Bromsgrove Town Centre
Area Action Plan

Issues and Options | **July 2008**

Building a better Bromsgrove

Bromsgrove District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

LDF Local Development Framework

Contents

1.	Introduction	4
2.	Vision and Objectives	13
3.	Consultation	16
4.	Transport, Movement and Accessibility	25
5.	Retailing	34
6.	Living and Working in Bromsgrove	39
7.	Environment and Open Spaces	46
8.	Opportunities for Change	51
	Appendix	58

1. Introduction

Introduction

Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove

Bromsgrove Museum, Birmingham Road

This Issues and Options Report sets out a range of issues relevant to the town centre, and proposes possible actions for each issue which have been identified through consultation. The summary tables 1.1 - 1.4 (starting overleaf) provide an overview of the issues identified within the report. and potential actions for each. Sections four to seven of the report provide the context, policy background and a more detailed explanation for each.

As a Development Plan Document (DPD), the AAP will form part of Bromsgrove's Local Development Framework, and will contain policies that set out the planning framework for Bromsgrove Town Centre. The AAP, alongside the Core Strategy and other DPD's currently being prepared by the Council, will remain in place for the lifetime of the Development Plan, until 2026.

Your Views

At this stage, we would like your views on the issues and actions put forward. We would like you to respond by identifying your preferred actions for each of the issues raised. We would also like you to raise any additional issues together with views on how these additional issues might best be addressed in the emerging Area Action Plan for Bromsgrove town centre.

In thinking about the issues and actions presented, it must be remembered that the preferred option may not be a single discrete action, but rather may be a combination of a range of actions taking the best parts of each, or may be an action not yet put forward which emerges from public consultation.

The need for the Bromsgrove town centre Area Action Plan

Bromsgrove District Council has identified that a holistic approach to the redevelopment of the town centre is required, that takes into account the prime sites for regeneration, and includes a systematic consideration of other opportunities.

Bromsgrove Town Centre Issues and Options Overview

Tables 1.1 – 1.4 provide an overview of the issues and associated options, which are included within this report. Each issue is related to one of the four themes, which are covered in greater detail by sections four to seven of this 'Issues and Options' report.

We are also asking for your feedback on the town centre vision and objectives included within section two of the report.

The Big Question

How should our vision be achieved?

Choosing the future direction and identity of the town will be important in developing appropriate strategies which help us to achieve our vision and objectives.

Your views on the vision, objectives and the options for dealing with the various issues will help shape decisions on the most appropriate future direction and identity for the town. They will influence the degree of change. The town centre can move in a number of directions including modernisation to a greater or lesser extent.

Therefore in providing feedback to this report you may wish to consider which of the following you would like to see:

- The town centre defined by re-establishing a street market;
- The development of small, independent and niche retailers;
- Expanded retailing so the town can compete with other shopping centres;
- A vibrant town centre in the evenings;
- An improved quality of environment in the town centre;
- More people living in town; and,
- Improved accessibility and quality of public services in the town centre.

Table 1.1 – Transport, Movement and Accessibility Issues and Potential Actions

Issues	Potential actions
Issue BR1 - Bromsgrove Station	A – Introduce a new regular shuttle bus link between the town centre and the station
	B - Improve signage between the town centre and the station
	C - Improve cycle and pedestrian routes between the station and the town centre
Issue BR2 - Road Network	A - Alter the road network to introduce a one-way system which includes the widening of Windsor Street
	B – Introduce improvements to the junction of Stourbridge Road and Birmingham Road
	C – Close Market Street to through traffic
	D – Reinstate traffic on the High Street
	E – Introduce a new link road to connect Bromsgrove town centre and the A38
Issue BR3 – Buses, pedestrian linkages and mobility	A - Bus stops should be retained in their current location
	B - Bus stops should be relocated to the site of the Windsor Street car park
	C - Reduce barriers to mobility
Issue BR4 – Car Parking	A - Increase the provision of short stay car parking spaces in the town centre
	B - Car parking charges should be reviewed
	C - Reduce the overall number of car parking spaces in the town centre
	D – Create a network of new multi-storey car parks serving the town's principal approaches

Table 1.2 – Retailing Issues and Potential Actions

Issues	Potential actions
Issue BR6 – Retail Offer	A - Attempt to attract a high quality anchor store for the Market Hall site
	B – Seek to encourage more independent and niche retailers to the town centre
	C – Seek to more tightly control the mix and range of retail units in the town centre
Issue BR7 – Market	A - Provide an outdoor street market in the town centre
	B - Do not provide a street market in the town centre
Issue BR8 – Evening Economy	A - Promote the provision of cafés and restaurants in the town centre, in association with an increased residential population, in order to stimulate the evening economy
	B - Maintain evening economy uses at their present level at the western end of the High Street

Table 1.3 – Living and Working in Bromsgrove, Issues and Potential Actions

Issues	Potential actions
Issue BR9 – Town Centre Housing Provision	A – Seek to increase the town centre population through the provision of mixed use developments on previously used brownfield land and housing above shops and businesses
	B – Retain the current town centre housing stock, and do not plan for any increase in the size of the town centre population
Issue BR10 – Future Employment Strategy for Bromsgrove Town Centre	A - Encourage small scale employment uses in town centre as part of new mixed use developments.
	B – Designate larger sites for employment uses within the town centre
	C – Retain the existing balance of employment uses within the town centre, or consolidate employment provision to enable the creation of further retail and housing development opportunities
Issue BR11 – Leisure Provision	A – Replace Dolphin Centre with new leisure facility on the existing site
	B – Retain and refurbish the Dolphin Centre
	C – Reprovide a public leisure facility on an alternative site in the town centre
	D – Reprovide a public leisure facility on an alternative site outside the town centre
Issue BR12 – Public Services	A - Re-locate a number of public services, including the police service and library to co-locate services and improve efficiency
	B - Relocate District Council offices to a town centre location
Issue BR13 – Crime & Safety	A - Ensure that CCTV coverage is comprehensive in the High Street
	B - Design out crime on new developments, and improve the safety of existing areas which are poorly lit and have limited overlooking

Table 1.4 – Environment and Open Spaces Issues and Potential Actions

Issues	Potential actions
Issue BR14 – Public Realm	A - Make improvements to the public realm in the High Street, including improving the quality of the paving in the pedestrianised area, improving the quality of shop fronts and reducing street clutter
	B - Involve the local community in town centre public realm improvements
	C - Implement a regular maintenance programme for the High Street
Issue BR15 – Spadesbourne Brook	A - Re-landscape the brook and improve the environmental quality of the surrounding area
	B - Culvert the brook
	C – Restore the natural habitat of the brook as much as possible in order to enhance biodiversity
Issue BR16 – Recreation Ground	A - Improve Recreation Ground facilities and linkages to the town centre
	B - Make the Recreation Ground more accessible to the town centre by 'swapping' the space with the adjacent car park
	C – Extend the Recreation Ground to cover the Recreation Road South Car Park

Bromsgrove Town Centre

Bromsgrove is an historic market town, which today acts as a major commuter centre for the West Midlands. As shown in Figure 1.1, the town is approximately ten miles south-west of Birmingham, strategically located near to the M5 and M42. The town was mentioned in the Domesday Book, and was the centre for the medieval wool trade. Bromsgrove still contains a number of historic and listed buildings.

According to recent population projections undertaken by Worcestershire County Council, the population of Bromsgrove is approximately 91,400 – similar in size and scale to the neighbouring towns of Kidderminster, Droitwich Spa, Worcester and Redditch. The M5 and M42 meet to the north of the town, offering good road links to the rest of the country, and the A38 and A448 offer good local access to the neighbouring towns. Bromsgrove train station is located approximately one mile outside the town centre, and provides services to a variety of destinations on the London Midland network, including Birmingham, Hereford and Worcester.

The AAP for Bromsgrove town centre provides an opportunity to create a coordinated framework for the future development of the town centre. This will ensure that new development and traffic improvements complement and enhance the centre's historic and environmental quality. The process involved in preparing the AAP will also provide a key opportunity for members of the local community and local stakeholders to have a significant input into the future of the town.

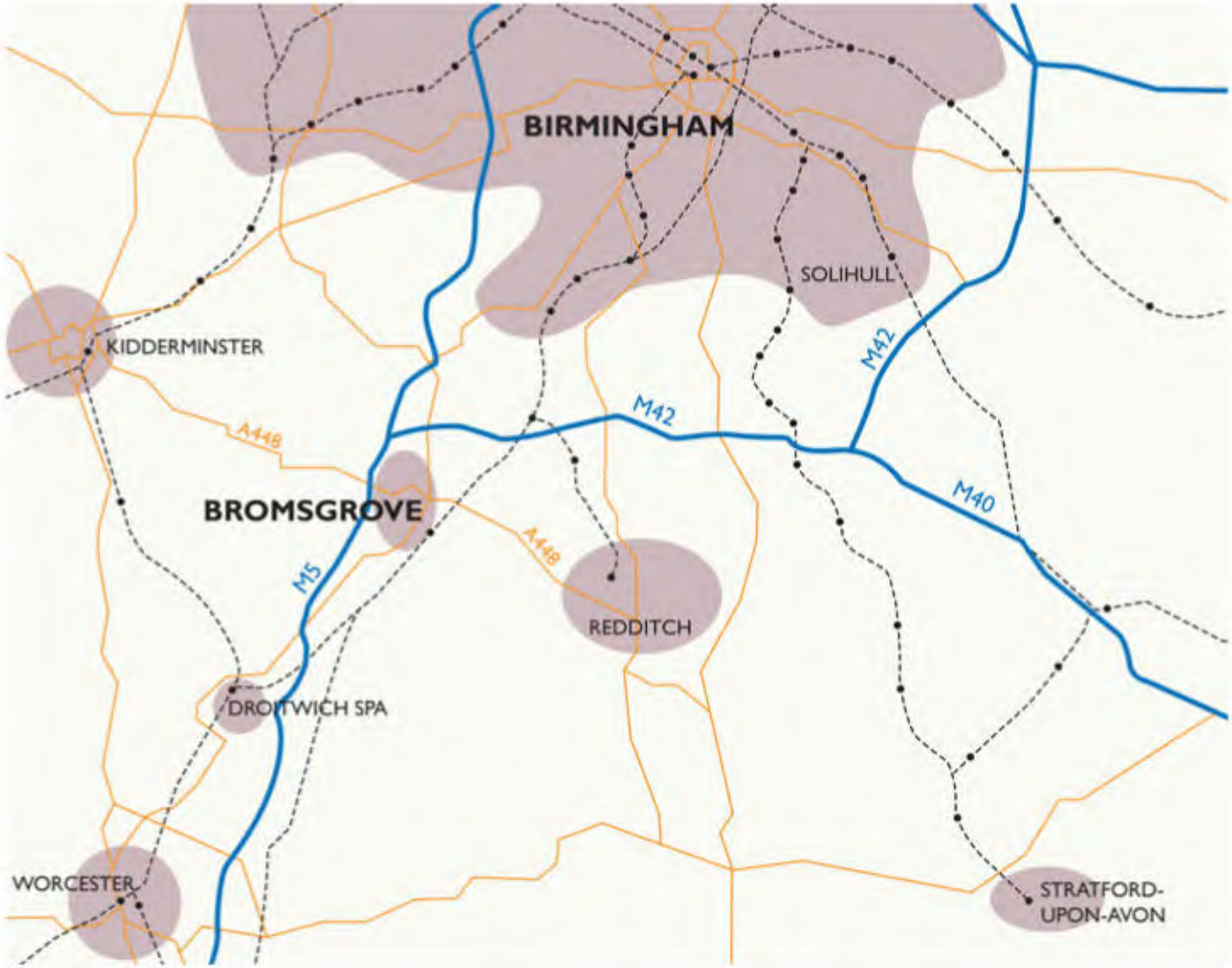

Figure 1.1: Bromsgrove Context Plan

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Figure 1.2: Existing Bromsgrove town centre boundary

AAP Process

The process for developing and adopting an AAP is set out in PPS12, and involves considerable informal and formal public consultation and participation.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, which came into force in September 2004, introduced a major reform to the planning system in England and Wales. The main aims of the legislation are to speed up the planning system, increase its flexibility and enable greater community involvement in the planning process. The reform also changes the emphasis in development planning towards shorter, streamlined plans which will have a clear, strategic vision and a spatial dimension. Formulating spatial rather than purely land-use policies provides for a more holistic approach to planning.

The Bromsgrove town centre Area Action Plan will provide a comprehensive planning policy framework for the area, covering all the major planning policy issues of transport, urban design, employment and retail. The AAP will also provide site-specific guidelines for individual opportunity areas within the town centre.

The role of the Issues and Options report is to summarise the key issues for Bromsgrove town centre, as identified through baseline evidence gathering, and to provide a series of options for how policy might respond to each of these issues. In an attempt to make this document as open and accessible as possible, these issues and options have been clearly identified within each section.

AAP context

Area Action Plans should be used to provide the planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation is needed. AAPs can:

1. Deliver planned growth areas;
2. Stimulate regeneration;
3. Protect areas particularly sensitive to change;
4. Resolve conflicting objectives in areas subject to development pressures; or
5. Focus the delivery of area-based regeneration initiatives.

Incorporating Sustainability

The new planning system places a statutory requirement on local authorities to undertake their planning functions with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. In order to ensure that plan preparation is based on principles of sustainable development, all Local Development Documents – statutory and supplementary – will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The SA will examine the environmental, economic and social impacts of each document. The findings of the SA will be a material consideration in determining the soundness of Development Plan Documents during the examination stage.

Bromsgrove LDF Sustainability Appraisal Scoping and Baseline Report

The report was completed by Bromsgrove District Council in March 2008, forming an important part of the Sustainability Appraisal for Local Development Documents, and has been subject to consultation in accordance with PPS12 and The Town and Country Planning (Local Development Framework) Regulations 2004.

The Sustainability Appraisal Process will run in parallel with the preparation of Local Development Documents. The Scoping Report covers Stage A of the process as outlined in Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents; Guidance for Regional Planning Bodies and Local Planning Authorities (ODPM, 2004) and as illustrated in Figure 1.3 below.

The Scoping Report sets the local context, establishes the baseline, and defines the sustainability objectives against which the policies and proposals contained in the Local Development Document will be appraised against.

The objectives and associated indicators will be used throughout the production of LDF documents to continually influence and assess the impact of future proposals and policies. Although the Scoping Report relates to the entire District, several of the objectives are particularly relevant to Bromsgrove town centre, and have therefore been used to appraise the sustainability of the Issues and Options report of this AAP.

Each of the objectives included within the Bromsgrove Town Centre AAP Issues and Options report have been appraised against the objectives contained in Table 1.5 below. A review of this appraisal is included as an Appendix A.

Bromsgrove Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2010

The Bromsgrove Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2010 (Bromsgrove Partnership, 2007) has been developed by the Local Strategic Partnership, covering a range of priorities including the town centre and regeneration. It is essential that the LDF maintains clear linkages with this strategy.

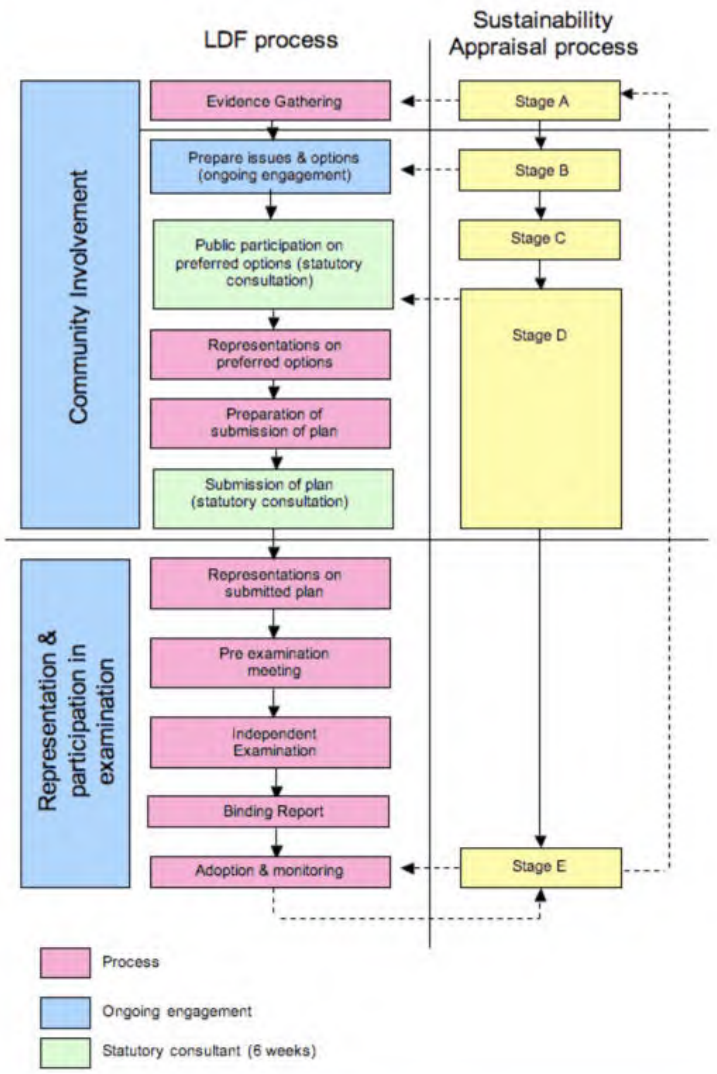

Figure 1.3: Programme and stages of assessment (ODPM, 2004)

Parkside Middle School, April 2008

Social objectives	1. Provide decent affordable housing for all, of the right quality and tenure and for local needs, in clean, safe and pleasant local environment 2. Improve the quality of and equitable access to local services and facilities regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, socio economic status or educational attainment 3. Reduce crime, fear of crime and anti- social behaviour 4. Reduce need to travel and move towards more sustainable travel patterns 5. Provision of opportunities for communities to participate and contribute to decisions that affect their neighbourhood and quality of life, encouraging pride and social responsibility in the local community
Environmental objectives	6. Maximise previously developed land and reuse of vacant buildings where this is not detrimental to open space and biodiversity interest 7. Conserve and enhance the historic built environment heritage and seek well-designed, high quality built environment in new development proposals 8. Ensure inappropriate development does not occur in high risk flood prone areas and does not adversely contribute to fluvial flood risk or contribute to surface water flooding in all the areas. 9. Promote energy efficiency and energy generated from renewable energy and low carbon sources 10. Protect and enhance the quality of water, soil and air quality 11. Reduce causes of and adapt to the impacts of climate change
Economic objectives:	12. Develop a knowledge driven economy, the infrastructure and skills base whilst ensuring all share the benefits 13. Promote and support the development of new technologies of high value and low impact especially resource efficient technologies and environmental technology initiatives 14. Raise the skills levels and qualifications of workforce 15. Sustainable use and development of material assets

Table 1.5 Sustainability Objectives

The Strategy aims to promote Bromsgrove as a thriving market town which will: "attract locals and visitors alike both for the shopping experience and the many other activities that the town will provide. As a thriving market town there will be regular activities like a street market, specialist markets, such as Easter markets, continental markets, farmers markets, antique fairs, the bonfire night, street theatre and so on… The town will be significantly regenerated to achieve this, with a new civic heart, perhaps relocating the Council House to the town centre, a new road layout and a community focal point."

Additionally a unique shopping environment, consisting of small specialist shops, High Street accommodation, restaurants, cafes and a retail mix that reflects the growing affluence of the District is promoted by the strategy. It also aims to promote good accessibility for people with disabilities, good toilet facilities and encourage children and young people into the town centre. The evening economy should include a range of entertainment which caters for the young, families and the elderly. In terms of transport, the Strategy also supports the upgrade of Bromsgrove Station to provide an additional 300 car parking spaces, longer platforms, better access and a bus interchange linking with the town centre.

Report Structure

The structure of this Issues and Options report is as follows:

- **Section 2** sets out an overarching vision for the town centre, and objectives which relate to each of the thematic sections included within the report;
- **Section 3** provides an outline of the consultation programme for the Bromsgrove town centre AAP, the key findings of the consultation carried out to date, and indicates the key priorities for the town centre, as suggested by consultees;
- **Section 4** sets out the issues and potential actions which relate to transport, movement and accessibility;
- **Section 5** sets out the issues and potential actions which relate to retailing;
- **Section 6** sets out the issues and potential actions which relate to living and working in Bromsgrove;
- **Section 7** sets out the issues and potential actions which relate to the environment and open spaces; and,
- **Section 8** seeks your views on potential changes to the town centre boundary and identifies a number of sites within the town centre which potentially provide opportunities for change. Issues and options relevant to each of these sites are identified.

Bromsgrove High Street, Jan 2008

2. Vision and Objectives

Vision

St John's Court

Thomas Horton Solicitors, April 2008

Bromsgrove will become a thriving market town which will: "attract locals and visitors alike both for the shopping experience and the many other activities that the town will provide. As a thriving market town there will be regular activities like a street market, specialist markets, such as Easter markets, continental markets, farmers markets, antique fairs, the bonfire night, street theatre and so on… The town will be significantly regenerated to achieve this, with a new civic heart, perhaps relocating the Council House to the town centre, a new road layout and a community focal point."

This statement sets out the Council's proposed vision for the future of the town centre, as taken from the Community Strategy. Following on from this vision, the Council has identified a number of objectives for Bromsgrove town centre, which relate to the sections included within the report. These objectives have been identified through the preparatory work undertaken for the AAP.

Your Views

At this stage, we would like you to let us know your views on the vision and objectives of the AAP, and the different approaches identified. If you do not agree with the vision, objectives or approaches, please tell us how you think they should be changed.

Objectives

Transport, movement and accessibility

– To improve pedestrian priority, linkages and mobility within and across the town centre;
– To improve pedestrian and cycle linkages between Bromsgrove Station and the town centre, and promote shuttle bus services; and
– To improve the junction arrangement where Birmingham Road meets Stourbridge Road to benefit all users.

Retailing

– To improve the range and quality of the retail offer in order to enhance the viability of the town centre as a sustainable shopping destination and attract a major retail anchor to the Market Hall site;
– To promote the development of local shops and services where feasible;
– To improve the range of the evening economy uses within the town centre, to include a choice of bars, cafes and restaurants, and to improve the quality in order to promote the vitality of the town centre; and
– To provide a regular outdoor market in the High Street.

Living and working in Bromsgrove

– To deliver high quality housing which provides a mix of unit sizes and tenure, in order to promote a sustainable community which contributes to the vitality and viability of the town centre;
– To ensure that residential unit numbers, densities and affordable housing provision is sufficient and appropriate for the local area;
– To improve the quality and efficiency of public service provision; and
– To ensure that crime is kept at a low level by extending CCTV coverage in the town centre and designing out crime where possible.

Environment and open spaces

– To radically improve the quality of the pedestrianised High Street;
– Improve pedestrian linkages and accessibility between the High Street and town centre open spaces; and
– To improve and enhance the quality and value of open spaces in the town centre, particularly the Recreation Ground and Spadesbourne Brook.

3. Consultation

Consultation

Introduction

In preparing this report, the Council is looking to the community and stakeholders to tell us the following:

- What your opinions are on the issues and actions presented;
- What actions are your preferred options that you want the Council to take forward; and
- Any issues or actions we haven't considered that you would like us to consider.

Consultation Programme

A significant amount of consultation has already taken place to inform this issues and options stage. In addition the Council have undertaken some early masterplanning work with the involvement of the community which has been very useful in defining the key issues and opportunities facing the town. Whilst not formally part of the AAP process, this earlier work was successful in engaging the community and involving them in scoping out and agreeing ideas to improve the environmental quality of the town centre.

This section provides a summary of this early consultation and that undertaken specifically for the Bromsgrove town centre AAP.

Early Consultation Work (2003)

Bromsgrove Town Centre Strategy Consultation

Urban Practitioners was commissioned by Bromsgrove District Council to produce the Bromsgrove Town Centre Strategy in 2003. As part of the preparatory work for the strategy, a major consultation event was held on the 27th November 2003 at the District Council offices. The purpose of this event was to provide an opportunity for local residents, businesses, community groups and relevant organisations to express their opinions on the key issues and opportunities relevant to the future of Bromsgrove. The event was attended by over 80 local representatives.

The consultation event was structured into three parts: a walking audit of the town centre; a 'dreams' workshop; and a 'solutions' workshop.

During the walking audit, participants were encouraged to write on post-it notes what they considered to be the area's issues and dreams. Following the walking audit, issues and dreams were collected and read out to the whole group. Post-it notes were then divided into themes and placed on a large display board. Finally, participants were divided into seven workshop groups to identify practical solutions and priorities for the town centre. At the end of the session, each group made a short presentation of their findings and ideas to the meeting.

Key findings were as follows:

Townscape

- Concern with the unattractive, run-down appearance of the town, and poor appearance of the areas to the rear of the High Street
- Concern with the deterioration of historic buildings
- Need for a town centre focal point
- Redevelopment of the 'Iceland', Blockbuster video, and KSH and Flooring sites would be desirable
- Mill Lane in need of improvement
- Protection of views of St John's Church required

Environment and Safety

- Concern over poor appearance and condition of Spadesbourne Brook. It should be cleaned and highlighted as a prime feature for the town
- Lack of open space
- Poor lighting
- Increase in landscaping and planting required across the town centre

Facilities / activities

- Poor quality and limited variety of shops. Improved retail offer required
- Concern over empty and neglected town centre properties
- Public conveniences in need of refurbishment
- Encourage people to live in the town centre
- New or expanded library a priority for the town centre
- Arts Centre would improve range of town centre facilities

Legibility / signage

- Signage uncoordinated and insensitive to the character of the town
- Shopfronts do not all complement historic architecture
- Too much street clutter
- Poor first impression of town when entering from Stourbridge Road
- Interesting shopfronts could be encouraged on High Street, and clearer guidance on paintwork and signage should be available
- Profile of historic buildings in the area should be raised

Streetscape

- Poor quality of paving in the town centre
- The illumination of the Housman statue required
- Reduction in litter desirable

Traffic and movement

- Parking provision inadequate and bus station in need of refurbishment
- Links between Market Hall and the High Street considered to be poor
- Bus station could be covered and enclosed or transformed into proper public space
- Improved pedestrian access from ASDA to the High Street desirable

High Street

- High Street run-down and lacking in character
- Rear of High Street too industrial
- Development at the rear of the High Street properties to provide frontage onto Market Street and Crown Close desirable
- High Street could be covered to create a precinct
- Increased routes linking the High Street to the surrounding roads

The Market Hall

- Market Hall building unattractive with poor frontage
- Alternative use could be found for site
- Town square or focal point could be created either on the site or in front of it
- Adjacent car park suitable for multi-storey car park and new retail development
- Redevelopment should incorporate the Spadesbourne Brook

2003 consultation and report covers

AAP Consultation Events (2007-08)

One-to-one meetings with key stakeholders

A number of meetings have taken place at an early stage in the preparation of the Bromsgrove town centre AAP, in order to identify the key issues and alternative options for the town. Meetings have been held with:

- Mark Weaver, Chair LSP
- Councillor George Lord
- Chief Inspector Tony Love
- Alan Stokes, Property Services, Worcestershire County Council
- Dave Hammond, Planning, Bromsgrove District Council
- Jim Griffiths, Bromsgrove Society
- Councillor Ted Tibby
- Councillor Rita Dent
- Kevin Dicks, CEO, Bromsgrove District Council
- Matthew Horton, Managing Director, Thomas Horton LLP
- Mike Brown, Chief Executive and John Morgan, Board Chairman, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust
- Councillor Roger Hollingworth, Leader of Bromsgrove District Council.

Focus Groups

The following focus groups have been held to identify a range of views from individuals and organisations:

Traders' - 17th January 6-7.30pm

- Simone Maury - Shiny
- Martin Connellan - Bromsgrove Cobbler
- Simon Cuppitt - Cuppitts
- Karen Phillips - The Clothes Rail
- Bryan Pearce - Tools for Cooks
- Sue Pearce - Tools for Cooks
- Russell Martin - Scruples
- Kaul Hegenbank - KSH Flooring
- Linda Hegenbank - KSH Flooring
- Dennis Norton - Holt House
- Myra Walters - Perry Lane Pharmacy
- Simon Greaves - Le Savon
- Dean Reilly - Bromsgrove Sports
- Adrian Kriss - Adrian Kriss & Associates
- Keith Hitchinson - Subway
- Christina Hitchinson - Subway
- James Sommerville - Thomas Horton LLP
- Joan Holland - Thomas Horton LLP

Council Officers and Representatives of the Disability Users Group - 17th January 10-12pm

- Celia Biolcati - Conservation Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
- Andy Coel – Housing Manager
- Mary Collet - Disability Users Group
- Mrs Breillat – Disability Users Group
- Mr Breillat - Disability Users Group
- Sarah Coller - Assistant Equalities Officer, Bromsgrove District Council
- Ray Crossland - Bromsgrove Access Committee, Disabled Access Group
- John Godwin - Leisure and Community Services, Bromsgrove District Council

Disability Users Group meeting – 8th February 11-12pm

- Ray Crossland - Bromsgrove Disabled Access Group
- Anne Crossland - Bromsgrove Disabled Access Group
- Gwyneth Breillat - Bromsgrove Disabled Access Group
- Kenneth Breillat - Bromsgrove Disabled Access Group
- Fiona Scott - Equality Officer Bromsgrove District Council
- Ann Batchelor - Bromsgrove resident
- Joe Scott - Bromsgrove resident
- Margaret Norton - Bromsgrove resident
- Mary Collett - North Worcester S.P.I.N
- Eileen Mulhall - North Worcester S.P.I.N
- Robin Edwards - Bromsgrove resident
- Sarah Kelsey - Equalities Assistant Bromsgrove District Council
- Paula Bullock - Padstone Day Centre service user
- Anjela Tsang - Padstone Day Centre staff

Workshops

A workshop was held with a number of Council members and officers on the 7th November 2007, in order to understand their priorities for the town. Representatives from Worcestershire County Council and other organisations were also present at the workshop.

Bromsgrove traders' workshop, Jan 2008

Key findings

All of the consultation meetings and exercises were structured around the following four themes, which encapsulate the main issues relating to the town centre:

- Transport, movement and accessibility;
- Retailing;
- Leisure and community services; and
- Environment and open spaces.

Therefore, this section identifies the findings for each of these four themes in turn. Please note this section reflects the most frequently stated opinions, and in some instances key findings were contradictory.

Transport, movement and accessibility

Bromsgrove Station

- Station is too remote from the town centre
- Station car parking is poor
- Regular shuttle service needed between the station and the town centre
- Pedestrian and cycle route needs improving between the station and the town centre.

Buses

- Current location of bus station should be retained
- Buses are not accessible to those in wheelchairs
- Dial-a-ride bus service required
- Coordinated provision of school buses required.

Road Network

- Junction of Stourbridge Road and Birmingham Road is often congested and needs improving
- Transport problems discourage shoppers and visitors to the town centre
- Gridlock occurs when motorway is jammed
- The road network is constrained by a number of physical limitations, including trees in the town centre and the Horton building
- A new bypass for the town centre should be considered, and there is a need to stop people using the town as a through route (for example, between Kidderminster and Redditch)
- A survey of traffic flows and the road network generally is required for the town centre
- Market Street should be closed to enable the High Street to be opened out to the west and better link ASDA with the town centre.
- Reinstate traffic onto the High Street
- Windsor Street should be widened to form part of a two-way loop around the town

Car Parking

- Car parking charges restrict trade in the town centre. However, car parking charges provide an important source of revenue for the Council
- Parking should be free in the evenings and on Sundays
- Pay and display car parking should be replaced by pay on return car parking
- Create a network of new multi-storey car parks which serve each of the town's principal approaches
- More short stay car parking is required to service the town centre shops
- More disabled parking spaces required to service the town centre shops, and shop-mobility
- Car parking strategy required.

Taxis

- Additional taxi rank is required in the town centre near the evening economy uses. This has been successfully trialled and is currently being implemented.

Retailing

Range of Retail and Vitality

- There is a need to increase the quality and the range of the retail offer
- There is a need to attract a quality convenience food store, preferably to the Market Hall site
- An anchor tenant is required in the High Street
- Once a new 'anchor' retailer has been attracted, a focus to the High Street is required, such as the provision of niche and boutique shops
- The number of fast food takeaways should be reduced
- A food store is required in the High Street
- Redeveloping the Market Hall site would be beneficial for the town centre and town centre businesses
- Town centre improvements are likely to have a positive impact on town centre retail
- Need to encourage more independent retailers to the town centre.

Evening Economy Uses

– Increase in the provision of restaurants and cafés required. This could be linked to the open spaces adjacent to the town centre (such as the Market hall site, the brook and Market Street).

Market

– Occasional themed markets and farmers markets would have a positive impact on the town centre
– An outdoor market in the High Street is traditional, and may help to stimulate further town centre activity.
– ASDA car park could accommodate the market
– The town centre should no longer accommodate a market, as the town needs to modernise, and poor quality market stalls create a negative perception of the town centre. Additionally, an outdoor market would create an increase in litter, and cause an obstruction to movements, reducing accessibility in the High Street

Leisure and community services

Dolphin Centre

– The Dolphin Centre should be improved or replaced. Opinion is split as to whether the centre should be redeveloped on the same site, elsewhere in the town centre or relocated to an edge of centre location
– The range of facilities at the Dolphin Centre should be expanded.

Range and Quality of Facilities

– Leisure and community facilities must be accessible to disabled users
– A bowling alley and cinema should be provided in the town
– New Primary Care facility should be developed on part of the grounds of Parkside School.

Re-location and Improvements to Services

– It may be possible to co-locate a number of public services, such as the police and ambulance services, in order to increase efficiency in providing new facilities for these services
– The police and ambulance services should be relocated to new premises outside of the town centre
– The Library requires redevelopment or relocation
– The Victoria Ground is adequate for the current requirements of Bromsgrove Rovers Football Club
– The relocation of the District Council offices should be considered, either to a building within the town centre or to an alternative location outside the town centre.

Crime and Safety

– Ensure that CCTV coverage of the High Street is comprehensive
– Design out crime on new developments, and improve safety of existing areas which are poorly lit and have limited natural surveillance.

Housing

– Consider the potential to increase town centre housing provision as part of new mixed use development schemes, and improvements to the evening economy.

High Street, Jan 2008

Church Street, Jan 2008

High Street, Jan 2008

High Street, Jan 2008

Environment and open spaces

Public Realm

- The quality of the public realm in the High Street needs to be improved
- The pedestrianised part of the High Street should be improved to look more attractive and reduce uneven surfaces (cobbles should be removed)
- The local community should be involved in making improvements to the High Street and local schools could provide public art
- A regular maintenance programme is required for the High Street
- Some shop fronts are poorly maintained and require improvement
- There is too much street clutter in the High Street
- Street cafés should be encouraged, in order to develop a café culture. This could potentially be to the west of the High Street, in associated with the option to close Market Street (see Transport, Movement and Accessibility).

Open Spaces

- Increased seating required in churchyard and areas of open space in town centre
- Recreation Ground is under-utilised and should either be improved with a regular amenity function or redeveloped for alternative uses. The opportunity may exist to swap the current open space with the adjacent car park to bring the open space closer to the town centre, or to extend the Recreation Ground over the site of the current surface car park.
- The Brook should be re-landscaped
- The Brook should be culverted
- Create a water feature alongside Market Street (if the Brook is culverted)
- Linkages between the town centre and open spaces need to be improved.

Areas of Character

- The 'Blockbusters building' on the High Street should be demolished and replaced with a new landmark building which is suitable for this 'gateway' location
- Worcester Road should be promoted as 'Bromsgrove Village'
- Future development of the Market Hall site and other future developments need to be sympathetic to the character of the town.

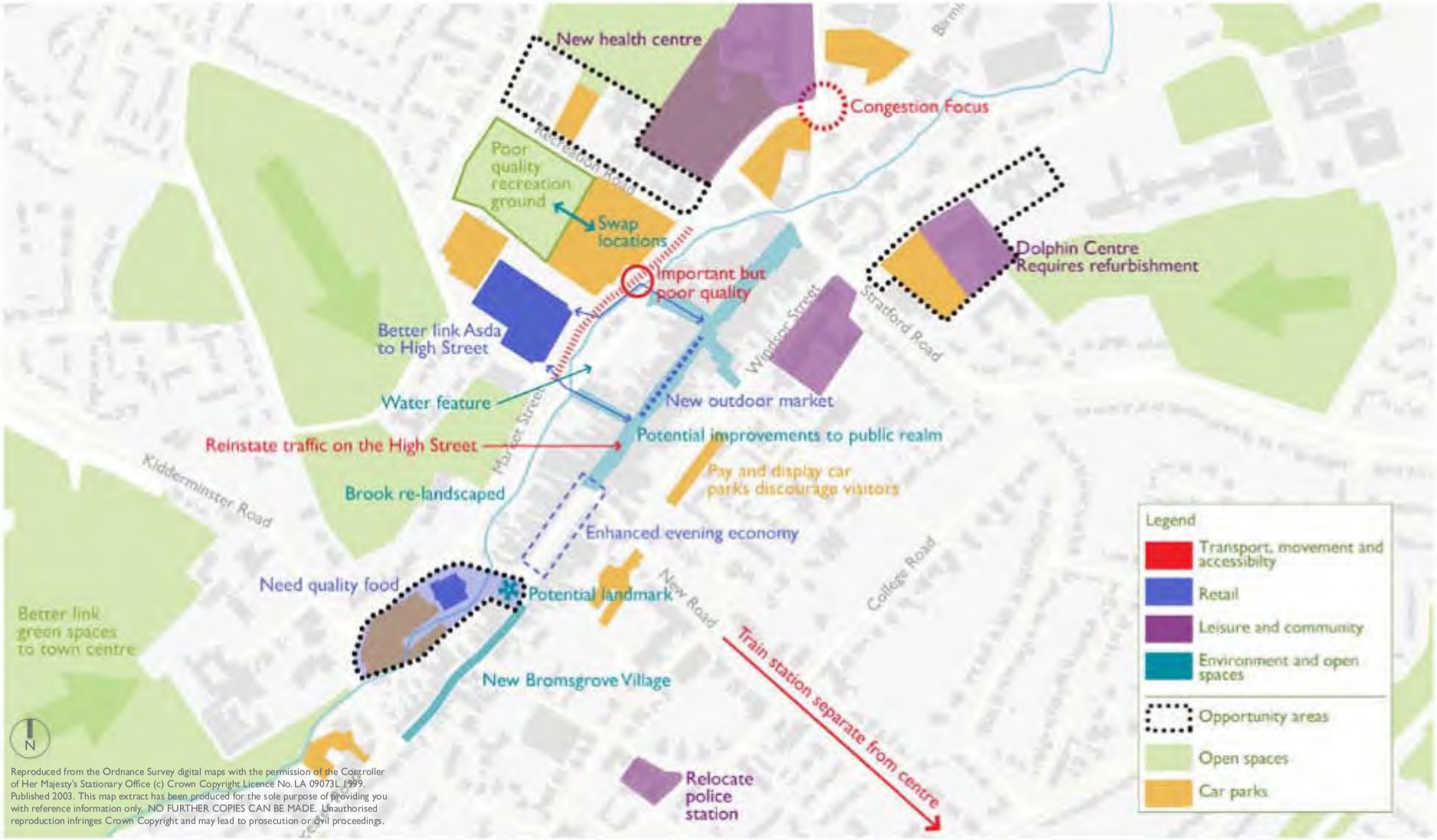

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Figure 3.1: Consultation summary plan

4. Transport, Movement and Accessibility

Transport, Movement and Accessibility

Town centre pedestrian signage, Jan 2008

Stratford Road, Jan 2008

Context

Bromsgrove benefits from a strong strategic location with very good vehicular access to the UK motorway network. The motorway network in the Bromsgrove area has experienced major improvements in recent years, with the extension and completion of the M42 and M40 motorways, and the widening of the M5. However, road congestion is an increasing problem for Bromsgrove, particularly during rush hour and when traffic attempting to avoid motorway congestion diverts to local roads.

Bromsgrove experiences high levels of private car ownership and car usage, reflecting the relative prosperity of the local population, good access to the strategic road network, and limitations to public transportation. According to Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan (Network Rail, October 2007) growth in usage of the rail service in Bromsgrove is being suppressed, principally by the inadequate station, car parking facilities and infrequent service levels. Proposals are in place to upgrade capacity at Bromsgrove Station, and to increase the service frequency. However, the current station location poses fundamental difficulties in terms of accessing the town centre. As a result the role of the station in promoting town centre regeneration is limited at present.

Bromsgrove Station is located approximately one mile from the town centre, as illustrated in Figure 3.1, and pedestrian, cycle and bus linkages are poor between the town centre and the station. Accessibility to the station platforms is restricted as one of the platforms can only be accessed via steps and a footbridge.

Bus services are able to penetrate into the town centre, and the bus stops located between Market Street and the High Street offer a convenient location for shoppers. However, there are problems with accessibility, both in terms of wheelchair access to the buses and in pedestrian accessibility to the bus stops from ASDA on the other side of Market Street.

The overall quantity of car parking is generally adequate for the town centre. However there are issues relating to car parking charges, methods of operation, and the quantity of short stay and disabled parking spaces close to shops and services.

Relevant Planning Policy

Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (PPG13) provides the following national planning policy guidance for transport:

"Our quality of life depends on transport…;we need a safe, efficient and integrated transport system to support a strong and prosperous economy. But the way we travel and the continued growth in road traffic is damaging our towns, harming our countryside and contributing to global warming".

Land use planning has a key role to play in promoting more sustainable travel by shaping the patterns of development and influencing the location, scale, density and mix of land uses.

As PPG13 states; *"Planning can help reduce the need to travel, reduce the length of journeys and make it safer and easier for people to access jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling".*

Within the West Midlands, the Regional Transport Strategy is incorporated into the Regional Spatial Strategy. In respect of Bromsgrove, the strategy seeks to improve accessibility and mobility so that more sustainable modes of travel are encouraged and local regeneration initiatives are supported. This is combined with the need to encourage behavioural change, such as reducing the need to travel, across the entire Region. Policies in the Transport Strategy should not be viewed in isolation from the rest of the Regional Spatial Strategy with the importance of transport reflected in planning policies throughout the Spatial Strategy which guide developments to appropriate locations and seek to minimise the impact of transport on the environment.

Bromsgrove District Local Plan (Bromsgrove District Council, 2004) contains several policies relating to transport, movement and accessibility in Bromsgrove town centre. Policy TR13 encouraged applications which promote the use of a variety of transport, and policy TR15 encouraged increased use of rail services, by enhancing car parking at Bromsgrove Station. Policy TR16 aimed to pursue opportunities to improve/provide cycle facilities in the District and to develop a network of cycle routes.

Additionally, the Plan promoted the further pedestrianisation of the southern section of

the High Street and Worcester Road, in order to improve the pedestrian environment, and stated that the Council will explore alternative routes for cross-town movement of traffic. This could involve the re-routing of traffic around the existing network using traffic management measures or if feasible the construction of a new link between New Road and Station Street.

We welcome your feedback on whether or not you think that these Local Plan policies are still relevant to Bromsgrove town centre, or whether they need to be updated through the AAP process.

Consultation on the Core Strategy Issues and Options suggested that transport problems for the disabled and those with mobility difficulties should be addressed by providing access to trains at the station, wheelchair accessible taxis and help fund community transport. Other issues raised included the distance from the train station to the town centre and the poor quality of Bromsgrove Bus Station.

The Local Transport Plan for Worcestershire is currently under review and will, when published, form the basis for future transport development in the County. New documents produced as part of the Local Development Framework will need to link to the Transport Plan to try and reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable means of transportation.

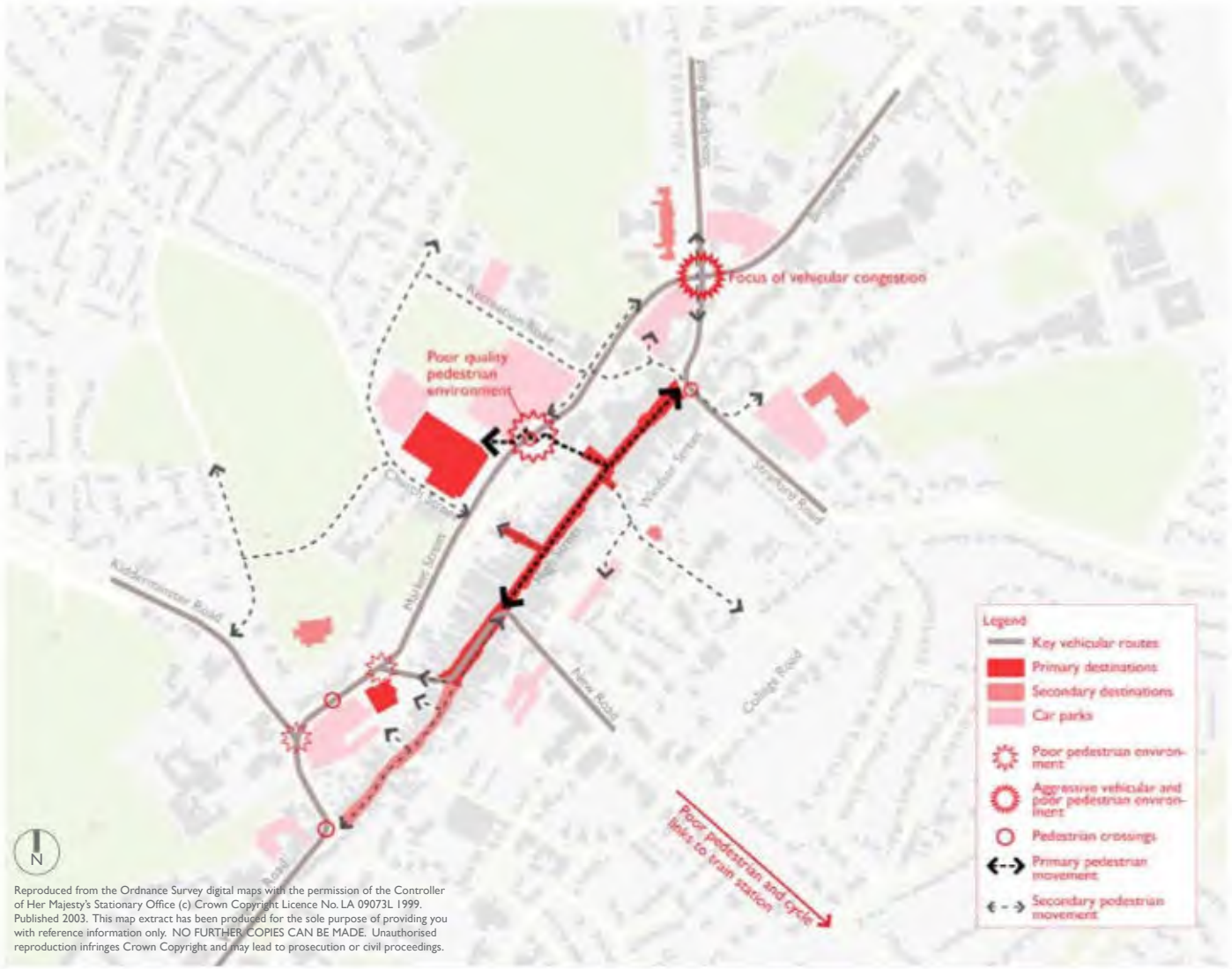

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Figure 4.1: Transport, movement and accessibility summary plan

Town centre signage to station, Jan 2008

Issue BR1 – Bromsgrove Station

ACTION A - Introduce a new regular shuttle bus link between the town centre and the station

A regular shuttle bus service taking visitors to and from the bus stops adjacent to the High Street and Market Street would enable visitors to reach Bromsgrove town centre using the train service, rather than private car. This may also encourage new visitors and shoppers to the town centre, who would previously have travelled to other town centres that were easier to reach by train. Any reduction in private car usage would have the added benefit of reducing town centre congestion, and promoting the use of public transportation encourages the development of more sustainable travel patterns. A bus link would also enable those living close to the town centre and commuting elsewhere to use the train rather than the car, providing the train serves their destination.

ACTION B - Improve signage between the town centre and the station

This would help to make it easier to walk between Bromsgrove Station and the town centre. This may encourage an increase in visitors and shoppers to the town centre, and reduce reliance on the private car. However, limitations with the current train service may limit the extent of the impact, and improvements in accessibility may encourage people to shop elsewhere. Additionally, improving signage will only help to improve accessibility to the station for the more mobile sections of the population, and does not reduce the distance or journey time involved.

ACTION C - Improve cycle and pedestrian routes between the station and the town centre

This would help to improve accessibility between the station and the town centre for cyclists and pedestrians. This may encourage an increase in visitors and shoppers to the town centre, and reduce reliance on the private car.

Physical measures to improve cycle and pedestrian routes could include looking at opportunities to: widen pavements; to improve lighting; implement dedicated cycle lanes; and to give greater pedestrian and cycle priority at key junctions. These measures would be complemented by physical improvements at the station itself.

Issue BR2 – Road Network

ACTION A – Alter the road network to introduce a one-way system which includes the widening of Windsor Street

The objective of introducing a one-way system around the town centre would be to reduce congestion, particularly at current problem areas such as the junctions of Stourbridge Road and Birmingham Road. This could also improve the pedestrian environment around the High Street and Market Street by creating a larger pedestrianised area. A section of Market Street could become pedestrianised, with the potential for bus access to remain. This would enable the potential for new development and for significant environmental improvements to the Market Street area and Spadesbourne Brook.

However, the changes would be likely to require the bus stops to be moved to necessitate a change in location for the bus stops, which would result in reduced bus penetration into the town centre. Although a one-way system may act to reduce congestion, there may also be increased journey distances and times for those travelling through the town centre, for example from New Road to Stourbridge Road.

As illustrated by Figure 4.2, relocating the bus stops to the site of the Windsor Street car park would enable the development of

improved bus linkages with Bromsgrove Station. However, this would require the loss of some or all of the car parking facilities at Windsor Street, which would reduce the number of car parking spaces available in the town centre. The alterations would also require the widening of Windsor Street, and vastly increase the amount of traffic using the street. This may impact negatively on surrounding business and residential areas, and could potentially be detrimental to the character of the town centre. As shown on Figure 4.2, the one-way system could also be extended to the south, by extending Windsor Street to join Paradise Row. The traffic could then join Worcester Road via Station Street. This would reduce the need for vehicles to join the High Street at the junction of New Road. However, this would require the building of a new section of road, and the demolition of some buildings. Care would need to be taken to ensure that the conservation area and surrounding listed buildings would not be adversely effected.

ACTION B - Introduce improvements to the junction of Stourbridge Road and Birmingham Road

The introduction of a roundabout at the junction of Stourbridge Road and Birmingham Road may help to improve vehicular flows at this junction.

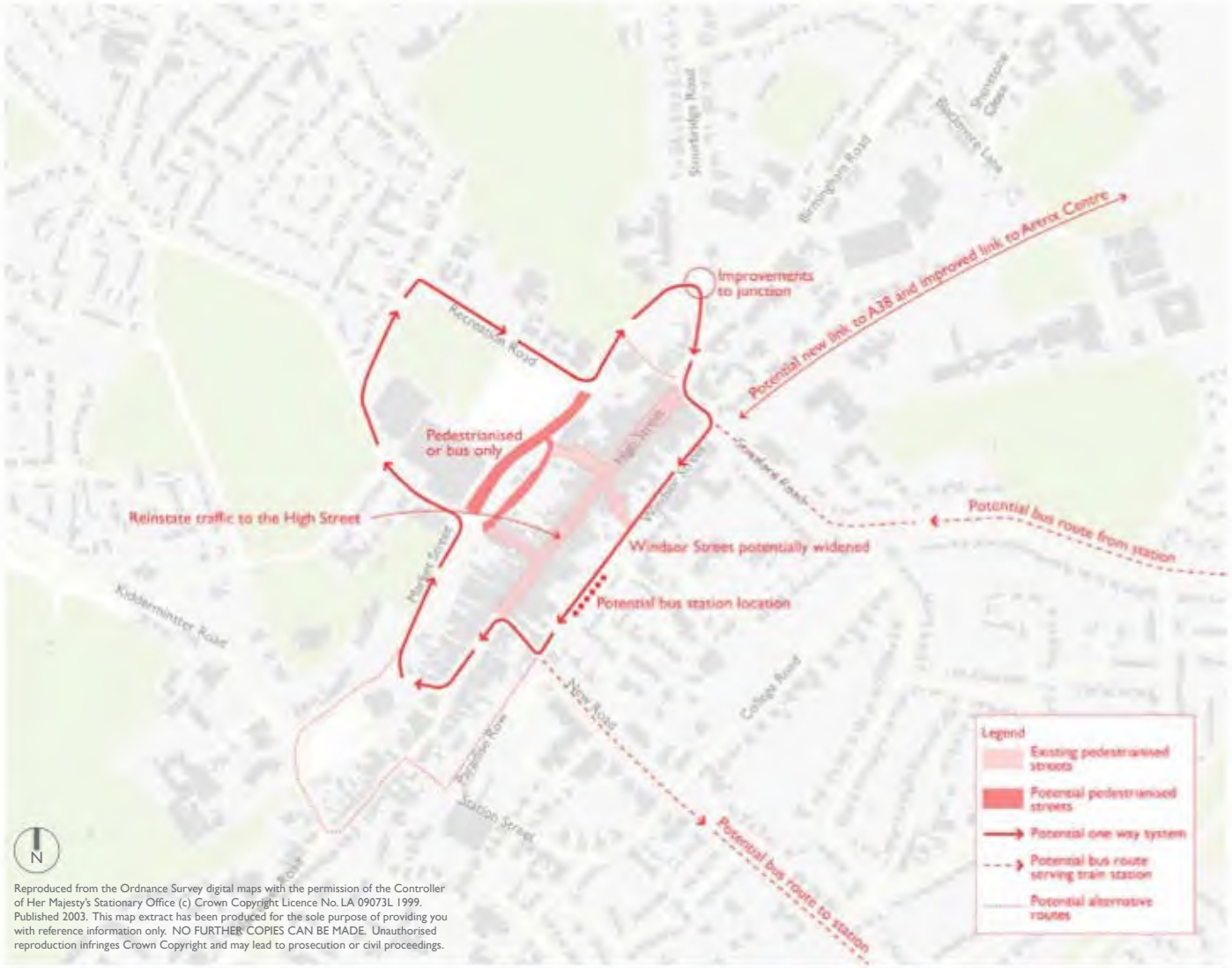

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Figure 4.2: Potential road network alterations

The Strand, Jan 2008

High Street, Jan 2008

ACTION C - Close Market Street to through traffic

The possibility exists to either pedestrianise Market Street or to make it bus only between the junctions of Crabtree Lane and Recreation Road. This would enable the potential for new development and for significant environmental improvements to the Market Street area and Spadesbourne Brook. Additionally, it would improve the integration and accessibility between town centre uses on either side of Market Street.

However, this would necessitate traffic to be diverted along alternative routes, which would increase journey times and distances, and could potentially lead to an increase in traffic congestion.

ACTION D - Reinstate traffic on the High Street

The High Street was pedestrianised approximately 25 years ago. In this time there has been a change in the retail character of the town centre, with the arrival of the ASDA supermarket to the west of Market Street, and the reduction in the number of smaller and independent traders and retailers in the town centre. Currently, there are a number of vacant stores along the High Street.

According to some, this change in character has occurred as a direct consequence of the pedestrianisation of the High Street. However, others see that this change has been brought about by a range of other factors, such as:

- National retail trends and the change in shopping habits, leading to the growth of supermarkets and the reduction in independent retailers;
- Lack of suitable short stay car parking facilities within Bromsgrove town centre, and the cost of using Council owned car parks;
- Increased competition from other nearby town and city centres which offer a greater range and quality of retail and services; and
- Town centre congestion in Bromsgrove.

It has been suggested that the reintroduction of traffic into the High Street could improve the vitality and viability of the High Street and town centre more generally.

Reinstating traffic along the High Street would help to create a simpler road system in the town centre, and would represent a partial return to the original road network. Allowing vehicles to access the entire High Street would also enable people to directly access shops and town centre facilities.

However, reinstating traffic along the High Street would increase noise, congestion and pollution along the High Street, and make the environment less pleasant for pedestrians and shoppers. Additionally, whilst reinstating traffic along the High Street may help to simplify the town centre road network, it may result in even higher levels of town centre vehicular congestion as the road would be narrow, and the frequency of car parking spaces, loading bays and pedestrian crossing facilities required could have a significant impact on the traffic using the High Street as a through road. Detailed consultation with traders would need to take place before any decision to reintroduce vehicles onto the High Street could be taken, in order to understand the predicted impacts on servicing arrangements, parking and trading levels.

The limited pedestrianisation of the High Street could also be considered as a potential action, whereby the High Street remains pedestrianised during the busiest shopping hours of the day, but is opened to vehicles at other times.

ACTION E - Introduce a new link road to connect Bromsgrove town centre and the A38

As illustrated on Figure 4.2, the potential exists for a new link road between the A38 and Bromsgrove town centre, expanding the existing School Drive to the east of the town centre. This would enable improved access between the town centre and the A38, and

would improve accessibility to the facilities and amenities on route, including the Dolphin Centre, the Artrix Centre and David Lloyd centre. However, this would require the development of a new section of road which dissects the recently developed Artrix Centre car park.

Ideally, a physical link (pedestrian or vehicular) would also be constructed between School Drive and Birmingham Road to the east of the town centre to reduce the physical impermeability of the block. This could potentially connect Blackmore Lane and Shenstone Close with School Drive. However, recent planning consents may restrict the possibility to achieve such a link.

Issue BR3 – Buses, pedestrian linkages and mobility

ACTION A - Bus stops should be retained in their current location

The current location of bus stops provides a high degree of penetration into the town centre. Consultation with local residents and business reveals that people are generally satisfied with the location of the bus station, along Market Street, as it provides good levels of accessibility to the High Street environment and the range of shops and services it provides, as well as ASDA on the other side of Market Street.

ACTION B - Bus stops should be relocated to the site of the Windsor Street car park

Relocating the bus stops to Windsor Street car park would enable the bus stops to retain a town centre location, and provide the potential to promote bus linkages with Bromsgrove Station. However, this would require the loss of some or all of the car parking spaces currently available at Windsor Street car park (69 spaces), and would not provide such convenient access to town centre businesses at the northern end of the High Street and Market Street, including ASDA and Shop Mobility.

ACTION C – Reduce barriers to mobility

At present, less mobile users of the town centre find using bus services difficult or impossible. Therefore, buses should ensure that they provide suitable wheelchair access, and bus stops should be convenient for all town centre uses.

Improvements are required to pedestrian linkages to the west of the High Street, and there is a need to reduce the physical and visual barriers currently presented by Market Street. There is a particular need to improve pedestrian crossing facilities between ASDA, the bus stops and the High Street and the footpath along Market Street to the north of the bus stops (behind Iceland). This path dramatically narrows as it cross over the Brook at this point and this cause congestion for pedestrians and problems for the elderly, those in wheelchairs or with pushchairs.

There should be an increase in the number of disabled car parking spaces in the town centre, particularly at Shop Mobility. The provision of a dial-a-ride facility would enable the mobility impaired to access to the town centre more easily.

Barriers to mobility should be removed throughout the town centre, by ensuring that dropped kerbs and ramps are consistently provided, pedestrian crossings are fully functional and easy to use, and paving is even.

Mill Lane, Jan 2008

Mill Lane, Jan 2008

Issue BR4 – Car Parking

ACTION A - Increase the provision of short stay car parking spaces in the town centre

An increase in the number of short stay car parking spaces available in close proximity to the High Street would enable shoppers to more easily pick up or drop off goods, and provide a boost to town centre businesses. However, providing short stay car parking in close proximity to the High Street may increase town centre congestion, as large numbers of motorists may be tempted to search for a relatively small number of spaces, leading to waiting and cruising for spaces.

ACTION B - Car parking charges should be reviewed

Many local residents, businesses and visitors to the town centre express concern about the cost of car parking, long hours of operation for car park charging, and the pay and display method for collecting car parking revenue. Reducing car parking charges may encourage a greater number of visitors to the town centre, both during the day and in the evening. Additionally, pay on foot car parking would provide greater flexibility to those parking their cars in the town centre, as they would no longer be restricted to a time period specified on arrival.

However, reducing car parking charges would encourage greater use of private cars in and around the town, rather than promoting use of sustainable modes of transportation. Additionally, encouraging an increase in parking is likely to increase town centre congestion.

ACTION C - Reduce the overall number of car parking spaces in the town centre

Reducing the overall number of car parking spaces in Bromsgrove town centre would encourage greater use of sustainable modes of transportation, such as buses, trains, cycling and walking. However, the current provision of public transportation in the town is unlikely to provide a viable alternative for private car usage for the majority of visitors and residents. Therefore, any significant reduction in the overall number of car parking spaces without any accompanying improvement in the provision of public transportation would be likely to have a detrimental impact of businesses in Bromsgrove town centre.

ACTION D - Create a network of new multi-storey car parks serving the town's principal approaches

Current car parking facilities could potentially be consolidated and improved by providing a network of multi-storey car parks at the principal approaches to the town centre. This could be particularly beneficial if current parking facilities were to be lost at Windsor Street car park (see BR2 Action A above) and Recreation Road South (see BR14 Action C below). Multi-storey car parking facilities could potentially provide a similar quantity of car parking spaces in appropriate town centre locations on smaller land parcels, therefore freeing up valuable town centre land for other uses.

However, multi-storey car parks would need to be well designed and care would need to be taken to ensure that they do not have a detrimental impact on the town centre's conservation area or listed buildings. Design considerations should also include ground floor usage with the intention to minimise non-active frontage. Additionally, car parks would need to be carefully sited to ensure that they encourage a reduction in town centre congestion. This could potentially be achieved by locating the multi-storey car parks at the town's principal approaches (see Figure 4.3), thereby reducing the need for visitors to travel into or through the town centre in order to find a car parking space.

Suitable locations for multi-storey car parks, as illustrated on Figure 4.3, include the existing Windsor Street car park, the Dolphin Centre car park (see site 9 on Figure 8.2), the Fire Station and Library (see site 6 on Figure 8.2) subject to the appropriate relocation of these services in the future, and the Market Hall and George House site (see site 2 on Figure 8.2) in association with any potential future redevelopment.

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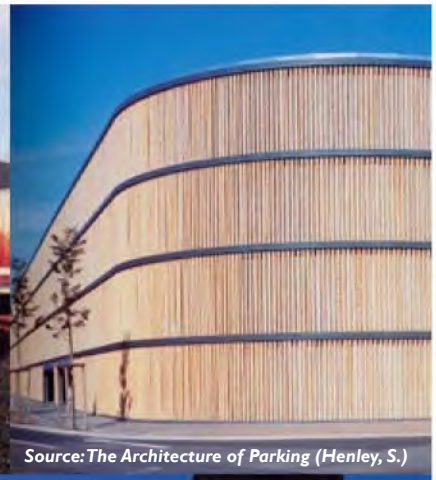
Figure 4.3: Car parking provision and potential multi-storey locations

Source: The Architecture of Parking (Henley, S.)



Source: The Architecture of Parking (Henley, S.)

Source: The Architecture of Parking (Henley, S.)

Examples of decked car parks

5. Retailing

Retailing

George House, Jan 2008

Market Hall, Jan 2008

Context

Bromsgrove town centre remains the main retail destination within the District. However, not all local residents use Bromsgrove town centre as their primary shopping destination, and other nearby competing centres offer types of stores not currently available.

Within Bromsgrove town centre there is a significant representation of comparison retailers along the High Street, including a number of national chain stores, such as Argos, WHSmith, Superdrug and Woolworths. There is also a small cluster of larger warehouse retail units to the east of the town centre on Birmingham Road, which includes Lush furniture store.

The major convenience retail offer is provided by ASDA, located to the western side of Market Street. However, there are currently aspirations to improve the range and quantity of the convenience retail offer within the town.

An indoor market is provided inside the Market Hall building at the western end of the High Street. However, this is already recognised by the Council as a major opportunity site and work, in parallel to the Core Strategy and AAP for Bromsgrove Town Centre, is underway to assist in promoting this key site for redevelopment, with the market potentially relocated outside along High Street.

The shop accommodation in the town centre is mixed, and many small and independent businesses occupy small premises that do not lend themselves to redevelopment. As a result, there is a shortage of suitable larger retail accommodation that suits modern retailing needs.

According to the Bromsgrove Town Centre Retail Capacity Analysis Update (CBRE, December 2007) there is a quantitative need for additional comparison and convenience retail over the study period up to 2022.

Bromsgrove town centre includes relatively few evening economy uses. However, those that do exist are generally clustered at the western end of the High Street and on Worcester Road.

Relevant Planning Policy

National planning policy for town centres and retail development is set out in PPS6 'Planning for Town Centres'. The Government's key objective for town centres is to promote their vitality and viability by:

- planning for the growth and development of existing centres;
- promoting and enhancing existing centres, by focusing development in such centres; and,
- encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all.

To achieve this the Government wants to see enhanced consumer choice by making provision for a range of shopping, leisure and local services, which allow genuine choice to meet the needs of the entire community. They also want to see improved accessibility, ensuring that existing or new development is, or will be, accessible and well-served by a choice of means of transport. While the town centre is still seen as the primary place for new retail development, opportunities must be found for large-format retailers such as DIY stores and electrical appliance retailers, especially those who sell white goods like fridges and washing machines. The Government want these to be located if possible on edge-of-centre sites which could combine retail, leisure and mixed-use development. This is so large format stores don't compete with town centres but instead support them.

Policy UR3 of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) requires that strategies are developed to maintain and enhance the underpinning of all centres to serve their local communities in terms of retail provision, access to services and cultural and leisure facilities. The role of Bromsgrove Town Centre is not to provide retailing facilities for those from other districts but to serve the needs of the Town's population and nearby rural settlements.

The Bromsgrove District Local Plan (Bromsgrove District Council, 2004) aimed to retain Bromsgrove town centre as the main location for general shopping facilities in the District, and sought to strengthen Bromsgrove's shopping role in order to better compete with neighbouring centres (policy S20). The plan proposed primary

and secondary shopping areas within the town centre in order to achieve a balance between different categories of shopping provision. Within Bromsgrove town centre, primary shopping areas have been defined as the pedestrianised High Street, the east side of the Strand, the retailing outlets to the north of Market Place, the north part of Worcester Road including access to Market Hall, and the pedestrianised Church Street, Mill Lane and Chapel Street. These frontages form the commercial core of the town centre and contain the main concentration of Class A1 retail outlets. The remaining section of Worcester Road within the conservation area has been designated as a secondary shopping street, along with the north side of Strand and the south side of Birmingham Road. The secondary shopping area contains a wider range of retail and related uses than the primary shopping area.

Within the primary shopping area the District Council will normally allow proposals for retail development at ground floor level and retail, office or residential use at upper floor level (BROM13). Within the secondary shopping area retail uses at ground floor level will be acceptable. Retail, residential or office use may also be considered as appropriate in these locations (BROM14).

The Plan also included policies which seek to enhance the overall shopfront and architectural quality, and to retain and enhance the character, of main shopping areas (policies S23, S24, S26 and S27). Policy BROM16 also stipulates that the Council wishes to retain small scale shop units in

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Figure 5.1: Summary of retail options

High Street, Jan 2008

Chapel Street, Jan 2008

the pedestrian streets and within the town courts and alleyways of the town centre. SPG2 'Shopfronts and Advertisements Design Guide' (Bromsgrove District Council, 1995) includes further detailed guidance.

We welcome your feedback on whether or not you think that these Local Plan policies are still relevant to Bromsgrove town centre, or whether they need to be updated through the AAP process.

The Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation has identified that policies should ensure that proposals for the town centre foster a range of uses, including leisure uses as a means of stimulating the evening economy and residential development to support the regeneration of the town centre.

Issue BR6 – Retail Offer

ACTION A - Attempt to attract a high quality anchor store for the Market Hall site

The Market Hall site is located at the western end of the High Street, and presents an opportunity to improve the range and quality of shops offered in the town centre by developing a major anchor store which visually defines the area. An anchor store would be a large store, such as a department store or supermarket that would attract customers to the town centre, who are then expected to visit other shops.

It is vital that any new high quality anchor store be integrated into the wider town centre environment, and acts to complement existing businesses by generating further town centre activity. Visibility of the site along the High Street axis will depend on whether the site currently occupied by the Blockbuster store is included in any development plans.

ACTION B – Seek to encourage more independent and niche retailers to the town centre

A strategy to promote the town centre as an attractive location for independent and specialist niche retailers could help to improve the vitality and add to the character of the town centre. This approach would align well against the current planning policy of seeking to retain small scale shop units in the town centre under the currently adopted policy BROM16.

However, such retailers may be more susceptible to unfavourable market conditions than larger multiple retailers. It should also be noted that the town is considered to already be relatively well served by small, independent retailers, as was evident during the traders' workshop. Views were expressed at that workshop that more should be done to promote the town and a managed programme of events and street markets would help support the smaller independent traders in the centre.

ACTION C – Seek to more tightly control the mix and range of retail units in the town centre

During the consultation and workshops with retailers already trading in the town, concerns were expressed regarding the need to protect and promote the market character of the town centre. One effective way of achieving this is the controls the planning system is able to use in determining the mix of shopping uses in the town centre. The currently adopted Local Plan distinguishes between primary and secondary shopping streets although no distinction within primary shopping streets is made between any of the A-class (retail) land uses. Introducing tighter and clearer controls on the mix of uses within the A-class in Bromsgrove town centre could help in protecting and enhancing the town's core retail function. See also Issue BR8 below.

Issue BR7 – Market

ACTION A - Provide an outdoor street market in the town centre

Provision of an outdoor street market on the High Street could help to encourage visitors and shoppers to the town centre. However, the quality of the market could potentially define the perception of quality of retail offer and quality of town centre environment. Therefore, it will be important to ensure that the appearance of the street market has a positive contribution to the town centre. An outdoor street market would require increased street maintenance.

An outdoor street market would need to be suitable sited to ensure that it does not present a barrier to pedestrian accessibility, but at the same time helps to stimulate increased town centre activity. Potential sites for the market include the pedestrianised section of the High Street, Crown Close / Market Street, Windsor Street, Mill Lane or Church Street.

ACTION B - Do not provide a street market in the town centre

The likely future redevelopment of the Market Hall site means that the market will lose its home. Although Bromsgrove is traditionally a market town, the nature of the town has changed significantly over the years. Therefore, the question has been raised as to whether a market should be retained at all within the town centre, particularly given the need to respond to market conditions in order to promote the vitality and viability of the town.

Should the regular street market not be provided, the town centre could provide occasional themed markets and farmers markets.

Issue BR8 – Evening Economy

ACTION A - Promote the provision of cafes and restaurants in the town centre, in association with an increased residential population, in order to stimulate the evening economy

Accompanying an increase in the town centre population with the provision of additional evening economy uses, either through new mixed-use development, or by the provision of separate residential and evening economy functions, could potentially stimulate the town centre evening economy. It would be easier to attract an increase in residential population to the town centre if the evening economy uses are present, and the evening economy uses would benefit from a permanent residential town centre presence.

The stimulation of the evening economy would help to increase the vibrancy of the High Street and surrounding roads into the evening, where at present activity tends to stop after the shops and businesses close during the late afternoon. Increased activity in the evening may stimulate the town centre economy by encouraging longer opening hours for shops, and the increased presence of people in the evening would provide added safety.

Conversely, however, town centre activity in the evening may require an increase in policing, and greater security measures for local shops and businesses, particularly if the evening economy uses are not contained in a specific area of the town centre.

Possible locations for the evolution of a cluster of evening economy uses include the Strand area and the north-eastern end of the High Street, the lower end of High Street between New Road and Worcester Road and Worcester Road itself where there is already something of a cluster of evening economy uses.

ACTION B - Maintain evening economy uses at their present level at the western end of the High Street

Worcester Road currently represents a small cluster of evening economy uses in the town being the location of the town's main night club. The present level of evening economy uses does not present any significant crime or disorder problems for the town centre. However, the range and quality of evening economy uses is relatively limited.

6. Living and Working in Bromsgrove

Living and Working in Bromsgrove

St John's Church, Jan 2008

Artrix Centre, Jan 2008

Context

Within Bromsgrove District the resident population reflects national characteristics with reducing household sizes and an increasing elderly population. At present there is a range of housing types within Bromsgrove town centre, which includes sheltered accommodation for the elderly and market housing of different sizes and tenures. The Regional Housing Strategy characterises southern districts such as Bromsgrove as having a predominance of moderate to high priced neighbourhood zones and a lack of social housing provision within settlements.

The majority of employment in Bromsgrove town centre is retail or service sector related. However, there are also a small number of manufacturing and light industrial firms within the town centre. In terms of individual employers, Bromsgrove School and Bromsgrove District Council are the largest single employers within the town centre area.

Following the trends of the wider district, there is an imbalance between the type of jobs and pay available in Bromsgrove compared to the average wages of its population. Industries with higher paid jobs need to be encouraged to stay or locate in or around the town centre to reduce the daily flow of the population to other employment centres and promote more sustainable working and commuting patterns. New business parks located adjacent to the A38, such as Bromsgrove Technology Park, Aston Fields and Buntsford Gate reflect new high technology and office related uses located in close proximity to the town centre, and offer opportunities for expansion.

The Artrix Art Centre, the Dolphin Leisure Centre, the David Lloyd Leisure Centre and the Victoria Ground (home of Bromsgrove Rovers Football Club) are located within, or in close proximity to the town centre. The Artrix Centre was opened in 2005, and consists of a 320 seat theatre which showcases music, theatre, dance and film productions, a rehearsal studio and a number of multi functional rooms. The Dolphin Centre was constructed in the 1960's and consists of a swimming pool, sports hall and fitness suite. The facility underwent a substantial renovation approximately three years ago, however the design and structure of the Dolphin Centre means that it is in need of replacement. The David Lloyd Leisure Centre is a private leisure facility.

The Victoria Ground is located to the north east of the town centre, on the Birmingham Road. Bromsgrove Rovers FC are one of the oldest football clubs in England, formed in 1885. The club have been located at the Victoria Ground, which has a capacity of approximately 5,000, since 1910. The ground is likely to remain adequate for the club for the foreseeable future.

The principal library for the district is situated within the town centre. Although the library is located within the town centre, it is located on Stratford Road, rather than the High Street. The building is also of poor quality and no longer considered particularly fit for purpose. The replacement of the library is currently under consideration.

The police and fire services are also located within the town centre, at the Crescent and Windsor Street respectively. However, the relocation of these services to new sites outside of the town centre is also currently under consideration. Consultation on the future of the potential relocation of the Fire Station is due to commence during the summer of 2008, in association with the Fire Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan 2008.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the potential to relocate a number of leisure and community facilities under County Council ownership to alternative sites in and around the town centre. These proposals are being promoted by Worcestershire County Council, with the aims of providing improved facilities in more appropriate locations, and co-locating services where possible to maximise efficiency and encourage resource sharing.

Relevant planning policy

Government guidance states that plans should encourage mixed and balanced communities, with policies that cater for single person households and avoid the creation of large areas of housing of similar characteristics in new housing developments. The Government is committed to ensuring the maximum and efficient use of land. One of its key objectives is that as much new housing is built on previously developed land or 'brownfield' sites.

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision Draft (presented to the Secretary of State by the West Midlands Regional Assembly in December 2007) seeks to retain a strong emphasis on urban renaissance and the concentration of new housing development within the Major Urban Areas. At the same time, new housing provision will need to be made in other parts of the Region to meet housing demand. For Bromsgrove town centre, no specific housing allocations are made, however, the RSS allocates an indicative annual average of 105 new homes for Bromsgrove from 2006-2026. Policy UR3 relates to enhancing the role of City, Town and District Centres. As a Town Centre, Bromsgrove Town should be encouraging more people to live in or close to the town centre through the reuse of sites, development of mixed-use schemes, the conversion of property and initiatives such as "living over the shop".

Policy PA1 of the Regional Spatial Strategy promotes economic growth in market towns where it can help to create more sustainable communities through providing a better balance between housing and employment. In order to encourage the diversification of the regional economy, three High Technology Corridors (HTC) are identified, which link to the Region's critical research and development capabilities and advanced technologies. Bromsgrove is within the Central Technology Belt. The District is also required to maintain a portfolio of available employment land to meet the needs of the local economy and businesses wanting to relocate to Bromsgrove. A range of sites must be provided to suit the needs of different types and size of business.

In respect of the tourist and cultural economy the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) requires that Development Plans should generally encourage both the improvement of existing provision as well as the creation of new facilities, subject to the capacity of infrastructure and the environment to accommodate new facilities and visitors associated with them.

In terms of housing allocations, the Worcestershire Structure Plan contains housing requirements for the District to 2011. It also contains a phasing target to 2006. The District has exceeded the phasing requirement and has enough dwellings with permission to significantly exceed the 2011 requirement. As such the District does not need to allow any further housing to meet its housing requirements as set out in the Structure Plan. Supplementary Planning Guidance was adopted in 2003 which has effectively placed a moratorium on the granting of permission for new general market housing proposals. As existing housing supply decreases as properties are built, the Council may have to begin to allow targeted proposals so as to maintain a constant supply of housing for the District. The Structure Plan also includes the employment land allocations targets.

Allocations for new employment land will be released through an 'Allocations' plan. This plan will be produced once new housing and employment figures are released through the Regional Spatial Strategy, probably in late 2008. As the Council has already identified employment land to meet its current requirements within the District to 2011, as taken from the County Structure Plan, there is no pressing need to allocate further land until new requirements are known.

The existing Local Plan (Bromsgrove District Council, 2004) aimed to retain and provide new or enhanced community facilities where possible (Policy S28). Proposals that result in the loss of playing fields were discouraged, unless the alternative provision could be made and the provision of playing fields to Council standards would still be met, or the scheme would lead to an improvement in the facilities available elsewhere on the site (policy S32).

The Plan did not contain any policies on crime prevention. However, the Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership have produced a Community Safety Strategy called, 'Keeping Bromsgrove Safe'. The Local Development Framework and initially the Core Strategy will have regard to the priorities of this document. The strategy identified 5 key priorities; reducing crime; keeping communities feeling safe; achieve cleaner, greener and safer public spaces; reduce the harm of drugs and alcohol; and realise the potential of our young people.

We welcome your feedback on whether or not you think that these Local Plan policies are still relevant to Bromsgrove town centre, or whether they need to be updated through the AAP process.

The Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation has identified that 'town trails' should be developed to encourage people into Bromsgrove town centre as part of a leisure experience.

St John's Church, Jan 2008

Issue BR9 – Town Centre Housing Provision

ACTION A – Seek to increase the town centre population through the provision of mixed-use developments on previously used brownfield land and housing above shops and businesses

The potential exists to incorporate further housing within mixed-use town centre developments on 'brownfield' sites, and above existing town centre shops and businesses. Any new housing provided would need to represent a range of tenures and costs. However, new town centre housing, particularly above shops in the High Street, would offer an opportunity to increase the provision of affordable housing units. This may also contribute towards the vitality and viability of the town centre, particularly in tandem with improvements to the evening economy.

The inclusion of housing uses in town centre developments is in accordance with national, regional and local planning policy. Town centres are accessible locations being well served by public transport services and residents would have easy access to a good range of shops and services. Therefore, town centres are considered to be sustainable locations for new residential developments.

Through the provision of town centre housing in both new mixed-use developments and above shops, Bromsgrove town centre can play an important role in meeting regional housing allocations put forward by the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy.

ACTION B – Retain the current town centre housing stock, and do not plan for any increase in the size of the town centre population

The Regional Spatial Strategy does not include any specific housing targets for Bromsgrove town centre, and the targets for Bromsgrove District contained in the Structure Plan have already been met. Additionally, there are only a limited number of brownfield sites likely to be available offering opportunities for new mixed use development.

Whilst it is understood that housing is an appropriate land use in town centres, it is not the principal land use of the majority of town centre redevelopment proposals. The viability of including housing in town centre redevelopments will vary over time with changing market conditions. Applications are always determined on their own merits and a policy approach could be taken under this option whereby far greater emphasis is placed on commercial land uses in town centre redevelopment proposals. There would be no requirement to provide housing uses in town centre redevelopment proposals although there may still be a role for housing uses in enabling some sites to come forward.

Issue BR10 – Future Employment Strategy for Bromsgrove Town Centre

ACTION A - Encourage small scale employment uses in town centre as part of new mixed use developments.

It may be possible to incorporate a variety of B1 (offices/business) small enterprises within mixed-use town centre development opportunities which come forward over the lifetime of the plan. Such uses could complement larger businesses locating in the nearby A38 business parks, such as Bromsgrove Technology Park. However, at present there are only a limited number of suitable sites for mixed-use development within the town centre (see section 8).

ACTION B – Designate larger sites for employment uses within the town centre

It may be considered to be more appropriate to designate sites within the town centre for other employment uses (B1), general industrial (B2) or storage / distribution (B8) employment uses. This would place emphasis on promoting local job creation but the local office market is not well developed and industrial uses are unlikely to be able to afford the land values associated with town centre sites. Bromsgrove District Council is itself one of the largest employers in the town and their offices are currently located just beyond the town centre boundary. Should the opportunity arise to relocate the

Council office to a town centre location, depending on its location, such a development could contribute significantly to the viability of the commercial centre.

ACTION C – Retain the existing balance of employment uses within the town centre, or consolidate employment provision to enable the creation of further retail and housing development opportunities

Retaining the current level and mix of employment provision within the town centre may be considered appropriate, particularly given the scale of out-commuting to Birmingham and other nearby urban areas. The consolidation of employment land within the town centre may enable the creation of mixed-use development opportunities potentially for higher value land uses, such as housing and retail.

Issue BR11 – Leisure Provision

ACTION A – Replace Dolphin Centre with new leisure facility on the existing site

The Dolphin Centre is well located in the town. Whilst not currently formally falling within the town centre boundary, the site is within a short walk of the High Street and is served by a large pay and display car park. Whilst the building is on a large site, it is likely that redevelopment and replacement of the centre in its current location would involve a period during construction when the services provided within the facility would not be available. However, redevelopment on the existing site would provide the opportunity to improve the range and quality of services and facilities provided at the centre.

Issues relevant to the consideration of the most appropriate location for replacement leisure facilities in the town revolve around the aspirations to improve the range and quality of other complementary community services in the town. For example, if a new public leisure centre was redeveloped on the site of the existing Dolphin Centre, in additional to the continuity of service issues that would arise, the site could no longer be considered as a potential alternative location for the District Council offices or a site for a replacement library. There are, therefore, a number of interlinked issues relating to community service provision in the town which need to be considered in the round and not in isolation.

ACTION B – Retain and refurbish the Dolphin Centre

Further more detailed feasibility work will be required, but this option may be cheaper and is more likely to be able to offer some form of limited continuous service for local people. However, the facility has recently already undergone a substantial renovation and the design and structure of the facility is considered to be outdated. The pool is based on a structure on stilts and overall the building is considered to be inefficient in terms of its use of space and energy.

ACTION C – Reprovide a public leisure facility on an alternative site in the town centre

Town centres are considered by the Government to be the most appropriate locations for retail and leisure uses. Identifying an alternative town centre location for a replacement leisure facility is therefore an appropriate strategy. However, identifying a site for a facility of this scale in an historic market town the size of Bromsgrove is not a straightforward task. There are, however, a number of known opportunity sites within and immediately adjacent to the town centre which might be considered suitable for a new replacement leisure facility – these are set out in Section 8 below.

We would particularly welcome your views on the appropriateness of the existing

Existing town centre housing, April 2008

Existing town centre housing, April 2008

Dolphin Centre, Jan 2008

Bromsgrove library, Jan 2008

Library and Fire Station site on the junction of Stratford Road and Windsor Street as a potential alternative site. However, if an alternative site is to be sought and agreed, much will depend on the existing use of that site and any particular issues of phasing and continuity of service associated with that existing use.

ACTION D – Reprovide a public leisure facility on an alternative site outside the town centre

It may be that, when looked at sequentially, there are no town centre sites that offer a viable alternative for the development of a replacement leisure facility. In this case, it may be appropriate to relocate the services currently provided at the Dolphin Centre to an out of centre location that is still considered to be accessible to the local community.

In informal discussions and consultations during the preparation of these issues and options for Bromsgrove town centre, some stakeholders expressed a desire to see the leisure centre relocated to a site in the vicinity of the Artrix Centre and Bromsgrove College. Whilst it may be perceived that this location is some distance from the town centre, School Drive provides potentially direct access to this cluster of community, education and leisure uses.

Issue BR12 – Public Services

ACTION A - Re-locate a number of public services, including the police service and library to co-locate services and improve efficiency

As described above, Worcestershire County Council is examining the potential to relocate publicly owned public service facilities in Bromsgrove in order to provide more modern and efficient services. However, any relocation of services would be largely dependent on each other. The danger exists that a delay in the relocation of one service or facility could result in a delay in the service or facility that is dependent on relocating to that particular site, and therefore that the chain could collapse. There would be a need for a detailed phasing approach.

Consideration is currently being given to the possibility of forming a cluster of community service uses adjacent to the proposed new health centre on the site of the former Parkside Middle School on Stourbridge Road. Potential partners for this initiative could include the Ambulance Service and the Police Service. Such an initiative would free up key town centre sites for redevelopment for other uses. However, given the need for continuity of these essential community services, there are likely to be complicated phasing requirements.

However, it is considered that these issues are not insurmountable. The result could be a concentration of essential front line community services located in new premises on the edge of Bromsgrove town centre and the Council would be keen to hear from local people, businesses and other stakeholders whether this would be a welcome approach.

ACTION B - Relocate District Council offices to a town centre location

The potential exists for Bromsgrove District Council to relocate from its existing location on Burcot Lane, to a town centre location. The existing offices are not considered to provide a suitable facility for the future, and the dated design of the buildings may restrict the capacity to suitably refurbish.

Providing District Council offices in a town centre location may have added regenerative effects for Bromsgrove town centre, as it would ensure that Council staff would have access to town centre shops and facilities. Additionally, a town centre location may offer a more prestigious address for the District Council, and the release of the current site either for housing or mixed-use development would enable the Council to raise significant funds.

However, a town centre location may contribute to further town centre congestion,

and finding suitable car parking facilities in the absence of adequate public transport provision could prove to be problematic.

Given that the site of the Dolphin Leisure Centre is already home to the Worcestershire Hub service point, it may be considered that this site is the most appropriate site on which to relocate the District Council offices.

Issue BR13 – Crime & Safety

ACTION A - Ensure that CCTV coverage is comprehensive in the High Street

Although crime and disorder is not a major problem in Bromsgrove town centre, it may be desirable to extend the CCTV coverage to ensure that the entirety of the High Street and Worcester Road is monitored.

ACTION B - Design out crime on new developments, and improve the safety of existing areas which are poorly lit and have limited overlooking

The provision of an additional taxi rank at the western end of the High Street is likely to reduce crime and the perception of crime in Bromsgrove town centre. However, there are some areas in the town centre where it may be possible to improve safety either by improving lighting, or ensuring that there is a greater degree of natural surveillance. This may be particularly important during the evening and late at night, when the town centre is quiet. Potentially problematic areas include Windsor Street, the southern end of the High Street / Worcester Road and Market Street / Crown Close which suffers from a lack of frontage and activity. It may be, given the less prominent nature of these locations, that the introduction of residential uses might have a significant part to play in providing activity and overlooking.

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Figure 6.1: Summary of leisure and community services xxxxxxxxx

7. Environment and Open Spaces

Environment and Open Spaces

New Road, Jan 2008

Worcester Road, Jan 2008

Context

Bromsgrove town centre includes many buildings of considerable architectural merit. There are numerous listed buildings in the centre and particularly along High Street and the majority of the town falls within a conservation area. Bromsgrove town centre is not considered to be a tourist destination, but the potential exists to promote heritage opportunities, particularly in terms of the architectural value of some town centre buildings above the shop fronts.

Partial pedestrianisation of the High Street occurred over twenty years ago. However, the pedestrianised area is now considered to be unattractive, with a range of street furniture and an uneven paved surface, which has been inadequately maintained. Therefore, it is considered that the High Street would benefit from environmental enhancement.

The town centre contains few open spaces. However, the opportunity exists to improve the overall quality and amenity value of existing spaces, and access to them. Existing spaces include the Recreation Ground, and land surrounding Spadesbourne Brook and St John's Church. At present the Recreation Ground provides only limited value to the local population, and has few amenity functions. However, the space is used by the Council to host several fairs and festivals throughout the year.

Relevant planning policy

National planning policy guidance on open spaces, sport and recreation is contained in PPG17. The Local Development Framework must ensure that adequate land is allocated for organised sport and informal recreation, and the Council are required to resist pressures for development of open space which conflict with the wider public interest.

Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1), 'Delivering Sustainable Development', requires that Development plans promote development that creates socially inclusive communities including supporting the promotion of health and well being by making provision for physical activity. Additionally, PPS1 requires that development plans should promote development that creates socially inclusive communities and deliver safe, healthy and attractive places to live. Hence it is a requirement for all policies produced as part of the Core Strategy and subsequent Local Development Framework documents to take account of their impact on community safety and the design of our built environment.

PPS9 'Biodiversity and Geological Conservation' contains the objectives to:

- promote sustainable development by ensuring that biological and geological diversity are conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development;
- conserve, enhance and restore the diversity of England's wildlife and geology; and
- contribute to rural renewal and urban

renaissance by enhancing biodiversity in green spaces and among developments and ensuring that developments take account of the role and value of biodiversity in supporting economic diversification and contributing to a high quality environment.

The Regional Spatial Strategy requires that plans produced by the Council identify, protect, conserve and enhance the Region's diverse historic environment and manage change in such a way that respects local character and distinctiveness (Policy QE5). Of particular significance for Bromsgrove is the Spatial Strategy's identification of historic rural landscapes and their settlement patterns, listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, conservation areas and historic parks in the West Midlands. Additionally, the Regional Spatial Strategy requires that local authorities ensure the highest standards of design, building on the existing character and identity of areas. Policy QE3 specifically requires that plan documents produced by the local authority secure a high quality townscape, urban form, building design and urban spaces, through the use of architecture, urban design and landscape design, which respects regional and local character, culture and history. Particular attention should also be given to the creation of safer environments which discourage crime and promote community safety.

The Bromsgrove District Local Plan (Bromsgrove District Council, 2004) sought to retain and enhance all public and privately owned open space of recreational and amenity value. Development of open space will only be considered where it can be clearly demonstrated that there is unlikely to be any long-term need to retain it for either recreational or amenity purposes (policy RAT4). Additionally, the Council encouraged the further pedestrianisation of the High Street and Worcester Road in order to improve the shopping environment, and existing landowners on Worcester Road to the east of the Market Hall site were encouraged to undertake appropriate works to enhance the town centre's attractiveness to shoppers (BROM 17 and 18).

We welcome your feedback on whether or not you think that these Local Plan policies are still relevant to Bromsgrove town centre, or whether they need to be updated through the AAP process.

The Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation has identified that the distinctive character of Bromsgrove town centre should be retained and enhanced.

Figure 7.1: Summary of environment and open spaces

Spadesbourne Brook, Jan 2008

Issue BR14 – Public Realm

ACTION A - Make improvements to the public realm in the High Street, including improving the quality of the paving in the pedestrianised area, improving the quality of shop fronts and reducing street clutter

Improving the environment in the High Street will help to improve the overall perception, and help to attract more visitors and shoppers to the town centre. Additionally, improving the quality of the paving and reducing the amount of objects on the street would improve accessibility, particularly for those with mobility difficulties.

ACTION B - Involve the local community in town centre public realm improvements

Involving the local community in improving the town centre could help to foster civic pride, and would be more likely to ensure that measures to improve the town centre are endorsed by local people and businesses.

ACTION C - Implement a regular maintenance programme for the High Street

This could ensure that the quality of the street environment and public realm is maintained to higher standards, which is likely to improve the perception of the town centre. A higher quality public realm is likely to attract an increased number of visitors and shoppers to the town centre, and encourage them to stay longer.

Issue BR15 – Spadesbourne Brook

ACTION A - Re-landscape the brook and improve the environmental quality of the surrounding area

Improving the quality of the Brook and surrounding open space would enable the area to become more of a feature for the town centre. However, regular maintenance would be required following any environmental improvements in order to ensure that the quality of the improvements are maintained.

ACTION B - Culvert the brook

The Spadesbourne Brook is considered by some to be too small to warrant making it a town centre feature. Additionally, the regular maintenance required makes it resource intensive, and therefore it may be better to culvert it so that it runs underground. Should the Brook be culverted, it may be considered appropriate to create a water feature either on Market Street (should Market Street be closed to through traffic in association with BR2 Action C above) or adjacent to Market Street. The views of the Environment Agency will be particularly important in determining the future treatment of the Brook.

ACTION C – Restore the natural habitat of the brook as much as possible in order to enhance biodiversity

Spadesbourne Brook is one of the key natural features within the town centre. Enhancing the natural habitat and biodiversity of the Brook could help to contribute to the urban renaissance of the town centre.

Issue BR16 – Recreation Ground

ACTION A - Improve Recreation Ground facilities and linkages to the town centre

The Recreation Ground currently has little amenity value to the town. However, it could include more amenity functions, and the overall environmental quality could be improved. In addition, improving linkages through from the Recreation Ground to the town centre could help to attract a greater number of visitors and users.

ACTION B - Make the Recreation Ground more accessible to the town centre by 'swapping' the space with the adjacent car park

The Recreation Ground open space could be swapped with the Recreation Road south car park (see Figure 6.1). This would bring the open space much closer to the town centre and provide a direct link to open space from the east side of Market Street. Accessibility to the open space would be drastically improved. However, this would have the impact of moving the car park further away from the town centre, which would inconvenience car users.

ACTION C - Extend the Recreation Ground to cover the Recreation Road South Car Park

Extending the Recreation Ground to cover the adjacent car park would recapture the open space that existed prior to the development of the car park, and ensure that the open space becomes closer and easier to access from the town centre.

Depending on the approach taken to town centre parking provision, as discussed in Issues BR4, the reduction in car parking facilities within the town centre would be likely to have mixed implications for the town centre. The Recreation Road South Car Park represents the largest single local car parking facility, and extending the Recreation Ground to cover the car park would result in a loss of 321 car parking spaces close to the town centre, which may have a detrimental impact on shops and businesses (if it means that people are deterred from coming to Bromsgrove).

However, the loss of the car parking facility may help to reduce town centre congestion, by ensuring that fewer cars attempt to enter the town centre to park. Alternative car parking facilities exist in this area of the town at Recreation Road North (47 spaces), Churchfields (318 spaces) and Parkside (101 spaces) car parks.

8. Opportunities for Change

Opportunities for Change

Introduction

The following section seeks your views on the town centre boundary and a range of sites which potentially offer opportunities for development within Bromsgrove town centre. The identification of opportunity sites within the town centre is important, as these sites can provide opportunities for change and for new development.

Town Centre Boundary

One overriding issue for the AAP to address will be the town centre boundary. This is an important designation because it defines the limit of town centre activity, and therefore the extent of the area which is considered appropriate for town centre uses.

Figure 8.1 illustrates potential alterations to the town centre boundary, to include sites particularly relevant to this AAP, including the Dolphin Centre, Bromsgrove Library and Parkside School.

We welcome your feedback on these proposed alterations to the town centre boundary, as part of the AAP process.

Figure 8.1: Potential to extend town centre boundary

Opportunity Sites and Site Schedule

Figure 8.2 identifies potential development opportunity sites, but does not provide any policy detail at this stage. The purpose of the plan is to depict the extent of the sites, which are considered to be potential development sites. The accompanying site schedule describes the current status of the sites, identifies likely ownership and land assembly constraints, and provides a brief overview of indicative issues and options relating to each site.

Figure 8.2:Town Centre AAP proposals map

St John's Church, Jan 2008

Possible Opportunity	Status	Ownership	Issues and Options
1. Station Street	Several areas of under utilised land exist around Station Street to the south west of the town centre. The site includes a mixture of car related uses and under utilised land.	Mixed private ownership	The site could present a medium to long term opportunity for mixed-use development on the edge of the town centre.
2. Market Hall and George House	The market is soon to be relocated to an outdoor location, with the intention of releasing the Market Hall site, potentially for development of a quality food store. There are currently no proposals for George House (which is located adjacent to the Market Hall site), and the intentions of the occupants (including Blockbusters at ground floor level) is currently unknown.	Market Hall site is owned by Bromsgrove District Council, and the 'Blockbusters' building is in private ownership	Site provides opportunity to develop a landmark building at the western gateway to the High Street, and could aim to attract a high quality retailer, environmental improvements and associated car parking. The Blockbuster site plays a very important townscape role in terminating the High Street vista.
3. Police Station	The police are actively seeking to relocate from their current site on The Crescent.	Worcestershire County Council	Should the police relocate to an alternative location, this site may become available for mixed-use development. The existing police station site is not located within the town centre boundary.
4. 27-29 High St (formerly McDonalds)	The former McDonalds store at the western end of the High Street is currently vacant. There are no known proposals for this site at present.	Unknown private ownership	Due to its location at the western end of the High Street, in close proximity to existing town centre evening economy uses and in context of the most recent land use associated with the site, this building may provide a suitable location for a restaurant or bar. Probably too small a site to be specifically allocated in the AAP, it is the frontage policy that is likely to control how the site is used in planning terms.
5. Crown Close	The car parking areas to the rear of High Street properties are currently under utilised and create a poor frontage environment to Crown Close.	Mixed private ownership	This area presents little in the way of positive frontage or activity to Crown Close or Market Street. The land may present a retail/cafe or office development opportunity. Much will depend on access and parking requirements associated with the High Street units served from the rear.

Market Hall, Jan 2008

Fire Station, Jan 2008

6. Fire Station and Library	The Fire Station and adjoining Library building are located on Windsor Street. The relocation of the Fire Station to a more suitable building and location is currently under consideration, and the Library is in need of refurbishment or relocation.	Worcestershire County Council	Should the fire service and library relocate, this site may provide significant mixed-use development opportunities, particularly to increase the provision of town centre housing. The Stratford Road frontage of the current Library site is compromised by a pair of semi-detached properties. This will be an issue when considering the appropriate scale of any redevelopment scheme on this site. The site would be suitable for a variety of commercial town centre uses. In the context of the potential relocation of the Dolphin Centre, this site may provide a suitable alternative.
7. Recreation Road	Some of the land to the east of Recreation Road opposite the Recreation Ground and Recreation Road car park is currently under utilised for a town centre location. There are no known proposals for this site at present.	Mixed private ownership	This site may offer opportunities to expand the retail offer of the town centre to the north. Small to medium sized units could potentially be developed. Car parking would be provided by existing facilities in the adjacent Recreation Road car park.
8. Corner of High Street and the Strand (end unit) vacancy	This small unit is currently vacant. There are no known proposals for this unit at present.	Unknown private ownership	Retail or café opportunity
9. Dolphin Centre	The Council are currently considering the longer term future of the Dolphin Centre. However, no decisions have been made regarding the facility's future.	Bromsgrove District Council	Should the Dolphin Centre be relocated, this site could provide an opportunity to develop public and community facilities, such as a civic centre, library and hub, or alternatively mixed-use development. A critical issue in bringing the site forward for redevelopment will be agreeing an approach to the reprovision of the leisure services currently provided in the building. Where should these sites be reprovided in the Borough? In a town centre site or an edge/out of centre location such as land adjacent to the Artrix Centre.

10. Birmingham Road Retail units	The large retail units on the Birmingham Road and associated car parking provide a substantial site on the fringe of the town centre.	Unknown private ownership	Potential exists to consolidate the existing retail units and provide a single more substantial retail offer which compliments that already provided in the town centre. Car trip generation will be a key issue in considering the redevelopment of the site. In light of the current use of the site, continued retail uses are likely to be considered appropriate together with office and potentially some housing. There would appear to be an opportunity to create a physical linkage through to School Drive. This could potentially deliver significant improvements to local routes and the movement network.

High Street, Jan 2008

Other sites

The following two sites are located in close proximity to Bromsgrove Town Centre, and are of direct relevance to the AAP.

District Council Offices	As outlined above, the Council are currently considering relocating from their existing site on Burcot Lane.	Bromsgrove District Council	This site presents the opportunity for significant residential development on the edge of the town centre. This is not a town centre site and will not be included in the Town Centre AAP proposals map, but it is of relevance to the AAP in that the relocation of the Council offices to a town centre location is a possibility currently being considered.
Bromsgrove Station	A site is identified for car parking purposes adjacent to Bromsgrove Railway Station in the Local Plan and identified on the proposals map (BROM31)	Unknown private ownership / Network Rail?	This is not a town centre site and therefore will not be shown as a potential development opportunity on Figure 7.1. However, efforts to improve the quality of connections between the town centre and the station area are being considered (Park and Ride) and this is an important issue for the town and therefore relevant to the AAP.

Hanover Street, Jan 2008

Bromsgrove High Street, Jan 2008

Appendix

Appendix

Appendix A - Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

The following tables demonstrate the results of the initial informal sustainability appraisal of the AAP objectives. The sustainability objectives identified in the Scoping Report (see table 1.1 of the report) have been used to appraise the AAP objectives. For each of the AAP objectives the relevant sustainability objectives are identified, together with any likely future impact or implications for the AAP arising from the appraisal.

Transport, movement and accessibility

AAP objectives	Relevance to Sustainability Objectives
To improve pedestrian priority, linkages and mobility within and across the town centre	– Improves equitable access to local services and facilities (Objective 2) – Reduces the need to travel and encourages sustainable means of transportation (Objective 4 and 11)
To improve pedestrian and cycle linkages between Bromsgrove Station and the town centre, and promoting a shuttle bus service	– Improves equitable access to local services and facilities (Objective 2) – Reduces the need to travel and encourages sustainable means of transportation (Objectives 4 and 11)
To improve the junction arrangement where Birmingham Road meets Stourbridge Road to benefit all users	– Improves equitable access to local services and facilities (Objective 2) – Does not reduce the need to travel or encourage more sustainable travel patterns (Objective 4) – May offer the opportunity for new development which maximises previously developed land (Objective 6) – Develops the town centre infrastructure, and therefore the economy (Objective 12)

Retailing

AAP objectives	Relevance to Sustainability Objectives
To improve the range and quality of the retail offer to enhance the viability of the town centre as a sustainable shopping destination and attract a major retail anchor for the Market Hall site	– Would improve the quality of and equitable access to local services and facilities (Objective 2) – Reduces the need to travel to competing centres (Objective 4) – New development needs to conserve and enhance the historic built environment (Objective 7) – Would need to ensure that development does not occur in high risk flood zones and does not contribute towards surface water flooding (Objective 8) – Would need to promote energy efficiency and respond to climate change (Objectives 9 and 11) – Would help to improve the town centre infrastructure and skills base (Objectives 12 and 13)
To promote the development of local shops and services where feasible	– Aims to improve local shop and service provision (Objective 2) – Reduces the need to travel to competing centres (Objective 4) – Encourages pride and social responsibility in the local community (Objective 5) – Encourages development of local firms, which is sustainable (Objective 15)
To improve the range and quality of the evening economy uses within the town centre to include a choice of bars, cafes and restaurants, in order to promote the vitality of the town centre	– Aims to improve the range and quality of local facilities (Objective 2) – Would need to be mindful of the need to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (Objective 3) – Reduces the need to travel to competing centres (Objective 4) – New development needs to conserve and enhance the historic built environment (Objective 7) – Would need to ensure that development does not occur in high risk flood zones and does not contribute towards surface water flooding (Objective 8) – Would need to promote energy efficiency and respond to climate change (Objectives 9 and 11) – Would help to improve the town centre infrastructure and skills base (Objectives 12 and 13)
To provide a regular outdoor market in the High Street	– Aims to improve local facilities (Objective 2) – Reduces the need to travel to competing centres (Objective 4) – Encourages pride and social responsibility in the local community (Objective 5) – Would help to retain the market as a feature of the town centre (Objective 7) – Encourages development of local trade, which is sustainable (Objective 15)

Living and Working in Bromsgrove

AAP objectives	Relevance to Sustainability Objectives
To deliver high quality housing which provides a mix of unit sizes and tenure, in order to promote a sustainable community which contributes to the vitality and viability of the town centre	– Provides affordable housing (Objective 1) – The need to travel may be reduced if housing is located in the town centre (Objective 4) – Maximises brownfield land and vacant town centre sites (Objective 6) – Seeks well designed and high quality built environment (Objective 7) – Would need to ensure that development does not occur in high risk flood zones and does not contribute towards surface water flooding (Objective 8) – Would need to promote energy efficiency and respond to climate change (Objectives 9 and 11)
To ensure that residential unit numbers, densities and affordable housing provision is sufficient and appropriate for the local area	– Provides affordable housing (Objective 1) – The need to travel may be reduced if housing is located in the town centre (Objective 4) – Would need to maximise brownfield land and vacant buildings (Objective 6) – Seeks well designed and high quality built environment (Objective 7) – Ensures that housing density is appropriate, and therefore not located in areas of high flood risk (Objective 8)
To improve the quality and efficiency of public service provision	– Improves the quality of and access to services (Objective 2) – Reduces the need to travel (Objective 4) – Promotes energy efficiency and responds to climate change (Objectives 9 and 11)
To ensure that crime is kept at a low level by extending CCTV coverage in the town centre and designing out crime where possible	– Reduces crime and fear of crime (Objective 3) – Needs to conserve and enhance the historic built environment (Objective 7)

Environment and Open Spaces

AAP objectives	Relevance to Sustainability Objectives
To radically improve the quality of the pedestrianised high street	– Improves access to local services and facilities, by improving pedestrian surface (Objective 2) – May help to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (Objective 3) – May present the opportunity for the community to participate in improvements (Objective 5) – Needs to conserve and enhance the historic built environment heritage (Objective 7) – Needs to promote energy efficiency, and not contribute to surface water flooding (Objectives 8 and 9) – Sustainable use of material assets (Objective 15)
Improve pedestrian linkages and accessibility between the High Street and town centre open spaces	– Improves quality of local services and facilities (Objective 2) – May help to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (Objective 3) – Encourages pride and social responsibility in the local community (Objective 5) – Needs to conserve and enhance the historic built environment heritage (Objective 7) – Protects and enhances the quality of water, soil and air quality (Objective 10) – Sustainable use of material assets (Objective 15)
To improve and enhance the quality and value of open spaces in the town centre, particularly the Recreation Ground and Spadesbourne Brook	– Improves equitable access to open spaces (Objective 2) – Should attempt to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (Objective 3) – Encourages pride and social responsibility in the local community (Objective 5) – Protects and enhances the quality of water, soil and air quality (Objective 10) – Sustainable use of material assets (Objective 15)