

Sale Town Centre Road Map November 2013



Consultation Draft

1. Background

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Road Map is to provide a clear, overarching plan for the physical, economic and community development activities taking place in Sale over the next 12 months. It will be used to set the priorities for the work of the Council in the town centre, and to identify potential future activity.

1.2 Brief History

The town of Sale is part of the Metropolitan Borough of Trafford and lies about five miles south west of the city of Manchester. Historically, it was part of the English county of Cheshire and its postal address is still 'Sale, Cheshire'.

Sale has a number of important geographical and historical features. The town is linked to the main waterway networks in the North West by the Bridgewater Canal which reached Sale in 1765 on its route to Manchester from the mines at Worsley. The canal runs through the heart of Sale, is home to Sale Cruising Club and offers a pleasant, relaxed environment. Sale is bisected in a roughly north to south direction by the Roman Watling Street, which, today, as Cross Street and Washway Road, forms the A56 main route between Manchester and Chester. Most importantly, Sale lies on the former Manchester South Junction and Altrincham railway line which reached the town in 1849, linking it to Manchester and acting as a catalyst for its growth.

In Roman times Watling Street was a part of the route from Mamucium (Manchester) to Deva (Chester). Until the 1930s, the area to the west of this road was known as Ashton-on-Mersey, whilst that to the east constituted Sale and Sale Moor. Today the name Sale is applied to the whole area, including Sale Moor and Ashton-on-Mersey, although both those names are still in use for particular parts of Sale.

The M60 motorway clips the northern part of Sale on its way to Stockport from the west. Both Ashton-on-Mersey and Sale Moor have their own 'village' centres, in addition to the shopping and other commercial facilities of the main Sale town centre, which lies around the A56, School Road, Ashfield Road, Tatton Road and Northenden Road.

1.3 Defined area

The area referred to as the “town centre” within the Road Map is the area defined as Sale town centre within the Trafford Unitary Development Plan (UDP). This is shown in Appendix 1. It is important to note that the defined town centre boundary may change slightly as a result of the work being carried out on the Local Plan: Land Allocations Plan. However the changes are not expected to affect the principles of the Road Map or projects within it.

The areas that are included in the Road Map are listed below (property numbers are shown in brackets when only part of a road is included):

School Road	Cross Street (2-24)
Northenden Road (2-26, 1-35)	Washway Road (1-23, M&S)
Sale Waterside	Curzon Road
Hope Road (1)	Hereford Street
Broad Road (2-6, Q-Park & B&M)	Hayfield Street
Tatton Road (1-21)	The Square – Market Walk and Mall
Ashfield Road (1-55)	Orchard Place
Claremont Road (2-14, 1-17)	Springfield Road (2)
Sibson Road (Friars Court)	

1.4 Sale Town Centre Partnership

The Sale Town Centre Partnership is a not for profit group that was formed in 1998 to help tackle everyday issues that affect the area and to promote Sale. The Sale Town Centre Partnership Action Plan 2013-15 sets out the following vision for the town centre:

“To ensure that Sale is a prosperous and vibrant town that offers a diverse range of activities in an attractive, clean and safe environment for the enjoyment of the local community and visitors alike”

The overall objective of the Partnership is to ‘ensure that Sale is a prosperous and vibrant town that offers a diverse range of activities in an attractive, clean and safe environment for the enjoyment of the local community and visitors alike’. The Partnership works to do this through promoting and raising the profile of Sale as a place to shop, relax and enjoy; creating an environment to be proud of and a safe and secure town centre. The Partnership is a recognised representative organisation for Sale businesses and is consulted on proposals/planning applications for the area.

Events are one of the ways in which the Partnership aims to increase footfall to the Town Centre. The key events within the programme to date are the Christmas Lights Switch On, the Summer Festival and the Farmers’ Markets which take place four times a year.

1.5 Aims

The proposed aims for the Road Map are to:

1. Identify developments that will realise the full potential of Sale Town Centre;
2. Identify how the retail, leisure and services offer in the town centre, including the evening economy, can be improved;
3. Promote Sale as a place to live, work, shop, relax and enjoy; increasing the footfall of the town;
4. Assist existing businesses in maintaining and improving their business performance and sustainability whilst encouraging new businesses into the area;
5. Ensure Sale town centre is a clean, safe and accessible place for residents and visitors alike;
6. Ensure the town centre fulfils its role as a vibrant social hub for the whole community.

2. Current Baseline

2.1 Resident Population

There are estimated to be 134 residents living within the UDP Boundary area (from an analysis of postcodes and ACORN data). The town centre serves Sale's total population of around 54,696 (2011 census data).

2.2 Vacancy rates

Town Centre Vacancy Rates are monitored on a quarterly basis:

- There are 242 ground floor properties in Sale town centre with 21 currently vacant.
- The vacancy rate as at October 2013 is 8.6%. This has fallen from 12.4% since July 2012.
- This compares very well against both the north-west average of 20.1% and national average of 14.1%.

2.3 Number of new businesses opened/closed

Since July 2012, 13 vacant units have been brought back into use compared to 4 that have closed meaning that 9 net additional businesses have opened during this period.

An additional 4 units have changed use (this excludes businesses that have changed names).

2.4 Proportion of independent businesses

The independent business sector is strong in Sale town centre with around 63% of the businesses being independent.

2.5 Business rates

The total rateable value for the whole of the town centre is estimated to be £8.93 million. The other town centres in Trafford are estimated as follows:

- Altrincham - £25,669,760
- Stretford - £5,250,071
- Urmston - £4,118,570

2.6 Parking provision

Parking is plentiful, and is well distributed, throughout Sale town centre. The majority is within private ownership but there are also a small number of Council owned street parking spaces available on Northenden Road, Hope Road, Ashfield Road, Claremont Road & Broad Road. The numbers of spaces in the private car parks are shown in Table 1 and on-street spaces in Table 2.

Private Car Park	Number of spaces
Q Park, Broad Road	440
Sainsburys	361
The Square	300
Aldi	114
Tesco	244
M&S	60
Total	1519

Table 1. Private Sector Car Parks and Number of Spaces

On Street Car Parking	Number of spaces
Ashfield Road	18
Claremont Road	12
Broad Road	4
Northenden Road	17
Hope Road	8
Total	59

Table 2. On Street Car Parking and Number of Spaces

One particular issue that has been highlighted during this work is poor signage to the car parks. The Q-Park is particularly difficult to get to and navigate from. Combined with the impact of nearby one way streets this can make using the car park particularly difficult for those who are unfamiliar with the area.

Private Car parking in Sale is relatively cheap:

- £2.50 all day in The Square Car Park or £6.50 at Q-Park compared to around £12-18 in central Manchester.

- On Street Parking is a nominal 10p for the first hour and 30p for 2 hours which is the same as elsewhere in Trafford and is amongst the lowest in the North West.
- Supermarket parking is free for customers via a redemption system.

2.8 Crime

Crime statistics for the past two years are found in Table 3. It is positive to note that most types of crimes have reduced compared to the previous year, including the total number of crimes. It is also worth noting that where there has been a percentage increase the total numbers of crime are small, so although the 300% rise in graffiti incidents may appear to be alarming, the rise concerns only 3 additional reported incidents over 12 months.

Performance Measure	2012/13	2011/12	Variance +/-	% Variance
STP3: Total Recorded Crime	351	428	-77	-18.0%
STP4: Serious Acquisitive Crime	13	12	1	8.3%
STP5: Domestic Burglary	6	5	1	20.0%
STP6: Robbery	1	2	-1	-50.0%
STP7: Vehicle Crime	7	7	0	0.0%
STP8: Theft	211	230	-19	-8.3%
STP9: Criminal Damage	23	33	-10	-30.3%
STP29: Violence Against Person with Injury	14			
STP30: Serious Sexual Offences	1			
STP13: Total number of ASB Incidents	124	155	-31	-20.0%
Total number of Fly-tipping Incidents	14	15	-1	-6.7%
Total number of Graffiti Incidents	4	1	3	300.0%

Table 3. Crime in Sale town centre

2.9 Partnership Members

The Partnership has 40 members at present made up of local businesses, schools and charities. The majority of the Members are businesses.

3. SWOT Analysis

A SWOT Analysis (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, **T**hreats) was carried out to provide an assessment of the baseline position for the town centre and the direction of travel required to:

- build on its strengths;
- manage its weakness and address the gaps;
- identify and grasp the opportunities; and
- have awareness of the threats, and manage where possible.

The SWOT Analysis is shown on the following two pages:

DRAFT

Internal Factors

Strengths

Location & Accessibility

- Pedestrianised shopping is easy and accessible
- Good transport links by tram, bus, cycle and car - less than a mile to M60 motorway
- Linked to the main waterway networks in the North West by the Bridgewater Canal
- Large residential populations close by- relatively affluent with disposable income
- High quality housing surrounds the centre with varied housing types
- Lots of low cost private and on street car parking
- Q-Park Multi- storey car park is well maintained, clean and secure

Offer

- Supermarkets – Tesco, Sainsburys, Aldi
- Big retail names present e.g. M&S, New Look, Wilkinsons, Argos, Boots, Peacocks
- Lots of independent retailers
- Good leisure offer with active evening economy - lots of restaurants/cafés
- Public facilities – Contact Centre, Library & Leisure Centre
- Provision for arts and creative industries - Sale Waterside
- The Square – excellent for events and well maintained
- Market 4 times per year in 2013
- Good representation of business and professional services sector
- Presence of a traditional fishmonger and butchers
- Summer and Christmas Events

Public Realm

- Lots of trees & greenery
- Sale Waterside has attractive public realm with seating and views of the canal

Other

- Low vacancies compared to Altrincham and Stretford town centre
- Relatively safe - good CCTV coverage
- Presence of a Town Centre Partnership & Local Chamber of Commerce
- Community feel – people associate with the town centre from all over Sale
- Public toilets
- Taxi marshalling at Christmas
- Opportunities for start-up businesses – Traders Outlet and small unit sizes.
- Nearby green space – Worthington Park (Green Flag status)

Weaknesses

Location & Accessibility

- Traffic congestion at certain times of day – a.m. and post school
- Poor signage – difficult to navigate, particularly to car parks
- Cost of Parking – Competition from free parking at out-of-town retail parks and the Trafford Centre. Private parking is more expensive than on-street.
- Lack of control over retailers' advertising boards on School Road.
- Some pedestrian routes are unattractive, poorly defined and lack clear signage .e.g. link from The Square to M&S.

Offer

- Reputation of night time economy
- Poor mix of retail – certain types of shops missing e.g. men's clothing
- No traditional, independent bakers/greengrocer/
- Too many charity shops
- Lots of discount/budget shops but shortage of higher-end named retailers
- Lack of activity on School Road after 5pm.

Public Realm

- Poor quality public realm on School Road inc. trip hazards and pigeon infestation – poor image of Centre
- Poor quality buildings and high vacancies on A56

Marketing

- Lack of a theme/brand – what is the main attraction, why is it different to other centres?

Other

- Small number of active Town Centre Partnership members and poor business representation at meetings
- Daytime/ Night time uses divided (School Road / Northenden Road)
- Not attracting 'higher-spend' customers in sufficient numbers
- Small size of retail units - difficult to attract named retailers
- Face-to-face charity collectors ("chuggers") hassling shoppers on School Road

External Factors

Opportunities

Location & Accessibility

- Improved signage – especially to car parks & Bridgewater Canal
- Encourage cycling as a mode of transport – consider removing cycling restrictions on School Road

Development Opportunities

- Redevelopment of The Square Shopping Centre
- Encouraging business/residential on vacant upper floors
- Improvements to properties through the Town Centres Loan Scheme

Offer

- Encouraging independent retailers
- Regeneration of Cross Street/ Washway Road
- Pop up shops / other uses
- Increased frequency, diversity and marketing of events
- Bringing in further non-retail uses
- Greater integration of daytime and night time uses
- Strengthening the creative offer based around Sale Waterside

Public Realm

- Funding identified for Environmental Improvements
- Improved public realm linking Northenden Road and School Road
- Improved street cleaning on School Road and Northenden Road at key times of the week i.e. Sat am and Mon am

Marketing

- Promoting leisure offer around the Bridgewater Canal.
- Marketing of Sale and what town centre has to offer
- Pro-active media support
- Encouraging linked visits to other tourist attractions in Trafford
- Encouraging local businesses to work together to add value e.g. Waterside Arts Centre & local restaurants

Other

- Developing an overarching strategy or masterplan for the centre
- Partnership recruitment
- Action to address safety concerns about the evening/night time economy with improved presence of police during evening/night time
- Enforcing legislation on face-to-face charity collectors
- Relatively affluent local population

Threats

Financial Pressures

- High Business rates are one of the most significant concerns reported by businesses
- Economic situation - low consumer spending power
- Changing retailer strategies – Less stores serving larger catchments
- Cost of Public Realm Improvements – limited resources.

Offer

- Increasing numbers of charity shops, pound shops, bookmakers, e-cigs etc. dominating the high street (as in many other centres)
- Further retailer closures increasing vacancy rate.

Competition

- Competition from other town & city centres and the Trafford Centre
- Online shopping
- Trafford has a number of town centres so Sale 'competes' with others for resources

Reputation

- Bad reputation of evening economy

4. Current activities & issues

Note: A comprehensive summary of the actions is contained in Appendix 2.

4.1 Markets

Markets can often be a key attraction for people to visit a town centre and can play a key role in regeneration. They can provide a different offer to the products sold in shops, including the provision of fresh locally sourced produce, and also provide a means of encouraging entrepreneurialism; allowing people to try out business ideas with minimal costs and risk.

Sale does not have a fixed market site or markets held on a weekly basis. However, the success of the local produce and craft markets during December 2012 led to plans being made to host four in 2013. The first three have been held to coincide with Easter, Sale Festival and Heritage Day. The final one will form part of the Christmas light switch on event on 30th November.

Consideration should be given to the role of the Market and the products offered to ensure that it compliments, and is not in competition with, other nearby markets such as Altrincham.

The primary aim of the Market should be to attract additional footfall. To achieve this it is essential that the Market is well publicised using both traditional forms of marketing and social media.

4.2 Reinventing the High Street

Stakeholder Involvement

It is important that all Stakeholders are involved and work together to drive change. A membership recruitment drive for the Town Centre Partnership was undertaken in April/May 2013. A new promotional leaflet was produced, and the Treasurer and Stronger Communities Officer visited each business in the Town on a one-to-one basis. This approach resulted in two additional members joining the Partnership. Events (including public consultations) and newsletters have been, and will continue to be, used as a platform to promote the partnership.

4.3 Independents and Business Support

Independent retailers with local connections generally have a closer relationship with local communities and the local economy. More of the money spent in them is liable to stay and re-circulate in the local area and they are more likely to support other local businesses, compared with national and international suppliers. With many national chains now choosing not to locate in smaller towns it is important that independent retailers are encouraged to fill the space that is left.

Economic Growth

The Economic Growth Team provides advice and support to new businesses that make enquiries. This includes advice on potential funding opportunities, making contact with landlords and agents and often signposting businesses to relevant support agencies and initiatives (either local, GM level or national) based on the specific nature of their enquiries. For example, many people who have enquired about the loan scheme for a new start up business have been signposted to Blue Orchid who offer new start up advice.

A list of available business support for town centre businesses is currently kept by the Economic Growth Team and is circulated to businesses that make enquiries. This information will be kept up to date and made available on the Council's website.

Loan Scheme

The Town Centres Loan Scheme has now been running over 6 months. No loans have yet been given out but there have been 10 enquiries about the scheme to date with 6 still being live.

The funding pot for Sale amounts to £20k. A review of the scheme is almost completed using feedback that has been gathered from potential applicants. The review will make recommendations on how the scheme can be improved and it is likely that the scope of the scheme will be amended to ensure the benefits of the scheme are fully realised and the town centres receive maximum benefit from the available funding. This is especially important as a lot of enquiries have been made but they are slow to convert into applications. A second wave of marketing will then be planned as part of the review process.

4.4 Events

Events are an important way of promoting the town centres and attracting additional footfall. The Town Centre Partnership currently holds two main events held per year in Christmas and Summer. They are publicised through the local press, posters in the town centre and the town centre partnerships.

We Love Sale/Summertime Sounds

The most recent event held by the Partnership was the summer event on 8th June which included dance and music performances in the Square, a craft and produce market on School Road, a canal boat parade and an opportunity to learn about resuscitation (CPR) from the North West Ambulance Service coinciding with the launch of the defibrillators and promoting Sale as a 'Heart Safe' town.

Food Festival/Local Produce

The Square in Sale Town Centre hosted its first Food Festival on Saturday 12th October. The festival saw local produce on sale, as well as some Christmas Gift ideas.

Retail Offers/Discounts

For the last 2 town centre events (November and June) the Partnership has engaged many of the retail businesses in Sale to develop a local discount scheme, to drive footfall and spending on each event day. This involvement has been sought via quarterly newsletters and special 'Get Involved' leaflet drops. The majority of the businesses getting involved have been independents or franchises with national retailers proving to be more difficult to engage.

4.5 Places for People

Maintenance

Ensuring that Sale looks attractive and is well maintained is important to attracting visitors and encouraging dwell time. The main pedestrian thoroughfare running through the town centre is Northenden Road-School Road-Hayfield Street, yet this key route is looking tired and poorly maintained.

Defibrillators

To help to promote Sale town centre as a “safe” location, a recent initiative has been to install public access defibrillators in the town centre to be used if a person in the town centre has a cardiac arrest. The first is located near to the Tesco store. Stronger Communities are working to secure a second location. A free defibrillator training course was offered to local businesses and partners by North West Ambulance Service in July 2013.

4.6 Marketing / Communication / Information

Communications

Information to businesses and residents about Sale town centre is communicated in a variety ways but chiefly through Partnership websites, quarterly business newsletters, social media, press releases, regular business visits and consultation events.

Town Centre Partnerships

Social Media is now very important in disseminating information to both businesses and the public. The Sale Town Centre Partnership Twitter account now has over 1000 followers.

5. Future Opportunities / Actions

Note: A comprehensive summary of the actions is contained in Appendix 2.

5.1 Markets

The three Markets that have taken place so far during 2013 have been well received. Further plans should be made to continue hosting occasional Markets during 2014, the frequency of the Markets could also be considered to ascertain whether there is sufficient appetite from traders for more frequent events. The Markets should be widely promoted to ensure that they generate additional footfall and the local community is able to benefit.

Currently the Markets take place along School Road. The 'Square' in front of Wilkinsons provides an open area that may lend itself towards hosting a Market on a more regular basis and would draw in footfall to an area where there is currently a high concentration of vacant units. This area is currently in private ownership so proposals would need to be taken forward with the involvement of The Square Shopping Centre.

There is an additional opportunity around encouraging shop traders to set up stalls and displays outside their shops on Market days to add to the vibrancy of the Market and ensure that the permanent retailers benefit.

5.2 Reinventing the High Street

Although Sale has a lower vacancy rate than many town centres around the Country it is important that this is tracked and 'future proofing' measures implemented to ensure vacancy levels do not increase. Changing consumer habits, retailer strategies and the threat of online shopping mean that there is a need to adapt. The town centre should no longer be considered as a solely retail space – other community, work, leisure and residential uses must be encouraged.

Landlords'/Retailers' Forums

Setting up a forum for landlords and agents to communicate and share information and explore options for filling vacant units could be a suitable option for Sale. This approach has been successfully trialled by Altrincham Forward.

A retailers' forum could be another option to encourage retailers to work together to come up with and implement ideas which can improve the town. This could be either a sub-group of the Town Centre Partnership focusing on retail focused issues or a separate group, preferably with a strong lead from the retailers themselves.

In establishing these groups there is a need to think clearly about the objectives. In Altrincham the Landlords forum was set up to focus on reducing the high vacancy rates. For Sale, with a lower vacancy rate, the focus could be on getting more people to shop and stay longer in the town centre and improving its overall appearance.

Use of Vacant Units

Inventive ways to ensure use of vacant units should be explored. For example, some of the activities that have been implemented in Altrincham could also be implemented in Sale:

- Window Displays – Independent retailers in Altrincham have created window displays in the vacant Grafton's units on Stamford New Road based around particular themes e.g. weddings/ bridal. A similar approach could be applied relatively easily in The Square where there are a number of adjacent properties that are vacant within the same ownership.
- Arts/Events – In Altrincham there have been successful examples of using vacant units for Photography Exhibitions and a pop up Health and Wellbeing Centre. There is a strong arts offer in the Town Centre based around Sale Waterside, who could be approached to jointly develop ideas to promote the arts. Trafford College may also be interested in using vacant units for activities or exhibitions.
- Pop-up shops – Vacant units could be used to provide short term occupation for retailers trying to test the market or promote a new product.

If a Landlords' or Retailers' Forum is established in Sale then this could make the implementation of some of these activities easier, though it is not essential. Trafford College or local schools could be contacted to see if they wish to become involved in using units for art or educational projects. There are potential funding issues (e.g. business rates for the period of occupation) that would need to be resolved if these activities are to be implemented.

The owners of The Sale Square Shopping Centre would be a key player in any discussions about vacant units and within a potential Landlords' Forum. The Council should meet with the owners to discuss potential uses for vacant units

5.3 Independents and Business Support

Business Support Package

There are a number of activities that could be carried out in Sale town centre that would promote business opportunities in the town and encourage the independent sector. A support package could be developed for retailers that could be tailored individually to Sale. This support is particularly important for independent retailers who will not have access to the same resources as larger multiples. This could include:

- Funding to employ business advisors to give specialist retail advice to assist retailers.
- Extending a skills package currently being delivered in Altrincham with discounted prices for customer service skills. If there is no take-up in Altrincham then it could be considered whether this could be rolled out more widely.
- A campaign to promote the businesses along the lines of the 'Altrincham Originals' campaign.

The Trafford Centre Pledge is a joint project with DWP and Trafford College to provide a locally trained workforce for retail businesses in the Trafford Centre through a Skills Shop . If successful, this local recruitment offer could potentially be extended out to all retailers in all of the Borough's town centres, including Sale.

Business Rates Appeals

One of the most frequent complaints by businesses in all town centres and by those thinking of moving to the town centre has been the high business rates payable for units. Business rates are based on a proportion of the rateable value of a property, which broadly represents the annual rent the property could have been let for on the open market on a particular date, on full repairing and insuring terms.

For the current rating lists, this date was set as 1 April 2008 when the property market was at its peak. Commercial property values have fallen since 2008 and other economic factors have made it more difficult for businesses to turn a profit, however the rates that businesses are liable to pay have stayed the same. This has caused hardship for many businesses and the Government's decision to delay the revaluation will mean businesses will pay rates based on 2008 values until 2017.

Altrincham Forward is working with WHR property consultants to help to develop a collective evidence base to appeal against the value of properties. This is being translated into a fact sheet for businesses to assist those making appeals, which they have to do

on an individual basis to the Valuation Office Agency (VOA). In Altrincham the appeal is based on increased void space and disruption caused by major developments in close proximity such as the Interchange and Hospital.

The case for appeal in Sale is unlikely to be the same due to the lower vacancy rates but the Council should seek advice from WHR in respect of Sale Town Centre to establish if there is an alternative case for proceeding. If there is a case, a business meeting should be organised where the process can be explained and advice provided regarding potential grounds for appeal. Following this, an information sheet with generic evidence that could assist individual businesses to appeal to the VOA would also be prepared.

Small Business Rates Relief Scheme

A further activity around business rates that may assist some smaller businesses would be to identify eligible businesses who have not already taken up the small business rates relief scheme (through the Business Rates section) and encouraging them to do so. The relief for eligible businesses can be 50-100%.

Small Business Saturday

The Department for Business Innovation and Skills has asked for the support of Local Authorities in promoting the first ever UK Small Business Saturday, which will be held on 7 December this year. Small Business Saturday is aimed at raising the profile of small businesses of all kinds, both locally and nationally, and to encourage people and organisations to do business with them. Economic Growth and Stronger Communities have produced initial ideas for this day, many of which focus on town centre businesses including Sale. Activities include raising awareness, business to business opportunities and events.

5.4 Events

Work should continue to ensure that events are delivered during the next 12 months at key times of the year, such as Christmas and Summer. More frequent events would be hugely beneficial to the town centre and local communities.

Christmas 2013

Work is currently underway to plan the Christmas 2013 event which will be held on Saturday 30th November and will consist of:

- Christmas Farmers Market along School Road
- Four hours of local talent performing in the Square Shopping Centre
- A Christmas Lights switch on with local children from Cadman's Dance School, Brooklands School Choir and Sale Nomads
- Father Christmas Boat Parade down the Canal
- Father Christmas distributing gifts on the Waterside Plaza

In addition the following are also happening on the same day:

- 4Manchester Women Christmas Fayre at Sale Waterside
- 'I've Seen Santa Christmas' Theatre Production at Sale Waterside.

5.5 Places for People

Ensuring that the town centre is attractive and provides a pleasant experience for visitors and shoppers is vital to its success. Two major developments have been proposed that could transform the town centre. The Council will provide technical advice and support to potential developers on Planning and Highways issues and the Economic Growth Team will advise on matters such as funding or employment. It is recommended that the Council draw up a Strategy or Masterplan to help provide a detailed planning framework for developments in the town centre to ensure that the scheme links effectively with the rest of the town centre and all future developments are considered as part of the wider vision for the town centre. A comprehensive strategy could help to attract private sector development.

The Square Shopping Centre

As part of their representations on the Broadheath supermarkets during Summer 2013, the owners indicated that they were proceeding with pre-application discussions for redevelopment of the Square Shopping Centre for a supermarket, together with other development including some residential. These pre-application discussions are still open but are not being progressed at the moment.

Environmental Improvements

Proposals are currently being prepared and costed for discussion with the Town Centre Partnership, taking into account the priorities outlined by the Partnership. The proposals are to be funded from the Town Centre Investment Fund using funding for Environmental Works and additional funding diverted from the Vacant Units allocation at the request of the Partnership. Options include:

- Tree management e.g. pollarding, crown management, etc. to try and resolve the lime tree dew discharge problem and trips and slips issues
- Removal/facing of dated, obstructive brick planters
- De-clutter of unnecessary signage and street furniture where possible
- Introduce new street furniture along the centre of School Rd
- Improve signage at key entry points
- Repair existing damaged areas of paving
- Introduction of new soft landscape features
- Introduction of children's play equipment
- Improve Christmas lighting infrastructure

The proposed options are centred on the main School Road pedestrianised area. The intention is to try and create a modern, attractive, legible streetscape, which creates an environment with pavement seating capable of holding events and social interaction. It must be remembered that there are significant limitations on what can be achieved within the financial envelope provided.

£95k of funding has been identified to invest in improving the public space in Sale Town Centre. This is to help stimulate increased business to retailers, and more widespread economic regeneration.

Car Parking

Although the total number of car parking spaces in Sale does not appear to be a problem at the present time, the most significant issues appear to be the directional signage to the car parks, particularly Q-Park, which is the largest car park and also the greatest distance from the A56 (the main arterial route through Sale from Altrincham), the Motorway and central Manchester. The pedestrian routes from the car parks could also be made clearer and more attractive.

A review of the existing traffic signage should be carried out and a strategy adopted for improving signage to the car parks. The good availability of parking should be highlighted in town centre publicity, particularly for events. Where there is opportunity within publicity documents, a map showing parking opportunities should be included. Sale Waterside could include a parking map within their publicity.

The parking section on the Sale Town Partnership website should highlight all of the parking options in the town centre and include a map to show where the parking is located.

Maintenance

Until new proposals for School Road are implemented the area should be kept clean and landscaped features maintained. Utility companies should be forced to reinstate to a high standard after carrying out excavation works.

Cycling

Given that Sale's accessibility is one of its key strengths with the A56 and Bridgewater Canal towpath providing some of the most used cycling routes in the area, there is a significant opportunity to improve cycling access to the town centre. Initial activities that are identified as priorities for action are:

- Reviewing the provision of cycling stands to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in the locations where there are greatest requirements.
- Consider a trial of removing cycling restrictions down School Road.
- Improving signage to/from the Bridgewater Canal.

There are proposals for a high quality cycle parking installation providing swipe card access to enclosed storage and lockers to be undertaken as part of a wider TfGM project. Preferred site not yet confirmed but likely to be either Waterside Plaza or Sale Metrolink station. The facility is expected to be completed in early 2014.

5.6 Marketing / Communication / Information

Press

Existing marketing activities should continue. There should be proactive press releases based around key achievements and opportunities. Key milestones should be identified well in advance so that the communications can be issued quickly when required.

Websites

Information on the Town Centre Partnership and Council websites should be reviewed and developed to ensure they are useful and relevant to users and kept up to date.

There could be pages within the Business section of the Council's newly designed website that could be dedicated specifically to town centres, both for attracting new investment and the support and services that are available to existing businesses. The support that is highlighted for existing businesses would act as a toolkit for businesses to help themselves and include both in-house and third party support. The website would include links to other areas of the Council's website that might be of use, such as licensing, environmental health and business rates.

Links to and from Visit Trafford pages could attract more people into the town centre by highlighting the Town Centre as part of the wider offer within the local area.

Town Centre Profiles

The Economic Growth Team have now drafted the text for a document that will contain profiles of each of the town centres plus a section highlighting the benefits of what Trafford has to offer business looking to locate in the Borough. This will be formatted to reflect the style of the recently agreed Trafford Investment Pack and used to attract businesses to the town centre. It will also be used as a tool to help promote the Town Centres Loan Scheme.

Performance Dashboards

Following on from a successful pilot of the 'Performance Dashboard' in Altrincham town centre, it is planned for this template to be rolled out to the other town centres to monitor key performance indicators, with work carried out by Economic Growth and Stronger Communities teams. Discussions are also taking place with New Economy to develop indicators which link into work across Greater Manchester.

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6. Funding

6.1 Income from use of display space

Opportunities for income generation should be explored and the money recycled into town centre improvements and activities. An opportunity currently being explored in Altrincham is to ensure greater returns from renting pitches in the pedestrianised area to businesses to market and sell products. In Altrincham, management companies have indicated they could draw in greater income than at present. Developments on this should be closely monitored if it is implemented next year - if this is successful then it should be considered as an option for Sale.

6.2 Sponsorship

Opportunities for sponsorship should be pursued in order to raise money to enable events and deliver regeneration activities. There are two areas for which this should initially be explored:

- Sponsorship of events (including Summer and Christmas) – to enable more frequent or better quality events.
- Sponsorship of Christmas Tree and Lights – The Town Centre Partnership will engage with town centre businesses to promote sponsorship opportunities for Christmas 2013. A letter is to be sent to them to ask for support.

National retailers, including the supermarkets, have proved difficult to engage in the past, particularly in terms of securing financial contributions, but efforts should be made to establish contact with them as key town stakeholders.

Sponsorship opportunities do not need to be restricted to town centre businesses. There may be businesses elsewhere in the town who may wish to contribute in exchange for mention of their contribution on advertising and signage. Town Centre Businesses and existing business contacts should be approached in the first instance.

6.3 External Funding Opportunities

Other external funding opportunities to deliver regeneration and Economic Development activities should be continually monitored. At the current time, the scope for public sector funding for retail areas is generally more limited than other employment sectors, as it is more difficult to demonstrate genuine economic growth rather than displacement of activity from other areas. Also, with moves

towards loan funding in preference to grant, it is difficult to find support for activities such as public realm improvements which do not directly generate a return. The Greater Manchester Town Centres Fund is being set up to get around this issue but currently appears focused on the 8 key town centres in Greater Manchester, including Altrincham. This means that the other town centres are unlikely to benefit in the short term, however there could be future opportunities.

6.4 Business Funding

As part of the business support activities of the Economic Growth Team, advice is given to businesses of all kinds about potential grant or loan funding opportunities that are available at the time.

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7. Locality Partnerships

In Summer 2013, the Trafford Partnership established four Locality Partnerships, made up of Councillors and partners including the police, health services and council, and Community Ambassadors.

Locality Partnerships have responsibility for deciding local priorities and shaping local services. The overarching benefit of locality working is to create a collective effort to achieve the best possible outcomes for Trafford's neighbourhoods and residents. This will be achieved by:

- Increasing active citizenship
- Increasing community ownership of issues and challenges and developing innovative solutions
- Reducing demand for services
- Improving transparency and accountability to local people
- Providing local communities with the opportunity to influence change and commissioning decisions

Sale town centre is within the Sale Locality area. The wards that make up this area are: Bucklow St Martins (Sale); Ashton upon Mersey; Brooklands; Priory; Sale Moor; and St Marys.

The three key themes that the Sale Locality Partnership is focusing on are:

- 1. Healthy Lifestyles** - Increase healthy lifestyles through the promotion of health, wellbeing and sporting provision in the area
- 2. Economic Vibrancy** - Increase the economic vibrancy of Sale through the profiling of events **and** signposting people to services particularly debt advice; employment and volunteering opportunities
- 3. Community Spirit and Fun** - Give a platform for community and voluntary groups, increase a feeling of community spirit in the Sale area and get more citizens involved in the work of the Board and other community projects

The Sale Locality Partnership has identified the need to focus on the town centre as a matter of priority and is planning an engagement event in Sale town centre in March 2014 that will focus on these key themes. Appendix 2 provides a summary of the projects and activities within this report with each of the activities linked to these themes.

Locality Partnerships will evolve over time and it is envisaged that, in the long term, they may take on devolved services and will influence the resource allocation of an area. They therefore have an important role to play in determining the future of town centres.

8. Governance Structures and Monitoring

8.1 Partnerships

There are now less resources within the public sector to implement improvements than there have been in the past. Therefore it is important to ensure that all stakeholders, particularly businesses and property owners, are involved in the delivering activity in Sale town centre. The Landlords' and Retailers' Forums discussed in Section 5.2 are examples of this approach.

The Stronger Communities Team will continue to source and secure new members to join the Partnership. It is clear that the Sale Town Centre Partnership needs more business representation so active recruitment campaigns should continue. Regular update newsletters should continue to provide information on progress and opportunities.

It is also important to show that the Partnership is a “doing group”. A key project undertaken in 2012/13 was the installation of public access defibrillators in the town centre and a training session for businesses was arranged. One activity arranged by the Partnership was an Employment Law session hosted by ACAS in October 2013. This was free for members with a small charge for other businesses. Hosting events like these can help to demonstrate the benefits of being in the town centre partnership.

Plans were made in early 2013 to use the proposed regeneration of the street scene of School Road to boost the partnership. Although the consultation has been delayed, this could also offer an opportunity to promote the partnership.

The annual Town Centre Partnerships Forum is next scheduled for May 2014. The purpose of this forum is to allow businesses and external stakeholders from each town centre partnership within Trafford to share best practice ideas and input into future Strategy.

The legal status and structure of each of the partnerships could be reviewed to understand what the best approach is to deliver action. For example there may be financial advantages to gaining charitable status e.g. a development trust with charitable status could get rates relief if the partnerships were to take on responsibility for pop-up shops.

The Management Group of Sale Town Centre Partnership could be strengthened with more targeted recruitment of local figureheads and stakeholders with a range of specialist skills.

8.2 Private Sector Income

In order to deliver a greater level of improvements and activities to help to promote the town centre with limited public sector resources, it is imperative that contributions are secured from the private sector. Businesses could be asked to contribute on a voluntary or compulsory basis but either route might be difficult to implement because of the challenging conditions that retailers currently face, meaning that businesses may feel they don't have spare money to contribute. Therefore a strong case would need to be made about the value they would get from the funding invested and how the businesses would benefit.

In some areas private sector contributions to town centre improvements have been made cost neutral through membership benefits such as reduced insurance, waste collection and utility costs as a result of collective negotiations. If similar benefits could be identified in Sale then this would increase the chances of securing contributions.

Voluntary contributions

Businesses could be asked to pay voluntarily into a fund perhaps as a membership fee, where there would be clearly defined activities implemented using the funding.

The success of the scheme may be limited because of the difficulties in persuading businesses to pay into a fund where not every business would contribute and those who don't pay might receive benefits. Additionally, if businesses are able to opt-out then this reduces the scope for income generation.

Voluntary contributions may be more effective for smaller projects where there may be some goodwill involved e.g. Christmas Tree and Lights, or where individual businesses gain some recognition of their contributions through sponsorship opportunities.

Business Improvement District

The Altrincham Forward model of governance and generating sustainable income could provide potential options for other towns within Trafford, including Sale. It should be clearer what the chances of success of a potential Business Improvement District (BID) in Altrincham town centre might be in the next 12-18 months and it should then be considered whether this approach is suitable for other town centres. A significant issue with this approach would be the considerable resource requirements (particularly officer time) to set up a BID.

A BID is a flexible funding mechanism to improve or manage a clearly defined commercial area. It places an additional levy on all ratepayers following a majority vote. If the vote achieves both a majority in terms of numbers of ratepayers and the proportion of the rateable value, then it becomes mandatory on all ratepayers within the defined area. The BID levy is on the occupier rather than the owner for occupied properties so if the property is unoccupied the landlord is required to pay. A BID can last for up to 5 years and businesses may vote to renew their BIDs once the initial period has elapsed and this has happened in many areas.

Legislation allows any *additional* functions to be funded by the BID (i.e. those that are not statutory functions of the local authority). Marketing and Events, Crime Prevention, Public Realm Enhancement, Transport, Environmental and Carbon Reduction and Cleaning are some of the most popular activities implemented through BIDs.

Based on a business rates levy of 1-2% of the rateable value which is typical of BIDs in other areas, a Sale town centre BID would have the potential to generate between £89,300 and £179,600 per annum before administration costs are taken into consideration.

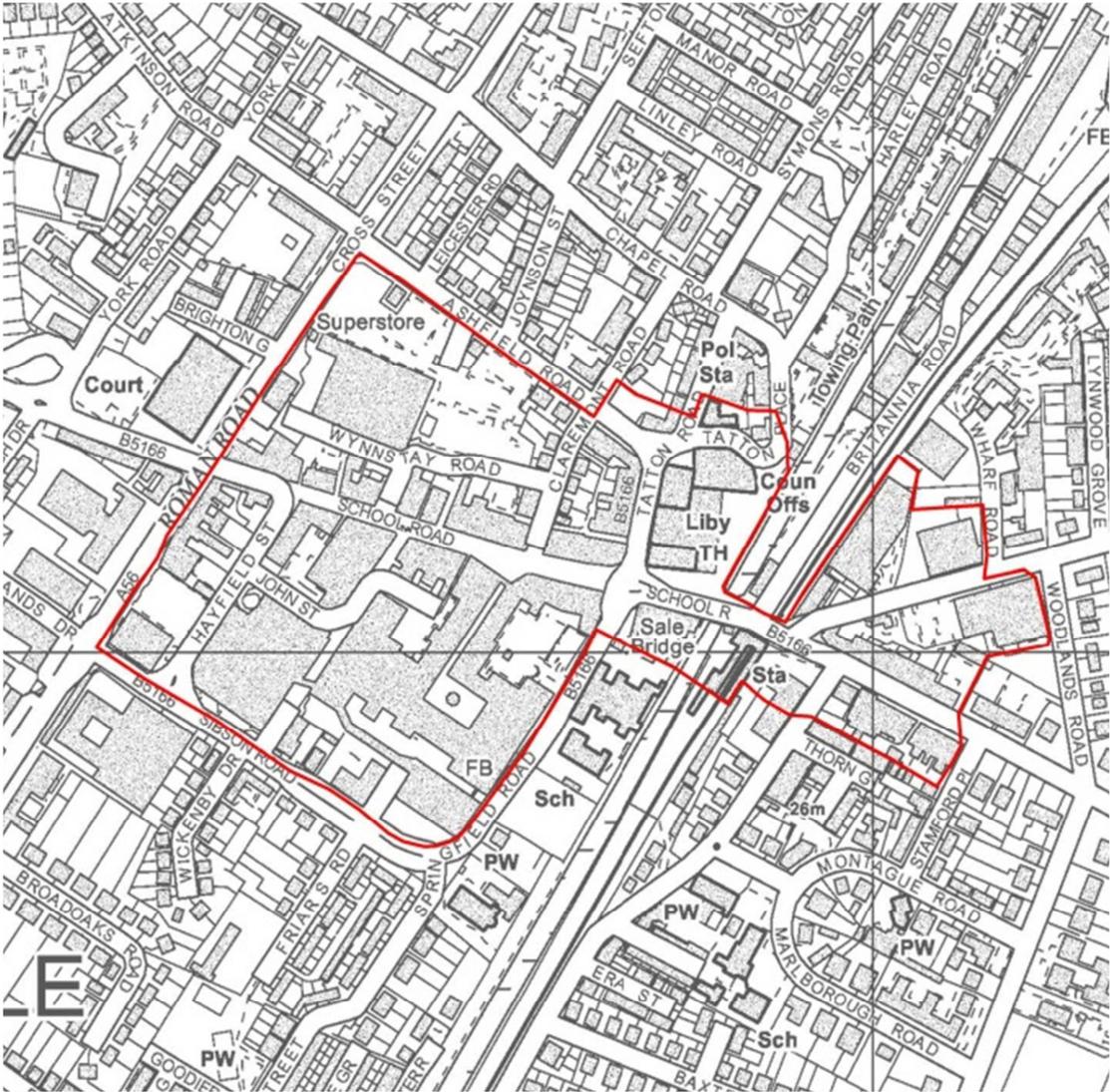
Some potential issues with the BID approach in relation to Sale that would need to be overcome are:

- Businesses within the Square Shopping Centre will already pay a service charge which covers some of the activities a BID might fund, therefore they may see it as a duplication of payment.
- The Supermarkets make up a large proportion of the rateable value within the town centre so have a lot of power in terms of influencing the vote. Therefore for the BID to be successful the supermarkets would need to be supportive of the BID.

9.0 Conclusion/Next Steps

The Sale Town Centre Roadmap provides an overarching plan for the physical, economic and community development activities taking place in Sale over the next 12 months. It will also form the basis for the production of a Delivery Plan to set out future activity in the town centre which will be prepared in conjunction with the Sale Town Centre Partnership and other key stakeholders.

Appendix 1 – UDP Boundary



Appendix 2 – Comprehensive Summary of Activities

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