

Winsford Development Framework

March 2016



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Winsford Town Centre and Environs: Aerial View

01 // Introduction

1.1 This Winsford Development Framework has been produced for Cheshire West and Chester Council by Nexus Planning with Broadway Malyan. Additional input has been provided by Colliers International to add to the position on the local property market. The Framework is the culmination of the analysis, consultation and appraisal work undertaken in Winsford by the consultant team with the support of Cheshire West and Chester Council and Winsford Town Council.

1.2 In recent years and like many other towns across the country, Winsford has faced new challenges on a number of fronts. The town is having to adapt to the increasing regional mobility of shoppers; the growth of online shopping and the increasing concentration of comparison retail and leisure facilities in a fewer number of larger locations – notably in the North-West in Liverpool, the Trafford Centre and Manchester City Centre.

1.3 Notwithstanding the competitive environment, Winsford has a number of assets and lots of as yet untapped potential.

1.4 The Winsford Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Group have played an active role in the preparation of the Development Framework which has been crucial in ensuring the proposals within the framework deliver on the aspirations of the recently adopted Neighbourhood Plan. It is not the purpose of this Framework to review the Neighbourhood Plan strategy or indeed revisit the basis and recommendations of previous studies but rather to focus existing strategies into a clear delivery strategy based on agreed development and design principles.

1.5 This Framework focuses on central Winsford and particularly the A54 corridor between and including the Verdin Exchange and the Winsford Cross Shopping Centre to the west and the Winsford gyratory and New Road Industrial

1.6 Area to the west along the River Weaver. This area includes Town Park and the old High Street. The approach to housing allocations to the north of New Road are also considered.

1.7 The Development Framework therefore focuses primarily on:

- Producing a Development Framework for central Winsford, which will be a high-level spatial design and development strategy;
- A development framework for key sites, including Winsford Cross Shopping Centre and surrounds, Town Park, the old High Street, the Verdin Buildings, and the New Road industrial area and housing allocations to the north;
- Informing the design and layout of these key sites; and
- Setting out a preferred delivery approach.

1.8 In achieving the above, the Development Framework considers how these recommended actions will help to:

- Improve the overall function of central Winsford particularly around improvements to the connectivity between the town centre and waterfront area;
- Revitalise the town centre and increase footfall and the number of visitors to Winsford;
- Develop a practical toolkit for CWaC and Winsford Town Council as they take forward regeneration proposals; and
- Support jobs and economic growth.

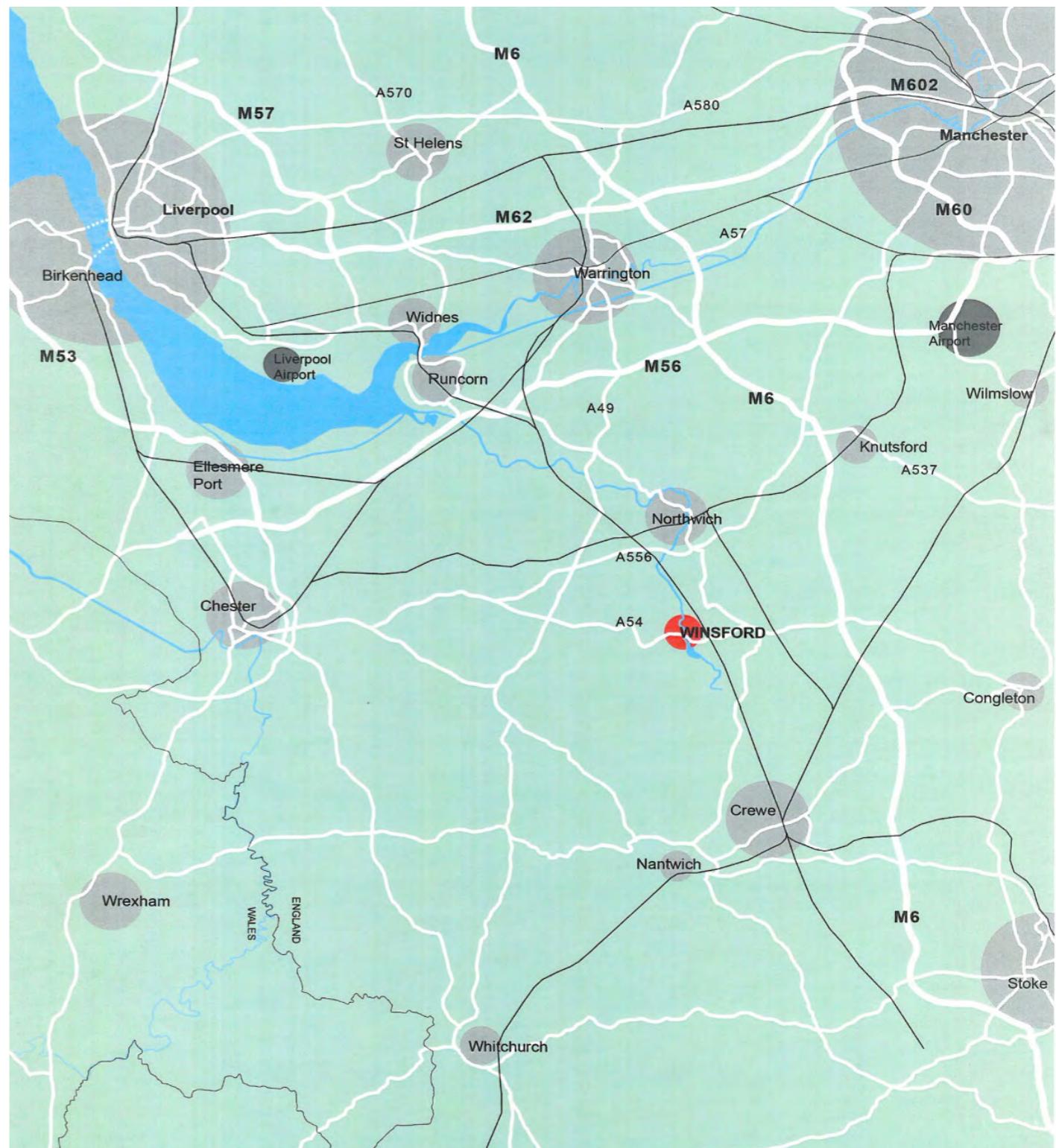


Figure 1: Regional Context

1.8 The remainder of this report comprises the following sections:

- **Section 2 Winsford in Context** – an overview of the study area, location and accessibility, role, history, planning policy, socio-economic profile, land ownership, and market perception.
- **Section 3 Development Framework Zones** – sets out the scope of the Development Framework with reference to a series of zones.
- **Section 4 Development Framework Vision** – sets out the Vision against which the Development Framework should be applied.
- **Section 5 Development Project: Winsford Cross Shopping Centre** – considers the design principles and delivery approach to the project.
- **Section 6 Development Project: Town Park and High Street** – considers a design concept and design principles for the enhancement of these areas.
- **Section 7 Development Project: New Road 'Waterfront' and Whitegate** – sets out the design principles and delivery approach for future development in this area.
- **Section 8 Development Project: Verdin Buildings and land to rear** – considers a design concept and delivery approach for the Verdin buildings and land to rear.
- **Section 9 Delivery Approach** - sets out a series of recommendations that can be taken forward as actions when considering the implementation of the proposal and projects identified in this Development Framework document.
- **Section 10 Conclusions and Recommendations**

Consultation

1.9 It is acknowledged that there has already been extensive consultation undertaken in regards to the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan. It was therefore agreed that the consultation for this study would be focused on the design principles and concepts for projects identified through the baseline work and in agreement with CWaC and Winsford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. The design principles and projects were the subject of public consultation between Monday 26th October and Sunday 22nd November 2015. This consultation was undertaken in parallel to emerging proposal for a transport strategy for the town. A Consultation Statement (Nexus Planning, December 2015) prepared separately details the key findings of this consultation. The outcome of public consultation has been reflected in the recommendations of this report.

Acknowledgement

1.10 Nexus Planning would like to thank the Officers and Members of Winsford Town Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council and the Winsford Neighbourhood Planning Implementation Group, other consultees and the residents of Winsford whose input has been invaluable in preparing this report.

02 // Winsford in Context

2.1 This section of the Development Framework provides an overview of Winsford. In doing so, it draws on a baseline study published in June 2015 (Winsford Development Framework, Baseline Report, Nexus Planning). This study focuses on central Winsford and this is reflected in the scope of this overview.

Overview

2.2 The character of Winsford reflects its history. In the 1800s the settlement expanded around the growth of the salt mining industry centred on the River Weaver. The town then had a further period of significant expansion during the 1960's and 1970's with the development of new, largely public housing areas, community facilities and the Winsford Cross Shopping Centre to accommodate the relocation of residents from areas subject to urban renewal in both Liverpool and Manchester.

2.3 Winsford is a medium sized town in Cheshire West and Chester with a total population of 30,481 (2011 Census) living in around 9,650 households. The town centre itself is outwardly dominated (when viewed from the High Street) by the 1960's shopping mall known as Winsford Cross Shopping Centre together with a number of contemporaneous civic buildings along High Street. More recent retail development, including an Asda food store and a number of larger format retail units, a multi-storey car park as well as Winsford Lifestyle Centre and the Wyvern House council offices are located to the south of and 'behind' the Shopping Centre and serviced from 'The Drumber', a distributor road linking to High Street (A54).

2.4 The main built up area of Winsford is split across the three wards of Swanlow and Dene to the south of the A54, Over and Verdin to the north of the A54 and Wharton to the east. The study area for the Development Framework includes parts of all three wards.

Winsford's Role

2.5 Winsford town centre provides a range of retail and community facilities. In terms of the town centre hierarchy in Cheshire West and Chester as defined by the planning authority, Chester is the sub-regional centre, Northwich is a strategic centre followed by the town centres of Ellesmere Port, Winsford, Frodsham and Neston.

2.6 The retail offer is dominated by the Winsford Cross Shopping Centre, the adjacent Asda foodstore and a number of larger format retail unit located between the A54 High Street and The Drumber. This is also home to the Winsford indoor food market. The old High Street – a remnant of the former 'main street' lies to the north of the A54 dual carriageway and to the east of Winsford Cross Shopping Centre. The old High Street is a secondary retail and commercial area of smaller, domestic scale shop units.

2.7 Winsford also provides other essential services associated with a typical town centre including the Lifestyle Centre, a large multi-purpose venue incorporating leisure, fitness and theatre facilities. There are some public houses around the Winsford gyratory, although the 'evening economy' in central Winsford is limited.

2.8 Central Winsford is well provided for in terms of open and environmental areas including Town Park, the Weaver Parkway and Bottom Flash. The town also benefits from links into the wider mid Cheshire countryside.

2.9 Winsford has a solid base of primary and secondary education. The town is served by 10 primary schools. Winsford Academy was built in 2010, and currently serves 11 – 18 year olds although as of September 2016, the sixth

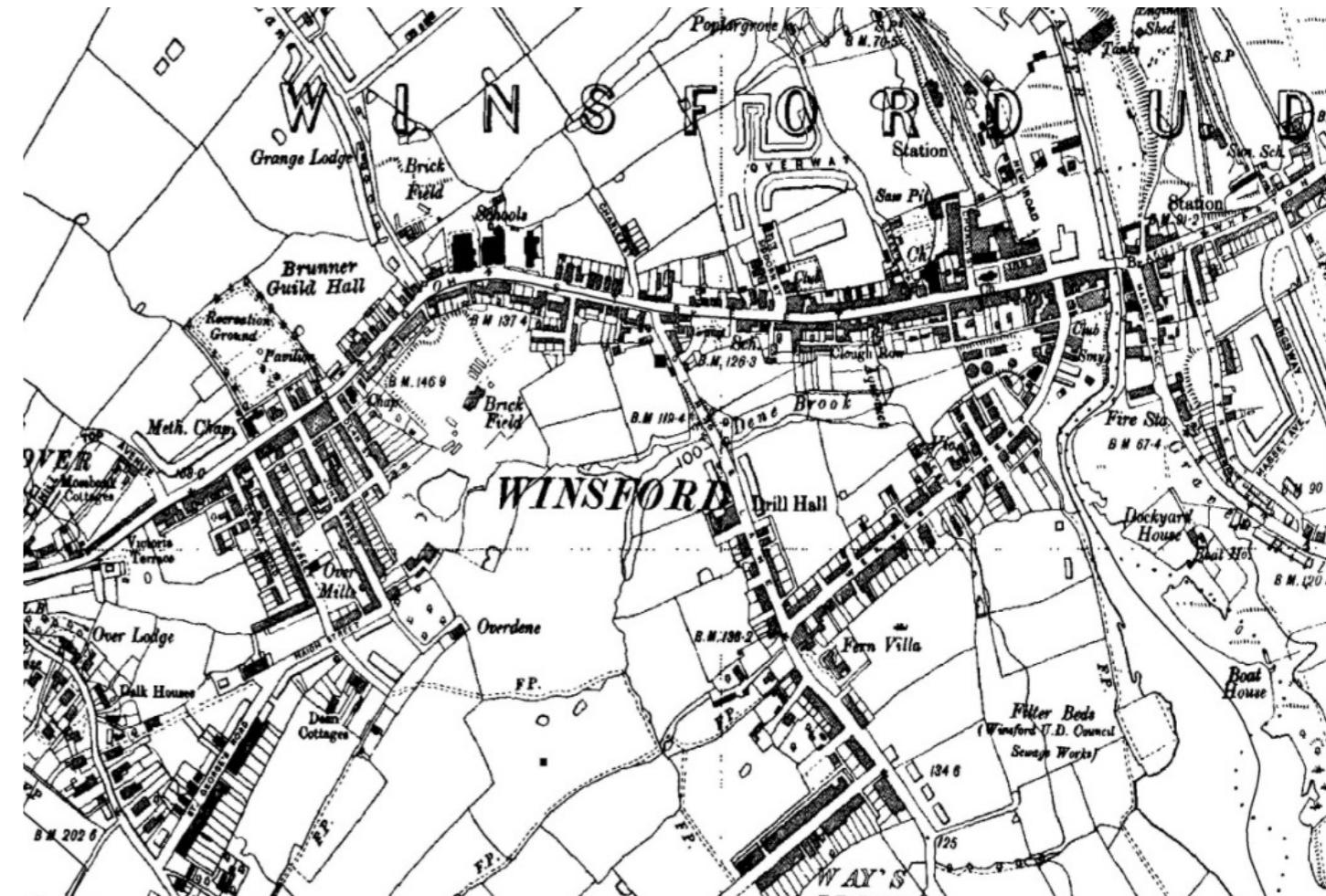


Figure 2 Winsford Town Centre 1919 - 1939 Sourced Cheshire West and Chester Council

form provision will be suspended. In its 2014 report, Ofsted recorded the Academy at Grade 3 'Requires improvement' across all indicators.

2.10 The recently built Mid Cheshire College (Winsford Campus) is situated to the east of the town, near the River Weaver, off Weaver Street.

2.11 Winsford Industrial Estate, to the east of central Winsford, is a key employment location in the Borough with an emphasis on industrial and distribution businesses.

Brief History

2.12 Substantial salt deposits were first exploited in Winsford from the 1830s leading to the development of a major salt industry along the banks of the River Weaver. By 1897 Winsford had become the largest producer of salt in Britain. The industry remains an important part of the local economy to this day.

2.13 Much of the early development in Winsford took place on the eastern side of the River Weaver. The town of Winsford began to grow, with new housing, shops, pubs, chapels and a new church being built in the former hamlet of Wharton, now a neighbourhood in the larger town of Winsford.

2.14 Winsford had a second period of rapid expansion from the 1960s as an 'overspill' town taking residents from slum clearance areas of both Liverpool and Manchester. The new Winsford Cross Shopping Centre was opened in the 1960s as part of this expansion of the town and established the new town centre some distance away to the west of the traditional focus of the River Weaver.

2.15 More recently, Winsford has seen a number of new housing developments around the town as well as new employment sites being created including Winsford Industrial Estate.

2.16 As acknowledged in previous studies, the development of the town away from its original focus has in some ways created a disconnect between the new town centre and the distinctive environmental assets of the river corridor to the detriment of both. It has also led to a lack of clarity over the role of key parts of a now extended 'town centre' notably around the old High Street.

Planning Policy Context

2.17 Policies within the Local Plan very much support the regeneration of Winsford including the investment of a new foodstore as well as cultural and leisure facilities in the town centre and the waterfront. Residential development is also supported.

2.18 Along with Chester, Northwich and Ellesmere Port, Winsford will be the focus for major leisure, tourism, cultural development proposals and visitor accommodation in the borough.

2.19 There have been a number of previous regeneration strategies for central Winsford, however; none have specifically considered Winsford Cross Shopping Centre. Improvements to the function and connectivity of the gyratory have also previously been considered. Some of the concepts and proposals are still very much relevant today and have fed into and informed this Development Framework.

2.20 The Neighbourhood Plan contains a number of policies each with its own objectives and aspirations aimed at regenerating and revitalising the town centre with a focus on leisure activities at the riverfront as well as enhancements to connectivity in and around the town centre.



Mid Cheshire College, Winsford Campus



Winsford Academy

2.21 Of particular relevance to the Development Framework are Policies TTC1 to TTC4, TTC7-9 and NTC1 - NTC7 of the Neighbourhood Plan – these relate to the redevelopment or refurbishment of the shopping centre and consider the future of the market, the potential development of a new foodstore and improvements to the old High Street.

2.22 A number of town centre sites have been allocated to provide a mix of town centre uses including residential, retail, commercial, leisure and social and community uses. A focus of leisure uses are allocated adjacent to the River Weaver.

2.23 The Town Park is allocated for improvements to open space to reflect its potential to become a key town centre space.

2.24 Policy E2 identifies the town centre as a location for small to medium size businesses that will attract people to the town and provide local job opportunities for residents.

2.25 Housing allocations are concentrated north of the A54 particularly around the New Road industrial area and the open space/countryside area behind the Verdin buildings. Some of these sites have various constraints, notably NTC 1 and NTC 2 which are partially on a former landfill site.

Socio-economic Profile

2.26 Winsford makes up 12.6% of Cheshire West and Chester's population. The population grew by 4% between 2001 and 2011.

2.27 The population of Winsford is set to increase further with the potential housing growth that is planned in the area. The CWAC Local Plan (Part One) has identified a need for a minimum of 21,000 new homes by 2030, of which at least 3,150 should be provided in Winsford.

2.28 Some key indicators for Winsford are:

- The proportion of social rented housing is 24% in Winsford which is higher than many other parts of the district (ONS, 2013).
- Educational attainment (measured as residents with 5+ A* - C GCSE's or equivalent including English and Maths) is slightly lower than the rest of the locality area (Northwich and Winsford), with Over and Verdin ward home to the lowest levels of qualifications amongst residents (ONS, 2013).
- Winsford has higher unemployment rates compared to the rest of the locality area the highest being 5.1% in Over and Verdin as well as having the highest percentage of 16 – 24 year olds who are unemployed (11.8%) (ONS, 2013).
- The percentage of households that claim Council tax benefit in the locality area is 19.1% which is higher than the borough rate of 18.2% although the highest ward rate is in Winsford Over and Verdin ward (28.7%) (ONS, 2013).

Accessibility

2.29 Winsford is situated in the eastern part of Cheshire West and Chester. It is reasonably well connected to other nearby towns by road including Northwich. The A54 runs through the centre of Winsford as a strategic east-west route. However, the A54 dual carriageway is an overly dominant feature in the town centre, creating severance between the north and the south of central Winsford and acting as a barrier to the Town Centre for those wishing to access it from the north. This north-south divide is particularly marked between the residential areas to the north of the A54 and

retail core of the shopping centre, and also between the old High Street and Town Park.

2.30 Public transport links and access to the motorway network, principally the M6 via Middlewich, are less than ideal.

2.31 There is a regular rail service to Liverpool and Crewe although there are no direct services to Manchester. There are no Sunday bus services running to and from Winsford and weekday evening services do not tend to operate past 8pm. Winsford railway station, on the Liverpool to Birmingham main line, is one mile (1.5 km) east of the centre of the town, in Wharton.

2.32 Connectivity between Winsford and the M6 is currently via Middlewich which leads to journey delays and congestion in Middlewich itself. Improving access to the M6 from Winsford could be achieved through the provision of a bypass of Middlewich, which would lead to improved journey times for trips to and from Winsford and reduce the impact of through traffic in Middlewich Town Centre. Depending upon the alignment of the route, this may also provide scope for changes to traffic management and routing in central Winsford.

Winsford Transport Study (WTS): Issues and proposed schemes

2.33 Alongside the work undertaken on the Development Framework, Mott MacDonald have prepared the Winsford Transport Study (WTS) on behalf of Cheshire West and Chester Council which aims to test and evaluate the emerging issues from the Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan, such as increased housing growth, and to seek to provide transport measures which can ensure this growth is supported and has a positive impact on the wider transport network. Nexus Planning have

liaised with Mott MacDonald to ensure that issues common to both studies have been considered consistently.

2.34 The baseline work undertaken for the WTS acknowledged that there are complex transport and accessibility issues and highlights a number of key points in its findings:

- The River Weaver acts as a barrier to pedestrian and cyclist east-west movements, and access to Winsford is restricted to the Winsford gyratory the only vehicular crossing of the river in the immediate area - this leads the effect of 'funnelling' people and cars through Winsford.
- There are direct rail services to Liverpool and Crewe but no direct services to Manchester or Chester. The station itself is poorly connected to the town centre by bus, walking and cycling routes.
- Evening and Sunday bus services are fairly limited.
- Cycling infrastructure within the town does not provide a comprehensive network and some sections are in a poor state of repair.
- There is no pedestrian access around Bottom Flash which limits its potential as a visitor attraction.

2.35 The WTS includes a number of potential schemes to address the transport issues in and around Winsford. Of particular significance to central Winsford and the Development Framework are:

- Encourage walking and cycling - improved links between High Street and Town Park and a new pedestrian/cycle route around the Bottom Flash.
- Improving bus options - a new town centre/bus interchange, evening and weekend

service improvements and the strengthening of the 'bus triangle' (Northwich, Middlewich and Winsford).

- Parking and Taxis - increase and improve taxi rank facilities and improve car parking in the town centre.
- Encouraging sustainable travel - through raising awareness and options for smart tickets for public transport.
- Improving our roads - Improvement to the A54 from the Winsford gyratory to Swanlow Lane, providing a boulevard setting with better pedestrian facilities. This could include reducing the speed to 30mph and improved public realm.

Land Ownership

2.36 CWaC Council and Winsford Town Council own a significant part of land in the central Winsford area. Council owned land includes the Town Park, Verdin Buildings and playing fields as well as various plots on New Road which includes the site of the former Greedy Pig public house and the site on the opposite side of New Road. However, New Road in particular is in a number of different ownerships including the Canals and Rivers Trust and other private sector owners.

2.37 The Council are the majority freehold landowners of land within the town centre boundary although a private sector company are long leaseholders to Winsford Cross Shopping Centre.

Winsford – Market Perception

2.38 It is clear that central Winsford and the town centre is suffering from a general lack of interest from developers and end users. In general, but with notable exceptions, current demand is generally for low key, 'roadside' commercial uses and for predominantly lower priced housing. Developments of this nature would not by themselves deliver the radical change in the market's perception that is required to deliver on both Winsford's potential and on the regeneration objectives established through the adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

2.39 At the heart of the town centre is the poorly perceived Winsford Cross Shopping Centre which sets the tone for the market perception of wider area. This has been the subject of speculation over its refurbishment and / or redevelopment for a number of years and the continued uncertainty over its future regeneration acts as an on-going barrier on realising the potential of the town and the

confidence of potential investors.

2.40 Whilst there is potential to attract new investment and occupiers that would breathe life into the centre (and the town and a whole) ownership constraints and associated issues are currently preventing this.

Conclusions

2.41 Winsford has a distinctive industrial heritage that led to the growth of the town in the 1800s around the River Weaver. It became an 'overspill' town in the 1960s which led to a further period of significant growth and a 'relocation' of the heart of the town centre away from the natural focus of the River and toward the new Winsford Cross Shopping Centre. Significant infrastructure was put in place at that time, notably the A54 dual carriageway, although not all of the original growth ambitions were released. This has left a number of legacy issues, notably a lack of clarity over how the centre of Winsford 'stitches together' and the over engineering of some sections of the A54.

2.42 The Winsford Neighbourhood Plan establishes a clear agenda for the development and regeneration of central Winsford which is taken forward in this Development Framework.

2.43 If the Development Framework was to respond to the existing market dynamics of the town (and thereby simply respond to existing and foreseeable private sector interest) then it would fail to create the step change that is needed to deliver on the Neighbourhood Plan Vision. This is the challenge for the Development Framework.

2.44 Winsford is reasonably well connected to other towns in the wider area, at least by private car, which creates significant competition; particularly in retaining spend in the town

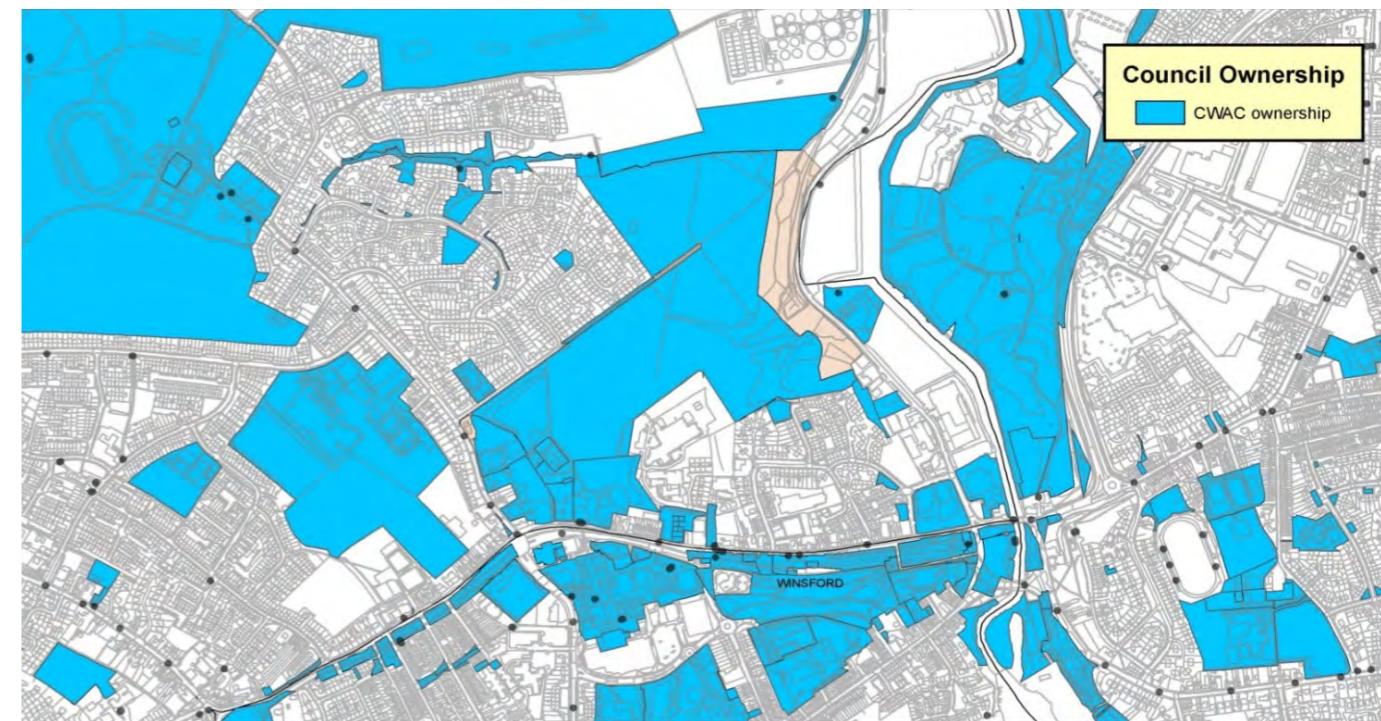


Figure 3 – CWaC land ownership in Winsford

centre. The Winsford Industrial Estate is a major strategic employment location, underlining the on-going potential of the area. The Crewe High Growth City agenda and the prospect of HS2 do create further opportunities for Winsford to position itself as a key centre.

03 // Winsford: Existing Character

3.1 The scope of the Development Framework is centred around a number land parcels or zones identified in the study brief. These zones are:

- Zone 1 - The retail core comprising Winsford Cross Shopping Centre and surrounds;
- Zone 2 - Town Park;
- Zone 3 - The old High Street which performs a secondary retail function;
- Zones 4 & 5 - New Road 'Waterfront' and Whitegate area; and
- Zone 6 - The Verdin Exchange buildings (including the Guildhall and Russell buildings) and land to rear.

3.2 This section of the Framework provides an overview of each of these zones as a basis for going on to establish an overall Vision for central Winsford and in subsequent sections the design and development principles for each zone.

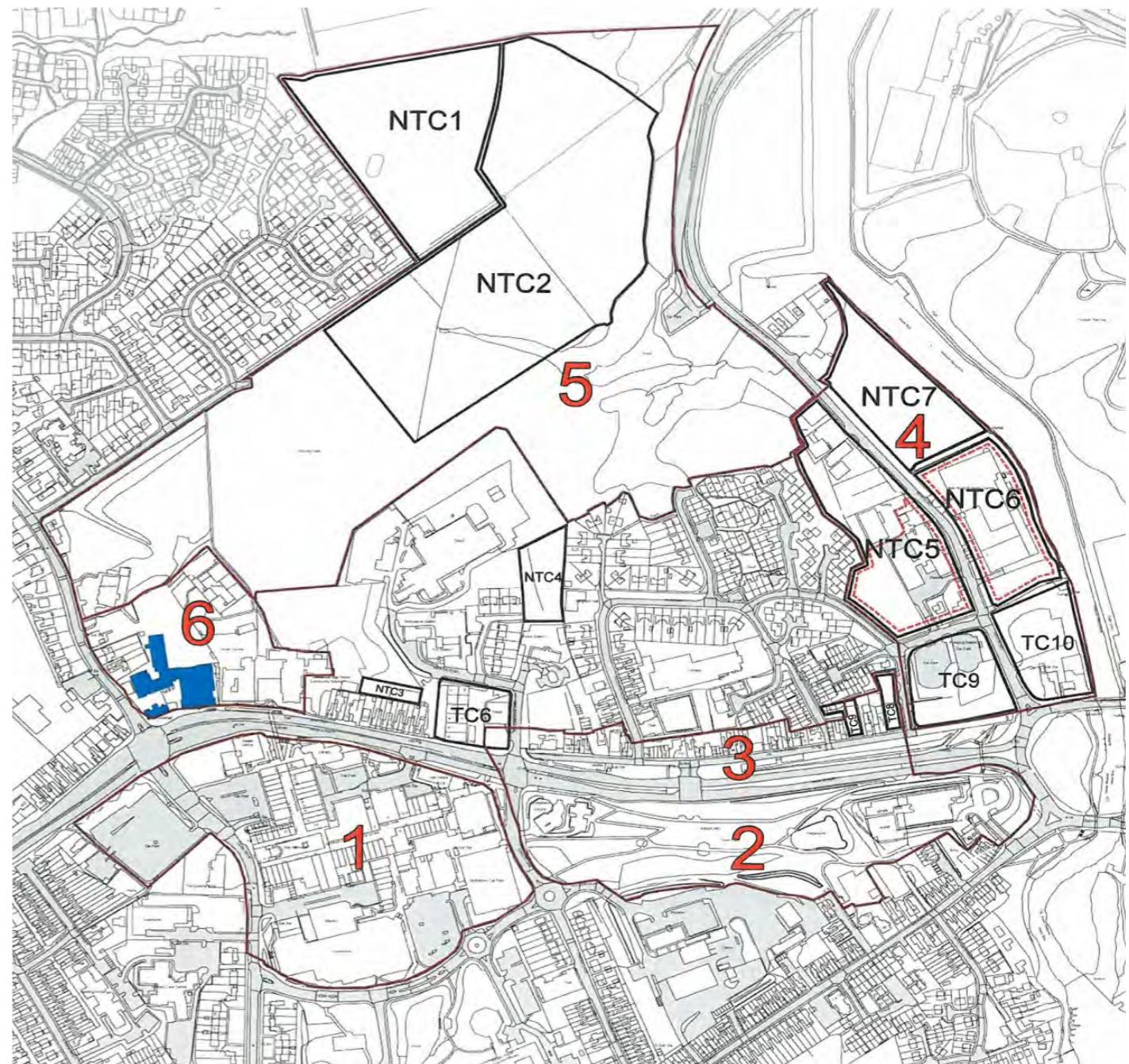


Figure 4 – Development Zones

Zone 1 - The Retail Core

3.3 The retail core of the town comprises Winsford Cross Shopping Centre, the adjacent Asda foodstore and a number of larger format retail units between the shopping centre to the south and The Drumber. This area is also home to the Winsford indoor food market. To the north of this area along the A54 corridor boundary are the offices of Job Centre Plus, Dingle Recreation Centre, Vale House Resource Centre, Winsford Library and the site of the former Winsford Civic Hall. To the south of the retail core, south of The Drumber are Wyvern House council offices and Winsford Lifestyle Centre.

3.4 The Council owns the freehold of Winsford Cross Shopping Centre with a private sector landlord having a long lease. The shopping centre was built in the 1960s and has a range of small to medium unit sizes. There are a number of vacant units currently marketed to let in the north-west quadrant of the shopping centre. There has been a lack of major investment over recent years.

3.5 Discussions between the Council and the existing principal lease holder have explored the potential for partial redevelopment of the centre and have identified the need to focus this effort towards the north-west quadrant.

3.6 A further development opportunity has been identified to the west of the north-west quadrant of the shopping centre at rear of The Queens Arms public house Dene Drive. The site currently operates as a car park that serves the town centre and is a possible location for a new food store.

3.7 There is opportunity therefore to redevelop and clearly define a comprehensive layout in the north-west quadrant and improve the quality of this area to make it more attractive to the market.

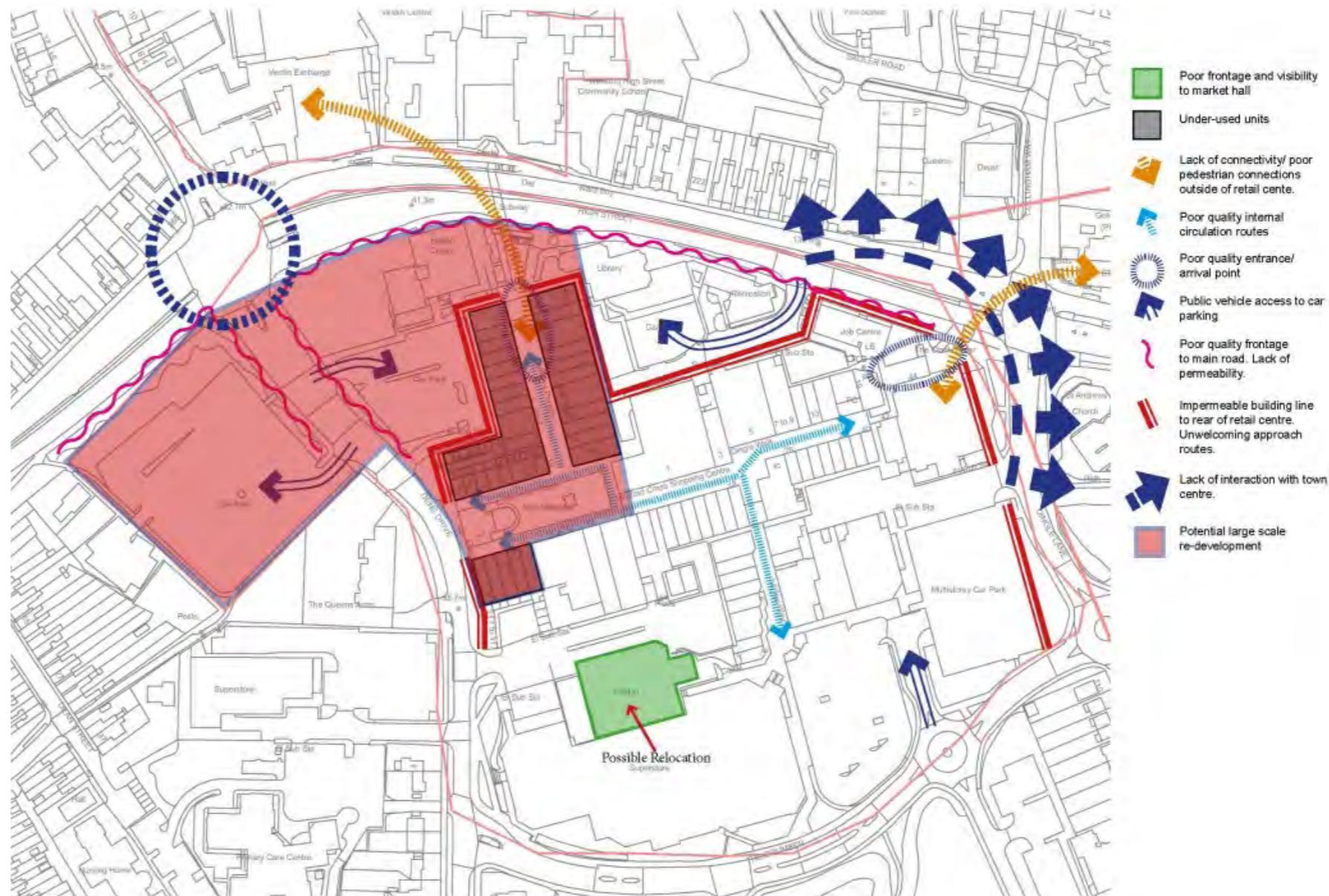


Figure 5 – Retail core analysis

3.8 Whether entering from Dene Drive (west), Dingle Lane (east), the A54 entrance (north) or from The Drumber (south – once past Asda), the shopping centre itself has poor quality arrival points. The outward facing side of the shopping centre suffers from poor frontages and a lack of permeability into the shopping centre, particularly along the A54. The subway also offers a poor connection for pedestrians and cyclists although there is a surface level crossing nearby.

3.9 The internal circulation of the shopping centre lacks clarity and legibility. It is unclear as to the location and access of the market hall for those less familiar with the centre.

3.10 The retail units south of the shopping centre include Asda, Argos, amongst other national retailers, which are considered fit for purpose and appear to be trading well.

Zone 2 - Town Park ("The Drumber")

3.11 Town Park is a significant part of the open space assets in the town. The park runs east-west and is 'book-ended' by Mid Cheshire College (Winsford Campus) on the eastern end and St Andrew's Methodist Church and the retail core of the town centre to the west. There are various pathways which run east-west through the park. The park itself is well maintained, albeit linkages with the surrounding areas to the north and south are poor.

3.12 Notwithstanding this, the park has limited profile and offers little reason for people to spend time there. There is no furniture and equipment such as benches, dog litter facilities, play areas or points of interest that people expect from a recreational urban park. Dense vegetation and tree cover limit the visibility from the A54 and detracts from a sense of security day or night.

Zone 3 - The old High Street

3.13 The old High Street is a linear parade of terraced, domestic scale buildings primarily in retail use (A1 Retail, A5 Hot Food Takeaway) dating back to the early 1900s and runs parallel to the A54. There are offices and some residential uses peppered in between the shops.

3.14 The parade is in multiple ownerships. The majority of the units are occupied by small independent retailers. There are some vacant units and the overall quality of commercial property is in need of investment.

3.15 Given the location of The old High Street, it performs a secondary retail function to the main retail core of the shopping centre and is outside the town centre boundary (as defined in the Local Plan). Whilst not allocated as a 'centre' in the neighbourhood plan, the old High Street operates as a local centre where customers predominantly arrive by car, park up to access services then leave by

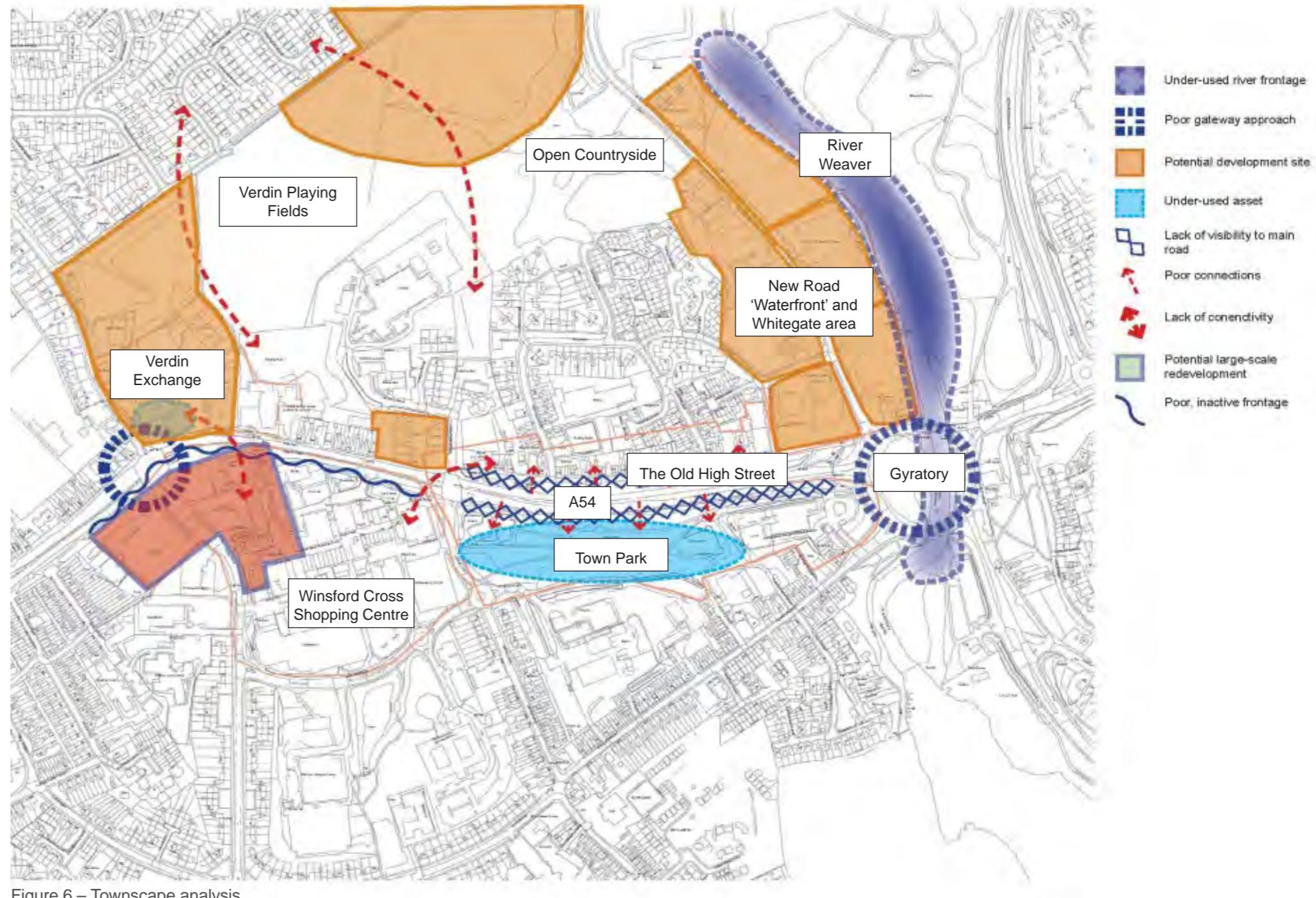


Figure 6 – Townscape analysis

car. Visits are short and it would appear there are few linked trips with main retail core i.e. the shopping centre and surrounds.

3.16 Whilst the parade is currently reasonably occupied, the area suffers from a lack of visibility and accessibility from the main highway due to a poorly maintained tree and shrub line, poor quality shop frontages and limited parking. Addressing the building frontages and external curtilage would help to improve the quality of the environment and image of the town.

Zone 4 & 5 - New Road 'Waterfront' and Whitegate area

3.17 New Road runs parallel with the River Weaver from the gyratory on the A54 northwards towards the existing salt mining areas to the north-east of Winsford. The area is predominantly in industrial use and contains a number of development opportunities. Allocations NTC 5 and NTC 6 includes a former industrial building and the existing New Road Business Centre, both of which are subject to extant planning permissions for residential uses.

3.18 Two sites directly fronting the gyratory (TC9 and TC10) the old post office site and the site known as the 'former Greedy Pig' are allocated for mixed-use proposals and are currently cleared.

3.19 The open countryside that adjoins the Verdin Playing Fields to the east is allocated for residential use as well as protected open space. There is currently no access route from New Road to this area of open countryside. There is an opportunity to consider connectivity and linkages for all modes of transport in future development proposals.

Zone 6 - The Verdin Exchange, Guildhall and Russell buildings and land to rear

3.20 Verdin Exchange buildings which includes the Grade II listed Guildhall and Russell buildings, along with the land to the rear which currently operates as car parking, are considered for refurbishment and/or redevelopment. The Council own the Russell building, Verdin Exchange buildings and car park and the Guildhall is in ownership of the Town Council.

3.21 The buildings are situated to the north-west of the retail core of Winsford town centre and are primarily in B1 office use although there is a large number of vacant floorspace throughout. The building adjoined to the rear of the Verdin Exchange (formerly a gym) is in a derelict state and requires demolition. According to Cheshire West and Chester Council the Verdin Exchange and Guildhall building is less than 20% occupied. It is apparent that the Guildhall building is in a poor state of repair. The Citizens Advice Bureau currently operates out of the Russell Building.

04 // Winsford: Development Framework – Vision

4.1 The Development Framework for the area is based around the priorities, aims and aspirations of the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan with an emphasis on ‘quality’ and a quality experience for visitors to the area and for those who live and work there as well.

4.2 Spatially and through development projects this emphasis on quality is underpinned, as set out in the neighbourhood plan Vision, by approaches to developing and enhancing:

- A **Retail Core** that benefits from a partial redevelopment of the existing shopping centre. This is vital to the delivery of regeneration in Winsford and in raising the profile for those who live, work and spend time here.
- A **‘Walkable Neighbourhood’** where residents are well connected to the town centre and waterfront.
- A **Leisure Gateway** that takes advantage of the waterfront location to deliver new homes and leisure facilities. The old High Street is also seen as a key linkage between the leisure gateway and the town centre.
- A **‘Greenway’** to improve connections between the waterfront and the town centre. New facilities at Town Park would give people a reason to spend time here.
- A **‘High Street for people’** - reducing the dominance of cars along this route and making the High Street more of a place for people.

4.3 The remainder of this report considers the approach to each of the development zones within the context of this Vision.

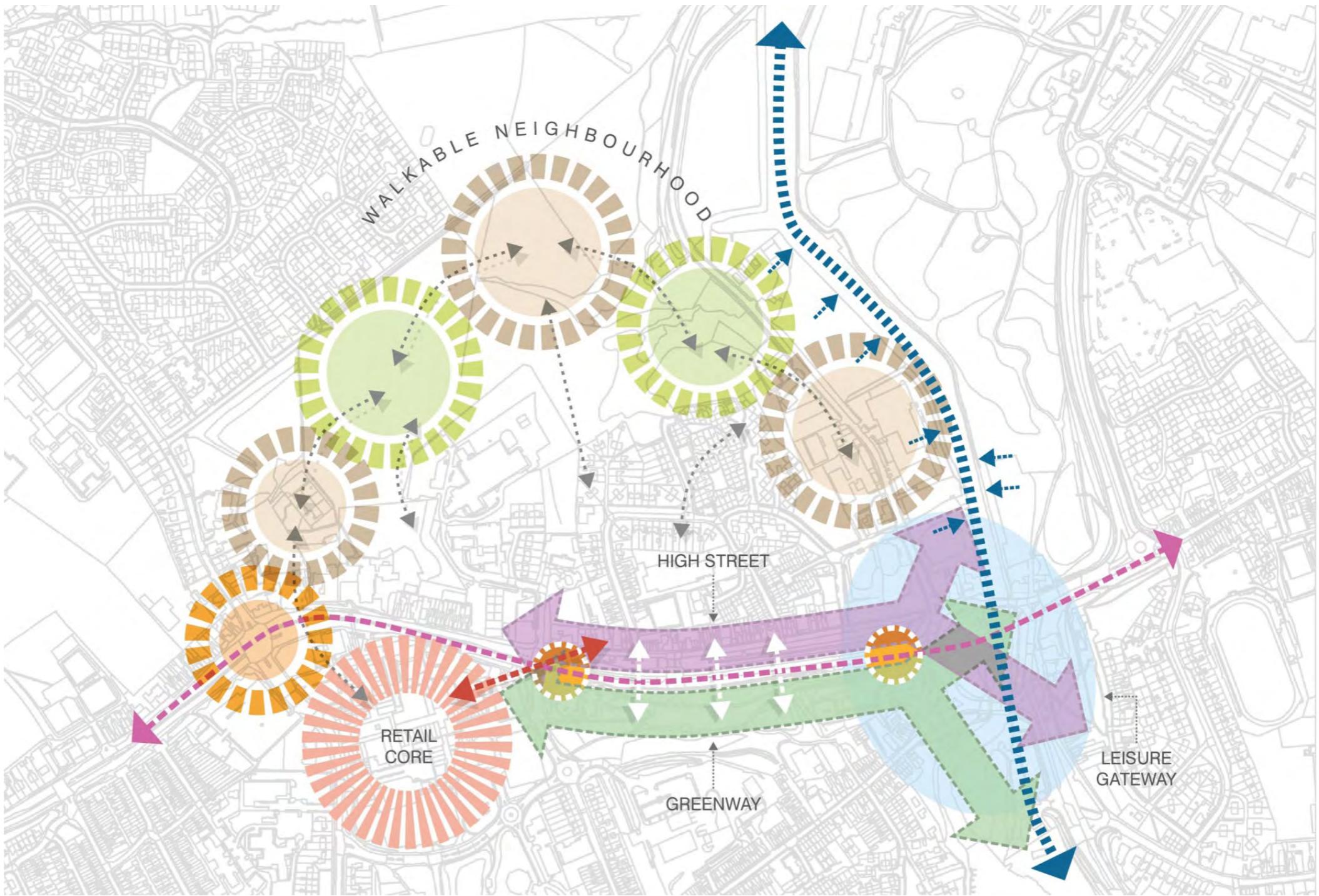


Figure 7 – Development Framework Vision

05 // Development Project – Winsford Cross Shopping Centre

5.1 Significant redevelopment and refurbishment of the shopping centre is fundamental to the delivery of the regeneration that is necessary to raise the profile of Winsford, and critically bring a change in market perceptions of the town and begin to broaden the appeal of Winsford town centre.

Proposal

5.2 Redevelopment should be focused on the north-western quadrant of the shopping centre to provide contemporary facilities for local people, businesses, and visitors to the area. The southern side performs fairly well in terms of the overall health of the centre.

5.3 The options presented therefore focus on the north-west quadrant of the shopping centre. Both options include the creation of new larger retail units and a site suitable to accommodate a new food store. Refurbishment of remaining shopping centre units, improved pedestrian walkways, and public realm spaces could also be included in proposals.

5.4 The Market Hall can potentially be relocated to a more prominent location as part of the refurbishment of existing units. As an alternative, consideration could also be given to positively integrating the existing market building through rejuvenating the Market Hall, with greater visibility, signage and improved pedestrian access.

5.5 The future of the existing civic buildings along the A54 frontage differentiates the two options. These include the Job Centre, Vale House Resource Centre, Dingle Recreation Centre and Public Library which will need to be considered as part of the redevelopment strategy. Ideally, subject to viability, the majority of these buildings should be redeveloped, perhaps with the

exception of the library to facilitate the creation of a stronger, mixed frontage along the A54, potentially comprising some housing.

5.6 It is considered that the strength of the shopping centre is around larger format retail with accessible car parking.

5.7 Delivery of these proposals is likely to be phased where market conditions permit and which provides the basis for the early implementation of much-needed improvements. Sites such as the former Civic Hall site and the car park on Dene Drive are currently vacant and could potentially be delivered within the first phase of proposals.

5.8 A set of design principles have been established and should underpin the delivery of development proposals and concepts in relation to the redevelopment and/or refurbishment of the shopping centre.

5.9 Case studies have been included that show recent comparable town centre developments and the design principles and delivery mechanisms that have been applied to these developments.

Design and Development Principles

5.8 Design and development principles to consider include:

- Modern, larger retail units to attract a wider range of quality retailers
- High quality public realm to complement a redeveloped retail offer and to provide a high quality shopping environment for visitors using quality materials, street furniture, lighting, tree planting and landscaping. An improved public realm will also allow for spill-out from retailers and the market.

- Key community facilities to be retained/replaced in order to ensure that the strong community spirit is maintained and that the town centre remains as a destination for key public services.

- Through redevelopment of the north-west quadrant, add one or more clear anchors to extend the retail circuit.

- Improvements to and the establishment of attractive facades fronting the A54 through new developments and/or redevelopment of existing buildings to create strong, active frontages to passers-by and to 'open up' the retail core to the north.

- Improvements to key gateways in the centre from all directions.

- Create a higher profile for the market which may involve relocating it to a more prominent location or refurbishing the existing market and improving access, legibility and signage.

- A high quality public space for events and specialist markets would add diversity to the offer of the retail core and create a lively and active area that adds to a rejuvenated centre.

- Good quality parking facilities for both vehicles and cyclists that allow for ease of access to the centre and link with improved cycle facilities along the High Street and the 'Greenway', tapping into the existing green infrastructure.

- Establish clearer pedestrian links throughout the centre with strong walkways that provide clarity of direction, movement and sense of place.

- Dene Drive car park is identified as a development area that will contribute to facilities within the retail core.

- To retain and/or improve those retail units that would not be part of the redevelopment of this quadrant of the shopping centre. This would

be done through either reconfiguration or façade improvements.

- Create a much stronger 'back of pavement' frontage to the A54 comprising 3-4 storey development potentially including housing.

Implementation/Delivery Approach

5.10 A delivery strategy to revitalise the Shopping Centre and deliver a significant change in offer, environment and outward perception is critical to the success of the Winsford Vision as a whole and could deliver the step change in market perceptions that are required.

5.11 As freehold owner the Council should take a leading role in this. This could comprise working with the existing owners, however with key investment milestones in place to ensure delivery. Should this prove unworkable the Council should consider alternative delivery mechanisms.

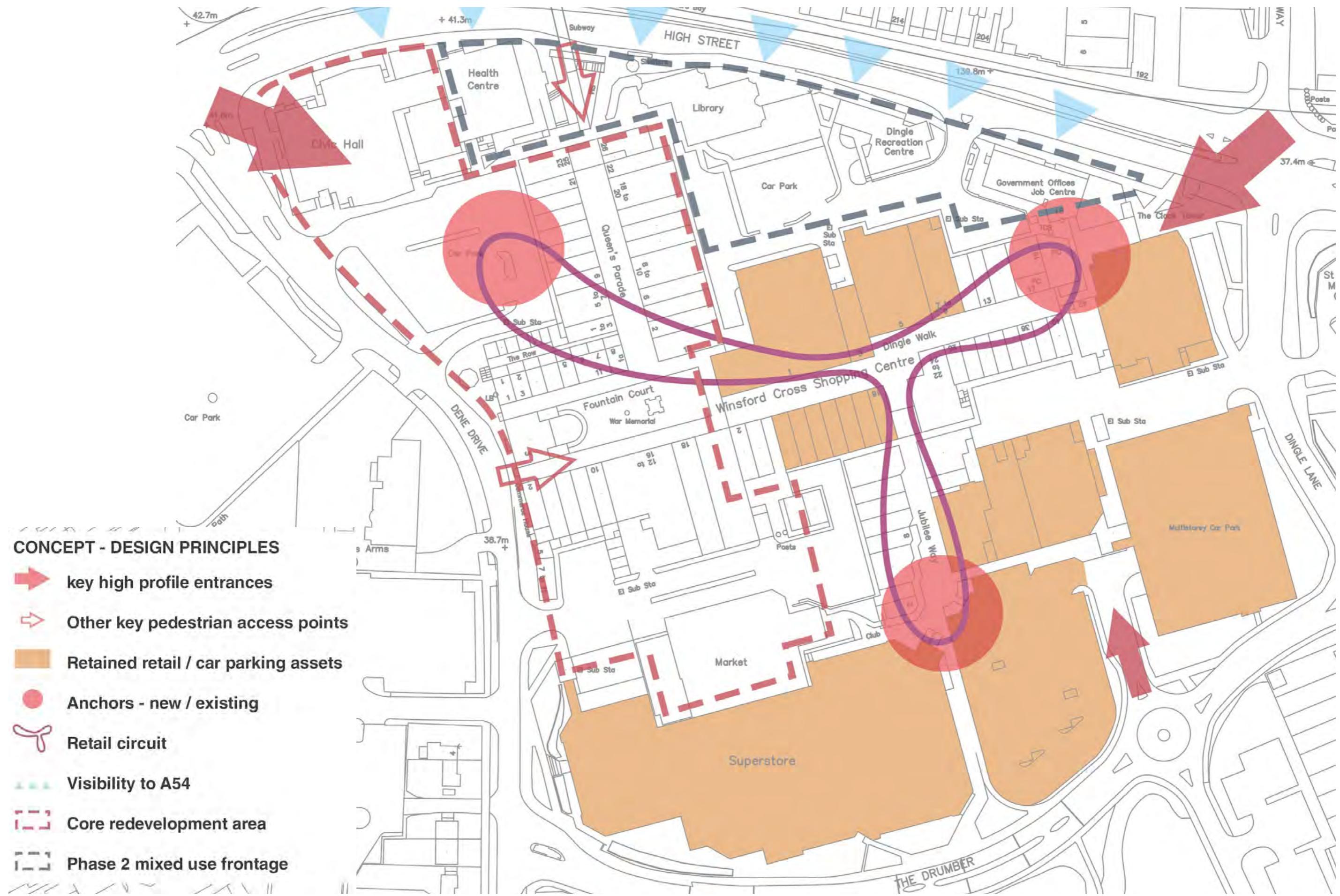
5.12 The redevelopment of the centre could form a wider part of the key delivery model for Winsford.



Winsford Cross Shopping Centre



Figure 8 – Retail Core



16 Figure 9 – Retail Core

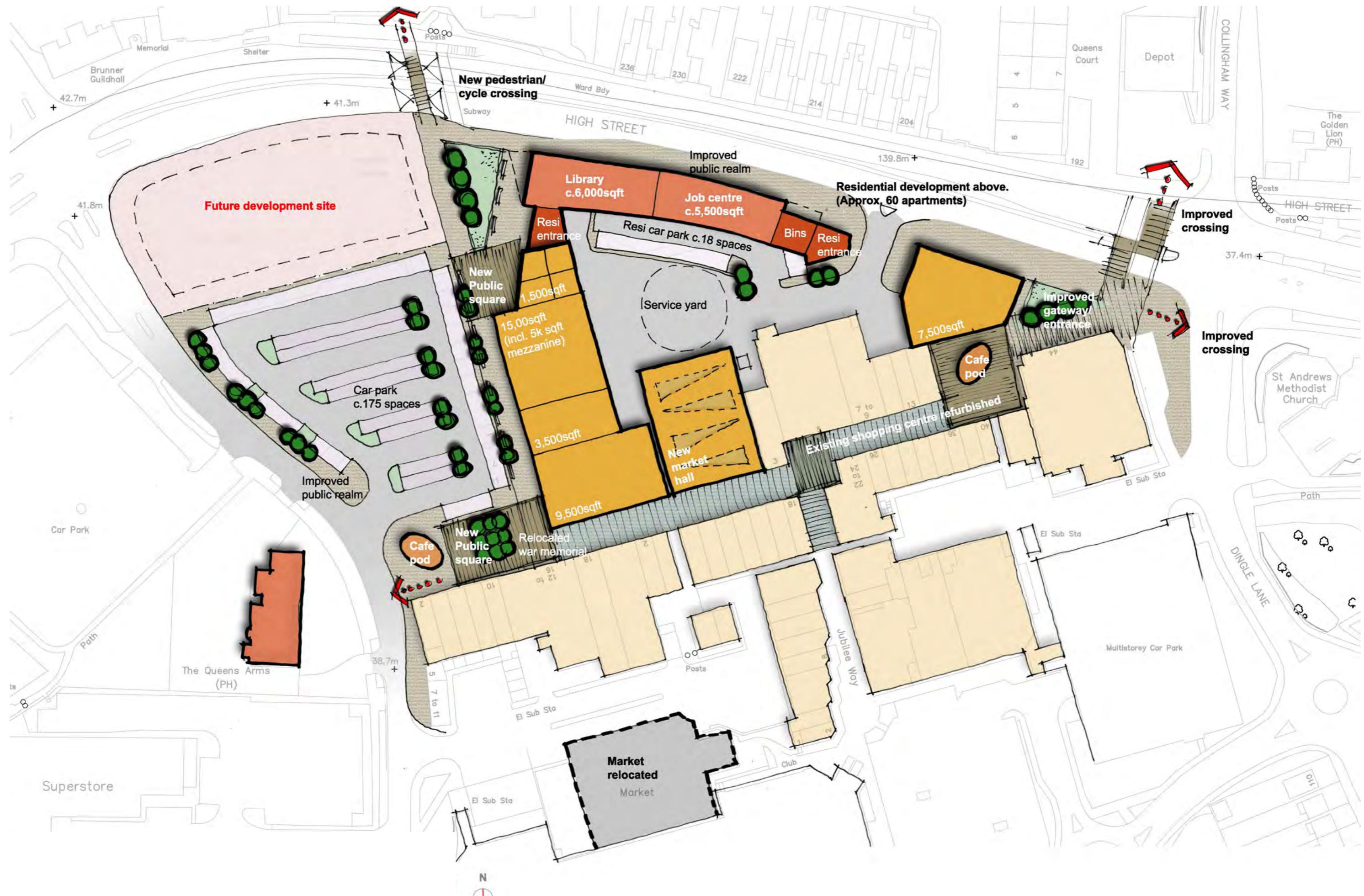


Figure 10 – Retail Centre Scenario 1



Case Studies

Urmston Town Centre, Eden Square

Delivered by Ask Developments in partnership with Trafford Council, the £43M redevelopment of the shopping centre took place starting in 2007 and was delivered in three phases. Eden Square was built on the site of former council offices and a number of vacant units, which made way for a 630 space shoppers' car park, a 50,000 sq ft Sainsbury's store, new library, plus other high street stores and a new public library. As well as being a retail centre, Eden Square is also a place to live, with an attractive residential area comprising 64 city style apartments.

The buildings and surrounding landscaping needed to create an engaging and contemporary shopping experience, as well as complementing the high street brands that would be located here, such as Sainsbury's, Boots, Costa Coffee, Hallmark and Thorntons. The quality of public realm and artwork has been a key component in the success of the project and the choice of paving and landscaping materials was therefore vitally important to create a welcome ambience where visitors would be encouraged to shop and that would be desirable to live in. Eden Square was completed in 2013.

It is these high quality public realm improvements that must be considered as part of the redevelopment of the North West quadrant of Winsford Cross Shopping Centre in order to create a quality shopping environment with greater legibility, to compliment an improved retail offer. The case study also provides an example of delivering housing as part of a redeveloped shopping centre.



Urmston Town Centre

Widnes Shopping Park

Within the defined town centre boundary in Widnes, Widnes Shopping Park opened in 2010 containing large, modern retail units that have since attracted a number of multinational retailers including Marks and Spencer, New Look and Boots. The aim was to bring new retailers into Widnes to complement the town's existing offer and strengthen the range and diversity of retailing in Widnes. The high end anchor tenants have been key in establishing the park as a successful development which is likely to act as a catalyst for further change in the Widnes area. These units are in addition to the pre-existing Morrison's store, Green Oaks Shopping Mall and Widnes Market.

Larger retail units in the southern quadrant of Winsford Cross Shopping Centre occupied by Argos amongst others has significantly improved footfall in this section of the shopping centre. Within the rest of the shopping centre the units are predominantly smaller in size. By considering some of these design principles and by incorporating larger more modern units in the North West quadrant of Winsford Cross Shopping Centre, similar to those developed at Widnes, it is likely to attract multinational retailers and provide this section of the shopping centre with a much needed anchor store to facilitate the creation of a retail loop throughout a redeveloped centre.



Widnes Shopping Centre

Market Walks, Chorley

As with Winsford, it was evident that there was a need for new investment in Chorley Town Centre. A new impetus to help raise its profile as a place to shop and visit for leisure purposes. A detailed Masterplan was commissioned for the future development of Chorley Town Centre, providing a deliverable framework for investment at key development sites to ensure the viability and vitality of Chorley Town Centre going forward.

The Council bought the site for £23M in November 2013 and will be a key enabler and critically the custodian of the plan to redevelop part of the town centre. With the Council in the lead – as an investor as well as a leader the town centre will become critical to the economic success of the borough, the vibrancy of the local economy and the wellbeing of the resident population. The plan creates a new framework within the town centre which can continue to prosper.

A £12.9M scheme has been developed including a cinema, restaurants and new shops. It is funded by the council with no development taking place without getting tenants signing up in advance (75% of units signed up on pre-lets), meaning the authority would generate an income from the extension that would go to providing services for residents.



Chorley Town Centre

06 // Development Project – Town Park & The Old High Street

6.1 The Vision establishes Town Park as a key 'green link' between the environmental assets associated with the waterfront and the Bottom Flash, and the retail core of Winsford. It is also agreed that Town Park should have a more positive, complimentary relationship with the old High Street.

6.2 The old High Street is a linear parade of shops primarily occupied by retailers and small businesses, interspersed with residential units. At present there are few vacant units on the parade yet the area suffers from a lack of visibility from the main highway, poor quality shop frontages and limited parking.

6.3 It is considered that both of these locations should be considered as one development concept given the proximity of both sites and the potential for improvements in the relationship and function of these two areas.

Proposal

Town Park

6.4 The Development Framework focuses on a scheme that rethinks the function of the open space at Town Park whilst enhancing the existing links between the waterfront and the town centre. The focus is on delivering an improved open space suitable for families. Proposals include new public realm, play equipment, arts/sports/recreation strategy and entrance gate to the Town Park whilst retaining much of the natural assets that already exist in the park. The relationship of the park to Weaver Way, the Waterfront and the old High Street is also considered in proposals.

6.5 The topographical 'amphitheatre' shape of the Town Park could be embraced and lends itself well to festival music and entertainment events where the slopes of the park act as viewing areas

for audiences. The construction of a bandstand or stage facility would complement this.

6.6 Design options for the roundabout/gyratory are considered as part of a 'greenway' between the northern section of the Bottom Flash and the town park in linking this leisure/recreation area with the town centre.

The old High Street

6.7 The scope for radical development of the area is fairly limited, and indeed not necessary. As a retail destination, it will continue to be secondary to the main retail core, but could, overtime continue to provide a high profile location for independent, and niche retailing and other small businesses.

6.8 The focus for the old High Street will be around improvements to the public realm, accessibility and visibility to underpin its role as a secondary retail destination. This will involve the clearing of trees and shrubs which is essential to enable the old High Street to be visible to passing traffic. Improvements to the road, paving and shop frontages will raise the profile of the street and continue to attract independent retailers as well as cafes and restaurants that would enhance the role of the old High Street as a location for the night time economy.

6.9 Specific and potential shorter term proposals for the area include:

- Replace existing street lights with better, more traditional design
- Signage to the old High Street from the main highway would direct visitors to the parade
- Planting, hanging baskets and landscaping
- LED tree lighting

6.10 More car parking, improvements to building frontages, outdoor seating to encourage dwell time, and new links to the Town Park and the retail core of the shopping centre should also be considered. These improvements could assist in expanding on existing events and markets in this area.

6.11 Improvements to the crossing of the A54, also considered as part of the Transport Study should enable more linked trips to be made between the old High Street and the retail core, as well as an improved relationship with Town Park.

6.12 Case studies have been included to demonstrate successful implementation of programmes and facilities to places similar to the old High Street and Town Park.



The Old High Street



Town Park (also known as 'The Drummer')

Design and Development Principles

Old High Street - Gateway

- Signalised junction introduced – to encourage use of the old High Street/Town Park and improve the pedestrian/cycle experience.
- Create a 'gateway feature' such as a 'Welcome to Winsford' sign.
- Create a main pedestrian link between the old High Street/Town Park.
- Traffic Calming through a shared surface treatment along the old High Street to provide a continuous surface plane that will improve the pedestrian experience.
- Defined road edge through kerbs – cars allowed in deference to pedestrian movement
- On-street parking augmented and two-way traffic retained to encourage use of the old High Street.
- New tree planting along the street line to humanise the high street.

Town Park / Bottom Flash

- Create a gateway entrance to the park.
- Improved connections and visibility from the A54.
- Improved pedestrian and cycle routes through the park.
- Create a new play zone with play equipment, picnic area and events zone with a band stand/stage.
- Disposal facilities for litter and for dog walkers.
- Improve connections to Bottom Flashes through improved legibility and wayfinding.

The old High Street – Shop Frontages

- Open up views of shops from A54 by clearing out the vegetated bank understory, create views across through removal of vegetation/ thinning out tree canopy / tree removal as appropriate.
- Introduce a shop frontage improvement programme.

A54 Traffic Calming

- Reduce the speed limit to 30 mph in order to reduce the impact of vehicles on pedestrian movement.
- Reduce to two lane two way (incorporating pickup and drop off).
- Creation of a boulevard from the Town Park reducing the severance between the two areas.
- Introduce parking on street to North of A54.
- Introduce new dedicated Cycleway/Footway to South of A54.
- Create improved crossing points to the East and West.



Figure 12: Town Park/High Street: Illustrative Concept

Implementation/Delivery Approach

- 6.13 Funding opportunities which include the New Homes Bonus have been identified by the Town Council as a source of funding to implement such proposals.
- 6.14 It is vital that funding is identified to improve the frontages of shops and businesses along the old High Street.
- 6.15 Once CIL is adopted by the Council, larger scale projects which may include landscaping, play equipment, the arts and sculptures (trails) and new pathways for cycling and walking at Town Park could be considered. More elaborate public realm improvements involving potential resurfacing of the road/paving to create a more shared surface, improved car parking and landscaping should be considered.
- 6.16 Winsford Town Council should facilitate the establishment of a High Street Forum of traders and businesses that will improve the communication in the business community here.

Case Studies

Leicester City Council

In 2012, Leicester City Council announced a scheme enabling shop owners on six key routes into the city and city centre to apply for a share of funding to spruce up their businesses and improve the appearance of the area. The shop front grant scheme is designed to boost independent shopping areas on the city's key gateways, or those linked to existing regeneration projects.

Shop owners were able to bid for up to a maximum of £5,000 and then match the sum with their own money. The scheme was introduced in order to boost independent shopping areas, especially in areas that form key gateways to the city or are linked to existing regeneration projects.



Narborough Road, Leicester

Rossendale Borough Council

Rossendale Borough Council launched a new Shop Front Improvement Scheme in November 2015. Traders within a defined boundary within the town centre will be able to apply for grants of up to £2,000 to improve their shop's appearance. Grants of 50 per cent will be available to shop and business owners, with the balance to be paid by the shop or business owner.

Rossendale Borough Council has provided £100,000 of funding through Haslingden Task Force to provide a catalyst to develop regeneration initiatives in Haslingden, including the shop front improvement scheme.

Both of these schemes are applicable to the required improvements to the shops and businesses on the old High Street.

Sefton Park, Liverpool

Sefton Park and Stanley Parks in Liverpool both host a number of events throughout the summer months. Sefton Park is operated by Liverpool City Council. It covers approximately 200 acres and is Grade I Listed by English Heritage. As well as a boating lake and a café, the Park is home to the Grade II listed Sefton Park Palm House. This is maintained by the registered charity, the Sefton Park Palm House Preservation Trust. The Trust raises all its own income. This covers the running costs, together with an annual contribution to Liverpool City Council towards the Building Maintenance of the Palm House. The Palm House hosts a series of events which attract visitors to the Park. It is also open for private hire.

Stanley Park is also listed as Grade II by English Heritage. It contains park lakes, a rose garden, a bandstand, play area. A recent planning application made by the City Council has sought improvements to the Park – including replanting to create walkways, the planting of new trees and removal of dead trees, improvements to existing paths, resurfacing of the existing car parking, new and improved lights and the repair of the sandstone entrances and gates.



Sefton Park, Liverpool

Worthington Park, Sale

Worthington Park benefits from the work of the active Friends of Worthington Park group which were established to work with Trafford Council, the local community and other partners to safeguard the park and enhance the facilities. The park has been redeveloped with the planting of 27,000 native trees, using late Victorian planting styles. A 'tree trail' leaflet, produced by the Friends of the Park group, celebrates and promotes this feature of the park. An open air green gym was also opened on January 2011. This was another initiative by the Friends of the Park group. It was supported by the Community Spaces open grants programme that is managed by Groundwork UK and is funded through the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces initiative. The landscape work was undertaken by Trafford Council. The Group also organises events to attract visitors and enhance the park. These have included Dog Shows, 'Carols around the Tree' and park clean-up sessions.



Worthington Park, Sale

07 // New Road 'Waterfront' and Whitegate

7.1 This area is characterised by industrial uses and a number of vacant sites at the southern end of New Road towards the gyratory. Residential allocations NTC 5 and NTC 6 are included and are currently the subject of a recent planning permission submitted by Wulvern Housing for residential housing.

7.2 The location should be considered as one integrated housing, leisure, mixed use and environmental project.

7.3 Residential allocations NTC 1 and NTC 2 which includes open countryside adjacent to the Verdin playing fields are also considered in proposals.

Proposals

7.4 There are several pub/restaurants located in the immediate area however, there is scope for a national pub operator on the site allocated TC 10 in the neighbourhood plan which is a prominent location by the River Weaver. A hotel development is considered on part of the site allocated as TC9 in the neighbourhood plan. Some small top up shopping would also be encouraged. These uses would strengthen and enhance this area as the 'leisure gateway' to Winsford.

7.5 Residential-led development on New Road should deliver the step change in quality of higher value market housing delivery in Winsford that is necessary to raise the profile and leans away from 'hum drum' development that has previously characterised housing development in the area. Residential development here should be integrated with the surrounding areas and those of the Open Countryside allocations of NTC 1 and NTC 2 of the neighbourhood plan, to create a 'Walkable Neighbourhood' with improved connections to the town centre and the waterfront leisure uses.

7.6 It is considered that there is scope for bespoke/self-build units on land that is currently allocated for housing in the neighbourhood plan (NTC 1 and NTC 2). Proposals should also consider improvements to the existing playing fields to the rear of the Verdin Exchange.

Design and Development Principles

- High quality residential and mixed use development (hotel, pub, retail) should front onto and open up the Waterfront, taking full advantage of its location and provide a high quality frontage in what is considered a key gateway into Winsford.
- The opportunity should be taken to provide plots for bespoke higher value, larger housing with each home being self-designed by individuals. The scheme should be taken forward in a consistent joined up manner.
- New development should consider contributions to be made to improve the Verdin Playing Fields making that accessible throughout the year, potentially through the implementation of all-weather facilities.
- New play areas and facilities to serve new and existing residents in the area.
- A new link road should be created between New Road and new housing on existing allocations adjacent to the open countryside.
- New pedestrian and cycling connections between new housing and the town centre should be established through improved cycleways and walkways that are safe and well lit, encouraging new residents and existing residents from housing north of the playing to access facilities and services of old High Street and the retail core and to link in with existing green infrastructure.

- Accessibility and connectivity to the riverside should be enhanced through improvements to the river banks, better lighting, and to cycle and pedestrian paths alongside the river which then connect to New Road and the Bottom Flash.
- Landscaping and improved pedestrian and cycle routes on the gyratory that link improvements to the green infrastructure along the river to the Greenway from the Bottom Flash and Town Park.
- Develop the habitat and environmental value of open space areas by making improvements to the ecology, tree planting and landscaping of the area, encouraging natural flora and fauna.
- Improvement to east-west linkages by including a new pedestrian bridge across the river reducing the severance of the river to pedestrian and cycle movement.

Implementation/Delivery Approach

7.7 The Council should consider the appointment of a contractor partner to deliver the key sites within its control (and subject to the outcome of negotiations on the shopping centre). This could take the form of a partnership with the Council taking a flexible view on land receipts, with any value that is generated overall only being taken out towards the end of the development programme or perhaps more likely given the low values at play currently, it may be more appropriate to focus on long term leasehold income rather than capital receipts.

7.8 The Council is looking to establish a Housing Development Company and will play a greater role in getting housing built within the authority. This will involve working with businesses, housing associations and others to provide homes their residents want and need to build strong and sustainable communities.



Figure 13 - New Road 'Waterfront' and Whitegate design concept

Case Studies

Farrington Lodge Estate, Centurian Way, Leyland

The proposal is in two parts. Part one includes the development of 11 detached high quality dwellings in parkland setting having regards to character and materials of neighbouring properties. Each home is self-designed and built by individuals in accordance with a set of design parameters that were submitted as part of the proposal.

Part two is a development of very high quality family housing offering a variety of accommodation. A series of environmental and ecological enhancements are also included with the overall proposal.

Such a proposal would help to raise the profile of Winsford as a whole, as well as attracting a wider demographic to the town centre. It would also enhance the ecological and environmental asset of the open Countryside which is currently underused.



Farrington Lodge Proposal, Leyland

Crosville, Runcorn

Proposals include extra parking; a makeover for the canal banks and bridge; better lighting; a retail, food and leisure complex including a pub; modern affordable housing and more public transport routes via the town centre. These proposals are moving forward in parallel to finalising a masterplan for consultation for the regeneration of the town centre itself, which is likely to include a mix of residential and commercial uses. New lighting and CCTV would also be installed.

This proposal reflects the type of mixed-use development incorporating a watercourse, similar to the type of delivery that would benefit the site on New Road fronting onto the gyratory and River Weaver.



Crosville Proposal, Runcorn

08 // Development Project - Verdin Buildings and Land to Rear

8.1 The Verdin is an important community asset which is apparent from the consultation responses received relating to the future use of these buildings. However the space is no longer fit for purpose to attract new businesses. Redevelopment and refurbishment of the Verdin Buildings could include the Verdin Exchange (including the former gym to the rear), Russell Building and Guildhall.

Proposals

8.2 Proposals should seek to retain the historic value of the Guildhall and Russell buildings and explore the redevelopment potential of the Verdin Exchange buildings to the rear which includes the former gym building.

8.3 Redevelopment of the Verdin Exchange and former gym building to create a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom residential apartments which would be attractive to local young professionals.

8.4 The listed Russell building, and potentially the Guildhall could be refurbished and retained for commercial/community uses in order to provide modern facilities to attract new small businesses and enterprises to the area as well as accommodate existing tenants.

8.5 Recent appraisal work undertaken by the Council considered a number of options in relation to the future use of Verdin buildings, none of which considered any residential uses. A 'do nothing' option would mean the buildings deteriorate further and was considered as the least preferable option. Other options considered the substantial expenditure that would be required to bring the buildings up to modern day standards in order to retain existing occupants as well as attracting new tenants of a commercial, community and leisure use. This work concluded that viability and the costs associated with repair and refurbishment works would determine the future of these buildings. It was considered that a combination of business centre and community use offers the greatest benefit to the local community through the relocation of existing community facilities associated with the Dingle Centre and a number of other community facilities. A long lease to a third sector organisation to manage the facility and reinvest any surplus income for the benefit of the community may need to be considered.

8.6 Land to the rear of the Verdin Exchange which includes the car park, could potentially be included as part of this parcel of redevelopment

of the Verdin Exchange. The scale of development and the amount of land that could be included within the proposal is yet to be determined. This does not include any of the allocations related to open space associated with the playing fields.

8.7 High quality, family homes in this area could be considered on this land where potential interest has been expressed to redevelop this site. Development here could contribute to the regeneration of the town centre.

8.8 A set of design principles have been established and should underpin the delivery of development proposals in relation to the redevelopment and refurbishment of the Verdin buildings.

Implementation/Delivery Approach

8.9 THT Ltd (part of Trafford Housing Trust) has expressed an interest in taking this proposal forward to redevelop the site for residential uses including the refurbishment of the Russell and potentially the Guildhall buildings.

8.10 Funding opportunities should be explored that relate to the refurbishment of Council-owned grade 2 listed buildings.

Design and Development Principles

- Refurbishment of listed Russell Building (and potentially the Guildhall) to provide high quality community, leisure and/or enterprise space ensuring that important heritage characteristics are maintained and enhanced.
- Redevelopment of Verdin Exchange and the former gym to the rear for high quality one and two bedroom residential apartments whilst considering its close proximity to both listed buildings.
- Service and delivery to businesses within the Russell and Guildhall buildings will need to be considered in regards to new redevelopment proposals.
- High quality market housing to the rear with car parking facilities. New housing should consider contributions that should be made to improve the existing Verdin Playing fields
- Maintain public access from Roehurst Lane through to High Street. This is an important linkage for existing residents in accessing the town centre.
- Improvements to the shared area between the Russell and Guildhall buildings, fronting the Verdin Exchange. Potentially to create a more attractive space through landscaping.



Figure 14: Verdin Exchange - Conversion Options



Figure 15: Indicative Layout

09 // Delivery Approach

9.1 This section sets out a series of recommendations that should be taken forward as actions when considering the implementation of the proposal and projects identified in this Development Framework document.

9.2 A comprehensive joined up approach is considered to be critical to delivering projects identified in the Framework for Winsford. The Council's role as freehold owner of key sites is critical. The value of the potential to work with an agglomeration of sites should be exploited allowing value and risk to be shared across sites and importantly higher values through improved market conditions resulting from investment in one site to be of direct benefit to the delivery vehicle through enhanced return in another for example through enhanced house prices. Ideally the redevelopment of the shopping centre would be the catalyst and focal point of this approach (both as a central to the change in market perceptions but also as the key value generator).

Winsford Cross Shopping Centre

9.3 The Council should consider the appointment of a contractor partner to deliver the key sites within its control (and subject to the outcome of negotiations on the shopping centre). This could take the form of a partnership with the Council taking a flexible view on land receipts, with any value that is generated overall only being taken out toward the end of the development programme or perhaps more likely given the low values at play. Currently it may be more appropriate to focus on long term leasehold income rather than capital receipts.

9.4 Ideally this approach would involve the delivery of significant improvements to Winsford Cross Shopping Centre. However, it is acknowledged that this resolution of the shopping centre is complex and this should not unduly hold up the appointment of a developer partner for the wider

strategy. In this context, a partnership approach could include land in the ownership of the Council at Winsford Industrial Estate.

9.5 A similar approach is being taken in the SHARP initiative (Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme) in Flint (Wates are the appointed partner). Works have been commissioned (and funding) to develop 500 social, affordable and rent to buy homes over the next 5 years. The programme also has the scope for Flintshire Council to invest land for the development of private for sale homes and is based around a number of objectives including:

- Delivery of the Programme in a manner responsive to local needs and priorities;
- Quality of Housing which conforms to at least local planning level 3;
- A funding model which provides the initial capital investment for the developments through borrowing; lease back; buy back options or other arrangements to be recouped through increased income from rents;
- Value for money facilitated by competitive pricing; robust and transparent costings supported by open book accounting; performance reporting and monitoring;
- Workforce and training initiatives; Environmental protection and improvements; Development of sub-contracting and supply chain opportunities;
- Increased social capital through engagement and consultation with the community.

9.6 The Verdin buildings should be considered along with the Dingle Centre, Winsford Library, Vale House and other public sector uses and buildings to consider the scope for consolidation and enhancement of accommodation in line with the One Public Estate agenda. New uses in the existing library could be part of this

approach whilst consolidated public service accommodation could form part of, and partly support redevelopment proposals in and around the shopping centre.

The Verdin Exchange

9.7 The Verdin as a part heritage and part community/leisure/enterprise project may be best dealt with outside of this process and seen as an earlier win. Trafford Housing Trust Ltd has expressed an interest in redeveloping the Verdin Exchange buildings and a section of land to the rear for residential development. The listed Russell Building (and possibly Guildhall Building) would be refurbished and retained for community/business work space and offices. The Council should consider funding opportunities relating to the refurbishment of listed and historic buildings.

The old High Street and Town Park

9.8 The old High Street and Town Park are essentially public realm projects not directly linked to development projects. Subject to funding, these projects can be taken forward by CWaC and Winsford Town Council in consultation with owners of properties on High Street. A loan or grant scheme for shop front improvements should also be considered.

9.9 Again subject to funding, the project is flexible in terms of phasing but could be seen as an early win and part of a programme of positive actions geared towards changing perceptions of Winsford through investment on this high profile area.

9.10 A delivery matrix considering all the sites is included in Appendix A of this report.

10 // Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1 The Winsford Neighbourhood Plan, prepared in consultation with the local community and its subsequent adoption following a 'yes' vote at the public referendum, demonstrates that Winsford has a strong community presence. Local people and businesses care about the future of the town centre.

10.2 It is evident that Winsford has some key assets. This Development Framework acts as a guide in achieving the aspirations and objectives of the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan by identifying opportunities for the development and redevelopment of key sites and assets that will enable the town centre to provide facilities that people come to expect from their town centre and the functions that it performs as a place to live, work, learn and spend time socially.

10.3 However it is also clear that central Winsford and the town centre is suffering from a general lack of interest from developers and end users and there are clear instances of market failure which are not allowing key sites to come forward. In general, but with notable exceptions, the demand that there is, from low key, 'roadside' commercial uses and for predominantly lower priced housing which would not by themselves deliver the radical change in the market's perception that is required in Winsford to deliver on both the potential and regeneration objectives.

10.4 Specifically Winsford suffers from:

- poorly perceived shopping centre which sets the tone for the market view of the wider area. A strategy for the Shopping Centre that delivers a significant change in offer, environment and outward perception is critical to the success of the Winsford Vision as a whole.
- an urban form, allied to competing centres, which 'pulls' away from the town centre (itself somewhat dispersed) and does not place the town centre at the heart of the community. This is exacerbated by new housing being developed predominately in edge of centre locations, taking advantage of transport links to the wider region which weaken the link between the town centre and the community.

10.5 If the Development Framework was to respond to the existing market dynamics of the town then it would fail to create the step change that is needed to deliver on the Neighbourhood Plan Vision. The type of development that would take place would be humdrum, rather than aspirational, and in some cases, notably housing, would not come forward for some significant time. Accepting the more utilitarian development schemes that have been muted for key sites would only serve to reinforce current perceptions and preclude schemes with potentially, significantly more regeneration benefits.

10.6 The Development Framework has been prepared on the basis of exploring innovative funding and delivery mechanisms that create the opportunity for transformational developments to come forward in key locations. These will rely on the Council playing a central role. The success of the strategy is also predicated on the development and significant enhancement of the shopping centre – the key barrier to changing market perceptions of Winsford.

10.7 Within this context the development framework has been developed to:

- Revitalise the Shopping Centre as the location for larger format retail, a rejuvenated market and associated community uses.
- Re-establish, but rationalise the Verdin Exchange as a key location for community use and enterprise in part through the introduction of housing as part of the mix.
- Humanise of the A54, including the links to the Verdin Exchange and the old High Street.
- Establish of the old High Street as a highly visible, accessible location for independent business, linking the town centre to the Waterfront.
- Reinforce Town Park's role as a green space and a link to the green spaces and other recreational assets around associated with the Waterfront.
- Establish the Waterfront, including frontage sites on New Road, as a leisure (pub/ restaurants) and recreation (boats, walking, cycling) destination and as complementary to the commercial heart of the town centre.
- Develop New Road, beyond its A54 frontage, as part of a new residential area, with strong green infrastructure and links to the waterfront, well integrated into the heart of the town centre and the new Verdin Exchange.

10.8 This strategy should be delivered with CWaC and Winsford Town Council taking a leading role but with the input of a developer contractor partner able to take a long term view of a number of projects within the strategy and in particular the benefits of investment and developing in the short term to realise enhanced values in the medium to longer term.

Appendix A: Delivery Matrix

Site	Ownership	Proposal	Implementation/Delivery Approach	Recommendations/Comments/Observations
Winsford Shopping Centre	CWaC Council own the freehold and MAR Properties own the leasehold.	<p>Significant redevelopment of the shopping centre is fundamental to the delivery of the regeneration of Winsford, and critically in a change in market perceptions of the town. Redevelopment will be focused on the northern side of the shopping centre as the southern side performs fairly well in terms of the overall health of the centre. This should include proposals to include a clearly defined layout to provide clarity of movement within the shopping centre, a new foodstore, repositioning of the market hall, new larger retail units, improvements to the facade fronting the A54, an improved public realm and shopping environment to provide contemporary shopping facilities for local people, businesses and visitors to the area.</p>	<p>As freehold owner the Council should take a leading role in this. This could comprise working with the existing owners, however with key investment milestones in place to ensure delivery. Alternatively, the Council may need to facilitate delivery by a third party; ultimately confirming the importance of the centre in planning terms to put in place the option of CPO to ensure delivery.</p> <p>The redevelopment of the centre could form a wider part of the key delivery model for Winsford.</p>	<p>To continue to liaise with the existing leaseholder with a view to establishing a back-stop date at which point an alternative delivery mechanism would be considered.</p>
Verdin Buildings and Land to Rear	CWaC Council own the listed Guildhall Building and the Verdin Exchange as well as land to the rear of the Verdin. Winsford Town Council owns the also listed Guildhall Building.	<p>Demolition of the Verdin Exchange buildings to the rear which includes the former gym building.</p> <p>New residential apartment block could replace these buildings comprising 1 and 2 bedroom apartments which would be attractive to local young professionals.</p> <p>The listed Russell building, and potentially the Guildhall could be refurbished and retained for commercial/community uses.</p> <p>New housing (ideally exclusive for private market sale) is proposed on land to rear of the Verdin buildings. The scale of development and the amount of land that could be included within the proposal is yet to be determined.</p>	<p>THT Ltd (part of Trafford Housing Trust) have expressed interest in taking this proposal forward. CWaC to proceed with discussions with Paul Westhead & Steph Everett at THT.</p> <p>CWaC are looking to submit an expression of interest for European funding in relation to the community element of the scheme.</p>	<p>Future use of the Winsford Town Council owned Guildhall Building yet to be determined. To be part of redevelopment for housing or commercial use? Leave alone?</p> <p>Further discussion between THT Ltd, CWaC and Winsford Town Council will determine future of Guildhall Building with the Council acting as partner.</p>
Old High Street	Mixed ownership	<p>The scope for radical development of the area is fairly limited, and indeed not necessary. As a retail destination, it will continue to be secondary to the main retail core, but could, overtime continue to provide a high profile location for independent, and niche retailing and other smaller businesses.</p> <p>The focus for Old High Street will be around public realm, accessibility and visibility improvements to underpin its role. This will involve the clearing of trees and shrubs which is essential to enable the high street to be visible to passing traffic. Improvements to the road, paving and shop frontages will raise the profile of the street. The high street could also play an important role in the night time economy for Winsford.</p> <p>Specific and potential shorter term proposals for the area include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace existing street lights with better, more traditional design • Signage to the high street from the main highway would direct visitors to the parade • Planting, hanging baskets and landscaping • 'Business Board' at entrance of main carriage way • LED tree lighting • Winsford Town Council should facilitate the establishment of a High Street Forum of traders and businesses. <p>Car parking improvements, improvements to retail frontages, outdoor seating to encourage dwell time, and new links to the Town Park and the retail core of the shopping centre should also be considered. These improvements could assist in expanding on existing events and markets in this area.</p> <p>Improvements to the crossing of the A54 as part of the Mott McDonald Transport Study should enable more linked trip to be made between Old High Street and the retail core.</p>	<p>Funding opportunities which include New Homes Bonus has been identified by the Town Council as a source of funding to implement such proposals.</p> <p>Once the CIL is adopted by the Council, larger scale projects which may include more elaborate public realm and potential resurfacing of the road/paving to create a more shared surface, improved car parking and landscaping.</p> <p>It is vital that funding is identified to improve the frontages of shops and businesses along old High Street.</p>	<p>Identify funding opportunities that could be used to implement shorter term proposals.</p> <p>A detailed scheme should be prepared based on the principals established in the Development Framework. Once CIL has been adopted, funds raised from CIL can be directed to specific projects and concepts for Old High Street identified through the Development Framework.</p>

Town Park	Winsford Town Council has recently taken on the leasehold for the park.	<p>The Development Framework will focus on a scheme that will rethink the function of the open space whilst enhancing the existing links between the waterfront and the town centre. The focus is on a deliverable open space, public realm, play equipment, arts/sports/ recreation strategy and entrance gate to the Town Park, in particular considering its relationship to Weaver Way, the Waterfront and High Street.</p> <p>The topographical 'amphitheatre' shape of the Town Park lends itself well to festival music and entertainment events where the slopes of the park act as viewing areas for potential audiences. The construction of a temporary band stand or stage facility would be required.</p> <p>Design options for the roundabout/gyratory are considered as part of a 'greenway' between the northern section of the bottom Flash and the town park in linking this leisure/recreation area with the town centre.</p>	<p>Funding opportunities which include New Homes Bonus has been identified by the Town Council as a source of funding to implement such proposals.</p> <p>Once the CIL is adopted by the Council, larger scale projects which may include more elaborate landscaping, play equipment, the arts and sculptures (trails) and new pathways for cycling and walking</p>	<p>Identify funding opportunities that could be used to implement shorter term proposals.</p> <p>A detailed scheme should be prepared for bot Town Park and Old High Street based on the principles established in the Development Framework Once CIL has been adopted, funds raised from CIL can be directed to specific projects and concepts for Town park identified through the Development Framework.</p>
New Road 'Waterfront' and Whitegate	Multiple land ownerships which include CWaC, Canals and Rivers Trust, Pochins and various other private sector ownerships.	<p>There are several pub/restaurants located in the immediate area however, there is scope for a national pub operator on the site allocated TC10 in the neighbourhood plan which is a prominent location by the River Weaver. A hotel development is considered on part of the site allocated as TC9 in the neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>Residential-led development on New Road should deliver the step change in quality housing delivery in Winsford that is necessary to raise the profile of the area and leans away from 'hum drum' development that has previously characterised housing development in the area. Residential development here should be integrated with the surrounding areas and those of the Open Countryside allocations of NTC 1 and NTC 2 of the neighbourhood plan, to create a 'Walkable Neighbourhood' with improved connections to the town centre and the waterfront leisure uses.</p>	<p>The Council should consider the appointment of a contractor partner to deliver the key sites within its control (including subject to the outcome of negotiations on the shopping centre). This could take the form of a partnership with the Council taking a flexible view on land receipts, with any value that is generated overall only being taken out toward the end of the development programme or perhaps more likely given the low values at play currently it may be more appropriate to focus on long term leasehold income rather than capital receipts.</p> <p>Appointing a contractor would involve the Council going through OJEU procurement leading to a Development Agreement. However, in practice, starting an OJEU process from scratch would be a time-consuming and difficult process that would be off-putting to the market given the time and costs associated with bidding. The Council might therefore need to rely on the HCA's DPP2. The downside of this is the narrowing of the field and the exclusion of some developers that might be creative and hungry to work with the Council. The restricted field might therefore make it more difficult (but not impossible) to achieve a more ambitious specification.</p> <p>The Council is to establish a Housing Development Company where the Council will play a greater role in getting housing built within the authority, working with businesses, housing associations and others to provide homes their residents want and need to build strong and sustainable communities. The Development Framework recommends that the Council considers those housing allocations within Winsford town centre that would support the regeneration of the town centre such as sites on New Road and the open countryside to the rear.</p> <p>Further detail and case studies are provided in the accompanying Delivery Note prepared by Nexus Planning.</p>	<p>The Council to continue to liaise with Wulvern Housing in relation to the housing sites that currently have permission for housing on New Road.</p> <p>Once the Council's Housing Development Company is established, the Development Framework should provide the basis for housing growth in the Winsford area.</p> <p>On 3rd December 2015, CWaC published a paper titled 'Housing Delivery – Strategic overview and alternative delivery models' (Item 6). It outlines the range of current and potential future mechanisms that are available to the Council in order to ensure new homes are delivered that create mixed tenure communities, assist in unlocking stalled sites and contribute to the growth agenda. A number of innovative new delivery mechanisms are being investigated by the Council to ensure housing of an appropriate mix and type is built out across the borough to meet growth targets and community needs.</p>

