

Dear Members

Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee will be held in the **Craddock Room, Civic Centre, Riverside Stafford** on **Thursday 2 July 2026 at 6.30pm** to deal with the business as set out on the agenda.

Please note that this meeting will be recorded.

Members are reminded that contact officers are shown at the top of each report and members are welcome to raise questions etc in advance of the meeting with the appropriate officer.



Head of Law and Governance

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2 JULY 2026

Chair - Councillor F Beatty

AGENDA

1	Minutes of 19 March 2026 as previously published on the Council's website.		
2	Apologies		
3	Public Question Time - Nil		
4	Councillor Session - Nil		
5	Members' Items - Nil		
6	Called In Items - Nil		
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7	Officers' Reports		
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Membership

Chair - Councillor F Beatty

F Beatty	D M McNaughton
B M Cross	A Nixon
F D J James	M Phillips
P W Jones	J S Powell
B McKeown	D P Rouxel

Agenda Item 7(b)

Annual Scrutiny Business Report

Committee:	Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	2 July 2026
Report of:	Head of Law and Governance
Portfolio:	Leader of the Council

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To report the business conducted by Scrutiny Committees over 2025/26.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report be noted and recommended for submission to Council.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.2 To make Council aware of the scrutiny activity that has been undertaken over the last municipal year.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 Scrutiny is an important function in every council operating executive arrangements. It is important that members understand the role of scrutiny and that Council is kept informed of the work undertaken by Scrutiny Committees.
- 3.2 This report provides a summary of the work undertaken by each committee over the last municipal year. Full details of committee agendas and reports can be found on the Councils website.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 Good scrutiny can enhance decision making across all Council priorities. In particular it supports Priority 4: Effective Council through providing good customer experience, value for money to local taxpayers and good governance across the Council.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 The Council operates Executive arrangements through the election of a Leader and Cabinet. Every local authority operating Executive arrangements is required to establish at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee to act as a check and balance to the Executive.
- 5.2 Scrutiny Committees are cross party committees each reflecting the overall political balance of the Council. They are not decision making bodies, but allow elected members who do not sit on the Cabinet to scrutinise and influence Executive decision making. This can take the form of scrutinising decisions that Cabinet are planning to take (policy review and development), those it plans to implement (through use of call-in procedures) and those that have already been implemented (through performance review).
- 5.3 National guidance advises that scrutiny work should be based upon four principles. It should:
- Provide constructive “critical friend” challenge
 - Reflect the voices and concerns of the public
 - Be led independently by members who take responsibility for their role, and
 - Drive improvement in services and strategic decision making
- 5.4 The Council has established three scrutiny committees, each with its own terms of reference and areas of oversight. The three areas are Resources, Economic Development and Planning and Community Wellbeing. Details of each committee’s remit, and the procedure rules for the scrutiny function, are set out in the Council’s Constitution.

Performance Review

- 5.5 Each committee regularly monitors Council performance, within its area of scrutiny, through the review of quarterly performance information. Information reported includes progress against delivery plans and key performance indicators, and enables members to identify whether the Council is achieving its corporate plan objectives. Effective monitoring helps the Council to identify good and poor performance and to take action where needed to put things right.
- 5.6 Senior officers attend committee meetings to answer any questions, or respond to requests for clarification, and committees have the power to call senior officers and Cabinet members to account.

- 5.7 In addition to playing an important role in reviewing performance, each committee sets its own scrutiny work programme for the year. The following additional scrutiny work was carried out by each committee during 2025/26.

Resources

- 5.8 The Resources Scrutiny Committee reviewed the draft General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Fees and Charges, prior to consideration by full Council at its Budget meetings.
- 5.9 The Committee set up a task and finish group to conduct the annual review of the Council's constitution. A number of proposals were considered, including an update to the Code of Conduct for Employees and the committee recommendations were adopted by full Council in April 2026.
- 5.10 A further task and finish working group was set up regarding the revenues and benefits debt collection process. This concluded in March 2026 and the Committee have supported the review and are recommending to Cabinet in May that the project to review older debts be continued into the 2026-27 financial year, subject to a review on a 6-monthly basis by the Section 151 Officer on the ongoing effectiveness.
- 5.11 The Committee reviewed the performance of corporate complaints handling over 2025/26, including monitoring details of any complaints referred to the Ombudsman over that period.
- 5.12 The committee scrutinised the End of Year Performance Report for 2024/25 and asked for clarity regarding the current Fire Risk Assessment as the KPI had not been met. The Head of Service reported back to the next scrutiny committee detailing progress that had been made.

Economic Development and Planning

- 5.13 In light of the significant volume of regeneration work currently being undertaken by the Council, the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee held a number of meetings to review updates on Regeneration Projects within Stafford town, including the Stafford Town Masterplan, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Business Growth programme and the Stafford Station Gateway project.

- 5.14 The Committee received a presentation from the Visitor Economy Partnership Development Manager, Staffordshire County Council on the work of the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). Members asked officers to review the proposed LVEP list of priorities for Stafford Borough and to bring the outcome of this work back to a future committee for consideration. Members also received an update on the successful UKREiF event where a number of developers and investors showed interest in the regeneration of Stafford's High Street.
- 5.15 Members were informed of the publication of the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2024/25 which relates to section 106 funding. It is a legal duty to produce the statement and is required to be published by December each year. Members requested that a further item be brought back to Scrutiny to review how Ward Members and communities can be more effectively engaged when determining open space provision in their localities.
- 5.16 The Committee received updates on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and its effect on the Local Plan.
- 5.17 Following a Council notice of motion titled Protecting Our Rivers and Oceans, an additional scrutiny committee took place where stakeholders were invited to present to the committee to answer the questions that had been raised. Members received presentations from Severn Trent Water and the Internal Drainage Board. Severn Trent Water agreed to provide further information on its 5 year investment plan, reservoir expansions and website which show information on sewage and flooding within the Borough. Members agreed that a letter should be sent to the local MP requesting that water authorities and IDBs should become statutory consultees in planning applications. The committee also requested that Cabinet should review the original motion and present an update to Council before the end of the year.
- 5.18 A representative from Mondrem visited the scrutiny committee to provide information on the review of the Development Management service and to give an overview of the Enforcement Policy. There was a Members Item regarding backlogs in planning and planning enforcement which led to the Enforcement Policy being looked at again in further detail at a subsequent meeting. Members asked officers to write to the Government to highlight concerns regarding the recruitment and retention of Enforcement staff and the inability of the Council to enforce effectively against Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Members requested that officers set up a refresher BNG workshop.
- 5.19 The Committee also received a presentation on Renewable Energy, sharing examples of appeals, and concluding that each application site is judged on its own merits.

- 5.20 A report was received regarding heritage and conservation within the Borough. Members requested that Cabinet identify resources to enable the introduction of a Local Heritage Assets List. The Conservation Officer also offered to host a workshop with members to looking at identified and emerging historic assets. This topic will be revisited at a future meeting.
- 5.21 The Committee set up a task and finish group to look at the evening and night time economy. The group will continue to meet and provide feedback to the scrutiny committee.
- 5.22 A joint Economic Development and Planning and Resources Scrutiny Committee was held to discuss S106 monies. All members were invited to attend.

Community Wellbeing

- 5.23 The statutory overview and scrutiny function for Staffordshire is undertaken by Staffordshire County Council's Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In accordance with good practice, and to ensure co-ordinated scrutiny of local health matters between councils, the Chair of the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee is also a member of the County Council committee and a member of the County Council scrutiny is appointed to the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. The committee has a standing agenda item where it receives reports from the County Scrutiny alerting it to any health matters being scrutinised.
- 5.24 In addition to monitoring local health matters, the committee held meetings to review matters including the strong performance of the Disabled Facilities Grants service and received an update on the work of the Councils Streetscene services and the changes that had taken place over the last year. Members of the committee asked a series of questions of the Council's Streetscene Manager about the current service provision during his presentation.
- 5.25 The committee also reviewed the work carried out by the Councils external contractors for Leisure, Culture and Heritage Services and Waste Collection, through receipt of their annual reports. A presentation was received on the work of the Social Housing Provider "Housing Plus" in the Borough. Housing Plus are the largest housing provider in the Borough owning 80% of the social housing stock and in January 2025 merged with Wrekin Housing Association. The presentation triggered wide ranging discussion on housing and neighbourhood issues that were important for residents in the Borough. The Committee asked the Chair to write to the Council's waste collection contractor to pass on its sincere gratitude for the work of its employees within the borough area over the previous 12 months.

- 5.26 The committee received a presentation from representatives of the Community Wellbeing Partnership regarding work carried out in respect of reducing crime and disorder and tackling health inequalities within the Borough over the year.
- 5.27 The committee set up a task and finish group to look at the topic of Food Waste. The group met several times and included a visit from a neighbouring authority that had been collecting food waste for several years. Over a period of several months the group reviewed national, regional, and industry data; reviewed and made recommendations on the proposed communication with the public, and ultimately influenced the shaping of the new service across the borough.
- 5.28 The committee received one called-in item, referred to it under the Councils scrutiny call-in arrangements. This related to the Cabinet's decision to adopt an Events Policy. The policy was scrutinised with the Head of Operations in attendance around its intension, following which the Committee expressed their satisfaction and no further action was recommended.

Future Work Programme

- 5.29 Each committee sets its initial annual work programme at the first business meeting of the new municipal year, taking into account any outstanding matters from the previous year and any new priorities for the upcoming year. The work programme is reviewed as a standing item at every meeting.

6 Implications

In this section, please provide details of any implications that Members should be aware of under the below headings. If you are unsure if your report will include any such implications, then you must consult with Officers in the relevant departments before submitting your final report to Democratic Services for consideration by Leadership Team.

If there are no implications under each individual heading, then please state "None".

6.1 Financial

None

6.2 Legal

As set out in the report.

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Risk Management

None

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

None

6.6 Health

None

6.7 Climate Change

None

7 Appendices

None

8 Previous Consideration

None

9 Background Papers

None

Contact Officer: Ian Curran

Telephone Number: 220

Ward Interest: N/A

Report Track: Community Wellbeing 16 June 2026
Resources 23 June 2026
Economic Planning and Development 2 July 2026
Council 21 July 2026

Key Decision: N/A

Agenda Item 7(c)

New Local Plan Update

Committee: Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny

Date of Meeting: 2 July 2026

Report of: Head of Economic Development and Planning

Portfolio: Economic Development and Planning

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the New Local Plan and associated National Planning Policy Framework.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the latest progress on the New Local Plan 2025–2045 and associated national policy changes.
- 2.2 That the Committee scrutinises the deliverability of the Local Plan timetable and evidence base, and requests regular progress reporting against key milestones and Gateway stages, including identification of risks to programme delivery.
- 2.3 That the Committee seeks assurance on the robustness of engagement, risk management, and alignment with emerging national and strategic planning reforms, and provides early input into key strategic policy choices as they emerge.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 It is important for the Borough Council to make progress on the New Local Plan for Stafford Borough 2025-2045 in order to provide for future development across the Borough through establishing strategic planning policies and specific land allocations.
- 3.2 Since the current Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 was adopted (Part 1 in June 2014 and Part 2 in January 2017) significant changes have occurred locally and nationally impacting upon planning policy. Corporately there is now more of a focus on delivering economic growth and national policy seeks to ensure that development proposals take into account the effects of change on the built and natural environment.

- 3.3 On 27 November 2025 the Government published New Local Plan guidance, which was followed on 25 March 2026 with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 coming into effect together with further policy and guidance provided to support the new plan-making system. Details provided includes the requirements of work to be completed prior to the 30-month period to produce a New Local Plan beginning at Gateway 1.
- 3.4 On 21 May 2026 Cabinet approved publishing a new Local Plan timetable and statutory Notices in early June, with a Scoping and Participation consultation on the New Local Plan 2025-2045 currently taking place from 8 June 2026 to 12 noon on Tuesday 28 July 2026.
- 3.5 Following the Government publishing an updated version of the National Planning Policy Framework for consultation in December 2025, the Borough Council submitted a detailed response. It is anticipated that the new National Planning Policy Framework will be published in the Summer 2026 with new policies relating to plan-making and decision-making for consideration.

4 Relationship to Corporate Business Objectives

- 4.1 The following vision and priorities from the Council's Corporate Plan 2025/26 to 2027/28 are considered relevant to this report:

Vision

- "To be an effective Council that promotes a growing economy, strong, healthy communities and a sustainable environment."

Priorities

- "Prosperous Economy"
- "Communities and Wellbeing"
- "Climate Change, Nature Recovery and the Environment"
- "Effective Council"

5 Report Details

- 5.1 Proposed reforms to the plan making system have been in development since the Conservative Government published a consultation in July 2023 covering proposals to streamline the plan making system. This was supported by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) which introduced the statutory framework for many of the planned reforms. The current Labour Government published their response to the consultation in February 2025 leading to updates to the National Planning Policy Framework. Both parties sought universal plan coverage and an improvement to the time it takes to develop a Local Plan (on average 7 years).
- 5.2 On 27 November 2025 the Government provided information on the new plan-making system through a series of publications as listed below and the key elements summarised:
- A written ministerial statement on the Government’s plans to reform local plan making - questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2025-11-27/hcws1104
 - An overview of the 30 - Month local plan making process - www.gov.uk/guidance/30-month-local-plan-process-an-overview
 - Detailed information on how the new system will be rolled out; and - www.gov.uk/government/publications/rollout-of-the-new-local-plan-making-system/rollout-of-the-new-local-plan-making-system
 - Additional guidance about progressing plans through the new system and the proposed transitional arrangements will be provided by the Planning Advisory Service.
- 5.3 Subsequent updates have been shared and continue to be provided through MHCLG’s Local Plan roadmap webpage to assist with progress different elements of the programme. The guidance on the 30-month timetable explains what is required at each stage. During March 2026 further information was release, explaining what the Government set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026, and the explanatory memorandum: **APPENDIX 1** provides a diagram showing the stages involved in plan making, with key requirements for the new plan-making system.
- 5.4 The New Local Plan 2025 - 2045 timetable published on 2 June 2026 is set out below, and replaces the Local Development Scheme from March 2025:

Process Stage	Proposed Completion Date
Publish Local Plan timetable	3 June 2026
Publish Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan preparation	3 June 2026
Publish Notice of Scoping Consultation	3 June 2026

Process Stage	Proposed Completion Date
Scoping Consultation	8 June to 28 July 2026
Gateway 1: self assessment of readiness	30 October 2026
Publish Notice of Proposed Local Plan content and evidence consultation	2 June 2027
Consultation: Proposed Local Plan content and evidence	7 June and 27 July 2027
Gateway 2	20 December 2027
Publish Notice of Proposed Local Plan consultation	27 May 2028
Consultation: Proposed Local Plan	5 June and 17 July 2028
Gateway 3	29 September 2028
Submission to Examination	30 October 2028
Adoption	30 April 2029

5.5 On 2 June 2026 the Borough Council published the two required statutory Notices, those being a Notice of Intention to Commence with the Local Plan process and the Notice of Scoping Consultation. On 3 June 2026, ahead of the consultation period starting on Monday 8 June through to 12 noon on Tuesday 28 July 2028 the following documents were made available together with associated information and an e-consultation response form through the Borough Council's web-site:

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/new-local-plan-2025-to-2045

- Scoping the Issues and Early Participation
- Communication and Engagement Strategy
- Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report

5.6 The Borough Council is progressing with the following evidence based documents in preparation for the new plan-making process, including the level of housing requirement to be effectively planned for focused on the standard methodology for local housing need, which will be published in due course:

- Economic Development and Housing Needs Assessment (EDHNA)
- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy
- Playing Pitch Strategy and Sports Facilities Strategy
- Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment
- Town Centre Capacity Assessment for Stafford, Stone and Eccleshall

- 5.7 It should be noted that the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 introduced a new strategic planning system, with further details expected throughout this year alongside a new published National Planning Policy Framework following the consultation period that ends on 10 March 2026. The new strategic planning system, which will result in a higher tier of statutory plan being created called Spatial Development Strategies, will have need to be taken into account when preparing new Local Plans and associated conformity requirements. It should be noted that on 12 February 2026 the Government published a consultation document, available via the link below, seeking responses on strategic planning geographies, including the area for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Further details will be shared in due course.

Areas for producing spatial development strategies -

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/areas-for-producing-spatial-development-strategies/areas-for-producing-spatial-development-strategies

- 5.8 As a result of the NPPF published in December 2024 and the consultation proposals in December 2025 it is important to consider the implications for the Stafford Borough New Local Plan 2025-2045. The Borough Council has submitted a response to the latest NPPF consultation ahead of the deadline of 10 March 2026 with an updated NPPF expected in the Summer 2026.

National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system - www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

The main costs incurred in preparing and finalising the New Local Plan 2025 - 2045 includes the evidence base, community engagement and consultation, and the independent Examination process prior to adoption.

Council agreed in February 2026 as part of the budgets an amount of approximately £865,000 to deliver the local plan over the budget period 2026/27 to 2029/30.

The Government is supporting Council's progressing with new local plans through a £14 million national scheme. Stafford Borough Council received funds amounting to £108,474 on 25 March 2026 to be used for technical studies, additional staffing and engagement work, following submitting an Expression of Interest.

6.2 Legal

The New Local Plan has to be prepared in accordance with the relevant Planning Acts and regulations, and be aligned with related national planning policy and guidance. The Plan will need in accordance with the Council's constitution to be formally endorsed by Full Council prior to publication and on adoption.

6.3 Human Resources

The New Local Plan will be delivered by existing staff from within Economic Development and Planning, and the wider organisation, together with support from specialist consultants.

6.4 Risk Management

An adopted local plan for Stafford Borough is in place. However, there is a requirement on Local Planning Authorities to review Local Plans and ensure policies are up to date. A delay and / or uncertainty at the local level without a new Local Plan being produced could lead to legal challenges and/or planning appeals with potential significant costs for the Council.

Whilst the Council will seek to ensure that the New Local Plan is progressed in accordance with the latest timetable and minimise any risks of delay it should be noted that the following external factors are beyond the Council's control and may have an impact:

- Changes in Government legislation, regulations and policy including Local Government re-organisation
- Unanticipated scale and nature of consultation responses received including new evidence submitted unexpectedly
- Failure of key partners and other agencies to deliver evidence on time and make responses to key elements of the process
- Unanticipated delays in external events such as resource capacity of the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for the Examination process or failure to deliver robust arrangements for this process

It should be noted that the following risks can be considered and effectively managed by the Council:

- Staff turnover, recruitment difficulties and sickness absences leading to inadequate skills base
- Political changes, procedural delays or failure to meet Council deadlines

- Non-conformity and failure in the tests of soundness for new planning policy documents

The Council will continue to closely monitor Government legislation, regulations and policy as part of updating the Local Plan whilst deploying robust programme management techniques to deliver evidence and digital services as required through the process, including regularly engaging with the Planning Inspectorate. All internal risks will be reviewed when required and proposed actions delivered efficiently.

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

The New Local Plan 2025-2045 will provide clear guidance to developers, and also members of the public, through planning policies and proposals in across the Borough. This will enable any resident or business to see the requirements related to future development. There are no direct impacts identified for Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation at this stage.

The New Local Plan will deliver a statutory development plan which is designed to be inclusive to all residents and those interested in planning the future for the Borough.

Throughout the process of preparing the New Local Plan a thorough consultation and engagement process will enable residents and interested parties to be involved in its preparation, including 24/7 access to key documents through the Borough Council's website.

6.6 Health

Working from a consistent evidence base through the Borough Council and with partners, ensures that recommendations made in relation to the New Local Plan 2025-2045 with policy-specific areas are consistent and complementary to an approach that supports equality in both service provision and health outcomes. Specific reference will be made when details of the New Local Plan 2025-2045 are made available.

6.1 Climate Change

Working from a consistent evidence base through the Borough Council and with partners, ensures that recommendations made in relation to the New Local Plan 2025-2045 with policy-specific areas are consistent and complementary to an approach that supports equality in both service provision and climate change outcomes. Specific reference will be made when details of the New Local Plan 2025-2045 are made available.

7 Appendices

Appendix 1: New Local Plan process - Key Stages

8 Previous Consideration

10 June 2025 Economic Development & Planning Scrutiny Committee
Agenda and Minutes via link below:

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/25-26-committee-meetings

21 May 2026 Cabinet Agenda and Minutes via link below:

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/26-27-committee-meetings

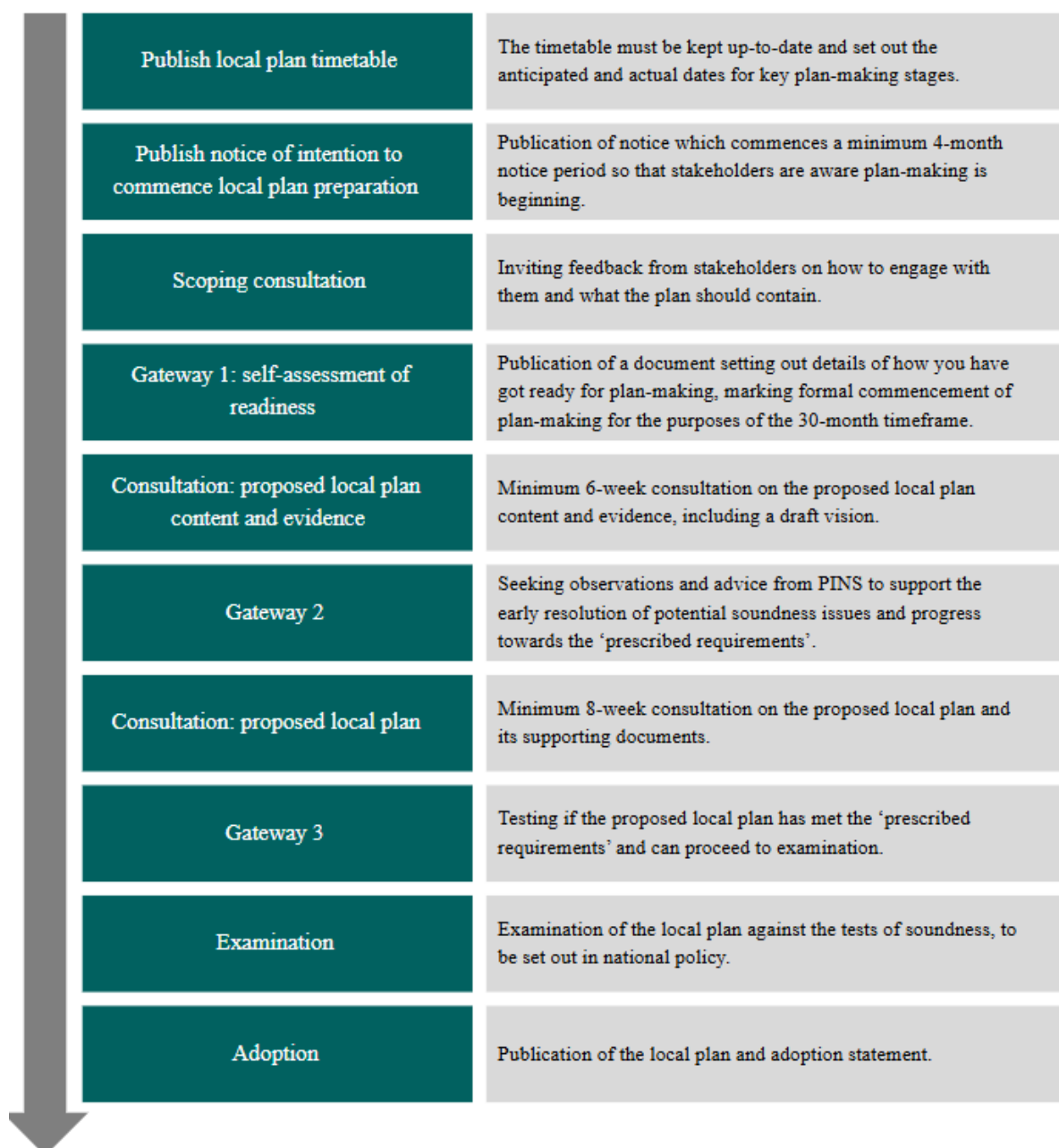
9 Background Papers

File available in Economic Development and Planning together with the
following information available via the Stafford Borough Council website link:

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/new-local-plan-2025-to-2045

Contact Officer:	Alex Yendole
Telephone Number:	07800 619530
Ward Interest:	N/A
Report Track:	Economic Development & Planning Scrutiny Committee - 2 July 2026 (Only)
Key Decision:	No

New Local Plan system - Key Stages



Agenda Item 7(d)

Stafford Town Centre Development Framework

Committee:	Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny
Date of Meeting:	2 July 2026
Report of:	Head of Economic Development and Planning
Portfolio:	Economic Development and Planning

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Scrutiny Committee on the progress on the Stafford Town centre Regeneration Programme and to present the Stafford Town Centre Development Framework.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

3 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 3.1 The Stafford Town Centre Transformation Programme supports delivery of the following priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan 2025-28:
- Prosperous Economy
 - Communities and Wellbeing

By leading on site assembly and clearance works the regeneration programme is addressing longstanding issues around deliverability that could otherwise continue to deter investment in Stafford town centre.

Redevelopment opportunities that offers the potential for a variety of uses can support both the local economy and the delivery of both market and affordable housing.

- 3.2 The Programme is also consistent with the development strategy as set out in the adopted Local Plan, the Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031.

4 Report Detail

- 4.1 As Members are aware the regeneration programme for Stafford town centre has been split across two main priorities - public realm improvements and strategic land assembly. With the renovation of Market Square and reconfigured approach and entrance to Stafford Station complete, work continued at pace to complete the grant funded acquisition of the former Guildhall shopping centre, former Co-operative department store, 10-12 Gaolgate Street and the former Wilko store.
- 4.2 As landowner of these strategic sites across the town centre the Council can better control and influence the type, scale, design and function of new buildings and public spaces. The Council has used the grant funding to progress a programme of demolition and site clearance works to present development-ready sites.
- 4.3 At the last Scrutiny meeting in March 2026 officers reported that the main demolition works to the former Guildhall shopping centre and the former Co-operative department store were completed and that a Cabinet report would follow setting out the next steps for the programme. Since then applications for planning permission to demolish the former Wilko site, 10-12 Gaolgate Street and residual works at the Guildhall site have all been submitted for consideration and, subject to planning being agreed a contractor has been procured to carry out the works.
- 4.4 In April 2026 the Stafford Town Centre Development Framework (enclosed at **Appendix 1**) was shared with and approved by Cabinet. The aim of the Development Framework is to be clear about the ambition of the Council and the type and scale of development being sought. At this stage though Members should note that the images contained within the Framework are illustrative only and the detail will come later.
- 4.5 The Framework is guided by the fundamental principles of the Future High Streets Fund which seeks to address the long term changes to town centres following a shift away from an over-reliance on traditional retail. The proposals also reflect the types of development that the market (the private sector) can and will deliver and this is based on discussions with interested developers and operators over the last 12 months. The team will carry out a public engagement exercise with residents, businesses and stakeholders to share the proposals in the Development Framework and talk about what the plans mean in practice for Stafford people.

4.6 The purpose of the Framework is to provide the Council with a flexible, practical and deliverable route to achieve the following:

- Comprehensive regeneration of the cleared sites
- A new destination which is complementary to and integrated within the wider town centre function
- High quality development, with a mix of uses, which encourage activity and footfall within the town centre
- A robust solution which is:
 - Viable
 - Deliverable
 - Appropriately phased
 - Has the support of the wider community
 - Is flexible in response to market demand to ensure longevity

4.7 The Framework identifies six development areas as follows:

Development Area	Location	Proposed Development Type(s)
Market Hall	The former Guildhall shopping mall, to the rear of the retained arcade	Market Hall: food and beverage, retail
Residential/Mixed Use North	The former multistorey car park and indoor market hall at the Guildhall	Residential: town houses and apartments Commercial/business/service use Associated parking
Residential South	The former Guildhall management suite, gym and car park off Earl Street	Residential: terraced houses and apartments
Mixed Use, Gaolgate	Former Co-op and 10-12 Gaolgate Street	Residential: apartments
Broad Street	Former Wilko, Shopmobility unit and public toilets	Education
Public Realm (Various)	Spaces within the development areas listed above	High quality, connected spaces to strengthen the County Town identity

- 4.8 Members will note that the Framework identifies the former Wilko site on Broad Street for educational use. Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group continues to grow with their Institute of Technology campus within the Stafford Station Gateway opening in 2025 and the recent acquisition of a former bank on Greengate Street earlier this year which will support their adult learning curriculum. Despite these new facilities coming into use the demand for places at the College means space is still needed.
- 4.9 For the remaining sites that the Council wishes to retain in the longer term a developer selection process is being progressed which, when concluded, will be reported to Cabinet for final decision prior to any contractual commitments being made.
- 4.10 Although the Council owned sites represent a significant amount of redevelopment potential the aim has always been to act as the catalyst for private sector investment in the town. As such, sitting alongside the Development Framework a Stafford Town Centre Masterplan has also been jointly commissioned with Staffordshire County Council which looks further ahead at other regeneration opportunities over a much wider area. This is due to be reported to Cabinet in the summer.

5 Implications

5.1 Financial

None

5.2 Legal

None

5.3 Human Resources

None

5.4 Risk Management

None

5.5 Equalities and Diversity

None

5.6 Health

None

5.7 Climate Change

None

6 Appendices

Appendix 1: Stafford Town Centre Development Framework

7 Previous Consideration

Cabinet 9 April 2026, minute CAB71.

8 Background Papers

None

Contact Officer: Michelle Smith

Telephone Number: 01785 619335

Ward Interest: Forebridge

Report Track: Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny
2 July 2026 Only

Key Decision: N/A



ArkleBoyce.

Stafford Town Centre

DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Contact Details

Client: Stafford Borough Council
Project Contact: ArkleBoyce Architects

Status: FINAL
Date: March 2026
Prepared: MB
Checked: JA
Revision: B

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Executive Summary



The Development Framework for Stafford is a guide for developers, operators and investors, describing the opportunity that has been created within the Regeneration Area, located in Stafford's northern Town Centre. The document has been prepared to guide the future comprehensive regeneration of the area and the vision described in this Development Framework will help deliver Stafford's growth, productivity and quality of life.

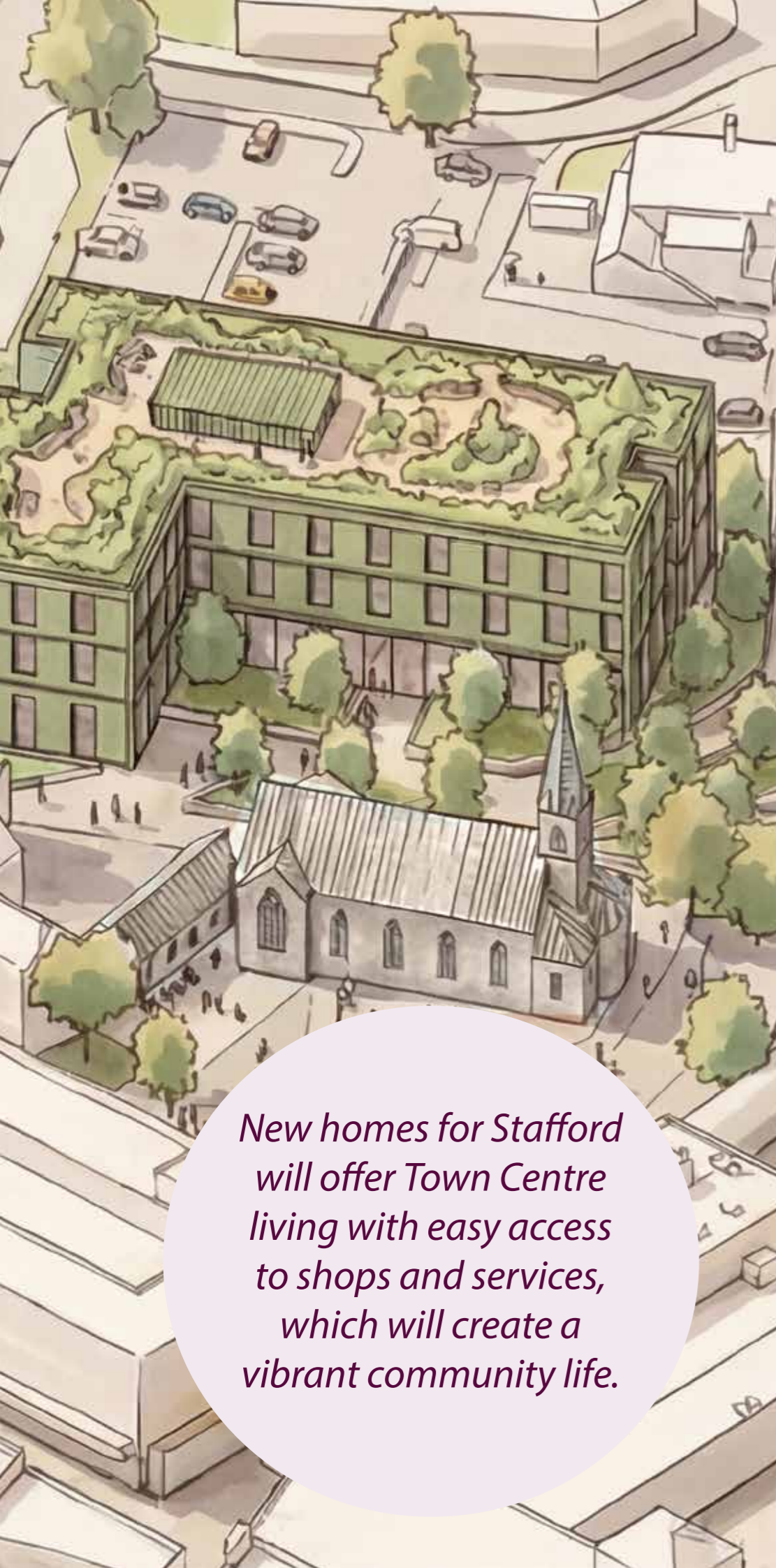
The development sites identified within this document are strategically positioned adjacent to key town centre assets. The planned regeneration will form strong physical and functional connections with the existing built environment, which will support continued development and success.

Stafford is ideally positioned with excellent connectivity to several major cities, including Birmingham and Manchester. With strong transport links and a growing local economy, the Development Framework outlines the opportunity to deliver high-quality, commercially attractive development that will enhance the wider town centre offer for current and future generations.

An aerial architectural rendering of a town center development. The scene shows a mix of existing and proposed buildings. In the foreground, there are several large, light-colored buildings with flat roofs, some of which appear to be under construction or recently completed. To the right, a prominent brick building with a clock tower stands out. Further back, there are more multi-story buildings, some with red roofs. The streets are lined with trees and small figures of people, suggesting a pedestrian-friendly environment. The overall style is a detailed line drawing with soft shading and a color palette dominated by earthy tones like browns, oranges, and greens.

The Development Framework sets out opportunities for new residential, commercial and educational uses set within high quality public realm.

The new market hall will act as an anchor for the north of the Town Centre, creating space for independent vendors, retail and events to boost footfall and activity.



The Vision

The vision for the Regeneration Area is to build on the town's significant successes to deliver further transformational change to the north of the Town Centre, creating a vibrant, inclusive and future-ready destination at the heart of Staffordshire.

Through public sector intervention, we have unlocked landmark development opportunities that reimagine the area as a thriving hub of commercial, cultural and community life.

Through a diverse mix of uses, including market and food hall spaces, town centre living, commercial, business and service spaces and education, Stafford's northern Town Centre will be reinvigorated with uses and development that celebrate its heritage and create resilience that meets the needs of today and tomorrow.

Our aim is to create a new destination, where visitors want to shop, where people want to socialise, learn, spend time and where businesses want to invest.

New homes for Stafford will offer Town Centre living with easy access to shops and services, which will create a vibrant community life.



I. Introduction

About this Document

Stafford Borough Council has commissioned ArkleBoyce to produce a Development Framework for the Regeneration Area in the north of the Town Centre.

The aim of the Development Framework is to provide clarity for prospective investors about the long-term vision for Stafford's transformation.

The Development Framework seeks to:

- Set out a background and context for development opportunities and public realm proposals;
- Articulate a clear vision and identity for the northern part of Stafford Town Centre; and
- Provide guidance for development proposals coming forward including appropriate uses and design principles for the built form, public realm and landscaping within the area.

Background

As with many town centres, Stafford has experienced challenging conditions over recent years which has culminated in a decrease in footfall and an associated reduction in retail offer. A number of retail units within the northern Town Centre have been vacated with little chance of those units being re-occupied.

The Government has promoted key initiatives to deal with challenges faced by town centres in the 21st century. In 2025, the Local Government Association published a paper on the transformative impact of housing led regeneration.

The paper, titled **“The role of town centre housing in town centre revitalisation”** states the following:

Housing-led regeneration has emerged as a key strategy to help address these challenges. By leveraging housing development as a driver of investment and renewal, local leaders are meeting immediate housing needs while delivering broader economic and social benefits. Working with central government and private sector partners, they are pioneering new approaches to overcome viability barriers and attract investment.

Following the Government's lead and best practice in the revitalisation of town centres, this Development Framework has been informed by discussions with a number of operators and developers who have shown an interest in the development opportunities offered in Stafford's northern Town Centre.

The process started with the launch of the Stafford Prospectus at UKREiiF in May 2025 and market leaders in the investment and delivery of town centre regeneration programmes have been engaged through a soft marketing exercise.

This has informed all aspects of the Development Framework process, including development mix and uses, quantum, scale and massing. All of which are key elements of modelling and subsequently delivering commercially viable proposals.

Phase I of the project, which is the demolition of the Guildhall and Co-op Department store, will shortly conclude. After this, the Council will continue to lead on demolition across the area with a number of sites within the Regeneration Area being progressed.

2. Context

Strategic Context

The Regeneration Area lies within the County Town of Stafford, a historic market town located in the Staffordshire, in the West Midlands region of England.

Occupying a strategic position, the town is well connected by the M6 motorway and the West Coast Main Line, making it a key node between the North West and the Midlands.

Stafford acts as a central hub for economic activity, public services and cultural life and is located nearby some of the UK's major cities, including 16 miles north of Wolverhampton, 18 miles south of Stoke-on-Trent and 30 miles north-west of Birmingham.

This accessibility underpins major regeneration programmes such as the Stafford Station Gateway and Town Centre revitalisation initiatives supported by national funding streams, signalling sustained confidence in Stafford's long-term growth potential.

Stafford also benefits from exceptional access to high-quality natural environments, with Cannock Chase National Landscape, the Trent Valley and the Shropshire Hills forming its natural landscape. The River Sow, Doxey Marshes and the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal are local waterways and natural features that are in close proximity to the Town Centre. As such, the town offers residents and visitors ample access to the countryside and wildlife.

This blend of urban opportunity and rural proximity strengthens Stafford's identity as a sustainable, liveable, and well-connected County Town.



Stafford Town Centre

Stafford Town Centre is a large regional centre. The traditional Town Centre was focussed around Market Square, Gaolgate Street and Greengate Street, however in more recent years, the Town Centre has grown outwards to the north east with the development of Kingsmead Retail Park and to the east with the development of Riverside, which includes national retailers, restaurants and a cinema.

The Town Centre is currently undergoing significant transformation, guided by a number of regeneration initiatives around Station Gateway, Eastgate, expansion of NSCG College and the Market Square.

The Town Centre and its immediate surroundings has a rich heritage, containing the Stafford Town Conservation Area and a number of significant Listed Buildings.

The wider Town Centre environment is varied, with high-quality public realm evident in the traditional shopping areas of Market Square, Greengate Street and Gaolgate Street.



Greengate Street



St Mary's Church



Market Square

Site Context

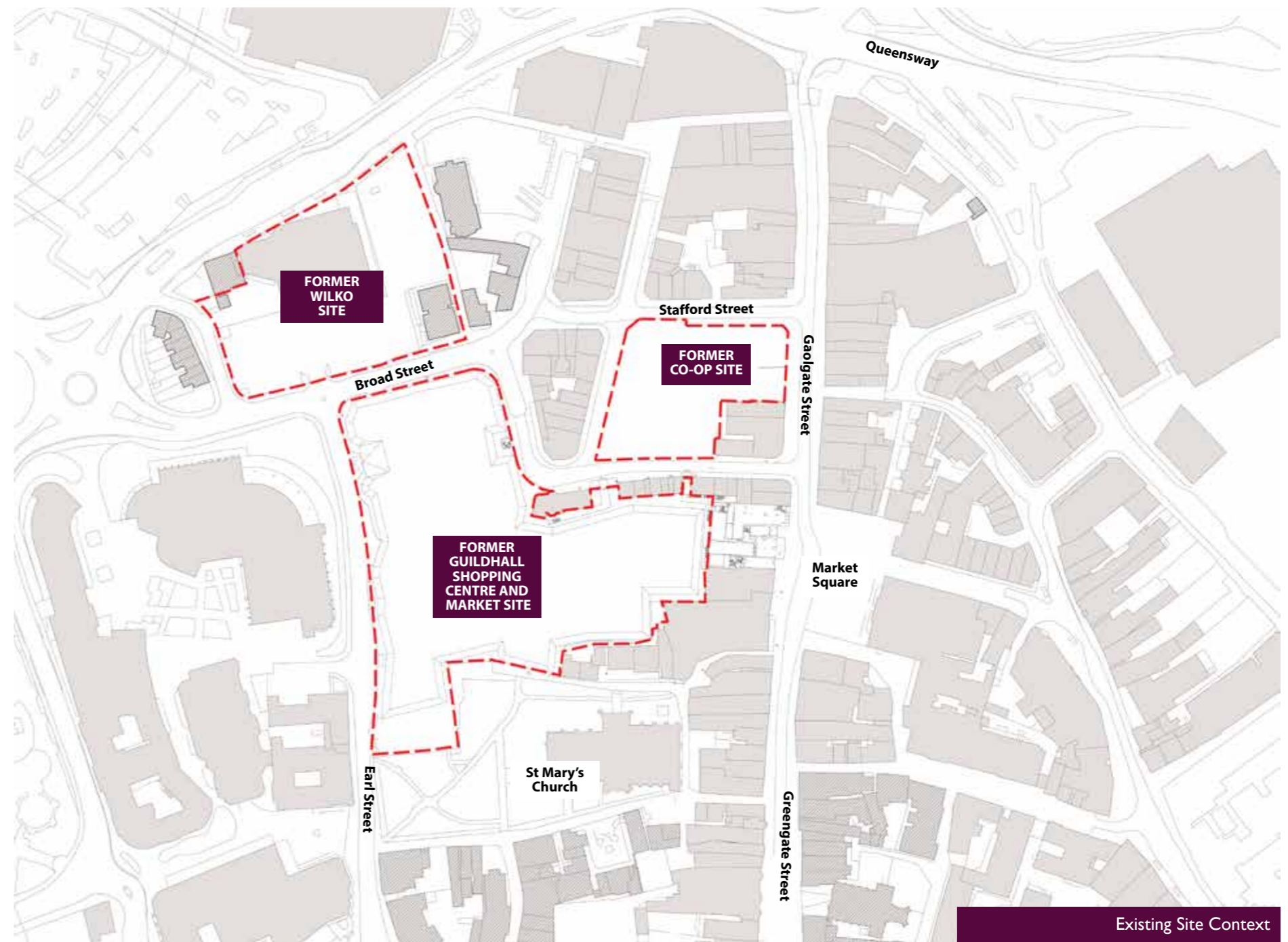
The Regeneration Area

The Development Framework covers a portion of the northern Town Centre, this spans 2.4 hectares and includes:

- The former Guildhall Shopping Centre and Stafford Market.
- The former Co-op Department Store.
- The former Wilko site.

These sites are suitable for a range of uses, including residential, commercial, retail, service uses and education. The delivery of the Development Framework will also unlock the opportunity for new public realm within the Town Centre.

In addition to the development opportunities identified within this Framework, a wider Town Centre Masterplan is nearing completion, which aligns with the vision and principles of this document.



Movement and Accessibility

The wider Town Centre benefits from a clear and permeable street network, with pedestrian-friendly streets and alleys. Extensive pedestrianisation and restrictions on vehicle movement have created a pleasant environment.

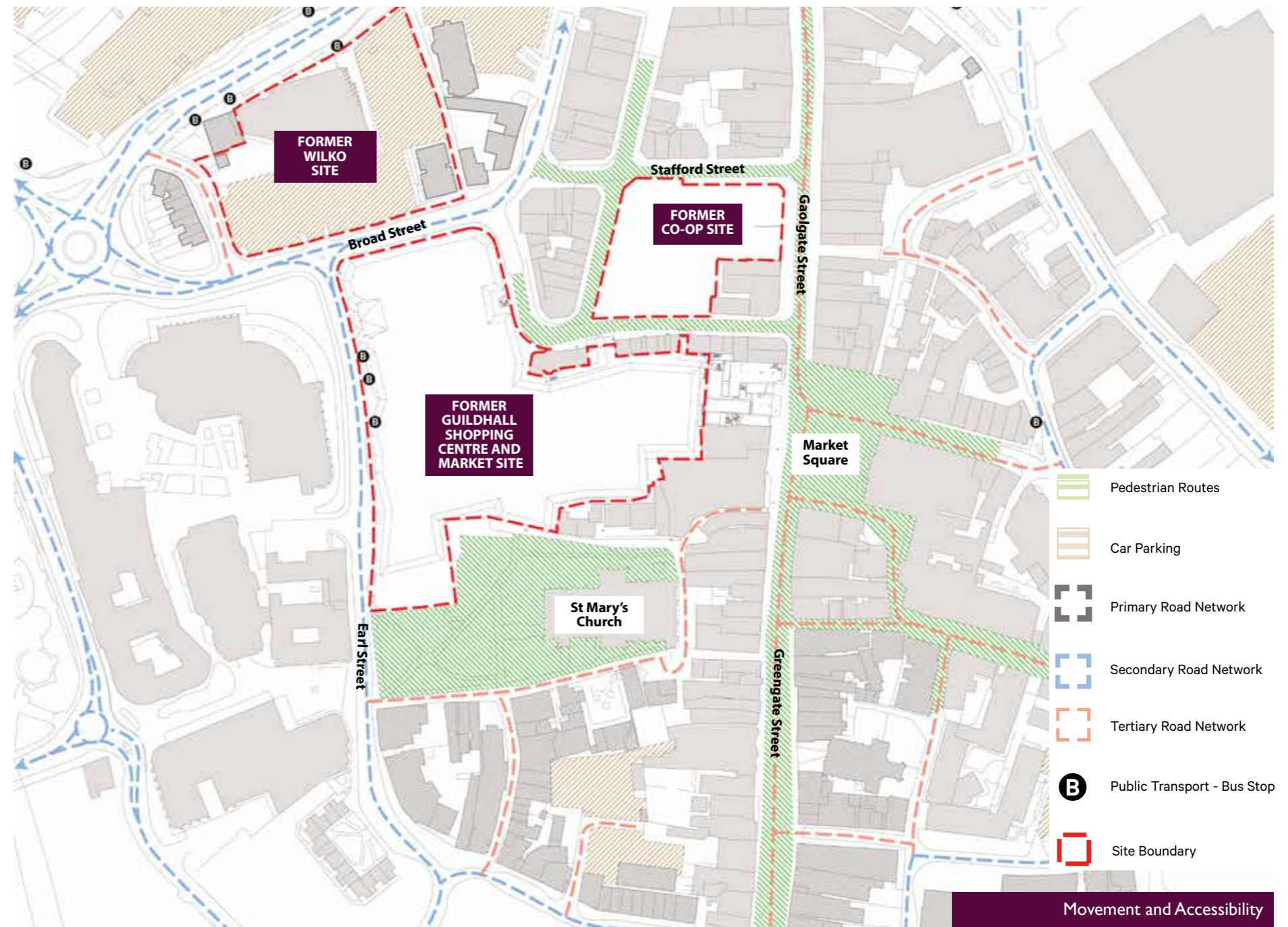
The Town Centre is well connected by multiple transport modes. Stafford Rail Station, located approximately 250m to the west of the Regeneration Area, provides services to destinations including Crewe, Birmingham, Liverpool, London, and Manchester.

Gaol Square Bus Interchange offers links to Eccleshall, Stone, Cannock, Hanley, Lichfield, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Newport, Rugeley, Stoke, Telford, Uttoxeter, and Wolverhampton. The majority of bus routes can be accessed from the edge of the Town Centre with a number of routes running into the centre along Eastgate Street and Earl Street.

Vehicle access is strong, with the Town Centre positioned off the A34 and A518.

National Cycle Route 5 and Route 55 provide good access into the Town Centre from the West, North West and East.

The main shopping areas, including Greengate Street, Market Square, Gaolgate Street, Riverside are pedestrianised and have high accessibility.



Statutory Designations

The Regeneration Area is located within Flood Zone I, having a low probability of flooding.

The majority of the Development Framework area is located within the Stafford Town Conservation Area and the sites fall within the setting of a number of Listed Buildings.

The Development Framework lies close to the Cannock Chase National Landscape. Part of Cannock Chase is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). All development that leads to a net increase in dwellings within 15km of the site must take all necessary steps to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects upon the SAC's integrity.

Heritage, Landscape and Public Realm

The majority of the Development Framework area is located within the Stafford Town Conservation Area, with the development sites falling within the setting of a number of Listed Buildings.

These assets are set within a compact network of streets and alleys, where most buildings follow a strong three-storey building line. The Council's appraisal of the Stafford Town Conservation Area, currently on the heritage at risk register, highlights the former shopping centre as negative infill development that has undermined the historic character of the County Town.

As the Framework sites lie within the setting of several heritage assets, the height and massing of future development proposals is an important consideration.

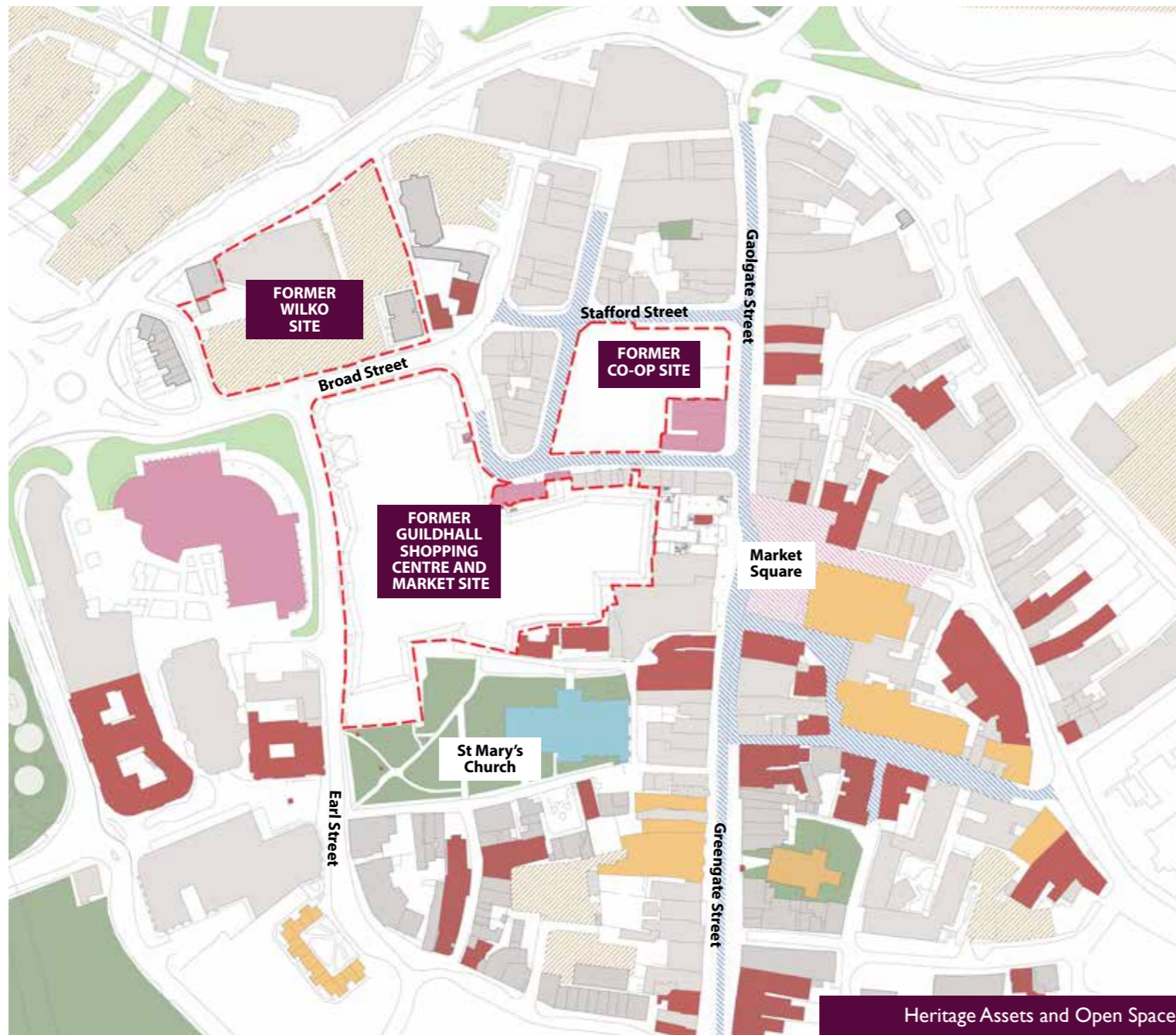
Heritage assets within and adjoining the Regeneration Area include:

- Stafford Town Conservation Area
- Grade I Church of St Mary
- Grade II Foundations of Bertelin's Chapel
- Grade II Fry Headstone
- Grade II Dale Monument
- Grade II 5-8 St Mary's Grove
- Grade II County Education Offices
- Grade II Stafford Borough War Memorial
- Grade II 2-3 Church Lane
- Grade II Church Lane Evangelical Church
- Grade II 56-58 Greengate Street
- Grade II Former Noah's Ark Inn
- Grade II 18 Market Square
- Grade II St Bernard's House
- Grade II 2 Mount Street
- Grade II 34-37 Gaolgate Street

Victoria Park is a key asset within Stafford, providing a green gateway for visitors arriving by train. It forms part of a series of open spaces along the River Sow, creating a high-quality waterfront setting that is easily accessible from the Town Centre. The river is well maintained, and many buildings benefit from their location along its banks.

The Town Centre also features a range of high-quality public realm and pedestrian areas, offering an attractive environment for retail and leisure activity. Market Square, which has recently been refurbished, sits at the heart of the centre and regularly hosts markets and civic events, reinforcing its role as a focal point for community life.

Together, the scale and quality of the building fabric, public realm and green spaces make Stafford an appealing place to walk and cycle. The River Sow's open spaces further enhance provision of accessible green areas. Stafford also holds a number of annual events, including the Stafford Food Festival, Spring Fair, Half Marathon and Christmas Lights switch on.



Planning Context

National Policy and Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework

The requirements for Local and Neighbourhood Plans are laid down in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024). This states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Furthermore, the planning system should take into account local circumstances to ensure that economic, social and environmental gains can be delivered in a sustainable manner according to the needs and opportunities of different areas.

The NPPF outlines that a positive approach should be taken to the growth, management and adaptation of town centres and that the efficient use of land should be promoted, with substantial weight given to the value of using previously developed and under-utilised land for homes and other identified needs.

Draft National Decision Making Policies (December 2025)

The Draft National Planning Policy Framework is currently out to consultation. This sets out clearer policies for planning and decision making, with the intention that decision making policies will not be repeated in development plans.

There is continued support for the effective use of land within proposed Policy LI. For town centres, there is a greater emphasis within proposed Policy TC1 on the need to set out a clear strategy and vision to ensure all needs are considered, including the scope to accommodate additional floorspace, broaden the mix of uses, and bring vacant sites back into use.

Proposed Policy TC2 promotes continued support to strengthening the vitality and viability of town centres, where this can be achieved through the diversification of uses, intensification and provision of residential accommodation and improving access to local shops and facilities which provide day-to-day services for the local communities.

Planning Practice Guidance

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) is the government's online resource that explains how to apply the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in practice. It provides detailed, topic-based guidance for local authorities, developers, and communities, ensuring consistency and clarity in how planning policies are interpreted and implemented.

Unlike the NPPF, the PPG is continuously updated online to reflect new policies, case law, and government priorities.

Key themes from the PPG on Town Centres emphasise vitality, adaptability, and sustainable growth. The guidance highlights how planning authorities can support Town Centres in responding to economic change, diversifying uses, and ensuring they remain attractive, accessible, and resilient.

National Design Guide

The National Design Guide sets out the government's vision for creating well-designed places that are beautiful, sustainable, and enduring. It explains what good design means in practice and provides a framework for local authorities, developers, and communities to follow. The guide identifies principles to ensure that new developments respond to local character, support social interaction, promote active travel, and integrate green infrastructure.

It forms part of national planning practice guidance and is intended to support the National Planning Policy Framework. The guide helps local authorities assess design quality, informs the preparation of local design codes, and encourages developers to deliver schemes that enhance heritage, improve wellbeing, and foster resilience. By setting a clear benchmark for design quality, the National Design Guide aims to ensure that future growth contributes positively to communities, strengthens identity, and creates places that are attractive, inclusive, and adaptable over time.

National Model Design Code

The National Model Design Code provides detailed guidance to help local authorities, communities, and developers define what good quality design looks like in their area. It sets out clear design parameters and expands on the ten characteristics of well-designed places identified in the National Design Guide. The Code is intended to ensure that new development reflects local character, supports sustainable growth, and delivers high-quality places that are attractive, functional, and resilient.

Draft Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance.

The four existing guidance documents (National Design Guide, Design PPG and National Model Design Code Parts 1 and 2) have been consolidated into a single streamlined resource, "The Draft Design and Placemaking PPG".

The PPG is intended to support the application of policies in the Draft NPPF 2025. It outlines and illustrates the government's priorities for well-designed places, including the seven features of well-designed places:

- Liveability – healthy, mixed and integrated communities.
- Climate – mitigating and adapting to change.
- Nature – enhanced and optimised.
- Movement – accessible and easy to move around.
- Built Form – a compact and connected pattern of development.
- Public Space – safe, social and inclusive.
- Identity – attractive and distinctive.

Planning Policy for Stafford

In preparing the Development Framework, consideration has been given to national, regional and local planning policy. This includes both adopted and emerging policies in order to establish a full picture of the planning context and emerging evidenced requirements and needs.

A synopsis of the key policies which are relevant to and have informed the Development Framework proposals are contained below.

- Part 1 of the Local Plan contains a vision, spatial principles and specific policies which will guide development across the Borough.
- Part 2 of the Plan details settlement and Recognised Industrial Estate boundaries together with a policy protecting community / social facilities.

Part 1 Local Plan

The 2014 Plan for Stafford Borough (Part 1) contains a vision, spatial principles and specific policies which will guide development across the Borough.

Since the adoption of the Local Plan there have been significant changes in National Planning Policy and in particular, housing targets for Stafford.

The following Local Plan Policies are relevant to this Development Framework:

- **Policy SP3 and 4 Stafford sustainable settlement hierarchy** - which outlines the County Town of Stafford as the primary settlement within the Borough to accommodate 70% of the housing development within the plan.
- **Policy SP5 Stafford Borough Employment Growth Distribution** - which outlines 56% of the employment land should be directed at Stafford.
- **Policy Stafford I** - the anchor policy for shaping Stafford's future - summarised opposite.
- **Policy E8 Town Centre** - outlines Town Centre policy considerations, summarised overleaf.
- **Policy N1 Design** - seeks to secure enhancements in design quality, through set design principles on use, form, space and movement.
- **Policy N2 Climate Change** - all development must incorporate sustainable design features to facilitate a reduction in the consumption of natural resources, improve the environmental quality and mitigate against the impact of climate change.
- **Policy N9 - Historic Environment** - requires new development to respect Stafford's Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings and encourages high-quality design that enhances the setting of heritage assets.
- **Policy T1 Sustainable Transport** - Supports connectivity between the railway station, bus interchange, and Town Centre.
- **Policy C1, C2 and C3 Housing Policies** - Encourages a mix of residential development and outlines affordable and specialist housing requirements.

Stafford Town Centre Policy

Policies that are relevant to Stafford and its Town Centre are contained within Part 1 of the Local Plan and are summarised in more detail below and overleaf.

Policy Stafford I - Stafford Town

The regeneration of Stafford Town Centre is supported through **Policy Stafford I** which is the anchor policy for shaping Stafford's future. It ensures that growth is concentrated in the town, rather than dispersed across the Borough; regeneration projects are aligned with heritage and sustainability priorities; and Stafford remains competitive against regional centres.

In summary, the policy:

- Establishes Stafford as the County Town and the primary settlement within the Borough, where the majority of new housing, employment, retail, and infrastructure will be directed.
- Identifies significant levels of housing and employment land to be delivered in Stafford, reflecting its role as a sub-regional centre.
- Supports a range of uses in Stafford Town Centre to strengthen vitality and viability, including retail, leisure, and cultural development.
- Requires improvements to transport networks, sustainable travel options, and community facilities to support growth.
- Ensures development respects Stafford's historic character and environmental assets, integrating green infrastructure and protecting conservation areas.
- Highlights strategic locations as priorities for regeneration and mixed-use development.
- Embeds principles of low-carbon design, reduced car dependency, and resilience to climate change.

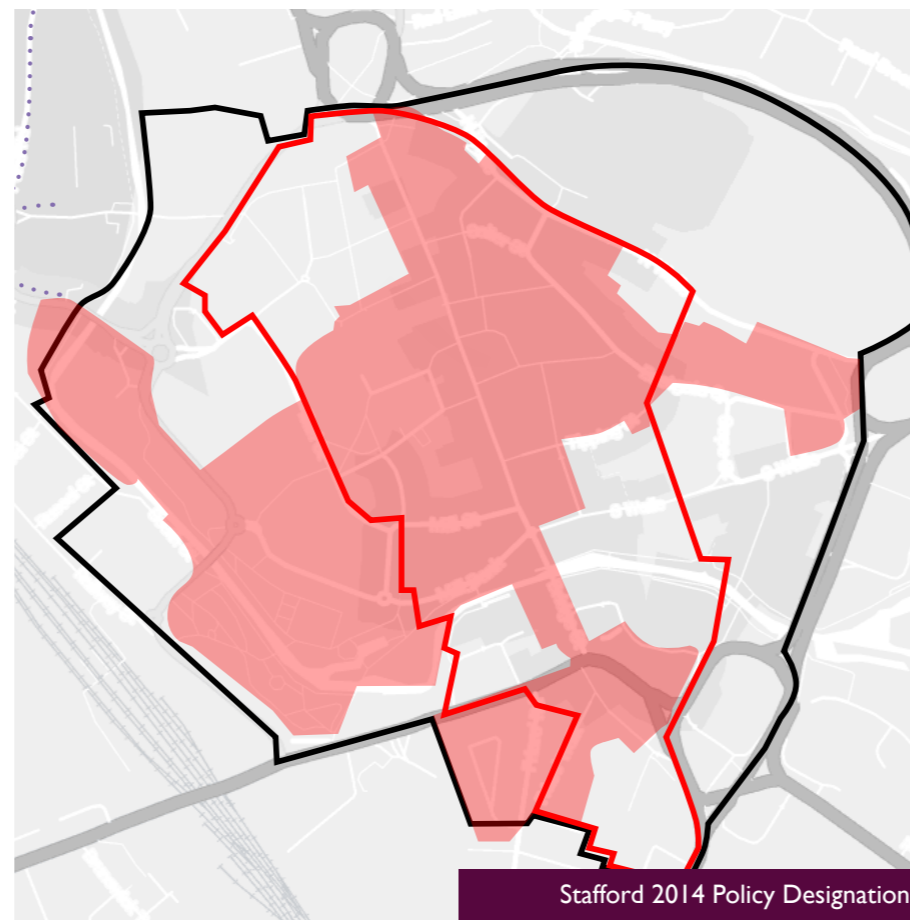
Town Centre Policy - Policy E8 - Town Centres

Policy E8 outlines:

“Stafford Town Centre is the primary comparison and convenience shopping destination serving Stafford Borough as a whole, with a vibrant night time economy including arts and cultural activities, attracting significant numbers of trips from adjoining parts of the Borough as well as developing a key role as a tourist destination within Staffordshire.”

In summary, the policy seeks to:

- Maintain and improve the quality and diversity of retail provision.
- Maintain and promote a diversity of uses.
- Retain and increase the amount of attractive residential provision in town centres, through new build and conversion.



- Town Centre Boundary
- Primary Shopping Area Boundary
- • • Western Access Improvement
- Stafford Town Conservation Area Boundary

Local Plan Part 2

Part 2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough sets out boundaries for the settlements of Stafford, it also includes a policy on protecting social and community facilities, and the employment areas in Stafford.

The Plan for Stafford Borough - Part 2 was adopted by the Council on the 31 January 2017.

- **Policy SP3 Stafford Borough Sustainable Settlement Hierarchy** - The majority of future development will be based on a sustainable settlement hierarchy with the County Town of Stafford being first.
- **Policy SP4 Housing Growth Distribution** - 70% of housing target will be directed at Stafford.
- **Policy SB1** - details Settlement Boundaries for Stafford (bar employment use).
- **Policy SB2** - outlines social and community facilities are protected unless it can be demonstrated through evidence, the use is no longer required.
- **Policy SB3** - outlines those protected employment areas within Stafford.

Supplementary Planning Documents

Design SPD (2018)

The Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted in April 2018 and provides detail on how Local Plan policies should be applied in planning applications.

It outlines the following Core Design Principles:

- Development must respond to local distinctiveness, heritage assets, and landscape setting.
- Promotes permeability, pedestrian priority, and integration with existing street patterns.
- Ensure buildings respect human scale, with appropriate massing, height, and proportion.
- Separation distances to safeguard privacy and outlook.
- Encourage high-quality streets, squares, and green spaces that foster community activity.
- Incorporate energy efficiency, green infrastructure, and climate resilience into design.
- Standards for spacing, garden sizes, and orientation to ensure good living conditions.
- Emphasis on creating mixed, inclusive neighbourhoods with varied housing types.
- Guidance on scale, materials, and detailing to ensure changes respect the character of existing dwellings and streets.

Emerging Local Plan

New Local Plan 2025-2045

Following a Cabinet decision on 6 March 2025, Stafford Borough Council are currently preparing their evidence base for a new Local Plan 2025 to 2045 which will start a new plan-making process for the area.

The Local Plan 2025 - 2045 will fully replace the Local Plan for Stafford Borough with a new development strategy, site allocations and Development Management policies.

There have been significant changes in national policy and legislation since the adoption of the current Local Plan that the new Local Plan will be considering in its preparation. Relevant to this Development Framework and providing a robust context to this document include:

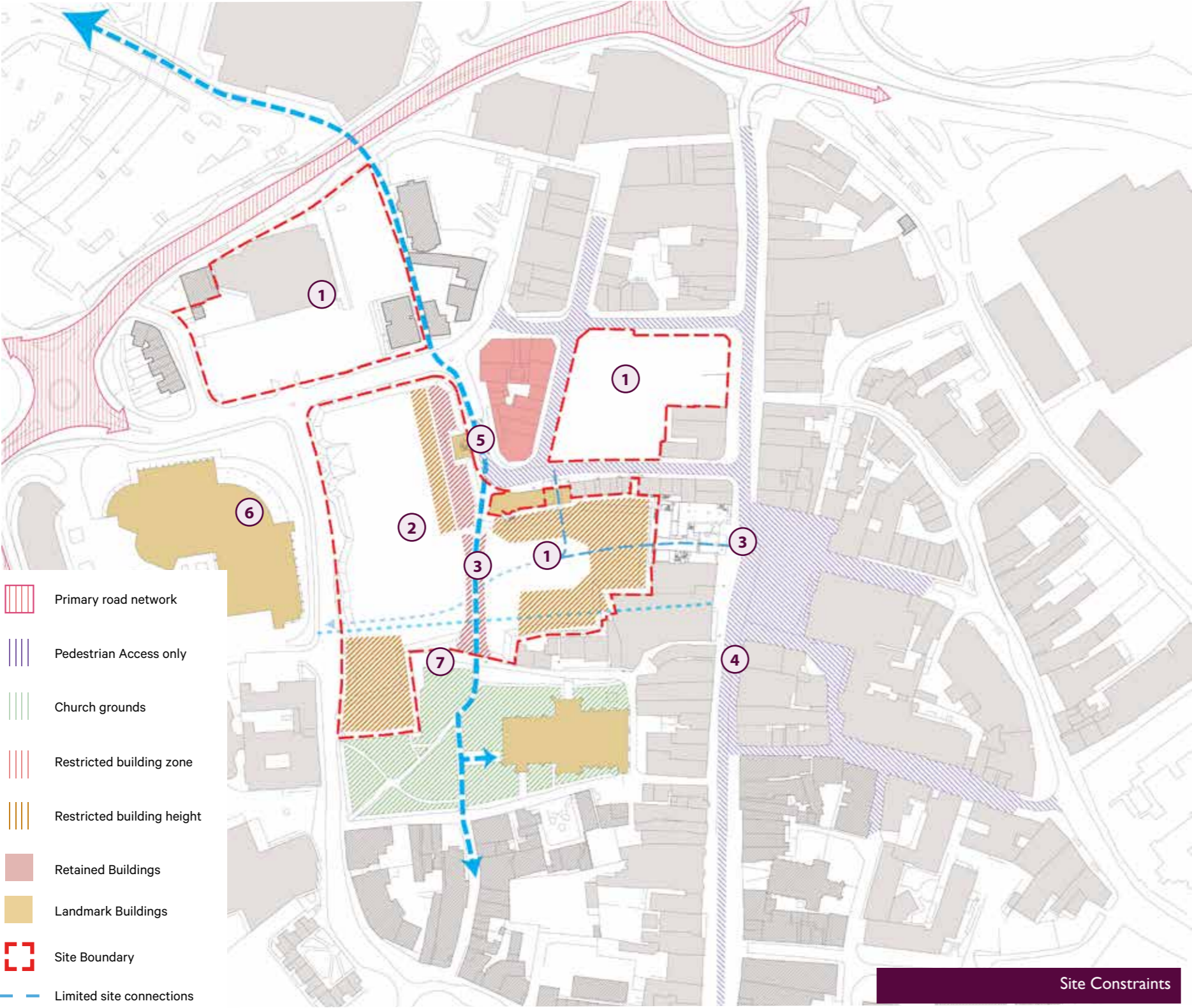
- The housing need for the area and the substantial increase in the housing requirement for the Borough;
- The sustained support for brownfield-first development to achieve higher housing targets and support urban regeneration; and
- The recognition that town centres must are no longer solely defined by retail and need to evolve.

Other Relevant Guidance

Other relevant guidance documents that have informed the Framework and should inform development proposals include:

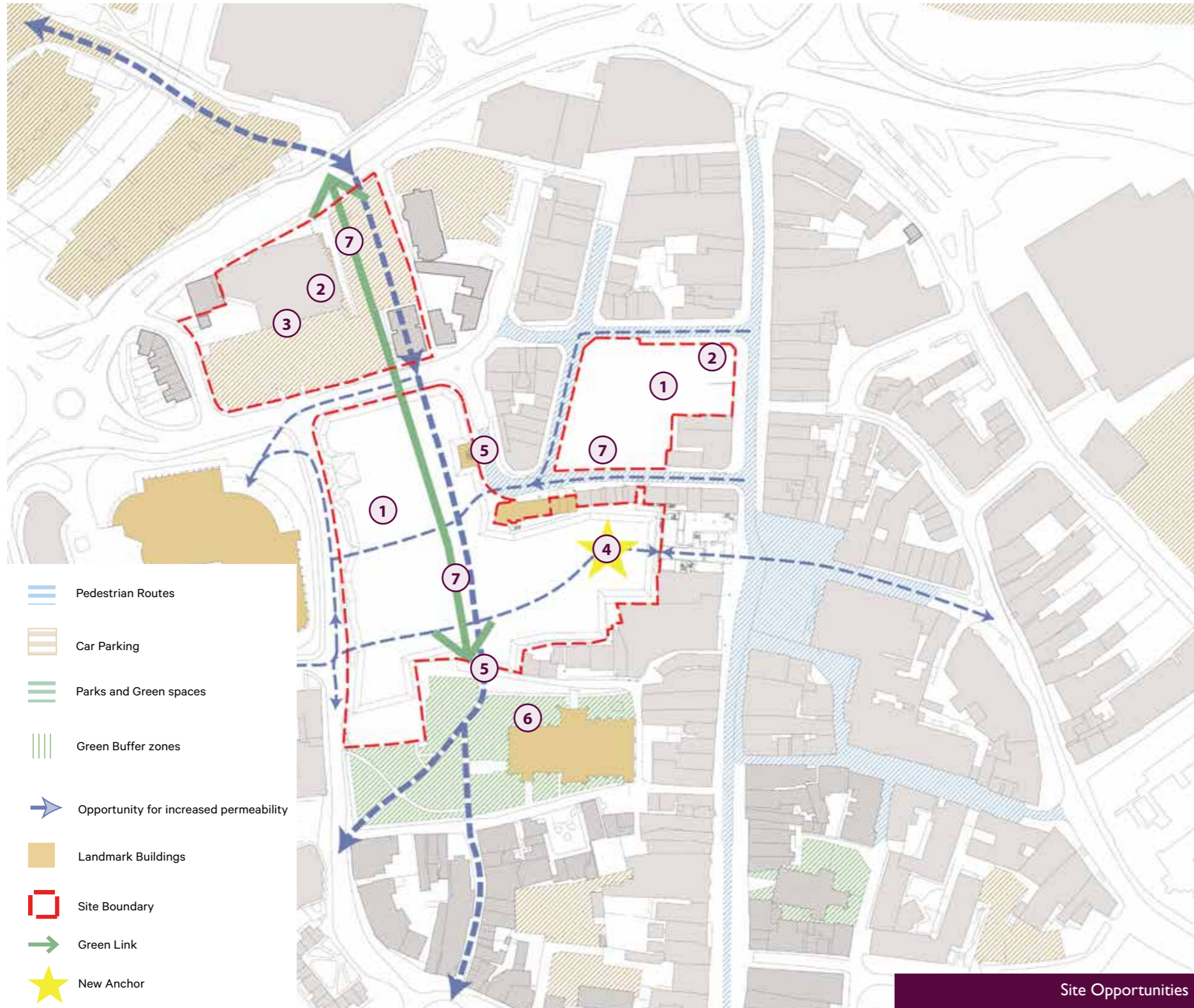
- Staffordshire Local Transport Plan (2026).
- Stafford Economic Growth Strategy (2020-2025).
- Stafford Corporate Plan (2025-2028).
- Stafford Climate Change Strategy.

3. Challenges and Opportunities



The Challenges

- ① There has been a general decline in requirement for large scale retail space within the Town Centre due to online shopping trends and post pandemic behaviours.
- ② There is a lack of suitable residential accommodation within the Regeneration Area across all age groups.
- ③ There is a lack of connectivity between key spaces and landmarks, there is a need to connect areas of the Town Centre back together.
- ④ Inconsistent quality of public realm, paving, seating options and poor signage.
- ⑤ Streets like Chapel Street lack active frontages and feel neglected compared to the primary shopping core.
- ⑥ There is an unmet and growing demand for education, yet limited space to accommodate its exponential growth.
- ⑦ Current built form around St Mary's Church creates a poor setting for the Grade I Listed Building.



The Opportunities

- ① The former Guildhall Shopping Centre and Co-op Department Store have been acquired and demolished by the Council. This is creating opportunities for the private sector to introduce a range of new uses, including residential, leisure, education and commercial to help diversify the Town Centre.
- ② Further sites have been acquired and are planned to be demolished, further expanding the regeneration footprint.
- ③ By acquiring and demolishing vacant sites, new spaces have been created which could support Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group's expansion.
- ④ An anchor development, such as a food hall can provide a focus for the centre and extend activity beyond daytime shopping.
- ⑤ Opportunity to increase footfall and improve accessibility between key landmarks, such as Chapel Tower and St Mary's Church, enhancing permeability.
- ⑥ There is an opportunity to enhance the Stafford Conservation Area.
- ⑦ Opportunity to create a sequence of new public realm areas within the town, which link to existing squares and greenspaces.

4. The Development Framework

The Development Framework has been prepared to guide the future regeneration for the north of the Town Centre. It provides design and development principles to guide development on the key regeneration sites outlined opposite.

The Development Framework provides guidance to promote sustainable growth and revitalisation within the Regeneration Area.

The vision is to create a vibrant, safe, inclusive, and sustainable Town Centre community. The core urban design principles are retained and refined to reflect Stafford's evolving needs.

The document provides both:

- **Strategic design principles** that should guide all development within the Regeneration Area.
- **Site specific parameters** for the individual sites that can help guide massing, heights and quantum.





Strategic Framework Principles

In delivering the vision for Stafford it is essential that all development demonstrates that it meets the Strategic Framework Principles to improve the quality of buildings and spaces within the Regeneration Area.

The following strategic framework principles have been identified to help shape the type of quality that future schemes should uphold within Stafford, anchoring development in local character, heritage and needs within the Regeneration Area.

Strategic Framework Principles include:

- **Creating a thriving Town Centre with a distinct character** - creating a strong sense of place that knits the area back together through permeable, active routes.
- **Creating diversity through a vibrant mix of uses** - by providing a complementary mix of uses to build on the recent successes within Stafford, such as Riverside.
- **Creating a connected and legible public realm** - through the creation of welcoming routes that prioritise people, reinforce identity, and create a resilient Town Centre.
- **Encourage a heritage-led design response** - drawing on Stafford's heritage to create an attractive and visually interesting focal point for residents of the town and the surrounding area.
- **Safeguard natural resources and sustainability** - protecting water, energy, and biodiversity through sustainable drainage, green infrastructure, efficient materials, and climate-resilient design.

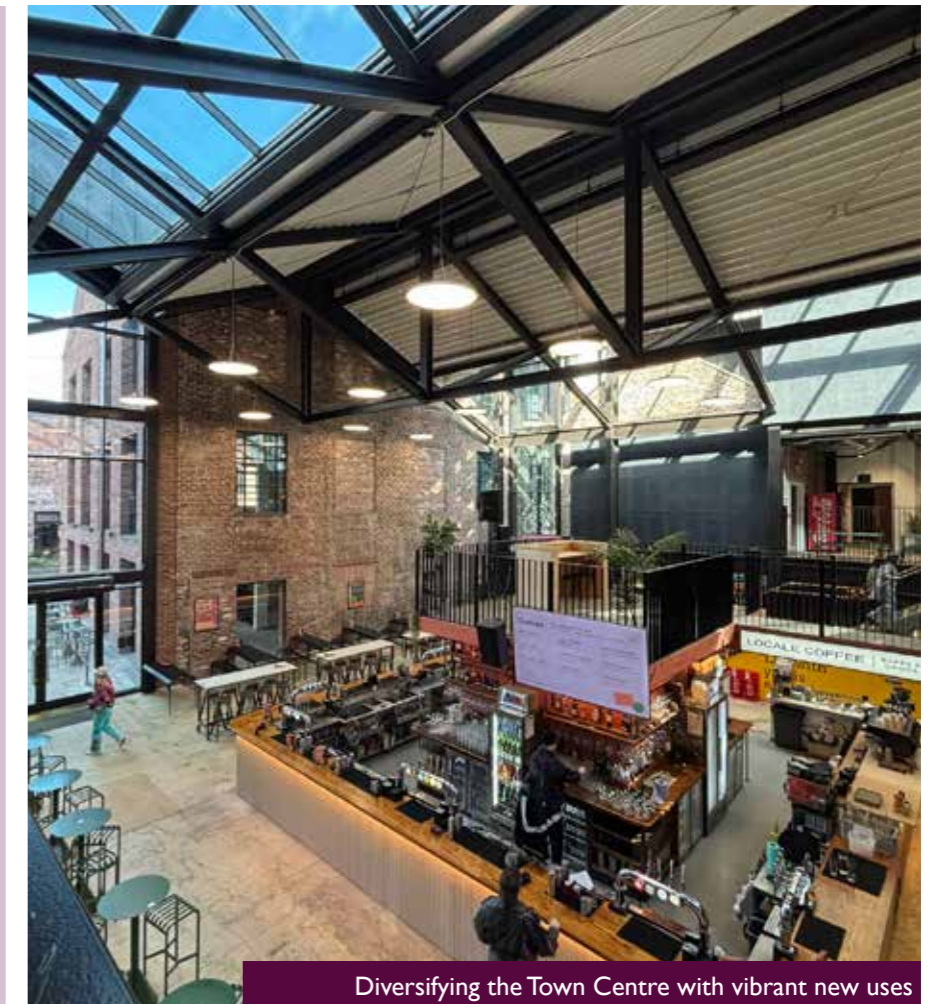
Creating a thriving Town Centre with a distinct character

It is important that at the heart of all development proposals within the Regeneration Area, a strong sense of place is developed to enhance the existing Town Centre.

Proposed interventions will bring forward a range of uses, promote a finer grain of built form and create streets and spaces that are fronted by high quality development.

The overarching aim for development within the area is to promote design excellence and develop a sense of place, with a clear character through development that:

- Reinforces Stafford's identity as a County Town, through new uses, distinctive architecture and civic spaces.
- Enhances a sense of place through the design of buildings and responding to the immediate context, heritage and townscape.
- Creates a robust urban form that encloses and fronts streets and spaces across the area. Development sites should include a clear definition between public and private spaces and demonstrate how parking and servicing can be accommodated where appropriate.
- Expands and diversifies public spaces, with improved pedestrian connectivity through a linked sequence of green and civic spaces, improving the permeability to existing public and green spaces, such as the Market Square and St Mary's Church.
- Ensures a high quality public realm to seamlessly guide people through the area and connect to adjoining locations within the town.



Diversifying the Town Centre with vibrant new uses

Creating diversity through a vibrant mix of uses

Attracting and accommodating a viable and robust mix of uses will be important in ensuring the future success of the Regeneration Area.

Successful regeneration within the town, such as Riverside, has drawn footfall away from the traditional centre. The acquisition of large sites provides the opportunity to create a complementary mix of uses within the northern Town Centre to ensure it is well-used and help attract people to live, work and play in the same area.

The Development Framework promotes a mix of uses to complement the existing retail function.

The Framework promotes a flexible range of uses, to diversify the Town Centre, including:

- A new Market Hall, including retail and food and drink.
- New homes, including buy-to-let, affordable, senior living and open market homes for Stafford.
- Space for commercial, retail, business and service uses, for a variety of operators.
- Space for educational uses and expansion of the NSCG College.

A range of unit sizes and uses will be encouraged to strengthen footfall and extend activity beyond daytime shopping, fostering a vibrant town centre environment.

Ground floors of buildings should have active frontages, incorporating uses that animate the street.



Active ground floors and a variety of uses will promote diversity

A Connected, Legible Public Realm

The Framework promotes development that enhances existing views and vistas so that the Regeneration Area is legible, permeable and easy to move around. This will contribute to improving the general accessibility of the Town Centre.

The ability to see important routes and landmarks is integral to finding your way around and helps contribute to making a place feel safe. Places where the urban form and layout make them easy to understand often function well and makes them pleasant places to work and visit.

A connected and legible public realm in Stafford should knit together heritage, civic spaces, and green assets with clear, welcoming routes that prioritise people, reinforce identity, and create a resilient Town Centre.

The Framework promotes the following:

- Key civic and heritage buildings, such as St Mary's Church and Chapel Tower should be visible along routes, aiding navigation and reinforcing character.
- Create and maintain clear, direct links between the Regeneration Area and existing civic spaces ensuring easy movement across the Town Centre.
- Reinforce Stafford's historic character by using locally appropriate materials, clear signage, public art and lighting that reflect Stafford's identity as a County Town.
- New public realm, greenspaces and streets should be designed to reinforce civic life able to host markets, festivals, and cultural events, reinforcing civic life.
- Use consistent paving, lighting, and street furniture to guide movement and reinforce identity and make spaces welcoming.



Encouraging a heritage-led design response

Making beautiful, sustainable places to live and work also means creating places that feel at home with their surroundings, while also pushing the boundaries of design.

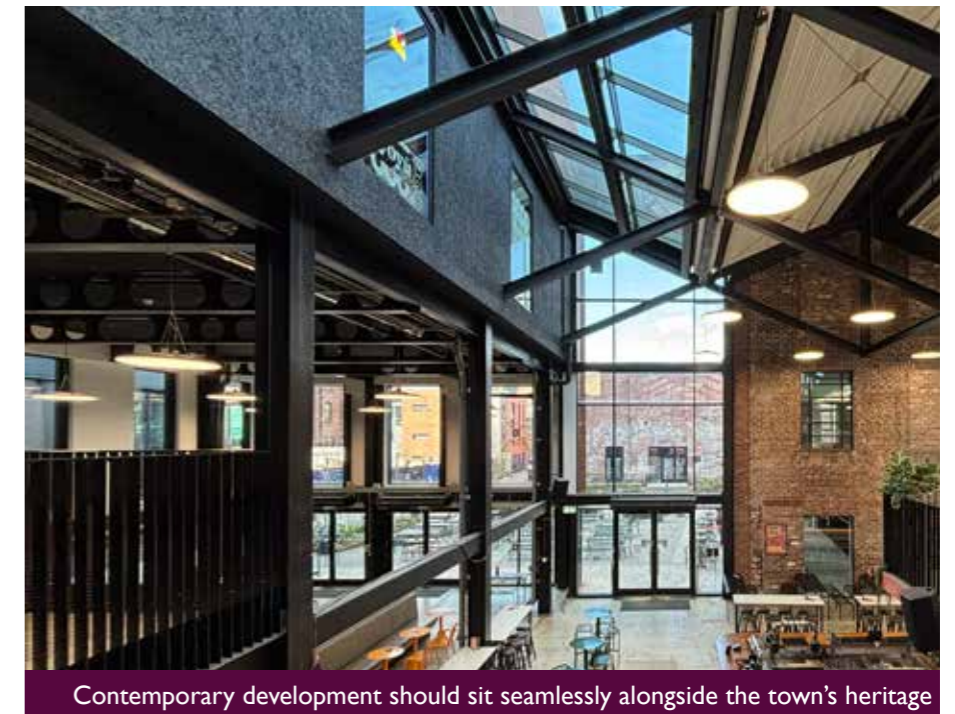
Stafford Town Centre has a rich history with an abundance of heritage assets demonstrating the town's evolution.

One of Stafford's primary strengths is drawing on this heritage to create an attractive and visually interesting focal point for residents of the town and the surrounding area.

Buildings and public spaces should be designed to the highest standards, with thoughtful detailing and a clear response to Stafford's historic character.

Development in Stafford should promote a heritage-led design response and ensure:

- New development should complement the existing townscape, Conservation Area and Listed Buildings. Development should be appropriate to the scale and nature of their immediate surroundings, respecting heritage assets while introducing quality built form.
- Human-scale frontages and avoid overbearing massing that detracts from heritage assets.
- Sightlines to landmarks such as St Mary's Church, Chapel Tower and Market Square are framed appropriately and protected.
- New public realm areas reinforce historic identity and explore the inclusion of heritage trails, plaques, and public art to celebrate Stafford's history and improve legibility.
- Resilient, adaptable design that stands the test of time, supporting Stafford's identity and economic vitality.



Contemporary development should sit seamlessly alongside the town's heritage

Natural Resources

Stafford Borough Council have declared a Climate Emergency and new development on prominent sites has an important role to play in changing attitudes towards how we care for the environment and minimise our footprint on the planet.

The Development Framework is fully supportive of the Council's environmental sustainability targets and supports this through its guidance.

Development should prevent harm to the environment and mitigate any negative impacts in line with relevant planning policies, including:

- Design which achieves the highest practicable energy efficiency, uses low-embodied carbon building materials and minimises water demand on any deliverable scheme.
- At least a 10% measurable net gain in biodiversity is required in line with policy.
- Integrating shading, sustainable drainage, and natural features to future-proof spaces.
- Using robust, low-maintenance finishes that age well and reduce long-term costs.



5. Development Areas

The Development Framework proposals each seek to contribute to the area’s overarching vision over coming years in becoming vibrant, resilient and attractive.

The Framework sets out to address the following key issues for the area:

- Establishing a **strong character and identity by creating a robust, legible and flexible built form.**
- Creating an **attractive public realm that encourages people to visit and dwell.**
- Attract and accommodate a **viable mix of uses.**
- Enhance and improve **sustainable movement through the area.**

Development Matrix

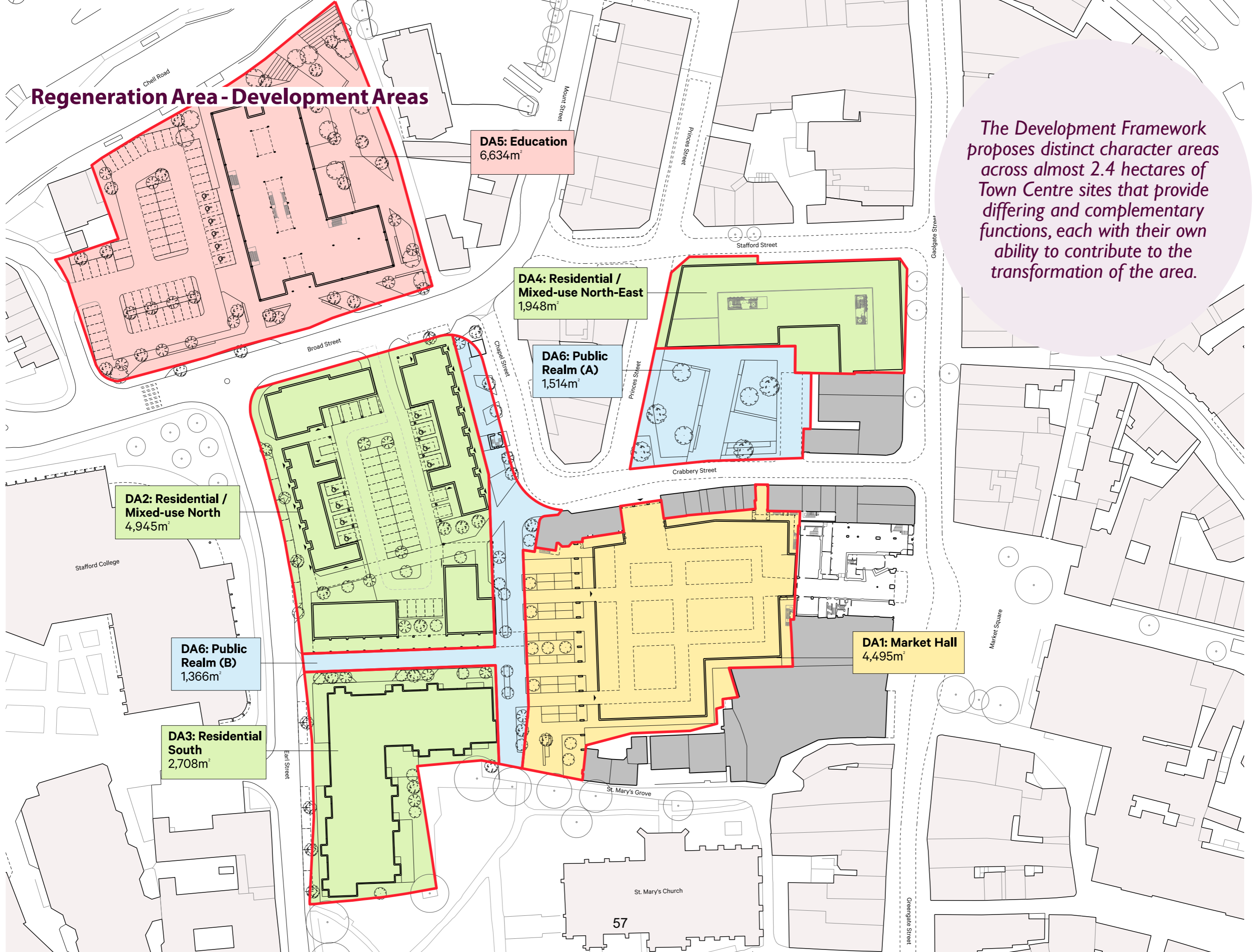
Site name	Site area (m ²)	Site area (ft ²)
DA1: Market	4,495	48,384
DA2: Residential / Mixed-Use North	4,945	53,228
DA5: Education	6,634	71,408
DA3: Residential South	2,708	29,149
DA4: Residential/Mixed-Use North-East	1,948	20,968
DA6: Public Realm	2,880	31,000
Totals	23,610	254,136

Building name	Ground floor GIA (m ²)	First floor GIA (m ²)	Second floor GIA (m ²)	Third floor GIA (m ²)	Fourth floor GIA (m ²)	Fifth floor GIA (m ²)	Building GIA (m ²)	Building GIA (ft ²)	No. Dwellings
Market	2,594.00	-	-	-	-	-	2,594.00	27,921.58	-
Resi Block 1 (North)	294.00	389.00	389.00	389.00	270.00	-	1,731.00	18,632.33	25
Resi Block 2 (East)	417.00	626.00	626.00	626.00	-	-	2,295.00		25
Resi Block 3 (South East)	275.00	345.00	345.00	345.00	-	-	1,310.00		13
Resi Block 3 (GF Commercial)	208.00	-	-	-	-	-	208.00		
Resi Block 4 (South West)	222.00	312.00	312.00	312.00	-	-	1,158.00		14
Resi Block 5 (West)	292.00	548.00	548.00	-	-	-	1,388.00		16
College	1,522.00	1,522.00	1,522.00	1,522.00	-	-	6,088.00	65,530.69	-
Residential Building	1,493.00	1,493.00	1,493.00	-	-	-	4,479.00	48,211.55	47
Residential Building	1,075.00	1,520.00	1,520.00	1,520.00	-	-	5,635.00	60,654.64	60
Resi (GF Commercial)	445.00	-	-	-	-	-	445.00	4,789.94	-
	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	-
Totals							27,331.00	225,740.73	200

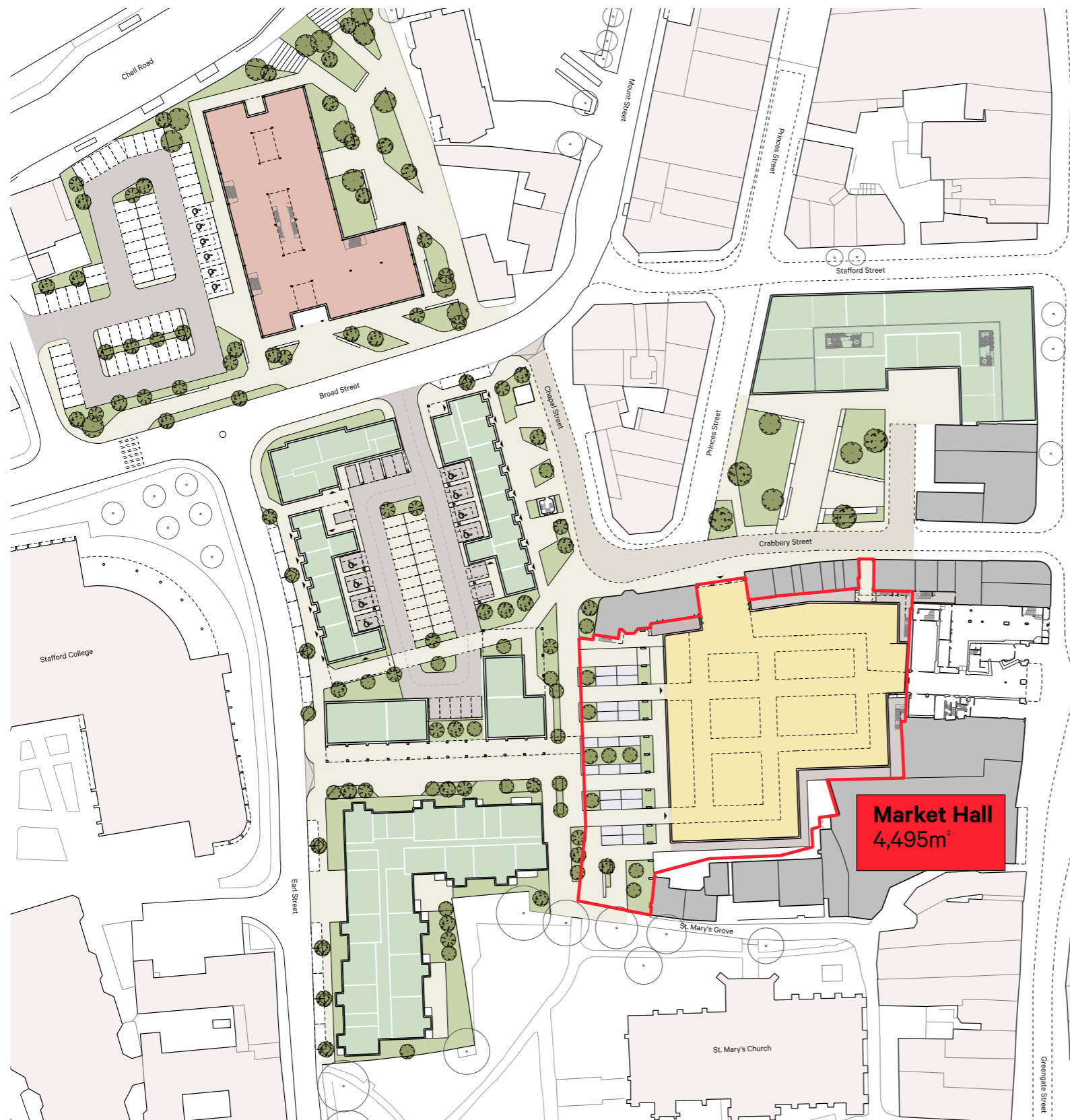
The schedules above describe the site areas at the current stage of design. The design is subject to Statutory approvals and specialist design input. Any decision to be made on the basis of these numbers, such as project viability, pre-letting, lease agreements or the like, should include due allowance for the changes inherent in the design development and building processes.

Regeneration Area - Development Areas

The Development Framework proposes distinct character areas across almost 2.4 hectares of Town Centre sites that provide differing and complementary functions, each with their own ability to contribute to the transformation of the area.



DA I: Market Hall



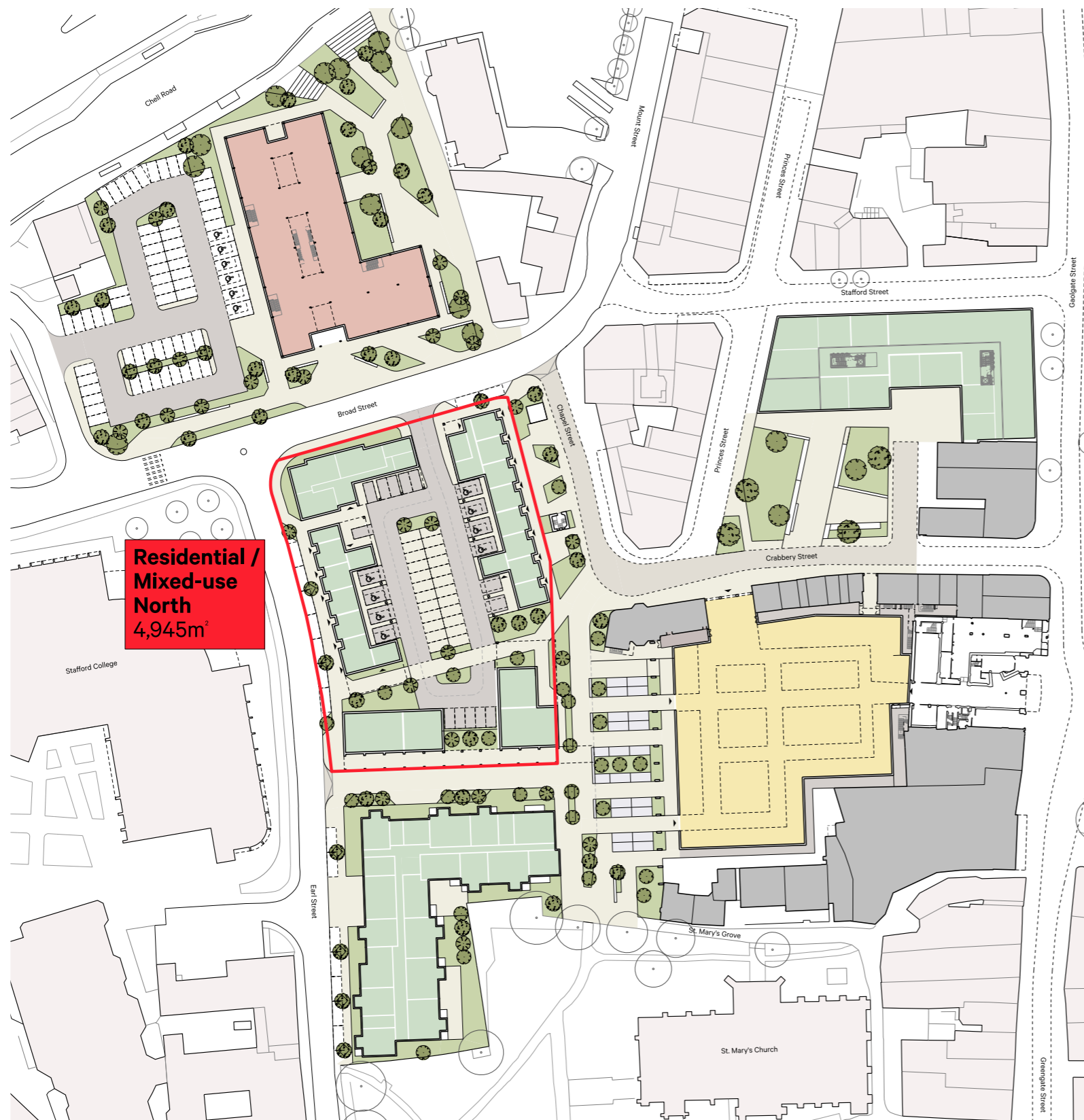
The former Guildhall Shopping Centre offers a significant redevelopment opportunity within the Town Centre. With its central location and considerable footprint, this site is perfectly positioned for a bold mixed-use scheme.

A new market hall will be situated in the heart of the Town Centre, complementing the existing retail offer to attract footfall, support businesses and acting as a focal point in the town centre.

Site Name	Market Hall
Site Area	0.45ha
Uses	Market Hall, Food, Retail.
Indicative Quantum	2,595sqm GIA.
Massing and Height	Up to two / three storeys - respect the three-storey building line typical of Stafford's Town Centre. Site appropriate for large footprint building, sensitively located behind existing built form.
Site Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate Stafford's heritage assets, Listed Buildings and Conservation Area setting into design, creating a new setting to St Mary's Church. • Ensure clear sight lines and multiple entrances to allow strong pedestrian connections to surrounding streets, including Crabbery Street and Market Square. • Create a new green connection between St Mary's Grove and Chapel Street and the landmarks of St Mary's Church and the Chapel Tower to connect previously severed links and contribute to the wider sequence of green spaces within the Town Centre. • Include shared seating, cultural programming, and event space to foster social interaction. • Design with flexibility to adapt to changing retail and leisure trends over time.



DA2: Residential / Mixed-Use North



Site Name	Residential / Mixed-Use North
Site Area	0.49ha
Uses	Residential - mix of dwelling types. Active ground floor. uses.
Indicative Quantum	8,090 sqm GIA residential development. 93 Units. 208 sqm GIA commercial, business, service use.
Massing and Height	Up to four storeys, Potential opportunity up to five storeys in appropriate locations.
Site Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development should provide a balanced mix of apartments and townhouses, catering to diverse households and age groups, including senior living and affordable homes. • The layout of any residential development should incorporate framed views and sight lines to celebrate existing high quality architecture and heritage assets, rather than obscure it. • Buildings should be set back to reduce impact along Earl Street to avoid a tunnelling effect to the street. The design should incorporate human-scale detailing and facades should be articulated to provide interest in the street scene. • Buildings should be set back on Chapel Street to celebrate landmarks, such as Chapel Tower and create space for public realm, planting and green space incorporated into the design to enhance its setting. • Homes should front onto the street, with active ground floors with a mix of uses, reinforcing the Town Centre's function and urban grain. • The design should encourage permeability and legibility, with clear pedestrian routes and courtyards that connect to the wider Town Centre and landmark's such as St Mary's Church. • Homes should have access to amenity space and communal gardens or shared courtyards should be provided within apartments to encourage social interaction and soften the built form. • Rooflines and heights must be carefully considered and designed, with step-backs or varied profiles to reduce visual impact.

The northern residential / mixed-use area is proposed on Chapel Street, south of Broad Street, on the former market site. Designed with a fine-grain layout, it will enhance the setting of nearby heritage assets and provide a mix of townhouses and apartments, with potential for other uses to create activity at ground floor.

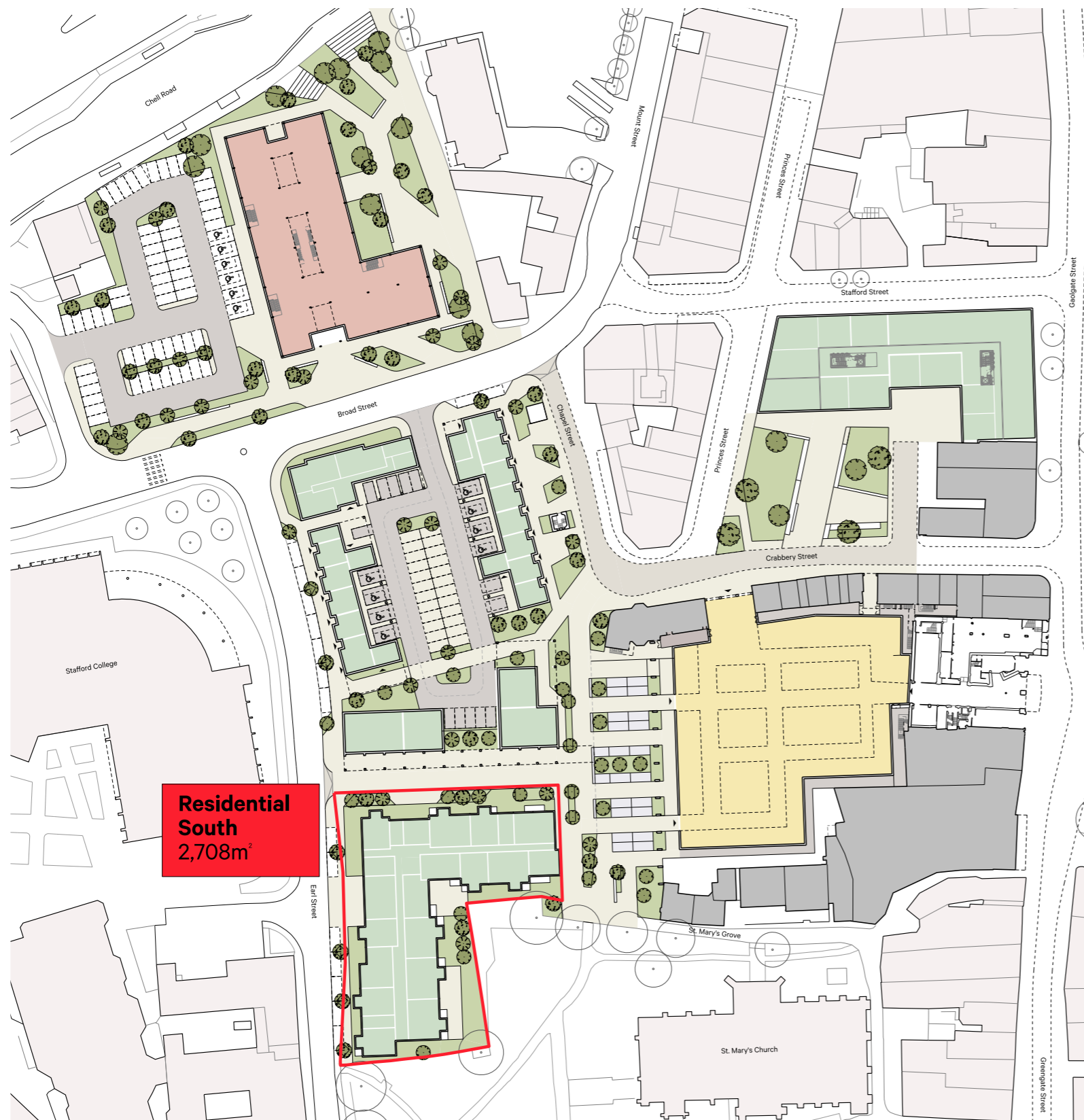
Introducing homes into Stafford Town Centre will re-energise the area, diversify its offer, and support long-term resilience.

Town Centre living sustains local shops, cafés, and leisure venues beyond retail hours, fostering a vibrant evening economy.



A finer grain of development helps better reveal existing heritage assets

DA3: Residential South



Site Name	Residential South
Site Area	0.27ha
Uses	Residential - mix of sizes. Terraced housing and apartments.
Indicative Quantum	4479 sqm GIA. 47 Units.
Massing and Height	Up to three storey development, arranged to be set back from St Mary's Church.
Site Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development should provide a balanced mix of units, catering to diverse households and age groups, including senior living and affordable homes. • Landscape and building design should enhance the church's setting, with buildings set back to reduce impact and planting and green space incorporated into the design to enhance its setting. • Homes must front onto the street, and civic square, creating active façades and reinforcing the Town Centre's urban grain. • Designs should encourage permeability and legibility, with clear pedestrian routes and courtyards that connect to the wider Town Centre and new public realm spaces created. • Homes should have access to amenity space and communal gardens or shared courtyards should be provided within apartments to encourage social interaction and soften the built form. • Design should incorporate human scale detailing to enrich the streetscape and facades should be articulated to provide interest in the street scene. • Rooflines and heights must be carefully considered and designed, with step-backs or varied profiles to reduce visual impact.

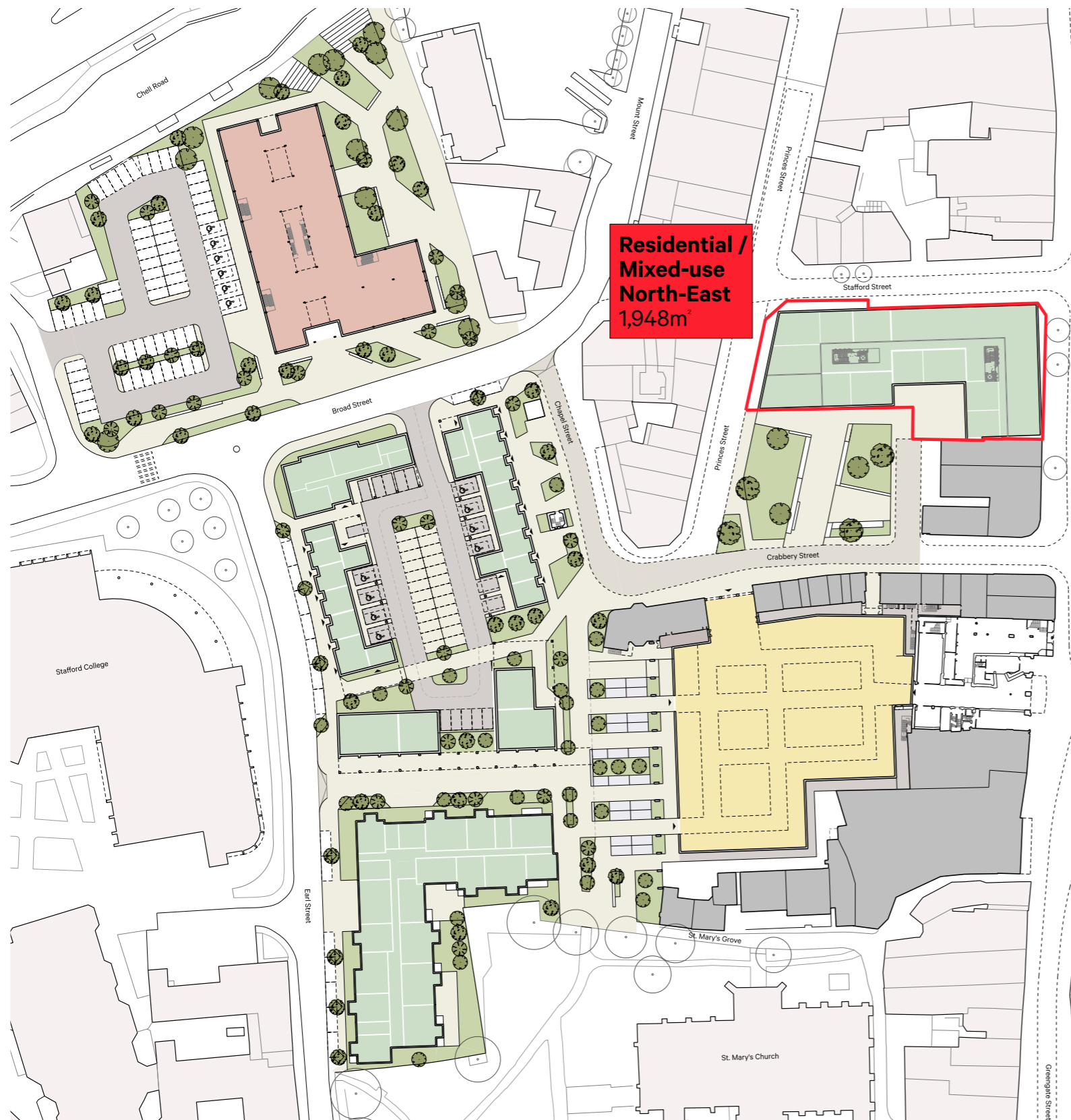
The southern residential area is located to the west of St. Mary's Church on the southern area of the former Guildhall Shopping Centre and car park. The new homes will provide an improved setting to the church and create front doors along Earl Street enlivening facades on a key town centre street.

This site also promotes Town Centre living by placing residents close to transport and services, the scheme reduces car dependency, strengthens sustainability, and promotes wellbeing.



Homes and uses should create active frontages

DA4: Residential / Mixed-Use North-East

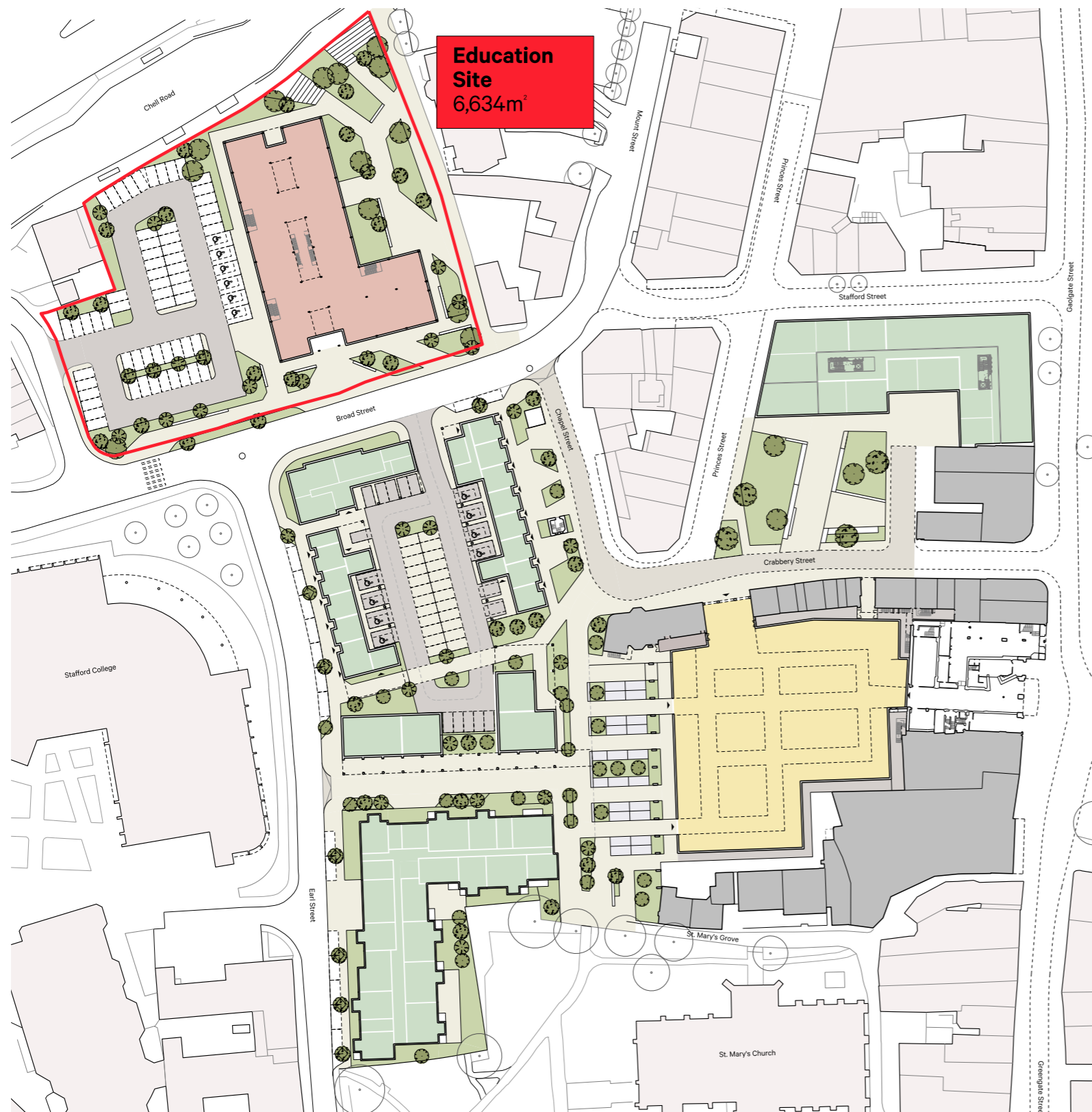


The former Co-op building on Gaolgate Street has been vacant for over ten years and offers a high-profile development opportunity at a key gateway into Stafford's northern Town Centre.

The Development Framework proposes the site is redeveloped as a mixed-use within a new public realm to help reinforce Stafford's heritage assets, animate civic spaces, prioritise sustainable movement, and create a lively, resilient Town Centre.

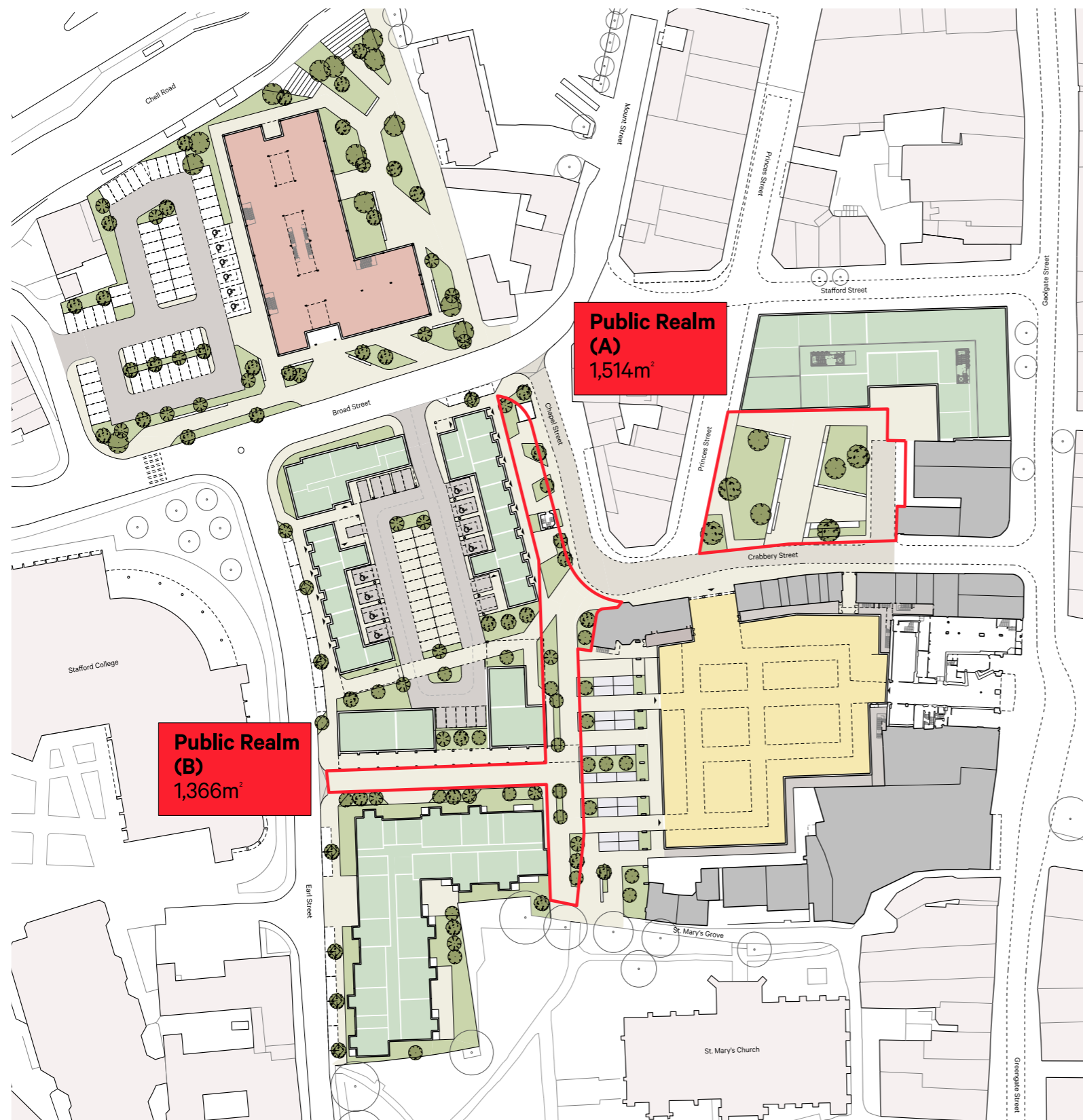
Site Name	Residential / Mixed-Use North-East
Site Area	0.19ha
Uses	Mixed-use - Residential, Commercial, Business and Service.
Indicative Quantum	5635 sqm GIA Residential. 60 units. 445 sqm GIA Business, Commercial, Service Use.
Massing and Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to four storeys. Residential uses above, with active ground floor uses fronting public space.
Site Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development should provide a balanced mix of units, catering to diverse households and age groups, including senior living and affordable homes. New buildings should complement Stafford's historic fabric, with new open space allowing an improved setting to buildings on Crabbery Street. Maintain the rhythm of three-storey frontages typical of Stafford, with taller elements used sparingly as landmarks. Development of up to four storeys may be appropriate, particularly fronting Stafford Street. Buildings should frame streets and new public space. Ground floors should be animated with retail, cafés, and business uses that spill into the public realm and create activity. Development should encourage smaller unit sizes to support independent businesses and variety.

DA5: Educational Site



Site Name	Educational Site
Site Area	0.66 ha
Suitable Uses	Education.
Indicative Quantum	6088 sqm.
Massing and Height	Site suitable for a larger footprint / landmark building of up to four storeys.
Site Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce the college as a landmark within the Town Centre, strengthening Stafford's role as a county town and hub for learning. • Integrate public realm and green spaces into wider sequence of green space within the Town Centre from the site, leading to St Mary's Church. • Ensure new buildings complement the setting of the Conservation Area and historic fabric, using sympathetic materials and scale. • Create flexible spaces that can evolve with changing needs and where feasible, incorporate shared facilities that benefit both students and residents. • Explore the opportunity to animate ground floors with cafés, exhibition spaces, and public-facing facilities to engage the wider community and create courtyards, squares and green areas that invite public use and foster interaction. • Maintain building heights and proportions that respect the Town Centre's character, with focal elements used sparingly.

DA6: Public Realm Enhancements



Public realm enhancements and new open spaces are proposed throughout the Development Framework Area to provide an improved setting for heritage assets and to create attractive and successful outdoor areas, providing a variety of spaces that both respond to the immediate context and encourage social interaction.

Site Name	Public Realm Enhancements
Site Area	0.3ha
Uses	Public Realm - variety of spaces.
Site Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a north-south green link between the education site to St Mary's Church, as part of a wider sequence of public realm areas that improve permeability between key buildings, streets and squares. • Ensure enhancements complement the Conservation Area, Listed Buildings, and historic street patterns. • Use high-quality, locally appropriate materials (stone, brick, timber) to reinforce the county town's identity. • Improve connections to civic areas such as Market Square as focal points for community life. • Introduce trees, planting and pocket parks to soften hard landscapes and improve biodiversity. • Design spaces that can evolve with changing community needs and retail trends and adaptable areas for markets, festivals, and civic events. • Use robust, low-maintenance finishes that age well and reduce long-term costs. • Incorporate lighting, seating, and safe routes to support activity beyond retail hours.



Streets and spaces will be improved throughout the area



St Mary's Church

Market Square

Chapel Tower

Trinity Church



6. Next Steps

This Development Strategy identifies a flexible solution for the Regeneration Area to foster transformational change and revitalised growth within the northern Town Centre.

It is recognised that implementing the development proposed will be challenging but the Development Framework and this design strategy identify that it can be delivered.

The Council have committed funds to deliver and unlock this change. The investment strategy for the next three years will focus on:

- De-risking sites;
- Improving the infrastructure and environment of the area;
- Site acquisition; and
- Procurement of private sector developers.

Private sector investment is vital to the success of the Town Centre. The procurement of private sector developer/s will be a major milestone in realising the vision for the area.

The Council will work with architects and developers to develop detailed design and market solutions guided by the design principles within this Framework.







For further information, please contact:

DEAN PIPER
Head of Economic Development and Planning
deanpiper@cannockchasedc.gov.uk

Priority Delivery Plan for 2025-26

Priority 1 - Prosperous Economy

Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 4

				N/A	Total Number of Projects
Action completed	Work on target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	Action not yet due	
7	3	7	1	1	19

Summary of Successes as at Quarter 4
<p>Stafford Town Centre Transformation; completion of main demolition works to the former Guildhall and Co-op and creation of a draft Development Framework, to be presented to Cabinet on 9 April 2026.</p> <p>Stafford Station Gateway; progression of Local Regeneration Funded activities including ground investigation works and surveys relating to Staffordshire County Council owned land.</p> <p>Council has responded to the National Planning Policy Framework consultation and made good progress with its evidence base for the new Local Plan.</p> <p>UKSPF; although there has been a slight delay with the delivery of two projects; the overall programme is on track to achieve full spend and delivery of outputs.</p>

Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 4

Stafford Station Gateway; delays in establishing formal governance arrangements and acquiring third party land.






S106 review; review deferred due to capacity issues.




Development Management; slower than anticipated progress with implementing the agreed Improvement Plan. Project end date has been re-profiled.





Local Plan; delay in publishing timetable due to new Local Plan regulations only being published by Government on 25 March 2026.

Priority 1 - Prosperous Economy

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
Delivery of regeneration schemes	Stafford Town Centre Transformation						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete work on Station Approach project 	X				Work on site completed in May 2025. Initial feedback on the improvements has been positive.	★
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete demolition works to Guildhall shopping centre and former Co-operative department store 			X		Main demolition works completed Q3 2025	★
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree preferred development delivery option for cleared development sites 			X		Programme amended to reflect the additional land acquisitions during the summer. Reported to Cabinet 9 April 2026	★
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop wider masterplan/development framework for Stafford town centre 				X	This is a joint commission with Staffordshire County Council and a draft masterplan is due to be completed April 2026 and presented to Cabinet in the summer.	▲
	Stafford Station Gateway						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence stakeholder engagement on delivery of the strategic vision for the site 		X				Initial Officer Board meeting held in November 2025 to agree priorities following the funding updates announced in September 2025. Full Board meeting delayed as SBC role is determined by land ownership which is to be confirmed	▲

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete land acquisition 		X			Legal process initiated following Cabinet approval, timescales of acquisition are not wholly in SBC control	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of Levelling Up Funded activities 				X	Spend within 2025/6 for this programme, now renamed as the Local Regeneration Fund, relates wholly to SCC activity and has been completed to date as planned	
Economic Growth Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and re-draft Economic Growth Strategy for consultation 				X	This was due to commence during Q4 but due to the changes within the Town Centre Transformation programme this has moved to Q1 2026/7	
Promotion of the Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Stafford town centre development prospectus at UKREiiF 2025 	X				Investment Prospectus produced and launched at UKREiiF development event in Leeds, May 2025 with significant interest generated in the regeneration of Stafford town centre.	
Pipeline of projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop pipeline of future economic development and regeneration projects 				X	This is aligned with the refresh of the Economic Growth Strategy. This was due to commence during Q4 but due to the changes within the Town Centre Transformation programme this has more to Q1 2026/7	

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree programme of projects for UKSPF for 2025/26 	X				The programme was agreed with the Leader in advance of submitting to Government in May 2025. Full details are being reported to Cabinet in July 2025.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete delivery of UKSPF programme for 2025/6 				X	The deadline for spending the UKSPF allocation has been extended until 30 September 2026. This means that for two projects that encountered unexpected issues during delivery that would otherwise have lost a small remaining element of funding can now be completed - this is scheduled for Q1 2026/7.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete review of section 106 policy and allocations 				X	<p>Review of S106 policy and allocations project delivery to be reconsidered in 2026-2027 due to current lack of capacity in finance team to support this workstream due to competing priorities.</p> <p>With LGR and other competing priorities, it is proposed to deprioritise this action and remove it from the PDP for 26/27.</p>	





Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme and Project Allocations for section 106 funding through evidence for Cannock Chase SAC and Leisure 				X	Projects completed on schedule for 2025-2026 based on resources available and external partners	
Delivery of planning services to enable economic growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish revised Local Development Scheme 				X	New Regulations on plan-making came into effect on 25 March 2026 with new Local Plan timetable published Q1 of 2026/2027	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) assessment and New Local Plan implications 			X		NPPF consultation published 16 December 2025, later than expected so delayed completion of this action. Council response to NPPF submitted 5 March 2026 Implications assessed on the New Local Plan process related to Regulations published 25 March 2026	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare New Local Plan and updated evidence base 				X	Current projects in Local Plan programme on track based on resources available and external consultants	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement improvement plan for Development Management 			X		The Improvement Plan is currently being implemented but the improvements are taking a longer time frame to achieve.	N/A

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
						<p>The service continues to address a large backlog of applications and is under further pressure from speculative applications.</p> <p>In December 2025, Leadership Team agreed to reprofile delivery of the improvement plan to June 2026. LT also agreed to additional short term agency cover being brought in to deal with the current caseloads and release capacity to support implementation of the improvement plan.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full introduction of a chargeable pre-application service 		X			Pre-application service introduced.	★

Priority Delivery Plan for 2025-26

Priority 3 - extract re Climate Change for Economic Development Scrutiny Committee

Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 4



				N/A	Total Number of Projects
Action completed	Work on target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	Action not yet due	
1	1				2

Summary of Successes as at Quarter 4

Publication of a BNG guidance note on the Council's website.





Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 4

None

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update e	Symbol
Local Plan with positive climate change policies	Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation study				X	Consultants have been appointed to undertake the study and work is underway. On track to be completed by Q3.	
Biodiversity in new developments	Implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain in accordance with statutory requirements	X				A BNG guidance note has been produced and has been published on the Council's website.	

Summary of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) - 2025/26

KPIs for Priority 1 - Prosperous Economy

Symbol	Description	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	End of Year
	Performance exceeds target	1	2	3	4	3
	Performance on target	1				
	Performance < 5% below target		1			1
	Performance > 5% below target		1	1		
N/A	Reported Annually / Not Applicable	5	3	3	3	3
	TOTAL	7	7	7	7	7

Priority 1 - Prosperous Economy

Indicator	Year End 24/25	Target 25/26	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 25/26	Rating Symbol	Comments
Regeneration									
Employment rate	79.8%	80%					N/A	N/A	Annual figure released by ONS. % relates to working age population (16-64) economically active i.e. in work or training. Next data release from ONS 21 July 2026, therefore the 25/26 year-end figure will be reported in Q2.
Town centre vacancy rate	N/A	N/A					N/A	N/A	Data not available; indicator to be removed from the KPI reporting.
Number of housing completions	612	749						N/A	Data not available until June 2026 Annual figure at year end (1 April 25 to 31 March 26)

Indicator	Year End 24/25	Target 25/26	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 25/26	Rating Symbol	Comments
Planning Services									
Major Planning Applications determined within time	93.3%	60%	60%	50%	80%	76%	66.5%	★	
Non-major Planning Applications determined within time	85.3%	70%	78.6%	67.9%	46.7%	76%	67.35	▲	As part of Improvement Plan, operational decision to prioritise the issuing of decisions to reduce backlog over securing an extension of time.
Major Planning Applications overturned at appeals as percentage of no. applications determined	Forecast < 10%	< 10%	1.4%	2.3%	1.49%	2.56%	1.94%	★	
Non-major Planning Applications overturned at appeals as percentage of no. applications determined	Forecast < 10%	< 10%	1.5%	1.1%	1.68%	1.11%	1.35%	★	

Agenda Item 7(f)**Work Programme - Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee**

Committee: Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny

Date of Meeting: 2 July 2026

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

Portfolio: Economic Development and Planning Portfolio

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme.

2 Recommendation

2.1 That the report be noted.

3 Key Issues

3.1 The first stage in achieving a Member-led Overview and Scrutiny process is to develop a Work Programme for the Members of the Committee to own.

3.2 Accordingly, an up-to-date copy of the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme is provided for Members to consider or amend as appropriate.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

4.1 This report is most closely associated with the following Corporate Business Objective 1:-

To deliver sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 Members will recall that one of the fundamental philosophies behind the creation of Overview and Scrutiny is that the process should be Member-led and the first stage in achieving this is to develop a Work Programme that is:-
- Owned by all Members of the Scrutiny Committee
 - Flexible to allow the Committee to react to urgent items
 - Contain aspects of both Overview and Scrutiny
- 5.2 Therefore, at each scheduled meeting of the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee, an up-to-date copy of the Work Programme will be provided for Members to consider or amend as appropriate.
- 5.3 The Work Programme includes provision for the Committee to scrutinise appropriate items delivered through the Council's Service Delivery Plan up to twelve months in advance, whilst maintaining the flexibility to respond to any issues that may arise.
- 5.4 Accordingly, attached at **APPENDIX** is the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee's current Work Programme to consider or amend as appropriate.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

None

6.2 Legal

None

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Risk Management

None

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

The Borough Council considers the effect of its actions on all sections and has addressed all of the following Equality Strands in the production of this report, as appropriate:-

Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

6.6 Health

None

6.7 Climate Change

None

7 Appendices

Appendix: Work Programme

8 Previous Consideration

None

9 Background Papers

File available in Law and Governance

Contact Officer: Jackie Allen

Telephone Number: 01785 619552

Ward Interest: Nil

Report Track: Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee - 2 July 2026 (Only)

Key Decision: N/A

Appendix 1

Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme

Tuesday 6 October 2026 at 6:30pm

Report Deadline: Monday 21 September 2026

Officer Reports:

- Q1 Performance Report**
Head of Economic Development and Planning
- Development Management Progress Review**
Head of Economic Development and Planning
- Stafford Station Gateway**
Head of Economic Development and Planning
- Work Programme**
Head of Law and Governance

Thursday 17 December 2026 at 6:30pm

Report Deadline: Wednesday 2 December 2026

Officer Reports:

- Infrastructure Funding Statement 2026**
Head of Economic Development and Planning
- Q2 Performance Report**
Head of Economic Development and Planning
- Work Programme**
Head of Law and Governance

Tuesday 16 March 2027 at 6:30pm

Report Deadline: Monday 1 March 2027

Officer Reports:

Q3 Performance Report

Head of Economic Development and Planning

Conservation and Heritage Update

Conservation Officer

Work Programme

Head of Law and Governance

Future Items:

Development Strategy / Investment Prospectus

Biodiversity Net Gain

Rural Economy

Review of the Task and Finish Working Group - Evening Economy

Pre-Application Service