

WEDNESBURY TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

*A vision
for the future*



August 2024

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Prepared by:



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Foreword



Councillor Peter Hughes
Cabinet Member for
Regeneration and Infrastructure

Maria Jardine

Chair of the Wednesbury Levelling
Up Partnership Board



The Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan sets out priorities to revitalise the town centre as the vibrant heart of Wednesbury. It will help to encourage and secure further investment for Wednesbury, and provide direction on how the town centre develops, changes and adapts over the next 10 years.

The Cabinet's ambitions are to foster a thriving economy which provides opportunities for growth; to improve the health of our residents and make Sandwell a great place for our children and young people to grow up in, whilst maintaining a cleaner, greener, safer environment. The Masterplan will help to ensure that we achieve these ambitions by evolving Wednesbury into a dynamic and sustainable place that supports businesses, enhances community well-being, and attracts new development opportunities.

As Chair of the Wednesbury Partnership Board, I am pleased to present this ambitious Masterplan which puts down on paper a shared vision to improve the town centre.

The plan envisions a lively town centre with a mix of new uses and supportive residential communities. Our goal is to create a place where people can live, stay, and enjoy their town centre, making Wednesbury, with its rich industrial heritage and history, a place we are all proud to call home.

This Masterplan marks the start of a significant journey towards the future regeneration and transformational change of our town.





Sandwell Council have prepared a masterplan for Wednesbury Town Centre to help achieve our vision for the future of the town:

The town centre will be revitalised as the vibrant heart of Wednesbury, a historic Black Country market town with a proud heritage, and a contemporary place where people live and work that supports the needs and wellbeing of local communities.

Wednesbury will boast a distinctive visitor experience that will combine shopping with a diverse evening economy and cultural offer that welcomes a broader range of visitors from across Sandwell's communities.



The Need for Change

The challenges faced by Wednesbury are common to many town centres in the UK, and it is important that the town centre adapts in order to play a key role in the future success of the wider community and West Midlands region. Town centres have been a focal element of regeneration and planning strategy, with Wednesbury benefiting from Levelling-Up funding in recent years. The recent change in UK government will result in an evolution of the regeneration and funding which the Masterplan must be positioned to respond to.

A number of key drivers for change in Wednesbury shape the need for a masterplan to guide and promote future change and investment. These include:

Changing High Street Trends

In particular decreased demand for, and resulting oversupply of retail space due to changing spending habits, increased out of town and online retail, and a change in the types of premises demanded. Around 15% of retail units in the town centre are vacant, whilst retail space is dominated by large units including Morrisons. There is an increased need for town centres to offer a distinctive visitor experience, more leisure and community facilities, places to live and work, and a more independent retail offer.

Visitor Perceptions

There are negative perceptions of the town as a place to live, work and visit. This includes poor perceptions relating to crime and safety (especially for women and girls), a perception that there is a limited offer to attract families, a perceived oversupply of certain retail uses, and limited offer to attract visitors in the evening.

Quality of the Environment

The town centre is dominated by poorly maintained and dilapidated buildings and vacant sites. Whilst the historic core creates a strong sense of character, many buildings are in poor repair or include inappropriate modern alterations. Poor quality modern infill buildings and gap sites detract from the overall character. Areas surrounding the town centre, including the ring road and areas linking to the metro stop, have a fragmented character which creates a poor welcome.

Socio Economic Challenges

Wednesbury town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods are identified amongst the most deprived communities in England (75% of communities within the top 20%) based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. This includes low income and low participation in higher education. Investment in the town can help to improve economic outcomes, become a driver for economic growth, and better connects residents with jobs and educational opportunities within the region.

Accessibility and Connectivity

Whilst the town centre is located in a central position within the Black Country, it is perceived as being difficult to access. Large roads, areas of urban fragmentation and poor-quality infrastructure detract from the desirability to walk and cycle. There is an over supply of car parking, however parking is dispersed and managed in a way which can make it difficult to access. Proximity to the Metro offers a significant opportunity to improve accessibility if it can be better connected with the town centre.

Development Viability

Demand for new development and investment to improve existing properties is low, resulting in challenges for development viability and resulting high levels of dilapidated buildings and empty sites. Wednesbury needs a step change on how it is perceived as place to live, visit and do business in order to attract new investment, drawing in its metro connectivity with Birmingham city centre (26 mins), Wolverhampton (17 mins), and Dudley (around 15 mins*) as well as support from the public sector to help development to take place.

Sustainability

The Climate and Ecology emergencies represent the major challenges of our time, and shape statutory requirements to create Carbon Net Zero communities by 2050 and contribute to Biodiversity Net Gain. These missions will influence all future change in Wednesbury town centre, in terms of the quality of buildings infrastructure, developing in sustainable locations, need for low carbon travel options, and the importance of greening the urban environment to improve the local microclimate, air quality, water resilience and support wider community health and wellbeing.

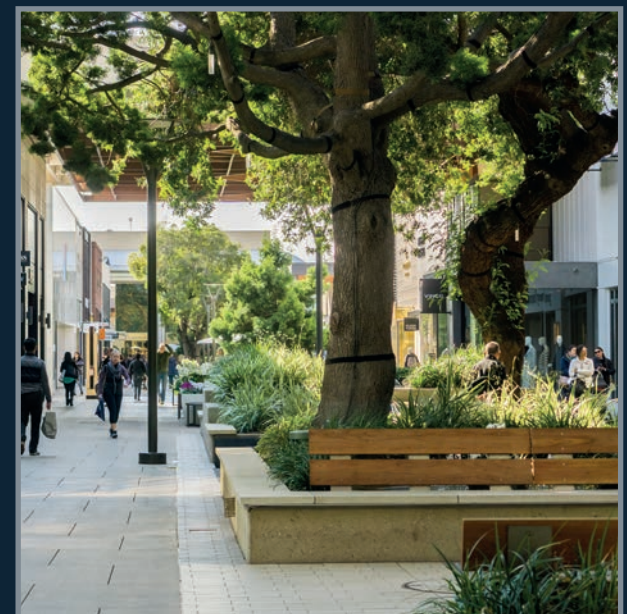
*Journey times to be confirmed

The Masterplan Aims

1 **A welcoming and inclusive town centre** with attractive points of arrival, an improved sense of safety, high quality wayfinding and a distinctive character which draws on the identity and heritage of Wednesbury.

2 **A well-connected place** which is easy to walk and cycle to and around, has better links to the Metro, is well integrated with surrounding areas to support sustainable patterns of travel, and is easy to get to by a range of modes.

3 **A transformed environment** with enhanced public realm, repaired townscape, more green infrastructure, better integration with surrounding open spaces and resilience to climate change.



4

A consolidated and strengthened retail offer with a diversified range of shops, more independent businesses and an expanded evening, cultural, community and leisure offering which will attract families and children.

5

A diversified mix of land uses including higher density residential development, places for enterprise and employment and facilities which support these uses, tackling vacant sites and buildings.

6

An active and vibrant place in the daytime and evening with high footfall in key retail streets, active ground floor uses and spill out, and animation of the public realm through events, markets, pop-ups and meanwhile uses.



Public Consultation

The Masterplan sets out to address the key priorities of the local community and other stakeholders. The plan making process has responded to a series of engagement activities to understand local priorities.

Between January and March 2021 an expansive community engagement and arts programme called 'High Street Stories' was undertaken which helped to identify an understanding of the town's culture and identity.

A public survey was undertaken as part of a public engagement event held at Wednesbury Market on 4th November 2023 to capture views on the current state of the town centre and potential future regeneration.

The public survey highlighted that many visitors to the town centre are frequent visitors, with the vast majority of respondents visiting at least once per week, and over 50% visiting several times a week or daily. Most respondents stated they very rarely visit in the evening, however it should be noted that the surveys were only conducted during the daytime.

A number of key local issues and priorities captured through these activities:

- There is a strong sense of identity, community pride and friendliness, and a feeling that this is important to the future of the town and town centre.
- Many visitors come to the town centre to use community facilities such as the Library, as well as visiting cafés as a social outing.
- Shopping is a key reason for visiting, however many respondents feel that there should be a better range of shops including traditional food shops and more clothes and comparison retail.
- Users of the town centre feel that there should be an improved market offer.
- Maintenance and management are issues, including concern at the condition of buildings and a perceived high level of litter.
- There should be more places to sit.
- Personal safety / security is a concern for people visiting in the evening.
- There is a feeling that there should be more evening activity, especially for families and a broader range of visitors.

Public consultation of the Masterplan was completed between May and June 2024 consisting of a public engagement event at Wednesbury Library, in addition to community group and school workshops and an online survey. The engagement captured views which have been taken into consideration in the making of this document.



Figure 1 Public event (Philip Parnell Photography)

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Status of the Plan

This Masterplan sets out an integrated, placemaking-led approach for future regeneration in Wednesbury town centre, to guide Sandwell Council's decision making around investment, policy and partnership. This will help us to capture opportunities to diversify the town centre and make it more resilient to the challenges faced by retail centres and the wider communities of the town.

Masterplans are a key tool for supporting access to regeneration funding, including the Levelling Up Fund, which represents the largest source of funding for urban regeneration projects in the UK. The masterplan will also support access to a wider range of potential funding from UK government and other sources.

The Masterplan does not have statutory status in terms of planning or other council decision-making, but may be seen as a material consideration and indication of Sandwell Council's future intentions in relation to policy creation.

Sandwell Council prepared a Masterplan for West Bromwich Town Centre in 2022. These two plans should be seen as complementary and form part of the wider regeneration strategy for Sandwell.

Plan Timeframe

The Masterplan has a time horizon of 10 years, guiding development up to 2034. The strategy includes 'quick win' projects which can be delivered within the context of current available funding, alongside more complex, longer-term projects which will require further feasibility assessment. The Council will continue to review the strategy over the course of its lifetime, responding to changing circumstances and capturing new opportunities as they arise.

Producing the Plan

The Masterplan was prepared by Sandwell Council with support from Mott MacDonald and Aspinall Verdi in 2024. This process included a range of public and stakeholder engagement events to capture local views, interests, and aspirations.

“**Fundamentally, high streets and town centres have the same purpose - to meet the needs of their catchment communities.**”

High Street Task Force

1.2 The Study Area

The Masterplan focuses on Wednesbury town centre. The study area boundary draws on the retail area boundary set out in the Sandwell Draft Local Plan (2023) with expansion to include some potential development areas. This includes the main shopping streets of Union Street, Upper High Street, Lower High Street, and Market Place as well as surrounding streets, car parks, and Morrisons superstore.

The Plan also considers the relationships between the town centre and the wider town, particularly including connections with the Wednesbury Great Western Street metro stop, Wednesbury Leisure Centre, Wednesbury Library, as well as surrounding employment areas, residential areas, and open spaces.



Figure 2 Study Area

Key
Study Area



1.3 Regeneration Context

UK Levelling Up Mission

The UK's Levelling Up Mission¹ is about growing the economy, creating jobs, and supporting communities. The UK Government has administered a range of funds, most notably, £4.8bn as part of the Levelling Up Fund. The commitment by the government is to support and generate equal opportunity across the UK.

Sandwell has attracted over £361m investment from funds, including City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS), UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and decarbonisation funding, which all relate to the 12 Levelling Up Missions.

Projects such as the redevelopment of Haden Hill Leisure Centre in Cradley Heath, and Town Deals for Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich have all attracted significant funding to Sandwell to support the regeneration of the area, looking to create equal opportunity for residents.

Sandwell Council and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) have agreed a Levelling Up Partnership (LUP) that will channel £20m of investment into ambitious projects for the community in Wednesbury. The partnership will help Sandwell Council deliver new homes, tackle crime and antisocial behaviour, improve green spaces and Wednesbury town centre, and expand the Millennium Centre so that more can be done to give people the skills they need to secure better jobs.

The 12 Levelling Up Missions

- **Living Standards**
- **Research & Development**
- **Transport**
- **Digital Connectivity**
- **Education**
- **Skills**
- **Health**
- **Wellbeing**
- **Pride in Place**
- **Housing**
- **Crime**
- **Local Leadership**

¹ DLUHC (2022) Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper

UK Approach to Town Centre Regeneration

The UK Government acknowledges the long-term challenges that continue to face high streets and town centres and has therefore developed a long-term plan to support the evolution of high streets into thriving places to work, visit, and live which will breathe new life into town centres. Key to this is transforming derelict buildings, cleaning up the streets, and giving communities the chance to own their local pubs, theatres, sports grounds, and corner shops.

High Street Task Force

The High Streets Task Force was commissioned by the government in 2019, with the aim of delivering a range of services which support local authorities' capacity to create town centres and high streets that are at the heart of their communities, with a unique sense of place and a strong identity. The task force sets out that:

- High streets and town centre have to be both vital (full of reasons for people to visit) and viable (attractive to both visitors and investors in the longer term).
- High streets need to become less reliant on retail and more multi-functional to be resilient and sustainable going forwards.

Net Zero Commitments

The UK Government's Net Zero Strategy (2021) sets out a long-term plan to achieve net zero by 2050. A key commitment of the Net Zero Strategy is to champion climate action within local planning authorities.

Sandwell Council declared a climate emergency in 2020. The Climate Change Strategy for the 2021-2025 period sets out Sandwell Council's target for the Council to become carbon neutral by 2030 and for the borough to become carbon neutral by 2041. The strategy, paired with the Climate Change Action Plan covers the 6 themes of Council estate and operations, the built environment, transport, waste, adaptation, and natural capital.

Policy

The following National and Local Design Guidelines have been considered in the formulation of the masterplan:

- Sandwell Plan 2024-2027
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- National Design Guide
- Black Country Core Strategy
- Regional Transport Strategies
- Draft Sandwell Local Plan
- Active Travel Strategies
- Building for a Healthy Life
- Sandwell Council’s Residential Design Guide SPD
- Wednesbury Market Place Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2024

Further details are available in Appendix A



Figure 3 Ten Characteristics of a Well-Designed Place (National Design Guide)

1.4 Existing Projects

West Midlands Metro Expansion

A new line from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill is currently under construction. The 11km extension begins at the Wednesbury Great Western Street metro stop and will be delivered in two phases.

- Phase 1: Wednesbury Great Western Street to Flood Street in Dudley town centre.
- Phase 2: Flood Street to Brierley Hill.

Wednesbury Great Western Street metro stop will serve as an interchange location for services from Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Dudley. Phase 1 is anticipated to commence operation in 2024/5,

TfWM have also identified a range of further potential extensions to the network, subject to appraisal, scheme development and funding. In the long term, this could include a new link between Wednesbury to Walsall, and extension of the new route from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill linking to Stourbridge.



Figure 4 West Midlands Metro Improvements Map (TfWM)

Wednesbury High Street Heritage Action Zone

High Street Heritage Action Zones (HSHAZ) are designed to unleash the power of the historic environment, creating conditions for economic growth and improving the quality of life in villages, towns and cities across England. HSHAZs are backed with government funding and offer businesses the opportunity to apply for grants to improve their historic buildings.

Wednesbury town centre has been subject to a HSHAZ between March 2020 and March 2024 in partnership between Historic England and Sandwell Council. The programme aimed to deliver improvements to the historic town core and Market Place, with a focus on streetscape enhancements and uplift to surrounding historic buildings.

This is in response to a lack of maintenance over many years due to low rents and poor profit margins leading to localised market failure.

The scheme included:

- £3.6 million investment consisting of £1.8 million from Historic England and £1.8 million from Sandwell Council.
- Conservation and restoration of the Grade II listed Clock tower in Market Place.
- Enhancement of Market Place public realm, including moving the markets back to Market Place with new market/event stalls.
- Historic Building Renovation of one building in the Conservation Area (8 Market Place).
- 'We Are Wednesbury' cultural programme and community engagement, led by Multistory.



Figure 5 Renovation of 8 Market Street (Sandwell Council)

2 Wednesbury Today

Wednesbury is a market town located in the West Midlands metro area, around 11km to the north-west of Birmingham city centre. It is the second largest town centre in Sandwell.

The town forms part of the distinctive Black Country urban area which includes the neighbouring areas of Dudley and Wolverhampton.

Wednesbury has a stop on the West Midlands Metro, with services towards Birmingham (26 minutes) and Wolverhampton (17 minutes), and future services to Dudley and beyond.

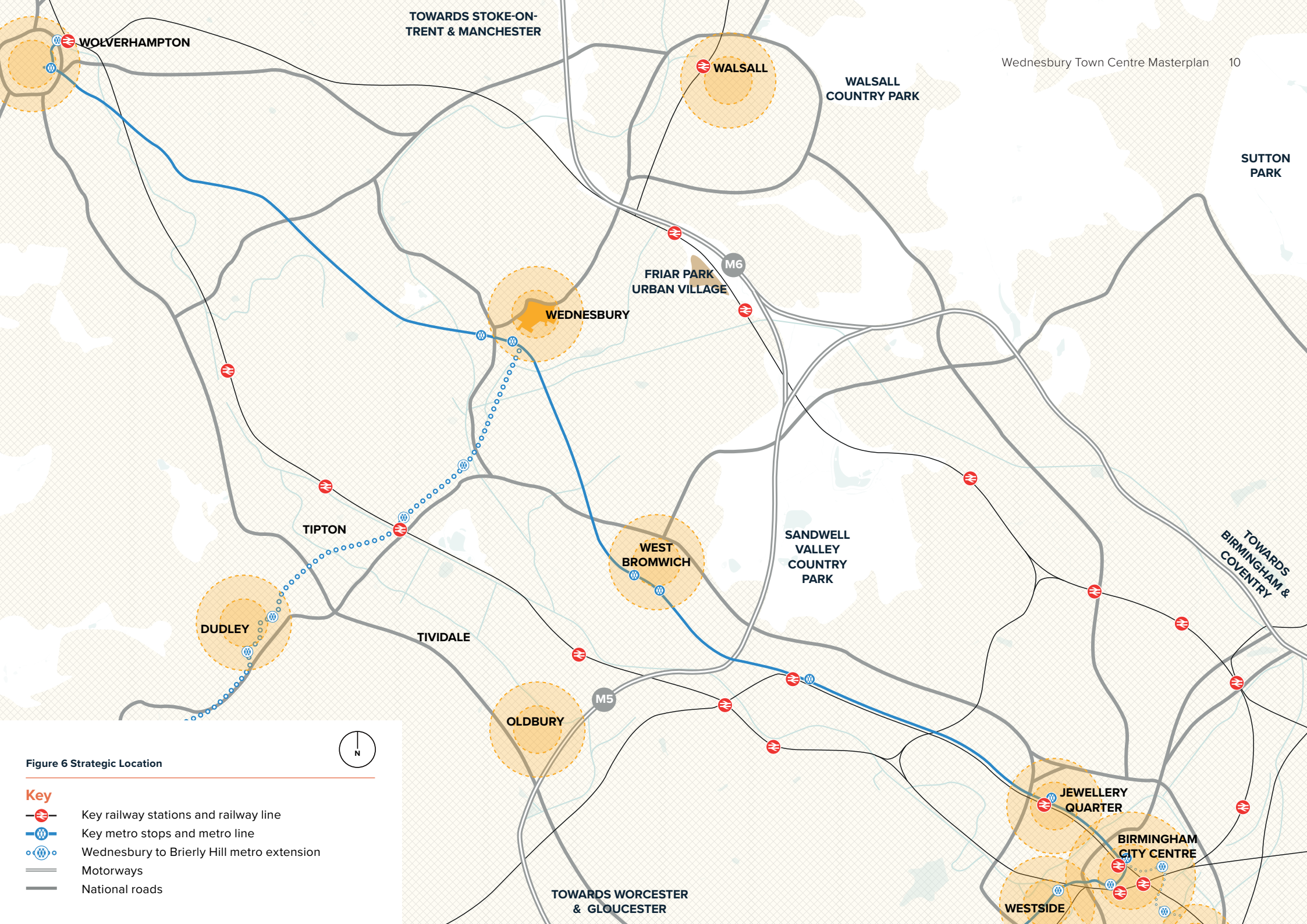


Figure 6 Strategic Location



- Key**
- Key railway stations and railway line
 - Key metro stops and metro line
 - Wednesbury to Brierly Hill metro extension
 - Motorways
 - National roads



2.1 Wednesbury's Story

The town is believed to pre-date the early medieval period, with some evidence of an iron-age hillfort in the area. The Domesday Book of 1086 records the town as 'Wadnesberie', with a population of around 9 households, putting it in the smallest 40% of settlements recorded at this time. It is described as 'One of the more considerable villages of a thinly populated and economically backward area' at this point. The town takes its name from 'Woden's burh', with Woden likely referring to the Pagan god and burh a stronghold or fortification.

Communication routes played a crucial role in shaping Wednesbury's development, and its proximity to vital crossing points along the River Tame likely fuelled the town's growth throughout the Medieval period. Although the market charter was not in place until 1709, excavations in the Market Place area have suggested that the triangular public square that is identifiable today was occupied and used by the 14th century.

Wednesbury stands as a testament to the early industrial prowess of the Black Country, with some of the earliest industrial activity recorded here as far back as 1315, including coal mining, pottery and nail manufacturing. These early ventures not only laid the groundwork for the region's industrial dominance but also underscored Wednesbury's role in the burgeoning Industrial Revolution in this area.

By the 18th and 19th centuries, industry in Wednesbury had expanded and diversified to include saw making and gun-barrel making, with historic mapping from this period showing an explosion in factories including Brunswick Works, Lea Brook Iron Works, Chemical Works and Old Patent Tube Works. The increase in trade, commerce and industry throughout this period saw the heightened affluence and increased prosperity of the area, which also corresponded with an increase in public houses, property building and services for coaches travelling through the town. The town and surrounding area grew exponentially through this period, with the construction of roads, canals such as the Walsall Canal and Tame Valley Canal and rail lines such as the L&NWR and GWR linking Wednesbury to the wider networks of Birmingham.

Figure 7 Historic Photos from the Town Centre (Multistory)

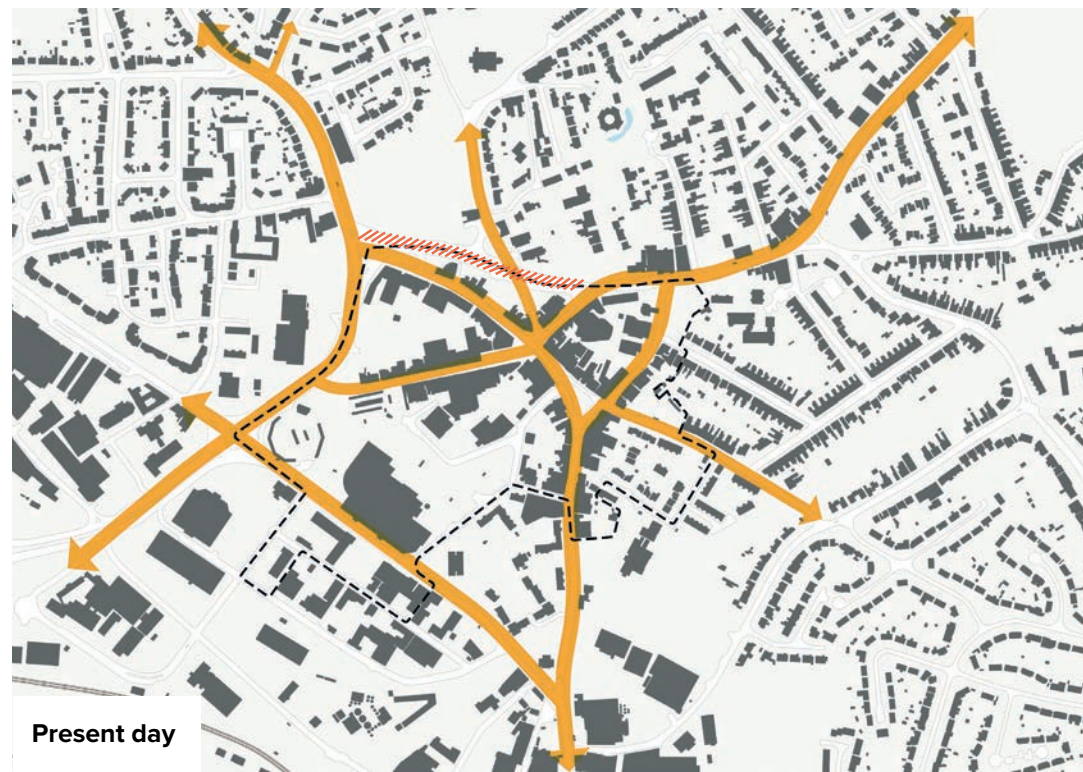
1. Former Talbot Hotel
2. Former George & Dragon Hotel and Tram on Market Place
3. Market Place (looking northwest)





1840-1880

Wednesbury's economic prosperity continued well into the early 20th century, something which is reflected in the new recreational buildings constructed in this period such as the Gaumont Cinema, Hippodrome and Wednesbury Labour Exchange. However, by the latter half of this period, Wednesbury saw an economic downturn, triggered by the rapid decline in industry. Over the 20th Century, Wednesbury became subsumed into the Black Country and West Midlands continuous built-up areas. Whilst it retains its character and identity as an independent town, it has increasingly become integrated with the wider area and lost some significance compared to larger urban centres and out-of-town retail centres. Construction of a significant motorway and highway network from the 1960s onwards changed the structure of the Black Country, with the A41 and A461 dual carriageways being built through and close to Wednesbury town centre.



Present day

Figure 8 Historic Maps Regression (Top: National library of Scotland)



2.2 Townscape Character

Wednesbury has a distinctive character which draws heavily from its history as an industrial town in the Black Country and its history as a market town.

Key aspects of the existing townscape, including its strengths and weaknesses, are set out on the following page.

Wednesbury Market Place Conservation Area, designated in 1980 and extended in 2024, covers much of the town centre, focused around the Market Place. Please see appendix for further detail.



Figure 9 Key Heritage Features from the Town Centre

1. Union Street
2. Market Place
3. Upper High Street
4. Clock Tower
5. Wednesbury library
6. Museum and Art Gallery



STRENGTHS WEAKNESSES

- A largely intact historic townscape consisting typically of two and three-storey buildings with continuous frontage and distinctive corner buildings, with a range of ages, architectural styles and materials.
- A distinctive and historic street pattern and urban grain, including the triangular Market Place, which has been in existence since at least the late medieval period. This area has clear and understandable links with the past.
- A high propensity for active ground floors on Union Street, Upper High Street, Lower High Street and Market, including many traditional shopfronts and notable public houses, maintaining a commercial character.
- A number of significant / landmark buildings, most notably the Grade II listed market clock tower, John Taylor Duce & Sons building (Talbot House), the Golden Cross public house (amongst others), the former Gaumont Cinema, Wednesbury Town Hall and Wednesbury Museum and Art Gallery. Wednesbury Library and Memorial Gardens are located directly to the north of the study area.

- Areas of weak townscape character including poor quality modern infill buildings, and gap sites which have a poor appearance and feel of neglect.
- Poor quality property edges / backs facing High Bullen where the historic urban grain has been fractured, creating a poor impression of the town for people arriving / passing by car and bus.
- Significant backlog of repair and maintenance issues across the town with many buildings in a poor state of repair, or have been subject to inappropriate modern alterations and shop front signage which detract from historic character.
- High status vacant buildings such as the Gaumont Cinema negatively impact views into and out of the town and attract anti-social behaviour.
- Numerous back lanes, such as Hitchin's Croft, which lead pedestrians through areas of poor-quality public realm and townscape and provide access and views to the backs of properties.



2.3 Land Use & Development

Wednesbury town centre is a key service centre within the Black Country and has a range of land-uses associated with this role, notably:

- A diverse range of small and medium sized retail, primarily focused around Union Street, Upper High Street, Lower High Street and Market Place.
- Larger retail units, notably Morrisons superstore, and other supermarkets Iceland and Farmfoods.
- A range of cafés, sandwich shops and takeaways.
- A range of public houses.
- A range of leisure, community, cultural and civic facilities, including the Library, Leisure Centre, Museum & Art Gallery and Town Hall.
- There have been some small-scale developments of apartments in the town centre in recent years.
- A collection of vacant buildings at ground and upper floors.
- There are two approved housing sites in or close to the town centre, one of which has extant planning consent.

- £6m investment in a new NHS Health Centre for Wednesbury delivered in 2023 adjacent to Wednesbury Leisure Centre which releases an employment / commercial site for development (Spires).
- The site of the Friar Park Urban Village Masterplan, jointly owned by the WMCA and Sandwell Council, with capacity for 630 homes, lies approximately 1 mile from Wednesbury and has potential to impact footfall in the town centre.

The areas to the north, east and west of the town centre are broadly residential in character, whilst the area to the south is dominated by a wide range of industrial uses. The area to the south is identified as forming part of the Wednesbury to Tipton Metro Corridor Regeneration Area which promotes more mixed-use development character whilst protecting some employment sites.

Figure 10 Land Uses in Wednesbury

1. Morrisons superstore
2. Industrial and employment area
3. Wednesbury Leisure centre



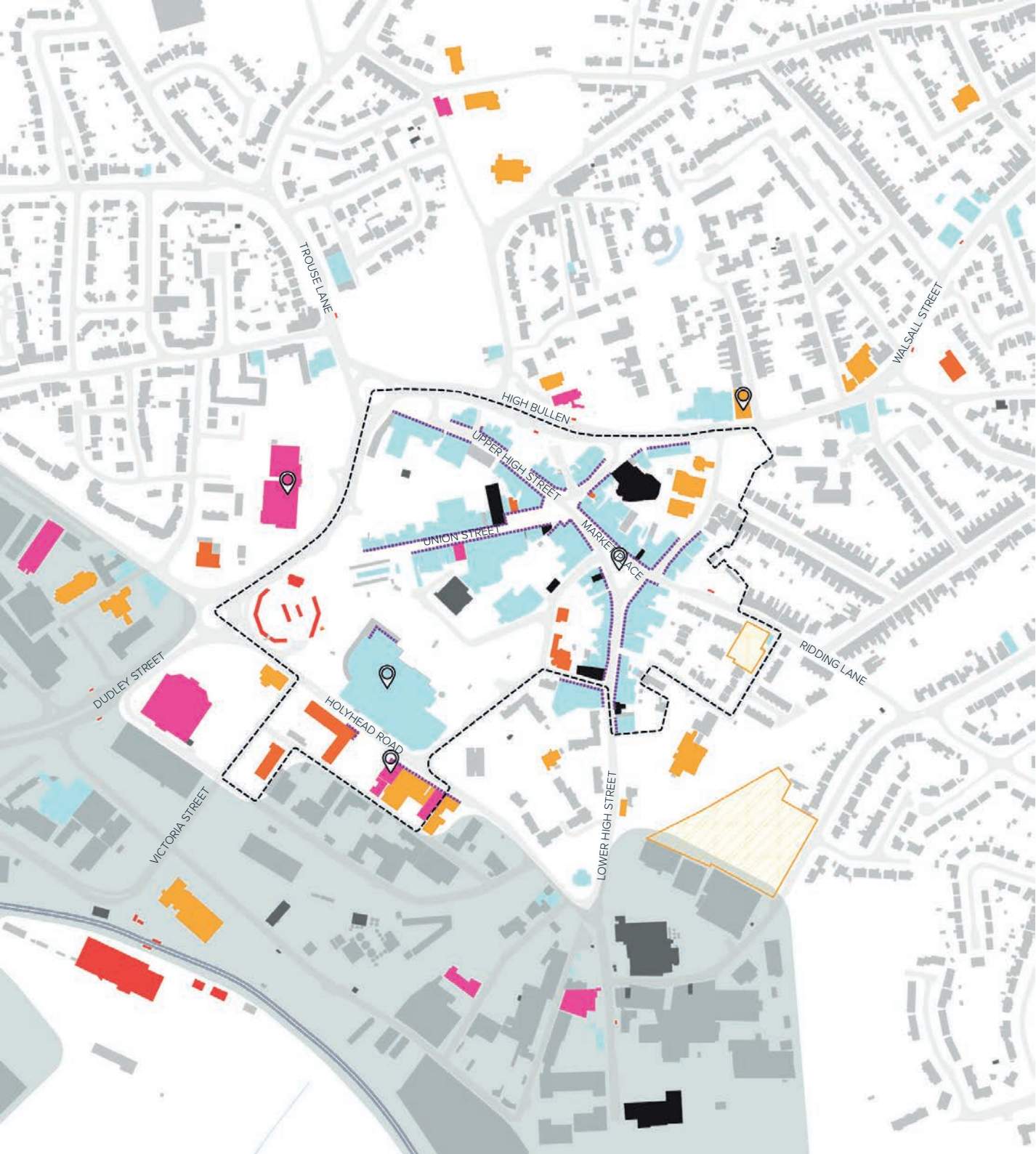


Figure 11 Land Use and Development



- Key**
- Study area
 - Retail and commercial
 - Community and civic
 - Health and emergency services
 - Leisure
 - Transport
 - Utility
 - Primary industrial & employment area
 - Vacant properties
 - Active frontages
 - Destinations
 - Planning applications

2.4 Movement & Access

To and From the Town Centre

Wednesbury is well integrated within the wider regional transport network, however there are a range of issues associated with accessibility:

- Wednesbury Great Western Street metro stop is located 500m to the south west of the town centre. The metro provides frequent services to Wolverhampton and Birmingham (4 to 6 trams per hour in each direction). The metro is currently being extended between Wednesbury and Dudley, which will create additional service patterns and potentially make Wednesbury an interchange location.
- Wednesbury bus station has services to a wide range of destinations within the local and wider Black Country area. There are multiple other bus stop locations, however there is no existing interchange between bus and Metro.
- There is a limited network of cycling routes serving the town centre. There are no National Cycle Network routes serving the town centre.
- There is a network of informal active travel paths associated with canals, which pass within 1km of the town centre but are not connected.
- Wednesbury town centre is easily accessible by road. The A41 and A461 are key roads within the regional road network and carry significant volumes of through traffic.
- The former L&NWR rail corridor alignment extending between Wednesbury and Walsall does not currently have any transport function. There is long term potential to re-open this route for passenger transport.
- There are seven surface car parks in the town centre, providing a total of 338 spaces in Sandwell Council car parks, a further 430 at Morrisons which are available for public use, as well as areas of on-street car parking. Surface car parks, including Morrisons, provide free parking for 2 hours and charge for longer stays. Parking utilisation for Sandwell Council is typically below 65%, with over 125 spaces available at the busiest times on surveyed days.

Within the Town Centre

There are a number of notable aspects relating to movement within the town:

- A high proportion of the town is located within a 15-20 minute walk of the town centre, with a high potential to support walking and cycling.
- The street network is broadly walkable, with a pedestrian spine and permeable network of streets. However, Upper High Street and Lower High Street have limited space for pedestrians.
- SCWIP identifies parts of the town centre as Core Walking Zone 5.
- The pedestrian connection to the Wednesbury Great Western Street metro stop is poor due to lack of enclosure and lack of natural surveillance.
- Limited existing cycling facilities within the town centre. A new cycle route linking the town centre with Wednesbury Great Western Street metro stop has recently been constructed as part of the SCWIP Cycle Route 8.
- The dual carriageways, Dudley Street and High Bullen create barriers to pedestrian movement and integration with surrounding residential and employment areas. Crossings are poorly located in relation to pedestrian desire lines.



Figure 12 Movement and Access



- Key**
- Study area
 - Metro line and stop
 - Metro line extension under construction
 - Metro line extension - long term aspiration
 - Bus station
 - Bus route and stops
 - Existing cycling and walking network
 - Proposed cycling and walking routes
 - Advisory route (out of trading hours)
 - Core walking zone (SCWIP)
 - Public pay and display car parks



Figure 13 Key Public Realm Areas and Features

1. Market Place
2. Union Street
3. Public realm at Wednesbury Great Western Street metro stop



2.5 Public Realm & Activity

Public realm within the town centre is of varying quality, and includes:

- An extensive pedestrianised area of Union Street and the public space at its southern end, which is utilised in some parts for outside café seating.
- Recently redeveloped Market Place with traffic free spaces for pedestrians and activity, along with the relocation of some market activities to this area with fixed market shelters.
- Limited space for pedestrians on Upper / Lower High Street and other trafficked streets.
- Distinctive public art including sculptures at Wednesbury Bus Station, metal friezes on Morrisons superstore, paving details at the southern end of Union Street and the Sleipnir sculpture at Wednesbury Great Western Street metro stop.
- A general lack of street trees or other greenery within the public realm.
- Mixed quality and inconsistent use of materials across streets within the town centre.
- ‘Concrete Collar’ effect created by engineered highway environment of High Bullen and associated junctions, and severance caused by other streets including Holyhead Road.

- Poor quality environment in and around town centre car parks, particularly High Bullen car park, and poor quality routes between car parks and primary streets, creating a poor welcome to the town centre.
- Poor quality environment around Wednesbury Great Western Street metro stop and routes linking the town centre, resulting in a low sense of arrival to the town centre.
- Limited and poor quality wayfinding systems within the town centre.
- Perceived risk of crime and personal safety within the town, particularly for women and potentially vulnerable people.










A number of events take place in Wednesbury on a regular and occasional basis, notably:

- Wednesbury market, which is held three times a week. The market has recently been relocated back to its historic location in Market Place.
- Wednesbury Day, two full Saturdays of activities and entertainment which took place in June 2023 focused towards families.
- Christmas Lantern Procession and lights switch-on which took place in December 2022.



Figure 14 Public Realm and Legibility



- Key**
-  Study area
 -  Barriers to movement
 -  Crossings
 -  Nodes
 -  Footway and pedestrianised areas
 -  Vehicular access to pedestrianised areas
 -  Carriageway
 -  Public parking areas
 -  Private parking areas



2.6 Landscape & Green Infrastructure

Wednesbury town centre currently has limited green infrastructure within its boundary. Existing green spaces and infrastructure within the town centre include:

- Mature trees and ornamental landscape associated with the bus station and adjacent public space.
- Mature trees on the boundaries of Morrisons, High Bullen and Springhead car parks.
- Mature trees on Walsall Street.
- Highway verges and trees associated with Dudley Street and High Bullen.
- Recently planted trees in Market Place.

There are more significant open spaces and elements of green infrastructure surrounding the town centre, including:

- Church Hill open space and adjacent St Bartholomew’s churchyard.
- Trees and planting associated with the former L&NWR rail corridor, largely naturalised.
- Brunswick Park, located around 1km to the north east.
- Hydes Road Playing Fields and other open spaces associated with the River Tame corridor, located around 1km to the south east.
- The town centre slopes gently from north to south, resulting in occasional longer distance views of hills to the south. The area to the north of the town centre slopes up, creating more open views including from Church Hill and the adjacent open space.
- There is no fluvial flood risk identified within the study area. This does not discount the potential for localised surface water flood risk.

Figure 15 Key Landscape Features

1. Mature trees at the Bus Station
2. Mature trees at High Bullen verges
3. Market Place trees
4. Church Hill open space



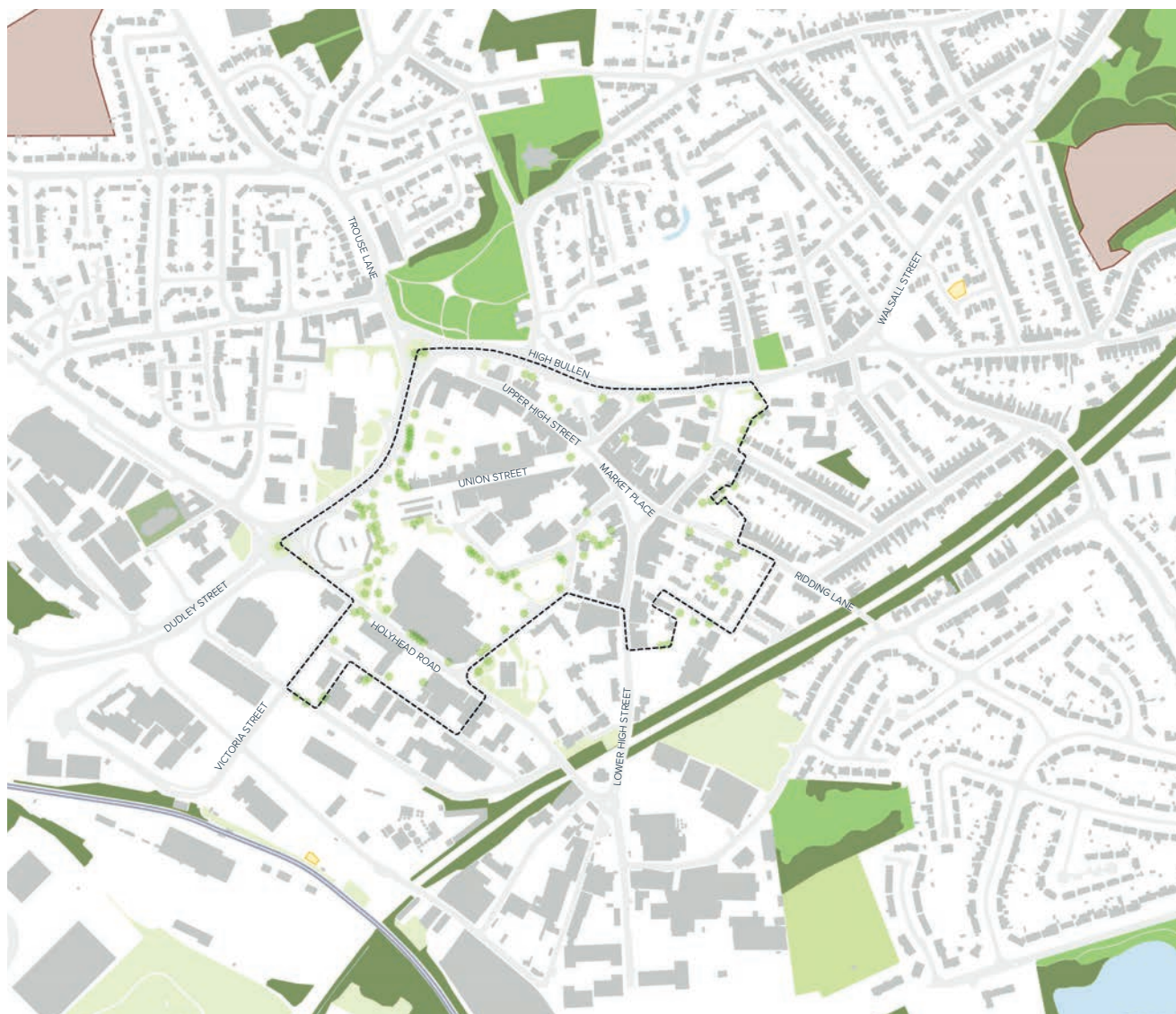










Figure 16 Landscape Character



- Key**
-  Study area
 -  Trees within study area
 -  Community open space
 -  Woodland
 -  Grassland
 -  Religious grounds
 -  Sports and playing fields
 -  Play area

CHALLENGES

2.7 Challenges & Opportunities

A range of key findings have been identified which form the basis for the Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan:

- Dilapidation, vacancy and gaps within the built environment, and access / views to areas of poor quality townscape.
- Changing retail context and likely continued decline in demand.
- Currently limited retail, leisure for families, and small evening economy offer.
- Impact of dual carriageways and associated poor quality environment on the perception of the town and active travel accessibility from adjacent areas.
- Distance to Metro Stop and quality of surrounding environment and routes to the town centre.
- Poor quality welcome to the town centre and resulting user perceptions, including a lack of wayfinding.
- Lack of green infrastructure and open spaces within the town centre.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Strong sense of community pride which can contribute to the future success of the town centre.
- Existing character, identity and heritage, which can be enhanced and revealed as a distinctive assets.
- An existing range of successful community events in the town centre which are helping to change local perceptions.
- Existing residential and employment uses within walking distance of the town centre, which can be better connected to bring more footfall to the area.
- Existing pedestrian spaces and potential to enhance these following from recent investment in Market Place.
- Generally good accessibility by road, bus and Metro, and potential to improve the quality of and connections to points of arrival by these modes.
- Existing green spaces and green infrastructure close to the town centre, which can be better integrated.
- Numerous potential development sites which can bring new uses to the town centre.
- The Wednesbury to Tipton Metro Corridor Regeneration Area brings the opportunity to transform existing lower value industrial uses into a wider range of higher value employment and other uses close to the town centre and metro stop.

3 Vision & Strategies

The town centre will be revitalised as the vibrant heart of Wednesbury, a historic Black Country market town with a proud heritage, and a contemporary place where people live and work that supports the needs and wellbeing of local communities.

Wednesbury will boast a distinctive visitor experience that will combine shopping with a diverse evening economy and cultural offer that welcomes a broader range of visitors from across Sandwell's communities.



3.1 The Aims

1 **A welcoming and inclusive town centre** with attractive points of arrival, an improved sense of safety, high quality wayfinding and a distinctive character which draws on the identity and heritage of Wednesbury.

2 **A well-connected place** which is easy to walk and cycle to and around, has better links to the Metro, is well integrated with surrounding areas to support sustainable patterns of travel, and is easy to get to by a range of modes.

3 **A transformed environment** with enhanced public realm, repaired townscape, more green infrastructure, better integration with surrounding open spaces and resilience to climate change.

4 **A consolidated and strengthened retail offer** with a diversified range of shops, more independent businesses and an expanded evening, cultural, community and leisure offering which will attract families and children.

5 **A diversified mix of land uses** including higher density residential development, places for enterprise and employment and facilities which support these uses, tackling vacant sites and buildings.

6 **An active and vibrant place** in the daytime and evening with high footfall in key retail streets, active ground floor uses and spill out, and animation of the public realm through events, markets, pop-ups and meanwhile uses.

3.2 The Strategies

The Town Centre Masterplan encapsulates five strategies which will shape the future of Wednesbury. The strategies consider how change will be implemented over the period of the plan, based on two broad timeframes:

Shorter Term - Up to 5 years

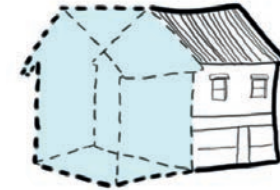
Projects that are simpler to deliver and are feasible / viable within existing funding / market context, 'quick win' projects, and projects which support immediate objectives to catalyse or build foundations for future stages of regeneration.

Longer term - Beyond 5 years

Projects which require more strategic planning and design, which are more complex to deliver including site assembly, or which will be feasible / viable building on successful outcomes from foundational stages of regeneration.



MOVEMENT



DEVELOPMENT



PUBLIC REALM



GREENING



SUSTAINABILITY

Figure 17 The Strategies

3.3 Development Strategy

Development will support the vibrancy of the town centre by densifying and diversifying the types of land-uses present, in particular places for people to live including a variety of types and tenures and affordable homes. This will help to increase footfall throughout the day and evening, supporting the viability of local retail businesses and facilities, whilst also promoting more sustainable patterns of movement by allowing people to live within easy walking distance of the town centre and the facilities they use day-to-day, as well as capturing the opportunity to create new development close to the metro stop.

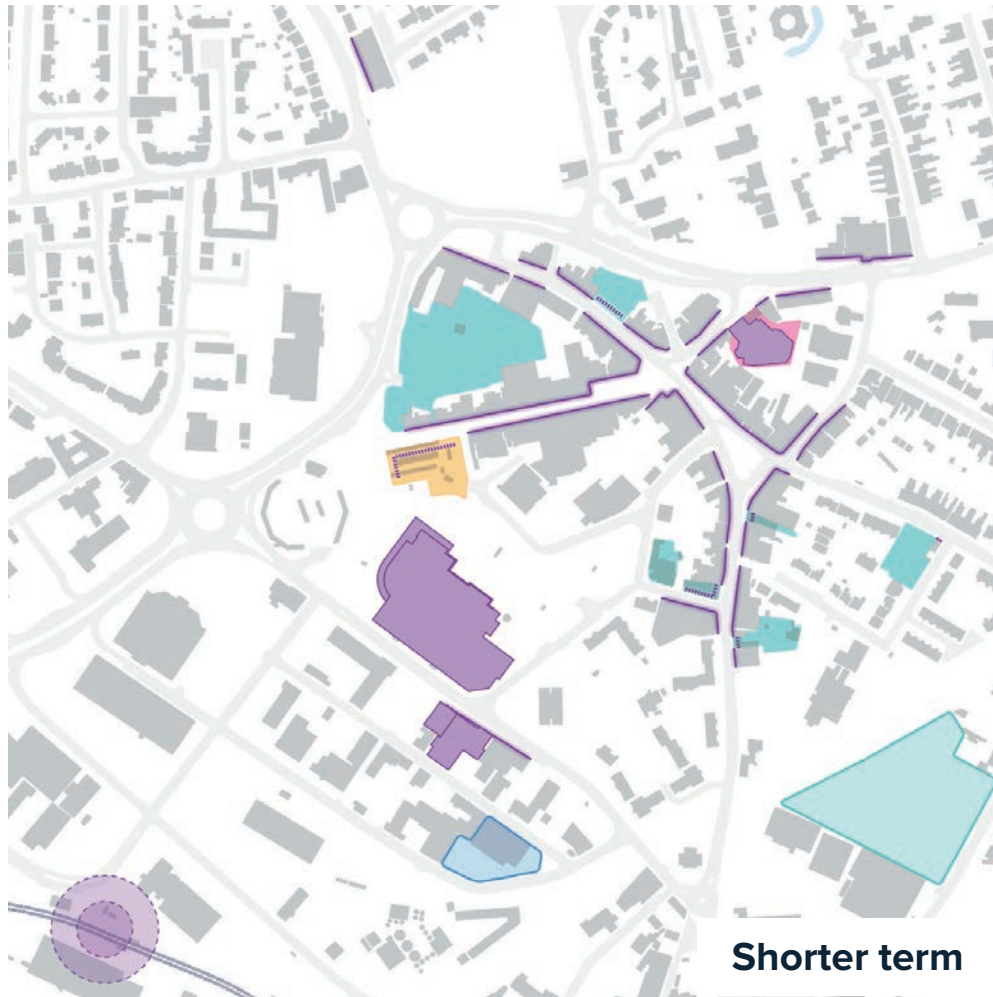
Development will enhance the built environment by infilling gap sites, re-using existing and historic buildings, and creating a stronger urban presence to surrounding main roads to increase the visibility of the town centre, based on the principles of good design and in response to existing local townscape character. It will support the existing pattern of active frontages, and promote a more mixed retail and visitor offer.

Shorter Term

- Development of infill sites within and surrounding the town centre, redevelopment of poorer quality buildings and re-use of vacant buildings.
- Renovation of the former Gaumont Cinema as a leisure destination.
- Pop-up food, drink and events destination at 'Union Yard'.

Longer Term

- Larger scale transformation of the area south of Holyhead Road to create a mixed-use. 'Metro Gateway' based on Transit-Oriented Development principles and in line with the Wednesbury to Tipton Metro Corridor Regeneration Area policy.
- Full redevelopment of the Union Yard site to create a landmark building and use at the gateway to the town centre, with potential for a wider redevelopment reconfiguring the bus station and adjacent public realm spaces.
- Potential other development sites which may become feasible over the longer term.
- Explore other uses which support strategic patterns of development within the Black Country and along the Metro corridors, and which support synergy with development proposed by the West Bromwich Town Centre Masterplan.

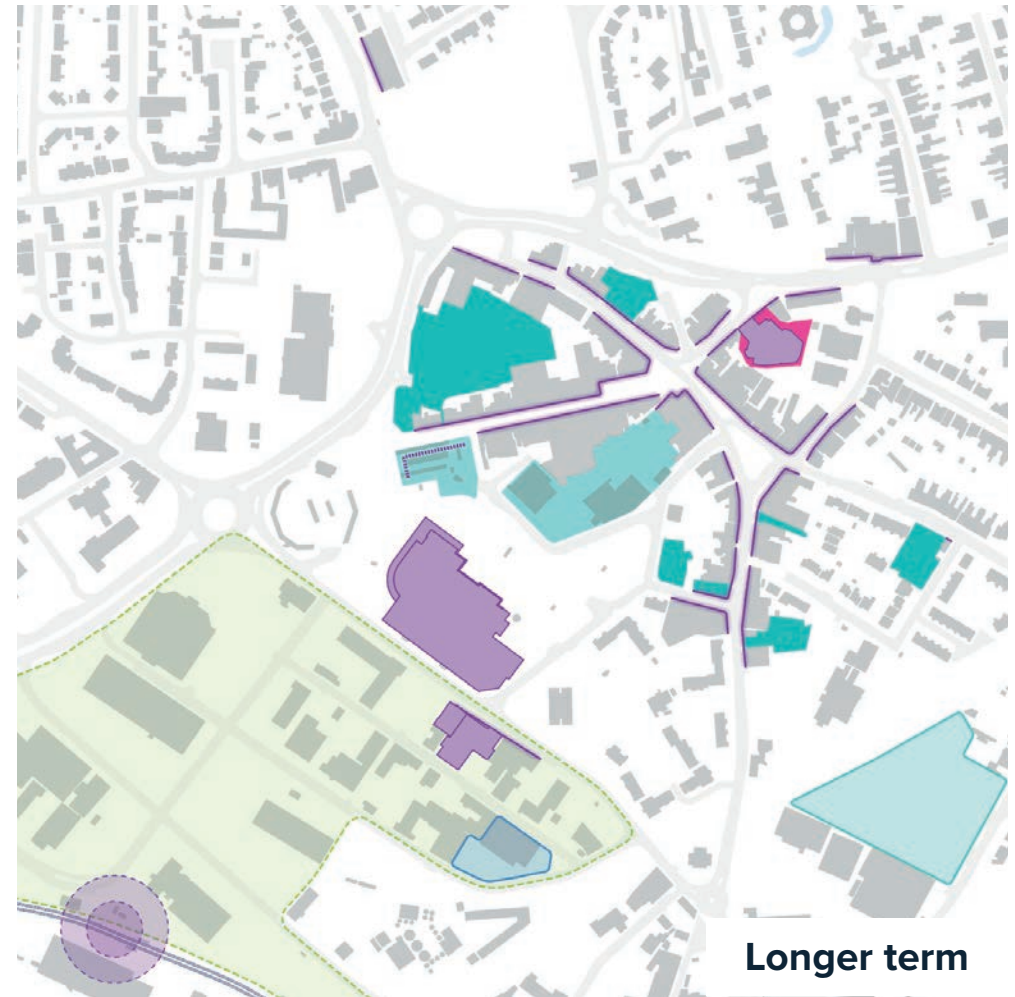


Shorter term

Figure 18 Short Term Development Strategy

Key

- Key destination buildings
- Enhanced active ground floors
- Proposed active frontage
- Extant housing planning consents
- Extant commercial planning consents
- Short term housing sites
- Short term commercial sites
- Short term meanwhile use
- Short term leisure sites



Longer term

Figure 19 Long Term Development Strategy

Key

- Key destination buildings
- Enhanced active ground floors
- Proposed active frontage
- Extant planning consents - housing
- Extant planning consents - commercial
- Completed short term housing sites
- Completed short term commercial sites
- Completed short term leisure sites
- Longer term housing opportunity sites
- Metro gateway strategic area



3.4 Movement Strategy

Transport infrastructure will make it easier for people to travel to the town centre by all modes, with an emphasis on supporting active travel, integrating with surrounding neighbourhoods and encouraging a shift to more sustainable modes and patterns of travel. This will help to ensure that the town centre is a focal point for the community that is convenient, welcoming and inclusive for people to access on a day-to-day basis and easy to find and access for first-time and occasional visitors.

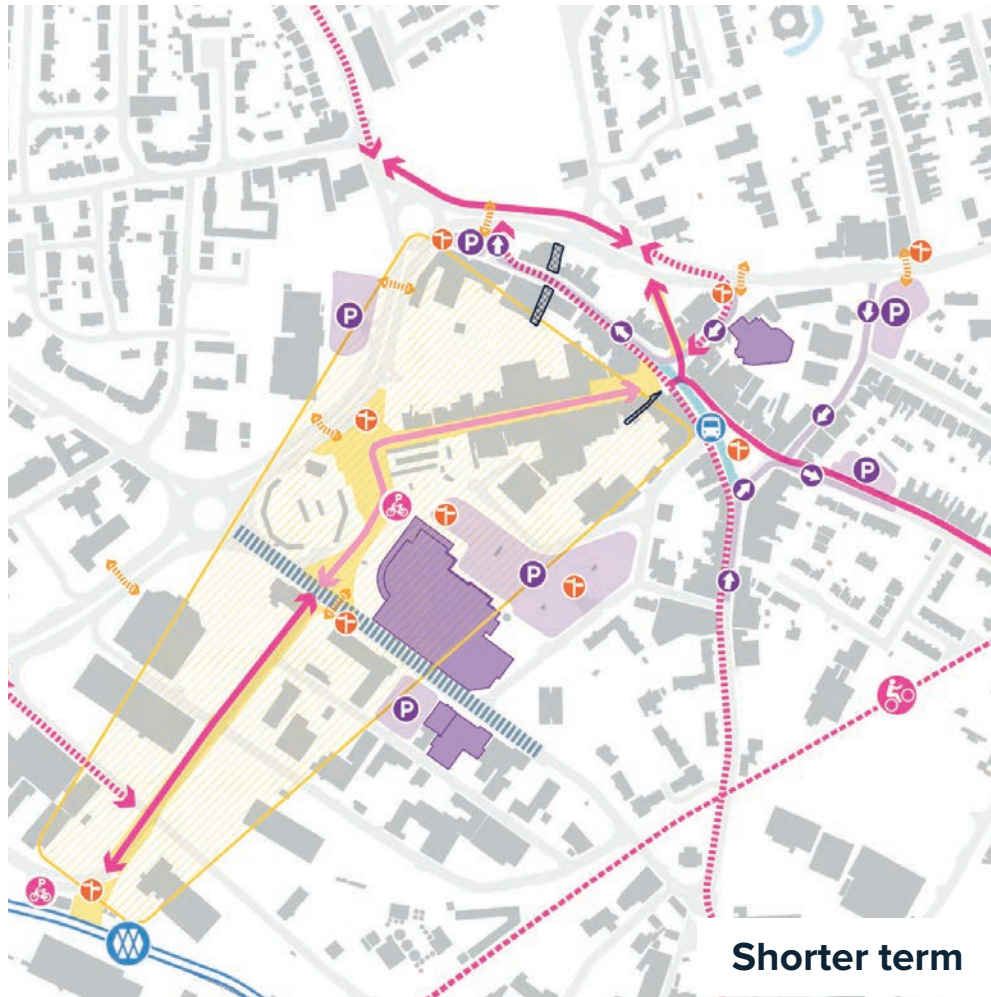
Improved connections to the metro and bus station will help to make the town centre more accessible within the region, and help to promote new development in an accessible, sustainable location. Improving the points of arrival and interchange between modes, will help to simplify people's journeys, including for people arriving by car to town centre car parks.

Shorter Term

- Improve existing cycle routes not fit for purpose to Local Transport Note 1/20 standard.
- New active travel routes, particularly the completion of routes identified in the SCWIP.
- Provision for cycle hubs at the metro stop and in the town centre.
- Improvement of pedestrian environment within the town centre, including wayfinding.
- Consolidation of car parking, improved facilities, advance directional signage and EV charging.
- Improved pedestrian crossings on High Bullen and Dudley Street.
- Reconfigured traffic circulation to discourage rat-running whilst retaining access for visitors.
- Closure / gating of back lanes to prevent footfall in back-land areas.
- Re-use of the former railway alignment to provide an active travel corridor linking to Walsall.

Longer Term

- Further expansion of cycle and walking network including segregated paths on High Bullen and Dudley Street, Potters Lane, and Walsall Street.
- Simplification of High Bullen and Dudley Street, including junctions, to reduce carriageway space (where possible) and improve flow for through traffic.
- Reconfiguration of bus routes to support metro / bus interchange and create bus-stop clusters at key gateways to the town centre.
- Re-use of the former railway alignment to provide new metro corridor linking to Walsall parallel to an active travel route (subject to width of corridor).

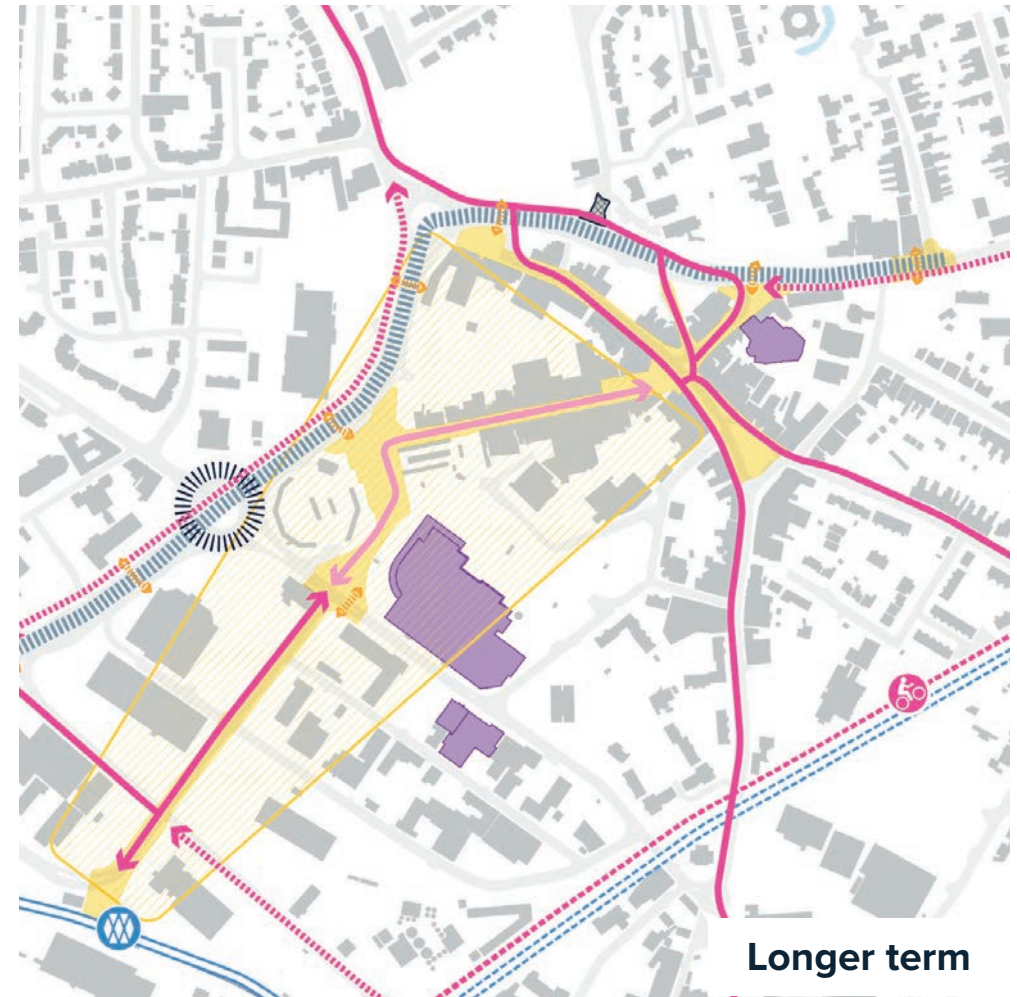


Shorter term



Figure 20 Short Term Movement Strategy

Key			
	Key destination buildings		Potential cycle parking hub
	Core walking zone		Potential wayfinding totem
	Improved crossings		Potential bus gate
	Public realm enhancement		Metro line and stop
	Existing cycling and walking network		Highway remodelling
	Proposed cycling and walking routes		Potential one-way traffic system
	Advisory route (out of trading hours)		Potential access removal
	Rail corridor active travel route		Car park



Longer term



Figure 21 Long Term Movement Strategy

Key			
	Key destination buildings		Rail corridor active travel route
	Core walking zone		Metro line and stop
	Improved crossings		Potential transit corridor
	Public realm enhancement		Highway remodelling
	Cycling and walking network		New junction
	Advisory route (out of trading hours)		Potential access removal / modal filter

3.5 Public Realm Strategy

Public realm will be enhanced to create a spine of attractive, vibrant spaces along key streets within the town centre. This will help ensure that the town centre is welcoming, safe, comfortable and inclusive for all visitors, easy to understand and use, promoting a positive user experience which encourages people to visit the town centre more frequently and stay for longer.

Public realm will integrate high quality materials with urban greening, street furniture, lighting, wayfinding, public art and provision for children's play. This will respond to the distinctive character of the town, integrating aspects of the historic environment, incorporating the recently completed Market Place scheme, and link the town centre with surrounding locations including the metro stop and nearby green spaces.

Shorter Term

- Implement enhancements including Union Street, Union Square and Victoria Street which already have funding through LUP, including improved lighting.
- Enhancement of Holyhead Road and spaces around the Town Hall.
- Additional investment in Market Place including additional urban greening.
- Repair urban edges through new development, new boundary treatments to backs of properties, and other screening of vacant / dilapidated land.
- Improve edges along High Bullen and Dudley Street including pedestrian spaces, pedestrian crossing points and urban greening.
- Events and activation programming including investment in the existing market and creation of a new pop-up destination in Union Yard.

Longer Term

- Full transformation of the public space on Union Street into a town square, with potential to host pop-ups and events, responding to development of the Union Yard site and potential reconfiguration of the bus station, to create an exceptional gateway to the town centre.
- Full transformation of Victoria Street and Metro Square to create an exceptional public realm spine.

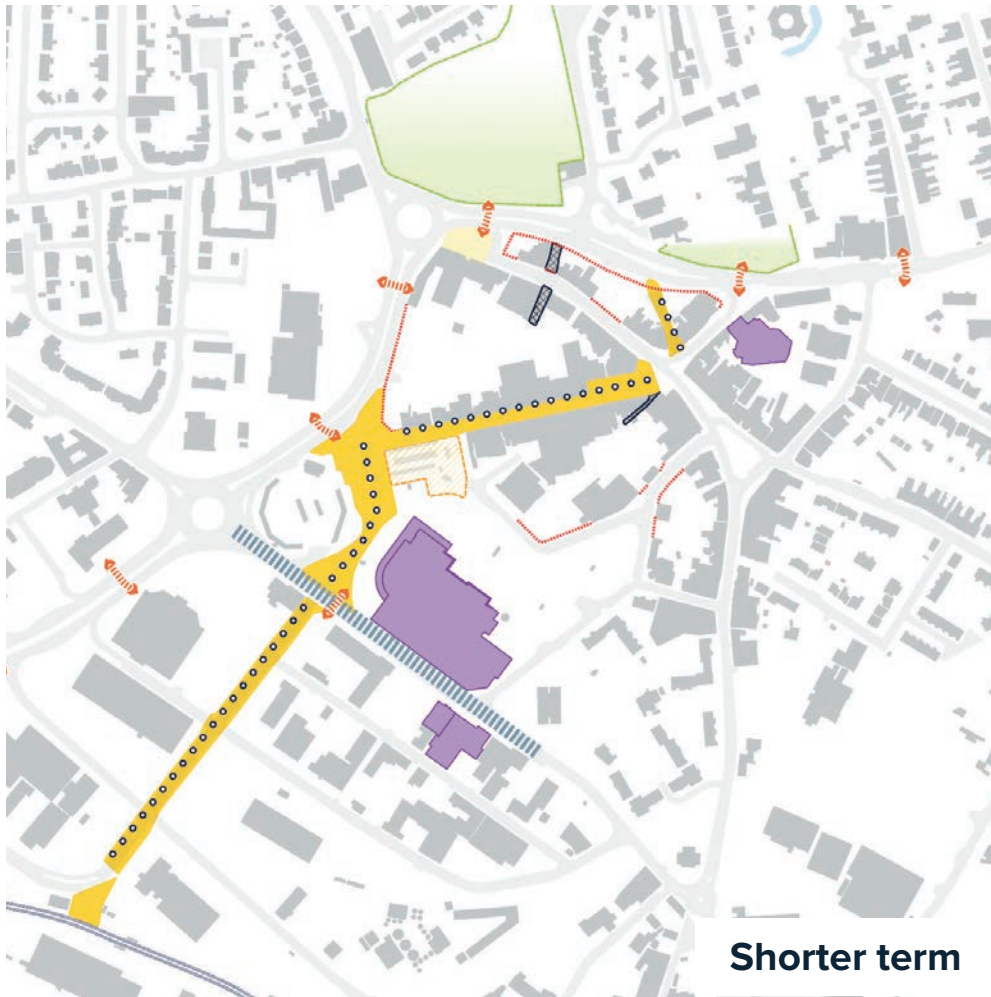












Figure 22 Short Term Public Realm Strategy



- Key**
- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
|  | Key destination buildings |  | Improved lighting |
|  | Potential meanwhile and pop up use |  | Edge treatment |
|  | Public realm enhancement |  | Highway remodelling |
|  | Improved crossing points |  | Potential access removal |
|  | Improved crossing and public realm |  | Green spaces |

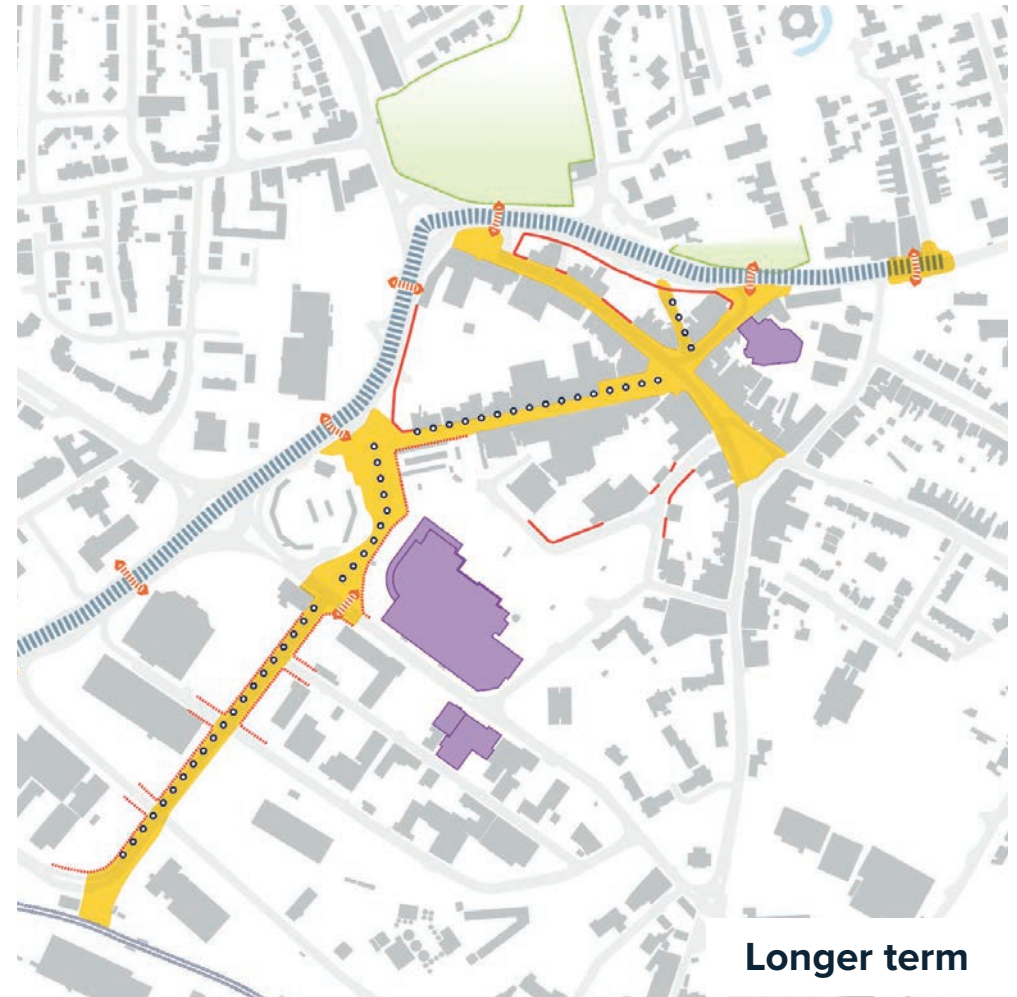









Figure 23 Long Term Public Realm Strategy



- Key**
- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|---------------------|
|  | Key destination buildings |  | Edge treatment |
|  | Public realm enhancement |  | Highway remodelling |
|  | Improved crossing points |  | Green spaces |
|  | Improved lighting | | |

3.6 Greening Strategy

The town centre will incorporate more urban greening, ensuring that visitors experience an attractive environment with greater interaction with nature, helping to improve air quality and water resilience, and promoting increased biodiversity as well as reconnecting the town centre with wider networks of green space.

Principles of human health and wellbeing will be promoted through high quality biophilic design, which incorporates greening and natural solutions into public realm enhancements, sustainable drainage and greening of buildings.

Shorter Term

- Naturalised verges and tree planting on High Bullen and Dudley Street.
- Greening of car parks, including provision for sustainable drainage.
- Increased provision for greening of Market Place and Union Street, potentially including pop-up 'parklets'.
- Reconnecting the town centre with the park on Church Hill.
- Enhancement of the former railway line to create a managed green corridor.

Longer Term

- Full integration of street trees, nature based sustainable drainage and other greening into public realm.
- Creation of a green corridor along Victoria Street.
- Transform High Bullen and Dudley Street into boulevards with substantial tree planting and other greening.
- Substantial integration of green infrastructure within the Metro Gateway area.

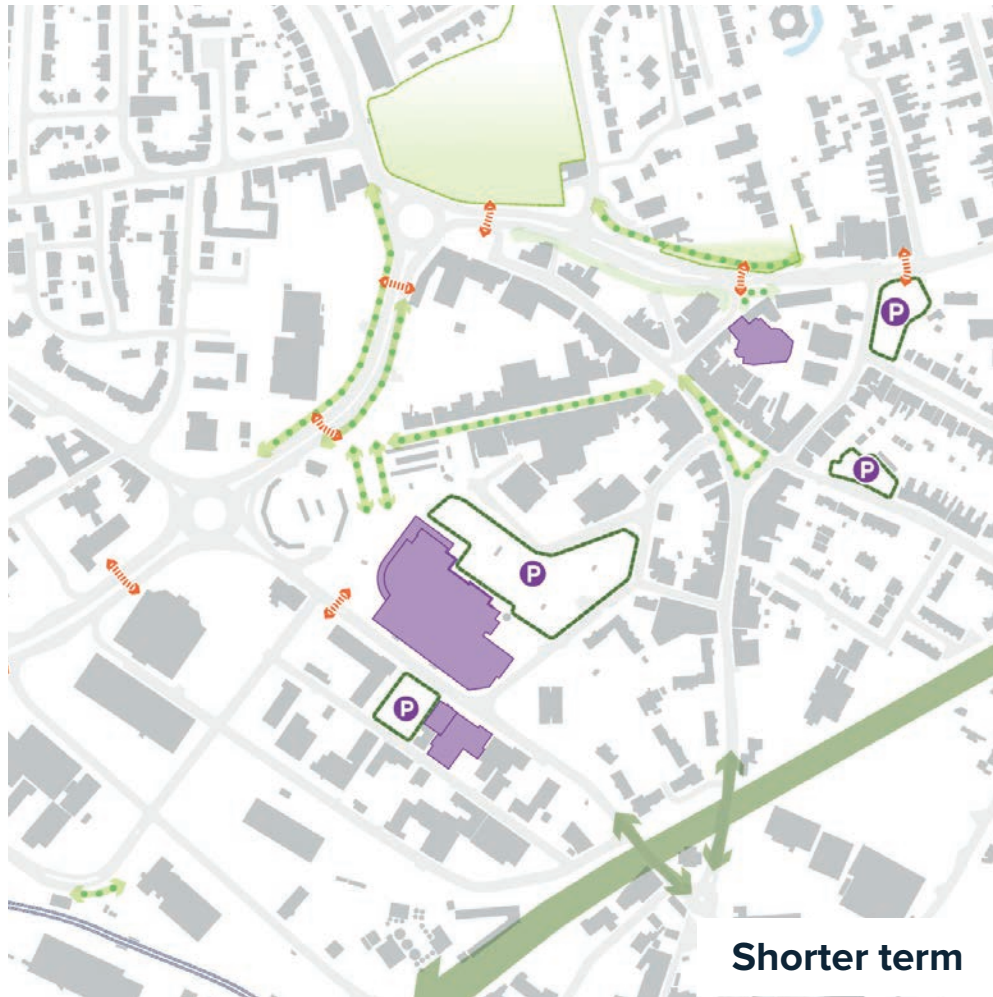


Figure 24 Short Term Greening Strategy

- Key**
- Key destination buildings
 - Ecological corridor
 - P Greening of car parks
 - Improved crossings
 - Short term potential greening
 - Green spaces

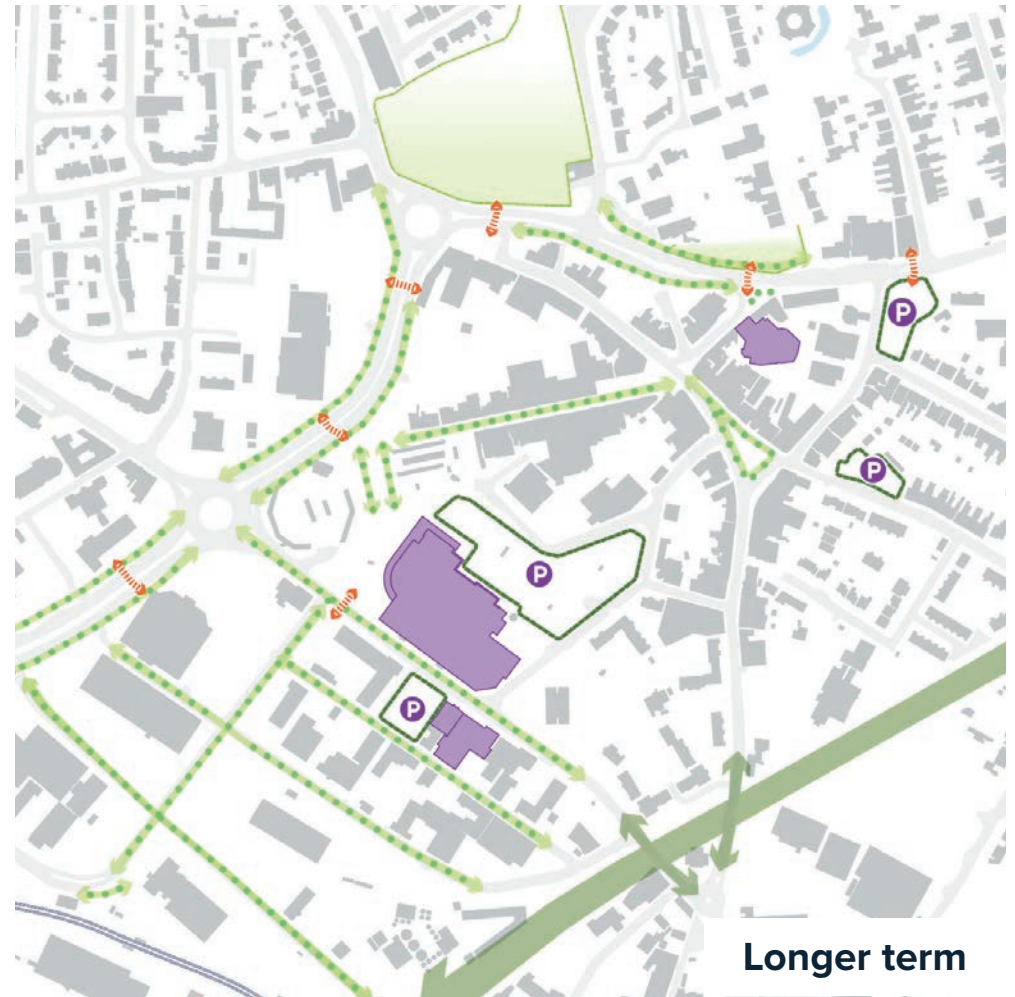


Figure 25 Long Term Greening Strategy

- Key**
- Key destination buildings
 - Ecological corridor
 - P Greening of car parks
 - Improved crossings
 - Long term potential greening
 - Green spaces

3.7 Sustainability Strategy

The town centre will support Sandwell's wider sustainability strategy, supporting the borough's commitments to be net zero carbon by 2040 in line with UK legislation, promote equality and inclusivity in access to energy and heating for all, and support other connected aspirations such as the transition from fossil fuels to low-carbon energy in transport, buildings and other areas of influence.

This will include the creation of a 'net zero neighbourhood' strategy which identifies key priorities for local sustainability based on engagement with the local community and other key stakeholders.

Shorter Term

- Promotion of building enhancements to improve thermal and energy efficiency, including insulation and heat pumps.
- Promotion of a high standard of sustainability in new buildings where Sandwell Council and partners have additional influence.
- Promotion of renewable energy generation, including roof-top solar panels.
- Provision for EV parking in public car parks and charging for other vehicle fleets including delivery vehicles, buses and Sandwell Council fleets.
- Promote reduced disposable plastics in local businesses, better waste management and local circular economies.
- Provision for EV car clubs to promote transition to EV vehicles and encourage reduced car ownership for town centre residents.

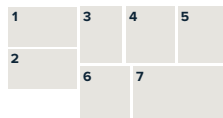
Longer Term

- Long term investment in EV vehicle fleets including delivery vehicles, buses and Sandwell Council fleets. Potential to create a 'last mile delivery' strategy for goods entering the town centre to promote smaller, EV delivery vehicles.
- Investment in energy grid capacity to support wider uptake of EVs, heat pumps and renewables.
- Delivery of a new mixed-use quarter around the metro stop, promoting sustainable and low car patterns of travel and incorporating exemplar sustainability such as Passivhaus standards, district heating, and renewables generation.



Figure 26 Sustainability Strategy

1. Roof top solar panels
2. EV charging
3. Electric bikes and bike sharing
4. Sustainable drainage and landscaping
5. Sustainable travel modes
6. Land use and activity
7. Mixed use developments



4 Proposals

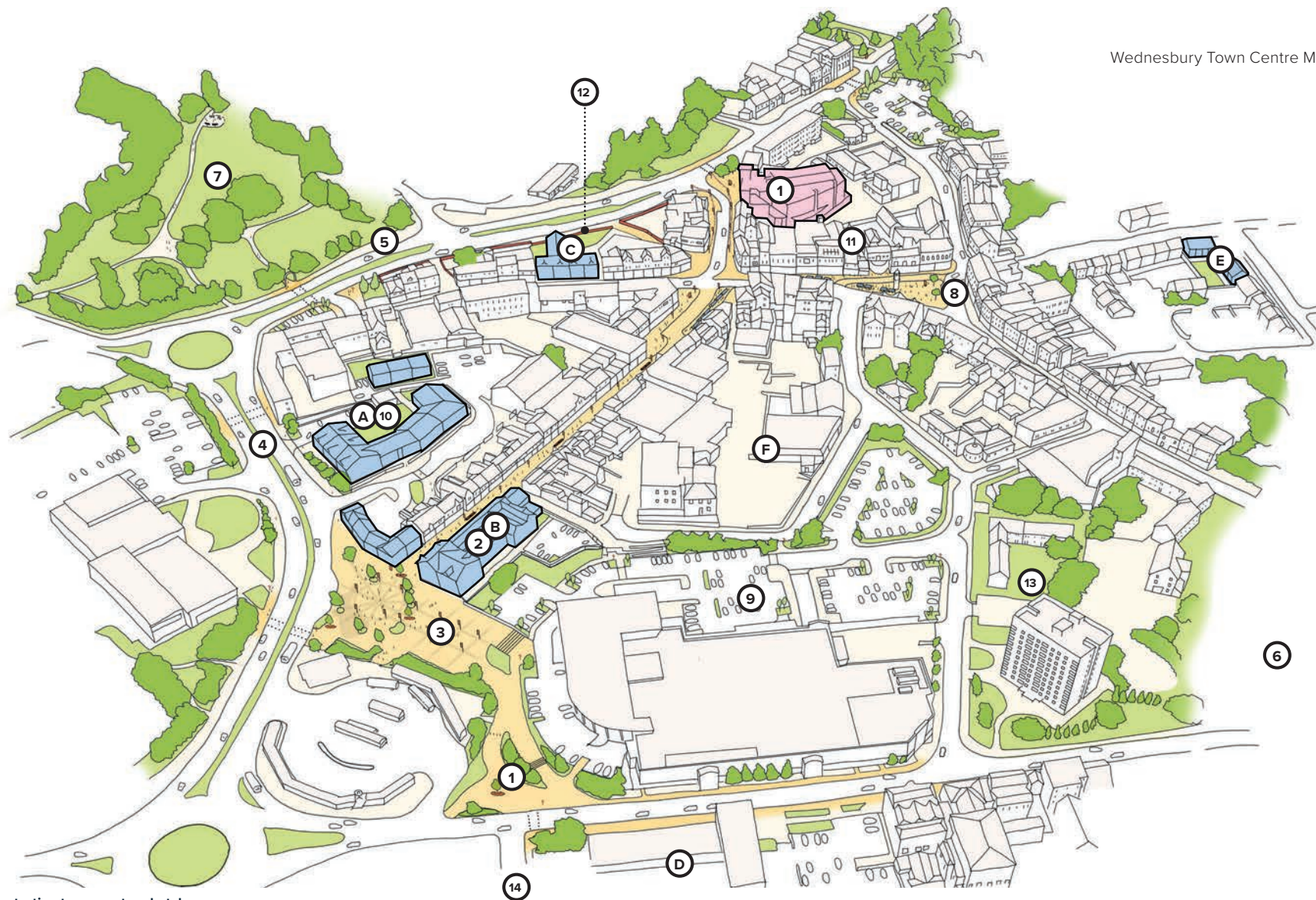


Figure 27 Illustrative town centre sketch

Key

- ① Leisure & Social Hub
- ② Union Yard Pop-up Destination
- ③ Public Realm Spine
- ④ Dudley Street & High Bullen Streetscape
- ⑤ Active Travel Infrastructure
- ⑥ Railway Corridor (off illustration)
- ⑦ Church Hill Enhancement

- ⑧ Traffic Circulation
- ⑨ Car Park Enhancement
- ⑩ Infill Development (multiple sites)
- ⑪ Townscape Enhancement (area wide)
- ⑫ Property Boundaries (area wide)
- ⑬ Net Zero Neighbourhood (area wide)
- ⑭ Metro Gateway

Site Locations

- Ⓐ High Bullen site
- Ⓑ Union Street site
- Ⓒ Upper High Street site
- Ⓓ Victoria Street sites
- Ⓔ Addison Street site
- Ⓕ O'Connell Walk sites (long term)

4.1 Project Led Approach

Regeneration is proposed through a range of discrete projects which accord with and contribute to delivering the vision and strategies set out in the masterplan.

Proposals will be taken forward by through a range of approaches, will include Sandwell Council working closely with stakeholders and potential public, private and third sector partners.

A range of mechanisms exist for delivering regeneration, including:

- Intervention by Sandwell Council and other partners, where they have direct control of land, buildings and / or uses, and access to appropriate funding.
- Initiatives and incentives offered by Sandwell Council and other partners which encourage third party organisations (including businesses and property owners) to support the delivery of the plan.
- Policies and Guidance, which can be used by Sandwell Council and other partners to guide third party organisations to support the delivery of the plan. Examples of such policies and guidance include the Draft Local Plan, Residential Design Guide SPD, and the Governments National Design Guide.

All projects identified in the plan are indicative, and will be subject to feasibility testing and possible change.

4.2 The Masterplan Framework

























The Masterplan Framework plan shows a spatial composite of potential projects.



Figure 28 Strategic Framework



Key

-  Study area
-  Development sites
-  Granted planning applications
-  Potential longer term development sites
-  Metro gateway area
-  Metro line and stop
-  Potential metro extension
-  Potential street frontage
-  Active frontage
-  Potential active frontage
-  Landmark buildings
-  Town centre connections
-  Walking and cycling routes
-  Core Walking Zone (SCWIP)
-  Potential active travel corridor
-  Enhanced public realm areas
-  Improved crossings
-  New junction
-  Highway remodelling
-  Town centre gateways
-  Existing green spaces
-  Potential green space
-  Potential greening
-  Ecological corridor

4.3 Community High Street

Work with local businesses and organisations to promote Wednesbury town centre as a ‘Community High Street’ which focuses on independent retail, community activity and local identity. This could include:

- Facilitating a Community High Street liaison group to bring key partners and stakeholders together, including traders and other community groups.
- Creating a ‘Visit Wednesbury’ website to promote the town centre, with a directory of local businesses, a programme of upcoming events, and a portal for engaging in community activities.
- Providing an online-retail presence for local, independent retail businesses.
- Branded material which promotes recognition and identity of the town centre, such as branded Wednesbury Market tote bags.
- Advertising for the town centre, including at public transport stations / shops and on vehicles.
- Creating a local business loyalty scheme.
- Community ambassadors and community policing strategy to create more visibility for safety and security.
- Advice, training and support for local retail and hospitality businesses.
- Potential creation of a ‘Business Improvement District’ or ‘Community Improvement District’ to help facilitate funding of small scale projects by local businesses and residents.
- Partnerships and learning from other locations where Community High Street initiatives have been implemented.

Figure 29 High Street Identity

1. Shop local banner
2. High street branded banner





4.4 Events & Animation Programme

Create and maintain a broader programme of events in the town centre, using existing spaces such as Market Place and Union Square. This could include:

- Investment in management and promotion of Wednesbury Market to create a market with more traders and a broader range of products, to appeal to a wider range of potential visitors.
- Seasonal / occasional markets, including street food markets and a Christmas market.
- Summer and Winter fêtes, to include activities within the heart of the town centre with street closures, such as continuation of the Wednesbury Day festival.
- Lumière and lantern events.
- Educational focused events including heritage, nature and arts trails.



Figure 30 Potential Programme for Events

1. Street food market
2. Night market
3. Christmas events
4. Summer music festival
5. Wednesbury Lantern Parade (Philip Parnell Photography)
6. Wednesbury Lantern Parade (Philip Parnell Photography)

1	4
2	5
3	6



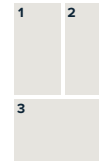
4.5 Wayfinding, Heritage & Arts Trails

Make provision for a co-ordinated wayfinding system which helps visitors to navigate the town, and access the town's assets and facilities and provides a joined up visual identity for visitor information. This could include:

- Simplified wayfinding map identifying key locations in and surrounding the town centre and key facilities such as public toilets.
- Interpretation material with information about the history of key locations and landmarks, with a potential heritage trail.
- Provision for new distinctive art installations including murals on blank building façades.
- Physical wayfinding signage at key locations within and surrounding the town centre, including points of arrival.

Figure 31 Wayfinding

1. Wayfinding and heritage information
2. Wayfinding totem
3. Exhibition panels



- Improving advanced direction signage on key road approaches.
- Digital material to support wayfinding including a directory of retailers and facilities. This could include a 'visit Wednesbury' online shop for independent retailers.
- Visitor information on trams and buses serving the area.



Figure 32 Heritage Trail Concept



St Bartholomew's Church

Towards Brunswick Park

HIGH BULLEN

UNION STREET

SPRINGHEAD

Bus Station

Morristons

HOLYHEAD ROAD

VICTORIA STREET

Towards Metro Station

Key

- Conservation area
- Interpretation panel
- Listed buildings & structures
- Locally listed buildings & structures
- Destinations

Fig. 27 reference 1



4.6 Leisure & Social Hub

Create a new leisure and social destination, or cluster of destinations, at the site of the former Gaumont Cinema, with particular consideration to the desire to create an expanded evening economy and create a destination for families and other groups that currently don't visit the town centre. This could include:

- A new cinema and theatre space.
- Themed social experiences such as adventure golf.
- Food and drink venue(s).
- Flexible arts, exhibition and events spaces e.g. a community-led multifunctional performance space.

Development should have consideration to the desire to retain the historic frontage of the former cinema, and to retain other internal elements where it is possible / appropriate.

The Council will also seek continued investment in existing leisure, culture and arts facilities within the town, including Wednesbury Town Hall, and Wednesbury Museum & Art Gallery.



Figure 33 Potential Leisure Destination Uses

1. Cinema (Myke Simon at Unsplash)
2. Bowling (Pavel Danilyuk at Pexels)
3. Arcade and games (Element5 Digital at Pexels)



Figure 34 Leisure Hub Illustrative Concept



Fig. 27 reference 2



4.7 Union Yard Pop-up Destination

Transform the former market site into a temporary food, drink and cultural destination which helps to catalyse the regeneration of the town centre in the short term, promotes an evening economy, and attracts a new demographic range of visitors to the town including families. This could include:

- Small scale food, drink and micro-retail units in shipping containers or other temporary structures.
- Expanded street food, craft and arts markets on selected days, with consideration to how this can complement Wednesbury Market.
- Potential to work with existing established businesses in Sandwell and the wider area to provide a 'pop-up' presence in Wednesbury.
- Potential to work with local entrepreneurs, including college students, to create opportunities to trial new food business ideas, based on a 'community kitchen' concept.
- Events such as live music, performance and outdoor cinema.
- Temporary landscapes, art and lighting installations, and children's play spaces.
- Potential for pop-up co-working hub or managed workspaces for micro-businesses.

In the long term, this site will potentially be a development site for a landmark building at a key gateway to the town centre.

Consideration will be given to the potential to reconfigure the site, the adjacent Union Square public space, Morrisons car park and Wednesbury Bus Interchange as part of an integrated masterplan for redevelopment.

This could include provision for a community hub, consolidating existing facilities such as health care to a convenient location within the town centre, as well as providing space for businesses incubated in the pop-up development.



Figure 35 Pop-Up Destinations

1. Temporary green
2. Space for micro-businesses
3. Food court and markets



Figure 36 Union Yard Illustrative Concept

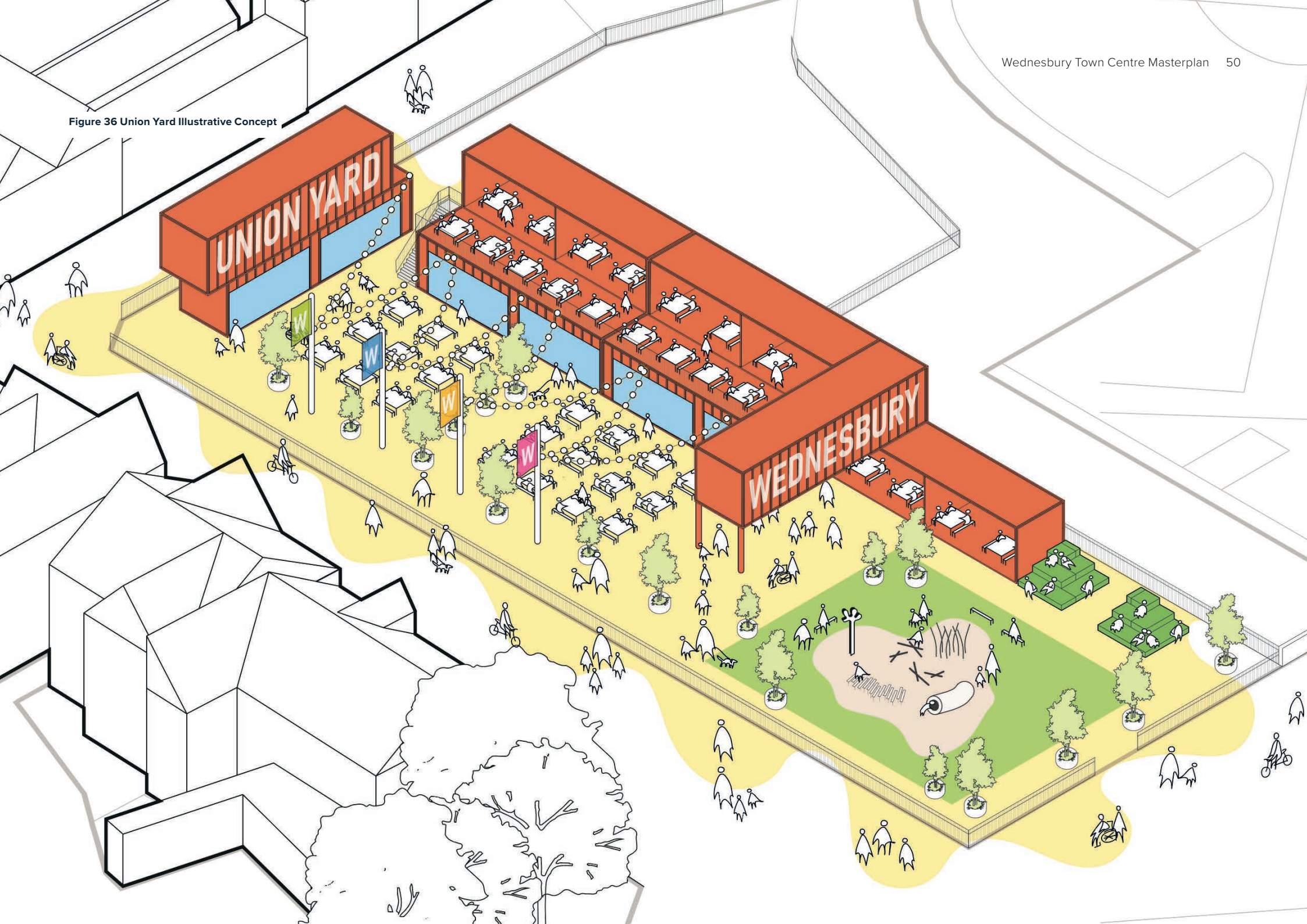


Fig. 27 reference 3



4.8 Public Realm Spine

Enhance the public realm along the key town centre streets to create a consistent, comfortable, attractive and inclusive pedestrian environment, and complements the recent investment in Market Place. This could include:

Phase 1

- Removal of back routes to encourage pedestrians to use the primary streets.
- Upgrade paving of Union Street as Market Place, based on LUP funded scheme.
- Provision for trees, street furniture and other enhancements in Union Street and the public space to the west of Union Street, based on LUP funded scheme.
- Improved lighting and other measures to improve sense of safety for visitors.
- Pop-up landscape, including 'parklets' on town centre streets where opportunities are identified.
- Provision for larger street trees in Market Place.
- New pedestrian crossing on Holyhead Road providing connection to Victoria Street.
- Gateway public spaces on key approaches, to make the town centre more identifiable and attractive, including through use of public art and artistic lighting.

Figure 37 Public Realm Enhancements

1. Artistic lighting at gateways
2. Permanent public realm enhancements
3. Temporary parklets

Phase 2

- Reconfiguration of public space to west of Union Street to create Union Square, a destination public space, potentially with a new layout to respond to surrounding development sites.
- Reconfiguration of Victoria Street to create a green street with substantial landscape, linking to the metro stop. Potential to widen street as part of a more comprehensive Metro Gateway development.
- Enhanced streetscape on Holyhead Road, focussing on spaces adjacent to the Town Hall and Museum & Art Gallery.



Figure 38 Public Realm Spine Illustrative Concept

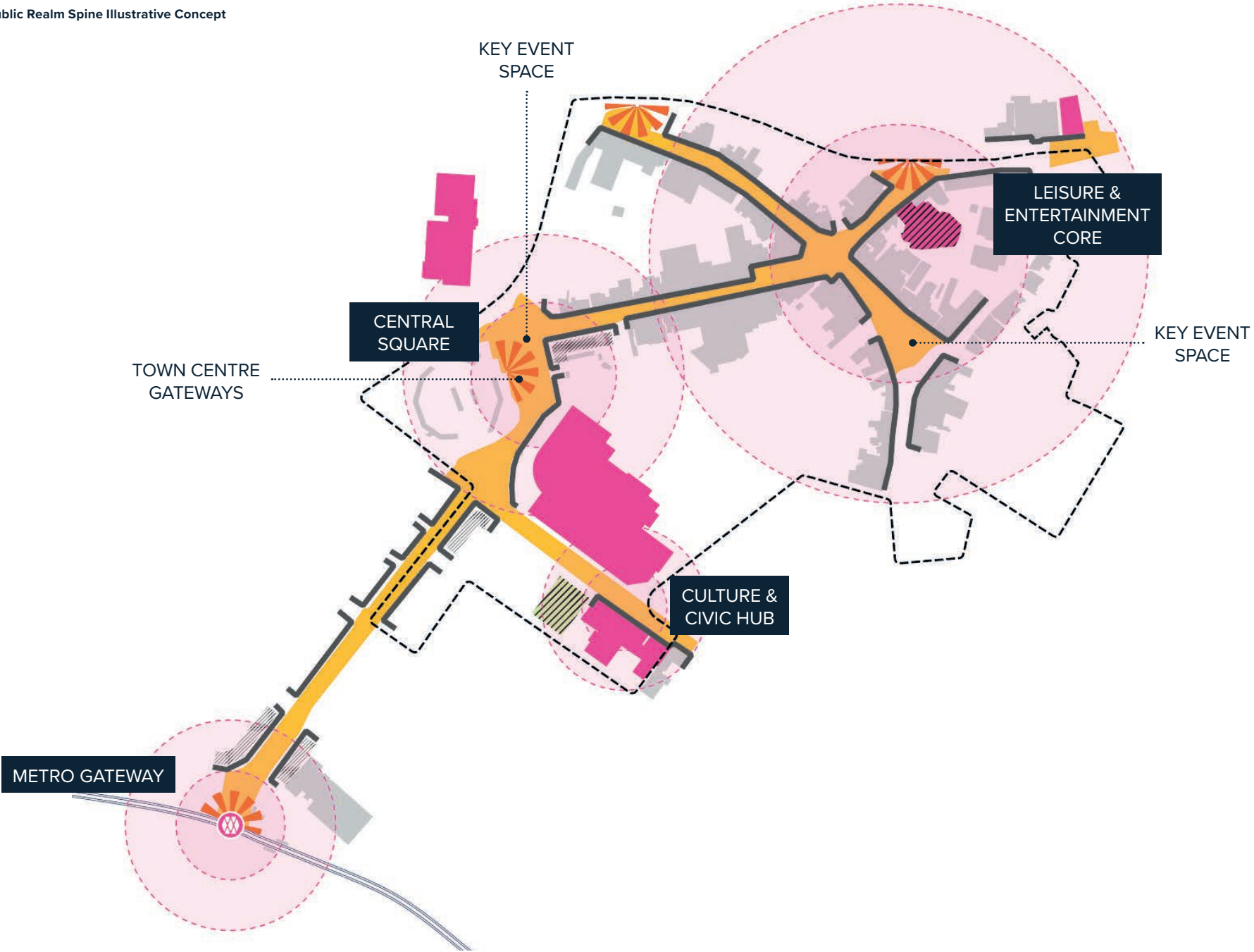


Fig. 27 reference 4

4.9 Dudley Street & High Bullen

Reconfigure High Bullen and Dudley Street to reduce the sense of severance created by these roads, improve pedestrian connections from the northern and western edges of the town centre, and improve the perception of the town for people arriving or passing by car. This area of the town centre can be enhanced based on a phased approach:

Phase 1

- Relocate crossings to match pedestrian desire lines.
- Create single stage crossings to replace staggered / multi-stage crossings.
- Improve pedestrian spaces around crossings.
- Remove pedestrian barriers and other clutter where appropriate.
- Simplification of minor junctions, reduced radii.
- Tree planting where space is available.
- Wildflower planting on verges and biodiversity positive maintenance regime

Figure 39 Enhanced Highway Environment

1. Wildflower planting at pedestrian crossing
2. Reduced lane width



Phase 2

- Simplify junctions and remove turning functionality in some locations.
- Remove / reduce traffic lanes and turning lanes where feasible.
- Reduce lane width.
- Utilise reclaimed space for full streetscape enhancement including substantial street tree planting, provision for sustainable drainage or other landscaping.
- Any alterations to road layout and highway capacity will be subject to detailed feasibility assessment including impact on wider network capacity and resilience.



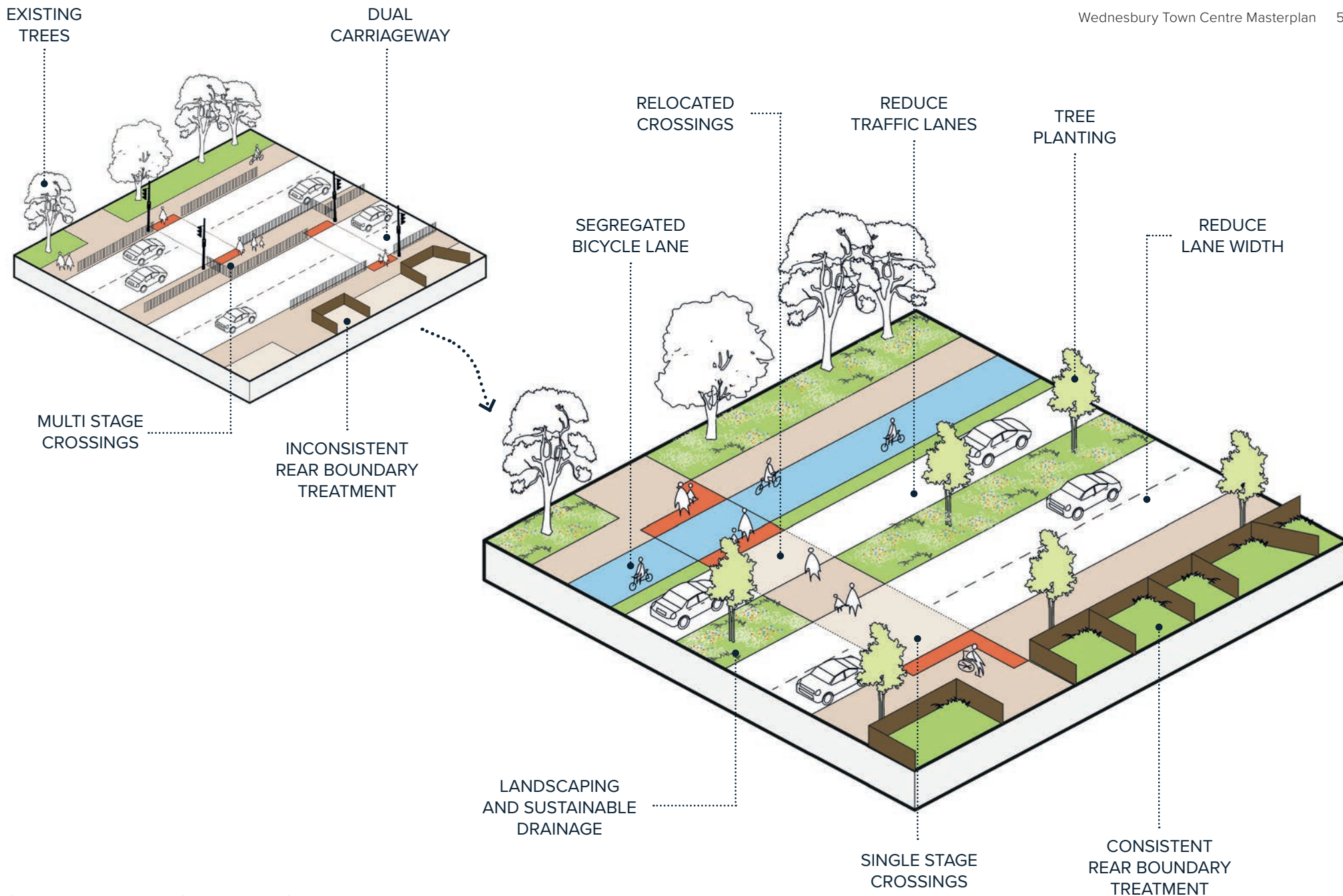


Figure 40 Dudley Street And High Bullen Illustrative Enhancements

Fig. 27 reference 5

4.10 Active Travel Infrastructure

Provide a network of active travel routes and better environment for walking and cycling to encourage people to switch to active travel modes and promote more local trips to the town centre. This could include:

Phase 1

- Completing proposed cycle routes on Dudley Street, High Bullen and Trowse Lane as part of the SCWIP.
- Providing cycle hubs at Union Square and Wednesbury Great Western Street metro stop with provision for secure parking, e-bike charging and basic cycle maintenance.
- Expanding West Midlands Cycle Hire to cover Wednesbury, with provision for docking stations at key locations in the town centre and at Wednesbury Great Western Street metro stop.

Phase 2

- Expanding cycle infrastructure throughout the Metro Gateway area, including enhanced cycle route on Victoria Street, and a new east-west route on Great Western Street or Potters Lane.

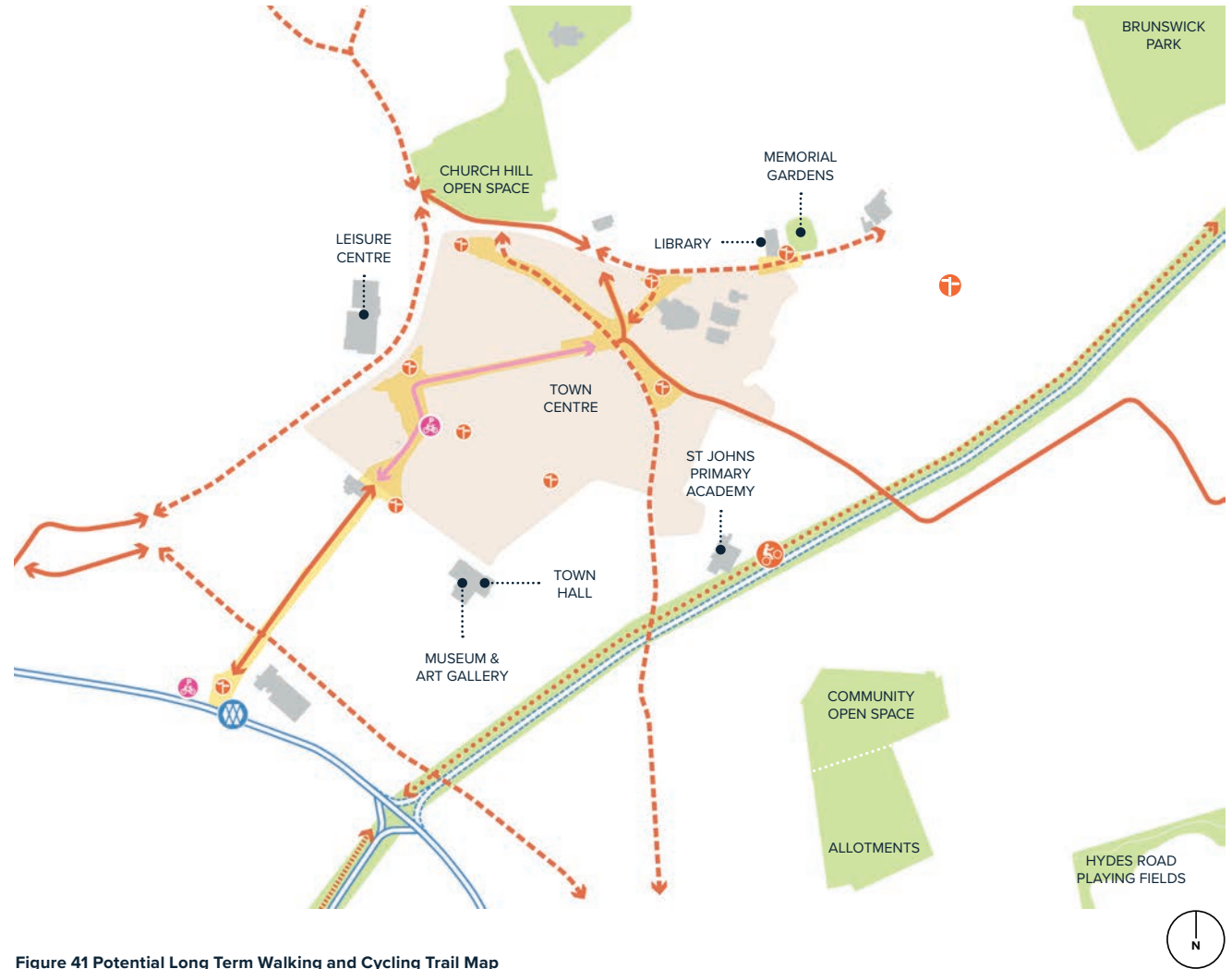


Figure 41 Potential Long Term Walking and Cycling Trail Map

Key			
	Key community uses		Advisory route (out of trading hours)
	Key open spaces and green corridors		Potential cycling and walking routes
	Public realm enhancement		Rail corridor active travel route
	Metro line and stop		Potential cycle parking hub
	Potential transit corridor		Potential wayfinding totem
	Existing cycling and walking network		

Fig. 27 reference 6

4.11 Railway Corridor

Adapt the former L&NWR railway corridor to create a new green infrastructure and movement asset for the town. This could include:

- Creating an active travel route along the railway alignment towards Walsall (potentially as far as Willows Lane), with multiple points of access from surrounding streets and connections into Brunswick Park.
- Providing an active travel route to the south in parallel with the new Metro line, linking at least 1km to join with the Tame Valley Canal towpath and wider towpath network.
- Enhancing landscape along the route to create a largely naturalised green corridor.
- Providing for wayfinding, heritage trails and public art which helps to create an identity for the route.

In the longer term, accommodate a new metro link connecting Wednesbury and Walsall town centres, with potential new stop at Wednesbury Town Centre subject to service patterns. This should consider the desire to retain an active travel route within the same corridor.

Fig. 27 reference 7

4.12 Church Hill Open Space

Reinvigorate and enhance the open space at Church Hill to create a valuable asset for the town centre and surrounding communities, which contributes to the attractiveness and success of the town centre. This could include:

- Naming the space.
- Improving connections to the park across High Bullen.
- Improving entrance spaces around the park, particularly on High Bullen, including improved signage.
- Potential enhancement to the park landscape, including creating a demarcated viewpoint at the top of the park.
- Potential provision for a destination children's play space within the park.



Figure 42 Active travel route



Figure 43 Enhanced open space

Fig. 27 reference 8

4.13 Traffic Circulation Planning

Reconfigure the highway layout to reduce prevalence of rat running through town centre streets and encourage traffic to use surrounding main roads, in order to improve the attractiveness and safety of the town centre for pedestrians. This could include:

- Implementing one way traffic on Lower High Street (northbound) and Springhead (southbound), to prevent through traffic along the full route.
- Removing general traffic from Market Place to prevent through traffic from Lower High Street to Upper High Street.
- Providing directional signage encouraging traffic to use Holyhead Road and High Bullen for trips across the town centre.
- Providing signage to encourage traffic to use Holyhead Road to access the Morrisons car park.
- Provision for 'hostile vehicle mitigation' to restrict / manage access to pedestrian spaces.

Any alterations to road layout and highway capacity will be subject to detailed feasibility assessment including impact on wider network capacity and resilience.



Figure 44 Potential Traffic Circulation Plan





Key	
	Public realm enhancement
	Potential bus gate
	Potential one-way traffic system
	Car park

Fig. 27 reference 9

4.14 Car Park Enhancements

Rationalised and improved town centre car parking to create a better experience for users, reducing the number of car parks and focusing improvements on key parking locations, notably Morrisons and Springhead. This could include:

- Creating a stronger single brand identity for town centre car parks, which encompasses the Morrisons car park.
- Ensuring provision for paid longer stay car parking at Morrisons car park.
- Improving advanced directional signage (and variable message signing showing availability) for car parking so that they are easy to find, including for passing trade, and to promote routes that avoid Market Place.
- Improving onward wayfinding signage from car parks towards town centre destinations.
- Enhancing car park environments, including through new tree planting, better pedestrian paths and provision for sustainable drainage within car parks.
- Making more provision for blue badge and other priority parking in key locations.
- Providing more EV charging spaces on a phased basis to meet or exceed emerging demand.
- Any alterations to car parking layout and capacity will be subject to detailed feasibility assessment including impact on town centre accessibility.

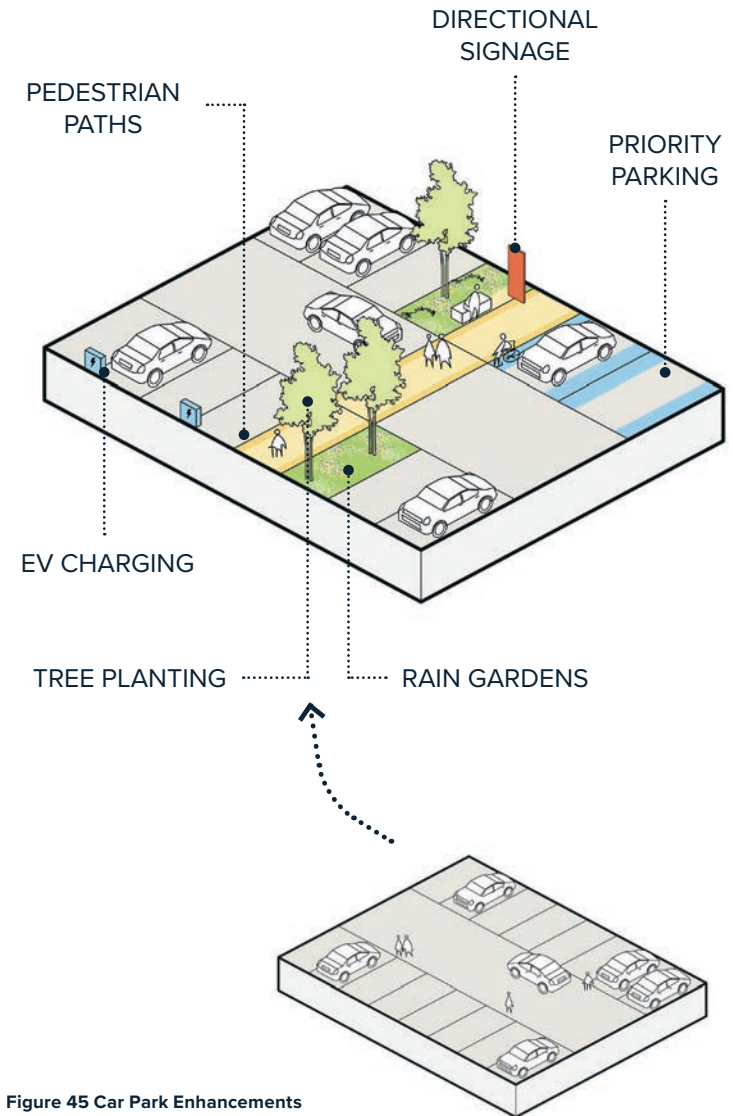


Figure 45 Car Park Enhancements

Fig. 27 reference 10

4.15 Infill Developments

Promote development in the town centre which introduces a mix of land-uses and / or improves the quality of the built environment. There are a number of sites in the town centre that can be developed within the short to medium term:

Phase 1:

- Upper High Street gap site.
- High Bullen surface car park.
- Addison Street.
- Other vacant / windfall sites.
- Sites / buildings identified as 'negative' in CAA.
- Reuse / refurbishment of vacant buildings.

There are a number of sites in the town centre that could be developed in the longer term, based on emerging opportunities to create cohesive sites and deliver high quality development in key locations:

- Union Street (potentially including a wider redevelopment area encompassing reconfiguration of the bus station and adjacent public realm).
- O'Connell Walk.
- Sites south of Holyhead Road, potentially forming early phases of the Metro Gateway.

Development should be undertaken based on current planning policies and principles of good design, with reference to the Sandwell Residential Design Guide, National Design Guide, and National Model Design Code.

Where development is located within the conservation area, consideration should be given to the Conservation Area Appraisal in identifying appropriate architectural responses. This document should also be considered a helpful source of information for sites outside the conservation area, but within the core town centre area.

The Masterplan (and other guidance; local plan, Residential Design Guide SPD etc) will help to influence all future development regardless of council ownership. Sandwell Council will consider compulsory purchase of sites where appropriate to promote new development which accords with the aims of the masterplan, or to support development viability.

Any development of existing car parks will be subject to a detailed assessment of feasibility and impact on town centre accessibility, including inclusive access.

Concept Site Layouts

Concept site layouts have been prepared for four sites to test initial feasibility, capacity and viability of potential development, and set out design aspirations and principles. Any development on the sites will be subject to further design development, assessment against planning policy, design guidance, site constraints / context, and engagement with site owners. These concepts are set out on subsequent pages.

Key Design Principles

The following specific considerations should be applied to new developments within the town centre:

- Desire to increase the mix and density of uses within the town centre, particularly residential and small scale employment / enterprise spaces.
- Response to existing and historic townscape character including building line, significance of corner buildings, scale, horizontal and vertical rhythm (typically narrow plot frontages) and roofscape.
- Appropriate architectural detail in response to existing and historic character, including materials, proportions, fenestration and traditional shopfronts, with consideration to the existing variety of historic detailing.
- Provision for active ground floor uses on primary retail streets where viable, which may include some non-retail uses which make provision for public entrances and a 'shop window'.
- Appropriate provision for amenity for new residents, including front doors on streets, car parking, cycle parking, external spaces, and outlook with consideration of the town centre location of development.
- Provision to retain existing trees within sites and close to site boundaries, and integrate new green infrastructure within development, including SuDs.
- Consideration for the desire to preserve and enhance special architectural and historical character, including listed buildings, the setting of listed buildings, and buildings / elements which are designated within the conservation area.

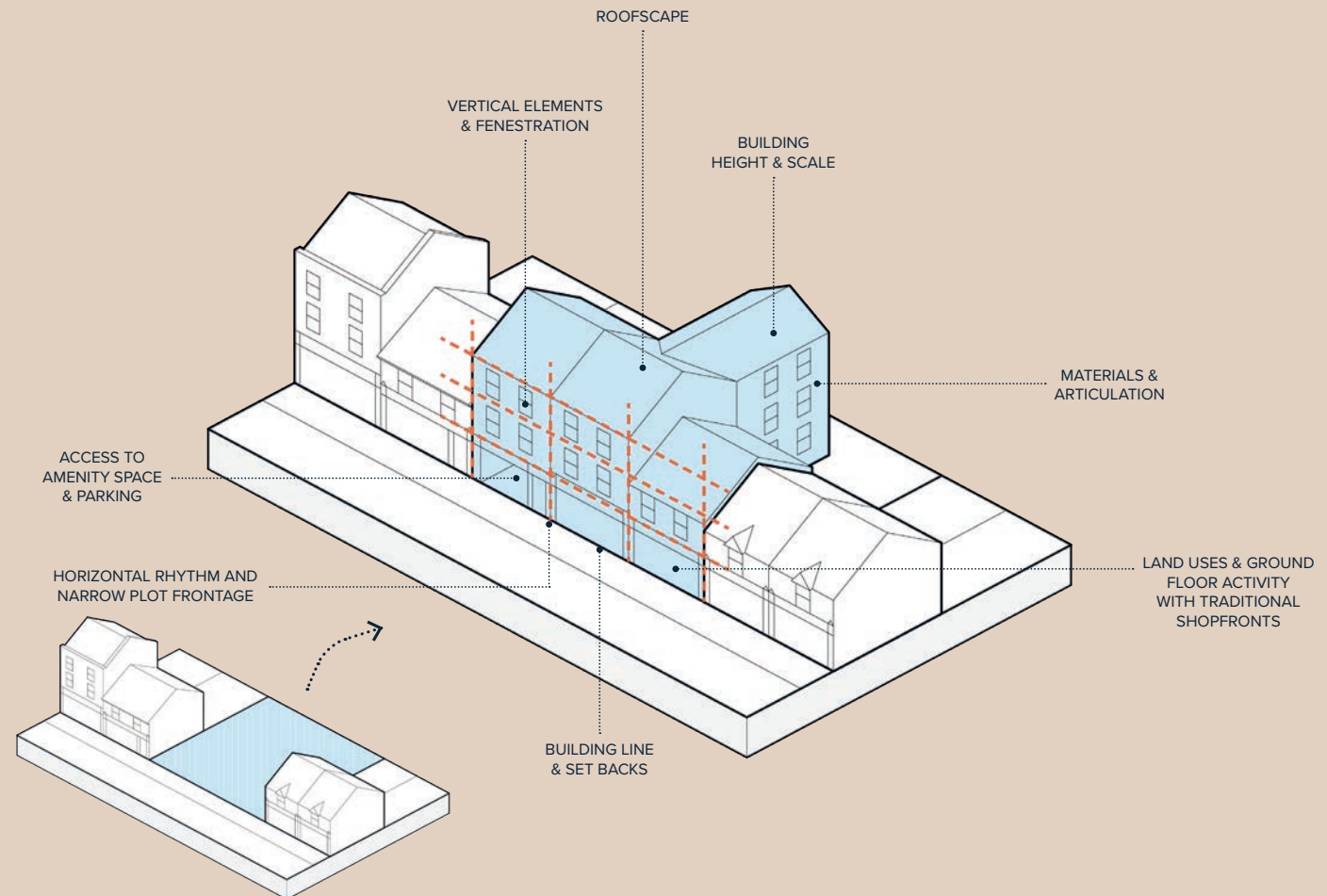


Figure 46 Key Design Principles



Form, Materiality and Detailing

Wednesbury includes wide range of commercial and civic buildings with different ages, styles and materials, and it is this variety which is key to the character of the town centre. Whilst the appearance of individual buildings varies, the character is held together by consistency of street frontage, building scale of 2 to 3 storeys, and a vertical rhythm created by narrow building plots. The design of new buildings within the town centre should consider the following elements:

Roof form: A variety of roof shapes, most typically including simple pitched roofs with shallow eaves and simple detailing such as brick cogging. Many buildings have more complex roof shapes including gabled roofs, parapet faced roofs and mansard roofs, along with more elaborate eaves detailing.

Materials: A broad range of materials including red stock brick, painted brickwork, white or pale coloured render, slate or similar roof materials, simple window surround detailing including stone lintels and cills.

Windows: Typically vertically oriented window apertures with a highly regular vertical and horizontal rhythm. Sash windows or windows of similar appearance. Some variety in window shapes, sizes and styles including distinctive oriel windows on some upper floors.

Other features: Traditional timber shopfronts typical on ground floors including features such as fascia, pilasters, cornicing, stallrisers and larger areas of glazing, with a trend towards classical detailing. The design of new buildings in the town centre should have regard to these elements as well response to the scale, massing, siting and rhythm of other surrounding buildings.

Figure 47 Form, Materials and Detailing in Wednesbury

1. Springhead
2. Market Place
3. Upper High Street



Detailing of windows, downpipes, gables and gutters, parapet caps, entrance canopies and other architectural features should be considered as an important element of new buildings. This could include contemporary interpretation of Wednesbury's distinctive stylings.



Figure 48 Modern interpretations

1. White brick cladding (HDA)
2. Steep roofscapes (HDA)
3. Shopfront (AHMM)
4. Black brick detailing (Graeme Nicholls Architects)
5. Red brick terraced building (Wienerberg)

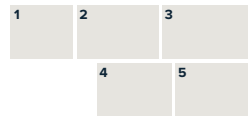


Fig. 27 reference A

High Bullen

Site Area: 0.70 ha.

Mix of Uses: Residential (apartments), supported living, commercial, community uses (eg, health) or other active ground floor uses.

Site Capacity: 43 units (1 and 2 bed apartments).

Key Opportunities:

- Increase range of uses and choice of housing in the town centre to encourage more footfall in the town centre during the day and evening.
- Reinstate historic street edge and active ground floor frontage on Union Street.
- Create an attractive gateway to Union Street and the town centre.
- Respond to enhancement of public realm on Union Street and adjacent spaces.
- Improve character of the town centre on approach from High Bullen by repairing fractured urban environment.
- Provide new green infrastructure and SuDs within new development.
- Potential to assemble larger site with frontage onto Upper High Street.

All details indicative / approximate and subject to further feasibility assessment and design development.

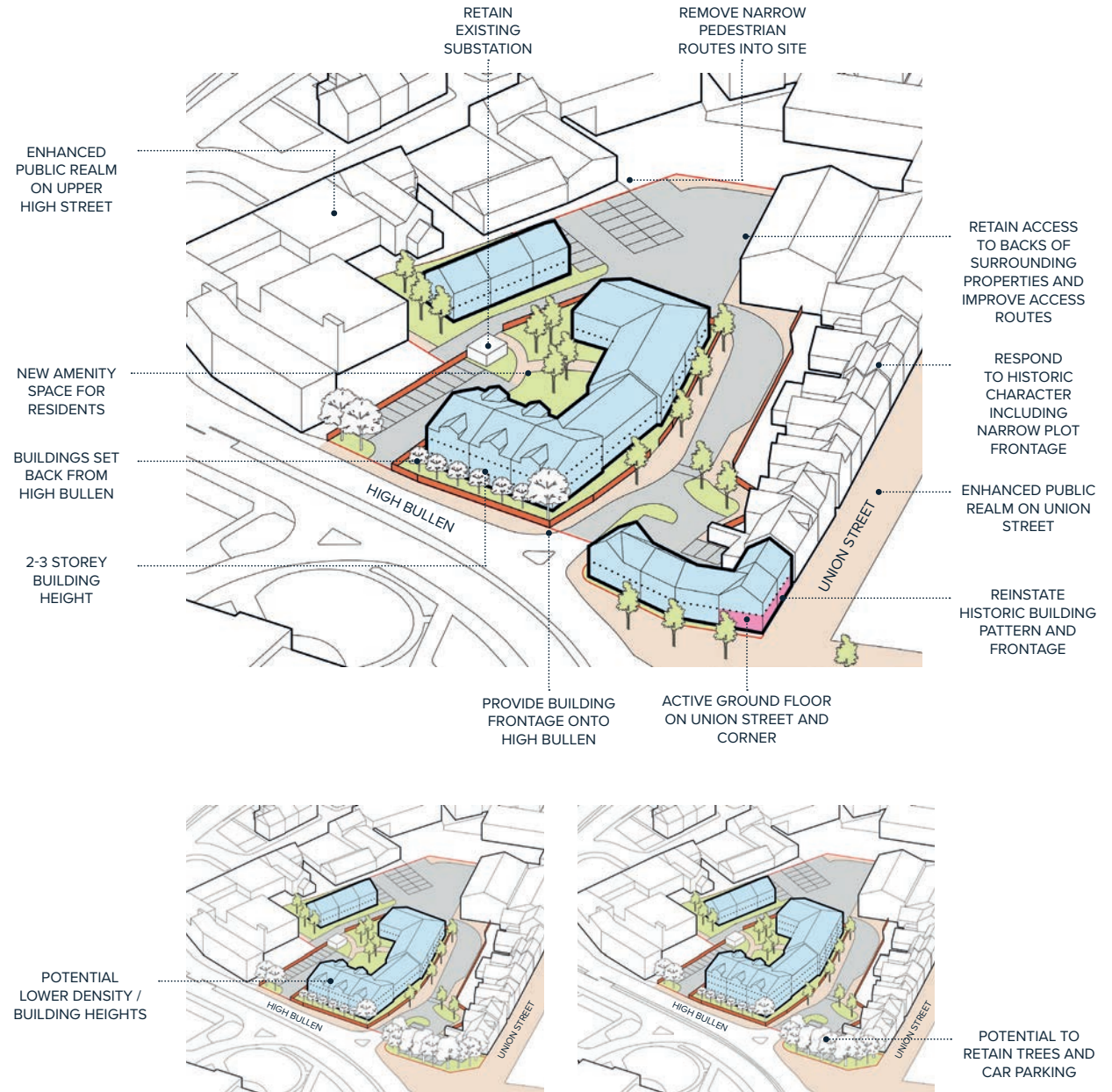


Figure 49 High Bullen Indicative Concept Site Layout

Fig. 27 reference B

Union Street

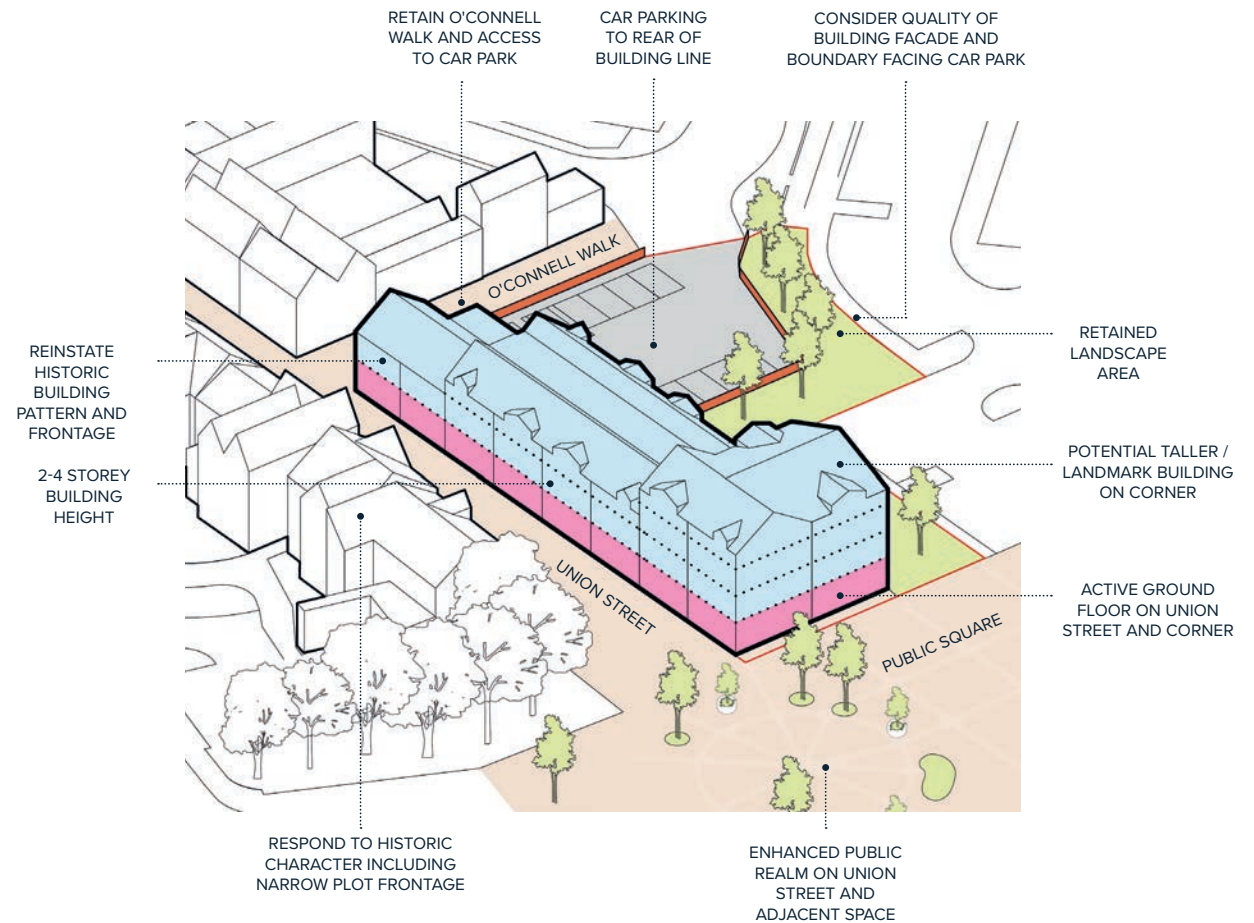
Site Area: 0.21 ha.

Mix of Uses: Residential (apartments), commercial or other active ground floor uses, community uses including healthcare.

Site Capacity: 25 units (1 and 2 bed apartments).

Key Opportunities:

- Increase range of uses and choice of housing in the town centre to encourage more footfall in the town centre during the day and evening.
- Reinststate historic street edge and active ground floor frontage on Union Street.
- Create an attractive gateway to Union Street and the town centre.
- Respond to enhancement of public realm on Union Street and adjacent spaces.
- Repair fractured built form on Union Street and reduce views to surface car parking.



All details indicative / approximate and subject to further feasibility assessment and design development.

Figure 50 Union Street Indicative Concept Site Layout

Fig. 27 reference C

Upper High Street

Site Area: 0.09 ha.

Mix of Uses: Residential (apartments), commercial or other active ground floor uses.

Site Capacity: 11 units (1 and 2 bedroom apartments).

Key Opportunities:

- Increase range of uses and choice of housing in the town centre to encourage more footfall in the town centre during the day and evening.
- Reinstate historic street edge, townscape character and active ground floor uses on Upper High Street.
- Set a high standard of design quality to stimulate further enhancement of replacement of negative buildings.
- Improve town centre townscape character by removing gap site.
- Improve rear property boundary and appearance of town centre on approach from High Bullen, including urban greening of boundary.

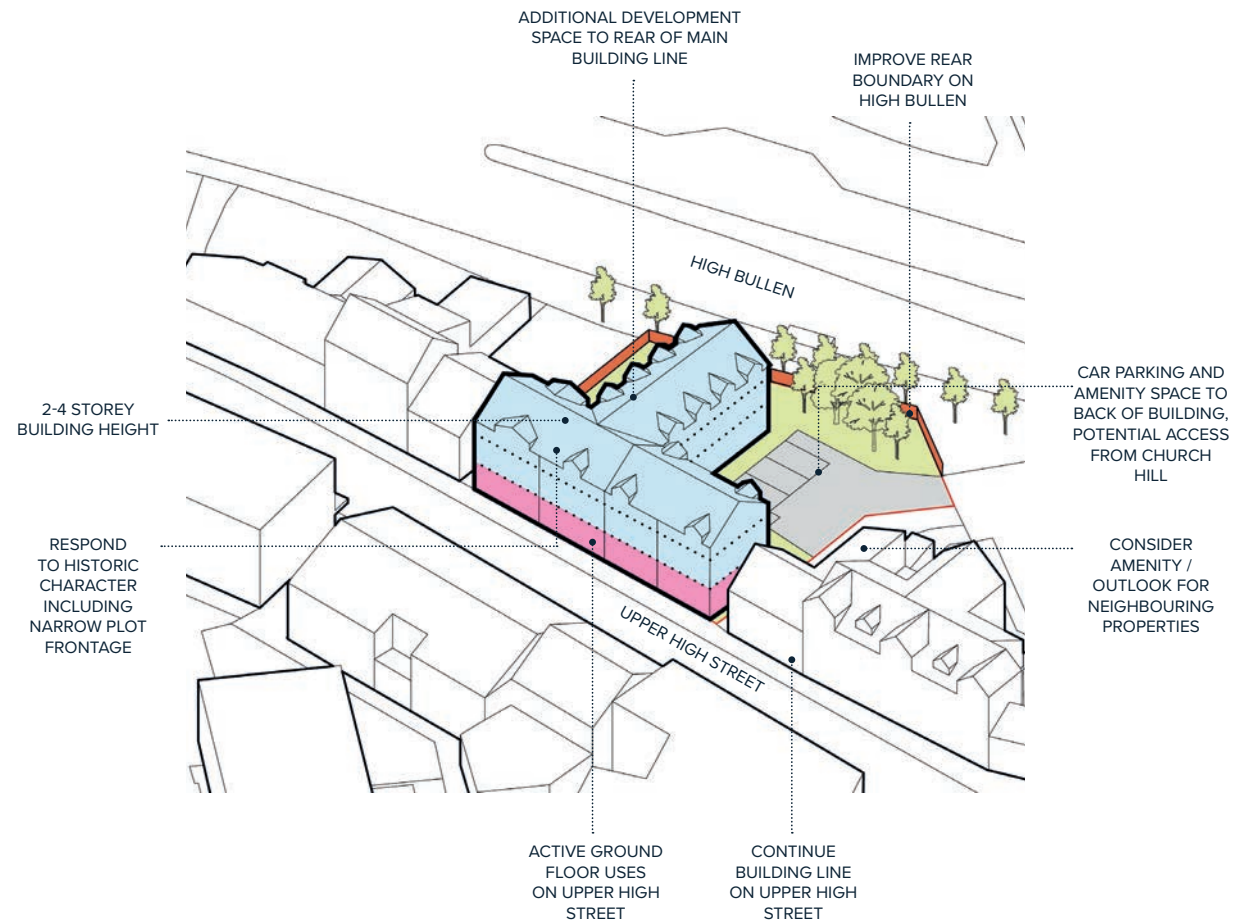


Figure 51 Upper High Street Indicative Concept Site Layout

All details indicative / approximate and subject to further feasibility assessment and design development.

Fig. 27 reference D

Victoria Street Sites*

Site Area: 0.52 ha.

Mix of Uses: Residential (apartments), community or other active ground floor uses.

Site Capacity: 53 units (1 and 2 bed apartments).

Key Opportunities:

- Improve quality of urban environment on Victoria Street including building frontage.
- Improve experience for visitors walking / cycling from metro stop.
- Introduce a broader mix of uses in the area close to the metro stop to help activate and animate the area.
- Potential for more contemporary design response (form and detailing) away from town centre historic core.
- Respond to enhancement of public realm Holyhead Road and Victoria Street
- Potential to form phase 1 of wider redevelopment of surrounding "Metro Gateway" area, see page 69.

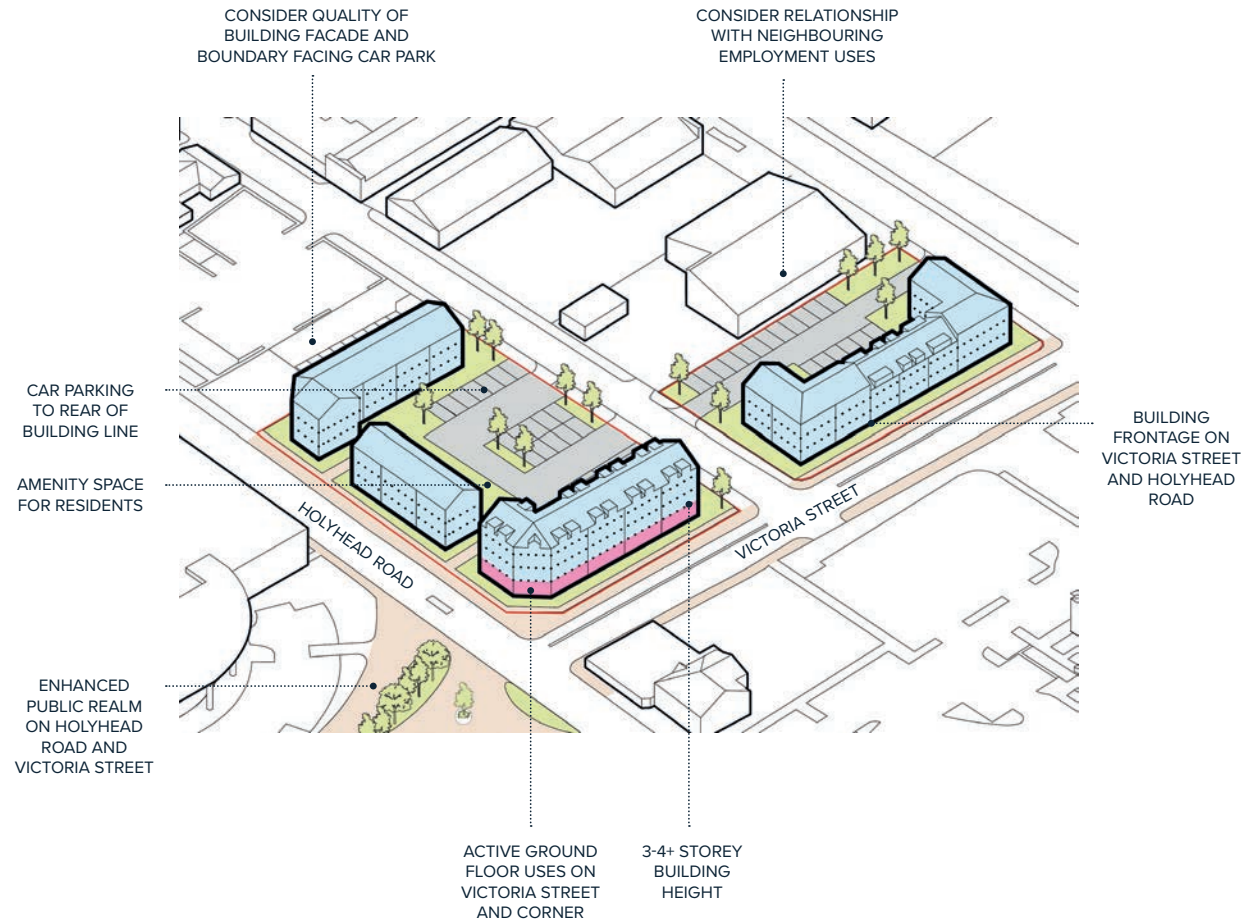


Figure 52 Police Station and Spires Sites Indicative Concept Site Layout

All details indicative / approximate and subject to further feasibility assessment and design development.

* Development on this site is dependent on the decisions of West Midlands Police and this document does not seek to pre-empt any decisions made.

Fig. 27 reference 11

4.16 Townscape Enhancements Initiative

Create a strategy for tackling dilapidated, vacant and underutilised properties, including retail units and underutilised upper floor spaces. This could include:

- Maintaining a list of vacant and underutilised properties and their respective owners within the town centre, and identifying priority buildings focusing on prominent and historic buildings including listed buildings.
- Proactive tracking of businesses, organisations and services which need space in Wednesbury, and promotion to potential investors.
- Promoting use of underutilised upper floors for residential uses, including managed affordable housing.
- Promoting pop-up and meanwhile uses for vacant retail spaces, including non-revenue generating community activities.
- Grant funding to repair and reinstate historic building fabric and shopfronts.

- Creating a fund for Compulsory Purchase of key properties where owners are not taking action.
- Where development is located within the Conservation Area, consideration should be given to the Conservation Area Appraisal in identifying appropriate architectural responses. Consideration should be given to enhancing buildings which are identified as 'negative' in the Appraisal.

Fig. 27 reference 12

4.17 Property Boundaries Programme

Work with property owners on Upper High Street (and potentially other locations) to improve the quality of rear boundaries which face High Bullen where the built environment has become fractured. This could include:

- Tidying of building façades (fronts and rears) which are visible from High Bullen or other streets.
- Tidying of rear yards and improved boundary treatments, including provision for consistent boundary treatments.
- Provision for trees and other green infrastructure in yards.



Fig. 27 reference 13

4.18 Wednesbury Net Zero Neighbourhood

Develop a net zero neighbourhood plan to understand the local area and identify opportunities that improve sustainability of the region and support the commitment to net zero carbon and other considerations relating to the climate emergency and energy resilience / affordability.

A net zero neighbourhood is a community where energy requirements are reduced through demand reduction measures and remaining energy needs are met through decarbonised energy sources as well as wider measures being taken to create a sustainable place to live.

Development of this strategy should be neighbourhood specific and include full engagement with local communities, businesses and infrastructure providers. When considering the pathway to Net Zero, a whole system approach should be applied, considering the interactions, feedback and dependencies to identify interventions.

This could include:

- Grant funding for sustainable building improvements including insulation, heat pumps and rooftop solar, and replacement of other fossil fuel dependent household and business infrastructure.
- Provision for larger scale community owned renewable generation projects.
- Commitment from Sandwell Council (and partners) to promote sustainable buildings for all new developments where there is direct influence (eg, ownership and funding).
- Improvement to existing energy grid to support increased usage, including provision for smart grids and local energy storage (subject to engagement with Distribution Network Operator).
- Improved digital infrastructure and strategy to support home working and local co-working communities.
- Promotion of EVs, EV charging infrastructure and EV car clubs with the aim of providing alternatives to car ownership.
- Promoting growth in green industries and encouraging development of skills in this sector.



Figure 53 Net Zero Neighbourhood Concept

1. Building improvements
2. Co-working location (Austin Distel at Unsplash)
3. Sustainable building design

Fig. 27 reference 14

4.19 Metro Gateway Development Framework

Develop a longer-term strategy or policy to create a mixed-use urban neighbourhood anchored around the Wednesbury Great Western Street metro stop, through a phased / incremental approach. This can transform the area between the town centre and the metro, creating a high quality urban environment which draws people from metro to the town centre, introduces a wide range of land-uses which help to bring more footfall to the town centre, and forms a 'transit-oriented development' which promotes use of Metro and sustainable patterns of travel within the wider area.

Proposed land-uses within the area should respond to the Local Plan and policy in relation to the Wednesbury to Tipton Regeneration Area and Waste Sites, as well as the desire to retain employment uses within the area and support existing business to be integrated or relocated with minimised disruption. The area includes a mix of sites with varying complexity, some of which could be developed in the short to medium term, representing early phases of the Metro Gateway development. The strategy should consider early assessment of feasibility including issues such as land contamination from historic uses, and engagement with land-owners and existing business to establish aspirations.

This could include:

- A mix of employment, residential, commercial, community and education uses.
- Potential to create new facilities for tertiary and higher education associated with existing local institutions, including enterprise and innovation spaces.
- Urban form based on recognised townscape principles, including provision for perimeter blocks, appropriate street frontage and enclosure, and active ground floors.
- Reuse of historic buildings including former railway sheds.
- High quality streetscapes, including active travel infrastructure and significant urban greening, with particular focus on Victoria Street as part of the public realm spine.
- Limited ancillary services subject to a sequential test and impact assessment to support the new residents, employees and metro uses.
- A high standard of building sustainability.
- Consideration to reducing car ownership and parking requirements, including provision for car clubs, cycle parking and travel planning.



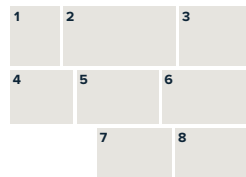
Figure 54 Illustrative Development Framework Plan

Key	
	Potential earlier phases
	Later phases
	Existing buildings
	Strategic waste site
	Potential open spaces
	Potential green infrastructure network
	Proposed public realm spine
	Metro line and stop
	Potential transit corridor



Figure 55 Metro Gateway Concept

- 1. Employment uses
- 2. Residential amenity space
- 3. Building reuse
- 4. Street frontage and enclosure
- 5. Enhanced active travel environments
- 6. Ground floor activation at key locations
- 7. Sustainable building design
- 8. Urban greening



5 Delivery

5.1 Delivering Change

The proposals set out in this Masterplan represent a potential range of projects and actions that can be undertaken over the next ten years to support the regeneration of Wednesbury town centre.

This section sets out our approach to delivering these projects to ensure that we continue to work proactively towards our vision and aims.

In addition to identified actions, Sandwell Council will use the masterplan as a tool for communicating aspirations, undertaking continued engagement with the community and businesses, promoting Wednesbury town centre to potential investors, and shaping Council decisions across a range of service areas.

Sandwell Council will continue to review potential projects over the plan timeframe, updating projects where appropriate in response to changing context and funding opportunities.

It is recognised that there are challenges and barriers to change that must be overcome in order to successfully deliver the desired outcomes of the masterplan. This includes significant challenges relating to development viability, existing limited propensity for private sector activity, and limitations of current council budgets. Sandwell Council will need to work closely with public and private sector partners in order to overcome these challenges.

5.2 Key Partners & Stakeholders

Sandwell Council will work with a range of partners and stakeholders to deliver the proposals set out in the Masterplan. This will include:

- Sandwell Council
- Wednesbury Levelling up Partnership Board
- Wednesbury Town Member Board
- West Midlands Combined Authority
- Transport for West Midlands
- Historic England
- High Streets Task Force
- Existing town centre and wider Wednesbury businesses
- Community organisations
- Land owners, developers and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)
- Retailers and leisure operators
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (and other government organisations)

In many instances, the wider public and active community organisers are key partners and stakeholders. All future actions to deliver the masterplan proposals should have regard for the importance of ongoing community engagement and involvement. We will work closely with stakeholders to explore how regeneration can help to deliver social value and measurable social outcomes.

Our approach to working in partnership will continue to evolve over the course of the masterplan's lifespan, particularly when responding to changes to local, regional and national governance and where there are opportunities to identify new partner and stakeholder organisations who can play a positive role in helping us to deliver the masterplan.

5.3 Funding

There are a range of existing funding streams at a local, regional and national level which are intended to support the regeneration of town centres and communities, and which may be available to support the delivery of proposals in Wednesbury town centre. These include:

Levelling Up Fund*

- Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Fund has been allocated £20.4m to help improve the Wednesbury area, including the attractiveness and safety of Wednesbury town centre, building upon the improvements already made through the Wednesbury High Street Heritage Action Zone. This funding is already allocated to help deliver some elements of this masterplan, in particular to support enhancement of the public realm and development of vacant sites.

*The name and some details of this fund have been changed as of July 2024. This will not affect the award of funding to Sandwell Council.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

- Sandwell has been allocated £9,817,228 of funding for the three years running from 2022 to 2025. UKPSF focuses on boosting productivity, jobs, improving public services, helping to restore community and local pride and empowering local leaders and communities.
- The future of the UK SPF is unclear, however it is anticipated that future funding will be made available in some form.

Homes England

- Brownfield, Infrastructure and Land Funds are provided by UK central government in England through Homes England to support a diverse range of partners, both in the public and private sector, to unlock strategic housing sites including housing-led, mixed-use opportunities where brownfield, infrastructure or land projects which face delivery and/or viability challenges. This may particularly apply to the Metro Gateway proposals.
- The Affordable Homes Programme 2021 to 2026 provides grant funding to support the capital costs of developing affordable housing for rent or sale.

S106 Agreements / Community Infrastructure Levy

- Monetary contributions from developers can result from planning obligations related to planning applications. Known as Section 106 agreements they can result in funding to mitigate specific impacts resulting from site development including affordable housing provision. In addition, developer contributions resulting from the application of the Community Infrastructure Levy can support the delivery of community facilities, open spaces, public realm and transport infrastructure.
- **Business Improvement Districts (BID) and Community Improvement Districts (CID)**
- BID / CID funding allows local businesses (and other partners) to pool resources to fund small scale projects, or to act as a consortium to attract other funding and grants which may otherwise be unavailable. In order to access this funding, it would be necessary to create BID / CID organisations and infrastructure is it is not currently in place.

Enterprise Zones (EZs)

- Enterprise Zones offer an opportunity to focus specialised businesses within a certain area, supported by business rates relief that can attract investment to places like Wednesbury.

Heritage Lottery Funding

- This funding is available to support the preservation of historic buildings, industrial legacy and the natural environment. Funding can be used to engage the wider community on heritage, undertake repairs and conservation works as well as funding staff posts (or other professional fees).

Local Authority Budgets

- The council delivers a range of existing services which impact on the town centre including those related to open spaces, highways, public realm and education. Whilst these budgets are limited and under significant existing pressure, it will be important to understand how they might be leveraged to deliver elements of the masterplan.
- Whilst these budgets are limited, there may be the opportunity to partially fund schemes with partners, using public money strategically to address market failures that can enable other funders to deliver elements of this Masterplan which would otherwise not be financially or commercially viable.

West Midlands Combined Authority

- The anticipated increase in the devolution of decision-making and spending powers to Combined Authorities over the coming years is likely to make funds available to support locally focussed schemes such as those set out in this masterplan. The details on this remain unclear however, but it remains an early focus of the UK Government and was specifically featured in the 2024 King's Speech.

- £100m Land Fund / £128m Brownfield Housing Fund / £24m National Competitive Fund / £100m Brownfield, Infrastructure & Land Fund / £140m Commercial investment Fund: WMCA have a number of potential funds that the Council may wish to explore in further detail. The majority of the funds are focused on the development of brownfield land and therefore can be considered appropriate for the sites identified in Wednesbury. There is also a commercial fund and further investigation is required as to whether this could be used to bring the former Gaumont Cinema back into use.
- Transport and Infrastructure Fund: The Department for Transport in April 2022 confirmed a £1.05 billion grant to transport road, bus, rail, tram, and cycling and walking infrastructure across the West Midlands.
- Potential further devolution opportunities, delegated spending budgets and funding through Single Settlement Funding and Local Growth & Place.

Private sector

- Viability is challenging across Wednesbury town centre; however, attracting private sector investment and expertise will be key in bringing forward a number of the development sites.
- The leveraging of public investment to address market failures and enhance the viability of schemes to private sector co-funders presents a significant opportunity to enable the delivery of this Masterplan.

Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport for the West Midlands (TfWM)

- Where a project has a transport element, such as circulation, active travel or wayfinding, funding may be sought from the DfT or from TfWM to contribute to the project's delivery. As with all funding applications, certain requirements must be met to secure funding, but the DfT is a significant funder for projects in town centres nationally.

Public Works Loan Board borrowing** (**capture of funding prior to ending of scheme to be clarified)

- The Council is able to borrow capital from the PWLB to help unlock the delivery of sites; funding could be used to help assemble sites or fund the construction of schemes; however, the Council will need to be able to demonstrate that it is able to pay back the loan and therefore will need to ensure that they secure an income from the scheme(s) and/or have a clear exit (e.g. disposal).

One Public Estate

- The OPE seeks to support locally-led partnerships of public sector bodies focused on the public service delivery strategies and estates needs. The OPE includes the Brownfield Land Fund, which is capital grant funding available to all English Council's to support the release of council-owned brownfield land housing. The most recent round of funding (BLRF3) closed earlier this year. Given the Council's land ownership within Wednesbury town centre the Council should consider the potential to use this fund to help unlock sites for development.

Project-specific funding

- Where projects relate to specific areas of interest for national and regional funding bodies, it may be possible to leverage funding from those bodies for the specific purposes that align with the objectives of those organisations. Examples include the Arts Council for public events and performance projects, Heritage England for heritage projects or Sports England for projects that have a sporting connection.

Over the course of the masterplan's lifespan, the range of funding sources available and processes for obtaining funding will evolve. Sandwell Council will continue to track funding opportunities and seek to match funding with potential projects set out in the Masterplan. This may include identifying new regeneration opportunities where this aligns with future funding streams.

5.4 Projects and Initial Actions

The proposals in chapter four are set out in the following matrix as a series of projects. For each project we have identified a broad aspirational timeframe for delivery, key partners / stakeholders, and where appropriate initial actions that Sandwell Council could undertake to make progress towards delivery.

All projects identified in this plan are subject to initial feasibility assessment and business case preparation, including assessment of alignment with the Sandwell Corporate Plan (and other relevant policies). These will inform a decision by the Council to move forward with the project at the appropriate point in time. This process will also identify potential funding requirements and demonstrate value for money based on the objectives of potential funding streams.

Project Timeframe

The Council will identify and focus on priority proposals based on initial feasibility testing and public engagement, while continuing to track and undertake appropriate actions to support progress on longer term proposals where these may not require notable initial actions.

The project matrix on the next page sets out an initial understanding of priorities and timeframes for delivering the masterplan proposals.

0-2 years / Quick wins – projects which can commence with limited planning, low risk and little investment or already have funding.

2-5 years / Short term – projects which require more planning or which require funding sources to be established.

5-10 years / Medium term – projects which require more complex planning or a longer lead time for development.

10 years + / Long term – projects which are aspirational and are likely to require large scale investment or highly complex planning processes.

The matrix below sets out the proposals identified as forming the masterplan, the aspirational timeframe for each project, potential key partners, and the potential initial actions that can be undertaken by Sandwell Council (SMBC) to progress each project.

For all proposals, the first steps will include project prioritisation and selection, initial feasibility assessment and endorsement from Sandwell Council's relevant service areas and cabinet.

Plan Ref	Project Name	Potential Funding Sources	Key Stakeholders / Partners	Complexity	Actions / Next Steps
-	Community High Streets	SMBC BID / CID S106 / CIL	Local traders and businesses Active community organisers SMBC	Low	Engage with local business owners and active community organisers. Engagement with scheme operators on other locations. Establish governance structures.
-	Events and Animation	SMBC BID / CID Arts Council	Events organisers Active community organisers SMBC	Low	Engagement with market operators. Engagement with existing events operators and active community organisers. Develop draft events calendar for each space.
-	Wayfinding and Trails	SMBC WMCA BID / CID	Local history society Local artists SMBC	Low	Preliminary strategy and concept design for wayfinding / trail systems.
0 - 2 YEARS / QUICK WINS	2	SMBC UK Govt Funding Private sector	Potential operators Market traders Active community organisers Local arts organisations SMBC	Medium	Undertake a feasibility assessment including concept design, costing and potential phasing. Secure temporary planning consent. Undertake market testing to establish operator interest. This could include a more commercial or more community / third sector led approach to development.
	11	UK Govt Funding HLF Private Sector CIL/S106	Property Owners Historic England SMBC	Low (per project)	Identify processes and parameters for scheme. Identify priority properties. Undertake land registry analysis to identify owners / property boundaries.
	12	UK Govt Funding Homes England	Property owners Local artists SMBC	Low (per project)	Engage with property owners. Develop design concept. Undertake land registry analysis to identify owners / property boundaries.
	9	UK Govt Funding Private sector	Morrisons Car park operators EV providers SMBC	Low	Engage with operators and stakeholders. Undertake a feasibility assessment including concept design, costing and capacity modelling.
	8	Traffic Circulation	SMBC LUP DfT TfWM	SMBC WMCA	Low

Plan Ref	Project Name	Potential Funding Sources	Key Stakeholders / Partners	Complexity	Actions / Next Steps
10	Infill Development Sites	UK Govt Funding Private sector WMCA Homes England	Property owners Potential developers and RSLs Potential occupiers SMBC	Medium-High	Engage with owners. Identify development partners. Prepare outline proposals.
1	Leisure & Social Hub	UK Govt Funding WMCA Sport England	Property owner Potential operators / developer SMBC	Medium-High	Engagement with property owner. Undertake a detailed feasibility study including concept design and costing. Identify and engage with potential operators. Explore other capital funding opportunities to support leisure, arts and culture in the town centre including at Wednesbury Town Hall, Museum and Art Gallery.
4	Dudley St and High Bullen Short term enhancements	UK Govt Funding	SMBC	Medium	Undertake feasibility assessment including concept design, costing and traffic modelling. Secure highway approvals.
3	Public realm spine and LUP enhancements	UK Govt Funding DfT TfWM	SMBC	High	Undertake detailed design and costing of LUP funded scheme. Identify potential early quick win phases including pop-up furniture and landscapes.
5	Active travel infrastructure short term enhancements	UK Govt Funding WMCA S106 / CIL DfT TfWM	TfWM Sustrans Active Travel England SMBC	Medium	Engage with stakeholders. Undertake a feasibility assessment including concept design and costing.
7	Church Hill open space	UK Govt Funding HLF / SfN S106 / CIL	West Midlands Police Play England SMBC	Medium	Co-design with local community. Undertake a feasibility assessment including concept design and costing.
6	Railway Corridor active travel link	UK Govt Funding ATE funding S106 / CIL DfT TfWM	TfWM Sustrans Network Rail Active Travel England SMBC	Medium	Engage with key stakeholders and local community. Undertake a feasibility assessment including concept design and costing.
13	Wednesbury net zero neighbourhood	UK Govt Funding WMCA	SMBC WMCA	High	Prepare strategy including community engagement. Undertake feasibility assessment costing.

2 - 5 YEARS / SHORT TERM

Plan Ref	Project Name	Potential Funding Sources	Key Stakeholders / Partners	Complexity	Actions / Next Steps	
5 - 10 YEARS / MEDIUM TERM	14	Metro Gateway Early Phases	UK Govt Funding Brownfield Land Fund Private Sector WMCA	TfWM Homes England Property owners Potential developers Sandwell College SMBC	Medium	Engage with key stakeholders including potential anchor uses (eg, tertiary education). Undertake feasibility assessment including viability and market testing, and assessment against planning policy compliance (eg, sequential testing for new land uses). Prepare development framework.
	5	Active travel infrastructure long term enhancements	ATE funding UK Govt Funding S106 / CIL DfT TfWM	TfWM Sustrans Active Travel England SMBC	High	Engage with key stakeholders Undertake feasibility assessment including concept design, costing and traffic modelling
	3	Public realm spine long term enhancements	UK Govt Funding SHIF S106 / CIL WMCA	SMBC WMCA	High	Undertake feasibility assessment including concept design and costing
	4	Dudley St and High Bullen Long term highway enhancements	S106 / CIL WMCA DfT TfWM	SMBC	High	Undertake feasibility assessment including concept design, costing and traffic modelling
10+ YEARS / LONG TERM	6	Metro Transit Corridor	DfT TfWM	TfWM Network Rail SMBC	High	Engage with key stakeholders
	14	Metro Gateway later phases	DfT TfWM	TfWM Homes England Property owners Potential developers Sandwell College SMBC	Medium	Ongoing assessment of developer demand / partnership opportunities and potential public sector anchor land uses / facilities

Development Sites

The matrix to the right sets out the key development sites identified in the masterplan, the aspirational timeframe for each project, potential key partners, and the potential initial actions to be undertaken by Sandwell Council to progress each project.

For each site, Sandwell Council will undertake initial feasibility assessment and identify the potential level of intervention required to support and shape development. Development options could include:

- Private sector delivery with Sandwell Council influence through statutory Development Management processes
- Private sector-led delivery with limited SMBC partnership, including funding to derisk sites or other activities to promote private sector investment
- SMBC-led delivery with selected development partners

These options include the potential for Sandwell Council to acquire privately owned sites through CPO purchase (or other processes), or to dispose of publicly owned sites to private development. SMBC will also work with other public sector land owners where appropriate to support appropriate development options.

Plan Ref	Site Name	Owner	Timeframe	Actions / Notes
A	High Bullen	SMBC	2-5 years	Detailed capacity assessment of site. Identify potential development partners. Consider potential public sector funding (Homes England / WMCA / OPE) to unlock development.
B	Union Street	SMBC	5+ years	Develop framework plan for surrounding sites. Meanwhile use of site as pop-up destination. Consider potential as part of a wider portfolio of sites. Undertake soft market testing with developers. Consider potential public sector funding streams (Homes England / WMCA / OPE).
C	Upper High Street	Single private owner	2-5 years	Engage with site owner. Detailed capacity assessment of site. Explore options for partnership development.
D	Victoria Street	SMBC / public sector	2-5 years	Develop framework plan for Metro Gateway Area. Explore options to assemble larger site. Soft market test with developers.
E	Addison Street	Single private owner	2-5 years	Engage with land owner. Explore options for partnership development.
F	O'Connell Walk	Multiple private owners	5+ years	Engage with land owners. Explore opportunities to relocate existing uses within town centre.

Appendices

Appendix A: Policy & Strategies

Appendix B: Population & Demographics

Appendix C: Heritage

Appendix D: High Street & Market Context

Appendix E: Land Ownership

Appendix A: Policy & Strategies

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (2023) sets out the Government’s policies to guide planning in England, with an overarching aim to achieve sustainable development. It covers a range of policies, including ensuring the vitality of town centres, promoting sustainable transport, creating well-designed and beautiful places, and conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

“ Well-designed places influence the quality of our experience as we spend time in them and move around them. We enjoy them, as occupants or users but also as passers-by and visitors. They can lift our spirits by making us feel at home, giving us a buzz of excitement or creating a sense of delight. ”

National Design Guide

National Design Guide

The National Design Guide (2021) forms part of the Government’s collection of planning practice guidance and sets out ten characteristics of well-designed places, with guidance and principles for each: Context, Identity, Built Form, Movement, Nature, Public spaces, Uses, Homes and Buildings, Resources, and Lifespan.

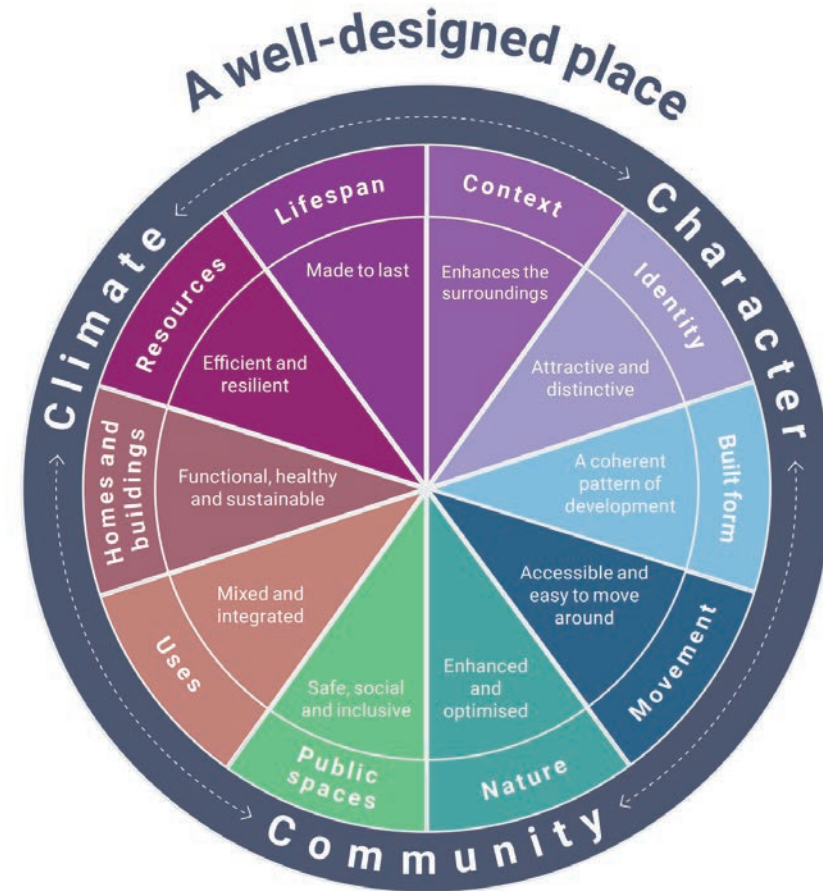


Figure 56 Ten Characteristics of a Well-Designed Place (National Design Guide)

Existing Strategies

Sandwell Council Plan 2024-2027

The Sandwell Council Plan sets out a vision for the future of the borough and outlines the Council's commitment to delivering positive change for its citizens. The plan centres around delivering 4 strategic themes, underpinned by a 'One Council One Team' approach:

- Growing up in Sandwell: A great place for children to grow up and to ensure a brighter future for children and young people, where every individual is valued and given access to the tools to succeed. In January 2024, we started the journey to become a recognised UNICEF UK Child Friendly Borough.
- Living in Sandwell: Commitment to our local environment with a focus on ensuring that the community takes pride in its surroundings, fostering a sense of ownership and community spirit. We want to make sure that all of our assets support the Council to create a healthier, wealthier and more sustainable borough.
- Healthy in Sandwell: We are committed to fostering a community where every resident has the opportunity to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. By empowering individuals to remain independent and resilient, we aim to ensure that they can lead fulfilled lives for as long as possible.
- Thriving Economy in Sandwell: We want Sandwell to stand as a beacon of progress in the West Midlands, for Sandwell to have thriving economy and a sustainable future. We have a strategic vision that promises a flourishing future for residents and businesses.
- One Council One Team: To deliver our ambitions across our Council Plan we need more than an engine to drive change we need our whole workforce. Sandwell Council's ethos of 'One Council One Team' reflects a commitment to unity and collaboration, striving for excellence in serving the community.

Black Country Core Strategy

The Core Strategy sets out the vision for the Black Country region until 2026 and consists of the Black Country Core Strategy, Area Action Plans (AAPs), Site Allocation Documents (SADs) and other Local Development Documents (LDDs). The core strategy sets out the vision for the Black Country region until 2026.

Regional Transport Strategies

Transport for West Midlands' (TfWM) Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out a strategy to improve the regional transport offer, ensuring safe, well-connected and accessible transport within the region. TfWM propose investing £6.1 billion to deliver sustainable transport solutions, including a proposed West Midlands Metro Extension between Wednesbury and Walsall.

Draft Sandwell Local Plan

Sandwell Council are preparing a draft local plan to replace the Black Country Core Strategy. The Local Plan will guide development in Sandwell until 2041. Key policies and allocations for Wednesbury town centre include:

- SDS4 – Achieving well-designed places.
- SCE3 – Town centres (tier two centres).
- SDS2 – Wednesbury to Tipton Metro Corridor regeneration area.
- SHE2 – Extension of the Market Place conservation area.
- SHO1 – Housing allocation adjacent to the former railway line.
- STR1 – Priorities for the development of the transport network.

Consultation on the Local Plan concluded in December 2023. Whilst the plan has not yet been adopted, it should be treated a material consideration in future planning decisions and is likely to be broadly reflective of future policy direction. Further consultation on the Draft Local Plan will take place in late summer 2024.

Active Travel Strategies

The Sandwell Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (SCWIP) provides a long-term strategy for delivering walking and cycling infrastructure in Sandwell. The SCWIP is a response to the Government's call for authorities to develop a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) to be prioritised for funding.

The SCWIP identifies two proposals relevant to Wednesbury Town Centre:

- Core Walking Zone 5, covering the area between Wednesbury Great Western Street metro stop and the town centre as, particularly identifying the need to improve Victoria Street, the poor quality of some back lanes and car parks and the impact of traffic and poor air quality on the pedestrian environment, alongside other minor improvements.

- Cycle Route 8 Tipton to Wednesbury town centre, a proposed new route which skirts the town centre on Dudley Street / High Bullen and connects to Holyhead Road and Wednesbury Great Western Street metro stop via a spur. The section of this route on Victoria Street has been partially completed.

The Starley Network illustrates the cycling and walking network in the West Midlands, including existing and proposed routes. It also features other active travel interventions set out by local authorities, including the interventions set out in the SCWIP.

Appendix B: Population & Demographics

Today, Wednesbury is a substantial town with a population of around 39,000 people, across three wards making up the town. Wednesbury forms part of the Black Country and West Midlands, merging with surrounding settlements of West Bromwich, Dudley, Wolverhampton, and other smaller centres.

Wednesbury's population grew by nearly 5% between 2011 and 2020, with a proportional increase of 13% in the 0-15 age range. Despite this, Wednesbury's growth rate was lower than Sandwell's which was over 6% over the same period. Wednesbury's population is generally older than that of Sandwell's more widely, with a higher proportion of residents aged 65+, and lower proportion of residents of working age (16-64) and children (0-15).

Wednesbury is affected by a range of socio-economic challenges which impact the town and its town centre. Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 measures deprivation across England and uses areas to illustrate deprivation across England. These areas are known as Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), and are equivalent to small communities.

Nearly 75% of small communities in Wednesbury fall within the top quintile on the IMD, and all of Wednesbury's communities fall within the top half.

Of the indices of deprivation, Wednesbury particularly suffers in the health deprivation and disability dimension with all of its communities falling in the three most deprived deciles. Additionally, at least 25% of communities in Wednesbury are in the most deprived decile for the education, employment, and income deprivation dimensions.

Wednesbury has a higher proportion of residents with no qualifications and lower-level qualifications (e.g., GCSEs) as the highest level of attainment than Sandwell and the West Midlands. Wednesbury's population falls short of these comparators regarding higher level qualifications (e.g., A levels, degree).

Regarding mobility of the population, more than 78% of households in Wednesbury have access to at least one car or van. Generally, vehicle ownership is higher in Wednesbury than Sandwell, and falls in line with the West Midlands average.

39,000

People in Wednesbury

75%

Communities in the top quintile of IMD

25%

Communities in most deprived decile for education, employment and income

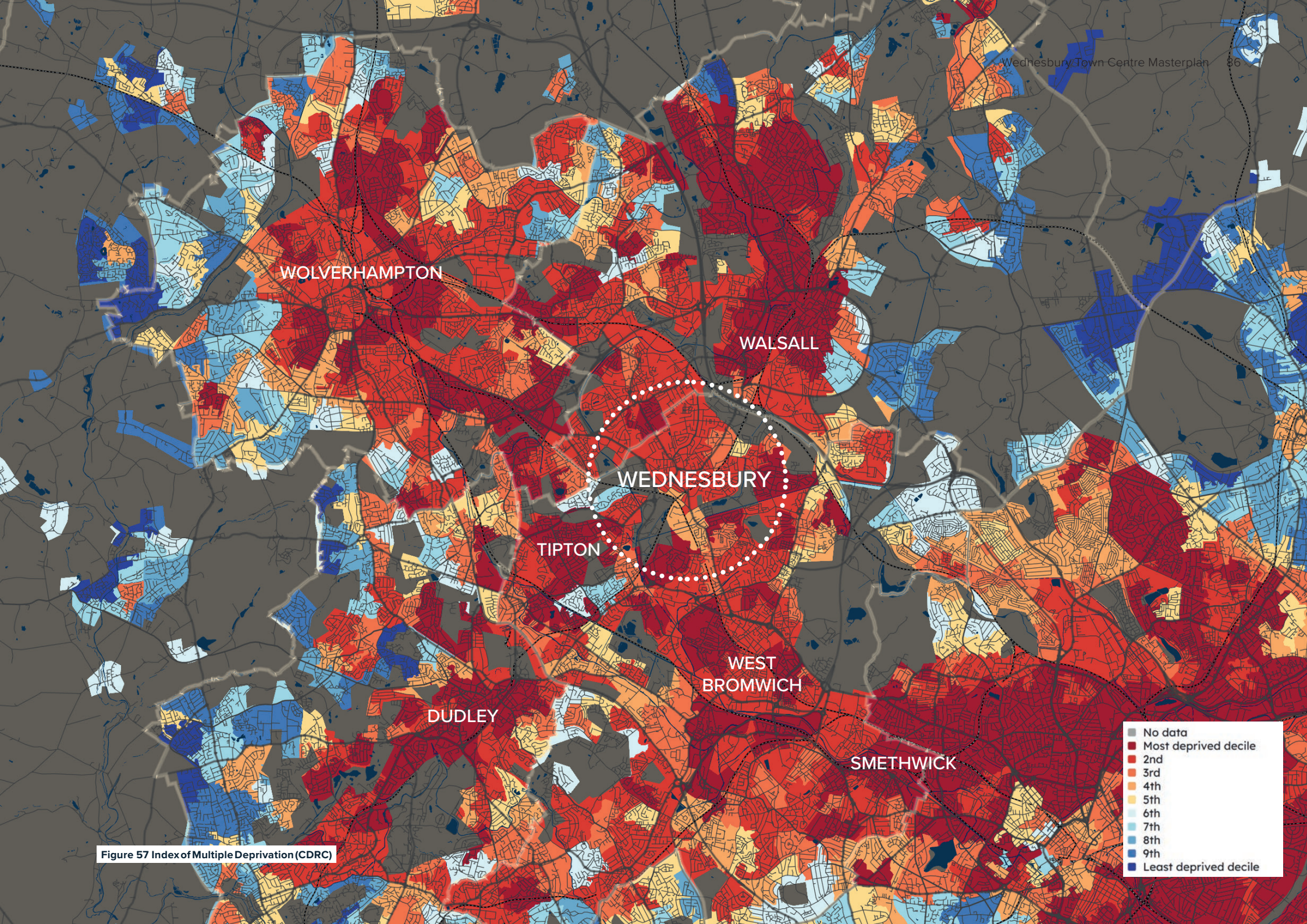


Figure 57 Index of Multiple Deprivation (CDRC)

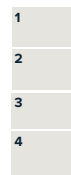
Appendix C: Heritage

Wednesbury Market Place Conservation Area, designated in 1980 and extended in 2024, covers much of the town centre, focused around the Market Place. It was designated as a result of its special architectural and historic interest and covers an area of just over 3 hectares. In accordance with Section 16 of the NPPF, development within this area must have regard for the desire to preserve or enhance the special character of the conservation area.

The Market Place Conservation Area is included on Historic England’s Risk Register, having a ‘very bad’ condition which is likely due to the poor condition of many historic buildings, high vacancy rates and inappropriate modern development and alterations. It is noted as having an ‘improving’ trend as a result of the recent HSHAZ. The HSHAZ scheme encountered significant challenges in delivering improvements including a lack of uptake on the historic building restoration grants as a result of capacity or interest from building owners to invest in property.

Figure 58 Key Heritage Assets in the Town Centre

1. Memorials at Memorial Gardens
2. Former Gaumont Cinema building
3. Former Conservative and Unionist Club building
4. Former Post Office building & Town Hall



A Conservation Area Appraisal¹ was prepared in 2023 as part of the HSHAZ scheme, which included an extension of the area to include Upper High Street. More information on historic and architectural character are contained in the Appraisal, as well as identification of buildings which have a positive and negative impact on local character.

In addition to the conservation area, there are three listed buildings / structures within the town centre. These include Market Place Clock Tower (Grade II), 31 and 33 Market Place (Grade II), Museum and Art Gallery (Grade II). Various other listed historic buildings are located close to the town centre, including Wednesbury Library (Grade II), the two memorials at Memorial Gardens (Grade II), St Bartholomew’s Church (Grade II), and St Mary’s Church (Grade II).

Sandwell Council also maintain a list of locally important historic buildings in the borough which was last reviewed and updated in 2022. These assets, whilst not statutory protected, are considered in planning applications as a result of their significance and local importance. A number of these are located in and surrounding the town centre, including the Town Hall, former post office, former Gaumont Cinema, former Conservative and Unionist Club building, and the Masonic Hall.

¹ Sandwell Council (2024) Wednesbury Market Place Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



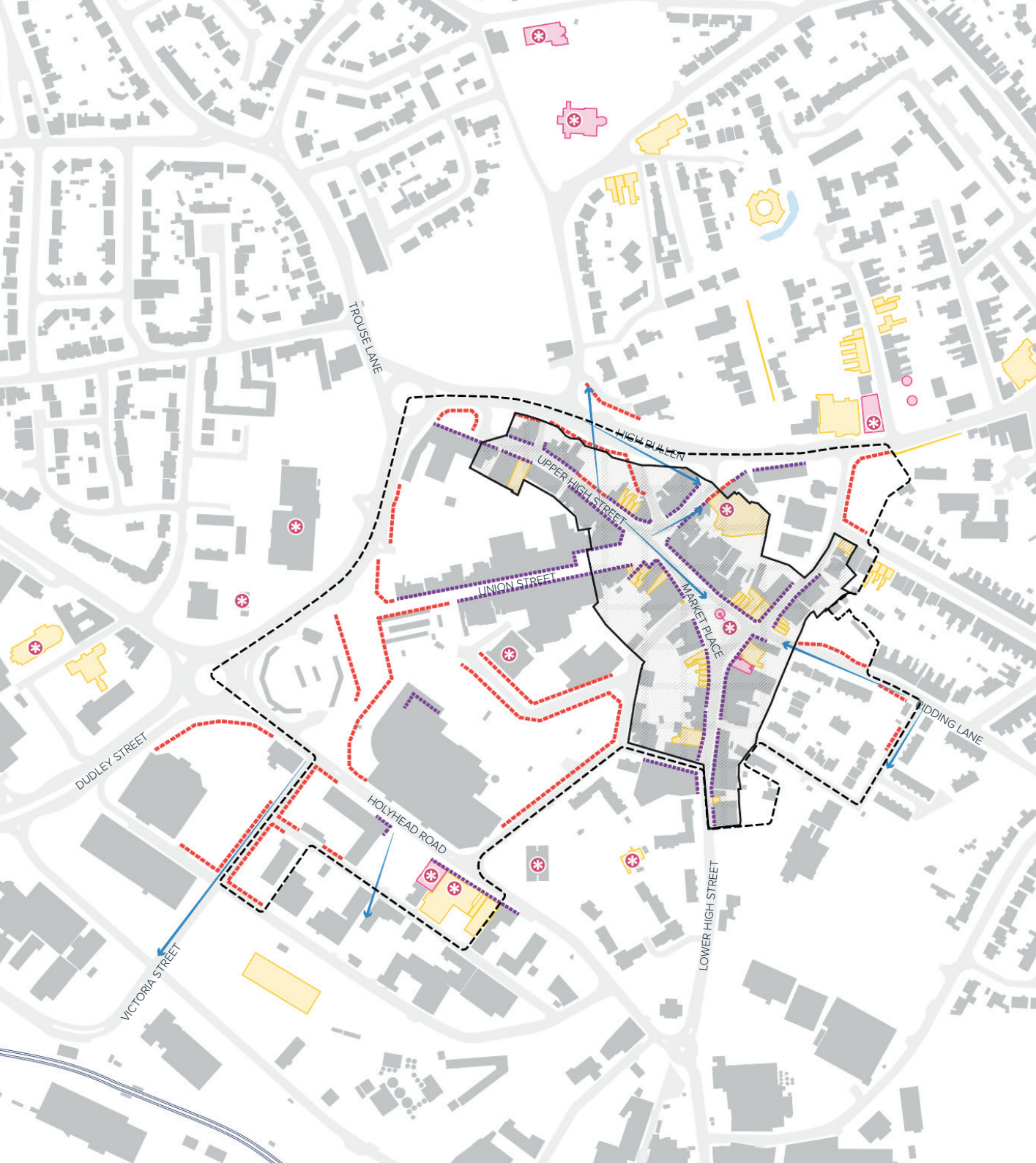


Figure 59 Heritage Character Assessment (HSHAZ / Historic England)

Figure 60 Heritage and Townscape Character



- Key**
- Study area
 - Conservation area
 - Listed buildings and structures
 - Locally listed buildings and structures
 - * Landmarks
 - Active frontages
 - Negative frontages
 - ➔ Views

Appendix D: High Street & Market Context

Wednesbury faces a challenging retail climate with increased trends towards online and out-of-town retail, as well as competition from other larger town centres in the Black Country and major retail centres in Birmingham City Centre and Merry Hill.

The town centre retains a range of retail with a number of distinctive features compared to other town centre¹:

- A high proportion of convenience, predominantly due to the large Morrisons superstore.
- A below average provision of comparison retail.
- A comparable level of vacancy to the national average.
- An above average provision of independent businesses to the national average.

There is a high provision of hairdressers, beauty salons, charity shops and discount stores. Hot food takeaways and food and drink both make up 6% of units respectively, whilst it is noted that there are few restaurants open in the evening.

Footfall through the town centre is highest on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, all of which are market days, reflecting the ability of the market to drive footfall through the town centre and on the high street.

Similar to other town centres, footfall has declined from pre-Covid levels, most notably by around 30% on Union Street and Upper High Street, with limited recovery since 2020.

The rental values achieved in Wednesbury range from £3.81 to £22.86 per square foot, averaging at around £9.50 per square foot. Within the current market context there is limited demand for new retail space.

¹ The Black Country Local Authorities (2022) Black Country Centres Study – Addendum 2022

Appendix E: Land Ownership



Sandwell Council are a significant landowner within the town centre, including areas of public realm, surface car parks (with the exception of Morrisons car park), vacant sites and some developed sites, and community facilities including the town hall and art gallery.

Other sites known to be in public ownership include Wednesbury Police Station and Wednesbury Bus Station.

The remaining sites are in private or unknown ownership.



Figure 61 Land Ownership

- Key**
-  Study area
 -  Sandwell Council Freehold

Mott MacDonald
10 Livery Street,
Birmingham, B3 2NU

www.mottmac.com