01 Introduction

The Solihull Town Centre Masterplan aims to provide a blueprint for future investment and development which maximises the opportunities for Solihull, capitalises on its existing assets, and sets out a clear vision for Solihull 2036; as a vibrant, sustainable, aspirational and diverse 21st century town.

Solihull is already a successful and popular town, and has consistently been named as one of the best places to live within the United Kingdom. With its excellent shopping, cultural facilities, employment opportunities with about 15,000 jobs currently and attractive setting, Solihull has a lot to offer to residents, businesses and visitors.

UK Central is a prime investment location, which is the West Midland's principal economic gateway and strongest performing economy, centred around Solihull. Incorporating the town centre, Birmingham Airport, Jaguar Land Rover and the National Exhibition Centre. UK Central is also the site of the West Midland's proposed new High Speed Rail Interchange. In June 2013, Solihull Council, the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership, and Arup published the UK Central Masterplan, showcasing the development potential of the area up to 2040. The masterplan outlines how bold measures need to be taken to capitalise on the potential of the already successful gateway site. It is predicted that UK Central could create an additional 100.000 jobs with a town centre range of 4 to 16,000 jobs, and increase the region's revenue up to £19.5 billion annually by 2040.

It provides significant opportunities to maintain and enhance Solihull's existing economic base on a scale of national significance; positioning the town as part of the engine room of the West Midlands. In order to ensure managed growth and the retention of the character which makes Solihull so popular, the Masterplan will provide a framework for future development, which aims to

balance the sometimes conflicting needs for growth and infrastructure investment with quality of place.

1.1 Purpose of this document

This document presents AECOMs analysis and emerging masterplanning approach to the Solihull Town Centre Masterplan, which builds upon previous visioning work, established through the Town Centre Study (GVA Grimley, 2009) and draws together the emerging principles from the Solihull Town Centre Access and Movement Study.

The work in this report has been underpinned by Cushman and Wakefield's analysis of the market, which reviews the current and potential office, retail, leisure and residential markets within Solihull Town Centre, and has helped to inform the emerging strategy. Figure 1.1 provides a diagrammatic explanation of these separate workstreams and inter-relationships.

1.2 Extent of the Study

The study area (figure 1.2) covers the immediate town centre which is bounded by the B4102 Warwick Road to the north, the railway line to the south, Church Hill Road / New Road to the east and Solihull Train Station and Lode Lane to the west. This area encompasses Solihull's retail and commercial core.

In addition, two further areas of influence have been identified, one to the north and one to the south. The northern area of influence, beyond the B4102 includes Solihull Hospital, Solihull School and a number of existing commercial buildings. The area to the south includes Tudor Grange Park and Solihull College. These areas, whilst not forming part of the town centre core, are important components of the town and it is important that the masterplan ensures that these important assets are integrated and well connected with the town centre.

Existing Visioning Work

- Town Centre Study (GVA Grimley, 2009)
- Draft Public Realm Framework (Phil Jones Associates, 2014)
- Solihull Connected Green Paper (SMBC, July 2015)
- Connecting Solihull now Solihull Connected Opportunities and Constraints Report (SMBC, March 2015)
- Solihull Connected Technical Notes: Solihull TC Public Transport, Solihull TC Active Travel, Solihull Town Centre Parking Note
- Solihull Town Centre Car Park Modelling
- Draft Solihull Town Centre Public Realm Strategy (February 2014)
- High Speed Rail 2 Growth Strategy
- Solihull Local Plan
- **GVA Grimley Studies**
- M42 Masterplan
- West Midlands Movement for Growth and Midlands Connect

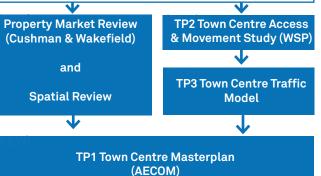


Fig 1.1 Diagram illustrating the separate work streams and interrelationships



Fig 1.2 Extent of the Solihull Town Centre Masterplan Study Area and associated Area of Influence.

02 Planning Policy Review

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

In relation to design, the National Planning Policy Framework attaches importance to good design, so that it is indivisible from good planning, and shoul contribute positively to making places better for purpositive positively to making places better for planning Policy Framework attaches importance to good design, so that it is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for planning Policy Framework attaches importance to good design, so that it is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for planning Policy Framework attaches importance to good design, so that it is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for planning Policy Framework attaches importance to good design, so that it is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for planning Policy Framework attaches importance to good design, so that it is indivisible from good planning places better for planning Policy Framework attaches importance to good design, so that it is indivisible from good planning places better for planning Policy Framework attaches importance to good design, so that it is indivisible from good planning places better for planning Policy Framework attaches importance to good design, so that it is indivisible from good planning Policy Framework attaches importance to good design, so that it is indivisible from good planning Policy Framework attaches importance to good design, so that it is indivisible from good planning Policy Framework attaches importance to good design, so that it is indivisible from good planning Policy Framework a

2.1 National Planning Policy

2.1.1 National Planning Policy Framework

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

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

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

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

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

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

In relation to community engagement, the document states that early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential. A wide section of the community should be

proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area.

2.2 Local Planning Policy

2.2.1 Solihull Local Plan

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

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

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

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

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

Policy P2 (Town Centres) states that town centres will be the focus for all new developments including retail and other commercial development. Solihull Town Centre will be developed and sustained as a place of quality and distinction and be the principal focus of commercial activity and public transport. It will be shaped and managed to ensure continued economic growth and success. The

character and quality of the town will be enhanced through the promotion and careful control of new development which is sensitive to its context but adds a new dimension to interest, activity and economic success.

The document provides a Town Centre map which establishes:

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

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

- 5. About 34,000 sqm of additional comparison retail floorspace by 2021; a further 23,000 sqm 2021 to 2026; and an additional 2,800 sqm of convenience retail floorspace top 2026.
- 6. Up to an additional 35,000 sqm of new office floorspace
- 7. Residential development, both on freestanding sites and as part of mixed use development or refurbishment

schemes, will be encouraged in and around the town centre. Large scale sites additional to the Opportunity Sites will include:

- a. Monkspath Hall Road
- b. Station Approach

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.2.2 Solihull Local Plan Review

In July 2015 the Council resolved to undertake a review of its local plan for 3 reasons. Firstly, the successful legal challenge to the Local Plan 2013 post adoption means that the Plan has no overall housing requirement for the Plan period, making it difficult to demonstrate that the Borough has a five-year housing land supply. Secondly, the examination of the Birmingham Development Plan has made clear that the City Council is unable to meet its own housing need within its boundaries, and that the shortfall will have to be met elsewhere within the Housing Market Area (or other nearby areas) such as Solihull. Finally, the UK Central Masterplan and Prospectus for a 'Garden City' approach to the High Speed 2 Interchange have set out the Council's ambitions for this part of the Borough. The Proposed Local Area Plan for the High Speed 2 Interchange and Adjoining Area highlighted the need to review the Green Belt boundary to enable the Interchange Area to be allocated for development, and the full potential of the High Speed 2 project to be realised.

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

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

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

2.2.3 Solihull Connected Green Paper June 2015

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

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

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

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

The transport needs are set out in the document, highlighting the recent announcements on the Solihull Gateway Bus Interchange, SPRINT Corridor and High Speed Rail 2

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

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

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

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

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

2.2.4 Solihull Connected Transport Strategy (June 2016)

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

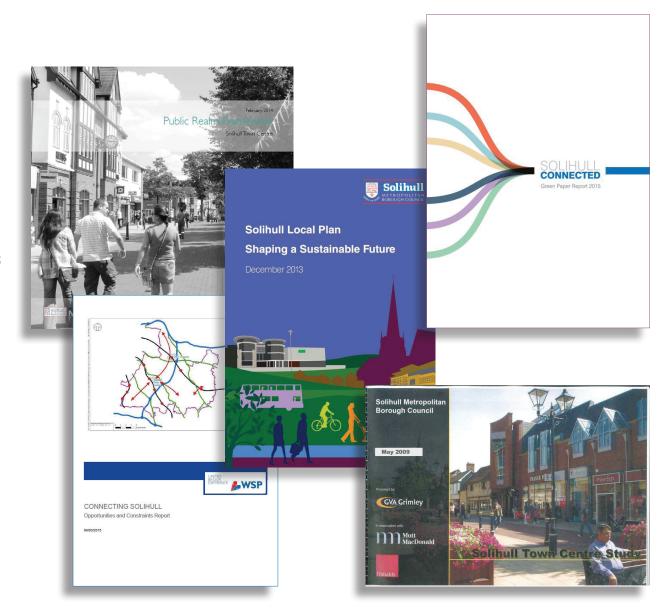
The strategy sets out the following key objectives:

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

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

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

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



2.3 Other Relevant Documents

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

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

2.3.2 M42 Economic Gateway Masterplan Report

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

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

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

2.3.3 Connecting Solihull Opportunities and Constraints Report

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

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

2.3.4 Solihull Transport Strategy – Town Centre Public Transport Assessment

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

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

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

2.3.5 Solihull Station Masterplan

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

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

2.3.6 Solihull Town Centre Public Realm Framework

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

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

2.3.7 Urban Characterisation Study

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

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

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

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

This document recognises the need for the town centre to move towards more sustainable transport modes and undertake a shift away from private car use. The document

touches upon the issues of road capacity in the town centre and the benefits of moving the rail and bus stations closer to the centres of activity.

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

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

2.3.11 Solihull Connected Town Centre Active Travel Assessment

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

2.3.12 Solihull Town Centre Study

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

2.4 Strategic Planning History

Headline strategic planning milestone developments in the town centre include:

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

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

2.5 Relevance to Solihull Town Centre Masterplan

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

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



