPD04: Householder Developments	178
Policy LPD05: Extension, Alteration, Reuse or Replacement of Buildings in the Green Belt	180
Policy LPD06: Prominent Gateway Corridors	182
Policy LPD07: Digital Communications.....	184
Policy LPD08: Advertisements.....	187
Policy LPD09: Air Quality.....	189
Policy LPD10: Food and Drink.....	192

1. Introduction

1.1 What is the St Helens Borough Local Plan?

- 1.1.1 The St Helens Borough Local Plan sets out the framework for the growth and development of the Borough. It identifies how and where new development and regeneration should take place and thereby promotes and manages the future development of the Borough. It will also shape the investment plans of the Council, other public and voluntary organisations, and the private sector.
- 1.1.2 The Local Plan includes:
- the vision and objectives for the development of the Borough up to and beyond 2037;
 - strategic policies guiding the amount, form and location of new development;
 - site allocations for new housing, employment, and other forms of development; and
 - local policies with additional requirements to guide the consideration of planning applications for new development, and details of where these will apply.

1.2 What is the Plan trying to achieve?

- 1.2.1 St Helens Borough Council has worked for many years with other stakeholders to create a modern, distinctive, economically prosperous, and vibrant Borough, in which key environmental assets are protected and enhanced. The Local Plan will play an important role in achieving these aims.

1.3 Relationship to other planning documents

- 1.3.1 This Local Plan Written Statement forms a key part of the statutory 'development plan' for St Helens Borough. Other 'development plan documents' include:
- the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan 2013, which sets out the planning strategy and site allocations for the sustainable management of waste across Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, and Wirral; and
 - the Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan 2017, which sets out a strategy for the sustainable development and regeneration of several communities and adjacent countryside in the southern part of the Borough.
- 1.3.2 Further development plan documents may be adopted during the lifetime of the Plan.

- 1.3.3 The Council's Policies Map is a separate document that is updated as necessary when each development plan document is adopted. It identifies, on an Ordnance Survey map base, areas that are allocated for development or covered by specific designations, for example to recognise their environmental character. The Policies Map has been updated for adoption of this Plan.
- 1.3.4 National legislation also allows neighbourhood plans to be prepared for specific parts of the Borough. To date, no neighbourhood plans have been prepared in St Helens Borough. Government policy requires that any neighbourhood plan that is prepared should not undermine the strategic policies of the Local Plan¹.
- 1.3.5 The policies of the Local Plan replace all the policies in the St Helens Local Plan Core Strategy 2012 and the previously 'saved' policies of the St Helens Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 1998. No part of the Core Strategy or the UDP documents will remain extant from adoption of this Plan.
- 1.3.6 None of the policies in the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan 2013 or Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan 2017 will be replaced by this Local Plan. These documents will remain fully in place beyond adoption of this Plan.
- 1.3.7 The Council has also adopted a range of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). These provide further guidance and can be area-based or theme-based. The Council proposes to review some existing SPDs after this Plan is adopted and prepare further SPDs as appropriate.
- 1.3.8 The Council also has a duty to prepare regular Monitoring Reports that assess the effectiveness of adopted planning policies in addressing the key economic, social, and environmental issues facing St Helens Borough. The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the Council will engage stakeholders when preparing new planning policies and determining planning applications. The Local Development Scheme sets out which planning policy documents will be produced by the Council, including a timetable for their preparation.
- 1.3.9 A number of published evidence base studies have played a key role in shaping the Local Plan and are referred to in relevant parts of this Plan. In particular, the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) identifies the key items and types of infrastructure that must be provided, how and when each item is to be provided, and by whom.
- 1.3.10 Further details concerning the role of these, and other documents prepared by the Council, are set out on its website at <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/>.

¹ National Planning Policy Framework, 2021 – Paragraph 29

1.4 Preparing the Local Plan

- 1.4.1 The Council has undertaken extensive consultation with the local community and other stakeholder groups as it has prepared the Local Plan. This included an initial consultation on the scope of the Local Plan (in 2016) and then consultation on the Local Plan Preferred Options (in late 2016 / early 2017). Separate documents set out how these consultations were undertaken and with whom, the key issues raised in the responses and how these have been addressed in the Plan.

1.5 Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment

- 1.5.1 A key role of the Local Plan is to promote sustainable development. This means promoting:
- social progress that meets the needs of everyone;
 - effective protection of the environment;
 - prudent use of natural resources; and
 - high levels of economic growth and employment.
- 1.5.2 To ensure that the Plan is truly sustainable it has been subject to a robust process of sustainability appraisal as it has been prepared. The outcomes of this process are set out in a separate sustainability appraisal report.
- 1.5.3 As required by relevant legislation, the Plan has also been subject to a process of Habitats Regulation Assessment as it has been prepared. This has assessed and, as appropriate, addressed the effects of the Plan on certain areas in the Liverpool City Region that have been recognised at the European level for their nature conservation significance. The outcomes of this exercise are set out in a separate Habitats Regulation Assessment report.

1.6 National and regional context

- 1.6.1 A range of existing and emerging policy documents have influenced the development of the St Helens Borough Local Plan. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) aims to promote sustainable development and growth while making the planning system less complex and more accessible. The Local Plan has been prepared to accord with the tests of 'soundness' set out in the NPPF. It has also had regard to the Government's online Planning Practice Guidance.
- 1.6.2 At the regional level, the North West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) was revoked in 2013.

1.7 The Liverpool City Region

- 1.7.1 St Helens Borough forms one of 6 local authority areas within the Liverpool City Region (the others being Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, and Wirral). The City Region authorities have worked closely together for many years on strategic planning matters, and these working

relationships were formalised by the creation of a City Region Cabinet in 2009 and then the City Region Combined Authority in 2014. Key documents prepared at a City Region level include the Liverpool City Region Growth Strategy, Merseyside Local Transport Plan, Liverpool Airport Masterplan, and the Liverpool City Region Ecological Framework. The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority is also preparing a Spatial Development Strategy that will help to shape the development of the City Region. There are also close working relationships between St Helens Borough and other neighbouring districts including West Lancashire, Warrington, and Wigan.

- 1.7.2 The individual local authorities within and around the Liverpool City Region have also either recently prepared or are in the process of preparing their own Local Plans. In accordance with the 'duty to cooperate' the Council has worked closely with these other Councils and other public bodies in addressing key strategic planning issues such as housing, the economy, infrastructure, and strategic environmental assets. This has been, for example, by either commissioning evidence on a shared basis or closely involving partners as evidence has been gathered. The results of this cooperation have underpinned the approach to key issues in this Plan.
- 1.7.3 The Local Plan also relates closely to a range of more local strategies such as the St Helens Housing Strategy, the St Helens Plan, and the St Helens Economic Regeneration Strategy.

1.8 Structure and form of the Local Plan

- 1.8.1 Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of this Local Plan set out, respectively, the context for the Plan, key issues and opportunities facing the Borough and its overall vision, aims and objectives. The policies of the Plan are then presented in chapters 4 ('Core Policies'), 5 ('Area Policies'), 6 and 7 (that set out a range of policies on thematic topics) and 8 ('Development Management Policies'). Each policy is presented in a box with a further box identifying links to the relevant aims and objectives of the Plan and its reasoned justification underneath. Those policies that are strategic in nature are indicated as such. The Plan is also supported by a range of appendices.

1.9 Future review of the Local Plan

- 1.9.1 In accordance with national planning legislation, the Local Plan will be subject to regular monitoring and will be reviewed at least once every 5 years after its adoption to assess whether it needs updating, and action taken to update the Plan if considered necessary. This will ensure that planning policies in St Helens Borough remain responsive to the development needs of the Borough.

1.10 Relationship to the Development Management process

- 1.10.1 It is likely that most of the policies in this Plan will be delivered via individual development proposals that will require a planning application. Planning applications are themselves subject to consultation processes

before being decided. When determining planning applications, the Council will assess them against all the relevant policies of this Plan and other documents referred to above.

- 1.10.2 It is important that developers discuss their proposals with the Council at an early stage, so that any issues concerning their acceptability can be addressed before a planning application is submitted.

IMPORTANT NOTE: INTERPRETATION OF THE PLAN'S POLICIES

National planning law requires that decisions concerning planning applications must be made in accordance with the 'development plan' unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this context, the 'development plan' for St Helens Borough includes all the policies of this Local Plan together with other 'development plan' documents (such as those listed earlier in this section). These policies must therefore be read as a whole.

Proposals that may comply with one policy may not necessarily comply with others. In assessing such cases, decision makers will need to weigh up the factors involved, to ensure that a balanced decision is made. Depending on the nature and location of the proposal, other factors such as national policy requirements may also be relevant.

1.11 Further Information

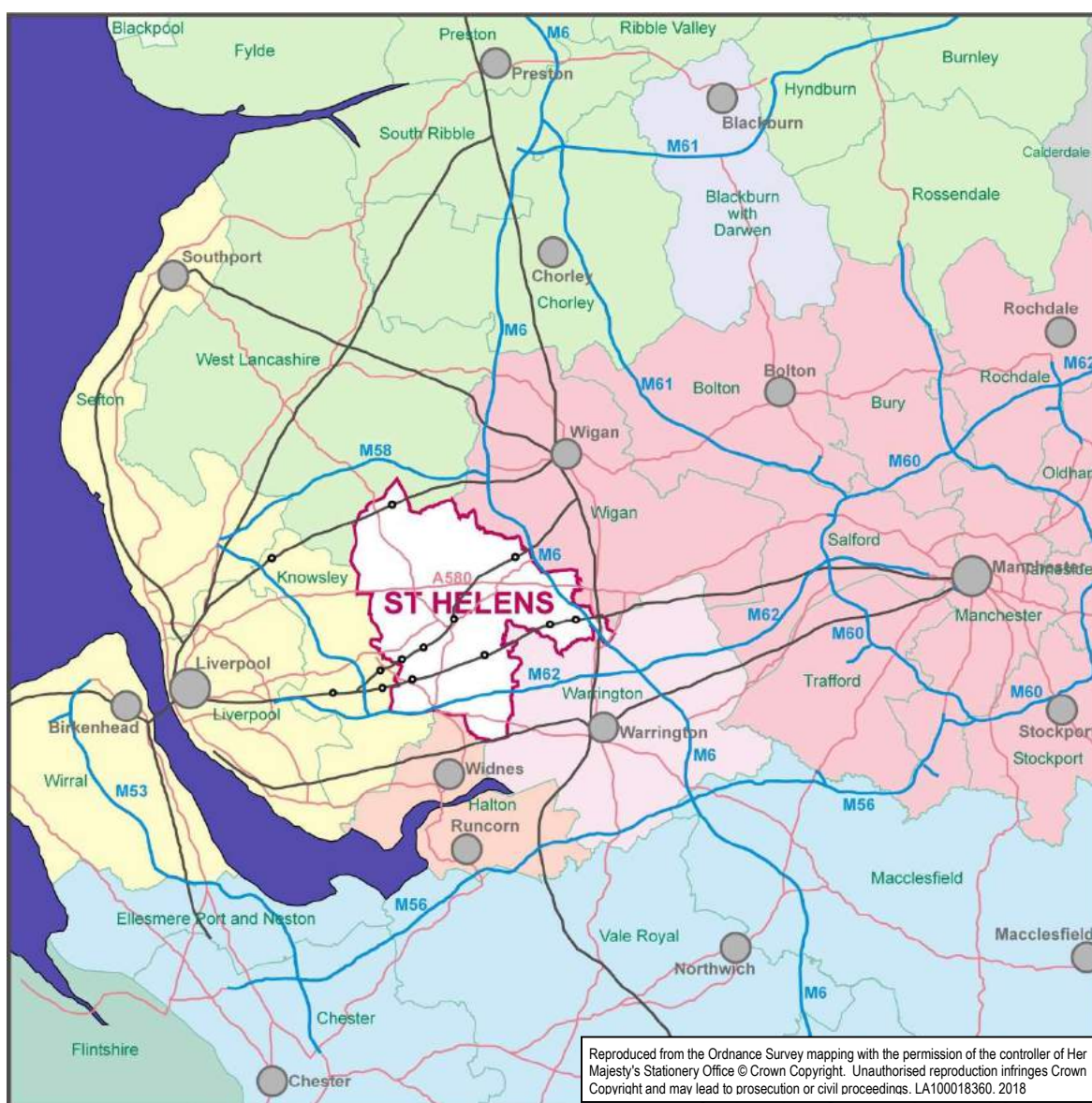
- 1.11.1 Further information about the Local Plan and related matters is set out on the Council website at <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/>.

2. St Helens Borough Profile

2.1 Sub-regional context

- 2.1.1 Located between Liverpool and Manchester, St Helens Borough enjoys a strategic position at the heart of the North West and Merseyside conurbation.
- 2.1.2 The economy of the Borough is closely linked with that of the rest of the Liverpool City Region and West Lancashire. It shares a housing market with Halton and Warrington and there are also links, for example, in terms of journeys to work, with Wigan, Salford and Manchester. Key opportunities in the surrounding area include the growth of Liverpool Superport, Liverpool John Lennon airport and enhanced transport linkages driven by the emerging 30 year vision of Transport for the North (TfN).

Figure 2.1: St Helens Borough and its sub-regional context



2.2 Place

- 2.2.1 The urban form of St Helens Borough can be traced back to its history of coal mining, railways, and world famous glass industries. Driven by rapid population growth during the 18th and 19th centuries, St Helens (and the related areas of Haydock, Newton-le-Willows and Rainhill) grew to form substantial urban areas. Within the northern part of the Borough are a number of villages and hamlets that originally formed to serve the surrounding agricultural uses. Within the southern part of the Borough a number of communities that originally served the coal mining industry have in some cases merged to form part of the core urban area of St Helens.
- 2.2.2 In recent decades the traditional industries have declined in importance, with a corresponding reduction in jobs and business opportunities, and the creation of a legacy of derelict and (in some cases) contaminated land. These issues lie at the heart of many challenges facing the Borough.
- 2.2.3 However, St Helens Borough has also undergone considerable positive change, with successful efforts to regenerate the economy, infrastructure, and environment. Key achievements have included the completion of a new stadium for the Saints Super League team, improvements to railway stations, new business premises, the new Town Centre College Campus, improved parks and open spaces, reclamation of former collieries and some other industrial sites, and significant levels of new housing. Big attractions include The Dream - a 20m high artwork on a reclaimed colliery overlooking the M62 – and the nationally significant Haydock Park Racecourse.

2.3 Demographic trends

- 2.3.1 The resident population of St Helens Borough, that totalled 179,331 in 2017², is expected to grow steadily, albeit at a slower rate than for the North West and for England. The Borough has an aging population with a higher proportion of people aged 65 years and over, and proportionally fewer people of working age between 16 to 64 years old than England as a whole. The number of residents of the Borough who are in their 80s is expected to almost double to 12,800 in 2037, and the number of residents in their 90s is expected to almost triple to 9,700³.
- 2.3.2 The Borough is ethnically less diverse than many other areas, with 96.6% of the population⁴ identifying themselves as white, compared to 79.8% nationally and 87.1% in the North West.

² 2017 Mid-year Estimate, Office of National Statistics (ONS)

³ St Helens Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2017

⁴ 2011 Census

2.4 Economy and Skills

- 2.4.1 The economy of St Helens Borough has many strengths and opportunities, and recent years have seen the creation of new or improved employment floorspace, for example alongside the A570 St Helens Linkway. Due to its location and excellent transport connectivity the Borough has great potential to increase its economic competitiveness, including in the growing logistics sector. Self-employment levels have increased and business survival rates at 5-years after start-up have improved in recent years⁵.
- 2.4.2 Notwithstanding these opportunities, St Helens Borough is ranked as the 36th most deprived out of 326 local authorities in England⁶. Its relative position has deteriorated since the 2010 Index of Deprivation that ranked the Borough as the 51st most deprived area. Deprivation levels in some parts of the Borough have also worsened relative to others. The proportion of children in low income families is higher than those in England and the North West as a whole. St Helens Borough still has levels of dependency on benefits that are above regional and national averages⁷.
- 2.4.3 The unemployment rate in St Helens Borough is (according to data in Table 2.1) lower than regional and national averages. However, the economic activity and employment rates in the Borough remain lower than both the regional and national averages. Furthermore, economic inactivity (e.g., due to sickness) is much higher than the North West average and pay levels in the Borough are also lower than elsewhere.

Table 2.1: Labour Market Indicators in St Helens Borough⁸

Labour Market Indicators	St Helens Borough (%)	North West (%)	England (%)
Economic activity	73.1	76.5	78.6
Employment	70.1	73.0	75.1
Self-employed	12.1	12.5	14.4
Unemployment	3.6	5.1	4.3
Economically inactive	26.9	23.5	21.6

- 2.4.4 The proportion of residents without any qualifications is also higher than the regional and national levels at 12.4% compared to 9.0% and 7.6%

⁵ Business Registers Unit (BRU)

⁶ Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015

⁷ Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

⁸ Source: NOMIS (ONS) – rate as % of population aged 16-64 years. Period: Jan 17 – Dec 17

respectively⁹. Attainment levels for children and young people at Key Stages 2 and 4 also fall below regional and national averages.

2.5 Housing

- 2.5.1 In 2011, 30% of the Borough's housing stock was terraced and 9% flats. The percentage of semi-detached houses (46%) was significantly higher than the regional and national averages (36% and 31% respectively). The percentage of detached houses (14%) was significantly lower than the regional and national averages (18% and 23% respectively). The proportion of dwellings in owner occupation in St Helens Borough (67.8%) was higher than the regional average (65%)¹⁰.
- 2.5.2 The proportions of different types of dwelling in the Borough in 2011 were similar to those that existed in 2001, albeit with a small increase in the percentage of detached dwellings and flats/apartments and a corresponding decrease in the relative percentage of semi-detached and terraced properties. These changes reflect the new build aspirational housing projects undertaken across the Borough, stock clearance of older properties and a tendency by Registered Social Landlords to build smaller housing units in recent years.
- 2.5.3 Affordability of market housing for sale is an issue in the Borough with lower quartile house prices over four times greater than the lower quartile household income in the Borough¹¹.

2.6 Health and Wellbeing

- 2.6.1 Life expectancy in St Helens Borough, recently measured at 77.46 years for males and 80.95 years for females, is considerably below the national averages¹². The two main causes of death in St Helens are cancer (27.2%) and circulatory disease (21.9%). Furthermore, over 71% of the 18+ adult population in the Borough – considerably higher than the national average - is estimated to be classed as overweight or obese¹³. This has been identified as a growing problem, in particular for children and young adults.
- 2.6.2 Crime rates in St Helens Borough have reduced in recent years and are performing relatively well compared to neighbouring authorities, national averages, and those in other local authority areas with similar characteristics¹⁴. It is considered important to maintain this progress.

9 NOMIS – Jan 17 – Dec 17

10 2011 Census

11 Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Housing and Market and House Prices

12 ONS Life Expectancy Data 2014-2016

13 Public Health England – 2016-2017

14 Police UK

2.7 Transport

- 2.7.1 St Helens Borough has an extensive and well used bus and rail network, with ten railway stations that provide regular connections to neighbouring towns and cities, and direct trains as far afield as North Wales and Blackpool. Nevertheless, a need has been identified to improve aspects of the public transport network and walking and cycling facilities.
- 2.7.2 The Borough also enjoys a strategic position at the heart of the regional road network, between the core cities of Manchester and Liverpool, with easy access to the M58 to the north, the M62 to the south and the M6 to the east. However, highways in the Borough are under increasing pressure as traffic flows continue to rise; this leads to local congestion and capacity issues at peak times at various junctions.
- 2.7.3 The Council is working closely with infrastructure and service providers to identify and address these issues, including (in appropriate cases) through the use of contributions from developers linked to future development. Current proposals for new infrastructure are set out in the St Helens Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

2.8 Town Centres

- 2.8.1 St Helens Town Centre plays an important sub-regional role as the Borough's principal town centre providing a range of retail and other services for the Borough. This is complemented by the roles played by Earlestown Town Centre (within the town of Newton-le-Willows) and a range of smaller district and local centres.
- 2.8.2 A key challenge is for the town and other centres to diversify their role in response to changing economic circumstances, including competition from retail parks and internet shopping. The Council has successfully secured an initial £173,029 capacity funding grant to support the development of a Town Deal Board and Investment Plan from the Governments Town Deal fund to help with projects around land use and regeneration, connectivity, skills, and employment for St Helens Town Centre.
- 2.8.3 In addition, the Council is entering into a strategic partnership agreement with the English Cities Fund (ECF) to ensure the delivery of a Borough wide regeneration strategy initially starting with St Helens Town Centre.

2.9 Heritage Assets

- 2.9.1 The Borough boasts a varied and unique built environment, based upon its history connected with the railways, mining, glass and other industries. Existing heritage assets make a valuable contribution to economic and social wellbeing and a focus for heritage led regeneration and tourism development. They include: 148 Listed Buildings (Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II), 12 Scheduled Monuments (four of which are identified on Historic England's "*at risk*" register), one Registered Battlefield, eight Conservation Areas and three Registered Parks and Gardens. There are also a number of areas of archaeological interest and above-ground

assets of local interest that may not meet the criteria for statutory designation but that merit local protection.

2.10 Green Infrastructure, Outdoor Sport and Leisure

- 2.10.1 Despite the urban character of much of the St Helens Borough, over half of its area is rural or semi-rural in nature, and 7% of it constitutes open green spaces within the urban areas. The Borough benefits from an extensive network of open countryside and green spaces, much of which is accessible to local residents providing opportunities for formal and informal recreation, and improved health and quality of life. Certain spaces provide valuable nature conservation habitats, including, for example, 120 designated Local Wildlife Sites. Open spaces also play a role in helping to manage flood risk, including in the Sankey Catchment that covers much of the Borough. In addition, open spaces provide opportunities to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Therefore, this plan will support the Council's Climate Change Emergency declaration.
- 2.10.2 Landscape improvement programmes have been undertaken in a number of locations, for example Bold Forest Park in the south of the Borough, Carr Mill Dam and Stanley Bank in the north. All these sites have had significant investment that enabled improved levels of public access for walking, cycling and horse riding. The Mersey Forest and related initiatives have played a major role in securing the environmental regeneration of parts of the Borough.

2.11 Key Issues

- 2.11.1 Based upon the issues identified in the Council's Local Plan Scoping Consultation Document and the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Reports, and comments received from stakeholders, it has been identified that the Local Plan should seek to address the following:
- i) Deliver sustainable communities;
 - ii) Strengthen and diversify the local economy;
 - iii) Deliver sustainable development;
 - iv) Meet local housing needs;
 - v) Meet employment needs;
 - vi) Protect and where possible enhance the town, district and local centres;
 - vii) Manage the rural economy;
 - viii) Improve health;
 - ix) Maximise accessibility and social inclusion;
 - x) Sustain population recovery;
 - xi) Reduce crime;
 - xii) Encourage the use of sustainable transport;
 - xiii) Manage and enhance the environment;
 - xiv) Recognise and support community and cultural facilities; and
 - xv) Manage river catchments and enhance biodiversity.

3. St Helens Borough in 2037

3.1 Spatial Vision

- 3.1.1 The vision of the Local Plan describes the type of places that the Borough of St Helens and its constituent settlements should be in 2037. It is that:

By 2037, St Helens Borough will provide, through the balanced regeneration and sustainable growth of its built-up areas, a range of attractive, healthy, safe, inclusive, and accessible places in which to live, work, visit and invest.

A range of high quality new employment development will have taken place, making use of the Borough's excellent transport links and its location between Liverpool and Greater Manchester. Established employment areas will continue to provide affordable accommodation for a wide range of employers. The rural economy will have been sustained and diversified.

The Town Centres of St Helens and Earlestown and the Borough's network of smaller centres will have adapted to changing economic conditions and provide a wide range of vibrant shopping, leisure, and other uses.

Good quality new market and affordable housing will have been provided, broadening the housing stock, meeting local needs, providing safe and sustainable communities, and making the Borough a residential destination of choice. Effective use shall have been made of the Borough's stock of brownfield land to help meet these needs.

The Borough's housing will be well connected to employment areas, local facilities, attractions, and green spaces in a way that will encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport. Health will have been further improved by encouraging active lifestyles with a wide range of sporting, community, and leisure opportunities.

The Borough's unique heritage, linking to its historic role in the glass, rail, coal mining and other industries, and its wide range of important natural environmental assets will be both recognised and valued. Its network of green spaces and wider cultural and leisure offer, epitomised by features such as the Sankey Valley, Bold Forest Park, 'The Dream', St Helens Rugby League Stadium, World of Glass, and Haydock Racecourse, will be retained and strengthened.

3.2 Strategic Aims and Objectives

3.2.1 In order to achieve the vision, the following strategic aims and objectives will be pursued.

STRATEGIC AIM	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE
1. Supporting Regeneration and Balanced Growth	<p>1.1 To promote regeneration by enabling steady and sustainable economic and population growth.</p> <p>1.2 To reduce deprivation by ensuring that new development and investment can benefit deprived communities.</p> <p>1.3 To help meet development needs by ensuring the efficient re-use of previously developed land.</p>
2. Ensuring Quality Development	<p>2.1 To promote the creation of a well-designed environment by supporting proposals for high quality development.</p> <p>2.2 To mitigate the effects and minimise the impacts of land use changes on climate change by requiring well-designed developments in suitable locations.</p> <p>2.3 To contribute to the development of stronger and safer communities by prioritising new development and investment that can benefit those who are disadvantaged.</p>
3. Promoting Sustainable Transport	<p>3.1 To improve access for all by facilitating sustainable transport choices, development in accessible locations, an integrated public transport network, and targeted improvements to the transport network.</p>
4. Meeting Housing Needs	<p>4.1 To enable the delivery of sustainable communities by identifying land for a sufficient number and range of new dwellings.</p>

STRATEGIC AIM	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE
5. Ensuring a Strong and Sustainable Economy	<p>5.1 To maximise the contribution of St Helens to the economy of the Liverpool City Region and adjacent areas, and meeting local employment needs, by ensuring an adequate supply of employment land and premises.</p> <p>5.2 To support the wider Borough by aiding the development of the tourism, leisure, and rural economies.</p> <p>5.3 To enhance the vitality and viability of town, district and local centres, and the role of St Helens as a sub-regional shopping centre, by enabling appropriate development in those locations.</p> <p>5.4 To utilise the Borough's strategic location in relation to the rail network by facilitating rail-enabled employment development.</p>
6. Safeguarding and Enhancing Quality of Life	<p>6.1 To increase convenience and reduce the need to travel by ensuring appropriately located, integrated provision of a wide range of community facilities.</p> <p>6.2 To safeguard the quality of the environment by protecting and enhancing local character and distinctiveness, the historic environment, biodiversity, and geodiversity.</p> <p>6.3 To protect and enhance the multi-functional network of green spaces throughout the Borough by promoting positive use and management whilst improving their biodiversity and increasing tree and woodland coverage.</p>
7. Meeting Resource and Infrastructure Needs	<p>7.1 To mitigate development impacts by ensuring that local and strategic infrastructure needs are fully met.</p> <p>7.2 To acknowledge the value of resources within the Borough by safeguarding them or promoting their use in a sustainable manner.</p>

3.2.2 The Spatial Vision will be delivered via progress towards the achievement of the strategic aims and objectives. How these relate is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Interrelationship of Vision, Aims and Objectives



3.3 Ensuring delivery of the aims and objectives

- 3.3.1 Primarily, the aims and objectives set out above will be delivered via the application of the policies in chapters 4 to 8 (inclusive) of this Plan. The table in appendix 3 sets out which policy (or policies) will be most important in delivering each objective. The monitoring framework in appendix 4 identifies key targets that must be met if specific policies of the Plan are to be successful, how progress is to be measured, and what remedial actions will be undertaken if progress is not made at the required rate.
- 3.3.2 The Plan proposes to review the following SPDs that are used by the Council:
- Ensuring a Choice of Travel
 - Hot Food Takeaways
 - Affordable Housing
 - New Residential Development
 - Householder Development
 - Telecommunications
 - Nature Conservation.
- 3.3.3 This Plan also proposes to produce new SPDs to support the implementation of policies:
- Developer Contributions
 - Open space provision and enhancement
 - Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

4. Core Policies

4.1 Policy LPA01: Spatial Strategy

Policy LPA01: Spatial Strategy

1. The sustainable regeneration and growth of St Helens Borough through to 2037 and beyond will be focussed (as far as practicable, having regard to the availability of suitable sites) on the Key Settlements, namely St Helens Core Area, Blackbrook and Haydock, Newton-le-Willows and Earlestown, Rainford, Billinge, Garswood and Rainhill.
2. New development will be directed to sustainable locations that are appropriate to its scale and nature and that will enable movements between homes, jobs and key services and facilities to be made by sustainable non-car modes of transport.
3. The re-use of suitable previously developed land in Key Settlements will remain a key priority. A substantial proportion of new housing throughout the Plan period will be on such sites. This will be encouraged through the use of Policies LPA07 and LPC02 to support the delivery of sites, particularly those on Previously Developed Land, by, for example, setting lower thresholds for developer contributions on previously developed sites to reflect the higher costs and lower sales values typically associated with redeveloping such sites where appropriate.
4. Comprehensive regeneration of the wider Borough will be delivered by the English Cities Fund Regeneration Partnership, through the provision of quality housing, new commercial activity, upgraded infrastructure and the overall improvement of the social and economic viability of the Borough on a phased basis.
5. This Plan releases land from the Green Belt to enable the needs for housing and employment development to be met in full over the Plan period up to 31 March 2037, in the most sustainable locations. Other land is removed from the Green Belt and safeguarded to allow for longer term housing and / or employment needs to be met after 31 March 2037. Such Safeguarded Land is not allocated for development in the Plan period and planning permission for permanent development should only be granted following an update of this Plan. Within the remaining areas of Green Belt (shown on the Policies Map) new development shall be regarded as inappropriate unless it falls within one of the exceptions set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (or any successor document). Inappropriate development in the Green Belt shall not be approved except in very special circumstances. Delivery of compensatory improvement measures within areas remaining in the Green Belt will be required following any release of Green Belt land for development purposes.

Details of such improvements will be considered during the Development Management process and assessed on an individual application basis.

6. Substantial new employment development (set out in Policy LPA03 and excluding town centre uses) will take place on large sites that are capable of accommodating large employment buildings (over 9,000m²) and are close to the M6 and M62. High quality road, public transport and active travel links will be required between existing and proposed residential areas, particularly those with high deprivation levels, and areas of employment growth. Existing employment areas will be retained where they are suitable and viable for this use in order to maintain a diverse portfolio of accessible employment opportunities across the Borough. Suitable development that would diversify the rural economy will also be supported.
7. Parkside West and Parkside East form transformational employment opportunity sites that will make a major contribution to the economic development of St Helens Borough, the Liverpool City Region and beyond. Development that prejudices their development in accordance with Policies LPA03, LPA09 and LPA10 will not be allowed.
8. The preferred locations for new town centre development shall be within St Helens Town Centre (as the Borough's principal town centre), Earlestown Town Centre, and the Borough's network of district and local centres, in line with Policies LPB01, LPB02 and LPC04.
9. The quality of life, health and wellbeing of St Helens Borough's residents, workers and visitors and the quality of the natural environment will be supported by:
 - a) taking steps to maintain, enhance, connect and / or expand the Borough's network of ecological, open space and recreational sites and greenways in accordance with Policy LPA08;
 - b) seeking improvements to the quality of open space within and around new development;
 - c) requiring new development proposals to mitigate their contribution to climate change and to adapt to its impacts;
 - d) supporting the delivery of landscape reclamation and improvement projects in locations such as the Bold Forest Park and Sankey Valley Park; and
 - e) requiring development to support healthy lifestyles in accordance with Policy LPA12.
10. The provision of a convenient, safe, and sustainable transport network, and the delivery of improvements to the network, will be required in line with Policy LPA06.
11. New development that would deliver regeneration within the key settlements and accord with other Plan policies will be supported. Regeneration in these settlements will also be promoted by (in addition to the measures set out

above) focussing available resources on its effective delivery and preventing development that would adversely impact upon or jeopardise the delivery of regeneration proposals.

4.2 Policy LPA01: Strategic Aims, Objectives and Key Delivery Mechanisms

Strategic Aims Met	All
Strategic Objectives Met	All
Is this a 'strategic' or 'local' policy?	Strategic
Key Delivery Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan • Development Management process • Funding programmes • St Helens Infrastructure Delivery Plan

4.3 Reasoned Justification

- 4.3.1 Policy LPA01 underpins the other policies in the Plan, setting out how development will be distributed across the Borough up to 2037 and beyond. It aims to meet the needs of the Borough's residents, businesses, workers, and visitors whilst minimising adverse impacts and wherever possible enhancing the natural environment.

Sub-regional context

- 4.3.2 In preparing this Plan, the Council has cooperated extensively with nearby districts in the Liverpool and Greater Manchester City Regions, and in Warrington and West Lancashire. The following key conclusions have been drawn from this process:
- None of the neighbouring districts have identified a need for St Helens Borough to accommodate any of their housing development needs;
 - No spare site capacity has been identified in any neighbouring local authority areas to accommodate any of the housing needs arising in the Borough;
 - A need has been identified within the Liverpool City Region as a whole (including St Helens Borough) to accommodate the growth of the logistics and warehousing sector (associated with underlying economic trends and the growth of the port of Liverpool), with a particular focus on the need for large scale units of over 9,000m²;
 - Warrington Council has identified scope for a site at Omega South West within St Helens Borough to be developed to help meet its employment needs;
 - All of the immediately neighbouring districts to St Helens Borough have (due to restrictions on the supply of land in their existing urban areas) recently undertaken or are in the process of undertaking Green Belt reviews to meet their development needs.

Key Settlements and spatial areas in St Helens Borough

- 4.3.3 The largest settlements within the Borough provide, or are large enough to provide, a range of facilities and services to meet many day to day household needs and are shown on the Key Diagram as Key Settlements. The Key Settlements are of varying scales and roles as follows.

Key Settlements and spatial areas

- **St Helens Core Area** – centred around the Principal Town Centre of St Helens and including the surrounding built up area from Moss Bank in the North, Clock Face to the South, Eccleston to the West and Parr and Sutton to the East, it forms the largest Key Settlement of the Borough.

It includes St Helens Central Spatial Area – an area immediately surrounding St Helens Town Centre, including industrial and business areas and the Ravenhead and St Helens out-of-centre retail parks.
- **Blackbrook and Haydock** – located to the east of St Helens Core Area, this Key Settlement contains the significant Haydock Industrial Estate and the local centre of Clipsley Lane.
- **Newton-le-Willows and Earlestown** – the largest distinct Key Settlement after the Core Area, and contains Earlestown Town Centre, known for its markets, and the local centre of Newton.
- **Rainford** – the largest village in the north of the Borough, this Key Settlement contains a local shopping centre and also acts as a service centre for the distinct settlement of Rainford Junction to the north (where there is a train station with links to Wigan and Liverpool).
- **Billinge** – a village that forms a Key Settlement in the north of the Borough with a distinct shopping centre.
- **Garswood** – a village in the north of the Borough that has some shops and services. Whilst it has no distinct central shopping / service centre it is large enough to form a Key Settlement.
- **Rainhill** – a village in the south of the Borough with a local centre that is physically linked to neighbouring urban areas and is a Key Settlement.

Other settlements

The following are not Key Settlements, have only limited opportunities for development, and require sustainable transport links to the Key Settlements and employment sites to be maintained and enhanced:

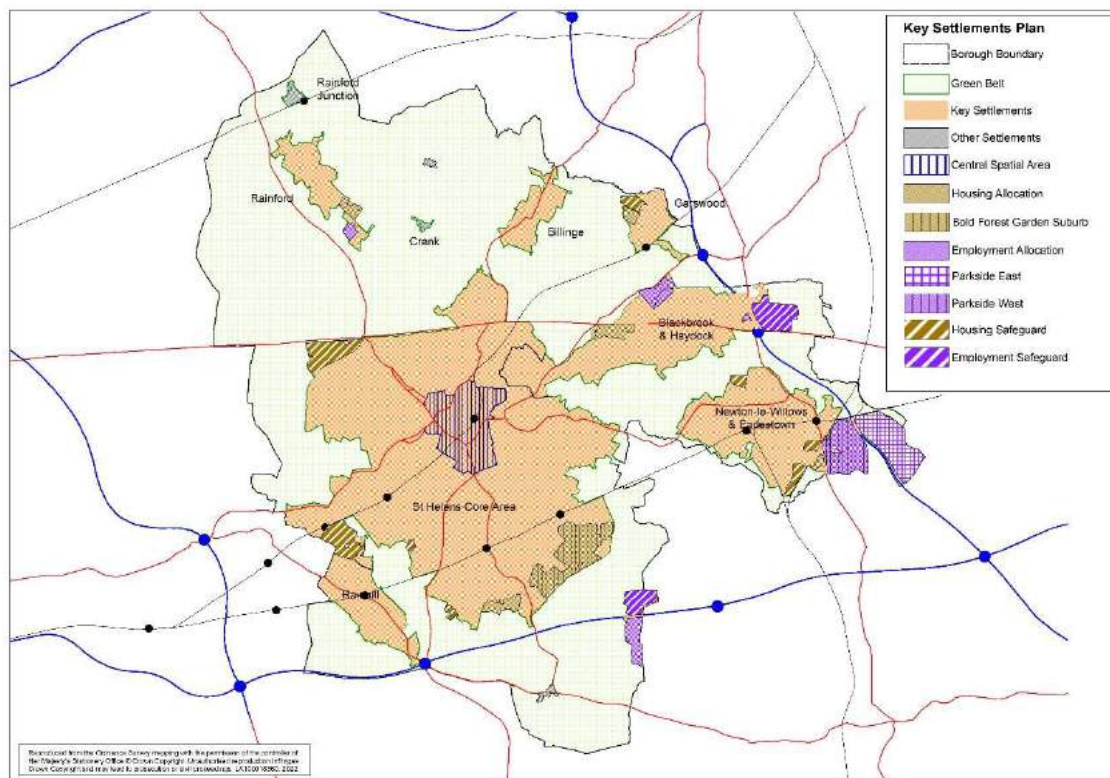
- **Rainford Junction** – a satellite settlement that is physically separate from Rainford but functionally reliant on Rainford for day-to-day services and is excluded from the Green Belt.
- **Crank** – a small village / hamlet to the north of the Borough, with a tightly defined developed area, that is excluded from the Green Belt.
- **Bold Heath** – a small village / hamlet in the south of the Borough with an open low density character that is ‘washed over’ by the Green Belt.
- **Kings Moss** – a small village / hamlet to the north of the Borough that has weak boundaries around it and is ‘washed over’ by the Green Belt.

Development needs in St Helens Borough

- 4.3.4 The Borough has economic activity and employment rates, skills levels and average wages that are below national averages. Recent rates of employment development and investment have been substantially below those achieved in the 1990s. It has also become clear that the existing available stock of employment land and premises in St Helens Borough is not sufficient in terms of amount, site size, site location and site characteristics to meet market requirements, leading to missed investment and job opportunities.
- 4.3.5 The Borough is, however, well placed to provide new employment, including helping to address the sub-regional need for large scale logistics development, due to its location close to the M6, M62 and A580 and to major north-south and trans-Pennine rail routes. There is also a unique opportunity to develop land at Parkside for rail-enabled and other employment development. The needs for employment development are set out in further detail in Policy LPA03.
- 4.3.6 This Plan addresses these issues by providing sufficient employment land on a variety of sites to meet the needs of modern businesses. This will encourage inward investment, allow businesses to expand, retain and create jobs, and increase employment rates. It will also enable St Helens Borough’s residents to work closer to home and so reduce the currently extensive numbers of people who need to commute to other locations or move away to find work. The Plan’s approach accords with that of the Liverpool City Region growth strategy.
- 4.3.7 The Borough also has a substantial need for new housing development that is linked to demographic needs and the need to provide sufficient housing to support employment growth. The primary focus of new housing development in recent years has been on Previously Developed Land (‘PDL’ or ‘brownfield land’) in urban areas. Such locations tend to be well served by existing infrastructure and services and can be developed whilst minimising impact on the environment outside urban areas. However, every update of the St Helens Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) since 2010 has found that there is

inadequate land in the urban areas to meet housing needs in the longer term. Housing needs are set out in further detail in Policy LPA04.

Figure 4.1: Key Settlements Plan



Spatial Strategy for meeting development needs (including Green Belt review)

- 4.3.8 The Council aims to ensure that the housing and employment needs of St Helens are met in full within the Borough. New development will be guided towards sustainable locations, generally within, on the edge of, or close to Key Settlements (insofar as this is acceptable and practicable). This approach will take account of environmental and infrastructure constraints; the need to maintain an effective Green Belt; settlement size; projected future population growth; past rates of housing delivery in relation to settlement size; and the availability of services and facilities.
- 4.3.9 The Council will also give continued priority to the development of suitable and available sites within urban areas. However, due to the lack of sufficient capacity on these sites to meet needs, and the lack of any scope to help meet the Borough's needs in any neighbouring district, some sites on the edges of existing settlements have been removed from the Green Belt by this Plan and allocated for development in the period up to 2037. Some other sites have been removed from the Green Belt but, rather than being allocated for development, have been safeguarded to meet potential longer term development needs after 2037. This will ensure that the changes to the Green Belt endure well beyond 2037, avoiding the need for another Green Belt review for a substantial period, and giving a clear indication of the potential location of future development and associated infrastructure needs.

- 4.3.10 The Council's SHLAA indicates that there is capacity for substantial housing development on urban sites. However, it also established that Green Belt release would be required to help meet identified housing needs over the Plan period. Likewise, there is a significant shortfall in the urban supply of employment land against the identified needs.
- 4.3.11 In view of the NPPF advice that local authorities work jointly with neighbouring authorities to meet any development requirements that cannot be met within their own boundaries, it should be noted that whilst St Helens shares a housing market area with Halton and Warrington, both have identified shortages of urban land supply for housing. St Helens Borough shares a functional economic market area with Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, West Lancashire, and Wirral, none of which have identified spare capacity for employment development which could help meet the needs of St Helens. Such is the shortage of employment and housing development land in the surrounding areas as a whole that several authorities (Knowsley, Sefton, and West Lancashire Councils) have successfully undertaken local Green Belt reviews to meet their own needs, with further authorities also undertaking them (collectively covering the whole of Greater Manchester, Halton, Warrington, and Wirral). None of these reviews have identified surplus capacity to help meet development needs arising in St Helens.
- 4.3.12 In addition, there are other reasons why it is not desirable for housing or employment development needs arising in St Helens to be met in other authorities. If a neighbouring authority were able to meet such needs, this would (due to the shortage of urban land supply identified in those areas) be through the release of Green Belt, i.e. the prospective loss of Green Belt in St Helens would simply be replaced by a similar loss of Green Belt elsewhere. This would also lead to a risk that residents would need to move out of the Borough, potentially resulting in the loss of economically active residents within local communities. Such an approach would also be unlikely to guarantee delivery of affordable or special housing needs for residents of St Helens. If demand for new employment was required to be met outside the Borough, it would tend to exacerbate net out-commuting. This would prejudice the achievement of sustainable patterns of travel and make it more difficult for residents of St Helens, some of whom are likely to be reliant on public transport to access employment.
- 4.3.13 For all of these reasons, there are considered to be exceptional circumstances at the strategic level to justify the release of Green Belt land to meet identified development needs.
- 4.3.14 The sites that have been removed from the Green Belt have been selected following a comprehensive Green Belt Review. This has identified sites on the basis of their scope to be developed whilst minimising harm to the overall function of the Green Belt, and their suitability for development in other respects. The criteria used have included their physical suitability for development, accessibility by sustainable transport modes to services and facilities, levels of existing or potential future infrastructure provision, their economic viability for development, and the impact that their development would have on the environment. Further details of this process are set out in the St Helens

Green Belt Review 2018. Small changes have also been made to the boundary of the Green Belt to amend minor anomalies, for example where the original Green Belt boundary no longer follows the edge of the built up area.

- 4.3.15 New employment development falling within use classes B2, B8 and for light industrial, offices and research and development uses will be primarily focussed on large previously undeveloped sites in close proximity to the M6 and M62 in order to meet modern requirements and market demand. Due to their peripheral location, improved road, public transport and active travel links will be required between these sites and residential areas in the Key Settlements, in particular to provide links to the proposed new employment areas from areas of deprivation. Existing employment areas will be retained and protected through Policy LPA03 to maintain a distribution of accessible employment sites across the Borough unless they are no longer suitable and viable for this use.
- 4.3.16 The interconnected sites of Parkside West and East benefit from a location at the heart of the north-west motorway network and access to the national rail freight network, presenting an opportunity to provide an employment development that will act as a link to the Southern English ports and Europe, as well as supporting the growth of the Liverpool SuperPort. Policies LPA03, LPA03.1, LPA09 and LPA10 set out details of the proposed development of these sites. The Council will also support steps to improve transport linkages between Parkside, the rest of the Borough and surrounding areas to facilitate sustainable access for the workforce.

Protection of remaining areas of Green Belt from inappropriate development

- 4.3.17 Following the adoption of this Plan, over half of the land area of the Borough will remain in the Green Belt. Land remaining in the Green Belt will continue to be strictly protected from inappropriate development, such as most forms of housing and employment development, in accordance with national policy.
- 4.3.18 The Government attaches great importance to the protection of the Green Belt, with the fundamental aim being to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belt include its openness and permanence. The NPPF sets out the purposes of Green Belt, which are:
- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
 - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
 - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
 - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
 - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land."*
- 4.3.19 Many forms of development are classified as being inappropriate within the Green Belt. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and will not be approved except in very special circumstances. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the

Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

- 4.3.20 In addition, the Council aims to protect and enhance remaining areas of Green Belt by seeking the delivery of compensatory improvement measures. In accordance with paragraph 142 of the NPPF, delivery of compensatory improvement measures will be sought when sites are released from the Green Belt for development as part of this Plan. Such measures should enhance the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land, amongst other improvements. Further guidance is provided within the National Planning Practice Guidance (Green Belt Land).
- 4.3.21 The delivery of compensatory improvements will be supported by a number of policies within this Plan. For example, policies LPA08, LPC05-10 and LPC12 all have an environmental focus, which will support the delivery of Green Belt compensatory measures. Additionally, Development Management focussed policies, including LPD01-03 and LPD09 will support this.
- 4.3.22 Beyond the policy framework in this Plan to support the delivery of Green Belt compensatory measures, as well as other development plan documents, such as the Bold Forest Park AAP, the Council will continue to build on project improvements delivered to date. Improvements include those at the strategic level, such as at Bold Forest Park, for example the expansion of tree cover and the delivery of improved recreational facilities. A further strategic level project is the Sankey Valley Corridor Nature Improvement Area (NIA), which is focussed on enhancing the aquatic environment as well as the surrounding natural environment within the catchment, and improvements in environmental management practices. Improvements in this location have included accessibility enhancements, including walking, and cycling infrastructure and new signage, enabling increased access to the Green Belt for residents and visitors. It is expected that further improvements can be delivered at these two strategic projects as part of Green Belt compensatory measures.
- 4.3.23 There are further sites around the Borough that could be improved as part of Green Belt compensatory measures including those which form part of the Knowsley and St Helens Mosslands Nature Improvement Area (NIA), comprising three sites in the north of the Borough, near Rainford, one by Parr and one by Newton-le-Willows (see appendix 9). In addition, there are many Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) in the Borough, which are identified on the Policies Map, and appendix 8 of this Plan shows that there are several LWS in each ward of the Borough, with many of these wards having LWS in the Green Belt. There are also three Local Nature Reserves located within the Green Belt. Compensatory measures can also occur at non-designated sites within the Green Belt, for example, initiatives related to alleviating the effects of flooding events, such as those implemented previously in the settlement of King's Moss. Therefore, there are clear opportunities for localised Green Belt compensatory measures to be delivered on such designated and non-designated sites across the entire Borough through the delivery of environmental improvements, in addition to the two identified strategic sites referred to above.

The role of town, district and local centres

- 4.3.24 The Plan also aims to support existing town, district, and local centres by preventing new development outside their boundaries that may harm their vitality and viability. Proposals for new retail and other town centre uses will be focussed towards existing centres appropriate to their type and scale, thereby maximising their accessibility by existing public transport and active travel provision and facilitating linked trips. The preferred location for new comparison retail and intensive town centre leisure development will be St Helens Town Centre. Further details of these matters are set out in Policies LPB01, LPB02 and LPC04.

Green infrastructure

- 4.3.25 Within and outside the Key Settlements open space and greenways provide spaces for nature, opportunities for recreation, exercise and relaxation, ecological linkages, and active travel routes. Open spaces and landscaping, including those provided within development sites also provide opportunities to adapt to climate change by storing flood water, reducing urban heat islands, capturing carbon, and improving air quality and therefore support the Council's Climate Change Emergency declaration. Whilst public funding support to create and manage open spaces, flood water storage and greenways is limited, the development of sites for housing or employment uses, including on sites released from the Green Belt, is likely to present opportunities for such provision.

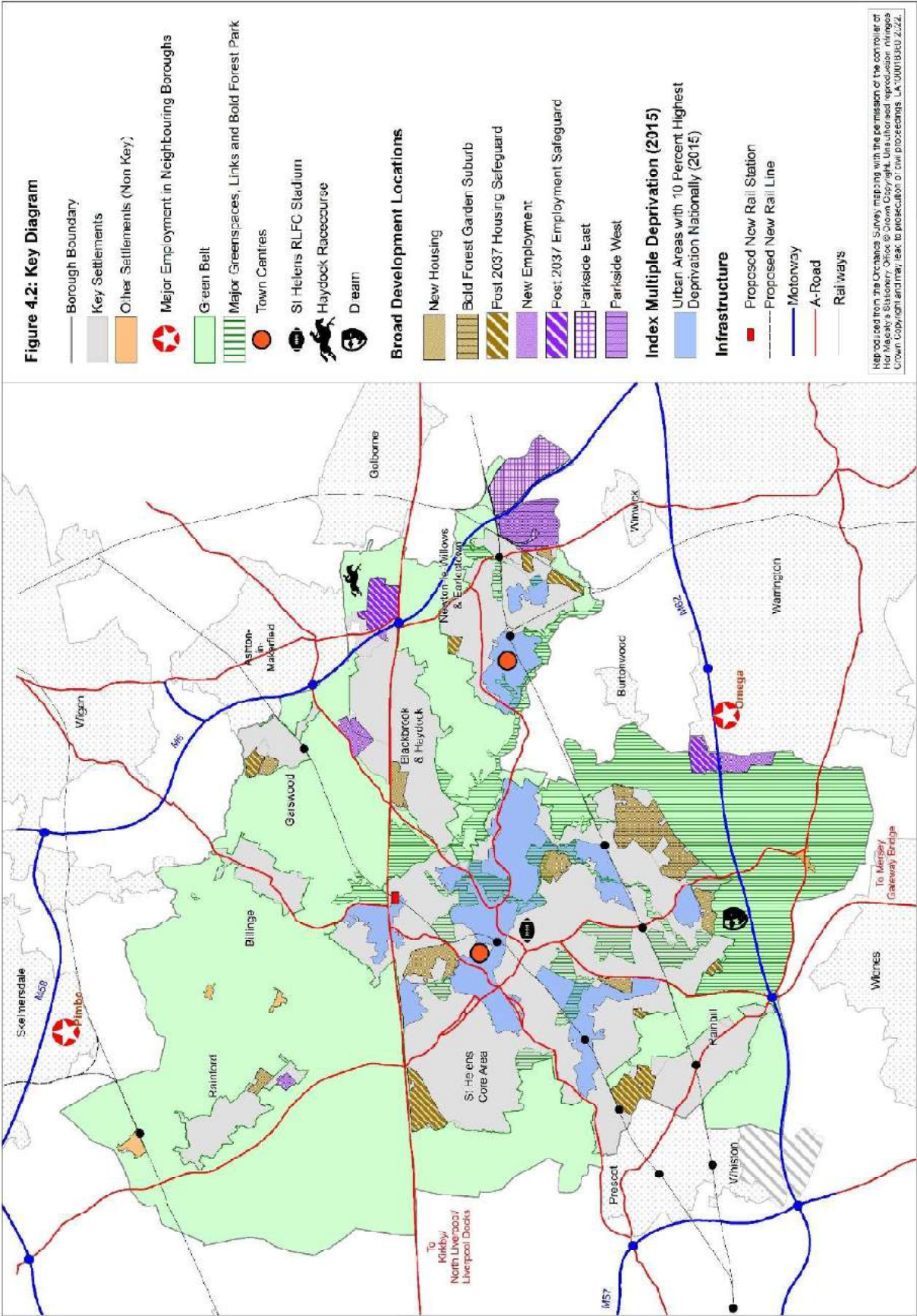
Transport provision

- 4.3.26 This Plan aims to protect existing transport infrastructure and secure improvements to provide efficient travel linkages within the Borough and to link the Borough with other areas. It also seeks to ensure that development does not prevent improvements to Junction 23 of the M6 and other road and public transport infrastructure from being implemented. Enhancing linkages between areas of deprivation and employment areas particularly by public transport, walking and cycling is a key priority. Such enhancement of sustainable transport modes further supports the Council's Climate Change Emergency declaration through the promotion of active and low carbon travel opportunities. Further details of the Plan's approach to transport issues are set out in Policy LPA06.

Supporting regeneration

- 4.3.27 As a priority, the Council will continue to work to support the redevelopment of brownfield sites in the urban area.
- 4.3.28 The Council has entered into a formal partnership agreement with the English Cities Fund as the Council's preferred strategic partner to ensure the delivery of a Borough wide regeneration strategy, including economic regeneration and housing. The Council has recognised that a new approach to growing the economy of the Borough is required that seeks to work pro-actively with the private sector and establish a strategic partnership maximising the opportunities presented to deliver significant future growth in St Helens and deliver key priorities including Town Centre regeneration, social wellbeing and providing appropriate infrastructure to support future development.

- 4.3.29 Furthermore, as part of the 'Town Deal' initiative established by the Government in 2019, the Council has successfully secured significant investment of up to £25 million. This funding will be used to help increase economic growth with a focus on land use and regeneration, improved connectivity (both transport and better broadband connectivity), skills and employment, and heritage, arts, and culture for St Helens Town Centre.
- 4.3.30 The Council will prepare SPDs covering specific areas to help implement regeneration where this is considered necessary.



4.4 Policy LPA02: Development Principles

Policy LPA02: Development Principles

New development in St Helens Borough will be required to support the following development principles where relevant:

1. Create sustainable communities with a strong sense of place.
2. Meet the challenges of population retention and growth by:
 - a) Providing for a mix of types and tenures of quality homes to meet the needs and aspirations of all existing and future residents in sustainable locations;
 - b) Maintaining, and where possible enhancing, accessibility to a good range of services and facilities; and
 - c) Providing and contributing to assessed infrastructure and service requirements where appropriate.
3. Improve the economic well-being of the Borough's residents by:
 - a) Contributing to the creation and retention of a range of employment and training opportunities that are readily accessible by non-car modes of transport to the Borough's residents, including local unemployed and disadvantaged people;
 - b) Contributing to the reduction of socio-economic inequality including health inequalities within St Helens Borough, and between the Borough and other parts of the UK; and
 - c) Contributing to and complementing the regeneration of the Borough.
4. Contribute to inclusive communities by seeking to address the requirements of:
 - a) An ageing population, particularly in terms of housing, health and wellbeing;
 - b) Children, young people and families;
 - c) People with special needs, including those with a disability; and
 - d) The specific identified needs of minority groups in the Borough, including Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.
5. Contribute to a high quality built and natural environment by:
 - a) Securing high quality design in all development and a high standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
 - b) Taking account of the Borough's landscape character and townscape, and the distinctive roles and settings of different areas of the Borough, in the location and design of new development;

- c) Protecting, conserving, and / or enhancing the Borough's natural, built and historic environments;
 - d) Protecting and enhancing the quality of the Borough's natural resources including water, air, land, and biodiversity; and
 - e) Making effective use of land, buildings, and existing infrastructure (including through the remediation of contaminated land).
6. Minimise the need to travel and maximise the use of sustainable transport by:
- a) Guiding development to sustainable and accessible locations or locations that can be made sustainable and accessible;
 - b) Encouraging a shift towards more sustainable modes of transport for people, goods and freight and encouraging the use of lower carbon transport;
 - c) Encouraging safe and sustainable access for all, particularly by promoting the use of public transport, walking, and cycling between homes and employment; and
 - d) Supporting the provision and retention of shared space, community facilities and other local services (such as local shops, health facilities, education provision, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses, and places of worship).
7. Promote healthy communities by improving access and opportunities for formal and informal recreation (including through the use of green infrastructure), improving cycling and walking routes, and minimising air, soil, and water pollution.
8. Lower St Helens Borough's carbon footprint and adapt to the effects of climate change by:
- a) Contributing to reductions in carbon emissions from all sources;
 - b) Meeting appropriate standards for sustainability and energy efficiency and promoting the use of renewable energy and sustainable construction;
 - c) Assessing and addressing the impact of climate change through mitigation and / or adaption measures;
 - d) Using water, energy, minerals and waste resources in an efficient and effective way;
 - e) Ensuring that all new development addresses the need to mitigate and, where appropriate, adapt to flood risk; and
 - f) Making best use of existing building materials (including historic features and materials) in order to reduce waste and lower energy consumption.

4.5 Policy LPA02: Strategic Aims, Objectives and Key Delivery Mechanisms

Strategic Aims Met	All
Strategic Objectives Met	All
Is this a 'strategic' or 'local' policy?	Strategic
Key Delivery Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan • Development Management process • St Helens Infrastructure Delivery Plan

4.6 Reasoned Justification

- 4.6.1 Policy LPA02 sets out the development principles that underpin this Local Plan. They represent a sustainable and balanced approach to the provision of new development and respond to:
- a) The Strategic Aims and Objectives identified in chapter 3 of this Plan;
 - b) The Borough's key sustainability issues outlined in chapter 2 of this Plan and the St Helens Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (2015); and
 - c) The requirements of national planning policy and guidance.
- 4.6.2 The principles provide the basis for more detailed policies that follow in this Plan.

4.7 Policy LPA03: A Strong and Sustainable Economy

Policy LPA03: A Strong and Sustainable Economy

1. The Council will work with partner organisations to:
 - a) help meet the Liverpool City Region's needs for economic growth, job creation and skills development;
 - b) maximise the economic opportunities presented by St Helens Borough's location in relation to strategic road and rail routes;
 - c) ensure the necessary infrastructure is provided to support business needs (see Policy LPA07);
 - d) support the creation of and expansion of small businesses; and
 - e) support businesses and organisations in the economic recovery and renewal from the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The Council will aim to deliver a minimum of 173.24 hectares of land for employment development between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2037 to meet the needs of St Helens Borough.
3. The sites as shown in Table 4.1 and on the Policies Map are allocated for development for the employment uses indicated.
4. Proposals to develop or re-develop any of the above allocated sites for uses not listed in Table 4.1 will be refused, unless it has been demonstrated that:
 - a) the site is no longer both suitable and viable for an employment use identified in Table 4.1; and
 - b) the site has been offered for employment use on the open market at a reasonable price in a manner and for a period agreed with the Council; and
 - c) the results of the marketing exercise have been transparently shared with the Council; and
 - d) no employment use can be delivered as part of a mixed-use scheme on the site.
5. Other sites and buildings that are currently or were last used for employment use (or for sui generis use generating employment), including those in the employment areas listed in appendix 5, will be protected from changes to other uses, unless justified. Changes of use of such sites and buildings will be justified and permitted where it is demonstrated either that:
 - a) the land or building (or any part of it) is no longer suitable and economically viable for light industrial, offices and research and development, B2 or B8 uses in accordance with the Local Economy Supplementary Planning Document; or

- b) the land use planning benefits of the proposed development would outweigh the benefits of retaining the site or building in its existing use (including vacant buildings and sites).
- 6. Proposals for the re-use, re-configuration, or re-development for light industrial, offices and research and development, B2 or B8 uses of land or buildings used for light industrial, offices and research and development, B2 or B8 uses (including where such proposals would lead to a more intensive use of the land or buildings) will be supported, subject to compliance with other policies in the Plan.
- 7. Proposals for Class E uses in locations outside a defined centre will be subject to a condition to prohibit town centre uses (as defined in the glossary of the NPPF) unless the requirements of Policy LPC04 are satisfied.
- 8. The Council will support proposals to help diversify the rural economy, including through the re-use of suitable buildings in rural areas for appropriate employment uses, subject to other policies in the Plan.
- 9. The Council will support the protection, creation, enhancement and expansion of tourism, cultural and visitor resources, facilities, and attractions by favourably considering proposals that are appropriate to the local character and appearance of the area and that will:
 - i) increase the range and quality of the accommodation offer in the Borough: or
 - ii) enhance an existing tourist or visitor attraction; or
 - iii) attract investment to the Borough and create or safeguard jobs; or
 - iv) enable the economic or physical regeneration of a site or area; or
 - v) improve the quality and diversity of the Borough's visitor offer; or
 - vi) help to maintain existing natural, historical, or cultural assets.
- 10. The Council will prevent the unjustified loss of existing tourism, cultural and visitor resources and assets.
- 11. The Council will support the use of local suppliers of goods and services and the creation of apprenticeships and training opportunities for local people in accordance with the requirements of the Local Economy Supplementary Planning Document.

Table 4.1: Allocations for Employment Development

Policies Map Site Reference Number ¹⁵	Site Name	Indicative Site Area (hectares)	Appropriate Use(s) ¹⁶
1EA	Omega South Western Extension, Land north of Finches Plantation, Bold (to meet employment land needs arising in Warrington)	31.22	B2, B8
4EA	Land South of Penny Lane, Haydock	2.16	B2, B8
5EA	Land to the West of Haydock Industrial Estate, Haydock	7.75	B2, B8
6EA	Land west of Millfield Lane, south of Liverpool Road and north of Clipsley Brook, Haydock	20.58	B2, B8
7EA	Parkside East, Newton-le-Willows	64.55 ¹⁷	See Policy LPA09
8EA	Parkside West, Newton-le-Willows	79.57 ¹⁸	See Policy LPA10
9EA	Land to the West of Sandwash Close, Rainford	7.70	Light industrial, offices and research and development uses, B2, B8
TOTAL		213.53	

4.8 Policy LPA03: Strategic Aims, Objectives and Key Delivery Mechanisms

Strategic Aims Met	SA 1, SA 5
Strategic Objectives Met	SO 1.1, SO 1.2, SO 5.1, SO 5.2, SO 5.3, SO 5.4
Is this a 'strategic' or 'local' policy?	Strategic
Key Delivery Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Management process • Maintaining employment land supply • St Helens Infrastructure Delivery Plan

4.9 Reasoned Justification

- 4.9.1 The Council's City Growth Strategy (2008-18) and Council Plan 2017-2020 recognise the need to work in partnership with local communities and businesses to deliver economic growth, to strengthen the local business base, and to increase aspiration, skills, and employment in the Borough.
- 4.9.2 The Local Plan's vision still stands true as we plan for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic: By 2037, St Helens Borough will provide through the balanced regeneration and sustainable growth of its built-up areas, a range of attractive, healthy, safe, inclusive, and accessible places in which to live, work, visit and invest. Key to this is a continued focus on the economy, so that St Helens residents are able to access good quality jobs that raise their living standards, whilst also improving physical and mental health.
- 4.9.3 It is anticipated that the English Cities Fund Regeneration Partnership and the Council's successful Town Deal funding bid will also assist in the post COVID-19 economic recovery.
- 4.9.4 The provision of new well-located employment land and floorspace is essential to the Borough's future economic prosperity. Policy LPA03 therefore allocates sufficient land to meet anticipated development needs within the light industrial, offices and research and development uses, B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution) use classes during the Plan period. The NPPF requires the Council to plan for and accommodate all foreseeable types of economic growth. Policy LPA03 therefore identifies a range of locations, types, and sizes of employment sites to meet the needs of specific sectors of the business community and to protect existing areas where employment continues to be the most appropriate use.

Liverpool City Region

- 4.9.5 St Helens Borough's economy is inextricably linked to that of the wider Liverpool City Region. The Council will continue to work alongside its City Region partners to take full advantage of the continued growth of the City Region and to help deliver the economic growth, job creation, and skills development aspirations outlined in the Liverpool City Region Growth Strategy (2016) and Strategic Economic Plan (2016).

15 Sites 2EA, 3EA, 10EA, and 11EA were either completed or under construction during the Local Plan Examination and have therefore been removed from the Local Plan allocations and have been counted in either the completions or existing deliverable supply figures as at 31st March 2021.

16 The phrases B2 and B8 in Policy LPA03 refer to use classes in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).

17 The Parkside East site has a gross area of approximately 124.55ha, of which at least 60ha is reserved for development of a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange or other rail enabled use (see Policy LPA09). The indicative site area of 64.55ha represents the remainder of the site which may be developed for a wider range of employment uses subject to compliance with Policy LPA09. A further 5.58ha of land is included (to the west of the M6) to facilitate the provision of rail access to the site from the north.

18 79.57ha of land is allocated for employment use at the Parkside West site (Policy LPA10). This area excludes the 5.58ha of land which is required to facilitate rail access to site 7EA and a further 12.1ha that is occupied by a spoil heap which is not considered developable.

Employment Land Requirement

- 4.9.6 The NPPF requires the Local Plan to address objectively assessed needs (OAN) for economic development, taking account of market intelligence, market signals and the locational needs of different types of business.
- 4.9.7 The Council's Employment Land Needs Study (ELNS) 2015 and the ELNS Addendum Report (2017) indicate that the Borough, due to its location on the M6 and M62 motorways, is ideally positioned to provide a critical role in the North West large-scale logistics and distribution sector. The ELNS suggests that whilst traditionally St Helens Borough has been a manufacturing centre, with the largest land uses including class B2 (general industrial) operations, a strong shift to B8 (storage and distribution) uses is expected to occur during the Plan period.
- 4.9.8 The ELNS Addendum Report identified employment land OAN on the basis of historic trends, the need for a 5-year buffer to ensure choice and flexibility, and the potential for SuperPort¹⁹ and a future Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) at the former Parkside Colliery to increase demand for employment land in the Borough, particularly in the large-scale logistics sector. It identifies an employment land OAN of up to 239ha from 2012²⁰ to 2037. It also splits this overall need indicatively into individual use types, based on sectoral forecasts from Cambridge Econometrics and Oxford Economics and the market drivers underpinning local employment land demand, as set out in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: St Helens Borough Estimated Employment Land Needs 2012-2037

Employment Type	Hectares
Office	10-15
Research and Development	1-4
Light Industry	15-20
B2 General industrial	55-70
B8 Storage and Distribution	110-155
Total employment needs	190-239

- 4.9.9 Based on the ELNS Addendum Report, the OAN requirement for 2012-2037 has been calculated as a minimum of 239ha as shown in Table 4.3. This figure has been calculated by projecting forward the historic 5.8ha per annum growth scenario for the 1997-2012 period (referred to in the ELNS Addendum Report) from the base date of 2012 to the end date of the Plan (2037), and then adding a 5 year buffer to the baseline OAN (to ensure

¹⁹ SuperPort is the collective name given to the enhancement of sea and air ports and freight facilities along the River Mersey and Manchester Ship Canal. It includes the new Liverpool 2 deep water container port at Seaforth.

²⁰ The ELNS Addendum Report uses a forecasting base date of 2012, as there is evidence to suggest that take-up rates since then have been suppressed by a restricted land supply. Therefore there is a risk that the inclusion of post-2012 take-up rates would distort the historic baseline for predicting needs.

adequate choice and flexibility) and the recommended allowance for SuperPort and Parkside SRFI of 65ha from the ELNS Addendum Report.

Table 4.3: Objectively Assessed Need for New Employment Land - 2012-2037

Local Plan Objectively Assessed Needs Requirement 2012-2037	Hectares
Baseline OAN 2012 to 2037 (based on ELNS Period 1997-2012, 5.8ha per annum growth scenario)	145
5 year Flexibility Buffer	29
Allowance for SuperPort and Parkside SRFI	65
Total	239

- 4.9.10 The residual requirement for employment land (i.e., the minimum supply from new sites that must be provided for in the Plan) has then been calculated by allowing for take-up of employment land since 2012 against the OAN (239ha) and the existing supply of developable employment land in the Borough as shown in Table 4.4. Once an allowance of 60.77ha for take up and 4.99ha for the existing developable employment land supply in the Borough has been applied the residual requirement is 173.24ha.

Table 4.4: Residual Employment Land Requirement 2021-2037 (as of 31.03.2021)

Local Plan Employment Land Residual Requirement	Hectares
Local Plan OAN 2012-2037 including 5 year buffer and allowance for Parkside SRFI and SuperPort	239
Take-up between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2021 (includes completions at Florida Farm, Slag Lane Haydock, Land North of Penny Lane, Haydock, and Land at Lea Green Farm West, Thatto Heath)	60.77
Existing Supply of Deliverable Employment Land including allocations under construction currently (31 Mar 2021) (This is made up of Land North of Kilbuck Lane (3.46ha), Pilkingtons Cowley Hill Site (0.58ha) and Gerards Park, College Street, St Helens Town Centre, site allocation 11EA (0.95ha))	4.99
Total Residual Requirement 2021-2037	173.24
Supply from remaining allocations to meet the St Helens residual requirement (from sites 4EA, 5EA, 6EA, 7EA, 8EA and 9EA)	182.31

- 4.9.11 The above residual requirement figure includes no allowance for replacing employment land lost to other uses between 2012 and 2037. This approach is in line with the ELNS Addendum Report and is because the land take-up scenarios (from which the OAN is derived) are based on employment land gains only. It also cannot be assumed that losses of, for example, employment land that is not readily developable for employment uses and / or that has been vacant for a long time, need to be replaced.

The Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Assessment (SHELMA)

- 4.9.12 The draft Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Assessment (SHELMA) - published for stakeholder consultation in October 2017 - considers the need for employment development across 7 local authorities in the Liverpool City Region and West Lancashire. Together these authority areas are identified as the Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA).
- 4.9.13 The draft SHELMA identifies that, across the FEMA as a whole, at least 397ha of land is required for large scale B8 development (capable of accommodating units of over 9,000m²) between 2012 and 2037. However, it does not apportion this need between local authority areas as it states that such apportionment should be guided by the distribution of suitable sites. The draft SHELMA also assesses the need for light industrial, offices and research and development, B2 and for smaller scale B8 development (of less than 9,000m²). Unlike those for large scale B8 uses these needs are apportioned at a district level, and for St Helens Borough are identified as totalling at least 61.4ha of land between 2012 and 2037.
- 4.9.14 Following the finalisation of the SHELMA, the Council will continue to work collaboratively with the Liverpool City Region and West Lancashire authorities in order to progress the matters addressed within it including the required distribution of land for large scale B8 warehousing. Whilst the residual employment land needs in the Borough identified in Table 4.4 (totalling 173.24ha) cover a different time period to the SHELMA they will be sufficient to both meet the Borough's needs for light industrial, offices and research and development, B2 and small scale B8 uses and a substantial proportion of the sub-regional need for large scale B8 uses identified to date in the FEMA as a whole. This reflects the strategic location of St Helens Borough in relation to the motorway and rail networks linking the Liverpool City Region to the rest of the country.

Employment Land Allocations

- 4.9.15 To strengthen the local economy, St Helens Borough needs to build on those sectors where the Borough enjoys a competitive advantage. As identified above one such sector is logistics and distribution, where the Borough's location in relation to the M6 and M62 motorways and the rail network makes it particularly attractive for development. Market needs for the large-scale distribution sector (for units of above 9,000m²) generally focus on sites of 5ha or above and this has been reflected in the size of sites selected for release from the Green Belt and allocation for employment use in this Plan.

- 4.9.16 The total supply of allocated employment sites will (at 182.31ha – excluding site 1EA) slightly exceed the residual employment land requirement identified in Table 4.4. However, this is justified by:
- i) the need to reverse the suppression of employment land take-up the Borough has experienced since 2005, caused by an inadequate supply of market attractive sites; and
 - ii) the need to provide flexibility to respond to any requirement to meet B8 strategic land needs resulting from the SHELMA, over and above that identified in the ELNS Addendum Report and factored into the employment land requirement.

Helping to meet Warrington's Employment Land Needs

- 4.9.17 St Helens and Warrington Councils have identified, under the duty to cooperate, that the emerging Warrington Local Plan is unlikely to be able to accommodate all of Warrington's employment land needs for 2017-2037 within its administrative boundary. St Helens Borough Council has therefore agreed to allocate 31.22ha (site 1EA) of land adjoining the existing Omega South employment area to help Warrington Council to meet these needs.

Alternative Uses on Employment Sites

- 4.9.18 To ensure the development of the proposed employment allocations for the identified employment uses, the Council will require any applications for alternative uses to demonstrate that the site has been marketed for employment use on the open market for a minimum period of 18 months. Only after this period, and subject to no interest being received for the identified employment uses, will an application for an alternative use be considered further. This applies to site allocations within the Plan, as well as those sites contributing to meeting identified employment needs over the Plan Period, including but not limited to land at Florida Farm North, Land north of Penny Lane, Land at Lea Green Farm West and Gerards Park, College Street.
- 4.9.19 Existing employment sites in urban areas will still have an important role to play in accommodating employment development during the Plan period. Policy LPA03 therefore seeks to protect the employment role of such sites. During the Plan period however some older employment areas may become no longer suitable for this use or may have an altered economic role. Alternative uses on existing or former employment sites may be acceptable where continued employment use would be unacceptable on environmental grounds, or where the site is not well located in relation to the transport network or surrounding land uses, or where the community benefits of the proposed development would outweigh the potential loss of employment on the site caused by ceasing an existing use. The community benefits of a scheme could be wide-ranging, and it is the responsibility of the applicant to clearly set out these benefits to support their proposal. The Council will determine the significance of community benefits of proposals on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.9.20 Alternative uses may also be appropriate where there is no current or likely future market demand for employment uses on the site and / or its

reuse for such purposes would not be viable currently or in the long term. The Local Economy SPD (2013) outlines the evidence applicants will be required to provide in relation to the marketing and viability of employment sites before their loss for other uses can be supported. This outlines the requirement for existing employment sites to carry out a minimum of 12 months marketing for employment uses in order to identify that the site is not viable in the long-term.

Use of Local Suppliers and Training and Education

- 4.9.21 The St Helens City Growth Strategy aims to increase economic activity. The Council will seek to achieve this by helping applicants and the end users of suitable development schemes, for example by directing them to local recruitment services and apprenticeship schemes and to sources of information on local suppliers of goods and services. Applicants will also be encouraged to provide training and job opportunities for local people and to use locally sourced goods and services in line with the guidance in the Local Economy SPD (2013).

Green Belt Exceptional Circumstances

- 4.9.22 The following paragraphs articulate the exceptional circumstances justifying the removal of land from the Green Belt on a site-by-site basis. This builds on the exceptional circumstances strategic case as set out in the Reasoned Justification to Policy LPA01, and the following should be read in that context.

1EA – Omega South Western Extension, Land north of Finches Plantation, Bold

- 4.9.23 The Green Belt Review (2018) found the sub-parcel reflecting this site to make a ‘medium’ contribution to the Green Belt purposes as whilst the site contains no inappropriate development and has open views across it, it is bordered by large scale-built development at Omega South and the M62, and therefore only has a moderate countryside character. The Review also found the site to have ‘medium’ development potential.
- 4.9.24 The site is adjacent to the Borough’s boundary with Warrington Borough, and its development would form a natural extension of the adjacent Omega employment site. This is particularly important in relation to the exceptional circumstances in the context of this site being allocated to help meet Warrington’s employment needs.
- 4.9.25 The site is within 1km of an area within the 20% most deprived population in the UK, so its development for employment uses would help to reduce poverty and social exclusion. Further, the development of this site, provides the opportunity to improve sustainable transport links between St Helens and this site, as well as the wider Omega employment site, improving access to jobs in this location for residents of St Helens.

4EA – Land south of Penny Lane, Haydock

- 4.9.26 This site forms a relatively small part of a larger parcel of land that the Green Belt Review (2018) found to make a ‘medium’ contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt, with ‘good’ development potential. It should be noted that the parcel of land assessed in the Green Belt Review included the land to both the north and south of Penny Lane. In this

context, a significant part of the assessed Green Belt parcel (11.05ha) has an extant planning permission for employment development, of which the majority has now been developed. This is the land to the north of Penny Lane. The site forms a natural extension to the Haydock Industrial Estate. Indeed, given the development of land to the north of Penny Lane, this site is now surrounded by built development of the Haydock Industrial Estate to the north, east and south, and the M6 to the west. The site is also located in close proximity to an area that falls within the 20% most deprived population in the UK. Therefore, its development for employment use would help to reduce poverty and social exclusion. The development would also reduce the need to travel by making best use of existing transport infrastructure due to its location close to a high frequency bus service.

5EA – Land to the West of Haydock Industrial Estate, Haydock

- 4.9.27 The Green Belt Review (2018) found the sub-parcel of land reflecting this site to make a ‘medium’ contribution to the Green Belt purposes. The site adjoins the large built-up area of Haydock but is relatively well contained and strategic gaps between Haydock and elsewhere could still be maintained following the release of this site from the Green Belt. The Review also found the site to have ‘good’ development potential. The removal of this site from the Green Belt in conjunction with site 6EA, and the now developed employment land at Florida Farm North presents the opportunity to provide a stronger, more robust boundary in this location. The site is located within 1km of an area falling within the 20% most deprived population in the UK. Its development for employment use would help reduce poverty and social exclusion and help reduce the need to travel through making best use of existing transport infrastructure due to its location close to a high frequency bus service.

6EA – Land West of Millfield Lane, south of Liverpool Road and north of Clipsley Brook, Haydock

- 4.9.28 The Green Belt Review (2018) found the sub-parcel of land reflecting this site to make a ‘medium’ contribution to the Green Belt purposes. At the time the Green Belt Review was undertaken, this site did not adjoin a large built-up area, but was considered in part to prevent ribbon development along Liverpool Road. Since that time, employment development at Florida Farm North has taken place adjacent the southern boundary of the site. This site would form a natural extension to the Haydock Industrial Estate, and its development would provide a stronger, more robust Green Belt boundary. The site is located within 1km of an area falling within the 20% most deprived population in the UK. Its development for employment use would help reduce poverty and social exclusion.

7EA – Parkside East, Newton-le-Willows

- 4.9.29 The Green Belt Review (2018) found this site to make a ‘high+’ contribution to the Green Belt purposes due to its significant size, lack of enclosure to the east and strong countryside character with little inappropriate development. On this basis, the site would not ordinarily have progressed to further assessment. However, the Review acknowledged that the site forms part of the wider Parkside site, straddling

the M6, for which there has been a long history of developer interest, including a planning application for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI), the area being highlighted as a potential location for an inter-modal freight terminal in the previous North West RSS and the Core Strategy (2012) identifying the site as a strategic location for a SRFI. Furthermore, the evidence in the Parkside Logistics and Rail Freight Interchange Study (August 2016) found the site to be of regional and national significance in relation to regional and national policy, market demand and the need to deliver new and improved SRFIs, with the site's opportunity for rail access to be second to none in the North West.

- 4.9.30 This site has excellent locational advantages in relation to the delivery of a SRFI and major warehousing and industrial development, including accessibility by rail with north-south and east-west routes immediately adjacent, as well as proximity to the M6, Junction 22. The evidence also indicates that the site is of a sufficiently large scale and layout to provide the necessary operational requirements of a SRFI. The development of a SRFI on this site would support the Government's policy to move freight from road to rail.
- 4.9.31 Therefore, whilst development of this site could have a high impact on the Green Belt, there are exceptional circumstances justifying its release from the Green Belt for development as a SRFI (as well as other forms of B2 and B8 employment use, in principle, provided it is rail served or is of a layout and scale that does not prejudice the ability to develop an effectively laid out SRFI on at least 60ha of the site), and the site is considered to have 'good' development potential. Additionally, Parkside has been included as one of three Tax Sites as part of the Liverpool City Region Freeport. Also, as part of the Secretary of State planning approvals made in respect of the Parkside Link Road in 2021, the Secretary of State acknowledged that development at Parkside will deliver significant economic, regeneration and sustainability benefits.

8EA – Parkside West, Newton-le-Willows

- 4.9.32 The Green Belt Review (2018) found the parcel of land reflecting this site boundary to make a 'medium' overall contribution to the Green Belt purposes, influenced by the relatively high degree of enclosure, brownfield status of part of the site (former colliery and associated uses) and because it does not have a strong sense of openness or countryside character. It also found the site to have 'good' development potential. Its scale and location, particularly in relation to the transport network, makes it ideal for employment uses to meet the identified employment needs. It will also support the delivery of the SRFI on Parkside East (site 7EA).
- 4.9.33 The site is located within 1km of an area within the 20% most deprived population in the UK, so not only will development of the site bring wider economic benefits, but it will also help to reduce poverty and social exclusion, and due to its public transport links, would help to reduce the need to travel by car.
- 4.9.34 The relevance of paragraph 142 of the NPPF should also be noted given the importance of giving "first consideration to land which has been previously developed and / or is well-served by public transport" when a

conclusion has been reached that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development. The exceptional circumstances for removing land from the Green Belt to meet identified development needs is set out in the Reasoned Justification to Policy LPA01 and given the brownfield nature of much of this site, and for the other reasons set out, there are exceptional circumstances justifying the removal of this site from the Green Belt.

4.10 Policy LPA03.1: Strategic Employment Sites

Policy LPA03.1: Strategic Employment Sites

1. The following sites allocated under Policy LPA03 shall constitute Strategic Employment Sites²¹:
 - 1EA: Omega South Western Extension, Land north of Finches Plantation, Bold;
 - 6EA: Land west of Millfield Lane, south of Liverpool Road and north of Clipsley Brook, Haydock;
 - 7EA: Parkside East, Newton-le-Willows; and
 - 8EA: Parkside West, Newton-le-Willows.
2. Any planning application for development within a Strategic Employment Site must be supported by a comprehensive masterplan covering the whole Site, which must set out details of at least:
 - a) amount of development and proposed uses;
 - b) phasing of development across the whole site;
 - c) indicative layout and design details for the whole site, that must provide for an attractive built form with high quality landscaping when viewed from within the development and elsewhere;
 - d) measures to provide good levels of accessibility to the whole site by public transport, pedestrian and cycling links;
 - e) indicative layout promoting permeability and accessibility by public transport, cycling and walking;
 - f) a Green Infrastructure Plan addressing biodiversity, geodiversity, greenways, ecological network, landscape character, trees, woodland and water storage issues in a holistic and integrated way;
 - g) measures to address any potential flood risk and surface water drainage issues in accordance with Policy LPC12;
 - h) measures to promote energy efficiency and generation of renewable or low carbon energy in accordance with Policy LPC13;
 - i) a comprehensive strategy for the provision of all new, expanded and / or enhanced infrastructure that is required to serve the development of the whole site; and
 - j) how development of the site as a whole would comply with other relevant policies of the Local Plan.

²¹ The boundaries of the Strategic Employment sites are identified on the Policies Map.

3. Detailed development proposals within a Strategic Employment Site must be accompanied by a comprehensive package of training schemes and / or other measures to enable local residents (including unemployed and disadvantaged people) to access and benefit fully from the employment opportunities provided at the Site.
4. Development within Strategic Employment Sites will be required, subject to compliance with Policy LPA07, provide or make financial contributions towards the provision, expansion and / or enhancement of transport infrastructure (including road, public transport, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure) and / or other infrastructure to serve the needs of the development. Such provision may be either on-site or off-site and must be provided in time to meet the needs of the development. Where the specific development proposal would only cover part of the Strategic Employment Site, the provision and / or contributions must be in accordance with the comprehensive masterplan for the whole site referred to in paragraph 2 of this Policy.
5. The masterplans for each Strategic Employment Site, and any planning application for development within any other allocated employment site, must address site specific requirements set out in appendix 5 (in the case of sites 1EA and 6EA) and Policies LPA09 and LPA10 (in the case of sites 7EA and 8EA).

4.11 Policy LPA03.1: Strategic Aims, Objectives and Key Delivery Mechanisms

Strategic Aims Met	SA 1, SA 2, SA 3, SA 5, SA 7
Strategic Objectives Met	SO 1.1, SO 2.1, SO 3.1, SO 5.1, SO 5.4, SO 7.1
Is this a 'strategic' or 'local' policy?	Strategic
Key Delivery Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Management process • Masterplanning process

4.12 Reasoned Justification

- 4.12.1 The sites covered by Policy LPA03.1 are considered to be strategic as, given their scale, they will play a significant role in the delivery of the overall strategy of the Plan. It is anticipated that during the Plan period these sites will deliver most of the new employment land required to meet need. To ensure that the sites are developed to their full potential it is essential that development proposals within them are informed by a comprehensive and suitable masterplan for the site as a whole. The masterplan must identify any new, expanded, or enhanced infrastructure that is needed to serve the development as a whole. A comprehensive

approach will also be followed to securing any necessary developer contributions required to deliver such infrastructure.

- 4.12.2 Non-strategic sites that are allocated in Policy LPA03 are not considered large enough to warrant a strategic allocation. Whilst such sites are anticipated to yield less employment floorspace compared to strategic sites, their allocation will support the overall delivery of employment land, and they will play a key role in ensuring the supply of sites balances the phased delivery that typically results from the build out of large strategic employment sites.

4.13 Policy LPA04: Meeting St Helens Borough's Housing Needs

Policy LPA04: Meeting St Helens Borough's Housing Needs

1. In the period from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2037 a minimum of 10,206 net additional dwellings should be provided in the Borough of St Helens, at an average of at least 486 dwellings per annum.
2. The housing requirement will be met from the following sources:
 - a) Completions;
 - b) Sites with planning permission;
 - c) Housing allocations shown on the Policies Map and listed in Table 4.5;
 - d) Sites without planning permission identified in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA); and
 - e) 'Windfall' development, including development on small sites not individually identified in the SHLAA, sub-division of dwellings and conversions / changes of use.
3. New development should optimise the amount of housing developed on a site. New development should therefore aim to achieve the following minimum densities:
 - a) at least 40 dwellings per hectare (dph) on sites that are within or adjacent to St Helens or Earlestown Town Centres; and
 - b) at least 30 dph on all sites outside St Helens and Earlestown town centres.

Densities of less than 30 dph will only be appropriate where they are necessary to achieve a clear planning objective.
4. The delivery of new housing development will be monitored annually to ensure that:
 - a) an adequate supply of new housing is provided at all times in accordance with the Housing Delivery Test set out in national policy; and
 - b) there is a deliverable supply of housing that is sufficient to provide at least 5 years' worth of new housing development against the housing requirement. The 5-year land supply to be maintained shall include any buffer that is required under national policy. If annual monitoring demonstrates the deliverable housing land supply falls significantly below the required level, taking into account the requirements in relation to housing delivery set out in national policy, a partial or full plan update will be considered to bring forward additional sites.

Table 4.5: Sites allocated for new housing development

Site ref.	Name ²²	Area ²³ (hectares)	NDA ²⁴	Minimum Density (units per hectare)	Indicative site capacity (new dwellings)		Total
					Before 31.03.37	After 31.03.37	
1HA	Land South of Billinge Road, East of Garswood Road and West of Smock Lane, Garswood	9.58	75%	30	216	0	216
2HA	Land at Florida Farm (South of A580), Slag Lane, Blackbrook	23.19	75%	30	427	95	522
4HA	Land bounded by Reginald Road/Bold Road/Travers Entry/Gorsey Lane/Crawford Street, Bold (Bold Forest Garden Suburb)	132.86	75%	30	510	2,478	2,988
5HA	Land South of Gartons Lane and former St. Theresa's Social Club, Gartons Lane, Bold	21.67	75%	35	562	7	569
6HA	Land East of City Road, Cowley Hill, Town Centre	31.09	75%	47	607	493	1,100
7HA	Land West of the A49 Mill Lane and to the East of the West Coast Mainline railway line, Newton-le-Willows	5.33	75%	35	140	0	140
8HA	Land South of Higher Lane and East of Rookery Lane, Rainford	11.49	75%	30	259	0	259
9HA	Former Linkway Distribution Park, Elton Head Road, Thatto Heath	12.39	75%	38	352	0	352
10HA	Moss Nook Urban Village, Watery Lane, Moss Nook	26.74	75%	40	652	150	802
Totals					3,725	3,223	6,948

4.14 Policy LPA04: Strategic Aims, Objectives and Key Delivery Mechanisms

22 Site 3HA was partially complete during the Examination and has therefore been removed from the Local Plan allocations and has been counted in the completions and housing supply figures as at 31st March 2021 accordingly.

23 The figures for 'area' are the gross developable area of each site.

Strategic Aims Met	SA 1, SA 4
Strategic Objectives Met	SO 1.1, SO 4.1
Is this a 'strategic' or 'local' policy?	Strategic
Key Delivery Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Management process • Provision of a 5+ year deliverable housing land supply • Facilitating housing delivery • St Helens Infrastructure Delivery Plan

4.15 Reasoned Justification

- 4.15.1 National planning policy requires Local Plans to provide for the delivery of a wide choice of new housing in sufficient quantities to meet needs. The requirement of 10,206 dwellings in total over the Plan period (equating to an average of 486 dwellings per annum) set out in Policy LPA04 is designed to meet the full Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for new housing in the Borough. To identify the OAN for new housing the Council has taken into account a range of evidence as follows.

Quantifying the OAN for new housing in St Helens Borough

- 4.15.2 National planning policy requires Local Plans to use the nationally defined standard method to identify housing OAN unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach²⁵. It also indicates that alternative approaches identifying a higher need than that indicated by the standard method will in principle be considered sound.
- 4.15.3 The standard method uses household growth projections over a 10-year period as its starting point, to which it applies an 'uplift' to account for affordability issues to derive an annual housing need figure, that can be applied to the whole Plan period²⁶.
- 4.15.4 The most recent sub-national household projections, which have a base date of 2016, were published in September 2018. However, the Government has published draft proposals the effect of which (in the context of St Helens Borough) is that calculation of housing need based upon the standard method should be "*informed*" by the 2014 based and not the 2016 based household projections. Application of the national standard method using this approach would generate a housing need of 399 new dwellings per annum²⁷.

24 The NDA (net developable area) for each site is an estimate of the area available to accommodate new housing once an allowance, typically 25%, has been made for features that are not included when calculating density e.g., areas performing a function for the wider area and not just the development, such as significant new landscaping buffers, potential new schools, areas of strategic open space and roads to serve the wider area. Therefore, most sites will have a NDA of 75%.

25 The standard method is available to view at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>.

26 Planning Practice Guidance, July 2018.

27 This figure is derived by applying the standard method to the average household growth indicated in the 2014 based household projections for the 10 years from 2022 to 2032 and the 2021 affordability ratios, with the output extrapolated over the Plan period.

- 4.15.5 A key disadvantage of relying on the standard method to identify housing need is that it does not take into account the increased employment growth that is likely to result from the development of the sites that are allocated for employment development in Policy LPA03. This employment growth is likely to lead to increased housing need. In addition, the long term trend of declining affordability is likely, if continued in the future, to present an upward pressure on the outputs of the standard method. To address these points the Council has considered a range of other evidence to identify the housing OAN, as follows.
- 4.15.6 The Mid Mersey Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2016 confirmed that the local authority areas of St Helens, Warrington and Halton comprise a single Housing Market Area and that St Helens also has significant housing market and migration linkages with Knowsley and Wigan. The draft Liverpool City Region SHELMA, published in 2017, assessed housing needs across the whole City Region and West Lancashire but excluding Warrington.
- 4.15.7 The St Helens SHMA update 2018 used more recently published household and population projections, together with updated data linked to the development of the employment site allocations in Policy LPA03 of this Plan, to assess the housing OAN figures. It did so by assessing a range of demographic and economic led scenarios, for example: using assumptions concerning the expected rate of jobs growth; the numbers of supporting jobs that would be generated; employment rates; and commuting patterns.
- 4.15.8 Whilst the scenarios in the SHMA update 2018 indicate a range of annual housing needs figures, the scenario that is considered to be the most realistic gives rise to a figure of 486 net new dwelling completions per annum²⁸.

The housing requirement

- 4.15.9 It has been established (see the reasoned justification to Policy LPA01) that the Borough does not need to accommodate any housing needs arising in any neighbouring local authority area, and that no neighbouring local authority has capacity within their urban area(s) to accommodate any of the housing needs arising in St Helens Borough. As a result, and as no constraints have been identified that prevent the OAN from being met in full in the Borough, the housing requirement figure set out in Policy LPA04 equates to the identified OAN (of 486 dwellings per annum) for new housing. This requirement is net of (i.e., in addition to) dwellings required to replace any demolition losses that may take place during the Plan period. As it is an annual average it can be expected that variations in delivery over this period will occur.

Housing land supply

- 4.15.10 In accordance with Policy LPA01, a key priority is to maximise housing delivery on previously developed ('brownfield') land within existing urban

²⁸ This figure is derived from the 'economic scenario 2', sensitivity option 3 set out in the SHMA Update 2018, albeit extended to cover the whole Plan period to 2037.

areas. The St Helens Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2017 (as updated with the latest information as of 1 April 2021) identifies that sites in the urban area had a total capacity of 6,114 dwellings. This figure includes sites with planning permission, sites under construction, other sites identified as suitable for housing and an allowance of 93 units per annum from small windfall sites of less than 0.25ha (based upon past delivery rates). The largest SHLAA sites are allocated as sites 9HA and 10HA in Policy LPA04.

- 4.15.11 Some of the SHLAA sites are subject to physical or other constraints that could affect their rate of development, for example due to the need to deal with contamination caused by previous industrial activities. An allowance of 15% has been made for reduced delivery on the SHLAA sites over the later years of the Plan period. Total delivery from sites in the urban area is expected to fall substantially short of the total housing delivery required under Policy LPA04. As a result, the proposed land supply includes a number of allocated sites that have been released from previous designation as Green Belt. This element of the supply includes a contingency of 20% to allow for potential delays in development, for example to allow for the provision of essential infrastructure in currently undeveloped areas and other issues that may affect supply. The overall contribution from the different sources of land is summarised in Tables 4.6 to 4.9.

Distribution of housing

- 4.15.12 In accordance with Policy LPA01, the housing land supply will be distributed across the Borough, albeit with a concentration in existing urban areas and the major urban extension planned at Bold. In total, the allocated brownfield sites (6HA, 9HA and 10HA) have an estimated capacity of 1,611 dwellings in the Plan period. The location of sites that have been released from the Green Belt has been determined by the St Helens Green Belt Review. In total, the former Green Belt sites (1HA, 2HA, 4HA, 5HA, 7HA, and 8HA) have an estimated capacity of 2,114 dwellings in the Plan period. Whilst this process has constrained the ability to identify suitable sites in some key settlements, all settlements will have opportunities for housing development either within them or nearby.

Density

- 4.15.13 To ensure that land is used efficiently, Policy LPA04 encourages the use of high densities in appropriate locations for example on sites that are close to town or district centres or to public transport facilities. Densities of less than 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) are discouraged except where there is a legitimate planning reason for them, for example to ensure that development integrates successfully with the prevailing built form of the area.
- 4.15.14 The density of development on each allocated site should be at or above the minimum figures given in Table 4.5. The stated capacities of each site listed in the table are indicative, reflecting the minimum densities and anticipated net developable areas set out. The actual capacity will also be determined having regard to the acceptability of specific proposals in relation to relevant national and local policies.

Small sites

- 4.15.15 The Council is keen to promote the role of small sites in helping to meet its housing requirement. The St Helens Brownfield Register 2017 identifies 62 sites, with a combined capacity of 852 dwellings that are no larger than one hectare in size. This represents just over 10% of the total requirement for new housing from the date of the Register onwards. Further contributions in this respect can be anticipated from small greenfield sites identified (in the St Helens SHLAA 2017) and from the 'small sites' windfall allowance of 93 units per annum set out in the SHLAA.

Table 4.6: Residual Housing Land Requirement 2021-2037

Requirements	Dwellings
St Helens housing requirement (21 years from 1 Apr 2016 to 31 Mar 2037) at average of 486 per year	10,206
Net Completions from 1 April 2016 - 31 March 2021	3074
Residual requirement over Local Plan period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2037	7132

Table 4.7: SHLAA Housing Land Supply 2021-2037

SHLAA Supply 2021 – 2037 (as of 31.03.2021)	Dwellings
Total SHLAA supply– 1 April 2021 until 31 March 2037 (including non-Green Belt Local Plan allocation sites 6HA, 9HA and 10HA)	4626
SHLAA capacity reduction for non-delivery (15% of SHLAA identified capacity for years 6-16 of the Plan period including non-Green Belt Local Plan allocation sites 6HA, 9HA and 10HA) (2957 -15%)	-444
Residual SHLAA capacity over 16-year Plan period 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2037 (including non-Green Belt Local Plan allocation sites 6HA, 9HA and 10HA)	4182
Small sites allowance (93dpa) x 16 years (sites below 0.25ha / 5 dwellings)	1488
Total Plan period capacity on non-Green Belt land	5670

Table 4.8: Green Belt Land Supply 2021-2037

Green Belt Land Supply 2021-2037	Dwellings
Required capacity to be found on Green Belt land (7132-5670)	1462
20% increased allowance to be added to Green Belt required capacity (to allow for contingencies e.g.,	292

infrastructure provision, delays, lead-in times to start of housing delivery etc.)	
Overall required capacity of sites to be removed from the Green Belt	1754
Total Plan period capacity of allocated sites removed from the Green Belt (sites 1HA, 2HA, 4HA, 5HA, 7HA and 8HA)	2114

Table 4.9: Total Supply over the Plan Period 2021-2037

Total Supply over the Plan Period 2021-2037	Dwellings
Total Plan period capacity on non-Green Belt land	5670
Total Plan period capacity of allocated Green Belt sites	2114
Total housing supply over Plan period (2021-2037)	7784

Permission in Principle

- 4.15.16 Under recent legislation, Permission in Principle (PiP) provides a new mechanism under which development, including the provision of new homes, may be permitted on suitable brownfield sites. The Council can grant PiP for a site upon receipt of a valid application or by entering a site in Part 2 of its Brownfield Land Register subject to various statutory requirements being met. Whilst this power has not (as at the end of 2018) been applied to any sites in St Helens Borough, the Council will continue to assess the merits of using the PiP mechanism in the future to boost housing delivery.

Re-use of vacant dwellings

- 4.15.17 Council tax data confirms that in October 2017, 936 dwellings in St Helens Borough met the Government criteria for being long term vacant for six months or longer. The Council uses a number of methods in line with its Empty Homes Strategy to enable and encourage private owners to bring vacant dwellings back into use. As a result, the Council has enabled over 400 vacant dwellings to be brought back into use since April 2014. However, whilst this activity makes a contribution to meeting housing needs it must be balanced against the fact that the Council has only limited control over the overall number of vacant dwellings, which is affected by landowner decisions and other factors. For this reason, the housing supply figures in Tables 4.6 to 4.9 do not include an assumed contribution to the overall supply of housing from trends in the numbers of vacant dwellings.

Phasing of delivery and housing trajectory

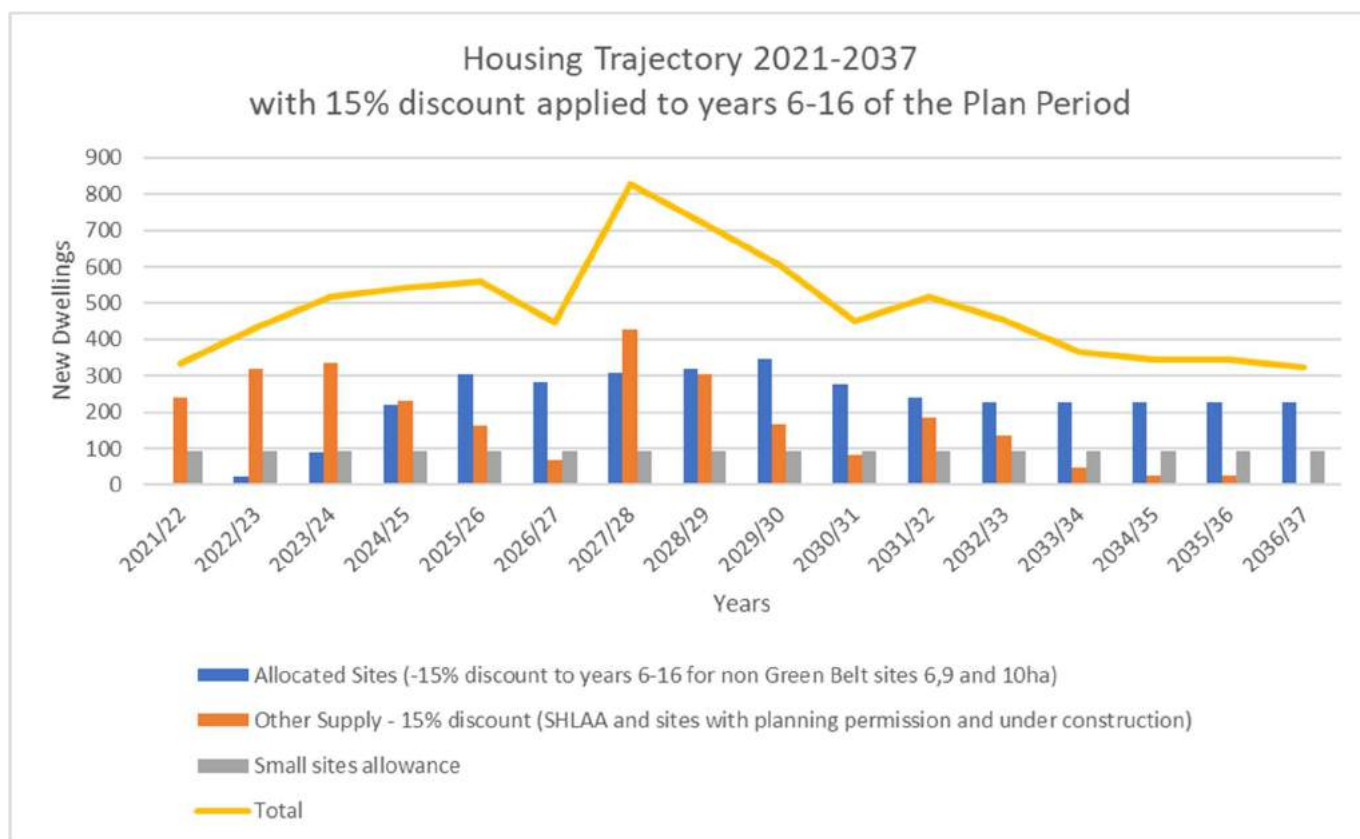
- 4.15.18 To ensure flexibility and choice in the housing market, Policy LPA04 does not phase the release of allocated housing sites into different parts of the Plan period up to 2037. However, in accordance with Policy LPA07 the

timing of delivery of some sites is likely to be influenced by the availability of any necessary infrastructure to serve the needs of the development.

- 4.15.19 The trajectory set out in Table 4.10 identifies at what stages delivery of new housing required over the Plan period can be anticipated. It is assumed that the majority of housing on most sites allocated in Policy LPA04 will be developed within the Plan period. Where a longer delivery schedule is expected (extending beyond 2037) the expected delivery within the Plan period has been estimated on the basis of assumptions concerning the number of developers who would be likely to be active on each site and the likely delivery rates from each.

Table 4.10: Housing Trajectory

Year	Allocated Sites (-15% discount to years 6-16 for non-Green Belt sites 6,9 and 10ha)	Other Supply - 15% discount (sites without planning permission (SHLAA), with planning permission and under construction)	Small sites allowance	Total Dwellings
2021/22	0	242	93	335
2022/23	22	318	93	433
2023/24	89	336	93	518
2024/25	219	230	93	542
2025/26	305	162	93	560
2026/27	285	68	93	446
2027/28	307	428	93	828
2028/29	320	305	93	718
2029/30	346	166	93	605
2030/31	277	82	93	451
2031/32	239	184	93	517
2032/33	227	134	93	454
2033/34	227	47	93	366
2034/35	227	26	93	345
2035/36	227	26	93	345
2036/37	227	3	93	322
Total				7784

Figure 4.3: Housing Trajectory – Year to Year

- 4.15.20 A graphical representation of the year-to-year housing trajectory set out in Table 4.10 is shown at Figure 4.3.
- 4.15.21 The delivery of housing will be monitored over the Plan period. If at any stage delivery falls below 95% of the required level over the previous three years, the Council will prepare an action plan (in accordance with the Housing Delivery Test set out in national planning policy) to address the causes of under-delivery. If delivery or current deliverable land supply falls substantially below the required level, the Council may undertake a Local Plan update to bring forward additional sites such as those that are safeguarded under Policy LPA05.

Five year housing land supply

- 4.15.22 The following tables provide the current housing land supply position and set out the key assumptions and parameters used to calculate it.

Table 4.11: Local Plan 5 Year Supply Position 31.03.2021

Local Plan 5 Year Housing Requirement	
Local Plan Annual Housing Requirement	486
Local Plan Housing Requirement 2016-2037 (486x21)	10206
Net Completions 2016-2021	3074
Local Plan Residual Housing Requirement 2021-2037 (10206-3074)	7132

Local Plan Residual Annual Housing Requirement 2021-2037 (7132/16)	446
Local Plan Housing Requirement 2021 - 2026 (446 x 5)	2230
Local Plan Housing Requirement 2021 - 2026 (5% buffer applied)	2342
Annualised Housing Requirement (2342/5)	468

Table 4.12: Local Plan 5 Year Supply as of 31.03.2021

Local Plan 5 year supply as of 31.03.2021	
Large sites - planning permission not started (including SHLAA 2017 sites that have since gained planning permission but not started)	475
Large sites - planning permission under construction (including SHLAA 2017 and new large sites with planning permission and under construction)	605
Large sites - SHLAA sites (including SHLAA 2017 sites with planning permission that has now expired)	208
Local Plan Allocations (including those previously counted as SHLAA sites, 6HA, 9HA and 10HA)	635
Small sites allowance (93 x 5)	465
5 year supply	2,388
Number of years supply of deliverable housing land (2388/468)	5.1

Green Belt Exceptional circumstances

- 4.15.23 The following paragraphs articulate the exceptional circumstances justifying the removal of land from the Green Belt on a site-by-site basis. This builds on the exceptional circumstances strategic case as set out in the Reasoned Justification to Policy LPA01, and the following should be read in that context.

1HA – Land south of Billinge Road, East of Garswood Road and West of Smock Lane, Garswood

- 4.15.24 The Green Belt Review (2018) found the parcel of land corresponding to this site to make a 'low' overall contribution to the Green Belt purposes. In summary, all sides of the site have strong boundaries, and it is therefore well contained. The strategic gap between Billinge and Garswood could also be maintained notwithstanding the release of this site from the Green Belt. It also found the site to have 'good' development potential. The site is in a sustainable location within walking distance of a local shop and public transport links, including the nearby railway station. Safe access to the site can be provided, and a suitable sustainable drainage scheme also. Indeed, development of this site could help solve flooding issues in the surrounding urban area. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) found development of the site would result in a high number of positive effects.

2HA – Land at Florida Farm (South of A580), Slag Lane, Blackbrook

- 4.15.25 The Green Belt Review (2018) found the parcel of land generally reflecting this site to make a 'low' overall contribution to the Green Belt purposes, with strong permanent boundaries and not having a sense of openness or countryside character. In summary, there is existing residential development on three sides of the site, and the East Lancashire Road (A580) on the fourth side. It also found the site to have 'good' development potential. The site is in a sustainable location with good levels of accessibility to key services and jobs (including at the Haydock Industrial Estate). The site presents no technical constraints that cannot be satisfactorily addressed. Indeed, the provision of flood mitigation measures for the site could have the beneficial effect of helping alleviate flooding in the wider area. The SA found development of the site would have a mixed impact on achieving SA objectives, with a high number of positive effects, including good access to public transport and employment opportunities.

4HA – Land bounded by Reginald Road / Bold Road / Travers Entry / Gorsey Lane / Crawford Street, Bold (Bold Forest Garden Suburb)

- 4.15.26 The Green Belt Review (2018) found the parcels of land that form this site make a 'low' to 'medium' contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt, with 'good' development potential. The land on which the site is located forms a notable indent in the alignment of the southern edge of the built-up area of St Helens. Whilst there are open views across the parcel, it has strong, robust physical boundaries including existing development to the north, east and west, and Gorsey Lane to the south. The site has good levels of accessibility to jobs in nearby industrial areas, and to public transport services, including via St Helens Junction railway station.
- 4.15.27 The site would be sufficiently large to include new social infrastructure (i.e. a new primary school, local retail centre and potentially health facilities). It is a major strategic opportunity to provide a wide range of new housing in an area that is close to some of the more deprived parts of the Borough and incorporate and deliver the framework and philosophies of the Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan. There are no technical constraints to development of this site that cannot be satisfactorily addressed. Due to its scale and location, development of this site would contribute strongly towards meeting the strategic aims and objectives of the Local Plan.

5HA – Land South of Gartons Lane and former St. Theresa's Social Club, Gartons Lane, Bold

- 4.15.28 The Green Belt Review (2018) found the parcel of land generally corresponding to this site boundary to make a 'low' overall contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt, benefitting from a high degree of visual enclosure with strong, robust boundaries. The Review also found the site to have 'good' development potential. The site is in a sustainable location with good transport links, including safe, convenient access by foot to the nearest local centre, bus stops and a railway station. It would form a natural expansion of the surrounding settlement and help deliver a range of housing in a relatively deprived area. Development of the site also provides the opportunity to facilitate improvements in line with the Bold

Forest Park Area Action Plan. The SA found development of the site would have a mixed impact on the achievement of SA objectives, with a high number of positive effects.

7HA – Land West of the A49 Mill Lane and to the East of the West Coast Mainline railway line, Newton-le-Willows

- 4.15.29 The Green Belt Review (2018) found the parcel of land containing this site to make a 'low' overall contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt, given its strong boundaries, high level of enclosure and the brownfield nature of much of the site. It does not have a strong sense of openness or countryside character. The Review also considered the site to have 'good' development potential. The site is in a sustainable location within a convenient walking distance of a local centre, various employment areas (existing and planned), a railway station and other public transport facilities. There are no technical constraints on the site that cannot be satisfactorily addressed. The SA concluded that development of the site would result in a high number of positive effects. This site is of particular significance given its brownfield nature, and the importance of making effective use of such land, where appropriate.

8HA – Land South of Higher Lane and East of Rookery Lane, Rainford

- 4.15.30 The Green Belt Review (2018) found the sub-parcel of land reflecting this site boundary to make a 'low' overall contribution to the Green Belt purposes given its limited role in preventing sprawl and the merging of settlements. It also has strong boundaries and a high degree of visual containment. The Review found the site to have 'good' development potential. The site is sustainable, with good access to public transport, the local highway network and employment areas. There are no technical constraints that cannot be satisfactorily addressed. The SA found that development of the site will have a mixed impact on the achievement of SA objectives, with a high number of positive impacts. The location of the site also aligns with the Plan's spatial strategy as Rainford is identified as a Key Settlement.

4.16 Policy LPA04.1: Strategic Housing Sites

Policy LPA04.1: Strategic Housing Sites

1. The following sites allocated under Policy LPA04²⁹ shall constitute Strategic Housing Sites:
 - 2HA: Land at Florida Farm (South of A580), Slag Lane, Blackbrook
 - 4HA: Land bounded by Reginald Road / Bold Road / Travers Entry / Gorsey Lane / Crawford Street, Bold (Bold Forest Garden Suburb)
 - 5HA: Land South of Gartons Lane and former St. Theresa's Social Club, Gartons Lane, Bold
 - 6HA: Land at Cowley Street, Cowley Hill, Town Centre
 - 9HA: Former Linkway Distribution Park, Elton Head Road, Thatto Heath
 - 10HA: Moss Nook Urban Village, Watery Lane, Moss Nook
2. Any planning application for development within a Strategic Housing Site must be supported by a comprehensive masterplan covering the whole site that must set out details of at least:
 - a) amount of development and proposed uses;
 - b) phasing of development across the whole site;
 - c) indicative layout and design details for the whole site that must provide for an attractive built form with high quality landscaping when viewed from within the development and elsewhere;
 - d) measures to provide good levels of accessibility to the whole site from the surrounding area by public transport, walking and cycling;
 - e) indicative layout promoting permeability and accessibility by public transport, cycling and walking;
 - f) a Green Infrastructure Plan addressing biodiversity, geodiversity, greenways, (including any proposed new greenways as referred to in Policy LPC07), ecological network, landscape character, trees, woodland and water storage in a holistic and integrated way;
 - g) measures to address any potential flood risk and surface water drainage issues in accordance with Policy LPC12;
 - h) measures to promote energy efficiency and generation of renewable or low carbon energy in accordance with Policy LPC13;
 - i) a comprehensive strategy for the provision of all new, expanded and / or enhanced infrastructure that is required to serve the development of the whole site; and

²⁹ Within the list of Strategic Housing Sites, sites 9HA, and 10HA are subject to existing planning permissions for housing led development. The boundaries of the Strategic Housing sites are identified on the Policies Map.

- j) details of how development of the site as a whole would comply with other relevant policies of the Local Plan.
3. Detailed development proposals within a Strategic Housing Site will be required, subject to compliance with Policy LPA07, to provide or make financial contributions towards the provision, expansion and / or enhancement of transport infrastructure (including road, public transport, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure) and / or other infrastructure to serve the needs of the development. Such provision may be either on-site or off-site and must be provided in time to meet the needs of the development. Where a specific development proposal would only cover part of a Strategic Housing Site, the provision and / or contributions must be in accordance with the comprehensive masterplan for the whole site referred to in paragraph 2 of this Policy.
 4. The masterplans for each Strategic Housing Site, and any planning application for development within any other allocated housing site, must address the indicative requirements set out in appendix 5 (in the case of sites 2HA, 5HA, 6HA, 9HA and 10HA) and Policy LPA11 (in the case of site 4HA).

4.17 Policy LPA04.1: Strategic Aims, Objectives and Key Delivery Mechanisms

Strategic Aims Met	SA 1, SA 2, SA 4, SA 5, SA 6
Strategic Objectives Met	SO 1.1, SO 2.1, SO 4.1, SO 5.1, SO 6.2, SO 6.3
Is this a 'strategic' or 'local' policy?	Strategic
Key Delivery Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Management process • Masterplanning process • St Helens Infrastructure Delivery Plan

4.18 Reasoned Justification

- 4.18.1 The sites in Policy LPA04.1 are considered to be strategic as, given their scale (with an indicative capacity of more than 300 dwellings each), they will play a significant role in the delivery of the overall strategy of the Plan. It is anticipated that during the Plan period these sites will deliver the bulk of housing required to meet need. Other sites identified for allocation by Policy LPA04 are not considered large enough to warrant a strategic allocation. Whilst it is anticipated that such sites will yield smaller numbers of homes compared to strategic sites, their allocation will support the overall delivery of housing and they will be a key part of the supply, balancing out the phased delivery that is likely to result from the build out of the large Strategic Housing Sites.

4.22 Policy LPA06: Transport and Travel

Policy LPA06: Transport and Travel

1. The Council's strategic priorities for the transport network are to facilitate economic growth, enable good levels of accessibility between homes, jobs and services, improve air quality and minimise carbon emissions. To achieve these priorities, it will seek to:
 - a) Secure the delivery of new or improved road, rail, walking, cycling, and / or bus infrastructure where required;
 - b) Ensure that new development is sufficiently accessible by road transport, walking, cycling and public transport;
 - c) Secure improvements to existing motorway capacity and infrastructure with particular priority being given to the M6 Junction 23 and M62 Junction 7;
 - d) Improve the accessibility to jobs, homes and services by all modes of transport and protect opportunities to achieve such improvements;
 - e) Secure the delivery of:
 - i) a new rail station at Carr Mill;
 - ii) any necessary improvements to local stations and rail lines;
 - iii) the proposed Skelmersdale Rail Link; and
 - iv) any infrastructure required to deliver HS2 or HS3 (Northern Powerhouse Rail);... and
 - f) Protect former railway lines and corridors from development that could hinder their future re-use for sustainable modes of transport.
2. All proposals for new development that would generate significant amounts of transport movement must be supported by a Transport Assessment or Transport Statement, the scope of which must be agreed by the Council.
3. New development will only be permitted if it would:
 - a) maintain the safe and efficient flow of traffic on the surrounding highway network. Development proposals will not be permitted where vehicle movements would cause severe harm to the highway network;
 - b) be located and designed to enable a suitable level of access (having regard to the scale and nature of the proposal) to existing and / or proposed public transport services;
 - c) provide appropriate provision of charging points for electric vehicles;
 - d) enable good levels of accessibility by walking and cycling between homes, jobs and services;
 - e) provide for safe and convenient pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access and movement to, from and within the development;
 - f) include adequate access arrangements for emergency, service and refuse collection vehicles; and

- g) provide sufficient on-site parking for persons of limited mobility, service vehicles, and cycles that must at least meet the Council's minimum standards, and adequate parking for all other vehicles.
- 4. To minimise air and noise pollution and carbon emissions, non-residential forms of development that would generate a significant amount of transport movement by employees or visitors must be supported by suitably formulated Travel Plans. Conditions and/or legal agreements will be used to ensure that Travel Plans submitted in such cases are fully implemented and monitored.
- 5. Development that would generate significant movement of freight must be located where there is a safe, convenient, and environmentally acceptable access route to a suitable part of the Key Route Network. The part of the Network that is marked as 'Key Route Network – non freight' on the Policies Map shall not be regarded as suitable in this context. Access into a new development (of any land use) directly from the Key Route Network will only be allowed if this would not unduly restrict the capacity of the road or cause harm to highway safety, and where no more suitable alternative exists or would be provided by the development.
- 6. Direct access from new development on to the Strategic Road Network will only be permitted as a last resort, where agreed by National Highways and where the necessary levels of transport accessibility and safety could not be more suitably provided by other means.
- 7. Where rail facilities are available or would be made so as part of a development generating significant movement of freight, this will be regarded as a benefit.
- 8. Development proposals must not prevent or jeopardise the implementation of planned transport schemes unless it has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that:
 - a) the transport scheme is no longer required;
 - b) there is a feasible and viable alternative to it; or
 - c) the benefits of the proposed development would outweigh those of the planned transport scheme.

Planned transport schemes include but are not limited to proposals for new or upgraded footpath, cycle path, bridleway, road, rail, bus and / or other public transport facilities that would be on the same site as, adjacent to or be otherwise affected by the development.

- 9. Further details of the operation of this Policy, for example those related to the Council's vehicle and cycle parking standards, standards for vehicle charging point provision, and to the requirements concerning transport assessments, transport statements and travel plans will be set out in a future review of the Council's Ensuring a Choice of Travel Supplementary Planning Document.

4.23 Policy LPA06: Strategic Aims, Objectives and Key Delivery Mechanisms

Strategic Aims Met	SA 3
Strategic Objectives Met	SO 3.1
Is this a 'strategic' or 'local' policy?	Strategic
Key Delivery Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Management process • Liverpool City Region: A Transport Plan for Growth and supporting strategies • Merseyside Local Transport Plan 2011 • St Helens Infrastructure Delivery Plan

4.24 Reasoned Justification

- 4.24.1 An effective transport network is needed to support a strong economy and a strong community. Quality environments that are conducive to walking and cycling can contribute to a healthier lifestyle. The measures and priorities identified in Policy LPA06 should help support economic growth, improve access to employment and services and support a healthier lifestyle. These priorities reflect those in A Transport Plan for Growth (published by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority) and its supporting strategies.

Carbon Emissions and air quality

- 4.24.2 Transport is a major source of carbon emissions that, in turn, are a major cause of climate change. Therefore, transport can play a key part in the development of a low carbon economy. Many of the priorities identified in this Policy will play an important part in helping to reduce carbon emissions resulting from transport and therefore supporting the Council's Climate Change Emergency declaration. Measures to reduce the need to travel, widen travel choice and reduce dependence on the private car, alongside investment in low-carbon vehicle technologies are an important part of helping to meet national climate change targets. Similarly, they form an important part of the Council's drive to tackle air quality issues, particularly (but not exclusively) within Air Quality Management Areas, some of which adjoin major roads (see Policy LPD09 for further details).

Transport Assessments

- 4.24.3 Development proposals that are likely to generate a significant number of journeys require close scrutiny to identify the highway issues and potential solutions associated with them. In such cases, a more detailed assessment of the extent to which the development will contribute to the following aims, in the form of a Transport Assessment, may be requested:
- Enabling access by all users or occupiers of the development to a suitable range of viable means of transport;
 - Limiting any harm from traffic in respect of safety issues, noise, and air pollution or to local amenity; and

- c) Ensuring safe and easy access to and from the development for all of its users.

Travel Plans

- 4.24.4 A Travel Plan can help reduce the number of car trips to a development. Travel Plans aim to reduce the number of journeys needed, where possible, and to encourage choice and the use of sustainable means of transport by the occupiers of new developments. This includes, for example, car-sharing, working from home, awareness-raising campaigns, or subsidised public transport season tickets. Travel Plans should be used to ensure that travel demand arising from new development will make the best use of sustainable transport.

Merseyside Local Transport Plan

- 4.24.5 The Merseyside Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) provides a long-term strategy and delivery programme of transport investment and service improvements for the period 2011-2024. It aims to give Merseyside a safer, more sustainable, efficient, and integrated transport network that is accessible to all. As well as St Helens Borough it covers Liverpool, Knowsley, Sefton, and Wirral.
- 4.24.6 LTP3 has the following vision:

“A city region committed to a low carbon future, which has a transport network and mobility culture that positively contributes to a thriving economy and the health and wellbeing of its citizens and where sustainable travel is the option of choice”

A Transport Plan for Growth

- 4.24.7 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority document A Transport Plan for Growth, aims to improve the social, environmental, and economic wellbeing of the City Region, by delivering a world-class transport network. It brings together the existing Local Transport Plans of Merseyside and Halton. The Transport Plan for Growth has been developed to provide a clear vision for a successful transport provision in the City Region, and act as an investment plan to promote and support economic growth. The City Region authorities will continue to work together to produce a new Local Transport Plan for the whole area from 2025.

Key Route Network

- 4.24.8 The Liverpool City Region Key Route Network establishes, for its most important roads, the same standards of road and traffic management; thereby providing a consistent and integrated network. The Key Route Network in St Helens Borough includes lengths of the A570, A580 and A58. Whilst much of it is suitable for the movement of freight, this does not apply to the length of the A58 linking St Helens to Prescot. The Network is substantially based upon the Strategic Freight Route identified in the Merseyside Freight Strategy (LTP3 Annex 4, 2011), and is shown on the Policies Map and illustrated on the Key Diagram.

Proposed Major Road Network

- 4.24.9 As part of the Transport Investment Strategy published in 2017, the Government committed to creating a Major Road Network (MRN). Draft proposals were issued for consultation, outlining how a new MRN would help the Government deliver a number of objectives, including supporting housing delivery and economic growth. The creation of an MRN will allow for dedicated funding from the National Roads Fund to be used to improve this middle tier of the busiest and most economically important local authority 'A' roads. Parts of the A58 and A570, and the whole of the length of the A580 which falls in St Helens, have been proposed for inclusion in the MRN.

Supporting Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 4.24.10 A new SPD will be prepared to support the implementation of this Policy. The existing Ensuring Choice of Travel SPD will be updated as part of this process.

4.25 Policy LPA07: Infrastructure Delivery and Funding

Policy LPA07: Infrastructure Delivery and Funding

Protection, improvement and provision

1. The Council will seek to ensure satisfactory provision of all forms of infrastructure that are required to serve the needs of the local community by:
 - a) Protecting existing infrastructure from being lost where there is an identified need for it;
 - b) Supporting the improvement of existing infrastructure where there is an identified need for such improvement;
 - c) Safeguarding land for planned new or improved infrastructure where there is an identified need for it;
 - d) Seeking developer contributions in accordance with paragraphs 2 to 7 of this Policy; and
 - e) Requiring new community facilities and other social infrastructure to be located where they would be accessible by a choice of sustainable modes of transport and, where possible, clustered with other such facilities.

Developer Contributions

2. Subject to compliance with relevant legislation and national policy, development proposals will be expected to include or contribute to the provision, improvement or replacement of infrastructure that is required to meet needs arising from the development proposal. This may include direct provision of on-site or off-site infrastructure and / or financial contributions that will be secured by:
 - a) Section 106 planning obligations (or other legally binding agreements); and / or
 - b) A tariff based system such as the Community Infrastructure Levy.
3. Where the suitability of development depends upon the provision of additional or improved infrastructure or service capacity, that development should be phased to coincide with the provision of such infrastructure or capacity.
4. In applying this Policy, regard will be had to relevant evidence including the latest version of the St Helens Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Economic Viability

5. When assessing planning proposals, the Council and other decision makers will pay due regard to any impact that developer contributions towards infrastructure provision or other policy requirements may have on the economic viability of new development. In this context, consideration will be given to economic viability evidence including any site specific development appraisal that may have been submitted to determine the ability of the development scheme to support the required level of contributions. In light of the viability evidence, where a developer can demonstrate that meeting all policy requirements would not be viable, a pragmatic approach will be taken to s106 contributions on sites within zone 1.

Hierarchy of Developer Contributions

6. Decision makers will, as a general rule, apply the following hierarchy for developer contributions in cases where viability constraints can be demonstrated (with i) being the highest priority):
 - i) contributions that are essential for public safety (for example essential highway works or flood risk mitigation) or to achieve a minimum acceptable level of design quality;
 - ii) contributions that are necessary to provide affordable housing or to address a local infrastructure requirement or deficiency that would be caused or exacerbated by the development, depending on site surroundings and the level of existing infrastructure, for example education needs or green space provision in areas of deficit; and
 - iii) contributions that would not fall into categories i) or ii) as set out above.
7. Decisions on planning applications may deviate from the above hierarchy where a specific need to do so has been identified. The Council will provide further guidance in a future Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document and in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (including any future updates to this).

4.26 Policy LPA07: Strategic Aims, Objectives and Key Delivery Mechanisms

Strategic Aims Met	All
Strategic Objectives Met	All
Is this a 'strategic' or 'local' policy?	Strategic
Key Delivery Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Management process • Public and private sector investment plans • St Helens Infrastructure Delivery Plan

4.27 Reasoned Justification

- 4.27.1 The provision of high-quality infrastructure is a key element in the delivery of successful, sustainable communities. In this context, the term 'infrastructure' includes:
- physical infrastructure such as roads, railways, sewers and water supplies;
 - social infrastructure such as education and health establishments, neighbourhood retail or leisure uses, built sports and recreation facilities, cultural, emergency service and community facilities and institutions;
 - green Infrastructure such as parks and playing fields; and
 - digital infrastructure such as telephone and internet facilities.
- 4.27.2 Working with infrastructure providers and other partner organisations, the Council will seek to ensure that sufficient infrastructure is available to support new development. This will be done by supporting the effective protection and management of existing infrastructure (including effective demand management) and, where necessary, the provision of new or improved infrastructure; particularly in areas that are expected to accommodate major development. This can include the provision of wholly new road or other infrastructure, or investment in existing infrastructure to cope with additional demand, for example the expansion of local schools to cope with additional students arising from a large new housing development in the local area.
- 4.27.3 Where proposed development would result in the loss of built sports and recreational facilities, decision makers will follow the approach set out in the NPPF informed by the most up-to-date local needs assessment for built sports facilities.
- 4.27.4 Infrastructure may also need to be replaced or repaired during its operational lifetime, or to be upgraded to take account of new technologies, for example in relation to energy production and digital infrastructure. It will be necessary for local delivery partners to work closely together to ensure that a sufficient level of infrastructure provision is available.

- 4.27.5 Many forms of development have some impact on the need for infrastructure, services and amenities and should therefore (subject to national legislation and policy) contribute towards their costs of provision. Hence, it is appropriate for the Council and other decision makers to consider the mechanisms by which such contributions can be sought from developers.
- 4.27.6 The Council has no proposals, at the time of adoption of this Plan, to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This means that in most cases developer contributions will be sought via planning obligations entered into under Section 106 of the Planning Acts. The National Planning Practice Guidance sets out further details of the circumstances in which planning obligations can be used to fund infrastructure provision. The Council will comply with the up-to-date version of national guidance in operating Policy LPA07.
- 4.27.7 To support Policy LPA07 and comply with national policy, the Council, through a process of engagement with key infrastructure providers, has prepared the St Helens Infrastructure Delivery Plan. This will be updated and revised in future years in line with opportunities to provide, and the Borough's changing needs for, required infrastructure.
- 4.27.8 The Mid Mersey Water Cycle Study 2011³³ identified that further investigation is required to determine headroom capacity within the St Helens wastewater treatment plant. United Utilities has a responsibility to ensure that there is sufficient water treatment capacity to accommodate the needs of the area in a way that protects environmental assets, including the coastal and estuarine designated European ecological sites (see Policy LPC06 for further details). The Council will continue to identify any development pressures at an early stage so that appropriate steps can be taken to ensure that sufficient capacity is provided for the future levels and locations of development identified within the Plan.
- 4.27.9 To support Policy LPA07, the Council has published a Borough-wide economic viability assessment. This helps to identify the level and range of developer contributions (including 'in kind' contributions or financial contributions) that can be sought without prejudicing the financial viability of different types of development in different areas. It is anticipated that in some cases, development-level economic viability assessments may also be submitted by developers to account for site-specific circumstances and costs. Developers will be expected to fund these assessments, which must be undertaken objectively and transparently, and will be scrutinised before a decision is taken on the proposal.

33 Mid Mersey Water Cycle Study (Outline Phase), Entec on behalf of Warrington and St Helens Councils, 2011

4.28 Policy LPA08: Green Infrastructure

Policy LPA08: Green Infrastructure

1. Green Infrastructure in St Helens Borough comprises a network of multi-functional natural assets, including green space, trees, woodlands, mosslands, grasslands and wetlands, located within urban, semi-urban and rural areas. This network is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities and forms an important element of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Ecological Network.
2. The Council will work with other organisations where necessary to:
 - a) expand tree cover in appropriate locations across the Borough to improve landscape character, water and air quality and the value of trees to wildlife;
 - b) strengthen and expand the network of wildlife sites, corridors and stepping stone habitats to secure a net gain in biodiversity;
 - c) improve and increase the connectivity of the Greenway network;
 - d) increase the accessibility of open space within walking distance of housing, health, employment and education establishments to promote healthy lifestyles;
 - e) reduce the risk of flooding, improve river water quality and riverine and riparian habitats within the Sankey Catchment; and
 - f) ensure that development proposals on strategic employment and housing sites incorporate holistic Green Infrastructure Plans.
3. Developers will be required to provide long-term management arrangements for new and existing green infrastructure within development sites.
4. Development that would contribute to or provide opportunities to enhance the function of existing green infrastructure and its connectivity from residential areas, town, district and local centres, employment areas and other open spaces, will be encouraged. Development that would result in the loss, fragmentation or isolation of green infrastructure assets will be refused. The only exceptions to this will be where it has been demonstrated that:
 - a) appropriate protection or retention of Green Infrastructure assets cannot be achieved in the pursuit of wider planning objectives;
 - b) the development would bring benefits that would override the resultant harm; and
 - c) there are no realistic alternatives to the proposed development that would avoid such harm.

In such cases, mitigation, for example, in the form of incorporating the identified Green Infrastructure assets into the scheme design and layout through a masterplanning process to maintain the key Green Infrastructure assets and connections, and / or as a last resort compensatory provision will be required.

4.29 Policy LPA08: Strategic Aims, Objectives and Key Delivery Mechanisms

Strategic Aims Met	SA 2, SA 6
Strategic Objectives Met	SO 2.1, SO 2.2, SO 6.2, SO 6.3
Is this a 'strategic' or 'local' policy?	Strategic
Key Delivery Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan • Creation of new Local Nature Reserves • Mersey Forest Plan/Town in the Forest Initiative • Development Management process • Development of the Sankey Canal Corridor as a multi-functional green corridor • Enhancement and restoration of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Ecological Network and the LCR Nature Improvement Area • Sankey Catchment Action Plan • St Helens Infrastructure Delivery Plan

4.30 Reasoned Justification

- 4.30.1 Policy LPA08 aims to protect, enhance, and sustain the Borough's natural assets and increase accessibility to them and connectivity between them, whilst protecting and enhancing landscape character, to ensure that the natural environment underpins the quality of life. The Green Infrastructure network in the Borough has a wide range of functions and values for recreation and tourism, air quality (supporting the Council's Climate Change Emergency declaration), public access, health, heritage, biodiversity, water management and landscape character, providing a sense of place, distinctiveness, and quality of life. Much of the network (such as Bold Forest Park and the Sankey Valley Park) is influenced by the town's industrial past of coal mining, glass making and chemical production and has a strong heritage value. Mossland has historically been drained for agriculture and the remnant stock provides multi-functional benefits for water management, carbon storage and biodiversity. The Liverpool City Region Ecological Network (see Policy LPC08 for further details) and the 25-year Environment Plan target habitat creation and restoration of mossland areas in the Borough.

- 4.30.2 In implementing Policy LPA08 (in both urban and rural areas) the Council will seek to liaise closely with, and where necessary work in partnership with, landowners.
- 4.30.3 Open space forms a part of Green Infrastructure and for the purposes of this policy includes formal intensively managed open space such as parks, sports grounds, amenity greenspace, play areas, allotments, cemeteries, and church yards. It also includes natural and semi-natural open space that are less-intensively managed with more attention given to natural habitats of value to wildlife. Many of these form greenway links between the countryside and urban areas. The NPPF states that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.
- 4.30.4 St Helens Borough Council commissioned studies in 2006³⁴ and 2016³⁵ to examine the provision of open space in the Borough. In accordance with the NPPF, the studies have identified specific needs and local standards of provision (that are informed by community and stakeholder consultation concerning existing levels of provision and accessibility). These studies have also identified surpluses and deficits against these standards.
- 4.30.5 The 2016 study concluded that in overall terms there is a sufficient quantity of open space; however, there are areas where there are deficiencies in the quantity, quality and / or accessibility of open spaces. Policy LPA08, in combination with other Plan policies (e.g., Policy LPC05) address this by seeking to ensure the protection and provision of open space to meet the communities' needs and safeguard the visual amenity and character of the built-up area.
- 4.30.6 The NPPF 2021 requires development plans to *"take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries."* The local authorities in the Liverpool City Region (LCR) have worked together to prepare the LCR Ecological Network as a joint evidence base and to plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale.
- 4.30.7 The Government's 25-year Environment Plan³⁶ has a target to increase the coverage of woodland in England by up to 12% by 2060. This would involve planting 180,000ha by the end of 2042. The Government supports the development of the Northern Forest along the M62 Corridor, through the partnership of the Community Forests and the Woodland Trust. The Mersey Forest Plan³⁷ sets local targets for woodland cover including in St Helens Borough. Policy LPA08 seeks to promote a joined-up approach that will support delivery of these other strategies.

³⁴ The St Helens Open Space Study (PMP, 2006)

³⁵ St Helens Borough Council Open Space Assessment (Knight Kavanagh Page, 2016)

³⁶ A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment HM Government 2018

³⁷ More From Trees: The Mersey Forest Plan 2014

4.40 Policy LPA12: Health and Wellbeing

Policy LPA12: Health and Wellbeing

The Council will work with its health and wellbeing partners to promote public health principles, maximise opportunities for people to lead healthy and active lifestyles, and reduce health inequalities for residents within the Borough. Through the planning system, the Council will seek to:

1. encourage improved access to a choice of homes and jobs that meet the needs of the area;
2. ensure the provision of easy-to-maintain, safe and attractive public areas and green spaces to serve new development that minimise the opportunity for and fear of crime and anti-social behaviour and that promote social cohesion and mental wellbeing;
3. encourage people to be physically active by providing opportunities for walking, cycling, outdoor recreation and sport including, where appropriate, the provision of opportunities for physical activity within the design of new development;
4. guide the location of food and drink uses such as hot food takeaways, drinking establishments, restaurants, cafes and other uses that may have negative health impacts having regard to their impact on other land uses in the local area;
5. maximise the levels of accessibility between homes, educational establishments, jobs, public transport services, health and other services, recreational opportunities and community, cultural and leisure facilities;
6. encourage measures to achieve affordable warmth;
7. promote Active Design principles as established by Sport England; and
8. manage air quality and pollution.

4.41 Policy LPA12: Strategic Aims, Objectives and Key Delivery Mechanisms

Strategic Aims Met	SA 2, SA 6
Strategic Objectives Met	SO 2.2, SO 6.1
Is this a 'strategic' or 'local' policy?	Strategic
Key Delivery Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Management process • Hot Food Takeaway SPD

4.42 Reasoned Justification

- 4.42.1 Decisions that influence how the built and natural environment is managed and developed can have both negative and positive impacts on the health and wellbeing of local people. The planning process can help to promote the health and wellbeing of residents, workers, and visitors in the Borough through its role in shaping the built and natural environment. This can influence people's ability to follow healthy behaviours and can have positive impacts by reducing inequalities. Therefore, it is important that health matters are considered at an early stage in the design of development schemes.
- 4.42.2 The NPPF requires Local Plans to enable and support healthy lifestyles and encourages local planning authorities to engage relevant health organisations in the preparation of Local Plans.
- 4.42.3 Key health and wellbeing issues faced by the Borough's residents include:
- life expectancy levels that are lower than the national averages;
 - an ageing local population (which is associated with a variety of health related problems);
 - economic activity rates that are lower than regional and national averages;
 - limited levels of physical activity and rising levels of obesity (in adults and children);
 - mental health issues;
 - in-work poverty; and
 - incidences of alcohol-related harm.
- 4.42.4 There are also significant inequalities in health outcomes and lifestyle factors between people living in different areas of the Borough³⁸. The St Helens People's Board (which covers the statutory functions of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Community Safety Partnership) is responding to these issues in a variety of ways. These include the implementation of the St Helens People's Plan 2017-2020, within which a

38 As set out in the St Helens Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2017): <https://info4.sthelens.gov.uk/strategic-assessments/jsna>

key focus is the establishment of the “*St Helens Cares*” integrated operating model for health and social care in the Borough.

- 4.42.5 Policy LPA12 sets out a range of measures that the Council will use to address health and wellbeing related issues. In combination with other policies within this Plan, such as LPA01, LPA06, LPA07, LPA10, LPD09 and LPD10, Policy LPA12 seeks to promote healthier communities and reduce health inequalities in the Borough.
- 4.42.6 Active Design has been developed by Sport England supported by Public Health England and sets out ten principles. These are arranged under the headings of:
- Activity for all;
 - Walkable communities;
 - Connected walking & cycling routes;
 - Co-location of community facilities;
 - Network of multifunctional open space;
 - High quality streets and spaces;
 - Appropriate infrastructure;
 - Active buildings;
 - Management, maintenance, monitoring & evaluation; and
 - Activity promotion & local champions.
- 4.42.7 Further details of Active Design are set out in the Sport England document Active Design: Planning for Health and Wellbeing through Sport and Physical Activity 2015. Active Design principles will be applied as appropriate to new development proposals in the Borough to help provide opportunities for active and healthy lifestyles.
- 4.42.8 Further guidance to support the implementation of Policy LPA12 may be set out in a future SPD.

5. Area Policies

5.1 Policy LPB01: St Helens Town Centre and Central Spatial Area

Policy LPB01: St Helens Town Centre and Central Spatial Area

1. The Council will promote the Central Spatial Area as an accessible and welcoming destination for new development that accords with paragraphs 2 to 9 of this Policy and that would help create a high quality built environment. Development that would support the delivery and implementation of the Council-led strategy for the future regeneration and development of St Helens Town Centre will be supported.
2. The English Cities Fund Regeneration Partnership will help deliver a comprehensive redevelopment of the Town Centre and Central Spatial Area, including new commercial activity, upgraded infrastructure, the provision of quality housing, and the overall improvement of the social and economic viability of the area.
3. Proposals for retail and leisure development will be directed to suitable locations within the Town Centre and then other sequentially preferable sites in line with Policy LPC04 and national policy. A town centre 'area of opportunity' for future retail, leisure and cultural development is shown indicatively on the Policies Map. Development that would result in significant harm to the Town Centre's vitality and viability or prejudice planned investment within it will be resisted.
4. Proposals for change of use of units in the Primary Shopping Area in St Helens Town Centre will be refused unless they would be to a main town centre use or uses that would contribute positively to the overall vitality and viability of the centre.
5. New development proposals will be required, where appropriate having regard to their location, nature, and scale, to facilitate linked trips between the Primary Shopping Area and other existing and proposed developments within the St Helens Central Spatial Area, including Asda on Kirkland Street; The Range on Chalon Way; St Helens and Ravenhead Retail Parks; Linkway West; Tesco Extra on Linkway; and St Helens RLFC Stadium.
6. Regular health checks will be undertaken to monitor the vitality and viability of St Helens Town Centre.
7. Proposals for housing or a mix of housing and other suitable use(s) within or on the edge of the Town Centre will be supported where they would avoid prejudicing the retail and service role of the Town Centre.

8. New development in the vicinity of St Helens Canal will be required to, as appropriate, improve the public realm by retaining and enhancing the existing waterway, positively integrating with the canal, and securing improvements to Green Infrastructure in line with Policy LPA08.
9. Pedestrian and vehicular accessibility within and around the Town Centre will be managed in line with the road-user hierarchy set out in the Liverpool City Region: Transport Plan for Growth in order to:
 - a) maintain pedestrian priority within the Town Centre and extend pedestrian links to adjacent areas;
 - b) make suitable provision for cyclists;
 - c) support the Town Centre as the hub of the public transport network in St Helens Borough; and
 - d) make appropriate provision for cars and service vehicles.

5.2 Policy LPB01: Strategic Aims, Objectives and Key Delivery Mechanisms

Strategic Aims Met	SA 1, SA 3, SA 5, SA 6
Strategic Objectives Met	SO 1.1, SO 3.1, SO 5.2, SO 5.3, SO 6.1
Is this a 'strategic' or 'local' policy?	Strategic
Key Delivery Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Management process • St Helens Infrastructure Delivery Plan • St Helens Town Centre Strategy • Transport investment programmes

5.3 Reasoned Justification

- 5.3.1 The St Helens Central Spatial Area (as shown in appendix 11 and on the Policies Map) includes the Town Centre and its surrounding hinterland. This includes residential, retail and leisure uses' that link to the central retail core.
- 5.3.2 The St Helens Borough Council Retail and Leisure Study Final Report May 2017 assessed the Borough's future retail and leisure needs. It found that the Town Centre's market share for comparison goods expenditure has decreased from 28.2% in 2011 to 20.4% in 2017 whilst the market shares for Ravenhead and St Helens Retail Parks have increased significantly.
- 5.3.3 Based on an assessment of the expected levels of population and expenditure growth, a requirement for additional comparison goods floorspace across the Borough is identified from 2023 onwards. This will correspond to an approximate need for between 3,000m² and 6,200m² of new floorspace by 2028 rising to between 9,200m² and 21,200m² by 2033

(it should be noted however that long term estimates should be viewed cautiously due to the difficulties in predicting the economy's performance over time).

- 5.3.4 To meet this need and address the weakening of the town centre's comparison goods market share in recent years, the Council will continue to pursue 'town centre first' principles in line with national policy and seek to accommodate as much of this additional floorspace within St Helens Town Centre as possible. A health check of the town centre carried out as part of the study reported that 15.8% of the total units were vacant, which is significantly greater than the national average vacancy rate of 11.2%. Therefore, it is sensible in the first instance to prioritise the re-occupation of vacant units to boost the health of the town centre.
- 5.3.5 The same 'town centre first' approach will apply to locating future leisure-based development to provide for diversification in the town centre's offer to the public and so improve its vitality and viability.
- 5.3.6 A Town Centre Strategy³⁹ to provide a comprehensive approach to the future of St Helens Town Centre underwent public consultation during August - October 2017. The Strategy set out a vision for the future of the town centre detailing thematic initiatives to deliver this. In January 2020 the Council successfully received an initial £173,029 capacity fund as part of the Governments Town Deal initiative. The Council has now successfully secured significant investment of up to £25 million. This funding will be used to help increase economic growth with a focus on land use and regeneration, improved connectivity (both transport and better broadband connectivity), skills and employment, and heritage, arts, and culture. A Town Investment Plan will be developed and will sit alongside the Town Centre Strategy.
- 5.3.7 The Council's future aspirations to improve the offer of St Helens Town Centre as set out within the Strategy include the provision of new retail and leisure floorspace, subject to the appropriate policy tests. It is considered that this approach, along with steps to encourage the reuse of vacant floorspace, will address the identified quantitative and qualitative needs of residents in the Borough.
- 5.3.8 The Council will support initiatives and schemes that will help to implement the Strategy by revitalising and enhancing the Town Centre's retail, leisure, and cultural offer. The 'Area of Opportunity', referred to in the Strategy, has been identified due to the potential to reconfigure and / or redevelop land and premises close to Church Square and Chalon Way for suitable town centre uses. To support this initiative and to assist in the regeneration of the area, the Council has entered into a regeneration partnership with the English Cities Fund to deliver a comprehensive redevelopment of the Town Centre (and wider Borough on a phased basis).
- 5.3.9 The first preference for the location of new Class E and Sui Generis retail main town centre uses development is within the Primary Shopping Area.

39 St Helens Transforming our Town - Planning for the future of St Helens Town Centre (Sept 2017)

Proposals for Class E and Sui Generis retail main town centre uses that are in an edge-of-centre or out-of-centre location in relation to the Primary Shopping Area will require a Sequential Assessment in accordance with national policy and Policy LPC04.

- 5.3.10 For all non-retail Main Town Centre uses (as defined by the NPPF) the preferred location is within the Town Centre. Proposals for such uses in an edge-of-centre or out-of-centre location in relation to the Town Centre boundary will require a Sequential Assessment in accordance with national policy and Policy LPC04.
- 5.3.11 All Main Town Centre uses in an edge or out-of-centre location that meet the thresholds in Policy LPC04 will also require an Impact Assessment in accordance with national policy.
- 5.3.12 Within the Central Spatial Area, facilities such as the Asda on Kirkland Street, The Range on Chalon Way, Ravenhead Retail Park, St Helens Retail Park, Linkway West, Tesco Extra on Linkway and St Helens Rugby League Football Club's Stadium perform a key function in retaining local retail expenditure and attracting visitors to the town. The Council will continue to promote better integration of these outlying facilities with the Town Centre and its retail core by, for example, encouraging the provision of improved pedestrian routes and bus services.
- 5.3.13 Continuous monitoring of the vitality and viability of the Town Centre will provide the Council with regular and up-to-date data on occupancy and vacancy rates and enable effective monitoring of policies to ensure they are performing effectively.
- 5.3.14 To enhance the vitality of the Town Centre and promote the health of the local community in line with the NPPF, the Council will support mixed-use schemes where they would not restrict the availability of viable retail floorspace. In particular, schemes that would upgrade the quality of the existing office stock will be encouraged even where this would lead to an overall net loss of office floorspace.
- 5.3.15 The Liverpool City Region: Transport Plan for Growth and associated documents set out a road-user hierarchy in order to reduce carbon emissions, reduce the risk of road traffic incidents and promote active travel. In line with this hierarchy the Council will, insofar as this is practicable and consistent with safety considerations, promote measures to prioritise road traffic within and around the town centre in the following order (highest priority first):
 - a) pedestrians;
 - b) cyclists;
 - c) public transport users; and
 - d) access traffic.

The objectives of this approach are to support the amenity of the town centre, encourage visitors and attract further businesses to the area.

6.10 Policy LPC04: Retail and Town Centres

Policy LPC04: Retail and Town Centres

1. Proposals for retail, leisure and other main town centre uses will be directed towards the Borough's defined centres as listed below and as shown on the Policies Map:
 - a) Principal Town Centre: St Helens
 - b) Town Centre: Earlestown
 - c) District Centres: Rainhill and Thatto Heath
 - d) Local Centres: Billinge; Chain Lane; Clipsley Lane; Denton's Green; Eccleston; Fingerpost; Marshall's Cross; Newton-le-Willows; Newtown; Rainford; and Sutton.
2. The development of main town centre uses within the defined centres will be supported. Proposals for other uses in such locations will be considered having regard to the scale and nature of the proposal and the role and function of the centre. Planning permission will be granted for development that is appropriate in terms of its scale and nature relative to the role and function of each centre.
3. Proposals for main town centre uses will be subject to a sequential approach to development in line with national policy. This will require development for such uses to be located as a first preference in suitable locations within town, district, or local centres and then (as a second preference) in edge-of-centre locations. Only if suitable sites in such locations are not available should out-of-centre sites be considered. The Primary Shopping Area (PSA) shall be the preferred location for proposed retail development in St Helens and Earlestown, with edge-of-centre in the context of such proposals being defined as locations that are well connected to and up to 300m from the PSA.
4. When considering proposals in out-of-centre locations, preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected to a defined centre as listed in paragraph 1 of this Policy.
5. The sequential approach will not apply to applications for small scale rural offices or other small scale rural development.
6. All proposals for retail development that would not be located within a defined centre must be accompanied by an assessment of their likely impact on existing centre(s) if they would be above the floorspace threshold for the area in which they would be located as set out below:

Location of proposal	Floorspace threshold (gross)
Within 800m of the boundary of Earlestown Primary Shopping Area or of a District Centre	300m ²
Within 800m of the boundary of a Local Centre	200m ²
All other cases	500m ²

7. All proposals for leisure uses that would fall outside of a defined centre must be accompanied by an assessment of their likely impact on existing centre(s) if they would be above the size threshold for the area in which they would be located as set out below:

Location of proposal	Floorspace threshold (gross)
Within 800m of the boundary of Earlestown Town Centre or of a District Centre	300m ²
Within 800m of the boundary of a Local Centre	200m ²
All other cases	500m ²

8. Where more than one impact threshold applies, the lower impact threshold will take precedence.
9. Impact assessment thresholds will apply to applications for new floorspace, changes of use and variations of condition to remove or amend restrictions on how units may operate.

6.11 Policy LPC04: Strategic Aims, Objectives and Key Delivery Mechanisms

Strategic Aims Met	SA 1, SA 5
Strategic Objectives Met	SO 1.1, SO 5.3
Is this a 'strategic' or 'local' policy?	Strategic
Key Delivery Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Management process • Earlestown Town Centre Strategy • St Helens Town Centre Strategy • Town centre health checks

6.12 Reasoned Justification

Network and Hierarchy of Centres

- 6.12.1 In defining the Borough's Town, District and Local centres, the Council recognises the importance that these centres play at the heart of local communities, and it will seek to support appropriate investment within them. The boundaries of each centre are shown on the Policies Map and in appendix 11. The network and hierarchy of centres within the Borough are defined in accordance with the findings of the St Helens Retail and Leisure Study 2017, which undertook health checks of each centre to assess their role and functionality. Centre boundaries will be kept under review, in line with the NPPF, to reflect changing needs.
- 6.12.2 St Helens remains the top tier town centre performing an important role and containing a good representation of retail, leisure, and civic uses that cater for many of the needs of the Borough's residents. As such, it forms the Principal Town Centre in the Borough. Earlestown, as a second tier Town Centre, contains a reasonable provision of goods and services, and is highly accessible from the surrounding residential areas. Rainhill and Thatto Heath District Centres provide accessible locations with sufficient levels of retail and service provision and community facilities to meet day-to-day needs of local residents. The 11 Local Centres cater for day to day shopping needs of the local communities providing an important local service to meet the needs of residents within the surrounding catchments.

Sequential Approach

- 6.12.3 To ensure the vitality and viability of the Borough's centres are maintained and enhanced the Council will continue to apply the 'town centre first' principle. When considering development proposals for retail and other main town centre uses, that will be directed to defined centres in the first instance.
- 6.12.4 In line with the NPPF, a sequential assessment will be required to support any planning application for a main town centre use that is not in an appropriate location within an existing centre.
- 6.12.5 The preferred location for retail proposals in St Helens or Earlestown (i.e., the 'in-centre' location for the purposes of operating the sequential approach) shall be the Primary Shopping Area. Within the District and

Local Centres, the preferred location for retail development shall comprise all areas within the defined centre boundary. For all non-retail main town centre use proposals, the preferred location shall comprise all areas within the defined Town, District or Local Centre boundaries.

- 6.12.6 This approach is consistent with NPPF definitions. A sequential assessment must, where required, set out why sequentially preferable (i.e., more central) locations have been ruled out. When considering alternative sites, the suitability, availability, and viability of the site should be assessed, with particular regard to the nature of the need that is to be addressed.
- 6.12.7 When considering how the sequential test should be applied, the Council will take account of planning practice guidance and only require assessments that are proportionate and appropriate to the size and scale of the development proposed.
- 6.12.8 It is recognised that certain main town centre uses have particular market and locational requirements that mean that they may only be accommodated in specific locations. In the case of proposals for small scale shops and services in predominantly residential areas serving a localised catchment, it may not be reasonable to expect the same customer base or market to be served from premises within a defined centre or on the edge of it. Where this can be fully justified, and the proposal is in a highly and safely accessible location (including by walking and cycling) a sequential assessment of alternative locations may not be required.

Impact Assessment

- 6.12.9 In line with the NPPF, the St Helens Retail and Leisure Study 2017 recommends that a range of locally set thresholds be used to identify when proposals for main town centre uses outside existing centres must be accompanied by a town centre impact assessment. These thresholds relate to the size and proximity of the proposal to the centres as set out in paragraphs 6 and 7 of Policy LPC04.
- 6.12.10 In the case of District and Local Centres the lower local impact thresholds of 200m² and 300m² referred to in Policy LPC04 will apply to proposals on sites that are less than 800m from the nearest part of the boundary of the relevant centre. The distance of 800m is broadly commensurate with the potential walk-in catchments of smaller centres and is identified by Guidelines for Providing for Journeys on Foot (The Institution of Highways & Transportation, 2000) as being the 'preferred maximum' acceptable walking distance to a centre. Beyond 800m from the District and Local centres, the higher threshold of 500m² will apply.
- 6.12.11 Where an impact assessment is required, the applicant should agree its scope with the Council at an early stage to ensure it is proportionate to the scale of the proposed development and provides the required information to identify the effects of the development on the centre. The Council will take account of planning practice guidance when considering such assessments.

7.19 Policy LPC11: Historic Environment

Policy LPC11: Historic Environment

1. The Council will promote the conservation and enhancement of the Borough's heritage assets and their settings in a manner that is appropriate to the significance of each asset. These include designated heritage assets such as Scheduled Monuments, Registered Battlefields, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens, and non-designated above ground assets and areas of archaeological interest.
2. All proposals for development that may affect a heritage asset, or its setting should be accompanied by an Assessment of Significance that should form part of a Design and Access Statement and / or a Heritage Impact Assessment and clearly set out the significance of the heritage asset including any contribution made by its setting. The proposals should demonstrate how they respond to the significance of the asset. Merseyside Historic Environment Record (HER) should be consulted as a minimum.
3. The impact of development proposals on the significance of heritage assets and their settings will be considered in accordance with case law, legislation, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Development affecting heritage assets

4. Development proposals that would lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset will be refused permission unless it can be demonstrated that:
 - a) the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or total loss; or
 - b) all the other exceptions set out in paragraph 195 of the National Planning Policy Framework (or any successor national policy that supersedes this paragraph) apply.
5. Development involving harm to or loss of any non-designated heritage asset (such as any building identified on a Local List prepared by the Council) will only be permitted where the benefits are considered sufficient to outweigh the harm, having regard to the scale of the harm and the significance of the heritage asset.
6. Where the complete or partial loss of any heritage asset is justified, the asset's significance must be recorded to a standard agreed by the Council and made publicly available.

Areas of archaeological interest

7. Any development proposal that may affect one or more asset(s) of archaeological interest (whether designated or not) must include an appropriate desk-based assessment and where necessary a field evaluation, carried out by a suitably qualified person(s). Such evidence should identify any likely features of archaeological interest within or close to the site and how these would be affected by the proposal.
8. Development proposals affecting archaeological remains may be required (depending on the significance of the remains) to preserve the remains in situ or to secure the appropriate excavation and recording of the significance of the remains by a suitably qualified person.

Other implementation measures

9. The Council will:
 - a) prepare, update and promote the implementation of Heritage Asset Appraisals and Management Plans and give appropriate weight to these in development control decisions;
 - b) work with partner organisations to interpret and educate the public about the heritage of the Borough;
 - c) take appropriate measures to improve public access to heritage assets; and
 - d) seek to secure the effective conservation and use of all heritage assets that are 'at Risk' within the Borough.

7.20 Policy LPC11: Strategic Aims, Objectives and Key Delivery Mechanisms

Strategic Aims Met	SA 6
Strategic Objectives Met	SO 6.2
Is this a 'strategic' or 'local' policy?	Strategic
Key Delivery Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Management process • Maintaining employment land supply • Facilitating housing delivery • Partnership working to secure conservation, recording and interpretation of heritage assets

7.21 Reasoned Justification

- 7.21.1 St Helens Borough has a unique heritage, based upon its history connected with the railways, mining, glass and other industries. The Local

Plan has a key role in improving the appearance and character of the built environment and ensuring that it can be used in a way that adapts to changing social, economic, and environmental requirements.

Policy LPC11 sets out how the Council will seek to conserve the Borough's historic environment and promote awareness of its shared heritage.

- 7.21.2 National planning policy requires the Local Plan to set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, and that planning applications should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. Development that would cause substantial harm to a designated heritage asset must be refused unless such harm would be necessary to achieve substantial public benefits or other very specific circumstances set out in national policy apply. Designated heritage assets in St Helens Borough include those set out in paragraph 1 of Policy LPC11.

Listed Buildings

- 7.21.3 The Borough of St Helens contains 148 Listed Buildings. Whilst Earlestown railway viaduct is the only Grade I structure; the Borough has 12 Grade II* structures including Scholes Hall and the Statue of Queen Victoria in Victoria Square. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure the preservation of buildings listed under Part 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as being of special architectural or historic interest. Buildings and structures within the curtilage of listed buildings are also protected under the Act.
- 7.21.4 There are tight planning controls over development involving the alteration or loss of a listed building or land in its curtilage. Most new development affecting the exterior of a listed building or within the curtilage of a listed building requires planning consent. Works affecting the interior or exterior of a listed building, curtilage building or structure, normally require listed building consent. A comprehensive description and list of all listed buildings and other nationally designated heritage assets is set out on Historic England's website⁴⁷.

Scheduled Monuments

- 7.21.5 A scheduled ancient monument is defined by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as any structure, or site of a structure, above or below ground that is considered by the Secretary of State to be of public interest by reason of its historic, architectural, traditional, artistic, or archaeological importance. An application must be made to Historic England for any proposed works affecting a scheduled monument, in addition to any need for planning permission. All scheduled monuments, and non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance, will be given the strictest protection. Development proposals that would result in substantial harm to or total loss of significance of any scheduled monument, or any

⁴⁷ <https://historicengland.org.uk>

associated feature contributing to their significance including their setting, will be refused except in wholly exceptional circumstances. Historic England's Heritage List for England identifies 12 Scheduled Monuments in the Borough, four of which are on their 'at risk' list.

Registered Battlefield – Battle of Winwick

- 7.21.6 The Battle of Winwick (also known as Battle of Red Bank) took place in 1648 and has been identified as being an important component of Oliver Cromwell's victory in Lancashire, which ended the Second English Civil War. The site of the battle has been designated as a registered battlefield by Historic England, recognising its significance as a turning point at this key moment in British history, and reflecting the military tactics of the time and comprising a likely final resting place for those that died during the battle. The battlefield is subject to the strong protection given to designated heritage assets set out in national policy and paragraphs 3 and 4 of Policy LPC11.

Registered Parks and Gardens

- 7.21.7 Parks and gardens of national historic importance are designated as Registered Parks and Gardens and included in a register maintained by Historic England. There are currently three Registered Parks and Gardens in the Borough at Taylor Park (which was part of the former Eccleston Estate), St Helens Cemetery in Windle and a landscape associated with the Former Pilkington Headquarters Complex.
- 7.21.8 New development must promote the enjoyment, landscape character and interest of these areas by respecting their layout, design, character, appearance, and setting. It should also avoid causing harm to key views from or towards these landscapes or prejudicing their future restoration.

Conservation Areas

- 7.21.9 The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places statutory duties on Local Planning Authorities relating to the designation and ongoing review of Conservation Areas and adoption of policies to ensure their conservation and enhancement. There are currently eight Conservation Areas in St Helens Borough. Proposals for development affecting a Conservation Area should preserve or enhance those elements that have been identified as making a positive contribution to the character and special architectural or historic interest of the area. These elements may include buildings, boundary features, other structures, landscape features, open spaces, and the setting. Where proposals would lead to harm to a Conservation Area, then the harm will be identified as being either substantial or less than substantial based on the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole. Development causing such harm will be subject to the tests set out in Policy LPC11 and national policy.

Non-designated buildings and other structures

- 7.21.10 The Borough contains a number of buildings and other structures that are not formally designated as heritage assets, but that nevertheless contribute to the character of the area. Policy LPC11 confirms that development that would cause harm to or loss of non-designated assets will be refused unless any public benefit from the development would

outweigh such harm or loss. Development proposals that are likely to affect one or more non-designated assets will be required to include the evidence referred to in paragraph 2 of Policy LPC11.

Archaeological sites

- 7.21.11 Due to the long and complex history of the area, some sites (in addition to those affected by the formally designated Battlefield and Scheduled Monuments referred to earlier) are likely to contain remains of archaeological interest. Where a development would be likely to affect any site with potential to include archaeological interest (whether the site is formally designated or not), the Council will require the submission of an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation, demonstrating the level of such interest and how it would be affected. Planning conditions and / or agreements will be used as necessary to secure the appropriate preservation and / or recording of any remains, with the preferred solution depending upon the degree of significance of the asset.

Design of development affecting heritage assets

- 7.21.12 Particular attention must be paid to the design of any works affecting a heritage asset. For example, on Listed Buildings and buildings in a Conservation Area, particular attention must be paid to the design and materials used in the walls, roof, doors, and other detailing. The design of any windows must be carefully assessed, having regard to the importance of the building, the character and appearance of the area, the details of any opening mechanism, the appearance of 'joints' and the design of glazing bars and horns.

Historic environment records and the interpretation of heritage assets

- 7.21.13 The Merseyside Historic Environment Record⁴⁸ is the central heritage asset database for the Liverpool City Region and should be consulted by developers when designing their proposals.
- 7.21.14 St Helens Borough Council has a strong record of working with partner organisations to engage communities in their local heritage and further the understanding of the development of St Helens as a town of the industrial revolution. Key partners in this context include Community Archaeology, the Museum of Liverpool, Merseyside Archaeological Society, Merseyside Industrial Heritage Society, Sankey Canal Restoration Society, St Helens History Society, and developers. It will continue to work with these bodies in this regard.

MASTERPLAN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL



#STHELENSTOGETHER



538

CGI of Church Square Subject to Design Development

CONTENTS

1. Foreword	3
2. Introduction - Overview	4
3. Purpose of this Masterplan Development Framework	6
4. Engagement and Next Steps	7
5. Strategic Analysis	9
6. Intended Role for St Helens Town Centre Within the Borough	11
7. Planning Policy Context	12
8. Current Performance of the Town Centre	16
9. Key Opportunities	27
10. Town Centre Vision & Strategic Objectives	28
11. Proposed Town Centre Masterplan	32
12. Town Design Principles	34
13. Proposed Town Centre Zones	35
14. Movement Strategy	51
15. Public Realm Strategy	54
16. Sustainability Strategy	56
17. Phasing & Delivery Strategy	57
18. Regeneration Benefits	58
19. Next Steps and How to Comment	59



FOREWORD

St Helens Borough Council and the English Cities Fund (ECF) are proud to set out our vision for St Helens town centre.

The Masterplan Development Framework has been endorsed by the Council to guide and support the positive transformation of the town centre. It will ensure that development coming forward is of high quality, is sustainable and has the people of St Helens at its heart.

The Council and ECF have entered into a 20-year partnership to bring forward regeneration across the borough, with our town centres in St Helens and Earlestown a priority. Together we have produced a Phase 1 development proposal set out in this Masterplan Development Framework to begin the significant transformation of St Helens town centre.

The first Phase has been carefully developed to introduce a balanced mix of uses into the heart of the town – providing an opportunity for those wanting to work, visit, live and enjoy leisure time in St Helens.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Baines".

Cllr David Baines
Leader of St Helens Council



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Phil Mayall".

Phil Mayall
Regional Director ECF

Importantly, the proposals have and will continue to be developed in partnership with prospective occupiers to meet future needs and ensure that the Phase 1 development is deliverable.

We want St Helens town centre to be a source of pride. A child and family-friendly place, home to thriving local businesses, quality homes, leisure and outdoor spaces, with great transport links, digital connectivity and future-proofed to address the climate emergency.

As we all know, our town has a rich industrial heritage, one of glass-making, chemicals and coal, hard work, strength and innovation. The partnership between the Council and ECF – working together with residents, businesses, regional partners, public and third sector organisations – gives us the opportunity to build the future our past deserves.



OVERVIEW

This Masterplan Development Framework for St Helens town centre provides an aspirational vision with a focus on deliverable transformation, built on feedback from the community. It has been prepared by St Helens Council and its partner – The English Cities Fund (ECF).

ECF is a partnership formed in 2001 between Muse Developments, Legal & General and Homes England. ECF has been working with councils, landowners and communities to create exceptional places across the UK, bringing together investment, regeneration expertise and long-term commitment to shape our towns and cities for the better. Following its expansion in 2018, it continues to take on large, complex sites, to create inspiring new places. ECF has delivered some of the country's most complex and successful urban regeneration projects and has a proven track record of transforming towns and cities, attracting investment, and unlocking potential.

In March 2020, St Helens Council and ECF agreed a 20-year partnership that would see a variety of sites across the borough benefit from redevelopment, the first being the Borough's town centres, including St Helens town centre, which is the subject of this Masterplan Development Framework. This partnership will allow the

Council to progress regeneration in the borough, with the town centres of St Helens and Earlestown being a first priority. This will facilitate transformational change that will build upon the town centres existing assets and uniqueness, and deliver high quality, sustainable regeneration. It will transform these key centres into exciting, vibrant places that are fit for the future.

This Masterplan Development Framework sets out an aspirational but realistic vision for the future of St Helens town centre, identifying the opportunities and challenges which exist, and illustrating thoughts and ideas around significant commercial and leisure investment that will completely transform the centre.

This investment will include revitalised retail spaces, new homes, high quality offices, hotel accommodation, improved public realm and new open green spaces.



#STHELENSTOGETHER

THE
ENGLISH
CITIES
FUND

OVERVIEW

This Masterplan Development Framework has been developed in response to the following key considerations, and takes account feedback from the community.

- The need for future development to be sustainable and of the highest quality, considering the challenges of climate change and the desire to move towards net zero carbon¹;
- The uniqueness of St Helens as a place, including preserving and enhancing its outstanding heritage assets;
- The need to identify defined areas or zones, that have a wide variety of choices;
- Making the town centre a child and family-friendly place;
- Supporting existing businesses and traders and revitalising the retail offer in the town;
- Providing places for independents, entrepreneurs and artisans to flourish;
- The need to provide a modern and sustainable town centre living option;
- Improving connectivity, legibility and wayfinding across the centre and the creation of clean, green streets to allow communities to make active travel choices that contribute towards health and wellbeing;

- Ensuring safe, secure public spaces, with ambient lighting; and
- Incorporating public art within the public realm that reflects the town's heritage, ingenuity and individuality.

In short, it must provide the best for all the people of the town and the wider borough, a development built to last that future generations can be proud of. The town centre will mirror the immense pride that people have for St Helens and be an inspiring place for everyone in the community.

It is recognised that the town centre must adapt and evolve in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to longer-term trends such as the growth of online shopping. Whilst retail will continue to have an important role in the town centre, this must be supplemented by a wider offer, including a mix of complementary uses. We want to encourage people into the town centre by providing spaces that people enjoy spending time in, that are a positive experience for residents, visitors and workers alike, with a broad range of services, amenities and opportunities for everyone, now and in the future.

Transformation at this scale must be managed and takes time. Delivery of

this ambitious Masterplan Development Framework will be phased to maximise benefits and minimise negative impacts. It is important to provide the right conditions that will get the town centre back to its former glory, support the growth of local businesses, provide the right infrastructure, deliver quality spaces and places, and set the groundwork that encourages the right type of future development and investment to come forward.

The Council and ECF are proposing an early and significant phase of development to visibly demonstrate the scale of ambition and for people to enjoy while supporting future activities across the wider town centre.

The Masterplan Development Framework aligns directly with 'St Helens Together: Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030', together with the vision and ambition for St Helens town centre that is set out within the successful St Helens Town Investment Plan. There are already visible signs of change in the town centre and this Masterplan Development Framework will harness and build on the positive activity happening across the Borough.



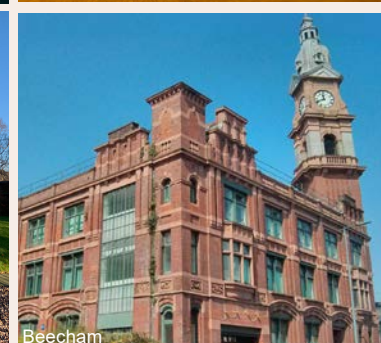
The World of Glass



The Gamble



Quaker House



Beecham



St Helens Parish Church



St Helens College



Town Hall



Train Station

"WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER BOROUGH, WITH PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO"²

¹ St Helens Council has committed to the ambitious objective of achieving zero-carbon status by 2040 (St Helens, March 2021)

² St Helens Council (2021) #StHelensTogether: Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030

PURPOSE AND STATUS OF THIS MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

This Masterplan Development Framework for St Helens town centre sets out a clear vision, objectives and development principles that will catalyse the delivery of transformational change in St Helens. In doing so, it will help to secure a range of long-lasting economic, social and environmental benefits across the town centre and positively impact the wider borough.

This Masterplan Development Framework has been prepared in the context of, and informed by, wider regeneration ambitions for St Helens, including those set out within adopted and emerging planning policy and related strategies.

The Masterplan Development Framework will guide development across the Framework area over the next 20 years and will form a material consideration in the determination of all future planning applications across the area.

The Development Framework will not form part of the statutory Development Plan; however, it has been prepared having had full regard to relevant legislation including national planning policy contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021), National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (2021), the 'saved' policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (1998), the Core Strategy (2012), and the emerging Local Plan.



ENGAGEMENT AND NEXT STEPS

The proposed vision for St Helens town centre set out within this Masterplan Development Framework builds upon the previous extensive engagement that informed the Towns Fund submission and the '#StHelensTogether: Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030', alongside other project-specific engagement activity.

We formally consulted on a Draft Masterplan Development Framework for 6 weeks, between 1st November 2021 and 13th December 2021. The consultation period invited comments from the local community and stakeholders and information was made available on the consultation website which included a virtual exhibition, feedback map and consultation email. A community information phone line was also established to receive feedback, and a series of in-person events were held, including a 'pop-up' exhibition at the former Phones4U unit on Church Street in St Helens town centre between 8th and 14th November 2021.

As a result, 248 feedback comments were received.

The representations received during this period have been fully considered by the Council and ECF in the preparation of the final Masterplan Development Framework. Formal responses are presented within a Consultation Statement that sits alongside the Masterplan Development Framework, ensuring that the process is open and transparent.



ENGAGEMENT AND NEXT STEPS

Most comments on the Masterplan proposals were positive, with 88% of respondents supporting the proposals and a recognition that change is needed to create vibrancy into the heart of the town centre.

'I look forward to seeing a newly regenerated and inclusive town centre'

'I love my town...we need to take bold steps to make this happen'

'The plans for the town centre look fantastic'

79% of respondents were in support of redeveloping some of the existing retail space and creating a central market hall. Comments received included the need to encourage smaller, independent retailers into the town centre, and creating better links between the high street and the out of town retail parks, and stadium. The importance of retaining heritage assets and historic buildings was also raised.

'Like the grass roof and position of the new market'

'Consider new walkways to join up the retail parks and Saints ground to the town centre'

'Not enough variety of shops to bring people into the town to spend money'

'Shopping needs to be linked with events, including food and leisure to be successful'

'Places for families to be entertained'

64% of respondents agreed that providing modern, sustainable commercial office space will help to attract new businesses to the town centre. Some comments raised as to whether there would still be a need for office space given the impact of the pandemic, but on a whole, there was the recognition that new modern office space would support the creation of new jobs, bring forward more local investment and new office space should be created in the town centre so workers can benefit from an accessible location and services.

66% of respondents were positive about the need for a high-quality town centre residential offer, noting the potential to provide a mix of house types, including more affordable housing.

'The development needs to suit the town, people of all ages and abilities and is fit for purpose'

There was overwhelming support for the creation of new green spaces within the town centre, including Discovery Park. 83% were supportive of this proposal and recognised the health and well-being benefits of green spaces and more trees.

There were some comments about managing anti-social behaviour within the town centre and the need for lighting and CCTV to improve safety.

'Can we have more trees?'

'Make more of the canal, as a leisure/ safe place to walk and sit'

'Welcoming outdoor spaces for people to enjoy meeting'

'Everywhere needs good lighting and effective CCTV so people feel safe'

Almost 90% of respondents agreed that the town centre needs to be better connected, with a number of people stressing the need for better quality and more car parking, and making the town centre easier to get to by public transport, walking and cycling.

'May consideration be given to providing disabled car parking spaces, near disabled toilets, providing a collection point for town centre owned mobility scooters?'

'The town needs to flow from one point of interest to another'

Following further research and analysis of parking data plus a review of the public responses received during the consultation exercise, it is proposed that a new future-proof multi storey car park will be built to help meet the future parking demand requirements of the town having regard to the need to balance the use of more sustainable travel options. This facility will be built to modern functional requirements including appropriate provision for disabled users, parent and child, electric charging points, car share providers, and the storage and hire of e-bikes, etc. The car park will have extended opening times to meet the requirements of the evening economy and be designed to Secure by Design standards with good lighting and CCTV coverage. Potential locations for the new multi storey car park will be explored alongside a delivery plan of the phased development.

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

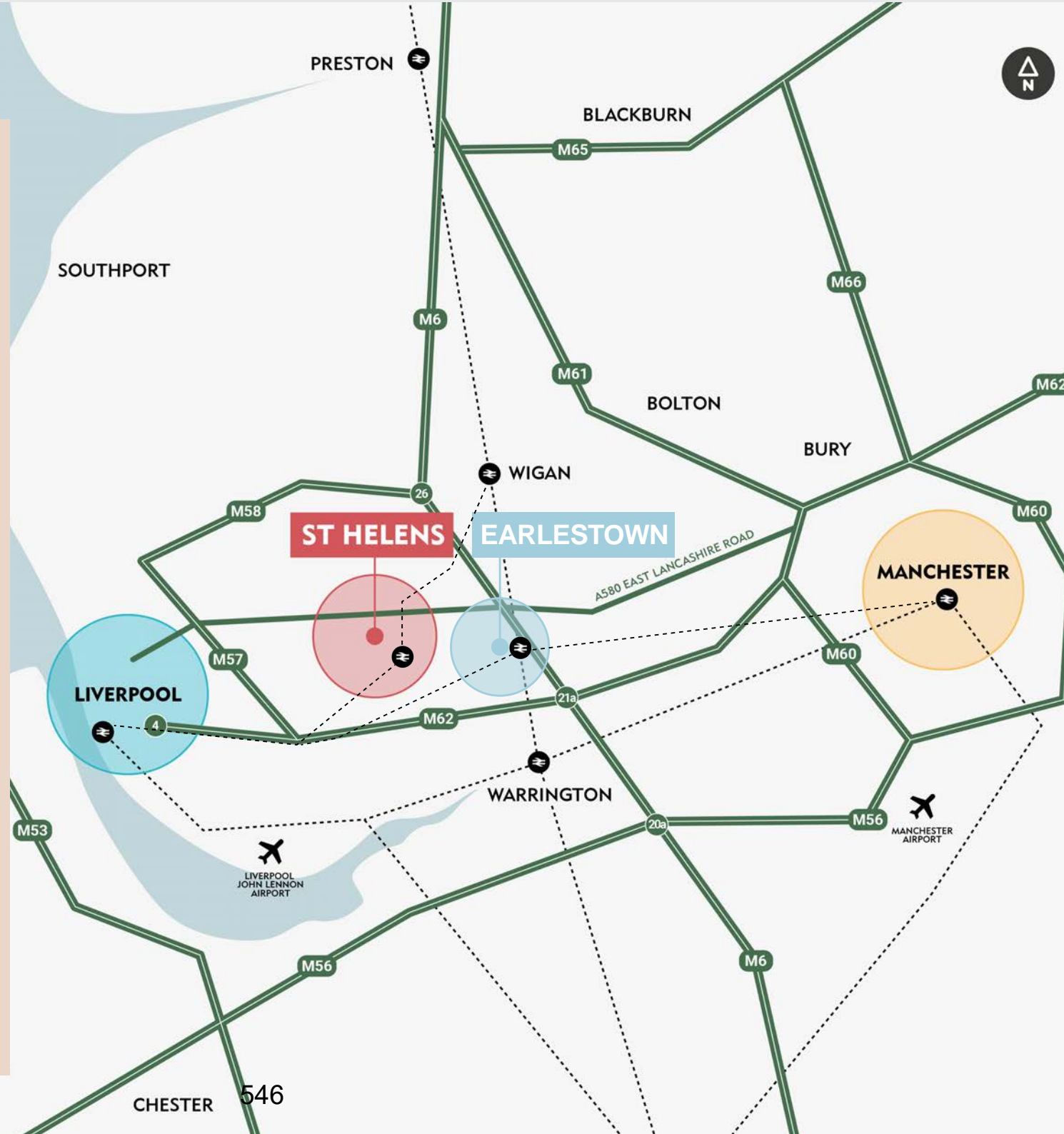
St Helens is located between Greater Manchester and Cheshire and is a member of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) – an important, thriving sub-region which also covers Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, and Wirral.

The City Region has seen over £1bn added to its economy in the last decade and has a wealth of assets including providing home to 52,000 businesses³ and delivering a strong and diverse business base, high-class universities, a world-class tourism offer, and of course, the skills, creativity, and innovation of its people.

St Helens is playing a significant role in the City Region and has attracted significant investment for infrastructure, skills, business support, and transformational projects such as Glass Futures. We have exciting prospects for green growth and new technologies, and for some of the best digital connectivity in the UK through the LCR Connect project.

St Helens town centre is well placed to benefit from these opportunities and is well-connected to the wider sub-region given its location on the strategic road network but also the strong public transport links we have via both bus and rail.

³ Draft L LCR Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) March 2020



ST HELENS BOROUGH

St Helens town centre is the principal town for St Helens Borough and provides a range of key services for the borough including retail, community uses and amenities. St Helens town centre is complemented by Earlestown town centre and a range of smaller district, village and local centres across the borough.

Given St Helens is the principal town centre, it should be one that the people of St Helens are immensely proud of and utilise; a place where people want to meet, spend time and promote positively to others.

The town centre has incredible promise – from thriving independents and a rich cultural heritage to enviable transport connectivity and stunning canal side opportunities. These are just a few of its key assets that can be maximised. In addition, people are our greatest asset and provide a warm and friendly welcome to visitors.

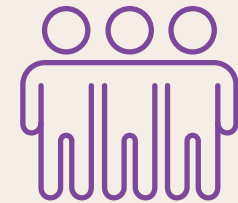
The cross-cutting priorities set out within the ‘#StHelensTogether: Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030’ also influence the regeneration of the town centre.



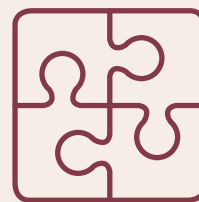
ENSURE CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE
HAVE A POSITIVE
START IN LIFE



PROMOTE GOOD
HEALTH, INDEPENDENCE
AND CARE ACROSS
OUR COMMUNITIES



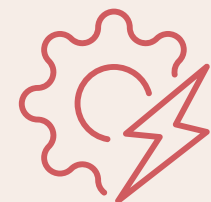
CREATE SAFE
AND STRONG
COMMUNITIES AND
NEIGHBOURHOOD
FOR ALL



SUPPORT A STRONG,
THRIVING, INCLUSIVE
AND WELL-CONNECTED
LOCAL ECONOMY



CREATE GREEN
AND VIBRANT PLACES
THAT REFLECT OUR
HERITAGE AND CULTURE



BE A
RESPONSIBLE
COUNCIL

INTENDED ROLE FOR ST HELENS TOWN CENTRE WITHIN THE BOROUGH

Set out within the Borough Strategy,

'St Helens town centre requires radical transformation. Ambitious plans should be made and implemented, considering the offer for families and the daytime and night-time economies'⁴.

The transformation of St Helens town centre will focus on its heritage, sporting and cultural assets, building on its uniqueness to do things differently and innovatively, including the global opportunity of Glass Futures and Foundation Industries. This focus will in turn help create vibrancy within the town centre for all to use, value and enjoy, making St Helens an attractive place in which to live, work, visit, and invest.

⁴ St Helens Council (2021) Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030, p. 46



In preparing this Masterplan Development Framework, consideration has been given to national, regional and local planning policy. This includes both adopted and emerging policies as set out below.

NATIONAL POLICY

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK 2021 (NPPF)

The NPPF has several chapters within it of particular relevance to this Masterplan Framework. These will be set out in this section, along with a summary of the key parts of most relevance to this project.

Chapter 5

Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

The Government has a stated objective to significantly boost the supply of homes, and therefore it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land comes forward where it is needed. Such housing must meet the needs of groups with specific housing requirements, including but not limited to, for example, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people etc.

The value that small and medium sized sites can make to meeting the identified housing requirement is recognised, and the NPPF expects Local Planning Authorities to promote the development of a good mix of sites.

Chapter 6

Building a strong, competitive economy

The NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions

in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, considering both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. The importance of setting criteria or identifying strategic sites for local and inward investment is also acknowledged, as well as the need to address potential barriers to investment, including inadequate infrastructure or a poor environment.

Chapter 7

Ensuring the vitality of town centres

The role that town centres play at the heart of local communities is recognised, and a positive approach should be taken to their growth, management, and adaptation. They should be allowed to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allowing a suitable mix of uses (including housing development on appropriate sites) and reflecting their distinctive characters.

National planning policy states that main town uses should be in town centres, and provides a mechanism, using the sequential

test, to ensure this happens, unless such sites are not available. This re-enforces the importance of town centres.

Chapter 8

Promoting healthy and safe communities

Achieving healthy inclusive and safe places is key. This includes promoting social interaction through, for example, mixed use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts allowing for easy pedestrian and cycle connections, and active street frontages. Places should also be safe and accessible through, for example, well designed, legible pedestrian and cycle routes and high-quality public spaces. Finally, healthy lifestyles should be enabled and supported through provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops and walking and cycling infrastructure. Provision of supporting infrastructure is essential. This includes the access to a network of high-quality open spaces and recreation opportunities.

Chapter 9

Promoting sustainable transport

National policy states that significant development should be focussed on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of

transport modes. This can help reduce congestion and associated emissions, with the associated air quality and public health benefits. Indeed, the delivery and promotion of sustainable transport links can help deliver on many of the themes throughout the NPPF, as well as policies at the local level. Sustainable transport is a fundamental matter, and therefore transport issues should be considered at the earliest stages of development proposals.

Furthermore, in town centres, the quality of car parking should be improved so it is convenient, safe, and secure, as well as promoting accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

Chapter 11

Making effective use of land

Land should be used effectively in meeting the need for homes and other uses, and in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed land. Planning policies and decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings. The density of development needs detailed consideration to make sure land is effectively used, whilst still securing well designed, attractive, and healthy places.

Chapter 12

Achieving well-designed places

Creating high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamentally important. There should be a clear design vision and expectations, with local communities fully engaged in the process from the early stages, so that local aspirations are reflected. Principles are set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, and locally produced design guides and codes should be consistent. There is also a clear emphasis on the importance of trees to the character and quality of urban environments and their contribution to tackling climate change.

Chapter 14

Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to climate change impacts and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. New development should take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing, and landscaping to minimise energy consumption. The use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat should be increased.

Chapter 15

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

The natural environment should be enhanced by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity (including by establishing resilient and coherent

ecological networks), remediating, and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict and contaminated land and preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water, or noise pollution. Where possible, development should help improve local environmental conditions, such as air quality.

Chapter 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution they can make to sustainable communities, and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE (NPPG)

The NPPG provides additional, detailed guidance on the planning system and areas of national policy. This section focuses on the ‘town centres and retail’ section of the NPPG.

Town centres are areas where “main town centre uses” are concentrated, and local

planning authorities can take a leading role in promoting a positive vision for them, bringing together stakeholders and supporting sustainable economic and employment growth. The NPPG acknowledges that a wide range of complementary uses (such as residential, employment, office, commercial, leisure / entertainment, healthcare, and education) can, if suitably located, help support the vitality of town centres. The same is true of temporary activities also.

Creating a vision for town centres that meets wider economic and community needs is key, and requires effective and creative leadership, with stakeholders engaged in the evolving vision. The NPPG continues to advise on the types of stakeholders that might be engaged, the potential contents of a town centre strategy, as well as the type of indicators to consider in assessing the health of town centres, and subsequently planning for their future.

An entire section in the NPPG dedicated to ‘town centres and retail’ highlights the importance the Government attaches to successful, vibrant, resilient, well-designed, high-quality town centres that reflect the aspirations of local communities.

KEY LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

USE CLASS ORDER CHANGES

Of relevance to town centres across the UK, during 2020, Government brought in changes to consolidate several separate Use Classes under a single ‘Commercial, Business and Service’ Class E. This update to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (the ‘UCO’) came into effect in September 2020 and combined shops, restaurants, offices, gyms and nurseries (amongst others) that no longer require planning permission to switch between uses.

These changes intend to make it easier to enable greater utilisation of existing assets and where appropriate, re-purposing of buildings in town centres such as St Helens. Class E is intended to encourage diversification and facilitates an enhanced role for town centres as places of work, providing space for services, research and development, creating and making. Shops can change to restaurants, cafes, gyms, offices, health centres and indoor sports facilities. This fits well with a ‘mixed-use neighbourhood’ approach.

In March 2021, an update was then made to the related legislation⁵ to allow for the change of use of these commercial properties to residential from August 2021 under a fast track ‘prior approval’ process. This demonstrates the Government’s desire to ensure that high streets thrive and survive through adopting mixed-use approach in town centres.

⁵General Permitted Development (England) Order 2015 (the ‘GPDO’)

SUB-REGIONAL POLICY

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION: 'OUR PLACES' SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

St Helens Council authority area forms part of the Liverpool City Region (LCR). LCR is now developing a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) for the City Region, entitled 'Our Places'. This spatial framework will set out the development and use of land looking ahead over the next 15 years and will be the first of its kind for the City Region.

LCR consulted on a draft document between October 2019 - January 2020, to inform the development of the SDS as part of Stage 1. Building on the feedback received from Stage 1, a Stage 2 consultation was then launched between November 2020 - February 2021 on the proposed vision and a set of objectives (illustrated right), along with suggested approaches to several key policy areas. The intention was to help progress the development of the strategy to meet the challenges and priorities of the City Region.

The overriding purpose of Stage 2 engagement was to make sure the SDS continues to be shaped positively and meaningfully by the people of the LCR. The proposed LCR vision, on which comments were sought, is as follows:

The Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy Vision

In 15 years we want to be a City Region where:

- A proactive, collaborative Spatial Development Strategy has been instrumental in delivering the goal of inclusive growth alongside environmental responsibility;
- Effective action to tackle Climate Change has been, and is being, taken; with measures put in place to increase our resilience to its effects;
- Our health and wellbeing is fundamental in deciding how we shape the places we live, work and meet;
- Opportunities for Building Back Better have been taken, creating a genuinely inclusive economy that is more competitive, connected, resilient, sustainable and greener; providing quality jobs, prospects and prosperity;
- **Our town centres, creatively re-purposed and re-imagined, provide opportunities for businesses and communities to thrive and develop;**

- Homes are provided to meet all our needs, are well designed and fit for the future, forming safer and well-connected communities;
- The value of new development looks beyond simple economic returns to deliver wider and lasting social and community benefits.

The LCR Spatial Planning team is now using the feedback from the consultation to help shape and progress the SDS.

LOCAL POLICY

THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Development Plan for St Helens currently comprises:

- Core Strategy Local Plan (adopted October 2012);
- 'Saved' Policies of the Unitary Development Plan (adopted 1998);
- Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (adopted July 2013); and
- Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan (adopted July 2017).



**Climate
Change
and
Environment**



**Health and
Wellbeing**



**Inclusive
Economy**



**Placemaking
&
Communities**



**Social
Value**

Source: Liverpool City Region, Our Places,
Spatial Development Strategy (2020)

ST HELENS UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Area 5 (Part 2 of the UDP) relates to the Southern Corridor including St Helens Town Centre and sets out the overall vision, which is to make the Town Centre a more attractive place to work, live, shop in or visit. It seeks to:

- (i) support and enhance the Town Centre as a shopping centre;
- (ii) expand employment opportunities;
- (iii) improve the appearance and quality of the built environment;
- (iv) protect the amenities of existing Town Centre residents;
- (v) improve transport links to and around the town and to achieve an effective public transport interchange within the centre;
- (vi) make the centre accessible to all forms of transport;
- (vii) provide an even distribution of car parks; and
- (viii) to attract investment.

These objectives remain relevant today. Of particular relevance are 'saved' Policies TC3 – TC12 which relate to St Helens Town Centre and seek to ensure its future vitality and viability.

ST HELENS CORE STRATEGY (2012)

The town centre boundary is identified on the Proposals Map and delineates the primary shopping area and primary retail frontage. The following associated policies are of primary importance:

Policy CSS1 – Overall Spatial Strategy

seeks to regenerate St Helens borough through directing development towards the town of St Helens. This will be done by ensuring that 69% of residential development is located in St Helens; further retail and leisure development is secured within the town centre; and prioritising the reuse of previously developed land; and

Policy CAS2 – St Helens Central Spatial Area

aims to enhance the St Helens Central Spatial Area as an accessible and welcoming destination for shopping, leisure, culture, tourism, employment and housing.

EMERGING LOCAL PLAN

The Council submitted the Local Plan 2020 - 2035 Submission Draft (2019) to the Secretary of State for independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate. As part of the independent examination, virtual public hearing sessions commenced from 25 May 2021.

The Council consulted on the Proposed Main Modifications to the Local Plan from 18th November 2021 to 13th January 2022. The modifications are those that the Inspector examining the Local Plan has identified as necessary in order for it to be found 'sound'.

Draft Policy LPA02 – Spatial Strategy

outlines the broad principles of growth in the Borough, focusing development on the Key Settlements, including the St Helens Core Area, and re-using previously developed land where possible. The draft policy notes that comprehensive regeneration of the wider Borough will be delivered by the English Cities Fund Regeneration Partnership, through the provision of quality housing, new commercial activity, and upgraded infrastructure.

Draft Policy LPB01 – St Helens Town Centre and Central Spatial Area

establishes the area as an accessible and welcoming destination for new development and a high-quality built environment. The draft policy recognises that the English Cities Fund Regeneration Partnership will help to deliver a comprehensive redevelopment and an overall improvement of the social and economic viability of the area.

The new Local Plan is expected to be adopted in Spring 2022.



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

This Masterplan Development Framework has been prepared to respond to the issues and challenges that the town centre currently faces. In considering these challenges it also identifies the key assets and opportunities that are important to preserve, enhance and build upon.

A town centre health check has been undertaken which informed the St Helens Town Investment Plan submitted to Government in February 2021, and this noted the following key considerations:

- The local retail property market is dominated by large scale monolithic indoor shopping precincts hidden from view and invisible to potential customers;
- Some properties are in a poor condition and fail to offer the modern retail offer to new exciting independent traders;
- The town centre has a unique architectural heritage and cultural offer that is underutilised. These assets should play a greater role in attracting visitors to the town centre;
- The town centre environment has an important role in making St Helens a distinctive and attractive place to visit. It offers an opportunity for us to green our high street helping to tackle both the climate and health challenges faced by the borough;
- Good transport connections exist to the strategic road network, rail links and key bus routes however there remain challenges including a poor sense of arrival in the town centre, difficult wayfinding and in general the town centre feels like it is turning its back on you as a visitor rather than welcoming you in;
- The financial and service industry are well represented in the town centre, but their impact is lessened as they are located across a wide geographic area. There is an opportunity to build on this foundation and create new and modern places to work in a flexible way; and
- It is clear that the town centre has real potential. Whilst radical change is required in some areas others present the opportunity for more incremental and organic change to happen over time.

The following sections will explore each of these areas in more detail.



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

FOOTFALL AND RETAIL OFFER

In recent years, St Helens town centre has suffered from declining footfall and a decrease in the market share of comparison goods⁶. Previously, the town was very vibrant and benefited from loyal shoppers; however, a perfect storm with the introduction of out-of-town retail parks⁷, superstores such as Tesco, Asda and Morrisons, the closure of High Street names such as Topshop in July 2019 and the relocation of Marks & Spencer's to the retail park in March 2019, alongside the broader macro trends of a shift to online retail, has badly impacted the town centre.

Diversion of total retail spending to online was estimated to be 28.6% in 2020, which is marginally below average when compared against other town centres across the UK (PROMIS, 2021). This reflects the accelerated shift to online given COVID-related restrictions on store

openings in 2020. This is further demonstrated by the number of vacant units in the centre increasing from 18.7% in Q4 2019 to 21% in Q2 2021 according to PROMIS (2022).

The high street is currently overstocked in terms of retail quantum, has an over-supply of lower value shops, and a lack of food and beverage outlets. In the context of the above, there is therefore a need to create a broader offer to entice people back into the town centre, to address the lack of an evening economy and to return the town centre as a place for families to spend valuable quality time together.

⁶ The St. Helens Borough Council Retail and Leisure Study Final Report May 2017 found that the Town Centre's market share for comparison goods expenditure has decreased from 28.2% in 2011 to 20.4% in 2017.

⁷ Offering convenience and free car parking.



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

The resident population of the borough totalled at 181,095⁸ in 2020. This is expected to grow steadily, albeit at a slower rate than for the North West and for England.

The borough has an ageing population with a higher proportion of people aged 65 years and over. The number of residents of the borough who are in their 80s is expected to almost double to 12,800 in 2037, and the number of residents in their 90s is expected to almost triple to 9,700⁹.

In contrast, there is proportionally fewer people of working age between 16 to 64 years old than England as a whole, with young adults aged 15-24 being particularly under-represented, and children aged 0-14 and adults aged 25-44 are moderately underrepresented¹⁰.

The borough is ethnically less diverse than many other areas, with 96.6% of the population identifying themselves as white,

compared to 79.8% nationally and 87.1% in the North West¹¹.

In terms of the economy and levels of affluence, positively there are a number of employment opportunities and self-employment levels have increased and business survival rates at 5-years after start-up have improved in recent years¹². Despite this, the Borough is relatively deprived, being ranked as the 26th most deprived out of 317 local authorities in England (IMD, 2019). Deprivation levels in some parts of the borough have also worsened relative to others. The proportion of children in low income families is higher than those in England and the North West as a whole. The borough still has levels of dependency on benefits that are above regional and national averages¹³.

Unemployment is lower than regional and national averages albeit productivity across all broad sectors is lower in St Helens than nationally¹⁴.

⁸ Population estimate, Office of National Statistics (ONS)

⁹ St Helens Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2017

¹⁰ PROMIS, 2021

¹¹ 2011 Census

¹² Business Registers Unit (BRU)

¹³ Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

¹⁴ Source: NOMIS (ONS) – rate as % of population aged 16-64 years. Period: Jan 17 – Dec 17



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

HOUSING OFFER

The Borough has experienced significant housing growth over recent years. Much of this housing growth has been typically focused on family homes provided by larger national housebuilders within the outer neighbourhoods of the borough, but in addition, in recent years, there has also been growth in the town centre housing offer. 169 apartments have been consented since 2017¹⁵ and of those consented, 136 are one-bedroom apartments which have been brought forward in the private rented sector.

There remains an opportunity to create a unique housing offer in the town centre that offers modern design and a sustainable housing choice whilst allowing residents to make use of the town centre facilities, take advantage of being well-connected to employment areas, and excellent transport connectivity. Thus, allowing the town centre to offer a housing choice which is a point of difference to the rest of the borough, broadening the housing stock. This offer is likely to attract young professionals, downsizers, and provides an alternative offer for young families who recognise the benefits of being close to amenities and want the vibrancy of a town centre location.

The housing offer will not only provide a place for people to live in the town centre,

address housing need and contribute to the borough's housing targets, but it will provide improved choice in property type and tenure, helping to retain and attract the socially mobile.

Bringing additional residential development into the town centre will also help to deliver economic growth by driving footfall outside of typical shopping hours to support the night-time economy.

New residential development in the town centre must be fit-for-purpose, for now and for future generations, and accord with the residential design standards enshrined within adopted and emerging planning policy. New residential development must be of a high quality, use good architecture that respects the heritage and character of the town, and enhance local distinctiveness.

It should also provide a safe, secure, attractive, permeable, legible environment for all users and encourage active travel modes including walking and cycling, with appropriate facilities integrated into the development. New residential development will also be required to contribute towards the provision, expansion and/or enhancement of open space to meet needs in accordance with adopted and emerging policy.

¹⁵ Residential Market Analysis Report, Feb 2021



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT

At present, St Helens town centre has good connections to the strategic road network and rail links to Liverpool, Wigan, Preston and onward destinations via St Helens Central Station. It is also served by high-frequency effective bus routes. However, there are several transport and movement challenges.

The three main points of arrival into the town centre do not feel like key gateways that present St Helens as a modern, vibrant and accessible town.

1. Arrival by bus is typically via the bus station located at the rear of the Hardshaw Shopping Centre. It is a heavily constrained footprint, with poor and very limited public realm, and poorly connected to the wider town centre. There is no space to pause, orientate yourself, or to wait for a friend. This contributes to the lack of intuitive way-finding that should encourage pedestrians into the heart of the town centre.

2. By train, despite a distinctive station building and some high-quality public realm features, the arrival space is immediately confronted by a roundabout, rather than a public space to dwell and meet. The roundabout acts as a barrier to pedestrian movements along Bickerstaffe Street to the bus station and civic and heritage area.

3. By car, the likely arrival points are located at the Birchley Street surface car park or the multi-storey car parks along Chalon Way. Here, the town centre presents inactive façades and backs of buildings. The town centre feels like it is turning its back on you rather than welcome you in.

There are poor opportunities for active travel such as walking and cycling and an over-dominance of vehicular movements. The A58 provides excellent links to the strategic road network (M62/M57) but forms a concrete collar to the south and east of the town centre, impairing pedestrian and cycle links to the town centre from local communities of Fingerpost, Peasley Cross, Parr, West Park, Eccleston, Cowley Hill and Sutton.



Constraints Map Key

	Large Indoor Shopping Centre Plots		Existing Access Routes
	Surface and Multi-storey Parking		Key Arrival Elevations
	Noise Source		Wide over engineered highway
	Inactive Elevations		Transport Hub



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

RAIL ACCESS

The rail station is accessed by vehicles via Corporation Street or via the one-way route of Shaw Street, northbound, with pedestrians able to access via Bickerstaffe Street. There is an opportunity to strengthen the connection between the rail station and the bus station.

Limited cycle parking is available in the form of ten 'Sheffield' stands (with a capacity for 20 cycles) and there are further 'bike and go' services available at the station for onward travel. The cycle parking does not meet with modern technical standards. terms of security and attractiveness.

BUS ACCESS

Passengers arriving by bus can alight via the bus stops throughout the town centre or the bus station itself. The bus station consists of nine stands within the central island, with an additional three stands located on Bickerstaffe Street and a bus layby located on Corporation Street itself.

All the stands are sheltered and have raised kerbs for accessibility. Guard rails surround the bus station prevent pedestrians from walking out into traffic; however this does not promote attractive public realm space or create a sense of place.

CAR PARKING

The parking options comprise poor quality, outdated multi-storey buildings and large inefficient surface car parking areas. Wayfinding to car parks is poor and there is no real-time information available to support visitors in locating those which have available spaces.

A review of the existing town centre car parks has been undertaken to establish the level of demand for spaces at different times of the day/week, any restrictions over the length of stay, charging policy etc. The study also looked at how the removal of the Hardshaw Centre parking, as a result of the phase 1 development, would impact on the user demand profile and whether there was a need to provide additional parking to ensure a plentiful supply of spaces for all users.

Maintaining accessibility for those with mobility issues is also critical. Effective disabled persons parking places, both on and off street, will be provided throughout the town centre.

Following further research and analysis of parking data plus a review of the public responses received during the consultation exercise, it is proposed that a new future-proof multi storey car park will be built to help meet the future parking demand requirements of the town having regard to the need to balance the use of more sustainable travel options. This facility will be built to modern functional requirements including appropriate provision for disabled users, parent and child, electric charging points, car share providers, and the storage and hire of e-bikes and e-scooters, etc . The car park will have extended opening times to meet the requirements of the evening economy and be designed to Secure by Design standards with good lighting and CCTV coverage. Potential locations for the new multi storey car park will be explored alongside a delivery plan of the phased development.

CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST

The pedestrian routes from the town centre to the bus and rail stations are relatively well sign posted and are within close proximity.

Despite this, people travelling by foot must navigate a mini roundabout on entrance to the rail station, which can create a conflict.

During match days, the Steve Prescott Bridge is a key route towards the stadium. There is a pinch point on Salisbury Street due to the narrow footway, which can cause safety issues.

The main high street of the town centre along Church Street is pedestrianised. To travel to the bus station via Church Street, many pedestrians currently use the Hardshaw Centre as a strategic through-route, although navigation through the enclosed centre is not straightforward.

Both Corporation Street and Bickerstaffe Street can become overrun with buses, which poses a risk to passengers alighting from the buses, specifically on Bickerstaffe Street, where buses

allow passengers to alight on the road when there is no space in the lay by to stop in the designated area. The layout of the bus station itself is crowded and congested due to the vast amount of traffic travelling through here, the termination of buses at the station and use Corporation Street as a lay-by.

The bus station is not especially safe for cyclists due to the numbers of buses travelling through the area. There is a lack of dedicated cycling infrastructure around St Helens town centre which can often cause risks to cyclists, specifically around the bus station. There are areas of shared paths and cycle infrastructure such as Chalon Way, however, this is not linked with the wider network and key destinations – making it difficult for cyclists to be able to navigate through town efficiently and safely.

Access by foot and by cycle also needs improvement to assist movement from nearby residential and out of town retail areas over the linkway into the town centre.

WAYFINDING

Wayfinding within the town centre at present is poor and an improved signage strategy needs to be implemented to ensure easy access for all. Key connections with surrounding residential communities will also be crucial along with the key routes from main arrival points into the town centre.





CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

QUALITY OF BUILT-ENVIRONMENT

ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

St Helens has several significant and important heritage assets that distinguish it from other town centres.

These include concentrations of listed buildings and others of considerable architectural merit, coupled with the town centre's canal setting to the south and east. This is reflected by the designation of two Conservation Areas which cover the town: George Street Conservation Area and Victoria Square Conservation Area. There is also evidence of previous investment in the town centre's public realm, including mature structural landscaping.

However, St Helens has several existing challenges that detract from the environmental quality of the town centre. Cohesiveness within the town centre is poor. Assets are somewhat disparate and disconnected; wayfinding is lacking; and public spaces do not encourage dwell-time or achieve their full potential. An initial appraisal undertaken by ECF noted the following:

- Church Square can act as a key focal point and become a positive dwell space on route through the town;

- The town centre is dominated by three large indoor shopping centres which contribute to the overprovision of retail space, poor wayfinding and some inactive frontages;
- The market hall suffers from its location off Chalon Way as it turns its back on the town centre. It is under-occupied and underutilised as a town centre asset;
- The market and The World of Glass suffer given that Chalon Way is dedicated to vehicular movements as opposed to an inviting place for pedestrians, making them feel like they are located on the outer fringes of the town, as well as a lack of high-quality public realm in this location; and
- Key assets of the Town Hall, Gamble, Victoria Square and the town's wider cultural and heritage offering are difficult to find and poorly linked which reinforces their location on the periphery of the town centre.

CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

QUALITY OF BUILT-ENVIRONMENT

Despite this, there are key assets and positive features which can be built upon and strengthened further. The traditional retail streets within historic frontages close to St Helens College have character and intimacy. Likewise, the George Street Conservation Area provides a positive contribution to the town. Other assets, such as the Sankey (St Helens) Canal provides real adjacent opportunities for new high-quality development but, given the current layout and uses within the town centre, they are hidden, unloved and not fulfilling their true potential.

The key assets existing within the town centre which the Masterplan Framework can build upon are as follows:

ST HELENS COLLEGE

provides an active Campus within the heart of the town centre and was redeveloped in 2009 as part of government's 'Building Colleges for the Future Programme'. The College is currently undertaking a review of their assets, which will be considered and aligned with the Masterplan Development Framework. The College provides training to circa. 8,000 students across its Campuses in St Helens¹⁶ and it is a key footfall driver for the town.

¹⁶ St Helens Town Centre and STEM Centre

QUAKER MEETING HOUSE

is a Grade II listed building, built in 1679 and is the oldest building in St Helens. It falls within the George Street Conservation Area.

THEATRE ROYAL AND ARTISTIC SPACES

including The Citadel support the town's cultural and creative offering along with Heart of Glass; a collaborative and social arts agency based in St Helens, and Citadel Arts; a charity that runs events and workshops for families in St Helens.

Heart of Glass have delivered various pop-up events over recent years including MadLove takeover within the former Woolworth's building, engaging with school children to create 'The Book of St Helens' and most recently, artwork installations in Parr.

The Citadel is home to MD Creatives and provides space for live performances as well as rehearsal space and youth and disability theatre, based in an old 160 year old Theatre and music hall.



St Helens College



Theatre Royal



The Citadel



Quaker Meeting House

CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE

TOWN CENTRE

THE GAMBLE BUILDING

(formerly Gamble Institute) was originally built as a library and technical school in 1896. It was supported by funds from Sir David Gamble and was developed to support the advancement of technical and scientific skills among the local population. External works are being undertaken to bring the building back into use. The building also provides home to the borough's archive.

ST HELENS TOWN HALL AND VICTORIA SQUARE

sit in the heart of the civic part of the town. The Town Hall is an important civic building for the town and forms part of the Victoria Square Conservation Area, declared as such in 2000 in recognition to the value placed on its special qualities.

THE WORLD OF GLASS

provides a museum and gallery space within the town centre and presents the borough's heritage and Pilkington Glass collections together with the historic Jubilee No. 9 Tank House, which is Grade II* Listed and a Scheduled Monument.

ST HELENS TRANSPORT MUSEUM

is housed in the old St Helens Corporation Transport bus depot and provides a wide collection of vehicles.

THE COUNCIL'S ARTS IN LIBRARIES PROGRAMME

which has secured National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status.



The World of Glass



St Helens Transport Museum



Gamble Institute, Victoria Square



Town Hall, Victoria Square

SUMMARY









In summary, considering all the above, the key issues to be addressed through the Masterplan Development Framework for St Helens town centre include:

- Supporting existing retailers and traders, by consolidating and enhancing the retail offer and responding to existing challenges and future trends to ensure a vibrant town centre for the existing community and future generations to enjoy;
- Reducing the oversupply of shopping centres that over-dominate the built form and creating smaller modern retail properties attractive to the independent sector and new entrepreneurs. This will build on the already strong and growing independent sector within the town.
- Introducing a mix of new uses and diversifying the traditional retail offer through a mix of complementary alternative uses including food and drink, commercial, residential, as well as range of amenities and services.
- In doing so, improving and enhancing the night-time economy and broadening the overall leisure, food & beverage opportunities within the town with a focus on families.
- Delivering a quality town centre living offer to diversify the housing stock and to provide an alternative for those wanting to experience the new amenities in the town centre. This will appeal to a new socio-demographic and create a critical mass of new population who will provide footfall to support the night-time economy and invest in their local high street.
- The need to respond and be cognisant of the changing demographic of the borough, including the ageing population.
- The opportunity to utilise available development sites within the town centre and the potential of brownfield land to contribute towards growth targets including the delivery of new homes.
- Improving place-making and sense of place. Providing better amenity and experience will encourage people of all ages to visit and spend their leisure time in St Helens town centre. This includes making more of the student footfall from St Helens College.
- Ensuring that the town centre is accessible by all modes of transport. This must include sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling, and that appropriate infrastructure is in place to accommodate this. Similarly, improved access by bus and rail should also be incorporated into the Framework. Car parking should be considered across the town centre and future provision and demand assessed in the context of climate change and sustainability targets.
- Positively changing the perceptions of the town centre, through high quality events and activities in the centre including temporary pop ups or 'meanwhile' uses to demonstrate change is happening.
- The opportunity to redevelop Council-owned assets to best effect. This includes making the most of the significant and extensive heritage and cultural assets that exist in the town centre.



KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities Map Key

-  Future Opportunities
-  Permeability
-  Key Public Spaces
-  Existing Positive Frontages
-  Place making
-  New Active Frontages
-  Transport Hub
-  Sankey Canal



A VISION FOR ST HELENS TOWN CENTRE

Having established the town centre's baseline position, the overarching vision for the town centre and the associated strategic objectives for its future development have been considered below.

THE STRATEGIC OPTIONS

Several strategic options are available:

- **Do Nothing** – In this scenario, this leaves the future prosperity of the town to market forces. The implications here are that there may be increased vacancies, a lack of control of the town centre by the Council, and further reduction in footfall and dwell-time without intervention.
- **Curating Events** – In this scenario, activities or events which are considered to be temporary or 'meanwhile' uses are put in place only. This option can be seen as a 'sticking plaster' and does not address fundamental issues within the town centre.
- **Solo-Use Scheme** – In this scenario, the Council or others may seek to develop part of the town centre for a solo-use (for example, solely commercial, new retail/leisure, etc). Whilst this may improve parts of the town, other areas may remain unchanged and left behind.
- **Comprehensive Mixed Use Scheme** – In this scenario, the town centre is looked at comprehensively, which has the potential to derive the maximum number of benefits for the community.

THE STRATEGIC SOLUTION

To maximise the benefits of the proposed intervention, the preferred approach for the Masterplan Framework is to deliver a Comprehensive Mixed-Use Scheme, which secures several uses for the town centre that will maximise footfall, dwell-time, and the wider regeneration benefits for the Borough.



TOWN CENTRE VISION

The vision statement set out below articulates the preferred approach to the development of the town centre. The vision was supported through the most recent consultation completed in November and December 2021 to gain input into this Masterplan Development Framework.

The vision for St Helens town centre has been informed by stakeholder engagement together with the '#StHelensTogether: Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030' which was subject to extensive engagement prior to its adoption. It also considers the strategic context and the opportunities and constraints within the town centre which have been set out in earlier sections.

The preferred approach, which is consistent with the '#StHelensTogether: Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030', envisages radical transformation of the town centre through development that will nurture, celebrate, and host culture, building upon the town's creative and innovative gene and positive legacy of its' industrial heritage.

'ST HELENS...A CULTURALLY CENTRED VIBRANT TOWN CENTRE THAT MATCHES THE BOROUGH'S POTENTIAL WITH PEOPLE AT THE HEART'

"By 2030 St Helens will be culturally centred, will nurture and celebrate its cultural and industrial heritage, will build upon its creative and innovative gene in glass making and foundation-industries to innovate and do things differently, and create new opportunities, including those from the City Region. Vibrancy will be created for the town centre; the town will be a more accessible and enjoyable place to come together and will be a place where the community will learn from one another, improve their physical and mental well-being and where people want to live, work and visit. Businesses and residents will be attracted to the new opportunities available, will have quality spaces to dwell and will benefit from improved transport and digital connections borough-wide".



The following strategic objectives will help to achieve the delivery of a culturally centred and vibrant town centre, which is at the heart of the vision for St Helens:

1. DELIVERING A DIVERSE, VIBRANT AND ANIMATED TOWN CENTRE

To create a town centre that responds to the changing nature of the high-street; consolidating the proportion of retail and concentrating retail provision.

Encouraging new town centre uses, increasing active frontages and offering spaces that attract the local and independent traders that make St Helens truly unique.

Introducing a diverse mix of town centre uses, to include both retail, leisure and other traditional town centre uses, as well as a complementary residential offer.

Promoting the existing cultural offer and improving opportunities for linked visits as well as encouraging the night-time economy.

Introducing temporary or 'meanwhile' uses including events and pop ups to create a vibrant, lively ever-changing place that people want to visit.

Delivering new public art work within key streets and spaces in the town centre.



catalytical impact of Glass Futures and the opportunity to harness innovation and skills for the benefit of the local community.

To create the infrastructure to support the emerging global employment in the borough whilst also creating places for people to collaborate and innovate.

3. PROMOTING HIGH-QUALITY TOWN CENTRE LIVING

Delivering a unique, high-quality, residential offer within the town centre that meets housing need and aspiration. To diversify the borough's housing stock across a mix of typologies and providing the opportunity for a new residential population to thrive as part of the wider placemaking ambitions.

4. CREATING A SUSTAINABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND CONNECTED TOWN CENTRE

To create a more sustainably accessible town centre to make it easier for people to enjoy the services, spaces and amenities that the town centre has to offer.

To improve the transport and digital infrastructure laying the foundations for communities, businesses and visitors to digitally connect, and for businesses and investment to be attracted into the borough.



2. ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE GROWTH

Providing the foundations to attract high-quality employment into the town centre, building on the

To ensure the town centre deals with the effects of climate change and maximises the opportunity for net zero carbon development, with sustainability and climate change at the forefront of its transformation.

5. POSITIVELY CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE TOWN

Positively changing the perceptions of the town and the borough through promoting our heritage, protecting and enhancing our historical assets, the canal and our cultural offer to provide a distinctive experience for visitors, residents and businesses.



6. TO PROVIDE A HEALTHY AND COMMUNITY-FOCUSED TOWN CENTRE

Creating high-quality spaces and places for independent businesses and community functions to thrive, people to dwell and socialise within, providing opportunities for active travel and leisure, and creating a town centre which the people of St Helens are proud of.



Ensuring that connectivity and accessibility for sustainable modes of transport are accommodated within the town centre to increase health and wellbeing.

Greening and improving the public realm to contribute towards net zero carbon, biodiversity and sustainability goals, to the benefit of the existing community and future generations.




















These strategic objectives are in line with the adopted Core Strategy (2012) policies CSS 1, CSD 1, CAS 1, CAS 2, CH 1, CH 2, CE 1, CQL 1, CQL 2, CQL 4 and Saved Policies within the Unitary Development Plan (1998) RET 1, RET 4, ENV 22, ENV 24B, ENV 25, ENV 26, TC 4, TC 5.

The Strategic Objectives also reflect on the policies within the emerging Local Plan which is at Main Modifications Stage (emerging policies): LPA03, LPB01, LPB02, LPC11, LPA07), and align with the proposals set out within the Town Deal.

PROPOSED TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

Key

-  Masterplan Focus
-  1 St Helens Town Hall
-  2 Victoria Square
-  3 The Gamble
-  4 Bus Station
-  5 Road Transport Museum
-  6 Rail Station
-  7 New Market Hall
-  8 Quaker Meeting House
-  9 St Helens College
-  10 Church Square Shopping Centre
-  11 St Helens Parish Church
-  12 New Canal Side Offering
-  13 The World of Glass
-  14 St Helens Chamber
-  15 Improved Link to Stadium & Glass Futures
-  16 Totally Wicked Stadium

The town centre masterplan which accompanies this Masterplan Development Framework sets out a proposed spatial framework for the implementation of the town centre vision and strategic objectives outlined in the previous section.

The Masterplan has been developed around a number of zones or key character areas, opportunity sites, public realm and transport and movement considerations, as well as the consideration of specific urban design principles within each zone.



OVERARCHING SPATIAL CONTEXT

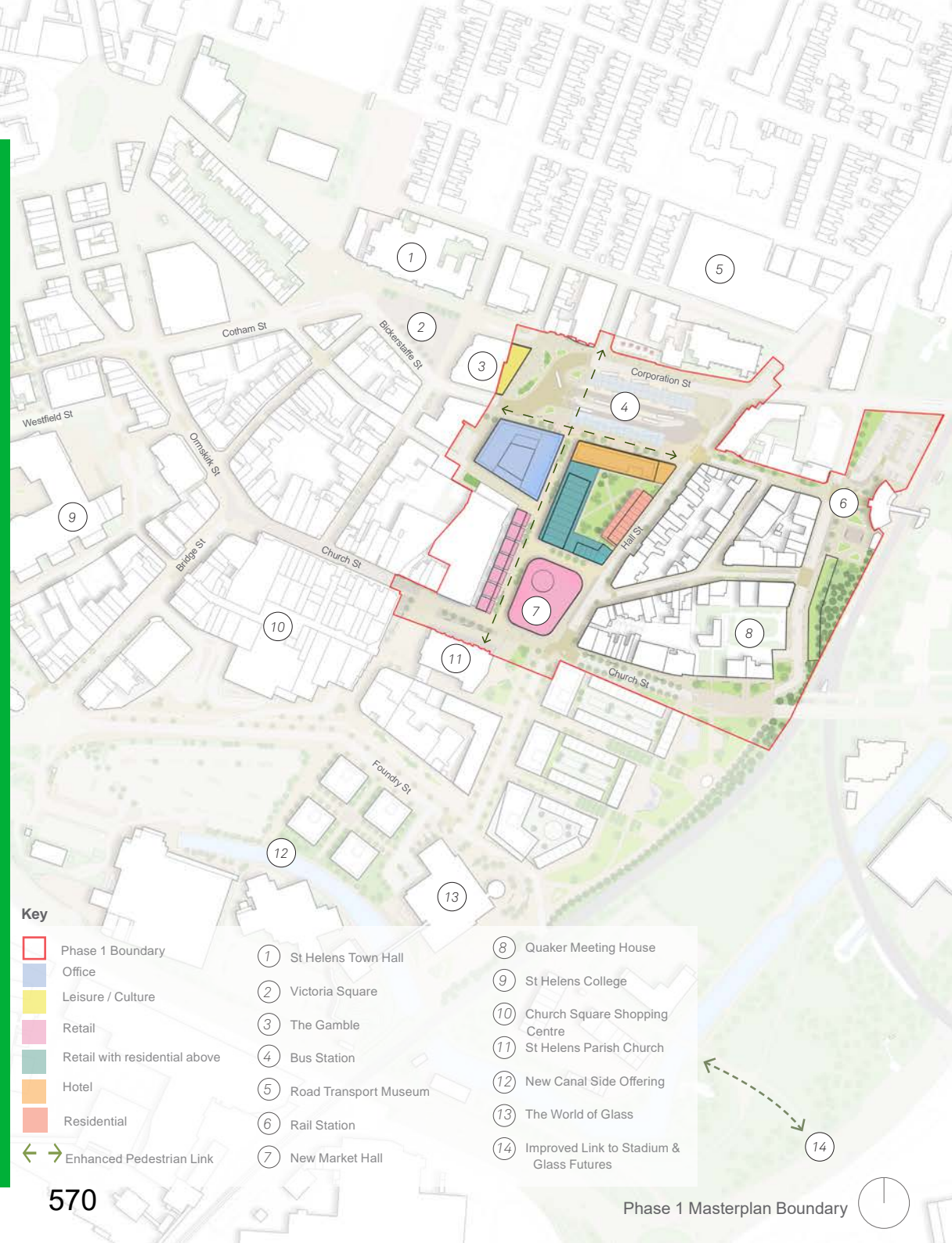
This Masterplan Development Framework will outline the ambition for the whole town centre. The first phase will focus on the heart of the town centre and the immediate deliverable place-making opportunities in and around Church Square. As illustrated, there are important wider links to consider which go beyond the proposed red line or area of intervention; these will be dealt with in complementary masterplans which will come forward in the future.

TO THE SOUTH/SOUTH EAST a key change area is the site of Glass Futures, and the broader opportunity to create a potential Foundation Industries Campus, bringing together innovation in glass and other industries to drive forward the green economic growth of the town and the borough. It is important to emphasise the key links between these opportunities to ensure employment-generating development around Glass Futures is not seen as separate to the activities and change taking place in the town centre; those new employees and businesses are attracted into the town centre for retail, leisure and amenity use during and after the working day.

Likewise, the existing link between the town centre, railway station and rugby stadium are important to enhance the visitor experience and offer a reason for extended visits and return complementary visits.

TO THE NORTH, there are future redevelopment opportunities for the College Street area and the potential to consolidate public sector uses to make more of this key gateway into the town centre. The spatial link between the town centre, through College Street and up to the future housing-led development at Cowley Hill will be important to create, so this future residential community can easily access the offer within the town centre via walking and cycling opportunities.

TO THE WEST, drawing in the existing educational uses and offer provided by St Helens College is key, and making sure that there are spaces, places and a town centre offer that is attractive for students and young people. The areas in and around Westfield Street and Duke Street need consideration too – creating the opportunity for a more diverse and town centre wide evening economy.



DESIGN PRINCIPLES

All development coming forward within the Masterplan Development Framework boundary will adhere to adopted and emerging planning policy and consider the following key design principles.

- Create positive active frontages throughout the town centre, such as leisure, retail and residential at ground level.
- Open up the desire lines improving natural wayfinding and maximising existing landmarks and focal points.
- Create opportunities to provide experiences through a range of placemaking activities and events which animate the spaces and create interest.
- Improve and link public space, historic, cultural buildings, the canal and existing positive streets.
- Increase the footfall throughout the town centre.
- Create new and improved dwell spaces.
- Create a density that is appropriate to a town centre location.
- Draw upon the heritage analysis of the site and street patterns, seeking opportunities to restore the historic street grain pattern with a network of interconnecting shared surface streetscapes.
- Consolidate car parking supply to make car parks more efficient, reduce circulating vehicles in the town centre and promote sustainable travel.
- Adhere to latest guidance on 'Building Better, Building Beautiful'.



PROPOSED CHARACTER ZONES

The town centre area has been divided into four broad character zones, which have been delineated based upon key characteristics. Each zone has an important role to play in the wider transformation of St Helens town centre, and collectively, they will support the delivery of the overarching vision.

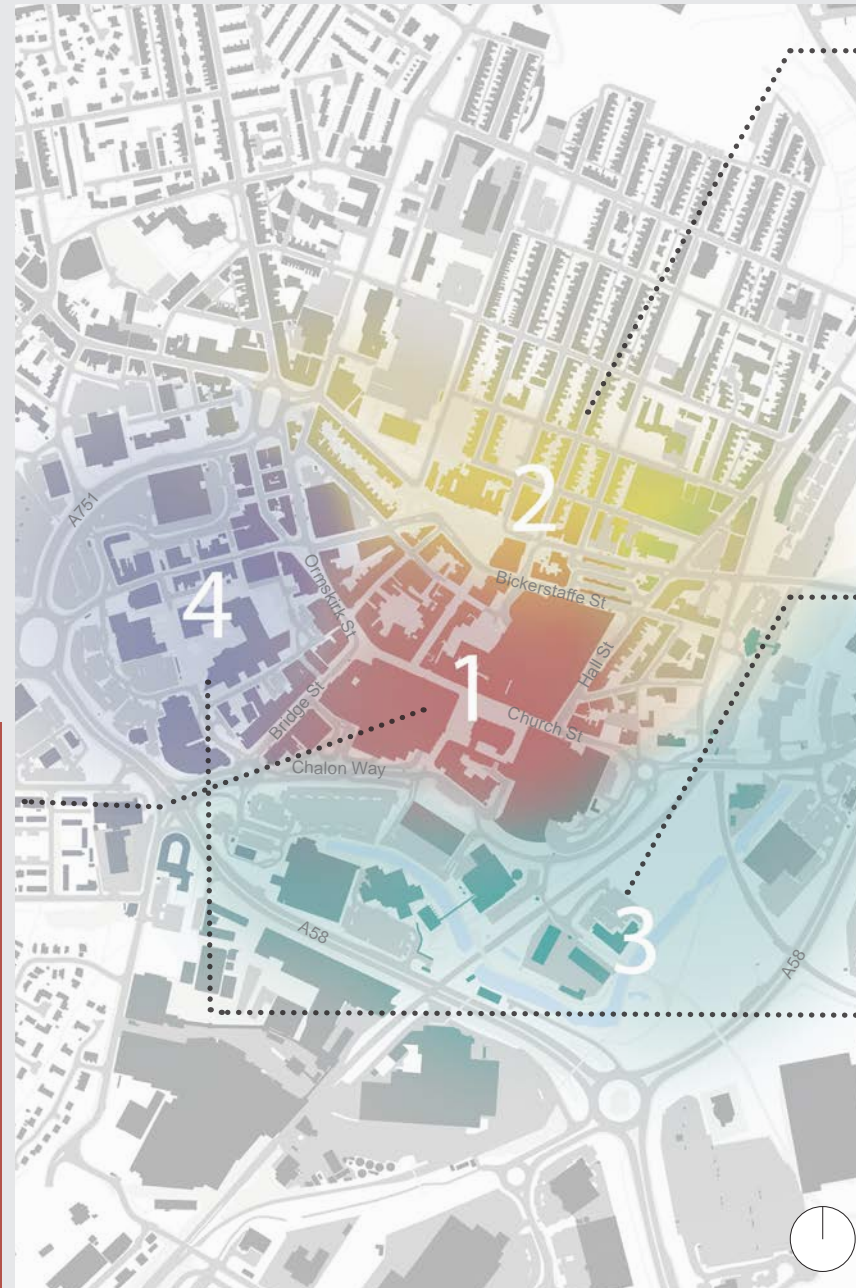
It is important to note that the zones do not represent phasing and delivery priorities. They have been identified based on the types of uses, scale and massing that will be considered in each area.

The zones are set out below, including a summary of the urban design principles and key components that have been considered in each area.

CHARACTER ZONE 1: CENTRAL RETAIL

Encompassing the heart of the town, occupied by traditional high street uses and centred around the Grade II listed St Helens Parish Church, which is a key asset for St Helens and the focus of Church Square. There are opportunities to improve the built environment, landscaping and reduce the dominance of the insular shopping centres which reduce the permeability within the town centre.

The Central Retail zone is bounded by the existing bus station and Cloughton Street to the north, St George's Quarter/Conservation Area to the east, Foundry Street/Chalon Way West to the south, and Bridge Street to the west.



CHARACTER ZONE 2: CIVIC AND HERITAGE

Comprising the area between St Helens Central (rail station), existing bus station around Bickerstaffe Street, George Street Quarter Conservation Area, Victoria Square Conservation Area, and the parcel of land between College Street and Birchley Street. This zone includes many of the town centre's heritage assets.

Development coming forward in this location needs to be sensitive to the unique character of the Conservation Areas – to preserve and/or enhance the heritage assets through bringing forward appropriate and sensitively-considered development in terms of scale, massing and use of materials.

There is a real opportunity in this zone to enhance the quality of the Conservation Areas.

CHARACTER ZONE 3: DISCOVERY

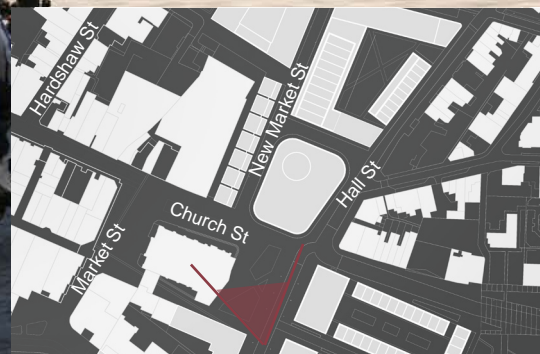
Presents an arc of opportunity for change and future transformation for the town centre. It includes the area in and around the Sankey (St Helens) Canal, important listed structures including the highly significant Tank House, which is both Grade II* listed and a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), being the best surviving example of a late 19th century glassmaking tank furnace building. These important buildings and structures represent the cultural heritage and glass legacy of the borough. The zone is bounded by the Linkway (A58) to the south and east.

CHARACTER ZONE 4: EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

As its name suggests, this part of the town centre includes the St Helens College Campus and is bounded by Linkway West. This area is characterised by education uses, surface car parking, large, big box retailers, leisure uses and provides the focus for the evening economy from Bridge Street and Barrow Street to Westfield Street and extending to Duke Street.



1 CENTRAL RETAIL



CHARACTER ZONE 1

CENTRAL RETAIL

The Central Retail Zone provides the opportunity to create a strong heart and focus to the town centre.

This area relates to the heart of the town, currently occupied by traditional high street uses, and centred around a key asset for St Helens – Church Square and the Grade II listed St Helens Parish Church.

Whilst there has been some private investment here in recent years, which is strongly supported and encouraged, there are clear opportunities in this area to reduce the dominance of the insular shopping centres that reduce the permeability in this part of the town centre and to improve the landscaping and public realm.

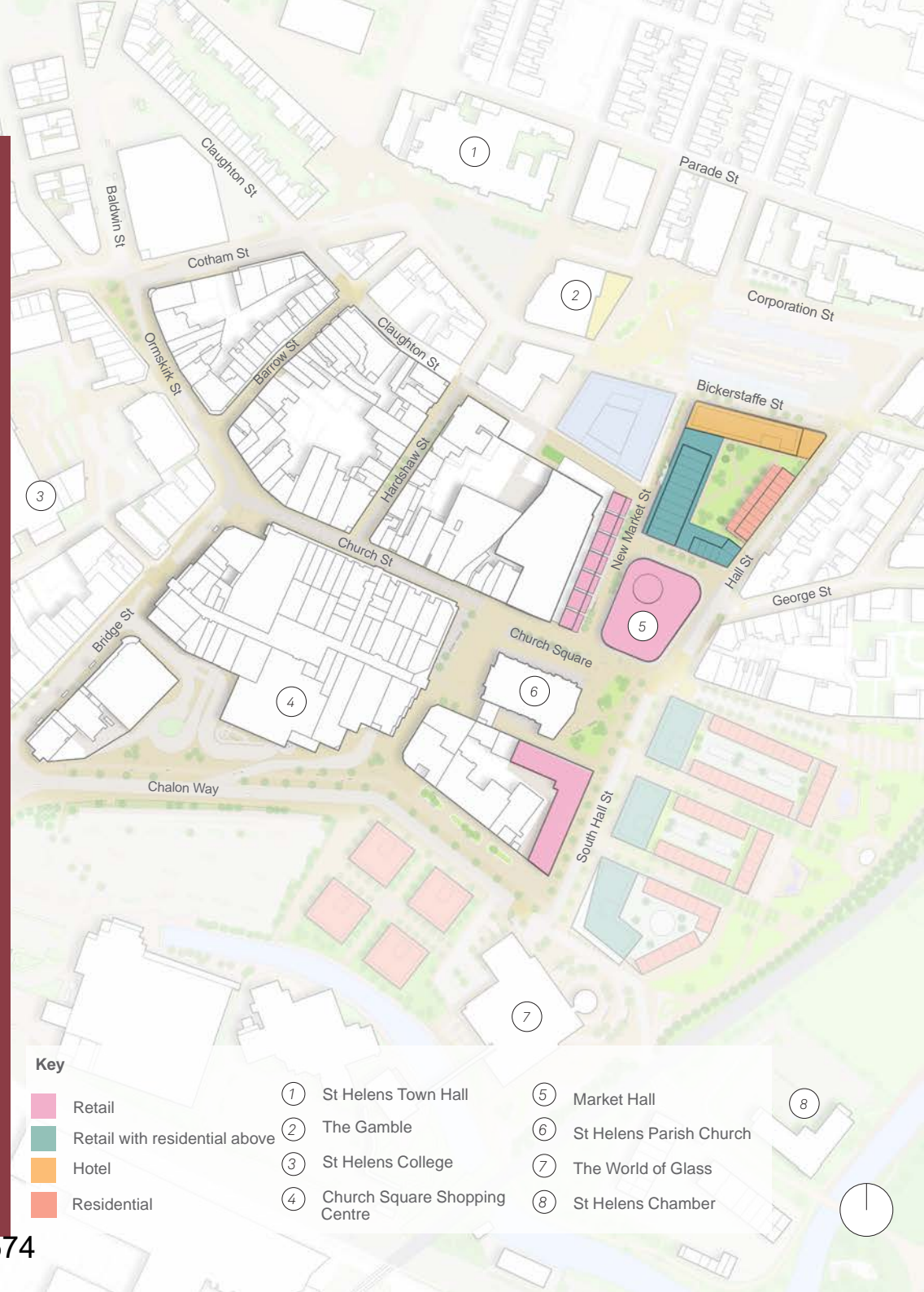
In this context, the ambition here is to demolish the existing Hardshaw Shopping Centre and replace it with a new mixed-use development. This will allow a re-introduction of the original street pattern to create better links north to south through the town centre. The new development will provide a link through from an improved bus station at Bickerstaffe Street through a newly created 'New Market Street' and create a vista down to St Helens Parish Church.

Engagement with existing traders and occupiers will be undertaken to ensure that appropriate alternative premises can be found within the town centre whilst this work is being undertaken.

The development proposes the following:

- New townhouses fronting onto Hall Street (overlooking the George Street Quarter Conservation Area);
- A new hotel, with the opportunity for an active street frontage onto Bickerstaffe Street;
- Small to medium sized retail and leisure units fronting onto the newly created New Market Street at ground floor level and residential apartments above;
- Provision of small-scale retail kiosks to provide the opportunity for independents and start-ups to occupy space within the heart of the town centre; and
- A new market hall occupying the corner of Church Street and Hall Street, with the opportunity for spill-out space in Church Square and in New Market Street.

In the short to medium term, Church Square Shopping Centre will be retained, and façade improvements undertaken. In the longer-term, this area may be revisited in response to prevailing future trends at that time. It will be important to maintain and enhance linkages between Bridge Street and St Helens Parish Church.



Key

- Retail
- Retail with residential above
- Hotel
- Residential

- ① St Helens Town Hall
- ② The Gamble
- ③ St Helens College
- ④ Church Square Shopping Centre
- ⑤ Market Hall
- ⑥ St Helens Parish Church
- ⑦ The World of Glass
- ⑧ St Helens Chamber

CENTRAL RETAIL

PUBLIC REALM

The public realm strategy for this zone will include enhancement of the existing pedestrianised area to the west of the Church and around the Church itself. This will be supplemented by an extension to the pedestrianised environment through the creation of a new Market Street link to the bus station and the spaces and streets around the new market hall building. Hall Street North will be enhanced with wider pavements and street trees with an extension of Hall Street to the South and the World of Glass albeit with a more pedestrian and cycle priority focus.

To emphasise this zone as the centre of the town there will be high-quality surface materials and street furniture, together with the introduction of more soft landscaping and a greener environment to make it a place that encourages people to want to dwell, increase the biodiversity offer and help tackle the climate emergency. The public realm treatments around the periphery of this zone will play a pivotal role in seamlessly knitting together the urban fabric of the other three town centre zone, along with the introduction of high quality public art.

MOVEMENT

Movement in the Central Retail Zone will be focussed on walking and cycling. The area will be largely pedestrianised, and will feature attractive, safe street design that will help to encourage walking, and supplemented by cycle parking directly outside key retail spaces.

Vehicular access for deliveries and servicing will still be provided and controlled through existing, and, where necessary, new or amended Traffic Regulation Orders.

It will be important to ensure clear, legible, and direct walking and cycle connections from the Central Retail Zone to other zone, especially those that contain key onward destinations and public transport connections (such as the reconfigured bus station and St Helens Central rail station).

Following further research and analysis of parking data plus a review of the public responses received during the consultation exercise, it is proposed that a new multi storey car park will be built to help meet the future parking demand requirements of the town having regard to the need to balance the use of more sustainable travel options. This facility will be built to modern functional requirements including appropriate provision for disabled users, parent and child, electric charging points, car share providers, and the storage and hire of e-bikes and e-scooters, etc. The car park will have extended opening times to meet the requirements of the evening economy and be designed to Secure by Design standards with good lighting and CCTV coverage. Potential locations for the new multi storey car park will be explored alongside a delivery plan of the phased development.



CENTRAL RETAIL

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The key move within the Central Retail Zone proposes to increase permeability through the town centre, connecting Church Square back with the town and its key arrival points (bus and rail station) and public spaces. This reintroduction of the historic street pattern breaks down the monolithic scale and footprint of the Hardshaw Shopping Centre making it easier to move and find your way through the town centre.

A new street is proposed which connects the bus station with Church Square, opening up the view of St Helens Parish Church tower, drawing people into the retail core and improving wayfinding.

The urban character of the George Street Quarter, scale and massing, is planned to be reintroduced to Hall Street and to create active frontages and activity at street level, as opposed to the blank façades of the current Hardshaw Shopping Centre. One such way will be to create front doors directly onto Hall Street.

Hall Street is proposed to be extended through Church Square down to The World of Glass, linking a key heritage and cultural asset and putting it back in the heart of the town.

St Marys Market is proposed to be relocated and positioned at the heart of the town centre. This will activate the Church Street and Church Square with space for the stalls and events to spill out into the enhanced public realm, creating activity and vibrancy within the heart of the town centre.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Re-introducing the original historic street pattern to encourage this permeability, breaking up monolithic buildings and introducing development of a more appropriate and 'human-scale' befitting of a town centre.
- Open up the desire lines improving natural wayfinding i.e., simple & intuitive permeability. Ensuring pedestrians and cyclists can permeate through the town centre safely and with ease using the towns wayfinding points by drawing upon the heritage analysis of the site and street patterns.
- Improve and link public space, historic, cultural buildings, canal and existing positive streets.
- Encouraging activity at ground floor level through active frontages, opportunity to make the most of the street and public realm, and creation of 'spill-out' space for occupiers and stallholders.
- High quality public realm and streetscape, with soft landscaping and greening.
- Positive active frontages. Streetscapes are activated through leisure, retail and residential use at ground level, providing an active 24/7 town centre.
- Creating a density appropriate to a town centre location.

PREFERRED USES

- Mixed use, retail and leisure led development with a variety of unit sizes to accommodate local independents as well as options for high street multiples where appropriate;
- High quality residential.

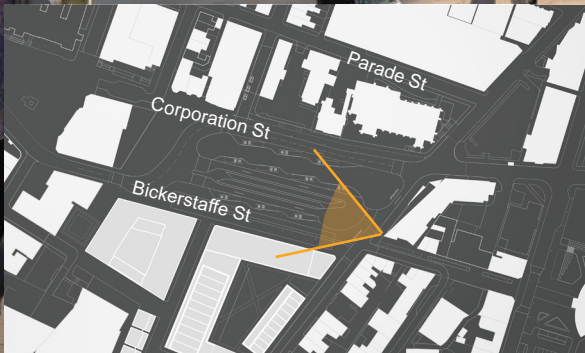


CGI of Church Square Subject to Design Development



2

CIVIC AND HERITAGE



CGI of proposed Bickerstaffe Street subject to design development

CHARACTER ZONE 2

CIVIC AND HERITAGE

The Civic and Heritage Zone includes some of the town's key heritage buildings and assets, which are recognised given that the zone includes two Conservation Areas – George Street and Victoria Square. The Conservation Area status means that more robust planning considerations are imposed, and in line with the NPPF, development coming forward in these locations must respect the Conservation Area, and where possible seek out opportunities for new development that enhance and make a positive contribution to heritage assets contained within the Area¹⁷.

The Zone encompasses:

- The area around St Helens Central Railway Station and the George Street Conservation Area, spanning from Church Street/Parr Street to the south, just beyond Corporation Street to the north, and Hall Street to the west;
- The area from Hall Street through to Victoria Square, including the bus station, transport museum, The Gamble and Town Hall buildings; and
- The area between College Street and Birchley Street, including Birchley Street Car Park, Police Station and Law Courts.

Within this part of the town centre there is the opportunity to create more of a civic heart to St Helens, building on the existing assets of the Town Hall and the Gamble Building and focusing on the spaces between these buildings to create a space where people want to dwell. Equally important is the need to define a positive arrival point into the town centre – both from St Helens Central Rail Station and the bus station as key public transport nodes for St Helens.

Development within the Civic and Heritage Zone includes the following:

- A new Commercial Office to provide high-quality employment space for the town centre;
- A redesigned bus station to provide a more pleasant and safer environment for pedestrians;
- The creation of a new public square to the rear of the Gamble building;
- Improved landscaping and public realm from St Helens Central Train Station, along Bickerstaffe Street and into Victoria Square;



¹⁷ NPPF (2021) Paragraph 206

CIVIC AND HERITAGE

Whilst not proposed as forming part of the Phase 1 proposals, there is also the future ambition to further enhance Victoria Square and create a dual frontage to the Gamble building that, through sensitive extension works, could create a second entrance connecting to and over-looking the improved bus station.

PUBLIC REALM

This zone of the town benefits from having some beautiful heritage buildings and so the public realm should complement and enhance their setting to provide opportunities for people to dwell and enjoy them. The creation of a new plaza at the rail station will enhance the sense of arrival into the town at this key gateway. Clear wayfinding and landscape design should provide legible pedestrian routes to orientate visitors towards the bus station along Bickerstaffe Street and the heart of the Civic and Heritage Zone.

The environment around the re-configured bus station will be much improved with the pedestrianisation of Bickerstaffe Street and the removal of unnecessary highway clutter to create plenty of space for pedestrians to move and dwell. High quality surface materials, furniture and soft landscaping such as rain gardens will further enhance the experience of this area. The creation of a public space linking the Theatre Royal and The Gamble will allow these significant civic assets to breathe, enhancing their offer and the way people interact with them.

MOVEMENT

The Civic and Heritage Zone will, through some subtle changes to access and movement configuration, see a significant improvement to the way people can move

about the town centre. Underpinning this is the newly reconfigured and expanded bus station.

Located on the existing site, the bus station will no longer be surrounded by circulating bus movements, acting as a barrier to north-south pedestrian footfall. Enhanced crossing amenity adjacent to the bus station will help achieve this, and the rationalisation of operational bus movements and layover space to within the footprint of the bus station, rather than on the adjacent Corporation Street, will make things clearer and safer for all town centre visitors.

Bickerstaffe Street is proposed to be closed off to traffic to enable a much improved, clear connection between the Town Hall and points to the west of the town, and Central rail station in the east. This change will also help to better connect the bus station with the Central Retail Zone.

Increased public realm space and widened footways/cycleways will replace a route that is currently used by circulating buses and taxis. Enhanced and enlarged public realm space, to better accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, will also be provided outside the Gamble building (referenced here as 'Gamble Square') and on the northern side of Corporation Street, enhancing access to and enlivening the frontage to features such as the Theatre Royal and the transport museum.

In order to accommodate east to west movements for deliveries, servicing and taxis, Corporation Street is proposed to be made 2-way.

Use of appropriate surface materials will help to soften the principle of this route being a road for motorised vehicles and bring it closer to the look and feel of a shared space.



CIVIC AND HERITAGE

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Civic and Heritage Zone contains two key arrival points into St Helens town centre, by bus and train, and so is a place where people's first impressions of St Helens are formed. A key move has been to link these arrival points and maximise the public realm, reducing the dominance of vehicles, creating spaces to meet, dwell and find your bearings.

The new station plaza serving the rail station is better linked down Bickerstaffe Street to the bus station and beyond to Victoria Square, creating a joined-up transport hub for buses, trains, and cycles, and making both arrivals and onward connections easier.

An improved Bus Station with a key focus on the pedestrian experience is proposed to be overlooked by a new hotel, conveniently located next to the transport hub and providing 24-hour activity.

The new Gamble Square bounded by the Gamble Building, the Theatre Royal, Holy Cross and Saint Helen Catholic Church, the Millennium Centre plus a potential new office and hotel will become a destination in itself, now linked directly with Church Square with views of St Helens Parish Church tower.

The scale and massing of the buildings round the new Gamble Square and bus station can be higher. Mediating between the residential scale of Hall Street at 2 to 3 storeys and the significantly taller civic buildings of the Gamble, Town Hall, and Century House.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- The creation of a joined-up transport hub, bus, rail, and cycle linking to destination buildings and public spaces with onward connections to retail.
- Arrival points feed through the retail zone increasing footfall providing places to dwell linking to all the 4 zones and dispersing beyond.
- Open up the desire lines improving natural wayfinding i.e., simple & intuitive permeability. Ensuring pedestrians and cyclists can permeate through the town centre safely and with ease using the town's wayfinding points by drawing upon the heritage analysis of the site and street patterns.
- Improve and link public space, historic, cultural buildings, canal and existing positive streets.
- Positive active frontages. Streetscapes are activated through leisure, retail and residential use at ground level, providing an active 24/7 town centre.
- Create dwell spaces.
- Infill gap sites creating a density and quality appropriate to a town centre location.
- Respecting the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas – both George Street and Victoria Square.

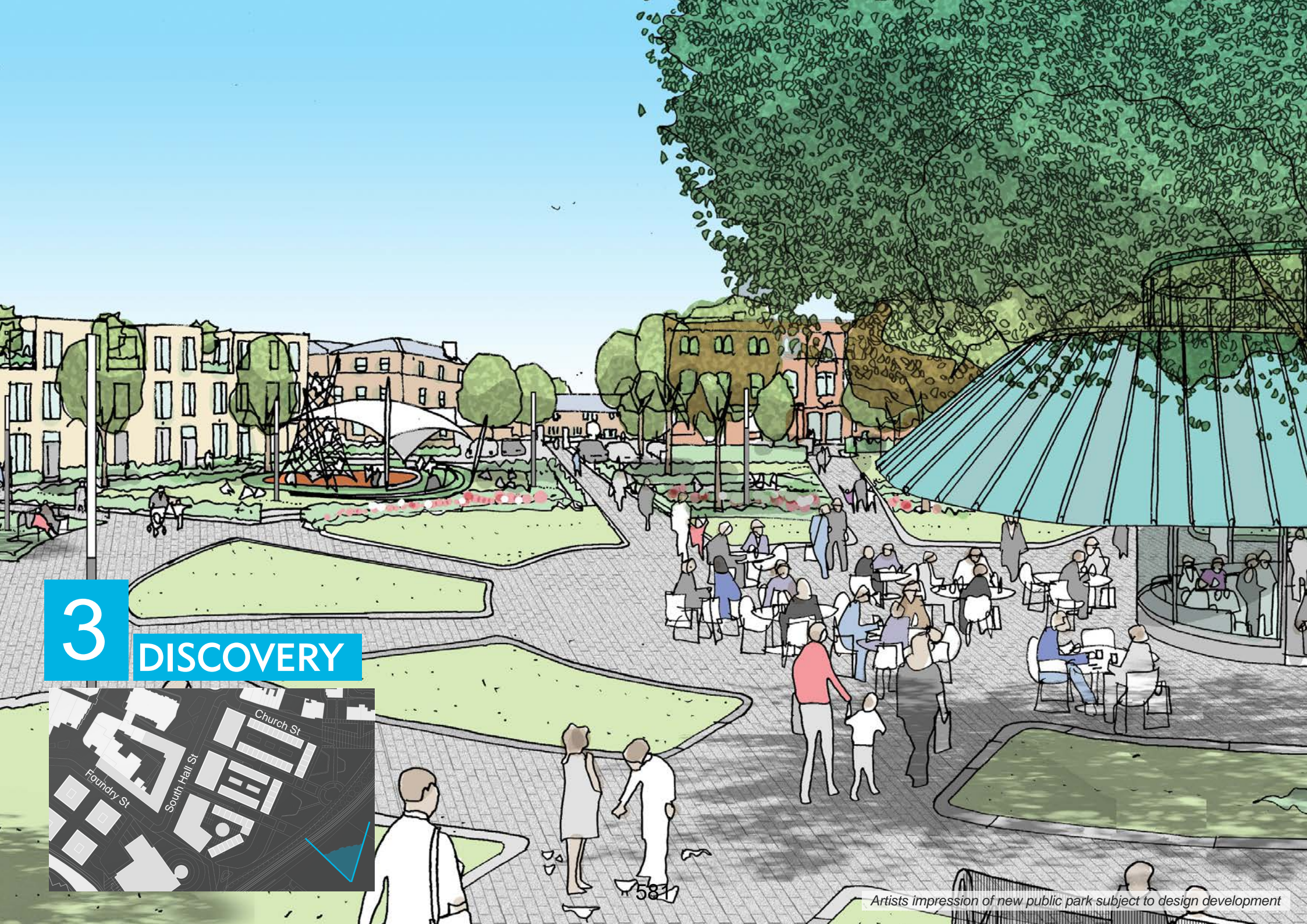
PREFERRED USES

- High-quality transport facilities;
- Commercial-led development at an appropriate scale and massing;
- Ancillary retail and leisure led development;
- High-quality public realm and landscaping;
- Community-focused buildings and amenities;
- High quality residential.



3

DISCOVERY



Artists impression of new public park subject to design development

CHARACTER ZONE 3

DISCOVERY

The Discovery Zone includes the area from Church Street to the north (currently occupied by St Mary's Shopping Centre and existing market hall), The World of Glass, and the area around the Sankey Canal. This part of the town centre is currently dominated by highway infrastructure.

This part of the town centre at present feels disconnected from the retail core, hindered by the lack of visual links down towards the canal but at the same time includes several the town's key assets. Through the implementation of the Masterplan Framework over time, by undertaking some key urban design moves, such assets will be better presented and will help to contribute to the uniqueness of St Helens town centre.

The development proposes the following:

- St Mary's Shopping Centre and associated multi-storey car park is proposed to be demolished and over time, to be replaced by new residential development. These sites can come forward in phases dependent upon market requirements and will likely be a mix of townhouses and apartments.
- Closing off a significant part of Chalon Way to through-traffic, allowing the improvement of pedestrian movement through this part of the town. In order to continue to allow buses to move from Foundry Street to the bus station, it is proposed that a new link from Foundry Street to Hall Street will be constructed.
- Through the calming/ de-engineering of Chalon Way, there is the opportunity to replace existing hard infrastructure with a pleasant green space providing improved amenity space within the town centre.
- There are opportunities here longer-term to create development sites in and around the canal, improving the environment and public realm around The World of Glass and developing the former Chalon Way Car Park site.
- Through implementing these key moves, this part of the town centre will be better connected into the retail core as well as to the Chamber of Commerce, the Stadium, the proposed new Youth Hub that forms part of the Town Deal initiative, and the area which is being developed for Glass Futures.



Key

■ Retail with residential above

■ Future mixed-use development

↔ Link to Stadium & Future Development Site

① St Helens Town Hall

② The Gamble

③ Rail Station

④ St Helens College

⑤ Church Square Shopping Centre

⑥ St Helens Parish Church

⑦ The World of Glass

⑧ St Helens Chamber

⑨ Mixed-use development to succeed container based meanwhile uses

⑩ Improved Link to Stadium & Glass Futures

DISCOVERY

PUBLIC REALM

The jewel in the crown of this Masterplan Development Framework from a public realm perspective is the creation of Discovery Park. A large new green space in the centre of the town. An opportunity for increasing the number of trees, planting and lawn areas which will bring multiple benefits to the people of St Helens as well as for biodiversity. Access to high quality green space has huge benefits to people's wellbeing whilst also helping to tackle issues of flooding and reducing the carbon footprint of urban environments.

The Park on the former Chalon Way carriageway will provide an enhanced pedestrian and cycle link between the Town Deal Youth Hub project, St Helens Central Rail Station and the canal, The World of Glass, the Chamber of Commerce, the stadium, and Glass Futures. Opportunities for including children's play, heritage trails and nature areas will be explored.

The external environment around The World of Glass and connections to the canal is a key focus and has great potential to provide a unique public realm offer for the town centre. Opportunities that encourage people to be able to better interact with the water and outdoor exhibition space for the museum will be explored.

MOVEMENT

The Discovery Zone is likely to see a radical transformation in terms of access and movement. The uninviting, over-engineered, car-dominated appearance of the existing Chalon Way will be replaced by a cleaner, greener, more inviting pedestrian and cycle enabled link that will help to connect Central Rail Station with key destinations to the south of the town, for example The World of Glass, the Chamber of Commerce, the Stadium and Glass Futures beyond.

Chalon Way will be closed off as a through route for vehicles, including for buses, with provision being made for them to use a new link from Foundry Street to Hall Street, creating more access options to the bus station and penetrating the town better.

This change is in response to the need to create stronger public realm along the Chalon Way/Foundry Street corridor, linking key land uses together, and in response to potential changes in car parking locations. Access to all properties will be carefully considered to ensure they can be serviced effectively. Ultimately, the aim is to reduce unnecessary and harmful through traffic in the town centre.

Access to new residential areas will be provided, but through movement for general traffic from south-north will be discouraged.



DISCOVERY

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The de-engineering and re-routing of Chalon Way opens up this side of the town and the canal basin, drawing it back into the town centre.

The new Discovery Park provides a green amenity space and positive edge to the town and rail line. The Park enhances the setting for the historic Quaker Meeting House linking it with The World of Glass and beyond to the Chamber of Commerce, the Stadium and Glass Futures.

The character and scale of the George Street Quarter is pulled south along the eastern edge of the park, with the new streets linking it up with Church Square and the New Hall Street South, improving permeability.

At the southern end of the park to the west of The World of Glass, new development activates the canal edge and links it back with the town centre. The creation of this positive and permeable edge along the rail line and canal, helps to reinforce existing links, opening up the sites for development. Once developed, this will contribute positively to the sense of arrival into St Helens town centre.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- The de-engineering and re-routing of Chalon Way opens up this side of the town and the

canal basin, drawing it back into the town centre.

- The new Discovery Park provides a green amenity space and positive edge to the town and rail line. The Park creates a new setting for historic and cultural buildings and enhanced green public realm.
- Open up the desire lines improving natural way-finding i.e. simple & intuitive permeability. Ensuring pedestrians and cyclists can permeate through the town centre safely and with ease using the towns way-finding points by drawing upon the heritage analysis of the site and street patterns.
- Positive active frontages. Streetscapes are activated through leisure, retail and residential use at ground level, providing an active 24/7 town centre.
- Arrival points feed through the retail quarter increasing footfall providing places to dwell linking to all the 4 zones and dispersing beyond.
- Creating a density appropriate to a town centre location whilst respecting our historic buildings.
- Consolidate car parking supply to make car parks more efficient, reduce circulating vehicles in the town centre and promote sustainable travel.

PREFERRED USES

- High quality residential;
- Ancillary retail and leisure led development;
- High-quality public realm and landscaping;
- Cultural assets and buildings.





4

EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

CHARACTER ZONE 4

EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

This area lies to the west of the primary shopping area and includes St Helens College Campus, Westfield Street and leisure/food and beverage uses, extending out towards Duke Street.

Proposed future development in this zone is, for now, focused on enhancements to the public realm, pedestrian, and cyclist connectivity. This includes:

- Enhancing the landscaping and public realm within Westfield Street, to create a more pleasant experience for pedestrians;
- Providing improved pedestrian and cyclist connectivity over the Linkway to provide better connections to local communities who live close by.

PUBLIC REALM

The key focus for the public realm within the Education and Entertainment Zone is to improve the pedestrian environment of the existing streets and spaces that connect key assets. To enhance the pedestrian experience within them and improve movement between this Zone, the Central Retail Zone and the Civic and Heritage Zone.

There are some key streets that provide important access routes into the town centre and these would benefit from widened footpaths where possible, the de-cluttering and rationalisation of street furniture, the provision of more courtesy pedestrian crossings at key locations and more street trees.

Westfield Street in particular has the opportunity to be enhanced into a high-quality pedestrian priority street that should stimulate the regeneration of businesses within this area.

Key

- ① LIDL
- ② Sports Direct
- ③ Wilko
- ④ Beecham Building
- ⑤ Imperial Food and Drink Quarter
- ⑥ St Helens College
- ⑦ Cineworld Cinema
- ⑧ Church Square Shopping Centre



EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

MOVEMENT

This success of this zone will be determined through providing strong access and movement connections to the adjacent zones. There are some challenges in this area that need to be overcome, not least the current barrier of the ring road (referred to as essentially forming a 'concrete collar' around the southern part of the town).

Schemes such as the Town Deal 'Connected Places' project - which proposes the installation of new footways/cycleways traversing the St Helens Linkway - will help to improve crossing amenity of the ring road to better connect areas to the south and east of the town. It is vital that strong connections can be made to the Central Retail, Civic and Heritage and Discovery Zones for pedestrians, cyclists, and bus users.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The buildings within the Education and Entertainment Zone create a strong street frontage with a real positive human scale to the streets; however, the public realm needs repairing. The proposed improvements to the buildings and public realm will link this with the other zones and over the bypass.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Improve and link public space and existing positive streets.
- Open up desire lines to improve natural wayfinding i.e., simple & intuitive permeability, ensuring pedestrians and cyclists can permeate through the town centre safely and with ease using the towns wayfinding points by drawing upon the heritage analysis of the site and street patterns.
- Positive active frontages with streetscapes are activated through leisure, retail, and residential use at ground level, providing an active 24/7 town centre.
- Consolidate car parking supply to make car parks more efficient, reduce circulating vehicles in the town centre and promote sustainable travel.

PREFERRED USES

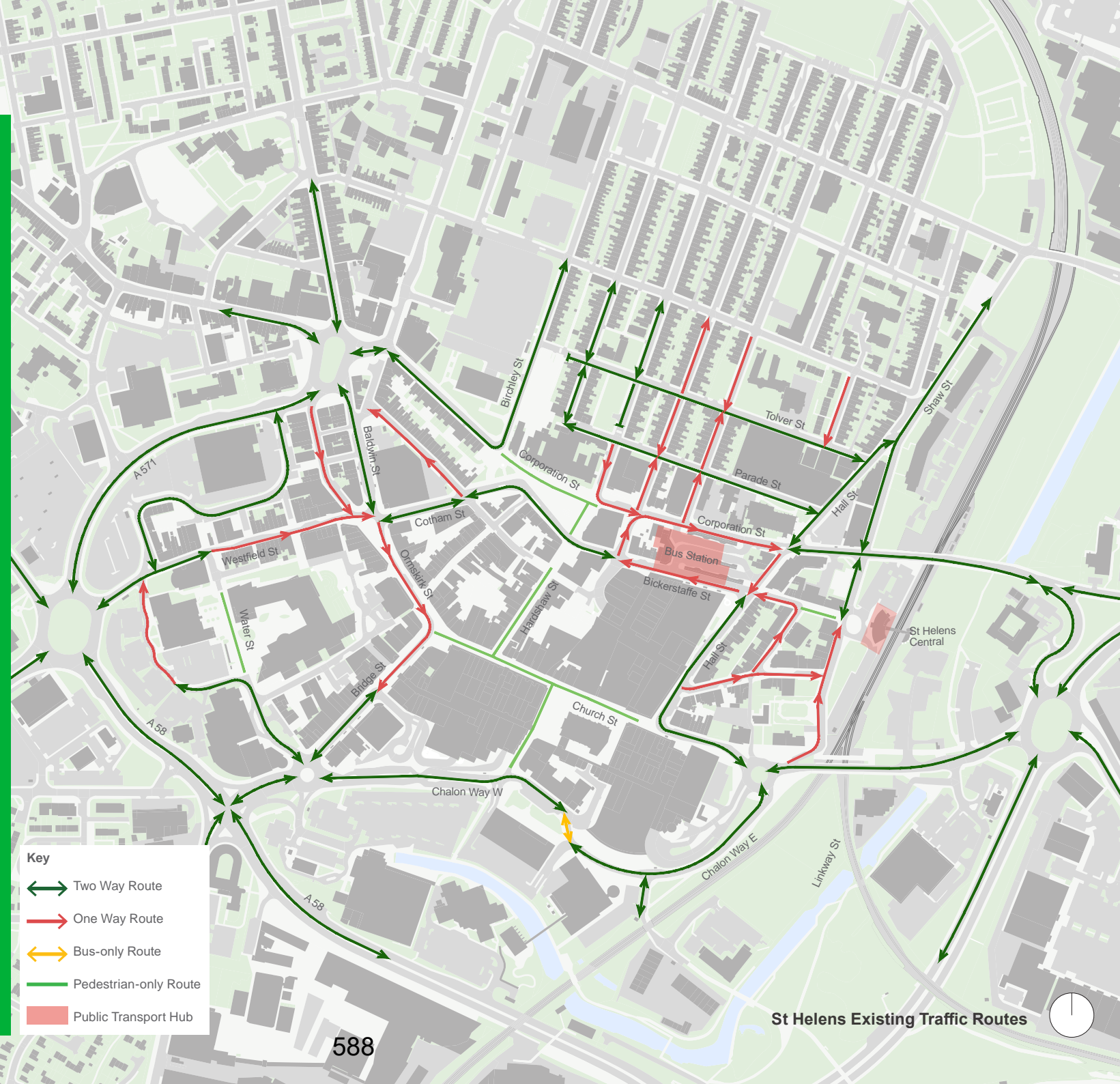
- Mixed use, retail and leisure led development with a variety of unit sizes to accommodate local independents as well as options for high street multiples occupiers where appropriate;
- Education-related uses associated with St Helens College aligning with their forthcoming masterplan;
- High quality public realm and landscaping; Encourage high quality evening economy uses, such as the growing independent sector on Barrow Street.



STRATEGY

The Masterplan Development Framework proposes the following changes which will have particular implications for transport:

- Bus Station reconfiguration and enhancement of the link between bus station and rail station;
- Removal of some car parks, notably St Mary's and Hardshaw Centre car parking provision;
- Re-provision of parking facilities at suitable locations that are to be informed by a new parking strategy;
- Access only provision to new residential development in the south east of the Masterplan Framework area;
- Creation of a pedestrian link through what is currently the Hardshaw Centre; and
- Development and enhancement of a pedestrian route and green park towards the Stadium.



Key

↔ Two Way Route

→ One Way Route

→ Bus-only Route

— Pedestrian-only Route

■ Public Transport Hub

St Helens Existing Traffic Routes

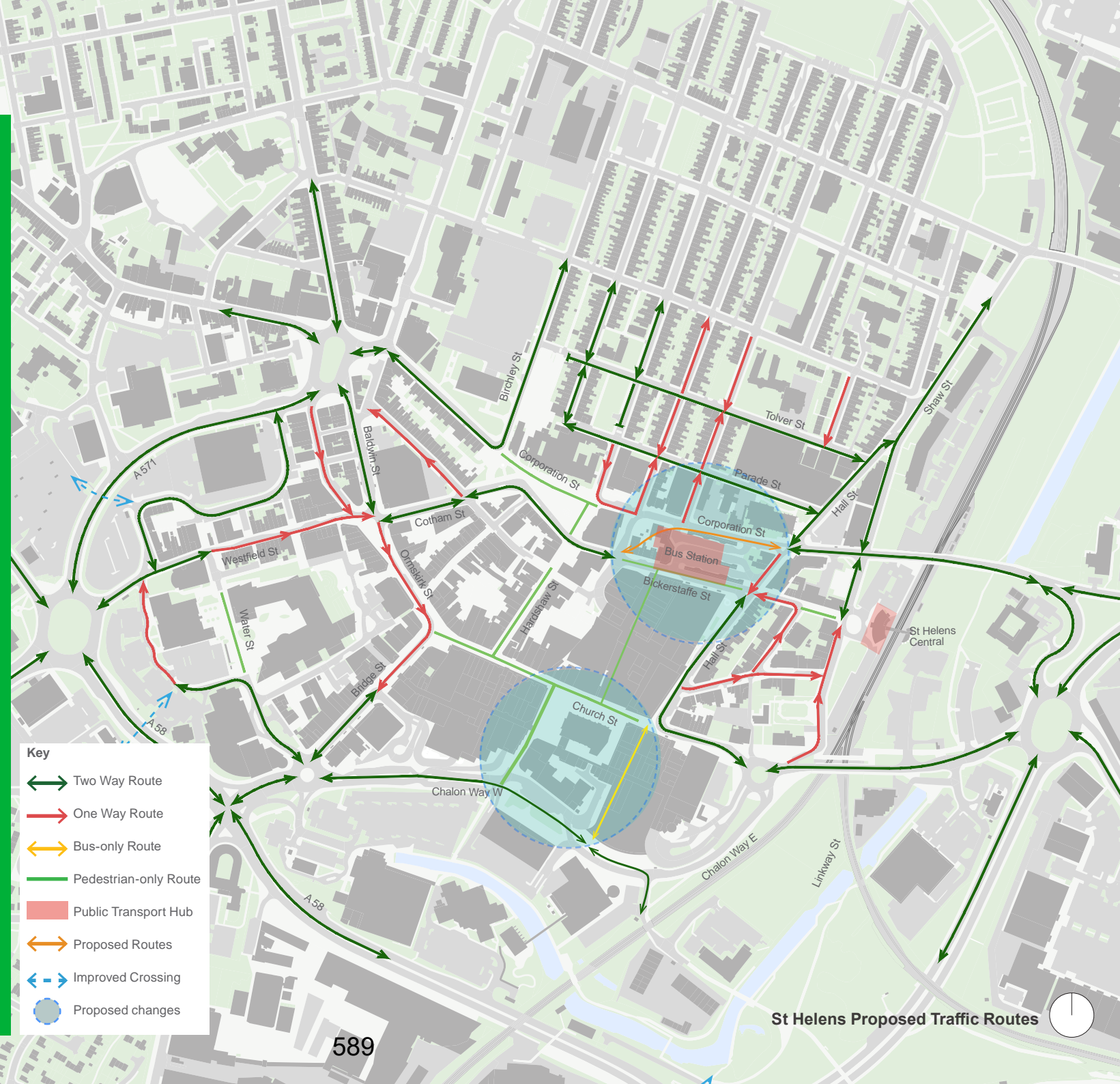
MOVEMENT STRATEGY

A RECONFIGURED BUS STATION

Reconfiguration of the bus station is proposed within the Masterplan to enhance the streetscape and enable more efficient transport movements. The bus station will be reconfigured to make space more efficient and enable passengers to board or alight more easily. A north-south pedestrian prioritised route through the bus station will connect the theatre and transport museum to the retail core.

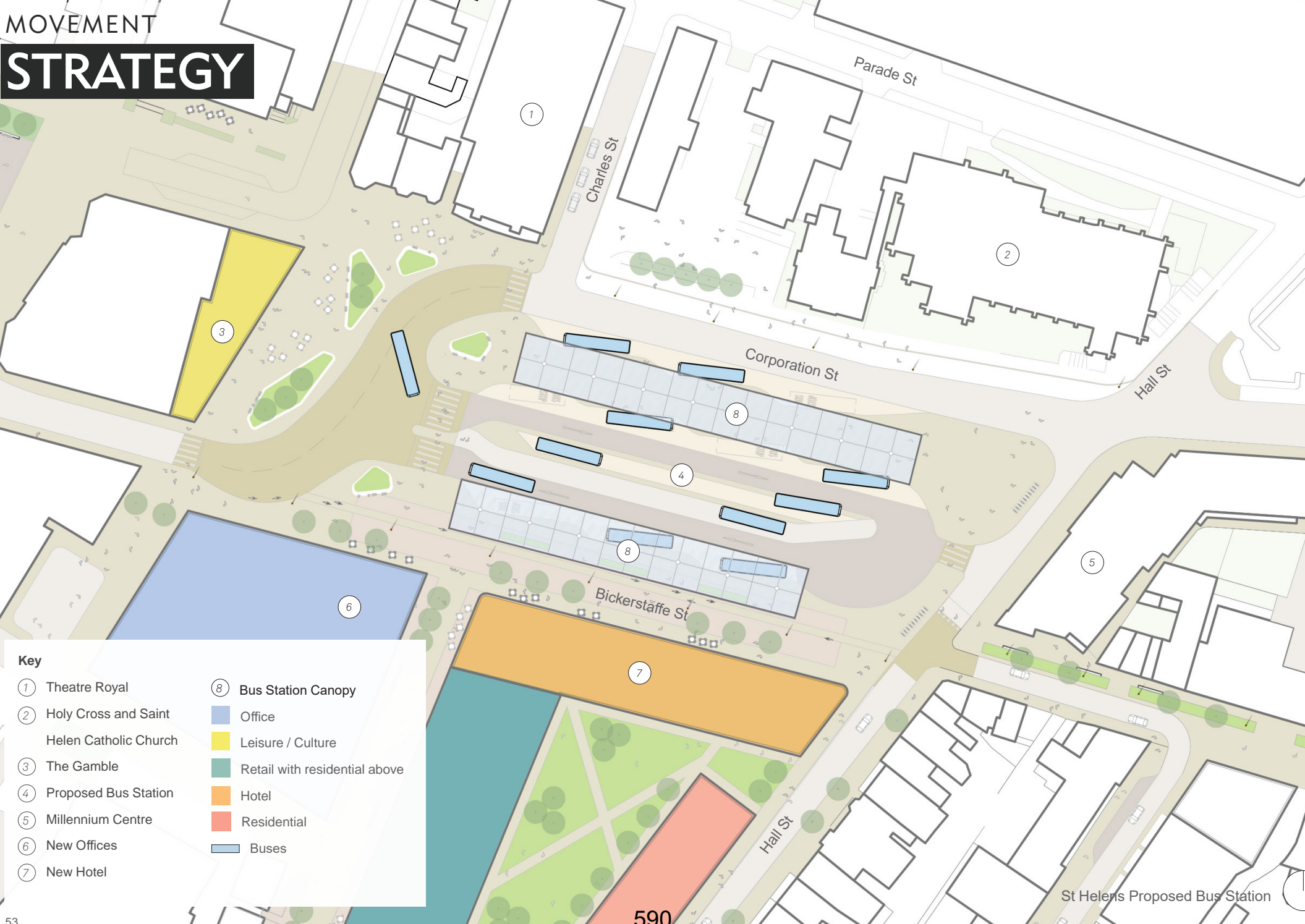
The enhancement of these north-south connections is expected to increase the footfall within the town centre due to the introduction of a pedestrian link through the existing Hardshaw Centre. This will enable pedestrians to access the bus station and consequently the rail station easier from the centre of town and connect other wider attractions such as the museum and theatre.

These interventions aim to increase footfall between the bus station, key attractions, and shops, making the town centre better connected and easier to navigate.









MOVEMENT

STRATEGY



Key

- | | |
|--|---|
| ① Theatre Royal | ⑧ Bus Station Canopy |
| ② Holy Cross and Saint Helen Catholic Church |  Office |
| |  Leisure / Culture |
| ③ The Gamble |  Retail with residential above |
| ④ Proposed Bus Station |  Hotel |
| ⑤ Millennium Centre |  Residential |
| ⑥ New Offices |  Buses |
| ⑦ New Hotel | |

PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

Key



Primary Pedestrian Link



Secondary Pedestrian Link



New Pedestrian Link



Enhanced Pedestrianised Street



Enhanced Street



Key Green Space



Key Civic Space



Market Canopy



Improved Junction



Focal Point



Key Gateway



Enhanced Edges



Existing Pedestrianised Street



THE PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY FOR ST HELENS HAS THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

- Establish a strong hierarchy of streets and spaces that prioritise pedestrians and cyclists;
- Improve strategic connections between the key assets and destinations within the town centre and beyond;
- Provide a mix of public space opportunities that encourages people to engage with their environment and community;
- Create a unique and distinctive town centre including introducing public art within streets and spaces to create local landmarks and aid with legibility; and
- Support the development of key sites and encourage investment in the town centre.

THE STRATEGY CONCENTRATES ON THE FOLLOWING KEY ELEMENTS:

- The creation of a new arrival gateway space at the rail station, including the new 'Gamble Square';
- The pedestrianisation of a section of Bickerstaffe Street and improving the environment around the re-modelled bus station;
- The upgrading of Hall Street whilst extending it to the south to connect with The World of Glass and the canal;
- The creation of a direct pedestrian link between Church Square and the bus station / theatre and residential neighbourhoods to the north;
- Provide improved pedestrian and cycle links with the Education and Leisure Zone

and facilities to the west of the town centre including Duke Street; and

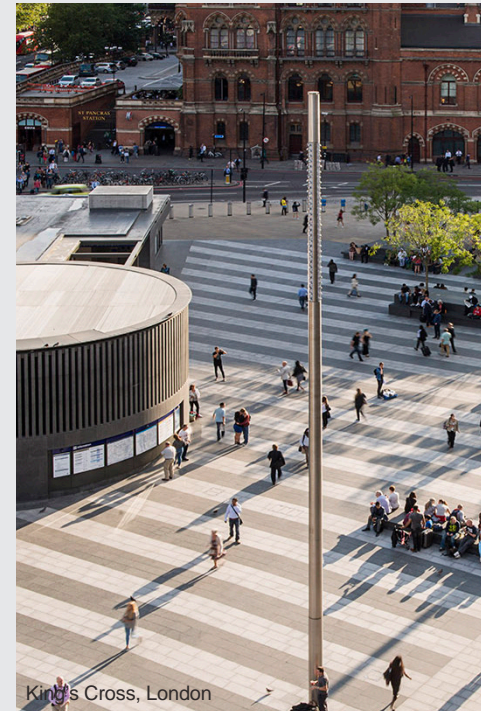
- The creation of a significant new green space in the heart of the town with improved links to the canal, Chamber of Commerce, stadium, Glass Futures, and proposed Youth Hub initiative.

THE FUTURE STRATEGY PRIORITISES THE IMPROVEMENT OF EXISTING SPACES AND THE CREATION OF NEW ONES.

A range of new public spaces include:

- A gateway space by the rail station to improve the sense of arrival in the town.
- A cultural space by The World of Glass.
- A significant new green space with opportunities for sculpture, play and enhanced biodiversity in the heart of the town.
- A new civic space outside the Theatre Royal with connections across to The Gamble and pedestrianised space along Bickerstaffe Street.

The enhancement of existing streets such as Hall Street through the widening and enhancement of footpaths, introduction of street trees, rationalising parking, and general decluttering. The creation of new pedestrian priority streets and routes will improve the permeability of the town centre and strengthen connections between the town's key transport nodes, assets, zones and neighbourhoods.



King's Cross, London



Bad Salzungen, Germany



Sheffield Gold Route



Shaw Street, Altrincham

STRATEGY

A key cross-cutting theme and objective for the Masterplan Development Framework is sustainability and ensuring that key sustainability principles are adhered to. This approach is in line with the pledge that St Helens Council has made; to meet zero carbon status by 2040 and address the impact that climate change is having on the borough. It will be vital to deliver a town centre that is future-proofed to be able to respond to the climate emergency, deliver low carbon buildings, increase biodiversity across the town centre and reduced waste through construction and operational activities.

ECF as St Helens Borough Council's partner has also agreed a Sustainable Development Strategy and prepared a robust Sustainable Development Brief which sets out the following key objectives that all new development and projects should meet. Other development coming forward within St Helens town centre will also be encouraged to sign up to these sustainability principles, in addition to those set out within the emerging Local Plan.

**NET ZERO CARBON**

To be net zero carbon in construction and during operation

**ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY**

Delivering a net gain in biodiversity, whilst providing high quality green spaces

**CIRCULAR ECONOMY**

Eliminating waste and improving resource efficiency through circularity

**HEALTH & WELL-BEING**

Delivering high quality spaces where people can live, work and thrive while positively impacting their physical and mental health

**SOCIAL VALUE**

The positive social, economic and environmental outcomes that we create for individuals, businesses and the government through our development activities.

**WIDER SUSTAINABILITY**

Capturing wider sustainability issues such as Water, Transport & Certification

As the design of each building progresses, key performance targets will be set for each of the six objectives, including the level of embodied carbon, operational energy levels, percentage increase in biodiversity etc. These targets will be monitored and recorded as the design is progressed and will then form a key part of the Building Agreement which the Contractor will be contractually obliged to deliver against.



DELIVERY STRATEGY

In order to deliver this extensive and ambitious masterplan, the proposals are to be phased. The proposed phasing will look to minimise disruption in the town centre, to protect the operation of existing businesses and traffic/pedestrian movements. There will however need to be several existing retail businesses relocated from their premises into alternative units, to facilitate the works. This will be done during the pre-commencement phase of works through positive engagement with the individual businesses that are directly affected, which will inform a co-designed Phase 1 Delivery Strategy.

PHASE 1

The scale of Phase 1 development is significant and will create a hugely positive impact on the town centre. The detailed scope of the proposed Phase 1 is listed below, and will create: new high quality office space, high quality homes, an international hotel brand, a revitalised market hall and an enhanced bus station.

Linking all these proposals together will be high quality public realm that will create new pedestrianised streets and public squares, increasing biodiversity through quality landscaping and creating a place that will attract more residents, visitors and business to St Helens.

The proposed Phase 1 will comprise:

- The new and extended bus station, future-proofing the provision of bus services in St Helens;
- The creation of the new Gamble Square, the pedestrianisation of Bickerstaffe Street and the

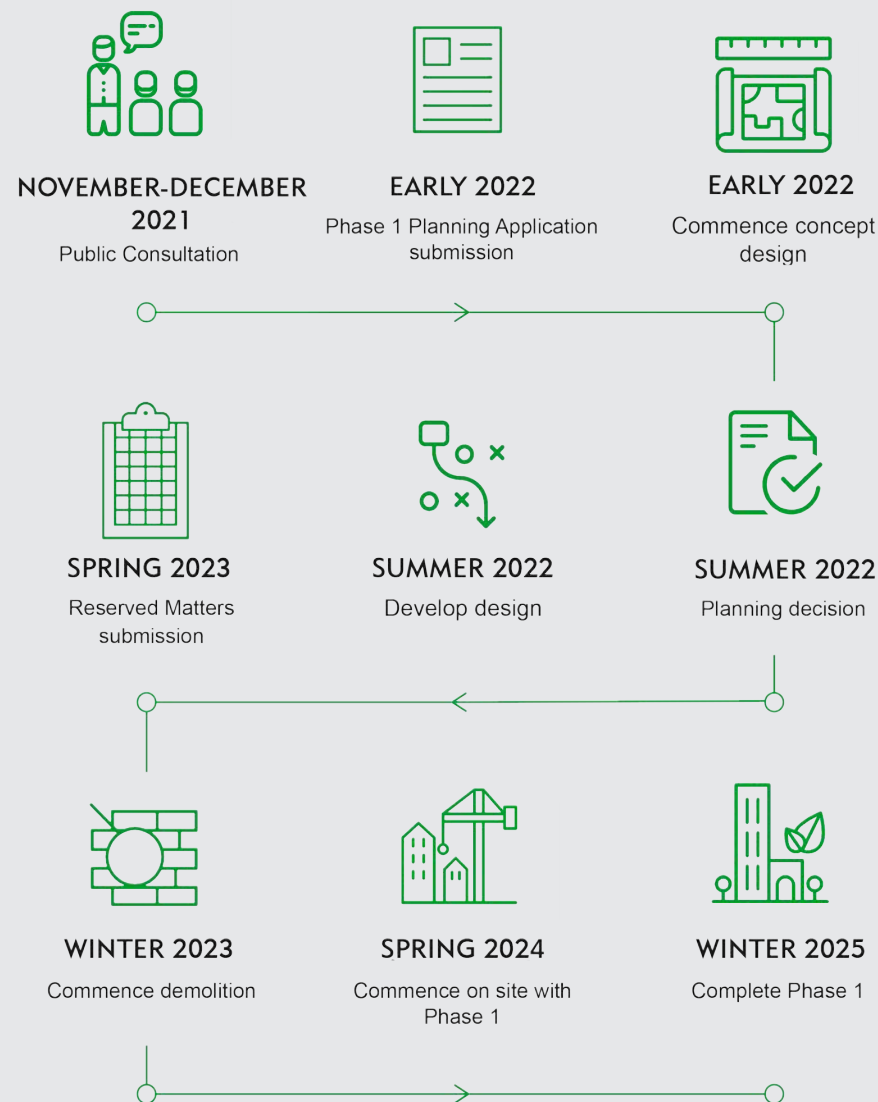
widening of Corporation Street to create a two-way road;

- Extensive demolition of the Hardshaw Centre and other key properties to facilitate the Phase 1 works;
- A new high specification modern office of circa 50,000 sq ft, designed to the highest sustainable standards;
- A 120+ bed international branded hotel;
- A new modern market hall, incorporating food and beverage stalls;
- New homes, including apartments and family homes;
- New retail units to support the local independent sector as well as high street names; and
- Extensive public realm linking the new development to the train station, bus station and Church Square.

PROGRAMME

An indicative timeline for the key activities required to deliver Phase 1 is set out as illustrated in the diagram to the side.

The completion of Phase 1 will make way for the creation of the new Discovery Park and further development opportunities in the town centre. Phase 2 proposals will be developed in response to the prevailing town centre conditions at that time and be informed by additional public engagement.



BENEFITS

The Masterplan Development Framework provides an opportunity to drive transformational change for St Helens town centre. This will generate physical regeneration benefits on the ground but also have wider-reaching positive impacts for the local community, businesses and occupiers in the town over the next 20 years. Such benefits include:

- Driving economic growth and job creation;
- Enhanced green space and public realm;
- A more sustainable town centre – adapted to climate change, with less reliance on the private car;
- Increasing the visitor economy;
- Celebration of the borough's unique cultural and heritage assets;
- Addressing local housing need;
- Positively changing perceptions of St Helens (and the wider Borough) and attracting future inward investment into the town;
- Provision of new community facilities;
- Social value embedded into the development;
- Enhanced biodiversity;
- Attracting meanwhile uses and events.



NEXT STEPS

This Masterplan Framework presents an ambitious and transformational vision for St Helens town centre that will generate significant regeneration benefits locally over the area for the existing community and future generations.

Your views on the Draft Masterplan Development Framework are important to us and we value your contribution. We have reviewed all the feedback, comments and questions submitted and have taken these into account before finalising this Masterplan Development Framework.

Your comments will also be reflected on as we shape our plans for the proposed Phase 1 development. The planning application is to be submitted in early 2022.


















There will also be an opportunity to comment on the planning application once it is formally submitted and validated.

For up to date information on our proposals please go to our website www.sthelenstowncentre.co.uk.



PROPOSED TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

Key

-  Masterplan Focus
-  1 St Helens Town Hall
-  2 Victoria Square
-  3 The Gamble
-  4 Bus Station
-  5 Road Transport Museum
-  6 Rail Station
-  7 New Market Hall
-  8 Quaker Meeting House
-  9 St Helens College
-  10 Church Square Shopping Centre
-  11 St Helens Parish Church
-  12 New Canal Side Offering
-  13 The World of Glass
-  14 St Helens Chamber
-  15 Improved Link to Stadium & Glass Futures
-  16 Totally Wicked Stadium

The town centre masterplan which accompanies this Masterplan Development Framework sets out a proposed spatial framework for the implementation of the town centre vision and strategic objectives outlined in the previous section.

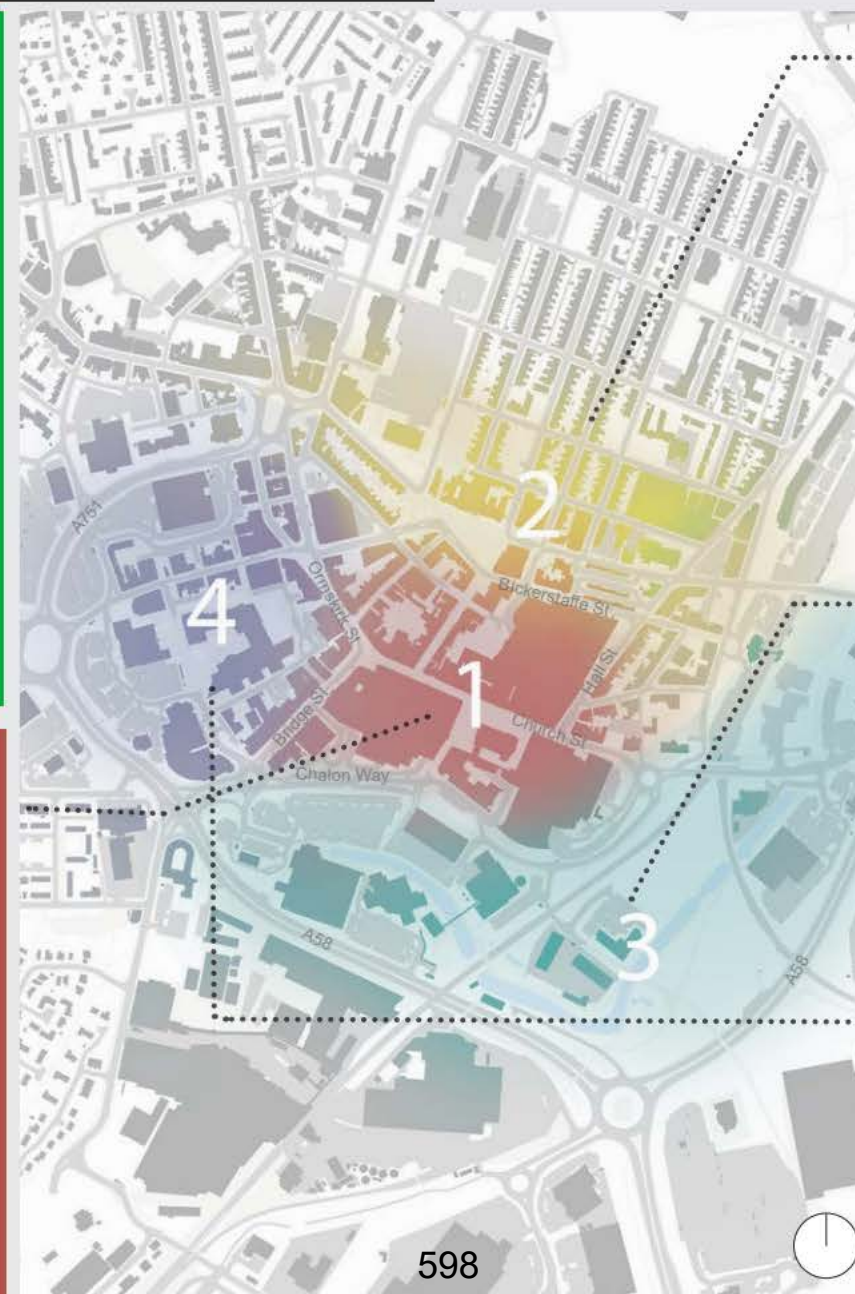
The Masterplan has been developed around a number of zones or key character areas, opportunity sites, public realm and transport and movement considerations, as well as the consideration of specific urban design principles within each zone.

PROPOSED CHARACTER ZONES

The town centre area has been divided into four broad character zones, which have been delineated based upon key characteristics. Each zone has an important role to play in the wider transformation of St Helens town centre, and collectively, they will support the delivery of the overarching vision.

It is important to note that the zones do not represent phasing and delivery priorities. They have been identified based on the types of uses, scale and massing that will be considered in each area.

The zones are set out below, including a summary of the urban design principles and key components that have been considered in each area.



CHARACTER ZONE 2: CIVIC AND HERITAGE

Comprising the area between St Helens Central (rail station), existing bus station around Bickerstaffe Street, George Street Quarter Conservation Area, Victoria Square Conservation Area, and the parcel of land between College Street and Birchley Street. This zone includes many of the town centre's heritage assets.

Development coming forward in this location needs to be sensitive to the unique character of the Conservation Areas – to preserve and/or enhance the heritage assets through bringing forward appropriate and sensitively-considered development in terms of scale, massing and use of materials.

There is a real opportunity in this zone to enhance the quality of the Conservation Areas.

CHARACTER ZONE 3: DISCOVERY

Presents an arc of opportunity for change and future transformation for the town centre. It includes the area in and around the Sankey (St Helens) Canal, important listed structures including the highly significant Tank House, which is both Grade II* listed and a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), being the best surviving example of a late 19th century glassmaking tank furnace building. These important buildings and structures represent the cultural heritage and glass legacy of the borough. The zone is bounded by the Linkway (A58) to the south and east.

CHARACTER ZONE 4: EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

As its name suggests, this part of the town centre includes the St Helens College Campus and is bounded by Linkway West. This area is characterised by education uses, surface car parking, large, big box retailers, leisure uses and provides the focus for the evening economy from Bridge Street and Barrow Street to Westfield Street and extending to Duke Street.





ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Town Hall, St. Helens, Merseyside, WA10 1HP

Telephone: 01744 673219 Joanne Griffiths MBE

Agenda CABINET

PUBLIC MEETINGS ARE WEBCAST (LIVE STREAMED)

Date: Wednesday, 20 October 2021 **Time:** 3.00 pm **Venue:** Room 10

Membership

Councillors: Baines (Chair), Bell, Bond, Bowden, Burns, Charlton, Gomez-Aspron MBE, Groucutt, McCauley and Quinn


<u>Item</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
1.	<u>Apologies for Absence</u>	
2.	<u>Declarations of Interest from Members</u>	
3.	<u>St Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework Consultation Draft</u>	3
4.	<u>Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework Consultation Draft</u>	77
5.	<u>Establishing a Growth Delivering Prosperity (GDP) Team</u>	145
6.	<u>Exclusion of the Public</u>	

Recommended that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items for the reason stated:

Item	Reason (under the Local Government Act 1972)
7	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information) (Para 3 of Schedule 12A)

PRIVATE AGENDA

<u>Item</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
** 7.	<u>Decision of the Land and Property Acquisition Group meeting held on 6 October 2021</u>	155
**	Key Decision which is not within the Public Notice of Key Decisions and will therefore be dealt with under the General Exception Provisions within the Constitution.	

 <p>ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Cabinet</p> <p style="text-align: center;">20 October 2021</p>
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Report Title:	St Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework Consultation Draft
Cabinet Portfolio	Regeneration and Planning
Cabinet Member	Councillor Richard McCauley
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	Town Centre
Report of	Lisa Harris Executive Director of Place Services Lisaharris@sthelens.gov.uk
Contact Officer	Sean Traynor Director of Strategic Growth Seantraynor@sthelens.gov.uk

Borough priorities	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	
	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	
	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	x
	Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	x
	Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	x
	Be a responsible Council	

1. Summary

- 1.1 The draft St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework has been produced to guide and support the positive transformation of the town centre, ensuring that the development coming forward is of high quality, sustainable and has the people of St. Helens at its heart. It sets out an ambitious long-term plan for investment in the town centre, outlining physical changes that are proposed to be delivered through implementation of the masterplan.
- 1.2 To accord with the recently adopted Community Engagement Strategy, it is proposed that the draft document be subject to a six-week period of consultation, ensuring that it benefits from views, opinions and feedback from the public, businesses, and visitors.

2. Recommendations for Decision

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) **Approve the draft St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework, attached as Appendix A.**
- ii) **Approve a process of period of public consultation for a period of six weeks in accordance with the Communication and Engagement Plan attached as Appendix B.**

3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 This report seeks approval to undertake a six-week public consultation on the draft St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework.

4. Background

- 4.1 Nationally, town centres are being affected by changing retail trends arising from an increase in online shopping, the development of out-of-town retail centres, an ageing population, changing lifestyles, and the rise of convenience-led retailing (such as “click and collect”). All these changes have been intensified during and following the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 4.2 For the Borough’s town centres to remain sustainable, they must adapt to these changing trends. To maximise the impact of the “St. Helens Pound” it is important to ensure that the

Borough's town centres complement rather than compete and therefore each town centre and district centre should provide a distinctive and unique offer.

- 4.3 The draft St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework provides an aspirational but realistic vision for the future of the town centre, identifying the opportunities and challenges which exist, and illustrating first thoughts and ideas around significant commercial and leisure investment that will completely transform the centre.
- 4.4 St. Helens town centre plays an important sub-regional role as the Borough's principal town centre providing a range of retail and other services for the Borough as set out in Policy LPC04 of the submission draft Local Plan. It contains a good representation of retail, leisure and civic uses that cater for many of the Borough's residents.
- 4.5 Policy LPB01 of the submission draft Local Plan sets out the Council's intentions to promote St. Helens town centre as an accessible and welcoming destination for new development that would help create a high-quality built environment. The Policy sets out developments that align with the delivery and implementation of the Council-led strategy for the future regeneration and development of St. Helens town centre will be supported.
- 4.6 The draft St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework takes Policy LPB01 intention to the next stage, ensuring that the development coming forward is of high quality, sustainable and has the people of St. Helens at its heart.
- 4.7 Considering the Council's climate change ambitions and the adoption of the UN sustainable development goals the draft masterplan aims to encourage sustainable development and provides the best for people and local communities, now and in the future.
- 4.8 The St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework would not "allocate" land for development, but would provide additional guidance for investors, developers, and decision-makers. It will not form part of the statutory Development Plan; however, it has been prepared having had full regard to relevant legislation including national planning policy contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021), the 'saved' policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (1998), the Core Strategy (2012), and the emerging Local Plan.
- 4.9 Whilst the outcome of the St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework will be of great interest to the public, the key target audience for this document is potential developers and investors. The document will also support council officers and members of the Planning Committee in assessing and determining planning applications. The St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework will be accompanied by an Implementation Plan to ensure that the vision and objectives for St. Helens town centre are achieved through the delivery of several projects and schemes

5. St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework

- 5.1 The draft St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework, attached at Appendix A, has been prepared by the Council and its strategic partner – the English Cities Fund (ECF). In March 2020, St. Helens Borough Council and ECF agreed a 20-year partnership that would see a variety of sites across the borough benefit from redevelopment, including St. Helens town centre. The aim of this partnership was to push forward regeneration in the borough, with the town centres of St. Helens and Earlestown being a priority.
- 5.2 In the preparation of the draft St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework, it has been recognised that much engagement has already taken place, whether this has been to

inform the Town Deal or associated with the #StHelensTogether - Our Borough Strategy. It has been developed with this engagement as its foundation.

- 5.3 In accordance with the recently adopted Borough Consultation and Engagement Strategy and in the spirit of #StHelensTogether, it is the intention to conduct a formal six-week period of public consultation, to allow everyone in the community an opportunity to provide their views on the draft proposals and to shape the final document. Further details of the consultation are set out at Appendix B.
- 5.4 The representations received during this period of consultation will be fully considered by the Council and ECF in the preparation of the 'final' St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework and any subsequent planning applications. Formal responses will be presented within a Consultation Statement which will sit alongside the Final Masterplan Development Framework.
- 5.5 The draft Masterplan Development Framework is a detailed document that assesses the current performance of the town centre, its footfall, retail, and housing offer. It analyses the transport and movement across the areas through road, rail, walking and cycling. The document assesses the challenges and the key opportunities within the town that would secure several uses for the town centre and will maximise footfall, dwell-time, and the wider regeneration benefits for the town.
- 5.6 The ECF Partnership have used this information together with feedback from previous engagements to develop a vision for St. Helens town centre, which is as follows:

'ST HELENS.... A CULTURALLY CENTRED VIBRANT TOWN CENTRE THAT MATCHES THE BOROUGH'S POTENTIAL WITH PEOPLE AT THE HEART'

- 5.7 The strategic objectives for the Draft Masterplan Development Framework are to:
 - **DELIVERING A DIVERSE, VIBRANT AND ANIMATED TOWN CENTRE** consolidating the proportion of retail and concentrating retail provision, encouraging new town centre uses, increasing active frontages and offering spaces that attract the local and independent traders that make St. Helens truly unique.
 - **ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE GROWTH** to attract high-quality employment into the town centre, building on the catalytical impact of Glass Futures and the opportunity to harness innovation and skills for the benefit of the local community.
 - **PROMOTING HIGH-QUALITY TOWN CENTRE LIVING** delivering a unique, high-quality, residential offer within the town centre that meets housing need and aspiration.
 - **CREATING A SUSTAINABLE, ACCESIBLE AND CONNECTED TOWN CENTRE** to ensure the town centre maximises the opportunity for net zero carbon development, with sustainability and climate change at the forefront of its transformation.
 - **POSITIVELY CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE TOWN** through promoting St. Helens' heritage, maximising the heritage assets, canal, and cultural offer to provide a distinctive experience for visitors, residents, and businesses.
 - **TO PROVIDE A HEALTHY AND COMMUNITY-FOCUSED TOWN CENTRE** Creating high-quality spaces and places for independent businesses and community functions to thrive, people to dwell and socialise within, providing opportunities for active travel and leisure, and creating a town centre which the people of St. Helens are proud of.
- 5.8 The town centre area has been divided into four broad character zones based upon key characteristics. Each zone has a significant role to play in the wider transformation of St. Helens town centre, and collectively, will support the delivery of the overarching vision.

- **CHARACTER ZONE 1: CENTRAL RETAIL QUARTER** encompasses the heart of the town, occupied by traditional high street uses and centered around the Grade II listed St Helens Parish Church. There are opportunities to improve the built environment, landscaping and reduce the dominance of the insular shopping centres which reduce the permeability within the town centre.
- **CHARACTER ZONE 2: CIVIC AND HERITAGE QUARTER** this area includes the majority of the town centre's heritage assets and development coming forward will preserve and/or enhance the heritage assets.
- **CHARACTER ZONE 3: DISCOVERY QUARTER** includes an arc of opportunity for change and future transformation for the town centre in an area of important buildings and structures that represent the cultural heritage and glass legacy of the borough.
- **CHARACTER ZONE 4: EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT** this part of the town centre includes the St. Helens College Campus and provides the focus for St. Helens' evening economy – in and around Westfield Street.

6. Implementation Plan

- 6.1 The draft St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework provides a vision and ambition for the future, but this is not a pipe dream. To accompany the final document will be an ambitious Delivery Strategy and Implementation Plan. This Delivery Strategy will set out the Phase 1 proposals which, if the Draft St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework is supported, will bring the plan to life.
- 6.2 The scope of the proposed Phase 1 works in St. Helens is significant and will create a hugely positive impact on the town centre, comprising:
- new high quality office space
 - high quality homes
 - an international hotel brand
 - a revitalised market hall
 - an enhanced bus station
- 6.3 Linking all these proposals together will be high quality public realm that will create new pedestrianised streets and public squares, increasing biodiversity through quality landscaping and creating a place that will attract more residents, visitors, and business to St. Helens.
- 6.4 After the consultation responses have been analysed and the St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework adopted it is the intention of the Council and ECF to follow shortly after with planning applications and detailed designs before the end of the municipal year.

7. Community Impact Assessment

- 7.1 The Community Impact Assessment identified that the draft Masterplan Development Framework provides an opportunity to drive transformational change for St. Helens town centre. This will generate physical regeneration benefits on the ground but also have wider-reaching positive impacts for the local community, businesses, and occupiers in the town over the next 20 years. Such benefits include driving economic growth and job creation, enhanced greenspace and public realm, providing a more sustainable town centre – adapted to climate change, with less reliance on the private car, increasing the visitor economy, celebration of the borough's unique cultural and heritage assets, addressing local housing need, positively changing perceptions of St. Helens (and the wider Borough) and attracting future inward investment into the town.

8. Consideration of Alternatives

- 8.1 When considering the form of the document officers deliberated on the form and status of the document. Consideration was afforded to the production of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This formal policy status was not pursued for several reasons; planning officer resources were dedicated to the submission draft Local Plan examination stage and several planning appeals. In addition, the current uncertainty in the economic market and government's intention to pursue significant reform of the planning system made it prudent to pursue a guidance document, that could be delivered quickly whilst still providing robust guidance that would not restrict development.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 Cabinet approval is sought for the draft St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework, following which it is proposed to conduct a 6-week period of public consultation. The findings of the consultation will then be considered before bringing the document back to Cabinet to consider formal adoption. The St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework is vital to support and guide investment and development in the area over the next 20 years. The ambition of the document is to help St. Helens be a town that matches the potential of the Borough; it should be appealing to all – a place where people want to live, work, and spend time.

10. Implications

10.1.1 Legal Implications

- 10.1.2 The Masterplan Development Framework will not form part of the statutory Development Plan. It will, however, be a material planning consideration in the determination of planning proposals. Land identified in a non-statutory town centre masterplan would be unlikely to meet the definition of blighted land as defined under Schedule 13 to the TCPA 1990 (section 150(1)) but specific legal advice will be sought following consultation with Landowners.

10.2 Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Implications

10.2.1 Social Value

- 10.2.1.1 Inclusive growth has social value at its heart and the ECF Partnership Board will oversee the delivery of social value outcomes across all development of the town centre.

10.2.2 Sustainability and Environment

- 10.2.2.1 The Masterplan Development Framework will generate physical regeneration benefits the provision of new greenspaces and public realm will provide a more sustainable town centre, the development should help the town centre adapt to the impact of climate change and the new development will be cognisant of the Borough's declared climate emergency, aiming to minimise and mitigate carbon emissions in the process. The aim of the plan is to encourage more people to use sustainable forms of transport and to enhance the biodiversity of the area.

10.2.3 Health and Wellbeing

- 10.2.3.1 The adoption of an inclusive growth approach will influence a considerable number of wider determinants of health such as employment, skills, and quality of place.

10.2.4 Equality and Human Rights

- 10.2.4.1 There will be no adverse Equality and Human rights issues. There will be an opportunity to tackle barriers for protected groups, considering the development as a dementia friendly town centre that is accessible and welcoming to all.

10.3 Customers and Resident

- 10.3.1 The draft Masterplan Development Framework supports improved two-way communications and engagement with our customers and residents. As noted in paragraph 5.3 of this report, the preparation of the draft Masterplan Development Framework has built on the findings of previous engagement and a further period of public consultation is proposed to take place in November and December 2021. A proposed Consultation and Engagement Plan is attached at Appendix B, this will be managed through the ECF Partnership and a specialist company, Lexington have been engaged to oversee the work.

10.4 Asset and Property

- 10.4.1 The delivery of the proposed Masterplan Development Framework would have a significant impact on St. Helens town centre and physical assets in the Council's current ownership within the town centre boundary would be affected. The Public Realm Strategy within the proposed Masterplan Development Framework will help to guide investment into the roads, footways, and public open spaces within the town centre. Several privately owned assets and properties would also be impacted upon, requiring separate dialogue and reporting as appropriate.

10.5 Staffing and Human Resource

- 10.5.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report. The implementation of the Masterplan Development Framework will require programme and technical support. This is the subject of the Growth Delivering Prosperity Team report which is also on the Cabinet meeting agenda.

10.6 Risks

- 10.6.1 The proposed Masterplan Development Framework is a long-term (20-year) plan to guide private and public sector investment in the area. Individual projects will be considered in detail as proposals are developed by partner agencies and other developers. It should be noted that this is an aspirational document which sets the vision for the area, however given that the Council has secured a delivery partner, with ECF the transition from plan to delivery will be as short a period as possible. In addition to funding from the Council many of the proposals will require external funding for them to be delivered. This will be through both public funding and investment from the private sector, which is in turn dependent on the prevailing national economic conditions.

10.7 Finance

- 10.7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report at this stage. The Masterplan would form the "blueprint" for development in St. Helens town centre, and engagement with the private sector would be coordinated through the St. Helens Regeneration Programme. The Implementation Plan will in time require investment by the Council. Capital financing has been indicatively identified within the Council's Medium Term

Financial Strategy (MTFS) for this purpose, although the proposals are very much at a pre-concept stage.

- 10.7.2 Further financial information and analysis will be required as part of analysing individual business cases and the impact of the overall scheme. When individual projects are identified, the resource requirements would be assessed on a project-by-project basis and with due regard to the overall scheme. This will be subject to further external financial and legal advice, the development of full business cases and further analysis of capital and revenue forecasts, to ensure affordability and sustainability. Projects will follow the Council's revised Contract Procurement Rules and there will be additional financial governance oversight provided by the ECF ODA provisions that include an Executive Board.

10.8 Policy Framework Implications

- 10.8.1 The proposals in this report will contribute to the delivery of the Our Borough Strategy, they will support the outcomes identified in the submission draft Local Plan and the initiatives contained within the Town Deal. Consultation and engagement will be conducted in accordance with the Community Engagement Strategy ensuring that the plans are coproduced with our communities. The implementation of the plans will also be supported by the newly created Place Board. The recovery of St. Helens town centre will also help to deliver the outcomes of the emerging Housing Strategy and the Economic Reset and Recovery Plan.

11. **Background papers**

- 11.1 St. Helens Borough Local Plan 2020-2035 Submission Draft
- 11.2 St. Helens Town Investment Plan

12. **Appendices**

- 12.1 Appendix A – draft St. Helens Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework.
- 12.2 Appendix B – Communication and Engagement Plan

DRAFT MASTERPLAN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

CONTENTS

1. Foreword	3
2. Introduction - Overview	4
3. Purpose of this Masterplan Development Framework	6
4. Engagement and Next Steps	7
5. Strategic Analysis	9
6. Intended Role for St Helens Town Centre Within the Borough	11
7. Planning Policy Context	12
8. Current Performance of the Town Centre	16
9. Key Opportunities	27
➤ 10. Town Centre Vision & Strategic Objectives	28
11. Proposed Town Centre Masterplan	32
12. Town Design Principles	34
13. Proposed Town Centre Zones	35
14. Movement Strategy	51
15. Public Realm Strategy	54
16. Sustainability Strategy	56
17. Phasing & Delivery Strategy	57
18. Regeneration Benefits	58
19. Next Steps and How to Comment	59



FOREWORD

St Helens Borough Council and the English Cities Fund (ECF) are proud to set out our vision for St Helens town centre.

Following consultation and any changes to be made based on your feedback, the final Masterplan Development Framework will be endorsed by the Council and will guide and support the positive transformation of the town centre. It will ensure that development coming forward is of high quality, is sustainable and has the people of St Helens at its heart.

The Council and ECF have entered into a 20-year partnership to bring forward regeneration across the borough, with our town centres in St Helens and Earlestown a priority. Together we have produced a Phase 1 development proposal set out in this Draft Masterplan Development Framework to begin the significant transformation of St Helens town centre.

The first Phase has been carefully developed to introduce a balanced mix of uses into the heart of the

town – providing an opportunity for those wanting to work, visit, live and enjoy leisure time in St Helens. Importantly, the proposals have and will continue to be developed in partnership with prospective occupiers to meet future needs and ensure that the Phase 1 development is deliverable.

We want St Helens town centre to be a source of pride. A child and family-friendly place, home to thriving local businesses, quality homes, leisure and outdoor spaces, with great transport links, digital connectivity and future-proofed to address the climate emergency.

As we all know, our town has a rich industrial heritage, one of glass-making, chemicals and coal, hard work, strength and innovation. The partnership between the Council and ECF – working together with residents, businesses, regional partners, public and third sector organisations – gives us the opportunity to build the future our past deserves.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'David Baines'.

Cllr David Baines
Leader of St Helens Council



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Phil Mayall'.

Phil Mayall
Regional Director ECF



This Draft Masterplan Development Framework for St Helens town centre provides an aspirational vision with a focus on deliverable transformation, built on feedback from the community. It has been prepared by St Helens Council and its partner – The English Cities Fund (ECF).

ECF is a partnership formed in 2001 between Muse Developments, Legal & General and Homes England. ECF has been working with councils, landowners and communities to create exceptional places across the UK, bringing together investment, regeneration expertise and long-term commitment to shape our towns and cities for the better. Following its expansion in 2018, it continues to take on large, complex sites, to create inspiring new places. ECF has delivered some of the country's most complex and successful urban regeneration projects and has a proven track record of transforming towns and cities, attracting investment, and unlocking potential.

In March 2020, St Helens Council and ECF agreed a 20-year partnership that would see a variety of sites across the borough benefit from redevelopment, the first being the Borough's town centres, including St Helens town centre, which is the subject of this Draft Masterplan Development Framework. This partnership will allow

the Council to progress regeneration in the borough, with the town centres of St Helens and Earlestown being a first priority. This will facilitate transformational change that will build upon the town centres existing assets and uniqueness, and deliver high quality, sustainable regeneration and transforming these key centres into exciting, vibrant places that are fit for the future.

This Draft Masterplan Development Framework sets out an aspirational but realistic vision for the future of St Helens town centre, identifying the opportunities and challenges which exist, and illustrating first thoughts and ideas around significant commercial and leisure investment that will completely transform the centre.

This investment will include revitalised retail spaces, new homes, high quality offices, hotel accommodation, improved public realm and new open green spaces.



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL



#STHELENSTOGETHER

THE
ENGLISH
CITIES
FUND

OVERVIEW

This Draft Masterplan Development Framework has been developed in response to the following key considerations, and taking into account previous feedback from the community:

- The need for future development to be sustainable and of the highest quality, considering the challenges of climate change and the desire to move towards net zero carbon¹;
- The uniqueness of St Helens as a place, including preserving and enhancing its outstanding heritage assets;
- The need to identify defined areas or zones, that have a wide variety of choices;
- Making the town centre a child and family-friendly place;
- Supporting existing businesses and traders and revitalising the retail offer in the town;
- Providing places for independents, entrepreneurs and artisans to flourish;
- The need to provide a modern and sustainable town centre living option;
- Improving connectivity, legibility and wayfinding across the centre and the creation of clean, green streets to allow communities to make active

travel choices that contribute towards health and wellbeing;

- Ensuring safe, secure public spaces, with ambient lighting; and
- Incorporating public art within the public realm that reflects the town's heritage, ingenuity and individuality.

In short, it must provide the best for all the people of the town and the wider borough, a development built to last that future generations can be proud of. The town centre will mirror the immense pride that people have for St Helens and be an inspiring place for everyone in the community.

It is recognised that the town centre must adapt and evolve in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to longer-term trends such as the growth of online shopping. Whilst retail will continue to have an important role in the town centre, this must be supplemented by a wider offer, including a mix of complementary uses. We want to encourage people into the town centre by providing spaces that people enjoy spending time in, that are a positive experience for residents, visitors and workers alike, with a broad range of services, amenities and opportunities for everyone, now and in the future.

Transformation at this scale must be managed and takes time. Delivery of this ambitious Masterplan Development Framework will be phased to maximise benefits and minimise negative impacts. It is important to provide the right conditions that will get the town centre back to its former glory, support the growth of local businesses, provide the right infrastructure, deliver quality spaces and places and set the groundwork that encourages the right type of future development and investment to come forward.

The Council and ECF are proposing an early and significant phase of development to visibly demonstrate the scale of ambition and for people to enjoy while supporting future activities across the wider town centre.

The Draft Masterplan Development Framework aligns directly with '#StHelens Together: Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030', together with the vision and ambition for St Helens town centre that is set out within the successful St Helens Town Investment Plan. There are already visible signs of change in the town centre and this Masterplan Development Framework will harness and build on the positive activity happening across the Borough.



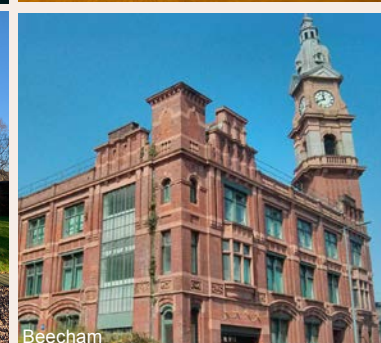
The World of Glass



The Gamble



Quaker House



Beecham



St Helens Parish Church



St Helens College



Town Hall



Train Station

"WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER BOROUGH, WITH PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO"²

¹ St Helens Council has committed to the ambitious objective of achieving zero-carbon status by 2040 (St Helens, March 2021)

² St Helens Council (2021) #StHelensTogether: Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030

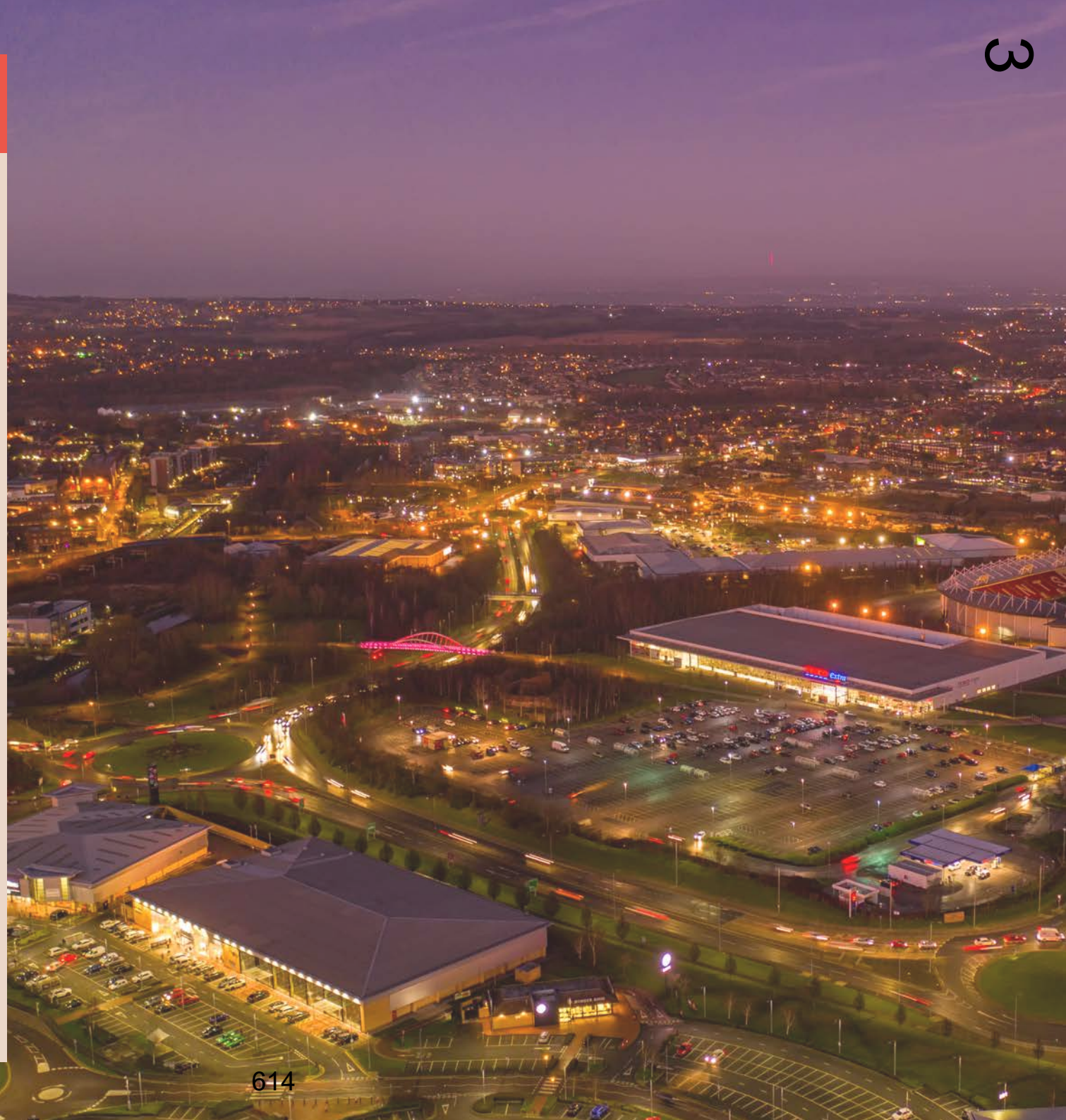
PURPOSE AND STATUS OF THIS MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

This Draft Masterplan Development Framework for St Helens town centre will set out a clear vision, objectives and development principles that will catalyse the delivery of transformational change in St Helens. In doing so, it will help to secure a range of long-lasting economic, social and environmental benefits across the town centre and positively impact the wider borough.

This Draft Masterplan Development Framework has been prepared in the context of, and informed by, wider regeneration ambitions for St Helens, including those set out within adopted and emerging planning policy and related strategies.

Following adoption by the Council, the Masterplan Development Framework will guide development across the Framework area over the next 20 years and will form a material consideration in the determination of all future planning applications across the area.

The Development Framework will not form part of the statutory Development Plan; however, it has been prepared having had full regard to relevant legislation including national planning policy contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021), National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (2021), the 'saved' policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (1998), the Core Strategy (2012), and the emerging Local Plan.



ENGAGEMENT AND NEXT STEPS

The proposed vision for St Helens town centre set out within this Draft Masterplan Development Framework builds upon the previous extensive engagement that informed the Towns Fund submission and the '#StHelensTogether: Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030', alongside other project-specific engagement activity. This is described in further detail in subsequent sections of this report.

In the coming weeks we will consult on this Draft Masterplan Development Framework, and we want to hear all your comments, questions and suggestions. There will be a formal 6-week period of public consultation, intended to allow everyone in the community to provide their views on the draft proposals, and further details of how to provide your comments are provided at the back of this report.

The representations received during this period will be fully considered by the Council and ECF in the preparation of the final Masterplan Development Framework and any subsequent planning applications. Formal responses will be presented within a Consultation Statement that will sit alongside the final Masterplan Development Framework, ensuring that the process is open and transparent.



ENGAGEMENT AND NEXT STEPS



Key messages from the most recent engagement, which was undertaken between August and October 2020, include:

"CREATE AN IDENTITY FOR ST HELENS"

"PREFERENCE TO RELOCATE THE EXISTING MARKET HALL"

"NEED TO MAKE MORE OF THE CULTURAL OFFER AND NIGHT-LIFE"

"AMBIENT LIGHTING AND CLEAN AND GREEN STREETS"

"THE TOWN CENTRE IS LACKING A FAMILY OFFER AS WELL AS NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY"

"THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLEAR ZONES OR QUARTERS, WHICH ARE CLEARLY DEFINED AND OFFER A WIDER VARIETY OF CHOICE"

"PROVISION FOR GREATER LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES"

"HUB FOR QUALITY EDUCATION, SKILLS AND ENTERPRISE"

"A NEED TO IMPROVE SAFETY AND SECURITY"

"PLACES FOR ENTREPRENEURS AND ARTISANS TO FLOURISH"

"THE TOWN CENTRE NEEDS TO BE SMALLER, FOR THE RETAIL TO SHRINK AND CREATE SMALLER, NICHE, BOUTIQUE INDEPENDENTS"

"A NEED TO DELIVER A MODERN AND SUSTAINABLE TOWN CENTRE LIVING OPTION"

"PUBLIC ART THAT REFLECTS THE BOROUGH'S HERITAGE, INGENUITY AND INDIVIDUALITY"

"A NEED TO REPLACE RETAIL WITH QUALITY HOUSING AND LIFESTYLE OFFER"

"IMPROVED CONNECTIVITY TO ALLOW COMMUNITIES TO MAKE GREEN TRAVEL CHOICES AND LINKED TRIPS TO THE RETAIL PARKS"



"PROVIDE SMALL MAKER SPACES WHICH ARE COOL AND INNOVATIVE"

"IT IS ESSENTIAL TO UNLOCK THE CANAL"

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

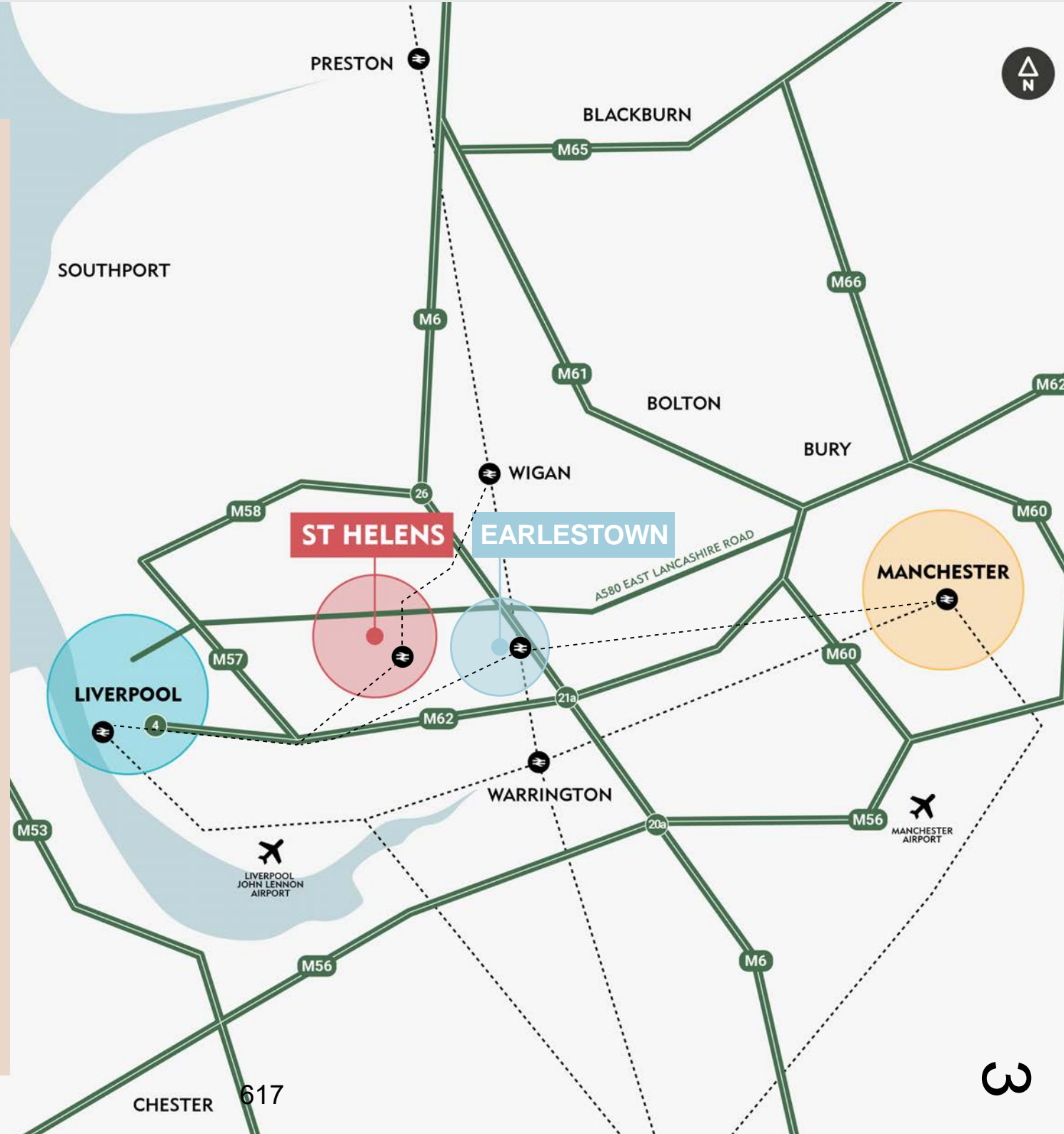
St Helens is located between Greater Manchester and Cheshire and is a member of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) – an important, thriving sub-region which also covers Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, and Wirral.

The City Region has seen over £1bn added to its economy in the last decade and has a wealth of assets including providing home to 52,000 businesses³ and delivering a strong and diverse business base, high-class universities, a world-class tourism offer, and of course, the skills, creativity, and innovation of its people.

St Helens is playing a significant role in the City region and has attracted significant investment for infrastructure, skills, business support, and transformational projects such as Glass Futures. We have exciting prospects for green growth and new technologies, and for some of the best digital connectivity in the UK through the LCR Connect project.

St Helens town centre is well placed to benefit from these opportunities and is well-connected to the wider sub-region given its location on the strategic road network but also the strong public transport links we have via both bus and rail.

³ Draft LIS



ST HELENS BOROUGH

St Helens town centre is the principal town for St Helens Borough and provides a range of key services for the borough including retail, community uses and amenities. St Helens town centre is complemented by Earlestown town centre and a range of smaller district, village and local centres across the borough.

Given St Helens is the principal town centre, it should be one that the people of St Helens are immensely proud of and utilise; a place where people want to meet, spend time and promote positively to others.

The town centre has incredible promise – from thriving independents and a rich cultural heritage to enviable transport connectivity and stunning canal side opportunities. These are just a few of its key assets that can be maximised. In addition, people are our greatest asset and provide a warm and friendly welcome to visitors.

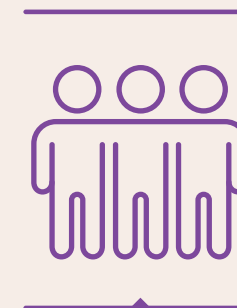
The cross-cutting priorities set out within the ‘#StHelensTogether: Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030’ also influence the regeneration of the town centre.



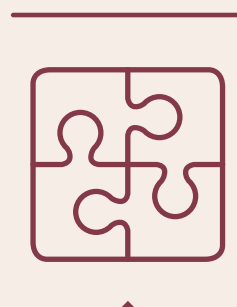
ENSURE CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE
HAVE A POSITIVE
START IN LIFE



PROMOTE GOOD
HEALTH, INDEPENDENCE
AND CARE ACROSS
OUR COMMUNITIES



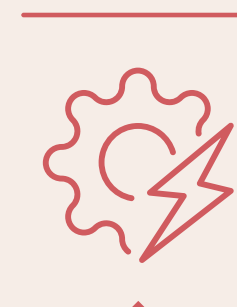
CREATE SAFE
AND STRONG
COMMUNITIES AND
NEIGHBOURHOOD
FOR ALL



SUPPORT A STRONG,
THRIVING, INCLUSIVE
AND WELL-CONNECTED
LOCAL ECONOMY



CREATE GREEN
AND VIBRANT PLACES
THAT REFLECT OUR
HERITAGE AND CULTURE



BE A
RESPONSIBLE
COUNCIL

INTENDED ROLE FOR ST HELENS TOWN CENTRE WITHIN THE BOROUGH

Set out within the Borough Strategy,

'St Helens town centre requires radical transformation. Ambitious plans should be made and implemented, considering the offer for families and the daytime and night-time economies'⁴.

The transformation of St Helens town centre will focus on its heritage, sporting and cultural assets, building on its uniqueness to do things differently and innovatively, including the global opportunity of Glass Futures and Foundation Industries. This focus will in turn help create vibrancy within the town centre for all to use, value and enjoy, making St Helens an attractive place in which to live, work, visit, and invest.

⁴ St Helens Council (2021) Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030, p. 46



In preparing this Draft Masterplan Development Framework, consideration has been given to national, regional and local planning policy. This includes both adopted and emerging policies as set out below.

NATIONAL POLICY

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK 2021 (NPPF)

The NPPF has several chapters within it of particular relevance to this Masterplan Framework. These will be set out in this section, along with a summary of the key parts of most relevance to this project.

Chapter 5

Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

The Government has a stated objective to significantly boost the supply of homes, and therefore it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land comes forward where it is needed. Such housing must meet the needs of groups with specific housing requirements, including but not limited to, for example, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people etc.

The value that small and medium sized sites can make to meeting the identified housing requirement is recognised, and the NPPF expects Local Planning Authorities to promote the development of a good mix of sites.

Chapter 6

Building a strong, competitive economy

The NPPF states that “planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions

in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, considering both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.” The importance of setting criteria or identifying strategic sites for local and inward investment is also acknowledged, as well as the need to address potential barriers to investment, including inadequate infrastructure or a poor environment.

Chapter 7

Ensuring the vitality of town centres

The role that town centres play at the heart of local communities is recognised, and a positive approach should be taken to their growth, management, and adaptation. They should be allowed to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allowing a suitable mix of uses (including housing development on appropriate sites) and reflecting their distinctive characters.

National planning policy states that main town uses should be in town centres, and provides a mechanism, using the sequential

test, to ensure this happens, unless such sites are not available. This re-enforces the importance of town centres.

Chapter 8

Promoting healthy and safe communities

Achieving healthy inclusive and safe places is key. This includes promoting social interaction through, for example, mixed use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts allowing for easy pedestrian and cycle connections, and active street frontages. Places should also be safe and accessible through, for example, well designed, legible pedestrian and cycle routes and high-quality public spaces. Finally, health lifestyles should be enabled and supported through provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops and walking and cycling infrastructure. Provision of supporting infrastructure is essential. This includes the access to a network of high-quality open spaces and recreation opportunities.

Chapter 9

Promoting sustainable transport

National policy states that significant development should be focussed on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of

transport modes. This can help reduce congestion and associated emissions, with the associated air quality and public health benefits. Indeed, the delivery and promotion of sustainable transport links can help deliver on many of the themes throughout the NPPF, as well as policies at the local level. Sustainable transport is a fundamental matter, and therefore transport issues should be considered at the earliest stages of development proposals.

Furthermore, in town centres, the quality of car parking should be improved so it is convenient, safe, and secure, as well as promoting accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

Chapter 11

Making effective use of land

Land should be used effectively in meeting the need for homes and other uses, and in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed land. Planning policies and decision should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings. The density of development needs detailed consideration to make sure land is effectively used, whilst still securing well designed, attractive, and healthy places.

Chapter 12

Achieving well-designed places

Creating high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamentally important. There should be a clear design vision and expectations, with local communities fully engaged in the process from the early stages, so that local aspirations are reflected. Principles are set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, and locally produced design guides and codes should be consistent. There is also a clear emphasis on the importance of trees to the character and quality of urban environments and their contribution to tackling climate change.

23

Chapter 14

Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to climate change impacts and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. New development should take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing, and landscaping to minimise energy consumption. The use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat should be increased.

Chapter 15

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

The natural environment should be enhanced by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity (including by establishing resilient and coherent ecological networks), remediating, and

mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict and contaminated land and preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water, or noise pollution. Where possible, development should help improve local environmental conditions, such as air quality.

Chapter 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution they can make to sustainable communities, and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE (NPPG)

The NPPG provides additional, detailed guidance on the planning system and areas of national policy through several specific sections. Whilst many of the areas referred to above are covered within it, in this section, the focus will be on the 'town centres and retail' section of the NPPG.

Town centres are areas where "main town centre uses" are concentrated, and local planning authorities can take a leading role in promoting a positive vision for them, bringing together stakeholders and supporting sustainable economic and employment growth. The NPPG acknowledges that a wide range of complementary uses (such as residential, employment, office, commercial, leisure / entertainment, healthcare, and education) can, if suitably located, help support the vitality of town centres. The same is true of temporary activities also.

Creating a vision for town centres that meets wider economic and community needs is key, and requires effective and creative leadership, with stakeholders engaged in the evolving vision. The NPPG continues to advise on the types of stakeholders that might be engaged, the potential contents of a town centre strategy, as well as the type of indicators to consider in assessing the health of town centres, and subsequently planning for their future.

An entire section in the NPPG dedicated to 'town centres and retail' highlights the importance the Government attaches to successful, vibrant, resilient, well-designed, high-quality town centres that reflect the aspirations of local communities.

KEY LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

USE CLASS ORDER CHANGES

Of relevance to town centres across the UK, during 2020, Government brought in changes to consolidate several separate Use Classes under a single 'Commercial, Business and Service' Class E. This update to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (the 'UCO') came into effect in September 2020 and combined shops, restaurants, offices, gyms and nurseries (amongst others) that no longer require planning permission to switch between uses.

These changes intend to make it easier to enable greater utilisation of existing assets and where appropriate, re-purposing of buildings in town centres such as Earlestown. Class E is intended to encourage diversification and facilitates an enhanced role for town centres as places of work, providing space for services, research and development, creating and making. Shops can change to restaurants, cafes, gyms, offices, health centres and indoor sports facilities. This fits well with a 'mixed-use neighbourhood' approach.

In March 2021, an update was then made to the related legislation⁵ to allow for the change of use of these commercial properties to residential from August 2021 under a fast track 'prior approval' process. This demonstrates the Government's desire to ensure that high streets thrive and survive through adopting mixed-use approach in town centres.

⁵General Permitted Development (England) Order 2015 (the 'GPDO')

SUB-REGIONAL POLICY

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION:
'OUR PLACES' SPATIAL
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

St Helens Council authority area forms part of the Liverpool City Region (LCR). LCR is now developing a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) for the City Region, entitled 'Our Places'. This spatial framework will set out the development and use of land looking ahead over the next 15 years and will be the first of its kind for the City Region.

LCR consulted on a draft document between October 2019 - January 2020, to inform the development of the SDS as part of Stage 1. Building on the feedback received from Stage 1, a Stage 2 consultation was then launched between November 2020 - February 2021 on the proposed vision and a set of objectives (illustrated right), along with suggested approaches to several key policy areas. The intention was to help progress the development of the strategy to meet the challenges and priorities of the City Region.

The overriding purpose of Stage 2 engagement was to make sure the SDS continues to be shaped positively and meaningfully by the people of the LCR. The proposed LCR vision, on which comments were sought, is as follows:

The Liverpool City Region Spatial
Development Strategy VisionIn 15 years we want to be a City
Region where:

- A proactive, collaborative Spatial Development Strategy has been instrumental in delivering the goal of inclusive growth alongside environmental responsibility;
- Effective action to tackle Climate Change has been, and is being, taken; with measures put in place to increase our resilience to its effects;
- Our health and wellbeing is fundamental in deciding how we shape the places we live, work and meet;
- Opportunities for Building Back Better have been taken, creating a genuinely inclusive economy that is more competitive, connected, resilient, sustainable and greener; providing quality jobs, prospects and prosperity;
- **Our town centres, creatively re-purposed and re-imagined, provide opportunities for businesses and communities to thrive and develop;**

- Homes are provided to meet all our needs, are well designed and fit for the future, forming safer and well-connected communities;
- The value of new development looks beyond simple economic returns to deliver wider and lasting social and community benefits.

The LCR Spatial Planning team is now using the feedback from the consultation to help shape and progress the SDS ahead of the next round of public consultation.

LOCAL POLICY

THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Development Plan for St Helens currently comprises:

- Core Strategy Local Plan (adopted October 2012);
- 'Saved' Policies of the Unitary Development Plan (adopted 1998);
- Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (adopted July 2013); and
- Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan (adopted July 2017).



**Climate
Change
and
Environment**



**Health and
Wellbeing**



**Inclusive
Economy**



**Placemaking
&
Communities**



**Social
Value**

Source: Liverpool City Region, Our Places

ST HELENS UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Area 5 (Part 2 of the UDP) relates to the Southern Corridor including St Helens Town Centre and sets out the overall vision, which is to make the Town Centre a more attractive place to work, live, shop in or visit. It seeks to:

- (i) support and enhance the Town Centre as a shopping centre;
- (ii) expand employment opportunities;
- (iii) improve the appearance and quality of the built environment;
- (iv) protect the amenities of existing Town Centre residents;
- (v) improve transport links to and around the town and to achieve an effective public transport interchange within the centre;
- (vi) make the centre accessible to all forms of transport;
- (vii) provide an even distribution of car parks; and
- (viii) to attract investment.

These objectives remain relevant today. Of particular relevance are 'saved' Policies TC3 – TC12 which relate to St Helens Town Centre and seek to ensure the future vitality and viability of the Town Centre.

ST HELENS CORE STRATEGY (2012)

The town centre boundary is identified on the Proposals Map and delineates the primary shopping area and primary retail frontage. The following associated policies are of primary importance:

- **Policy CSS1 – Overall Spatial Strategy** - seeks to regenerate St Helens borough through directing development towards the town of St Helens. This will be

done by ensuring that 69% of residential development is located in St Helens; further retail and leisure development is secured within the town centre; and prioritising the reuse of previously developed land; and

- **Policy CAS2 – St Helens Central Spatial Area** - aims to enhance the St Helens Central Spatial Area as an accessible and welcoming destination for shopping, leisure, culture, tourism, employment and housing.

EMERGING LOCAL PLAN

On Thursday 29 October 2020, the Council submitted the Local Plan 2020 - 2035 Submission Draft (2019) to the Secretary of State for independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate. As part of the independent examination, virtual public hearing sessions commenced from 25 May 2021.

- **Draft Policy LPB01 – St Helens Town Centre and Central Spatial Area** sets out the Council's vision for St Helens town centre and its surrounding hinterland as an accessible and welcoming destination for new development. It identifies that the Council will support new development and the delivery and implementation of the Council-led strategy for the future regeneration and development of St Helens town centre. This includes residential, retail and leisure uses that link to the central retail core.

Following the Hearing sessions, several proposed modifications were suggested by the Council (SHBC10), including amendments to Policy LPA02 Spatial Strategy (and elsewhere) recognising the role of the ECF Regeneration Partnership.

The new Local Plan is expected to be adopted in Spring 2022.



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE

TOWN CENTRE

This Draft Masterplan Development Framework has been prepared to respond to the issues and challenges that the town centre currently faces. In considering these challenges it also identifies the key assets and opportunities that are important to preserve, enhance and build upon.

A town centre health check has been undertaken which informed the St Helens Town Investment Plan submitted to Government in February 2021, and this noted the following key considerations:

- The local retail property market is dominated by large scale monolithic indoor shopping precincts hidden from view and invisible to potential customers;
- Some properties are in a poor condition and fail to offer the modern retail offer to new exciting independent traders;
- The town centre has a unique architectural heritage and cultural offer that is underutilised. These assets should play a greater role in attracting visitors to the town centre;
- The town centre environment has an important role in making St Helens a distinctive and attractive place to visit. It offers an opportunity for us to green our high street helping to tackle both the climate and health challenges faced by the borough;
- Good transport connections exist to the strategic road network, rail links and key bus routes however there remain challenges including a poor sense of arrival in the town centre, difficult wayfinding and in general the town centre feels like it is turning its back on you as a visitor rather than welcoming you in;
- The financial and service industry are well represented in the town centre, but their impact is lessened as they are located across a wide geographic area. There is an opportunity to build on this foundation and create new and modern places to work in a flexible way; and
- It is clear that the town centre has real potential. Whilst radical change is required in some areas others present the opportunity for more incremental and organic change to happen over time.

The following sections will explore each of these areas in more detail.



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

FOOTFALL AND RETAIL OFFER

In recent years, St Helens town centre has suffered from declining footfall and a decrease in the market share of comparison goods⁶. Previously, the town was very vibrant and benefited from loyal shoppers; however, a perfect storm with the introduction of out-of-town retail parks⁷, superstores such as Tesco, Asda and Morrisons, the closure of High Street names such as Topshop in July 2019 and the relocation of Marks & Spencer's to the retail park in March 2019, alongside the broader macro trends of a shift to online retail, has badly impacted the town centre.

Diversion of total retail spending to online was estimated to be 28.6% in 2020, which is marginally below average when compared against other town centres across the UK (PROMIS, 2021). This reflects the accelerated shift to online given COVID-related restrictions on store

openings in 2020. This is further demonstrated by the number of vacant units in the centre increasing from 18.7% in Q4 2019 to 21.1% in Q4 2020 according to PROMIS (2021).

The high street is currently overstocked in terms of retail quantum, has an over-supply of lower value shops, and a lack of food and beverage outlets. In the context of the above, there is therefore a need to create a broader offer to entice people back into the town centre, to address the lack of an evening economy and to return the town centre as a place for families to spend valuable quality time together.

⁶ The St. Helens Borough Council Retail and Leisure Study Final Report May 2017 found that the Town Centre's market share for comparison goods expenditure has decreased from 28.2% in 2011 to 20.4% in 2017.

⁷ Offering convenience and free car parking.



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

The resident population of the borough as at 2019 totalled 180,585⁸. This is expected to grow steadily, albeit at a slower rate than for the North West and for England.

The borough has an ageing population with a higher proportion of people aged 65 years and over. The number of residents of the borough who are in their 80s is expected to almost double to 12,800 in 2037, and the number of residents in their 90s is expected to almost triple to 9,700⁹.

In contrast, there is proportionally fewer people of working age between 16 to 64 years old than England as a whole, with young adults aged 15-24 being particularly under-represented, and children aged 0-14 and adults aged 25-44 are moderately underrepresented¹⁰.

The borough is ethnically less diverse than many other areas, with 96.6% of the population identifying themselves as white,

compared to 79.8% nationally and 87.1% in the North West¹¹.

In terms of the economy and levels of affluence, positively there are a number of employment opportunities and self-employment levels have increased and business survival rates at 5-years after start-up have improved in recent years¹². Despite this, the Borough is relatively deprived, being ranked as the 26th most deprived out of 317 local authorities in England (IMD, 2019). Deprivation levels in some parts of the borough have also worsened relative to others. The proportion of children in low income families is higher than those in England and the North West as a whole. The borough still has levels of dependency on benefits that are above regional and national averages¹³.

Unemployment is lower than regional and national averages albeit¹⁴ productivity across all broad sectors is lower in St Helens than nationally.

⁸ Population estimate, Office of National Statistics (ONS)

⁹ St Helens Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2017

¹⁰ PROMIS, 2021

¹¹ 2011 Census

¹² Business Registers Unit (BRU)

¹³ Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

¹⁴ Source: NOMIS (ONS) – rate as % of population aged 16-64 years. Period: Jan 17 – Dec 17



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

HOUSING OFFER

The Borough has experienced significant housing growth over recent years. Much of this housing growth has been typically focused on family homes provided by larger national housebuilders within the outer neighbourhoods of the borough, but in addition, in recent years, there has also been growth in the town centre housing offer. 169 apartments have been consented since 2017¹⁵ and of those consented, 136 are one-bedroom apartments which have been brought forward in the private rented sector.

29

There remains an opportunity to create a unique housing offer in the town centre that offers modern design and a sustainable housing choice whilst allowing residents to make use of the town centre facilities, take advantage of being well-connected to employment areas, and excellent transport connectivity. Thus, allowing the town centre to offer a housing choice which is a point of difference to the rest of the borough, broadening the housing stock. This offer is likely to attract young professionals, downsizers, and provides an alternative offer for young families who recognise the benefits of being close to amenities and want the vibrancy of a town centre location.

The housing offer will not only provide a place for people to live in the town centre,

address housing need and contribute to the borough's housing targets, but it will provide improved choice in property type and tenure, helping to retain and attract the socially mobile.

Bringing additional residential development into the town centre will also help to deliver economic growth by driving footfall outside of typical shopping hours to support the night-time economy.

New residential development in the town centre must be fit-for-purpose, for now and for future generations, and accord with the residential design standards enshrined within adopted and emerging planning policy. New residential development must be of a high quality, use good architecture that respects the heritage and character of the town, and enhance local distinctiveness.

It should also provide a safe, secure, attractive, permeable, legible environment for all users and encourage active travel modes including walking and cycling, with appropriate facilities integrated into the development. New residential development will also be required to contribute towards the provision, expansion and/or enhancement of open space to meet needs in accordance with adopted and emerging policy.

¹⁵ Residential Market Analysis Report, Feb 2021



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT

At present, St Helens town centre has good connections to the strategic road network and rail links to Liverpool, Wigan, Preston and onward destinations via St Helens Central Station. It is also served by high-frequency effective bus routes. However, there are several transport and movement challenges.

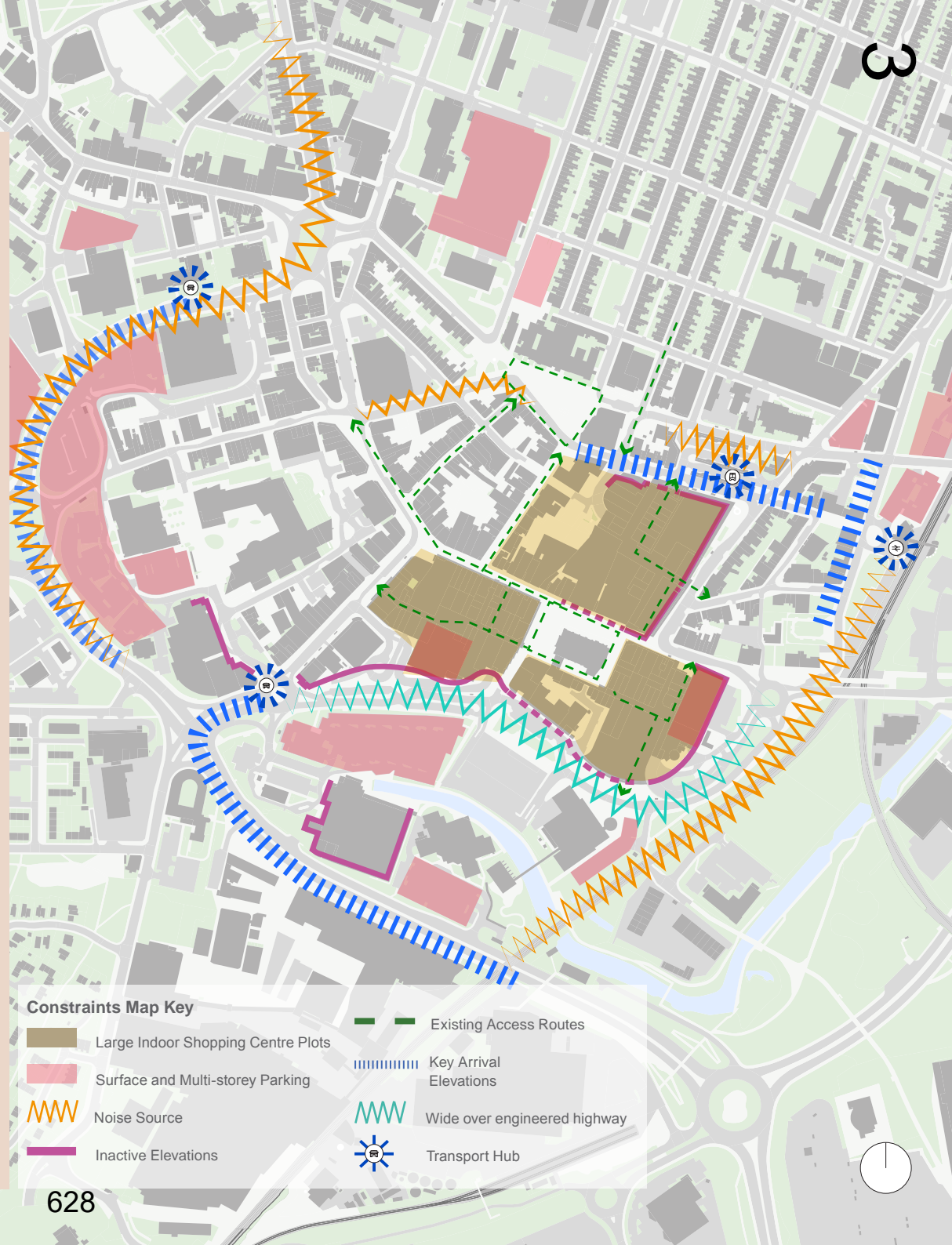
30 The three main points of arrival into the town centre do not feel like key gateways that present St Helens as a modern, vibrant and accessible town.

1. Arrival by bus is typically via the bus station located at the rear of the Hardshaw Shopping Centre. It is a heavily constrained footprint, with poor and very limited public realm, and poorly connected to the wider town centre. There is no space to pause, orientate yourself, or to wait for a friend. This contributes to the lack of intuitive way-finding that should encourage pedestrians into the heart of the town centre.

2. By train, despite a distinctive station building and some high-quality public realm features, the arrival space is immediately confronted by a roundabout, rather than a public space to dwell and meet. The roundabout acts as a barrier to pedestrian movements along Bickerstaffe Street to the bus station and civic and heritage area.

3. By car, the likely arrival points are located at the Birchley Street surface car park or the multi-storey car parks along Chalon Way. Here, the town centre presents inactive façades and backs of buildings. The town centre feels like it is turning its back on you rather than welcome you in.

There are poor opportunities for active travel such as walking and cycling and an over-dominance of vehicular movements. The A58 provides excellent links to the strategic road network (M62/M57) but forms a concrete collar to the south and east of the town centre, impairing pedestrian and cycle links to the town centre from local communities of Fingerpost, Peasley Cross, Parr, West Park, Eccleston, Cowley Hill and Sutton.



Constraints Map Key

	Large Indoor Shopping Centre Plots		Existing Access Routes
	Surface and Multi-storey Parking		Key Arrival Elevations
	Noise Source		Wide over engineered highway
	Inactive Elevations		Transport Hub



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

RAIL ACCESS

The rail station is accessed by vehicles via Corporation Street or via the one-way route of Shaw Street, northbound, with pedestrians able to access via Bickerstaffe Street. There is an opportunity to strengthen the connection between the rail station and the bus station.

Limited cycle parking is available in the form of ten 'Sheffield' stands (with a capacity for 20 cycles) and there are further 'bike and go' services available at the station for onward travel. The cycle parking does not meet with modern technical standards in

BUS ACCESS

Passengers arriving by bus can alight via the bus stops throughout the town centre or the bus station itself. The bus station consists of nine stands within the central island, with an additional three stands located on Bickerstaffe Street and a bus layby located on Corporation Street itself.

All the stands are sheltered and have raised kerbs for accessibility. Guard rails surround the bus station prevent pedestrians from walking out into traffic; however this does not promote attractive public realm space or create a sense of place.

CAR PARKING

The parking options comprise poor quality, outdated multi-storey buildings and large inefficient surface car parking areas. Wayfinding to car parks is poor and there is no real-time information available to support visitors in locating those which have available spaces.

Car parking within the town centre will be considered comprehensively as part of the wider Masterplan Development Framework. A Car Parking Strategy for the town is being prepared that will consider future demand and future requirements. There is a need to respond to climate change and sustainability targets as well as encouraging active modes of travel such as cycling and walking, incorporation of electric charging points, and future-proofing will be a key feature of this strategy.

Maintaining accessibility for those with mobility issues is also critical. Effective disabled persons parking places, both on and off street, will be provided throughout the town centre.

CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

3

PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST

The pedestrian routes from the town centre to the bus and rail stations are relatively well sign posted and are within close proximity.

Despite this, people travelling by foot must navigate a mini roundabout on entrance to the rail station, which can create a conflict.

During match days, the Steve Prescott Bridge is a key route towards the stadium. There is a pinch point on Salisbury Street due to the narrow footway, which can cause safety issues.

The main high street of the town centre along Church Street is pedestrianised. To travel to the bus station via Church Street, many pedestrians currently use the Hardshaw Centre as a strategic through-route, although navigation through the enclosed centre is not straightforward.

Both Corporation Street and Bickerstaffe Street can become overrun with buses, which poses a risk to passengers alighting from the buses, specifically on Bickerstaffe Street, where buses

allow passengers to alight on the road when there is no space in the lay by to stop in the designated area. The layout of the bus station itself is crowded and congested due to the vast amount of traffic travelling through here, the termination of buses at the station and use Corporation Street as a lay-by.

The bus station is not especially safe for cyclists due to the numbers of buses travelling through the area. There is a lack of dedicated cycling infrastructure around St Helens town centre which can often cause risks to cyclists, specifically around the bus station. There are areas of shared paths and cycle infrastructure such as Chalon Way, however, this is not linked with the wider network and key destinations – making it difficult for cyclists to be able to navigate through town efficiently and safely.

Access by foot and by cycle also needs improvement to assist movement from nearby residential and out of town retail areas over the linkway into the town centre.

WAYFINDING

Wayfinding within the town centre at present is poor and an improved signage strategy needs to be implemented to ensure easy access for all. Key connections with surrounding residential communities will also be crucial along with the key routes from main arrival points into the town centre.



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

QUALITY OF BUILT-ENVIRONMENT

ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

St Helens has several significant and important heritage assets that distinguish it from other town centres.

These include concentrations of listed buildings and others of considerable architectural merit, coupled with the town centre's canal setting to the south and east. This is reflected by the designation of two Conservation Areas which cover the town: George Quarter Conservation Area and Victoria Square Conservation Area. There is also evidence of previous investment in the town centre's public realm, including mature structural landscaping.

However, St Helens has several existing challenges that detract from the environmental quality of the town centre. Cohesiveness within the town centre is poor. Assets are somewhat disparate and disconnected; wayfinding is lacking; and public spaces do not encourage dwell-time or achieve their full potential. An initial appraisal undertaken by ECF noted the following:

- Church Square can act as a key focal point and become a positive dwell space on route through the town;

- The town centre is dominated by three large indoor shopping centres which contribute to the overprovision of retail space, poor wayfinding and some inactive frontages;
- The market hall suffers from its location off Chalon Way as it turns its back on the town centre. It is under-occupied and underutilised as a town centre asset;
- The market and The World of Glass suffer given that Chalon Way is dedicated to vehicular movements as opposed to an inviting place for pedestrians, making them feel like they are located on the outer fringes of the town, as well as a lack of high-quality public realm in this location; and
- Key assets of the Town Hall, Gamble, Victoria Square and the town's wider cultural and heritage offering are difficult to find and poorly linked which reinforces their location on the periphery of the town centre.



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

QUALITY OF BUILT-ENVIRONMENT

Despite this, there are key assets and positive features which can be built upon and strengthened further. The traditional retail streets within historic frontages close to St Helens College have character and intimacy. Likewise, the George Street Quarter Conservation Area provides a positive contribution to the town. Other assets, such as the Sankey (St Helens) Canal provides real adjacent opportunities for new high-quality development but, given the current layout and uses within the town centre, they are hidden, unloved and not fulfilling their true potential.

The key assets existing within the town centre which the Masterplan Framework can build upon are as follows:

ST HELENS COLLEGE

provides an active Campus within the heart of the town centre and was redeveloped in 2009 as part of government's 'Building Colleges for the Future Programme'. The College is currently undertaking a review of their assets, which will be considered and aligned with the Masterplan Development Framework. The College provides training to circa. 8,000 students across its Campuses in St Helens¹⁶ and it is a key footfall driver for the town.

¹⁶ St Helens Town Centre and STEM Centre

QUAKER MEETING HOUSE

is a Grade II listed building, built in 1679 and is the oldest building in St Helens. It falls within the George Street Conservation Area.

THEATRE ROYAL AND ARTISTIC SPACES

including The Citadel support the town's cultural and creative offering along with Heart of Glass; a collaborative and social arts agency based in St Helens, and Citadel Arts; a charity that runs events and workshops for families in St Helens.

Heart of Glass have delivered various pop-up events over recent years including MadLove takeover within the former Woolworth's building, engaging with school children to create 'The Book of St Helens' and most recently, artwork installations in Parr.

The Citadel is home to MD Creatives and provides space for live performances as well as rehearsal space and youth and disability theatre, based in an old 160 year old Theatre and music hall.



St Helens College



Theatre Royal



The Citadel



Quaker Meeting House

CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

THE GAMBLE BUILDING

(formerly Gamble Institute) was originally built as a library and technical school in 1896. It was supported by funds from Sir David Gamble and was developed to support the advancement of technical and scientific skills among the local population. External works are being undertaken to bring the building back into use. The building also provides home to the borough's archive.

ST HELENS TOWN HALL AND VICTORIA SQUARE

sit in the heart of the civic part of the town. The Town Hall is an important civic building for the town and forms part of the Victoria Square Conservation Area, declared as such in 2000 in recognition to the value placed on its special qualities.

THE WORLD OF GLASS

provides a museum and gallery space within the town centre and presents the borough's heritage and Pilkington Glass collections together with the historic Jubilee No. 9 Tank House, which is Grade II* Listed and a Scheduled Monument.

ST HELENS TRANSPORT MUSEUM

is housed in the old St Helens Corporation Transport bus depot and provides a wide collection of vehicles.

THE COUNCIL'S ARTS IN LIBRARIES PROGRAMME

which has secured National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status.



The World of Glass



St Helens Transport Museum



Gamble Institute, Victoria Square



Town Hall, Victoria Square

SUMMARY

In summary, considering all the above, the key issues to be addressed through the Masterplan Development Framework for St Helens town centre include:

- Supporting existing retailers and traders, by consolidating and enhancing the retail offer and responding to existing challenges and future trends to ensure a vibrant town centre for the existing community and future generations to enjoy;
- Reducing the oversupply of shopping centres that over-dominate the built form and creating smaller modern retail properties attractive to the independent sector and new entrepreneurs. This will build on the already strong and growing independent sector within the town.
- Introducing a mix of new uses and diversifying the traditional retail offer through a mix of complementary alternative uses including food and drink, commercial, residential, as well as range of amenities and services.
- In doing so, improving and enhancing the night-time economy and broadening the overall leisure, food & beverage opportunities within the town with a focus on families.
- Delivering a quality town centre living offer to diversify the housing stock and to provide an alternative for those wanting to experience the new amenities in the town centre. This will appeal to a new socio-demographic and create a critical mass of new population who will provide footfall to support the night-time economy and invest in their local high street.
- The need to respond and be cognisant of the changing demographic of the borough, including the ageing population.
- The opportunity to utilise available development sites within the town centre and the potential of brownfield land to contribute towards growth targets including the delivery of new homes.
- Improving place-making and sense of place. Providing better amenity and experience will encourage people of all ages to visit and spend their leisure time in St Helens town centre. This includes making more of the student footfall from St Helens College.
- Ensuring that the town centre is accessible by all modes of transport. This must include sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling, and that appropriate infrastructure is in place to accommodate this. Similarly, improved access by bus and rail should also be incorporated into the Framework. Car parking should be considered across the town centre and future provision and demand assessed in the context of climate change and sustainability targets.
- Positively changing the perceptions of the town centre, through high quality events and activities in the centre including temporary pop ups or 'meanwhile' uses to demonstrate change is happening.
- The opportunity to redevelop Council-owned assets to best effect. This includes making the most of the significant and extensive heritage and cultural assets that exist in the town centre.









36



KEY OPPORTUNITIES



Opportunities Map Key

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|---|----------------------|
|  | Future Opportunities |  | Place making |
|  | Permeability |  | New Active Frontages |
|  | Key Public Spaces |  | Transport Hub |
|  | Existing Positive Frontages |  | Sankey Canal |



A VISION FOR ST HELENS TOWN CENTRE

Having established the town centre's baseline position, the overarching vision for the town centre and the associated strategic objectives for its future development have been considered below.

THE STRATEGIC OPTIONS

Several strategic options are available:

- **Do Nothing** – In this scenario, this leaves the future prosperity of the town to market forces. The implications here are that there may be increased vacancies, a lack of control of the town centre by the Council, and further reduction in footfall and dwell-time without intervention.
- **Curating Events** – In this scenario, activities or events which are considered to be temporary or 'meanwhile' uses are put in place only. This option can be seen as a 'sticking plaster' and does not address fundamental issues within the town centre.
- **Solo-Use Scheme** – In this scenario, the Council or others may seek to develop part of the town centre for a solo-use (for example, solely commercial, new retail/leisure, etc). Whilst this may improve parts of the town, other areas may remain unchanged and left behind.
- **Comprehensive Mixed Use Scheme** – In this scenario, the town centre is looked at comprehensively, which has the potential to derive the maximum number of benefits for the community.

THE STRATEGIC SOLUTION

To maximise the benefits of the proposed intervention, the preferred approach for the Masterplan Framework is to deliver a Comprehensive Mixed-Use Scheme, which secures several uses for the town centre that will maximise footfall, dwell-time, and the wider regeneration benefits for the Borough.



Artists impression of proposed New Market Street

TOWN CENTRE VISION

The vision statement set out below articulates the preferred approach to the development of the town centre. This statement highlights the key objectives and priorities for achieving those objectives.

The vision for St Helens town centre has been informed by stakeholder engagement undertaken in October 2020, which built upon earlier engagement in 2016/17 and that helped to create the 'St Helens Story', together with the '#StHelensTogether: Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030' which was subject to extensive engagement prior to its adoption. It also considers the strategic context and the opportunities and constraints within the town centre which have been set out in earlier sections.

The preferred approach, which is consistent with the '#StHelensTogether: Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030', envisages radical transformation of the town centre through development that will nurture, celebrate, and host culture, building upon the town's creative and innovative gene and positive legacy of its' industrial heritage.

40

'ST HELENS...A CULTURALLY CENTRED VIBRANT TOWN CENTRE THAT MATCHES THE BOROUGH'S POTENTIAL WITH PEOPLE AT THE HEART'

"By 2030 St Helens will be culturally centred, will nurture and celebrate its cultural and industrial heritage, will build upon its creative and innovative gene in glass making and foundation-industries to innovate and do things differently, and create new opportunities, including those from the City Region. Vibrancy will be created for the town centre; the town will be a more accessible and enjoyable place to come together and will be a place where the community will learn from one another, improve their physical and mental well-being and where people want to live, work and visit. Businesses and residents will be attracted to the new opportunities available, will have quality spaces to dwell and will benefit from improved transport and digital connections borough-wide".



The following strategic objectives will help to achieve the delivery of a culturally centred and vibrant town centre, which is at the heart of the Vision for St Helens:

1. DELIVERING A DIVERSE, VIBRANT AND ANIMATED TOWN CENTRE

To create a town centre that responds to the changing nature of the high-street; consolidating the proportion of retail and concentrating retail provision.

Encouraging new town centre uses, increasing active frontages and offering spaces that attract the local and independent traders that make St Helens truly unique.

Introducing a diverse mix of town centre uses, to include both retail, leisure and other traditional town centre uses, as well as a complementary residential offer.

4 Promoting the existing cultural offer and improving opportunities for linked visits as well as encouraging the night-time economy.

Introducing temporary or 'meanwhile' uses including events and pop ups to create a vibrant, lively ever-changing place that people want to visit.

Delivering new public art work within key streets and spaces in the town centre.

2. ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE GROWTH

Providing the foundations to attract high-quality employment into the town centre, building on the



catalytical impact of Glass Futures and the opportunity to harness innovation and skills for the benefit of the local community.

To create the infrastructure to support the emerging global employment in the borough whilst also creating places for people to collaborate and innovate.

3. PROMOTING HIGH-QUALITY TOWN CENTRE LIVING

Delivering a unique, high-quality, residential offer within the town centre that meets housing need and aspiration. To diversify the borough's housing stock across a mix of typologies and providing the opportunity for a new residential population to thrive as part of the wider placemaking ambitions.

4. CREATING A SUSTAINABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND CONNECTED TOWN CENTRE

To create a more sustainably accessible town centre to make it easier for people to enjoy the services, spaces and amenities that the town centre has to offer.

To improve the transport and digital infrastructure laying the foundations for communities, businesses and visitors to digitally connect, and for businesses and investment to be attracted into the borough.



To ensure the town centre deals with the effects of climate change and maximises the opportunity for net zero carbon development, with sustainability and climate change at the forefront of its transformation.

5. POSITIVELY CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE TOWN

Positively changing the perceptions of the town and the borough through promoting our heritage, protecting and enhancing our historical assets, the canal and our cultural offer to provide a distinctive experience for visitors, residents and businesses.

6. TO PROVIDE A HEALTHY AND COMMUNITY-FOCUSED TOWN CENTRE

Creating high-quality spaces and places for independent businesses and community functions to thrive, people to dwell and socialise within, providing opportunities for active travel and leisure, and creating a town centre which the people of St Helens are proud of.

Ensuring that connectivity and accessibility for sustainable modes of transport are accommodated within the town centre to increase health and wellbeing.

Greening and improving the public realm to contribute towards net zero carbon, biodiversity and sustainability goals, to the benefit of the existing community and future generations.



These strategic objectives are in line with the adopted Core Strategy (2012) policies CSS 1, CSD 1, CAS 1, CAS 2, CH 1, CH 2, CE 1, CQL 1, CQL 2, CQL 4 and Saved Policies within the Unitary Development Plan (1998) RET 1, RET 4, ENV 22, ENV 24B, ENV 25, ENV 26, TC 4, TC 5.

The Strategic Objectives also reflect on the policies within the emerging Local Plan which is in Examination (emerging policies: LPB01, LPC04, LPB01, LPB02, LPC11, LPA07), and align with the proposals set out within the Town Deal.

PROPOSED TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

- Key**
- 42 Masterplan Focus
 - 1 St Helens Town Hall
 - 2 Victoria Square
 - 3 The Gamble
 - 4 Bus Station
 - 5 Road Transport Museum
 - 6 Rail Station
 - 7 New Market Hall
 - 8 Quaker Meeting House
 - 9 St Helens College
 - 10 Church Square Shopping Centre
 - 11 St Helens Parish Church
 - 12 New Canal Side Offering
 - 13 The World of Glass
 - 14 St Helens Chamber
 - 15 Improved Link to Stadium & Glass Futures
 - 16 Totally Wicked Stadium

The town centre masterplan which accompanies this Draft Masterplan Development Framework sets out a proposed spatial framework for the implementation of the town centre vision and strategic objectives outlined in the previous section.

The Masterplan has been developed around a number of zones or key character areas, opportunity sites, public realm and transport and movement considerations, as well as the consideration of specific urban design principles within each zone.



OVERARCHING SPATIAL CONTEXT

This Masterplan Development Framework will outline the ambition for the whole town centre. The first phase will focus on the heart of the town centre and the immediate deliverable place-making opportunities in and around Church Square. As illustrated, there are important wider links to consider which go beyond the proposed red line or area of intervention; these will be dealt with in complementary masterplans which will come forward in the future.

43

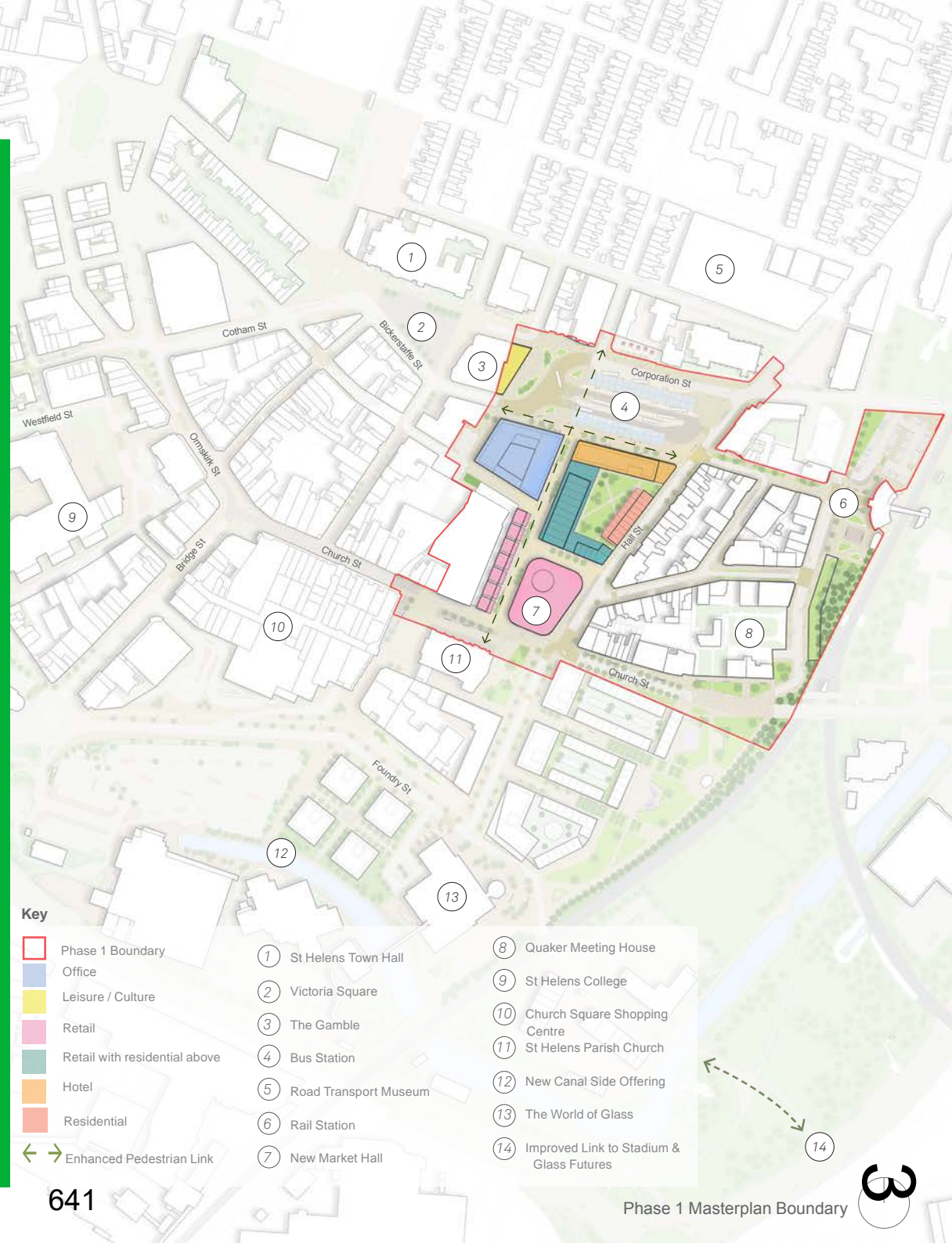
TO THE SOUTH/SOUTH EAST

a key change area is the site of Glass Futures, and the broader opportunity to create a potential Foundation Industries Campus, bringing together innovation in glass and other industries to drive forward the green economic growth of the town and the borough. It is important to emphasise the key links between these opportunities to ensure employment-generating development around Glass Futures is not seen as separate to the activities and change taking place in the town centre; those new employees and businesses are attracted into the town centre for retail, leisure and amenity use during and after the working day.

Likewise, the existing link between the town centre, railway station and rugby stadium are important to enhance the visitor experience and offer a reason for extended visits and return complementary visits.

TO THE NORTH, there are future redevelopment opportunities for the College Street area and the potential to consolidate public sector uses to make more of this key gateway into the town centre. The spatial link between the town centre, through College Street and up to the future housing-led development at Cowley Hill will be important to create, so this future residential community can easily access the offer within the town centre via walking and cycling opportunities.

TO THE WEST, drawing in the existing educational uses and offer provided by St Helens College is key, and making sure that there are spaces, places and a town centre offer that is attractive for students and young people. The areas in and around Westfield Street and Duke Street need consideration too – creating the opportunity for a more diverse and town centre wide evening economy.



DESIGN PRINCIPLES

All development coming forward within the Draft Masterplan Development Framework boundary will adhere to adopted and emerging planning policy and consider the following key design principles.

- Create positive active frontages throughout the town centre, such as leisure, retail and residential at ground level.
- Open up the desire lines improving natural wayfinding and maximising existing landmarks and focal points.
- Create opportunities to provide experiences through a range of placemaking activities and events which animate the spaces and create interest.

44

- Improving and linking public space, historic, cultural buildings, the canal and existing positive streets.
- Increasing the footfall throughout the town centre.
- Creating new and improved dwell spaces.
- Creating a density that is appropriate to a town centre location.
- Draw upon the heritage analysis of the site and street patterns, seeking opportunities to restore the historic street grain pattern with a network of interconnecting shared surface streetscapes.
- Consolidate car parking supply to make car parks more efficient, reduce circulating vehicles in the town centre and promote sustainable travel.
- Adherence to latest guidance on 'Building Better, Building Beautiful'.



PROPOSED CHARACTER ZONES

The town centre area has been divided into four broad character zones, which have been delineated based upon key characteristics. Each zone has an important role to play in the wider transformation of St Helens town centre, and collectively, they will support the delivery of the overarching vision.

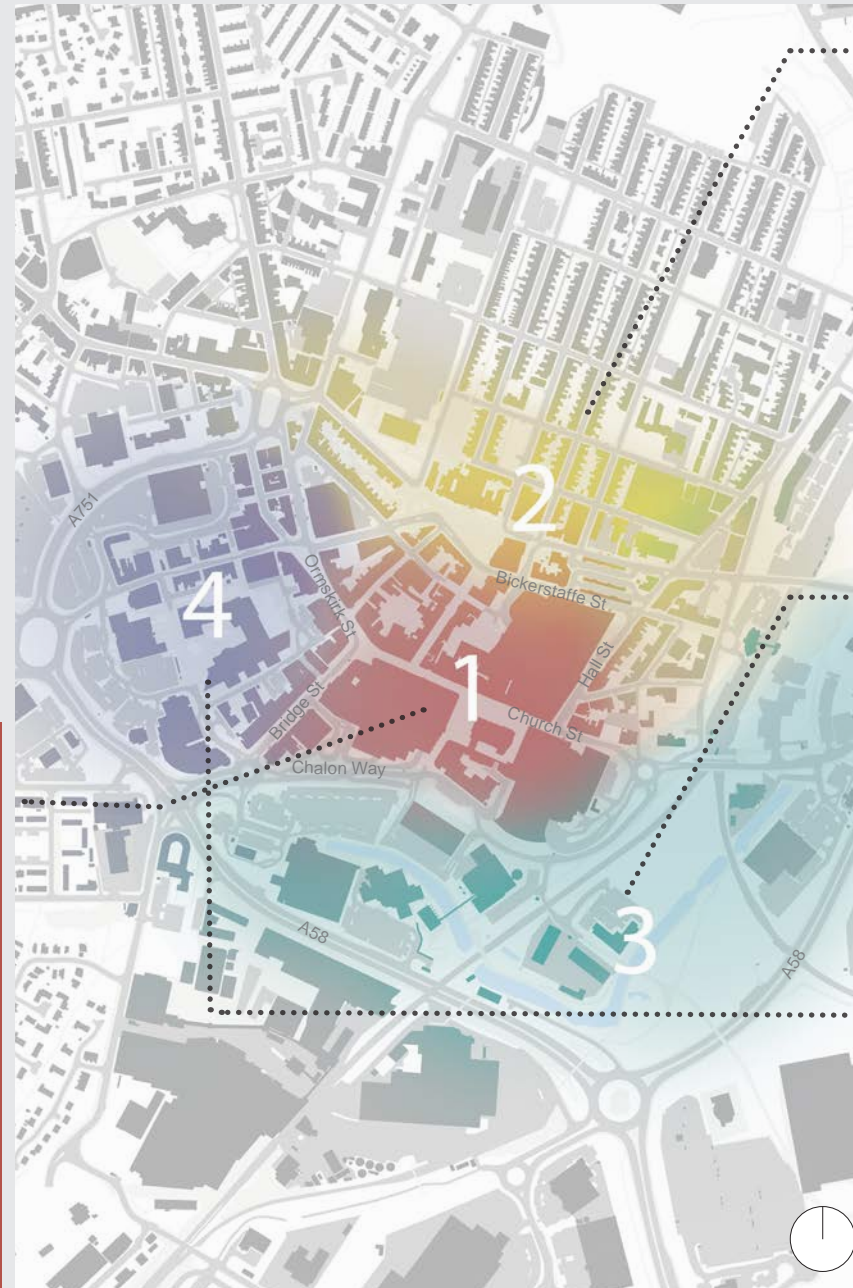
It is important to note that the zones do not represent phasing and delivery priorities. They have been identified based on the types of uses, scale and massing that will be considered in each area.

The zones are set out below, including a summary of the urban design principles and key components that have been considered in each area.

CHARACTER ZONE 1: CENTRAL RETAIL

Encompassing the heart of the town, occupied by traditional high street uses and centred around the Grade II listed St Helens Parish Church, which is a key asset for St Helens and the focus of Church Square. There are opportunities to improve the built environment, landscaping and reduce the dominance of the insular shopping centres which reduce the permeability within the town centre.

The Central Retail zone is bounded by the existing bus station and Cloughton Street to the north, St George's Quarter/Conservation Area to the east, Foundry Street/Chalon Way West to the south, and Bridge Street to the west.



CHARACTER ZONE 2: CIVIC AND HERITAGE

Comprising the area between St Helens Central (rail station), existing bus station around Bickerstaffe Street, George Street Quarter Conservation Area, Victoria Square Conservation Area, and the parcel of land between College Street and Birchley Street. This zone includes many of the town centre's heritage assets.

Development coming forward in this location needs to be sensitive to the unique character of the Conservation Areas – to preserve and/or enhance the heritage assets through bringing forward appropriate and sensitively-considered development in terms of scale, massing and use of materials.

There is a real opportunity in this zone to enhance the quality of the Conservation Areas.

CHARACTER ZONE 3: DISCOVERY

Presents an arc of opportunity for change and future transformation for the town centre. It includes the area in and around the Sankey (St Helens) Canal, important listed structures including the highly significant Tank House, which is both Grade II* listed and a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), being the best surviving example of a late 19th century glassmaking tank furnace building. These important buildings and structures represent the cultural heritage and glass legacy of the borough. The zone is bounded by the Linkway (A58) to the south and east.

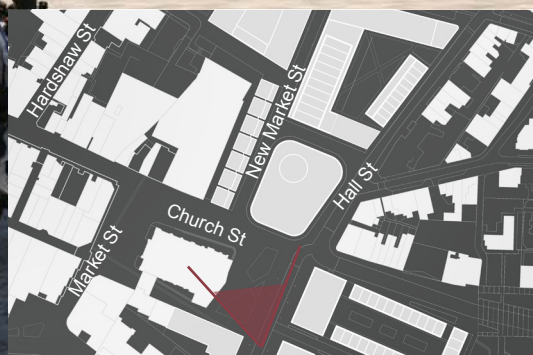
CHARACTER ZONE 4: EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

As its name suggests, this part of the town centre includes the St Helens College Campus and is bounded by Linkway West. This area is characterised by education uses, surface car parking, large, big box retailers, leisure uses and provides the focus for the evening economy from Bridge Street and Barrow Street to Westfield Street and extending to Duke Street.

46

1

CENTRAL RETAIL



644

GGI of proposed Church Square

CHARACTER ZONE 1

CENTRAL RETAIL

The Central Retail Zone provides the opportunity to create a strong heart and focus to the town centre.

This area relates to the heart of the town, currently occupied by traditional high street uses, and centred around a key asset for St Helens – Church Square and the Grade II listed St Helens Parish Church.

Whilst there has been some private investment here in recent years, which is strongly supported and encouraged, there are clear opportunities in this area to reduce the dominance of the insular shopping centres that reduce the permeability in this part of the town centre and to improve the landscaping and public realm.

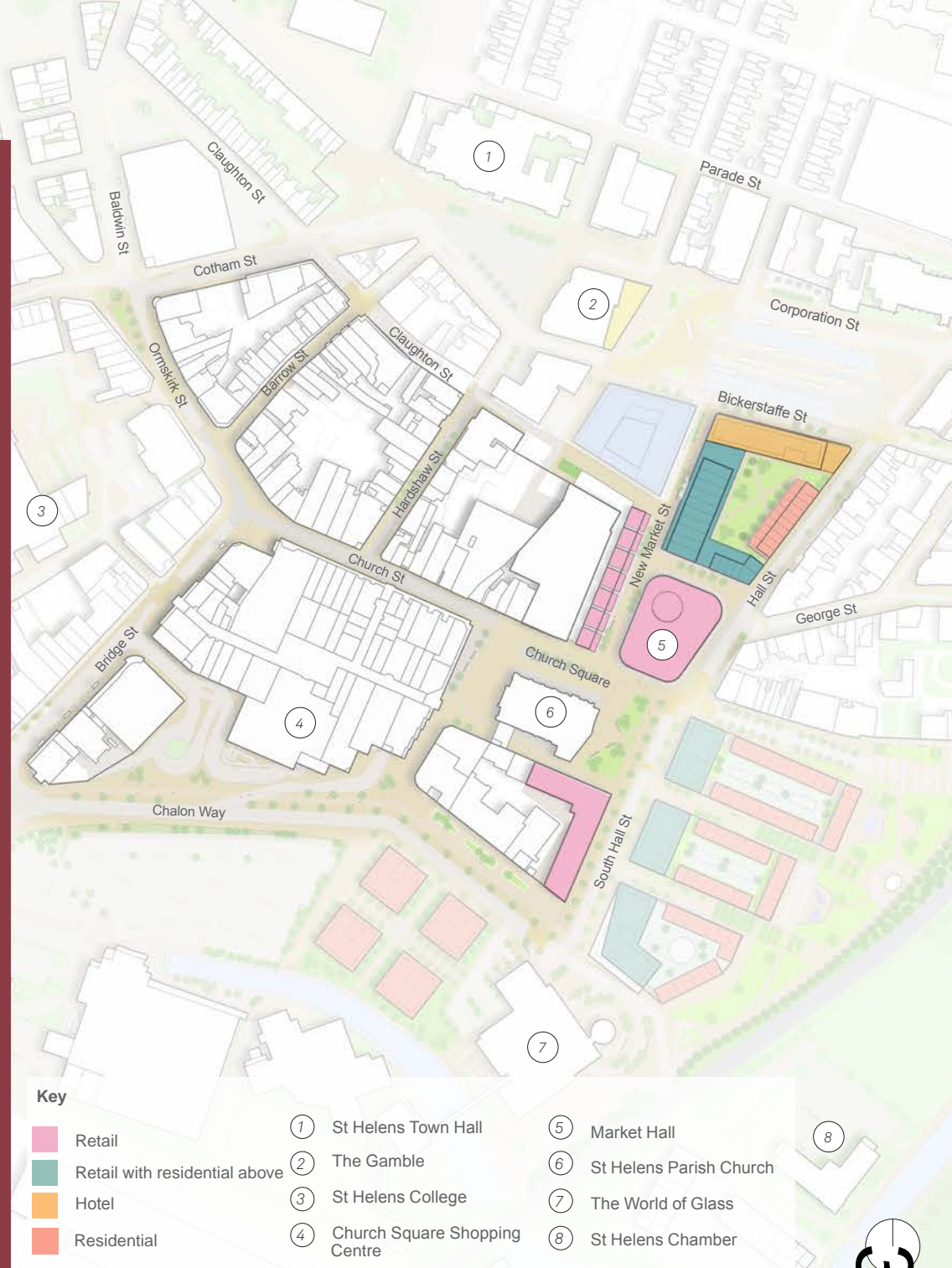
In this context, the ambition here is to demolish the existing Hardshaw Shopping Centre and replace it with a new mixed-use development. This will allow a re-introduction of the original street pattern to create better links north to south through the town centre. The new development will provide a link through from an improved bus station at Bickerstaffe Street through a newly created 'New Market Street' and create a vista down to St Helens Parish Church.

Engagement with existing traders and occupiers will be undertaken to ensure that appropriate alternative premises can be found within the town centre whilst this work is being undertaken.

The development proposes the following:

- New townhouses fronting onto Hall Street (overlooking the George Street Quarter Conservation Area);
- A new hotel, with the opportunity for an active street frontage onto Bickerstaffe Street;
- Small to medium sized retail and leisure units fronting onto the newly created New Market Street at ground floor level and residential apartments above;
- Provision of small-scale retail kiosks to provide the opportunity for independents and start-ups to occupy space within the heart of the town centre; and
- A new market hall occupying the corner of Church Street and Hall Street, with the opportunity for spill-out space in Church Square and in New Market Street.

In the short to medium term, Church Square Shopping Centre will be retained, and façade improvements undertaken. In the longer-term, this area may be revisited in response to prevailing future trends at that time. It will be important to maintain and enhance linkages between Bridge Street and St Helens Parish Church.



Key

- Retail
- Retail with residential above
- Hotel
- Residential

- 1 St Helens Town Hall
- 2 The Gamble
- 3 St Helens College
- 4 Church Square Shopping Centre
- 5 Market Hall
- 6 St Helens Parish Church
- 7 The World of Glass
- 8 St Helens Chamber

CENTRAL RETAIL

PUBLIC REALM

The public realm strategy for this zone will include enhancement of the existing pedestrianised area to the west of the Church and around the Church itself. This will be supplemented by an extension to the pedestrianised environment through the creation of a new Market Street link to the bus station and the spaces and streets around the new market hall building. Hall Street North will be enhanced with wider pavements and street trees with an extension of Hall Street to the South and the World of Glass albeit with a more pedestrian and cycle priority focus.

To emphasise this zone as the centre of the town there will be high-quality surface materials and street furniture, together with the introduction of more soft landscaping and a greener environment to make it a place that encourages people to want to dwell, increase the biodiversity offer and help tackle the climate emergency. The public realm treatments around the periphery of this zone will play a pivotal role in seamlessly knitting together the urban fabric of the other three town centre zone, along with the introduction of high quality public art.

MOVEMENT

Movement in the Central Retail Zone will be focussed on walking and cycling. The area will be largely pedestrianised, and will feature attractive, safe street design that will help to encourage walking, and supplemented by cycle parking directly outside key retail spaces.

Vehicular access for deliveries and servicing will still be provided and controlled through existing, and, where necessary, new or amended Traffic Regulation Orders.

It will be important to ensure clear, legible, and direct walking and cycle connections from the Central Retail Zone to other zone, especially those that contain key onward destinations and public transport connections (such as the reconfigured bus station and St Helens Central rail station).

A detailed review of the car parking provision within the town centre, is being undertaken in parallel to the draft Masterplan Development Framework consultation and the findings of this study will be incorporated into the final document. This review will seek to ensure that ample affordable on and off-street parking is provided within the town centre. This will also include increased electricity charging at key points around the town centre.



CENTRAL RETAIL

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The key move within the Central Retail Zone proposes to increase permeability through the town centre, connecting Church Square back with the town and its key arrival points (bus and rail station) and public spaces. This reintroduction of the historic street pattern breaks down the monolithic scale and footprint of the Hardshaw Shopping Centre making it easier to move and find your way through the town centre.

A new street is proposed which connects the bus station with Church Square, opening up the view of St Helens Parish Church tower, drawing people into the retail core and improving wayfinding.

49 The urban character of the George Street Quarter, scale and massing, is planned to be reintroduced to Hall Street and to create active frontages and activity at street level, as opposed to the blank façades of the current Hardshaw Shopping Centre. One such way will be to create front doors directly onto Hall Street.

Hall Street is proposed to be extended through Church Square down to The World of Glass, linking a key heritage and cultural asset and putting it back in the heart of the town.

St Marys Market is proposed to be relocated and positioned at the heart of the town centre. This will activate the Church Street and Church Square with space for the stalls and events to spill out into the enhanced public realm, creating activity and vibrancy within the heart of the town centre.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Re-introducing the original historic street pattern to encourage this permeability, breaking up monolithic buildings and introducing development of a more appropriate and 'human-scale' befitting of a town centre.
- Open up the desire lines improving natural wayfinding i.e., simple & intuitive permeability. Ensuring pedestrians and cyclists can permeate through the town centre safely and with ease using the towns wayfinding points by drawing upon the heritage analysis of the site and street patterns.
- Improve and link public space, historic, cultural buildings, canal and existing positive streets.
- Encouraging activity at ground floor level through active frontages, opportunity to make the most of the street and public realm, and creation of 'spill-out' space for occupiers and stallholders.
- High quality public realm and streetscape, with soft landscaping and greening.
- Positive active frontages. Streetscapes are activated through leisure, retail and residential use at ground level, providing an active 24/7 town centre.
- Creating a density appropriate to a town centre location.

PREFERRED USES

- Mixed use, retail and leisure led development with a variety of unit sizes to accommodate local independents as well as options for high street multiples where appropriate;
- High quality residential.



2

CIVIC AND HERITAGE



CGI of proposed Bickerstaffe Street

CHARACTER ZONE 2

CIVIC AND HERITAGE

The Civic and Heritage Zone includes some of the town's key heritage buildings and assets, which are recognised given that the zone includes two Conservation Areas – George Street and Victoria Square. The Conservation Area status means that more robust planning considerations are imposed, and in line with the NPPF, development coming forward in these locations must respect the Conservation Area, and where possible seek out opportunities for new development that enhance and make a positive contribution to heritage assets contained within the area¹⁷.

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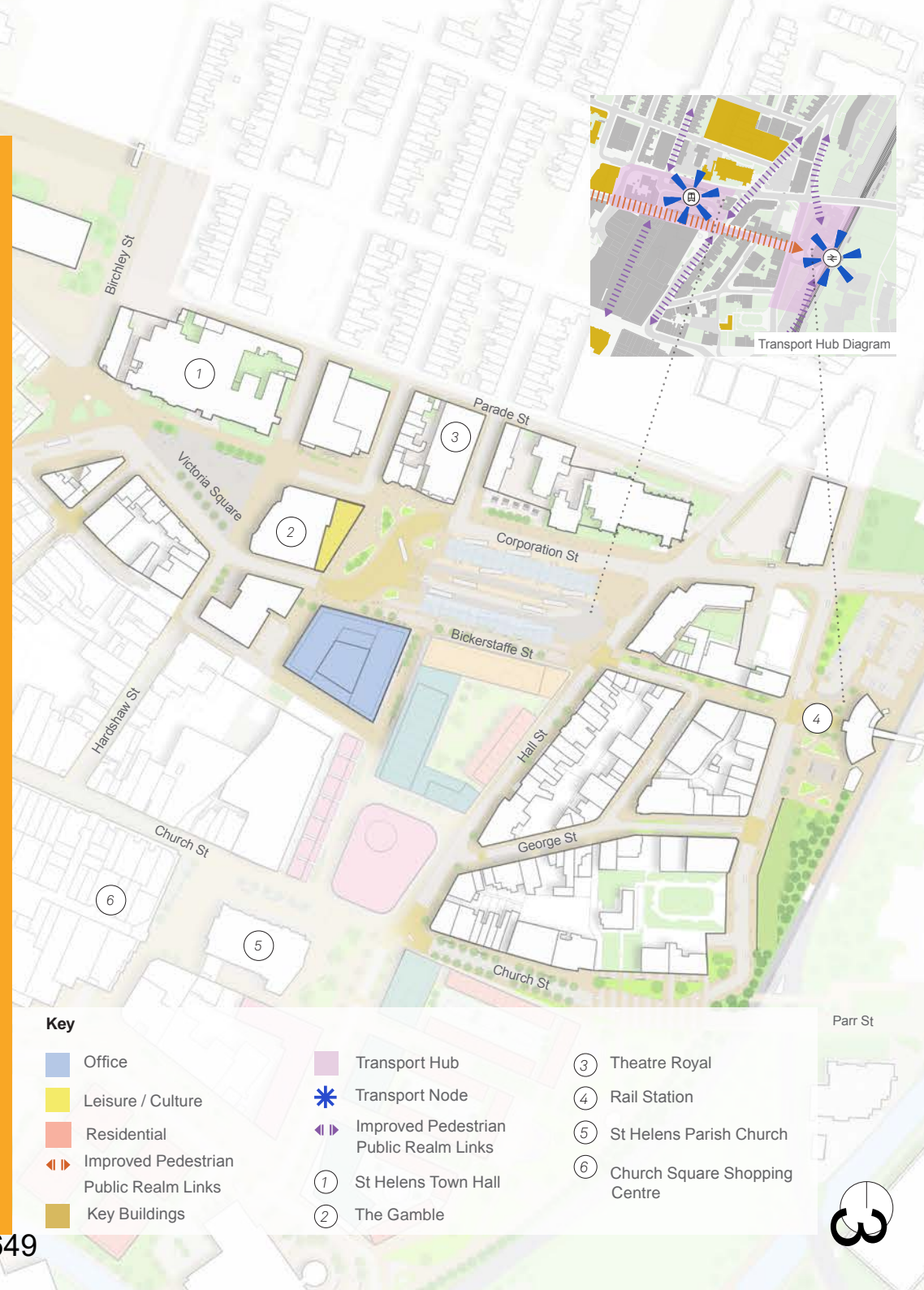
The Zone encompasses:

- The area around St Helens Central Railway Station and the George Street Conservation Area, spanning from Church Street/Parr Street to the south, just beyond Corporation Street to the north, and Hall Street to the west;
- The area from Hall Street through to Victoria Square, including the bus station, transport museum, The Gamble and Town Hall buildings; and
- The area between College Street and Birchley Street, including Birchley Street Car Park, Police Station and Law Courts.

Within this part of the town centre there is the opportunity to create more of a civic heart to St Helens, building on the existing assets of the Town Hall and the Gamble Building and focusing on the spaces between these buildings to create a space where people want to dwell. Equally important is the need to define a positive arrival point into the town centre – both from St Helens Central Rail Station and the bus station as key public transport nodes for St Helens.

Development within the Civic and Heritage Zone includes the following:

- A new Commercial Office to provide high-quality employment space for the town centre;
- A redesigned bus station to provide a more pleasant and safer environment for pedestrians;
- The creation of a new public square to the rear of the Gamble building;
- Improved landscaping and public realm from St Helens Central Train Station, along Bickerstaffe Street and into Victoria Square;



¹⁷ NPPF (2021) Paragraph 206

CIVIC AND HERITAGE

Whilst not proposed as forming part of the Phase 1 proposals, there is also the future ambition to further enhance Victoria Square and create a dual frontage to the Gamble building that, through sensitive extension works, could create a second entrance connecting to and over-looking the improved bus station.

PUBLIC REALM

This zone of the town benefits from having some beautiful heritage buildings and so the public realm should complement and enhance their setting to provide opportunities for people to dwell and enjoy them. The creation of a new plaza at the rail station will enhance the sense of arrival into the town at this key gateway. Clear wayfinding and landscape design should provide legible pedestrian routes to orientate visitors towards the bus station along Bickerstaffe Street and the heart of the Civic and Heritage Zone.

The environment around the re-configured bus station will be much improved with the pedestrianisation of Bickerstaffe Street and the removal of unnecessary highway clutter to create plenty of space for pedestrians to move and dwell. High quality surface materials, furniture and soft landscaping such as rain gardens will further enhance the experience of this area. The creation of a public space linking the Theatre Royal and The Gamble will allow these significant civic assets to breathe, enhancing their offer and the way people interact with them.

MOVEMENT

The Civic and Heritage Zone will, through some subtle changes to access and movement configuration, see a significant improvement to the way people can move

about the town centre. Underpinning this is the newly reconfigured and expanded bus station.

Located on the existing site, the bus station will no longer be surrounded by circulating bus movements, acting as a barrier to north-south pedestrian footfall. Enhanced crossing amenity adjacent to the bus station will help achieve this, and the rationalisation of operational bus movements and layover space to within the footprint of the bus station, rather than on the adjacent Corporation Street, will make things clearer and safer for all town centre visitors.

Bickerstaffe Street is proposed to be closed off to traffic to enable a much improved, clear connection between the Town Hall and points to the west of the town, and Central rail station in the east. This change will also help to better connect the bus station with the Central Retail Zone.

Increased public realm space and widened footways/cycleways will replace a route that is currently used by circulating buses and taxis. Enhanced and enlarged public realm space, to better accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, will also be provided outside the Gamble building (referenced here as 'Gamble Square') and on the northern side of Corporation Street, enhancing access to and enlivening the frontage to features such as the Theatre Royal and the transport museum.

In order to accommodate east to west movements for deliveries, servicing and taxis, Corporation Street is proposed to be made 2-way.

Use of appropriate surface materials will help to soften the principle of this route being a road for motorised vehicles and bring it closer to the look and feel of a shared space.



CIVIC AND HERITAGE

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Civic and Heritage Zone contains two key arrival points into St Helens town centre, by bus and train, and so is a place where people's first impressions of St Helens are formed. A key move has been to link these arrival points and maximise the public realm, reducing the dominance of vehicles, creating spaces to meet, dwell and find your bearings.

The new station plaza serving the rail station is better linked down Bickerstaffe Street to the bus station and beyond to Victoria Square, creating a joined-up transport hub for buses, trains, and cycles, and making both arrivals and onward connections easier.

An improved Bus Station with a key focus on the pedestrian experience is proposed to be overlooked by a new hotel, conveniently located next to the transport hub and providing 24-hour activity.

The new Gamble Square bounded by the Gamble Building, the Theatre Royal, Holy Cross and Saint Helen Catholic Church, the Millennium Centre plus a potential new office and hotel will become a destination in itself, now linked directly with Church Square with views of St Helens Parish Church tower.

The scale and massing of the buildings round the new Gamble Square and bus station can be higher. Mediating between the residential scale of Hall Street at 2 to 3 storeys and the significantly taller civic buildings of the Gamble, Town Hall, and Century House.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- The creation of a joined-up transport hub, bus, rail, and cycle linking to destination buildings and public spaces with onward connections to retail.
- Arrival points feed through the retail zone increasing footfall providing places to dwell linking to all the 4 zones and dispersing beyond.
- Open up the desire lines improving natural wayfinding i.e., simple & intuitive permeability. Ensuring pedestrians and cyclists can permeate through the town centre safely and with ease using the town's wayfinding points by drawing upon the heritage analysis of the site and street patterns.
- Improve and link public space, historic, cultural buildings, canal and existing positive streets.
- Positive active frontages. Streetscapes are activated through leisure, retail and residential use at ground level, providing an active 24/7 town centre.
- Create dwell spaces.
- Infill gap sites creating a density and quality appropriate to a town centre location.
- Respecting the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas – both George Street and Victoria Square.

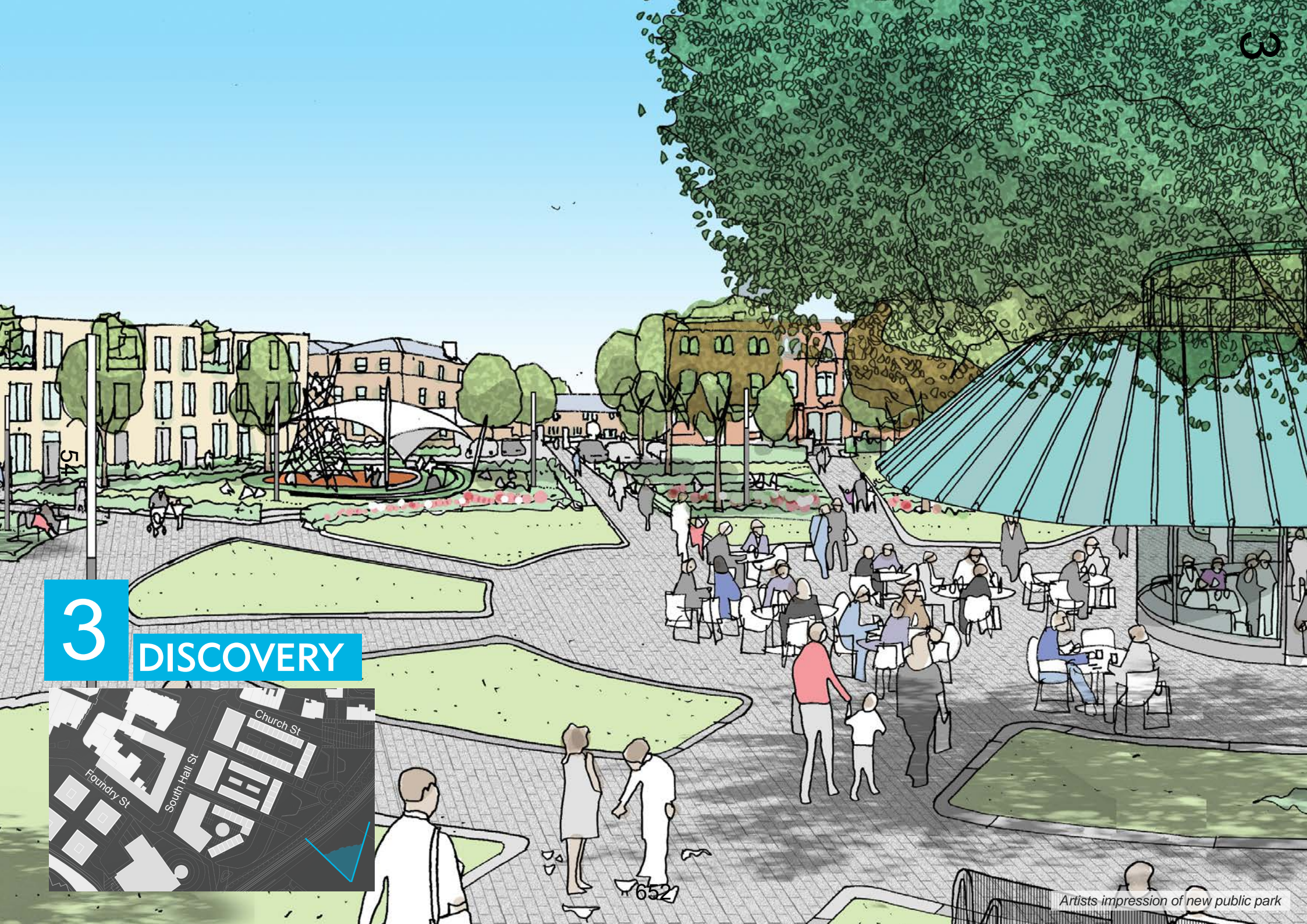
PREFERRED USES

- High-quality transport facilities;
- Commercial-led development at an appropriate scale and massing;
- Ancillary retail and leisure led development;
- High-quality public realm and landscaping;
- Community-focused buildings and amenities;
- High quality residential.



3

DISCOVERY



Artists impression of new public park

DISCOVERY

The Discovery Zone includes the area from Church Street to the north (currently occupied by St Mary's Shopping Centre and existing market hall), The World of Glass, and the area around the Sankey Canal. This part of the town centre is currently dominated by highway infrastructure.

This part of the town centre at present feels disconnected from the retail core, hindered by the lack of visual links down towards the canal but at the same time includes several the town's key assets. Through the implementation of the proposed Masterplan Framework over time, by undertaking some key urban design moves, such assets will be better presented and will help to contribute to the uniqueness of St Helens town centre.

The development proposes the following:

- St Mary's Shopping Centre and associated multi-storey car park is proposed to be demolished and over time, to be replaced by new residential development. These sites can come forward in phases dependent upon market requirements and will likely be a mix of townhouses and apartments.
- Closing off a significant part of Chalon Way to through-traffic, allowing the improvement of pedestrian movement through this part of the town. In order to continue to allow buses to move from Foundry Street to the bus station, it is proposed that a new link from Foundry Street to Hall Street will be constructed.
- Through the calming/ de-engineering of Chalon Way, there is the opportunity to replace existing hard infrastructure with a pleasant green space providing improved amenity space within the town centre.
- There are opportunities here longer-term to create development sites in and around the canal, improving the environment and public realm around The World of Glass and developing the former Chalon Way Car Park site.
- Through implementing these key moves, this part of the town centre will be better connected into the retail core as well as to the Chamber of Commerce, the Stadium, the proposed new Youth Hub that forms part of the Town Deal initiative, and the area which is being developed for Glass Futures.



Key

■ Retail with residential above

■ Future mixed-use development

↔ Link to Stadium & Future Development Site

① St Helens Town Hall

② The Gamble

③ Rail Station

④ St Helens College

⑤ Church Square Shopping Centre

⑥ St Helens Parish Church

⑦ The World of Glass

⑧ St Helens Chamber

⑨ Mixed-use development to succeed container based meanwhile uses

⑩ Improved Link to Stadium & Glass Futures



DISCOVERY

PUBLIC REALM

The jewel in the crown of this Draft Masterplan Development Framework from a public realm perspective is the creation of Discovery Park. A large new green space in the centre of the town. An opportunity for increasing the number of trees, planting and lawn areas which will bring multiple benefits to the people of St Helens as well as for biodiversity. Access to high quality green space has huge benefits to people's wellbeing whilst also helping to tackle issues of flooding and reducing the carbon footprint of urban environments.

56 The Park on the former Chalon Way carriageway will provide an enhanced pedestrian and cycle link between the Town Deal Youth Hub project, St Helens Central Rail Station and the canal, The World of Glass, the Chamber of Commerce, the stadium, and Glass Futures. Opportunities for including children's play, heritage trails and nature areas will be explored.

The external environment around The World of Glass and connections to the canal is a key focus and has great potential to provide a unique public realm offer for the town centre. Opportunities that encourage people to be able to better interact with the water and outdoor exhibition space for the museum will be explored.

MOVEMENT

The Discovery Zone is likely to see a radical transformation in terms of access and movement. The uninviting, over-engineered, car-dominated appearance of the existing Chalon Way will be replaced by a cleaner, greener, more inviting pedestrian and cycle enabled link that will help to connect Central Rail Station with key destinations to the south of the town, for example The World of Glass, the Chamber of Commerce, the Stadium and Glass Futures beyond.

Chalon Way will be closed off as a through route for vehicles, including for buses, with provision being made for them to use a new link from Foundry Street to Hall Street, creating more access options to the bus station and penetrating the town better.

This change is in response to the need to create stronger public realm along the Chalon Way/Foundry Street corridor, linking key land uses together, and in response to potential changes in car parking locations. Access to all properties will be carefully considered to ensure they can be serviced effectively. Ultimately, the aim is to reduce unnecessary and harmful through traffic in the town centre.

Access to new residential areas will be provided, but through movement for general traffic from south-north will be discouraged.



DISCOVERY

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The de-engineering and re-routing of Chalon Way opens up this side of the town and the canal basin, drawing it back into the town centre.

The new Discovery Park provides a green amenity space and positive edge to the town and rail line. The Park enhances the setting for the historic Quaker Meeting House linking it with The World of Glass and beyond to the Chamber of Commerce, the Stadium and Glass Futures.

57 The character and scale of the George Street quarter is pulled south along the eastern edge of the park, with the new streets linking it up with Church Square and the New Hall Street South, improving permeability.

At the southern end of the park to the west of The World of Glass, new development activates the canal edge and links it back with the town centre. The creation of this positive and permeable edge along the rail line and canal, helps to reinforce existing links, opening up the sites for development. Once developed, this will contribute positively to the sense of arrival into St Helens town centre.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- The de-engineering and re-routing of Chalon Way opens up this side of the town and the

canal basin, drawing it back into the town centre.

- The new Discovery Park provides a green amenity space and positive edge to the town and rail line. The Park creates a new setting for historic and cultural buildings and enhanced green public realm.
- Open up the desire lines improving natural way-finding i.e. simple & intuitive permeability. Ensuring pedestrians and cyclists can permeate through the town centre safely and with ease using the towns way-finding points by drawing upon the heritage analysis of the site and street patterns.
- Positive active frontages. Streetscapes are activated through leisure, retail and residential use at ground level, providing an active 24/7 town centre.
- Arrival points feed through the retail quarter increasing footfall providing places to dwell linking to all the 4 zones and dispersing beyond.
- Creating a density appropriate to a town centre location whilst respecting our historic buildings.
- Consolidate car parking supply to make car parks more efficient, reduce circulating vehicles in the town centre and promote sustainable travel.

PREFERRED USES

- High quality residential;
- Ancillary retail and leisure led development;
- High-quality public realm and landscaping;
- Cultural assets and buildings.



4

EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

CHARACTER ZONE 4

EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

This area lies to the west of the primary shopping area and includes St Helens College Campus, Westfield Street and leisure/food and beverage uses, extending out towards Duke Street.

Proposed future development in this zone is, for now, focused on enhancements to the public realm, pedestrian, and cyclist connectivity. This includes:

- Enhancing the landscaping and public realm within Westfield Street, to create a more pleasant experience for pedestrians;
- Providing improved pedestrian and cyclist connectivity over the Linkway to provide better connections to local communities who live close by.

59 PUBLIC REALM

The key focus for the public realm within the Education and Entertainment Zone is to improve the pedestrian environment of the existing streets and spaces that connect key assets. To enhance the pedestrian experience within them and improve movement between this Zone and the Central Retail Zone and the Civic and Heritage Zone.

There are some key streets that provide important access routes into the town centre and these would benefit from widened footpaths where possible, the de-cluttering and rationalisation of street furniture, the provision of more courtesy pedestrian crossings at key locations and more street trees.

Westfield Street in particular has the opportunity to be enhanced into a high-quality pedestrian priority street that should stimulate the regeneration of businesses within this area.

Key

- ① LIDL
- ② Sports Direct
- ③ Wilko
- ④ Beecham Building
- ⑤ Imperial Food and Drink Quarter
- ⑥ St Helens College
- ⑦ Cineworld Cinema
- ⑧ Church Square Shopping Centre



EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

MOVEMENT

This success of this zone will be determined through how strong access and movement connections are to the other zones; there are some challenges in this area that need to be overcome, not least the current barrier of the ring road (referred to as essentially forming a 'concrete collar' around the southern part of the town).

Schemes such as the Town Deal 'Connected Places' project - which proposes the installation of new footways/cycleways traversing the St Helens Linkway - will help to improve crossing amenity of the ring road to better connect areas to the south and east of the town. It is vital that strong connections can be made to the Central Retail, Civic and Heritage and Discovery Zones for pedestrians, cyclists, and bus users.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The buildings within the Education and Entertainment Zone create a strong street frontage with a real positive human scale to the streets; however, the public realm needs repairing. The proposed improvements to the buildings and public realm will link this with the other zones and over the bypass.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Improve and link public space and existing positive streets.
- Open up desire lines to improve natural wayfinding i.e., simple & intuitive permeability, ensuring pedestrians and cyclists can permeate through the town centre safely and with ease using the towns wayfinding points by drawing upon the heritage analysis of the site and street patterns.
- Positive active frontages with streetscapes are activated through leisure, retail, and residential use at ground level, providing an active 24/7 town centre.
- Consolidate car parking supply to make car parks more efficient, reduce circulating vehicles in the town centre and promote sustainable travel.

PREFERRED USES

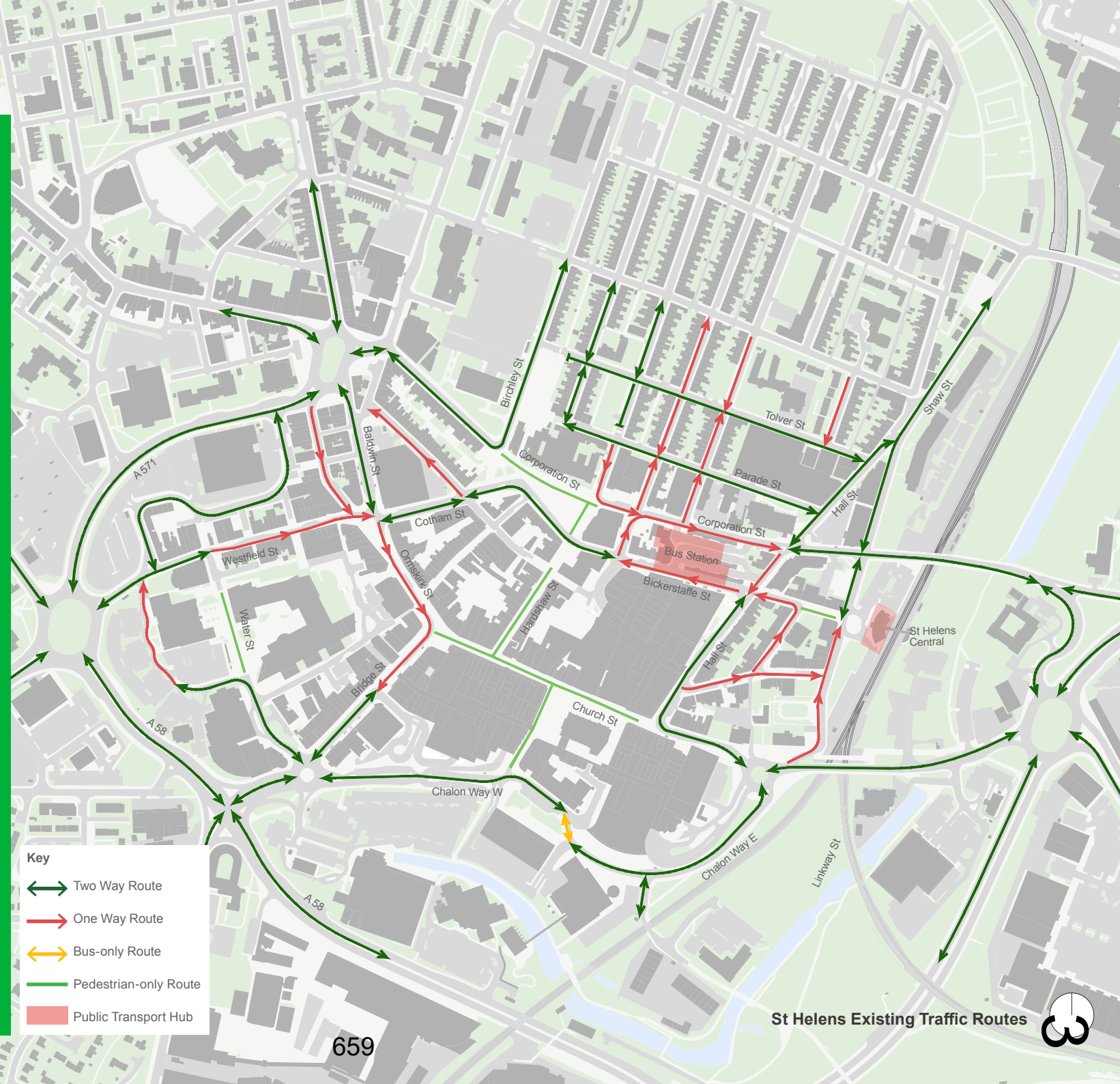
- Mixed use, retail and leisure led development with a variety of unit sizes to accommodate local independents as well as options for high street multiples occupiers where appropriate;
- Education-related uses associated with St Helens College;
- High quality public realm and landscaping; Encourage high quality evening economy uses, such as the growing independent sector on Barrow Street.



STRATEGY

The Draft Masterplan Development Framework proposes the following changes which will have particular implications for transport:

- Bus Station reconfiguration and enhancement of the link between bus station and rail station;
- Removal of some car parks, notably St Mary's and Hardshaw Centre car parking provision;
- Re-provision of parking facilities at suitable locations that are to be informed by a new parking strategy;
- Access only provision to new residential development in the south east of the draft Masterplan Framework area;
- Creation of a pedestrian link through what is currently the Hardshaw Centre; and
- Development and enhancement of a pedestrian route and green park towards the Stadium.



Key

↔ Two Way Route

→ One Way Route

→ Bus-only Route

— Pedestrian-only Route

■ Public Transport Hub

St Helens Existing Traffic Routes

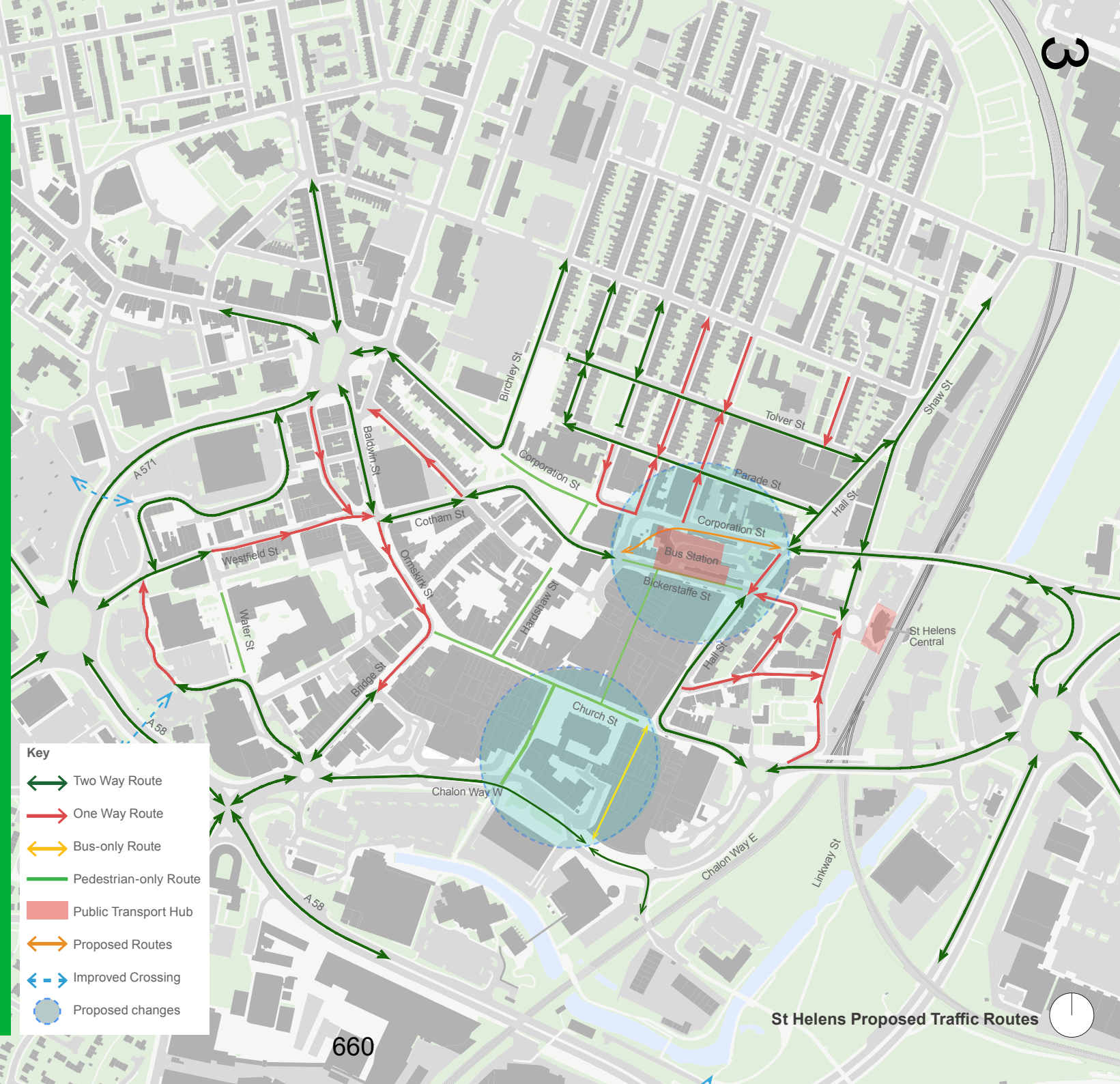
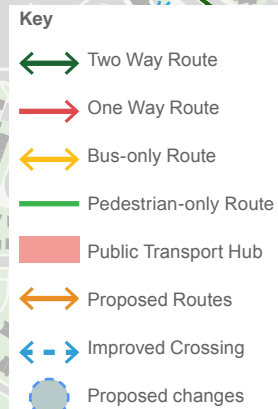


A RECONFIGURED BUS STATION

Reconfiguration of the bus station is proposed within the Masterplan to enhance the streetscape and enable more efficient transport movements. The bus station will be reconfigured to make space more efficient and enable passengers to board or alight more easily. A north-south pedestrian prioritised route through the bus station will connect the theatre and transport museum to the retail core.

The enhancement of these north-south connections is expected to increase the footfall within the town centre due to the introduction of a pedestrian link through the existing Hardshaw Centre. This will enable pedestrians to access the bus station and consequently the rail station easier from the centre of town and connect other wider attractions such as the museum and theatre.

These interventions aim to increase footfall between the bus station, key attractions, and shops, making the town centre better connected and easier to navigate.



MOVEMENT STRATEGY



Key

- ① Theatre Royal
- ② Holy Cross and Saint Helen Catholic Church
- ③ The Gamble
- ④ Proposed Bus Station
- ⑤ Millennium Centre
- ⑥ New Offices
- ⑦ New Hotel
- ⑧ Bus Station Canopy
- Office
- Leisure / Culture
- Retail with residential above
- Hotel
- Residential
- Buses

St Helens Proposed Bus Station



PUBLIC REALM
STRATEGY

3

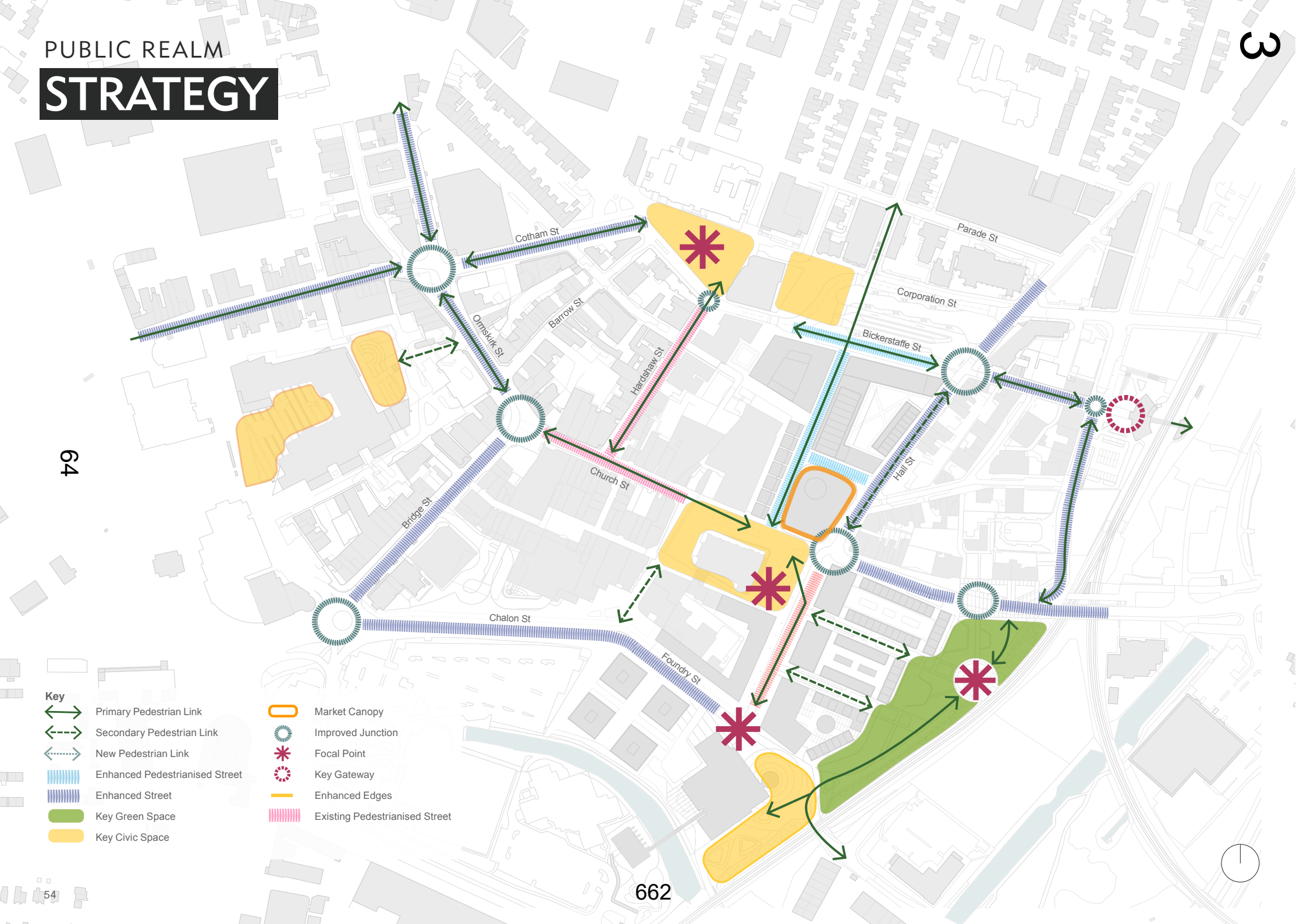
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- Key**
- Primary Pedestrian Link
 - Secondary Pedestrian Link
 - New Pedestrian Link
 - Enhanced Pedestrianised Street
 - Enhanced Street
 - Key Green Space
 - Key Civic Space

- Market Canopy
- Improved Junction
- Focal Point
- Key Gateway
- Enhanced Edges
- Existing Pedestrianised Street

54

662



THE PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY FOR ST HELENS HAS THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

- Establish a strong hierarchy of streets and spaces that prioritise pedestrians and cyclists;
- Improve strategic connections between the key assets and destinations within the town centre and beyond;
- Provide a mix of public space opportunities that encourages people to engage with their environment and community;
- Create a unique and distinctive town centre including introducing public art within streets and spaces to create local landmarks and aid with legibility; and
- Support the development of key sites and encourage investment in the town centre.

65

THE STRATEGY CONCENTRATES ON THE FOLLOWING KEY ELEMENTS:

- The creation of a new arrival gateway space at the rail station, including the new 'Gamble Square';
- The pedestrianisation of a section of Bickerstaffe Street and improving the environment around the re-modelled bus station;
- The upgrading of Hall Street whilst extending it to the south to connect with The World of Glass and the canal;
- The creation of a direct pedestrian link between Church Square and the bus station / theatre and residential neighbourhoods to the north;
- Provide improved pedestrian and cycle links with the Education and Leisure Zone

and facilities to the west of the town centre including Duke Street; and

- The creation of a significant new green space in the heart of the town with improved links to the canal, Chamber of Commerce, stadium, Glass Futures, and proposed Youth Hub initiative.

THE FUTURE STRATEGY PRIORITISES THE IMPROVEMENT OF EXISTING SPACES AND THE CREATION OF NEW ONES.

A range of new public spaces include:

- A gateway space by the rail station to improve the sense of arrival in the town.
- A cultural space by The World of Glass.
- A significant new green space with opportunities for sculpture, play and enhanced biodiversity in the heart of the town.
- A new civic space outside the Theatre Royal with connections across to The Gamble and pedestrianised space along Bickerstaffe Street.

The enhancement of existing streets such as Hall Street through the widening and enhancement of footpaths, introduction of street trees, rationalising parking, and general decluttering. The creation of new pedestrian priority streets and routes will improve the permeability of the town centre and strengthen connections between the town's key transport nodes, assets, zones and neighbourhoods.



King's Cross, London



Bad Salzungen, Germany



Sheffield Gold Route



Shaw Street, Altrincham

STRATEGY

A key cross-cutting theme and objective for the Draft Masterplan Development Framework is sustainability and ensuring that key sustainability principles are adhered to. This approach is in line with the pledge that St Helens Council has made; to meet zero carbon status by 2040 and address the impact that climate change is having on the borough. It will be vital to deliver a town centre that is future-proofed to be able to respond to the climate emergency, deliver low carbon buildings, increase biodiversity across the town centre and reduced waste through construction and operational activities.

ECF as St Helens Borough Council's partner has also agreed a Sustainable Development Strategy and prepared a robust Sustainable Development Brief which sets out the following key objectives that all new development and projects should meet. Other development coming forward within St Helens town centre will also be encouraged to sign up to these sustainability principles, in addition to those set out within the emerging Local Plan.

66

**NET ZERO CARBON**

To be net zero carbon in construction and during operation

**ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY**

Delivering a net gain in biodiversity, whilst providing high quality green spaces

**CIRCULAR ECONOMY**

Eliminating waste and improving resource efficiency through circularity

**HEALTH & WELLBEING**

Delivering high quality spaces where people can live, work and thrive while positively impacting their physical and mental health

**SOCIAL VALUE**

The positive social, economic and environmental outcomes that we create for individuals, businesses and the government through our development activities.

**WIDER SUSTAINABILITY**

Capturing wider sustainability issues such as Water, Transport & Certification



PHASING AND DELIVERY STRATEGY

In order to deliver this extensive and ambitious masterplan, the proposals are to be phased. The proposed phasing will look to minimise disruption in the town centre, to protect the operation of existing businesses and traffic/pedestrian movements. There will however need to be several existing retail businesses relocated from their premises into alternative units, to facilitate the works. This will be done during the pre-commencement phase of works through positive engagement with the individual businesses that are directly affected, which will inform a co-designed Phase 1 Delivery Strategy.

PHASE 1

The scale of Phase 1 development is significant and will create a hugely positive impact on the town centre. The detailed scope of the proposed Phase 1 is listed below, and will create: new high quality office space, high quality homes, an international hotel brand, a revitalised market hall and an enhanced bus station.

Linking all these proposals together will be high quality public realm that will create new pedestrianised streets and public squares, increasing biodiversity through quality landscaping and creating a place that will attract more residents, visitors and business to St Helens.

The proposed Phase 1 will comprise:

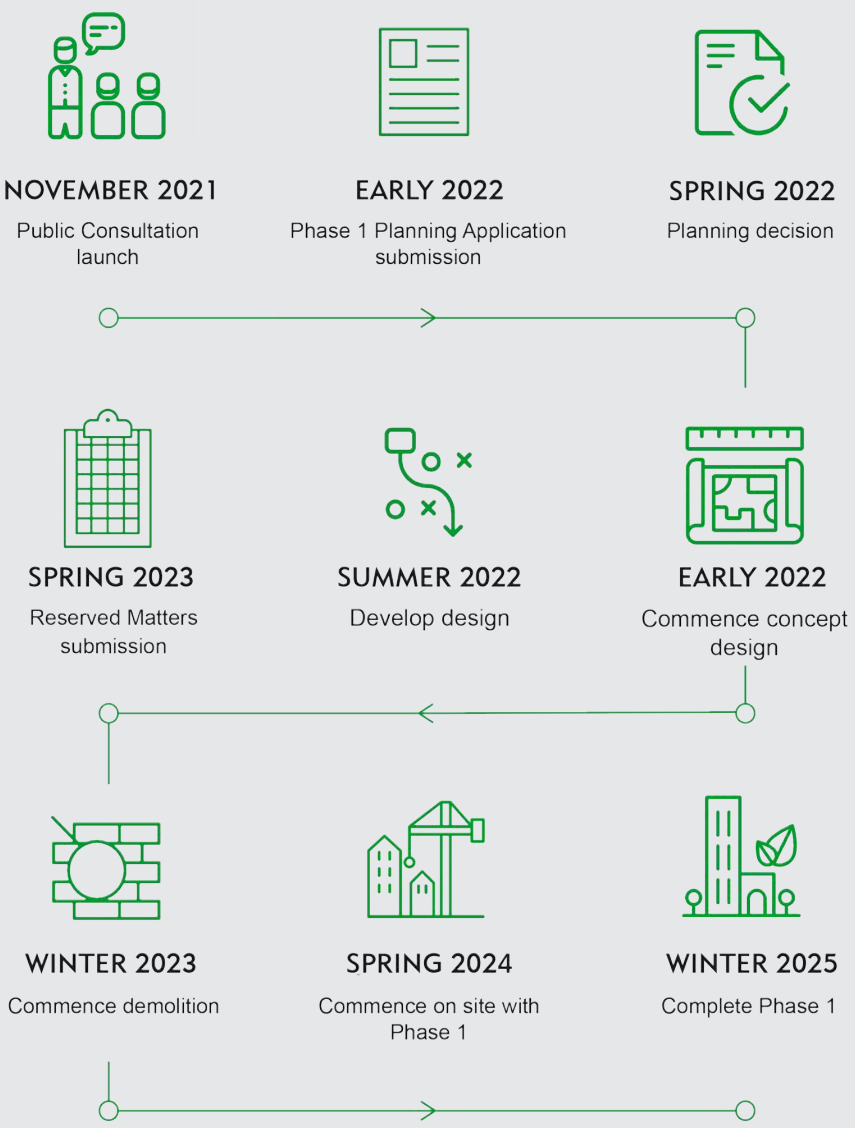
- The new and extended bus station, future-proofing the provision of bus services in St Helens;
- The creation of the new Gamble Square, the pedestrianisation of Bickerstaffe Street and the

- widening of Corporation Street to create a two-way road;
- Extensive demolition of the Hardshaw Centre and other key properties to facilitate the Phase 1 works;
- A new high specification modern office of circa 50,000 sq ft, designed to the highest sustainable standards;
- A 120+ bed international branded hotel;
- A new modern market hall, incorporating food and beverage stalls;
- New homes, including apartments and family homes;
- New retail units to support the local independent sector as well as high street names; and
- Extensive public realm linking the new development to the train station, bus station and Church Square.

PROGRAMME

An indicative timeline for the key activities required to deliver Phase 1 is set out as illustrated in the diagram to the side.

The completion of Phase 1 will make way for the creation of the new Discovery Park and further development opportunities in the town centre. Phase 2 proposals will be developed in response to the prevailing town centre conditions at that time and be informed by additional public engagement.



BENEFITS

The Draft Masterplan Development Framework provides an opportunity to drive transformational change for St Helens town centre. This will generate physical regeneration benefits on the ground but also have wider-reaching positive impacts for the local community, businesses and occupiers in the town over the next 20 years. Such benefits include:

- Driving economic growth and job creation;
- Enhanced green space and public realm;
- A more sustainable town centre – adapted to climate change, with less reliance on the private car;
- Increasing the visitor economy;
- Celebration of the borough's unique cultural and heritage assets;
- Addressing local housing need;
- Positively changing perceptions of St Helens (and the wider Borough) and attracting future inward investment into the town;
- Provision of new community facilities;
- Social value embedded into the development;
- Enhanced biodiversity;
- Attracting meanwhile uses and events.



NEXT STEPS

This draft Masterplan Framework presents an ambitions and transformational vision for St Helens town centre that will generate significant regeneration benefits locally over the area for the existing community and future generations.

Your views on this Draft Masterplan Development Framework are important to us and we value your contribution. Our public consultation will run between Monday 1 November and Monday 13 December. During this time, there are several ways you can comment on the proposals:

YOUR FEEDBACK



ONLINE FEEDBACK FORM

Visit our website and fill in the feedback form or drop your comments onto our interactive map at: www.sthelenstowncentre.co.uk



EMAIL

Email any additional comments or questions to us at: sthelens@havingyoursay.co.uk



WRITE TO US

Via the following: Freepost, YOURVOICECOUNTS



FREEPHONE

Call our dedicated Community Information Line at 0333 358 0502 (Weekdays 9.00am – 5.30pm)



PUBLIC EXHIBITION

During the consultation period, we will also be holding a public exhibition in the local area – visit our website to find out more information.

Following the end of the consultation, we will review all the feedback, comments and questions submitted and explore opportunities to incorporate the feedback before we finalise the Masterplan Development Framework. Subject to the comments received, it is anticipated that a planning application related to the proposed Phase 1 will be submitted in early 2022.

Any feedback provided will be used for the purposes of informing the final Development Framework and the submission of future planning applications. A summary of all responses will be collated into a Consultation Statement that will be submitted as part of future planning applications to the Council. The data will be held securely in accordance with data protection guidelines.



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St Helens - Town Centre Regeneration

Consultation and Engagement Strategy

Overview

St Helens Council has formed a 20-year partnership with the English Cities Fund (ECF) that will see a variety of sites across the borough benefit from redevelopment, with an initial focus on plans to transform St Helens and Earlestown town centres. Lexington have been commissioned by ECF to prepare a strategy for engagement and consultation regarding the emerging Draft Masterplan Development Frameworks for each town centre, as well as the associated Phase 1 planning applications.

This document details the recommended strategy for public consultation and stakeholder engagement, alongside the indicative timescales for when this activity will take place.

Consultation Notification

Digital will be the primary method for general awareness raising and notification of the respective consultations. Hard copy leafleting is not supported for this purpose having regard to the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration and its associated environmental objectives, having particular regard to the borough-wide nature of the consultations.

The methods of awareness raising and consultation notification are prescribed (in summary) as:

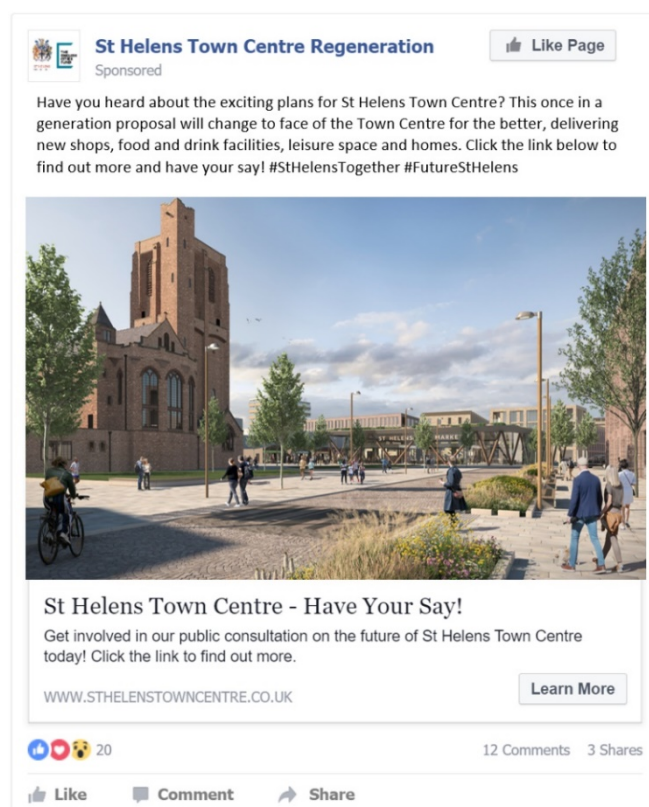
- **Social media advertising** – To notify all residents, businesses and stakeholders within the Borough of the consultations a series of Facebook and Instagram pages will be created for each consultation, with appropriate adverts stemming from each page.
- **Stakeholder social media posts** – Stakeholders will be encouraged to publish posts advertising both consultations via their own established channels such as St Helens RLFC, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, St Helens Chamber of Commerce, etc.
- **Press activity** – Press releases shall be issued to key publications and reference both consultations, with briefing opportunities provided to radio and TV channels.
- **Physical posters** – Posters are to be provided in a range public spaces and venues such as post offices, libraries, shops, bus stops, doctors surgeries, etc. These posters will contain QR codes, allowing easy access to the consultation websites.
- **Digital advertising** – Content will be displayed on the Council's variable message signs that are located at strategic locations in the borough and other buildings. We will also engage with partners to promote in their premises where available.
- **Written letters and engagement meetings** will be issued to and held with those stakeholder groups that are directly affected by the Draft Masterplan Development Framework

proposals. This includes groups such as existing market traders, businesses where their premises are specifically identified for redevelopment, bus and taxi operators affected by the proposed transport proposals, etc.

- **Project websites** will act as the hub for each consultation, with a dedicated St Helens town centre website. Details of the websites will be published on all other communications materials. The websites are under construction and will become active on the day of publishing it is accessible from www.sthelenstowncentre.co.uk
- **Physical events** will be held in the town centre to provide an opportunity for residents, as well as those who visit, work and play in St Helens to speak to the development team directly. A series of smaller pop-up events will run outside of both town centres to engage a wider audience. Further details of the physical events are provided below and continue to develop.

Social Media Advertising

Adverts for both consultations are to be distributed across the entirety of the Borough. Lexington will lead on the content, comment management and the launch of all social media advertising. This will be predominantly via Facebook, as well as Instagram. An example advert is included below.



Consultations will launch on 1 November and run for a 6-week period of time. Ahead of the consultation launch, Lexington will prepare a bespoke social media advertising strategy that will include content for sign-off by Council Officers and ECF, together with a protocol for Councillors to assist responses to any comments received on the adverts ahead of the consultation going live.

Project Websites

The project websites will act as the main hub for the consultations and include important information regarding the Draft Masterplan Development Frameworks, Phase 1 planning applications and ways to provide feedback. Each town centre regeneration project will have its own website, but that the two can be referenced and linked to one another within the site. The website will be accessible from www.sthelenstowncentre.co.uk

The website will include several pages, for example:

- **Welcome Page** – Including introductions to the proposals, the consultation, and key CGIs. This is the page residents will land-on should they visit the address listed on all material or click the social media adverts.
- **Our Vision** – a page dedicated to the overall concept and vision for the proposals.
- **Development Framework** – Key information about the development framework, as well as a link to a PDF of the document which will be hosted on the site. This will also include imagery and information specifically related to the detail of the Masterplan.
- **Virtual Exhibition** – Links to the virtual exhibition room, which will include PDFs of the exhibition boards.
- **Phase 1 Application** – Information about how the Phase 1 planning application feeds into the programme.
- **FAQs** – Responses to common questions that will be asked during the consultation period.
- **Your Views** – Information about the consultation, ways to provide feedback, and links to a feedback form. This page will also include details of an email address, dedicated Community Information Line and written address.
- **About Us** – Details of ECF and its partnership with St Helens Council.

Physical Exhibitions

A week-long period of public exhibitions will be held in St Helens town centre. These events will be held in a vacant unit or other suitable venue within the following weeks:

- **w/c 15 November** – Public events in St Helens town centre

During the events, a series of exhibition boards will be displayed to provide more detail about each proposal. The content within the series of boards will include:

- **Welcome board** – Detailing the purpose of the consultation and encouraging attendees to provide feedback.
- **Our Vision** – A focus on the wider strategic vision for the town centre.
- **The Story So Far** – Background about how we reached this point, how the draft Development Masterplan Development Framework and the Phase 1 planning application sit together and the anticipated timescales moving forwards

- **The Masterplan** – Imagery and information specifically related to the detail of the Masterplan proposals.
- **Phase 1 Planning Application** – Information about how the Phase 1 application feeds into the programme.
- **Your Views** – Information about the consultation, ways to provide feedback, and links to a feedback form

Print outs will be available of the Draft Masterplan Development Framework documents and large prints of the CGIs. A fly through is also being prepared which will be displayed during the sessions.

To engage with as wide an audience as possible, interactive games will be hosted at the events to entice passers-by to enter the unit, read the information available and report their feedback.

In addition to the weeklong events:

- **Pop up Roadshow** – there will be a series of pop-up sessions outside of the town centres to engage a wider audience. This will include neighbourhood centres, leisure centres and libraries.
- **Christmas Lights Switch on** – a trailer will be hired to visit St Helens centre on Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 November, and during the Christmas lights switch on events in both locations. The information displayed during these mobile sessions will be the same as at the weeklong static events in the retail units.

Feedback Mechanisms

During the consultation period feedback will be invited on the Draft Masterplan Development Framework and the Phase 1 planning application.

There will be several ways to provide feedback, including:

- Via a dedicated feedback form available on each consultation website
- Via the same form which will be available at the exhibitions and venues
- Via a dedicated email address
- Via telephone or post

In addition, those visiting the website will also be given an opportunity to visit an interactive page that will allow users to drop pins on parts of the two town centres whereby they have very specific comments.

All of the feedback submitted in the various different ways will be managed and collated by Lexington, the communication contractor. Lexington will produce a Statement of Community Involvement following the end of the consultation. This document will outline the consultation methodology, the feedback that has been received, as well as the partnerships response to this feedback. It will be hosted on the consultation websites once the consultations have ended, to provide all parties with a transparent overview about the consultation processes.

All persons or organisations who engaged in the consultation process will be notified when the Phase 1 applications are being submitted, to ensure that those who have indicated an interest in the plans are kept informed of progress.

Media Engagement

A series of press releases will be prepared throughout the lifetime of the programme. This includes at the point of the consultation launch, and when the feedback has been analysed. St Helens Council will liaise with the local media, whilst Lexington will lead on engagement with the trade press.


Stakeholder Engagement

A series of stakeholder engagement meetings or webinars will be undertaken throughout the consultation period. Examples of the groups that will be engaged include: all Councillors, Owners of all property impacted by the plans, businesses occupying the property impacted by the plans, the Business Forum group, The Youth Council, Disability groups, Local MPs and the Town Deal Board

Timetable of Activity

Date	Activity
Tuesday 12 th October	Cabinet reports published. Engagement with the press and pre-launch stakeholder activity
Wednesday 20 October	Cabinet meeting to endorse consultation process.
Monday 1 November	Consultation launch and websites go live.
Monday 8 November – Sunday 14 November	Exhibition at St Helens town centre retail unit 9 – 5pm with some extended opening times across the week.
Monday 15 November – Sunday 21 November	Earlestown town centre retail unit or Portacabin 9 – 5pm with some extended opening times across the week.
Saturday 27 November	Manned trailer event in St Helens town centre between 4pm and 7pm during Christmas light switch on
Sunday 28 November	Manned trailer event in Earlestown town centre between 4pm and 7pm during Christmas light switch on
Pop up events	As opportunities are identified
Monday 13 December	Consultation ends

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 <p>ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Cabinet</p> <p style="text-align: center;">20 October 2021</p>
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Report Title:	Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework Consultation Draft
Cabinet Portfolio	Regeneration and Planning
Cabinet Member	Councillor Richard McCauley
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	Earlestown
Report of	Lisa Harris Executive Director of Place Services Lisaharris@sthelens.gov.uk
Contact Officer	Sean Traynor Director of Strategic Growth Seantraynor@sthelens.gov.uk

Borough priorities	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	
	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	
	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	x
	Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	x
	Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	x
	Be a responsible Council	

1. Summary

- 1.1 The draft Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework has been produced to guide and encourage new development in Earlestown town centre. It sets out an ambitious long-term plan for investment in the town centre, outlining physical changes that are proposed to be delivered through implementation of the masterplan.
- 1.2 To accord with the recently adopted Community Engagement Strategy, it is proposed that the draft document be subject to a six-week period of consultation, ensuring that it benefits from views, opinions and feedback from the public, businesses, and visitors.

2. Recommendations for Decision

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) **Approve the draft Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework, attached as Appendix A.**
- ii) **Approve a process of period of public consultation for a period of six weeks in accordance with the Communication and Engagement Plan attached as Appendix B.**

3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 This report seeks approval to undertake a six-week public consultation on the draft Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework.

4. Background

- 4.1 Nationally, town centres are being affected by changing retail trends arising from an increase in online shopping, the development of out-of-town retail centres, an ageing population, changing lifestyles, and the rise of convenience-led retailing (such as “click and collect”). All these changes have been intensified during and following the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 4.2 For the Borough’s town centres to remain sustainable, they must adapt to these changing trends. To maximise the impact of the “St Helens Pound” it is important to ensure that the

Borough's town centres complement rather than compete and therefore each town centre and district centre should provide a distinctive and unique offer.

- 4.3 The draft Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework provides an aspirational long-term vision to guide future development and the transformation of the town centre. It identifies the potential development and investment opportunities to sustain and enhance areas and proposes a first phase of investment to improve the much loved and valued Earlestown Market Square.
- 4.4 Earlestown is recognised as the second town centre in the Borough's hierarchy of centres as set out in Policy LPC04 of the submission draft Local Plan. It is an accessible town centre from the surrounding residential areas and from other parts of Newton-le-Willows. Earlestown town centre contains a rail station and bus station, which provide access to local and regional destinations. The town centre provides a local community focus.
- 4.5 Policy LPB02 of the submission draft Local Plan sets out the Council's intentions to safeguard and enhance the function and role of Earlestown town centre, and to provide a Council-led framework for the future regeneration and development of the town centre. The Policy sets out the intention for the framework and states that it should:
- enhance the town centre as a shopping destination.
 - increase the vibrancy of the town's market.
 - protect and enhance the town's-built heritage.
 - promote Earlestown as a commuter settlement given its direct rail connectivity to Liverpool, Manchester, and Chester
 - increase the number and variety of residential units by encouraging mixed use development that makes a positive contribution to the economic role of the town centre; and
 - link the town centre with the new homes provided in residential redevelopments in the surrounding areas.
- 4.6 The draft Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework takes Policy LPB02 intention forward to the next stage, guiding future development to ensure it is high quality, has regard to the uniqueness of Earlestown, its heritage assets and spaces including the historic market square.
- 4.7 Considering the Council's climate change ambitions and the adoption of the UN sustainable development goals the draft masterplan aims to encourage sustainable development and provides the best for people and local communities, now and in the future.
- 4.8 Earlestown will be revitalised, to re-create a thriving historic market town returned to its former glory. The aim of the draft masterplan is to embrace the town's important heritage assets through:
- repurposing the Town Hall.
 - creating spaces and places that people enjoy spending time in; and
 - provide an attractive town centre which is accessible for everyone and sustainable for the future
- 4.9 The Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework would not "allocate" land for development, but would provide additional guidance for investors, developers, and decision-makers. It will not form part of the statutory Development Plan; however, it has been prepared having had full regard to relevant legislation including national planning policy

contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021), the 'saved' policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (1998), the Core Strategy (2012), and the emerging Local Plan. The draft Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework has also been developed and influenced by the Earlestown Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (2016).

- 4.10 Whilst the outcome of the Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework will be of great interest to the public, the key target audience for this document is potential developers and investors. The document will also support Council officers and Members of the Planning Committee in assessing and determining planning applications. The Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework will be accompanied by an Implementation Plan to ensure that the vision and objectives for Earlestown town centre are achieved through the delivery of several projects and schemes

5. Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework

- 5.1 The draft Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework, attached at Appendix A, has been prepared by the Council and its strategic partner – The English Cities Fund (ECF). In March 2020, St. Helens Borough Council and ECF agreed a 20- year partnership that would see a variety of sites across the borough benefit from redevelopment, including Earlestown town centre. The aim of this partnership was to push forward regeneration in the borough, with the town centres of St. Helens and Earlestown being a priority.
- 5.2 In the preparation of the draft Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework it has been recognised that much engagement has already taken place, whether this has been to inform the proposed use for a repurposed Earlestown Town Hall or associated with the #StHelensTogether - Our Borough Strategy. It has been developed with this engagement as its foundation.
- 5.3 In accordance with the recently adopted Borough Consultation and Engagement Strategy and in the spirit of #StHelensTogether, it is the intention to conduct a formal six-week period of public consultation, to allow everyone in the community an opportunity to provide their views on the draft proposals and to shape the final document. Further details of the consultation are set out at Appendix B.
- 5.4 The representations received during this period of consultation will be fully considered by the Council and ECF in the preparation of the 'final' Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework and any subsequent planning applications. Formal responses will be presented within a Consultation Statement which will sit alongside the Final Masterplan Development Framework.
- 5.5 The draft Earlestown Masterplan Development Framework is a detailed document that reviews the evolution of Earlestown, looking backward to determine how we want the town to move forward. The document assesses the current performance of the town centre, its footfall, retail, and housing offer. It analyses the transport and movement across the areas through road, rail, walking and cycling. The document assesses the challenges and the opportunities within the town including the quality of the built environment.
- 5.6 The ECF Partnership have used this information together with feedback from previous engagements to develop a vision for Earlestown town centre, which is as follows:

***“A TRADITIONAL MARKET TOWN
WITH A THRIVING AND VIBRANT HIGH STREET AND MARKET PLACE”***

5.7 The strategic objectives for the draft Masterplan Development Framework are to:

- **DELIVER A DIVERSE, VIBRANT AND ANIMATED TOWN CENTRE** offering spaces to attract local and independent traders that complement the historic market.
- **PROMOTING HIGH-QUALITY TOWN CENTRE LIVING** that meets housing need and diversifies the town centre housing stock.
- **CREATING A SUSTAINABLE, ACCESIBLE AND CONNECTED TOWN CENTRE** to make it easier for people to enjoy the services, spaces, and amenities the town has to offer.
- **ENCOURAGING CREATIVES AND INDEPENDENTS** building on the success of the historic market, encouraging more creatives and independents to become established.
- **POSITIVELY CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE TOWN** through promoting the unique heritage of Earlestown, including the historic Town Hall and Market Place,
- **TO PROVIDE A HEALTHY AND COMMUNITY-FOCUSED TOWN CENTRE** Creating high-quality spaces for people to thrive, dwell and socialise with each other.

5.8 The town centre area has been divided into three broad action zones based upon key characteristics. Each zone has a significant role to play in the wider transformation of Earlestown town centre, and collectively, will support the delivery of the overarching vision.

- **ACTION ZONE AREA 1 ARRIVAL HUB** this area encompasses the train station and land immediately south of the station, the opportunity is to improve wayfinding, integrate all public transport options providing a truly multi modal interchange, and redevelop under-utilized land for residential use.
- **ACTION ZONE AREA 2: QUEEN STREET JUNCTION AND MARKET STREET** to enhance the town's rich heritage and improve the quality and appearance of the listed buildings, buildings of merit and the overall Conservation Area. The aim is to re-activate the street and change the environment towards a more balanced, pedestrian and mobility friendly area.
- **ACTION ZONE 3: MARKET SQUARE** this is the jewel in the crown of Earlestown. The key focus is to improve the quality of the historic market square, encouraging active frontages and bringing key heritage assets back to life, making the Market Square a more vibrant place to be for more of the time

6. Implementation Plan

6.1 The draft Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework provides a vision and ambition for the future, but this is not a pipe dream. To accompany the final document will be an ambitious Delivery Strategy and Implementation Plan. This Delivery Strategy will set out the Phase 1 proposals which, if the draft Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework is supported, will bring the plan to life.

6.2 The scope of the proposed Phase 1 works in Earlestown will help the town centre to re-establish itself as a thriving market town to attract more residents, businesses, and visitors. It will focus on:

- Enhancing market square to create a covered market area, flexible event space and landscape improvements; and
- Improving the public realm and key highway junctions to make the town centre more welcoming and pedestrian friendly

6.3 After the consultation responses have been analysed and the Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework adopted it is the intention of the Council and ECF to

follow shortly after with planning applications and detailed designs before the end of the municipal year.

7. Community Impact Assessment

- 7.1 The Community Impact Assessment identified that the draft Masterplan Development Framework provides an opportunity to drive transformational change for Earlestown town centre. This will generate physical regeneration benefits on the ground but also have wider-reaching positive impacts for the local community, businesses, and occupiers in the town over the next 20 years. Such benefits include driving economic growth and job creation, enhanced greenspace and public realm, providing a more sustainable town centre – adapted to climate change, with less reliance on the private car, increasing the visitor economy, celebration of the borough's unique cultural and heritage assets, addressing local housing need, positively changing perceptions of Earlestown (and the wider Borough) and attracting future inward investment into the town.

8. Consideration of Alternatives

- 8.1 When considering the document officers deliberated on the form and status of the document. Consideration was afforded to the production of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This formal policy status was not pursued for several reasons; planning officer resources were dedicated to the submission draft Local Plan examination stage and several planning appeals. In addition, the current uncertainty in the economic market and government's intention to pursue significant reform of the planning system made it prudent to pursue a guidance document, that could be delivered quickly whilst still providing robust guidance that would not restrict development.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 Cabinet approval is sought for the draft Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework, following which it is proposed to conduct a 6-week period of public consultation. The findings of the consultation will then be considered before bringing the document back to Cabinet to consider formal adoption. The Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework is vital to support and guide investment and development in the area over the next 20 years. The ambition of the document is to sustain and enhance Earlestown town centre so that it can adapt to the changes and challenges of the retail and leisure markets and return to its former glory.

10. Implications

10.1.1 Legal Implications

- 10.1.2 The Masterplan Development Framework will not form part of the statutory Development Plan. It will, however, be a material planning consideration in the determination of planning proposals. Land identified in a non-statutory town centre masterplan would be unlikely to meet the definition of blighted land as defined under Schedule 13 to the TCPA 1990 (section 150(1)) but specific legal advice will be sought following consultation with Landowners.

10.2 Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Implications

10.2.1 Social Value

- 10.2.1.1 Inclusive growth has social value at its heart and the ECF Partnership Board will oversee the delivery of social value outcomes across all development in the town centre.
- 10.2.2 Sustainability and Environment
- 10.2.2.1 The Masterplan Development Framework will generate physical regeneration benefits the provision of new greenspaces and public realm will provide a more sustainable town centre, the development should help the town centre adapt to the impact of climate change and the new development will be cognisant of the Borough's declared climate emergency, aiming to minimise and mitigate carbon emissions in the process. The aim of the plan is to encourage more people to use sustainable forms of transport and to enhance the biodiversity of the area.
- 10.2.3 Health and Wellbeing
- 10.2.3.1 The adoption of an inclusive growth approach will influence a considerable number of wider determinants of health such as employment, skills, and quality of place.
- 10.2.4 Equality and Human Rights
- 10.2.4.1 There will be no adverse Equality and Human rights issues. There will be an opportunity to tackle barriers for protected groups, considering the development as a dementia friendly town centre that is accessible and welcoming to all.
- 10.3 Customers and Resident
- 10.3.1 The draft Masterplan Development Framework supports improved two-way communications and engagement with our customers and residents. As noted in paragraph 5.3 of this report, the preparation of the draft Masterplan Development Framework has built on the findings of previous engagement and a further period of public consultation is proposed to take place in November and December 2021. A proposed Consultation and Engagement Plan is attached at Appendix B, this will be managed through the ECF Partnership and a specialist company, Lexington have been engaged to oversee the work.
- 10.4 Asset and Property
- 10.4.1 The delivery of the proposed Masterplan Development Framework would have a significant impact on Earlestown town centre and physical assets in the Council's current ownership within the town centre boundary are likely to be affected. The Area Action Zone 3: Market Square focusses on the rejuvenation of this council owned asset, there are covenants held on the land which will restrict the use of the site albeit proposed uses are likely to be aligned to the covenant.
- 10.4.2 The Public Realm Strategy within the proposed Masterplan Development Framework will help to guide investment into the roads, footways, and public open spaces within the town centre. The draft Masterplan Development Framework also recognises that the Earlestown Town Hall is an important and attractive building and as such is an important asset to retain and bring back into use.
- 10.5 Staffing and Human Resource
- 10.5.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report. The implementation of the Masterplan Development Framework will require programme and

technical support. This is the subject of the Growth Delivering Prosperity Team report which is also on this Cabinet meeting agenda.

10.6 Risks

- 10.6.1 The proposed Masterplan Development Framework is a long-term (20-year) plan to guide private and public sector investment in the area. Individual projects will be considered in detail as proposals are developed by partner agencies and other developers. It should be noted that this is an aspirational document which sets the vision for the area, however given that the Council has secured a delivery partner, with ECF the transition from plan to delivery will be as short a period as possible. In addition to funding from the Council projects may require external funding for them to be delivered. This will be sourced through both public funding and investment from the private sector, which is in turn dependent on the prevailing national economic conditions.

10.7 Finance

- 10.7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report at this stage. The Masterplan would form the “blueprint” for development in Earlestown town centre, and engagement with the private sector would be coordinated through the Earlestown Regeneration Programme. The Implementation Plan will in time require investment by the Council. Capital financing has been indicatively identified within the Council’s Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for this purpose, although the proposals are very much at a pre-concept stage.
- 10.7.2 Further financial information and analysis will be required as part of analysing individual business cases and the impact of the overall scheme. When individual projects are identified, the resource requirements would be assessed on a project-by-project basis and with due regard to the overall scheme. This will be subject to further external financial and legal advice, the development of full business cases and further analysis of capital and revenue forecasts to ensure affordability and sustainability. Projects will follow the Council’s revised Contract Procurement Rules.

10.8 Policy Framework Implications

- 10.8.1 The proposals in this report will contribute to the delivery of the Our Borough Strategy, they will support the outcomes identified in the submission draft Local Plan and will protect the aims and objectives of the Earlestown Conservation Management Plan. Consultation and engagement will be conducted in accordance with the Community Engagement Strategy ensuring that the plans are coproduced with our communities. The implementation of the plans will also be supported by the newly created Place Board. The recovery of Earlestown town centre will also help to deliver the outcomes of the emerging Housing Strategy and the Economic Reset and Recovery Plan.

11. **Background papers**

- 11.1 St. Helens Borough Local Plan 2020-2035 Submission Draft
- 11.2 Earlestown Conservation Area Management Plan

12. **Appendices**

- 12.1 Appendix A – draft Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework.

12.2 Appendix B – Communication and Engagement Plan.

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DRAFT MASTERPLAN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

CONTENTS

1. Foreword	3
2. Introduction - Overview	4
3. Purpose of this Masterplan Framework	5
4. Engagement and Next Steps	6
5. Strategic Context	7
6. Local Context	8
7. Intended Role for Earlestown Town Centre Within the Borough	11
8. Planning Policy Context	12
9. Engagement to Date	16
10. Evolution of the Town Centre	17
11. Current Performance of the Town Centre	20
12. Town Centre Vision & Strategic Objectives	27
13. Proposed Town Centre Masterplan	30
14. Town Centre Design Principles	32
15. Key Interventions & Opportunity Sites	33
16. Proposed Town Centre Action Zones	36
17. Public Realm Strategy	45
18. Movement Strategy	47
19. Sustainability Strategy	49
20. Phasing & Delivery Strategy	50
21. Regeneration Benefits	51
22. Next Steps and How to Comment	52



FOREWORD

St Helens Borough Council and the English Cities Fund (ECF) are proud to set out a vision for Earlestown town centre.

Following consultation and any changes to be made based on your feedback, the final Masterplan Development Framework will be endorsed by the Council and will guide and support the positive transformation of the town centre. It will ensure that development coming forward is of high quality, is sustainable and has the people of Earlestown and Newton-le-Willows at its heart.

89

The Council and ECF have entered into a 20-year partnership to bring forward regeneration across the borough, with our town centres in Earlestown and St Helens a priority.

Earlestown is the town centre of the historic town of Newton-le-Willows and we want it to be a source of pride for the whole borough. We want to return the town centre to its former glory as a thriving market town by supporting the many existing businesses

and market traders while building on the popularity of the historic market to create a thriving and bustling town centre.

The proposals for Earlestown town centre in this Draft Masterplan Development Framework include a revitalised market square, improved public realm and wayfinding, a refurbished and reopened town hall, and the potential for a new transport interchange, all of which will help to unlock and enable future investment into the town centre.

The partnership between the Council and ECF – working together with residents, businesses, regional partners, public, private and third sector organisations – gives us a once in a lifetime opportunity to achieve significant change and attract investment.

With pride in our past and ambition for our future, working together we can build the Earlestown you deserve.



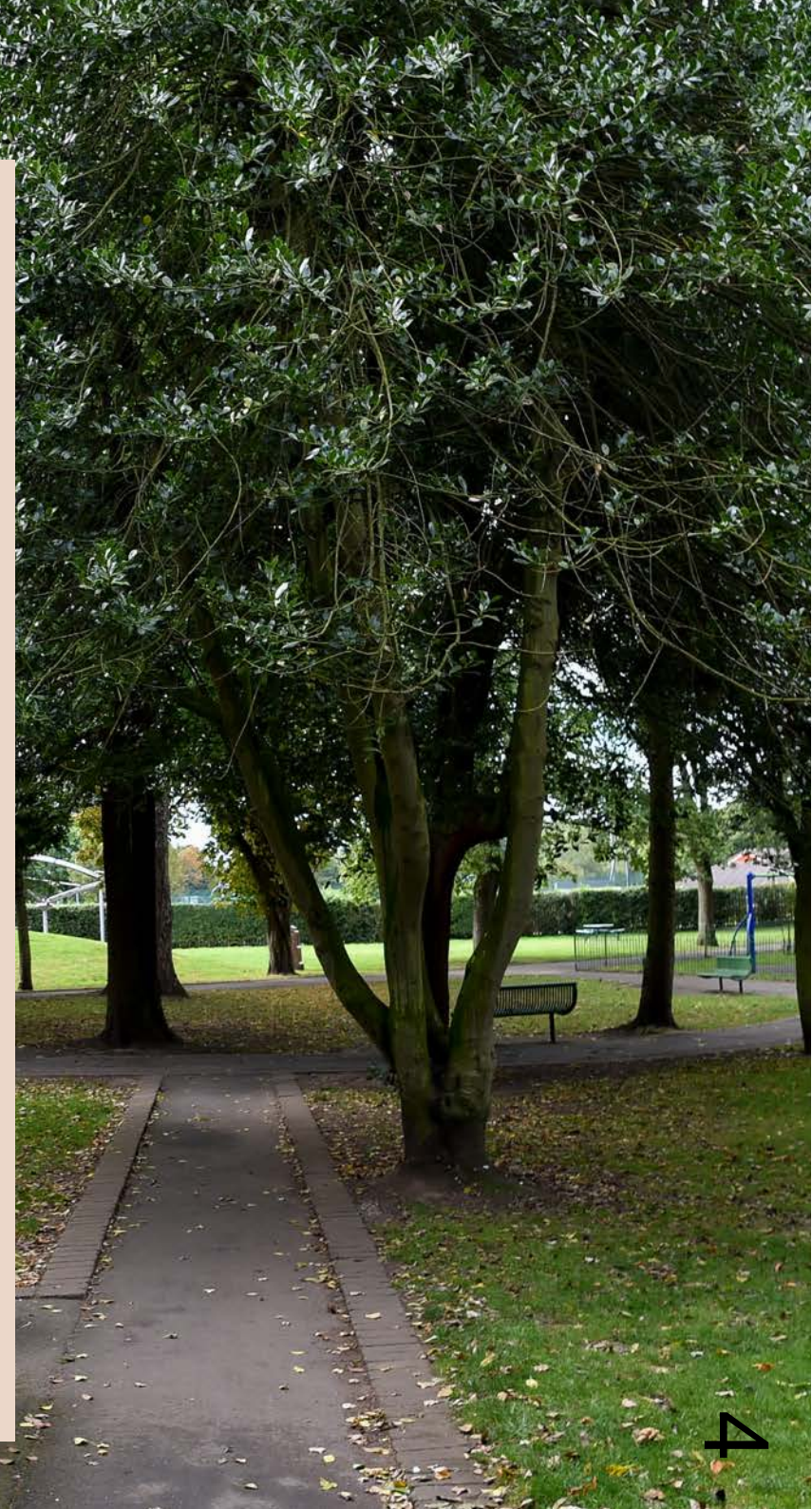
David Baines

Cllr David Baines
Leader of St Helens Council



Phil Mayall

Phil Mayall
Regional Director ECF



The Draft Masterplan Development Framework for Earlestown town centre provides an aspirational long-term vision to guide future development and the transformation of the town centre.

It has been prepared by St Helens Borough Council and its partner – The English Cities Fund (ECF).

ECF is a partnership formed in 2001 between Muse Developments, Legal & General and Homes England. Since then, ECF has been working with councils, landowners, and communities to create exceptional places across the UK, bringing together investment, regeneration expertise and long-term commitment to shape our towns and cities for the better. Following its expansion in 2018, it continues to take on large, complex sites, to create inspiring new places. ECF has delivered some of the country's most complex and successful urban regeneration projects and have a proven track record of transforming towns and cities, attracting investment, and unlocking potential.

In March 2020, St Helens Council and ECF agreed a 20-year partnership that would see a variety of sites across the borough benefit from redevelopment, including Earlestown town centre, which is the subject of this Draft Masterplan Development Framework. This partnership will allow the Council to push forward regeneration in the borough, with the town centres of Earlestown and St Helens being a priority. This will facilitate transformational change that will build upon the town centres existing assets and uniqueness, and deliver high quality, sustainable regeneration and transforming these key centres into exciting, vibrant places that are fit for the future.

This Draft Masterplan Development Framework sets out an aspirational but deliverable vision for the future of Earlestown town centre, identifying the opportunities and challenges that exist, and illustrating thoughts and ideas around future investment that will transform the centre.

This Framework will guide, encourage and support the right type of development coming forward within the town centre.

Future development will be of a high quality, having regard for the uniqueness of Earlestown, its heritage assets and spaces including the historic market square. Development will be sustainable and provide the best for people and the local community, now and in the future.

Earlestown has the opportunity to be revitalised and to re-create a thriving historic market town that revives its former glory. The town's important heritage assets will be embraced through re opening the Town Hall, creating spaces and places that people enjoy spending time in, and delivering an attractive town centre that is sustainably accessible.

Earlestown must adapt and respond to longer-term retail trends, as well as its role within the wider Borough. It should complement as opposed to compete with St Helens town centre and has an opportunity to provide a sustainable mixed-use community with high quality amenities and services on its doorstep. It should appeal to Newton-le-Willows and the surrounding towns and villages.

Earlestown town centre shall become an inspiring place for all aspects of the community, which has adapted to the changing economic conditions and that provides a wide range of vibrant retail, leisure and other uses.

Delivery of this ambitious Masterplan Development Framework will be phased as transformation of this scale, if done correctly, takes time. It is important to provide the right conditions to get the town centre back onto its feet – support local businesses, provide the right infrastructure, deliver quality spaces and places, and set the groundwork that encourages the right type of future development and investment to come forward.

The Council and ECF are proposing an early and significant phase of development to visibly demonstrate the scale of the ambition and for people to enjoy while supporting future activities across the wider town centre.

The Draft Masterplan Development Framework aligns directly with the #St. HelensTogether - Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030.

“WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER BOROUGH, WITH PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO”¹

¹ St Helens Council (2021) #StHelensTogether: Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030

PURPOSE AND STATUS OF THIS MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

The Draft Earlestown Town Centre Masterplan Development Framework will set out a clear vision, objectives and development principles that will catalyse the delivery of transformational change in Earlestown town centre. In doing so, it will help to secure a range of long-lasting economic, social and environmental benefits across the town centre and positively impact on the borough as a whole.

This Draft Masterplan Development Framework has been prepared in the context of, and informed by, wider regeneration ambitions for Earlestown, including those set out within adopted planning policy and the emerging Local Plan.

Following adoption by the Council, the Masterplan Framework will guide development across the Framework area in future years and will form a material consideration in the determination of all future planning applications across the area.

The Framework will not form part of the statutory Development Plan; however, it has been prepared having had full regard to relevant legislation including national planning policy contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021), National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (2021), the 'saved' policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (1998), the Core Strategy (2012), and the emerging Local Plan.



ENGAGEMENT AND NEXT STEPS

The proposed vision for Earlestown town centre builds upon previous consultation, recognising that a significant amount of engagement has already taken place, whether this has been to inform the proposed use for a repurposed Earlestown Town Hall or associated with the Borough Strategy 2021-2030.

In accordance with the recently adopted Borough Consultation and Engagement Strategy, it is the intention to conduct a further six-week period of public consultation, to allow everyone in the community an opportunity to provide their views on the draft proposals and to shape the final document.

Further details of how to provide your comments are provided at the back of this document.

The representations received during this consultation period will be fully considered by the Council and ECF in the preparation of a 'Final' Masterplan Development Framework and any subsequent planning applications. Formal responses will be presented within a Consultation Statement that will sit alongside the final Masterplan Development Framework, ensuring that the process is open, inclusive and transparent.



STRATEGIC CONTEXT

It is important to understand the wider context in which Earlestown town centre is located within, as these borough-wide and sub-regional influences have a bearing on the future of the town centre and how it needs to be shaped and evolved to respond to wider opportunities both now and in the future.

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

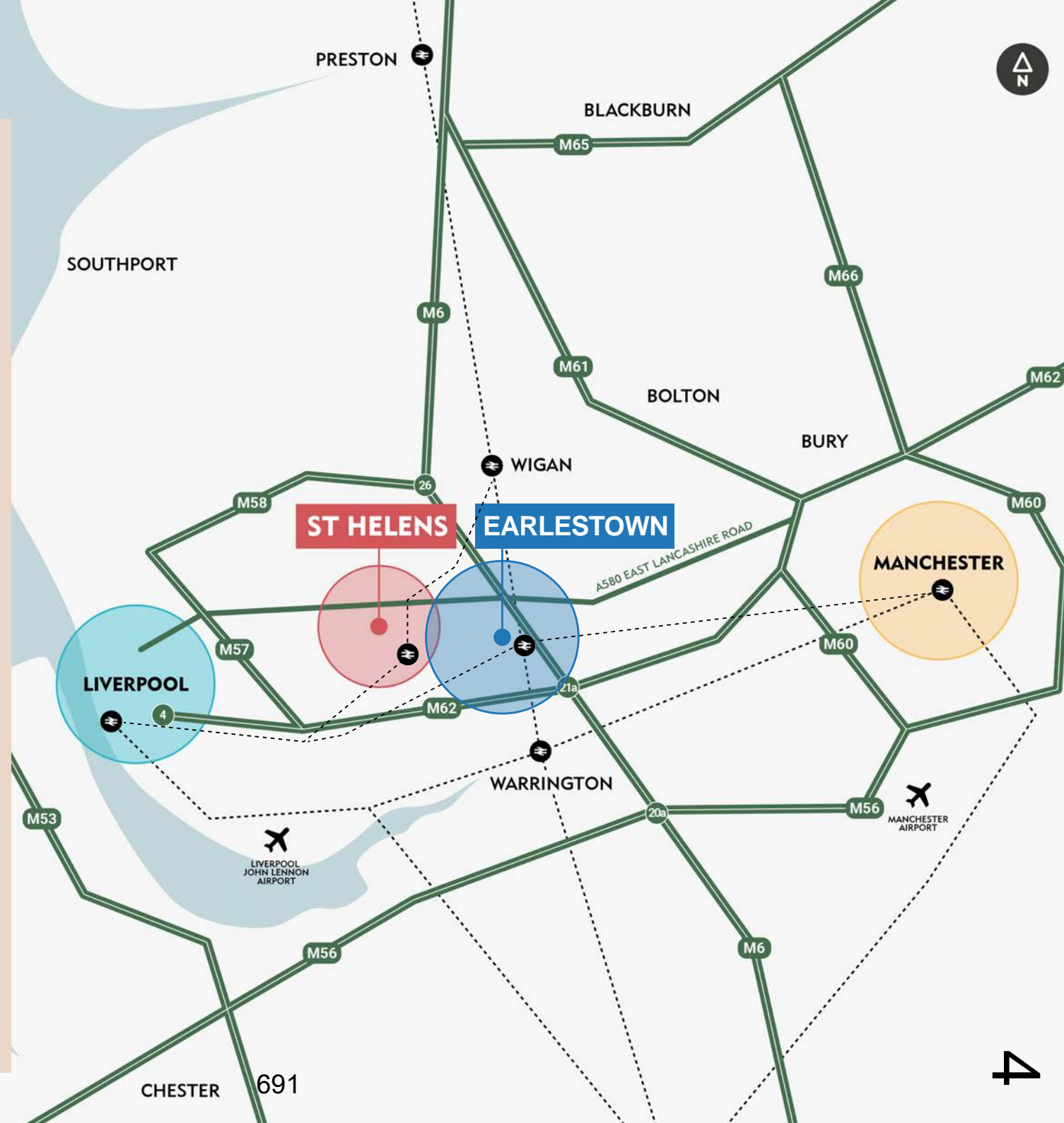
The Borough of St Helens, being located between Greater Manchester and Cheshire, is a vital part of the wider Liverpool City Region (LCR) – an important, thriving sub-region which also includes Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, and Wirral.

The City Region has seen over £1bn added to its economy in the last decade and has a wealth of assets including providing home to 52,000 businesses² and delivering a strong and diverse business base, high-class universities, a world-class tourism offer, and of course, the skills, creativity, and innovation of its people.

Our Borough has significant prospects for future growth which will contribute to the growth of the sub-region. The Borough will play a strong role, in terms of attracting new businesses, residents and visitors with a real opportunity to benefit from the levelling-up agenda of government, alongside prospects for green growth with several exciting initiatives and improved digital connectivity through the creation of a new digital super spine.

Earlestown town centre is therefore well placed to benefit from these opportunities and is well-connected to the wider sub-region given its location on the strategic road network, its strong rail connections and a good network of public transport.

² Draft LIS (LCR)



CONTEXT

Local influences are also important to reflect and consider. This includes the wider proposals in and around the town centre which will have a bearing on the type of development that could come forward as part of the Masterplan Development Framework.

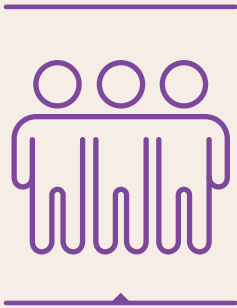
There are cross-cutting priorities set out within Our Borough Strategy (2021-2030) that influence the regeneration of the town centre as follows:



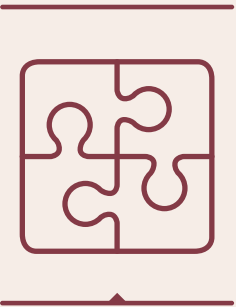
ENSURE CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE
HAVE A POSITIVE
START IN LIFE



PROMOTE GOOD
HEALTH, INDEPENDENCE
AND CARE ACROSS
OUR COMMUNITIES



CREATE SAFE
AND STRONG
COMMUNITIES AND
NEIGHBOURHOOD
FOR ALL



SUPPORT A STRONG,
THRIVING, INCLUSIVE
AND WELL-CONNECTED
LOCAL ECONOMY



CREATE GREEN
AND VIBRANT PLACES
THAT REFLECT OUR
HERITAGE AND CULTURE



BE A
RESPONSIBLE
COUNCIL

Source: St Helens Council (2021) Our Borough Strategy (2021-2030)

LOCAL CONTEXT

EARLESTOWN

Earlestown is a traditional market town with a strong industrial heritage, developed as a result of the railway, it is one of only two town centres in the borough. It falls within the town of Newton-le-Willows and is located on the eastern edge of the borough; in addition, Earlestown has significant linkages to Warrington and the surrounding towns and villages outside of the borough.

It is highly accessible with good links from the surrounding residential areas and wider parts of Newton-le-Willows and benefits from a well-connected rail station that provides access to a range of local, regional and national destinations. Pre-pandemic, Earlestown was popular for commuters, with several of the sites in proximity to the rail station being utilised for car parking.

The town benefits from key heritage assets and a unique street pattern that are recognised through the designation of the Conservation Area, but there are

missed opportunities to 'showcase' these important assets given the dated public realm and spaces.

Earlestown town centre has suffered decline since 2001³. The retail comparison offer is below average and in decline, vacancies have increased post-pandemic and as a result there is limited vibrancy and vitality within the town centre. Footfall is much improved on market days and the traditional market provides a distinctiveness to the town. However the market square suffers from a lack of activity from the buildings surrounding it and on non-market days the square is cluttered and over-taken by cars.

There are clear opportunities to improve the quality of the built environment and enhance the historic qualities of the town, improve wayfinding from key arrival points that include the rail station and to create a new high quality housing offer to improve the vibrancy of the town centre.

³ St Helens Retail Capacity Study, 2005



With a targeted focus on the public realm, there is scope to lay strong foundations for future investment to come forward. For Earlestown town centre, this includes:

- Delivering enhanced public realm including an improved and greener historic market square;
- The potential to open-up Market Street to some vehicular traffic, in a similar way to Bridge Street to address the vibrancy along this street on non-market days. The use of bollards or barriers allow this area to be pedestrianised for events or on market days.
- Addressing pedestrian and cycle connections, and movement along key junctions including redesigning the junction at Queen Street/Earle Street/Bridge Street/Market Street;
- Creating better wayfinding from key arrival points through to the Market Place and town centre;
- Creating the opportunity for more vibrancy and active uses within the heart of the town, which could include delivery of new housing and diversifying the uses along the traditional retail high street;

- Integrating into/responding to the new housing on Earle Street on the former Viaduct Works site;
- Increasing “town centre living” opportunities to put people back at the heart of the town centre;
- Connecting existing retail footfall generators to create the opportunity for linked trips;
- The redevelopment of Earlestown Rail Station as a modern transport hub whilst protecting and reopening this important heritage asset.

Beyond the town centre, there are wider opportunities that Earlestown could and should respond to. This includes:

- The proposed Parkside employment opportunity, providing jobs for local people;
- The opportunity to provide better connectivity to new residential communities at Vulcan Village, Earle Street and Wargrave through the redevelopment of Earlestown Rail Station
- Haydock Park Racecourse;
- The Sankey Canal Corridor; and
- The successful Sankey Valley Industrial Estate



Vulcan Village



Haydock Park Racecourse



Sankey Valley

INTENDED ROLE FOR EARLESTOWN TOWN CENTRE WITHIN THE BOROUGH

As set out within the Borough Strategy, Earlestown town centre has the potential to create jobs, attract new businesses, and generate a vibrant high street to attract visitors.

The emerging Local Plan acknowledges the need to diversify the role for Earlestown town centre in terms of the shift from traditional retail and introducing more varied uses to attract people into the town centre. The emerging Local Plan however does confirm that Earlestown will continue to be the focus for new town centre development (Draft Policy LPA02: Spatial Strategy), and the importance of its function and role within the Borough (Draft Policy LPB02: Earlestown Town Centre).



In preparing this Draft Masterplan Development Framework, consideration has been given to national, regional and local planning policy. This includes both adopted and emerging policies as set out below.

NATIONAL POLICY

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK 2021 (NPPF)

The NPPF has several chapters within it of particular relevance to this Masterplan Development Framework. These will be set out in this section, along with a summary of the key parts of most relevance to this project.

Chapter 5

Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

The Government has a stated objective to significantly boost the supply of homes, and therefore it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land comes forward where it is needed. Such housing must meet the needs of groups with specific housing requirements, including but not limited to, for example, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people etc.

The value that small and medium sized sites can make to meeting the identified housing requirement is recognised, and the NPPF expects Local Planning Authorities to promote the development of a good mix of sites.

Chapter 6

Building a strong, competitive economy

The NPPF states that “planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions

in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, considering both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.” The importance of setting criteria or identifying strategic sites for local and inward investment is also acknowledged, as well as the need to address potential barriers to investment, including inadequate infrastructure or a poor environment.

Chapter 7

Ensuring the vitality of town centres

The role that town centres play at the heart of local communities is recognised, and a positive approach should be taken to their growth, management, and adaptation. They should be allowed to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allowing a suitable mix of uses (including housing development on appropriate sites) and reflecting their distinctive characters.

National planning policy states that main town uses should be in town centres, and provides a mechanism, using the sequential test, to ensure this happens, unless such

sites are not available. This re-enforces the importance of town centres.

Chapter 8

Promoting healthy and safe communities

Achieving healthy inclusive and safe places is key. This includes promoting social interaction through, for example, mixed use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts allowing for easy pedestrian and cycle connections, and active street frontages. Places should also be safe and accessible through, for example, well designed, legible pedestrian and cycle routes and high-quality public spaces. Finally, health lifestyles should be enabled and supported through provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops and walking and cycling infrastructure. Provision of supporting infrastructure is essential. This includes the access to a network of high-quality open spaces and recreation opportunities.

Chapter 9

Promoting sustainable transport

National policy states that significant development should be focussed on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help reduce congestion and associated emissions, with

the associated air quality and public health benefits. Indeed, the delivery and promotion of sustainable transport links can help deliver on many of the themes throughout the NPPF, as well as policies at the local level. Sustainable transport is a fundamental matter, and therefore transport issues should be considered at the earliest stages of development proposals.

Furthermore, in town centres, the quality of car parking should be improved so it is convenient, safe, and secure, as well as promoting accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

Chapter 11

Making effective use of land

Land should be used effectively in meeting the need for homes and other uses, and in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed land. Planning policies and decision should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings. The density of development needs detailed consideration to make sure land is effectively used, whilst still securing well designed, attractive, and healthy places.

Chapter 12

Achieving well-designed places

Creating high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamentally important. There should be a clear design vision and expectations, with local communities fully engaged in the process from the early stages, so that local aspirations are reflected. Principles are set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, and locally produced design guides and codes should be consistent. There is also a clear emphasis on the importance of trees to the character and quality of urban environments and their contribution to tackling climate change.

66

Chapter 14

Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to climate change impacts and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. New development should take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing, and landscaping to minimise energy consumption. The use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat should be increased.

Chapter 15

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

The natural environment should be enhanced by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity (including by establishing resilient and coherent ecological networks), remediating, and

mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict and contaminated land and preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water, or noise pollution. Where possible, development should help improve local environmental conditions, such as air quality.

Chapter 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution they can make to sustainable communities, and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE (NPPG)

The NPPG provides additional, detailed guidance on the planning system and areas of national policy through several specific sections. Whilst many of the areas referred to above are covered within it, in this section, the focus will be on the 'town centres and retail' section of the NPPG.

Town centres are areas where "main town centre uses" are concentrated, and local planning authorities can take a leading role in promoting a positive vision for them, bringing together stakeholders and supporting sustainable economic and employment growth. The NPPG acknowledges that a wide range of complementary uses (such as residential, employment, office, commercial, leisure/entertainment, healthcare, and education) can, if suitably located, help support the vitality of town centres. The same is true of temporary activities also.

Creating a vision for town centres that meets wider economic and community needs is key, and requires effective and creative leadership, with stakeholders engaged in the evolving vision. The NPPG continues to advise on the types of stakeholders that might be engaged, the potential contents of a town centre strategy, as well as the type of indicators to consider in assessing the health of town centres, and subsequently planning for their future.

An entire section in the NPPG dedicated to 'town centres and retail' highlights the importance the Government attaches to successful, vibrant, resilient, well-designed, high quality town centres that reflect the aspirations of local communities.

KEY LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

USE CLASS ORDER CHANGES

Of relevance to town centres across the UK, during 2020, Government brought in changes to consolidate several separate Use Classes under a single 'Commercial, Business and Service' Class E. This update to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (the 'UCO') came into effect in September 2020 and combined shops, restaurants, offices, gyms, and nurseries (amongst others) that no longer require planning permission to switch between uses.

These changes intend to make it easier to enable greater utilisation of existing assets and where appropriate, re-purposing of buildings in town centres such as Earlestown. Class E is intended to encourage diversification and facilitates an enhanced role for town centres as places of work, providing space for services, research and development, creating and making. Shops can change to restaurants, cafés, gyms, offices, health centres and indoor sports facilities. This fits well with a 'mixed-use neighbourhood' approach.

In March 2021, an update was then made to the related legislation⁴ to allow for the change of use of these commercial properties to residential from August 2021 under a fast track 'prior approval' process. This demonstrates the Government's desire to ensure that high streets thrive and survive through adopting a mixed-use approach in town centres.

⁴ General Permitted Development (England) Order 2015 (the 'GPDO')

SUB-REGIONAL POLICY

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION:

'Our Places' Spatial Development Strategy

The Liverpool City Region (LCR) is developing a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) for the City Region, entitled 'Our Places'. This spatial framework will set out the development and use of land looking ahead over the next 15 years and will be the first of its kind for the City Region.

100 LCR consulted on a draft document between October 2019 - January 2020, to inform the development of the SDS as part of Stage 1. Building on the feedback received from Stage 1, a Stage 2 consultation was then launched between November 2020 - February 2021 on the proposed vision and a set of objectives (illustrated right), along with suggested approaches to several key policy areas. The intention was to help progress the development of the strategy to meet the challenges and priorities of the City Region.

The overriding purpose of Stage 2 engagement was to make sure the SDS continues to be shaped positively and meaningfully by the people of the LCR. The proposed LCR vision, on which comments were sought, is as follows:

The Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy Vision

In 15 years we want to be a City Region where:

- A proactive, collaborative Spatial Development Strategy has been instrumental in delivering the goal of inclusive growth alongside environmental responsibility;
- Effective action to tackle Climate Change has been, and is being, taken; with measures put in place to increase our resilience to its effects;
- Our health and well-being is fundamental in deciding how we shape the places we live, work and meet;
- Opportunities for Building Back Better have been taken, creating a genuinely inclusive economy that is more competitive, connected, resilient, sustainable and greener; providing quality jobs, prospects and prosperity;
- **Our town centres, creatively re-purposed and re-imagined, provide opportunities for businesses and communities to thrive and develop;**

- Homes are provided to meet all our needs, are well designed and fit for the future, forming safer and well-connected communities;
- The value of new development looks beyond simple economic returns to deliver wider and lasting social and community benefits.

The LCR Spatial Planning team is now using the feedback from the consultation to help shape and progress the SDS ahead of the next round of public consultation.

LOCAL POLICY

THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Development Plan for St Helens currently comprises:

- Core Strategy Local Plan (adopted October 2012);
- 'Saved' Policies of the Unitary Development Plan (adopted 1998);
- Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (adopted July 2013); and
- Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan (adopted July 2017).



Climate Change and Environment



Health and Wellbeing



Inclusive Economy



Placemaking & Communities



Social Value

Source: Liverpool City Region, Our Places

ST HELENS UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Area 1 (Part 2 of the UDP) relates to Newton-le-Willows, including Earlestown, and identifies the following key issues in relation to Earlestown:

- (i) the older nature of the highway network and building stock;
- (ii) the need to satisfactorily redevelop cleared sites;
- (iii) vacant sites that have only been developed to a temporary standard;
- (iv) poor rear servicing to commercial premises;
- (v) poor environment for residents and shoppers;
- (vi) under-used sites/buildings, particularly Earlestown Station, listed for its special architectural and historic interest.

A number of these issues remain relevant today. Of particular relevance are 'saved' Policies E1, E2, E5 and E6 which seek to tackle these issues and ensure the future vitality and viability of the town centre.

ST HELENS CORE STRATEGY (2012)

The following Core Strategy policies are of primary importance:

- **Policy CSS1 – Overall Spatial Strategy** - seeks to regenerate the borough of St Helens through directing

development across the borough, with approximately 23% of new residential development being located in Newton-le-Willows and Earlestown; identifying that Earlestown will remain the second Town Centre within the Borough; and

- **Policy CAS3.1 – Newton-le-Willows and Earlestown Strategy** – seeks to ensure the future of the Earlestown town centre and its future regeneration and development.

EMERGING LOCAL PLAN

On Thursday 29 October 2020, the Council submitted the Local Plan 2020 - 2035 Submission Draft (2019) to the Secretary of State for independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate. As part of the independent examination, virtual public hearing sessions commenced from 25 May 2021.

The emerging Local Plan acknowledges the need to diversify the role for Earlestown (and St Helens) town centres in terms of the shift from traditional retail and introducing more varied uses to attract people into the town centre. The emerging Local Plan does, however, confirm that Earlestown will continue to be the focus for new town centre development (Draft Policy LPA02: Spatial Strategy), and the importance of its function and role within the Borough (Draft Policy LPB02: Earlestown Town Centre).

Helpfully there is also reference within the emerging Local Plan and clear objectives for Earlestown as follows:

- Enhance the Town Centre as a shopping destination and increase the vibrancy of the town's market;
- Protect and enhance the town's built heritage;
- Promote Earlestown as a key commuter settlement with direct rail connectivity to Liverpool, Manchester and Chester;
- Increase the number and variety of residential units by encouraging mixed use development that makes a positive contribution to the economic role of the town centre; and
- Link the town centre with the new homes to be provided through the residential redevelopment of Deacon Trading Estate and other housing developments' (Draft Policy LPB02, Paragraph 5.6.8).

Following the hearing sessions, a number of proposed modifications were suggested by the Council (SHBC010) including amendments to Policy LPA02 Spatial Strategy (and elsewhere) recognising the role of the ECF Regeneration Partnership.

The new Local Plan is expected to be adopted in Spring 2022.



The proposed vision for Earlestown town centre builds upon previous consultation, recognising that significant engagement has already taken place, including consultation on a potential use for a reopened and refurbished Earlestown Town Hall and the new Borough Strategy.

The Draft Masterplan Development Framework has been influenced by the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (St Helens Council, 2016).

This sets out the following objectives for Earlestown:

102

- By 2025 the centre of Earlestown will be a much more popular and attractive location for people to live, work and play. The historic character will have been restored and new development will reinforce that character. The great majority of buildings within the conservation area will be fully occupied with shops and leisure on the ground floors and offices and flats on the upper floors. The town hall and railway station will be refurbished and in use for business or recreational uses.
2. The public realm will be smart, orderly, tree lined and distinctive, reflecting the linear character of the streets. The town centre commercial area will have been diversified into a place to enjoy leisure and recreation in the daytime and evening as well as to satisfy local shopping needs. The Market Square will be a well enclosed focus of community and commercial life.

3. The welcoming appearance and activity of Market Street will draw movement between the town and the railway station. Beyond the conservation area core of the town, the surrounding areas will be prospering as new and existing residents discover the potential for commuting by rail between Earlestown and the centres of Warrington; Liverpool and Manchester whilst enjoying relatively low accommodation costs.
4. Small businesses will have recognised the potential of this location to attract skilled employees from a wider area and perhaps it may have emerged as a niche location for artists, fashion designers or others taking up the opportunity to sell directly to customers from around the Northwest region who regularly attend the town's ever popular weekly markets.

(Source: St Helens Council (2016) Earlestown Conservation Area, Character Appraisal and Management Plan, March 2016 (pp.23-24)

The proposed approach responds to these aspirations through delivering high-quality public realm and improved spaces to dwell, a potential relocation of the bus station to create a new transport interchange associated with the rail station and the opportunity to introduce a diverse range of uses and occupiers into the town centre.

Through this consultation on the Draft Masterplan Development Framework, we want to hear from you as to whether the design response to these issues is the right one. Details of how you can comment are provided at the end of this report.



EVOLUTION OF THE TOWN CENTRE

Earlestown is located between Manchester and Liverpool and forms the eastern part of the town of Newton-le-Willows. The town is steeped in historical associations, being fringed to the south by the first locomotive passenger railway line in the world, and to the west by the Sankey Canal which was the first industrial era canal in the world.

Earlestown owes its existence and character to the railways; the railway was the first in the world to rely exclusively on steam power; the first to be entirely double track throughout its length; the first to have a signalling system; the first to be fully timetabled; and the first to carry mail. Towards Liverpool, the line crosses the Sankey Canal over the world's oldest mainline railway viaduct still in use today.

The historic maps and text below describe the change of the town over this period to the current day.



EVOLUTION OF THE TOWN CENTRE

The historic maps describe the change of the town over this period to the current day.

1890

By the 1890s, the Earlestown area of Newton-le-Willows had outgrown the older part of the town and so the market was moved to its current location in Earlestown and the market square is the town's centrepiece.

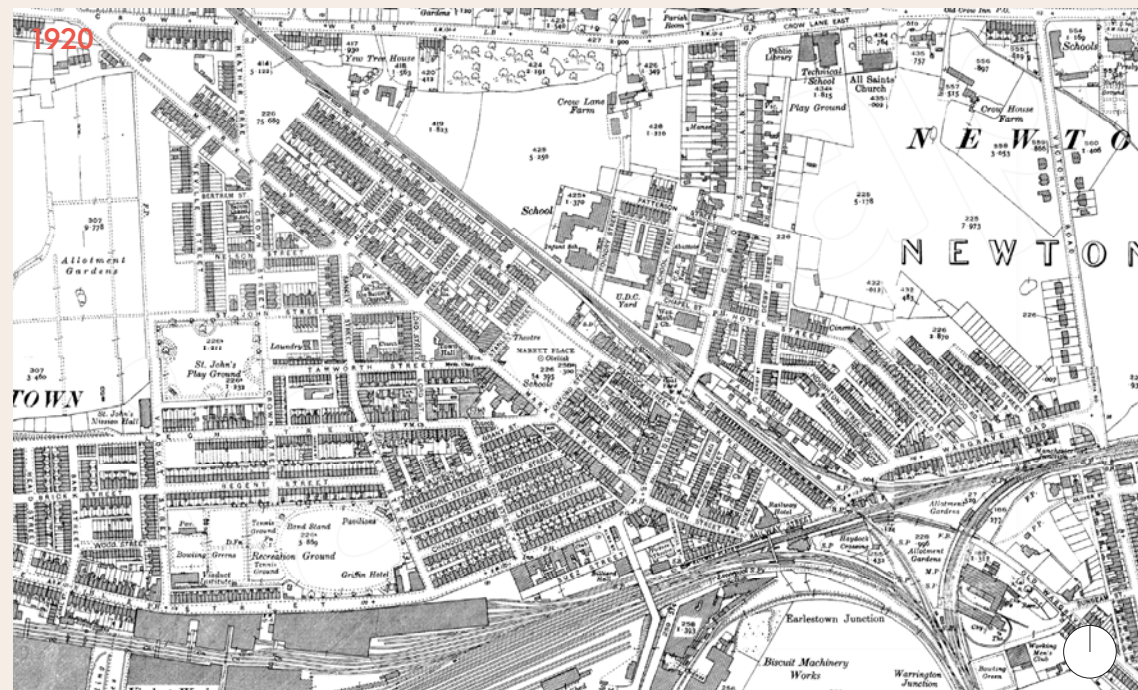
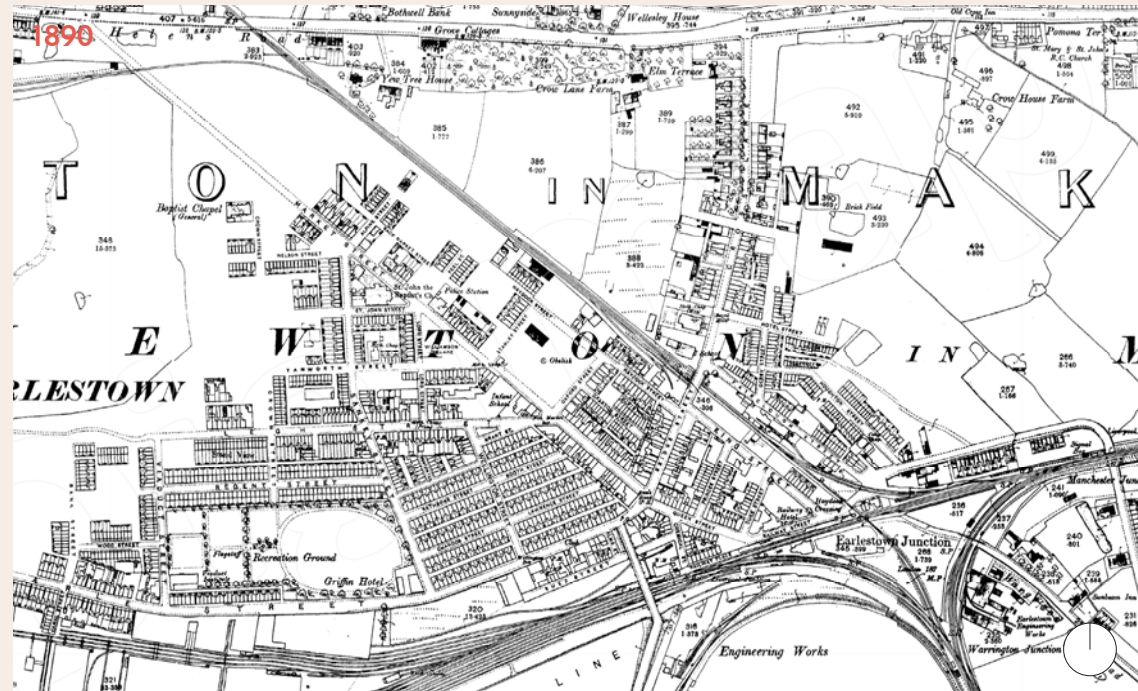
The historic street pattern is clearly visible, the two grids aligned with each railway branch coming together at Market Street. The town is growing out and along the railway lines primarily to the west. Market Square is clearly visible but sits almost on the edge of town rather than at its heart. The obelisk standing proud marking the centre of the square.

Large warehouses are clearly visible along the railway lines to the south of the recreational ground. Given the town's size this shows the significant investment and significance of the town as the home to the world's first passenger railway line. The Railway, Rams Head and the Griffin Hotel can clearly be seen on the plan. In 1892, Earlestown Town Hall was opened, and part of civic and democratic life was moved from Newton Civic Hall on Newton High Street.

1920

The town has significantly expanded. Terraced houses are shown pushing out north of the railway lines and beyond Crown Lane (A572). To the south of the town larger warehouses have been built to serve the rail network.

The expansion of the town sees the creation of more and larger schools, the new Town Hall, theatres, followed by The Curzon cinema and churches.



EVOLUTION OF THE TOWN CENTRE

1960

The town has continued to expand in a similar gridded pattern as it moves out. The industry to the south of the railway has increased. The pattern and density of the centre of town has barely changed since 1920.

2021

The street pattern has been eroded with the demolition of rows of terraces to make way for cul-de-sac streets. The houses therefore turning their backs on some of the main routes through the town, impacting on a lack of overlooking and active street frontages. You also see the introduction of large retail boxes and surface car parks which obliterate the historic grain of the town, creating inactive frontages and opening up the Market Square. Market Street has been pedestrianised, and the one-way system introduced. The Haydock Colliery Railway has been closed and dismantled along the rear of Fairclough Street.



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

4

The Draft Masterplan Development Framework has been prepared to respond to the issues and challenges that the town centre currently faces. In doing so, it identifies the key assets and opportunities that are important to preserve, enhance and build upon.

A town centre health check has been undertaken which noted the following key considerations:

- The Historic Market is a key asset which brings in visitors and footfall.
- There is a growth of independents moving into the town, which support the vibrancy of the place and add to its overall character; despite this, there are few national retailers, and it is poorly represented in terms of comparison goods.
- Notwithstanding the positive independent sector, as a whole Earlestown centre is underperforming. Pedestrian activity is lower than what is expected within a town centre, and the LCR Town Centres Commission⁵ noted that the town is declining overall. Business diversity in terms of the mix of sectors is lacking and it experiences very low business density with only 94 businesses being registered in the town centre.
- Earlestown is highly accessible and thus a popular place for commuters given the excellent railway connections. Despite this, these commuters do not necessarily use the services and amenities within the town centre and therefore there is the opportunity to create more linked trips and footfall. There is also a disconnect between the rail station and bus station, reducing the ability to encourage use of public transport modes.
- Key heritage buildings, such as the town hall, add to the character and the uniqueness of the place. These however are under-utilised and there is an opportunity to bring these back into viable, long-term use.
- The town is compact and walkable, but wayfinding is poor and there are challenging junctions to navigate. The current road layout and lack of clear signage fails to attract people into the heart of Market Street and Market Square.

The following sections will explore each of these areas in more detail.

⁵ LCR Town Centres Commission (2020) – Interim Report



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

FOOTFALL AND RETAIL OFFER

Earlestown town centre has suffered from declining footfall and a recent audit undertaken on behalf of the LCR noted that it is under-performing. A particular challenge which impacts footfall is the lack of employment-focused provision within the town.

107 Earlestown town centre has a fairly high representation of retail services but, as with other market towns of its size, has few national multiple retailers, and is poorly represented in terms of comparison goods. Vacancies are present within the town (currently 17.16% of overall units), which detract from the opportunity to create active frontages and vibrancy.

Unique to Earlestown town centre is the traditional and historic market which has been running for over 700 years. The Market Charter for the town was granted in the 13th century. This helps to bring in visitors and footfall on market days (Friday and Saturday) but has suffered from decline. Shop-front improvements, which are of a high quality and in keeping with the existing character of the area, are needed.

HOUSING OFFER

There is an opportunity to diversify the existing housing stock and introduce high-quality, shared ownership and market sale options into the town centre. New housing development should be complemented by an improved amenity offer within the town centre, which will be supported by the provision of new high-quality public realm. Historically, a large amount of housing has been removed from Earlestown town centre, which has reduced the amount of people living in and using the town centre. This mainly consisted of dense terraced housing on sites now occupied by supermarkets.

Earlestown, given its location and accessibility by public transport modes, has a real opportunity to create a sustainable living option and embrace the principles of a '15-minute neighbourhood'. There is an opportunity here to convert underutilised space above existing shops to residential use.



TOWN CENTRE

TRANSPORT AND
MOVEMENT

The entry points into Earlestown by bus, train or car do not feel like gateway points into a vibrant market town.

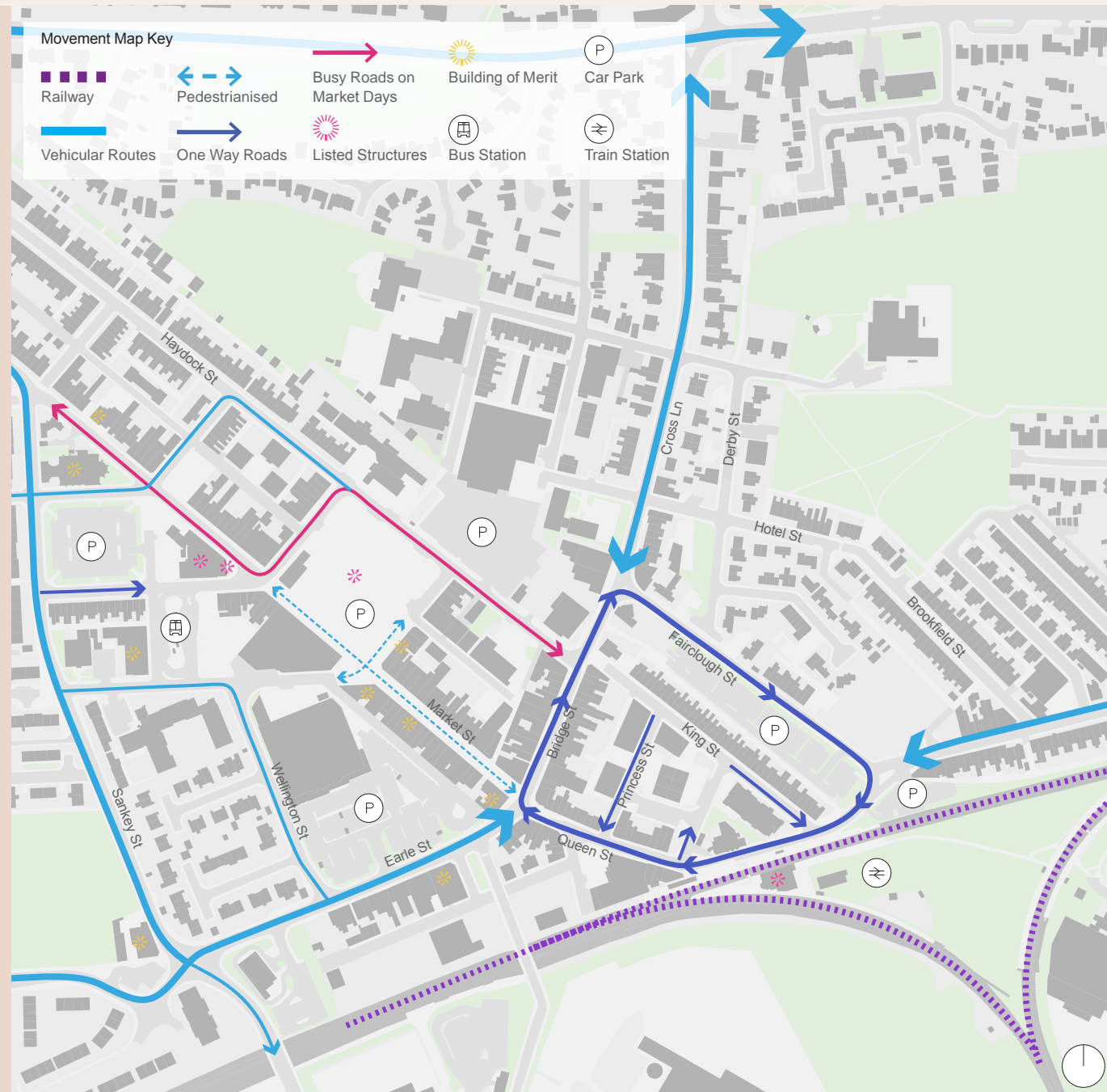
ARRIVAL BY TRAIN feels unsafe and confusing given the multiple platforms and layout of the Grade II Listed station itself. Once onto Railway Street there is no public realm or opportunity to pause and orientate yourself, and no wayfinding or clear obvious route into the town centre and market square. The key gateway as you arrive onto Railway Street is currently dominated by the unoccupied public house and vacant plot of land, which does little to promote a sense of arrival into the town⁶.

108 The walking and cycling route up to the town centre and the market square is also difficult to navigate and dominated by vehicular traffic. The junction between Queen Street, Market Street, Bridge Street and Earle Street is confusing for people travelling on foot given the current one-way system in place.

ARRIVAL BY BUS is somewhat from the rail station, with a small bus station located to the side of the Town Hall which includes sub-standard bus shelters. As with the rail station, there is little provided in terms of wayfinding or orientation. The dominant view and welcome to the town from bus looks towards inactive frontages of Tesco and Wilko.

ARRIVAL BY CAR is confusing given the one-way system, which avoids the town centre. There is also a dominance of surface car parking. If rationalised, whilst still providing adequate provision, it could provide opportunities for other uses and development.

⁶ Planning permission has now been granted to develop 15 no. affordable dwellings on this site (Planning Reference: P/2020/0772/FUL)



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

RAIL ACCESS

The rail station (a Grade II listed building) is accessed by vehicles and pedestrians via Queen Street and Old Wargrave Road. When arriving by train, depending on the platform passengers arrive at, they will walk through a fenced path in a wooded area to get to the desired access point. This wooded area has little natural surveillance and represents a perceived security risk, especially in winter and at night. It is also confusing to navigate around the station to find the right platform.

Step-free access is possible to only two of the five platforms (eastbound Liverpool to Manchester trains and westbound Manchester to Warrington). There is no step-free access to platform 2, 3 and 4 (for trains towards Liverpool, Warrington, Chester and Manchester), therefore return trips are practically impossible.

BUS ACCESS

Passengers arriving by bus can alight on Queen Street or adjacent to the Town Hall. The bus station consists of four stands which are all sheltered; however, the bus station layout is unattractive and has no soft landscaping.

Guard rail surrounds prevent pedestrians from walking out into traffic but does little to promote attractive public realm space or create a sense of place. None of these bus stands have raised kerbs which may cause accessibility issues for some passengers. Little wayfinding is in place between the bus station and the train station.



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST ACCESS

The pedestrian routes from the town centre to the bus and train stations are poor, with little signage or wayfinding. The junction with Earle Street, Queen Street and Bridge Street is a barrier between the bus and rail station and often puts pedestrians in danger. Consequently, cars do not always give way for pedestrians, due to poor visibility and speed of vehicles from Queen Street. This site is part of the Newton Heritage Trail (www.newtonheritagetrail.com), recently installed and refurbished by Newton and Earlestown Community Group.

Another challenging junction for pedestrians is Fairclough Street/Bridge Street/Cross Lane junction. The road markings make it very difficult for pedestrians to understand which vehicles have right of way and presents a risk of collisions.

There is a lack of dedicated cycling infrastructure around Earlestown town centre. There is a short, unsegregated, shared bus and cycle lane along Bridge Street/Haydock Street. There is limited cycle provision within the town with only two cycle stands located along Market Street. To maximise the accessibility of the town centre for walking and cycling, it will be important to create strong links with surrounding residential areas.

VEHICULAR & CAR PARKING ACCESS

Vehicles arriving from the north and south of the town centre are routed around the one-way system, which avoids the town centre. Restricted visibility at the Bridge Street/Earle Street junction increases the risk of collisions.

Car parking needs to be consolidated and better directional signage installed to assist people in finding a suitable space.



CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

QUALITY OF BUILT-ENVIRONMENT

ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

Earlestown town centre has a designated Conservation Area, in part recognised due to its unique street pattern, and excellent examples of heritage buildings but there is an opportunity to further enhance these.

As set out within the Conservation Area Appraisal (2016), *'the signature building of the town centre is the Town Hall and its clock tower'...the 'structure is appropriately prominent in several long views as the town's principal civic building'* (p. 14).

Earlestown Town Hall is Grade II Listed and has been vacant since summer 2008. The major structural elements of the building need refurbishment, replacement and repair. The visual condition survey identifies multiple defects to the external and internal fabric of the building.

The Council will be commencing the structural repairs in 2022, following which there is the opportunity to bring this important heritage building back into viable use. Extensive consultation

undertaken by PLACED confirmed the community's aspirations to see this building being returned to its former glory.

The overall quality of the built environment within the town centre is poor. The town suffers from inactive and open street frontages comprising blank façades (such as Wilko's), harsh security shutters (particularly along Market Street) and a lack of active frontages in and around the historic market square.

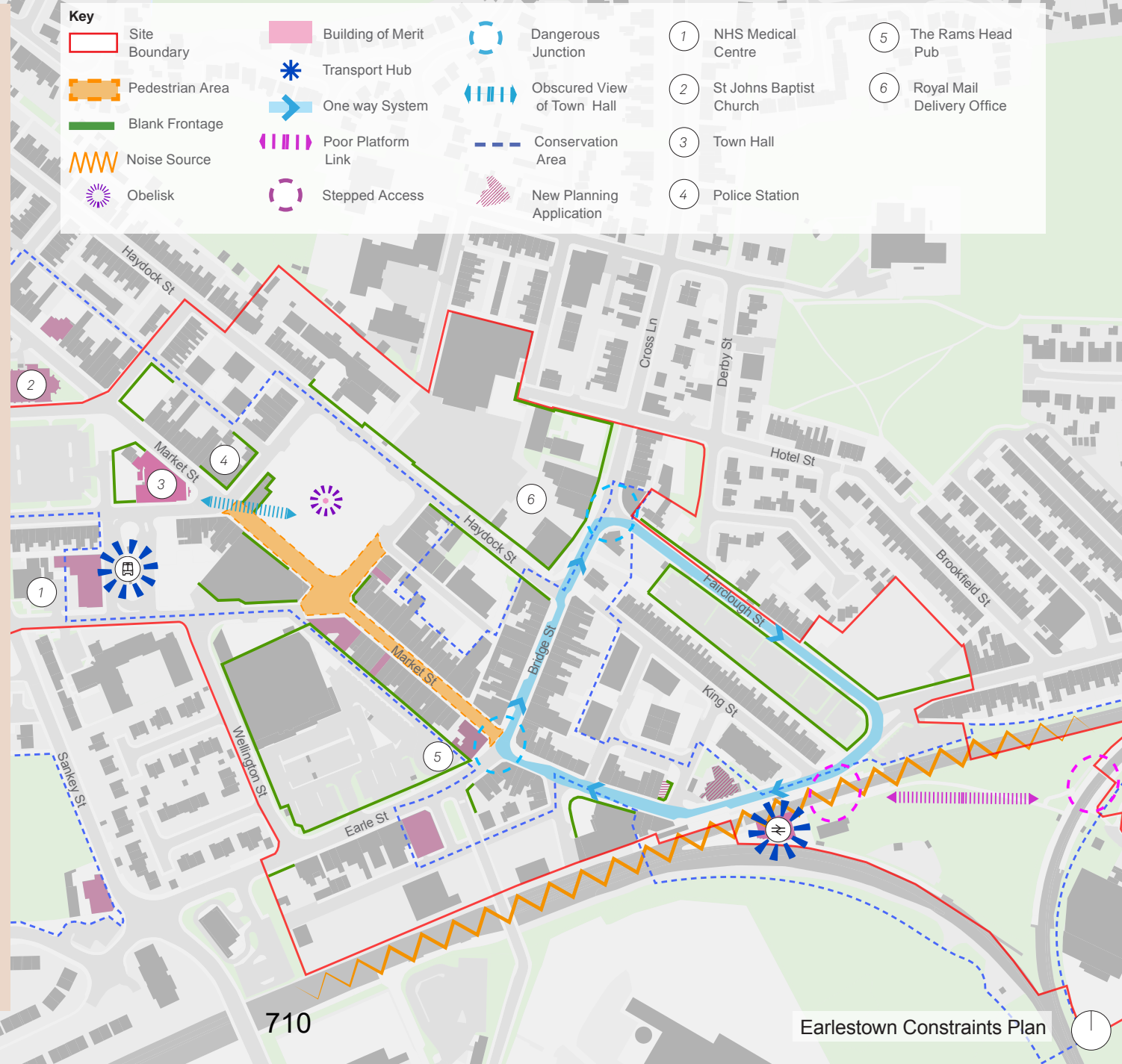
The market square is a hard environment and a largely uninviting space, which is under-utilised on non-market days. It is over-taken as an informal surface car park and as a store for the skeleton market-stall frames on non-market days. This limits the opportunity to use the square for events and public space. During market days too, it is let down by the lack of structure to the stalls and servicing/parking, resulting in a dominance of 'white vans'.



SUMMARY

In summary, the key issues to be addressed through the Masterplan Development Framework for Earlestown town centre include:

- Creating a high-quality built environment and public realm, including the market square so that people want to visit and spend time in Earlestown, are encouraged to dwell, spend their disposable income and create a vibrant high street.
- To encourage a strong food and beverage offer to support the creation of an evening economy.
- Supporting existing traders whilst also introducing a wider mix of uses and diversifying the traditional retail offer.
- Positively changing the perceptions of the town centre, through a range of events and activities, including some temporary or 'meanwhile uses' to encourage people into the town.
- Delivering a quality town centre living offer to address vacant and under-used sites (including re-purposing some surface car parking) and attract vibrancy and people into the heart of the town.
- Undertaking junction enhancements, improving cycling routes, delivering an improved bus station with an interchange and rail station enhancements.
- Providing a clear wayfinding strategy to link from key arrival gateways into the town centre, making it easier and more legible to find your way around; and
- Improving placemaking and redeveloping Council-owned assets including heritage buildings and brownfield land to best effect.





A VISION FOR EARLESTOWN TOWN CENTRE

TOWN CENTRE VISION

Having established the town centre's baseline position in the previous sections, the overarching vision for the town centre and the associated strategic objectives for its future development have been considered below.

The vision for Earlestown town centre has been informed by stakeholder engagement undertaken by PLACED in February and March 2020 and the High Street Task Force in 2021, the objectives set out within the Conservation Management Plan and the key objectives as set out within the emerging Local Plan.

114 The vision statement set out below articulates the preferred approach to the development of the town centre.

**'EARLESTOWN...A
TRADITIONAL
MARKET TOWN
WITH A THRIVING
AND VIBRANT
HIGH STREET AND
MARKET PLACE'**



The following strategic objectives will help to achieve the delivery of a thriving and traditional town centre, which is at the heart of the Vision for Earlestown town centre:

1. DELIVERING A DIVERSE, VIBRANT AND ANIMATED TOWN CENTRE

To create a town centre that responds to the changing nature of the high-street; encouraging new town centre uses, increasing active frontages and offering spaces that attract the local and independent traders that make Earlestown town centre truly unique.

Introducing a diverse mix of town centre uses, to complement the historic market, existing independents and creating more opportunities for a thriving food and beverage offer that support the evening economy.

1.2 Promoting the existing cultural offer and improving opportunities for linked visits as well as encouraging the night-time economy.

Introducing temporary or 'meanwhile' uses including events and pop ups to create a vibrant, lively ever-changing place that people want to visit.



2. PROMOTING HIGH-QUALITY TOWN CENTRE LIVING

Delivering a high-quality residential offer within the town centre to meet housing need, diversify the town centre housing stock and providing the opportunity for a new residential population to thrive as part of our wider place-making ambitions.

3. CREATING A SUSTAINABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND CONNECTED TOWN CENTRE

To create a more sustainably accessible town centre to make it easier for people to enjoy the services, spaces and amenities that the town centre has to offer.

To ensure the town centre maximises the opportunity for net zero carbon development, with sustainability and climate change at the forefront of its transformation.

4. ENCOURAGING CREATIVES AND INDEPENDENTS

Building on the success of the historic market, encouraging more creatives and independents to establish themselves within Earlestown town centre, and the opportunity for spin-off local businesses.



5. POSITIVELY CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE TOWN

Positively changing the perceptions of the town and the borough through promoting the unique heritage within Earlestown town centre, including the historic Town Hall and Market Place, as well as other heritage buildings and legacy of the railway to provide a distinctive offer.

6. TO PROVIDE A HEALTHY AND COMMUNITY-FOCUSED TOWN CENTRE

Creating high-quality spaces and places for independent businesses and community functions to thrive, people to dwell and socialise within, providing opportunities for active travel and leisure, and creating a town centre that the people of Earlestown are proud of.

Ensuring that connectivity and accessibility for sustainable modes of transport are accommodated within the town centre to increase health and well-being.

Greening and improving the public realm to contribute towards net zero carbon, biodiversity and sustainability goals, to the benefit of the existing community and future generations.



The proposed strategic objectives for the town centre align with those set out within the Borough Strategy and emerging Local Plan, but with a focus on the suggested boundary for the masterplan area. These strategic objectives are in line with the adopted Core Strategy (2012) policies CSS 1, CSD 1, CAS 3.1, CP 1, CP 2, CH 1, CH 2, CQL 4 and Saved Policies within the Unitary Development Plan (1998) RET 1, RET 4, RES 3, ENV 24B, ENV 25, ENV 26, AP1.1, E1, E2, E5, E6.

The Strategic Objectives also reflect on the policies within the emerging Local Plan which is in Examination (emerging policies: LPC01, LPC02, LPC04, LPB02, LPC11, LPA07).

PROPOSED MASTERPLAN



- Key**
- Masterplan Focus
 - 1 Earlestown Town Hall
 - 2 Earlestown Police Station
 - 3 Proposed Market Hall
 - 4 Market Square
 - 5 Wilko
 - 6 Tesco
 - 7 Royal Mail Delivery Office
 - 8 Potential Transport Hub
 - 9 Improved Rail Station



PROPOSED

MASTERPLAN APPROACH

The town centre masterplan that forms part of this Draft Masterplan Development Framework sets out a proposed spatial framework for the implementation of the town centre vision and strategic objectives.

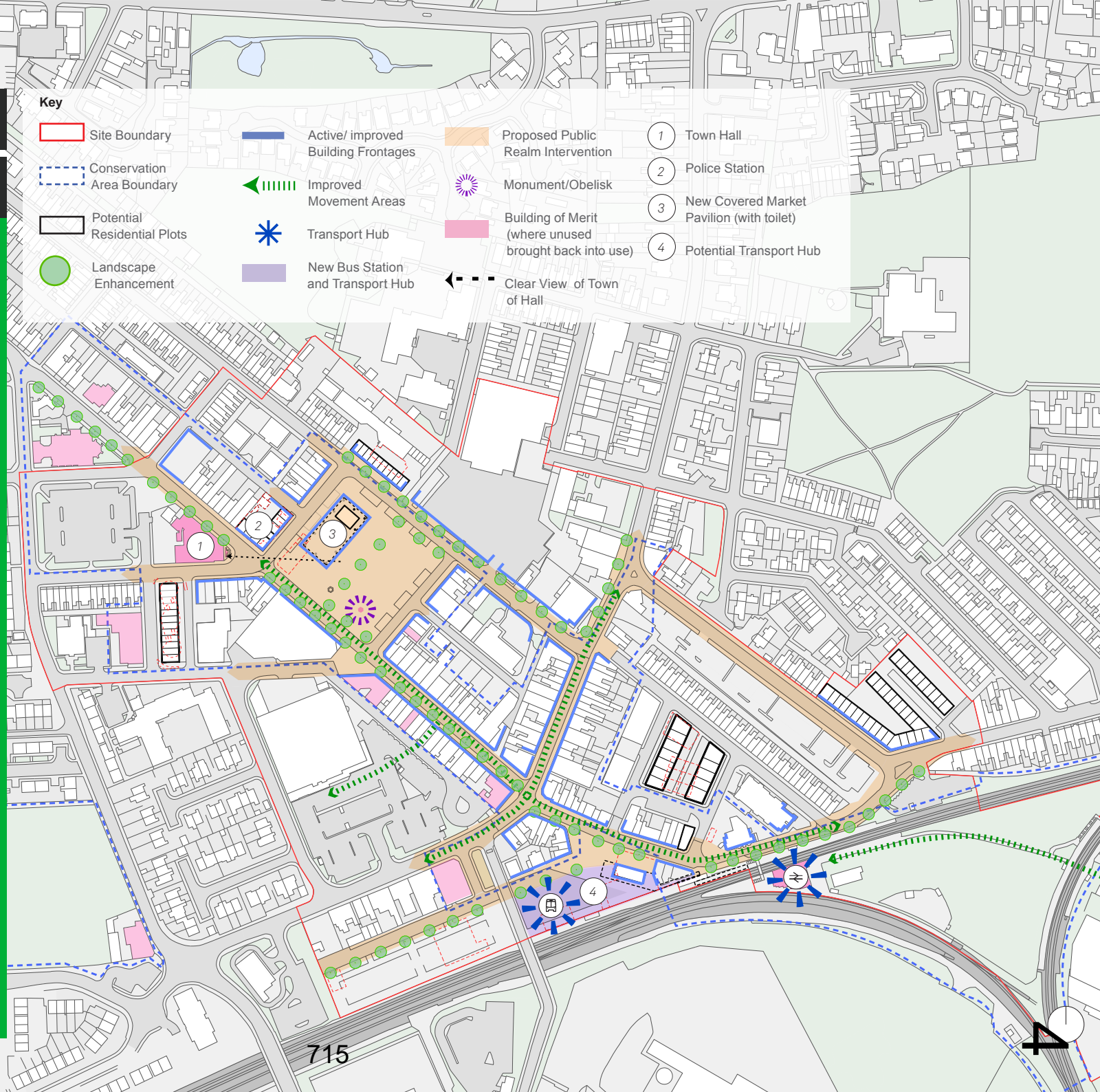
The Draft Masterplan has been developed around a number of action zones, opportunity sites, public realm, and transport and movement considerations, as well as the consideration of specific urban design principles within each area.

OVERARCHING SPATIAL CONTEXT

This Masterplan Development Framework focuses primarily on the heart of the town centre – the historic Market Square, the Town Hall, and the key arrival/ gateway points into the town centre.

The proposed red line is bounded by St John Street to the north, Sankey Street to the west, Hotel Street to the east and Sunbeam Street to the south (Old Wargrave Road).

The proposed area therefore covers the historic Market Square, the Town Hall, the train station, bus station, traditional 'High Street' area and also opportunity sites for redevelopment.



DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Any development coming forward within the Draft Masterplan Development Framework boundary will need to adhere to adopted planning policy and consider the following key design principles.

- Create positive active frontages throughout the town centre, such as leisure, retail and residential at ground level.
- Open up the desire lines improving natural way-finding and improved orientation from key gateways and arrival points.
- Create opportunities to provide experiences through a range of placemaking activities and events which animate the spaces and create interest.
- Improving and linking public space, such as the market square, and historic buildings (including the Town Hall).
- Increasing the footfall throughout the town centre.
- Improving dwell spaces, with a particular focus on enhancing the Market Square.
- Creating a density that is appropriate to a town centre location.
- Draw upon the heritage analysis of the site and street patterns, seeking opportunities to restore the historic street grain pattern with a network of interconnecting shared surface streetscapes.
- Consolidate car parking supply to make car parks more efficient and provide better directional signage to access car parking.
- Promote sustainable travel with a focus on the people travelling on foot or by cycle.



Artists Impression of Market Street

OPPORTUNITY SITES

Several key moves or interventions that will lay strong foundations for future growth and investment into Earlestown town centre are proposed. These interventions in many cases relate to more than one action zone and are summarised as follows:

A. DE-CLUTTER AND UPGRADE THE PUBLIC REALM

It is important to focus on the key routes that link the town centre's existing transport nodes in recognition that overall wayfinding and orientation needs improvement. Earlestown was developed due to the railways, first opening in 1830, with the railway sitting on the Liverpool to Manchester line; the first recognisably modern railway in the world. The route through from this key arrival point, which remains an important commuter route to this day, needs to be strengthened and to encourage people into the heart of the town.

Through this key route leading from Railway Street through to Queen Street and up through to Market Street, there is an opportunity to improve and rationalise shop fronts, key listed buildings and buildings of merit. Introducing standardisation of shop-front signage befitting of the Conservation Area, eliminating harsh 'in-active' roller shutters and exploring the potential to open up Market Street to controlled vehicular

traffic outside of core hours. These interventions will all encourage extended vibrancy and activity along this key route.

B. IMPROVE MARKET STREET

Market Street will benefit from decluttering, reconstructing with high quality materials and the introduction of street trees and well considered street furniture. The use of lighting and references to the town's heritage through interpretation and/or artwork will emphasise the sense of place.

There is the potential to open Market Street to an element of controlled vehicular traffic one way during certain times of the day to help activate the street. Testing this as a temporary scenario is an option and the design of the street, with flush surface treatments and placement of features, will allow the flexibility to retain it as a pedestrianised street in the future if required. A new pedestrian link will be created to the west along Market Street to connect with the Tesco store, in the most convenient location whilst protecting important heritage features.



OPPORTUNITY SITES

C. IMPROVE THE QUEEN STREET/ MARKET STREET JUNCTION

The Queen Street/Market Street junction is envisaged as a raised table junction where minimal carriageway widths allow for optimum pedestrian movement, better connecting the transport hub with Market Street and the Market Square to the north. This in turn provides more opportunities for spill out space, which will enliven the town's main pedestrian thoroughfare.

D. ENLIVEN MARKET SQUARE

Market Square is the jewel in the crown of Earlestown town centre. Proposals here revolve around re-defining this square as a place for people with a multi-use offer. Establishing direct views of the Town Hall from the Square will be facilitated by removing existing buildings.

Softening the space through the introduction of raised lawn areas and planting is also proposed. Elements that stimulate interest and human interaction should be considered such as water features, play and/or artwork.

A flexible event space would provide opportunities for specialist market days and community events, creating a destination that brings the community together. A permanent covered market canopy would provide shelter and a

managed environment for the market with storage and toilet facilities incorporated within.

Making Market Square a more vibrant place to be for more of the time means that managing and controlling both parking and servicing of stalls must be done better. At present, its size leads to inefficiencies in servicing in particular, while allowing parking over much of the square reduces the effectiveness of public space. Parking management will be improved, and stronger routes created to and from other parking locations within the town centre. Key to this is also creating better non-car routes throughout the town centre to reach the Market Square from the surrounding neighbourhoods.

E. RE-IMAGINE THE TOWN HALL

The Grade II Listed Town Hall currently lies vacant, but survey work has started to support appropriate repair of the external structure and there are active enquiries for new uses within the building. The wider masterplan development framework, public realm and Market Square enhancements and curating events within the town centre will have a positive impact on the perception of Earlestown and help to support and attract new investment into the town centre.



OPPORTUNITY SITES

UNLOCKING NEW DEVELOPMENT SITES FOR HOUSING

Opportunities for potential development sites have also been identified. These sites could be redeveloped for new high-quality housing and include:

- Land to the south of the train station (off Sunbeam/Old Wargrave Road),
- Land off Fairclough Street
- Land off King Street
- The current Bus Station site
- Land off Haydock Street

121 OTHER OPPORTUNITY SITES

In addition to the proposed 'key moves' identified above, there are wider opportunities to look at other key gateway sites, in particular those sites around the Market Square to explore if these buildings and/or sites can be re-imagined, and an opportunity to enhance the rail station.

For prominent gateway sites, where there are prospects for redevelopment, the focus should be on ensuring that they provide active frontages (particularly those sites fronting onto the Market Square).



Key
 — Masterplan Boundary
 ■ Potential Future Development/Improvement Sites

PROPOSED ACTION ZONES

The town centre area has been divided into three broad action zones that have been delineated based upon key characteristics. Each zone includes a summary of the urban design principles and key components that will be considered in each area.

Each zone has an important role to play in the wider transformation of Earlestown town centre, and collectively, will support the delivery of the overarching vision. It is important to note that the Action Zones do not represent phasing and delivery priorities. They have been identified based on the types of uses, scale and massing that will be considered in each area.

ACTION ZONE 1 ARRIVAL HUB

This area encompasses the rail station and land immediately south of the station, including the current industrial area off Sunbeam Street.



ACTION ZONE 3: MARKET SQUARE

The northern extent of the proposed Masterplan Development Framework area comprises the Market Square Action Zone. The key focus here is therefore about improving the quality of the historic market square, encouraging active frontages and tackling key heritage assets such as the Town Hall, and the opportunity longer-term to address key gateway sites including the police station. This would include how the current Police Station site is dealt with, along with the provision of a new police station in close vicinity.

ACTION ZONE 2: QUEEN STREET JUNCTION AND MARKET STREET

The ambition at the Market Street/Queen Street Junction Action Zone is about enhancing the town's rich heritage and improve the quality and appearance of the listed buildings, buildings of merit and the overall Conservation Area; and improving pedestrian and cycle movement/accessibility making it easier to move between the train station and the high street, leading up to the Market Square.

There is a real opportunity in this zone to enhance the quality of the Conservation Areas.

Action Zones Plan





123

1

ARRIVAL HUB



ACTION ZONE 1

ARRIVAL HUB

An enhanced rail station with a potential bus facility adjacent will deliver a truly multi-modal interchange alongside better treatment of the streetscape. This will create a new gateway to Earlestown town centre and help make better use of its great rail connectivity to and from the wider region. It will be important to respect the Grade II listed status of the rail station building as part of any future plans to ensure the historic environment is protected and enhanced.

The creation of a gateway plaza adjacent to a new integrated transport hub will improve the town centre's sense of arrival. Clear sightlines, wayfinding and the introduction of trees and street furniture will aid in the legibility of this space and guide people towards Market Street and the heart of the town centre.

A new cycle hub will provide secure cycle storage, encouraging cycling and promoting healthier lifestyles.

The potential improvement of the green space south of the railway station, within the triangle between the tracks, will provide additional access to open space and improve connections to the residential neighbourhoods south of the town centre.

Key Design Principles:

- 1 Activate the streets by encouraging and providing space for spill out
- 2 Create a sense of arrival by providing a new plaza space on Queen Street and integrating a bus/train/cycle hub, waiting room and ticketing office
- 3 Improve connections across the railways tracks, ensuring DDA improvements are undertaken to support accessibility for all¹
- 4 Active use of station building(s) whilst respecting the heritage asset
- 5 Improve green space between railway tracks and connections through to Old Wargrave Road, with improved lighting and signage to improve safety and security

¹ Disability Discrimination Act





125



2 MARKET STREET AND QUEEN STREET JUNCTION

CGI of proposed Market Street and Queen Street Junction

723

4

MARKET ST AND QUEEN ST JUNCTION

To enhance the appearance and experience of this area, Market Street will benefit from decluttering, resurfacing with high quality materials and the introduction of street trees and well considered street furniture. The use of lighting and references to the town's heritage through interpretation and/or artwork will emphasise the sense of place.

Market Street/Queen Street junction is a real challenge for pedestrians to cross due to the one-way system in place for cars.

There is the potential to open Market Street to controlled vehicular traffic during certain times of the day to help activate the street for extended periods. This could be achieved with retractable bollards at key points. Testing this as a temporary scenario is an option and the design of the street, with flush surface treatments and placement of features, will allow the flexibility to retain it as a pedestrianised street in the future if required. A new pedestrian link will be created to the west along Market Street to connect with Tesco store.

The Queen Street/Market Street junction is envisaged as a raised table junction where minimal carriageway widths allow for optimum pedestrian movement, better connecting the transport hub with Market Street and the Market Square to the north. This in turn provides more opportunities for spill out space that will enliven the town's main pedestrian thoroughfare.

Along Market Street there is also the opportunity to create cohesiveness and enhancement to the Conservation Area through restoring historic shop frontages and eliminating hard roller shutters which currently dominate the street scene.

Key Design Principles:

- ① Potential to test a temporary scenario of re-introducing one way bus, taxi and service access traffic northbound.
- ② Retain a flush surface treatment from building to building but resurfaced with high quality materials, enhancing pedestrian movement, allowing space for businesses to spill out and occupy the street and introducing street trees at regular intervals and high- quality street furniture in select locations
- ③ A potential pedestrian link between Market Street and Tesco to facilitate better connectivity.
- ④ Opportunities for heritage interpretation of street signage and furniture
- ⑤ Re-work the one-way road system - priority along Earle Street and Bridge Street.
- ⑥ Introduce a raised table to improve pedestrian movement between Queen Street and Market Street.





128

3 MARKET SQUARE



ACTION ZONE 3

MARKET SQUARE

Market Square is the jewel in the crown of Earlestown town centre. Proposals here revolve around re-defining this square as a place for people with a multi-use offer. Establishing direct views of the Town Hall from the square will be facilitated by removing existing buildings that are located within the square.

Softening the space through the introduction of raised lawn areas and planting is also proposed. Elements that stimulate interest and human interaction should be considered such as water features, play and/or artwork.

A flexible event space would create a destination that brings the community together. A permanent covered market canopy would provide shelter and a managed environment for the market with storage and toilet facilities incorporated within. It is proposed to explore relocation of the Obelisk, making the best use of this heritage asset, creating a more flexible square that is capable of hosting a greater variety of events.

Making Market Square a more vibrant place to be over extended periods of time means that the management and control of both parking and servicing of stalls must be improved. At present, its size leads to inefficiencies in servicing in particular, while allowing parking over much of the square reduces the effectiveness of public space. Parking will be better managed and stronger routes created to and from other parking locations within the town centre. Key to this is also creating better non-car routes throughout the town to reach the square from the surrounding

Key Design Principles:

- ① Open up views of the Town Hall from the square by removing existing buildings.
- ② Provide a flexible space for specialist markets and other civic events, with the provision of a covered market canopy structure with storage and toilet facilities.
- ③ Explore option for relocating the obelisk to the western side of the square.
- ④ The introduction of lawns, planting and trees within the square to help soften the space and strengthen the

square edges. The planting contributing towards biodiversity and providing interactive elements that encourage people to dwell in the space. Accommodating pedestrian movement across the space from north to south and east to west.

- ⑤ Activating street frontages and strengthening the built edge of the square.
- ⑥ Improved links to nearby surface car parks.





STRATEGY

THE PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY FOR EARLESTOWN HAS THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

- Create public realm of an outstanding quality that enhances the historic environment of Earlestown and creates a distinctive sense of place;
- Support the development of key sites and encourage new investment elsewhere in the town centre;
- Encourages people to choose to walk, cycle and dwell in the streets and spaces; and
- Soften the public realm through the creation of green spaces with tree planting and enhanced opportunities through climate positive design.

THE STRATEGY CONCENTRATES ON THREE KEY ELEMENTS:

- The creation of a new arrival gateway space at the transport interchange on Queen Street;
- The improvement of Market Street and its junction with Bridge Street and Earle Street; and
- The enhancement of the historic Market Square.



STRATEGY

The town centre already benefits from a strong urban form and historic street pattern so improvements within the public realm are to be concentrated around the quality and condition of the existing streets and spaces.

To make them more legible, attractive and places for people. Also, an emphasis on decluttering the street scene whilst greening the environment through the introduction of tree planting and soft landscaping where appropriate. Climate Positive Design should be a pillar for the future development of Earlestown town centre's public realm.

The narrowing of carriageways, widening of footpaths, improvements to pedestrian crossings and the use of high-quality surface materials will all contribute to a more successful public realm that looks to prioritise pedestrians and cyclists.



Arrival Hub: Arrival plaza with raised planter seating to encourage dwell time and soften the space



Arrival Hub: Transport Hub look & Feel



Arrival Hub: Managed woodland with improved footpath routes



Market St & Queen St Junction: Raised table junction with heritage materials



High quality high street environment with new paving, street trees and spill out cafés



Market St & Queen St Junction: High quality materials and pedestrian crossings across Bridge Street



Market Square: Opportunities for interactive play elements such as water jets and seating



Market Square: Kiosks to create active frontage onto square



Market Square: Soft landscaping with seating edges

The Masterplan Development Framework enables the following improvements to be implemented:

- Introduce a signal or revised junction control to slow and manage movement of traffic, while providing better opportunities for pedestrians.
- Inclusion of a pedestrian phase at this junction to allow people to cross safely;
- Implement traffic calming measures such as 20mph speed restrictions and a raised table at the Earle Street/Queen Street/Bridge Street junction to slow traffic down and improve the public realm environment. Surface treatments extended to the rail station;
- Removal of the short southbound bus only section on Fairclough Street between Fairclough Street and Haydock Street;
- Potential relocation of the Bus Station to create a transport interchange/hub;
- Enhancing Earlestown rail station;
- Opening up Market Street for controlled vehicle movements;
- Creating a new connection between Tesco and Market Street;
- Enhanced connections for those travelling on foot or by cycle between residential areas outside the town centre and through the town centre itself.

133



MOVEMENT STRATEGY

The potential bus station relocation aims to create a transport interchange/hub adjacent to the rail station. Cycling facilities are also proposed to be located here, with the existing taxi rank nearby to provide access to all modes of transport. Relocating the position of the bus station could promote multi-modal journeys, which is key to boosting economic vitality whilst enabling commuters to travel and interchange conveniently.

The site on which the current bus station sits could then potentially be released as a development plot in a location close to the main retail centre in Earlestown town centre.

The masterplan considers the partial removal of pedestrianisation along Market Street using a trial arrangement where controlled movement for certain vehicles are permitted at certain times. This measure would be hoped to stimulate much needed activity on Market Street, whilst not adversely compromising pedestrian safety on days such as market day, or when events are held such as Remembrance Sunday.

With the potential relocation of the bus station, further consideration of bus routing will need to be analysed to understand the ways in which buses best meet the demands of passengers and the key locations. It is also essential that any changes to bus movements are discussed with and agreed with Merseytravel and bus operators, to ensure all operational requirements are fully considered before changes are implemented.

The current one-way system through the town is proposed to be retained.

Maintaining accessibility for those with mobility issues is critical. The aim will be to provide effective disabled persons parking places, both on and off-street at logical places throughout the town centre, reducing distances to key land uses and/or making the journeys from such parking more pleasant, mobility friendly and secure than at present. A review of Electric Vehicle Charging, Parent and Child and Valet/Premium Parking will also be considered.



STRATEGY

A key cross-cutting theme and objective for the Draft Masterplan Development Framework is sustainability and ensuring that key sustainability principles are adhered to. This approach is in line with the pledge that St Helens Council has made; to meet zero carbon status by 2040 and address the impact that climate change is having on the borough.

ECF as St Helens Borough Council's partner has also agreed a Sustainable Development Strategy and prepared a robust Sustainable Development Brief which sets out the following key objectives that all new development and projects should meet.

Other development coming forward within the borough will also be encouraged to sign up to these sustainability principles, in addition to those set out within the emerging Local Plan.

135

**NET ZERO CARBON**

To be net zero carbon in construction and during operation.

**ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY**

Delivering a net gain in biodiversity, whilst providing high quality green spaces.

**CIRCULAR ECONOMY**

Eliminating waste and improving resource efficiency through circularity.

**HEALTH & WELLBEING**

Delivering high quality spaces where people can live, work and thrive while positively impacting their physical and mental health.

**SOCIAL VALUE**

The positive social, economic and environmental outcomes that we create for individuals, businesses and the government through our development activities.

**WIDER SUSTAINABILITY**

Capturing wider sustainability issues such as Water, Transport & Certification.

DELIVERY STRATEGY

PHASE 1

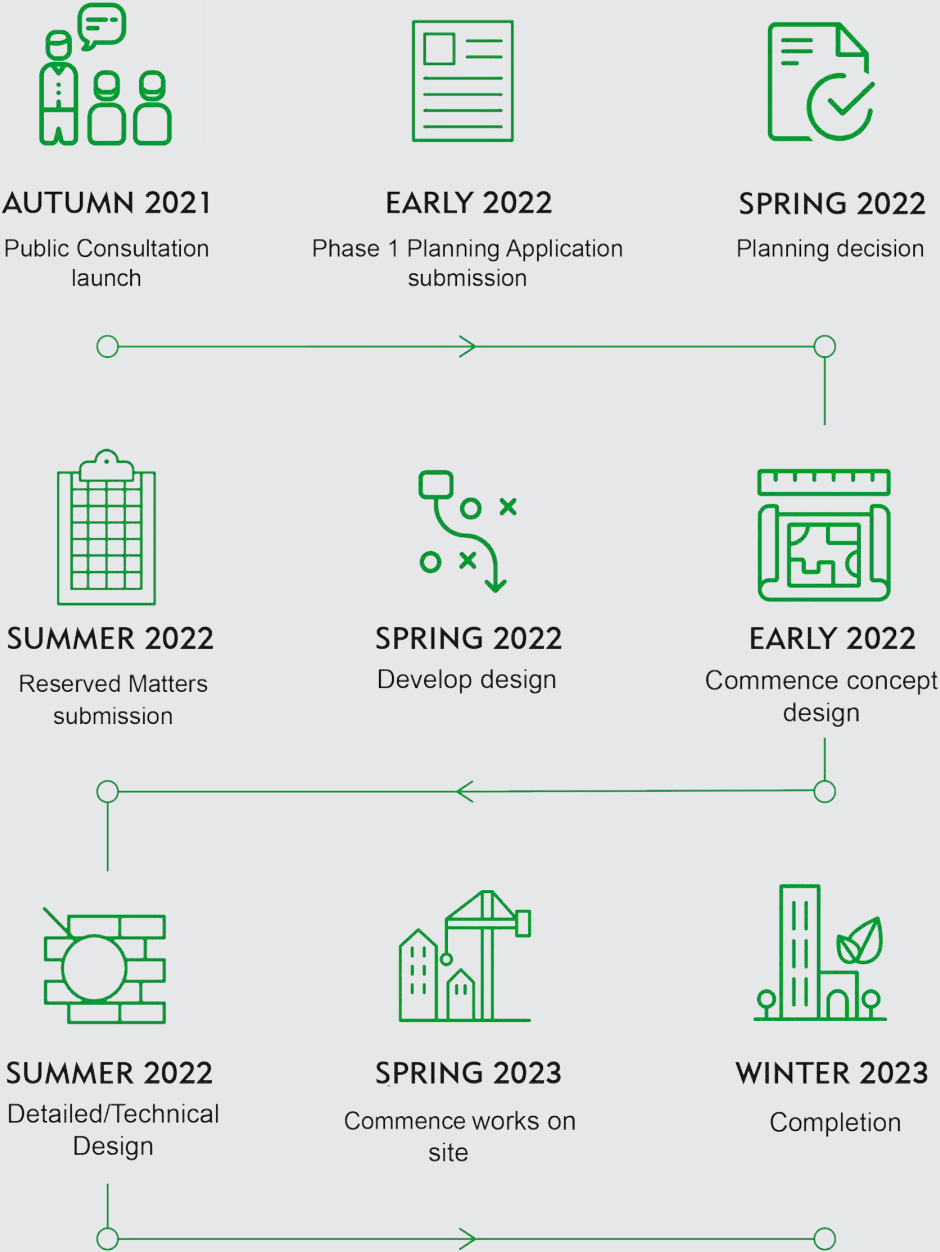
The scope of proposed Phase 1 works in Earlestown town centre is initially focussed on the creation of an enhanced market square to create a covered market area, flexible event space and landscape improvements, as well as improvements to the public realm to make the town centre more pedestrian friendly.

Future phases and other opportunities will be explored including:

- Bringing the town hall back into use;
- Working with Merseyside Police to deliver a new Police Station building whilst disposing of the current Police Station building;
- Creating a new transport interchange and arrival hub;
- Creation of new homes.

These proposals will allow Earlestown town centre to attract more residents, businesses and visitors, helping it to re-establish itself as a thriving market town.

A delivery proposed programme has been developed for Phase 1 which provides a timeline for the key activities required to deliver these works;



BENEFITS

The Draft Masterplan Development Framework provides an opportunity to drive transformational change for Earlestown town centre. This will generate physical regeneration benefits on the ground but also have wider-reaching positive impacts for the local community, businesses, occupiers, and private investors in the town over the next 20 years. Such benefits include:

- Driving economic growth and inward investment;
- Enhanced green space and public realm;
- A more sustainable town centre – adapted to climate change;
- Increasing the visitor economy;
- Celebration of the borough's unique cultural and heritage assets, including the real asset which is the historic market;
- Addressing local housing need;
- Positively changing perceptions of St Helens (and the wider Borough) and attracting future inward investment into the town;
- Provision of new community facilities;
- Social value embedded into the development;
- Enhanced biodiversity;
- Attracting meanwhile uses and events.



NEXT STEPS

This draft Masterplan Development Framework sets out an opportunity to enhance the public realm and infrastructure within Earlestown town centre, which in turn will help make the most of the town's heritage assets, including the historic marketplace. It will encourage high-quality development and future investment into the town centre that will generate significant regeneration benefits for the existing community and future generations.

Your views on this Masterplan Development Framework are important to us and we value your contribution. Our public consultation will run between Monday 1 November and Monday 13 December. During this time, there are a number of ways you can comment on the proposals:

YOUR FEEDBACK



ONLINE FEEDBACK FORM

Visit our website and fill in the feedback form or drop your comments onto our interactive map at: www.earlestown.co.uk



EMAIL

Email any additional comments or questions to us at: earlestown@havingyoursay.co.uk



WRITE TO US

Via the following: Freepost, YOURVOICECOUNTS



FREEPHONE

Call our dedicated Community Information Line at 0333 358 0502 (Weekdays 9.00am – 5.30pm)

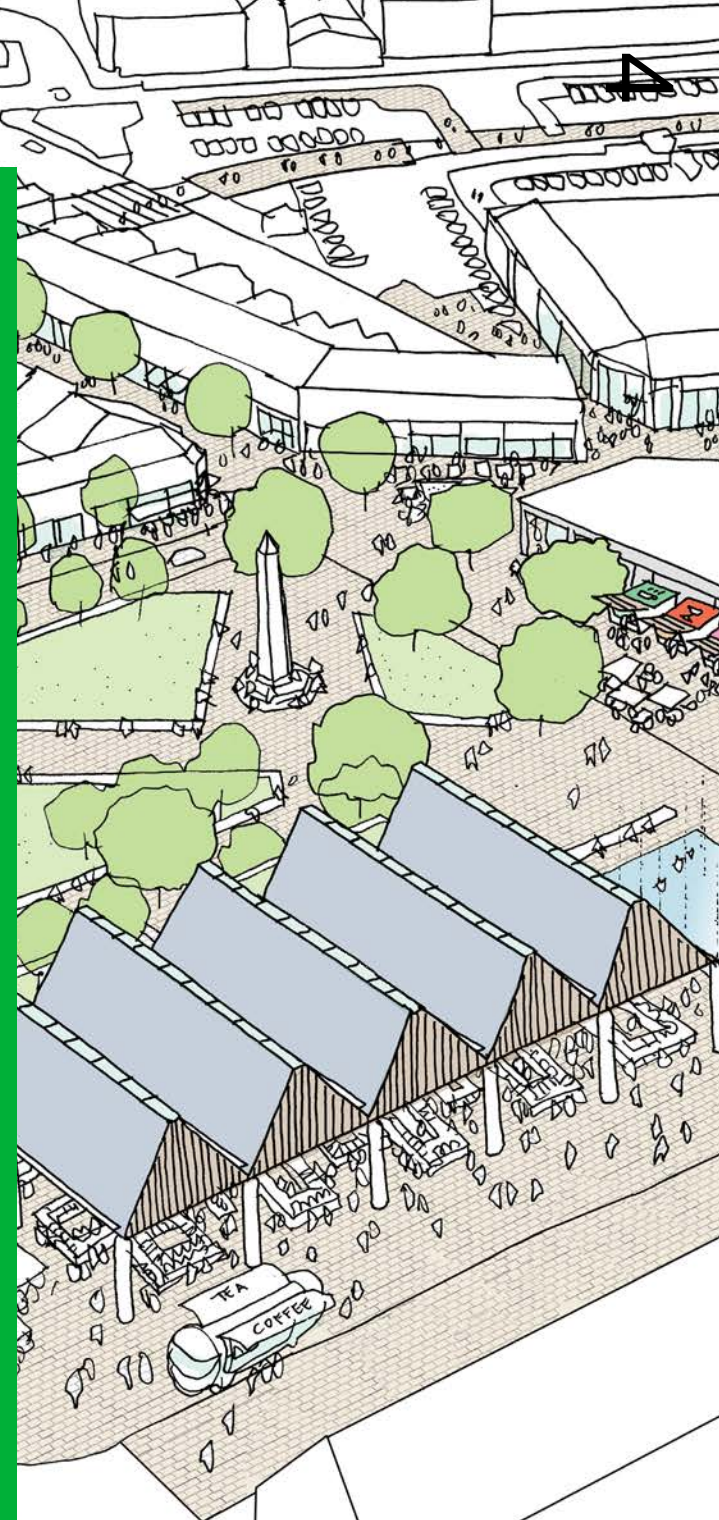


PUBLIC EXHIBITION

During the consultation period, we will also be holding a public exhibition in the local area – visit our website to find out more information.

Following the end of the consultation, we will review all the feedback, comments and questions submitted and explore opportunities to incorporate the feedback before we finalise the Masterplan Development Framework. Subject to the comments received, it is anticipated that a planning application related to the proposed Phase 1 will be submitted in early 2022.

Any feedback provided will be used for the purposes of informing the final Masterplan Development Framework and the submission of future planning applications. A summary of all responses will be collated into a Consultation Statement that will be submitted as part of future planning applications to the Council. The data will be held securely in accordance with data protection guidelines.



Artist impression of Town Centre

Earlestown - Town Centre

Regeneration

Consultation and Engagement Strategy

Overview

St Helens Borough Council has formed a 20-year partnership with the English Cities Fund (ECF) that will see a variety of sites across the borough benefit from redevelopment, with an initial focus on plans to transform St Helens and Earlestown town centres. Lexington have been commissioned by ECF to prepare a strategy for engagement and consultation regarding the emerging Draft Masterplan Development Frameworks for each town centre, as well as the associated Phase 1 planning applications.

This document details the recommended strategy for public consultation and stakeholder engagement, alongside the indicative timescales for when this activity will take place.

Consultation Notification

Digital will be the primary method for general awareness raising and notification of the respective consultations. Hard copy leafleting is not supported for this purpose having regard to the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration and its associated environmental objectives, having particular regard to the borough-wide nature of the consultations.

The methods of awareness raising and consultation notification are prescribed (in summary) as:

- **Social media advertising** – To notify all residents, businesses and stakeholders within the Borough of the consultations, a series of Facebook and Instagram pages will be created for each consultation, with appropriate adverts stemming from each page.
- **Stakeholder social media posts** – Stakeholders will be encouraged to publish posts advertising both consultations via their own established channels such as St Helens RLFC, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, St Helens Chamber of Commerce, etc.
- **Press activity** – Press releases shall be issued to key publications and reference both consultations, with briefing opportunities provided to radio and TV channels.
- **Physical posters** – Posters are to be provided in a range public spaces and venues such as post offices, libraries, shops, bus stops, doctors surgeries, etc. These posters will contain QR codes, allowing easy access to the consultation websites.
- **Digital advertising** – Content will be displayed on the Council's variable message signs that are located at strategic locations in the borough and other buildings. We will also engage with partners to promote in their premises where available.

- **Written letters and engagement meetings** will be issued to and held with those stakeholder groups that are directly affected by the Draft Masterplan Development Framework proposals. This includes groups such as existing market traders, businesses where their premises are specifically identified for redevelopment, bus and taxi operators affected by the proposed transport proposals, etc.
- **Project websites** will act as the hub for each consultation, with a dedicated website per project. Details of the websites will be published on all other communications materials. The websites are under construction and will be accessible from www.earlestown.co.uk
- **Physical events** will be held in the town centre to provide an opportunity for residents, as well as those who visit, work and play in Earlestown and Newton le Willow to speak to the development team directly. A series of smaller pop-up events will run outside the town centre to engage a wider audience. Further details of the physical events are provided below and continue to develop.

Social Media Advertising

Adverts for both consultations are to be distributed across the entirety of the Borough. Lexington will lead on the content, comment management and the launch of all social media advertising. This will be predominantly via Facebook, as well as Instagram.

Consultations will launch on 1 November 2021 and run for a 6-week period of time. Ahead of the consultation launch, Lexington will prepare a bespoke social media advertising strategy that will include content for sign-off by Council Officers and ECF, together with a protocol for Councillors to assist responses to any comments received on the adverts ahead of the consultation going live.

Project Websites

The project website will act as the main hub for the consultations and include important information regarding the Draft Masterplan Development Frameworks, Phase 1 planning applications and ways to provide feedback. The town centre regeneration project will have its own website, that will link to the other town centre plans. The website is under construction so not yet active but will be accessible from www.earlestown.co.uk

The websites will include several pages, for example:

- **Welcome Page** – Including introductions to the proposals, the consultation, and key CGIs. This is the page residents will land-on should they visit the address listed on all material or click the social media adverts.
- **Our Vision** – a page dedicated to the overall concept and vision for the proposals.
- **Development Framework** – Key information about the development framework, as well as a link to a PDF of the document which will be hosted on the site. This will also include imagery and information specifically related to the detail of the Masterplan.
- **Virtual Exhibition** – Links to the virtual exhibition room, which will include PDFs of the exhibition boards.
- **Phase 1 Application** – Information about how the Phase 1 planning application feeds into the programme.

- **FAQs** – Responses to common questions that will be asked during the consultation period.
- **Your Views** – Information about the consultation, ways to provide feedback, and links to a feedback form. This page will also include details of an email address, dedicated Community Information Line and written address.
- **About Us** – Details of ECF and its partnership with St Helens Council.

Physical Exhibitions

A week-long period of public exhibitions will be held in each town centre. These events will be held in a vacant unit or other suitable venue within the following weeks:

- **w/c 22 November** – Public events in Earlestown town centre

During the events, a series of exhibition boards will be displayed to provide more detail about each proposal. The content within the series of boards will include:

- **Welcome board** – Detailing the purpose of the consultation and encouraging attendees to provide feedback.
- **Our Vision** – A focus on the wider strategic vision for the town centre.
- **The Story So Far** – Background about how we reached this point, how the draft Development Masterplan Development Framework and the Phase 1 planning application sit together and the anticipated timescales moving forwards
- **The Masterplan** – Imagery and information specifically related to the detail of the Masterplan proposals.
- **Phase 1 Planning Application** – Information about how the Phase 1 application feeds into the programme.
- **Your Views** – Information about the consultation, ways to provide feedback, and links to a feedback form

Print outs will be available of the Draft Masterplan Development Framework documents and large prints of the CGIs. A fly through is also being prepared which will be displayed during the sessions.

To engage with as wide an audience as possible, interactive games will be hosted at the events to entice passers-by to enter the unit, read the information available and report their feedback.

In addition to the weeklong events:

- **Pop up Roadshow** – there will be a series of pop-up sessions outside of the town centres to engage a wider audience. This will include neighbourhood centres, leisure centres and libraries.
- **Christmas Lights Switch on** – a trailer will be hired to visit Earlestown town centre on Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 November, and during the Christmas lights switch on events in both locations. The information displayed during these mobile sessions will be the same as at the weeklong static events in the retail units.

Feedback Mechanisms

During the consultation period feedback will be invited on the Draft Masterplan Development Framework and the Phase 1 planning application.

There will be several ways to provide feedback, including:

- Via a dedicated feedback form available on each consultation website
- Via the same form which will be available at the exhibitions and venues
- Via a dedicated email address
- Via telephone or post

In addition, those visiting the website will also be given an opportunity to visit an interactive page that will allow users to drop pins on parts of the town centre whereby they have very specific comments.

All of the feedback submitted in the various different ways will be managed and collated by Lexington. Lexington will produce a Statement of Community Involvement following the end of the consultation. This document will outline the consultation methodology, the feedback that has been received, as well as the partnerships response to this feedback. It will be hosted on the consultation websites once the consultations have ended, to provide all parties with a transparent overview about the consultation processes.

All persons or organisations who engaged in the consultation process will be notified when the Phase 1 applications are being submitted, to ensure that those who have indicated an interest in the plans are kept informed of progress.

Media Engagement

A series of press releases will be prepared throughout the lifetime of the programme. This includes at the point of the consultation launch, and when the feedback has been analysed. St Helens Council will liaise with the local media, whilst Lexington will lead on engagement with the trade press.

Stakeholder Engagement

A series of stakeholder engagement meetings or webinars will be undertaken throughout the consultation period. Examples of the groups that will be engaged include: all Councillors, owners of all property impacted by the plans, businesses occupying the property impacted by the plans, the Business Forum group, the Youth Council, disability groups, MPs and the Town Deal Board.

Timetable of Activity

Date	Activity
Tuesday 12 th October	Cabinet reports published. Engagement with the press and pre-launch stakeholder activity
Wednesday 20 October	Cabinet meeting to endorse consultation process.

Monday 1 November	Consultation launch and websites go live.
Monday 15 November – Sunday 21 November	Earlestown town centre unit or temporary facility 9 – 5pm with some extended opening times across the week TBC.
Sunday 28 November	Staffed trailer event in Earlestown town centre between 4pm and 7pm during Christmas light switch on
Pop up events across the borough	When opportunities identified
Monday 13 December	Consultation ends

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	<p style="text-align: center;">Cabinet</p> <p style="text-align: center;">20 October 2021</p>
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Report Title:	Establishing a Growth Delivering Prosperity (GDP)Team
Cabinet Portfolio	Regeneration and Planning
Cabinet Member	Councillor Richard McCauley
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All
Report of	Lisa Harris Executive Director Place lisaharris@sthelens.gov.uk
Contact Officer	Sean Traynor Director Strategic Growth seantraynor@sthelens.gov.uk

Borough priorities	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	x
	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	x
	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	x
	Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	x
	Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	x
	Be a responsible Council	x

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council has made a significant commitment to accelerate delivery and growth. This report proposes the creation of a Growth Delivering Prosperity (GDP) Team to accelerate the delivery of the Borough's significant and ambitious growth plans whilst securing benefits for local communities and tackling the boroughs inequalities.
- 1.2 The report proposes a bespoke model for the GDP Team in St. Helens, informed by customer engagement and learning from other authorities. The aim of the team is to maximise outcomes and enhance service delivery and also create opportunities for staff development across the Strategic Growth Department.
- 1.3 The proposals have been developed to utilise and repurpose existing human resources wherever possible to minimise the initial financial implications. Beyond the accelerated delivery of the existing ambitious growth programme, the proposed GDP Team will also improve the borough's prospects of further sustained investment over the longer-term through an enhanced reputation for positive direct delivery by the Council or for delivery facilitation.

2. Recommendations for Decision

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) **Note the establishment of a Growth Delivering Prosperity (GDP) Team within the Strategic Growth Department in accordance with the details set out herein.**
- ii) **Agree to a Cabinet report that will consider the funding mechanisms for the proposed GDP Team across the financial years 2021/22 - 2023/24 as set in Section 9.7 of this report.**
- iii) **Note that a review of the GDP Team model be conducted as part of the budget process for 2023/24 pursuant to the consideration of future years funding mechanisms as may be appropriate following the review.**
- iv) **Note the need for a recruitment campaign to promote the opportunity and attract applicants.**

3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 This report seeks approval to establish a dedicated team to accelerate the delivery of the Borough's ambitious growth plans. The Growth Delivering Prosperity (GDP) Team would be responsible for accelerating delivery of the priority place-based growth projects, with a focus on securing shared prosperity outcomes, environmental enhancements and tackling the boroughs existing inequalities.

4. Background / Reasons for the recommendations

- 4.1 The Borough Strategy has established a clear vision and set of priorities for the period 2021 – 2030 and place-based regeneration programmes will play an important part in helping the Borough achieve our ambitious plans for growth that benefits the people of the borough.
- 4.2 The Borough Strategy is further supported by the Economic Reset and Recovery Plan, this plan recognises that the geography of St. Helens provides significant place-based opportunities to accelerate recovery from the effects of the covid pandemic and to reset our economy to ensure the Borough grows back greener.
- 4.3 In addition, the positive progress of the Local plan: Building a Better Future towards formal adoption puts in place a strong strategic Framework to set housing and employment development targets.
- 4.4 These strong strategic and planning foundations have created an extensive programme of growth opportunities that include, but are not limited to:
- Town Centre Regeneration
 - St. Helens town centre regeneration (multi-phased projects)
 - Earlestown town centre regeneration (multi-phased projects)
 - Implementation of the Town Investment Plan (7 substantive programmes 15 Individual Projects)
 - Town Deal Acceleration Fund and progression of Chalon Way Meanwhile use.
 - Economic Development
 - Glass Futures Phase 1
 - Glass Futures Phase 2
 - Foundation Industry masterplan
 - Parkside Link Road including M6 J22 improvements.
 - Parkside West including JV relationship with Langtree
 - Parkside East Including Engagement with National Infrastructure bodies
 - Parkside Freeport Programme
 - Omega Zone 8
 - Housing Delivery
 - Bold Forest Garden Suburb
 - Cowley Hill Works redevelopment
 - Moss Nook redevelopment
 - Area based small site redevelopment
 - Environmental Improvements and supporting Infrastructure
 - Bold Forest Park
 - New Carr Mill Railway Station

- Earlestown Station enhancements
- St. Helens Junction to St. Helens Central Railway reinstatement
- St. Helens Interchange Transport Investment
- Routes to Regeneration (St. Helens Northern Housing Access) Transport Investment
- M6 J23 'Haydock Island' improvements
- St. Helens Southern Gateway – Improving access to Lea Green Station
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
- LCR Digital Infrastructure

4.5 In addition to this existing programme, there are several imminent and substantial future funding opportunities. The ability to secure external funding is critical to accelerate delivery and it is clear by our recent success that if the right resources and expertise is applied to the borough's opportunities, we will be successful in a competitive funding environment. The current and future initiatives include:

- LCR Sustainable Transport Fund
- LCR Strategic Investment Fund
- Shared Prosperity Fund
- Levelling Up Fund Round 2
- Home Building Fund
- Restoring Your Railways Fund
- Access for All Fund
- Community Renewal Fund
- LCR Housing Brownfield Fund

4.6 In 2020 the Council recognised the need to secure capability and capacity to support and improve the delivery of services within the Place Services Directorate, importantly the delivery of key projects to deliver the council's priorities. Accordingly, Phase 1 and 2 senior management restructures have been implemented (as approved by Cabinet in December 2019). This investment has paid significant dividends to date, and significant progress has been made in the achievement of the Council's priorities. The new management team has been able to secure significant external funding, with £36m secured to date for economic development, town centre regeneration and transport funding. A further £31m of external funding bids are currently pending.

4.7 In addition to the management team the restructure led to the creation of a Planning & Regeneration Service within the Strategic Growth Department. However, the Regeneration function currently has limited human resource below the Head of Regeneration & Growth role, and therefore if we are to convert financial success into economic delivery and success then further programme specific and technical human resource and intervention is required.

5. Proposal to create a Growth Delivering Prosperity (GDP)Team

5.1 The extensive growth programme, combined with the prospects of further success with external funding opportunities, demonstrates the need to create technical resource capacity. This will act to secure accelerated delivery in accordance with the Council's growth objectives.

5.2 The current Planning & Regeneration Service is currently resourced to fulfill its statutory functions rather than to take a proactive and intervention approach to growth. In the absence of appropriate human resourcing, the Council will fail to deliver and maximise opportunities thereby increasing the risk that government, partners, developers, and employers may choose to invest elsewhere. There is also a significant risk that the expectations of our business and

residential communities, together with partners/stakeholders, will not be realised thereby causing reputational harm to the Council. This risk has been identified on the Corporate Risk Register, with a current rating of High.

- 5.3 The authors of this report have direct experience of instigating such arrangements, which is recognised as a leading initiative. Importantly, learning from this example and from other local authorities who have done similar has helped inform and refine the specific format in St. Helens with the aim to create a new exemplar. The intention is to create additional resource in a collaborative environment that not only facilitates acceleration of projects for which the team have direct responsibility but also support other priorities across the Council – ensuring everyone will have the opportunity to play their part.
- 5.4 The proposed GDP Team will manage and ensure that the delivery of the significant work programmes identified in Section 4 above are accelerated. However, accelerated delivery is not the only intent of the team proposal. It will be further distinguished through a focus on securing shared prosperity outcomes and environmental enhancements as an integral benefit of growth. In doing so this will help to secure support from local communities to the Council's ambitious growth agenda through local meaningful and demonstrable engagement and the delivery of physical and economic benefits. This approach is in full accordance with the #St. Helens-Together ethos.

6. Community Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no direct community impact assessment implications arising from this proposal. The individual programmes that are facilitated or delivered by the proposed new team will be subject to separate community impact assessments and reporting arrangements.

7. Consideration of Alternatives

- 7.1 Do-nothing or do-minimum alternatives have been considered but failure to invest additional resources would put at risk the considerable growth opportunities currently available to St. Helens Council and the borough as a whole. Consideration has also been afforded to precisely replicating the arrangements introduced by other local authorities, learning has informed an adapted model version that is bespoke to St. Helens and its Place Directorate.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The proposed new GDP Team will provide a significantly enhanced service to deliver Borough priorities, enable key investors and developers engage and collaborate with stakeholders and partners helping the Council to accelerate the delivery of projects and programmes. In doing so it will improve the boroughs prospects of further sustained investment over the longer-term through an enhanced reputation for delivery be that by the Council or enabling and facilitating others to develop in the Borough.

9. Implications

9.1 Legal Implications

- 9.1.1 There are no legal implications associated with the proposals set out in this report.

9.2 Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Implications

9.2.1 Social Value

9.2.1.1 A primary aim of the proposed GDP Team is to secure and maximise shared prosperity from the growth programme, ensuring that local communities benefit directly from social value outcomes. In the absence of appropriate levels of human resource there is a risk that social value opportunities may not be fully realised, thereby limiting the growth benefits.

9.2.2 Sustainability and Environment

9.2.2.1 The proposals will positively support sustainability and the environment, with the proposed team having a focus on ensuring environmental enhancements are secured as an integral benefit of growth projects.

9.2.3 Health and Wellbeing

9.2.3.1 Acceleration of the investment and growth programmes secured by the proposals set out within this report will have positive health and wellbeing implications for St Helens communities. These benefits can be maximised through the provision of suitable human resources.

9.2.4 Equality and Human Rights

9.2.4.1 There are no direct equality and human rights implications associated with this proposal. Any implications associated with individual projects within the growth programme will be subject to separate reporting where appropriate.

9.3 Customers and Resident

9.3.1 The proposals set out within this report are driven by a desire to accelerate delivery and the realisation of benefits and outcomes from the Councils ambitious growth agenda. With a focus on shared prosperity, and inclusive growth the proposed team will seek to maximise these benefits for all our customers, residents, and businesses.

9.4 Asset and Property

9.4.1 The success of the proposed Team will lead to the creation of new, improved and highly valued assets across the Council in private, public and community ownership.

9.4.2 The core of the proposed team will operate primarily from within the Planning & Regeneration Service and integrate with the Councils new Ways of Working model. Once the team has been engaged there will be further opportunity to consider future alignment with partners such as the Chamber of Commerce to help create a further enhanced Inclusive Service for business, investors and developers.

9.5 Staffing and Human Resource

9.5.1 The proposed structure comprises 22 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts. It is anticipated that 9 of these posts will be filled by existing, equivalent post-holders within the structure, through direct assimilation or the repurposing of existing resources.

9.5.2 There are several new posts within the proposed structure. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications will be drafted, assessed, and evaluated by the Council's Job Evaluation Team. These tasks will require dedicated support from the Human Resources Service to expedite implementation of the GDP Team.

- 9.5.3 In addition, the employment market in this area is highly competitive and therefore there will be a need to take a proactive approach to recruitment if we are to attract candidates of the right caliber with appropriate knowledge, experience and skills. This will therefore require additional HR, communications and marketing support.
- 9.5.4 In addition to the creation of the GDP team, it is proposed to review the current resources, within the Economy Service to ensure the right balance between the two teams is maintained and its retained resource to be repurposed to focus on inward investment and key client management activities.
- 9.5.5 In the short term, it is proposed that technical support for functions such as planning, and highways, finance and legal will remain within existing teams and will be commissioned as appropriate from within those teams. This will promote the collaborative culture of the organisation and will be monitored to ensure it remains the best deployment of resources to meet priorities.
- 9.5.6 The proposed structure requires the deletion of one existing post (Transport Officer) within the Planning Service, this post has recently become vacant and therefore the deletion of this post will not involve redundancy proceedings.
- 9.5.7 The proposed structure includes for a Graduate Infrastructure Officer post, this will be a repurposed resource that allows the service to start to have a managed succession strategy
- 9.5.8 Consultation will take place with staff and Trade Unions. The new structure will be implemented following this consultation process and recruitment to those posts will commence immediately following the end of the consultation period. It is anticipated that the recruitment will be completed with the new team fully in place by January 2022 with interim agency appointments being facilitated due to current high demand across a range of projects.
- 9.6 Risks
- 9.6.1 Implementation of the proposed new team will ensure that the Council is able to be proactive, innovative, and collaborative in meeting its growth delivery needs alongside those of business and investors across St. Helens. The increase in technical resource capacity will ensure that the appropriate scale of technical expertise is in place to enable the GDP Team to promote forward delivery in achieving the Council's key priority for accelerating the delivery of growth across the Borough.
- 9.6.2 Failure to invest in these additional resources would put at risk the considerable investment opportunities currently available to the Council through a range of funding streams. Such opportunities would be slowed or at worst, lost, which would have an impact on the Council's future financial sustainability due to lost income and opportunities.
- 9.6.3 Failure to invest in this team would put at risk the significant work undertaken in recent years to bring forward the extensive growth programme identified in Section 4.
- 9.6.4 The new capacity will enable the Council to be far more proactive and solution focused with partners in identifying new opportunities and in bringing forward new physical development, natural capital, employment, and shared prosperity opportunities.
- 9.6.5 There is a risk that recruitment to posts could be unsuccessful; therefore, investment in a positive national recruitment drive will help mitigate this issue.

9.7 Finance

- 9.7.1 The total cost of the proposal set out in this report is estimated over two years as summarised in the table below – this excludes costs for additional specialist external commercial finance and legal support, which will be commissioned as required for major complex projects and charged to those accounts wherever possible. A considerable amount of external funding has been secured to support the creation of the team this year as detailed below.
- 9.7.2 It has been assumed that vacancies for the new posts are filled with effect from January 2022 with interim agency appointments being facilitated due to current demand across a range of projects. The additional cost of the interim agency arrangements to the commencement of the new posts in January 2022 is £ 0.245m.
- 9.7.3 Accordingly, the cost of the team for the partial year 2021/22 is circa £ 0.430m (including £0.245m interim agency arrangements) and this is to be allocated from the following sources:

Funding	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	Total £m
Additional Cost of GDP Team	0.430	0.738	0.553	1.721
Financed by:				
LCR Capacity Funding	0.200			0.200
Town Deal Capacity Funding	0.049			0.049
Town Deal Business Case Funding	0.039			0.039
St. Helens Interchange Programme Management Support funding	0.071			0.071
St. Helens North Housing Access	0.071			0.071
Flexible Capital Receipts		0.738	0.553	1.291
Total	0.430	0.738	0.553	1.721

- 9.7.4 During the period it is possible for further capacity funding to be identified within additional funding streams and/or partnership arrangements that could be applied to reduce the call on the flexible use of capital receipts.
- 9.7.5 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-2024 includes provision for a level of growth in Council Tax and Business Rates income over the period. The proposed Team will have a significant impact on growth which is likely to result in additional Council Tax and Business Rates income for the Council and provide opportunities for the Council to further invest in support of its priorities and/or reduce the forecast funding gap. However, delays to the Government's review of the Business Rates retention system and the wider system of local government financing provide a level of uncertainty as to the extent to which locally driven growth can be retained by the Council in the future.
- 9.7.6 It is anticipated there will be additional future planning income generated from the planned major developments that the Team will deliver (e.g. planning application fees, performance planning agreements and transport related income such as Section 38 and Section 278 income). These could potentially result in funding levels above current income budgets to sustain the team beyond the initial two-year period.
- 9.7.7 Whilst the proposed posts in the new team will be established on a permanent basis, the funding identified at this stage is for an initial two-year period. Although internal candidates may fill these, at this stage, costings have been produced on the basis that the resulting vacancies will be filled, though this may not be the case as and when the individual resulting

vacancies are considered and reviewed.

- 9.7.8 Continuity beyond the initial 2-year period would be subject to an analysis of the impact of the Team's work, including an analysis of matters such as partner, investor and developer feedback, council tax receipts, business rates income and planning fee levels. This will be subject to a further report in 2023. In the absence of specific additional funding streams, base revenue funding may need to be identified to resource a reviewed GDP Team beyond this two-year period and further Council-wide savings or cost reductions needed as part of the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy.

9.8 Policy Framework Implications

- 9.8.1 The proposals set out within this report have been generated in direct support of the Council's Policy Framework pursuant to their accelerated delivery, having particular regard to the Borough Strategy, Economic Reset and Recovery Plan and the Local Plan.

10. **Background papers**

- 10.1 Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030
- 10.2 Economic Reset and Recovery Plan
- 10.3 Reorganisation Phase 1 and Phase 2

11. **Appendices**

- 11.1 None

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