






Solihull Town Centre Masterplan

Supplementary Information

November 2016



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SOLIHULL TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

Supplementary Information

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STATION

01 | Planning Policy Context

01 | Planning Policy Context

This section will provide an overview of relevant national and local planning policy which has a significant influence on the Solihull Town Centre Masterplan. Also provided is a brief overview of relevant large scale planning applications which will influence the masterplan, in particular Touchwood II and Mell Square.

1.1 National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) comprises the core document for planning policies in England and sets out how these policies should be applied. The Framework explains how sustainable development can be achieved and the economic, social and environmental role that planning performs. The document states that pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life. The National Planning Policy Framework introduced the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' which is described as a 'golden thread' running through plan-making and decision taking. For plan-making this means that development needs should be sought positively, objectively assessed and feature flexibility to adapt to future change.

The Framework contains 12 'Core Planning Principles' and policies that should promote competitive town centres, recognising them as the heart of their communities. It is stated that solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion should be supported, while the quality of parking in town centres should be convenient, safe and secure.

To deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, local authorities should

plan for a mix of housing reflecting local demand.

In relation to design, the National Planning Policy Framework attaches importance to good design, stating that it is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The Framework states that it is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes and that design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription, instead guiding the scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access of new development more generally.

To achieve health objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, the document states that councils should create a shared vision with communities of the facilities they wish to see. Policies should aim to achieve places which promote meetings between different communities through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres and active street frontages, safe and accessible environments and accessible developments, containing clear, legible routes, and high quality public spaces.

It is stated within the National Planning Policy Framework that planning plays a key role in helping places reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions and supporting renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. In reference to the natural environment and biodiversity, the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Heritage conservation is also referenced within the framework, in terms of character and the need to preserve local identities.

In relation to community engagement, the document states that early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses

is essential. A wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area.

1.2 Local Planning Policy

Solihull Local Plan

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council adopted the Local Plan in December 2013. The Plan sets out the long-term spatial vision; defining how its settlements will develop and change over the Plan period (2011- 2028) through a strategy for promoting, distributing and delivering sustainable development and growth.

Solihull Town Centre is identified as a 'Centre for Growth' within the wider borough, meaning that it provides a strategic shopping, employment, cultural and leisure role and key transport hub.

The spatial strategy is expressed further in the five distinct areas of the Borough, of which Solihull Town Centre is number one. The town centre is expected to contribute to economic growth by:

- Focusing strategically important employment, shopping, cultural and leisure activities within the town centre;
- Facilitating improvements to and protecting future redevelopment opportunities of Mell Square;
- Pursuing development opportunities at Station Road, Homer Road triangle and Touchwood Extension;
- Phasing development to manage the impacts on existing retailers and other occupiers, to ensure timely provision of required supporting infrastructure and

maintain a balance of vitality and activity across the town centre;

- Encouraging a vibrant evening economy catering for everyone;
- Providing for new housing to contribute towards meeting the Borough's local needs;
- Promoting high quality digital connectivity to meet the future needs of businesses and residents;
- Integrating opportunities for decentralised heat and energy networks into master planning;
- Supporting appropriate waste management activities, such as recycling and combined heat and power;
- Improving key gateways and connections between the railway station and bus interchange and the Town Centre;
- Providing for a better, healthier and safer environment by enhancing the historic core and parkland setting of the town centre and improving the quality, legibility and connectivity of public spaces;
- Reinforcing the High Street as a principal pedestrian route with links to both the rail station and adjacent parks; and
- Increasing the proportion of visitors accessing the town centre by walking, cycling and public transport, thereby helping to reduce congestion.

Policy P2 (Town Centres) states that town centres will be the focus for all new developments including retail and other commercial development. Solihull Town Centre will be developed and sustained as a place of quality and

distinction and be the principal focus of commercial activity and public transport. It will be shaped and managed to ensure continued economic growth and success. The character and quality of the town will be enhanced through the promotion and careful control of new development which is sensitive to its context but adds a new dimension to interest, activity and economic success.

The document provides a Town Centre map which establishes:

1. The extent of the town centre to focus commercial and leisure activity, facilitate effective and efficient patterns of movement and public transport and to provide a clear identity;
2. A public realm framework as a focus for pedestrian movement and activity. New buildings will be required to front onto this network and focus their public activity to that frontage;
3. A pattern of retail frontages to ensure the effective, efficient, convenient vital and successful functioning of the town as a shopping centre; and
4. Opportunity Sites for new development at Touchwood, Mell Square West, Lode Lane and Herbert Road/Station Road: and indicative opportunities elsewhere including Mell Square East, Lode Lane and Homer Road.

In total, new development in the Town Centre will provide:

5. About 34,000 sqm of additional comparison retail floorspace by 2021; a further 23,000 sqm 2021 to 2026; and an additional 2,800 sqm of convenience retail floorspace top 2026.
6. Up to an additional 35,000 sqm of new office floorspace

7. Residential development, both on freestanding sites and as part of mixed use development or refurbishment schemes, will be encouraged in and around the town centre. Large scale sites additional to the Opportunity Sites will include:

- Monkspath Hall Road
- Station Approach

Policy P7 (Accessibility and Ease of Access) states that all new development should be focused in the most accessible locations and seek to enhance existing accessibility levels and promote ease of access. Investment in improvements to local public transport provision, cycling and/or walking measures will be sought in association with development proposals which do not meet the accessibility criteria set out by this policy.

Policy P9 (Climate Change) establishes that the Council will take full account of targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing generation from renewable/low carbon sources. In locations where decentralised energy and heat or off-gas networks exist, or have the greatest potential, such as Solihull Town Centre, developments of an appropriate scale, density and/or mix will be encouraged.

Policy P10 (Natural Environment) The Council recognises the importance of a healthy natural environment and for the economic and social benefits it provides. The full value and benefits of the natural environment will be taken into account in considering proposals, including the health of residents, and the potential for reducing impacts of climate change.

In Policy P15 (Securing Quality Design) the council outlines that all development proposals will be expected to achieve good quality, inclusive and sustainable design, which meets key principles including:

- Conserving and enhances local character, distinctiveness and streetscape quality and ensures that the scale, massing, density, layout, materials and landscape of the development respect the surrounding natural, built and historic environment;
- Integrates the natural environment within the development through the provision of gardens, quality open space and/or improved access to, enhancement or extension of the green infrastructure network; and
- Creates attractive, safe, active, legible and uncluttered streets and public spaces which are accessible, easily maintained and encourage walking and cycling and reduce crime.

Heritage protection is discussed in Policy P16 (Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness). The Policy states that the council considers the historic core of Solihull Town Centre and its adjacent parks alongside four other categories of areas which contribute to the local distinctiveness and character of the Borough. Proposals seeking to modify heritage assets for the mitigation of and adaptation to the effects of climate change will be expected to be sympathetic and conserve the special interest and significance of the heritage asset or its setting.

In Policy 18 (Health and Well Being) it is expected that proposals will promote, support and enhance physical and mental health and wellbeing. Support will be given to proposals which encourage social interaction and facilitate movement on foot and by cycle and contribute to the development of a high-quality, safe and convenient walking and cycling network.

Solihull Local Plan Review

In July 2015 the Council resolved to undertake a review of its local plan for three reasons. Firstly, the successful legal challenge to the Local Plan 2013 post adoption means that the Plan has no overall housing requirement for the Plan period, making it difficult to demonstrate that the Borough has a five-year housing land supply. Secondly, the examination of the Birmingham Development Plan has made clear that the City Council is unable to meet its own housing need within its boundaries, and that the shortfall will have to be met elsewhere within the Housing Market Area (or other nearby areas) such as Solihull. Finally, the UK Central Masterplan and Prospectus for a 'Garden City' approach to the High Speed 2 Interchange have set out the Council's ambitions for this part of the Borough. The Proposed Local Area Plan for the High Speed 2 Interchange and Adjoining Area highlighted the need to review the Green Belt boundary to enable the Interchange Area to be allocated for development, and the full potential of the High Speed 2 project to be realised.

The first stage of the Local Plan Review process, Scope, Issues and Options was published for consultation in November 2015. The document highlighted a need for a minimum of 4,000 additional dwellings over and above those planned for and the possibility of accommodating further growth from Birmingham. Seven broad potential options for accommodating growth were suggested. Over 160 representations were received together with more than 240 site submissions for consideration. The Council's response was agreed by the Cabinet Member for Managed Growth in April 2016.

The next stage will be for the Council to prepare a draft plan for consultation. This will be informed by the emerging evidence base and the outcome from the Scope, Issues and Options consultation.

The timetable for the local plan review is as follows:

- Autumn 2016 – Draft Local Plan
- Spring 2017 – Publication of Local Plan
- Summer 2017 – Submission of Local Plan for Examination
- Winter 2017 - Adoption

Solihull Connected Green Paper June 2015

The Solihull Connected Green Paper set out the strategic direction for the future and establishes policy to guide the transport agenda in the borough for the next 20+ years. It was consulted on July-October 2015 by the public and stakeholders. The document features key objectives such as:

1. Ensure that transport capacity and congestion are not a constraint to growth and that major transport investment helps drive growth effectively;
2. Promote and support sustainable and efficient forms of transport and transport investment;
3. Aim to support people's daily lives and well-being by providing door to door transport choices. Wherever possible these will include the opportunity to walk or cycle/use public transport whilst recognising the constraints to travel choice that exist within parts of the rural area;
4. Identify a prioritised short, medium and long term delivery plan to achieve the overarching vision and objectives whilst recognising and balancing the specific needs of the different parts of the Borough; and

5. Guide future master planning and land use policies to ensure that the design and location of future development enables and encourages walking, cycling and public transport use.

The role and purpose of the document is to provide a long-term strategic vision for how Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council manage the extra travel demand brought about by the predicted economic and population growth; both in the Borough and across the West Midlands. The big catalyst for the need to plan for this growth is the arrival of the High Speed Rail 2 Interchange in 2026. This national level infrastructure being located in the Borough presents huge opportunities for housing and job creation. The document explains the need to provide for a growing Borough, enhance its character and secure future funding.

The transport needs are set out in the document, and highlight important components such as the Solihull Gateway Bus Interchange, SPRINT Corridor and High Speed Rail 2.

Solihull Town Centre's identified needs within this document are to provide a comprehensive masterplan for Solihull Town Centre, which takes a detailed look at the land use plans and brings together a staged approach to:

- Identify the best land use mix and location;
- Understand car parking needs and develop a strategy for pricing and locations, making the best use of technology;
- Understand whether moving the railway station could result in an improved land use pattern;
- Improve the interchange between different modes of transport;

- Improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists into and across the centre
- Public realm design and the relationship between walking and cycling networks and green space;
- Businesses in the centre encouraging sustainable transport use, helping to alleviate peak time congestion; and
- Investigating the possibility of opening the High Street to vehicles in the evening to 'activate' the area.

The document sets out a 'mass transit' network of rail, bus, SPRINT and Solihull SPRINT which would better connect the town centre to key locations including Birmingham Airport and High Speed Rail 2, The Jaguar Land Rover Factory and Blythe Valley Business Park. These enhancements sit alongside investment in congestion hot-spots on arterials approaching Solihull Town Centre and other local centres and cycle routes.

With specific relation to the Town Centre Masterplan, the document states that the masterplan will help frame what the town wants to be; how it should grow and to what extent, and what will be the key uses and drivers for its vitality. Movement is a critical element of the success of the town, in conjunction with land use. An analysis should be made of how the main attractions within Solihull are interconnected; these include the retail centre, work places, rail and bus stations, Tudor Grange Park and Solihull Hospital. Cycling, public transport penetration and the potential relocation of the rail station are also considerations for the masterplan.

Solihull Connected Transport Strategy (June 2016)

This document presents the approved transport strategy for Solihull following the consultation on the Green Paper. It marks out the Council's vision as to; how transport infrastructure and initiatives will be delivered in the future, how to accommodate growth in travel demand on the network, and how the Council intends to maintain Solihull's character. This document moves forward the initial vision and ideas set out in the Solihull Connected Green Paper to bring about a stronger emphasis on sustainable forms of transport in Solihull: investing in high-quality public and active transport to provide residents and workers with greater opportunities to choose sustainable modes.

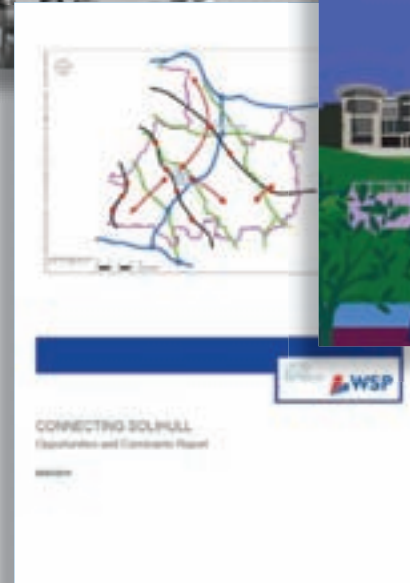
The strategy sets out the following key objectives:

1. Ensure that major transport investment enables and manages growth to achieve the Council priorities for homes and jobs;
2. Support and enable the integrated delivery of sustainable and efficient forms of transport like mass-transit, cycling and walking;
3. Contribute to the council priorities to support people's everyday lives and improve health and wellbeing through the promotion of smarter choices programmes linked to major and local infrastructure investment;
4. Identify a prioritised short, medium and long term delivery plan to achieve the overarching vision and objectives whilst recognising the specific needs of the different parts of the Borough; and
5. Ensure that the objectives of Solihull Connected are embedded in Local Plan and Health and Wellbeing policies to support walking, cycling and public transport use.

The document also provides a series of 'Priorities for Action' which respond to the needs of the Borough and which provide information on how specifically the council intends to achieve these priorities. The priorities for action are addressed under the following themes:

- A mass-transit network;
- Heavy rail;
- Investing in our roads;
- A strategic cycle network;
- Creating safer healthier communities; streets not roads;
- A town centre masterplan; and
- Technology and innovation.

A Delivery Plan is to follow in Autumn 2016 which will set out Solihull's transport and investment priorities. The Plan will be informed by a number of technical studies which include the Town Centre Masterplan and Access and Movement Strategy.



1.3 Other Relevant Documents

1.3.1 Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)

The SEP sets out how the Local Enterprise Partnership seeks to address challenges and opportunities in the area's economy and work in partnership with private, public and third sectors to target barriers to growth. The strategy focuses on four programmes of delivery which are growing business, enhancing Birmingham City Centre, UK Central, the Enterprise Belt and the wider Birmingham area and enhancing growth sectors. The document includes reference to the SPRINT connectivity into Solihull Town Centre which is identified as a Local Regeneration Project.

1.3.2 M42 Economic Gateway Masterplan Report

This study revealed an opportunity for growth on a scale of national significance, identifying the area's potential to underpin an economic resurgence. By targeting investment in local infrastructure and committing to deliver an expanded Airport and proposed High Speed Rail 2 station, the benefits for the area and the UK are significant. The area is connected to other major cities with the economic motors of Jaguar Land Rover, the National Exhibition Centre, Solihull Town Centre and the business parks of the M42 corridor nearby.

The town centre is listed as one of five geographical locations for growth. The existing and future assets of the town centre are for new developments and connectivity, accessibility improvement. The High Street is seen as a principal pedestrian route, this is linked to a density increase, affordable housing and extension of the town centre. With improved connectivity with the National Exhibition Centre, Airport and High Speed Rail 2 station, there is potential for the town centre to act as a node for wider tourism in the region and to directly benefit from

growth at the National Exhibition Centre and Airport. The report describes that Solihull is represented by high-street chain stores but lacks niche, independent retailers. The document aims to allow the town centre to grow and diversify its mix and character, assuming the continuation of growth trends reflected in previous studies. It also assumes that the extension of the town centre, together with the redevelopment of Mell Square, could serve to maintain and enhance the quality of Solihull's future retail offer, including a review of spatial elements and public realm.

1.3.3 Connecting Solihull Opportunities and Constraints Report

This report examined the potential opportunities and constraints facing Solihull and its transport system and how this might change in the future, looking specifically at:

- Population growth and the impacts on the future numbers of cars on the roads;
- How accessibility to public transport in certain areas of the Borough can impact on social exclusion;
- How and why Solihull's residents make decisions when leaving their homes to travel somewhere; and
- Specifically how the town centre's current operation could affect its viability in the future.

1.3.4 Solihull Transport Strategy – Town Centre Public Transport Assessment

This document examined bus and rail accessibility, integration between these modes and location of the rail station. The document recognised the strengths in Solihull's transport system but identified the following needs:

- Protection from the adverse impacts of traffic congestion on journey times, particularly between

Station Road and the rail station and on the approaches to Poplar Road from Warwick Road and Lode Lane;

- Maintain public transport access to the core of the town centre in the vicinity of Poplar Road and Solihull rail station whilst providing good access to planned new developments;
- Further investment in infrastructure to improve passenger facilities and increase capacity and operational capabilities; and
- Improve pedestrian and cycle links between the railway station and the town centre and planned new developments.

1.3.5 Solihull Station Masterplan

In June 2015 Centro submitted a bid to the Department for Transport (DfT) and Network Rail's 'Station Commercial Project Facility' fund (SCPF) for a £3.56 million scheme to regenerate Solihull Station as the gateway between Solihull Town Centre and the National Rail Network. A series of illustrative proposal options were developed to help assist with this aim.

The proposals considered interchange and the movements of the various station users including pedestrians, drop off, taxis, buses, and bicycles accommodating them all on the site and connecting into the local environment.

1.3.6 Solihull Town Centre Public Realm Framework

This study seeks to understand the physical and psychological factors that underpin Solihull's potential successes, recognising the need to improve and invest in order to continue to compete and attract visitors. The document details the context study, engagement activities and identifies emerging issues such as key public spaces, green spaces, signage, wayfinding and parking. The

study identified key streets, connections and gateways which 'require improvement'. Design objectives were then developed which included that the town centre should be legible, distinctive, flexible, attractive, functional, future-proofed, inclusive and safe. Recommended projects (town centre wide and location specific) were then identified with next steps outlined.

1.3.7 Urban Characterisation Study

This study considers the broad physical make-up of the Borough. It identifies a series of typologies and characteristics such as scale and grain, land use and network characteristics. Solihull Town Centre was identified within the Central Urban Core area, having the finest grain of development within the central urban core area. The town centre is described as a compact centre contained between the railway-line to the south and Warwick Road to the north. The centre comprises predominantly retail uses at its core with business uses, hotels and leisure uses at its periphery. To the north of the centre, land use is dominated by Solihull School and Solihull Hospital and to the South-West by Tudor Grange Leisure Centre and Park and Solihull College. The railway station is also located at the periphery, with remaining areas being residential.

1.3.8 Solihull Council Plan 2014-2020 (April 2016 Update)

This document sets out the strategy and direction for the Metropolitan Borough Council as a whole. The document focuses on services, supporting the vulnerable, future resilience and economic growth.

1.3.9 Solihull Town Centre Strategy Direction Paper No.5 Movement and Accessibility

This document recognises the need for the town centre to move towards more sustainable transport modes and undertake a shift away from private car use. The document touches upon the issues of road capacity in the town centre

and the benefits of moving the rail and bus stations closer to the centres of activity.

1.3.10 Solihull Town Centre Strategy Direction Paper No. 6 Urban Design Analysis

This paper combined key findings of documents and focussed on urban design analysis and opportunities. The document featured a baseline analysis as a first section and emerging opportunities as a second section. The Emerging Opportunities included 6 opportunity sites including Morrisons, Lode Lane, Station Road, Station Quarter, Prince's Way, Car Park Site and 4 sites for major improvements including Mell Square, Civic, Library and Police Station and Magistrates Court.

1.3.11 Solihull Connected Town Centre Active Travel Assessment

The Technical Note set out the issues and opportunities for promoting active travel and included including a review of existing barriers, best practice examples and case studies and highlighted opportunities for improved walking and cycling.

1.3.12 Solihull Town Centre Study

In May 2009, consultants were appointed to undertake an assessment to improve Solihull's competitiveness, sustainability and quality of life. The study examined the current position, desired future and methods for reaching future goals and provided a spatial strategy, phasing and implementation. The Spatial Strategy included Urban Design Objectives and principles on issues such as Urban Form, Land Use, Links and Connections, Public Realm and Townscape, Movement and Transport.

1.4 Strategic Planning History

Headline strategic planning milestone developments in the town centre include:

- Mell Square in the 60's,
- Poplar Road precinct in the 70s,
- High Street pedestrianisation in the 80's,
- Office developments along Homer Road in the 90's, and
- Touchwood at the turn of the Century

These have been followed by the prospect of the Touchwood extension and Waitrose which is now open in Homer Road.

1.5 Relevance to Solihull Town Centre Masterplan

Whilst the Solihull Town Centre masterplan is informed by statutory national, regional and local planning policies, including the UK Central Masterplan it also will perform an important function of informing future policy. This section of the evidence base has highlighted a number of areas where policy influence should be considered, including:

- Solihull is the West Midlands' principal international gateway and strongest performing economy. When HS2 is constructed, UK Central will be brought within a 40 minute journey of London, providing significant opportunities for growth and investment; and
- Central to Solihull's economic development and future growth is a commitment to deliver:
 - A well connected town centre which promotes and encourages sustainable travel, reducing dependency on the car;
 - A diverse, vibrant town centre with a character that makes Solihull unique;
 - Managed growth that is resilient to economic change and supports the ambitions of the region; and
 - A healthier, more attractive and safer town centre which supports the needs of residents, visitors and businesses.





02 | Market Report

02 | Market Report

2.1 Market Overview

A Market Baseline Report has been produced to review the current market conditions for office, retail, leisure and residential uses. This has informed the development of the Solihull Town Centre Masterplan. A summary of the key headlines is provided in the section below.

This guidance has subsequently steered the 'Areas of Change' and Development Parameters (section 6) through more detailed guidance on the type and scale of development. The full market overview report is provided in the Supplementary Information document.

2.1.1 Office Market

Solihull is regarded as a good location for business both in terms of its proximity to a large pool of skilled labour but also the amenable working environment the town presents. This is demonstrated by the notable latent occupier demand for space in the town centre, which underpins the rental premium over out of town that the town centre is developing. Analysis of take up within the town centre illustrates that there is significant pent up demand for space within the town centre, accompanied by relatively low levels of occupier churn. The occupier market is generally characterised by settled, long term occupiers of local, national and international standing such as British Gas, Excocite, NPower, United Utilities, Paragon and National Grid.

Solihull Town Centre is a component of what is termed the Birmingham Out-of-Town (OOT) market, which in recent years has been driven by the automotive and transport sectors. The current stock of office space is relatively low, particularly in comparison to Birmingham. This is because, despite recent healthy levels of take up, there has been

little development of new out-of-town space. The vast majority of current out-of-town space is located in business parks, however reflecting recent trends amongst corporate occupiers in financial and professional services, there is an increasing preference to strong town centre locations rather than out of town areas.

Whilst ostensibly the out of town and town centre office markets are well defined, in the medium to long term, the scale of UK Central growth will serve to cap rental growth in Solihull Town Centre, threatening rental security, a key factor when considering new development.

Currently rentals are at a level in Solihull Town Centre that are maintainable over the out-of-town market on the basis of the view businesses take on wider occupancy costs and risk considerations, in particular, the access and appeal to skilled labour. Indeed the masterplan presents the opportunity to guide and give occupiers confidence regarding the overall town centre offer of Solihull.

In the longer term supply at UK Central may grow to a point such that threatens the current rental premium over out-of-town. This is a potential threat to Solihull Town Centre if a defining and appealing overall product (a combined function of a good supply of new Grade A space alongside the well regarded amenity, which can be mutually reinforcing) is not in place.

There is pent up demand for office space in Solihull Town Centre, and the development is generally favourable for further office development, which we suggest should initially focus on the Homer Road Triangle area (at least 50,000 sqft) in order to address this demand and assist the overall town centre offer, especially considering the longer term competition likely to emerge from UK Central.

2.1.2 Retail Market

In order to maintain the current success of the High Street, there is a need to keep the retail circuit tight, and therefore an opportunity site should only be developed as retail/leisure/food and beverage if the site has a quality that can present something unique to the town centre and relates well to the circuit.

A gap analysis exercise was carried out to understand which brands for both food and beverage and retail were currently missing from Solihull. This list is contained within the Supplementary Information document.

With regards to food and beverage, occupiers have typical requirements of 1,000 to 1,500sqft and their preferred location would likely be as part of a wider food and beverage offer within a retail scheme. On this basis, if there was an actual requirement for the town centre from this group of brands, we would expect the interest to focus on Touchwood or Mell Square, especially in mind of:

- Touchwood II, expected to accommodate around 110,000 sqft of additional retail and leisure over 21 retail units and 9 catering units; and
- Whilst the remodelling of Mell Square is not expected to create a large net additional space, there will also be space for new occupiers, with a view especially on improving the food and beverage offer.

From a retail perspective, occupiers have typical requirements of 5,000sqft or less and again we would expect interest in this market to be focussed around Touchwood, Touchwood II and Mell Square.

A health and fitness operator, such as Fitness First (typical requirement in the region of 10,000sqft), would be

a welcome presence in the town centre, and would be a complementary occupier in proximity to new office space.

2.1.3 Residential Market

The relatively low volume of recent transactions, and indeed marketed homes, combined with the premium prices, reflects a very large pent up demand for homes in and around the town centre. In particular, the popularity of family suburban living, and the acute lack of supply (in terms of homes coming on to the market) within walking distance of the town centre is exemplified by the very low levels of recent transactions and homes being marketed in these areas.

When developing options for the Masterplan, a number of factors have been considered in relation to the residential market:

- Older households, many of whom may have “downsized” are an important market in the town centre, which will have bearing in average apartment size (upwards) and hence achievable densities;
- A premium is achievable for apartments within easy walking distance of town centre facilities, and whilst apartments further away, sell well, their relatively lower prices reflect their more peripheral positioning; and
- There is acute pent up demand for family houses at traditional suburban densities in proximity to the town centre, and it is this product that developers would seek to promote on the periphery of the town centre.





03 | Stakeholder Engagement

03 | Stakeholder Engagement

3.1 Engagement Approach

This section provides information on activities undertaken, the outcomes and key findings and how this process has helped to inform the development of the Solihull Town Centre Masterplan.

As part of the Solihull Town Centre Masterplan development, two stakeholder engagement events were held, which gave people the opportunity to ascertain, share and debate key opportunities and constraints. These events helped to confirm an understanding of the key issues and also began to shape the emerging vision and spatial strategy for the town centre.

The first event was held on the 10th of March 2016 and was attended by Solihull Council Officers and the consultant team (AECOM, Cushman and Wakefield and WSP). The event took the form of an interactive half day workshop, which provided internal stakeholders with the opportunity to comment and provide feedback on the baseline material prepared by the consultant team, and also generate ideas and suggestions for potential opportunity sites to be explored further. The event included:

- A presentation by the consultant team, illustrating the key opportunities and influences for the Town Centre Masterplan, including spatial, market and transport considerations; and
- A debate to identify future aspirations, priorities and long term ambitions.

A second event held on the 14th April 2016 was attended by key members of the Council, consultant team and a broad range of external stakeholders including Local Councillors, IM Properties, John Lewis, National Grid, Touchwood, West

Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire Service, Chiltern Railways, Solihull Citizens Advice Bureau, National Express, plus a large number of other local business representative's and community groups. In total over 40 people attended the event representing a broad range of interests. After formal introductions, the consultant team gave a presentation outlining Solihull's existing issues, current property market and potential opportunity areas.

This was followed up by an interactive session, where stakeholders were split into groups and asked to debate and set out their current perceptions of Solihull and a wish list of potential improvements. As part of this, plans were marked up by participants (see opposite), which started to articulate and demonstrate the potential areas of intervention.



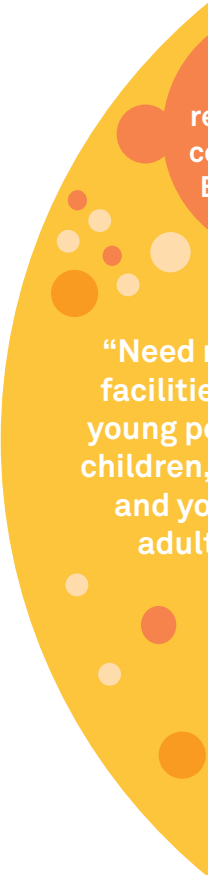
Solihull Town Centre Masterplan Stakeholder Workshop



A selection of material produced during the Solihull Town Centre Masterplan Stakeholders Workshop

3.2 Outcomes and Key Findings

Following the engagement events, all outputs (including plans and flip charts) were collated and analysed. The adjacent diagrams visually illustrate the key findings which were then used to develop the draft masterplans and vision for Solihull, together with the potential areas for change. The associated commentary shown in the graphic to the right was generated on the 14th April 2016 and reflects the opinions expressed from stakeholder focus groups.



Living & Working

“Solihull needs to respond to the competition of Birmingham”



“Residential development opportunity at Mell Square Car Park so not to distract from the High Street”

“The use of technology could reduce the need for office space in the future”

“A new hotel for Solihull will have a positive influence on building a night time economy”

“Lode Lane Car Park is underused. Can it be converted to commercial space?”

“Opportunity to convert the current Job Centre into a residential development”

“Could Solihull accommodate a highrise building?”

“Opportunity for a mixed use, large scale development at the Homer Road Triangle”

Every group suggested to “Introduce apartment type residential uses in the town centre”

“Residential development opportunity at Monkspath Hall Road Car Park”



Connections

“Need to improve access between the High Street and Tudor Grange Park as there is currently poor safety and limited movement”

Some respondents feel there is a “need to alleviate traffic congestion”



“Touchwood car park is overused while Lode Lane Car Park is underused”



“Solihull needs a shift in travel behaviour away from the car and into public transport. Lets improve the existing public transport facilities”



“Need to improve car parking entrances along Homer Road”

“Reduce the amount of cars accessing the town centre and suggested a park and ride scheme”

“Improve cycle and walking infrastructure”



“Improve access between town centre and Malvern Park”

“The masterplan should consider the location of Solihull Train Station to make best use of this key town centre asset”



“Concerns over the removal of car parking at Monkspath Hall Road Car Park from Homer Road employees”



04 | Public Consultation

04 | Public Consultation

Achieving local buy-in to the framework and principles identified in the masterplan is a fundamental requirement of the whole process. In response a public consultation was held in a series of venues in the town centre; it gave the local community an opportunity to get involved in shaping a masterplan that is illustrated in this document. This is important both from a local SMBC policy perspective and to achieve national good practice masterplanning and NPPF policy where matters impacting on the community should be developed in partnership with local people, local businesses and key stakeholders.

The public consultation gave the consultees an opportunity to understand the existing key issues informing the masterplan and an appreciation of the emerging opportunities / proposals. The associated feedback process enabled the community to comment on the process so far, influence the direction of travel and ensured comments were given due regard into the next, more detailed stage of the masterplan.

4.1 Consultation Aims

The public consultation gave people the opportunity to get involved in shaping a masterplan; to debate the big issues, opportunities and challenges and help the team to produce a flexible framework for future development and investment. The consultation material and associated questionnaire set out key questions the consultation sought to resolve/ gain an insight into, which were taken forward into the next stage of the masterplan. These questions involved:

- Gaining feedback on the masterplans understanding of existing issues;
- Gaining feedback on the Solihull 2036 Vision – Does

this support and accurately represent the community's aspirations for Solihull?;

- Understanding the community's reactions to the emerging masterplan concepts – Do the three themes (Connections, Living and Working, Experience) set out a successful framework to tackle the current issues Solihull has?;
- Understanding reactions to the potential areas of change and the envisaged future for each; and
- Gathering feedback on the long term future of the train station and its potential long term relocation.

4.2 Consultation Approach

The public consultation ran for a four week period from the 15th August 2016 and included two facilitated exhibition events:

- Thursday 25th August 2016 from 2pm to 8pm - The Core Studio, Theatre Square
- Saturday 3rd September 2016 from 10am to 4pm – Touchwood Shopping Centre

Throughout the consultation period there was a static exhibition of the consultation material located within the entrance foyer of The Core, in order to ensure that those people unable to attend the facilitated exhibition events, were able to review the consultation material in person. Copies of the masterplan documents were also made available at libraries across the borough, and the consultation was promoted as widely as possible through a variety of communication channels.

The material presented in the consultation is reproduced in figure 4.1.



Figure 4.1 Consultation Material

Engagement to Date 2

Living & Working

Connections

Experience & Place

A Vision for Solihull 2036...

"A 21st century town, nationally 'best in class' and the focus of long term regional investment at the forefront of innovation, diversity and sustainability. Offering better living, retail and offices with great connections and public realm to meet the aspirations of local people and businesses."

Stands apart from its neighbours

Modern and diverse

Solihull Town Centre Masterplan

Public Consultation

Emerging Concepts 3

1. Connections

2. Living and Working

3. Experience and Place

Solihull Town Centre Masterplan

Public Consultation

Areas of Change 4

1. Western Gateway

2. Southern Gateway

3. Business & Commercial Quarter

Solihull Town Centre Masterplan

Public Consultation

Areas of Change 5

4. Northern Approach

5. Heart of Solihull (Retail Core)

6. Solihull Living

7. St. Alphege Quarter

Solihull Town Centre Masterplan

Public Consultation

Have your say! 6

We would welcome your views on what you have seen and heard in this exhibition.

Please complete the online questionnaire here:

www.solihull.gov.uk/masterplan

Alternatively if you don't have online access call 0121 704 8001 to request a paper questionnaire and post it back to us.

Please also feel free to email your views to: masterplan@solihull.gov.uk

Please return any comments to us by **Friday 9 September 2016**

www.facebook.com/solihullcouncil

www.twitter.com/solihullcouncil

www.investincentral.com

www.solihull.gov.uk/solihullconnected

Next steps

A broad timeline is provided below which sets out key dates in the development and publication of the Solihull Town Centre Masterplan.

August - September	4 week public consultation on the draft masterplan
September	Consideration of feedback and shaping of the final masterplan
September	Submission as evidence base to Local Plan Review
Late 2016 - Early 2017	Local Plan Review Consultation
Early Spring 2017	Final masterplan revisions following Local Plan Review

Solihull Town Centre Masterplan

Public Consultation

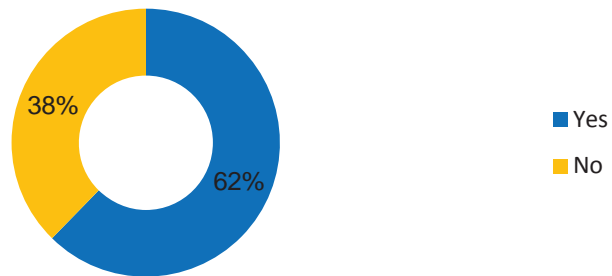
4.3 Summary of Feedback

The four week public consultation period ended on the 11th of September 2016. In total 376 questionnaire responses were received with additional detailed comments also received from members of the public, key stakeholders and external bodies.

The following section provides a summary of the principal comments received in response to the consultation.

Question 1.

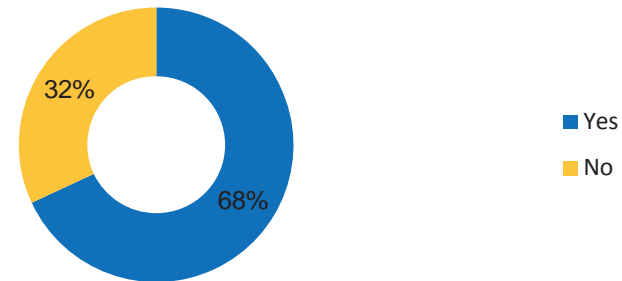
Do you agree with our Vision for the town centre in 2036?



One of the key comments made in answer to this question related to the importance of maintaining the distinctive character of Solihull which was mentioned by 20 people.

Question 2.

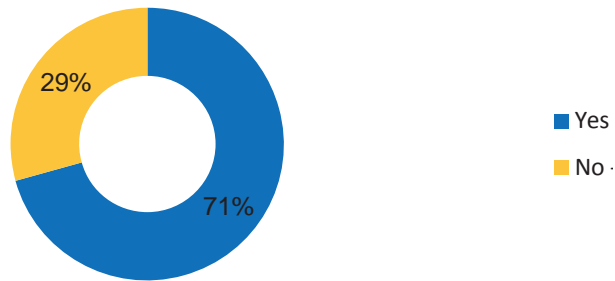
Do you agree with the issues identified as part of our emerging concepts?



The top two comments received in response to this question related to the desire for the station to remain in its current location (15 people) and also for sustainable transport measures to be prioritised with a particular emphasis on cycling (12 people).

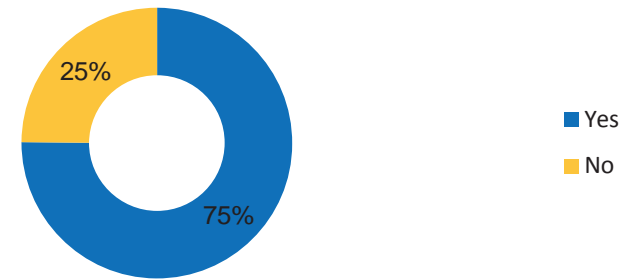
Question 3.

Are you generally in agreement with the Areas of Change that have been identified?

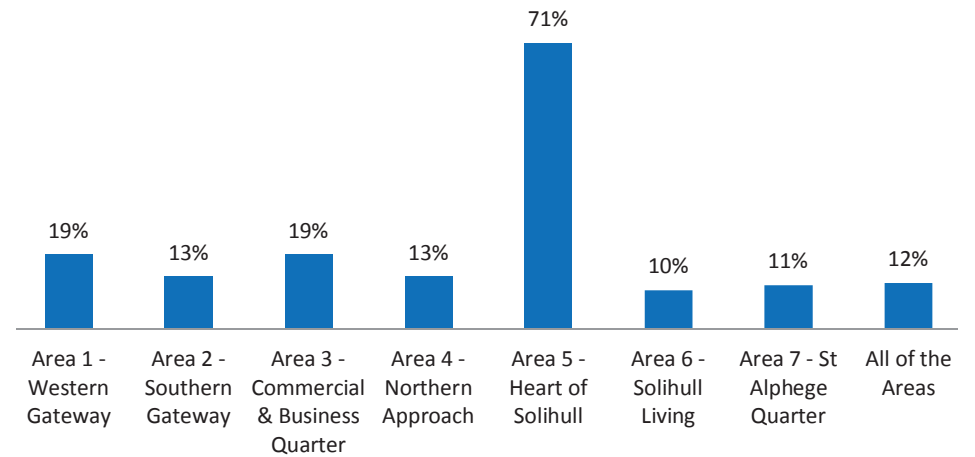


Question 4a.

Do you agree that the Masterplan should encourage retail development in the town centre?

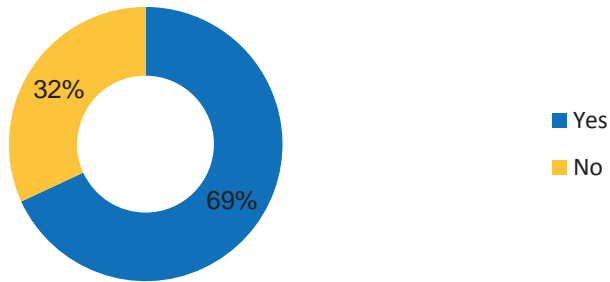


Where do you think this retail space should be located? (You can choose more than one area)

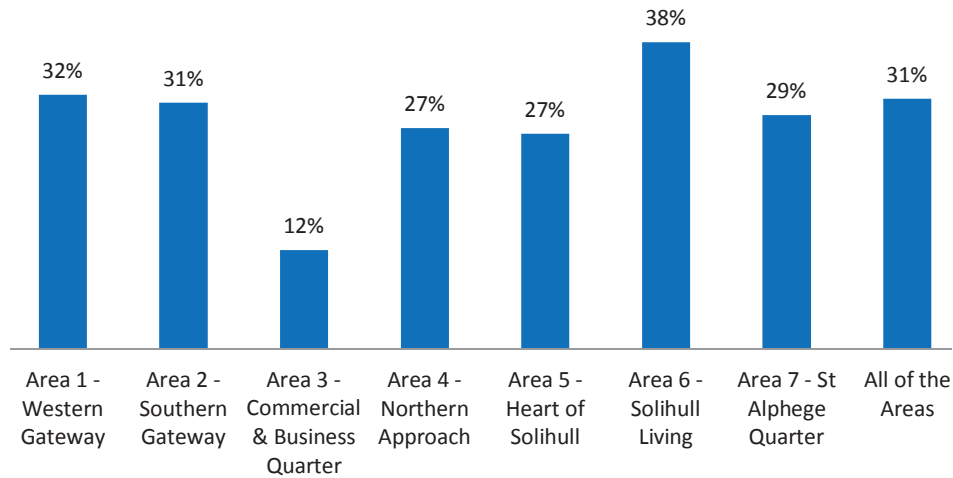


Question 4b.

Do you agree that the Masterplan should encourage residential development in the town centre?

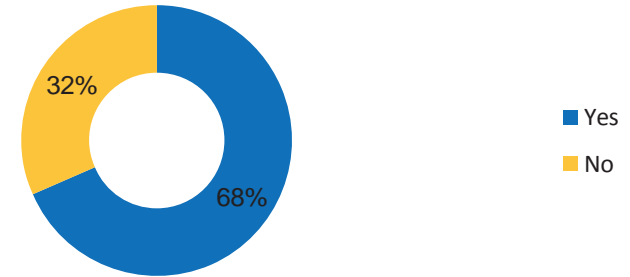


Where do you think this residential space should be located? (You can choose more than one area)

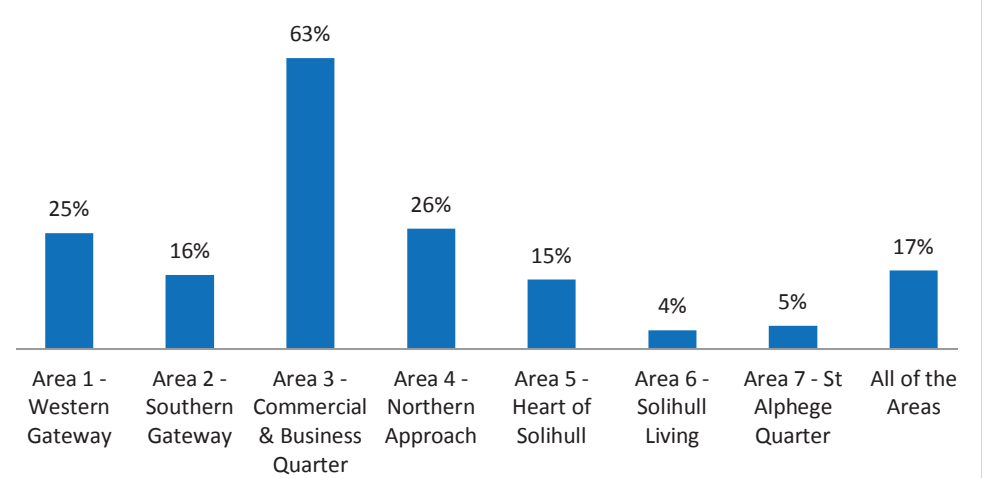


Question 4c.

Do you agree that the Masterplan should encourage commercial development in the town centre?

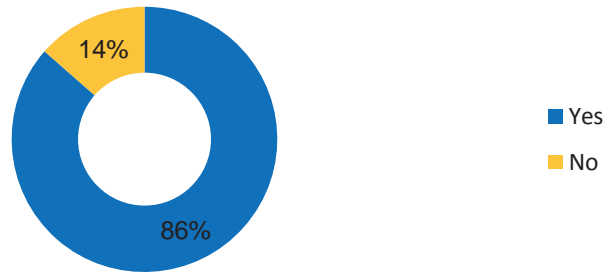


Where do you think this office space should be located? (You can choose more than one area)

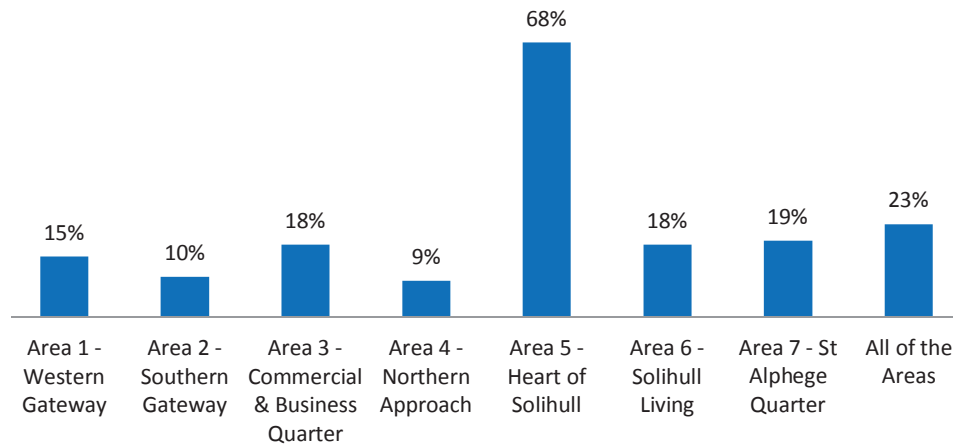


Question 4d.

Do you agree that the Masterplan should encourage diverse evening and leisure uses of the town centre?

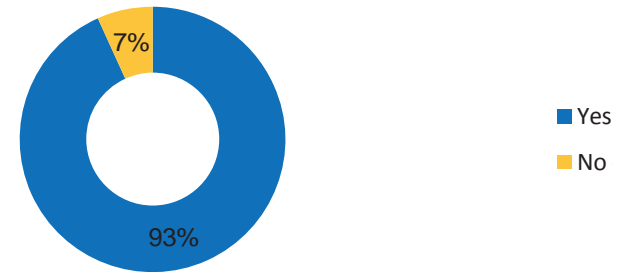


Where do you think this leisure and evening use should be focussed? (You can choose more than one area)

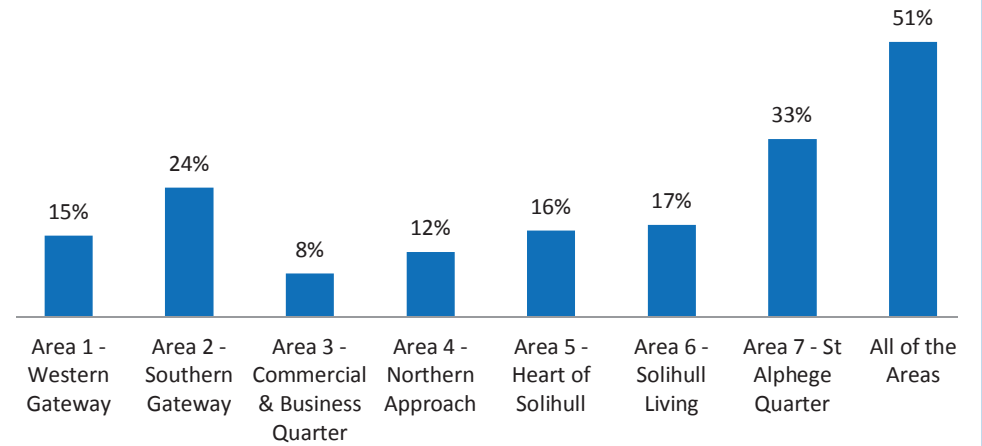


Question 4e.

Do you agree that the Masterplan should promote open and green spaces in the town centre?

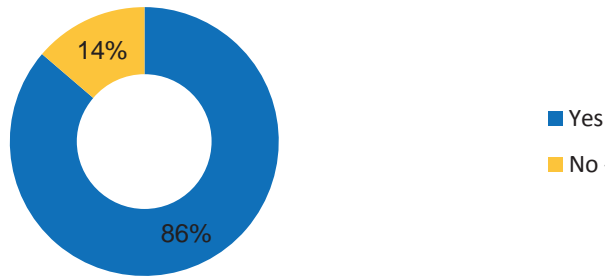


Where do you think this open and green space should be focussed? (You can choose more than one area)



Question 5.

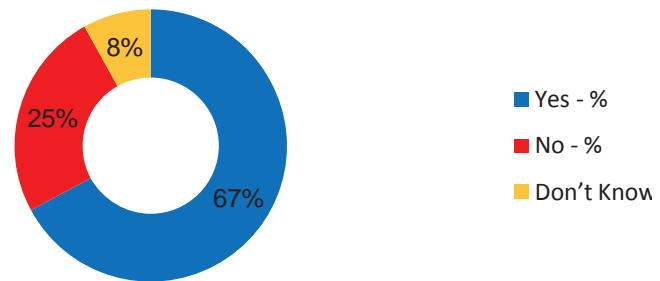
Do you agree that there would be benefits to attracting more independent businesses (both office and retail) to the town centre?



Comments regarding this section largely related to the view that there should provide more support for independents (59 people)

Question 6.

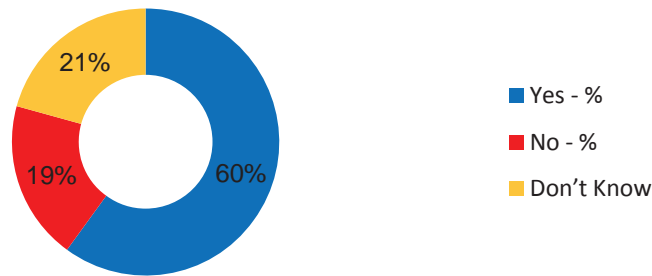
Do you agree that options for upgrading or relocating Solihull Train Station should be explored?



The top two comments received in response to this question related to the desire that the station should be relocated (22 people) with many respondents commenting that this should be a priority and that the current station should be improved (23 people)

Question 7a.

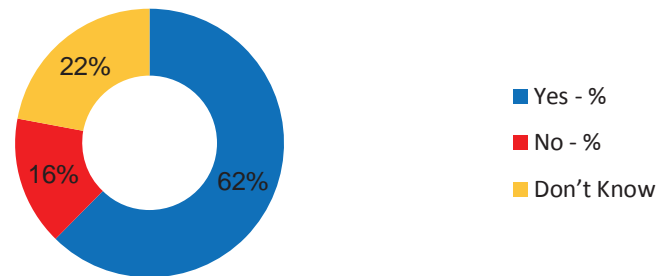
Does the Masterplan accurately identify the problems with pedestrian and cycle access in the town centre?



The majority of comments related to the desire that cycling facilities should be improved (45 people) and also that improvements should be made for pedestrians (15 people).

Question 7b.

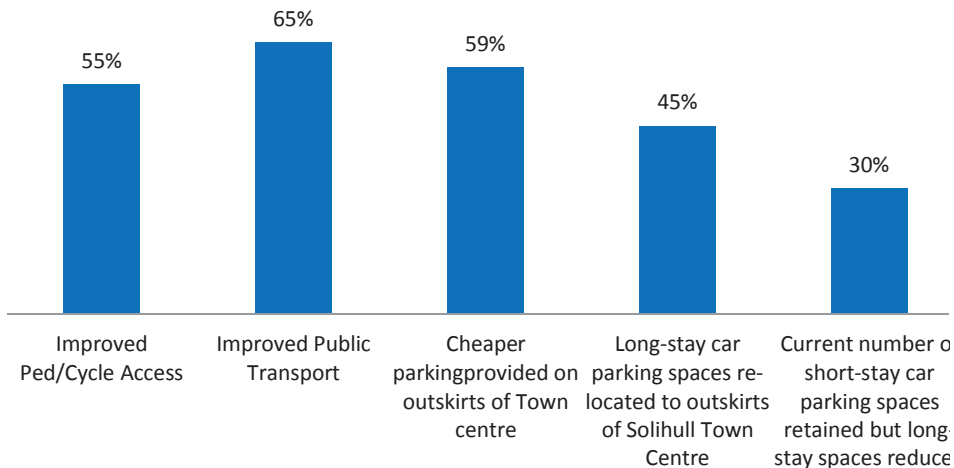
Do you support the Masterplan's proposals to address the problems with pedestrian and cycle access in the town centre?



Many people supported the proposed improvements for cycle facilities but also commented that they should go further (25 people).

Question 8.

What would you expect to see change in the town centre for you to support a reduction in the number of available parking spaces?



Other comments on the masterplan included:

- That the establishment of the masterplan is positive and will help Solihull compete (14 people);
- That more parking is required (8 people);
- Renovation of Mell Square is welcomed (8 people);
- The character of Solihull should be respected (5 people);
- The consultation period was too short (5 people); and
- More green space is required (5 people).

4.4 Consultation Responses from External Bodies and Key Stakeholders

Consultation responses were received from organisations including Campaign for Better Transport, MADE, Touchwood, NEC Ltd, RNIB, Solihull Ratepayers, Caldwell Properties, IM Properties, Canal and River Trust, TfWM, Chiltern Railways, Natural England, National Grid, Woodland Trust, Chief Constable of the WM Police. A summary of these comments are provided below.

CBT

Supported approach to reducing parking, increasing walking and cycling, but cautious about the relocation of the station.

MADE

Sound principles but the role of the masterplan should be clarified. Required housing growth could be accommodated within the Town Centre, but if developments are to be high density their attractiveness should be outlined. Improving station experience is necessary and investing in the station is welcomed. However, the approach towards moving the station would be approached with caution.

Touchwood

Long stay visits should be promoted to extend dwell time in the town centre and tourist attractions should be provided.

NEC Ltd

Supportive of the proposals but suggested improved links needed between North Solihull and the Town Centre. More focus should be placed upon the UK-Central Impact and each part of that scheme.

RNIB

Ability of people to respond may have required different output and response methods. Welcome improvements to

crossing points but shared space may lead to issues for partially sighted/blind people.

Solihull Ratepayers

Should reflect change in personal shopping habits, threat from online, click and collect and out of town. Parking reflects the convenience of many Town Centre users and should be convenient using pay on exit parking. Residential development in apartment form is supported. Little enthusiasm for moving the bus/rail interchange.

Caudwell Properties (from Montagu Evans)

Agreement that the relocation of the train station could accommodate new residential development and that the site would help facilitate the aspiration of the masterplan.

IM Properties (from Turley)

The masterplan should set out the level of intent of the masterplan more clearly with associated delivery timescales for developers and investors. IM does not agree with the relocation of the railway station but suggests that existing links between the station and Town Centre should be improved. The production of a town centre parking strategy would be supported. IM generally support the aims of achieving quality of place and delivery of infrastructure investment.

Canal and River Trust

No comments.

TfWM

Supporting the existing location should be explored further. Improved pedestrian routes along with intuitive desire lines. Other WM areas such as Coventry and Wolverhampton are around 650m from the centre but have used innovative measures to give the illusion that their stations are closer.

The masterplan should acknowledge the Lode Lane Bus Scheme which will speed up bus journeys. Radical road and urban design ideas should be explored to better connect the station and the town centre. The existing pedestrian subway is often overcrowded at peak times. Cycling initiatives should provide the potential for future increase capacity.

Chiltern Railways

Support the masterplan and greater pedestrian, cycle and public transport use. Moving the station would cost a substantial amount and there may be technical issues with the proposed site that would need to be investigated. Chiltern Railways would question whether this level of investment could be accommodated within the existing station to improve facilities there.

Natural England

General support for the plan and welcome the proposed green links.

National Grid

No comment.

Woodland Trust

Wording on Green Infrastructure should go further to positively support the role of street trees in the public realm.

Tyler Parks on behalf of the Chief Constable of the West Midlands Police

Need to include reference to provide safe environments which reduce crime, require developers to demonstrate how proposals address community safety and crime prevention. Promote a safe and secure entertainment, leisure and evening economy. Ensure effective delivery of infrastructure, crime prevention and anti-terrorism measures.



Figure 4.2 Solihull Town Centre Masterplan Consultation Events



05 | Public Realm Framework Guidelines

05 | Public Realm Framework Guidelines

5.1 Urban Design Principles

The Solihull Town Centre Masterplan aims to create new places that become seamlessly integrated with the existing urban areas, whilst respecting the character of Solihull Town Centre development boundary and integrating successfully with the immediate neighbouring areas, such as the school etc,

The proportion and mix of development envisaged creates a unique opportunity, not only to support the approach, but also to expand and improve useability and attractiveness of the town centre through improved transport connections and employment and living opportunities.

The town has a distinct urban structure with an established and historic core centred around High Street, that will be supplemented with new development and regeneration of the existing buildings.

The envisaged development incorporates a blend of uses, which aims to link the different character areas and development blocks as a unifying element. The extent of enclosure, and the relationship of built form to the surrounding areas and the spaces created, also varies. The mix of uses will bring unity and definition across the town centre responding to the vision for Solihull Town Centre.

In addition a hierarchy of streets and connections will be provided across the town centre to promote walking and cycling.

Major new north-south pedestrian connections will be formed between the park and Warwick Road, with a series of high quality urban squares and public realm spaces linking together.

The proposals suggested by Solihull Town Centre are aimed at strengthening the resilience of the town; not by watering down existing uses, but by providing new active, complementary uses and employment and living opportunities that will inform the future direction of Solihull Town Centre.

5.2 Active Frontages

Active uses at ground level will enliven Solihull Town Centre, while pedestrians enjoy a dedicated space, protected from cars.

Frontages facing onto the public realm help to generate active streets and provide passive surveillance. Blank sides and backs of properties facing onto the streets should be avoided. Along the primary routes through the town centre, frontages onto the pavement will boost commercial viability.

The location and heights of development frontages at Solihull Town Centre will be carefully considered to ensure that these streets and spaces are well enclosed and well overlooked by development, while ensuring that the treatment of frontages contribute to the interest and variety called for in the masterplan.

To help create this variety and aid legibility in the townscape, plot boundaries have been assigned one of four frontage categories which have been created to help guide and inform future development. These frontage categories respond to; their specific location, the street or space they overlook, key views and approaches and the extent of enclosure sought.



Figure 5.1 Active Frontages

5.3 Creating a Sustainable, Safe and Accessible Public Realm

5.3.1 Defining public and private

For space to be legible there needs to be a clear definition between the different zones of activity; between public and private space. This allows users to occupy the spaces comfortably.

The street is inherently public; the house is private. The treatment of the interface must be carefully considered. A successful streetscape will have a semi public zone between the two, defined by low boundary treatments, to mark the transition between the two. This provides a buffer zone from where the resident can be an observer, without having to be a participant in the street activity.

The public and private spaces in Solihull Town Centre are defined will differ depending on the character area. The more formal and 'urban' the character, the narrower the buffer strip. The treatment of the plot boundaries will relate to landuse and be fundamental to creating a safe and secure environment consequently, there will be a difference in the way in which commercial and residential boundaries are treated.

Active fronts

Frontages facing onto the public realm help to generate active streets and provide passive surveillance and interest. Blank sides and backs of properties facing onto the streets should be avoided. The majority of proposals within the Town Centre will provide the opportunity for active frontages with many of the approaches such as Western Gateway being dual fronted, with all sides active. A degree of privacy can be gained in these situations with

raised or table top planting to provide a suitable buffer distance and visual amenity. In other instances some of the commercial buildings such as those facing Princes Way are single frontage with a private internal area as part of the overall functional approach.

Private backs

The backs of residential properties should be private or semi-private and face other backs within a development where possible. This will provide a quiet amenity space to each property. The boundary treatments should be secure and visually impermeable, providing security and maximising privacy to garden areas. Traditional family residential (St. Alphege Quarter and Southern Gateway) have been designed as private with flatted typologies as semi -private. (Lode Lane Carpark, Homer Road Civic Buildings, Monkspath Hall Road and Solihull Living).



5.3.2 Passive security by good design

Passive Surveillance

Safety within the open spaces is an important consideration in the design process; routes and spaces should be overlooked by built development frontage, providing natural surveillance and a positive relationship with the built form.

Arranging furniture within designated furniture zones allows for clear sight lines along pavements, and a clear facade zone allows for observation of the streets from overlooking windows.

Street Activity

The land use mix and proposed frontages are planned and positioned to drive activity in the public spaces, and continue into evening activity.

The public spaces are designed to encourage people to interact and will be high quality encouraging people to stay and dwell.

Active ground floor uses have been targeted on certain streets to maintain an active public realm with café /bars positioned at key points in the public realm and orientated to maximise comfort in use and potential café culture. Building entrances have been positioned mid block for the same reason to drive footfall.

Lighting

Lighting is an important component of making the development feel attractive and safe after dark, as well as a means to give character. White light should be used, in preference to traditional sodium lighting, due to the better colour rendition that it gives. This improves visual

distinction at night, with features such as facial characteristics being clearer, enhancing the perception of safety.

The lighting scheme will also include routes suitable for bats, where the lights include cutoffs to preserve dark corridors and where groups of trees encourage connection. This will be primarily associated with green interface areas such as Southern Gateway

Secured by Design Principles

The principles of secured by design aim to reduce the opportunity for crime and the perceived fear of crime in a development, with the aim of creating safer and more secure environments.



5.3.3 Streets

A framework of key routes will encourage street life and activity. Streets will create permeability; connecting spaces and strengthening the development by reinforcing the hierarchy of building typologies.

Away from the main artery routes across the Town Centre, shared surfaces should predominate, so that streets are not controlled by cars and can be used as a safe pedestrian space, providing a softer setting to the residential areas and activity to the streetscape.

Footways should extend over access points to maintain pedestrian priority.

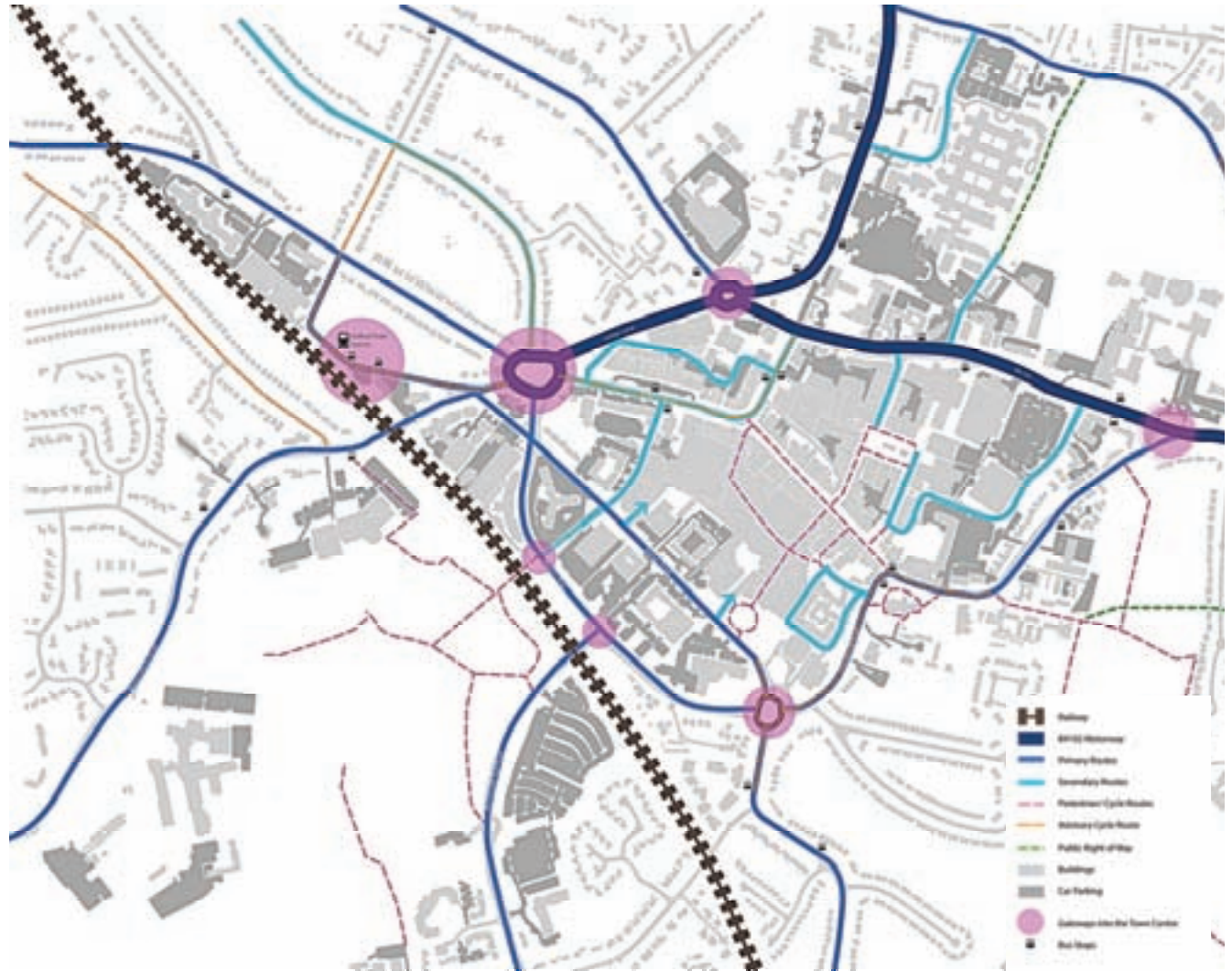


Figure 5.2 - Movement and Access

5.3.4 Water Sensitive Urban Design

Public realm, open spaces and urban landscapes can be designed to channel, treat and store water locally, using passive treatment systems that embed their ecological value.

The proposed Solihull Town Centre Masterplan presents an opportunity to manage surface water and drainage in a sustainable, and ecologically beneficial way. This can create a landscape feature that is functional, as well as attractive, while providing a model development in the implementation of SUDs.



Greenspace, green and brown roof systems

Greenspace in all its forms intercepts rainfall allowing it to infiltrate and increasing the lag time to its discharge into river systems. They all play an important role, not only in interception of rainfall but in what they offer in amenity value and overall life enrichment.

Rainwater harvesting

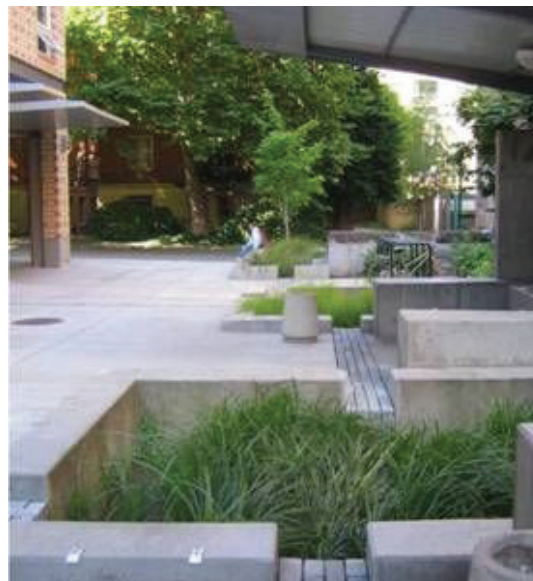
Rain and stormwater from rooftops of buildings can be collected and stored in rainwater harvesting tanks used specifically for purposes such as toilet flushing, garden watering and car washing and other uses where potable water is not necessary. Their use helps to prevent flood risk and pollution associated with peak storm water runoff.

Bioswale and buffer strips

These provide both stormwater treatment, storage and conveyance functions. The runoff water usually goes through a fine media filter or grass filter strip. Level changes, additional retention and remediation can be achieved using check dams along the swale. Vegetation growing in the filter media can prevent erosion and provide amenity.

Storage & conveyance channels

In deck scenarios or where space is limited, water will be collected and stored in conveyance channels. These channels can be covered with grills or decking. Where space permits, in particular at building entrances or points where amenity can be achieved, these channels should break out into planted cells that can initiate bioremediation of the runoff water.



Infiltration trenches

Another type of conveyance channel / trench, this is filled with permeable materials, such as gravel or rock, to create an underground reservoir. They are designed to hold stormwater runoff and gradually release it into the surrounding soil.

Permeable paving

Permeable paving can be used for filtration and infiltration of runoff. It can also be used to collect and convey water into an overall SUDs system. New paving materials like photocatalytic concrete can be used to maximise the environmental benefits by reducing NOX gases.

Rain gardens & Bio-retention basins

Bio-retention basins are similar to bio-retention swales, but provide extended retention of stormwater to maximise runoff treatment and storage during extended days of rainfall. The term rain garden is also used to describe a bio-retention system on a smaller more localised / domestic scale.

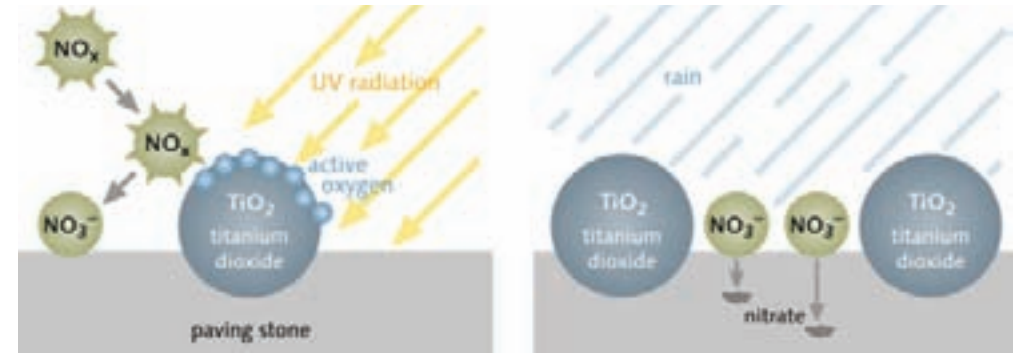


Figure 5.3 photocatalytic concrete pavers

Green and brown roof systems in conjunction with green walls can be used to create habitat, reduce noise, reduce climate change and provide amenity.

The systems can be varied from minimal extensive systems for habitat creation with reduced public access, to provide a visual amenity. To intensive systems for gardens with public access and full amenity use and interaction.



Energy

Consideration has been given to wider environmental measures that promote sustainable lifestyles, including minimising energy usage; achieving energy performance in design, incorporating passive heating and cooling.

New development in Solihull Town Centre should aim to achieve very good thermal performance by optimising fabric and air tightness and reducing thermal bridging through build quality and attention to detailing. Heating to the buildings could be delivered by high efficiency gas condensing boilers. Further energy efficiency improvements include low energy lighting, energy efficient appliances and comprehensive smart metering throughout.

Small scale renewable and/or low carbon technology could also be integrated into the development through building and layout design.

Green and Blue infrastructure

Green and Blue infrastructure is integrated in an efficient way that has wider development benefits. It is used as a distinct opportunity for water sensitive urban design - not only enabling water management but creating attractive green infrastructure, wet features, enhancing public open space, and providing opportunity for education about water resources and management.

An integrated and proactive surface water drainage network will provide a Sustainable Drainage System. This is achieved through the central Village Green space performing a major function of surface water drainage attenuation, supplemented by a network of lower order shared streets within individual development parcels with permeable surfaces and hardscape storage. An integrated swale system is proposed along the western section of the relief road.

Furthermore, individual buildings are expected to be designed in detail to incorporate features which collect run-off and recycle for use as grey water, combined with rainwater and storm water harvesting. Green roofs will play a key role in this regard and will serve a dual purpose by helping to reduce surface water run-off and create areas of habitat at roof level.

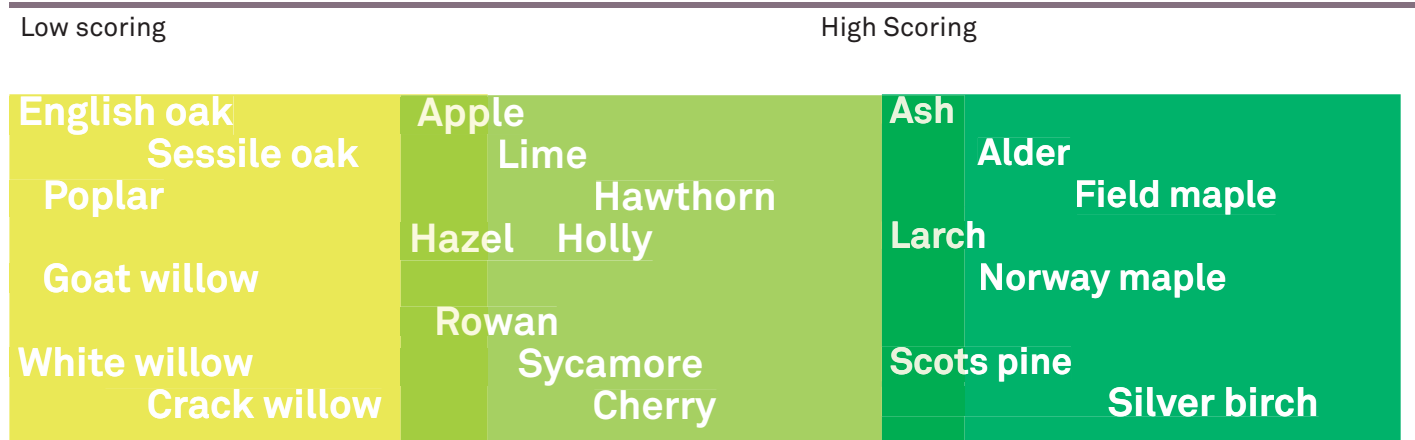


5.3.5 Air pollution

Modern materials and planting can be used to positively reduce this pollution locally. Photocatalytic concrete in permeable paving and street furniture could be used to reduce NO_x levels by as much as 20% by turning NO_x gases to nitrates that can then be used by SUDs planting.

Particulate matter pollutants (PM^{2.5}PM¹⁰), carbon dioxide, ozone and nitrogen dioxide can all be reduced by planting. Trees with a high Urban Tree Air Quality (UTAQ) have the most benefit. The soft landscape palette can focus on these species, but should also be evaluated in conjunction with ecological benefit, biodiversity, amenity value and carbon storage potential of different species of trees. The goal is to produce diverse and rich planting palette that directly benefits health and the environment but is also contextual and aesthetically pleasing, contributing positively to the urban environment throughout the seasons.

Fig 5.5 Urban Tree Air Quality (UTAQ) - trees with the greatest ability to improve air quality



Source: Trees & sustainable Urban air quality. Lancaster University

Fig 5.6 Carbon Sequestration - trees with the greatest capacity to store carbon



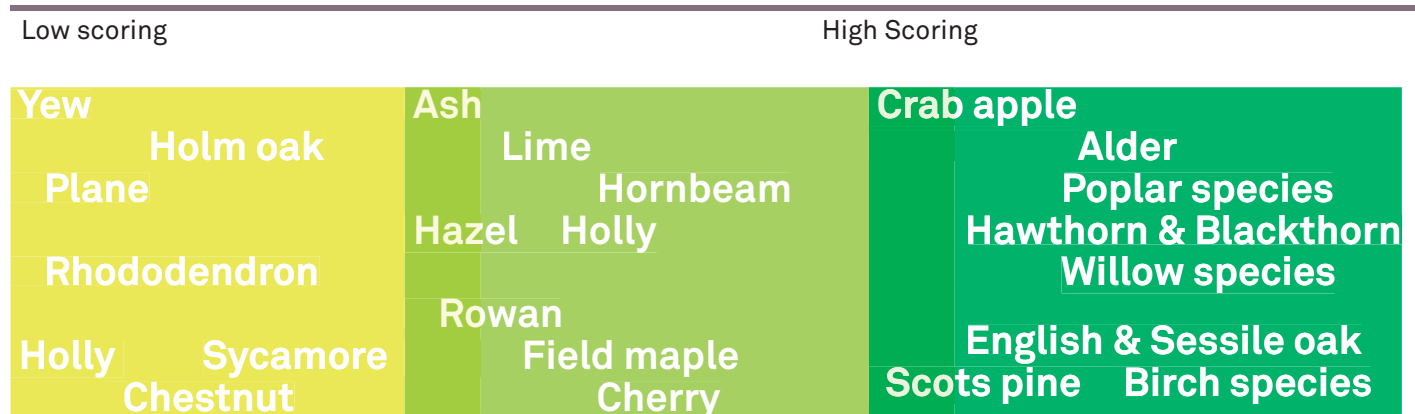
Source: Trees & sustainable Urban air quality. Lancaster University

Other important considerations are more subjective and harder to measure like a trees perceived amenity value and its burden in terms of maintenance, or suitability to the urban environment.

The expected conditions in Solihull will vary widely across the Town Centre. Likewise the scale of the streets and spaces needs to be taken into account when selecting trees.

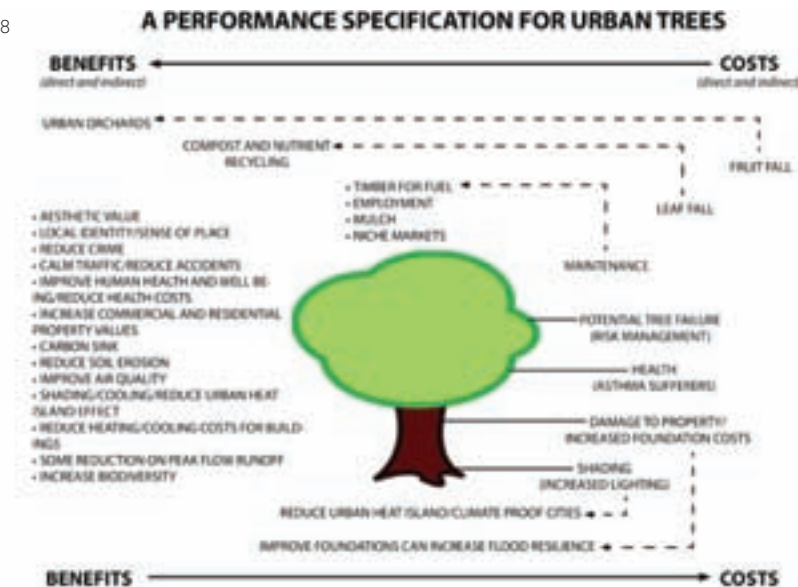
As a general rule of thumb trees with seasonal variation / interest have been included for these scenarios, and trees with obvious maintenance issues like fruit, or overly large, or persistent leaves have been left out. Trees with other factors like shallow rooting systems, have been suggested for greenspace areas only.

Fig 5.7 Ecological value (measured by ability to support insects and lichens)



Source: Alexander, A., Butler, J. and Green, T. (2006) British Wildlife 18(1): 18 - 28.

Fig 5.8



5.3.6 Landscape and open spaces

Green space is recognised as being important for the well being of communities and sustainable development.

The existing landscape provides a number of features that offer benefits in creating an extended development with character and a sense of place. These advantages include existing trees and a varied topography. These elements also have benefits in terms of amenity and the recreational opportunities they offer.

Future detailed designs should ensure that these natural features are integrated into the proposals to retain existing character, and provide enhanced amenity.



5.3.7 Natural Play Space

A natural play setting encourages and fosters a strong sense of place, connecting the play space with the local landscape and allows for imaginative play for a range of ages.

Solihull Town Centre has a strong landscape setting, and the improved relationship with established green space and parks, and the inclusion of natural play facilities associated and incidental will encourage positive relationships with the natural local landscape.

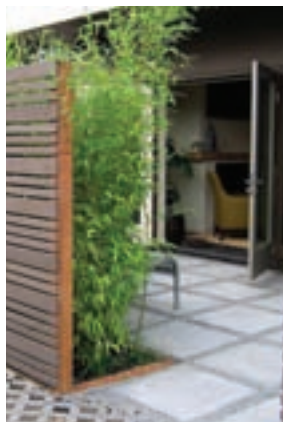
Passive recreation will be encouraged throughout the landscape and public realm strategy, working with the topography, particularly in areas with little development potential and areas of existing mature vegetation.



5.4 Sustainable connections

Walking and cycling are the most sustainable forms of transport and are therefore crucial to the aim of delivering a future Solihull Town Centre that is a sustainable place. Local facilities will therefore be provided within walking and cycling distance to encourage use of these transport modes.

New development should promote sustainable forms of transport by providing a network of paths connecting residential areas with local services, and by providing cycle parking facilities.



5.5 Building Servicing

5.5.1 Servicing Principles

- Servicing for Solihull Town Centre should be in line with the following principles:
- Delivery access should be directly from the street to the front doors of dwellings.
- Delivery access to mixed use buildings should, similarly, be directly to the building from the street. Where this occurs, adequate parking should be in place, or the space to allow two vehicles to pass.
- Delivery to buildings dedicated to food, general retail and non-office employment uses must be from the rear of the building. Delivery and loading areas must be screened from the street by buildings, where possible.
- Service and storage areas should generally be kept away from streets and other elements of the public realm. Where this is not possible, they must be screened from view, with a high quality visually impermeable wall and gates.

5.5.2 Bin Collecting Principles

- The storage and collection of rubbish and materials recycling must be carefully considered in the design of blocks within Solihull Town Centre, as follows:
- Where possible, all rubbish storage facilities should be provided at the rear of the buildings.
- The design of waste storage facilities should form part of the block design.
- No waste storage facilities should be provided at the front of dwellings, unless adequately screened. Waste storage facilities should generally be located in rear parking courts. Where required, internal storage or access routes through the building may be required.
- Refuse collection areas should be sited as close to the roadways as possible.
- The materials and overall design of storage facilities should be complementary to that of the built development proposals.
- Enable residents, commercial occupiers and visitors to recycle by providing facilities and space for effective sorting and collection of municipal waste, and for composting organic waste.

5.6 Material Palette - Public Realm and Landscape

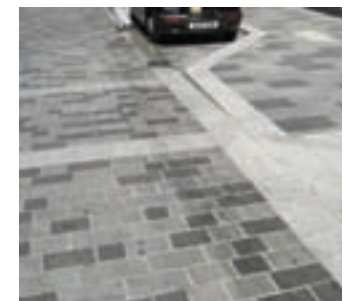
5.6.1 Hard Landscape

The public realm is designed to tie together the surrounding architecture both within the site and adjacent character areas. Subtle use of paving patterns and variations in units sizes will aid pedestrian orientation and add character and interest.

Materials will include natural stone flags and setts to link with completed sections of the projects, along with high-quality natural stone aggregate concrete paving slabs and unit blocks, incorporated in pavements and pedestrian areas. Use of high quality materials, subtle paving patterns, and integrated wayfinding will create a coherent and legible streetscape designed to aid and encourage pedestrian movement.

In all areas spatial delineation is to be provided by 450mm channel lines in contrasting colour to base paving. To highlight furniture lines and give visual cues to entrances and street terminuses.

Examples of sustainable materials and their relationship with the wider public environment are provided in the images opposite.



5.6.2 Furniture

Throughout the Town Centre, street furniture is to be minimal and discrete, and avoid unnecessary cluttering of the public realm. Public art within Solihull Town Centre should be integral to the public realm in the form of bespoke lighting, street furniture and paving elements. In a typical street scenario furniture elements should be organised into a furniture line to aid with line of sight and legibility, as well as assisting in the ease of maintenance and street cleansing, and the creation of an ordered street environment. Furniture lines can also be used to protect areas of reduced construction, SUDs conveyance channels.

Channel lines and furniture lines should be used to naturally delineate areas for restaurant or cafe culture breakout into the public realm.

- Important factors for the street furniture to consider:
- Establish a coordinated furniture suite for Solihull Town Centre to reduce long term maintenance and standardise finishes.
- Year round comfort: stone monoliths as used extensively to date are satisfactory, but are limited in their year round comfort. A higher proportion should incorporate hardwood or composite wooden slats.



- Suitable for elderly and infirm: a proportion of the street furniture in any given area should have backs and armrests, so that they can be used by everyone.
- Edges on street furniture vulnerable to damage from skateboarding should be protected with stainless steel skate bars at 1.5m c/c - Kent Swoosh. Alternatively, protection can be provided with cropped paving as a deterrent.
- Maintenance requirements, ease of replacement, durability and sustainability of materials and finishes.
- All furniture layouts should give consideration to necessary vehicle movements and layouts should be vehicle tracked. A furniture line is the default position for typical streets, working in conjunction with street trees and street lighting.
- Where furniture elements are deemed to be in a high risk area for accidental collision or vandalism, furniture elements should consist of component parts that can be replaced, or significantly robust such as the stone monoliths, that can resin repaired.



5.6.3 Street Layout

One of the main aims is to provide high quality footways throughout the development to promote walking and connections to the surrounding community. Good paving design forms an important element of any public highway and can successfully enhance an area's visual appearance.

New footway paving should be in keeping with the existing streetscape character and take into account the character areas and hierarchy of streets.

In typical streets the footway can be divided into 4 sections: (this will apply to most pedestrian streets as well, as they will still require a degree of vehicle access)

- Kerb zone;
- Furniture zone;
- Footway clear zone; and
- Façade clear zone.

The scale and importance of each zone may vary depending on the particular situation of the street in question. A number of interrelated factors should be considered:

- Available footway width;
- Vehicle flows and speed;
- Pedestrian flows;
- Parking and loading requirements;
- Land uses/ building requirements;
- Regulations governing the street; and
- Security requirements.

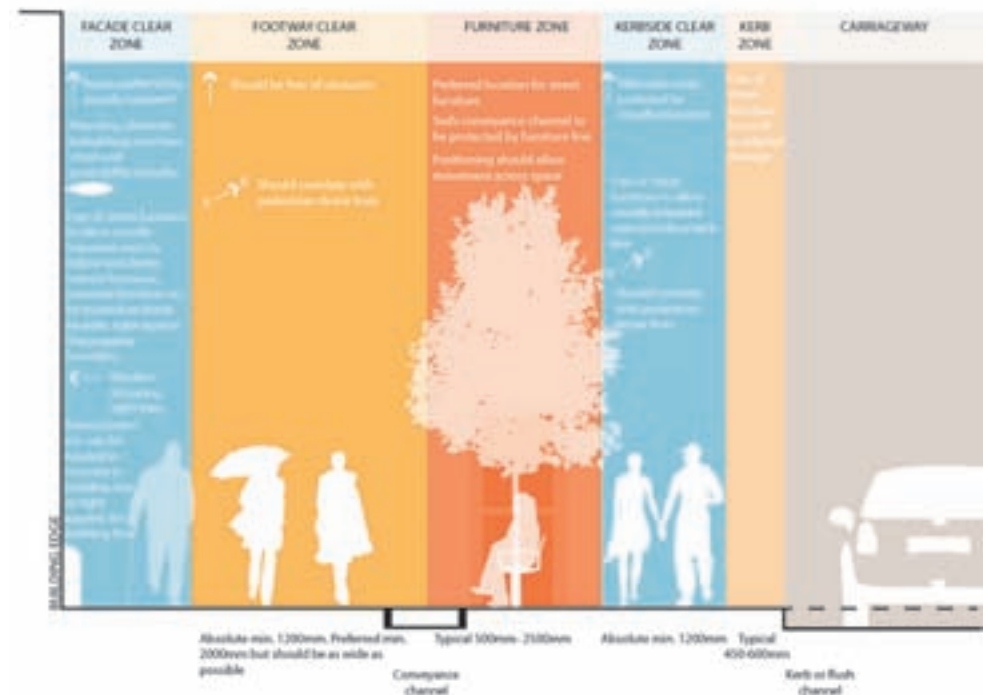


Figure 5.9- Pavement Principles

Kerb zone

The kerb zone is typically a clear zone of 450-600mm to allow for vehicle overhang and for the installation of a 300mm wide kerb. This zone should be kept free of street furniture to reduce accidental damage by/ to vehicles. Consideration will be given to placing objects within this zone when there are over arching requirements for:

- Pedestrian safety; and
- Clear footway zone is restricted.

Furniture zone

The furniture zone can vary in width but is typically between 500-2500mm, and is the preferred location for street furniture such as benches, bins, signs and lamp posts, planters and street trees. The furniture zone is a means of separation between carriageway and footway and wider zones lead to an increased perception of safety and comfort by the pedestrian. Consideration should be given to traffic and pedestrian flows. Faster roadways like the main site access road, should have wider zones where available, whereas zones with high pedestrian flows should be restricted if there is not enough available space in the clear footway zone.

Furniture zones can be categorised as follows:

- 500-1000mm wide - allows the positioning of barriers, bollards, street lights, control boxes, seats, bins and cantilevered bus shelters with perch seats, but with no end panels.
- 1000-1600mm wide - as above, but additionally allows the positioning of telephone boxes and other

large items of street furniture. Cycle racks can also be angled at greater than 45 degrees to the kerb line. This width also permits the introduction of street trees with grilles.

- 1600–2500mm wide or greater - as above, but additionally allows the positioning of cycle racks at 90 degrees to kerb line, kiosks and other structures, bus shelters with half and full end panels, and street trees.

Footway clear zone

The footway clear zone allows the uninterrupted passage of pedestrians along the street, free of objects to hinder the smooth flow. Their position should correlate with pedestrian desire lines. The minimum requirement is:

- 1200mm – the absolute minimum clear width between obstacles with a maximum length of restricted width of 5000mm. This allows the clear passage of 1 wheelchair or 2 persons.
- Usual minimum requirement is 1500mm – the minimum acceptable clear width under most circumstances, giving sufficient space for a wheelchair user and person walking to pass one another.
- Preferred minimum requirement is 2000mm - the preferred minimum clear width that, under normal circumstances, allows two wheelchairs to pass one another comfortably.



Facade clear zone

The facade clear zone is the area between the footway clear zone and the property line. Wherever possible, this zone must be kept free of street furniture, as it provides the best route for visually impaired people, who use canes to walk along the street using building facades as a guideline. In retail areas, a lack of obstructions may improve window shopping through clear sight lines.

Where the footways are narrow, essential street furniture may be located tight against the property boundary, preferably on blank facades. Consideration must be given to maintenance and cleansing requirements. Layouts should not trap litter or create small gaps that would be difficult to access with street cleaning equipment. If no furniture zone exists, larger elements of street furniture, 'A' boards and seating areas are difficult to incorporate into a narrow street and should be avoided in these situations.

Alternative solutions may be to locate service boxes, signal controllers, etc in any recesses in the building line, which may otherwise present cleansing problems as they are difficult to access.

Opportunities for attaching lighting and other elements of street furniture to buildings can have significant visual and accessibility benefits in narrow urban streets.

Good Practice

Street furniture should be located so that people with visual impairments can anticipate their position and consistency of location is beneficial in achieving this aim.



Figure 6.50 - Footway Clear Zone



5.6.7 Fencing, balustrade, handrails & boundary markers

New squares, incorporating a contemporary approach to the use of local materials, are proposed through the Town Centre alongside new paved pedestrian and shared surface streets. These streets will permeate through the masterplan, linking together hard and soft public open space. These will again incorporate elements of local materials, acting to tie the wider scheme together and unify the various areas of the Town Centre. In order to minimise vehicular movement throughout the site, subtle fencing and boundary markers restrict access, whilst having a minimal effect on the permeability of the site from a pedestrians perspective.

- Screening, powder coated RAL 7016.
- Vertical louvred fencing to demarcate boundary between public and private areas. 80% screening. Louvres in FSC timber. Typically Solinear Solex medera. Metal frame to be powder coated RAL 7016.
- 1200mm high estate fencing to site boundary, typical 5 rail 19mm circular hollow section system powder coated RAL 9005. Wallace Engineering.



Demarcation markers

- Where design permits, property line markers to be demarcated with flush kerb. In locations where continuous paving is required. Discrete 250mm S/S discs recessed and bonded into surface along property boundary at 2m centres to demarcate important boundaries, such as the property line with the adoptable pavement.
- All shared footways with cyclists and pedestrians to be clearly demarcated at the start and end with 250mm stone icon discs, recessed and bonded into ground surface.

Metalwork generally

- All new street cabinets and other incidental metalwork to be painted to tie in with metalwork finishes on street furniture and balustrade.



5.6.8 Lighting

Use of feature lighting highlighting key architectural and public realm details will be paramount to creating a unique evening identity for Solihull Town Centre.

Lighting fixtures, along with other street furniture, are to be minimal and discrete, and avoid unnecessary cluttering of the public realm. It is possible that bespoke street lighting can be interpreted through the form of public art for Solihull Town Centre and will be integral to the public realm.



5.6.9 Wayfinding & Interpretation

The future wayfinding strategy for the Town Centre should be integrated and should form part of the wider design strategy, and be designed to allow the user to navigate by the use of landmarks, visual clues and desire lines.

To minimise the proliferation of signs, and to reduce clutter, a hierarchy of information should be applied. This would require giving the user the right information at the right time, avoiding signing everything from everywhere, and will allow the user to navigate around the Town Centre and its wider environment with confidence, feeling informed and safe.

Legible environments only give the necessary amount of information. Studies show that the ability of the user to understand and retain information will decrease if the quantity of that information becomes overbearing.

The requirements for directional signage must consider the whole journey from arrival to endpoint: a consistent approach to the information delivery is essential.

As a user travels along specific points on a route, they will encounter a range of sign types from the signage family. These wayfinding markers create a series of



information stepping stones with decision points determining the sign location.

This creates a series of information levels:

- Gateway markers at key thresholds
- Fingerposts at major decision points, with route reminders to provide reassurance.
- Interpretative signs to inform users about the heritage and social heritage of the site, as well using the landscape and buildings as a learning landscape.

The site may have a specific colour palette applied to the signage or shape variation. This would create a sense of uniqueness for the Town Centre whilst the common form, materials, finishes and graphic treatment of the signs unite with the overall design strategy.

Sign Positioning Principles

Within the site, new signage should follow a signage strategy to create a legible environment where people can easily identify their location in relation to arrival points, routes, landmarks and destinations, within the Town Centre, making the Town Centre more accessible and encouraging journeys by foot and by bike.

The strategy is a guide and is based on the current status of the site. Exact locations will need to be determined locally and will be affected by:

- Survey of site lines, tree planting and highways signage.
- Coordination with other street furniture and lighting elements to avoid clutter.

Gateway Markers

Gateway markers are used at entrances to the town, individual developments and at highly visibility locations, such as The railway station and entry points from Wariwck Road and the parks. Information should be kept to a minimum, and the content should relate to branding the location, as well as providing maps and directional information to help plan a journey.

Fingerpost Markers

Fingerposts act as route reminders that aid navigation. They are able to sign in multiple directions and can be easily viewed from a distance. Fingerposts present the advantage of being easily adaptable and can accept new signs cost effectively.

Interpretative Signage

Interpretative signs provide directional and cultural information throughout the site at main junctions, meeting places and arrival points. Combining interpretative and directional information, they aid the users in establishing their location and planning a route to an end destination, and also reconnecting people with social and cultural history of the place, and to learn.





Gateway markers
at thresholds to
character areas

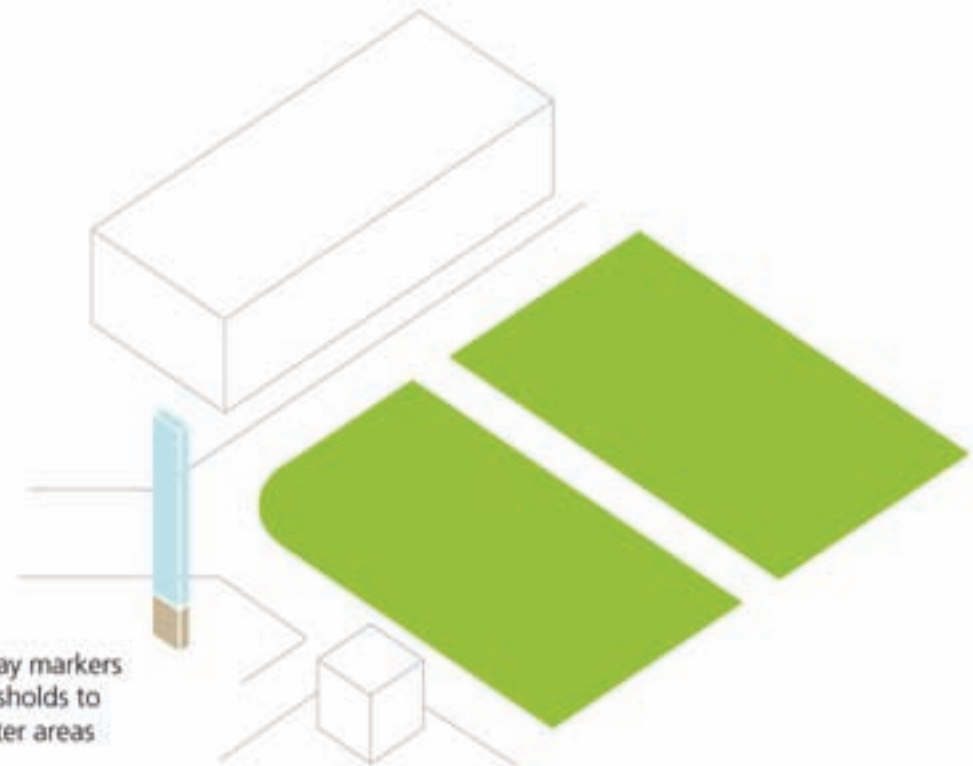
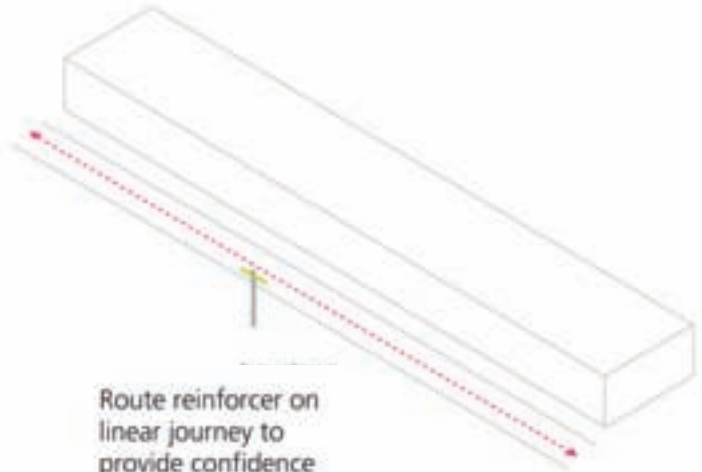
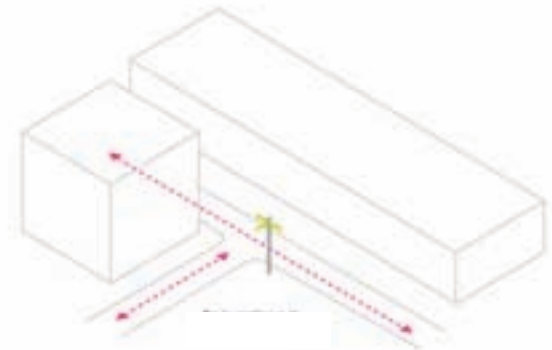


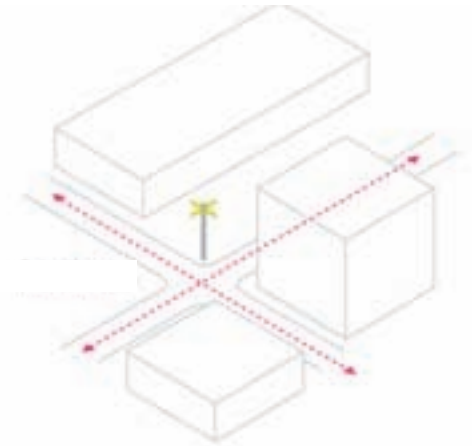
Figure 5.11 - Signage Principles



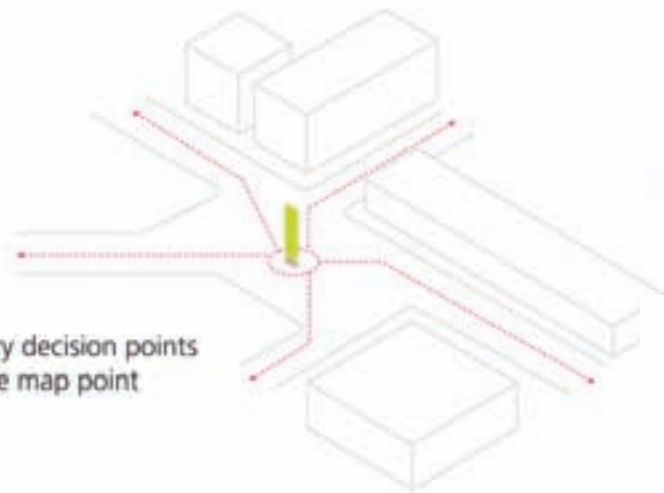
Route reinforcer on linear journey to provide confidence



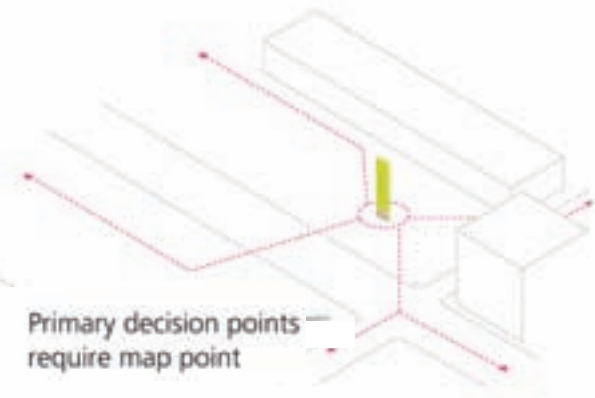
Route reinforcer at journey decision point



Route reinforcer at journey decision point



Primary decision points require map point



Primary decision points require map point

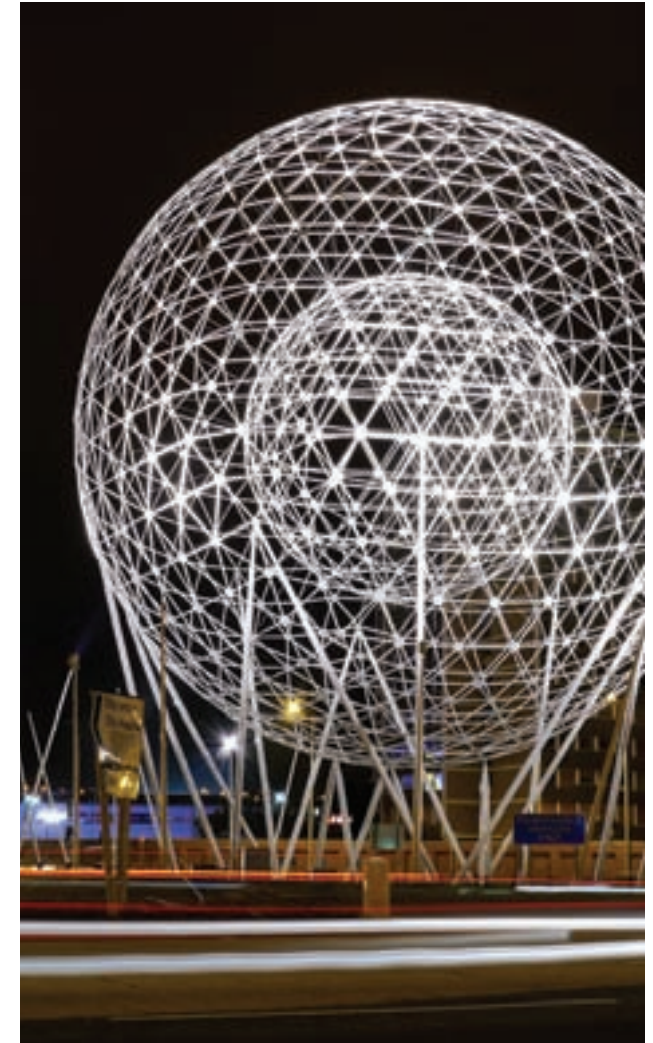
Figure 5.12- Signage Principles

5.6.10 Public Art Installations

Public art in Solihull Town Centre, as throughout the site, is to be integral to the public realm in the form of bespoke lighting, street furniture and paving elements, as well as specific interventions.

Important factors for the proposed art programme to consider:

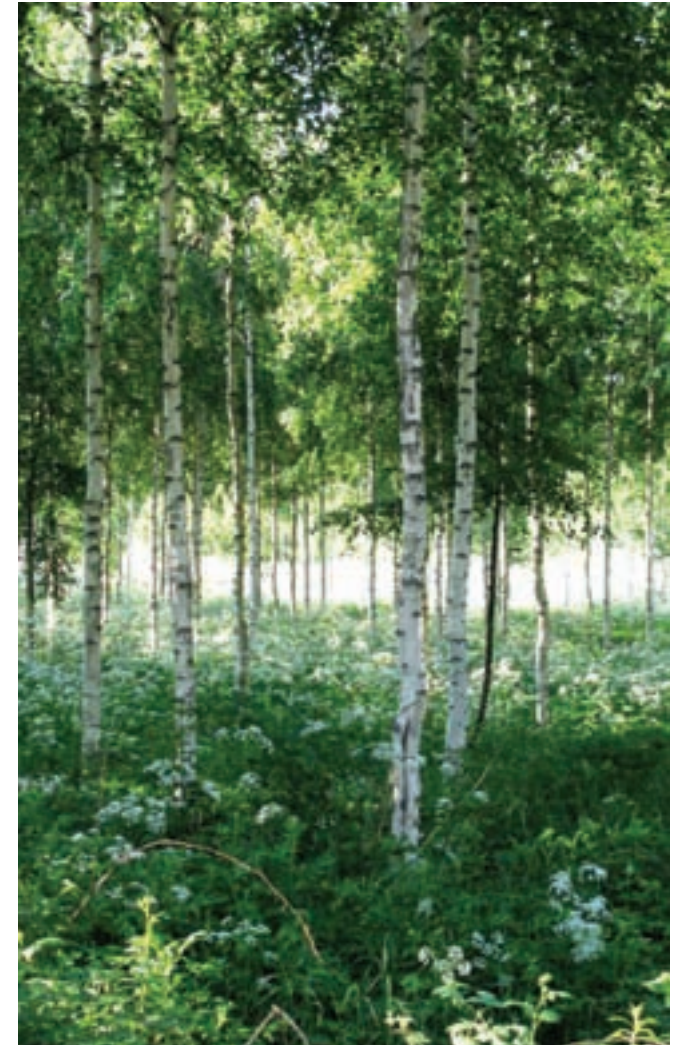
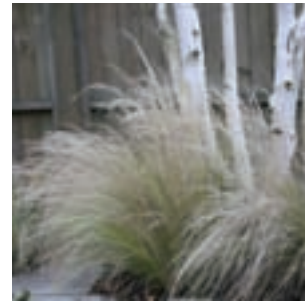
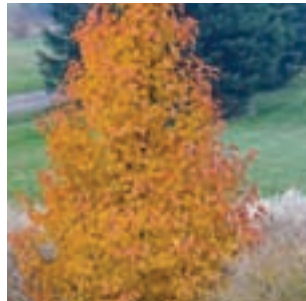
- Ephemeral pieces and performance art should be a strong feature in any proposed programme to assist with a constant draw to the Town Centre.
- Any programme should aim at events throughout the year, and should be integrated with key buildings in the Town Centre to drive footfall and attract investment.
- Art should be integral to the urban design of the Town Centre, working on all scales from large interventions to small, injecting humour, play, emotion and thought into the everyday; making the place special.
- A sculpture trail could help integrate linkages to the parks and peripheral residential communities.
- Key artwork should be at nodal spaces within Town Centre.. Incidental small interventions can be throughout the development and should be varied in their application, from sculpture, and surface interventions to poetry, sound, light and video, which connect with different people in different ways.



5.6.11 Soft landscape

Green space is recognised as being critically important for the health and wellbeing of communities and for a truly sustainable development.

In Solihull Town Centre green space will be woven into the public realm spaces at different scales and in different forms and complexities: from the formal to the more natural; from the small pocket park space to the formal Town Centre Linkages.



5.7 Summary of Place Making Principles

5.7.1 Connections

- Promote pedestrian and cycle connections throughout the Town Centre, and into the surrounding neighbourhoods by enhancing, extending and linking routes.
- Emphasis on creation of a hierarchy of pedestrian friendly, pedestrian priority and genuine shared surface streets/routes.
- Easily accessible public transport through improved links between major transport hubs and the wider area.

5.7.2 Safety

- Careful consideration to the layout and orientation of buildings to provide natural surveillance to public routes and spaces.
- Equally the public realm layout should avoid nooks and crannies, and have clear lines of sight. Narrow streets should have furniture lines to enable this.
- Use of active ground floors at key nodes and along key routes.
- Management and maintenance should be kept to a high standard to encourage respectfulness, civic pride and to deal with vandalism. Appropriate use of CCTV to enhance safety without infringing on privacy.
- Suitable lighting along key routes and public spaces - specifically the use of white light.



5.7.3 Views and Legibility

- Visual connection between key routes and new public realm.
- Selected glimpses into semi-private courtyards.
- Gateway features/buildings at key locations.
- Clear street hierarchy to assist legibility/wayfinding.
- Wayfinding strategy to form part of the town wide plan.



5.7.4 Public Realm

- Creation of significant new public spaces such as the Agora and covered event space, but also in the form of public squares and amenity green space.
- Attractive new pedestrian routes taking advantage of active frontages and new development
- Enhancement and refurbishment of existing footpaths and towpaths



5.7.5 Innovation and Sustainability

- Promotion of sustainable living through environmentally friendly buildings and landscape where possible.
- Utilisation of sustainable technologies and thinking, current at the time of development.
- Promotion of sustainable transport, including convenient access to public transport and provision of local amenities within walking distance.



5.7.6 Community

Mix of residential types and building uses located around usable public realm, semi-private courtyards and private garden spaces.

Opportunities for living, working and recreation.

Location of a variety of play opportunities close to and integrated into main pedestrian routes.

