

STRETFORD TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

Introduction

Many town centres nationally have suffered in recent years due to the pressures of out of town retail, internet shopping, the global economic recession and the lack of a distinctive offer. Stretford has not been immune from these pressures and it is recognised that more needs to be done in order to make Stretford Town Centre a unique and attractive destination of choice.

Stretford benefits from a strong community spirit and at its heart is a town centre serving local people; however there remain significant challenges. In order to realise its potential we need to address these key challenges and maximise the contribution made by Stretford's existing assets.

Ensuring the vitality of town centres is a priority of Trafford Council and there is a commitment to ensuring that local people are able to shop, eat, drink, relax and access key services within their town centre. Delivering the successful regeneration of Stretford Town Centre is therefore considered to be a key priority. The Stretford Town Centre Masterplan seeks to establish a comprehensive vision for the town centre, identify areas for future development and set out the key actions required to deliver this change and growth.

Stretford Town Centre

Stretford is one of Trafford's town centres and a key driver in the economic growth of the Borough. Stretford Town Centre is located in a prominent position along the A56 corridor at the northern end of Trafford and benefits from links to the M60, good public transport connections and access to the Bridgewater Canal. The Victoria, Longford, Moss and Gorse Hill parks are all located within walking distance of the town centre and provide access to areas of attractive green space.

Until the 1960s the town centre contained a wide range of retail, leisure and entertainment facilities within a conventional suburban neighbourhood. In the late 1960s and early 1970s significant development took place in the area with the widening of the A56 to six lanes and the completion of the Arndale Centre, a covered shopping centre now known as Stretford Mall. The core of the town centre area is now dominated by Stretford Mall. The mix of leisure and family entertainment uses has diminished over the years and there is no functioning evening economy in the town centre to provide for local people or visitors, furthermore there is no life or vitality in the

Stretford Town Centre Masterplan (January 2014)



centre after Stretford Mall closes. There are a limited number of office uses including Trafford Housing Trust, JobCentre Plus, Connexions and a mix of professional services. A number of important community facilities are located in the area, including Stretford library.

Purpose of the Masterplan

There is a clearly recognised need to improve the offer of Stretford Town Centre which is identified in the Trafford Core Strategy as a location for regeneration and change. The Trafford Retail and Leisure Study (2007) stated that Stretford Town Centre is “*in need of urgent improvements*”. The Retail and Leisure Study identified potential for future retail growth and an improvement in the evening economy focused on the food and drink offer and family orientated leisure facilities.

Delivering the successful regeneration of Stretford Town Centre is a key priority for the Council. In order to deliver the change and growth sought this Masterplan sets out how Stretford can maximise the opportunities of its key assets, link key spaces together and create a strong and attractive destination of choice meeting the needs of the community.

The ambition is to secure the revitalisation of Stretford Town Centre and create a unique town centre that is a destination of choice for local people to shop, eat, drink, relax and access key services. The Stretford Town Centre Masterplan will provide a coherent framework for the Council, property owners, prospective developers, existing occupiers and community stakeholders which will assist in realising the opportunities which exist within the Masterplan area over the next 10-15 years.

Public Consultation

Trafford Council invited representations on the Consultation Draft Stretford Town Centre Masterplan for an eight week period from 24 July to 18 September 2013. The public consultation was subsequently extended by a further four weeks to 20 October 2013 to allow additional time for representations to be made. In total 242 representations were received during the consultation period. A separate report on the consultation process, including a summary of the issues raised and full details of all representations received, has been completed. All consultation responses received have been fully considered and taken into account in making modifications to the Masterplan. The comments received will also be taken into account in the preparation of the Land Allocations Plan which is out for consultation in January/February 2014.

Structure of the Masterplan

- Masterplan Area
- Vision, Objectives and Sustainability Principles
- Illustrative Masterplan
- Policy Drivers
- Stretford's Assets
- Challenges and Opportunities
- Development Opportunities
- Public Realm, Highways and Pedestrian Movement
- Design Guidance
- Delivering the Masterplan

The Masterplan Area

Area Boundary

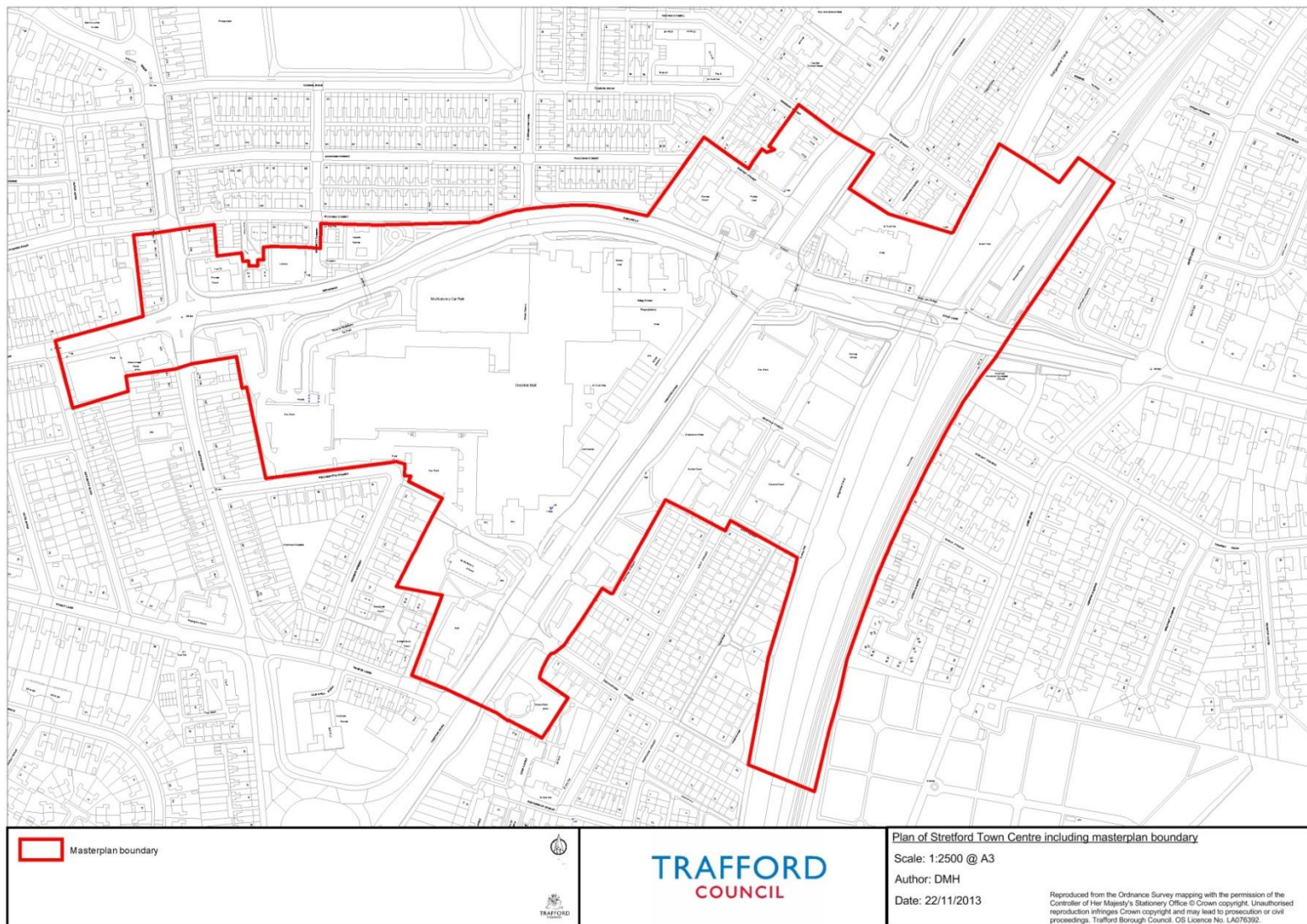
The Masterplan area boundary, as shown in Figure 1 below, encompasses Stretford Town Centre, as defined by the Trafford Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Proposals Map, in addition to a section of the Bridgewater Canal and key gateway sites at Chester Road, Edge Lane and Kingsway.



The Masterplan area boundary comprises the existing Stretford Town Centre boundary, in addition to a section of the Bridgewater Canal, Stretford Metrolink Station, the Essoldo Cinema, Stretford Public Hall, Lacy Street/Newton Street Car Park and adjoining employment uses, The Drum Public House, St Matthew's Church, Stretford Library and Mitford Street Clinic/Bennett Street Surgery and a section of Barton Road.

The rationale for this boundary is to include key gateways into the area, landmark buildings, community facilities such as the public library, the Metrolink Station and the Bridgewater Canal whilst ensuring development can be concentrated around a strong town centre core. The Masterplan area encompasses a number of sites where there are opportunities for intervention or new development.

Figure 1: Masterplan Area Boundary



Stretford Town Centre Masterplan (January 2014)

Prominent Buildings

The Masterplan area contains a number of prominent buildings, the locations of which are identified in Figure 2 below, most of which currently fail to make a positive contribution to the urban character of the town centre. If Stretford is to maximise the potential of its key physical assets then intervention will be required in respect of the majority of these buildings.

Stretford Mall

Stretford Mall was opened in 1969 as the Arndale Centre and provides the retail core of the town centre containing over 100 businesses. At the time of opening the Mall was one of the largest covered shopping centres in the country, providing modern retail facilities in the heart of the community. However, over recent years Stretford Mall has suffered from a lack of investment, competition from other centres and the loss of several major occupiers. Furthermore the once popular indoor market area is now largely vacant. As a consequence the Mall and town centre as a whole has been losing out to other centres that can offer both a more attractive retail environment to shoppers and modern retailers with more suitable premises.



Trafford Council is the freeholder of the Mall site. The operator of the Mall, which has a long leasehold interest in the site, is currently in administration.



Essoldo Cinema

The Grade II listed Essoldo Cinema building, designed in the art deco style, is an important heritage asset for Stretford Town Centre. Its distinctive frontage and location at a gateway into the town centre makes it a key landmark building. Originally known as the Longford Theatre, the building opened in 1936 and was renamed the Essoldo in 1950. From the mid-1960s the building was used as a bingo hall until its closure in 1995. It is currently in private ownership and has remained vacant for over 15 years providing an unattractive frontage. Adjacent to the Essoldo Cinema are three retail units located in a three storey terrace block alongside the Brick Top hairdresser unit and a row of five vacant office units with two storeys of residential above.

Stretford Public Hall

The Grade II listed Stretford Public Hall was built by John Rylands and opened in 1878. It is located on the A56 opposite the Essoldo Cinema and recognised by the community as a significant part of the architectural and historic fabric of Stretford. The building has accommodated a variety of uses over its lifetime including a library and civic theatre. It was refurbished in the mid-1990s and until recently was used as office premises by Trafford Council.



Stretford Library

The Stretford Library building is located on Kingsway, opposite Stretford Mall. The building opened in 1940 and contains the library, learning centre and the Stretford Citizens Advice Bureau. It is Trafford's oldest operational library building and requires improvements if it is to be made accessible for all.

Stretford Metrolink Station

Stretford is situated on the Altrincham to Bury Metrolink line and the station is a key public transport gateway into the town centre. The station originally served the Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway. The former street level booking hall building on Edge Lane currently contains retail and service uses.



St Matthew's Church

St Matthew's Church is a Grade II listed building constructed in the Gothic Revival style and is located adjacent to the southern side of Stretford Mall. The building was completed in 1842 to replace the original Stretford Chapel built by the de Trafford family in the 15th Century.

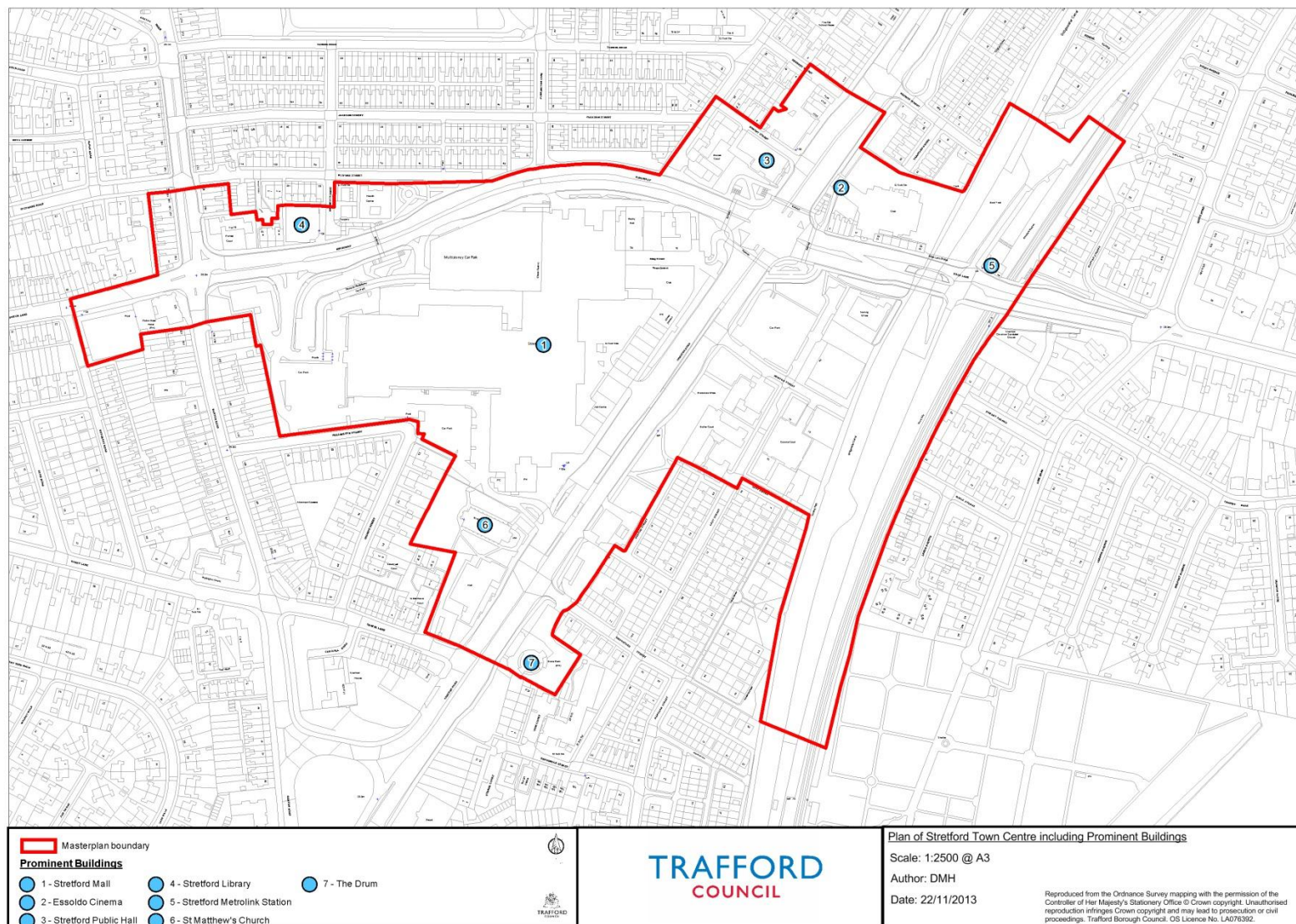
The Drum

The Drum is a vacant two storey building that fronts onto Chester Road and is located at the southern edge of the town centre opposite St Matthew's Church. Until recently it contained The Drum Public House.



Stretford Town Centre Masterplan (January 2014)

Figure 2: Prominent Buildings



Stretford Town Centre Masterplan (January 2014)

Vision, Objectives and Sustainability Principles

Vision

The vision for Stretford Town Centre is as follows:

'To create within Stretford Town Centre a prosperous, vibrant, attractive and safe destination that provides facilities throughout the day and evening to meet the needs of the community whilst maximising the opportunities provided by its key assets'.

To achieve this Vision:

'The Masterplan will deliver a strong sense of place within Stretford Town Centre with a thriving retail and leisure offer alongside new employment and residential development. There will be a clear and distinctive identity taking advantage of its listed buildings, covered shopping centre facilities and access to environmental assets including Stretford's parks and the Bridgewater Canal. The town centre will also be highly accessible with excellent public transport links and attractive pedestrian and cycle routes.

There will be a balance of independent retailers alongside national chains in an attractive shopping environment. The town centre will include a range of restaurant and café uses alongside family orientated entertainment activities contributing to a vibrant evening economy. The area will contain a range of high quality community facilities that meet the needs of local residents and support activity within the town centre. It will provide opportunities for those attending major cultural and leisure attractions in the surrounding area to visit and stay within the town centre'.

Objectives

The primary objective of the Masterplan is to secure the successful regeneration of Stretford Town Centre and provide a prosperous, vibrant, attractive and safe destination. The objectives of the Masterplan are:

- MO1: To bring forward sustainable development that realises the full potential of Stretford Town Centre and the surrounding area.
- MO2: To create a strong sense of place within the town centre.
- MO3: To improve key town centre gateways.
- MO4: To develop unused, under-used or derelict land for a mix of uses.
- MO5: To promote the refurbishment, enhancement and reuse of historic buildings such as the Essoldo Cinema and Stretford Public Hall.
- MO6: To enhance the retail, leisure and services offer in the town centre, particularly the evening economy.
- MO7: To deliver additional employment activity within the town centre.
- MO8: To provide residential development and a better balance in housing types.
- MO9: To attract visitors using major cultural and leisure attractions in the surrounding area to Stretford Town Centre.
- MO10: To maximise the role of recreational assets and green spaces including the Bridgewater Canal, Trans Pennine Trail and Stretford's parks.
- MO11: To address poor air quality and congestion along the A56.
- MO12: To improve pedestrian and cycle routes through the area and access by public transport.
- MO13: To provide clear signage throughout Stretford Town Centre.
- MO14: To create a safe and secure town centre where crime and anti-social behaviour is actively discouraged and reduced.
- MO15: To reduce economic deprivation within the surrounding area.
- MO16: To ensure the town centre fulfils its role as a vibrant social hub for the whole community.

Sustainability Principles

Development within the Masterplan area will be required to meet current planning policy in relation to energy and sustainable design. Future development proposals should also be in accordance with the following sustainability principles:

- SP1: Sustainability should be a primary consideration within the development process and lead to energy efficient design that reduces energy consumption and carbon emissions.
- SP2: New development should make use of renewable energy sources.
- SP3: There should be a focus on reducing the need to travel by privately owned vehicles and improving linkages with public transport infrastructure, cycle networks and pedestrian routes. A range of facilities should be provided to allow people to work, live and play in the local area.
- SP4: New development should aim to exceed building control minimum requirements such as those relating to reductions in CO2 emissions and climate change mitigation at the time of development.
- SP5: Modern methods of construction and sustainable materials should be utilised in new development, where appropriate.
- SP6: The use of green roofs and living walls on new and existing buildings should, where appropriate, be encouraged to enhance the green environment and help create unique identity.
- SP7: Sustainable waste management and recycling strategies should be developed.
- SP8: New development should manage surface water run-off and make use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS).
- SP9: The positive impact of biodiversity should be maximised and the greening of the urban environment required.

Illustrative Masterplan

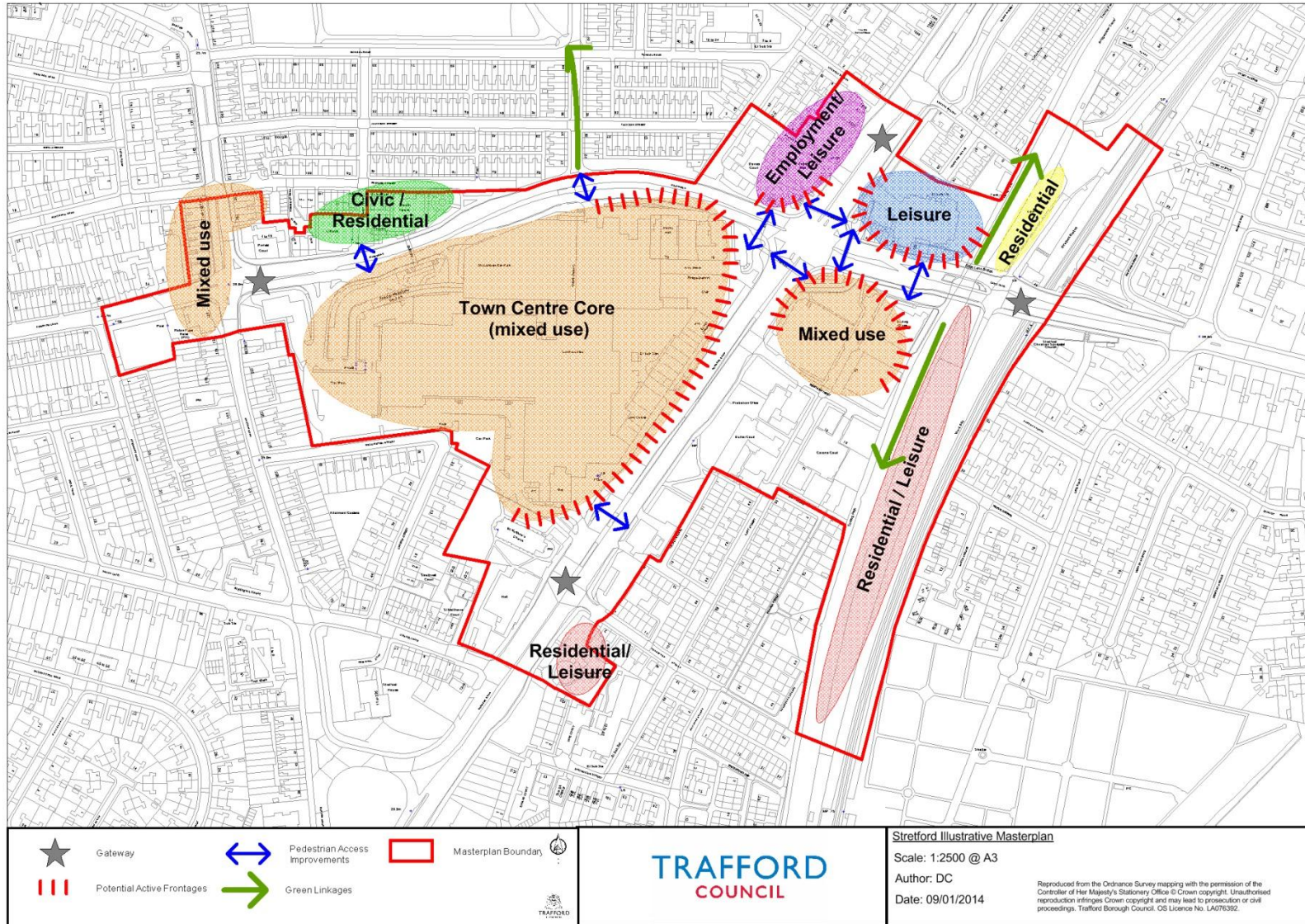
To be a successful town centre Stretford requires a diverse mix of land uses and a variety of experiences that provide an attractive offer to both the local community and visitors. Stretford currently lacks a diverse retail offer, appropriate mix of leisure and family entertainment uses, and development that maximises the impact of key assets such as its historical buildings and the Bridgewater Canal. The absence of these has an adverse impact on the performance of Stretford Town Centre and its ability to provide a prosperous, vibrant, attractive and safe destination.

Land Use Areas

Whilst a vibrant and active town centre requires a mix of land uses, it is important to provide defined land use areas in order to provide strong recognisable areas and clear urban design. The illustrative Masterplan shown in Figure 3 below seeks to define the role and function of different areas of the town centre.

A wider mix of uses will be encouraged within the town centre core at the Stretford Mall site. Land uses at key gateways should provide a sense of arrival in a town centre. Leisure and residential uses will be promoted on both sides of the Bridgewater Canal with more attractive routes provided to the town centre core. The area surrounding the Stretford Public Hall site is identified for employment and leisure use to support the town centre core. Improved linkages will be provided from the town centre core to the civic and residential uses on Kingsway and the existing retail and commercial uses along Barton Road. It will be necessary to alleviate the severance caused by the A56 and Kingsway and deliver an enhanced physical environment throughout the town centre.

Figure 3: Illustrative Masterplan



Stretford Town Centre Masterplan (January 2014)

Policy Drivers

The Stretford Town Centre Masterplan will support the delivery of key elements of national and local planning policy. This section provides a brief summary of the key planning policy documents and how they relate to the Masterplan.

National Planning Policy Framework

At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Town centres are recognised by the NPPF as being at the heart of communities and planning policies should support their viability and vitality, promote competitive town centres, and provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer reflecting the individuality of town centres. The NPPF requires that local planning authorities 'positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area' and develop positive planning policies to promote competitive town centre environments. Where town centres are identified as being in decline, local planning authorities should plan positively for their future to encourage economic activity.

Trafford Core Strategy

The successful implementation of the Masterplan will support the delivery of the adopted Trafford Local Plan: Core Strategy (2012). The Core Strategy sets eight Strategic Objectives for the Borough as a whole and 23 specific Place Objectives for Stretford. Stretford Town Centre is identified in the Core Strategy as a location for regeneration and change over the plan period.

Core Strategy Policy W2.4 states that Stretford Town Centre will be a focus for the consolidation and improvement of the convenience and comparison retail offer, as well as diversification to other uses such as offices, services, leisure, cultural and residential, as appropriate. Core Strategy Policy W2.6 identified the following actions for the successful delivery of regeneration in Stretford Town Centre:

- *New/improved retail floorspace to enhance the offer of the town centre, in particular within Stretford Mall and its immediate vicinity;*
- *New/updated commercial office accommodation and family oriented leisure facilities;*
- *New residential (apartment and family) accommodation (minimum of 250 units);*
- *Public realm enhancements and accessibility improvements around the A56 Chester Road – A5145 Edge Lane / Kingsway junction and between the town centre and the Metrolink station; and*
- *Securing the active reuse and preservation of the Essoldo building.*

Trafford Land Allocations Plan (Draft)

The Council is currently preparing the Trafford Local Plan: Land Allocations Plan which will provide detailed, site specific guidance for allocated sites and will be accompanied by a new Policies Map. It will supersede the majority of the remaining Policies and Proposals of the Revised Trafford Unitary Development Plan (UDP), including the boundaries of the town, district and local centres, including Stretford Town Centre, and primary and secondary retail frontages.

The draft Land Allocations Plan will go out to public consultation in January/February 2014. Following analysis of comments received at this stage the plan will be refined and, ultimately, a further version will be prepared. However, all comments received as part of the Stretford Town Centre Masterplan public consultation in 2013 will be taken into account in the preparation of the Land Allocations Plan.

SPD2: A56 Corridor Development Guidelines

The A56 Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out how the Council will promote improvements and reduce congestion along this important sub-regional transportation corridor through the provision of guidance to landowners, developers, architects, engineers, planners and other stakeholders. The SPD also provides guidance on how improvements will be implemented through such measures as planning applications, planning enforcement, development briefs and developer contributions.

The SPD identifies opportunity areas including Chester Road, Stretford, which are in need of improvement either through cleaning, landscaping or redevelopment. The Essoldo Cinema is identified as one of the major opportunity sites for intervention. The SPD also includes general guidance for new development to ensure it enhances the townscape along the A56 and identifies measures to improve road safety and accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and the disabled. The Chester Road and Edge Lane junction is specifically identified as one of the gateways along the A56. Further guidance is provided on making the use of the A56 more environmentally sustainable including improving air quality, tree planting, and the linkage of greenspaces.

Trafford Vision 2021

The Trafford Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy sets the vision for Trafford by 2021, including its town centres and their importance for local people and the Borough. The priority outcomes include:

- A balanced mix of residential, retail, commercial, leisure and food and drink uses in Trafford's town centres;
- More jobs and wealth created locally;
- Plenty of high quality businesses in well served locations for both new and expanding businesses and major relocations;
- More jobs and wealth created locally, particularly in the growth sectors;
- People feel a sense of belonging and involvement in their neighbourhood;
- More new homes and more affordable homes built on previously developed land;
- Public spaces, countryside and streetscape that are easily accessible to all, attractive and well managed for residents and wildlife and well used by residents; and
- More people using accessible public transport, walking and cycling.

Stretford's Assets

There are a number of key assets in Stretford Town Centre which provide the basis for creating a successful and distinctive town centre. However many of these assets are currently under-exploited and fail to support the town centre effectively. Stretford's key assets include:

- Historic buildings
- Proximity to environmental assets
- Accessibility by road, public transport, cycles and foot
- Proximity to major destinations
- A strong local community

Historic Buildings

The Masterplan area contains three Grade II listed buildings, namely, Stretford Public Hall, the Essoldo Cinema, and St Matthew's Church. The former Post Office building on King Street and Stretford library on Kingsway, whilst not listed, are buildings of historic interest and provide a link to Stretford's past. These buildings provide a valuable contribution to Stretford's identity and character. It will be important to ensure these are preserved and enhanced in the delivery of the Masterplan.

Environmental Assets

Stretford is located in close proximity to the Mersey Valley which provides access to the countryside. Victoria Park, Longford Park, Moss Park and Gorse Hill Park all provide attractive areas of public open space within walking distance of the town centre. A section of the Bridgewater Canal runs through the town centre providing potential for an attractive waterside setting linked to the town centre. Stretford also benefits from access to the Transpennine trail, which is a national coast to coast route that provides a largely traffic free environment for walking and cycling. In delivering the Masterplan public realm enhancements and other works should improve connections to these key environmental assets.

Accessibility

Stretford benefits from excellent accessibility by both road and public transport. The town centre sits at the junction of the Manchester to Altrincham and the Stockport to Urmston bus corridors providing regular connections from destinations across Greater Manchester. The Stretford Metrolink station provides regular connections from destinations across the sub-region. However the station and the physical environment surrounding it does not currently function as an effective town centre gateway and is in need of further improvement. The proximity to surrounding residential areas provides excellent opportunities for accessing the town centre by walking and cycling, however current routes for both pedestrians and cyclists are poor. Whilst Stretford benefits from excellent road connectivity via the A56 corridor and proximity to junction 7 of the M60 some rebalancing is required between the need of road users and pedestrians at key junctions within the town centre.

Proximity to Major Destinations

Stretford Town Centre is located in close proximity to a number of major destinations including Manchester United FC, Lancashire County Cricket Club, Imperial War Museum North and MediaCityUK. Whilst these bring large numbers of people into the local area there is currently little to attract them to spend time in Stretford Town Centre and capture the resulting economic benefits. The delivery of the Masterplan will provide additional facilities to attract visitors using attractions in the wider area to spend time and money in Stretford.

Local Community

There is a strong local community within Stretford and a desire for a town centre that provides facilities to meet local people's day to day needs. The area benefits from a diverse culture and a broad mixed population and the town centre should provide them with the appropriate space and focal point. There are a lot of community groups within the area such as Friends of Victoria Park that are very active and organise regular events. This will help provide a strong base from which to deliver a revitalised Stretford and future governance structures for the town centre will seek representation from a wide cross section of the local community.

Challenges and Opportunities

National Economy

As a consequence of the recent recession, levels of retail expenditure growth have declined. This has had a knock on effect on investor and developer confidence with a number of town centre development schemes across the country either cancelled or put on hold. There has been a squeeze on growth in consumer expenditure creating tough trading conditions for retailers and other town centre businesses.

Numerous high-profile retailers have gone out of business or into administration in the last few years including Woolworths, HMV, Adams, MFI, Zavvi, Borders and TJ Hughes. In response to declining sales other retailers have closed some stores to rationalise their portfolio or reduced previous expansion plans. Furthermore numerous town centres across the country have witnessed an increase in vacancies, the loss of anchor stores and a decline in town centre development.

The residential property market has witnessed significant change following a peak in 2007. The UK housing market underwent a period of significant downturn following the recession. The decline in residential property values was exacerbated by the decrease in the availability of mortgage finance and other economic uncertainties which destabilised the market. Whilst values are now increasing once again challenges remain around the housing supply required to meet predicted demographic changes.

Town Centre Performance

The town centre retail property market is currently in a period of transition. Retail rental levels and yields have been adversely affected by a combination of the poor performance of retailers, a decline in consumer spending power and limited access to investment capital. The retail performance of Stretford Town Centre has also suffered from strong competition from other destinations alongside changes to the national retail market, including the growth of online shopping.

Stretford Town Centre includes 138 ground floor retail units and over 35,000 sq.m of retail floorspace. The inward facing Stretford Mall dominates the town centre and does not provide active frontages to the main roads. As a consequence it is difficult to recognise it as a town centre and fails to provide a sense of place or any focal point. Whilst the Mall does include several national retailers and some strong independent business, overall the range and quality of operators is not sufficient to



Stretford Town Centre Masterplan (January 2014)

provide an attractive retail destination of choice. There have been several high profile closures in the Mall as a consequence of the national economic climate, most notably the TJ Hughes and Argos stores. In October 2013 there were 49 vacant town centre units equating to a vacancy rate of 36%.

Whilst the former market area is currently vacant there is potential to utilise this space of provide a regular market that can provide a range of goods from everyday items to higher end produce. Further themed or event markets could also help to revitalise the town centre and attract more local people and visitors.

A major omission within the Masterplan area at present is the lack of an adequate mix of leisure and family orientated entertainment uses and a functioning evening economy to ensure town centre activity after 5pm. Whilst Stretford is located in close proximity to major cultural and leisure destinations, including Manchester United FC and Lancashire County Cricket Club, there is little to attract visitors using these facilities to the town centre.

It is widely recognised that Stretford Mall requires intervention to provide a more diverse town centre offer and more attractive retail frontages to both Chester Road and Kingsway. Whilst it is unlikely that growth in consumer expenditure will reach the levels which supported many of the large scale retail developments of the last decade for the foreseeable future there is potential for a reduction in the quantum of retail floorspace within Stretford's town centre core and the introduction of a wider mix of uses to better serve the local community.

Office Market

The existing office market within Stretford Town Centre is very limited. The quantum of existing office floorspace within the Masterplan area is low and the limited amount of office floorspace that exists is generally of poor quality. Furthermore recent trends across Trafford have shown a move towards out of centre office locations, in line with the national pattern.

Within Stretford Town Centre there is no recently recorded uptake of office floorspace¹; this is largely due to the absence a supply of good quality space. Whilst the current market for office floorspace is relatively flat, an increase in the amount of good quality space within the town centre would help to support and enhance the wider town centre offer. As a location Stretford benefits from a number of assets including excellent accessibility by road and public transport, affordable office rents and proximity to the major employment locations of Manchester City Centre, Trafford Park and MediaCityUK. There is potential to strengthen the office market through the provision of some modern office space that can take advantage of Stretford's existing assets and link to a revitalised town centre retail and leisure offer.

Residential Market

The residential property market in Trafford has historically been strong relative to the performance of the regional and sub-regional market with average prices in the region of £230,000. Average sold house prices within Stretford are currently below the Trafford average and in the region of £150,000. Housing in Stretford is more affordable compared to areas immediately to the south and east, such as Sale and Chorlton where average sold prices are in excess of £200,000.

There is an identified need to deliver approximately 12,000 new homes across Trafford over the next 15 years. The distribution of new housing proposed in the Trafford Core Strategy is designed to ensure that sufficient housing is delivered in the right location to support Trafford's economic growth ambitions. Furthermore new residential development should contain the right mix of housing types and sizes to meet the needs of the community. New residential development within Stretford Town Centre will not only meet the identified need for new homes in Trafford but also support the development of the town centre retail and leisure offer by providing additional footfall and expenditure for the area and bring vacant sites back into active use. The delivery of new residential development will be supported by new community facilities within the area, including additional school provision as required.

¹ Focus Costar, October 2013
Stretford Town Centre Masterplan (January 2014)

Land Ownership

There are a number of Council land holdings within Stretford Town Centre. The Council owns Stretford Public Hall, Stretford Library and the Lacy Street/Newton Street Car Park. Whilst the Council owns the freehold interest for the Stretford Mall site the majority of this is on a long lease to Stretford Limited Partnership which went into Receivership in 2011. The Mall is therefore run by asset managers acting on behalf of Aviva Commercial Finance. Where the land interests required for delivery of key projects are not in the ownership of the delivery parties it may be necessary for the Council to consider acquiring land by using its compulsory purchase order (CPO) powers.

Movement and Highways

The six lane A56 and Kingsway/Edge Lane dual carriageways cut through the heart of the area and sever Stretford Mall from the local population and key assets such as the Bridgewater Canal, Metrolink Station and key buildings including the Stretford Public Hall and Essoldo Cinema. As a consequence the A56 and associated traffic dominate the town centre environment. The existing subways which provide access across the A56 are unattractive, unsightly and associated with fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. There is poor pedestrian access between sites within the Masterplan area.



Townscape and Public Spaces



The townscape is generally considered poor and uninspiring in appearance which contributes to negative perceptions of the area as a destination. Furthermore landscaping is dated and of poor quality throughout the Masterplan area. There is a lack of high quality and functional public open spaces within the town centre and linkages to key environmental assets are poor. Generally the built form within the town centre is of poor quality, particularly dominated by Stretford Mall. The Mall has a negative impact on the townscape with a number of blank and inactive frontages. In some areas the rear of retail units or service yards at Stretford Mall front onto the street. There

are some notable buildings of historic and architectural interest within the Masterplan area, however, some of these are vacant and/or in poor condition. Throughout the town centre the existing public realm is tired, dated and does not promote a strong sense of place.

There are attractive recreational areas and high quality public open space located within walking distance of the town centre at the Victoria, Longford, Moss and Gorse Hill parks. Furthermore the wider area benefits from high quality sports and leisure facilities at Stretford Sports Village which is located 1 mile from Stretford Town Centre. These facilities include a swimming pool, gyms, a sports hall, squash courts, and a floodlit 4G artificial pitch.

Development Opportunities

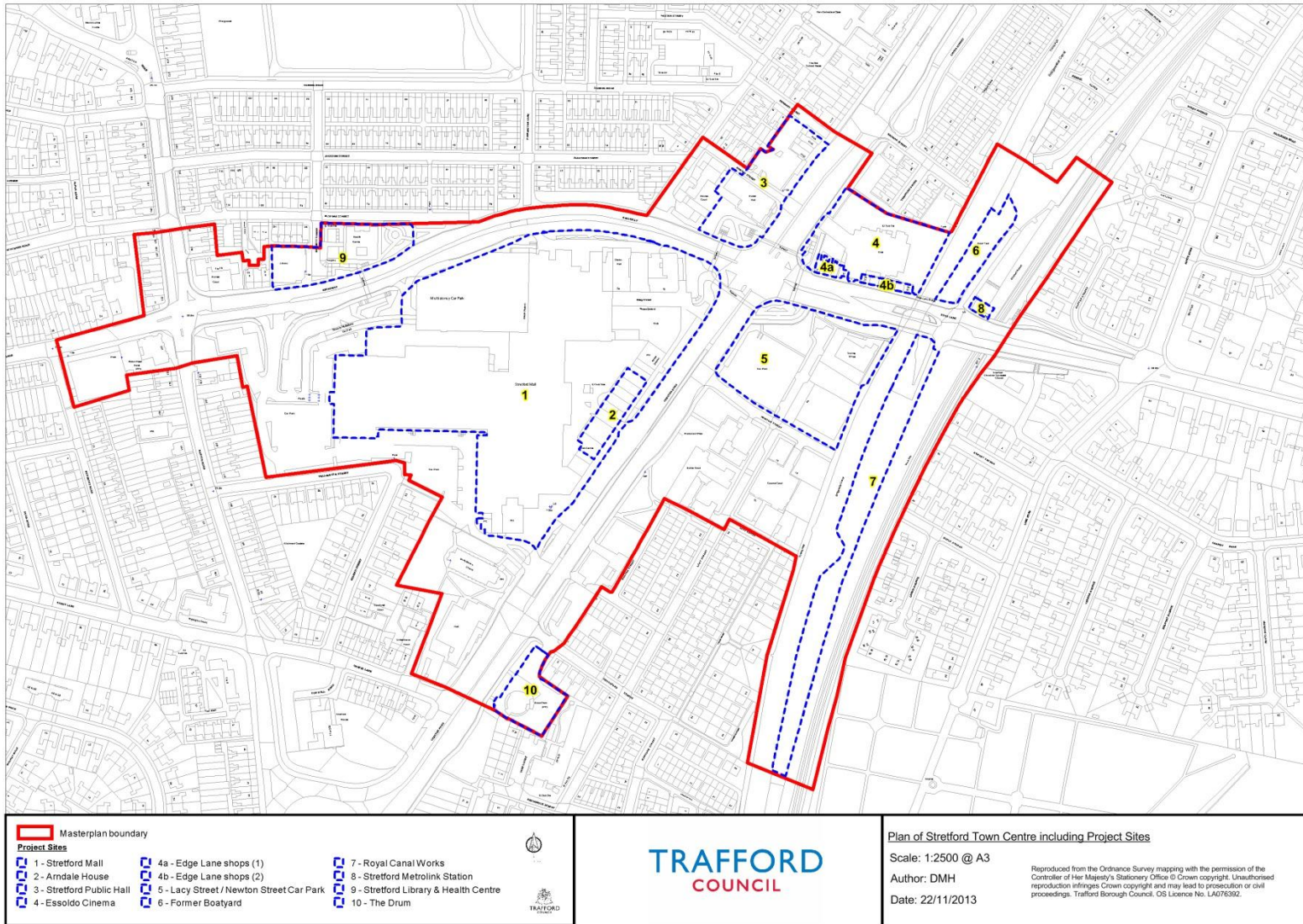
Development Sites

The approach to the regeneration of Stretford focuses primarily on remodelling of the Mall, reusing historic buildings, introducing a wider mix of uses into the town centre, developing an enhanced evening economy and improving the linkages between key environmental assets such as the Bridgewater Canal and Victoria Park.

Ten priority development sites, shown in Figure 4 below, have been identified within the Masterplan area where there are opportunities for intervention or new development. The delivery of these sites will help address the challenges faced by Stretford Town Centre, although no one project in isolation will deliver the vision and objectives of the Masterplan. The sites selected are those within the Masterplan area that are either within the Council's ownership, vacant land or buildings, or sites of strategic importance. The successful delivery of the identified development sites will help to bring life and vitality to the area and secure the regeneration of Stretford Town Centre.

The Masterplan will provide a framework to consider the area as a whole and avoid piecemeal development. In the case of privately owned sites it will provide owners/developers with greater confidence that the future of Stretford Town Centre is being considered holistically and support their delivery.

Figure 5: Development Sites



Stretford Town Centre Masterplan (January 2014)

Site 1: Stretford Mall



Stretford Mall is recognised as being central to the economic health of Stretford Town Centre. Historically the Mall has suffered from a lack of investment although there are opportunities to attract new investment to the area. The previous owners of the Mall had plans for the partial redevelopment of the Mall but these have not been implemented.

The Mall offers potential for expansion, reconfiguration or redevelopment in the longer term with a consolidation of retail space, a larger convenience retail store, the creation of more attractive frontages at key entry points and the introduction of a wider mix of uses into the town centre core, including residential. Ensuring that this site maximises its potential will be critical in positioning Stretford as a modern and competitive town centre.

There is potential to change the use of shop units along Chester Road to provide restaurant and café uses strengthening the evening economy and creating a more active and attractive frontage. A lay-by in front of these units has already been created to facilitate this change and provide short-stay car parking and a drop off area.

Whilst Stretford Mall is recognised as a dated and underperforming facility, there would be considerable cost implications in demolishing a significant proportion of the Mall. Therefore the Masterplan proposes the retention of the majority of the existing Mall which can be remodelled to create a more outward facing development. The remodelling would focus on the creation of more active frontages at key locations and the improvement of the physical attractiveness of the Mall. This includes scope for some demolition works and the delivery of a wider mix of town centre uses.

These uses would include:

- an anchor convenience retail store;
- balance of national retailers and independent stores;
- restaurant and café uses to provide for both the local community and visitors to the area;
- family orientated activities;
- professional services;
- community facilities; and
- residential accommodation.

Objectives delivered: MO1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 15, and 16



Site 2: Arndale House

Arndale House is an office block located above Stretford Mall. The future of this site will need to be considered alongside the plans for Stretford Mall as a whole. This unit could be refurbished to offer higher quality office accommodation that would be more attractive to potential occupiers or be converted for residential use.

The Arndale House office block could receive both an internal and external refurbishment in order to make the existing office floorspace more attractive to potential occupiers and improve the physical appearance of this landmark building. The ground floor entrance on Chester Road would be improved to provide a more attractive and active frontage. The attraction of new employers to Arndale House will both provide additional jobs for local people and contribute to increased footfall within the town centre.

Another development option for Arndale House would be conversion of the existing block for either residential or student accommodation, taking advantage of the town centre's good public transport linkages via the Metrolink. This would secure the active reuse of the building and provide an increased residential population to support town centre uses and the evening economy.

Objectives delivered: MO1, 7, 8 and 15



Site 3: Stretford Public Hall



Stretford Public Hall is a Grade II listed building which has been used for a variety of purposes over its lifetime and most recently has been utilised as office premises by Trafford Council. The Council will fully vacate the building in 2014 as part of the strategy to rationalise its office space. The building is one of the key landmarks within the Masterplan area and recognised by the community as a significant part of the architectural and historic fabric of Stretford. Therefore its retention and continued active use will be important in achieving the objectives of the Masterplan.

Stretford Public Hall and its adjoining land could provide opportunities for new leisure, employment or community uses. Future leisure uses contributing to the vitality of a rejuvenated evening economy could include a bar/restaurant facility or a new hotel in the heart of the town centre taking advantage of the proximity to major cultural and leisure destinations. There is also potential for community led arts/cultural provision within the Public Hall where an appropriate operator can be identified. The refurbishment of the Public Hall could provide a distinctive office location within the town centre that would bring additional economic activity into the area to support amenities.

There may be opportunities to utilise the adjoining surface car park to provide additional floorspace as part of any new development. This would potentially require a partial closure of Dorset Street, subject to appropriate consultation. A removal of the existing subways would also release additional land adjacent to the Public Hall that could support its future use.

The Council does not have the necessary resources to retain ownership of the building and will therefore seek its disposal to an appropriate purchaser in order to secure its continued active use and preservation. Consideration will be given to the potential for a community asset transfer if there is a robust business plan to support it. Any future use of Stretford Public Hall will need to have full regard to its listed building status and its role as a major landmark and gateway building in the town centre.

Objectives delivered: MO1, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 15

Site 4: Essoldo Cinema

The Grade II listed Essoldo Cinema has been vacant since 1995. Repairs have recently been made to the external fabric of the building. There is potential to create a new entertainment / leisure facility at this location contributing to the development of the evening economy and providing family orientated activities within the town centre. Restoration of the Essoldo Cinema could link more effectively with the parade of shops, office units and residential uses on Edge Lane immediately to the south of the building and with the Bridgewater Canal to the rear of the site.



The restoration of the Grade II listed Essoldo Cinema building would provide the opportunity for a large scale family friendly entertainment facility within Stretford Town Centre. This would support the development of the evening economy and also encourage families to use the town centre for leisure uses. Restaurant / café / bar facilities could also be provided as part of the Essoldo site. Works to the rear of the site would improve access to the Bridgewater Canal and take advantage of proximity to this waterside setting.

Adjacent to the Essoldo Cinema there is a row of three retail units alongside the Brick Top hairdresser unit and a row of five vacant office units with two storeys of residential above. These two areas are identified as sites 4a and 4b with potential to provide improved retail and leisure uses at a prominent location on Edge Lane. The reintroduction of active uses into these units will help to strengthen the linkage between the Stretford Metrolink station and the town centre and provide opportunities to grow the evening economy.

Objectives delivered: MO1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 15, and 16

Site 5: Lacy Street/Newton Street Car Park



This site currently provides an area of surface car parking, the Post Office sorting depot and offices for Atlas Bathroom and Heating. There is potential for this site to provide a mixed use development of residential, leisure and community uses. In developing this area it will be important to take full advantage of its gateway location and ensure that it contributes to an attractive route between the core of the town centre and the Metrolink and Bridgewater Canal. The area available for development may increase if the subways are removed which could release some additional land.

The car park is in the ownership of the Council, whilst this currently provides free parking a significant number of users are commuters using the Metrolink service rather than visitors to the town centre. If the Atlas Heating and Bathroom building and Post Office sorting depot are also brought forward as part of the development site then the viable and commercially attractive re-provision / relocation of these operations will be required prior to the redevelopment. If these units are to remain in situ and the car park site is redeveloped in isolation any new uses should be designed and managed so that they are both cognisant of and sensitive to adjacent operations.

Subject to securing necessary agreements in relation to third party land there is an opportunity to create a landmark building that also opens up access to the Bridgewater Canal. The site could include a new hotel with restaurant / café / bar uses at ground floor level and residential uses taking advantage of the canalside setting. This would provide an attractive gateway to the town centre and significantly enhance the evening economy. Any new hotel facility would provide accommodation within Stretford Town Centre for visitors to major cultural and leisure destinations in the surrounding area, including Manchester United FC and Lancashire County Cricket Club, and further support the development of the evening economy. Subject to future viability studies, it may be possible to extend the area for development further by including adjoining uses such as the Probation Service office, subject to the identification of suitable alternative space in the area.

Any future development of this site will need to be mindful of the potential impacts that might arise out of any reduction in car parking provision. This will require consideration of car parking across Stretford Town Centre and adjacent residential areas.

Objectives delivered: MO1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, and 16

Site 6: Former Boatyard Site, Edge Lane

An outline planning application has been prepared for the development of residential apartments along the Bridgewater Canal at the former boatyard site. This canalside development offers the potential to open up access from the town centre to this key environmental asset as part of a new 'Stretford Wharf'. Issues around access and parking remain under discussion between the applicant, the Council and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM).

The development of this site for high quality residential accommodation will take advantage of its waterside location and bring an area of brownfield land back into active use.

Objectives delivered: MO1, 4, 8, and 10



Site 7: Royal Canal Works Site, Edge Lane

As with development at the former boatyard site, this site offers the potential to open up access from the town centre to the Bridgewater Canal as part of a new 'Stretford Wharf'. Outline planning consent for the construction of 31 residential units on the Royal Canal Works site was granted in 2010, subject to the completion of a legal agreement. There is potential for development to also encompass the adjoining land to the east in the ownership of TfGM. This larger site would offer greater flexibility in terms of accommodating new development which could include residential with commercial pub/restaurant uses on the canalside. The site could also accommodate purpose built student accommodation taking advantage of its proximity to the Metrolink station.

The site offers potential to deliver new high quality residential accommodation with some leisure use at ground floor level taking advantage of its waterside location.

Objectives delivered: MO1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 16

Stretford Town Centre Masterplan (January 2014)

Site 8: Stretford Metrolink Station

The Stretford Metrolink station is located at a major public transport gateway into the town centre and is also sited at a prominent location along Edge Lane. A key issue at this site is the lack of an effective linkage from the Metrolink station and the absence of any sense of arrival in the town centre. As part of the Masterplan proposals the Stretford Metrolink building and surrounding area is identified for intervention to further improve the external appearance of the station building, particularly at the rear, alongside enhanced landscaping, outdoor space and linkages to the wider town centre at this key public transport gateway.



Objectives delivered: MO1, 2, 3, 12, and 13

Site 9: Stretford Library and Mitford Street Clinic/Bennett Street Surgery



The existing Stretford library is located on Kingsway and housed within the oldest operational library building in Trafford. The building itself is widely recognised as a key landmark by the community.

The Mitford Street Clinic has now been vacated by the NHS and will be subject to a retrospective planning application for conversion to residential use. The former Bennett Street Surgery building is currently in use as an office location.

The potential to provide a new combined community facility within the town centre core has previously been proposed. This would offer modern high quality public services and help generate additional footfall to support adjoining retail and leisure uses. However the retention of the library at its current location will continue its valuable contribution to the streetscape and offer potential to create a more effective link across Kingsway by retaining some civic function in this area. The Mitford Street clinic site will be brought forward for residential development and the former Bennett Street Surgery unit will remain as commercial floorspace.

Objectives delivered: MO1, 5, 6, 8, and 16

Site 10: The Drum

The Drum site is located on the A56 at the southern edge of Stretford Town Centre and contains the vacant Drum Public House building. The site is subject to a planning application for a drive-thru restaurant that would bring this site back into active use and provide a new food and drink facility within the town centre.



If a drive-thru restaurant use cannot be delivered on this site it also offers potential to provide new residential development integrated with the surrounding area.

Future development at this location should provide an attractive entry point into Stretford Town Centre and reduce severance from the existing residential community.

Objectives delivered: MO1, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 15

Public Realm, Highways and Pedestrian Movement

Public Realm

Successful town centres require good quality streets and spaces that provide an attractive physical environment. The existing public realm in Stretford Town Centre is tired, dated and the linkages between key areas are poor. There is a lack of any sense of arrival at key town centre gateways. In the evening there is limited activity in the town centre and consequently it feels sterile and lifeless. The streetscape suffers from a lack of animation along the A56, Kingsway and Edge Lane. There are a number of vacant buildings at prominent locations including the Essoldo Cinema, the units along Edge Lane, some of the Mall units along Chester Road and the former Drum Public House.

The revitalisation of Stretford Town Centre will require the provision of safe and attractive routes alongside enhanced gateways to the town centre. Intervention is also required to support the development of the evening economy and bring activity to the town centre after 5pm. More active building frontages are needed throughout the town centre if it is to provide an attractive environment in which people want to spend time. Improved signage and public realm works should provide enhanced linkages between the town centre and key environmental assets including Stretford's parks which offer attractive areas of formal green space in close proximity to Stretford Town Centre.

To facilitate this change a Public Realm and Movement Strategy will be commissioned as part of the works to deliver the Masterplan. This study will identify the specific interventions required as part of a comprehensive scheme that will make Stretford a more attractive and successful town centre whilst balancing the need to meet statutory duties to maintain traffic flows on the network, minimise the risk of accidents and provide for pedestrian safety.

Highways

The six lane A56 and Kingsway/Edge Lane dual carriageways separate Stretford Mall from the local population and assets such as the Bridgewater Canal, Metrolink Station and key buildings including the Stretford Public Hall and Essoldo Cinema. These highways and their associated traffic dominate the town centre environment.



The A56 is a major arterial route through Trafford. The A56/Kingsway/Edge Lane junction sits at the heart of the town centre and should provide a more effective gateway to Stretford. This space needs to be re-balanced to enable it to better serve the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. The existing brick planters down the centre of the A56 and Kingsway could be replaced with more attractive landscaping.

Where the A56 runs through Stretford Town Centre its speed limit is currently 40mph. It is recognised that drivers will generally drive according to conditions and the current nature of the A56 in this area, a multi-lane dual carriageway with no on-street parking and segregated pedestrian routes, is considered unsuitable for a lower speed limit. However, substantial change to the nature of this route will provide an opportunity to review the speed limit in this area accordingly so it is more suited to a town centre environment.

The A56, Kingsway, Edge Lane and Barton Road all have extensive lengths of pedestrian guardrail. These are unsightly within the streetscape and act as a barrier to movement. As part of the public realm improvements the extent of pedestrian guardrail will be reduced where it would not result in a detrimental impact on road safety.

There should be effective provision for cyclists to access the town centre. The provision of new cycle hubs and parking facilities will assist in making the town centre more usable by cyclists. There are also opportunities to link the town centre more effectively with the wider existing and proposed cycle network.

It will be necessary to alleviate the severance caused by the highways in Stretford Town Centre if it is to perform more effectively. Landscaping, improvements to outdoor spaces and traffic calming works along Chester Road, Kingsway and Edge Lane would help improve the physical environment of this area and reduce the negative impact of existing highways supporting the wider transformation of the town centre.

Pedestrian Movement

The A56 presents a significant barrier to pedestrian movement in Stretford Town Centre. Pedestrian access across the A56 into the town centre is currently provided by four subways. These are widely viewed as unattractive, unsightly and associated with fear of crime and anti-social behaviour; there are particular concerns about using the subways after dark, which present a barrier to the development of the evening economy. There is an existing surface level pedestrian crossing point on the A56 within the town centre providing access to Stretford Mall by St Matthews Church.

The subways provide opportunities for a number of interventions to deliver more attractive pedestrian access into the heart of the town centre. The replacement of the existing subways with surface level pedestrian crossing points has been identified as a key intervention that would deliver more attractive pedestrian access into the heart of a redeveloped town centre core. If the existing subways are removed this will release additional land which could provide for the creation of new public spaces in the heart of the town centre and support the development of adjacent sites.

The existing subway on Kingsway between the Mitford Street Clinic site and Stretford Mall, which is not currently well used, could also be removed and replaced with surface level crossing to provide a more effective linkage across Kingsway. There are existing surface level crossing points on Kingsway between the Mall and Pinnington Lane and at the Kingsway/Barton Road junction.

Any removal of the subways and their replacement with surface level crossing points will need to take account of the impacts on pedestrian safety and traffic flows and should be considered as part of a comprehensive package of improvements within an overall Public Realm and Movement Strategy.

Objectives delivered: MO1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14



Design Guidance

Stretford Town Centre should offer a safe, attractive and distinctive environment if it is to be a successful destination of choice. The urban design approach that underpins development within the town centre should:

- enhance the existing character of Stretford;
- create a centre with a unique identity;
- provide variety in the urban environment;
- create attractive outdoor spaces;
- ensure a safe and secure environment;
- enable ease of pedestrian and cycle movement;
- create a space that is easily understood;
- provide adaptability for future change;
- minimise the environmental impact; and
- protect and enhance Stretford's heritage assets.

The existing scale and massing of buildings varies throughout the town centre. The development of new buildings within Stretford Town Centre should relate in scale and mass to surrounding buildings and the size of development site. Where larger scale of development is appropriate, such as within the town centre core, careful consideration should be given in the design process to avoid development of a monolithic nature that has a negative impact on townscape.

Variation in building heights and elevation detailing can create a more interesting townscape and distinctive skyline. Taller buildings should be located in areas that emphasise key landmarks. Where taller buildings are appropriate consideration should be given to ensuring the design allows sufficient sunlight and daylight for different uses and protects the historic environment.

New development should contribute to the development of a high quality mixed use environment with a strong sense of place within the town centre. There should be well designed and active frontages, particularly at key entry points. Good quality materials and appropriate detailing should be used and where appropriate reflect the status of listed buildings. The physical environment should be enhanced through the use of good quality paving and landscaped edges, distinctive street furniture and clear and well positioned signage.

Delivering the Masterplan

Governance

It will be important to ensure that all stakeholders, particularly businesses and property owners, are involved in delivering improvements to Stretford Town Centre. There is an opportunity to refresh the governance model for the town centre and particularly secure more business representation. The future role, function and structure of the town centre partnership will be considered as part of this work to understand what the best approach is to deliver positive change.

A Stretford Retailers Forum will be established as a key group to encourage retailers to work together to come up with and implement ideas which can improve the town centre. The Steering Group of this forum should include a diverse range of representatives including multiples / independents and representation from Barton Road, Chester Road and Edge Lane, as well as within Stretford Mall.

Project Funding and Delivery

The Masterplan provides a framework for establishing a funding pot for the regeneration of Stretford Town Centre. The Council will look to pool developer contributions and other funding that can be used to kick-start further private sector investment. Initial funding has been identified that could deliver a first phase of public realm works acting as a catalyst to unlock other development opportunities. Any receipts from the sale of Council landholdings in the town centre can be identified for reinvesting in the town centre. There are other potential sources of grant funding such as the Heritage Lottery Fund that some projects within the Masterplan may be able to attract. The majority of projects within the Masterplan will be private sector led. The Council will use its resources proactively to provide support and confidence to the private sector in delivering significant new private investment within Stretford.

The delivery of the Masterplan will be dependent on effective partnership working. As part of the new governance structure described above collaborative working with the community, businesses, landowners, developers, investors, retailers and residents will deliver the revitalisation of Stretford Town Centre.

Key Actions for 2014-2018

The following key actions have been identified for the next five years to progress the delivery of the Masterplan.

- Revised governance structure for Stretford Town Centre, including Retailers Forum, established.
- A public realm and movement strategy with outline designs will be commissioned for the town centre to identify specific interventions to deliver the aspirations of the Masterplan.
- The Council will provide support to businesses looking to establish/grow within the town centre via the Town Centre Loan Scheme and other business support services.
- Inventive ways to ensure use of vacant town centre units will be explored including window displays, arts exhibitions/events and pop-up shops.
- A fact sheet will be prepared for businesses to assist in making business rate appeals.
- Work to continue with the administrators of Stretford Mall to identify how the performance of this facility can be improved, including delivery of wider mix of uses and indoor market events.
- The Council will dispose of Stretford Public Hall and consider the potential for a community asset transfer.
- Engagement will be undertaken with the owner of the Essoldo Cinema to progress proposals to bring this site back into active use.
- A targeted programme of business support will be provided to secure new retail and leisure uses in the Edge Lane units adjacent to the Essoldo Cinema.
- Further soft market testing will be undertaken in relation to the Lacy Street/Newton Street Car Park site and a detailed development proposal prepared.
- Work will be undertaken with the owners of the former Boatyard site and Royal Canal Works site to advance their plans for redevelopment.
- Retrospective planning application for residential uses of the former Mitford Street Clinic to be considered by Planning Committee.
- Planning application for drive-thru restaurant at The Drum site to be considered by Planning Committee.

Phasing Plan

The Stretford Town Centre Masterplan provides a framework for the transformation of Stretford Town Centre over the next 10-15 years. The phasing plan below sets out the priority activities for the next five years that will contribute to the vision and objectives of the Masterplan.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Establishment of new governance structure	■				
Preparation of Public Realm and Movement designs	■	■			
Securing indoor market within the Mall		■			
Delivery of new retail/leisure uses on Edge Lane		■	■		
Disposal and reuse of Stretford Public Hall		■	■		
Development of the Drum site			■	■	
Development of the Royal Canal Works site			■	■	
Implementation of first phase public realm works			■	■	■
Development of the former Boatyard site			■	■	
Delivery of Lacy Street/Newton Street site			■	■	■

The successful delivery of this activity over the next five years will help to kick start the long term revitalisation of Stretford Town Centre and contribute to the achievement of the vision and objectives of this Masterplan. In addition to the above activity the Council will actively support the introduction of new uses within Stretford Mall and proposals for its longer term redevelopment.