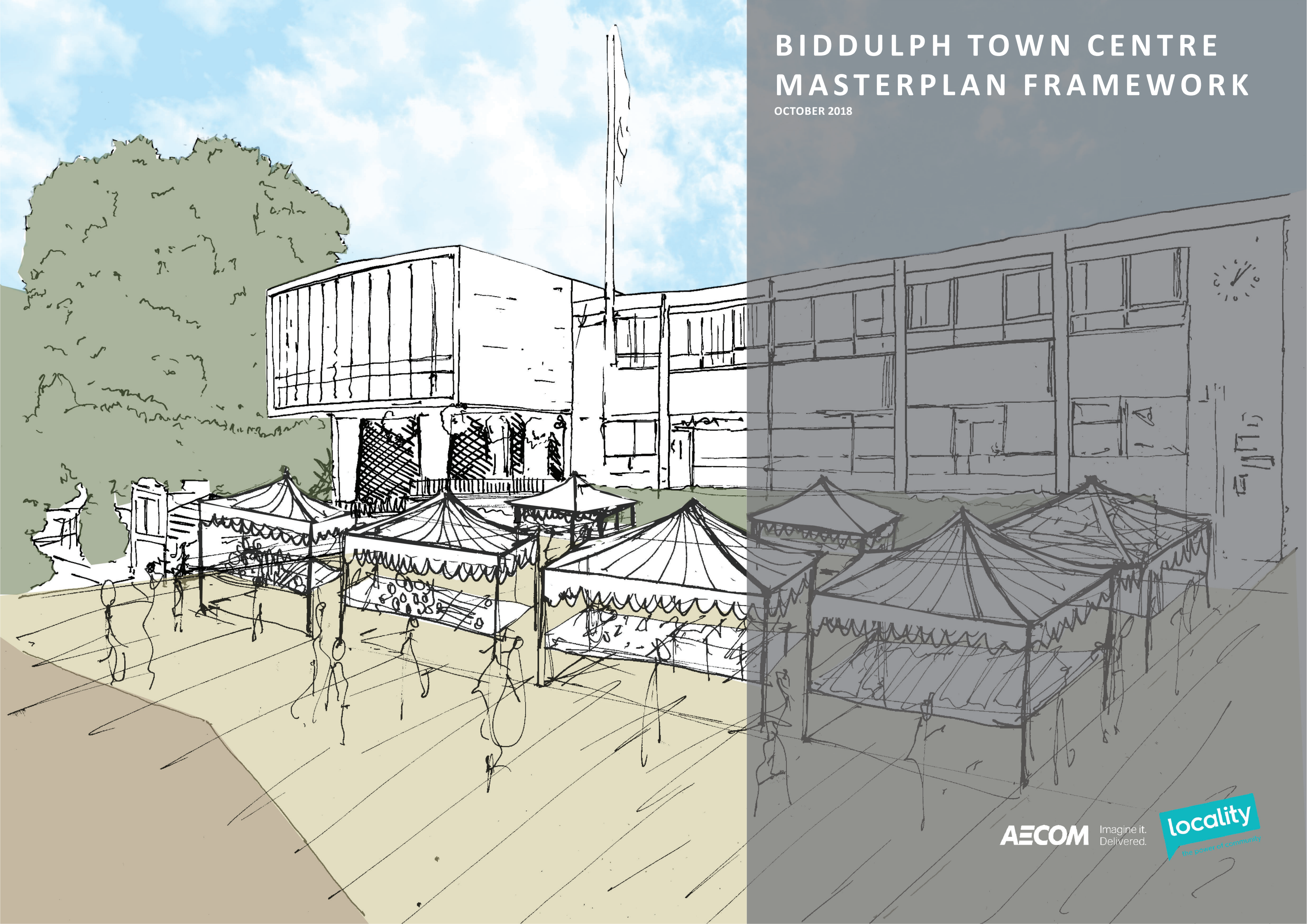


BIDDULPH TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

OCTOBER 2018



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60538603_MasterplanReport Draft	002	29/05/2018	Updated as per comments
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CONTENTS

1. Introduction	4
2. Planning Policy Review- Sites 1 and 2	5-6
2.1 Town Centre.....	5
2.2 Mill Triangle Sites.....	5
2.3 Town Centre Area Action Plan Analysis.....	6
3. Site Analysis	7-9
3.1 Town Centre analysis.....	7-8
3.2 Key Issues.....	9
4. Engagement	10
5. Masterplan Framework	11-26
5.1 Aims and Objectives.....	12
5.2 Masterplan Framework Site 1 - Town Centre	13-26
5.3 Masterplan Framework Site 2- Mill Triangle Sites.....	27-29
6. Next Steps	30

1 INTRODUCTION

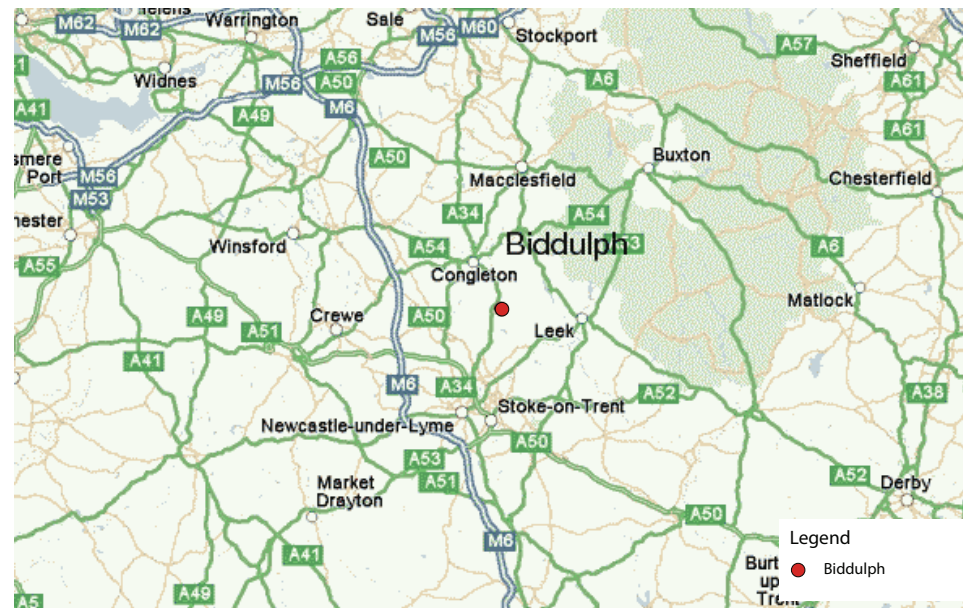
Through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Neighbourhood Planning programme, AECOM has been commissioned to assist the Biddulph Town Council and Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to prepare a Masterplan Framework for Biddulph Town Centre and consider proposed land uses for Mill Triangle Sites which would help to revitalise the Town Centre and improve the urban environment for locals and visitors.

Biddulph is located in Staffordshire 8.5 miles north of Stoke-on Trent and 4.5 miles south east of Congleton, Cheshire. It is known as 'The Garden Town of Staffordshire'. Biddulph Grange is a National Trust landscaped Victorian garden 1.6 miles from Biddulph Town Centre that attracts visitors from across the country.

The Masterplan Framework aims to understand key issues and identify potential interventions that would help enhance the urban realm of Biddulph Town Centre, creating an attractive, vibrant and diverse environment for residents and visitors. The Masterplan Framework will also undertake a high level review of the Town Centre 'Area Action Plan' (2007) and suggest appropriate land uses for the Mill Triangle sites, which would integrate well with the future growth and development envisaged for the town.

The following steps were undertaken to produce this report:

- Initial meeting, site visit and walk around;
- Desktop research and policy review;
- Engagement with Biddulph Town Council and Neighbourhood Plan Working Group.



Biddulph location map



Biddulph Town Centre Study Areas



'Biddulph in bloom' initiative



Biddulph Grange

2 PLANNING POLICY REVIEW

2.1 SITE 1- TOWN CENTRE

Planning policy documents relevant to our study area have been reviewed and are listed below.

- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan Preferred Option July 2017.
- Biddulph Town Centre Area Action Plan Development Plan Document , February 2007.

Site 1- Town Centre Study Area

Biddulph Town Centre Area Action Plan Development Plan Document February 2007, includes the following key strategic objectives for Biddulph Town Centre:

- A local shopping centre that attracts residents from all parts of Biddulph, as well as visitors from outside the town;
- A sustainable mix of retail, service, community and residential uses;
- Improved local employment opportunities;
- A high quality, well designed, safe and integrated centre;
- A centre accessible by a choice of transport modes;
- A locally distinctive Town Centre where environmental and heritage assets are maximised.

Within the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy it states that: Proposals relating to Biddulph Town Centre will be assessed against policies in the Biddulph Town Centre Action Plan Document (adopted February 2007) stated below.

Town Centre specific policies relating to the study area are summarised below:

Policy STRAT4: Pedestrianisation

The core of the Town Centre will be pedestrianised or partially-pedestrianised and well integrated with the existing public space in front of Biddulph Town Hall. The pedestrianised area should be capable of holding occasional events, including markets, whilst being an attractive usable area when not used as an events space.

Provision of a public square fronting Biddulph Town Hall would provide a place for interaction and community involvement. A pedestrian friendly environment would further enhance the Town Centre experience.

Policy PR1: Footpath Improvements

The Council will pursue the improvement of the following footpaths:

- Footpath between Wharf Road and High Street / Well Street Junction.
- Footpath between the Coperative supermarket (now B&M Bargains) and the JD Wetherspools.

Improvements should include improved hard landscaping, lighting, sight lines and signage.

Improvements with high quality material will help in increasing the visual appeal of the Town Centre and make it more inviting and attractive to users.

Policy PR3: Town Centre Gateways

High quality buildings, public realm, landscaping, and signposting are sought at the following gateway locations:

- Wharf Road/By pass junction.
- High Street: at the War Memorial.
- High Street/Well Street junction.

Improvements to public realm , landscaping and signage at key gateway junctions will help improve access and navigation within the Town Centre and improve the legibility of the town.

Policy T1: Traffic Management Proposals

The Council will work with the County Council to bring about improvements to the environment in the Town Centre and discourage the High Street from being used by through traffic.

This will be achieved by traffic management measures such as introducing one-way flows to some streets, or parts of streets, and pedestrianisation or partial-pedestrianisation of part of the High Street in front of the Town Hall.

The Council will work with the bus operators and with the County Council to establish a convenient interchange point with high quality waiting and information facilities, linked to cycle parking facilities and a taxi rank.

Traffic management is key to the success of the Town Centre. Pedestrian priority within the High Street, with well channelled traffic flow, would make the High Street safer and improve accessibility. Clear way finding measures and parking considerations should be made to encourage people to use the Town Centre.

Policies relating to Yarn Mill and Minster Mill site that form part of the Mill Triangle sites are listed below:

2.2 SITE 2- MILL TRIANGLE SITES

Site 2- Mill Triangle Sites- Yarn Mill and Minster Mill :

The redevelopment of Yarn Mill and Minster Mill provides an opportunity to create high density residential development on these underused sites in the Town Centre.

- Both buildings have no historic interest and have had various extensions which is likely to make residential conversion difficult. It is considered that a new build scheme on both sites would be appropriate;
- The Environment Agency has stated that the sites are within groundwater source protection zones so the developer should check for any restrictions associated with this prior to redevelopment of the sites;
- The Highway Authority requires provision of adequate parking and a Transport Assessment / Transport Statement to compare trip generation to the potential maximum of the current planning use.

Policy DSB2: Biddulph Mills

Land at Yarn Mill and Minster Mill in the region of 0.38ha in total is allocated for residential development of approximately 57 dwellings. Proposals for further intensification of these sites will be considered if residential amenity for future occupants is not adversely affected.

Development will be subject to:

- A site specific flood risk assessment and early discussions with the lead Local Flood Authority;
- Provision of adequate parking and a Transport Assessment in line with requirements of the Highway Authority;
- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan - Preferred Options;
- Contributions towards infrastructure, public open space, education, services;
- Improved pedestrian and cycle linkages with the Biddulph Valley Way and other community needs as required;
- Affordable housing in accordance with H3.

2.3 TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN (2007) ANALYSIS

This section is a high level review of Biddulph Town Centre 'Area Action Plan proposals map' for Biddulph Town Centre and its future delivery.

The Biddulph Town Centre Area Action Plan forms a part of the emerging Local Development Framework for Staffordshire Moorlands. The Area Action Plan is a formal 'Development Plan Document' and sets out the statutory planning policy for Biddulph Town Centre. The Area Action Plan focuses upon the delivery of regeneration in Biddulph Town Centre. The plan sets out the policy Framework against which planning applications will be assessed, and also considers how the regeneration of the Town Centre should be pro-actively delivered and coordinated by the public and private sectors in partnership.

The Area Action Plan shows the primary and secondary frontages within the Town Centre and improvements to High Street. The public realm of Biddulph Town Centre is degraded and needs improvements in order to attract users and traders. The quality of the shop front is poor and vacant shops result in dead frontage and an unattractive urban environment. It is paramount to revitalise and regenerate the Town Centre for future use. The provision for a 4500 sqm food superstore and other retail facilities (DS1) on the Wharf Road site, as proposed in the Area Action Plan; will have a negative impact on the Town Centre fabric. Provision of competing facilities, services and uses will result in leakage of trade from the High Street and impact the viability of the Town Centre. Furthermore provision for employment, leisure and non food retail (DS2) need to enhance the facilities offered within the Town. It is important to consider the impacts of DS1 and DS2 on the Town Centres economic and social viability before implementation. Residential development on Whalley Street will be beneficial due to its proximity to Town Centre and future employment opportunities within the Town Centre and surrounding developments. The uses within the Town Centre needs to be evaluated in order to function better and improve viability. Improvements to the High Street in terms of public realm upgrades and shop front upgrades is necessary to make it attractive to users.

Biddulph Town Centre is currently unattractive and requires interventions to forge a sense of place. The Masterplan Framework aims to provide interventions that would help revitalise and regenerate Biddulph Town Centre to create an attractive, safe, accessible and vibrant urban environment.

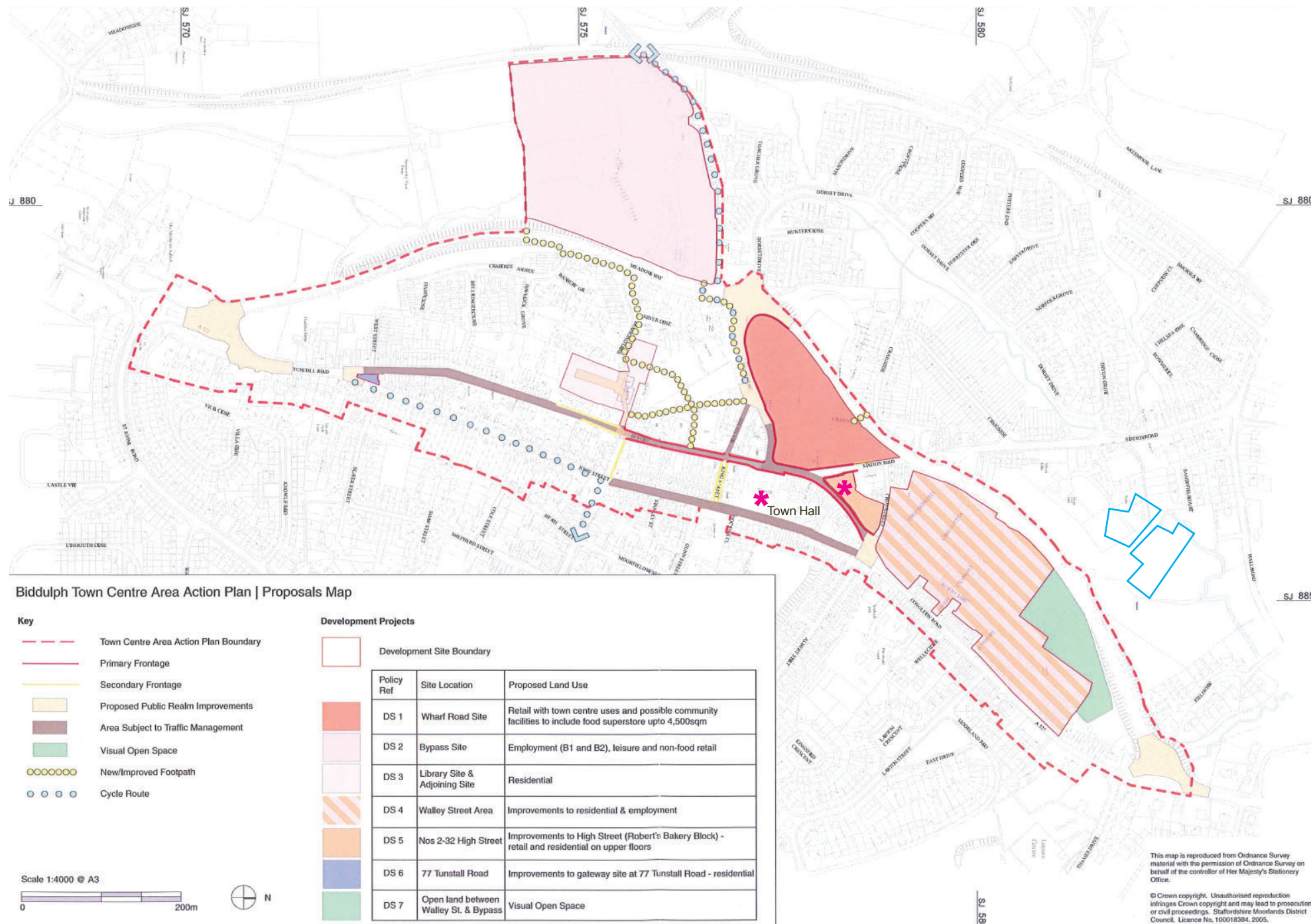


Figure 1: Biddulph Town Centre 'Area Action Plan' Proposal Map

3 SITE ANALYSIS

3.1 TOWN CENTRE ANALYSIS

This section includes an urban design site analysis of Biddulph Town Centre. The key aspects of the analysis focuses on:

- Landuse.
- Public realm.
- Access and parking.
- Character.
- Quality of environment.
- Night time economy.



Biddulph Town Centre Study Areas

3.1.1 Landuse:

Biddulph Town Centre is focused along the central High Street/ Tunstall Road. There is a large Sainsbury's at the end of High Street which is also accessible via the inner relief road that attracts customers both locally and from nearby towns. The main entrance to Sainsbury's is along Meadow way. Easy access and provision for free parking has resulted in leakage of trade from the High Street. Furthermore, the vacant/ dead frontage of Sainsbury's along a key gateway to the High Street/Town Centre makes an uninviting entry point into town and detracts users.

There is a range of shops within the Town Centre including takeaways, bargain stores, hairdressers, barbers, cafés, pubs, solicitors, property advisers etc. However, there is a lack of amenities like banks, hotels and night time uses. There are few residential properties within the Town Centre. The Town Hall is a key landmark within the Town Centre.

3.1.2 Public realm:

The quality of Public realm along High Street/ Tunstall Road is poor. Presence of a large number of bollards has narrowed the usable space on the pavements. There are a lack of resting spaces and the existing street furniture is in poor condition and does not complement the High Street. Poor public realm has contributed to the unattractiveness of the Town Centre.

3.1.3 Access and Parking:

There is a lack of legibility and accessibility within the Town Centre. The presence of two way traffic along South View Road hinders traffic flow. Parking on the High Street/Tunstall Road is time limited, whilst free parking is available at the Sainsbury's car park. The lack of clear gateways and way finding measures along with poor signages further exacerbates the lack of accessibility and legibility within the Town Centre.

3.1.4 Character:

Biddulph Town Centre lacks a sense of place. There is a mix of architectural style and building fabric. Poor quality public realm, lack of places of interaction and a pedestrian unfriendly environment degrades the urban character of the Town Centre.

3.1.5 Quality of environment:

There is a range of disused and vacant shops in the Town Centre. The lack of active frontages, low vacancy rates, poor shop frontages and lack of spill out spaces make the High Street unattractive to users.

3.1.6 Night time economy:

There is a lack of night time uses within the Town Centre. The town currently does not have any hotel accommodation. This makes the Town Centre unattractive and diverts users to neighbouring towns.

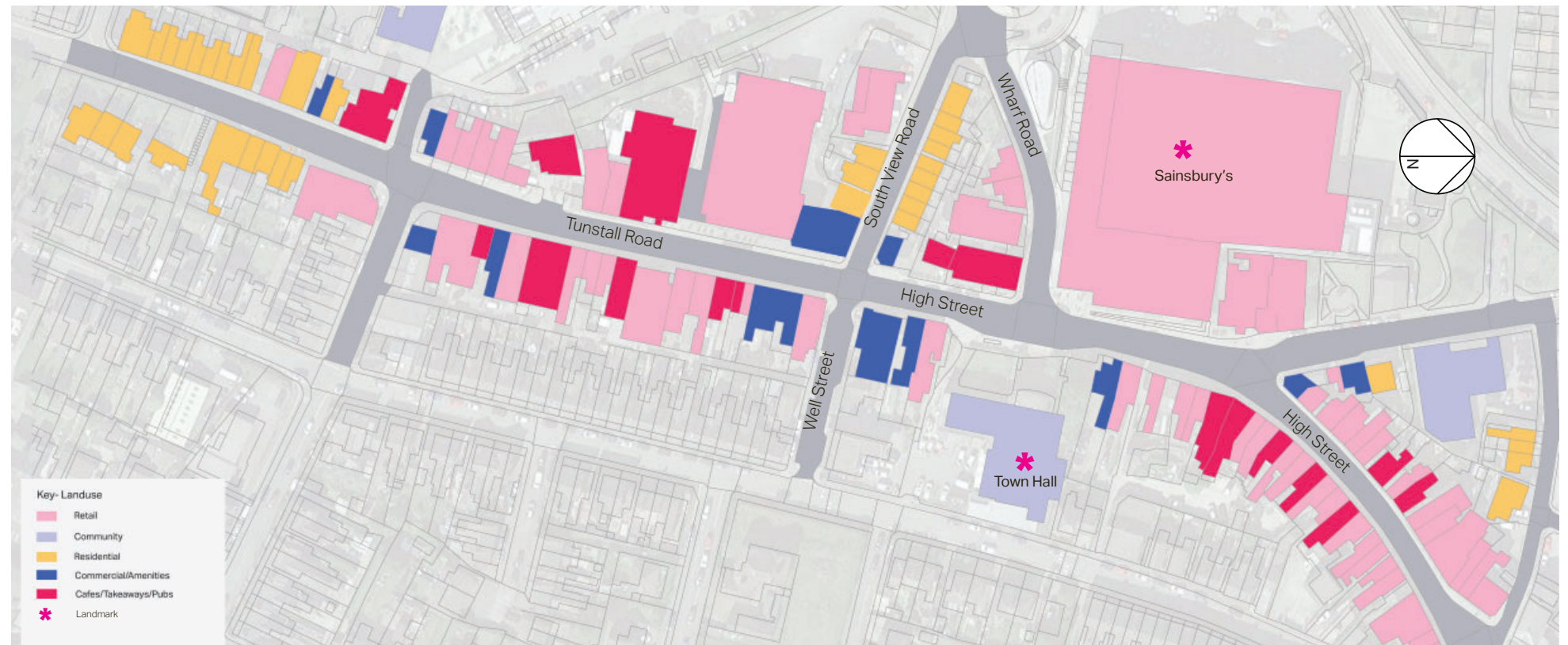


Figure 2: Biddulph Town Centre landuse map

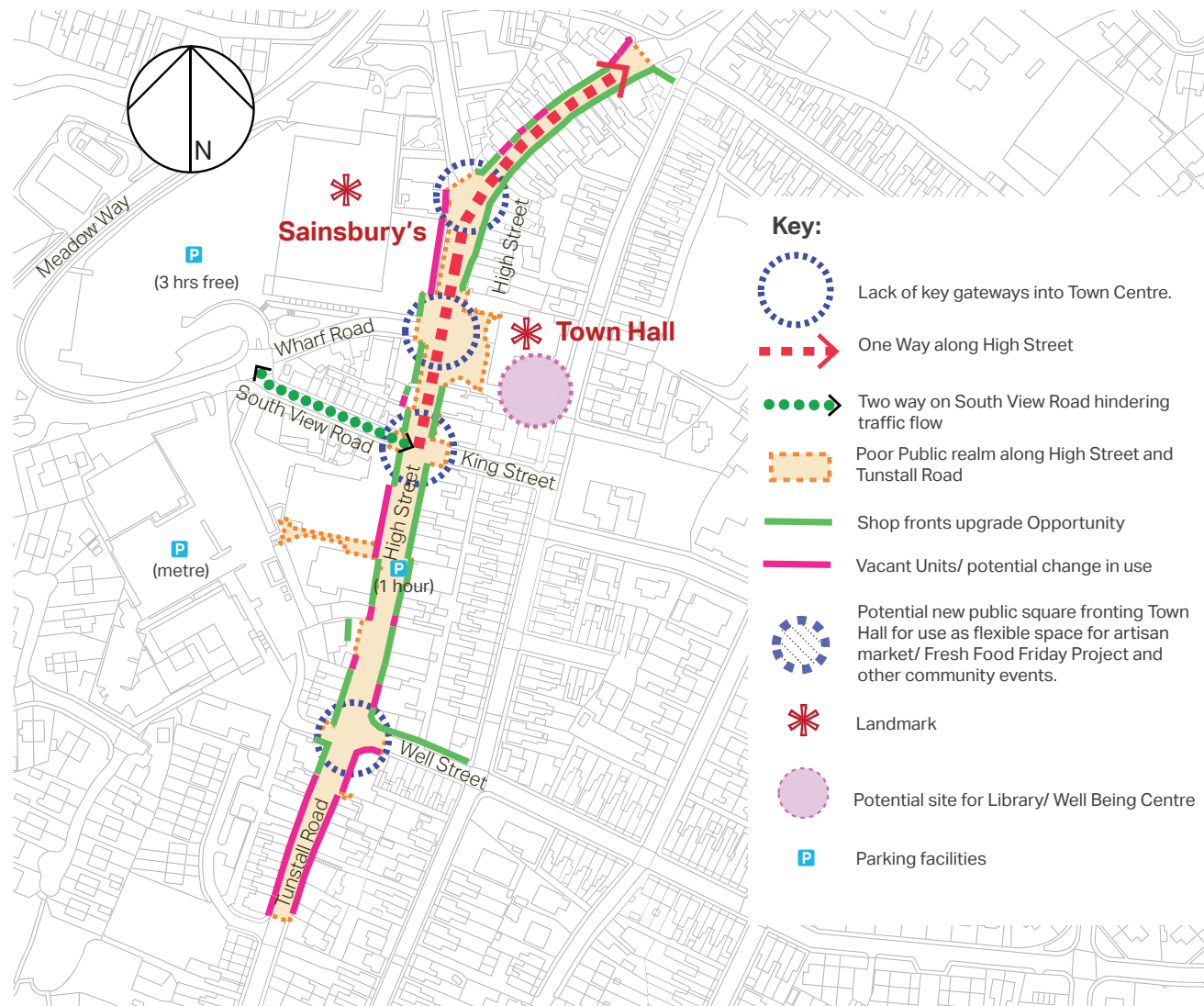


Figure 3: Biddulph Town Centre Analysis



High Street, Biddulph Town Centre

3.2 KEY ISSUES

From the Town Centre analysis the key issues that have resulted in the disuse and degradation of the Town Centre urban environment can be summarised below:

3.2.1 Poor quality of public realm:

There is a mix of surface treatment/paving material along the High Street/Tunstall Road, which have degraded over time. A large no. of bollards all along the High Street and Tunstall Road have resulted in narrow usable pavement space and cluttered street. Lack of resting spaces and places of interaction have further added to the poor Town Centre experience.

3.2.2 Inactive frontages/ vacant shop/poor shop fronts resulting in an unattractive urban setting:

There are a no. of vacant shop units along the High Street. Lack of spill out cafe spaces, vacant shop frontages and poor quality neglected frontages detract from the visual appeal of the Town Centre. This is further augmented by the dead frontage of Sainsbury's along the key gateway into the Town Centre that has contributed to the poor urban setting of the High Street /Tunstall Road.

3.2.3 Poor access and traffic dominated:

The presence of a one way street along the High Street and 2 way along South View Road have hindered traffic flow. The High Street is currently traffic dominated and lacks a pedestrian friendly environment which has deterred users and reduced the Town Centre experience.

3.2.4 Lack of Signage/ Way finding within Town Centre:

There is lack of adequate signage and way finding measures along key gateways within the High Street/Tunstall Road, Wharf Road and High Street junction, Station Road and High Street junction and Well Street and Tunstall Road junction.

3.2.5 Disposition of trade to Sainsbury's:

The main entrance of Sainsbury's is along Meadow Way. Free parking and accessibility via the inner relief road that bypasses the Town Centre has resulted in leakage of trade from the High Street/ Tunstall Road.

3.2.6 Lacks diversity of uses:

The Town Centre lacks variety of shops and key amenities like banks and hotels. This has affected the local economy and reduced dwell time.

3.2.7 Lack of night time economy:

There is a lack of night time uses such as bars/pubs/ restaurants and hotel facilities within the Town Centre that has diverted users to other nearby towns

3.2.8 Lack of sense of place:

There is currently a mix of architectural styles within the Town Centre. Poor quality shop frontages and lack of character detracts from the visual appeal of the Town Centre and makes it unattractive and uninviting for locals and visitors.



Major retailers closing down resulting in unattractive frontages



Lack of legibility for users regarding parking/ location of taxi ranks and way-finding within Town Centre



Sainsbury's leaking trade from the Town Centre



Lack of amenities with Barclays and TSB moving out of town

4 ENGAGEMENT

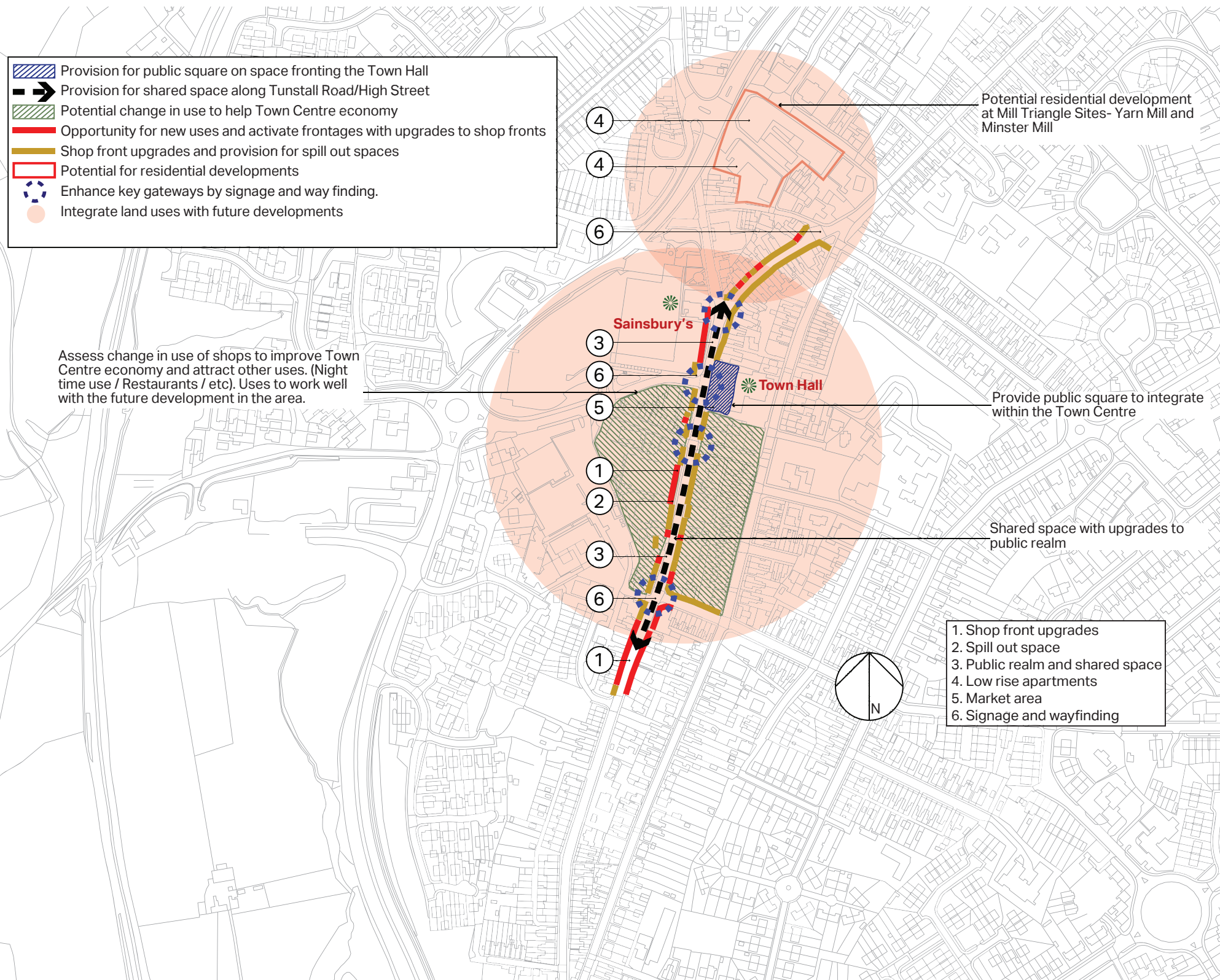


Figure 4: Biddulph Town Centre draft Framework plan

As part of the engagement process a draft Masterplan Framework including key recommendations/interventions and relevant precedences were sent to the Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and Council members. The contents of the draft Framework was discussed in a meeting held on 26th February 2018. Below is a summary of comments/feedback from the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and Town Council members which are included in the Framework document.

4.1 Summary of outcomes to be taken forward:

- The Neighbourhood Group suggested the need for a Library/Wellbeing Centre potentially located behind the Town Hall or the old Britannia/Cooperative building at the south end of the High Street. The location is yet to be confirmed.
- Removal of buses from the High Street and re-routed via Tunstall Road and Well Street. This would enhance pedestrian priority and reduce traffic dominance. The potential re-routing of buses/removal of buses along High Street is based on the feedback received by the Town Council in response to a questionnaire sent to residents regarding usage of public transport to access the High Street amenities. The new route would be subjected to highways studies and detailed review.
- There is potential for shared space along High Street/ Tunstall Road. Precedences of shared space highlighting design approach and lessons from each, to understand shared space ideology have been included in section 5.2.9. The design of shared space needs to be carefully planned and is being reviewed as part of this study. The design of the shared space will be subject to further considerations and capacity studies by a Highways consultant.
- Two way traffic along South View Road needs to be made one way to improve traffic flow along Station Road/ Cross Street and High Street. Buses need to be rerouted to go along Tunstall Road and Well Street to reduce traffic dominance.
- Public realm improvements need to be implemented along High Street/Tunstall Road to make the Town Centre attractive to users. This can be achieved by developing a Public realm strategy for Biddulph Town Centre.
- The space fronting the Town Hall can be used to provide a Public square for weekly artisan market/ Fresh food Friday project and other community events. This can be achieved by reconfiguring the current space and relocating the existing railing to avoid clutter. The square can be designed as an extension of the existing green landscaped lawn with raised seating and the iconic Miner's Wheel retained as public art. All the interventions are subject to detailed design and considerations.
- The Mill Triangle Site will have potential new residential development as indicated in the emerging local plan. A high level site layout plan for the 2 sites with indicative achievable no. of units are shown in section 5.3.1.

5 Masterplan Framework

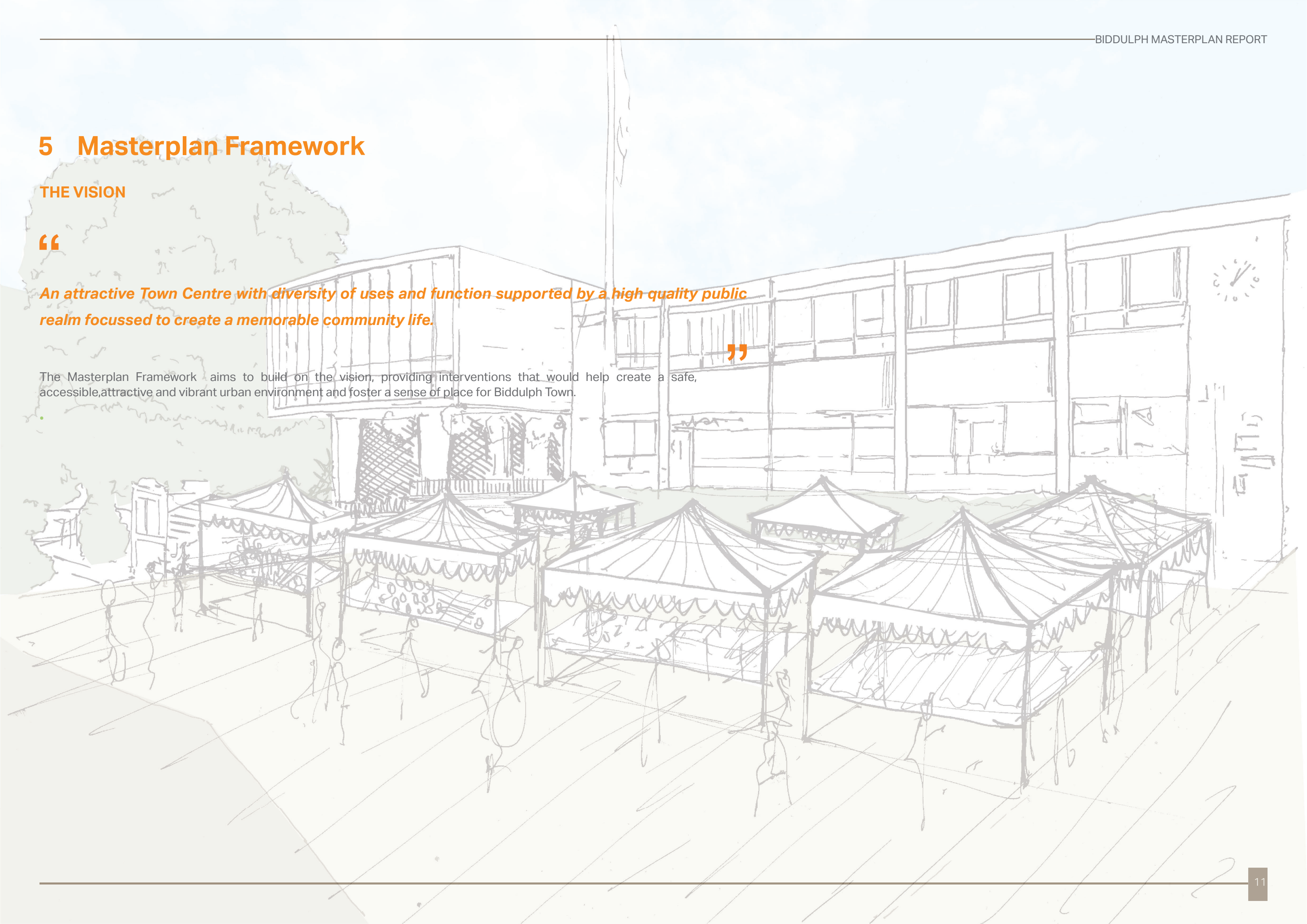
THE VISION

“

An attractive Town Centre with diversity of uses and function supported by a high quality public realm focussed to create a memorable community life.

”

The Masterplan Framework aims to build on the vision, providing interventions that would help create a safe, accessible, attractive and vibrant urban environment and foster a sense of place for Biddulph Town.



5.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Overarching aims have been developed in response to the urban design analysis of the Town Centre. These can be summarised as below:

5.1.1 High Quality Public Realm:

A better quality Town Centre environment would be achieved by improving the public realm and facilitating a dynamic street setting. Use of high quality material and street furniture would make the Town Centre attractive to users.

5.1.2 Shop front upgrades and Active frontages with spill out spaces:

Improving shop frontages along the High Street/ Tunstall Road would promote a healthy local economy by improving the visual appeal of the area. Shop frontages that are poorly designed and/or badly maintained detract from this visual appeal and make the Town Centre less inviting.

Improvements to shop frontages along High Street/Tunstall Road could be achieved by developing a coherent appearance of shop frontages along the street, promoting active shop fronts with clearly visible display areas, developing a dialogue with the street and expression of the architectural elements of the shop fronts. A shop front guide has been provided in section 5.2.8.

5.1.3 Improved Access and Shared Space:

Two way traffic on South View road can be made one way to improve traffic flow. Buses can be re-routed along Tunstall Road and Well Street to reduce traffic dominance and encourage pedestrian priority whilst improving accessibility within the Town Centre. Provision for shared space within High Street/Tunstall road will help create a pedestrian friendly environment and invite people to use the Town Centre. On street parking provisions need to be re-considered on Tunstall Road with regards to time limits to make the High Street shops and amenities more accessible during trade hours.

5.1.4 Gateways and way finding/ signage :

Enhancing key gateways along High Street specifically at key junctions between Wharf Road and High Street (in front of the Town Hall), Wharf Road and South View and High Street, Tunstall Road and Well Street will make the Town Centre more legible and attractive to users.

5.1.5 Diversity of uses:

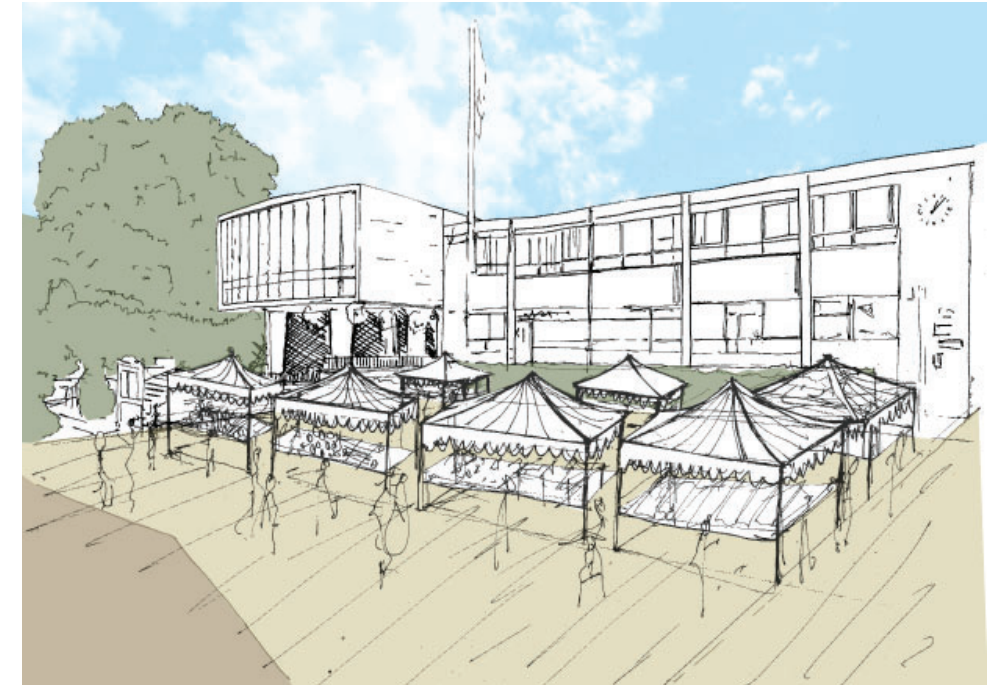
Increasing the mix of uses within the Town Centre that do not compete with the existing retail offer would help in enhancing the Town Centre economy. Provisions for night time uses and encouraging new residential development within the Town Centre will increase activity beyond trading hours further boosting the local economy.

5.1.6 Provision for Night time uses:

Provisions for pubs/bars and restaurants within the Town Centre to encourage usage after trade hours and improve the night time economy.

5.1.7 Foster sense of place:

Improving the public realm with high quality material, shop front upgrades and facilitating a dynamic street setting will help in fostering a sense of place for Biddulph Town Centre. This can further be enhanced by providing resting spaces and places of interaction in the form of public squares to host markets and community events. The space outside the Town Hall can be reconfigured to provide a public square. This space can potentially be a flexible venue for the monthly artisan market, fresh food Friday project that happens weekly and other community events. Currently a road closure is put in place for these events.

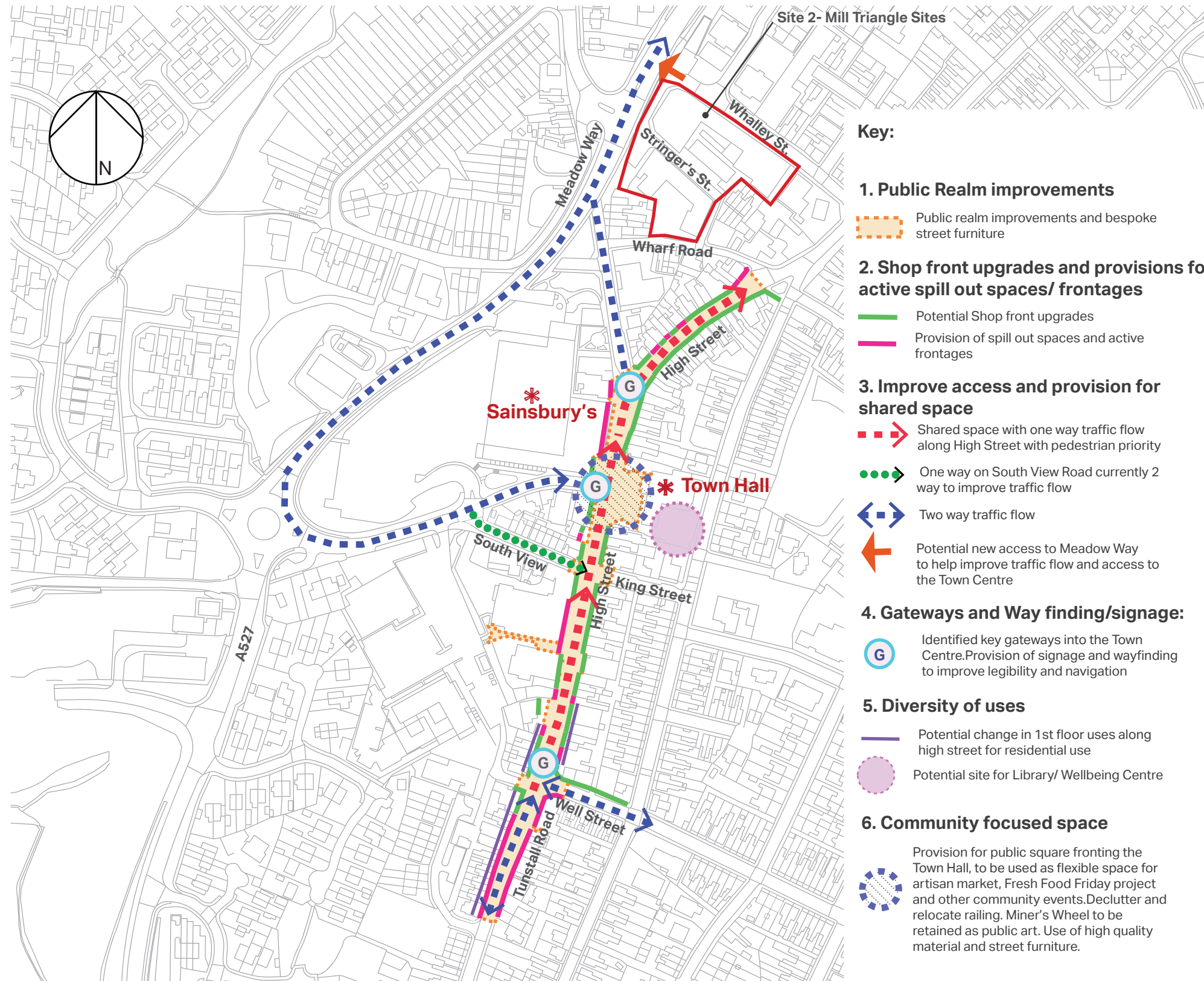


Town Hall frontage can potentially be developed into a square for local markets and events to add to the vitality of the Town Centre.



Friday artisans market have been a success with locals and visitors

5.2 Masterplan Framework Site 1 - Town Centre



Key:

1. Public Realm improvements

Public realm improvements and bespoke street furniture

2. Shop front upgrades and provisions for active spill out spaces/ frontages

Potential Shop front upgrades
 Provision of spill out spaces and active frontages

3. Improve access and provision for shared space

Shared space with one way traffic flow along High Street with pedestrian priority
 One way on South View Road currently 2 way to improve traffic flow
 Two way traffic flow
 Potential new access to Meadow Way to help improve traffic flow and access to the Town Centre

4. Gateways and Way finding/signage:

Identified key gateways into the Town Centre. Provision of signage and wayfinding to improve legibility and navigation

5. Diversity of uses

Potential change in 1st floor uses along high street for residential use
 Potential site for Library/ Wellbeing Centre

6. Community focused space

Provision for public square fronting the Town Hall, to be used as flexible space for artisan market, Fresh Food Friday project and other community events. Declutter and relocate railing. Miner's Wheel to be retained as public art. Use of high quality material and street furniture.

5.2.1 Public Realm Upgrades

Proposed public realm improvements along High Street and Tunstall Road would help create a more attractive and vibrant urban environment within the Town Centre. Use of high quality material, surface treatment and street furniture would help in enhancing the user experience of the Town. Framing the street with trees along-with Biddulph in bloom initiative will help create an attractive Town Centre. The presence of bollards all along the High Street has narrowed the pavements. Removal of bollards and widening usable pavement space will help create a pedestrian friendly street. A public realm strategy will need to be developed in order to deliver the Public realm upgrades.



Simplified public realm and high quality street furniture, Croydon



Improved shop fronts and shared surface, Humber Street, Hull



Pedestrian friendly public realm, Eastgate Street, Chester

5.2.2 Shop Front Upgrade and provisions for spill out spaces

The shops fronts in the Town Centre are currently degraded and poor quality. Different surface treatment, dead frontages and lack of spill out spaces makes it unattractive and uninviting to users. The Masterplan Framework suggests shop fronts to be upgraded whilst maintaining the character of the street scene. Provision of spill out cafe spaces and active frontages will further enhance the Town Centre experience. A shop front guide is included in section 5.2.8 which needs to be explored further.

Good quality Shop frontages



Unified shop fronts and high quality materials, Eastgate Street, Sidcup



Shop front upgrades, High Road, Leyton

Spill out space



Outdoor seating, Exmouth Market



Cafe with pavement tables and benches, Shoredich



Active shop frontage



Bakery with spill out seating, London



Shop with outdoor seating, Primrose Hill

5.2.3 Improved access and shared space

Access to the Town Centre can be improved by promoting traffic flow. Currently High Street/Tunstall Road is dominated by traffic and lacks a pedestrian friendly environment. South View Road can be made one way and provision of additional access on Whalley Street into Meadow Way can augment flow of traffic within the Town Centre.

Provision for 'shared space' along the High Street/Tunstall Road with one way traffic will help make the High Street pedestrian friendly, by limiting traffic speed and inviting people to use the street. Re-routing the buses along Tunstall Road and Well Street will further reduce traffic dominance and help create a pedestrian friendly street.

Shared space and bus route alignment will need to be subject to a detailed design and capacity study by a highways consultant. Relevant shared space case studies are included in section 5.2.9.

Shared space precedences- Before and After

Before - Chester



Chester Town Centre

After - Chester



After - Chester



Before - Preston



Preston Town Centre

After - Preston



5.2.4 Gateway, Signage and Way-finding

The Biddulph Town Centre lacks a sense of arrival. Inadequate signage and lack of way-finding make it difficult to access facilities and navigate through the town. Key gateways have been identified on the Masterplan Framework for signage and way finding measures, that would make the Town Centre more legible and easy to access. Bespoke finger signage can be used to locate amenities/uses within the town.

Precedent Images: Signage and way-finding



5.2.5 Diversity of Uses and night time uses

The Town Centre economy would benefit with a variety of shops in the High Street. Currently there is a lack of amenities like banks, hotels and night time uses. It is important to consider uses that do not compete with Sainsbury's and existing uses within the Town Centre.

Additional provisions for bars/pubs/restaurants and other night time uses will help boost the night time economy and encourage use of the Town Centre after normal trading hours. Currently lack of these facilities is diverting users to neighbouring towns.

5.2.6 Community focus space: Public square

The space fronting the Town Hall could be reconfigured as a public square for the existing monthly artisans market, Fresh food Friday Project and other community focused events. Currently these events require a road closure along High Street.

This can be achieved by reconfiguring the current space and relocating the existing railing to avoid clutter. The square can be designed as an extension of the existing green landscaped lawn with raised seating. The iconic Miner's Wheel can be retained as public art to promote identity and local distinctiveness. The new public square would use high quality material and bespoke street furniture which would help enhance the quality of the space and experience of the Town Centre.

Precedent Images: Public squares/ flexible space.

Market area



Lively market space, Hucknall



Street events/ performances



Artisan market, Wiltshire

Public Square



Examples of public squares using landscape elements.

5.2.7 VISUALISATION SKETCH OF PUBLIC SQUARE IN FRONT OF BIDDULPH TOWN HALL



1. Introducing a shared, same level space along High Street/ Tunstall Road will create a much more pedestrian friendly environment and calm traffic moving through the Town Centre. A change in surface materials will establish where traffic flow is permitted and where cars can park.

2. De-cluttering the space in front of the Town Hall will help create a space for people to interact and promote its use as flexible space for community events/ artisan markets/ fresh food Friday project.

3. Wall to wall surface treatment will create a coherent pedestrian experience along the High Street.



Before intervention; Space in front of the Town Hall

5.2.8 SHOP FRONT DESIGN GUIDANCE

This shop front design guidance is intended to provide advice on the design of businesses and shop fronts within the Biddulph Town Centre. The existing quality of shop fronts, and the impact this has on the wider 'feel' of the area, has been identified as an area of concern.

The purpose of this section is to encourage high standards of design and the use of appropriate and sympathetic materials in both new shop fronts and renovation of existing. Good design can make an important contribution to the character and appearance of a street, helping to create an attractive shopping environment.

The key objectives in relation to business and shop front design and signage in Biddulph are as follows:

- To provide guidance on the retention, refurbishment or replacement of existing shop fronts including signs and fascias;
- To support the transformation of shop fronts in older buildings where the original design has been destroyed or otherwise compromised and the applicant is wishing to reincorporate a traditional retail frontage into the building or a modern interpretation of it;
- To inform and encourage a diversity of approach to shop fronts, while promoting good design;
- To ensure appropriate provision is made to meet the access requirements of all shopkeepers;
- To improve the shop front perceptions within the whole Neighbourhood Plan area although the guidelines are intended primarily for shops on the High Street/ Tunstall Road.

BEFORE



AFTER



Shop front design, Leyton



Example of good shop front with congruent shop frontages



Example of bad shop front lacking continuity and coherent frontages

This section covers general principles of shop front design which could be adopted in order to improve the 'feel' of the Biddulph Town Centre making it more inviting and welcoming to the residents and visitors of Biddulph Town.

General principles of shop design:

The most welcoming of shop fronts are inviting and attractive in themselves; however, new construction methods and materials have led to a diffusion of the "standard" modern shop front within shopping streets. This type of shop front is usually characterised by aluminium or plastic framework, with a large area of plate glass, often incorporating a doorway. If this is applied to a historic building, it gives a visually non-cohesive appearance.

In the Neighbourhood Plan Area, the majority of the shop fronts are modern. It is important that new shops incorporate traditional features, where these are present locally, and thus, avoid large areas of plate glass, or using aluminium and plastic as materials.

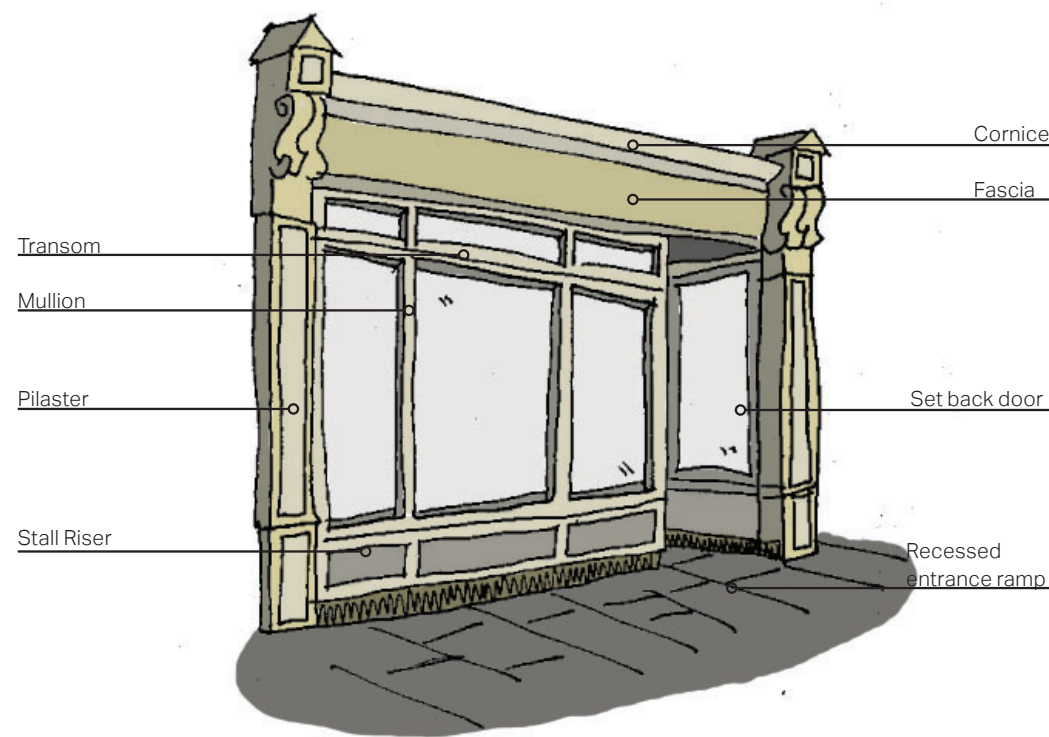
If the existing shop front is to be replaced, the key principle is that the new shop front should carefully take account of the building context and history as well as commercial concerns, being consistent with the whole architectural composition of the building. The design should take into account the period and style of the building above and of buildings in the immediate vicinity.

If the premises are in a more modern development, there is potential to explore a more innovative and attractive approach to a shop front. Even though this may involve the use of non-traditional materials, high quality design should always be guaranteed: shop front design in this instance should be imaginative and appropriate to the style of the building, utilising high quality materials. An example of a modern interpretation of the traditional configuration of shop fronts is shown in the image to the right.

The design or redesign of a shop front in the Neighbourhood Plan area should take into account the age and architectural detail of the building as a whole and special attention should be paid to the elements described below.

Windows:

It is highly recommended that the design of the windows is in keeping and should reflect and enhance the architectural style of the remainder of the building. The use of glazing panels, with mullions and transoms is preferred to the usually out of context large areas of glass. Shopfronts should ensure that their windows are used to effectively display products or maintain a visual link between the street and interior of the shop. In turn, shop fronts should avoid advertising displays, such as plastic film, that fully obscures the interior of the shop from the eyes of the pedestrian.



General principles of shop design



Modern interpretation of traditional shop front design



Traditional Shop front Design

Stall Riser

Traditional shopfronts are inviting and attractive in themselves; they add to the shopper’s experience and lend a Town Centre an air of quality and vitality. Usually, they have an entrance door set back from the back edge of the pavement; they will have a stall riser, one or two vertical mullions, and a transom rail at head of door level with clerestory or transom lights over.

Materials

Materials should be selected in accordance with the building character and image. As a general guidance, the number and type of materials should be kept to a minimum, and always be based on the local architectural style of the street.

Signs and Advertising

Though diversity is encouraged between different shopfronts, signage should be consistent across an individual façade. There is some degree of flexibility in signage design, but as a general set of principles, the following branding is appropriate in the Neighbourhood Plan area:

- Encourage font that is the same across all external signage;
- Maintain a consistent foreground and background colour;
- Ensure that the colour palette used is reflective of the colour palette present across the whole façade, including the area above the shopfront;
- If there is a hanging sign that extends out in front of the building, this should be in keeping with the rest of shopfront, and not have an overbearing impact on the general street scene; and,
- Advertising external to retail premises (e.g. A-frames and blackboards) should be discouraged where they impede walkways or harm local character.

Security

Addressing security is a key issue for both shopkeepers and the community. The use of solid roller shutter blinds, which lead to a very unattractive environment when closed, should be discouraged. The use of open roller grills, removable grills or internal grilles and meshes are preferred since the shop display can still be seen, enhancing the perception of the street outside working hours.

It is recommended that roller shutters and grills are integrated into the design of the shop and not additional items, non-contributing to the building appearance.

Awnings, Canopies and Blinds

If integrated into the shopfront design, awnings, canopies and blinds could be a very attractive addition to the street environment. Straight canvas canopies with particular retractable rollers design would be preferred and recommended instead of the use of unappropriated plastic coated blinds.

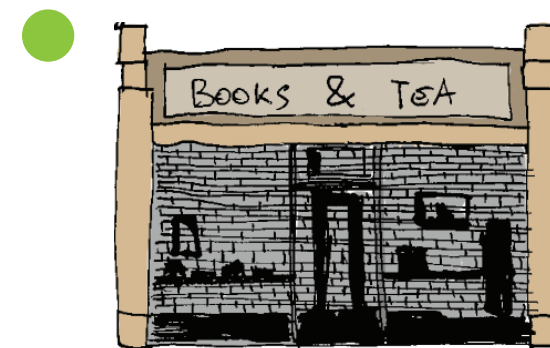
Incorporating design guidelines will help in creating an attractive and vibrant urban environment within the High Street/Tunstall Road.



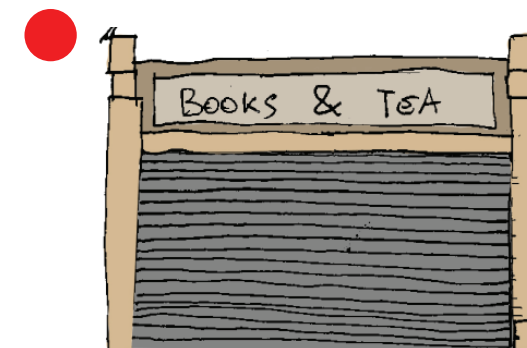
Good window design and proportions



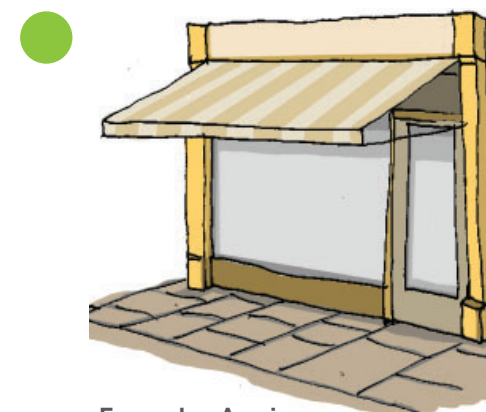
Bad window design and proportions



Grill type shutters create active shop fronts



Roller shutter detract from the streetscape



Example - Awnings

The basic sample policy outlined below can be used as starting point for drafting a Biddulph Town Centre-specific policy regarding shopfronts.

Shop front Quality Design

Proposals will be required to be of high quality, contributing to an overall improvement in terms of urban design and architecture.

Proposals will:

- Use an appropriate choice of materials and colour for the shop fronts;
- Be visually attractive from all angles;
- Enhance streets and spaces through quality design and architecture;
- Promoting visual links between the interior of the shop and the street; and
- Suitable in terms of crime prevention, community safety and security.

Please note this is only an example of policy, for town specific policy advise needs to be taken from LPA.

5.2.9 CASE STUDIES- SUCCESSFUL SHARED SPACE

The following case studies are successful shared spaces and are good precedences to understand how shared space could regenerate the street scene, by promoting pedestrian priority and inviting people to use the Town Centre amenities without detracting vehicular traffic flow.

These examples could potentially be used as a guide for developing shared space on High Street/Tunstall Road for Biddulph Town Centre.

5.2.9.1 CASE STUDY 1: NEW ROAD, BRIGHTON

New Road sits at the heart of the cultural quarter, linking the Royal Pavilion gardens to the new library. The Street was underused, unattractive and difficult to access. The street needed to accommodate civic activities as well as the more informal uses associated with theatres, cafes and restaurants which it was lacking.

Through a collaborative design process, Landscape Projects, Gehl Architects and the City Council reimaged the street as a 'shared surface'. The street has now become well-used as a centerpiece of Brighton's Cultural Quarter and is one of the most popular visitor attractions in the city.

THE DESIGN APPROACH

- Transform New Road into an attractive user friendly street, allowing motorists, pedestrian and activities to share the same space.
- Flexibility of use of space with pedestrians being priority.
- Surface design is critical to successful use of space, directing movement of both people and cars.
- Physical barrier removed and street surface and furniture laid out to encourage defensive driver behaviour. Careful use of surface and navigation to denote different kinds of space.
- The design is inclusive and caters to different needs.
- The user experience is enhanced by using attractive features like bespoke seating, street furnitures and improved lighting to encourage dwell time and night time use.
- Inclusion of spill out spaces and cafe culture creates active frontages, lively atmosphere, safe and attractive environment and helps surrounding businesses.



New Road, Brighton before intervention



New Road, Brighton after intervention has been transformed into a vibrant pedestrian friendly street .

THE DESIGN LESSONS

- Seating is an important resource, encouraging users to dwell in a space. Creation of a safe, attractive vibrant environment helps vitalise the streets and encourages foot traffic and increases economy.
- Active frontages and attractive street scene bring an area to life.
- Street ambience is key to use of space. Spaces that are clean, comfortable, attractive, shaded in parts/protected help create positive and vibrant spaces.
- Mix of use and diversity increases dwell time.
- Night time uses like pubs and restaurants help keep the space active beyond retail trading hours.
- Surface design plays a very important role in encouraging all types of users to use the spaces. Positioning of street furniture can play a major role in directing movement and can increase pedestrian priority.
- Special consideration should be made for inclusive design that caters to all users.



High quality material palette and bespoke street furniture enhances the street scene



Street becomes a place for resting and interaction forging a sense of place

5.2.9.2 CASE STUDY 2: FISHERGATE PRESTON

The project focuses on the delivery of a high quality public realm with re-configuration of key gateways. Designed to enhance the overall attractiveness of the City Centre as a viable business location and to act as a catalyst for private sector inward investment. One of the main themes of the project is to create a sense of place by enhancing the architectural heritage with a new shared space scheme to bring Fishergate into the 21st century. The design of the bespoke seating is stylish yet engineered to be durable and practical.

THE DESIGN APPROACH

- Re-balance the hierarchy of spaces for different road users; pedestrians, cycles and vehicular.
- Create an attractive civic centre and improve local economy.
- Emphasise key city gateways.
- Improve pedestrian priority while not being anti-car.
- Use a subtle palette to define space.
- Widen footpaths, and create broad crossings to guide free-flowing pedestrian movement.
- Reduce street clutter by reducing unnecessary signage and guardrail.
- Diversity of uses.
- Rethink traffic management options.
- Attractive street scene.



Enhanced street scene improves user experience



High quality material palette, reduced street clutter and planting framing the street



Pedestrian have priority over traffic and wider pavements provide ease of access

THE DESIGN LESSONS

- Promote ease of pedestrian movement over that of vehicular traffic.
- Achieve good design and ensure new developments contribute to the quality of the public realm.
- Reinforce the city's historic character through use of quality material, street furniture and planting.
- Reduce visual clutter.
- Use a public art and lighting strategy to enhance user experience.
- Provide spaces for interactions.
- Manage traffic by rebalancing priorities.



Before intervention traffic dominated and cluttered street resulting in an unsafe environment.



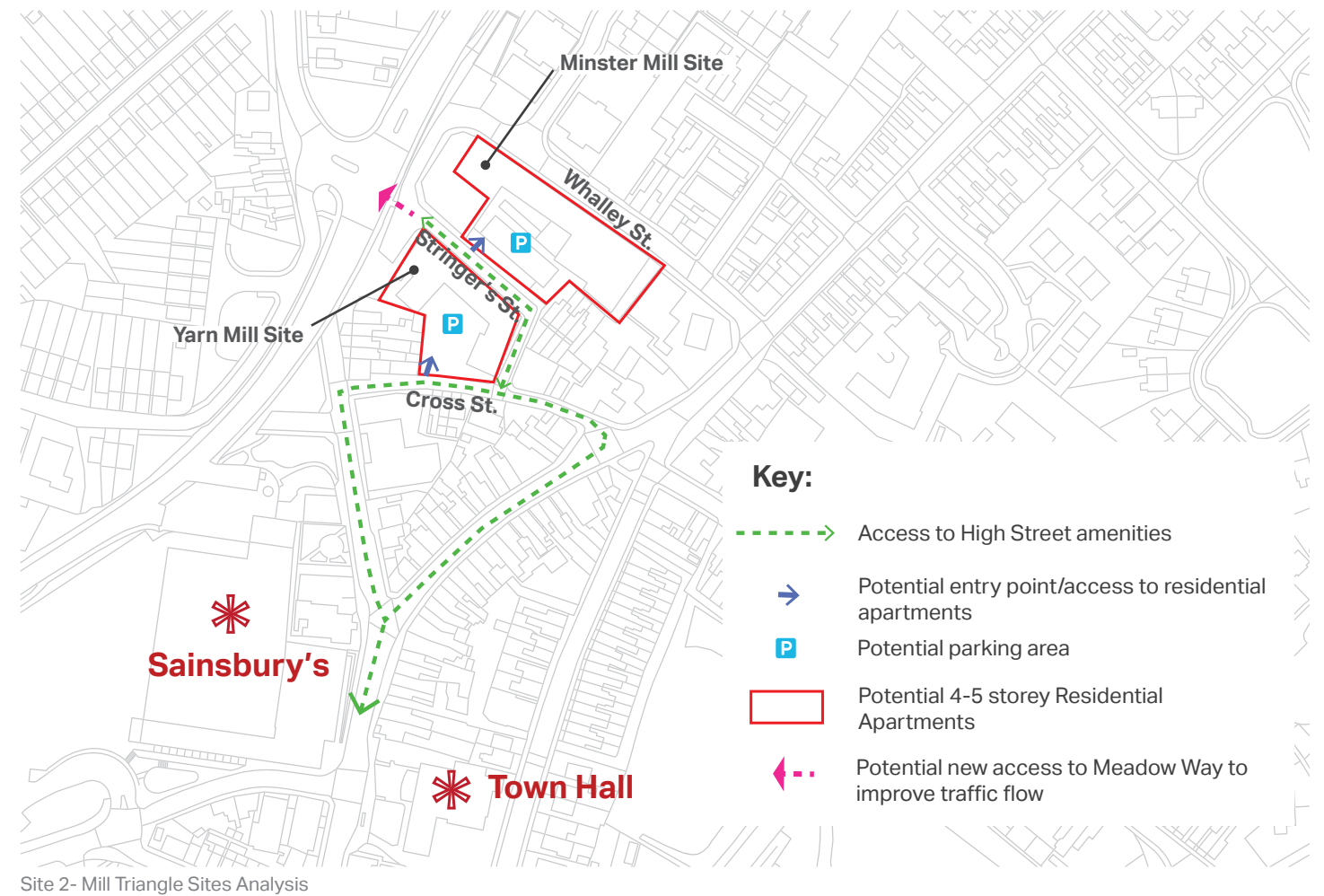
Clutter free street, pedestrian priority, wide pavements, bespoke seating, planting framing street and high quality material adding to an enhanced street scene

5.3 MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK SITE 2- THE MILL TRIANGLE SITES

The Mill Triangle Sites comprise of the Yarn Mill site and the Minster Mill site. The 2 sites currently contain disused mills and sheds which are not suitable for use. New residential developments are proposed for the two sites. The sites are well located with close proximity to the Town Centre and other future developments indicated on the Local Area Action Plan.

Yarn Mill could potentially be accessed via Cross Street and Minster Mill from Stringer Street. The existing access point into the two sites can be retained and enhanced. A new access/exit point is proposed to Meadow Way to improve connections to the wider development area and Town Centre traffic flow.

The following section includes high level site layouts, achievable no. of apartments as per high level capacity testing of the two sites and precedent images for envisaged residential developments.



Yarn Mill



Minster Mill



5.3.1 KEY PROPOSAL LAYOUT

1. Use of existing entry/exit to provide access to Yarn Mill site. Entry/Exit to be enhanced/ developed suitable for residential use.
2. High level capacity testing indicates that a potential of circa 24 apartments can be achieved on the Yarn Mill site.
3. Proposed access to the Minster Mill site from Stringer's Street to be developed for residential use.
4. High level capacity testing indicates that a potential of circa 18 apartment can be achieved on this part of Minster Mill site.
5. Proposed outdoor amenity green spaces.
6. High level capacity testing indicates that a potential of circa 16 apartments can be achieved on this part of Minster Mill site.

It is important to note that these layouts for the Mill Triangle sites are high level and will need to be subject to further review and detailed design.

Indicative no. of units as per high level capacity testing;
 Yarn Mill Site - circa 24 Homes
 Minster Mill Site - circa 34 Homes

Framework Plan Layout- Site 2- Mill Triangle Site

5.3.2 PRECEDENT IMAGES- SITE 2- MILL TRIANGLE SITES

Low rise contemporary apartments



Camden



Grimsby



Elephant and Castle



Shoreditch

6 NEXT STEPS

This report builds on the vision of Biddulph Neighbourhood Group and the Biddulph Council and offers interventions and advice on how the urban environment of Biddulph Town Centre can be enhanced and upgraded to create a vibrant and attractive Town Centre that is locally distinct and forge a sense of place. The recommendations are rooted in the engagement work that the group and Biddulph Council have undertaken, combined with the specialist skills of AECOM's planners and urban designers.

Summary of Key Recommendations:

- **Public realm improvements within the town centre.**
- **Shop front upgrades and provision for spill out spaces along High Street/Tunstall Road to enhance the town centre experience.**
- **Provision of 'Shared Space' along High Street/Tunstall Road with pedestrian priority. One way on South View Road to improve flow of traffic and accessibility. Parking facilities with appropriate time limits to be considered.**
- **Provision of a public square fronting onto the Town Hall to build on the success of artisan market, fresh food Friday project and other community events. The Town Hall frontage to be de-cluttered and reconfigured with bespoke street furniture and 'Miner's Wheel' retained as public art.**
- **Adequate signage and way finding measures at key identified gateways to improve legibility and navigation within town.**
- **Provision of night time uses such as bars, pubs and restaurants.**
- **Interventions that integrate well with future developments in the Town Centre and surrounding areas.**
- **Provision of high density residential development on the Mill Triangle sites.**

REVIEW

The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group will need to review the proposals in this document in accordance with the objects of the current draft Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan and the wider community.

INCORPORATE

It will then be necessary to incorporate the proposed Masterplan document into the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

ENGAGE

- Engage with the Council to develop policies supporting the proposals;
- Council to engage with traders and landlords to begin to implement shop front improvements; Neighbourhood Development order is a potential approach to achieve this.
- Identify public realm improvements to kick start the regeneration of Biddulph Town Centre.
- Develop Public Realm Strategy.
- Work with those local organisations that can help to implement the recommendations.
- Integration into the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to planning policy review.

The inputs from the Council's policy and development management specialists would be invaluable in advance of formal consultation and submission. The neighbourhood group should consider how our recommendations can be transposed into policy through discussions with the Council and use the best practice guidance from Locality to prepare draft policies for consultation. Locality's 'Writing Planning Policies'¹ guidance sets out how different planning policies are designed to achieve different things. The guide describes the three most common as:

Generic – a simple policy which applies universally to development across the entire neighbourhood plan area;

Criteria based – a policy with a series of requirements that should be met by development proposals. These can be set out as separate bullet points; and quantum of development, configuration and design.

Site specific – this is where a policy applies to particular areas of land.

land for a particular type of development. As well as allocating land you can use your plan to set out the principles which need to be followed in developing a particular site. This might include specifying what needs to be covered in a design brief to accompany any planning application. If you have site specific policies then you need to include a clear map showing the location and boundaries.

The neighbourhood group should check with the Local Planning Authority that their emerging preferred options are planning matters (i.e. suitable for inclusion as land use planning policy). Those that are not can be considered as community projects or neighbourhood infrastructure to be included within a delivery and implementation section of the neighbourhood plan.

Engage with developers to seek support for the proposals

In order for the neighbourhood plan to be effective, the policies put forward in support of the masterplan will require close liaison and cooperation with the Local Authority, landowners, and developers. Consulting with these key stakeholders in advance of formal consultation will help to establish buy-in to the broad objectives.

Neighbourhood Development Order

A Neighbourhood Development Order could be used in order to progress proposals within the town. Neighbourhood development orders are defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as orders, made by a local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) through which Parish Councils and neighbourhood forums can grant planning permission for a specific development proposal or classes of development.'

The Localism Act, which was introduced in 2011, allows town and parish councils and 'neighbourhood group' to have some control over how their neighbourhood develops. They can use 'neighbourhood development orders' to permit certain developments or certain classes of development in a neighbourhood without the need for a planning application.

Footnotes.

1. Writing planning policies: A guide to writing planning policies which will address the issues that matter to your neighbourhood plan (Locality, 2014) Accessed at: <http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/writing-planning-policies>.