

# Altrincham town centre neighbourhood business plan 2015 to 2030

Adopted November 2017



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Altrincham**

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**Altrincham  
town centre  
neighbourhood  
business plan  
2015 to 2030**

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# Chapter 1 – Background

## 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 When the Government approved the Localism Act in 2011, it presented the opportunity for the community of Altrincham to take responsibility for the future planning of its own town centre. The decline of High Streets across the country in the early years of the 21st century, the result of a unique combination of largely unforeseen factors, prompted the decision that a Neighbourhood Plan for the town centre, prepared by the local community, was required to address the decline and provide a locally driven, up to date planning context for the successful evolution and development of the town. In the autumn of 2013, that process began.

## 1.2 Why Was the Plan Needed?

1.2.1 Three factors came together in 2008 which had a significant negative impact on the role of High Streets across the UK:

- The development of major out of town shopping centres and retail parks with plentiful free car parking;
- The banking crisis and the subsequent impact on the economy leading to the recession and the austerity programme which together had a major impact on consumer spending, resulting in the closure of many High Street outlets nationwide and the rise in vacancy rates, and
- The rapid development of the internet and the associated growth in on-line retailing. Research in 2013 indicated that on-line non-food shopping expenditure would reach around 40% of total non-food expenditure by 2020, and there is no sign of that rapid growth abating.

1.2.2 The result of all this, coupled with high business rates based on historical property values established at the height of the market, was that Altrincham was suffering one of the highest retail vacancy rates in the country and that scale of decline was a source of considerable concern to all those who traditionally looked to the town centre to provide the services they required. Action was clearly needed.

1.2.3 In parallel with the development of this Plan, a Business Improvement District (BID) was established for the town centre, which became operational in April of 2016.

## 1.3 The Establishment of the Neighbourhood Forum

1.3.1 Where Parish Councils exist, they are responsible for preparing Neighbourhood Plans. Where they do not exist, as in Altrincham, a Neighbourhood Forum needs to be established to produce the plan.

1.3.2 The Localism Act identifies both Neighbourhood Plans (mainly residential in nature) and 'Business' Neighbourhood Plans (to deal with areas which are wholly or predominantly business in nature). These 'Business' Neighbourhood Plans provide for both businesses and residents to vote in separate referenda at the end of the process. It was concluded that the most appropriate form of plan for Altrincham Town Centre (ATC) would be a Neighbourhood Business Plan (NBP).

1.3.3 In the autumn of 2013, a public advert was placed announcing the intention of setting up a Neighbourhood Business Forum (the Forum) and seeking interest from anyone living or working in or using the town centre to get involved. By January 2014 the Forum had agreed a Constitution, including the proposed plan boundary. See Plans 1 and 2 p5 & p6. The Forum also established 6 Principles which would underpin their approach to preparing the plan. These are set out in Appendix 2.

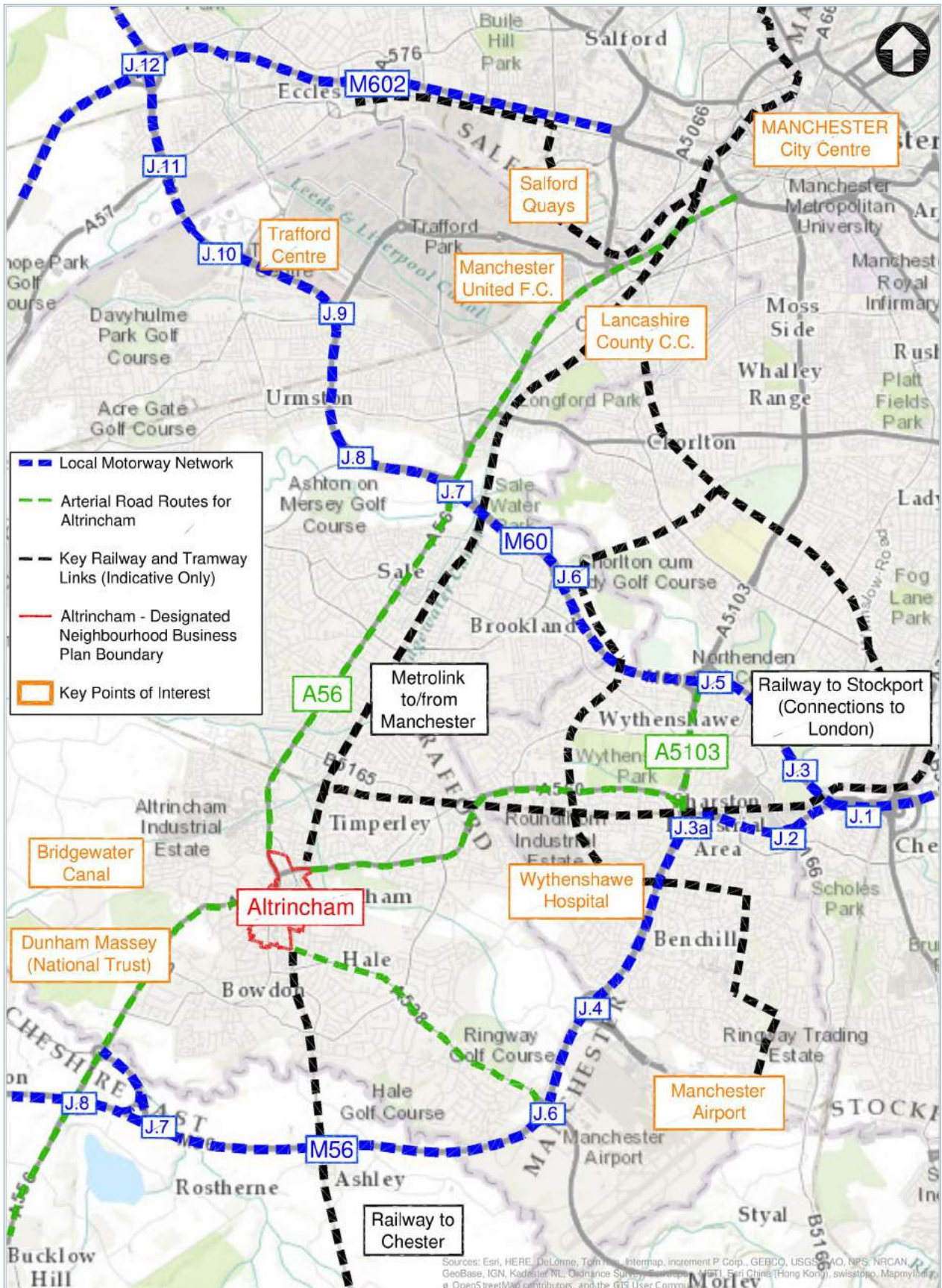
- 1.3.4 The Forum was formally designated by Trafford Council on the 28th of July, 2014 as the appropriate body to prepare the NBP and the Plan Boundary (see Plan 2, p6) was also designated. Membership of the Forum stood at 107 community volunteers at the end of February 2016.
- 1.3.5 In May 2014, the Forum established a private limited company number 9031399, 'The Altrincham Town Centre Plan Limited' in order to assist the Forum in delivering its responsibilities. This enabled the Forum to establish a bank account in order to receive monies and pay for services provided.
- 1.3.6 Details of the officers of the Forum, its Working Group and the Company are included in Appendix 2.

## **1.4 The Plan Preparation Process**

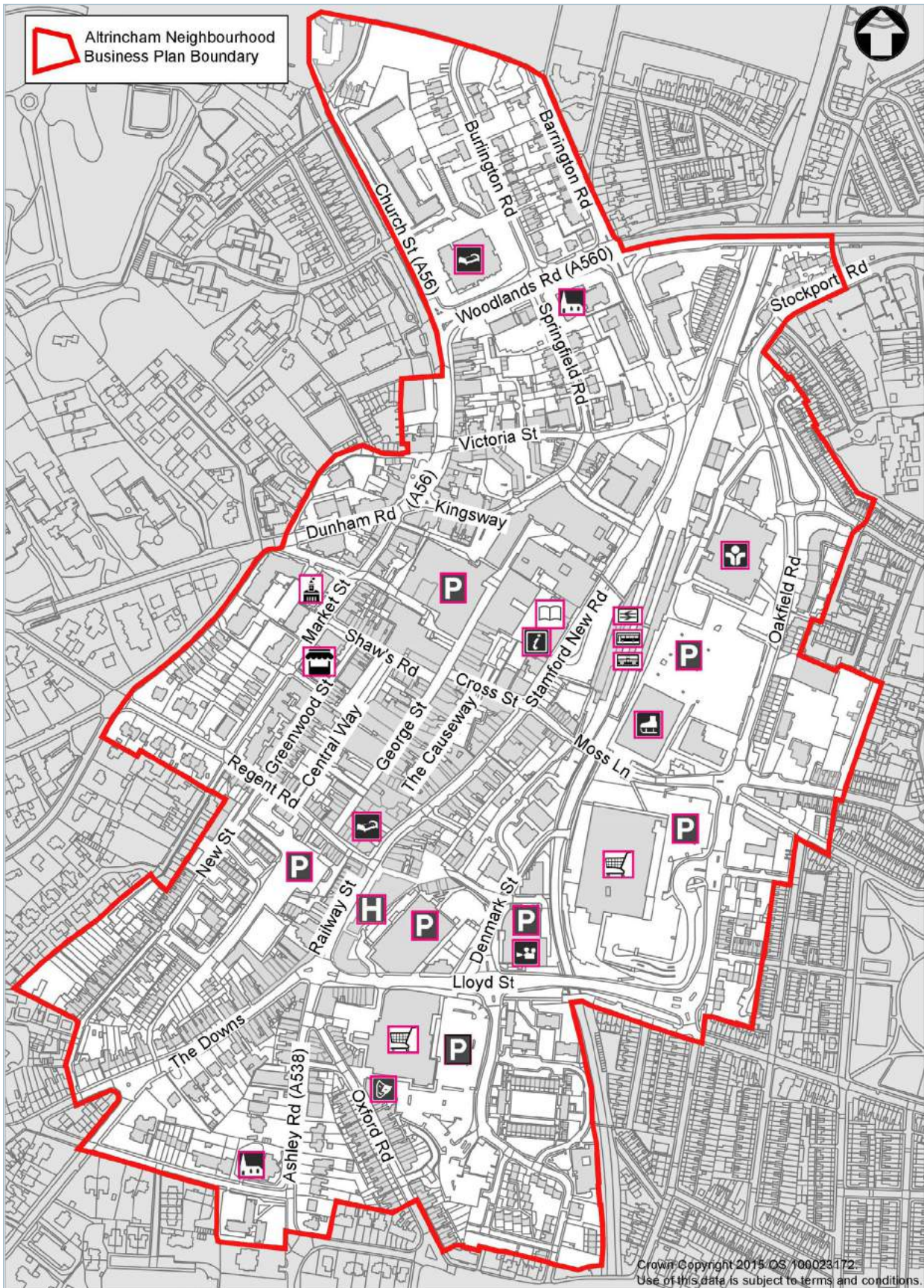
- 1.4.1. The process for preparing the plan has been driven by a Working Group (WG) of the Forum. The Forum spent some time prior to Designation understanding the latest research (see Appendix 1) into the radical impact that the combination of factors referred to in 1.2.1 above and particularly the huge impact of the digital revolution in the form of internet based shopping has had, and continues to have, on the town centre. The Forum has sought to widen understanding of this essential background information as part of the public consultation process.
- 1.4.2 A Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is a community led framework for guiding the future development and growth of an area. In preparing the Plan the Forum is obliged to comply with the Basic Conditions set out in the legislation. A "Basic Conditions Statement" is submitted to the Council with this Plan, see Appendix 4 for a link. This statement demonstrates to the independent examiner that the submitted Neighbourhood Business Plan meets those basic conditions.
- 1.4.3 With regard to the basic conditions, the plan must be in general conformity with both the National Planning Policy Framework and the Trafford Local Plan: Core Strategy Adopted in 2012 (see Chapter 2, Context) and also take account of the Trafford Revised Unitary Development Plan Adopted in 2006. The Plan must also contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and not breach and be compatible with EU obligations. The NP can contain a Vision, Objectives and planning policies and include the allocation of key sites for specific kinds of development. The vision, objectives and policies relate to the use and development of land and associated social, economic and environmental issues. The NP cannot promote less levels of development than is provided for in the Core Strategy but can promote higher levels of such development.
- 1.4.4 Once adopted, the Plan will form part of the Local Development Plan and will be used by the Council to determine planning applications in the plan area. It will also guide and influence future public and private sector investment in the town centre. An adopted Neighbourhood Plan has statutory status which gives it more weight than some other local planning documents such as Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 1.4.5 The Plan's preparation however hinges essentially on the effectiveness of the public consultation process which must underpin the proposals in the plan. This is a community driven plan, so it is essential that it reflects the views and opinions of those members of the community who have become engaged in the process. The nature of the public consultation therefore has sought to engage with as many people as possible in order to reasonably reflect the views of the community, and secure their support for the final plan in the referenda at the end of the process.
- 1.4.6 The Forum decided to adopt a three stage approach to the public consultation.

- (a) Stage 1 was all about encouraging people to complete a questionnaire which enabled respondents to raise all the issues which they considered the plan may need to address along with their ideas. There were over 1,400 responses.
  - (b) Stage 2 involved consultation on a draft Neighbourhood Business Plan (NBP) including proposals and options where appropriate in February/March 2015. That consultation also involved encouraging the general public and defined stakeholders to complete a questionnaire and there were over 600 responses.
  - (c) Stage 3 involved the Draft Final Neighbourhood Business Plan being the subject of a formal 6 week public consultation (in compliance with Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations, 2012) from mid-January to the end of February 2016. There were 220 questionnaire responses containing a total of 458 specific comments and 8 other written responses, all of which were considered by the Forum before finalising the Plan for submission.
- 1.4.7 A "Consultation Statement" detailing all three stages of consultation is submitted to the Council with this Plan, see Appendix 4 for a link.
- 1.4.8 Prior to the Stage 3 public consultation a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was commissioned from the engineering consultants AECOM. AECOM provided initial comments on an advanced draft of the draft Final Plan in early November 2015 and the Forum was able to consider the main points raised and reflect them in the draft Final which was the subject of the Stage 3 consultation. A link to the final SEA report is also available at Appendix 4.
- 1.4.9 On receipt of the Final Plan for adoption, Trafford Council is responsible for the next stages of the process as set out in Appendix 2.

# Plan 1: Altrincham Town Centre Wider Context



## Plan 2: Plan Boundary & Points of Interest





# Chapter 2 – The Context

(See also the Basic Conditions Statement – link at Appendix 4).

## 1. The National Context

1.1 Nationally, the National Planning Policy Framework (see Appendix 4 for a link) provides the context for the Neighbourhood Business Plan. The Plan promotes a series of policies which taken together help:

- (a) to achieve sustainable development (supporting the development of the town centre economy; supporting the delivery of more town centre homes; the creation of a high quality environment and encouraging the provision of local services, meeting the needs of the community) providing a flexible context within which the development needs of the town centre can be met, enabling it to respond to changing market conditions;
- (b) build a strong, competitive economy including supporting the development of the town centre office market and promoting the allocation of mixed use areas to encourage flexibility and the ability to respond effectively to changing market demands;
- (c) promote the vitality of the town centre as a vital commercial and economic centre and the social heart of the community, with clear land allocation policies supporting flexibility; strong support for the ongoing development of the market; planning positively for the future of the town centre and continuing to meet the needs of its catchment population;
- (d) promote sustainable transport with the modernisation of the inter-modal public transport interchange; the development of 'shared space streets' giving vehicles, cycles and pedestrians equal priority; encouraging the use of a wide range of transport modes giving people a real choice including providing sufficient car parking in the context of an Integrated Car Parking Strategy to support the varying requirements of the wide range of town centre services, facilities and users;
- (e) support a high quality communications infrastructure, including the provision of fast free WiFi and charging facilities and the application of digital technology by town centre outlets all aimed at developing the concept of the digital high street and providing rapid, easily accessible, up to date and comprehensive information on what the town centre has to offer its catchment population and visitors;
- (f) deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, with land allocated on the edge of the town centre for houses and apartments and encouraging the use of unused/underused town centre space, particularly above ground level and the conversion of mainly unoccupied office space for residential use, even where the provision of car parking is impractical. A target of at least 550 additional residential units is established, with encouragement for that figure to rise over the plan period;
- (g) require high quality design with the establishment of a series of design related policies including the establishment of town centre wide design principles and the description of the key characteristics of the 4 Character Areas in the town centre, all set out in the Supplementary Design Document at Appendix 3;
- (h) promote healthy communities through supporting the development of the town centre as the social hub of the community; providing safe, accessible and pleasant environments; providing the context within which a wide range of social, recreational and cultural facilities and services are provided for the community; giving support to the protection of valued local community facilities at risk and ensuring

that the planning framework is flexible enough to allow the town centre to develop and evolve to reflect the community's requirements, and

- (i) conserve and enhance the historic environment which is particularly important for Altrincham town centre. The recent review of the 7 Conservation Areas which lie in whole or in part within the town centre boundary and the production of Management Plans for each of them, provides an up to date context for determining proposals which impact on the historic environment. These are complimented in the Plan by the description of the Character Areas and the town centre wide design principles in the Supplementary Design Document. The land allocations policy also refers to the need for Heritage Impact Statements to be submitted along with planning applications for the development of defined sites.

## **2. The Trafford Context**

- 2.1 The Trafford Local Plan: Core Strategy (CS) adopted in 2012, provides the most up to date context within which the Plan has been prepared. Chapter 2 of the CS, 'The Profile' (and specifically the "Altrincham and Neighbouring Communities" section) is fully acknowledged but not repeated here. Similarly, the Vision for Trafford is taken as the context for defining the Vision for Altrincham town centre in Chapter 3 of the Plan.
- 2.2 The Strategic Objectives set out in Chapter 4 of the CS (and in particular SO 1, 3, 4 and 8) along with the "Altrincham and Neighbouring Communities" Place Objectives set out in Chapter 5 of the CS (in particular ALO 3, 5, 8, 9, 14, 16, 22 and 29), are all taken as the basis on which the Neighbourhood Plan Objectives for the town centre have been developed (see Chapter 3 of the Plan).

## **3. The High Street Context.**

- 3.1 The need to prepare this Plan was driven by the decline of the town centre from 2007/8 onwards, caused by a toxic combination of factors including:
  - The development of major out of town retail facilities with free car parking
  - The banking crash, recession and subsequent austerity programme and their impact on the economy generally and on consumer spending in particular, and
  - The rapidly increasing impact of digital technology on high street sales, with internet-based non-food sales predicted to rise to around 40% of total sales by 2020, a trend which is continuing to rise.
- 3.2 To counter these external influences, the town centre needs to respond positively, embracing the digital revolution; acknowledging the impact on requirements for retail space; acknowledging the growing 'convenience culture' trend;; strengthening the town centre's role as the social hub of the community and ensuring that the planning framework is sufficiently flexible to cater for changing market conditions in a rapidly changing technological environment.
- 3.3 The existing Core Strategy was based on data prior to the economic crisis of 2008 and when internet based shopping was of little relative significance. This pointed to the importance of preparing an up to date Plan for the town centre which took on board these major external influences and provided a more effective context for the town centre to develop and evolve over the period to 2030.

# Chapter 3 – Vision And Objectives

The Vision and Objectives relate to the use and development of land and associated social, economic and environmental issues. The integration of and interaction between this range of issues, raised by the community as part of the plan preparation process, is of key importance to the overall integrity of the Plan. The Plan addresses all the issues raised which contribute to the future development of a prosperous town centre and defines specific policies which can properly be adopted as part of the Local Development Plan. The Vision and Objectives set out below reflect the range of economic, social and environmental issues raised by the community.

## 3.1. The Vision for Altrincham Town Centre

"That Altrincham Town Centre evolves into an economically, environmentally and socially attractive and dynamic centre providing the widest possible range of high quality services and facilities to meet the needs of its catchment area population to 2030 and that in doing so it builds on its:

- Strategic position in relation to the Airport, Manchester City Centre, the motorway and rail networks and tourist destinations
- History and architectural heritage
- Unique 1290 Charter Market
- Wide range of assets, particularly leisure based facilities, already established

and develops its role as a modern market town, served by the effective application of the latest digital technologies, providing a safe and high quality environment in which all age groups can enjoy the widest possible range of quality cultural events and activities, leisure, retail, professional and business services, in which the community can engage and/or access."

## 3.2 The Objectives

- OB 1.** Secure the highest possible standards of design for the public realm and all new build and refurbishment in ATC including the use of high quality materials and ensuring that the scale and design of (re)development is appropriate to its location and setting, reflecting the character of the area in which it is located, including heritage characteristics and that environmental sustainability issues are addressed.
- OB 2.** Define a more focussed retail core and provide wider areas of mixed uses including retail, residential and a wide range of other service outlets within a revised town centre boundary.
- OB 3.** Review the extent of land allocated for office purposes and the potential impact of changes of use from offices to residential development.
- OB 4.** Fully reflect and support (a) the approved Conservation Area boundaries, Appraisals and Management Plans and associated policies, seeking to protect and enhance the town's heritage assets and (b) the Public Realm and Infrastructure Concept Proposals agreed by Altrincham Forward and the Council but seek to influence the phasing and the detailed design of each phase of these works to reflect the views expressed during the public consultations.
- OB 5.** Build on the success achieved by the new market operator, supporting the development and expansion of

the Charter Market and adjoining public space as a major destination to attract a wider clientele including families and young people and so increase footfall and spend levels across the Town Centre.

- OB 6.** Seek to attract more independent retailers providing goods not easily available on-line, including those serving niche markets and those providing food and fashionable clothes.
- OB 7.** Promote (a) the adoption of an integrated car parking strategy, to include improved access, signage and information, co-ordinated charging policies and payment systems, to maximise the use of all existing spaces and encourage longer dwell times and provision for town centre residents and workers and those using the interchange; (b) encourage the greater use of public transport, cycles, walking and taxis in accessing services and jobs in the Town Centre, and (c) the provision of additional, safe, mainly short stay parking.
- OB 8.** Promote the town centre as a social centre, a family friendly place with attractive green spaces and town squares and a wide variety of service outlets including leisure related outlets attracting events, festivals and cultural activities providing entertainment for all ages (including the younger generation and children) both during the day and in the evening, all in a safe, high quality environment.
- OB 9.** Promote the application of digital technologies in support of the promotion/advertising of the use of town centre services, including the development of a town centre web site; appropriate apps aimed at providing the widest possible up to date information about every aspect of town centre services; the provision of fast free WiFi and charging facilities and the development of comprehensive 'Click and Collect' facilities supported by all retailers including collective joint services offered by groups of independent outlets.
- OB 10.** Seek to increase the town centre resident population both by appropriately located new build and the refurbishment of appropriate existing unused/underused space, particularly above ground floor level in the town centre, with associated development control policies aimed at encouraging such developments.
- OB 11.** As the principal town centre of the Borough, Altrincham will continue to be a key focus for economic growth including offices, high quality comparison retail (supported by a range of other retail, service, and leisure and tourism activities) and other town centre uses including residential.

In addition, the Forum set its own objective for it to produce a plan which is sufficiently flexible to encourage the town centre to evolve effectively in a rapidly changing technological world, while at the same time giving potential investors sufficient clarity and confidence to encourage their investment in the town centre.

# Chapter 4 – Policies

The Planning Policies in this Neighbourhood Business Plan all support the principles outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework and are all in general conformity with the strategic policies set out in the Development Plan – the Trafford Local Plan Core Strategy adopted in 2012 and where appropriate the Revised Unitary Development Plan, 2006 (UDP). The Basic Conditions Statement (see Appendix 4 for the link) detailing the position is submitted to the Council along with this Final Plan and is one of the evidence documents to be presented to the Independent Examiner.

The Proposals and Policies set out below flow from the public consultation on how the town centre should evolve over the coming years and are those Policies which properly fall to be taken into account in determining planning applications for development in the town centre and allied issues covered by the Town and Country Planning legislation.

## 4.1 Land Allocations - OBs 1, 10 and 11 and Policy A1.

4.1.1 The allocation of the two builder's merchants sites on the south and north side of Moss Lane for residential purposes. (See Plan 6 on page 28, sites A and B).

**Site A** – Oakfield Road/Balmoral Road Builders Merchant site. 0.85 ha, identified in the SHLAA as a mix of apartments and houses with a standard density ratio of 50 dwellings per ha – yielding 43 units\*.

**Site B** – Mayors Road/Manor Road Builders Merchant site. 0.35 ha, identified in the SHLAA as a mix of apartments and houses with a standard density ratio of 50 dwellings per ha – yielding 18 units\*.

### Justification

In both cases it is considered that the existing uses and the traffic they generate for both deliveries and collections would be more appropriately located in primarily industrial areas rather than sitting adjacent to existing residential properties. Other uses compatible with housing such as open space could be considered although the deliverability of such a use is not considered to be practical. The allocation reflects the priority in the plan to increase the residential population in and adjacent to the town centre. It is acknowledged that the proposed change of use cannot be guaranteed to be delivered during the Plan period and this is taken into account in determining the target of at least 550 additional residential units (including the minimum of 250 defined in the Core Strategy). Should either or both of these sites become available for development during the Plan period, then the priority for their use is defined as residential. It is judged that the impact of such a change of use on air quality would be positive.

4.1.2 The allocation of land located at Ashley Road/St. John's Road (the former YWCA building) for residential purposes. (See Plan 6 on page 28, Site C).

The site is 0.33 ha and it is assumed it will be developed for apartments at 70 units per ha, yielding 23 units\*.

### Justification

The former YWCA building is located in a residential area not within the town centre boundary and the opportunity should be taken to utilise the site, preferably through redevelopment for residential use. As the property has been vacant for some years, this site can be returned to productive residential use in the early years of the plan i.e. 2015 to 2020.

Other uses compatible with its residential location (eg a residential care home) could be considered if they met a defined need and would be commercially viable. The plan supports the increase in the town centre residential population and as the demand for residential property within walking distance of the town centre remains high, this site offers an ideal opportunity to support that policy and is allocated accordingly for residential purposes. It is judged that the impact of the change from a YWCA hostel to residential on air quality would be broadly neutral.

The site is located in a Conservation Area and lies opposite a listed building, so in developing the site, it will be necessary to conserve and enhance the historic environment and reflect such a heritage asset and its setting in line with the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and Policies D1 to 3. A Heritage Impact Statement should be submitted along with the proposals for the development of the site.

Proposals for the development of the site for residential apartments/dwellings were exhibited for public comment in August 2015 and a planning application was granted on the 10th of March 2016 for the provision of 40 dwellings, in line with the allocation. Site C will remain allocated for residential purposes in the Plan as it has not yet commenced implementation on site.

- 4.1.3** The allocation of the site of the Old Hospital on Market Street/Greenwood Street (see Plan 6 on page 31, site D) for mixed use purposes, including residential, offices, library, community purposes and public open space next to the market.

#### **Justification**

This mix of uses reflects the response to the public consultations regarding the future use of this important town centre site. The site presents a significant opportunity to attract town centre residential accommodation, offices and community space, the latter being at a premium in the town centre, as well as the relocation of the library which the Council has agreed with the developer.

As the site lies within the Old Market Place Conservation Area, the development of this site will need to conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings. A Heritage Impact Statement should be submitted along with the proposals for the development of the site.

In addition to the agreement to relocate the library to this site, discussions are well advanced between the local NHS Clinical Commissioning Group and the developer to establish a Health and Well Being Centre (including relocated GP surgeries) a Pharmacy and a café. Although planning consent has been granted, this proposal is not yet legally committed. If it does not proceed then the allocation for mixed use purposes described above will stand. The matter will be kept under review up to the point of submission to the Council which will reflect the reality at that time.

- 4.1.4** The allocation of the Council owned Leisure Centre site and adjoining land for leisure uses, residential, offices, and car parking (see Plan 6 on page 28, Site E).

The site lies adjacent to the Altair site (which has consent for residential, offices, car parking and leisure uses including leisure based retail) and its future depends on the implementation of that scheme which provides (inter alia) for the development of a new Leisure Centre which, once completed would result in the demolition of the existing Leisure Centre (owned by the Council) and open up the opportunity for new development. The site has the potential to accommodate a mixed use scheme once the existing leisure centre is demolished. At least 30 residential units\* along the Oakfield Road frontage could be accommodated in addition to leisure uses (but expressly excluding A1 retail), offices and car parking.

### Justification

Once the existing Leisure Centre is demolished, that site and adjoining land presents one of the very few opportunities available to provide further short and long stay public car parking for the town centre (see 4.1.5 below) for at least a further 200 spaces, and this possibility needs to be protected and implemented. There is also scope to provide additional housing in support of the policy to increase the town centre residential population and to accommodate further office development (see para 4.8 below) should demand arise.

\* It should be noted that broad density assumptions have been applied however it is acknowledged that at the detailed design stage these may need to be reviewed to reflect site specific considerations.

#### 4.1.5. The allocation of the Regent Road car park and adjoining lands for mixed use purposes (see Plan 6 on page 28, Site F).

This site provides for the redevelopment of the Council owned vacant Regent Road frontage and the adjoining public car park to achieve the following:

- (a) the completion of the commercial (Mixed Use with Ground Floor Active Frontage) development of Regent Road and its corner with New Street including residential above ground floor level. At least 10 residential units can be accommodated;
- (b) the provision of increased short stay car parking (over double the existing capacity of 145 spaces providing c. 300 spaces);
- (c) improved pedestrian (including disabled) access via Kings Court to Railway Street and the new hospital and pedestrian access to George Street, and
- (d) recognition of the important history of Chapel Street.

The form of the redevelopment of the car park should take proper account of the existing flats and the medium to long term potential for their redevelopment for modern housing on a more domestic scale in sympathy with the existing development fronting New Street. The possibility of embracing the privately owned former Bowling Green land behind the pub should also be considered, providing a more useable area for redevelopment along with the establishment of an area of public open space in the new layout, which could be linked to the improved pedestrian access into Kings Court. The opportunity to provide a commemorative public space in Chapel Street should also be explored as should the relationship with Lloyd Square and the potential for it to be embraced in the scheme.

Given the complexity of the site and the fact that several individual parts of it are likely to come forward for development at different times, an overall 'master plan' or development framework should be prepared, to provide an integrated context within which proposals for individual developments can then be prepared.

As the site lies partly within a Conservation Area, its development will need to conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings. A Heritage Impact Statement should be submitted along with any planning applications for the development of any part of the site.

### Justification

The public demand for increased short stay parking provision is strongly emphasised in the response to the public consultations. This follows the very significant reduction in available spaces around the town

centre over the last 20 to 30 years following the development of previously vacant space used for car parking for the Sainsbury and Tesco stores, the Cinema, the Ice Rink and housing, all of which have also increased demand for car parking, coupled with the further reduction (c. 55 spaces) which will result from the Altair development (which will also increase demand) and the growing impact of parking related to the use of the interchange. All of this has placed greater pressure on existing spaces and causes additional car movements across town looking for spaces. Although priority is given in the car parking proposals set out below (see para 4.5) to maximising the use of all existing spaces, Regent Road car park is strategically located to serve the town centre and in conjunction with the completion of the Regent Road frontage to New Street is capable of providing additional spaces and catering for a more pedestrian friendly access to Railway Street and the new hospital via Kings Court. The opportunities to increase the provision of short term spaces in the town centre are strictly limited and this site presents one such opportunity which needs to be protected and implemented in order to provide improved accessibility and to improve the vitality of the town centre.

### **POLICY 'A' – Land Allocations. (Supports Objectives 7, 8 10 and 11. See Plan 6 on page 28).**

**A 1** – The Plan allocates 6 sites for future new development/redevelopment as follows:

**Sites A, B and C** – are allocated for residential purposes. (See Policy H 1).

**Site D** – is allocated for the mixed use development of the Old Hospital site. (See Policy H 2).

**Site E** – is allocated for leisure uses (excluding A1 retail), offices, car parking and residential. (See Policies H 1, CP 1 and OF 1).

**Site F** - is allocated for new Mixed Use with Ground Floor Active Frontage development and residential above on Regent Road and its corner with New Street plus additional short stay car parking (see Policy CP 1). In redeveloping this site, the opportunity should be taken to:

- Improve pedestrian (including disabled) access from the site into Kings Court;
- Improve pedestrian access to George Street;
- Establish a commemorative public space in Chapel Street;
- Establish the possibility of embracing the privately owned former bowling green into the site to provide a more useable area for redevelopment and the establishment of alternative public open space in the new layout ideally linked to the improved Kings Court pedestrian access.
- Explore the potential to embrace Lloyd Square in the overall re-development scheme and
- Secure the development of an overall master plan or development framework, to ensure effective co-ordination of proposals for individual parts of the area

**A 2** – In respect of sites C, D and F, it is important that their location wholly (sites C and D) or partly (site F) within Conservation Areas is reflected in the design of any development proposals so as to conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings and take full account of the relevant Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans and Policies D1 to D3. A Heritage Impact Statement will be required, to be submitted along with any proposals to develop any part of these sites.



## 4.2 The Designation of Main, (Primary) Shopping Frontages and Mixed Use Active Frontages– OB 2 and Policies S1 to 3 (see Plan 6 on page 28)

- 4.2.1 Following the support given during the public consultations and in line with OB 2, the Plan focusses the Main (Primary) Shopping Frontage on the Stamford Quarter, from the Shaw's Road/George Street intersection northwards to Stamford Square and then east along Stamford Mall up to and including the Stamford New Road junction. (See Plan 6 on page 28).
- 4.2.2 Again in line with the outcome of the public consultations, the areas around the Main (Primary) Shopping frontages along the balance of George Street, Stamford New Road/Moss lane, Railway Street/Goose Green/Kings Court, Regent Road, Greenwood Street, Shaw's Road/Cross Street, the Downs, Lloyd Street (part), Oxford Road, Market Street (part), Old Market Square and Kingsway (see Plan 6 on page 28) are designated as Mixed Use with Ground Floor Active Frontage.

### Justification

In circumstances where the overall demand for retail space has reduced and vacancies continue in excess of 15% of all space (and have been at or above this figure for 6/7 years), there is a clear case for focussing the retail core, to create a fully occupied and competitive heart of the town centre where retailers can offer quality and variety and the number of charity/cheap shops is reduced to a minimum. This approach is strongly supported by the public response to the consultation stages. To take no action would perpetuate the current problems and as the impact of the internet increased, so would the problems of vacancies and the proliferation of charity/cheap shops and the overall reduction in the quality of the retail offer.

- 4.2.3 Mixed Use with Ground Floor Active Frontage includes any use considered as a 'town centre use' (including services, retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development) as long as an Active Frontage was provided.\* Although residential would not normally be an acceptable ground floor use, it is an acceptable town centre use which can be accessed from the ground floor.

\* All references to an active ground floor frontage are meant to apply during normal ATC retail opening hours.

- 4.2.4 The provision of an Active Frontage (a term which indicates that the frontage will contain visual material and/or activity which will attract people's attention and interest) is vitally important in a mixed use area which is seeking to attract footfall. Breaks in the active frontage (i.e. stretches of frontage with no visual interest) will deter people from walking past that section. Active Frontage is defined in Policy S2 below.
- 4.2.5 The issue of compatibility between uses in a mixed use area, for example the impact of a proposed night club or a late night takeaway on existing residential amenity, is an important one. The Forum decided to adopt a simple policy of taking decisions on proposals based on the requirement to take full account of the uses that exist in the vicinity of the proposal in coming to a decision. This realistic approach reflects current arrangements, see Policy S3 below.
- 4.2.6 In considering the application of the Mixed Use with Ground Floor Active Frontage designation it has been agreed that it would be appropriate for the Council to update their shop front policy which would apply in this area, in due course. No timetable has been set.
- 4.2.7 The Plan also recognises the importance of the town centre attracting one or more small or medium size convenience stores in response to the growing desire to shift from the one-stop out-of-centre facilities to convenience at the local level, with positive effects on the role of the high street. Convenience retailing at

a more local level has grown steadily over the last 15 years and was sustained during the economic crisis and austerity. This shift in shopping habits reflects a basic change in the assessment of 'convenience' and which links convenience to 'local' and to 'community' giving greater value to authenticity, traceability and sourcing as well as the increasing number of top-up shopping trips and the use of often independent outlets specialising in particular aspects of 'grocery'. It is essential that ATC accelerates its adjustment to this important change in its role and amongst other things attracts convenience stores to the town centre. A small or medium sized convenience store is defined as being no more than 3 or 4,000sqft in size; open long hours e.g. 7.00am to 10.00pm and selling a variety of groceries, chilled and frozen foods, fruit and vegetables, health and beauty products, milk, newspapers, drinks etc.

### **POLICY 'S' – Main (Primary) Shopping and Mixed Use with Ground Floor Active Frontages. (Supports Objectives 2, 6 and 8). See Plan 6 on page 28**

**S 1** – The Main (Primary) Shopping Frontages comprising the retail core, are defined as both sides of George Street north of its junction with Shaw's Road/Cross Street; all frontages to Stamford Square and Stamford Mall, and the Stamford New Road frontages either side of the Stamford Mall entrance (see Plan 6 on page 28).

In the retail core, proposals which seek to maintain and enhance the continuous ground floor active retail frontages will be encouraged and supported. Proposals which would result in non-retail use(s) in these frontages will be resisted unless appropriate evidence is provided to demonstrate that the proposal would result in a positive impact on the attraction of the retail core to shoppers and visitors and thus the experience will be enhanced.

**S2** – The Mixed Use with Ground Floor Active Frontage designation is illustrated on Plan 6 and comprises all those existing frontages which are not primarily offices or residential and which currently provide a range of town centre uses. Ground Floor Active Frontage is defined as any visually interesting display which can attract the attention of passers-by and provide information on the services offered, and is able to be refreshed periodically in order to maintain that interest. Proposals for town centre uses in these frontages will be supported provided that an active ground floor frontage is maintained. The allocation embraces all town centre uses including services, retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural and community. In the case of residential proposals, it would only be acceptable for access arrangements to the units to be provided in these frontages thus maintaining the active nature of the ground floor frontage. All references to maintaining Active Ground Floor Frontages must apply during retail daytime opening hours as a minimum.

**S3** – In taking decisions on proposed town centre developments where there is the potential for conflict between uses (e.g. noise and disturbance; smell and fumes), careful account will be taken of all existing uses in the vicinity of the proposal in coming to a decision. Where the proposal would either be potentially adversely affected by any nearby existing uses, or would potentially have an adverse impact on any nearby existing uses, the extent of that potential adverse impact will be a material consideration in coming to a decision on the proposal.

## **4.3 New Retail Development, OB 2 and Policy R1**

**4.3.1** The Core Strategy provides for ATC to accept an additional 20,000sqm of new retail space over the period to 2026, including the approved Altair scheme. Since the Core Strategy was prepared, the radical changes

that have taken place in shopping habits and the impact on the town centre, throws into question the relevance of the data used to underpin this particular Core Strategy policy. Although the Plan acknowledges the Core Strategy policy, it is considered that the prospect of that extent of additional retail space being actually required and delivered is now highly unlikely.

- 4.3.2 The Plan strongly supports the government's Town Centres First policy which is closely linked to the policy to focus the retail core (policy S1).
- 4.3.3 The Plan also acknowledges that commercially viable redevelopment of existing retail space within the areas of the town centre allocated as Main (Primary) Shopping and Mixed Use with Active Ground Floor Frontages, in order to provide more modern space on those existing sites should be encouraged, which may result in a net increase in retail space on those sites. The provision for additional retail space in the Core Strategy is considered to be adequate to deal with this demand as well as the Altair consent.
- 4.3.4 The Plan supports the development of any further new town centre retail space on any site in the town centre defined as Main (Primary) Shopping and Ground Floor Mixed Use Active Frontages and opposes any new retail development outside of these areas.

#### **POLICY 'R' – New Retail Development (Supports Objective 2)**

R 1 – New retail development will be restricted to those areas of the town centre designated as Main (Primary) Shopping and Mixed Use with Ground Floor Active Frontages on Plan 6 (page 28).

#### **4.4 Town Centre Housing – OB 10 and Policies H 1 to 3; see Plan 6 on page 28.**

- 4.4.1 In responding to the issues facing Altrincham Town Centre, the public consultations gave strong support to the principal of attracting additional residential units, both new build around the town centre boundary and (predominantly) through the refurbishment/redevelopment of appropriate existing town centre buildings, particularly under used and vacant space at first floor level and above.
- 4.4.2 The Core Strategy provides for the town centre to accommodate a minimum of 250 additional residential units over that plan period (to 2025/6). The policies in this Plan will result in that number being exceeded. Although a specific target is set, the Plan aims to attract as much conversion and refurbishment of existing town centre buildings as possible, whilst also meeting the design requirements set out in OB 1. It is considered that at least 550 units could be provided within the plan period to 2030 and that there is scope for that figure to be increased.
- 4.4.3 The target of 550 units is made up of the following figures (as at August 2015) which have been discussed and agreed with the Council. The Council's Strategic Land Availability Assessment applies the following density assumptions which have been applied in relation to the land allocations described in para 4.1 as follows:
  - (i) 36 dwellings per ha for houses;
  - (ii) 70 dwellings per ha for apartments and
  - (iii) 50 dwellings per ha for mixed schemes.

NB It is acknowledged that at the detailed design stage these density assumptions may need to be reviewed to reflect site specific considerations.

1. Since the beginning of the Core Strategy plan period (which ends in 2025/6) there have been 66 residential completions and 231 units with planning consent, giving a total of 297. The Core Strategy provides for a minimum of 250 units in the town centre.
2. The land allocations described in 4.1 are expected to yield a potential total of 124 units although the 61 units relating to sites A and B cannot be guaranteed to become available during the Plan period, so only 63 units have been included in calculating the target figure. ( N.B. Site C was acquired in 2015 and in March 2016 consent was granted for 40 dwellings, 17 more than assumed in the 63 units referred to above).
3. In addition, account needs to be taken of the following:
  - (i) the planning consent won on appeal for the conversion of Ashley House to 32 units;
  - (ii) the intention of the Stamford Quarter owners to convert Clarendon House to at least 42 units and
  - (iii) the current proposal from Merepark to provide 37 units which may result in eventual approval to a lesser number (N.B. Final consent was granted in February 2016 for 27 dwellings, 10 less than assumed in the total below).

Giving a total of a further maximum of 111 units.

4. Finally, other conversions of existing property, including first and second floor accommodation above commercial/retail premises, in accordance with the positive policy included in the Plan to encourage such conversions – will yield, say, between 50 and 100 units over the next 15 years (an average of between 4 and 7 a year). This is regarded as a conservative estimate given the consistently strong local housing market.
5. The total potential number of units (as at August 2015) is therefore 521 to 571. The Plan sets a target of at least 550 units to be delivered by 2030.

**4.4.4** Although the Plan does not seek to define occupancy types which should be accommodated, the Plan would encourage young professionals; those who do not own a car and do not see the need to do so, and older people who would benefit from being located within easy walking distance of the town centre's facilities. Wherever possible, provision for cycle storage should be made in town centre residential development and this should have a particularly high priority where car parking provision is impractical or below otherwise normal standards. The town centre is generally not regarded as the most appropriate location for families with children, however it is a matter for individuals to decide where they should live.

**4.4.5** Where residents do own a car and parking cannot be provided on site, it is for them to decide how best to deal with the overnight parking issue given that much of the town centre is effectively unavailable for this purpose. It is however possible to use (for example) Regent Road CP overnight by parking there before 6.00pm and paying beyond 6.00pm (or parking after 6.00 and leaving anytime up to 8.00am the following morning). The use of existing publicly accessible spaces for overnight residential parking should be discussed and progressed as part of the development of the proposed Integrated Car Parking Strategy with a view to making spaces which are otherwise unused overnight available for this purpose. The Council should take the lead on this. (See para 4.5.3 below).

- 4.4.6 The Plan defines a positive and supportive car parking provision policy which remains broadly in compliance with the Car Parking SPD and Policy L7, Design, of the Core Strategy. Where the provision of car parking associated with the conversion of existing premises is agreed by the Council not to be practical, car free development will normally be considered acceptable in principle. This approach is flexible and supportive of refurbishing existing town centre properties and particularly those above retail and other commercial ground floor outlets in the heart of the town centre. (See Policy H 3). This policy applies within the Mixed Use/Historic Character Area (see Plan 5 on page 40) and the town centre Conservation Areas (see Plan 3 on page 36) within the town centre boundary. Within these areas developers would only be required to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Council why providing car parking is impractical and that car free development represents the only practical option.
- 4.4.7 In seeking to secure the delivery of at least 550 additional residential units, the Plan aims to support the sustainability of the town centre as both a key focus for economic growth and its role as a social centre serving its catchment community. Increasing the town centre population will contribute to achieving this by helping to:
- boost the local daytime and evening economy with their spending power;
  - provide a more developed sense of community across the town centre with a better balance between younger and older town centre users and making the place livelier;
  - reduce travel journeys and cost as jobs and facilities are more easily accessible;
  - support the development of the evening economy;
  - support the development of locally based employment and
  - provide increased natural surveillance and security for all concerned.

## **POLICY 'H' – Town Centre Housing (Supports Objectives 1, 4, 8 and 10)**

- H 1** – In support of the Core Strategy target to accommodate a minimum of 12,210 new dwellings across the Borough over the period to 2026, and to reflect Housing Growth Point Status, the Plan supports development proposals that will provide at least 300 additional residential units in the town centre, in addition to the 250 units minimum target defined in the Core Strategy, a total of at least 550 units in all, in order to support the sustainable development both of the town centre economy and the role of the town centre as a social centre serving its catchment community.
- H 2** – Proposals involving the refurbishment of existing property for residential purposes within the town centre boundary, but only existing first and upper floor space above retail and commercial ground floor uses in the area designated for Main (Primary) Shopping and Mixed Use with Ground Floor Active Frontage (see Plan 6 on page 28), will be supported and encouraged subject to other policies in this Plan.
- H 3** – That where the provision of car parking associated with the conversion of existing premises for residential purposes (within the Mixed Use Historic Area defined on Plan 5 on page 40 and the town centre Conservation Areas defined on Plan 3 on page 36 all within the town centre boundary defined on Plan 6 on page 28) is agreed by the local planning authority not to be practical, development with no off-street car parking provision will be encouraged and supported.

## 4.5 Car Parking – OB 7 and Policy CP 1.

4.5.1 In the Profile to the Core Strategy, one of the defined key issues facing Altrincham Town Centre (ATC) is the importance of ensuring that appropriate levels of car parking are provided. The need for additional short stay spaces; the difficulties town centre workers face in securing a parking space; the increasing demand for parking associated with the use of the interchange and the complex issue of ensuring that full and effective use is made of all the existing spaces, are all emphasised in the public consultations which have taken place. The issue of parking is clearly a major concern both for users and providers of town centre services and activities, and although every effort needs to be made to encourage people to use alternative forms of transport wherever possible, proper emphasis needs to be given to this important issue.

4.5.2 In response to the public consultations, the Plan promotes:

- (a) the development of an Integrated Car Parking Strategy – ICPS - (to include improved access, signage and information, co-ordinated charging policies and payment systems and the use of suitably located publicly accessible car parks for overnight parking by town centre residents), in order to maximise the use of all existing spaces and encourage longer dwell times and provision for town centre residents and workers and those using the interchange, such strategy to form the basis for a Supplementary Planning Document which could be adopted by the Council;
- (b) the greater use of public transport, cycles, walking and taxis in accessing services and jobs in the Town Centre (in line with government policy), and
- (c) the provision of additional, safe, mainly short stay parking in the town centre including for e.g. by increasing the number of spaces on a redeveloped Regent Road site and utilising the site of the existing Leisure Centre and adjoining land, once the new Leisure Centre is built, for a combination of short and long stay spaces, (the latter linked to the use of the interchange) as part of a mixed use scheme also involving leisure uses (excluding A1 retail), residential and offices.

### Justification

This package of proposals in three strands recognises that priority needs to be given to developing a much more integrated approach to car parking policy across the town centre with a range of integrated actions which, taken together, will result in the more efficient use of existing spaces, aimed at alleviating problems faced by those living and working in the town centre and those using the interchange, as well as those seeking to spend time in the town centre to access its various services.

In delivering a more efficient use of car parking spaces and improving the service to all town centre users, an integrated strategy will have the direct effect of reducing the number of car movements across the town centre through improved signing and information and a consistent charging policy; adding to the attraction of the town centre as a well organised and welcoming location and providing a rational basis for applying planning conditions to consents which cover relevant aspects of the ICPS to ensure that its application is consistent across the town centre. The Council will take the lead in developing this strategy in consultation with the other town centre based car park operators. The Forum will support the development of the strategy. In just the same way as the Supplementary Design Document appended to this Plan sets out a series of Town Centre-Wide Design Principles aimed at maintaining the quality of the built environment and protecting the town's heritage, so the ICPS will set the context for providing a consistent, efficient and effective approach to dealing with car parking demands from residents, workers and visitors.

It is also clear that the importance of promoting the use of other forms of transport/movement (in line with government policy) in order to access the town centre is fully recognised. Together these first two strands constitute an appropriate emphasis on supporting and delivering a sustainable approach to the issue. The third strand, involving the eventual provision of some additional spaces – mainly short stay - reflects the public demand for increased short stay parking provision which is strongly emphasised in the response to the consultations. This follows the steady and significant reduction in available spaces around the town centre following the development of Sainsbury's, Tesco, the Cinema, the Ice Rink and residential (on land previously used for car parking) and the further reduction which will result from the Altair development, coupled with the increase in demand which all these developments generate and the growing impact of parking related to the use of the interchange. All of this has placed greater pressure on existing spaces and causes additional car movements across town looking for spaces. Although priority is given in the car parking proposals to maximising the use of all existing spaces and encouraging alternative forms of transport, the opportunity to increase the provision of short term spaces in particular in the town centre is strictly limited and each of the two sites referred to in c) above present an opportunity which needs to be protected and exploited in order to provide improved accessibility and to improve the vitality of the town centre. It is estimated that an additional provision of c. 500 spaces is achievable.

#### **4.5.3 Integrated car parking strategy.**

Following consultation with car park operators and all other relevant interests the Council will promote the development of an Integrated Car Parking Strategy (embracing improved access arrangements; advance signage and information; co-ordinated charging policies and payment systems; the use of suitably located publicly accessible car parks for overnight parking by town centre residents, in order to maximise the efficient use of all existing spaces and encourage longer dwell times and provision for town centre residents, workers, those using the interchange and visitors) which could form the basis for a Supplementary Planning Document to be taken into account by the Council in determining planning applications involving the provision of publicly accessible car parking spaces and the conditions applied to such applications, to ensure that a consistent and efficient approach to managing such spaces is achieved, for the benefit of town centre residents, workers, visitors and the car park owners/operators.

### **POLICY 'CP' – Town Centre Car Parking (Supports Objectives 4, 7, 8 and 10)**

CP 1 – Proposals for additional mainly short stay parking in the town centre will be supported, including a redeveloped Regent Road car park site and the site of the existing Leisure Centre and adjoining lands as defined in Policy A1, sites F and E on Plan 6 on page 28.

## **4.6 Digital Infrastructure – OB9 and Policy DIGI 1.**

4.6.1 The infrastructure of town centres has traditionally been all about physical access by people to the town and goods to supply the various outlets – be that by road, rail, private or public transport, taxi, cycling or walking. Now there is a further critical dimension brought about by the digital revolution which is affecting almost every aspect of our lives. The very technology that has put the traditional high street under pressure through the rapid increase in internet-based shopping, also provides exciting new opportunities through ensuring that all businesses offering services of any sort are utilising digital technology effectively to promote those services. This means that the town centre needs to have high quality 3G and 4G (and

eventually 5G) mobile internet connectivity; that all retail, leisure and other appropriate outlets provide in house fast, free WiFi connections; that free charging facilities are made available and that comprehensive town centre wide information is made easily available for use by all potential customers. With the ability to provide up to the minute information on what ATC has to offer; to respond to requests for specific requirements; to promote opportunities, events, activities and offers; to direct cars to the nearest available car parking space; to provide co-ordinated click and collect locations for groups of independent retail outlets; to provide locations where people can work on-line – the list really is almost endless – Altrincham can embrace and exploit the digital revolution to the benefit of providers and users alike. The key lies initially in getting the basic infrastructure in place so that all these types of services and others as they are brought onto the market, can be developed and offered to attract people to visit the town. Most of these services will be provided by the businesses in the town – it is in their interests to do so. Indeed, if businesses do not embrace and utilise this rapidly developing technology, they are very unlikely to survive. The Plan encourages the development of appropriate town centre-wide digital infrastructure and the provision of fast free WiFi by all those delivering town centre services and free charging facilities for users and seeks to support proposals which will help to deliver and maintain that infrastructure. The development and application of digital technology in support of the future role of ATC is regarded as having a very high priority indeed and that priority needs to be reflected in all the decisions taken about investment and development in the town centre over the coming years.

#### **4.6.2 Digital infrastructure strategy**

**To ensure that new investment and (re)development in Altrincham Town Centre contributes effectively to the provision of the basic infrastructure required to enable occupiers and users of that space to offer appropriate digital services to potential users/clients in support of the development and evolution of the town centre, the Council will work with the BID company and all other relevant interests and take advice from independent experts in this field, to prepare a Digital Infrastructure Strategy for Altrincham Town Centre which, if appropriate, could form the basis for the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document by the Council, to require the provision of appropriate infrastructure in development proposals and be reflected in appropriate planning conditions.**

### **POLICY 'DIG I' – The Digital High Street (Supports Objectives 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9)**

DIGI 1 – Proposals to develop and enhance the digital infrastructure in the town centre will be supported.

#### **4.7 Design and Quality - OB 1, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 and Policies D 1 to 3, G1 and A2.**

- 4.7.1 The Stage 1 and 2 public consultations emphasised the importance for Altrincham Town Centre to offer quality across all aspects of its role in serving its community. Quality in its built environment, its public realm, the services offered, goods sold, events and activities promoted and so on. In doing so, it also needs to respect its built heritage whilst at the same time welcoming modern development which is appreciative of its setting and contributes positively to the street scene.
- 4.7.2 Following discussion with Planning Aid, regarding the development of urban design policies for inclusion in the Plan, it was agreed that a town centre-wide approach was needed which looked at the different priorities for the 4 Character Areas (see Plan 5 on page 40. The 'Mapping Out the Future ' plan and initial town centre-wide and area priorities were included in the Stage 2 consultation and were the subject of an



open Urban Design Workshop (March 2015) attended by over 50 people. From this a Forum Design Group of around 15 architects, planners, engineers, a local historian and other interested community members was set up. That Design Group developed the description of the 4 Character Areas and defined 16 town centre wide design principles. The Group also defined an initial set of Area Based Design Principles for each of the 4 Character Areas which were used as a basis for discussion with the Council regarding the content of the proposed Conservation Area Management Plans. 5 of the Conservation Areas have approved and adopted Conservation Area Appraisals (as Supplementary Planning Documents) and the other 2 appraisals are on course for early adoption. Management Plans for all 7 Conservation Areas are also on course for early adoption as Supplementary Planning Documents, all anticipated to take place by the end of 2016. On adoption, they will be used as a basis for determining planning applications in the 7 Conservation Areas. Policies D1 to D3 below sit alongside and are compatible with those Appraisals and Management Plans.

- 4.7.3 The description of the 4 Character Areas and the 16 Town Centre Wide-Design Principles are set out in the Supplementary Design Document (Appendix 3) of this Plan and which should be taken into account whenever proposed developments are designed and by the Council in determining subsequent planning applications. Policies D2, D3 and D4 reflect this.
- 4.7.4 The Design Group also addressed the importance of developing a co-ordinated and high quality public realm strategy, building on the planned public realm works, Phase 1 of which commenced implementation in early 2015. The proposed phasing of these works are illustrated on Plan A on page 7 of the non-statutory Annex to this Plan and comprise all those originally defined in the Planit and Stockley Report along with Market Street, the southern end of Greenwood Street and Pott Street, Regent Road and the Old Market Place. The promotion of this programme, including the need for additional funding from a variety of sources and the need for further feasibility assessments, is one of the major projects (see the non-statutory Annex attached) which the Neighbourhood Forum will help to promote. The Annex also sets out (a) a programme for the improvement of existing public open space and the development of new areas of open space (see Plan B on page 12); (b) the importance of improving the many ginnels and alleyways (see Plan C on page 17 and Policy D4); (c) the promotion of a co-ordinated signage and wayfinding strategy (see Plan D on page 20) and an initial illustrative network of green walkways and cycle ways (see Plan E on page 22).
- 4.7.5 The initial Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) comments (see Chapter 1, para 1.4.8) made a number of observations directly relevant to the programmes relating to public realm referred to above, as follows: (a) opportunities should be taken to provide 'urban greening' through the application of biodiversity criteria in design policies; (b) the Plan might benefit from a stronger policy on green spaces and green infrastructure and (c) there is a need to strengthen the provision of policies on cycle routes and encouraging cycling. These comments, taken with the work already done and detailed in the Annex, are now reflected in an overall Policy, G1, aimed at supporting the development of green infrastructure in the town centre; embracing the public realm strategy; the improvement and additions to public open space; the improvement of ginnels and alleyways and pedestrian and green routes and the provision for cycling within this framework, all outlined in the Annex.
- 4.7.6. The SEA published on the web site during the Regulation 14 (Stage 3) Public Consultation takes account of the amendments referred to in 4.7.5 and concludes that there is a need to present a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring of the following:
- a) Air Quality – the effect of increased traffic on 2 AQMAs, monitoring Nitrogen Dioxide levels and

changes in traffic flows, and

- b) Historic environment and landscape – the effect on Heritage Assets, monitoring Conservation Area condition.

Trafford Council has indicated that it will be carrying out the required monitoring.

### **POLICY 'D' – Design and Quality (Supports objectives 1, 4, 8 and 11)**

- D 1 – That all new build and refurbishment and the development of public realm in Altrincham Town Centre be of high quality design including the use of high quality materials and ensuring that the scale and design of (re)development is appropriate to its location and setting, reflecting the character of the area in which it is located, including heritage characteristics and that environmental sustainability issues are effectively addressed.
- D 2 – Proposals must demonstrate that account has been taken of the key characteristics of the 4 Character Areas described in the appended Supplementary Design Document (SDD) at Appendix 3 and defined on Plan 5 on page 40, in the design of all new development/redevelopment in those areas.
- D 3 – That all proposed development and redevelopment of buildings and the public realm in Altrincham Town Centre must demonstrate that account has been taken of the Town Centre-Wide Design Principles set out in the appended SDD at Appendix 3 which are relevant to those proposals.
- D4 – Proposals that improve an historic town centre ginnel will be encouraged and supported. Any proposals that would result in the loss of an historic town centre ginnel will be resisted.

### **POLICY 'G' – Green Infrastructure (Supports objectives 1, 4, 8, 10 and 11)**

- G 1 – Proposals for public realm should be of high quality design. Proposals should contribute to the attraction of the town centre from both its catchment population and visitors. Proposals should ensure that appropriate opportunities are taken to encourage the development and enhancement of all aspects of the public realm, including green pedestrian and cycle routes; and improvement to or provision of new public open space. New development or redevelopment should contribute to enhancement of the public realm wherever possible having regard for viability and costs.

## **4.8 Office Uses – OB 3 and Policy OF 1.**

- 4.8.1 The public consultation at Stage 2 placed a particular focus on the office market and there was strong general support for maintaining and developing that market. In the context provided by the Core Strategy, the Forum considered the various comments received including the main factors emerging from the consultations with the various companies directly involved in the Altrincham Town Centre Plan Area office market. These factors emphasised the difficulty of securing funding for new office development and that in the current economic and fiscal climate speculative development was highly unlikely; the negative effect of empty business rates; that the market focusses mainly on the provision of smaller office suites; the importance of constantly refurbishing and adapting existing space to meet modern demands; the impact of digital technology on the design of modern offices; the scope for refurbishing accommodation above retail and mixed use areas in the town centre subject to funding; the importance of an effective car

parking strategy to support the office market and the opportunity to benefit from the town centre's locational advantages including access to the multi-modal public transport interchange (bus, Metrolink and the mid-Cheshire line), the wide range of town centre amenities and the well-educated business and professional catchment population.

- 4.8.2 The combination of these main factors, including the economic and fiscal ones, means that the current market is strong at the smaller offices end; less so for lettings of 1,000sqm+; suffers from a majority of space not meeting modern standards; is only slowly responding to the impact of the digital revolution on office design and the demand for smaller offices and the fact that they are generally poorly served by appropriately located car parks. Overall the market is healthy, but there is no immediate prospect of new speculative space being added or of major refurbishment. The existing office locations, focussed to the north of the town centre, are likely to prove adequate to deal with current demand however, if the economic and fiscal context changes, as it has in the past, demand could well increase given the town's strategic locational advantages. In this situation, although there is some scope for redevelopment in the existing office area to the north of the town centre and in the areas designated for Main Shopping (above ground floor) and Mixed Use with Ground Floor Active Frontage, the only other location considered acceptable lies to the east of the interchange, (in addition to the planning consent for 3,500sqm as part of the approved Altair scheme) at site E – see Plan 6 on page 28, as part of a mixed use scheme.
- 4.8.3 The above conclusions are based on the collective knowledge, expertise and experience which the various consultees have of office development and management generally and Altrincham Town Centre's office market in particular.
- 4.8.4 The Core Strategy provides for ATC to deliver an additional 10,000sqm over the period to 2026 so given the Altair consent, 6,500sqm remain to be committed. As things currently stand, it is considered that this provision may well prove to be adequate to cover future demand to 2030. It is also considered that this provision for additional space would cover any redevelopment of existing accommodation which resulted in a net increase in lettable space. Should demand increase however, the Plan provides for further office development to take place in defined locations.
- 4.8.5 In all, the Plan provides a planning context which will allow the town to sustain a healthy office market, responding effectively to changes in demand and changes in the context within which the office market evolves be that economic, fiscal or technology driven, or any combination of these factors over the Plan period. This view is based on the widespread public support in principle for the maintenance and development of the office employment market, ranging from space for new and emerging businesses, to larger accommodation for established growing companies, to encourage increasing employment and the positive impact on the demand for town centre services which that would generate. It is also the case that the proposed increase in the town centre based residential population would help to underpin such employment growth.
- 4.8.6 Turning to the locational issues, the established office areas to the north and south of Woodlands Road provide significant opportunity for future redevelopment where demand arises and there is scope for a net increase in office space should there be the demand. There is also scope for office development in the areas allocated for Main Shopping (above the ground floor) and Mixed Use with Ground Floor Active Frontages. The only suitably located non office site offering the opportunity for future new office development in addition to the Altair site is site E, (see Plan 6 on page 28) between Oldfield road and the railway. Just as Station House benefits from its location close to the interchange and town centre amenities, so this location offers the opportunity for significant new office development (in addition to housing,

leisure uses and car parking) should demand arise. A concentration of office accommodation around the interchange would be very sustainable, maximising that multi-modal facility's importance in attracting employment and providing a wide range of transport options available to the workforce. It would also increase the town centre workforce with the consequential advantages already described. The Forum decided therefore that given that the Altair site already has planning consent, that site E (Plan 6 on page 28) be allocated for a combination of leisure, residential, offices and car parking.

### **POLICY 'OF' – Office Uses (Supports objectives 3, 7, 9 and 11)**

**OF 1** – If the Core Strategy provision for an additional 10,000sqm of new office space proves to be inadequate, additional provision should be made within the established office areas on the north side of the town centre; within the area designated Main Shopping Frontages (above ground floor); within the area designated Mixed Use with Ground Floor Active Frontages; within the approved Altair site and on site E (defined on Plan 6 on page 28) to the east of the interchange as part of the mixed use development defined in Policy A1.

## **4.9 The Market – OBs 5 and 8 and Policy M 1**

- 4.9.1** Altrincham's Charter Market was established in 1290 and has been a vital focus for activity in the town centre ever since. Today the market is experiencing a major resurgence and the Market House is now regarded as one of Altrincham's main family leisure related attractions as well as acting as a catalyst to improve activity, vibrancy and footfall in the surrounding areas
- 4.9.2** The market and Market House are a major attraction to visitors to the town and its continuing success and development is seen as a critical component in the ongoing development of the town centre over the Plan period and beyond. The Plan seeks to ensure that this significance is both nurtured and protected.

### **POLICY 'M' – The Market (Supports objectives 5 and 8)**

**M 1** – That the Market, including the Market House and the Lower Market, be regarded as a major focus for activities in Altrincham Town Centre and that full account be taken of its significance to the town centre in determining any development proposals which should demonstrate that they do not detract from the important contribution which the market makes to the town centre's attraction to its catchment population and other visitors.

## **4.10 Community Facilities**

- 4.10.1** Objective 2 (see Chapter 3) seeks to define a more focussed retail core and provide wider areas of mixed uses (see Policies S1 to S3) and Objective 10 seeks to increase the town centre resident population (see Policies H1 to H3). Both of these objectives contribute to Objective 8 which seeks to develop the Town Centre as a social centre – a community hub aimed at providing the full range of services for the catchment community.
- 4.10.2** The need to secure the provision of community facilities and safeguard existing valued town centre community facilities is a fundamental requirement to achieving Objective 8. The Plan seeks to safeguard the unnecessary loss of individual facilities delivered by a limited number of outlets and which underpin the viability and sustainability of communities in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (see para 70 in particular). Any proposals which would result in the loss of such a valued local community facility

should be resisted unless clear conditions are met and in implementing this policy the Council will require evidence that not only can an alternative facility or facilities be found within easy walking distance but that there is at least one such facility which offers services and an environment comparable to the facility under threat. The Council will also require evidence that there has been public consultation to ascertain the value of the facility to the local community. If the facility is registered as an Asset of Community Value then the Council will regard this as a material consideration in the determination of any planning application affecting that facility.

**4.10.3** On viability, where the outlet delivering the valued local community service is at risk of closure and adequate alternative services are not available, the Council will require evidence demonstrating that:

- a) the existing or recent business is not financially viable, as evidenced by trading accounts for the last three years in which the business was operating as a full-time business, and
- b) a range of measures were tried during this time to increase trade and diversify use, and
- c) the potential for the property to extend the range of facilities offered at the site has been fully explored.

The Council will also require evidence that all reasonable measures have been taken to market the facility to other potential operators.

**4.10.4** In adopting this approach it is important to recognise that in Altrincham town centre there will often be many outlets delivering similar services and that there will always be changes of use, some outlets closing, others opening as the market develops and the town centre evolves. The issue to be safeguarded against is the potential loss of a valued local community facility which, if not safeguarded, would mean that the service provided would either cease to be provided or cease to be effectively provided in the town centre. For example, if the future of the single post office in the town centre were to be at risk, subject to their being clear public support for its retention, that would be a valued local community facility at risk of closure with no adequate alternative being available in the town centre. Policy CF 1 below is meant only to address the situation where valued local community services are provided by a limited number of outlets and proposals are put forward which threaten the ongoing provision of those services either in whole or in part.

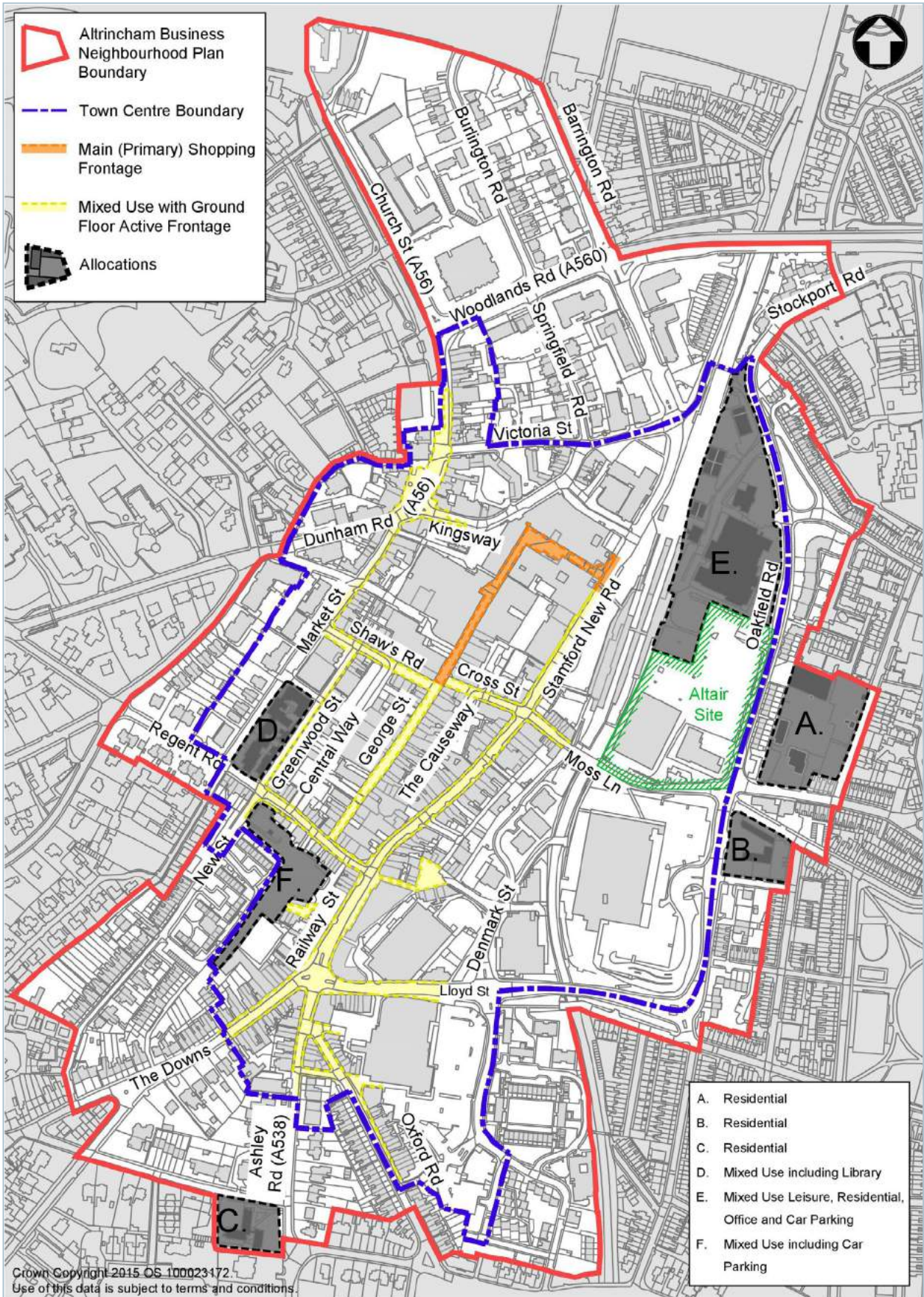
## **POLICY 'CF' – Community Facilities (Supports Objectives 2, 8 and 10)**

**CF 1** – Proposals that would result in the safeguarding of any existing valued local community facility(s) or the provision of new such facilities will be supported. Any proposal which would result in the loss of a valued local community facility will not be permitted unless:

- an alternative community facility which meets similar local needs to at least the same extent is already available and
- it can be shown that the proposal does not constitute the loss of a service of particular value to the local community nor detrimentally affect the character and vitality of the area and
- in the case of commercial community facilities, it has been demonstrated that it is no longer economically viable and cannot reasonably be made so.

'Community facility' is defined as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses, places of worship and other local services valued by the local community and which enhance the sustainability of the catchment community.

# Plan 6: Proposed Town Centre Boundary & Allocations



## Glossary of Terms

<b>ATC</b>	Altrincham Town Centre
<b>AF</b>	Altrincham Forward
<b>BID</b>	Business Improvement District
<b>CIL</b>	Community Infrastructure Levy
<b>CP</b>	Car Park
<b>FE</b>	Further Education
<b>GPs</b>	General Practitioners
<b>HRA</b>	Habitats Regulations Assessment.
<b>ICPS</b>	Integrated Car Parking Strategy
<b>NHS</b>	National Health Service
<b>NP</b>	Neighbourhood Plan
<b>NPPF</b>	National Planning Policy Framework.
<b>NBP</b>	Neighbourhood Business Plan
<b>OBs</b>	Objectives
<b>SEA</b>	Strategic Environmental Assessment.
<b>SHLAA</b>	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
<b>SDD</b>	Supplementary Design Document
<b>SPD</b>	Supplementary Planning Document
<b>The Forum</b>	Altrincham Town Centre Neighbourhood Business Plan Forum
<b>The Plan</b>	Altrincham Town Centre Neighbourhood Business Plan
<b>UDP</b>	Unitary Development Plan
<b>WG</b>	The Forum's Working Group

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# Acknowledgements

The following have given their support to the preparation of the Plan entirely or very largely at their own expense. This Plan could not have been produced without their support.

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Regeneris

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Jon Shaw Photography

Project 3 Architects

Locality

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Mott Macdonald

The Web Studio

The following two companies provided direct funding support to the Forum to assist in meeting the costs involved, particularly associated with the three stages of public consultation.

Petros

New Care Homes.

## Appendix 1: Research Papers & Reports Considered

1. Trafford Council Borough Retail and Leisure Survey, by GVA Grimley, Nov 2007.
2. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Agora ; a New and Better Vision for Town centres – collaborative response to the Mary Portas Review. 2011.  
Co-Produced by: Urban Pollinators; Action for Market Towns; Empty Shops Network; Incredible Edible Todmorden; Meanwhile Space CIC; MyCard; Research OO; Res Publica; Wigan Plus.
3. Altrincham Town Centre Assessment – DTZ for Altrincham Forward and Trafford Council, Sept 2011.
4. Understanding High Street Performance – a Report by GENECON LLP and Partners for BIS, Dec 2011.
5. The Portas Review: The Future of our High Streets. Report by Mary Portas to DCLG, Dec 2011.
6. Retail Futures, 2016. A Report by the Centre for Retail Research, May 2013.
7. The Grimsey Review – An Alternative Future for the High Street. (Bill Grimsey). Sept 2013.
8. Beyond Retail – Redefining the Shape and Purpose of Town Centres – The Final Report of the Distressed Town Centre Property Task Force (Chair, Mark Williams) – Dec 2013.
9. The Past Present and Futures of the High Street – The Bartlett School of Graduate Studies, UCL. (The Adaptable Suburbs Project), 2014.
10. High Street Performance and Evolution – University of Southampton, July 2014. (Prof Neil Wrigley & Dr. Dionysia Lambiri).
11. High Street UK 2020 – Repositioning the High Street. Prof Cathy Parker et al, MMU, 2014/15.
12. The Digital high Street 2020. Report of the Digital High Street Advisory Board, March 2015.
13. IGD Retail Analysis, 2014 ([retailanalysis.igd.com](http://retailanalysis.igd.com)).

## Appendix 2: The Forum & the Plan Preparation Process

### A. The 6 principles established by the Forum at the outset:

1. That a Business Neighbourhood Plan is required for Altrincham Centre.
2. That for the plan to be designated a Business Neighbourhood Plan the area of the plan must be wholly and predominantly business in nature as required by the Localism Act.
3. That the plan should focus on defining the land allocations and planning policies needed to underpin the sustainable and dynamic future of the Town Centre and should not deal with other, non-town centre, issues.
4. That in preparing the plan, it is essential to actively consult with the wider public, who look to the Town Centre to provide a range of services, including jobs, which they can access. The publicity associated with such consultation should encourage anyone who is interested to get involved in the consultation in the most appropriate way for them. During the plan preparation consultation stages no consultation boundary should be drawn which, if it were, could exclude anyone who wanted to get involved.
5. That the referendum for residents at the end of the process should embrace an area wider than the plan boundary, the definition of that area to be informed by data collected during the plan consultation process (i.e. data on home addresses of those participating).
6. That the Forum should formally request the Independent Inspector to determine that a wider boundary, based on the evidence provided following the public consultation, be used for the purposes of the residents referendum.

### B. Officers of the Forum, its Working Group and the Forum Company

#### 1. The Forum:

<b>Chairman</b>	Mr A (Tony) F C Collier.
<b>Deputy</b>	Mr R (Robert) G Redford.
<b>Secretary</b>	Mr. G (Graham) Fawcett.
<b>Treasurer</b>	Mrs S (Sue) J Aldridge.

#### 2. The Forum Working Group (maximum of 12 members of the Forum):

<b>Chairman</b>	Mr. R M (Mike) C Shields, CBE.
<b>Deputy</b>	Mr N (Neil) E. Myerson
<b>Members</b>	Tony Collier; Leslie Cupitt; Graham Fawcett; Stewart Grant; Councillor Michael Young; Robert Redford; Joan Scott; Amy Sharpe; Richard Simon; Damian Utton.

#### 3. The Altrincham Town Centre Plan Limited:

<b>Chairman</b>	Mr. A (Tony) F C Collier
<b>Directors</b>	Mrs S (Sue) J Aldridge
	Mr N (Neil) E Myerson
	Mr R (Robert) G Redford (Company Secretary)
	Mr R M (Mike) C Shields, CBE

#### 4. The Design Group:

<b>Chair</b>	Mrs A. (Amy) Sharpe and then Mr. D. (Damian) Utton.
<b>Members</b>	Virginia Brown; Jim Chapman; Rob Evans; Alex Gavrikova; Stewart Grant; Nigel Hinings; Lindsay Humblet; Sue Nichols; Mike O'Callaghan; Rob Park; David Roberts, Amy Sharpe and Damian Utton.
<b>In attendance</b>	Clare Taylor – Russell and Gary Earnshaw, Trafford Council; Mike Shields, Chair, Neighbourhood Plan Working Group.

### C. The Basic Conditions for a Neighbourhood Business Plan

The basic conditions for a neighbourhood plan are:

- (a) Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood plan.
- (b) The making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.
- (c) The making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area).
- (d) The making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.
- (e) Prescribed conditions are met in relation to the plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the neighbourhood plan.

### D. Trafford Council Responsibilities on Receiving the Final Plan from the Forum

Trafford Council is responsible for the following stages of the process as follows:

- (a) Formally publicising the Proposed Plan for 6 weeks and inviting comments.
- (b) Satisfying itself that the plan and the processes involved comply with the Basic Conditions set out in the Localism Act.
- (c) Appointing an Independent Examiner in consultation with the Forum and then submitting the Plan to that person for independent examination. The Examiner will consider the Plan and the evidence supporting it and make a recommendation to the Council as to whether the plan can go forward to the referenda with or without modifications.
- (d) Arrange the two referenda, one for the general public and one for the businesses in the plan area. The Examiner and the Council will determine the boundary of the general public's referendum which the Forum will request should be wider than the plan boundary, given the role of the town centre in providing services for its catchment population. The Forum will provide information on the post codes of those members of the public who have been involved in the process and have provided this information, to help inform the decision on the boundary. If a majority of those voting in each referendum are in favour of the plan it will be adopted by the Council. If a majority voting in each referendum are opposed to the plan, it will fall. If one referendum is in favour and the other is against, the Council will decide whether or not to adopt the plan.
- (e) Once adopted, the plan will become part of the Local Development Plan and will be used by the Council to determine planning applications and guide public and private sector investment decisions in the town centre over the period to 2030.

# Appendix 3: Supplementary Design Document

## A. Altrincham Town Centre Character Assessment

### 1.0 Policy Context

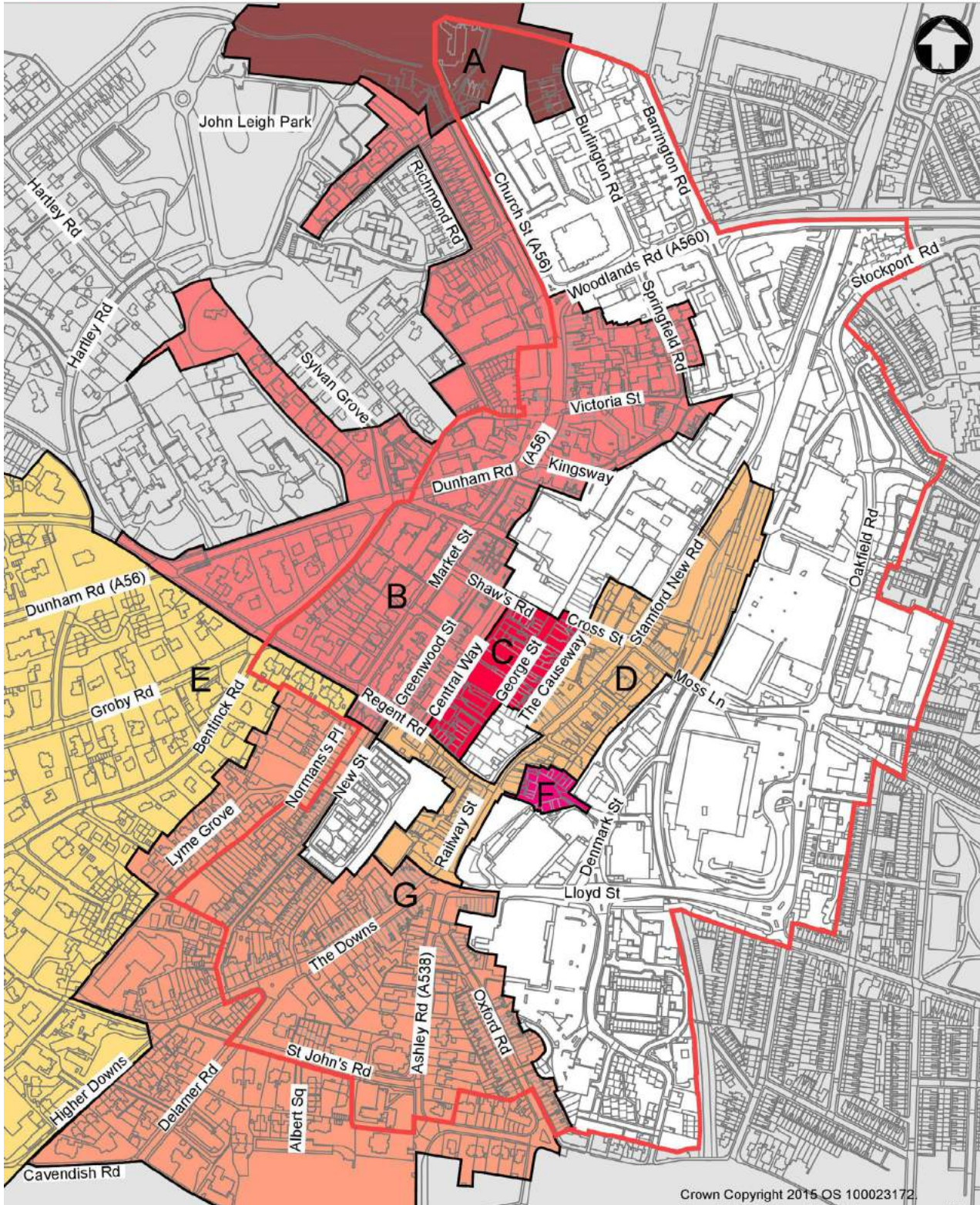
- 1.1 'Neighbourhood Plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area', seeking to ensure developments (amongst other criteria stated at para 58 of the NPPF) establish a strong and unique sense of place, respond to local historic character and are visually attractive.
- 1.2 The Trafford Core Strategy Policy L7 Design requires that, 'Development must be: appropriate in its context, make best use of opportunities to improve the character and quality of an area, enhance the street scene or character of the area by appropriately addressing scale, density, massing, layout, elevation treatment, material, hard and soft landscaping works, boundary treatment, and make appropriate provision for open space.'
- 1.3 Conservation Area Appraisal 'Supplementary Planning Documents' were adopted by Trafford Council in 2014 for five of the Conservation Areas that impact on the historic town centre (see Appendix 4 for links to the Supplementary Planning Documents for each of the Conservation Areas via the Trafford Council web site). These provide a lengthy assessment of the distinct character of each area, including a brief 'Plan for Further Action', which are being developed into more detailed Management Plans to inform development in each of the five areas. Area Appraisals for the other two Conservation Areas and the Management Plans for all seven areas will be adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Documents by the end of 2016.
- 1.4 A townscape character assessment is an established approach, and one advised by Planning Aid and Locality, who suggest it is best to focus on 'townscape characteristics such as enclosure and scale, ease of movement for pedestrians, distinctive features such as landmarks, the design and use of key spaces and the public realm' (Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide p. 43).

### 2.0 Process

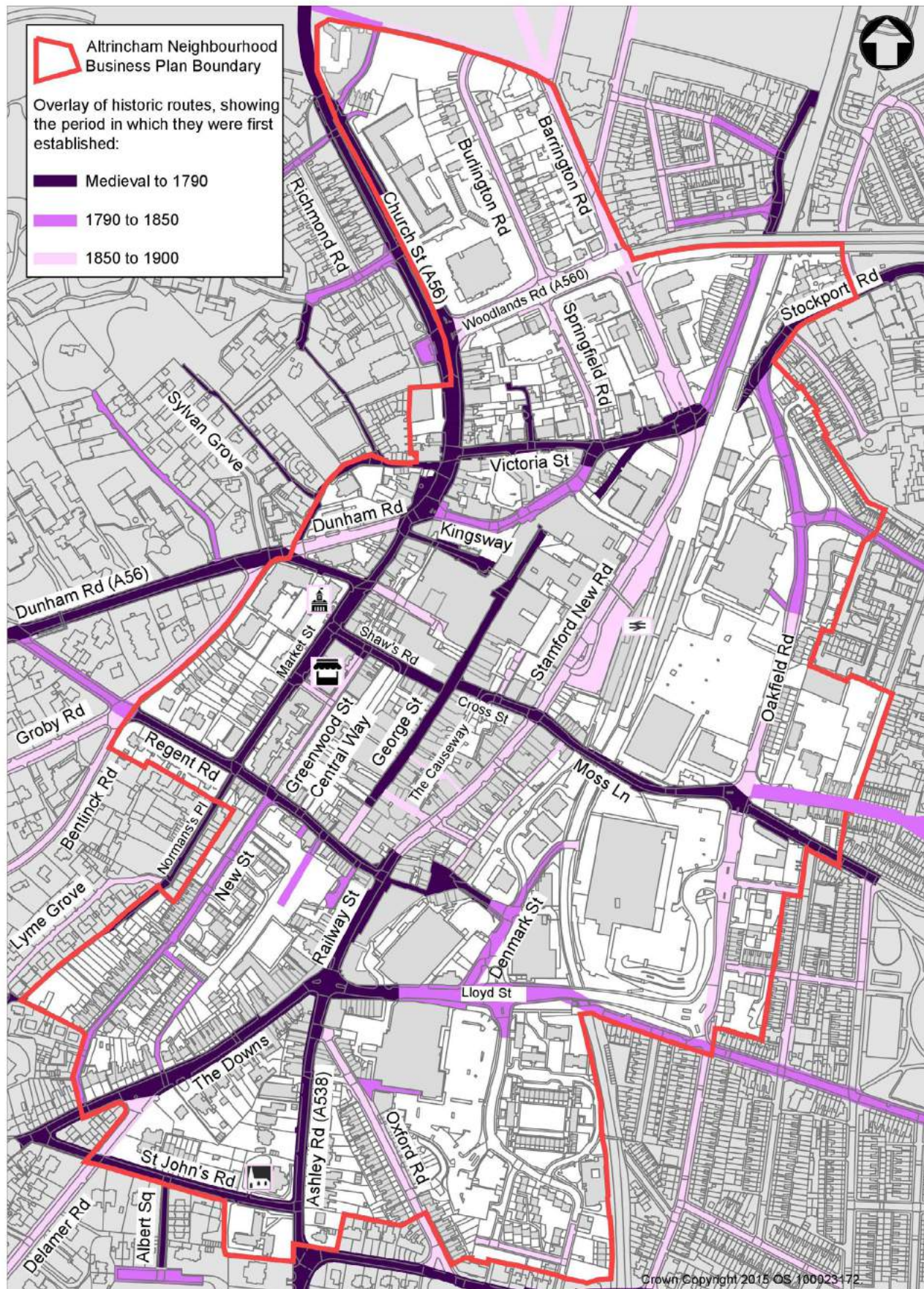
- 2.1 The public consultations emphasised the importance for Altrincham Town Centre to offer quality across all aspects of its role in serving its community including the built environment and its public realm. In doing so it also needs to respect its built heritage whilst at the same time welcoming modern development which is appreciative of its setting and contributes positively to the street scene.
- 2.2 A Forum Design Group was established to consider the development of urban design policies for inclusion in the Plan. The group concluded that a town centre wide approach was needed that looked at the different priorities for the separate character areas within the town.

# Plan 3: The Seven Conservation Areas

-  Altrincham Neighbourhood Business Plan Boundary
-  A - Sandiway CA
-  B - Old Market Place CA
-  C - George Street CA
-  D - Stamford New Road CA
-  E - Devisdale CA
-  F - Goose Green CA
-  G - The Downs CA



# Plan 4: Historic Street Layout



### 3.0 Town Centre Wide Analysis and Issues

- 3.1 To define the individual Character Areas a detailed town centre wide assessment has been made of the evolution of the town centre's layout and changing use. Issues and priorities that are town centre wide have also been identified. This analysis is summarised below. It starts with a description of how the historic urban grain of the town came about and shows how it has been retained. This is illustrated on Plan 4: Historic Street Layout.
- 3.2 From Medieval times the Old Market Place was the centre of the town set upon a raised, sloping ridge, with the main inner routes following along the top and contours of the slope (e.g. Market Street). Lesser routes led up the slope, forming a grid pattern (e.g. Cross Street /Shaw's Road and Goose Green/Regent Road).
- 3.3 With the arrival of the railway in 1849, firstly at two new stations in the Lower Town and then at a replacement combined new station in its current location in 1881, the focus of the town began its shift down the hill, from the Old Market Place to the middle and Lower Town (George Street, Stamford New Road and Railway Street). Oxford Road, Stamford New Road and Barrington Road were all built between 1876 and 1881. Until recent times, the railway lines and poor quality common ground at Hale Moss beyond, acted as a barrier to further town centre development to the east other than housing.
- 3.4 As the town grew in importance and prosperity, fine new civic and commercial buildings were built between 1870 and 1905. Stamford New Road, Oxford Road and Barrington Road were all built during this time, as were the Hospital, Market House, Old Bank, Town Hall, the foot of The Downs and Station Buildings. The wealthy surrounding residential commuter suburbs expanded rapidly, with town centre housing gradually given over to commercial use or else demolished.



Altrincham streets at the beginning of the 20th Century, as seen in postcards sent at the time.

- 3.5 In addition to the main historic routes within and leading to the town, there are numerous mainly underused and poorly maintained ginnels and back streets which provide handy cross routes between the main roads. There are also a number of green walking routes which lead into the primary town centre (see Plan C: Movement in the Non-Statutory Annex).



## 4.0 Town Centre Wide Issues

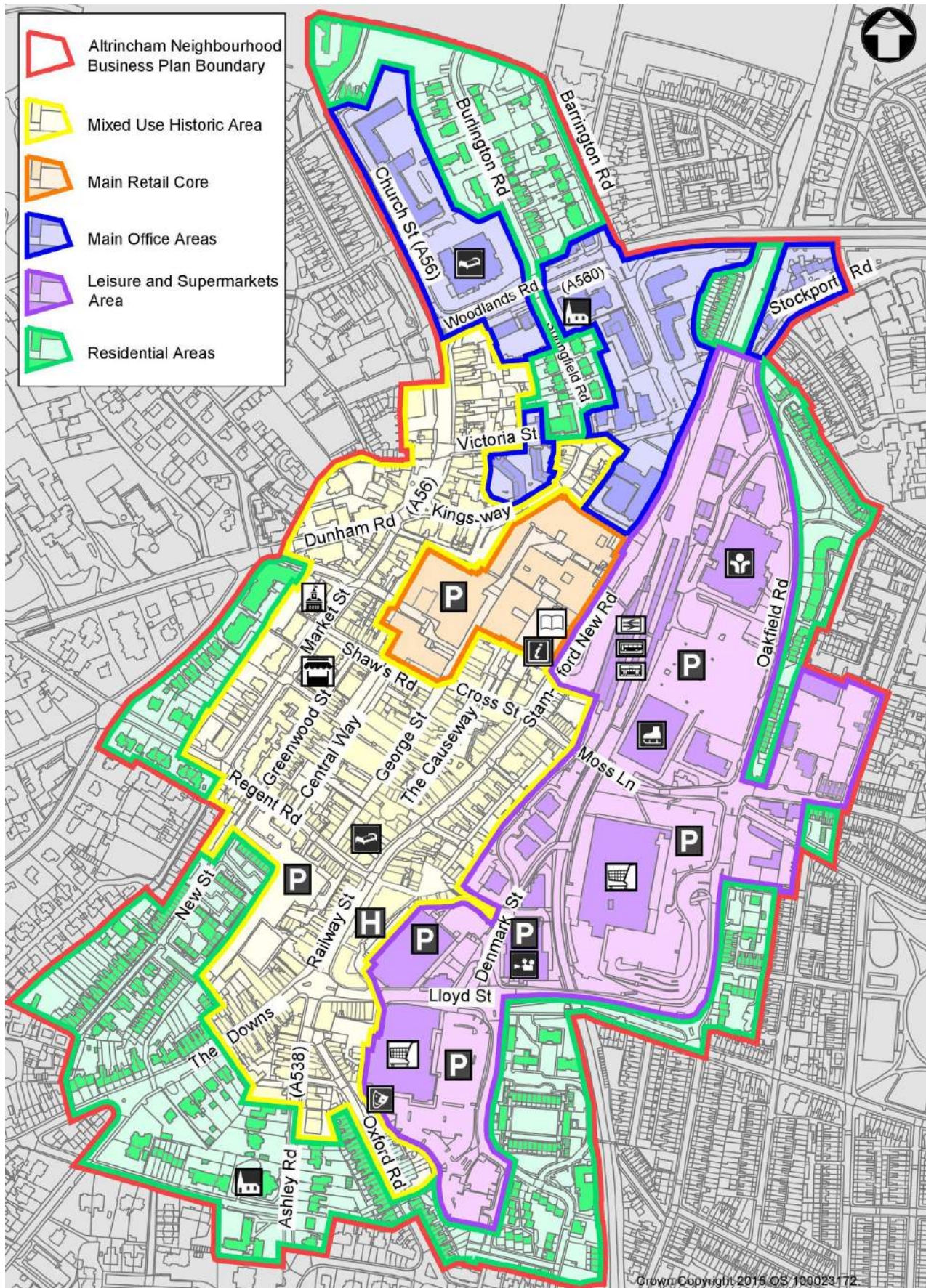
4.1 The Town Centre Wide Issues summarised below, are addressed in section B Design Related Principles:

- Street clutter (e.g. traffic lights, bollards, guard rails, highway signs, unhidden commercial bins, inactive telephone boxes, A-boards and other advertising signs), inactive and unrelieved retail frontages (e.g. Shaw's Road and Lloyd Street) and rear elevations of modern buildings (e.g. Central Way and the west of The Causeway).
- Poor shop front design, materials and illumination, along with overuse of roller shutters.
- Visually intrusive advertising signage on shop and business premises including numerous estate agents' boards. Key landmark buildings and building groups needing protection (e.g. Stamford New Road sweep of Victorian buildings; Railway Street buildings and the lower Downs; Old Market Place; Market and Town Hall area and the view across Moss Lane to Bonson's and Station Buildings)
- Poorly maintained buildings and in addition for the historic buildings, loss of architectural features and character.
- Most open spaces and pocket parks are in need of improvement, with opportunities to create new green open spaces within the town centre.
- Poor quality and/or underused pedestrian linkages and general gateways to the town, with potential to improve.



Visual clutter on The Downs

# Plan 5: The Character Areas



## 5.0 Character Areas

5.1 Plan 5 on **page 40** defines the four Character Areas in the town centre, with residential areas on the outskirts. Individual Character Area Assessments explain and visually present what makes each part distinctive, in order to arrive at the key characteristics that new development in the area should take into account. The Character Area Assessments are summarised as follows:

5.2 Mixed Use Historic Area

5.3 Main Retail Core

5.4 Main Office Areas

5.5 Leisure / Supermarkets Area.



Market Street, widened in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and graced with fine shops, offices and civic buildings, including the Market House built in 1879

### 5.2 Mixed Use Historic Area

- This town centre area broadly coincides with five of the Conservation Areas (see Plan 3: The Seven Conservation Areas on **page 36**). One of them, George Street, is on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' Register due to its deteriorating character.
- The historic urban grain dating back to Medieval times has been retained, creating an overall grid pattern of narrow streets in between the broad Old Market Place, widened Market Street and Stamford New Road newly created in 1881 (see Plan 4: Historic Street Layout on **page 37**). Ginnels form handy pedestrian connections.
- There are many high quality, varied, unique and predominantly two to three-storey historic buildings in natural materials within this area, particularly from the late Georgian period and from 1870 to 1905.
- Materials include brick (some polychrome); red and buff sandstone; terracotta and glazed ceramic; black and white Cheshire vernacular and Welsh blue/grey or Westmorland green slates. There is only one originally rendered and painted building (38, Stamford Street).
- There is a limited amount of late 20<sup>th</sup> Century development in this area, with much of it dated, unimaginative and poor quality (for example the new and refurbished retail units and the rear

extensions on the newly created Causeway and Central Way service roads) and also in the case of the Grafton tower, out of scale.

- The 21<sup>st</sup> Century buildings are, in the main, respectful of the Conservation Area status, in terms of their scale, height, design style, materials and features.
- The recent conversion of a number of historic buildings in this area back to residential or to offices has, in some cases, unfortunately not preserved nor enhanced the historic character (e.g. plastic replacement windows and painted brick and stonework).
- Many shop fronts are of more recent poor design, materials and lighting
- Much of the area is blighted by excessive and over-large signage, street clutter, external roller shutters and poorly maintained buildings and patched-up public realm.
- The main use of this area is by smaller independent shops, restaurants, cafes, pubs and beauty, business, legal, financial and medical services. It also includes the new Altrincham Hospital on Railway Street and the revitalised Market House venue and Market.



Lower George Street, with a mixture of large modern units designed for national chain stores

### 5.3 Main Retail Area

- This Area, known as the Stamford Quarter, wholly comprises the brick-built pedestrianised shopping precinct constructed in the late 1960s to the mid-1970s in place of historic Lower George Street. The middle sections were rebuilt in 2007, to provide much larger glass-fronted units. It is the prime retail core of Altrincham Town Centre, comprising 8 out of 11 of the main high street stores, including the anchors at each end of Marks and Spencer and House of Fraser (Rackham's). A large multi-storey private car park is integral to the development.
- It is an inward facing, fortress like series of blocks, with large footprint buildings with servicing to the rear and blank outward facing walls (except for the Stamford New Road frontage). Some of the traditional connections between the upper and lower town have been severed.

- The buildings are predominantly very tall two storeys in height, with the exception of the recent car park tower and six-storey Clarendon House on Stamford New Road opposite the transport Interchange.
- The Stamford Quarter is currently (2015/16) undergoing further phased modernisation, to update the retail space, the shopfronts and the public realm. The improvement works will also remove the 1970s raised walkways and improve the roof car park and its access. Some steps to improve the dated and run down outward appearance of the shopping area onto Stamford New Road are also being taken.



Modern office buildings on Barrington Road, set back with green landscaping

#### 5.4 Main Office Areas

- These areas were developed largely in the 1970s and 1980s with large footprint three to six storey free standing office blocks built in brick, most with dedicated parking to the rear. There are pockets of Victorian housing bordering the edge of the area, as well as the modern Cresta Court Hotel and Altrincham Methodist Church and Hall. The office blocks are built in a mix of styles, but are all high quality in materials and landscaping and well maintained.
- The larger offices front onto the wide Woodlands Road (A560) and Barrington Road South and contrast greatly with, the compact urban grain of the historic town centre. They are blocks set back from the road with planting and boundary walls. The offices on Victoria Street become appropriately smaller in scale on the incline of the road up towards the Old Market Place (and the Mixed Use Historic Area).
- The Church Street (A56) approach from the north is a main gateway into the town that has an attractive mature landscaped approach, but is a poor pedestrian environment due to the speed and volume of two-lane merging traffic. Woodlands Road, with two carriageways in both directions, is also a busy traffic environment and not very pedestrian friendly. There is very little greenery to relieve it.



The Ice Rink to the left and Tesco's with its bridge link to the main town centre, both housed in metal clad buildings surrounded by parking and maturing

### 5.5 Leisure Supermarket Area

- The area close to the railway line and on the former poor quality lower ground of Hale Moss, was the last area of town to be developed, with slum housing, small factories and warehousing in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, all this was demolished and an extensive area used for car parking, which became smaller over time as the area was developed for the Leisure Centre, tyre services, builders' yards and units, residential blocks, a fitness centre, two large supermarkets, the ice rink and finally a cinema in 2010. Manor Road was widened and the bridge built over the railway line on Lloyd Street at the same time as Tesco was developed in 2002.
- This area comprises standalone developments with their own car parking, acting as destination buildings for retail, leisure and business. The combined Altrincham and Bowdon Station was originally built in 1881 (the Interchange) and along with the former 1920s pub on Lloyd Street, is the only remaining historic building in this Area.
- Building styles and materials range from industrial park style metal clad boxes through to brick or rendered buildings with reasonable interest, detailing and proportions. Development is mainly low density and very high two storey buildings, within open and exposed spaces and busy road junctions, except at the boundary with the Mixed Use Historic Area on Lloyd Street and Moss Lane.
- There are good road and rail connections with the new pedestrian bridge within the transport Interchange and the traffic by-pass to the town centre on Oakfield Road and Manor Road, which also creates a boundary to residential development to the east. Lloyd Street continues the town by-pass into the town centre from the east. Moss Lane is a convenient one-way route through the town centre from the east and is also a particularly well used pedestrian and cycle route. There is a potential danger however, with cars using the road as a drop-off for the Interchange.
- There are pedestrian routes through the Tesco car park and at upper levels linking to the town over the railway line, but only the one to the bridge at Moss Lane is direct. The walkways are in a poor condition. Pedestrian routes across the leisure centre car park are not well defined.
- The area is open and green with good contained and maintained buffer planting to Tesco but there are also some not so well defined and maintained greenspaces at the main road junctions and near the leisure centre.

## B. Design Related Principals

### B1 Introduction

- 1.1 Section B2 below defines sixteen Town Centre Wide Design Principles, which reflect the outcome of the public consultations and the work of the Design Group and which need to be taken into account in determining all proposed development and redevelopment of buildings and the public realm.
- 1.2 These principles all need to be read in conjunction with the 7 Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans and are complimentary to them.

### B2 Town Centre Wide Design Principles



A good example of a new building design at the corner of Lloyd Street and Ashley Road

### New and Refurbished Buildings

#### 1. High Quality Building Design and Materials.

Encourage any new development or redevelopment that achieves a consistently high quality building design throughout the town centre, in terms of scale, materials, rhythm, density and landscaping appropriate to its context.

#### 2. Active Frontage

Ensure all new and refurbished buildings are designed to front on to the street and open spaces, with clear main entrances and (in those areas allocated as Main Shopping and Mixed Use with Ground Floor Active Frontages), active frontages (see Policies S1 and S2).

#### 3. Working with the Site and its Context

Take advantage of the topography and built features of any site and its context, including any relevant references in the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans (eg long range views, vistas, surrounding and neighbouring buildings and site orientation).

#### 4. Sustainable Environmental Design

All new buildings should meet and if possible exceed the sustainable environmental design requirements, set out in the Building Regulations, BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) and any other current published requirements.



Station buildings at the corner of Stamford New Road and Moss Lane, carefully restored externally, with the traditional shop front design reinstated, during the conversion of the upper office floors for residential use.

## Promoting Heritage and a Unique Sense of Place

### 5. Character

New and refurbished buildings should create a sense of place, with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character, reflecting the content of the Conservation Area Appraisals and the Management Plans.

### 6. Sensitive Conversions

Support changes of use that find a new appropriate and sustainable future for a building, particularly those at risk, providing that the historic integrity and architectural interest of the building is not significantly altered. The Council is encouraged to consider every appropriate available tool (including Article 4 directions) to ensure that sensitive conversions are carried out including, for example the replacement, where necessary, of original wooden windows with the same material, style and moulding.

### 7. Shopfronts

Existing historic shopfronts should be preserved and restored, in line with the Council's current Shop Front Guidelines and forthcoming replacement and active ground floor uses maintained, both in use and appearance, to avoid too many blank or opaque windows. Sensitive designed replacements/reinstatements should be sought for modern shopfronts of poor design and materials.

### 8. Cultural and Heritage Assets

Promote public art works with a particular emphasis on heritage interpretation to emphasise and educate on the town's unique history and sense of place.



## Streets and Spaces

### 9. High Quality Public Realm

Support the delivery of high quality public realm across the town centre in support of its role as a social centre serving its catchment population. **(Policy G1).**

### 10. Public Open Space

Promote the improvement and creation of public open space; green spaces and routes; shelter; places to sit and space for activities, playing and events. **(Policy G1).**

### 11. Historic Ginnels and Green Routes.

Support improvements to ancient and new green routes into the town centre and the numerous ginnels creating short cuts between the main streets, respecting the original character of the ginnels in terms of materials and finishes. **(Policies D4 and G1).**

### 12. Connectivity

Support improvements to the environment and connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists throughout the town centre, through the removal of street clutter, particularly at road junctions and key crossing points. **(Policy G1).**

### 13. Signage / Wayfinding

Support improvements to signage and wayfinding to town centre attractions and car parks from town centre gateways giving key consideration to pedestrians, cyclists, people with disabilities and those with special needs. **(Policy G1).**



Goose Green transformation



Historic ginnel between Stamford New Road and The Causeway through to George Street; another between Regent Road and the car park and the steps leading down from the Regent Road car park to Kings Court and the new Hospital on Railway Street

## Promoting Environmental Improvements

(Working with private owners and occupiers, along with local and statutory authorities)

### 14. Safety and Security.

Promote up-to-date methods of safety and security as key design considerations and support imaginative external lighting solutions.

### 15. Physical and Visual Street Clutter

Aim to removal excessive physical and visual street clutter (eg traffic lights, highway signs, guard rails, bollards, A-boards and advertisements). The Council is encouraged to consider the most appropriate action to take to restrict the display of any sign on a street frontage without consent including the application of a Regulation 7 Directive.

### 16. Back Land Areas

Support environmental action to tidy up and maintain back land areas and ensure in any new development that external storage bin areas are well designed and hidden from view.

## Appendix 4 – Links To Other Documents

1. Links provided on the Forum web site accessed via [www.myaltrincham.org.uk](http://www.myaltrincham.org.uk) :
  - The Non-Statutory Annex to the submitted Neighbourhood Business Plan.
  - The Basic Conditions Statement.
  - The Consultation Statement
  - The Strategic Environmental Assessment prepared and published by AECOM.
2. Links provided on the Trafford Council web site accessed via [www.trafford.gov.uk](http://www.trafford.gov.uk):
  - The Revised Trafford Unitary Development Plan adopted June 2006 and the Trafford Local Plan: Core Strategy, adopted January 2012.
  - The Supplementary Planning Documents for the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans at: <http://www.trafford.gov.uk/planning/strategic-planning/local-development-framework/supplementary-planning-documents.aspx>
3. Link provided on the Altrincham Forward web site accessed at [www.altrinchamforward.com](http://www.altrinchamforward.com):
  - Summary of The Concept Public Realm and Infrastructure Proposals report produced by Planit-IE and Stockley.
4. The National Planning Policy Framework (dated 27/3/12) – via the Communities and Local Government Web Site [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk) then via publications.
5. Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide – Locality at [www.locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Roadmap-worksheets-map-May-13.pdf](http://www.locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Roadmap-worksheets-map-May-13.pdf).
6. References to national guidance on heritage assets at <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/conservation-areas/> and <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/changing-face-high-street-decline-revival/>



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