

Vibrant, Distinctive, Accessible – An Economic Plan for Shirley 2016 – 2026

Draft Economic Plan January 2017

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1 – Introduction

The **Economic Plan for Shirley** sets out a shared vision for Shirley town centre – for local communities, visitors, businesses, and stakeholders. It is designed to respond to both the challenges facing the town centre and the opportunities available.

A Vision for Shirley: vibrant, distinctive, accessible – a destination of choice for shoppers and visitors and specialist independent retailers.

The Economic Plan sets out how this vision is to be achieved through a partnership approach to addressing agreed priorities, and by providing a clear framework for action in Shirley. It sets out immediate and longer term actions to achieve the vision, enabling all partners and stakeholders to work effectively together.

There are four priority themes for the successful delivery of the Economic Plan. These are high-level ones and provide the framework for a coordinated approach to activities in Shirley.

Theme	Description
Strategic	The strategic role of Shirley town centre and how it might evolve over the next 5–10 years. Shirley is one of three main town centres in Solihull providing retail, leisure, employment and other facilities.
Transformational	Key projects that provide the best opportunity to help transform the town centre in line with the agreed strategy. Powergen is one current project which is transformational.
Distinctive	Supporting and expanding what makes Shirley distinctive. This could include branding, marketing, and events promoting the town centre to attract visitors and shoppers.
Operational	Working to ensure that services affecting Shirley town centre, such as those provided by the Police or the Council are delivered in ways that support the achievement of the vision for Shirley.

2 – Background – Developing the Economic Plan

The Plan has been produced following a process of analysis, consultation and engagement.

Business Review Autumn 2015

- Initial Baseline Assessment completed
- Challenges and opportunities identified
- Development of strategic framework



Business and Stakeholder Engagement

- Active engagement with Shirley Town Team
- Engagement with Solihull Council Ward Members
- Survey of town centre businesses



Changing Context

- Solihull Connected Strategy
- Solihull Local Plan Review



Emerging Priorities

- Strong business led partnership
- Strategic role for the local centre
- Public realm – a place to visit and shop



Economic Plan Focus

- A structured framework – four priority themes
- Priorities for action
- A partnership approach



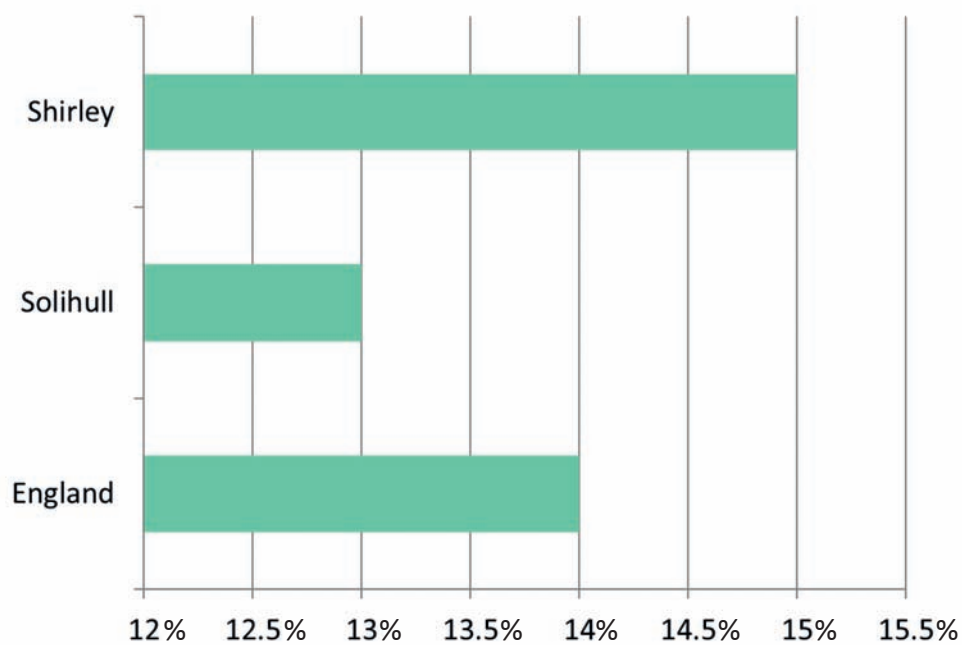
3 – Why an Economic Plan for Shirley?

Shirley plays a critical role in the Solihull economy. The town centre is a major local centre occupying a prime location on the A34 corridor connecting Junction 4 of the M42 with Birmingham City Centre. Shirley is also an important centre providing services to visitors and shoppers from a wide catchment area including Wythall and Hollywood to the south west, Acocks Green and Billesley to the north and north west and Catherine-de-Barnes to the east.

Shirley is a major centre of employment in the borough, with above average business and employment growth in recent years.

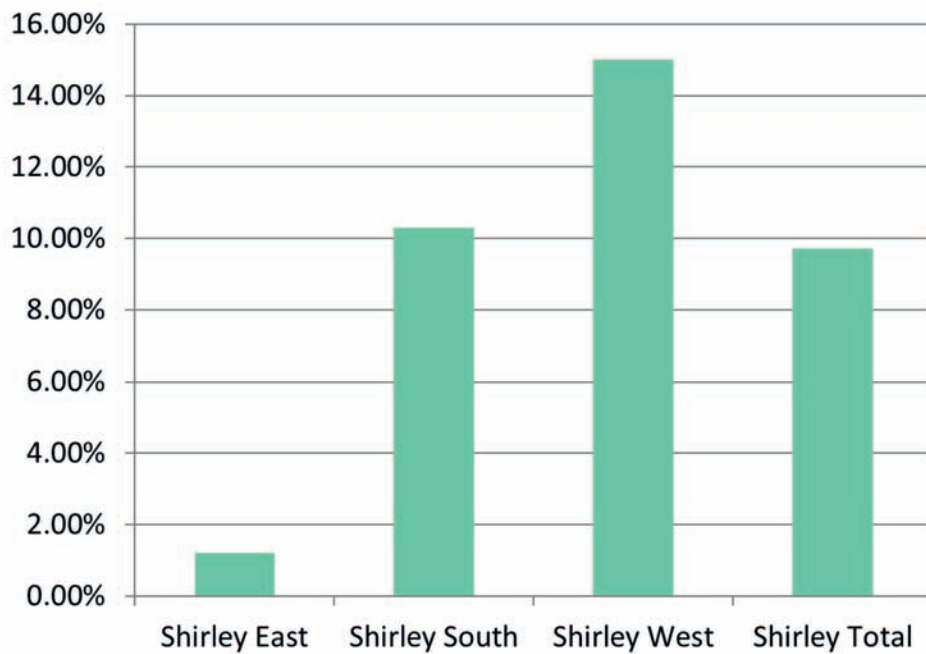


Business Growth Rates 2010-2015



Source – Office for National Statistics UK Business Counts (Local Units) 2015

Employment Growth 2014-2015



Source – Office for National Statistics – Business Register & Employment Survey 2016

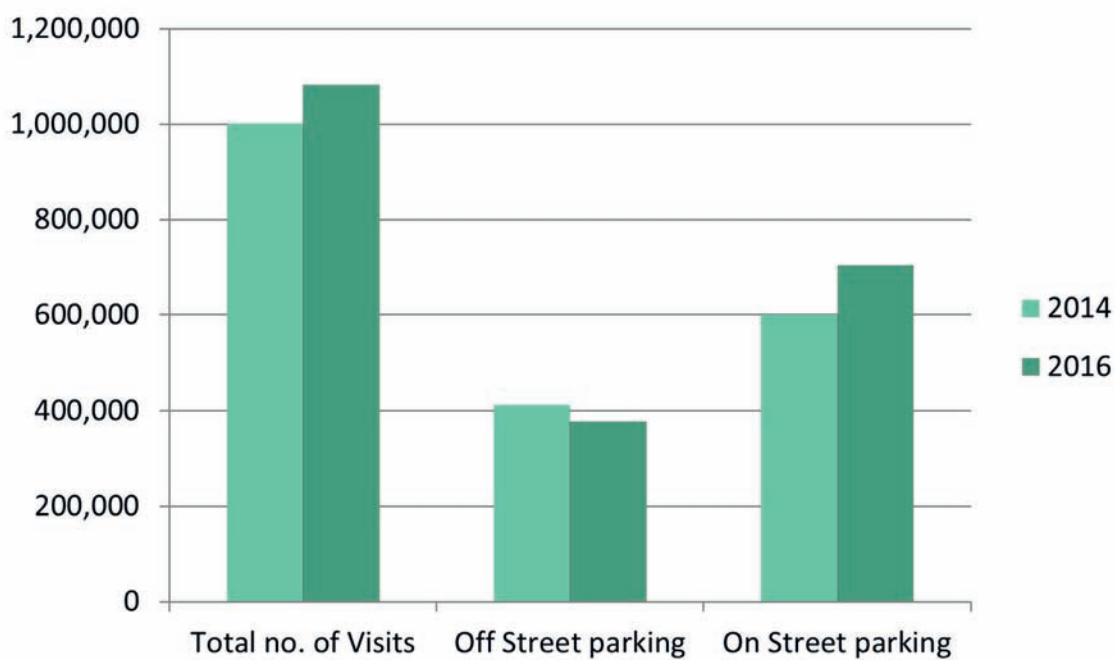
There are some 15,700 workforce jobs in total in the three Shirley wards, and employment grew 9.7% between 2014 and 2015 – higher than the growth of 6.1% across the borough as a whole and well above the 2.2% growth rate for England.

The opening of the Parkgate development in 2014 provided new retail, leisure, and food and drink outlets, as well as a new library and housing development. Opposite Parkgate, the regeneration of the former Powergen site will create an extra care village and traditional homes.



The town centre offers accessible facilities not only to local communities, but to the many workers on major employment sites in the wider Shirley area, including The Green and Cranmore, Monkspath and Solihull Business Parks. Shirley is in an excellent location to access employment opportunities. Department of Transport figures (2011) show that the majority of the neighbourhoods within the three Shirley wards are within five to nine minutes of a major employment centre by public transport or on foot and within five minutes by car.

Visits to Shirley Town centre by Car



Source: Solihull Council 2016, (excluding Asda)

There has also been increased use of car parking facilities in the town centre, with a 6.5% increase in the number of individual visits by car between 2014 and 2016. This could be due to the increasing attractiveness of Shirley as a place to shop as well as an increase in local employment.



Shirley Town team supports the local area and its community through networking, local events, and the marketing of Shirley to a wider area

Despite this strong overall performance there are clear challenges for Shirley town centre. Town centres nationally have been under pressure from the growth in online shopping and out of town retail development. There is also national recognition of the need for town centres to reinvent themselves as places to visit, with attractive streets and public spaces, and a mix of civic and leisure facilities as well as a core retail offer.

Over 200 town centres, including Solihull, have established Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). BIDs are business-led and funded bodies formed to improve trading conditions, and invest in agreed priorities such as marketing and events in order to deliver economic benefits for the town centre.

4 – Shirley Town centre: Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

A SWOT analysis sets out the opportunities and challenges for Shirley Town centre:

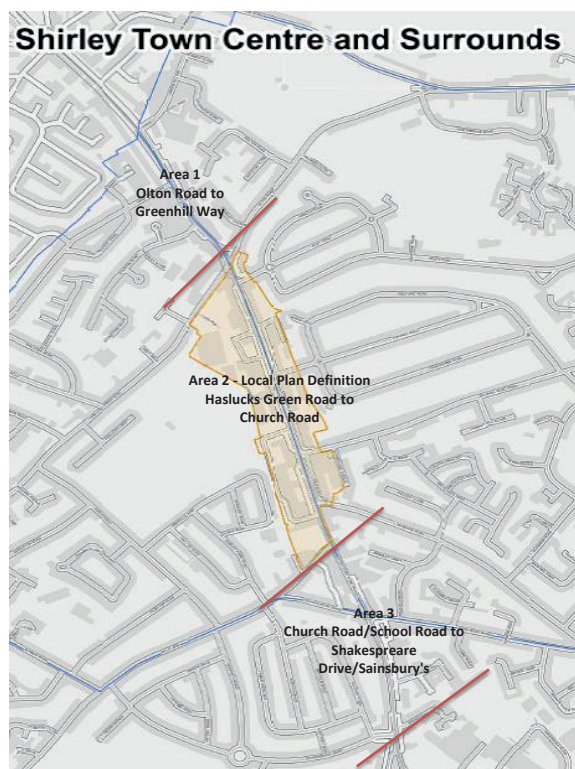
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinct nature of the retail offer, characterised by independent businesses • Recent development of Parkgate scheme, contributing to the development of a mixed use economy • Recognised family friendly offer • Local character, defined by various heritage sites • Shirley Park offers access to quality open green space in the heart of the town centre • Significant and growing local catchment area (employment and investment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A34 corridor impact, reducing perceived safe crossing points along the town centre • Shirley is not perceived as a destination shopping centre, lack of a strong brand • Varied quality of the public realm along the length of the town centre • Lack of clear signage to off street and on street parking provision • Poorly co-ordinated development of transport infrastructure for cars, cyclists, and pedestrians • Congestion and conflict between through and shopping traffic
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positioning Shirley as a main town centre • Delivery of proposals and opportunities identified in the Solihull Local Plan Review • Securing future investment in transport infrastructure through Solihull Connected Transport Strategy and Delivery Plan • Potential for establishing a Shirley Business Improvement District, focused on improving trading conditions • Maximising take up of business rates relief scheme to support smaller retailers • Developing a public realm framework and approach for Shirley in support of the Solihull Local Plan Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decline in traditional town centres, following the impact of growth from online retailing and increased competition from out of town retail developments • Need for town centres to develop a mixed economy (i.e. offering civic and leisure facilities, supported by a retail core) and be seen as an attractive destination to visit • Perceived poor quality of the shopping environment, linked to the current retail offer and impact of high levels of traffic • Negative impact of Business Rates (Non-Domestic Rates) and commercial rents on some businesses

5 – Priorities for Action

Five key areas have been identified as early priorities for action:

Defining Shirley town centre – confirming its role and setting a framework for future development.

- **Heart of Shirley** – a clear retail and commercial core, focused on the area including Haslucks Green Road down to Church Road. It incorporates the A34 corridor, dividing the town centre, reflected in the Solihull Local Plan. This area will be the focus for retail activity and any future retail development.



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- **Wider Shirley Centre** – a broader definition of the town centre incorporating commercial and retail activity down to Shakespeare Drive. This reflects the local perception of where the town centre starts and finishes, based on the views of key stakeholders. The focus here will be on partnership working, activities, marketing, and promotion. This area underpins a potentially viable Business Improvement District, generating additional funding to support a range of activities helping Shirley Town centre to thrive and prosper.

Regeneration projects – significant projects which can make a major contribution to the town centre, including new facilities, new housing, and other environmental improvements.

- The recent Parkgate development created a mixture of new retail, leisure and community facilities, alongside new housing
- The development of the former Powergen site by Shirley Advance LLP will create a mixture of new homes and an extra care retirement village.

Public realm – this is the publicly owned streets, pavements, rights of way, parks, open spaces, public and civic buildings, and facilities. The quality, safety and cleanliness of the public realm is essential in ensuring the town centre is welcoming, accessible, and attractive to shoppers, visitors, businesses and workers.

“Cleaner, Greener, Safer” – is fundamental for any sustainable community and town centre. The current maintenance programme keeps the overall shopping area in a clean and safe condition, and includes:

- Litter picking – a cleaning operative is permanently stationed on the high street from Monday to Friday for four to five hours a day to maintain the area. A mobile team cleanses the area over the weekend
- Highway safety – the Neighbourhood Co-ordinator carries out regular safety inspections along the length of the town centre, reporting relevant issues.



Developing the character of the town centre

Shirley has a number of historic landmarks and features, as well as green spaces, which are important assets. There is potential to use these assets, highlighted below, alongside other measures to develop the character of the town centre.

Historic landmarks and features

The existing historic and landmark buildings are features which could become more visible.



Shop fronts, windows and space

Create an inspiring town centre. The quality of the shop fascias and window displays varies across the length of the town centre.



Frontage space

Re-design the street, to create a user friendly space to improve general movement within the town centre.



A34 Corridor (Stratford Road)

Consider alternative ways to improve safe crossing points along the length of the town centre.



Behind the high street

There are hidden areas just off the high street, which could be used for community events and other business related activities.



Green spaces

There are two green spaces located along the town centre area, which could become more visible from the high street.



SHIRLEY - DEVELOPING THE CHARACTER OF THE TOWN CENTRE



POTENTIAL HIGH STREET INTERVENTIONS

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1. HERITAGE ASSETS, LANDMARKS
 Heritage assets, landmark buildings, distinctive facades to be restored and enhanced






 High quality public spaces around landmarks providing settings to heritage assets, distinctive spaces for outdoor uses, such as markets, events, social activity catering a.o.

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 Consider developing character and identity of historic core 'village' by reducing traffic dominance and speed, widening footways, restoration of existing buildings, high quality surfaces to enhance historic character across the streetspace as a whole, creation of distinct arrival area into Shirley town centre.
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2. SMALL SHOP FRONTS, WINDOWS
 Create more attractive, distinctive shop fronts, fascias, window displays, shop front spaces, restored facades







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4. A34 CORRIDOR (STRATFORD ROAD)
 Reduce traffic dominance, pollution and severance effects. Consider central reservations, reconfigured junctions to assist pedestrian movement and 'place' qualities.

 Key areas and junctions for improvements to pedestrian and cycle movement
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3. FRONTAGE SPACE
 Redesigning the street to create user friendly space, improve pedestrian movement and experience with wider pavements, integrated parking, tree planting/ greening, continuous foot and cycleways, de-clutter, simplified materials, reduced traffic dominance.

 Consider secondary public realm improvements to links between street frontage space and rear yards

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5. BEHIND THE HIGH STREET
 Current rear yard parking areas: consider other uses and activities, community events, small businesses, and low key public realm improvements

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6. GREEN SPACES
 Enhance prominence of the existing green spaces, visibility and accessibility from the High Street. Consider green boulevard link connecting remaining village (Church Street/ School Road triangle), cemetery and Shirley Park.

 Consider new tree lined boulevard link

 Consider kiosk or other 'attractor' to enhance visibility, activity, more prominent intersection between Shirley High Street and the Park

EXISTING

-  Highway space
-  Surface car parks
-  Residential areas
-  Local schools
-  Small business clusters behind the High Street

SMBC LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE, ECOLOGY AND URBAN DESIGN -DRAWING: Shirley - Developing Character of Town Centre/2016_12_16/UK

Business support infrastructure – supporting business growth, through improving the local trading environment across the wider town centre, not just the retail core.

Developing a Business Improvement District (BID) for Shirley

The benefits of a BID for Shirley are:

- to build on the achievements of Shirley Town Team
- businesses decide and direct what they want for the area
- BID levy funding is ring-fenced for use only in the Shirley area
- funding could deliver marketing, events and raise the profile of the town centre
- to help improve staff retention and business cost reduction
- facilitated networking opportunities with neighbouring businesses
- assistance in dealing with the Council, Police, and other public bodies
- to compete with similar town centres with a BID
- increased footfall and area promotion.



New BID organisations are created following a:

- consultation with and ballot of businesses voting on a BID proposal and business plan
- ballot won on two counts: a straight majority and majority by rateable value.

Reducing the impact of business rates – business rates are a tax levied on the occupation of property and ownership of empty buildings. They are paid on all non-domestic properties, with the revenue raised used to part fund local services.

- Business rates are calculated by a multiplier set by the government and **not** the Council
- From April 2017, businesses occupying a single property with a Rateable Value of less than £12,000 will be 100% exempted
- Businesses may be eligible for rates relief through various relief schemes including Small Business Rates Relief Scheme administered by Solihull Council.



Transport and access – The Solihull Connected Transport Strategy plans for balanced investment in transport infrastructure that still caters for cars, emphasising alternatives, including:

- innovative public transport schemes that are competitive, fast, reliable and frequent on key corridors across the borough
- high quality cycling networks to encourage residents to cycle to work
- community-focused initiatives to encourage healthier transport choices where possible.

Future long term improvements could be made to encourage more people to use sustainable modes of travel, aligned with the aims for public realm and accessibility, which would have a positive impact on Shirley.

Issues identified by town centre businesses about the current parking infrastructure relate to the clarity of signage, location of parking bays, and length of free parking allowance. The need for a mix of both short and long term provision for shoppers and workers was also highlighted by stakeholders. Currently off street parking offers 3 hours free, extendable to all day parking for a £4 fee.

6 – Immediate Actions

A number of short-term actions have been identified to respond to the priorities.

Priorities	Action	Progress
Defining Shirley town centre	Solihull Local Plan Review – defining the town centre and supporting a coordinated approach to the Public realm	Draft Local Plan Consultation underway Winter 2016/2017 including Shirley consultation event
Regeneration Projects	Maximise the benefits and opportunities for Shirley town centre from the development of the former Powergen site	Initial site works underway. It will create affordable housing, contribute to public open space, health care provision and off-site tree replacement
Public Realm	“Cleaner and Greener” activities focused on Shirley Town centre Enhancing the Public Realm in Shirley town centre	“Love Solihull” initiative proposed for 2017, encouraging businesses to clean in front of their premises. Exploring development of a design framework including shop fronts, public realm and on-street parking layouts
Business Support	Development of a Business Improvement District for Shirley	Funding identified and BID development support being commissioned early 2017
	Promote uptake of Small Business Rates Relief Scheme	Promotional campaign on National Rating Revaluation and Reliefs, Winter 2016 and Spring 2017
Transport and Access	Review current on and off-street parking	Assessment of provision Winter 2016 looking at clarity of signage, naming of car parks and potential for a permit scheme Consultation on proposals for future arrangements planned for Spring 2017

Delivering the Shirley Economic Plan

Timescale Priorities	Immediate	1–2 Years	2–5 Years	5+ Years
Strategic	Solihull Local Plan Review Consultation – defining the town centre, identifying options and focus for future growth	Solihull Connected – A34 initial development of schemes Revised Solihull Local Plan	Initial delivery of Solihull Local Plan Solihull Connected delivery	On-going Delivery of Local Plan Sites Solihull Connected delivery
	Solihull Connected – initial stages A34 Stratford Road Enhancement Study	A34 Stratford Road Corridor - potential Shirley Design Framework		
Transformational	Powergen – work starts on site	Solihull Local Plan – review investment opportunities	Town centre Investment – engage landlords, and landowners to explore investment opportunities	
Distinctive	Branding and marketing – enhance the promotion of Shirley town centre	Marketing plan – co-ordinated plan to promote the town centre within Solihull and beyond	Public realm – future enhancement of this space (linked to first five year investment plan)	Public realm – future enhancements of this space (linked to second five year Shirley investment plan)
Operational	Car parking provision – review of current provision	February 2017 – BID Steering Group established	BID Campaign – seek yes vote on BID proposal	Renew BID – second proposal developed, seek yes vote
	Cleaner and Greener – review maintenance programme	March to May 2017 – BID feasibility undertaken Summer 2017 – Borough wide strategy for car parking	BID first five year Shirley Investment Plan delivered	BID second five year Shirley Investment Plan delivered