

Halesowen Area Action Plan

Options
July 2010



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1 General Information

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Planning Policy Team, Directorate of the Urban Environment, 3 St James's Road, Dudley, DY1 1HZ or tel 01384 816967 or email ldf@dudley.gov.uk

Arabic

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Bengali

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Chinese

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Gujarati

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Punjabi

ਅਨੁਰੋਧ ਕਰਨ ਤੇ, ਇਹ ਡਾਕੂਮੈਂਟ (ਲਿਖਤ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼), ਅਤੇ ਸਥਾਨਕ ਵਿਕਾਸ ਯੋਜਨਾ (ਫਰੇਮਵਰਕ) ਸੰਬੰਧੀ ਹੋਰ ਡਾਕੂਮੈਂਟਸ ਵੱਡੇ ਪਰਿੱਟ, ਆਡੀਓ ਕਸੈੱਟ ਤੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤੇ ਹੋਏ, ਬਰੇਲ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ, ਅਤੇ ਅੰਗ੍ਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਨਾਲ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੀ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ ਜਾਂ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਣਗੇ। ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਕੋਈ ਡਾਕੂਮੈਂਟ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ (ਬਣਤਰ) ਵਿੱਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਪਤੇ ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ: ਪਲੈਨਿੰਗ ਪੌਲੀਸੀ ਟੀਮ, ਡਾਇਰੈਕਟਰੇਟ ਆਫ ਦਿ ਅਰਬਨ ਇੰਨਵਾਇਰਨਮੈਂਟ, ਡਡਲੀ ਮੈਟਰੋਪੌਲਿਟਨ ਬਰੋ ਕਾਊਂਸਲ, 3 ਸੈਂਟ ਜੇਮਸ ਰੋਡ ਡਡਲੀ Planning Policy Team, Directorate of the urban environment, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, 3 St. James's Road, Dudley DY1 1HZ - ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਨੰਬਰ: 01384-816967 - ਈ-ਮੇਲ ਪਤਾ: ldf@dudley.gov.uk

Urdu

یاد رکھیں ڈیولپمنٹ فریم ورک (مقامی بہتری سے متعلق اقدامات کا ڈھانچہ) سے متعلق دوسری دستاویزات بڑے حروف کی طباعت، آڈیو کیسٹ، بریل یا انگریزی زبان کے علاوہ زبانوں میں ترسیل کی صورت میں دستیاب ہیں یا درخواست پرفراہم کی جائے گی۔ اگر آپ کو دستاویز ان میں سے کسی بھی شکل میں درکار ہے تو براہ مہربانی پلاننگ پالیسی ٹیم، ڈائریکٹوریٹ آف اربن اینوائرنمنٹ، ڈڈلی میٹروپولیٹن بورو کونسل، 3 سینٹ جیمز روڈ، ڈڈلی ڈی ڈی 1 1HZ - فون نمبر: 01384 816967، ای میل: ldf@dudley.gov.uk

2 Introduction

- 2.1** In late 2009, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council began work on the Halesowen Area Action Plan (AAP). The Halesowen AAP will set the planning framework for Halesowen Town Centre and once it is adopted, it will be the framework for making decisions on planning applications in the area.
- 2.2** The Halesowen AAP is being prepared to update the current policy framework for the area, as set out in the Adopted Dudley Unitary Development Plan (2005) (UDP). Producing an Area Action Plan for the town centre is the best way of achieving this.
- 2.3** Once adopted by Dudley Council, the Halesowen AAP will form part of Dudley Borough's 'Local Development Framework'. It will provide a vision for what we want to achieve in the Town Centre by 2026, and through its policies and site allocations, it will set out how that vision will be delivered. The Halesowen AAP will include a proposals map to pull together and spatially represent the various issues and themes which together inform the document.
- 2.4** Halesowen has already benefited from significant investment in recent years, including:
- The redevelopment of the Cornbow Shopping Centre including an Asda supermarket;
 - An expanded and improved bus station;
 - A one-way system for parts of the Queensway; and 20 mph speed limits in place; and
 - Improvements to the Grange traffic island to the south of the town centre.
- 2.5** We now need to build on these improvements and positively plan for the future of Halesowen.

3 How to Use this Document

- 3.1** We have been gathering evidence about the Town Centre to identify the issues that the Halesowen Area Action Plan (AAP) should respond to and the changes that need to take place over the next 15 years.
- 3.2** Early consultation was undertaken on this emerging Area Action Plan in February and March 2010. The comments received have informed the preparation of this 'Options' consultation document and the identification of the issues to be addressed.
- 3.3** This document presents those issues together with suggestions for how to respond to them, and a vision for what we would ultimately like to achieve in Halesowen by 2026.
- 3.4** This Options document is intended to provide you with an opportunity to tell us whether you agree with the issues, the vision and proposed policies. You can also suggest alternative options or other things that you think ought to be considered.
- 3.5** Throughout the later sections of this document you will find questions which are intended to get you thinking about how Halesowen Town Centre should develop. Your views on these questions, and any other comments you would like to make, would be welcomed during the consultation period from 30th July to 10th September 2010.
- 3.6** You can respond to this consultation in writing by post, email or via our website at the address below:

David Piper
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3 St. James's Road,
Dudley,
West Midlands, DY1 1HZ
Tel: 01384 814173
Fax: 01384 814141

Email: david.piper@dudley.gov.uk

Website:

<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/environment-planning/planning/local-development-framework/hales-aap>

- 3.7** The Halesowen AAP 'Options' consultation document may be viewed and downloaded from the Council's website. Hard copies are also available for viewing at main libraries within the Borough, at the reception of the Council

offices at the address above and at Mary Stevens Park, Stourbridge. This document can be made available in large print and in languages other than English upon request.

- 3.8** This consultation document is accompanied by a '[Sustainability Appraisal](#)' which is also available at the locations quoted above. The Sustainability Appraisal assesses the options from this document to see what their likely significant effects would be, and whether any of the options would be more sustainable than others. This information may help you to reach informed decisions in your response to this consultation.
- 3.9** The responses received to the consultation will be used to prepare the final draft of the Halesowen Area Action Plan which is due to be published in January 2011. At this stage there will be a final opportunity for people to comment on the 'soundness' of the document before it is submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination in June 2011. It is anticipated that the AAP will then be adopted by July 2012.

4 Issues and Opportunities in Halesowen

- 4.1** Before starting to plan for the future of Halesowen it is necessary to understand what the area is like now. This section highlights the key issues, opportunities and challenges facing the Town Centre.
- 4.2** The Halesowen AAP builds upon and adds a spatial dimension to the Dudley Community Strategy by working towards its vision for stronger communities and addressing its priorities. For example, one of the strategic priorities within the Community Strategy is to create an attractive environment for people to live, work and invest in by improving the vibrancy and attractiveness of the Borough's town centres.
- 4.3** Whilst having a local focus, this Area Action Plan for Halesowen is integrated and in conformity with higher level strategic plans including the [Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country](#) (Core Strategy) - this plan and the Halesowen Area Action Plan form part of Dudley Council's [Local Development Framework](#), which is gradually replacing the existing Dudley [Unitary Development Plan](#) (2005).
- 4.4** The Core Strategy has been prepared by the four Black Country Local Authorities to guide development throughout Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton up to 2026. The Core Strategy states Brierley Hill to be the strategic centre for Dudley Borough, and identifies Halesowen as a Town Centre which will perform an important role in day to day shopping, leisure, community and cultural activity.
- 4.5** Although well progressed, the Core Strategy remains open to change until it becomes adopted by Dudley Council - adoption being timetabled for March 2011. The Core Strategy has a Vision consisting of three major directions of change, these being 'sustainable communities', 'environmental transformation' and 'economic prosperity'. The Vision gives rise to a number of Spatial Objectives, including: 'a network of vibrant and attractive town, district and local centres' and 'a high quality environment'.
- 4.6** Currently and in terms of Halesowen Town Centre, the Core Strategy includes as to:
- A need for an additional 2929m² (gross) of comparison shopping floorspace to be delivered around 2016;
 - A likely additional 3139m² of comparison shopping floorspace to be delivered over the longer term to 2026;
 - Comparison retailing proposals over 500m² gross floorspace will need to satisfy certain criteria – appropriate scale, no unacceptable impact on other centres, etc;
 - No additional convenience shopping floorspace is called for – although small proposals up to 650 m² net floorspace would be considered

appropriate; proposals above this size would need to satisfy criteria as per comparison retailing proposals above;

- A presumption in favour of small office developments totalling no more than 5000m² gross floorspace over the plan period to 2026;
- That town centres such as Halesowen provide appropriately scaled entertainment, leisure and cultural facilities;
- Encourages the use of upper floors for relevant town centre uses;
- Identifies support and or need for residential development and a modern health centre 'in or around Halesowen Town Centre';
- Recognition of the wider area forming a 'significant part of the biodiversity network' in Dudley and the Black Country (Regeneration Corridor 14);
- A need for east – west green links between Leasowes Park and the River Stour valley;
- Take opportunity to reinforce the surviving aspects of the historic character of Halesowen; and
- Supports the need for public realm improvements at Halesowen Town Centre and the wider area to the north and west (Regeneration Corridor 14).

4.7 Meetings, discussions and evidence gathering have taken place to begin to identify the issues that the Halesowen AAP should respond to. A SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) was produced for Halesowen Town Centre and is summarised below:

Strengths

- Compact and well serviced Retail Core
- Pedestrianised areas with good street furniture
- Well served by public transport and nearby public car parks
- Recently improved/refreshed highway infrastructure
- Proximity of the River Stour
- Town has historic/medieval value
- Good green space provision

Weaknesses

- Lacks provision for a vibrant evening / night time economy
- Lacks some character due to 1960s development
- Poor quality gateway sites, poor legibility in some areas of the town centre, poor appearance and condition of larger peripheral buildings, some central buildings also of poor appearance/repair
- Lack of blue chip comparison goods retailers (e.g. Marks & Spencer, Debenhams, etc)

- Midland House / Trinity Point detracts from the setting of the historic St John's Church
- Queensway carriageway detracts from the setting of St John's Church, and reduces pedestrian connectivity to the town's retail core area

Opportunities

- Enhance the River Stour and access to and along it – including in terms of it demarcating the town centre (including using public art to achieve this)
- Build in / add to Halesowen Town Centre's character – make better use of hidden gems, identify 'quarters' according to differing land uses, character and features
- Opportunity for improving green links/corridors into Halesowen Town Centre (e.g. River Stour Corridor, nearby Leasowes Historic Park)
- There is a surplus of approximately 100 public car parking spaces in the town centre which could be given consideration for redevelopment (although these spaces will likely have to be re-provided within a redevelopment scheme or elsewhere within the town centre)
- Investigate the feasibility of identifying certain development opportunity sites – e.g. Birmingham Street, Pool Road, or Maybrook House car parks.
- Carry forward appropriate elements of the Halesowen chapter of Dudley's Adopted 2005 Unitary Development Plan (UDP) – for example the development opportunity identified between Birmingham Street and the River Stour.

Threats

- Recent River Stour flood events
- Impacts of the above on possible future river-side development or redevelopment

4.8 An early stage consultation document/questionnaire was produced in order to seek the opinions of a range of businesses, organisations and individuals in terms of their concerns and aspirations for Halesowen Town Centre. The early stage consultation document was distributed to some 170 stakeholders during February 2010, with responses being asked for by the 16th March. Responses have been summarised into a 'consultation log' which is available on the Dudley Council website.

4.9 Responses received from stakeholders regarding the early stage consultation repeated and gave weight to much of that identified in the SWOT exercise (see above). These stakeholder responses have informed this Options document, and can be streamed into a number of topic themes. These themes (which have influenced the layout of chapter 6 of this Options document) are identified below, along with examples of what each will consider:

- Land Use and Regeneration - including the Halesowen AAP and other boundaries; additional land use requirements and where these should be located; existing land uses to be retained; public transport; public car parks; and development opportunity sites.
- Landscape and Public Realm - includes as to parks and open spaces; and improving other areas used and seen by the public.
- Nature Conservation - including improving the natural environment; safeguarding and enhancing sites of known nature conservation value; and the River Stour.
- Historic Conservation - including areas of high townscape value; historic character; heritage assets; and identifying areas of neutral or poor historic value.
- Urban Design - including character and appearance; high quality design; encouraging improvements to existing buildings; and pedestrian links and connections.

4.10 Issues and opportunities in Halesowen town centre are discussed further in the following chapters of this document.

5 Spatial Vision and Objectives

- 5.1** The vision for Halesowen Town Centre is a statement of where we want to get to and what this Area Action Plan should deliver by 2026. The draft vision below has been informed by an understanding of the issues and opportunities in the town centre, previous consultation responses, the overarching vision for the Black Country and the views of communities as expressed through the Community Strategy.

The Vision for Halesowen Town Centre:

Halesowen town centre benefits from having a compact and generally well presented and accessible urban core, and provides for local shopping and community activity. A key natural asset of the town centre is its position alongside the River Stour. The town centre further benefits from a variety of historical features and open spaces.

The Council's vision for Halesowen is that these assets be maintained and enhanced, and that the town centre succeeds as a focus for retail activity and a range of other uses to include employment, housing, leisure, entertainment and health facilities. The town centre will continue to be supported by effective and sustainable transport connections.

Above all, Halesowen will be a place that everyone will want to visit, work and live in and a centre in which people want to invest and do business.

Question 1

Do you agree with this Vision? If not, then what should the vision for Halesowen Town Centre be?

The Objectives for Halesowen Town Centre

- 5.2** To deliver the vision for Halesowen, clearly defined and measurable objectives are needed. These objectives will guide the preparation and implementation of the strategy and the monitoring of its achievements. The objectives for Halesowen Town Centre are proposed to be:
- 1. To maintain and build upon its recognised role in providing for local needs in an accessible and sustainable way by providing appropriate day-to-day shopping facilities and other suitably scaled town centre land uses such as employment, housing, leisure, entertainment and health facilities;*
 - 2. To provide for ease of movement, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, to the town centre from adjoining areas, and within the centre*

- between points of arrival and major destinations through the integration of a network of well-connected and direct streets, routes and spaces;*
3. *To capitalise on Halesowen's unique natural assets by protecting, improving access to and enhancing the River Stour and other green open spaces leading to and within the town centre for people and nature;*
 4. *To support a high quality public realm of streets, routes and public spaces that is attractive, safe, lively and pleasant to use that also reinforces the greening of the town centre;*
 5. *To ensure that the character and quality of Halesowen's historic environment is fully appreciated in terms of its townscape and landscape, individual buildings, plan form and archaeology – and that this is exploited to its best advantage and recognised by the community at large as one of the town's greatest assets; and*
 6. *To achieve a consistently high quality sustainable design and architecture in the design of new development and the enhancement of existing buildings and spaces within Halesowen town centre and beyond.*

Question 2

Do you support the above objectives? Please identify those that you would particularly support or disagree with.

6 Proposed Policies to Achieve the Vision

- 6.1** Informed by meetings, discussions and evidence gathering within the Council, and from responses made to the early stage consultation of a range of Halesowen stakeholders, this chapter of the document comprises a section for each of the following themes:
- Land Use and Regeneration.
 - Landscape and Public Realm.
 - Nature Conservation.
 - Historic Conservation.
 - Urban Design.
- 6.2** This chapter forms the main body of the Options document in terms of detailed issues, options, and suggested policies. Each of the above identified theme sections include a number of maps - these maps can generally be found at the back of each theme section.

6.1 Land Use and Regeneration

Objective

Ensuring a Vibrant Town Centre

To maintain and build upon Halesowen Town Centre's recognised role in providing for local needs in an accessible and sustainable way by providing appropriate day-to-day shopping facilities and other suitably scaled town centre land uses such as employment, housing, leisure, entertainment and health facilities.

The Area Action Plan Boundary

- 6.3** This Area Action Plan has to define the area to which it relates. A plan showing this proposed boundary is available at the end of this sub-chapter.
- 6.4** At present, the Area Action Plan boundary includes the industrial business area to the east of Birmingham Street so that potential redevelopment opportunities in this area can be considered. It would be logical to say that the Earls Way/Bromsgrove Road/Queensway ring road forms the natural boundary for the AAP. However, there are uses and services associated with the town centre that occur beyond this ring road - such as the police station, magistrates court, Andrew Road car park and St John the Baptist's church and grounds. There are also areas within the ring road where little if any change can reasonably be anticipated - for example the wider Tenterfields area. The proposed AAP boundary tends to follow the boundary between

the residential areas and retail or employment areas - although an exception to this is the residential areas to the south which have historical value in terms of their relationship with the town centre. The Churchyard to the northwest of the town centre provides a valuable asset to the town centre in terms of wider pedestrian connections and as amenity value.

6.5 At the start of this process, a provisional boundary for the Halesowen AAP was provided, which reflected the current Adopted UDP Inset boundary. This was subsequently assessed, including by site visits, an enquiry by design exercise, key analytical studies, and via an informal early stage consultation exercise carried out during February and March this year. As a result, this Options document is recommending a revised Halesowen Area Action Plan boundary.

6.6 The criteria used in revising the proposed Area Action Plan boundary are:

- The use and evaluation of criteria set out in Planning Policy Statement 12 Local Spatial Planning (PPS12, 2008);
- The inclusion of town functions including cultural, retail, leisure facilities and strategic open space;
- The inclusion of opportunity sites and underused buildings within a walkable area of the town centre;
- The exclusion of substantial residential areas that will be covered in other Development Plan Documents such as the Development Strategy DPD;
- The exclusion of stable residential areas that will not be subject to significant change; and
- Drawing the boundary to logical geographical edges such as roads and Borough boundaries.

Question 3

The Halesowen AAP boundary can change at this stage. Are there any areas which you feel should be added to the draft AAP area, or removed? If so please provide a plan showing the area and details as to why you consider it should or should not be included within the Area Action Plan's boundary.

Other Boundaries

6.7 It is required that the Halesowen AAP must also define the extent of the Town Centre boundary and its Primary Shopping Area (or Retail Core), and should also identify the primary shopping area's primary and secondary frontages - please see the AAP Boundaries map. The Dudley Adopted 2005

UDP provides a good starting point in these terms, with consideration also being given to the national planning policy and the Black Country's emerging Joint Core Strategy.

- 6.8** The Government's Planning Policy Statement 4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (PPS4, 2009) identifies a town centre to be a defined area, including the primary shopping area and areas of predominantly leisure, business and other main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. PPS4 states a primary shopping area to be a defined area where retail development is concentrated.
- 6.9** In land use terms and as earlier identified in the issues and opportunities section of this document, the Black Country Joint Core Strategy identifies a fairly modest amount of change for Halesowen Town Centre, including:
- A requirement for 2929m² gross comparison shopping floorspace to 2016, with a likely additional 3139m² over the longer term to 2026,
 - That town centres such as Halesowen should provide appropriately scaled entertainment, leisure and cultural facilities,
 - Support for small office developments totalling not more than 5000m² gross floorspace to 2026.

Question 4

Given the above, we think that the Halesowen AAP should reasonably continue to define the Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area (or Retail Core) boundaries as they currently exist in the Dudley Adopted 2005 UDP. Do you think that this is the correct approach?

If not, what alternatives would you suggest? Please give your reasons.

- 6.10** PPS 4 defines primary frontages as those likely to include a high proportion of retail uses, and secondary frontages as those offering more opportunity for a diversity of uses.
- 6.11** In defining primary frontages and given the relatively modest requirements of the Black Country Joint Core Strategy discussed above, it is proposed that the Halesowen AAP largely repeats those protected (retail) frontages identified in the Halesowen chapter of the Dudley Adopted 2005 UDP - but to also include the Wilkinsons and WH Smith shop frontages onto Hagley Street.

Question 5

Do you support the above proposed approach towards defining Halesowen Town Centre's primary frontages?

If not, what alternative approach would you suggest? Please supply a map and your reasoning.

6.12 Halesowen Town Centre's secondary frontages could be defined as:

Option 1

Those other frontages within the Primary Shopping Area which are adjacent or close to the primary frontages

Option 2

All frontages within the Primary Shopping Area other than those identified as primary ones

Question 6

Which of the above two options should be used in defining Halesowen Town Centre's secondary frontages? Please give your reasons.

Inside Halesowen Town Centre's Primary Shopping Area / Retail Core

6.13 Brierley Hill is now the Borough's strategic town centre where a high proportion of comparison goods retail shopping takes place and where a majority of any additionally required development of this type will be provided. Accepting this, it remains important that Halesowen continues to serve as a town centre catering for the largely day to day shopping needs of its local community and hinterland. Halesowen's Primary Shopping Area must therefore remain a focus for providing any additionally required retail land use and for safeguarding that which already exists.

- 6.14** The emerging Black Country Joint Core Strategy identifies a probable additional requirement for Halesowen Town Centre of some 6100m² (gross) comparison shopping floorspace over the period to 2026. Development on this scale could for example result in a good sized department store or otherwise a number of smaller retail units. The emerging Black Country Joint Core Strategy indicates that no additional new convenience shopping floorspace is required at Halesowen.

Question 7

We consider that an increase of 6100m² gross comparison retail floorspace over the period to 2026 can most probably be accommodated within the boundary of Halesowen Town Centre's proposed Primary Shopping Area, and should therefore be located in this Area as a first preference - do you agree with this approach?

If not, what alternative approach would you suggest? Please supply your reasoning.

Policy 1

Suggested Policy - Retail Floorspace

Subject to other policies in its Local Development Framework, the Council will permit additional new comparison retail floorspace within Halesowen Town Centre's Primary Shopping Area as follows:

2929m² (gross) comparison floorspace to be delivered by around 2016;

An additional 3139m² (gross) comparison shopping floorspace to be delivered over the longer term to 2026.

Any proposals for additional new convenience shopping floorspace should be located within the Primary Shopping Area and will be considered on their merits.

Question 8

Do you support part or all of the above suggested policy?

- 6.15** Noting the new Asda and other recent convenience retailing developments and commitments, there is currently no specific requirement for additional convenience shopping floorspace in Halesowen Town Centre to 2026. There

is however a continued need to retain and strengthen the Primary Shopping Area's locally focused retail function. For this to be achieved, it will be necessary to limit the amount of non-retail uses (i.e. those other than Use Class A1 Shops) permissible within the Primary Shopping Area.

Policy 2

Suggested Policy - Primary Shopping Area - Primary Frontages

This proposed policy will seek to maintain or enhance the role of Halesowen's Primary Shopping Area. Where primary frontages are identified, the Council will resist proposals that will lead to:

- Bunching of non-retail uses (i.e. uses other than comparison or convenience shopping) - no more than two non-retail uses adjacent to each other will be allowed,
- More than a certain percentage of all units in the Primary Shopping Area being taken by non-retail uses (proposed limit of 35%)

Question 9

Do you support part or all of the above suggested policy?

The Dudley Adopted 2005 UDP applies a similar policy to that proposed above, requiring that non-retail uses do not exceed 35% of all units in the retail core. Do you agree that this 35% figure be used in the above proposed policy for Halesowen's Primary Shopping Area - Primary Frontages, or should some other percentage figure be used? Please evidence your response.

- 6.16** Recent land use monitoring carried out by the Council regarding Halesowen Town Centre's retail core (April 2010) identifies that 40% of units are for other than shopping (Use Class A1 Shops) purposes. This is above that 35% maximum level set by Dudley Adopted 2005 UDP Policy CR4 Protected Frontages and indicates a need for an additional layer of policy safeguard for Use Class A1 Shops. It is proposed that this be achieved by identifying some secondary frontages within the primary shopping area, in addition to the primary ones identified and discussed above.

Policy 3

Suggested Policy - Primary Shopping Area - Secondary Frontages

This proposed policy will seek to maintain or enhance the role of Halesowen's Primary Shopping Area. Where secondary frontages are identified, the Council will resist proposals that will lead to:

Excessive bunching of non-retail uses (i.e. uses other than comparison or convenience shopping) - no more than three non-retail uses adjacent to each other will be allowed,

More than a certain percentage of all units in the Primary Shopping Area being taken by non-retail uses (proposed limit of 50%)

Question 10

Do you agree that Secondary Frontages need to be included in the Halesowen AAP?

Do you support part or all of the above suggested policy?

The Dudley Adopted 2005 UDP applies a similar policy to that proposed above, requiring that non-retail uses do not exceed 35% of all units in the retail core of Town Centres such as Halesowen and 50% of all units in the Borough's district and local centres. The latter percentage figure allows an increased level of land uses other than Use Class A1 Shops - using such a 50% percentage figure regarding Halesowen's secondary frontages thus accords with the PPS4 requirement that secondary frontages should offer more opportunity for a diversity of uses as compared to primary frontages.

Do you agree that this 50% figure be used in the above proposed policy for Halesowen's Primary Shopping Area - Secondary Frontages, or should some other percentage figure be used?

- 6.17** Joint Core Strategy Policy CEN4 'Regeneration of Town Centres' identifies that proposals for comparison retailing over 500m² gross floorspace or convenience retailing over 650m² net floorspace (both being Use Class A1 Shops) will need to evidence that they are of an appropriate scale to the function of the centre and would not undermine the vitality and viability of other centres.

- 6.18** To further add to Halesowen Town Centre's vitality and viability, the use of upper floors in the Primary Shopping Area for other appropriate town centre uses will be supported – including for example as offices or apartments. Emerging Black Country Joint Core Strategy Policy CEN4 'Regeneration of Town Centres' supports this approach.

Question 11

Do you agree that relevant town centre uses should be encouraged above ground floor shops in Halesowen's Primary Shopping Area, and if so what uses would you suggest?

Beyond Halesowen Town Centre's Primary Shopping Area / Retail Core

- 6.19** Beyond Halesowen's Primary Shopping Area, the wider town centre must continue its important role as a focus for a range of other town centre land uses such as offices, leisure, entertainment, health and cultural activities.
- 6.20** Therefore and for areas outside of the primary shopping area, there is ordinarily a need to prevent shopping (use class A1 Shops) and to encourage other land uses appropriate to town centres. Town centre land uses are identified in PPS4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth paragraph 7 and include leisure, entertainment, offices, arts culture and tourism (as well as retail). Emerging Black Country Joint Core Strategy Policy CEN4 'Regeneration of Town Centres' supports that town centres such as Halesowen provide appropriately scaled entertainment, leisure and cultural facilities.

Policy 4

Suggested Policy – Land Uses outside Halesowen’s Primary Shopping Area

Dudley Council will resist development proposals for comparison or convenience shopping (use class A1 Shops) outside the boundary of Halesowen’s Primary Shopping Area – these proposals will only be given further consideration if relevant criteria in national planning policy (currently PPS4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth) and the Council’s local development framework have been satisfied.

Dudley Council will give support in principle to development proposals outside the Primary Shopping Area proposing town centre uses other than shopping (use class A1 Shops) – appropriate town centre land uses being as identified in PPS4.

Proposals for residential land use will also be supported where appropriate and where the proposal does not result in the loss of a still needed town centre land use.

Proposals for office development (land use class B1a) will need to be in accordance with the requirements of Joint Core Strategy Policy CEN4 'Regeneration of Town Centres'

Question 12

Do you support part or all of the above suggested policy? If not, what alternatives would you suggest?

- 6.21** Following early stage consultation during February and March this year and further evidence gathering within the Council, there is a level of support for improving Halesowen Town Centre’s evening and night-time economy by adding to those facilities that already exist. Concern was expressed in terms of adding to anti-social behaviour late at night, and thus family orientated and non-alcohol facilities were favoured – a cinema being specifically mentioned. Noting that the Council leisure centre already exists at Great Cornbow, it seems particularly appropriate to locate additional leisure, entertainment, or health facilities at nearby development opportunity sites outside the Primary Shopping Area.

Question 13

Do you agree that Halesowen's evening and night-time economy should be further encouraged and improved?

Would a new cinema or similar (e.g. a bowling alley) be of benefit?

Should such facilities be located near to the existing Council leisure centre, or elsewhere in the town centre?

- 6.22** The Dudley Adopted 2005 UDP identified a need for a minimum of 35 dwellings to be provided in the area between Birmingham Street and the River Stour – this proposed development has not yet been carried out.

Question 14

Do you agree that this allocation for a minimum of 35 dwellings should be carried forward into the Halesowen AAP?

- 6.23** The emerging Black Country Joint Core Strategy states support and or need for residential development and a modern health centre 'in or around Halesowen Town Centre'.

Question 15

Although not identified by PPS4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth as town centre land uses, do you agree that residential development and a new modern health centre could be encouraged at appropriate locations outside of Halesowen's Primary Shopping Area - on the proviso that any still needed town centre land use is not lost?

- 6.24** Feedback from the early stage consultation during February and March 2010 included that the wider Halesowen area should be seen as a centre of excellence for education with regard to its schools and (importantly) Halesowen College. The Council share this view and recognise the education sector's benefits to Halesowen in terms of adding to the town centre's vitality and viability, providing for local jobs in schools and the college, and preparing local people for future employment. Additionally, the emerging Black Country Joint Core Strategy makes reference to 'opportunities for links to Halesowen College'.

Policy 5

Suggested Policy – Education in Halesowen

Existing education facilities in Halesowen Town Centre will be safeguarded where there is a need for them.

On the basis that any existing town centre land use for which there remains a need is not lost, any additionally proposed education facilities will be supported in principle at appropriate locations outside of Halesowen's Primary Shopping Area.

Question 16

Do you support part or all of the above suggested policy? If not, what alternatives would you suggest?

- 6.25** The River Stour is a key natural asset of Halesowen that runs from south to north along the eastern edge of the town centre. The open character of the riverside environment has been lost, partially as a result of topographical features, but also as a result of relatively modern development which has tended to turn its back on the river. There is thus a need to protect and improve access to the River Stour.

Policy 6

Suggested Policy – Proposed Development and the River Stour

Where feasible, development adjacent or in close proximity to the River Stour will be expected to enhance the river and its setting, improve access to and or along the river, and to guard against adding to flood risk.

Question 17

Do you support part or all of the above suggested policy? If not, what alternatives would you suggest?

Halesowen Town Centre as a whole

- 6.26** The town centre must also continue to provide the necessary supporting services and infrastructure, including for example in terms of public transport and public car parks.
- 6.27** The Dudley Adopted 2005 UDP gave policy support to proposals to provide bus lanes, bus shelters and a new expanded bus station with associated alterations to the road layout. Although much of this work has now been completed, the Halesowen AAP should continue to support an effective and sustainable public transport network in and around the town centre.

Policy 7

Suggested Policy – Public Transport

The Council will give in principle support to any future proposed appropriate improvements to the public transport network in and around Halesowen Town Centre.

Question 18

Do you support the above suggested policy? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

- 6.28** Halesowen has a number of public car parks located around the town centre and, in strategic terms, it is considered that provision for cars is adequately catered for in all parts of the town. The Halesowen Car Parking Study was carried out in June 2009 and identified a total of 1479 parking spaces (including 64 free on street spaces) and that some 100 spaces could be seen as surplus to requirements – it was decided by the Council to retain this modest surplus for the foreseeable future.

Policy 8

Suggested Policy – Car Parking

The Council will continue to provide and safeguard the required quantity of public car parking spaces of the right type in convenient and suitable locations where appropriate and feasible to do so. This Policy will need to be in accordance with the requirements of Black Country Joint Core Strategy Policy CEN8 Car Parking in Centres.

Question 19

Do you support the above suggested policy? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

Development Opportunity Sites

- 6.29** The plan at the end of this sub-chapter highlights the sites within the Halesowen AAP area that the Council are considering for redevelopment and improvement as part of future proposals to improve the quality of the Town Centre. Each has different characteristics that can be exploited to add to Halesowen Town Centre as a whole and assist regeneration.
- 6.30** These sites are being investigated for their suitability, availability and viability for redevelopment. Through this consultation process we are seeking evidence from landowners as to whether these sites are realistically likely to become available for redevelopment between now and 2026, and whether there are any other constraints on them.
- 6.31** We are also seeking comments from the public and any other interested party on the proposed development opportunity sites and any alternative sites. The boundaries on the plan are only draft at present and it is likely that not all of these sites will be needed to achieve our vision for Halesowen.

Potential Development Opportunity Site 1: Cornbow Hall and Pool Road Car Park

- 6.32** As discussed in the land use section above, there is a need to accommodate new comparison retail development within Halesowen Town Centre. Many of the potential development opportunity sites in this document have been identified on the basis of their potential suitability to accommodate some or all of that proposed retail development. This site is within the existing Retail Core as it was defined in the Adopted Dudley Unitary Development Plan (2005), is in an advantageous location near to the Cornbow Centre and is therefore the sequentially preferable site for new retail development.
- 6.33** At present, this site is dominated by the Pool Road multi storey car park, Cornbow Hall and the Wilkinsons store. Cornbow Hall offers a large function room and bar and is well used by the local community. The car park is in need of investment. As a whole, these buildings currently present a negative gateway into the Retail Core. Redevelopment could provide an opportunity to improve the car parking facilities, maintain and enhance frontages to Hagley Street/ Summer Hill and Pool Road and improve the quality of the built environment in this area.

- 6.34** Development could come forward on this site in a number of different formats. For example, if there was sufficient market interest then a department store could be created alongside a refurbishment of the existing car park. This option is likely to be able to accommodate around an additional 6,000m² of comparison retail floorspace and negate the need for any other retail sites to be bought forward, but Cornbow Hall would need to be relocated. Alternatively, a wholesale redevelopment of the site could result in an additional 3000m² of retail provided at ground floor level with new car parking and facilities for Cornbow Hall on the upper storey's. This is likely to be more attractive to the market but alternative sites for further retail development may still be needed.
- 6.35** Attention would need to be paid to the relationship any development has with the A459 to the south of the site and the Bull Ring public space area at the northeast corner. Refurbishment or redevelopment of this structure would also need to be considered in accordance with required levels of parking.

Question 20

As the only potential opportunity site directly within the retail core, Dudley MBC believes that this is the preferable site to accommodate new comparison retail development. Do you agree that this site should be the first choice for new comparison retail development or do you prefer any of the other potential development opportunity sites or any alternative sites?

Potential Development Opportunity Site 2: Trinity Point and High Street Car Park

- 6.36** This opportunity site sits next to the Townsend traffic island towards the north of the town centre. It is dominated by Trinity Point, a large office block which marks a gateway into the town centre. The other structure within this site is the two storey High Street car park. The site has important boundary edges on all sides. To the north is New Road, a key approach road to the town centre. To the east, down a steep gradient, is the River Stour and Rumbow Gardens. To the south is Church Lane and two historically significant timber framed cottages - 10 Church Lane and Whitefriars. The car park abuts Church Lane and is visible within the view along this road between the church and cottages. To the west of the site is Ivy House, the High Street and the Church of St. John the Baptist.
- 6.37** This site lies directly adjacent to the existing retail core so it could be a potentially suitable location for new comparison retail development. This would enable the Town Centre to expand and could provide a retail anchor to the northern end of the High Street, promoting more footfall between the north and south of the centre and enhancing the vitality and viability of the

centre as a whole. However, redevelopment would also mean the loss of the existing office use at Trinity Point which currently provides employment and contributes to the Town.

- 6.38** As this site is currently in an 'edge-of-centre' location and provides valuable employment for the local community, the Council feel that it is a less preferable site for new comparison retail development than Site 1 'Cornbow Hall and Pool Road Car Park' and therefore should only be investigated further if Site 1 cannot accommodate all of the retail development needed in the Town Centre.
- 6.39** If redevelopment were to be supported in this location, consideration would need to be given to its impact on the setting of the Church and other historical buildings. A good scheme could positively enhance these assets as well as enhancing the river corridor. In utilising this opportunity, a green link could be provided composed of amenity focused green infrastructure. Development within the block would also be expected to retain, improve and establish frontages to New Road and High Street and recognise the relationship to, and impact upon Rumbow and Church Lane.

Question 21

Do you think that this site is appropriate for comparison retail development? If your answer is yes, is it preferable to site 1 'Cornbow Hall and Pool Road Car Park'? If your answer is no, do you think that this site should be promoted for redevelopment at all, and if so, for what uses?

Potential Development Opportunity Site 3: Link House and Pioneer House

- 6.40** Link House sits at the junction of Birmingham Street, Birmingham Road and Rumbow and is a five storey brick built office building with car parking to the rear. Pioneer House fronts the northern end of Birmingham Street car park and houses a variety of uses including a gym. Steep level changes in topography, the route of the river and the existing urban form on this site all mean that access through this central area into the town centre from Tenterfields to the east of the River Stour is restricted and difficult.
- 6.41** This area has the potential to play a far more positive role enhancing both economic viability and the vitality of the Town. In recognition of this, the site was previously established as a major opportunity site in the Adopted Dudley Unitary Development Plan (2005). The UDP policy promotes this area for residential (C3), assembly and leisure (D2) and food and drink (A3) uses. It also notes that office (B1), non-residential institutions (D1) and hotels (C1) would be acceptable uses.

- 6.42** The UDP policy also seeks for development proposals to provide a strong frontage to Birmingham Street, and retain the key route from Cornbow to Peckingham Street. It notes that within the site, an active and attractive frontage onto the River Stour, together with an enhanced pedestrian route along it will be required. It continues to say that “provision for surface level crossings, especially at Queensway, will be required as part of a planning application. Light industrial (B1) uses will not be encouraged in this location in order to help achieve a high quality development which maintains the key functions of the Town Centre. To the east of the River, active and attractive frontages will be required to the River Stour and Queensway. Provision of access from the Tenterfields area will be expected.”
- 6.43** Development in this location could also help to open up the lost environmental asset of the River Stour and the potential for a public route along it, ideally on the side of the river closest to the Town Centre. Ideally, development should be set back from the River on both sides. However, the flood plain of the River Stour affects this opportunity site so attention must also be paid to this.
- 6.44** On the eastern side of the River Stour sits the Rumbow Works, occupied by B B Price Ltd, a successful local business. This manufacturing works provides valuable local employment but has in the past constrained development proposals on this potential development opportunity site. There is no evidence to suggest that this industry will relocate during the plan period and as such, any new development schemes should take account of their presence. Should the Rumbow Works site unexpectedly come forward in the future, it could form an appropriate extension to this development opportunity site and provision of a new east-west access route should be a high priority.

Question 22

Do you think that this development opportunity site should continue to be promoted for the uses that were previously endorsed in the Dudley UDP? If not, why not?

Potential Development Opportunity Site 4: Birmingham Street

- 6.45** The Birmingham Street opportunity site contains a wide variety of land uses. However, the potential of the site is being under-utilised and there is opportunity to increase the positive role the area can play in enhancing economic prosperity, environmental sustainability and public amenity. Dominating the site are the buildings of the Zion Christian Centre who are pro-actively pursuing development opportunities.

- 6.46** This site is linked to Site 3 'Link House and Pioneer House' as it formed part of the same opportunity site allocation in the Dudley UDP and was identified for the same uses as those given above. As an existing allocation in the Dudley UDP it is proposed that this site is carried forward into the Halesowen Area Action Plan.
- 6.47** Development in this area can provide active and attractive frontages onto areas of public space, and pay regard to existing and potential linkages throughout the site. Cornbow is of particular significance as it is one of the original streets through the town centre and has great potential for improvement as a public space and key link into the town from south east areas. There is a major opportunity with this whole site to provide a strong frontage to Birmingham Street whilst retaining and enhancing the key route between Peckingham Street and Cornbow. Strong frontages could also be established along the riverside, together with an enhanced pedestrian route along it. This opportunity site, together with the Link House and Pioneer House site, should be able to deliver approximately 35 residential units towards the town centre housing provision.

Question 23

Do you think that this development opportunity site should continue to be promoted for the uses that were previously endorsed in the Dudley UDP? If not, why not?

Potential Development Opportunity Site 5: Andrew Road Car Park

- 6.48** The Andrew Road Car Park occupies a strategic position adjacent to the bus station and the existing Retail Core, as it was designated in the Dudley UDP. If the existing quantum of car parking could be re-provided elsewhere within the Town Centre, potentially within one of the other development opportunity sites, then this site could be released for new development. Alternatively, a redevelopment scheme that re-provided the existing parking alongside new development could also be acceptable.
- 6.49** As this site is currently in an 'edge-of-centre' location it could provide suitable retail expansion space for the Town Centre. However, despite its strategic position adjacent to the bus station this site is segregated from the main retail area by the busy Queensway. As such, the Council feel that it is a less preferable site for new comparison retail development than both Site 1 'Cornbow Hall and Pool Road Car Park' and Site 2 'Trinity Point and High Street Car Park', and therefore should only be investigated further if Sites 1 and 2 cannot accommodate all of the retail development needed in the Town Centre.

- 6.50** To the rear of the site is the Highfields Estate and beyond that is Highfields Park. The design and layout of existing development on this opportunity site, as well as the change in topographical levels, are such that the town centre (to the east) and Highfields Park (to the west) are visually, perceptually and functionally separate from each other. Access to the town centre on foot is difficult from the Highfields area given the route of Queensway, the busy transport interchange at the bus station and the location of Andrew Road car park. Should the Andrew Road Car Park site be redeveloped there could be an opportunity to enhance the pedestrian links between Highfields and the Cornbow Centre.

Question 24

Do you think that this site is appropriate for comparison retail development? If your answer is yes, is it preferable to site 1 'Cornbow Hall and Pool Road Car Park' and/or site 2 'Trinity Point and High Street Car Park'? If your answer is no, do you think that this site should be promoted for redevelopment at all, and if so, for what uses?

Potential Development Opportunity Site 6: Maybrook House

- 6.51** Maybrook House is a five storey brick built office building prominently positioned on the corner of Queensway and Church Croft overlooking the bus station. It is home to a variety of companies including the Job Centre Plus. The building sits above a ground floor car park. The site is adjacent to the churchyard which is a well used formal green space very close to the heart of the town centre. Protection and enhancement of the town's historical and environmental qualities would be a priority if this site were to become available for redevelopment.
- 6.52** Maybrook House already makes a positive contribution to the Town Centre by providing valuable local employment and bringing trade into the centre. However, it is also a strategically positioned site in relation to the bus station and the retail core. As such, this site could provide retail expansion space for the Town Centre but at the expense of the existing office use.
- 6.53** As this site is currently in an 'edge-of-centre' location and provides valuable employment for the local community, the Council feel that it is a less preferable site for new comparison retail development than Site 1 'Cornbow Hall and Pool Road Car Park' and Site 2 'Trinity Point and High Street Car Park', and therefore should only be investigated further if Sites 1 and 2 cannot accommodate all of the retail development needed in the Town Centre.

Question 25

Do you think that this Maybrook House site is appropriate for comparison retail development? If your answer is yes, is it preferable to site 1 'Cornbow Hall and Pool Road Car Park' and/or site 2 'Trinity Point and High Street Car Park'? If your answer is no, do you think that this site should be promoted for redevelopment at all, and if so, for what uses?

Potential Development Opportunity Site 7: Fountain House

- 6.54** Fountain House is a large office building which sits on the eastern bank of the River Stour. It is currently largely unoccupied and has suffered from high vacancy levels for some years despite proactive marketing. This site could be put into more productive use through a change of use and redevelopment. Combined with Potential Development Opportunity Site 4 'Birmingham Street', there is an opportunity to significantly improve the quality of the built environment in this area, enhance the setting of the River Stour and establish a pedestrian route along the riverside.
- 6.55** This site is outside of the Retail Core and so would be a less preferable site for new retail development. However, it would be suitable for a wide range of other town centre uses including non-residential institutions such as education uses (D1), assembly and leisure (D2), a hotel (C1) and residential (C2 and C3).

Question 26

Do you support the redevelopment of this site? What uses do you think should be promoted in this location? Please explain the reasons for your answer.

Potential Development Opportunity Site 8: Will Thorne House

- 6.56** Will Thorne House is a three storey office building which sits at the top of a high embankment along Birmingham Road with a rear car park. On the opposite side of Birmingham Road is a small area of additional parking space sitting against a two storey high retaining wall. This area of parking is also included in the opportunity site.
- 6.57** Birmingham Road is a key pedestrian route into the town centre, but its function, appearance and potential are under utilised. Redevelopment here could provide a better frontage to Birmingham Road and enhance its character

and appearance. The northern edge of the opportunity site borders onto green space along Rumbow. This edge would need to be positively addressed in any redevelopment scheme.

- 6.58** This site lies adjacent to the Retail Core as it was designated in the Dudley UDP (2005) and so can therefore be considered as another potential location for retail expansion. However, the site's current use provides employment and is valuable to the Town Centre. This edge-of-centre site is more disjointed from the Retail Core than site 2 'Trinity Point and High Street Car Park' and would involve an uphill walk to get back to the town. For these reasons, the Council feel that it is a less preferable site for new comparison retail development than Site 1 'Cornbow Hall and Pool Road Car Park' and Site 2 'Trinity Point and High Street Car Park', and therefore should only be investigated further if Sites 1 and 2 cannot accommodate all of the retail development needed in the Town Centre.

Question 27

Do you think that this site is appropriate for comparison retail development? If your answer is yes, is it preferable to site 1 'Cornbow Hall and Pool Road Car Park' and/or site 2 'Trinity Point and High Street Car Park'? If your answer is no, do you think that this site should be promoted for redevelopment at all, and if so, for what uses?

Potential Development Opportunity Site 9: High Street

- 6.59** This site at the northern end of the High Street consists of an under-utilised parade of retail units. These premises are within the retail core but have suffered from periods of vacancy. Redevelopment here could provide more attractive retail formats and potentially additional retail floorspace. Mixed uses such as residential and offices would also be appropriate above the ground floor retail uses.
- 6.60** Redevelopment within this block would need to be sensitive to the site's location adjacent to St. John the Baptist's Church and Whitefriars, and as such, the historic rhythm of the buildings should be maintained. Development could also provide an opportunity to create an improved east-west pedestrian link through this area.

Question 28

Do you think that redevelopment on this site should be encouraged? If yes, what uses do you think should be promoted in this location?

- 6.61** The key purpose of this section is to identify the reasons why particular development opportunity sites have been selected and what challenges and opportunities they face when contemplating redeveloping these sites and how their redevelopment can link into and build upon the Town Centre as a whole. Although in this document the sites are being dealt with as separate development opportunity sites, it is important that they are not just viewed in isolation, but are also considered in combination.
- 6.62** As part of gathering information and views from the community at this Options stage, the Council would be interested to hear from any landowner, occupier or other interested party (private and public) who may wish to bring forward ideas, proposals and options for other specific developments and land uses with the Halesowen AAP area. In bringing forward these ideas, proposal or options now, interested parties will be able to ensure that the Council considers them fully prior to moving forward to the next stage.

Question 29

Do you have any other comments to make on the potential development opportunity sites identified above? Are any of the listed sites inappropriately identified? Do all the identified sites have the potential for change? Are there any alternative sites that should be considered for development?

Monitoring

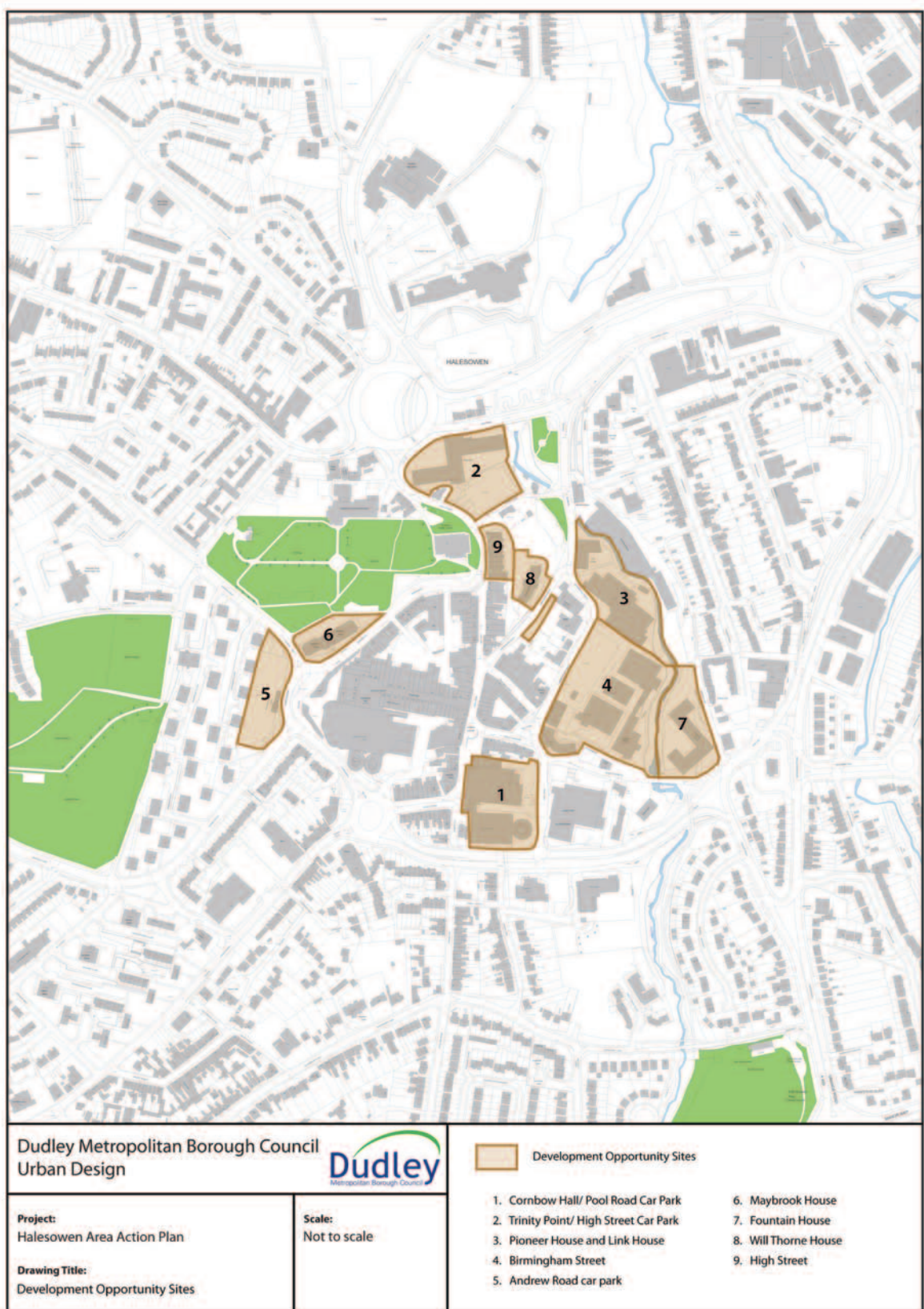
- 6.63** The suggested proposed policies will need to be monitored in order to ensure that they are being effectively delivered. Suggested (annual) monitoring indicators could include:
- Amount of new comparison retail floorspace provided in the Primary Shopping Area
 - Amount of new convenience retail floorspace provided in the Primary Shopping Area
 - Loss of comparison retail floorspace in the Primary Shopping Area
 - Loss of convenience retail floorspace in the Primary Shopping Area
 - Percentage of units in the Primary Shopping Area occupied by uses other than Use Class A1 Shops
 - Bunching of units used for other than Use Class A1 Shops in the Primary Shopping Area ('bunching' being 3 or more adjacent units in Primary Frontages; 4 or more adjacent units in Secondary Frontages)
 - Percentage of new retail floorspace (Use Class A1 Shops) provided outside the Primary Shopping Area
 - Amount of new dwellings provided inside the Halesowen AAP boundary

Question 30

Do you support the above initial suggested monitoring indicators? Is there anything else you could additionally suggest?



Map 1 Site Boundary



Map 2 Opportunity Sites

6.2 Landscape and Public Realm

Objective

Protecting and Enhancing the Landscape and Public Realm

To provide, protect and enhance a well connected landscape and public realm setting of streets, routes and public spaces that is attractive, safe, lively and pleasant to use that also reinforces the greening of the town centre.

Parks, Open Space, Green Infrastructure and Public Realm

- 6.64** The AAP recognises the role of individual landscape elements, and their unique characteristics that contribute to the wider green infrastructure and landscape setting and how this complex and dynamic relationship is altered and changed by time and interaction with people and activity.
- 6.65** Within Halesowen, the landscape is important because it is:
- An essential part of our natural resources and a key element towards modifying the effects of climate change;
 - Provides the setting for important historical buildings linking past, present and future.
 - An environment for a range of plants and animals – its biodiversity;
 - A resource that provides an attractive amenity for community and cultural events, linking people with their town centre and produces an enhanced quality of life, supporting tourism and return visits; and
 - A valuable recreation and learning resource bringing opportunities to improve the well-being of residents and inspiration and confidence for visitors and business.
- 6.66** Well designed parks, open spaces and squares provide a focus for people to meet and enjoy and play a role in a healthy lifestyle, as well as a catalyst around which housing, shops and businesses can benefit. They can also bring a unique selling point, enhancing the image of a place. However, there are currently few public spaces and no town park or connected green spaces in Halesowen town centre. The churchyard is cut off from the pedestrianised areas and Main Square within the inner shopping area. Somers Square provides a good example of new high quality public realm.
- 6.67** The outer road networks have isolated grass verges with occasional areas such as Finger post Gardens, which link into the important biodiversity corridors of the Stour Valley. Views and vistas to the green corridors and townscape from some of these isolated areas can be both positive and

sometimes negative at present. However the means via safe and useful routes to join up spaces and providing connections, offers a challenge within which a landscape and public realm strategy can provide new meaning and value to residents, visitors and investment. At the same time, enhancements to biodiversity and means to modify climate change can be brought about.

Question 31

Are there key public spaces and missing landscaped connections which should be proposed within a hierarchy of public and private spaces?

Are there particular areas of Halesowen Town Centre which suffer from a poor image and which could be enhanced by improvements to the public realm and via a well designed and integrated landscape treatment of private and business frontages?

Policy 9

Suggested Policy - Parks, open space, green infrastructure and public realm

Development should:

1. Provide open space that has clarity of purpose and function and a hierarchy of spaces, which carefully considers the need for creation of new space and retention of existing, and who will use it and how.
2. Provide a range for choice and play.
3. Reflect and enhance the local identity of parks, open spaces and the public realm.
4. Make the most of the heritage by retaining and integrating structures that become the focus and setting for newly created or re-invigorated landscape and public realm.
5. Integrate green infrastructure within building design such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to help reduce the impact of run-off within the urban environment.
6. Be adaptable and flexible to changing social, physical and environmental needs.
7. Provide spaces that help link communities together and reduce severance.
8. Be inclusive and not dominated by any single group, catering for a range of needs and involving a range of users.
9. Employ low-cost remediation techniques where possible to bring contaminated and lower quality land back into use.

Question 32

Do you support the above suggested policy? Are there any parts that you would disagree with? Is there anything else you think should be included?

Open Space Network

- 6.68** The Town Centre has one urban, public open space/square (Somers Square) where people can sit and which acts as visual focus in the townscape. The potential redevelopment of the Opportunity Sites 3 and 4 gives the best opportunity for a new 'square' or other type of space to be provided. The best location for this would be adjoining Birmingham Street where it could link in to Cobham Street. An enhanced public space on the Queensway road frontage opposite the Church would also help provide a visual focus to the town centre.

Question 33

Do existing public spaces in the town centre meet the public space needs of the town centre?

Are there key public spaces which should be proposed for retention or improvement?

Policy 10

Suggested Policy – Open Space Network

The following public open spaces, as shown in the Landscape and Public Realm Plan, will be protected, or created or enhanced as part of development proposals and other initiatives:

1. Queensway south of St. John the Baptist Church (enhanced space)
2. The River Stour (enhanced space)
3. Birmingham Street (new space)
4. Great Cornbow and Little Cornbow (enhanced space)
5. Hagley Road (enhanced space)
6. Birmingham Road (enhanced space)

Question 34

Do you support the above suggested policy? Are there any parts that you would disagree with? Is there anything else you think should be included?

Public Realm

- 6.69** Public open spaces provide a focus for community activity; they can be pleasant places to meet with others or just to sit and watch the world go by; and they can provide an attractive visual counterpoint to buildings as part of the street scene. There are currently few public spaces in the town centre: there is the central, outdoor space in Hagley Street, Somers Square, and there is Highfields Park although it is somewhat apart from the main flows of people in the town centre. Designs for new development should pay regard to protection of existing spaces or the provision of new ones.

Question 35

How do you think the quality of streets and spaces could be improved?

Policy 11

Suggested Policy – Public Realm

The quality of streets and open spaces will be improved through development or local initiatives having regard to the following measures:

1. The provision of high quality hard landscaping, street furniture, lighting, signage and art to help create a clear identity for the Town Centre. Strategies could be prepared to coordinate the choice and location of these features.
2. Mature tree planting and other landscaping will assist the 'greening' of the Town Centre.
3. Streets and spaces will be designed so that pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles can mix safely with priority given to pedestrians where possible.

Existing landscape features will be protected where they make a significant contribution to the street scene. Development in the vicinity of the Green Corridors, as shown in the Landscape and Public Realm Plan, will preserve their landscape character.

Question 36

Do you support the above suggested policy? Are there any parts that you would disagree with? Is there anything else you think should be included?

Parks and Open Space Provision

- 6.70** The amount, distribution and access to existing play and Local Park provision for amenity and well-being is informed by the Dudley MBC Parks Strategy. There is a need to safeguard from loss or harm, existing open space provision and to provide new and missing spaces to create a hierarchy of inspiring landscape and public realm projects to provide a unique selling point and image for Halesowen.
- 6.71** Outdoor play is central to an enjoyable childhood and playing is a primary need for children, closely linked to the innate need to express themselves, to explore, learn about and make sense of their world. Research tells us that play helps combat childhood obesity, aids children's mental and emotional responsiveness, improving their social skills, promotes their resilience and supports learning.
- 6.72** An environment which is attractive and safe for children to play is also an attractive, safe place for the whole community. This also creates safer, outdoor places for children to play and for teenagers to meet. However, within the centre of Halesowen there are no special places of an informal or formal nature for children's play or for teenagers.

Question 37

Should children's play and outdoor facilities for teenagers to meet be provided? Where should such facilities be provided within the network of landscape and public realm of the town centre? How can these facilities be delivered?

Formal Sport and Recreation Provision

- 6.73** Provision of sports and recreational opportunities play a major part in the health and well being of residents. Existing provision should be protected and new needs and opportunities provided via development which is integrated within green infrastructural links between the town centre and surrounding communities.

Question 38

Does the current distribution and range of sports, playing pitch and leisure provision meet present and community needs? Where do additional or modified areas need to be located or connected?

Landscape

- 6.74** Landscape features such as trees, hedges, banks and boundary walls form an important part of the street scene and can help to integrate new development into its context. The environmental success or failure of a development often owes much to the quality of its landscape setting. This includes walls, fencing and hard surfacing as well as trees, shrubs and other plant material. Where existing trees are to be retained within a redevelopment scheme, the layout of the built form should be required to accommodate their future growth.

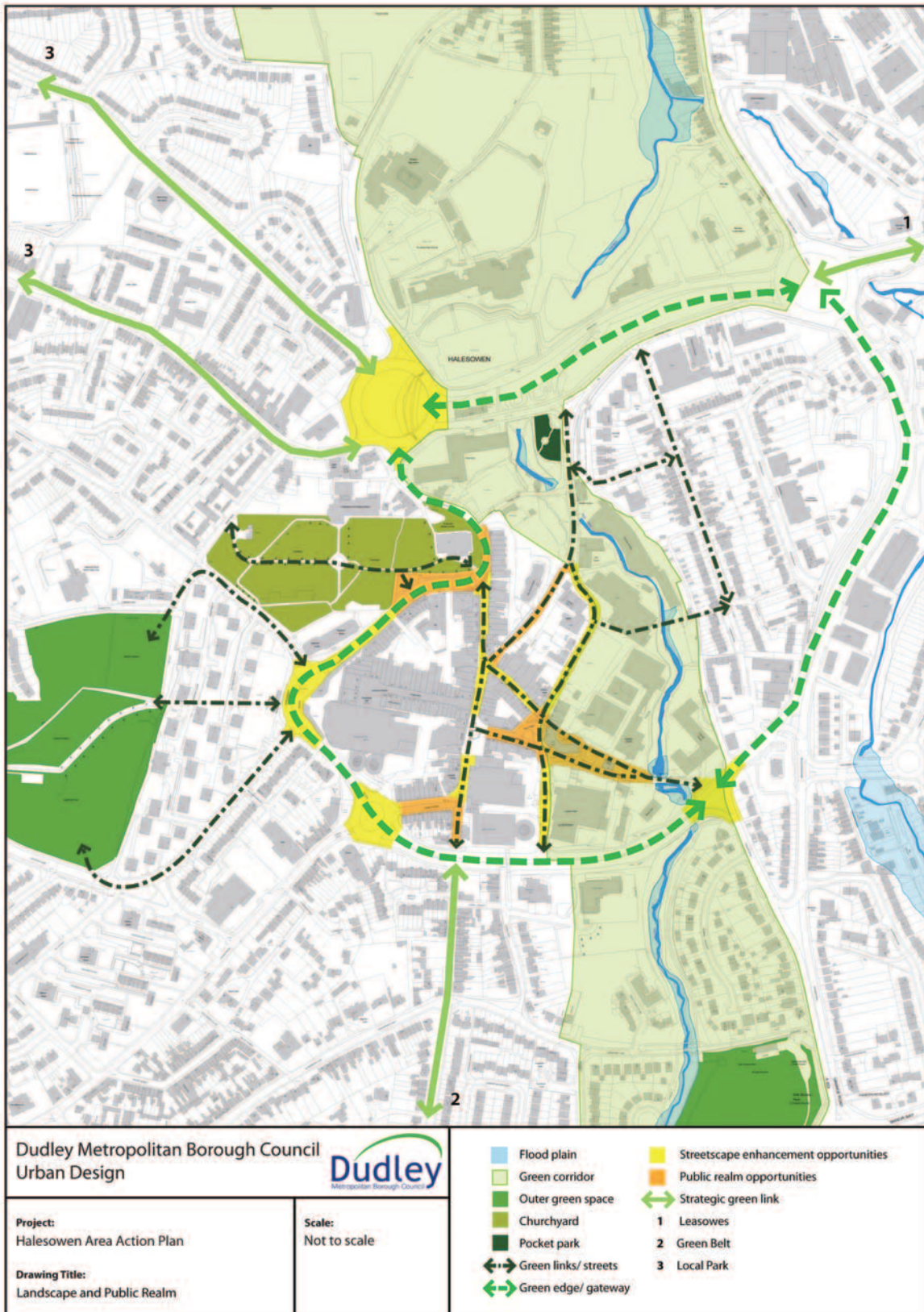
Policy 12

Suggested Policy – Landscape

1. All landscape associated with new development should be considered as an intrinsic part of the overall design concept and should be considered in detail at the outset. A landscape strategy will be a requirement for all appropriate forms of development, secured where appropriate by the use of conditions.
2. Applicants will be expected to provide sufficiently detailed landscape information to enable the scheme to be considered in context. Landscape strategies should ensure that:
 - a. Any trees, existing natural habitats or other features that can be effectively incorporated are retained.
 - b. Plant species, surfacing and other materials are appropriate to the site and locality with due regard to water consumption issues and nature conservation
 - c. Trees and other natural/green elements will be encouraged on the edges of new development to help soften the environment of Halesowen.

Question 39

Do you support the above suggested policy? Are there any parts that you would disagree with? Is there anything else you think should be included?



Map 3 Landscape and Public Realm

6.3 Nature Conservation

Objective

Safeguarding and improving Halesowen's natural environment

To capitalise on Halesowen's unique natural assets by protecting, improving access to and enhancing the River Stour and other green open spaces leading to and within the town centre for people and nature.

- 6.75** Halesowen is located on the south eastern outskirts of the Black Country. Its character is affected not only by the historical and ongoing development but also the natural and green assets present within and next to it. To the east of Halesowen's town centre is The Leasowes, a historic and beautiful landscape created by William Shenstone. To the south lies the streams and open countryside of Illey and ancient woodlands of Worcestershire.
- 6.76** The AAP sits under a higher tier planning policy which informs its direction. At a national level, Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (PPS9) requires planning policy to ensure development protects important natural assets (including nature conservation sites and wildlife corridors) and is used to improve the overall natural environment.
- 6.77** One of the themes of the emerging Black Country Joint Core Strategy is that the whole of the Black Country undergoes an environmental transformation to aid, attract and maintain inward investment. This is based on the findings of the Black Country Study. The Joint Core Strategy is progressing this environmental transformation through policies such as CSP3: Environmental Infrastructure and ENV1: Nature Conservation.
- 6.78** This AAP will look to progress these requirements through policies which are relevant to retain and augment the assets and distinctiveness of Halesowen. Many of the environmental improvements needed are not possible without development, however this will need to be undertaken in a sympathetic fashion to ensure the aims are achieved.









Green Network

- 6.79** Halesowen is a vibrant, distinctive town which has retained a relatively good supply of green space, both natural and more heavily managed. A green swath is present stretching from the Highfields Park and adjacent open spaces in the west linking to the north of the town centre, via St John's Churchyard to the River Stour in the east. The river connects the town to the Illey countryside in the south and also north to Furnace Coppice and further downstream to Stourbridge in the west. However, as yet no formal public access is possible to these areas along the river banks.

6.80 Halesowen is set within the Black Country Core Regional Biodiversity Opportunity Area (RBOA). This RBOA is identified within the 50 year Biodiversity Vision and Opportunity of the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership.



Map 4 Halesowen Green Network

	Inset boundary		Local Park
	Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC)		Pedestrian Link
	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)		Protected Open Space
	Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)		Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)

Key to Map

6.81 Improving the natural environment is seen as being an essential tool in retaining and increasing inward investment within the Black Country sub-region. The relatively good supply present offers Halesowen a real opportunity to capitalise on this for the benefit of residents, businesses and

wildlife. However, despite the volume of green space present it is recognised that this is often not in an attractive state, or is completely hidden from view, especially along the River Stour.

- 6.82** The River Stour is a major wildlife corridor which is arguably of regional/sub-regional importance. It is a major wildlife corridor in the southern part of the Black Country Core RBOA which helps to link the Forest of Feckenham RBOA in Warwickshire with the Cannock Chase and Sutton Park RBOA in Staffordshire and Birmingham.
- 6.83** Connected green space can provide better public access which encourages walking and cycling. As well as encouraging free healthy activity, it can reduce car use and therefore traffic entering the town centre. This is likely to have an increased effect in Halesowen as it can encourage greater use of the bus station therefore aiding a reduction in traffic in the wider area.
- 6.84** Wildlife present along the River Stour, such as Water voles and Kingfisher can be harmed by inappropriate disturbance. Indirect pressures can also have a negative impact on wildlife, such as increases in light pollution on Common pipistrelle and Brown long-eared bat.
- 6.85** The Halesowen AAP should therefore increase the ecological quality and public access present within the Green Network. The balance between amenity and wildlife will need to be determined as is appropriate to the specific location. An example of where wildlife would be given more support would be along the River Stour:
- widening the vegetation along the length
 - making the banksides less steep
 - improving the bankside habitats for local species
 - reducing the levels of light pollution
 - opening up vistas of the river to surrounding areas
 - creating an informal style cycle/footpath along the town centre side

Question 40

Should the AAP look to maximise opportunities to improve existing uses such as wildlife habitats and public open spaces?

Should the AAP look to link existing open spaces to provide additional uses such as walking and cycling?

Policy 13

Suggested Policy - Green Network

Development will protect and improve the Green Network within the Halesowen AAP boundary. It will create and strengthen pedestrian and bicycle links and significantly enhance the habitats for wildlife within it. Development along the River Stour will be expected to be set back at least 10m from the top of both slopes to enable new public access and ecological improvements.

Question 41

The suggested 'Green Network' policy seeks to deliver higher tier policies including PPS9 and the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country Policy CSP3. Do you support this suggested policy? If not what do you suggest?

Greening the Streets

- 6.86** Challenges which will face the town over the next 25 years include increased impacts of climate change, both in terms of peak summer temperatures (urban heat island effect) and flooding (more high intensity storm events).
- 6.87** Halesowen is urban in character, therefore residents and also visitors will experience hotter, more uncomfortable temperatures in high summer which can affect health (especially of the elderly and those with certain illnesses) and wellbeing. Increasing the amount of green space and tree cover is proven to reduce these peak temperatures back towards those found in the wider countryside. Techniques such as green walls and roofs can sometimes be used where space is limited on the ground.
- 6.88** The town has suffered from occasional localised flooding. Natural drainage techniques such as permeable surfaces, increasing cover of vegetation and ponds helps absorb rainwater into the ground and release a higher proportion back into the atmosphere as water evaporates. This reduces the volume and rate that rainwater enters drains and water courses which helps prevent existing drainage systems from becoming overloaded and resulting in floods.
- 6.89** The Council believes that this AAP should look to use land in an efficient and multi-functional way which benefits visual amenity, wildlife, reduces urban heat island effect and flooding. It is proposed that new development should proactively enable this transformation to take place in a manner that is appropriate and proportionate to the scale, kind and location of the works.

Question 42

Should natural and wildlife friendly techniques be used to minimise the predicted increase in Urban Heat Island effect?

Should natural and wildlife friendly techniques be used to help reduce flood risk?

Policy 14

Suggested Policy - Greening the Streets

Development will be expected to positively contribute to climate proofing Halesowen by increasing tree cover, areas of wildlife friendly vegetation, green roofs and or wetland features to benefit natural drainage (such as ponds, reed beds and swales) as is appropriate to its scale, kind and location. Development will contribute either directly through onsite works or where this is not possible offsite through mechanisms such as proportionate planning obligations.

Question 43

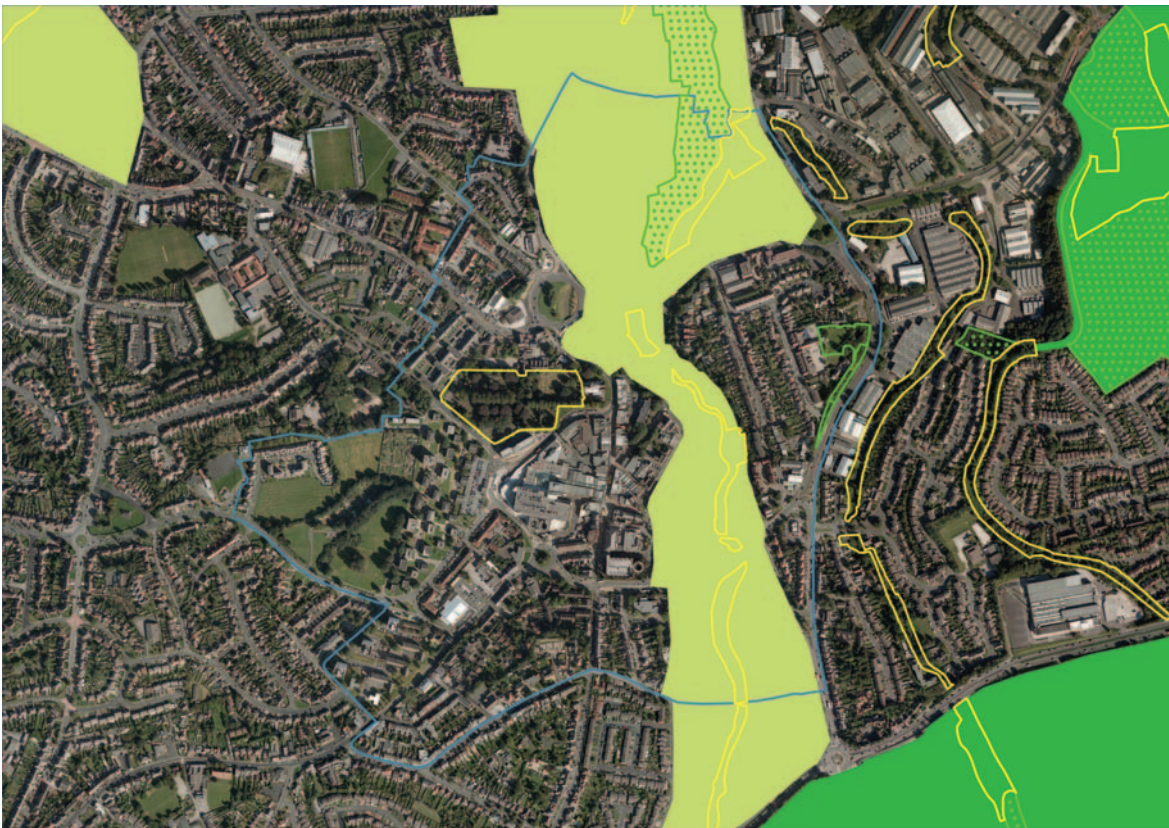
The suggested 'Greening the Streets' policy seeks to deliver higher tier policies including the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country Policy CSP3. Do you support this suggested policy? If not what do you suggest?

Protecting Key Nature Conservation Sites and Corridors

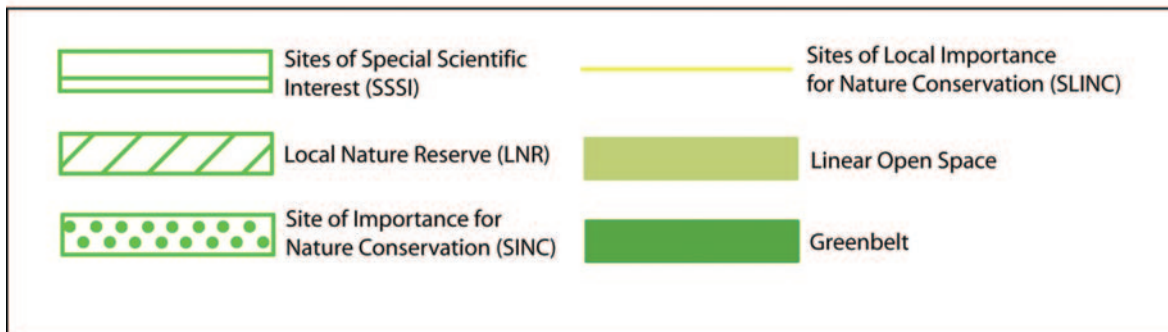
- 6.90** Halesowen has been recognised as containing several areas of importance for wildlife and geology. Within the current UDP (2005) several designations are present.
- 6.91** The River Stour is designated as Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC) along its length. Furnace Coppice area in the north receives a higher protection as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) called River Stour Valley South. The River Stour and its environs is also designated as Linear Open Space which underlines its importance as a sub-regional wildlife corridor.
- 6.92** The Bromsgrove Roadcutting at Tenterfields is a nationally protected Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to its important geology. It is the best example of the Basalt Sandstone Member of the Halesowen Formation (Upper Carboniferous). It has enabled scientists to understand the

environmental conditions present 310 -300 million years ago (the Westphalian Epoch). The northern section of this along with most of the playing fields of Tenterfields Primary School is designated as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) which not only aids protection but also encourages educational uses of this important area.

- 6.93** St John's Churchyard is declared a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC). The Common Pipistrelle bat and several important bird species are known to use the site.
- 6.94** As the nature designations present are of a national, sub-regional and/or borough character the Council therefore believes that the Halesowen AAP should conform to the policies stated at these levels.



Map 5 Sites and Corridors



Key to Map

Question 44

Are there any areas present within the AAP boundary, which are not highlighted above, where nature conservation designations should be considered?

Policy 15

Suggested Policy - Protecting Key Nature Conservation Sites and Corridors

Development will conform to policy ENV1 in the Core Strategy and the emerging Development Strategy DPD with regard to nature conservation designations. Development will only be supported where it appropriately protects the Site of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserve, Site of Importance for Nature Conservation and Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation. In addition to these it should protect and improve the wildlife corridor and public access functions of Linear Open Space.

Question 45

The suggested 'Protecting Key Nature Conservation Sites and Corridors' policy seeks to deliver higher tier policies including the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country Policy ENV1. Do you support this suggested policy? If not what do you suggest?

Monitoring Framework

An initial suggested set of (annual) monitoring indicators for nature conservation policy could include:

- Percentage of planning approvals in the Green Network which create/retain appropriate green links for people and wildlife.
- Percentage of planning approvals meeting the green infrastructure design requirements (these criteria to be determined at a later stage as this AAP progresses towards adoption)
- Percentage of planning approvals which protect SSSI, LNR, SINC and SLINC designations.
- Percentage of planning approvals within Linear Open Space which protect and positively benefit the wildlife corridor and public access functions.

Question 46

Do you support the above initial suggested monitoring indicators? Is there anything else that you could additionally suggest?



Map 6 Nature Conservation

6.4 Historic Conservation

Local Character and Distinctiveness - A Treasured Halesowen

Objective

Local Character and Distinctiveness

To ensure that the character and quality of Halesowen's historic environment is fully appreciated in terms of its townscape and landscape, individual buildings, plan form and archaeology – and that this is exploited to its best advantage and recognised by the community at large as one of the town's greatest assets.

Historic Environment

- 6.95** The AAP should include a strategy to protect buildings and places that make an important contribution to Halesowen's identity as a distinctive town centre with a long history and a unique character.
- 6.96** It should provide a vision of how new development should be integrated with the best of the town's historic buildings and places and provide guidance to ensure that new development fulfils this vision.

Halesowen's Historical Development

- 6.97** Halesowen's history can be traced back to the Domesday Book. However, the settlement is probably considerably older, growing from an Anglo-Saxon settlement that stood on the road from Wales to Coventry near a crossing of the River Stour, which probably lay around a circular enclosure that now forms the boundary of the churchyard. This was probably linked to the river crossing to the south east by a route following Hagley Street, Peckingham Street and Little Cornbow.
- 6.98** From the early 13th century Halesowen was developed as a market town by Halesowen Abbey becoming a local centre for the woollen cloth weaving industry. A long triangular market place extended from the bridge over the River Stour in the east along Great Cornbow and Little Cornbow up to Hagley Street in the west.
- 6.99** The town's position next to the River Stour provided an opportunity to harness water power for industry and by the 17th century a thriving metal forging industry developed. Birmingham Road and Birmingham Street were built running back from the market frontage to the forges and mills on the river bank. In the mid 1750s a new turnpike road was built linking Birmingham and Ludlow, passing to the north of Halesowen and forming the new route

of Whitehall Road and New Road. Birmingham Street was extended northward to meet this new route crossing the River Stour via a bridge known as the Rumbow.

- 6.100** By the late 19th century, ribbon development extended along Stourbridge Road to the north west and along Hagley Road to the south west, with a new focal point in the north at the junction of New Road, High Street and Stourbridge Road. Areas of terraced housing were built on formally planned streets just outside the town's historic core. Development of the Tenterfield area as a residential enclave began in the early 20th century, whilst Blackberry Lane and Summer Hill developed as areas of middle class housing. The historic grammar school at the Earl's School was significantly expanded at the start of the 20th century to take in a large green field site in which the main building (opened in 1908) forms a landmark on the northern edge of the town centre.
- 6.101** The area of housing around the town centre underwent rapid expansion during the Inter-War period and mid 20th century with areas of middle class housing to the south and south east and large estates of municipal housing including the Highfield and Hill Street estates to the west and south west. The industrial area along the banks of the River Stour underwent development involving increase of the footprint of individual industrial buildings and sites.
- 6.102** The 1960s saw major programmes of demolition and redevelopment throughout the town centre. Construction of Queensway created a circulation route that took traffic out of the central areas of Cornbow and Hagley Street to the south and west of the town centre, cutting off the churchyard from Hagley Street. A group of municipal buildings including the Police Station, Magistrate's Court, multi-storey car park, Cornbow Hall and Swimming Pool were developed either side of Queensway creating a new character civic area which breaks through to the historic market place via Pool Road. Other major developments included the demolition of the majority of historic buildings on the west side of Hagley Street and the development of the Cornbow Centre with a new frontage to Hagley Street and a precinct running back westwards from this frontage. Other areas were redeveloped at the same time in a more piecemeal fashion.
- 6.103** More recent development has included the clearance of buildings along Whitehall Road/New Road and the construction of Earl's Way, creating a dual carriageway link from Stourbridge Road and High Street to a roundabout in the east with access to rapid routes to Birmingham, Old Hill and the M5. Large office blocks were developed along the southern side of Whitehall Road/New Road, including the monolithic structure of Trinity House. Most recently a new bus station and a large supermarket with a multi-storey car park fronting onto Queensway have been constructed as a partial redevelopment of the Cornbow Centre.

The Future Character of Halesowen

- 6.104** The Town Centre has gone through a period of decline which has resulted in losses from its architectural heritage and historic spaces. This has also created potential for significant redevelopment. New development should respect the distinctiveness of the town centre and contribute to its character. A number of historic buildings (that pre-date the 1960s redevelopment of the town) survive, which help to preserve some of the town's earlier character, including important street corner sites and buildings within street frontages. However, it is now the buildings of the 1960s redevelopment which make the strongest contribution to the character of much of Halesowen's Town Centre.
- 6.105** The Council believes that the Halesowen AAP should provide a vision of how the character of the town centre including the historic buildings and spaces should develop in future and how the style and form of new developments will contribute to this.
- 6.106** This provides two options for how future development in the town centre could support its character and distinctiveness:

Option 1

Seek to reintroduce the materials, variety, forms and rhythms that are represented within the buildings that survive from before the extensive redevelopments of the 1960s to create a new townscape that reduces the dominance of the 1960s architecture and make the most of 'Old Halesowen'.

Option 2

Celebrate the town centre renaissance of the 1960s by seeking to integrate new development with the civic and commercial buildings that were created as part of it and encourage the use of these buildings to inspire the architecture of new developments in the town centre.

Question 47

Which option do you see as being the most desirable for the future management of Halesowen?

Do you feel that the later 20th century buildings should be regarded as a valued part of Halesowen's character or would you rather new development allowed a gradual replacement that focused on the older character of the town centre?

Policy 16

Suggested Policy - The Future Character of Halesowen

The Council will support proposals for new development that reintroduce a finer grain of development to Halesowen Town Centre that respects the rhythm, form and scale of frontages represented within the town before the redevelopments of the 1960s, creating a greater number of narrow frontages to properties, that provide flexible units for business or residential use within the town centre.

Question 48

Do you support this suggested policy? If not, why not?

Identification and Protection of Heritage Assets

(see proposed historic environment designations and archaeological priority areas maps)

6.107 In order to provide effective management of the historic environment the Council needs to identify those heritage assets that should be considered when developing its plans and considering planning decisions. Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5, 2010) defines a heritage asset as:

“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment. They include designated heritage assets (as defined in this PPS) and assets identified by the local planning authority during the process of decision-making or through the plan-making process (including local listing)”.

- 6.108** Designated heritage assets are covered by relevant legislation and comprise, World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Statutorily Listed Buildings, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and Conservation Areas.
- 6.109** An historic landscape characterisation has been undertaken to support development of the Area Action Plan. This has identified the contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the environment that is currently made by individual buildings within and around the AAP area. It is possible to define **Areas of High Historic Townscape Value** where the historic landscape characterisation has identified significant concentrations of buildings, structures and spaces that make a positive contribution to character and distinctiveness.
- 6.110** The appraisal has also considered the contribution of landscape features such as woodland, geological and riverine environments to the historic character and distinctiveness of the town centre and identified a number of **Areas of High Historic Landscape Value**.
- 6.111** Halesowen cemetery has been identified as a **Designed Landscape of High Historic Value**.
- 6.112** A review of the Council's Historic Environment Record (an extensive database of records of buildings and archaeological remains across the borough) has allowed the identification of a number of areas with a high potential for the presence and survival of significant archaeological remains. These have been identified as **Archaeological Priority Areas** and include much of the extent of the medieval town centre in addition to a number of historic industrial sites.
- 6.113** The Council already maintains a list of **Buildings of Local Historic Significance** and the appraisal has identified a number of buildings that would meet the criteria to be added to this list.
- 6.114** We feel that the Halesowen AAP should recognise the significance of these heritage assets and their contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the town centre and include a framework for their protection and management to ensure that they make a positive contribution to place shaping through regeneration and new development.
- 6.115** The following options represent a complementary and cumulative approach to the management of heritage assets within the AAP, with Option 1 as least intensive to Option 4 as most intensive.

Option 1

Adopt the buildings and areas identified as having significance in the historic landscape characterisation as a framework of locally identified heritage assets within the AAP that will guide the future management of the historic environment in the town centre.

Option 2

Include policies within the AAP to guide the future management of these heritage assets by resisting development that would have a negative impact on them and by encouraging development that protects and enhances their contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Option 3

Review the buildings and areas identified as having significance in the historic environment appraisal to determine whether any should be protected as designated heritage assets including scheduled monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas.

Option 4

Prepare management proposals to protect and enhance one or more of the heritage assets.

Question 49

Do you agree with the areas and buildings identified by the historic environment appraisal as having significance that requires special consideration in planning decisions? Are there any you would add or remove?

Which, if any, of these options would you choose to form a strategy for protecting and enhancing the town's heritage? Are there any other options you would suggest?

Policy 17

Suggested Policy - Protection of Heritage Assets

The Council will seek to protect the character and distinctiveness of Halesowen Town Centre defined as having local historic and archaeological significance by the Halesowen Urban Historic Landscape Characterisation Study, including features identified as contributing positively to the quality of the historic environment.

Question 50

Do you support this suggested policy? If not, why not?

Historic Areas with Neutral or Poor Character

(see historic environment issues and opportunities map)

- 6.116** Planning Policy Statement 5 states that within their local development framework documents, planning authorities should set out a positive, proactive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment in their area. It specifically asks local planning authorities to consider how historic environment contributes to the character of the environment and the sense of place, as well as the stimulus it can provide to inspire new development of imaginative and high quality design. Several significant areas of the Town Centre's historic landscape have a poorly defined or neutral character despite the survival of a small number of important historic buildings. These include the lower end of the former market place (including frontages on Great and Little Cornbow) and the routes of Birmingham Street, Birmingham Road, Rumbow, the Trinity House site and the frontage of Queensway opposite St John the Baptist Church. This is largely the result of developments that have introduced land uses and buildings that are not supportive of the character of the area as an historic town centre.
- 6.117** The Council believes that the Halesowen AAP should aim to make the best use of these historic areas to reinforce the sense of place where areas of neutral and poor character will be regenerated and subject to new development through the AAP. The following options are considered to be complementary and cumulative, with Option 1 representing a least intensive approach through to Option 4 as the most intensive.

Option 1

Identify areas with a high historic significance but with poor or neutral townscape character where the design of new development will need to enhance local character and distinctiveness.

Option 2

Promote the redevelopment of sites that would result in the enhancement of historic areas defined as having neutral or negative townscape.

Option 3

Provide design guidance including indicative master-planning to influence how new development will change the character of sites identified as having neutral or negative character.

Option 4

Prioritise these areas for interventions to improve the public realm including paving, street signage, street lighting and street furniture.

Question 51

Do you agree that the areas identified fail to make a positive contribution to the historic character of the town centre? Are there any areas you would add or remove?

Which, if any, of these options would you choose to form a strategy for improving areas with poor or neutral character? Are there any other options you would suggest?

What sorts of improvements to the public areas would you like to see used to regenerate areas of poor or neutral character?

Policy 18

Suggested Policy - Historic Areas with Neutral or Poor Character

The Council will protect the alignment of historically significant streets as identified by the Halesowen Historic Landscape Characterisation from encroachment by new development and will encourage developments that respect and redefine these historic streets with active frontages.

Question 52

Do you support this suggested policy? If not, why not?

Fragmentation of Historically Significant Street Lines and Frontages

(see historic environment issues and opportunities map)

- 6.118** Historically significant streets including Hagley Road, Little Cornbow and Summerhill have been severed by later 20th century highways works and development whilst redevelopment of frontages for large units, with broad forecourts or car parking areas at Birmingham Road, Birmingham Street and Great and Little Cornbow, has resulted in loss of the definition of the courses of historic streets. This has created fragmentation of the historic character of the area, where no one character is prevalent or resulted in a negative character that does not contribute to the area's character as a distinctive town centre.
- 6.119** The Council believes that the Halesowen AAP should protect the contribution that historically significant streets make to the sense of place, as well as recognising them as important routes of access and areas of sustainable activity. Furthermore, the Council believes that the AAP should aim to reunite sections of historic streets that have been severed, in order to restore their contribution to local character and distinctiveness and the economic sustainability of the town centre. The following options represent a complementary and cumulative approach.

Option 1

Include policies in the AAP to protect historically significant street lines and frontages from development that would detract from the character of historic street lines, sever their courses or result in the loss of historic buildings that provide definition to their courses.

Option 2

Identify opportunities in the AAP to reunite fragmented historically significant street lines through public realm and highways enhancements.

Option 3

Encourage new developments on opportunity sites that would provide strong frontage lines that improve the definition of historically significant streets.

Question 53

How do you think the AAP should address the fragmentation of historically significant street lines and frontages?

Which, if any, of these options would you choose to form a strategy for protecting and reuniting historically significant street lines and frontages in Halesowen? Are there any other options you would suggest?

Policy 19

Suggested Policy - Fragmentation of Historically Significant Street Lines and Frontages

The Council will protect historic street lines as defined by the Historic Landscape Characterisation from encroachment by new development and will target areas of fragmented streetscape through public realm and highways enhancements.

Question 54

Do you support this suggested policy? If not, why not?

Buildings that Detract from the Quality of the Historic Environment

(see historic buildings appraisal map)

- 6.120** A number of buildings were identified by the historic landscape characterisation as making a negative contribution to the quality of the historic environment. In some instances these buildings had an impact beyond their own curtilage that was judged to affect the setting of significant spaces and structures. Trinity House, for example, and its associated car park was identified as the most significant example as it has a negative impact on the setting of St John the Baptist's Church (listed Grade I), Nos. 6 to 8 Church Lane (listed Grade II), Ivy House (listed Grade II) and The George Inn Public House, High Street (listed Grade II). The poor appearance of this building has a negative impact that extends over a wide part of the Area Action Plan area.
- 6.121** We believe that the Halesowen AAP should identify the features of the landscape that detract from the quality of the historic environment (including buildings) of the town centre and should set out measures to encourage regeneration that either mitigates the negative impact of these features or that removes them entirely. It is therefore considered that the Halesowen AAP should identify sites where redevelopment of 'negative' buildings would represent an opportunity to enhance the character and appearance of the Town Centre.

Question 55

Do you agree with the buildings identified (see historic buildings appraisal map) as having a negative impact on Halesowen's historic character? Are there any buildings you would add or remove?

Policy 20

Suggested Policy - Buildings that Detract from the Quality of the Historic Environment

The Council will encourage new development that mitigates the negative impact made by buildings identified by the Halesowen Historic Landscape Characterisation as making a negative contribution to the quality of the historic environment within the Town Centre, including new developments of more sensitive design.

Question 56

Do you support this suggested policy? If not, why not?

Shopfronts

- 6.122** As a commercial centre, Halesowen Town Centre is dominated by the shopfronts and shop windows of the businesses that line Hagley Street, Hagley Road, High Street, Great Cornbow, Peckingham Street and Queensway. A number of these are of great age and, as additions to historic buildings, make a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of Halesowen Town Centre. Others are contemporary features forming part of the design of buildings both historic and modern and make an important contribution to the appearance of the area through their contribution to the original architectural schemes of buildings and developments.
- 6.123** However, in a number of cases shopfronts have been inserted, replaced or altered with details that are considered to detract from the special qualities of historic buildings or the overall character and appearance of the town centre. Common features that have a negative appearance include overly large shop fascia's, use of gaudy colours and lighting, poor quality materials, a profusion of lettering styles or styles that are out of keeping with the character of an historic building and the use of exterior roller shutters. The condition and quality of shopfronts will have a significant affect on the character and appearance of Halesowen Town Centre and, as such, will influence the economic sustainability of the town centre.
- 6.124** The Council are currently preparing a Shopfronts and Signage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which will aim to improve the quality and appearance of the Borough's retail and commercial centres in sustaining competitive locations for shoppers and visitors. A specialist survey of shopfronts in Halesowen has formed a part of the evidence base for this SPD, which will include guidance that relates specifically to shopfronts in Halesowen.
- 6.125** We believe that the Halesowen AAP should include a policy that recognises the importance of shopfronts and signage to the character and appearance of the town centre and that supports the use of the Shopfronts and Signage SPD as a tool for protecting and improving this character and appearance.

Question 57

Do you agree that the Halesowen AAP should include policies to protect and improve the appearance of the town centre's shopfronts? Do you agree with the suggested policy? If not, why not?

Policy 21

Suggested Policy - Shopfronts and Signage

The Council will have special regard to the contribution of shopfronts and signage to the character and appearance of Halesowen Town Centre and will require the use of a high quality of design and materials within the Town Centre.

Question 58

Do you think that the right issues have been identified with regard to Halesowen's historic environment?

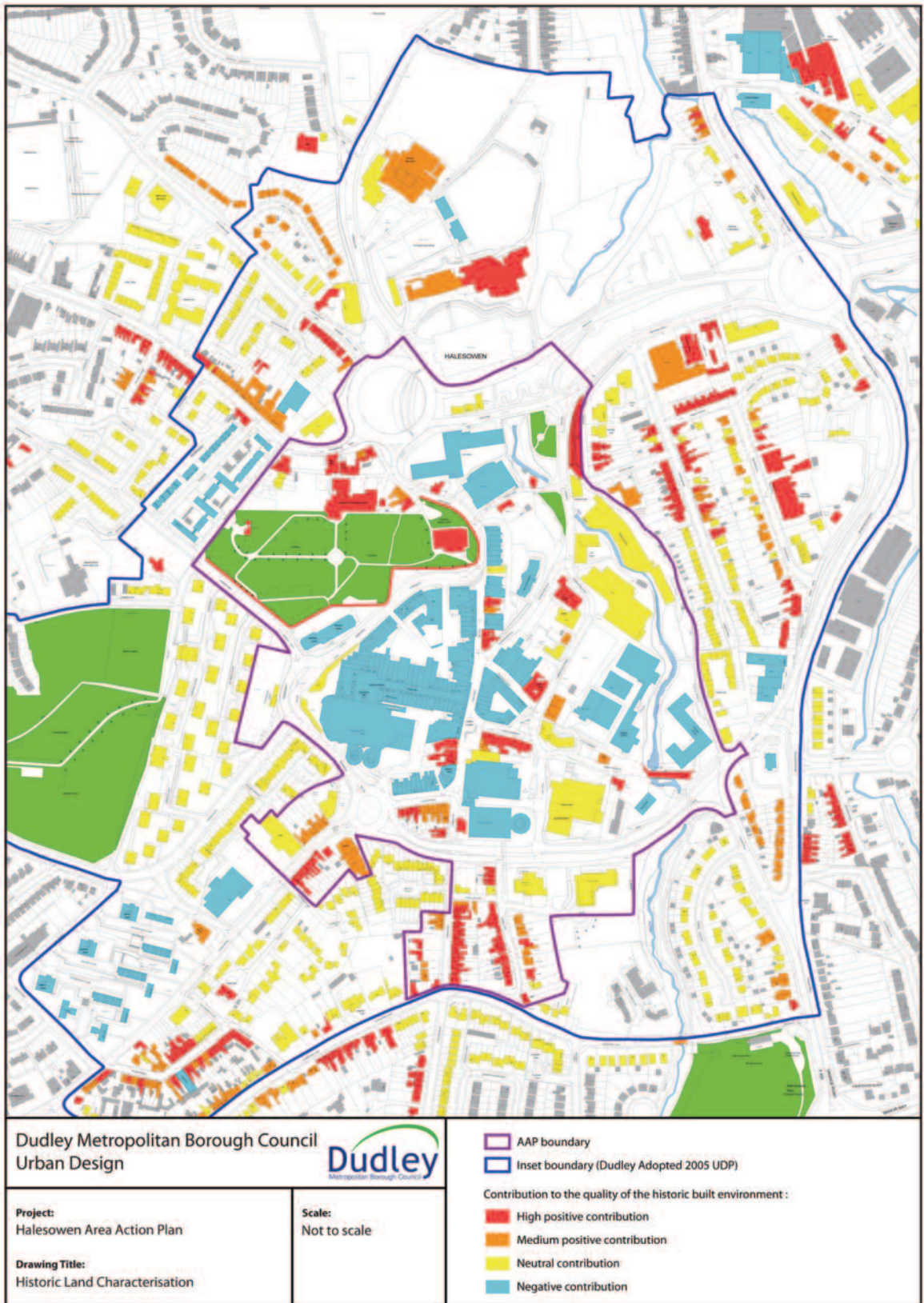
Are there any other issues relating to the Town Centre's historic environment that you think the Council should address within the AAP?

6.126 In order to monitor the effectiveness of the suggested policies a number of monitoring indicators will be needed. These are proposed to be as follows:

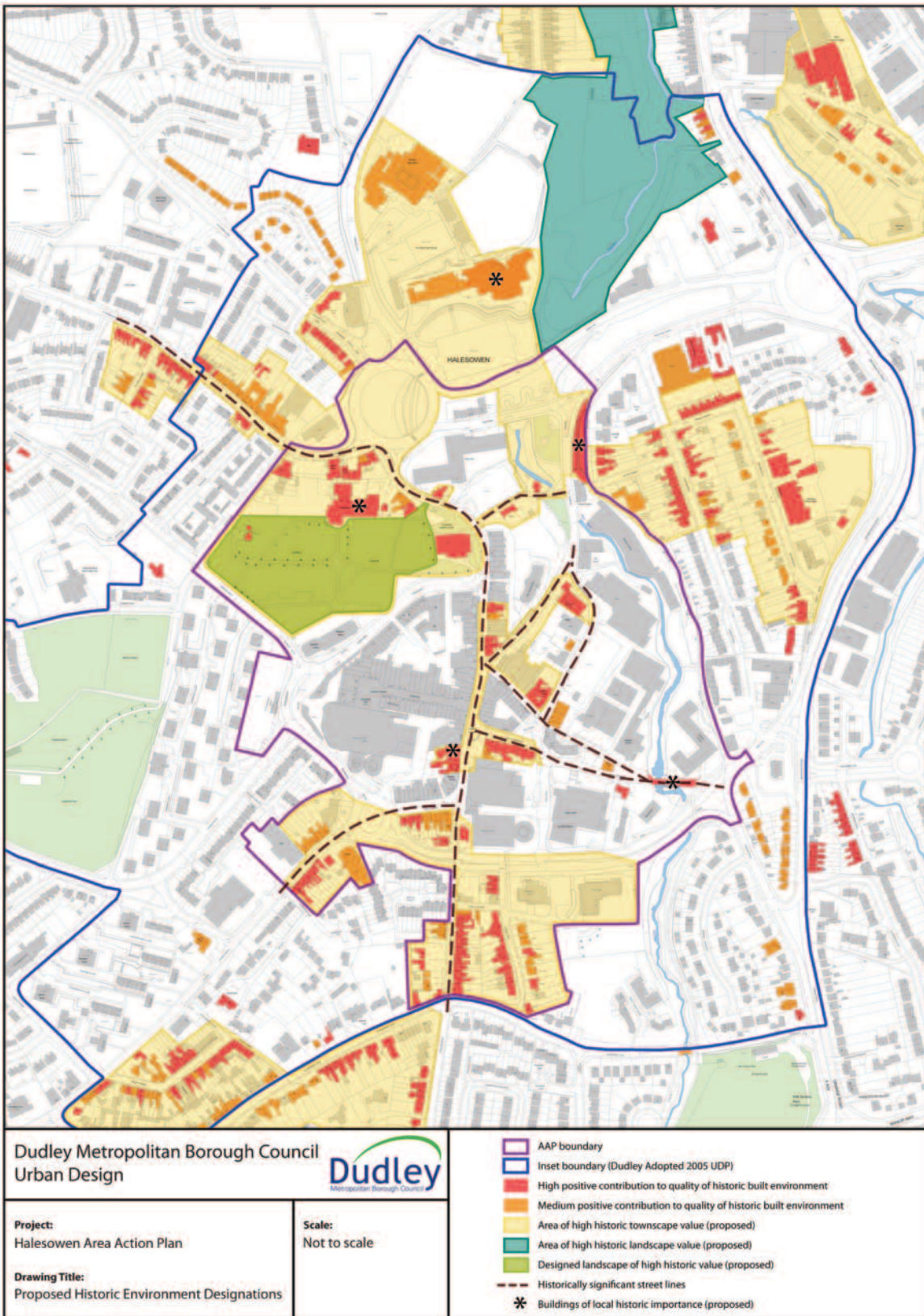
- Number of planning permissions granted contrary to Historic Environment Officer recommendation
- Number of planning permissions granted without an archaeological desk based assessment/ evaluation when requested to be supplied by the Historic Environment Officer

Question 59

Do you support the above initial suggested monitoring indicators? Is there anything else that you could additionally suggest?



Map 7 Historic Land Characterisation



Map 8 Historic Environment Designations



Map 9 Historic Environment Archaeological



Map 10 Historic Environment Issues

6.5 Urban Design

Objective

To achieve a consistently high quality sustainable design and architecture in the design of new development and the enhancement of existing buildings and spaces within Halesowen town centre and beyond.

To provide for ease of movement, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, to the town centre from adjoining areas, and within the centre between points of arrival and major destinations through the integration of a network of well-connected and direct streets, routes and spaces.

Design Quality

- 6.127** A high quality environment with well designed buildings and spaces is essential for the well-being of residents and visitors to Halesowen town centre. Good design relates to the layout and function of the different parts of the town centre as well as their detailed appearance. The pressure for development is so great that many opportunities to change the environment, for better or worse lie ahead over the next 20 years.
- 6.128** The character, image and appearance of Halesowen Town Centre, is beginning to deteriorate. The quality of buildings and spaces are dated and are in need of some repair to help raise the perception and overall quality of the town. While much of the urban fabric remains intact, providing well-defined urban spaces and activity, the edges of the town centre are fragmented with large monolithic buildings that turn their backs to the public realm. In contrast the town centre displays many good qualities such as its form and to some extent, its integration with neighbouring residential areas. As with most towns in the Black Country, Halesowen has many hidden 'gems', including its network of footpaths routes, as well as the River Stour.
- 6.129** Parts of the town centre have recently had improvements to raise the quality of the area and there are some listed buildings that are recognised as being of some local importance. The appearance and local distinctiveness of the town centre is somewhat undermined by recent developments that have failed to make any real impact on the town centre, other than of course, provide jobs to boost the local economy.
- 6.130** It is therefore important that the Halesowen Area Action Plan provides a strong framework for the design of future developments in the town centre. This can encompass protecting those areas which are valued and providing guidelines for new development for those areas where change is encouraged.

- 6.131** We think the Halesowen Area Action Plan should provide guidance on which areas should be protected, and which areas could be redeveloped, and what design guidelines should be followed by schemes for redevelopment. Design guidance could address a whole range of matters ranging from the shape of streets, to the height of buildings, to protecting key views and vistas, and to the appearance of new buildings.

Question 60

What factors do you think are important in achieving good design in Halesowen town centre?

What guidance should govern the design of new development on development opportunity sites?

Policy 22

Suggested Policy - Design Quality

Development should:

1. Be of the highest design quality.
2. Include a level of detail which gives the building visual interest for views both near and far.
3. Have ground floors occupied by uses that relate directly to passing pedestrians.
4. Have clear distinctions between public and private space.
5. Be designed such that the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour are reduced through increasing the surveillance from buildings of public spaces and other measures.
6. Reinforce the definition of streets and spaces.
7. Reduce the physical and visual impact of vehicles and service areas.
8. Have a scale and massing which respects its locality or is in accordance with other policies of this Plan.
9. Contribute to gateways and landmarks identified on the 'Views Vistas and Landmarks' plan as appropriate, by reinforcing the identity and character of the routes and spaces they serve.

Question 61

Do you support the above suggested policy? Are there any parts that you would disagree with? Is there anything else you think should be included?

Character and Appearance

- 6.132** Local distinctiveness plays an important role and is a key characteristic of successful places. Distinctiveness is achieved through identifying the predominant land use, character of specific areas within a place and through strengthening overall identity, which can help assist in tailoring future intervention. Halesowen's Town Centre currently includes a range of more or less defined areas of dominant character. These are illustrated in the Character and Appearance Map.
- 6.133** Halesowen varies in character. The redevelopment of the town centre in the 1960s has in many parts maintained the structure of the historic core. However, many buildings are of low quality and lack character. There is an opportunity for the AAP to provide some guidance on what the future character of the area could be, without being too prescriptive, certain character areas could reflect the historic core while others could be more contemporary in style.
- 6.134** To understand what parts of the environment are valued, and what may inspire us in creating new buildings and spaces, it is useful to ask a few fundamental questions about design and appearance in the town centre.

Question 62

What buildings or parts of the town centre are liked, and which are disliked, and for what reasons?

How can the AAP help to improve the character, identity and overall image of the Town Centre to give it a greater sense of place and meaning to the local community and visitors?

Do you agree with the character areas shown in the plan?

Policy 23

Suggested Policy - Character and Appearance

1. All development should include elements of local distinctiveness in terms of street pattern, siting of the building in relation to the street, scale, massing, plot widths, building shapes, architectural style, materials and colour.
2. The choice of which locally distinctive elements are incorporated into the design of a development, and the degree to which they are incorporated, depends upon the location of the proposal, and the function the building serves in the townscape as described by other Policies in this Plan:
 - In the High Street Character Area, developments will incorporate a high degree of locally distinctive elements.
 - Outside of this area, developments have the option of using a smaller choice and degree of locally distinctive elements provided that the overall character of the Town Centre is not prejudiced.
3. Developments can incorporate elements not described as 'locally distinctive' or be of a more contemporary style provided that the overall design of the development does not harm the achievement of a locally distinctive Town Centre.

Question 63

Do you support the above suggested policy? Are there any parts that you would disagree with? Is there anything else you think should be included?

Layout and Form

- 6.135** Design has a crucial role to play in delivering and creating a sense of safety and security. A key issue is that of natural surveillance and the overlooking of streets and spaces in the town centre. Streets which are well overlooked and which have activity in them throughout the day and evening benefit from the presence and surveillance of residents and visitors, which can be demonstrated along the High Street. Making frontages active adds interest, life and vitality to the public realm. Where this is not always possible, new buildings can be animated in other ways to encourage active edges.

- 6.136** The redevelopment of the town during the 1960s began to erode the original historic core and street pattern leaving large undefined areas where monolithic structures now exist, particularly on the edges of the town centre. These buildings are generally unattractive, with inactive edges and poorly overlooked spaces.

Question 64

What public spaces and streets feel unsafe at night and during the day?

Should new buildings/development be encouraged to maximise active frontages along the public realm where frequent doors and windows are provided?

Policy 24

Suggested Policy - Layout and Form

1. All development should require that issues of safety and security are an intrinsic consideration in the detailed design and layout of buildings and the spaces around, helping to deter crime and reduce the fear of crime in the town centre.
2. Whilst supporting the overall design quality policy, all new development will be required to achieve the following:
 - a. Paths and open spaces should be well overlooked by buildings, whilst maintaining privacy for residents;
 - b. A clear distinction between public, private and semi-private spaces;
 - c. The provision and maintenance of adequate lighting;
 - d. The avoidance of dark or secluded areas; and
 - e. Integration into the existing pattern of pedestrian and vehicular movement.

Question 65

Do you support the above suggested policy? Are there any parts that you would disagree with? Is there anything else you think should be included?

Access and Movement

- 6.137** Various types of severance are experienced across the town centre. This has resulted in physical barriers to pedestrian movement and visual/perceived barriers. The latter often reduces the perception of safety and thereby inhibits movement and the accessing of what the other areas have to offer.
- 6.138** The principal types of severance in and around the town centre include, the River Stour, which inhibits access for those living to the east of the town centre, Earls Way, which inhibits access to open space to the north of the town centre and the Highfields Estate, which is unattractive and unsightly and discourages pedestrian movement between Highfields Park to the town centre.

Question 66

What areas of severance exist in and around the town centre where it is difficult for pedestrians to access facilities and services?

Should these areas of severance be addressed and, if so, how?

Policy 25

Suggested Policy - Access and Movement

1. All development should retain and improve all useful, safe and appropriate vehicular and pedestrian routes and provide new ones that make access and movement easier, safer, more attractive and visually varied through and within built up areas.
2. Development should also make sure that:
 - Streets generally link up and layout designed to encourage safer walking, cycling and access to public transport;
 - Direct, convenient and safe access should be provided to new development for pedestrians and cyclists;
 - In new areas of residential development, new streets should be designed so that traffic moves slowly.
3. In addition to this, four new crossing points will be provided to help provide safer and convenient access and movement for pedestrians:
 - a. New Road and Earls Way linking Rumbow to the College;
 - b. Rumbow between Church Lane and Siviter Street;
 - c. Linkage between Birmingham Street and Cobham Road across the River Stour; and
 - d. An at-grade crossing point at Queensway between Great Cornbow and the River Stour

6.139 All development will be required to be designed with ease of access for all users as a prime consideration at the outset. Proposals are required to incorporate an Access Statement that shows how the principles of inclusive design have been integrated.

Question 67

Do you support the above suggested policy? Are there any parts that you would disagree with? Is there anything else you think should be included?

Scale, Height and Massing

6.140 The Council recognises that views and landmarks within Halesowen contribute a variety and interest to the townscape that reinforces its sense of place and give local identity. Inappropriately designed or sited buildings or structures

within particular sight lines of viewing corridors of local views can have a detrimental impact on the quality of the view and amenity it offers to local people.

- 6.141** Legibility is essential to ensuring the town centre is well understood and therefore usable, allowing the resident and the visitor to easily access the choices that are on offer. At present, the Pool Road Car Park, Trinity Point, Mayfair House, the Highfields Estate and impermeable areas across the River Stour provide barriers to pedestrian movement and reduce the quality and image of the town centre.

Question 68

What important landmarks are there in the town centre?

Do you think views and vistas of particular landmarks and buildings in the town centre should be protected? If so, which views could be designated as important viewing corridors?

Policy 26

Suggested Policy - Scale, Height and Massing

1. All development and any proposed alterations to existing buildings should not have an adverse impact on the designated local views and landmarks. Where the opportunity arises, development will be encouraged to create new views, vistas and landmarks in Halesowen.
2. Development should have regard and respect to the following views, vistas and landmarks:

Panoramic Views in/out Halesowen*

- PV1 – From Hagley Road to St. John the Baptist’s Church
- PV2 – From Townsend Roundabout to St. John the Baptist’s Church

Local View

- LV1 – Bull Ring to St. John the Baptist’s Church
- LV2 – Rumbow to St. John the Baptist’s Church

Landmark

- LM1 - St. John the Baptist’s Church

3. Where new development is likely to have an impact on a designated view or landmark, accurate visual representation of changes to the view will be required. Careful consideration will need to be paid to building materials and finishes, skylines and silhouettes.

*Views outside of Halesowen town centre boundary (UDP – 2005)

Question 69

Do you support the above suggested policy? Are there any parts that you would disagree with? Is there anything else you think should be included?

Monitoring Framework

6.142 The suggested policies will need monitoring to ensure that they are being delivered effectively. The suggested indicators for monitoring are as follows:

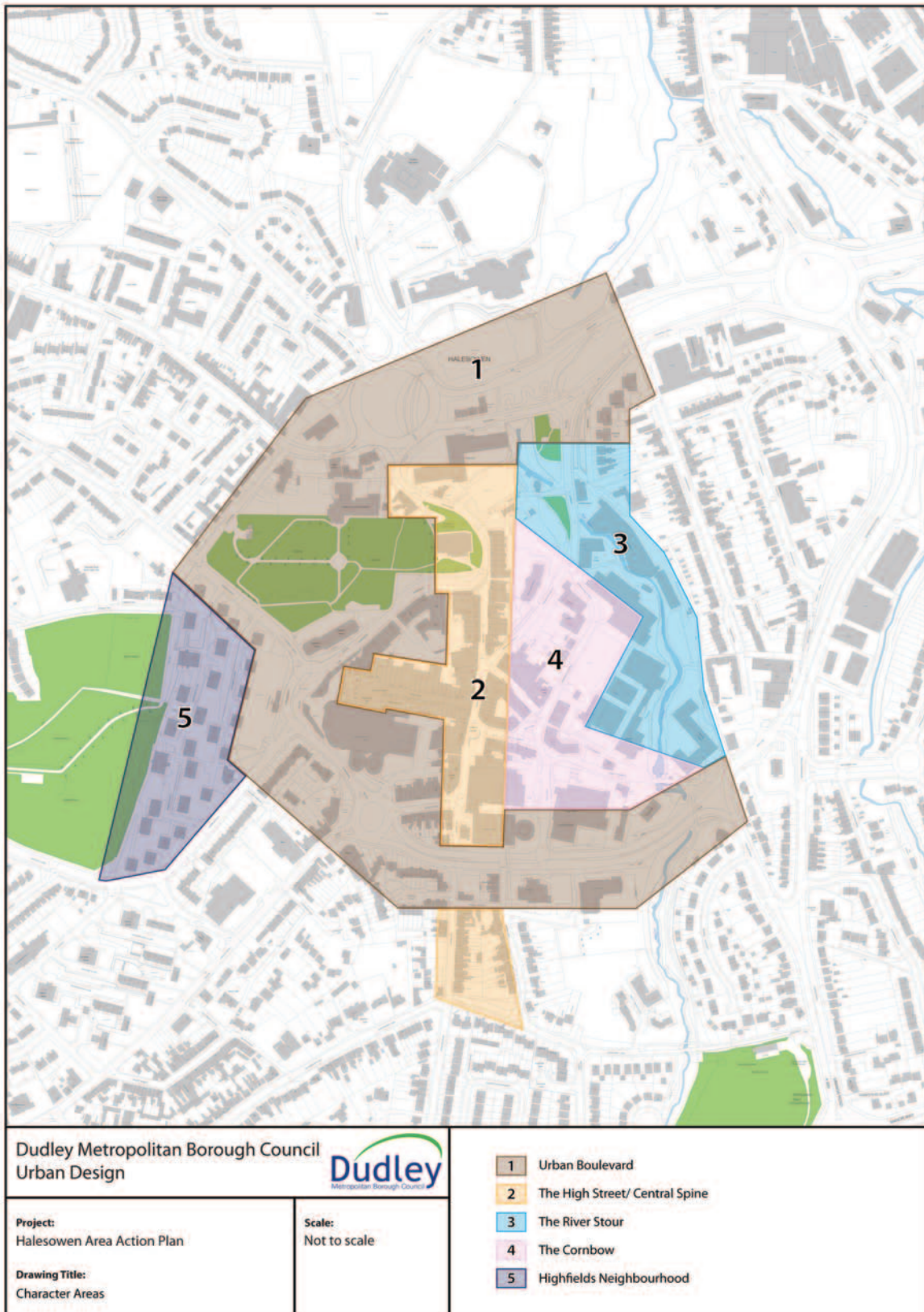
- Percentage of proposals that accord with the development framework resulting from this Halesowen AAP 'Options' consultation stage
- Percentage of proposals meeting the design requirements
- Percentage of proposals that accord with the principles of each character area
- Number of burglary dwelling crimes per thousand households (home office codes 28 and 29)
- Percentage of proposals that accord with the block layout and street layout of the development framework
- Percentage of proposals that accord with the local views viewing corridors (see views, vistas and landmarks map)

Question 70

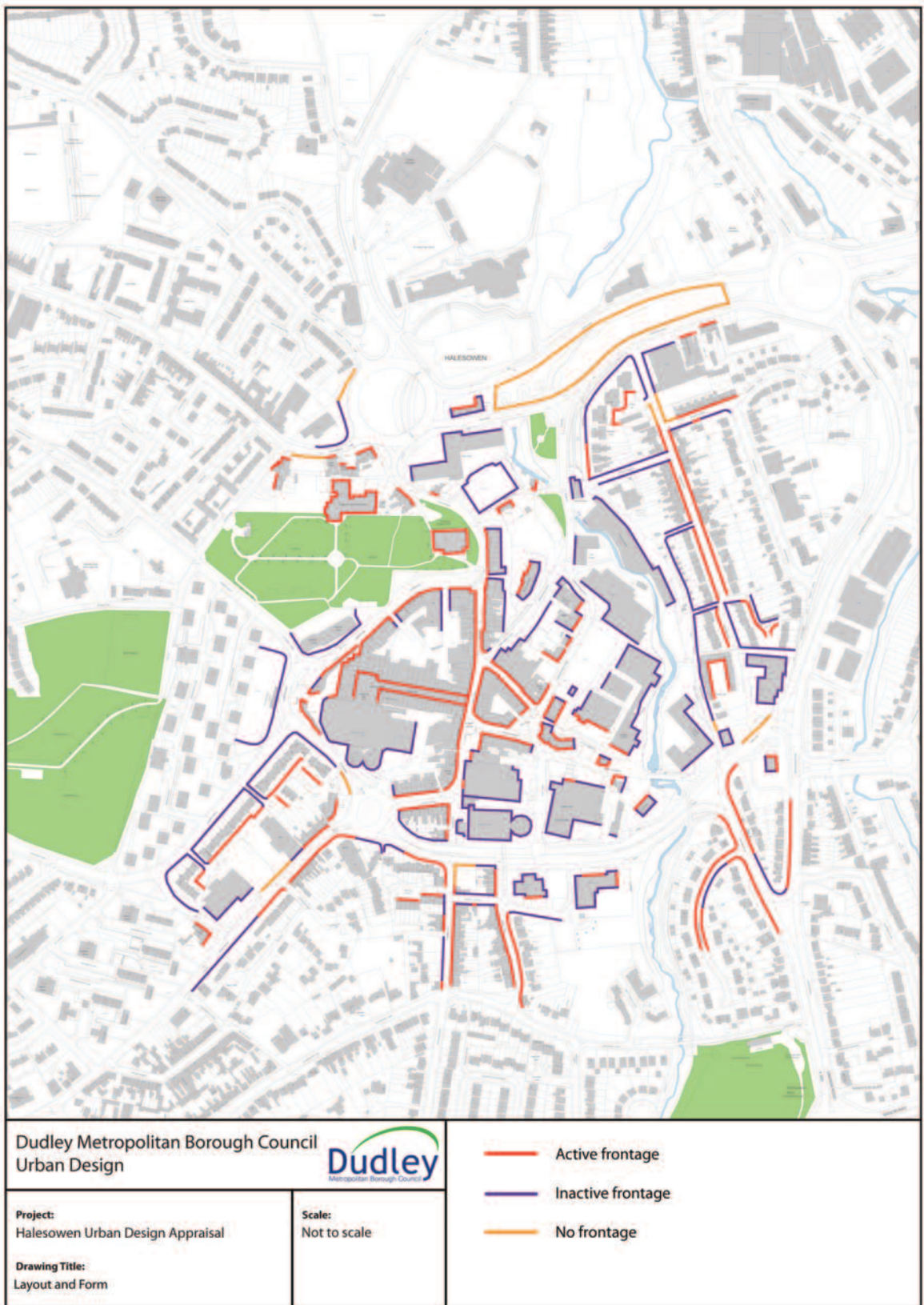
Do you support the above initial suggested monitoring indicators? Is there anything else that you could additionally suggest?



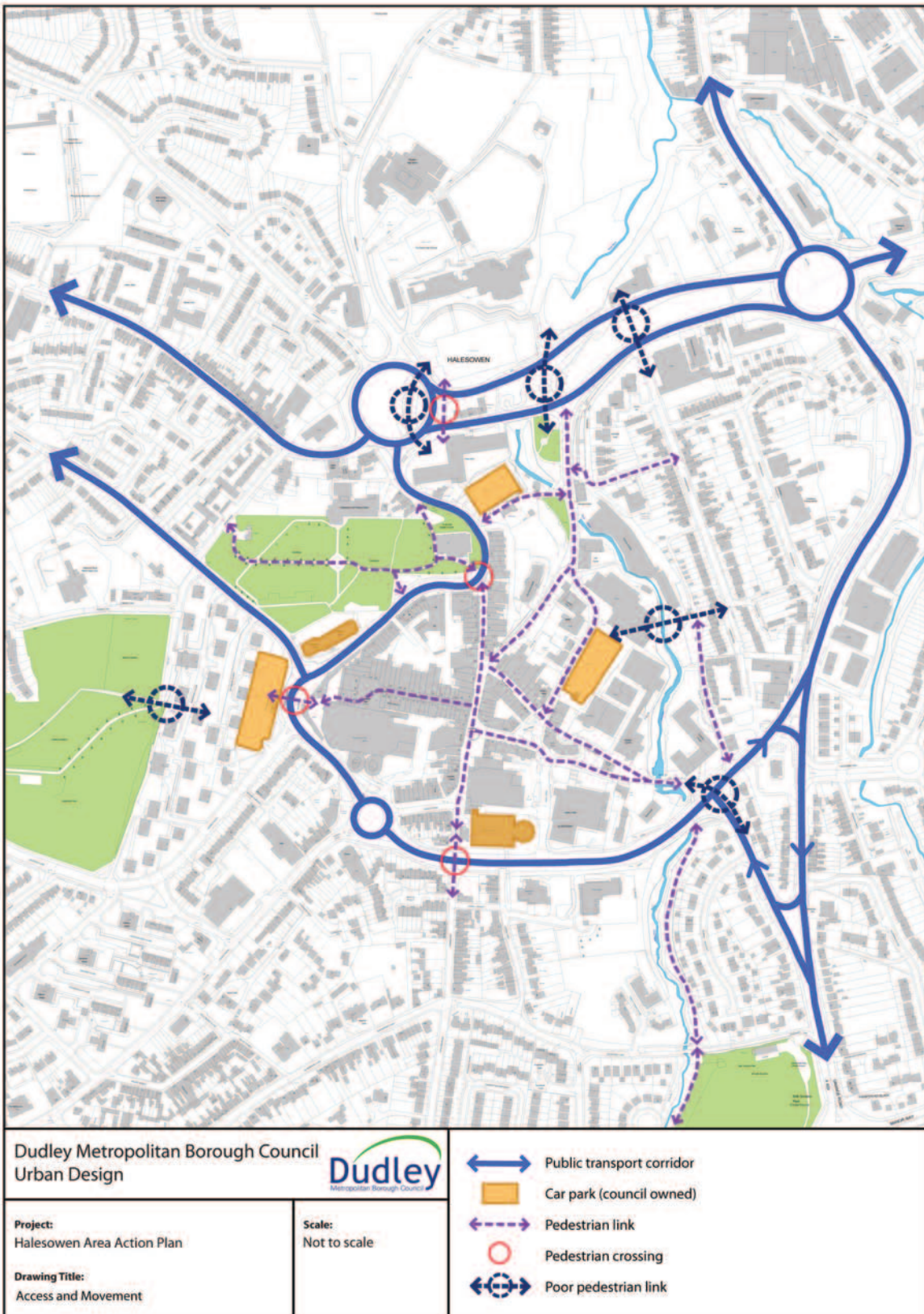
Map 11 Key Issues



Map 12 Urban Design - Character and Appearance



Map 13 Urban Design - Layout and Form



Map 14 Urban Design - Access and Movement



Map 15 Urban Design - Views, Vistas and Landmarks

7 Delivery

- 7.1** The role of this Area Action Plan is to set out how Halesowen Town Centre will grow and change in order to deliver our vision for the area by 2026. The strategy needs to be realistic and deliverable.
- 7.2** To ensure the strategy is robust, the Council are gathering evidence on each proposal in this Area Action Plan to ensure that the sites and infrastructure identified are physically able to be developed, that relevant stakeholders are engaged and supportive, and that the schemes are likely to be financially viable. As this document progresses further details will emerge on:
- Who will be responsible for delivering each aspect of this Area Action Plan (for example, landowners and developers for the Development Opportunity Sites)
 - The timescales for delivery
 - Any specific items of infrastructure to be funded through planning obligations from the various developments (such as new pedestrian links and affordable housing)
- 7.3** The feedback to this consultation will help to provide some of this evidence and identify any proposals which are not realistic and should therefore be removed from this Area Action Plan.
- 7.4** The policies to be set out in this Area Action Plan will be implemented by numerous mechanisms. It is expected that these will necessarily change and evolve over time. Indeed, delivery of these proposals will in many cases demand a multi-faceted approach and the commitment of a wide range of different organisations.
- 7.5** Investment will be required, primarily from the private sector into the identified Development Opportunity Sites. However, public sector investment can play an important complementary role, for example, through housing renewal activity or by enhancing the public realm and making the Town Centre more attractive to investors.

Planning Obligations

- 7.6** The Council seek planning obligations from developers and landowners to fund the infrastructure, services and public facilities that are needed to cope with the additional demands brought on by the new development and mitigate any harmful effects.
- 7.7** At this point in time, planning obligations are sought in accordance with the adopted Dudley MBC Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2009). This Area Action Plan will seek to identify the specific additional infrastructure projects that development in Halesowen will

need to fund that supplement the requirements already established in the SPD. This 'shopping list' will allow for the development of an effective infrastructure planning and delivery regime and any contributions strategy that the Council employs in delivering this Area Action Plan.

Monitoring

- 7.8** The Area Action Plan will contain a monitoring framework. This will measure delivery of the proposals against the specified time-scales and will assess the effectiveness of the policies against specified targets. This monitoring framework will be developed as this Area Action Plan progresses but suggested monitoring indicators are included in the previous sections for your consideration.

Question 71

Do you agree with the monitoring indicators suggested throughout this document? If not, why not? Are there any other indicators you believe should be monitored?