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Crewe Town Centre
Regeneration Delivery Framework for Growth
Draft Final Report

Prepared on behalf of

Cheshire East Council

4 March 2015

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Quality Assurance Record	
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Disclaimer

Executive Summary

Crewe is the 'Gateway to the North West' and enjoys a range of advantages including:

- A strategic connection by road (M6) and rail (West Coast Mainline) to the rest of the Country. Its unique 360 degree connectivity has been recognised by the recent proposal that it will be the North West Gateway Hub for HS2
- An excellent reputation as a "place to do business", demonstrated by its strong business base - home to in the region of 5,000 businesses (with around 60,000 work-based employees)
- A renowned Higher/Further Education presence which will be enhanced thorough the opening of the University Technical College in Crewe Town Centre in 2016
- An affluent catchment area.

However, Crewe Town Centre does suffer from a number of constraints including; perception, key gateways to the town are dominated by car parks, movement through the Town by foot in places is along poor quality corridors with vacant or underutilised buildings and, of most significance, challenging retail and leisure markets both nationally and locally (including pressure from out of town locations and other major retail and leisure destinations in the North West which are easy to access because of Crewe's excellent road and rail network).

The Town Centre core has great potential as a destination which is not being harnessed currently. The retail core comprises a number of smaller retail units surrounded by larger units on the edge. The larger format units are served by a ring of car parks and the links between these areas is in many cases poor quality or limited which discourages linked trips and reduces dwell times. Although located close to the Town Centre, the Grand Junction Retail Park, whilst attracting a range of national retailers, generates high visitor numbers at peak times creating congestion at a key gateway to the Town Centre. Whilst technically within what is geographically recognised as the Town Centre, the Phoenix Leisure Park is very poorly connected to the core of the Town and is perceived as being 'out of town', with an otherwise limited leisure offer at present. The key gateways are in many cases, dominated by car parking and fail to showcase what the Town has to offer.

The development industry is finally starting to emerge from its very deep recession. However, the retail sector has been hit very badly by the economic downturn and the retail landscape has fundamentally changed in response to shifting socio-demographic and market trends, including the growth of car based out of town shopping and online retailing. As a result, retail investment is focusing on prime locations within major city centres and retail destinations whilst many smaller district and sub regional centres, such as Crewe, have witnessed increasing vacancy rates. Crewe Town Centre must therefore establish a new role for itself that is less focused on retail and broadened out to include an enhanced leisure and cultural offer and a better choice of residential accommodation within walking distance of the Town. As developer interest starts to improve, especially as the opportunities offered by HS2 are realised, Crewe needs a strong framework which will showcase the Town's development sites and a programme of actions to overcome its constraints. It is anticipated that the house builders, in particular will take a fresh look at the Town and recognise its potential as an accessible and affordable location within the strong Cheshire residential market following further HS2 announcements.

In response Cheshire East Council has prepared a Regeneration Delivery Framework to set a route map to support the transformation of Crewe Town Centre. The Framework sets out an Action Plan to support the economic prosperity of Crewe Town Centre, establish a framework for the potential acquisition and intervention by Cheshire East Council in respect of a number of opportunity sites and to inform the emerging planning policy of Crewe Town Centre to feed into the Local Plan process. This Framework does not replace or supersede statutory development plans which have or are being prepared by Cheshire East Council. It seeks to stimulate public and private investment to maximise the benefits for the Town.

The **Vision** of the Regeneration Delivery Framework is as follows:

Capitalising on investment proposals such as the planned Lifestyle Centre and the University Technical College and proposed HS2 North West Gateway Hub Station and the Town's growing population, to re-establish Crewe Town Centre as *the* vibrant and attractive "Hub" offering a strong range of retail, leisure, employment and residential opportunities serving local businesses, shoppers, residents, students, visitors and rail passengers.

This Vision will be supported by the following **objectives**:

- To stimulate new investment in the Town Centre including retail, leisure, residential and business by bringing vacant sites back into use, intensifying the use of underperforming sites and utilising Cheshire East Council's assets
- To increase the number of Town Centre users, their dwell time and spend
- To diversify the housing stock in and around Crewe Town Centre and to increase the catchment of the Town Centre
- To make it easier to get into and around the Town Centre by foot, bicycle, bus and car
- To improve the quality and amount of the public space (including green space) and public realm (including green infrastructure) that links key spaces, buildings and the town's heritage and cultural offer in the Town Centre and to the Railway Station/proposed HS2 North West Gateway Hub
- To transform perceptions of Crewe Town Centre
- To provide sustainable development and design and support the Council's renewable energy agenda.

The Regeneration Delivery Framework comprises four **priority themes**:

- **Investment in Opportunity Sites** - Too much of Crewe Town Centre is either vacant (buildings and sites), underutilised or dominated by surface car parks. Cheshire East Council owns a number of sites within the Town and is committed to using these to stimulate private sector investment to attract new users and uses to the Town Centre

- **Improving access by all modes of movement into and within the Town Centre** to make it easier to get into and around the Town Centre by foot, bicycle, bus, car and potentially rapid transit link. The Framework will build on the current improvements already being delivered by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund programme and seek to attract additional resources to further influence travel behaviour and promote more sustainable forms of travel in and around Crewe to reduce congestion and encourage visitors to explore what the Town has to offer

- **Improvements to the public realm** - Currently there are only a few examples in the Town Centre of high quality public realm. Careful thought needs to be given when development sites are brought forward to ensure that the public realm between these sites and the Town's existing offer is enhanced to support the principles of the Framework. The priority needs to be given to key gateways and routes/corridors. This builds upon the commitment to greening the Town set out in the Green Infrastructure Action Plan for Crewe

- **Town Centre First** approach will remain with an emphasis on supporting mixed use investment in the designated Town Centre. This will seek to enhance vibrancy, increase visitor/consumer footfall and spend and deter any proposals that could undermine this. Until the Core Strategy is in place, the Regeneration Delivery Framework will be used to support the determination of planning applications setting new expectations for Crewe - poor quality and ill thought-out schemes will not be acceptable as the Council strives to ensure the delivery of higher quality buildings and public realm.

The Opportunity Sites

The Framework has identified 14 opportunity sites and advocates the following approach to supporting investment in and around them.

Types of Interventions	Sites
Priority sites where the Council should consider taking a direct role to deliver the regeneration priorities of the Town Centre	Royal Arcade and Adjoining Land
Other sites in the Council's ownership where the Council should work with the private sector to support development in accordance with the principles of the Regeneration Delivery Framework	Wrexham Terrace Car Park Civic and Cultural Quarter Lyceum Square/Market Shopping Centre Phoenix Leisure Park Oak Street Car Park and High Street The former Victoria High School Site Chester Street Car Parks
Sites to be brought forward by the private sector/existing landowners	Victoria Centre/Asda Vernon Way Retail Park Mill Street Macon Way
Sites with limited development opportunities where improved linkages to Town Centre should be supported	Grand Junction Retail Park Nantwich Road

The Framework also sets out a series of site specific and overarching actions to respond to it objectives and support the realisation of its Future Vision under each of the Themes. In the **short term** the **priority actions** will be to driven by Cheshire East Council and will include:

- Undertaking a series of feasibility studies including: assessment of options for the bus interchange, and Car Parking Strategy (to determine which existing car park sites could be surplus to requirements)

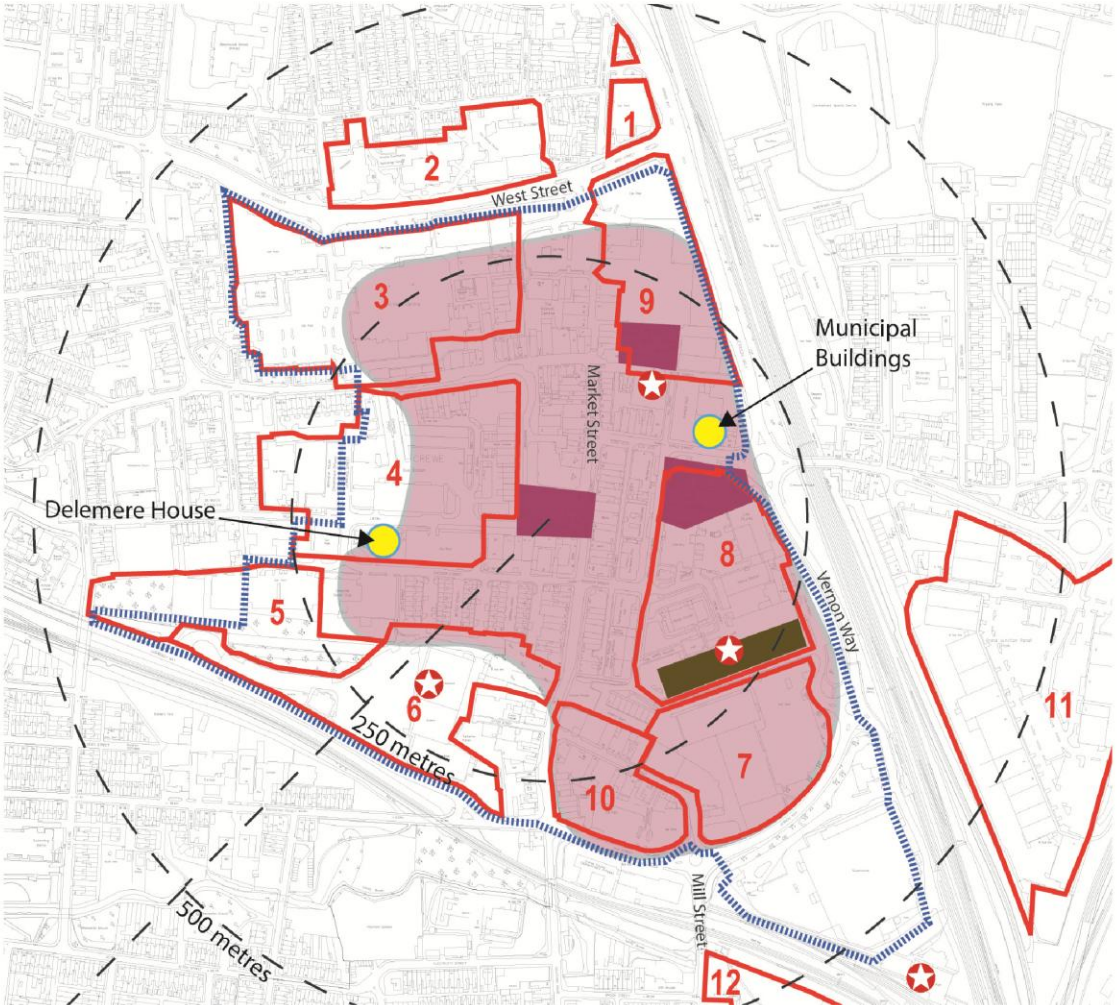
- Establishing a framework which will support the emerging planning policy to enhance and protect Crewe Town Centre
- Undertaking strategic acquisitions to ensure sufficient attractive sites are available to attract retail and leisure investment
- Driving forward the recommended actions and support the delivery of the opportunity sites including engaging with landowners, developers and potential retail/leisure occupiers
- Establishing appropriate governance and delivery structures to support the delivery of the Regeneration Delivery Framework
- Establishing appropriate resources to support the implementation of the Regeneration Delivery Framework. This will include seeking to link benefits to be invested back into the locality, fronting bids for funding and lobbying Central Government
- Lobbying on behalf of Crewe Town Centre to ensure that its profile is raised within the business community, Cheshire & Warrington Enterprise Partnership, North West and nationally and it is able to tap into opportunities to support economic development
- Engaging with local businesses, residents and potential investors to share how the transformation of Crewe Town Centre will be delivered
- Ensuring strong links are established between the Regeneration Delivery Framework and potential larger-scale delivery strategies, specifically High Growth City.

In the short term the expectation is that the public sector will need to drive change in Crewe. Cheshire East Council is committed to stimulating future retail and leisure investment and in order to do this it will use its existing land assets to leverage private sector investment from existing and new owners and it will undertake strategic acquisitions to ensure that appropriate sites are available to attract private sector investment in retail and leisure. Cheshire East Council will also continue to seek funding from a range of sources including Central Government, the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, as well as using its own resources and assets to support further improvements to accessibility and a programme of public realm improvements including greening the Town.

The Framework will be considered to be successful when new jobs are created, further private sector investment is made, more new homes are delivered and new retail and leisure operators are attracted to the Town, new business are established in the Town Centre (and they are networking with existing businesses) and there are many more positive headlines about Crewe.

Crewe Town Centre Regeneration Delivery

Town Centre and Key Opportunity Sites



Key

- Opportunity Site Boundary
- Proposed Town Centre Boundary
- Lifestyle Centre
- Cultural Assets
- Public Squares
- Pedestrian Zone
- Existing Landmark Building

Opportunity sites

1. Wrexham Terrace Car Park
2. Former Victoria High School
3. Victoria Centre / Asda
4. Royal Arcade and adjoining land
5. Chester Street Car Parks
6. Phoenix Leisure Park
7. Vernon Way Retail Park and adjoining land
8. Civic and Cultural Quarter (South)
9. Lyceum Square / Market Shopping Centre
10. High Street and Oak Street Car Parks
11. Grand Junction
12. Mill Street

1.0 Crewe: A High Growth City

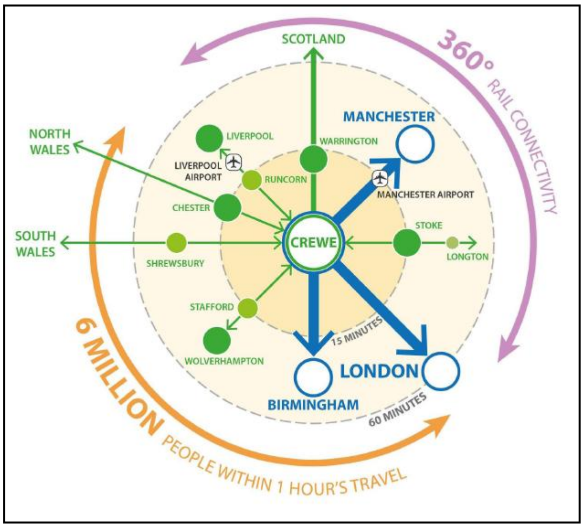
1.1 This section showcases Crewe's assets whilst highlighting the constraints that it must overcome if the Town Centre is to thrive.

Crewe's Economic Assets

Strategic Location

1.2 Crewe is located in the Borough of Cheshire East in North West England. Its rail station first opened in 1837 and to this day Crewe benefits from being strategically located on the road and rail network. The Town has a strong engineering heritage. It is often referred to as the 'Gateway to the North West', as outlined below:

- **Road** - the M6 (junctions 16 and 17) lies 5 miles from Crewe Town Centre providing good links to Birmingham to the south and Manchester and Liverpool to the north. Crewe's pivotal position between the north and south of the Country on the M6 appeals to distributors from retail and manufacturing. It is estimated that up to 5 million people reside within a 1 hour drive of Crewe. Manchester Airport and Birmingham International lie 19 miles and 53 miles away respectively



- **Rail** - the town offers exceptional rail links to multiple destinations and Crewe Rail Station is a key hub in the North West rail network for England, Wales and Scotland. There are 40 trains a day between Crewe and London, running up to 4 times an hour with a fastest journey time of 1 hour 36 minutes. In addition, direct trains run to Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Chester and Liverpool

- **High Speed Rail (HS2)** - Crewe's unique 360 degree connectivity has been recognised as an asset for HS2. Sir David Higgins report "Rebalancing Britain" recommends that the proposed North West hub for HS2 *"should be at Crewe because that is the best way to serve not just the local region, but also provide services into the rest of the North West, North Wales and Merseyside"*. He has also advocated extending the first phase to Crewe by 2027 instead of 2033. If endorsed by Government, Crewe will be exceptionally well-placed to deliver and benefit from major economic growth over the next 20 years and beyond. It is estimated that the North West Gateway Hub could deliver 64,000 jobs and £3.5bn GVA p.a. in the region. Plans are based upon investing in a new North West Gateway Hub station just to the south of the existing station, which will provide direct connectivity between HS2 and existing rail services to Crewe, alongside a rapid transit link to the current station location and the Town Centre, providing the conditions for capturing major growth for the whole of Crewe.

Competitive Business Base

1.3 Crewe has an excellent reputation as a “place to do business”, demonstrated by its strong business base. Crewe is home to in the region of 5,000 businesses (with around 60,000 work-based employees) which include concentrations of professional services, distribution and logistics, and advanced engineering built on its rich rail and car manufacturing heritage. Major employers in the town include Bentley Motors (current HQ c.3600 staff), Morning Foods, Network Rail, Virgin Rail and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) Cheshire Campus. Bentley Motors’ headquarters in Crewe is home to all of its operations including design, R&D, engineering and production of the company’s three model lines. It has recently announced that it is to manufacture its latest model, the Mulsanne Speed, in Crewe. This is in addition to its plans to manufacture its first ever SUV at the same plant from 2015, which represents a £800m investment from the VW Group, which will generate at least 1,000 new jobs.

1.4 From a business investment perspective, as well as having a broad business base with a number of major employers, Crewe is also able to offer a range of available and relatively affordable employment sites which could accommodate significant inward investment opportunities.

1.5 Tourism has a vital role to play in the continuing economic success and development of both Cheshire East and the North West region as a whole. It remains one of the fastest growing areas of the Cheshire East Economy and is worth £650 million to the local area.

Strong Local Leadership with Clear Growth Strategies - ‘High Growth City for Crewe’

1.6 Cheshire East Council recognises the strategic growth potential of Crewe and is promoting it as a ‘High Growth City’. This builds upon work undertaken by the Council in developing the ‘All Change for Crewe’ vision and growth strategy. The strategy recognises the critical role within the Cheshire & Warrington sub-region that Crewe currently plays as well as its future growth potential. The ambition for Crewe is for it to be a ‘nationally significant economic centre by 2030’. The ‘All Change for Crewe’ vision recognises the potential that the town has in terms of its strategic connectivity and strengths in advanced automotive and rail engineering amongst others. It refers to forthcoming investments relating to Bentley Motors, the recently confirmed UTC and also the proposals for an HS2 North West Gateway Hub in Crewe.

1.7 The Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) launched its 10 year Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) in March 2014. The LEP is backed by private sector businesses as well as local authorities across Cheshire and Warrington. The SEP refers to plans for a “High Growth City for Crewe” as one of its three key intervention priorities, largely reflecting its strategic importance with the proposed HS2 North West Gateway Hub. The SEP identifies four key elements that comprise the ‘High Growth City’ opportunity:

- Significant land for growth - both homes and employment
- Strong technological and human capital base with some of the UK’s leading businesses
- A constellation of towns that strongly interact as a single integrated market area - with strong individual identities and strong interrelationships (e.g. Crewe, Northwich, Alsager)
- Connectivity through its transportation infrastructure - which the North West Gateway Hub and M6 Smart Motorway will reinforce.

1.8 Following submission of the SEP to Government, the LEP has been awarded £142.7m in funding from the Government's £2bn Local Growth Fund. £20.1m has been confirmed in the first year, and as part of the Government's ongoing commitment to the LEP, there will be a further £122.6m of funding from 2016/17 onwards. As one of three principal investment priorities for the LEP, there is therefore recognition at all levels of the economic growth potential of Crewe. The direct reference to the proposals for a 'High Growth City' within the SEP is an indication of the commitment of partners across the sub-region and beyond to support future economic growth and investment in Crewe as a key driver of the wider North West and national economies.

1.9 Crewe is also home to the Crewe Business Park, widely regarded as the country's first 'green business park'. It was one of the first business parks in the UK to receive the prestigious Millennium Marque Award for environmental excellence. This 67 acre regional employment site is home to companies such as Busch GVT, Fujitsu and Air Products.

1.10 Significant investments have already been secured in relation to wider linked connectivity improvements including an investment of £27m secured to deliver the Crewe Green Link Road (South) scheme and £11.5m is also being invested into the Basford West Spine Road, improvements and widening of the A500 and enhanced junctions at both J16 and J17 of the M6. This is in addition to a £6m investment to enhance Crewe Railway Station delivered in 2014.

Renowned Higher/Further Education Presence

1.11 Crewe is home to MMU's Cheshire Campus, which is located on the edge of the Town Centre. Manchester Metropolitan University is one the largest campus-based undergraduate universities in the UK with a total student population of more than 37,000. There are c.4,000 students on its Cheshire Campus and the University is seeking to increase this to c.5,000 over the next five years. The Campus is renowned for the excellence of its educational, performance and sporting programmes. MMU has recently been through a process of consolidating its physical campuses so that it now operates only from its site in Manchester City Centre and its Cheshire Campus in Crewe, reflecting the importance of the latter. MMU has invested in excess of £350m over the past 10 years in its estate and is now developing plans for a new £200m+ capital investment programme. In 2010, it opened a new £10m Exercise and Sport Science Facility on its Cheshire Campus and this followed on from a £6m investment in a new Contemporary Arts Centre in 2009.

1.12 The University views the 'offer' and perception of Crewe Town Centre as being critical to the recruitment of staff and students and considers there to be a distinct lack of cultural/leisure/evening economy facilities in the town. Students use the current offer available along Nantwich Road, particularly in the evening, but a large proportion also travel to locations such as Stoke and Manchester. Enhancing the overall offer of Crewe Town Centre is therefore key to promoting the ongoing success of the Cheshire Campus, which is also seeking to develop its own complementary cultural and evening economy offer on campus.

1.13 The University is progressing investment plans, largely focused on on-campus developments. However, it is seeking to be increasingly outward facing, with a focus on the development of partnerships and external engagement. It is currently developing a HEFCE 'catalyst' programme funding bid in partnership with Cheshire East Council (CEC) and the Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (C&W LEP) for some form of skills/employment facility in Crewe and the location options for this are being discussed - clearly a Town Centre location would deliver significant benefits for Crewe as a whole.

1.14 Crewe is also home to South Cheshire College, one of the leading Further Education and sixth form colleges nationally. The College is located on a single campus about 1.5 miles from Crewe Town Centre and was comprehensively redeveloped in 2010 at a cost of over £70m. It has consistently received 'outstanding' awards from OFSTED and in 2014, the College announced its best ever set of vocational and A-Level results, with a 99.7% pass rate for A-Levels. Reaseheath College is also located within close proximity of Crewe, on the edge of Nantwich. It is an FE College which also offers HE courses and adult learning, with a particular focus on land-based subject areas.

Current and Pipeline Investment

1.15 Cheshire East Council recognises the importance of encouraging more footfall in the Town Centre to support investment by the private sector and has committed to directing new opportunities they are investing in into the Town Centre. For example:

- £15m Council investment to create Crewe Lifestyle Centre in the Town Centre is under construction. This will incorporate an eight-lane 25-metre swimming pool, a large teaching pool, sports courts, state-of-the-art fitness suites, library, cafe, multi-use hall, family support services, workspace and a specialist adult day care facility. This is due to open in 2016

- Crewe has been successful in securing its ambitions for a University Technical College (UTC) in the town centre. This is due to open in September 2016 and will cater for circa 800 14-19-year-olds seeking to pursue careers in engineering and high skill manufacturing, working closely with major local employers. The UTC scheme is a partnership between Cheshire East Council, Bentley Motors, Manchester Metropolitan University, Siemens, Bosch, OSL Rail, Jacobs Engineering, Chevron Racing, Optical 3D and South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce. This will provide a major boost to the educational offer of the town and wider area and will serve as a potential catalyst to further investment. The exact location of this has yet to be confirmed although partners and the Education Funding Agency's preferred site is at the Former Victoria High School Site off West St.

Affluent Catchment Area

1.16 Improving the residential offer within the Town Centre will help to attract and retain economically active residents and support a revitalised Town Centre through the generation of spend and longer dwell time.

1.17 The total population within Crewe's primary catchment area is 171,000 people with an estimated 'Greater Crewe' resident population of 83,000 people which is projected to increase to around 100,000 by 2031, representing a significant increase of 20%[1] and presenting a number of opportunities for economic growth.

1.18 Whilst the area around the Town Centre faces a number of socio-economic challenges, the Crewe area as a whole performs well on a number of socio-economic indicators, including a significant over-representation of working age adults categorised within the most affluent 'AB' social group (which includes those in managerial and professional occupations). This is further demonstrated by the industry standard 'PMA Affluence Indicator' which classes the Crewe catchment population as moderately affluent, ranking 59 out of a total of 200 centres across the UK based on a comparative assessment of a variety of income and lifestyle indicators. The CACI ACORN group profile also reveals that Crewe has an above average proportion of Wealthy Executives, Affluent Greys, Flourishing Families, Settled Suburbia and Blue Collar Roots socio-economic groups.

1.19 As a 'Principal' Town, the largest town in Cheshire East and the primary shopping centre in the south of the Borough there are a number of strategic opportunities for Crewe. Not least the opportunity to capitalise upon the demographics and relative affluence of its hinterland. Cheshire East as a whole is a prosperous sub-regional economy with some of the highest residential property prices and income per capita across the North West region. Neighbouring settlements, including the towns of Nantwich and Sandbach, have contrasting socio-economic characteristics yet are within close proximity of Crewe.

1.20 However, Crewe is underperforming as a Principal Town despite its positioning within a local economy which is surrounded by a large and relatively affluent catchment area. Its challenge is to address the current 'doughnut' effect that is prevalent through capitalising upon its economic assets and its sub-regional focus/importance to drive increased footfall, visits and expenditure from residents living in relatively affluent neighbouring areas.

The Constraints

1.21 Despite a number of assets and recent investments, Crewe continues to face a series of challenges:

- Perceptions of Crewe (specifically by retailers/investors/developers) are relatively poor and perpetuated by a high volume of retail voids, unattractive physical environment in some parts, disjointed pedestrian movement and connectivity, issues of congestion, and limited visibility of the Town's offering from the surrounding arterial routes. Crewe must re-establish its positioning and heighten its profile
- A challenging retail market nationally with investment increasingly focused on prime urban and out of town centres, resulting in growing retail voids and falling rental levels in secondary locations such as Crewe. This is despite continuing planning policy focus on local centres
- Leisure, hospitality and food and drink markets have also been constrained by the economic climate and reduced consumer spend and remain focused on highly accessible 'cluster destinations' of retail and leisure activity
- Crewe's strong road and rail connectivity means that it 'leaks customers and spend' as it struggles to compete with some of the Region's major retail and leisure destinations including Manchester City Centre, Liverpool One, and Chester where its residents' can easily get to.

[1] All Change for Crewe - A Prospectus for Crewe (ONS 2011 Based Population Projections)

Other attractive and relatively accessible locations providing a different offer include Cheshire Oaks, the Trafford Centre, and more locally Nantwich, Sandbach and the Potteries. Crewe must find a way to differentiate itself and provide a unique proposition to attract visitors and spend

- Within Crewe itself, Grand Junction Retail Park is performing strongly, but despite its proximity it currently provides little contribution in the form of linked trips to the Town Centre. Linkages between the Retail Park and the Town Centre must be enhanced to ensure that the opportunities presented by this asset are drawn into the Town Centre and maximised
- Many major occupiers recognise the importance of their presence within a town, both in terms of creating an attractive and vibrant town centre that generates footfall and in attracting other occupiers. As a result, they therefore expect incentives to move into a Town such as Crewe, through for example business rate relief or rent free periods. These can often be for a duration of time that equates to millions of pounds
- Crewe itself faces a number of socio-economic challenges in parts and as a whole, the Town underperforms compared with the rest of Cheshire East. Taking deprivation as an example, of the 231 communities known as 'Lower Super Outputs Areas' (LSOAs) in Cheshire East, 23 are amongst the 25% most deprived in England and 14 of these 23 are in Crewe. Furthermore, five of these LSOAs, all in Crewe, are amongst the 10% most deprived in England (IMD, 2010). Furthermore, Crewe's average household income figure is below the Cheshire East average (2010 CACI Paycheck Data) and it has a higher rate of worklessness. Improving the residential offer within the Town Centre will help to attract and retain economically active residential and support a revitalised Town Centre through the generation of spend and longer dwell time.

Purpose of the Framework

1.22 Partners have already prepared a number of reports setting out the future strategy for Crewe. This Regeneration Delivery Framework builds upon these to establish a route map to realise a transformational future for Crewe. Its purpose is threefold:

- To determine an Action Plan to support the economic prosperity of Crewe Town Centre - defining specific actions for key partners including CEC
- To establish a framework for the potential acquisition and intervention by CEC in respect of a number of priority sites
- To inform the emerging planning policy of Crewe Town Centre to feed into the Local Plan process.

Structure of the Report

1.23 The Regeneration Delivery Framework is structured as follows:

- Spatial review of the Town (Section 2)
- Property market overview of key sectors in Crewe Town Centre (Section 3)
- Introduction to the Vision, Objectives and Key Themes of the Regeneration Delivery Framework (Section 4)
- Consideration of the current and emerging Planning Framework and makes suggestions for its future approach (Section 5)
- Next steps (Section 6).

1.24 The Regeneration Delivery Framework is supported by a separate Implementation Plan which is structured as follows:

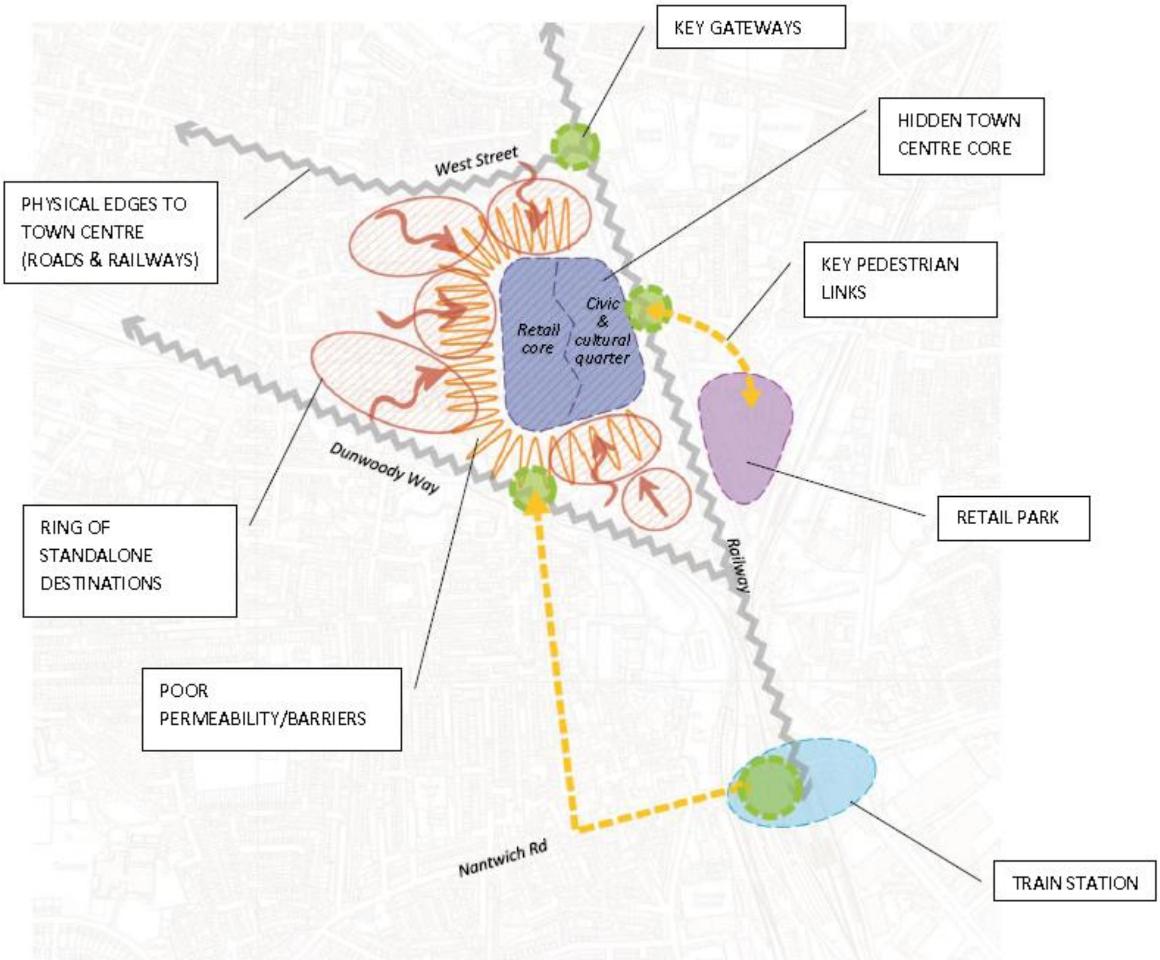
- Section 1 - Introduces the purpose of the Implementation Plan
- Section 2 - Provides a summary of the Regeneration Delivery Framework for context
- Section 3 - Sets out the actions required to underpin growth in Crewe Town Centre
- Section 4 - Considers governance and delivery issues
- Section 5 - Sets out priorities for lobbying and engagement
- Section 6 - Considers potential sources of funding
- Section 7 - Identifies further investigations required to support the realisation of the Vision.

2.0 Spatial Analysis

2.1 This section provides a spatial overview of the key physical attributes which need to be harnessed and the constraints that need to be overcome to support the transformation of Crewe Town Centre.

2.2 The key messages are set out in Figure 2.1. It identifies a retail core and Civic and Cultural Quarter which is surrounding by a ring of standalone destinations which in many cases are served by their own car park and separated by neighbouring destinations by service areas which act as barriers to movement through parts of the Town.

Figure 2.1 Crewe Town Centre - Spatial Analysis Plan



2.3 The Town Centre core has great potential as a destination however many parts are currently underutilised. The retail core comprises a number of smaller retail units surrounded by larger units on the edge. The larger format units are served by a ring of car parks and the links between these areas is in many cases poor quality or limited.

2.4 Whilst within what is geographically recognised as the Town Centre, the Phoenix Leisure Park is very poorly connected to the core of the town and is perceived as being 'out of town', otherwise the leisure offer in the Town Centre at present is fairly limited.

2.5 Although the Town's out of town retail park, Grand Junction Retail Park, is very close, separated by the railway line, there is a lack of linked trips.

2.6 The Town Centre core is compact, walkable and pedestrian dominant which presents the opportunity to lift and reinforce the Town as a destination. However, generally the Town lacks quality green spaces where people can dwell and relax. Many of Crewe's corridor routes and streets have little street tree cover.

Poor Connectivity

2.7 Crewe Town Centre suffers from a compartmentalised, broken layout. A ring of standalone destinations circle the perimeter of the Town Centre (many with their own car park). These destinations are predominantly big box retail and supermarkets. The orientation of these destinations, often linked by service areas, deters people from moving through the Town Centre - people tend to park and shop in the destination and leave. Blank edges and backs to these blocks of retail create 'walls' within the public realm. The overall feel is one of poor permeability and linkages throughout the Town Centre which does little to encourage visitors to dwell in the Town or venture further afield and spend more money. Visitors need to be encouraged to break through this ring to get to the Town Centre core.

Standalone Destinations that circle the Town Centre Core

Accessibility and Gateways

2.8 Routes into the Town Centre and gateways are dominated by vehicles. Some roads feel oversized and not urban in character. Many key desire lines/existing crossing points lack clarity or priority for pedestrians. Many of the Town's gateways have physical challenges such as bridges, underpasses, busy roads and typically open out onto big box retail and car parks. The permeability between these destinations is poor which deters visits exploring more of the Town to support linked trips, lengthening spend time and then providing the opportunity to increase spending.

2.9 This is further undermined by poor way finding along pedestrian routes resulting in a confusing place to visit where people are not encouraged to explore. A good example of this is at the Train Station. The Station is disconnected from the Town Centre and is 10 minutes walk from the Town Centre. However there are no signs to explain this at the Station. There should be a clear "route" identified between the Town and the Station with way findings updating visitors on their progress into Town to minimise the feeling of distance. Instead new visitors to the Town are effectively being left to find their own way there and some will be deterred and not make the trip. This issue has been recognised and the Council's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) programme, targeted at Crewe, will be improving the signage between the station and town centre to be completed in March 2015.




Poor Linkages between the Town Centre and Stations

Squares and Buildings

2.10 The Town does offer a number of civic squares which have benefited from public sector investment. The Lyceum Square space is dominated by car parking and as such fails to maximise its potential relationship to the Indoor Market and Theatre. Both the Indoor Market and the Theatre are not able to maximise their impact due to issues with their location in the Town and wider perceptions of the Town.

2.11 The Civic and Cultural Quarter accommodates the majority of the Town Centre's most attractive buildings, streets and spaces and cultural facilities including the Memorial Square. This offer will be further enhanced through the delivery of the new Lifestyle Centre, which has now has started on site, and will introduce a new destination to this quarter and increase activity and interest.

Attractive civic squares and existing pedestrian friendly routes

3.0 Property Market Overview

3.1 This section considers the headline market demand messages for new retail, leisure and residential across Crewe Town Centre.

Retail and Leisure Market

Market Overview and Drivers

3.2 The national retail landscape has fundamentally changed over the last decade in response to shifting socio-demographic and market trends. The significant growth of out-of-town and online retailing has led to an increasing retailer focus on a smaller number of prime city, town and destination shopping locations offering larger, more efficient floor plates and a greater critical mass of amenities. As a result, many smaller town and district centres have witnessed falling retail rental levels and increasing volumes of voids. Crewe Town Centre has not been immune to this trend and the strength and popularity of the offer at Grand Junction Retail Park is often in stark contrast to parts of the Town Centre, less than 0.5km (0.3 miles) away. This is illustrated in the CACI ratings where the footprint ranking of Crewe Town Centre has been falling whilst increasing for Grand Junction Retail Park.

3.3 As a result of these changes, retail investment is focusing on prime locations within major city centres and retail destinations such as the Trafford Centre - whilst many smaller district and sub regional centres have witnessed increasing vacancy rates. However, one of the few areas that have continued to see activity during the period is convenience retailing, including a proliferation of smaller local units (e.g. Sainsbury's Local and Tesco Express).

3.4 Whilst planning policy remains focused on local centres, ultimately all retailers from the large multiple to the local independent operators have a preferred location related to target their customer base. In determining where to locate they need to consider how their target catchment relates to the size, profile and spending power of the local catchment and the visibility, prominence and accessibility of sites. Increasingly many retailers, especially the national retailers, are seeking out of town locations due to their accessibility by car. The impact of these trends has undermined the viability and demand for new or existing retail space within many local centres, and landlords have had to offer large capital or other inducements to secure/retain tenants.

3.5 Turning to leisure and tourism uses, the following summarises the current market context:

- **Food and Drink -** the traditional pub format has been badly hit by the credit crunch, competition from supermarkets and the smoking ban. However, family restaurant chains and branded coffee shops have remained fairly resilient in recent years and are attracted to a critical mass of population which meets the demographics of their target market. The presence of the coffee shops encourages visitors to dwell longer and potentially spend more
- **Hospitality -** the hospitality industry has seen limited development over recent years as businesses and individuals have sought to reduce their hotel spend. International brands are focusing on accessible city and large town locations, whilst the budget hotel sector will also consider highly accessible sites along major arterial routes, which offer the best financial viability for development. As few operators are currently undertaking development, those that are active are able to cherry pick the best opportunities
- **Conferencing -** very much linked to hospitality, the conferencing and events market has been constrained over recent years by tightening business budgets. The sector is highly price competitive and whilst the number of events and delegates are showing signs of recovery,

average spend remains static as organisers opt for non-catering and shorter event packages[2]. New conferencing destinations are increasing focused on city centre destinations with a large catchment population and significant supporting amenities providing a wide variety of hotels and restaurants choices to a large number of delegates. The new ACC in Liverpool is such an example

- **Leisure and Tourist Attractions -** are also very location-driven and will focus on sites with good accessibility, significant catchment populations and in clusters with a critical mass of other attractive retail, leisure or tourism destinations.

The Existing Offer and Market Potential

Retail

3.6 Crewe is defined by market analysts CACI as being a 'Minor Average Centre'. Centres within this classification have a majority of mass retailing but also generally greater than 30% of value retailing. In terms of Crewe's retailer representation 2% is defined as Premium, 65% Mass and 33% Value. Whilst 'value' retail is an important sector for the Town, there is potential to diversify the local retail offer to appeal to a wider market audience. For example, through targeting a younger market segment, given the opportunities presented by the presence of Manchester Metropolitan University and the proposed UTC; or supporting the growth of a stronger independent retail offer.

3.7 There is also a need to reduce reliance on traditional retailing through a diversification of uses and users within the Town Centre. The family leisure market is an important sector and the creation of a better range of cafes, bars, restaurants and entertainment destinations will be key to broadening the attractiveness of the Town to a wider market and encouraging people to spend more and stay longer in the town, including in the evening, whilst also underpinning the existing retail offer.

3.8 The challenge for Crewe is to 'raise the bar' to ensure that it is able to increase its penetration into its affluent hinterland. It needs to increase and enhance the scale and quality of its offer as a whole to ensure that it does not continue to 'punch below its weight' and serve as a hindrance to wider sub-regional economic growth ambitions.

3.9 Crewe Town Centre provides in the order of 690,000 sq ft (64,100 sq m) of retail accommodation and serves a catchment population of approximately 83,000 people. The main retail centres within the Town Centre are:

- **Victoria Centre -** situated immediately west of the Market Centre, the 135,000 sq ft (12,540 sq m) Victoria Centre is a covered managed shopping centre anchored by Asda with other tenants including Mothercare and Bon Marche

- **Market Centre** - a 147,000 sq ft (13,660 sq m) managed shopping arcade to the north east of the Town Centre. The arcade is anchored by Wilkinson's with other principal tenants including River Island, Dorothy Perkins, Poundland and Argos

- **Victoria Street, Market Street and Queensway** - these pedestrianised streets provided the prime town centre retail offer. Key occupiers include Marks & Spencer, BHS, Boots, Topshop and JD Sports

[2] UK Events Market Trends Survey 2014

- **Crewe Market -** Crewe's indoor market is located on Earle Street and operates five days a week (closed Tuesday and Sunday) providing a mix of local produce, clothing, gifts, home-wares and electronics across 47 'lock up' stalls.

3.10 The Town Centre has a clear focus on the 'value' market in terms of the type of retailer present which plays an important role responding to the needs of the local catchment area within walking distance of the Town Centre. There is a significant volume of retail voids within the Town Centre. Prime Zone A retail rental levels within the Town Centre are around £50-£60 per sq ft (£540-650 per sq m) which provides a reasonable base for medium/long term growth potential provided a step change in the shopping environment and footfall levels can be achieved.

3.11 The majority of the retail units in the Town Centre core are small. Whilst five years ago this might have been seen as a major barrier to major retail brands few of these are now seeking large footprints in towns of the size of Crewe. However, the size of units, generally available in the Town Centre core, is of a scale that could be attractive, if other aspects of the Town Centre are improved, to independents. The attraction of independent operators is crucial to the future prospects of our town centres. They enable places to differentiate between each other - something that the out of town retail parks cannot do. A number of other Cheshire market towns have strong independent retail offer and are attracting visitors looking to walk about a town, experience its culture, eat and drink. Crewe needs to target these visitors in addition to its traditional shoppers.

3.12 Crewe's out of town retail offer is provided predominantly within the Grand Junction Retail Park. It is substantially let to retailers traditionally associated with the high street, with just one small retail void. These include Next, Poundstretcher; M&S Simply Food; Laura Ashley; Home Bargain; Boots; Sports Direct; Aldi; and TK Maxx, together with a supporting food and leisure offer in the form of Frankie and Benny's, Costa Coffee, and KFC. The Retail Park dominates Crewe's retail catchment due to its higher quality and profile occupiers, good visibility, and convenient central location with easy car accessibility and around 700 free car parking spaces.

3.13 From an occupier perspective, the larger floorplates provided at Grand Junction Retail Park suit more modern retailing needs, allowing the efficient display of a wider stock range, whilst free and immediately accessible parking supports the growing 'click and collect' format and enables the sales of some bulkier goods that would struggle on more traditional high streets. However unlike some other towns the out of town offer is situated just 0.5km (0.3 miles) east of the Town Centre, Grand Junction Retail Park is considered to be a major competitor to the traditional town centre offer. As such scope exists to encourage linked trips between the town destinations. Importantly, scope exists to try to attract the more affluent shoppers who are visiting the Retail Park into the Town Centre if it can reposition itself and its profile.

3.14 Food retailing is currently well provided by Morrison (3,701 sq m net), Tesco (5,574 sq m net) and Asda (5,132 sq m net). In addition there is an Aldi (754 sq m) on Nantwich Road (as well as at Grand Junction Retail Park), Sainsbury's Local on Edleston Road, Marks & Spencer Simply Food (608 sq m) at Grand Junction Retail Park. Sainsbury's had been looking to develop a new supermarket at Vernon Way but the site could not be assembled.

3.15 In recognition of the challenges facing town centres, there have been a number of central and local Government initiatives to support retail high streets. In 2012, Crewe was one of four Cheshire East towns to receive £10,000 funding to support the vitality of the Town Centre as part of a Town Team Partner Initiative following an unsuccessful Portas Pilot Bid. As part of a national initiative, Cheshire East Council offers Small Business Rate Relief to retailers with a low rateable value or that move into premises that have been vacant for a year or more. Other initiatives being introduced in other

Cheshire towns such as Northwich, where consideration is also being given to, include Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) within which local businesses agree to pay an additional business rates levy to support town centre initiatives.

3.16 In terms of car parking, Crewe Town Centre's retail offer is served by a privately operated 170 space surface car park located directly behind the Market Shopping Centre, which together with the Council's car parks on Chester Street and Delamere Street (350 spaces) and Victoria Centre (482 spaces) provide the main car parking for the Town. There is considered to be a surplus of car parks across the Town, but a greater understanding of the location and use of Crewe's car parks is required to ensure the offer reflects future regeneration and development in the town centre.

3.17 A secondary retail destination approximately 1km (0.7 miles) south of the Town Centre on Nantwich Road provides a more local offer. This half mile stretch anchored by the Rail Station and Aldi store provides a mix of predominantly independent retailers and services including estate agents, hair dressers, local restaurants and takeaways. Given the pedestrian and vehicle movement along Nantwich Road, and the proximity to both MMU and South Cheshire College, it is relatively vibrant throughout the day and has relatively few voids, despite fairly limited short-term parking provision. The quality of the offer improves further to the west. The area could see a brighter future on the back of HS2 investment.

Leisure

3.18 In terms of Crewe's commercial leisure offer, Phoenix Leisure Park to the south of the Town Centre off Dunwoody Way accommodates a Mecca Bingo Hall, Riverside Bowl, Odeon Cinema and Pizza Hut. The Park is within the Town Centre Boundary but suffers from poor pedestrian access and connectivity. The pedestrian access is via a steep bank and along an unattractive walkway. The owners and the Odeon are in discussion about the potential of the Cinema extending into the unit currently occupied by the bowling alley. The existing format of the unit fails to offer the range of related food and drink desired by many modern cinema complexes which impact on the income generating potential of the destination.

3.19 With the exception of Costa Coffee, Crewe's food and drink offer is limited to a handful of local public houses, cafes and coffee shop chains within the Town Centre itself. The only national chains are linked to the wider retail and leisure offer including a Pizza Hut at Phoenix Leisure Park and a Frankie and Benny's, Costa Coffee and KFC at Grand Junction Retail Park, further highlighting the increasing trend for retail and leisure clusters. There are also a number of independent restaurants/ takeaways on Nantwich Road.

3.20 The new Lifestyle Centre is currently under construction on the Christchurch car park site and is due to be operational in 2016. The Centre will combine leisure facilities including a new swimming pool, gym, multi-use hall, cafe and library with family and adult social care and community services within a single modern building. It has the potential to kick-start a new quality leisure offer in the Town Centre. Scope also exists to try to link this new leisure destination with existing leisure destinations in the Town such as the Lyceum Theatre and the Heritage Centre. The potential of expanding this cultural offer should also consider building upon the Town's rich rail and automotive history.

Hotels

3.21 Crewe has a number of national hotel operators present close to the Rail Station including a Best Western Crewe Arms Hotel, a Holiday Inn Express and Premier Inn Crewe Central. Further to the east near Manchester Metropolitan University's Campus are a Ramada Encore and a Travelodge. Crewe Hall Hotel (Q Hotel Group), situated approximately three miles east of the Town Centre provides a higher value spa, wedding and conferencing venue. The offer within the Town Centre itself is limited to local operators and rooms within public houses. Some of these hotels already provide a local business conferencing offer which should be supported. However, the potential to attract a larger conferencing offer is limited by the relative lack of supporting amenities. The arrival of HS2 would potentially strengthen the market for both hospitality and conferencing facilities within Crewe, however it is unlikely to be a driver of new facilities with operators tending to react to strong evidenced demand rather than rely on potential new economic anchors.

Key Message - Retail and Leisure Sector

- The Town Centres value offer accommodated mainly in the larger retail around the edge of the Town Centre core serves the immediate catchment well
- The Town's smaller retail units are well placed to serve the needs of the important independent sector
- Grand Junction Retail Park is performing strongly and attracts more affluent shoppers from Crewe's wider catchment. The key must be to entice these shoppers into the Town Centre Core by offering a better range of shops and services and a more attractive environment. Links between the two destinations need to be improved
- Extending the Town's leisure offer is critical to diversifying the Town's offer. The Lifestyle Centre has kick started a new leisure offer in the Town and this must be harnessed
- New residential development within the Town Centre would support the local retail offer through extending the hours of activity in the Town, increased footfall and spend, which in turn could generate demand in the medium to longer terms for an enhanced food and drink offer which is currently lacking
- The Town needs to become more attractive to a wider a range of visitors as possible. Scope exists to encourage more of the University's students into the Town and the planned University Technical College should be used to attract occupiers who target this market.

Residential Market

Market Overview and Drivers

3.22 Whilst the UK is now out of recession and we are witnessing strong headlines announcing a return of the housing market, much of this continues to be growth driven by London and the South East. The market remains cautious in more marginal locations such as the North West, where the regional residential market can be summarised as follows:

- **Regional House Prices** - Land Registry figures from the second quarter of 2014 indicate a 2.4% increase in achieved house prices over the last 12 months, but remain 17.2% below that of the 2007 market peak and are growing at a slower rate to that nationally. The most attractive and affluent regional market areas such as Manchester, Cheshire East and Cheshire West have experienced the greatest growth

- **Regional Volume of Sales** - at c.38% growth, the Land Registry figures indicate that the pace of sales across the North West has recovered much quicker than house prices over the last year, but again remain significantly below that of the market peak

- **New Build Development** - is starting to emerge, but with house builder focus shifted to profit rather than volume. There is some evidence that pace of sales and therefore build rates are slowly increasing. As such local achievable values, considered on a £ per sq ft basis, are now a key decision making factor for house builders looking to acquire sites for development. Consequently, sites with sufficient scale in more attractive residential areas capable of achieving required sales values are seeing much improved land values. Such areas are generally characterised by a significant catchment population and proximity to the region's economic drivers e.g. Manchester, Liverpool and Preston. Whilst this trend has helped to increase the volume of completions nationally, they remain very low at 135,550 in 2012/13 against a Government target of 240,000 per annum.

3.23 In response to the significant need for more housing and in light of tighter lending criteria for both purchasers and house builders, new delivery models have emerged, including the Government's Help to Buy programme which is considered to have been successful in increasing mortgage lending, sales and house building, although concerns remain around the potential to artificially increase prices.

3.24 For Registered Providers (RPs), traditional mechanisms of residential development funding have shifted, with key partners such as the HCA having significantly less funds available to support housing delivery. As such, some RPs are looking to diversify their offer and are considering new methods of delivery such as direct delivery and bond raising to fund sales and management of private sector stock. However, greater scrutiny into their business model is resulting in more caution in their activities.

3.25 In summary, the key housing market drivers are:

- Location - critical to decision making in respect of both the house builder and the potential purchaser/occupier. Sites in good locations, for example in close proximity to the motorway network, and of sufficient size to allow flexibility to build out desired house types, plot sizes and densities, are attractive

- Confidence - are prospective purchasers, occupiers and developers confident that the house is an established or up and coming area where sales can be achieved and values will rise?

- Access to finance - the limited availability and less favourable lending terms of finance for house builders has increased the cost of financing development. Further, stricter mortgage lending criteria for occupiers has resulted in slower sales rates and in turn, longer build out rates and higher preliminary costs and sales overheads for the developer. However, as the mortgage supply returns to some form of normality, there is a need to ensure that an appropriate supply of homes are able to come on stream to respond to demand.

Crewe's Existing Offer and Market Potential

3.26 The seven wards that make up the urban area of Crewe have a similar housing stock profile to that of the wider borough, with a relatively high proportion of detached housing stock (33%), compared to that of the regional (18%) and national (23%) averages[3]. In terms of tenure, owner occupation across the Crewe wards is relatively strong at 73% compared to that of the regional (65%) and national benchmarks (64%), but marginally lower than the Cheshire East average (75%). At 13% and 12% respectively, private and social renting is in line with the wider Borough but lower than the North West and England and Wales figures.

3.27 However, these figures disguise significant variations within the area. The Crewe Central ward which covers much of the Town Centre, has a very different stock profile with just 4% detached and 16% semi detached properties, but 45% terraced and 35% flatted. Further, just 36% of properties are owner occupied, with 34% privately rented and 28% socially rented.

3.28 Although it is not unusual for central urban locations to have predominance towards higher density terraced and apartment housing types and a lower rate of home ownership, there is an opportunity in Crewe to start to diversify the housing offer in terms of type, tenure and quality to provide greater choice to attract and retain some of the more affluent and economically active residents from the surrounding hinterland into the Town Centre and further afield given the Town's strategic location which will be further enhanced by HS2. Uplift in the amenity offer within the Town Centre will support this aspiration.

3.29 There are currently five active private new build residential developments within the Crewe conurbation:

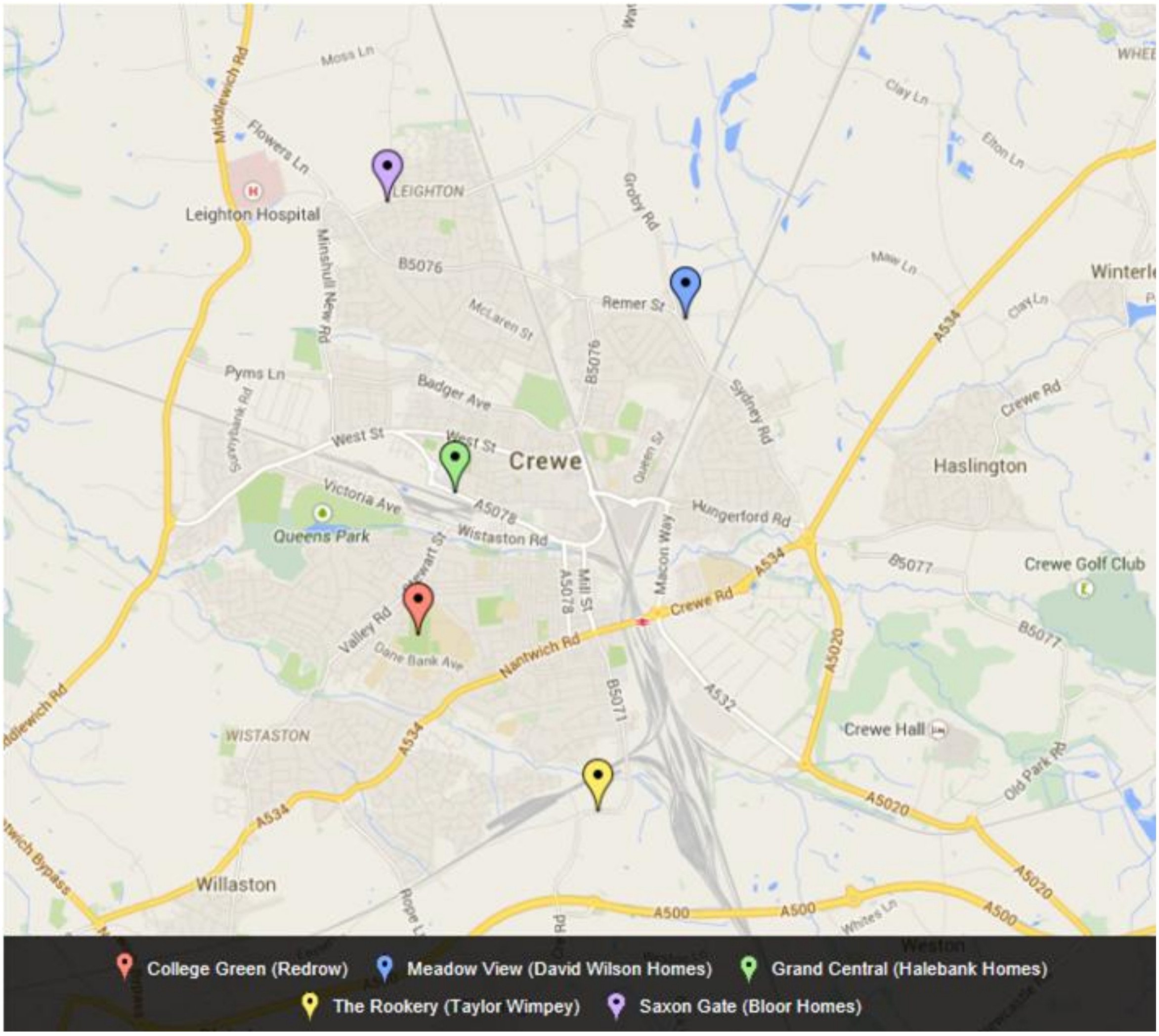
- Grand Central - Halebank Homes: Located off Dunwoody Way on the southern edge of Crewe Town Centre, Grand Central comprises an 86 unit development providing a mix of 1 and 2 bed apartments, and 3 and 4 bedroom townhouses. Just two show homes remain available for sale - a three bed town house at £145,000 equating to a net asking value of £152 per sq ft and a 2 bed apartment at £110,000 or £125 per sq ft net. This scheme represents the closest available comparable to Crewe Town Centre and has reportedly been slow to sell, although this is considered to be largely due to issues with the scheme's marketing. Previous DTZ analysis of achieved sales at the scheme indicates values in the order of £142 per sq ft
- College Green - Redrow: Situated off Danebank Avenue, adjacent to the South Cheshire College approximately 3 km (1.9 miles) south of Crewe Town Centre. The scheme comprises 50 predominantly three and four bed detached properties with some additional two and three bed semi detached and mews. Current net asking at the scheme values (asking less 5% to take into account sales incentives) are in the order of £176 per sq ft
- Meadow View - David Wilson Homes: Comprises 72 three and four bed detached and 2 and 3 bed semi detached homes. The development is situated off Maw Green Road on the eastern edge of the urban area approximately 2.4 km (1.5 miles) north east of Crewe Town Centre. Net asking values at the development are currently in the region of £190-200 per sq ft
- The Rookery - Taylor Wimpey: The Rookery is a recently launched development of 40 two and three bed mews and semi detached homes and three and four bed detached. Just one three bed end mews has been released to the market with an asking price of £152,995, equivalent to £215 per sq ft when a 5% discount has been applied to take account of sales incentives. The

[3] ONS 2011 Census Data. Crewe wards include Crewe Central; East; North; South; West; Crewe St Barnabas; and Leighton

development is situated off Crewe Road approximately 2.4 km (1.5 miles) south of Crewe Town Centre in a less urban setting

- Saxon Gate - Bloor Homes: Bloor Homes has achieved outline planning permission for up to 400 housing units on land north of Parkers Road in Leighton, approximately 3.2 km (2 miles) north of Crewe Town Centre. The development will have an offering of mostly 3, 4 and 5 bed detached homes with some mews and bungalow style properties. Marketing has recently commenced on the first phase of development which has full planning permission for 131 dwellings. The first release comprises 34 two, three and four bed semi detached and detached homes ranging in asking price from £144,500 to £247,995 and with best asking values in the order of £190 per sq ft.

3.30 In addition to the currently active new build open market private developments, Registered Providers are also delivering a range of new homes in and around the Town. Most notably, Countryside Properties is nearing completion of ‘The Carriages’, a 143 unit affordable rent, shared equity and Help to Buy scheme on the former Bombardier Site off Dunwoody Way on behalf of Your Housing Group and Cheshire East Council. The £14m development has been supported by £1.5m funding from the HCA. The scheme comprises a mix of one bed apartments and two and three bed homes. Buyers must have a connection to the Town and meet minimum earning threshold to be eligible.



Source: DTZ and house builders

3.31 Local estate agents in Crewe have indicated that the predominance of terraced properties within the Town Centre has driven demand from largely first time buyers including singles, young couples and new families and buy-to-let investors. Demand is considered to be largely from existing Crewe residents although there is reportedly strong demand from Eastern European immigrants working within the Town. Family households tend to look towards the outskirts of Crewe around Coppenhall and Leighton where there is more open space, better schools and larger properties available. Ultimately any new housing development in Crewe Town Centre must be price competitive if it is to appeal to a broader market.

3.32 As the residential market continues to improve, most national and regional house builders are now focusing on opportunity sites within areas where new build achievable values are in excess of £180 per sq ft. The overview of current new build developments would therefore suggest that whilst the outer areas of Crewe are likely to be attractive to the volume residential developers, whilst at about £140 per sq ft Town Centre sites are more likely to be of most interest to the regeneration focused developers who focus their activities in areas with the potential to diversify the local offer and with values in the order of £120-£160 per sq ft. Such developers include Keepmoat, Gleeson, Countryside Properties and Lovell.

3.33 Where office blocks no longer meet modern business requirements, the current time limited Permitted Development Rights allow the change of use of existing office buildings into residential without the need to apply for planning permission, provided the conversion can be completed by May 2016. This could represent a potential opportunity to Crewe which currently acts as a local office location for mainly public sector occupiers but is unlikely to attract new speculative office development or significant occupiers. Conversion could increase the Town Centre population, thus supporting the vitality and spend within the Town whilst providing the values required to revitalise tired buildings which currently detract from Crewe’s profile e.g. Wellington House on Delamere Street and Burford House on Prince Albert Street. However, viability given the high cost of refurbishment is likely to be a key issue, particularly in areas outside of the Town Centre such as on Nantwich Road, and further not all office premises lend themselves to easy conversion to residential uses.

3.34 House prices provide an indication of the level and change in demand for residential dwellings within an area. Table 3.1 sets out the HM Land Registry achieved house price and transaction volume data for all property types over the last two years within the CW1 and CW2 postcode districts combined. This area covers Crewe, Wistaston and Haslington and extends to the M6 in the east. A comparison to Q2 2007 which is considered to represent the peak of the housing market is also provided.

Table 3.1 Land Registry Average Pricing and Transaction Volumes within CW1 and CW2 (Q212 - Q214)

	Detached	Semi Detached	Terrace	Flats	All Properties
Quarter 2 2014	£208,247 (84)	£123,418 (119)	£85,767 (79)	£93,917 (18)	**£135,485 (300)**
Quarter 1 2014	£197,724 (59)	£120,608 (116)	£99,593 (74)	£72,163 (12)	**£129,855 (261)**
Quarter 4 2013	£238,310 (98)	£125,739 (112)	£98,282 (77)	£82,360 (15)	**£153,113 (302)**
Quarter 3 2013	£199,351 (68)	£127,536 (98)	£93,144 (64)	£76,204 (12)	**£136,075 (242)**
Quarter 2 2013	£197,704 (66)	£120,547 (106)	£87,451 (72)	£82,089 (14)	**£128,962 (258)**
Quarter 1 2013	£234,564 (44)	£119,902 (65)	£84,856 (48)	£0 (0)	**£141,322 (157)**
Quarter 4 2012	£206,820 (76)	£122,830 (78)	£93,272 (64)	£0 (0)	**£143,433 (218)**
Quarter 3 2012	£225,667 (61)	£114,602 (94)	£84,131 (53)	£0 (0)	**£139,409 (208)**
Quarter 2 2012	£198,457 (64)	£121,052 (98)	£76,577 (62)	£0 (0)	**£130,858 (224)**
			Compared With		
Quarter 2 2007	£232,795 (104)	£133,810 (181)	£108,084 (151)	£116,109 (16)	**£147,358 (452)**

Source: HM Land Registry. ( ) Denotes Number of Quarterly Transactions

3.35 Based on the latest available completed transactions data from the Land Registry, the average price of a residential dwelling in Q2 2014 (January - March) within the identified CW1 and CW2 postal district areas was £135,485, compared to that of the Cheshire East average of £242,158 and the national average of £256,883. These figures could indicate relative affordability (although it should be noted that the average income of Crewe residents is below that of Cheshire East) within the area ; however they may also suggest lower levels of demand from both occupiers and house builders.

3.36 Turning to consider how house prices have changed, in the seven years since the approximate peak of the residential market (Q2 2007), residential house prices within the CW1 and CW2 postal district have fallen by 8%. This is in stark contrast to the 2% growth witnessed across Cheshire East and 10% nationally over the same period. Further, quarterly transaction volumes fell significantly within the CW1 and CW2 postal districts from 452 property sales in Q2 2007 to between 157 and 300 per quarter for the majority of the last two years; around one to two thirds of that of the market peak. At 300 sales, Q2 2014 indicates some return to growth in volume of sales.

Student Residential

3.37 In some towns and cities a significant amount of purpose build student residential accommodation has been built over the 5 or so years. Approximately 30% of the Cheshire Campus students are 'day' students that commute in from neighbouring areas, c.25% reside on campus and c.45% live in private rented accomodation elsewhere in Crewe. The University recongises that it wil need to provide additional student residential accommodation to meet increasing student numbers but at the same time recognises that it has excess space within its campus boundaries to accommodate this and also other academic based growth/expansion. As such student accommodation outside of campus will need to be private sector led and is unlikely to be supported financially by the University - a model that has been attractive to developers and investors in other areas.

Key Message - Residential Sector

- The Town's existing residential offer is made up of predominantly high density and lower quality terraces and apartments. As such, Town Centre values are in the order of £140 per sq ft, and therefore most likely to be attractive to house builders that specialise in regeneration focused schemes rather than national house builders
- The HS2 announcement does hold a potential key to repositioning the perceptions of Crewe and its attractiveness to builders and occupiers. In particular scope exists to target those developers starting to look at the Private Rented Sector
- Crucially residential development will increase the attractiveness of the Town Centre for a range of retail and leisure occupiers at is will increase the catchment of the Town
- Improved housing choices will be critical to help attract some of the more affluent and economically active residents from surrounding areas
- The public sector is already supporting the delivery of new residential development across Crewe. The Town Centre has the potential to play an important role in this as it can be attractive to key sub sectors particularly young people
- Student residential has been a growth sector in some town and cities. MMU consider there is scope to accommodate new residential development within their campus so any student schemes in the Town Centre would need to be led by the private sector.

4.0 A New Future for Crewe

4.1 This section sets out the Vision, Objectives and the rationale behind the strategic themes. Detailed actions to support the realisation of the Regeneration Delivery Framework are set out in a separate confidential report (due to market sensitivities) but are summarised in the Executive Summary.

New Vision for Crewe Town Centre

4.2 The Vision of the Regeneration Delivery Framework is as follows:

Capitalising on investment proposals such as the planned Lifestyle Centre and the University Technical College and proposed HS2 Station and the Town's growing population, to re-establish Crewe Town Centre as *the* vibrant and attractive "Hub" offering a strong range of retail, leisure, employment and residential opportunities serving local businesses, shoppers, residents, students, visitors and rail passengers.

The Objectives

4.3 This Vision will be supported by the following objectives:

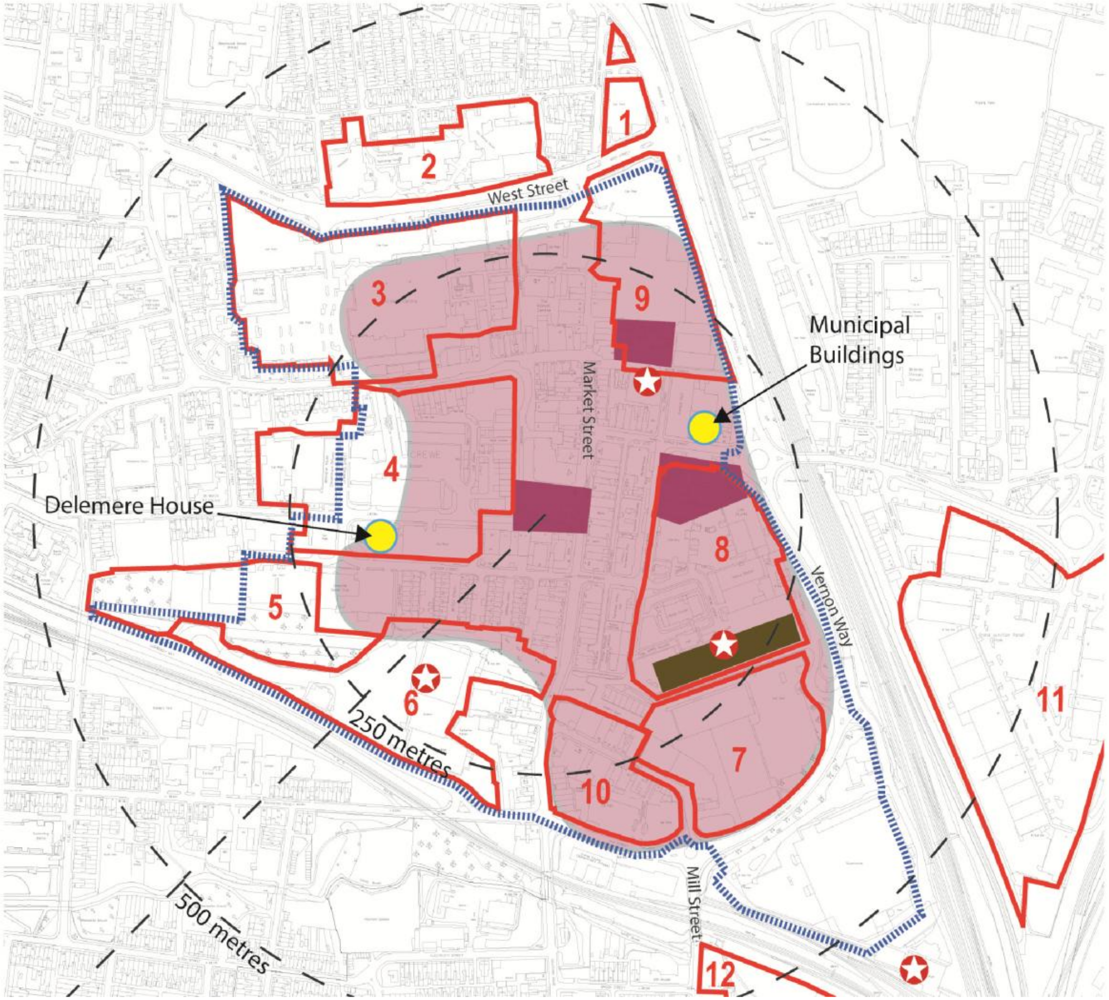
- To stimulate new investment in the Town Centre including retail, leisure, residential and business by bringing vacant sites back into use, intensifying the use of underperforming sites and utilising Cheshire East Council's assets
- To increase the number of Town Centre users, their dwell time and spend
- To diversify the housing stock in and around Crewe Town Centre and to increase the catchment of the Town Centre
- To make it easier to get into and around the Town Centre by foot, bicycle, bus and car
- To improve the quality and amount of the public space (including green space) and public realm (including green infrastructure) that links key spaces, buildings and the town's heritage and cultural offer in the Town Centre and to the Railway Station/proposed HS2
- To transform perceptions of Crewe Town Centre
- To provide sustainable development and design and support the Council's renewable energy agenda.

The Regeneration Delivery Framework Priority Themes

4.4 The Regeneration Delivery Framework comprises the following themes which are considered in turn in the remainder of this section:

- Investment in Opportunity Sites
- Improving access by all modes of movement into and within the Town Centre
- Improvements to the public realm
- Town Centre First.

Figure 4.1 Crewe Town Centre Regeneration Delivery Framework Plan



Key

- Opportunity Site Boundary
- Proposed Town Centre Boundary
- Lifestyle Centre
- Cultural Assets
- Public Squares
- Pedestrian Zone
- Existing Landmark Building

Opportunity sites

1. Wrexham Terrace Car Park
2. Former Victoria High School
3. Victoria Centre / Asda
4. Royal Arcade and adjoining land
5. Chester Street Car Parks
6. Phoenix Leisure Park
7. Vernon Way Retail Park and adjoining land
8. Civic and Cultural Quarter (South)
9. Lyceum Square / Market Shopping Centre
10. High Street and Oak Street Car Parks
11. Grand Junction
12. Mill Street

4.5 The need for intervention responds to the issues identified through the spatial analysis, market review and discussions with key stakeholders (see Appendix A). The actions recommended under each of the themes in terms of what, who and when is set out in a separate Implementation Plan but key messages are summarised in the Executive Summary. Figure 4.1 summarises the key recommendations of the Regeneration Delivery Framework, it identifies 14 opportunity sites, how movement could be improved by key modes of transport and identifies key gateways where public realm needs to be focused and landmark buildings developed.

Investment in Opportunity Sites

4.6 Too much of Crewe Town Centre is either vacant (buildings and sites), underutilised or used for car parking. Cheshire East Council own a number of sites within the Town and identified seven development areas (see Appendix B) where they considered there is scope to support future investment to attract new users and uses to the Town. In bringing these sites forward the following uses will be encouraged:

- **Retail** - It is critical to accept that the retail landscape nationally has fundamentally changed and generally there is an oversupply of stock in part due to the growth of internet shopping and demand for new space is generally being focused on a smaller number of prime locations. Crewe Town Centre needs to diversify its offer and be less reliant on retail whilst still supporting this important sector where demand is identified for example from value retailers. Scope exists, if the Town's overall attractiveness can be raised for the expansion of the independent retail offer which adds to the experience in a number of other Cheshire towns including Nantwich and Knutsford. There is a need to shift the balance away from big box retail around the perimeter to create a broader mix of uses within the Town Centre. Retail will continue to be a predominant use but new development will seek to enhance it. Retail uses are likely to become more focused on a tighter core and new uses encouraged where retail demand is no longer strong. There is a real need to ensure that the retail property in the Town is fit for purpose. Some of the units in the core are outdated and fail to meet the needs of modern retailers. It is crucial that this is not allowed to continue as Crewe will be by-passed by occupiers and shoppers who will chose alternative Towns. The Council needs to work with the private sector to reconfigure the Town in terms of its property offer and how these are accessed to ensure that they are capable of accommodating modern requirements

- **Leisure** - Leisure will be critical to supporting the retail offer and more leisure will be encouraged in the core of the Town rather than the edge. Creating a better range of cafes, bars, restaurants and entertainment destinations that encourage people to stay longer in the town, including in the evening. The use of a quality programme of retail and cultural events, including artisan markets, to raise the profile of Crewe to non-traditional consumers should also be encouraged, given the success of this approach in other Cheshire towns, including Macclesfield (Treacle Market, Barnaby Festival) and Wilmslow (Artisan Market). There is scope for target key sectors such as young people given the important presence that Manchester Metropolitan University plays in the Town as well as the proposed UTC. The family leisure market is also an important sector to target with a range of family friendly restaurants holding a key to broadening the attractiveness of the Town. Restaurants such as Zizzi, Pizza Express, Harvester and Bella Italia add considerably to a Town's offer but often need leisure anchors such as a cinema around which to cluster. Sporting events are also important for attracting a wider audience to a Town and is something working well in a number of other towns. Crewe's relative flatness makes it attractive for running and cycling events. Its network of public squares could also support a programme of events

- **Residential** - Attracting new uses into the Town Centre core will be critical. Although the Town is surrounded by residential development, the key to future residential in the Town will be to use it to diversify the existing offer and provide different types of residential accommodation to the town which will attract more working and affluent households. This should in turn increase footfall. General residential (for sale and private rent) should be targeted as well as specialist accommodation for older and potentially younger people will be encouraged to support the principle of sustainability by reducing the need to travel. Increasing the overall number of residents within the catchment area will also encourage investment by retail and leisure occupiers as will the extending activity in the Town Centre beyond 9-5. In bringing new residential sites forward, the key should be on diversifying the stock not adding more of the same in terms of size or tenure. HS2/High Growth City is an transformational opportunity which should put Crewe on the map for residents who recognise its potential as base to access many other parts of the Country easily

- **Public sector services** - Where public sector services are being rationalised priority should be given to the relocation of services into the Town Centre given its accessibility for a wide range of residents across Crewe and Cheshire. This principle is already being supported as demonstrated by the new Lifestyle Centre which is now being delivered in the heart of the Town's Civic and Cultural Quarters, the proposed UTC and lobbying for the relocation of the Cheshire Archives to Crewe will also support this.

4.7 From the seven development areas identified in Appendix B, the Regeneration Delivery Framework identifies 14 opportunities sites where new development should be focused. It sets out the types of uses which will be attractive to the market and the actions that are required to ensure that the sites can support the future growth, vitality and viability of the Town Centre. A summary of the sites and recommendation in respect of each is set out in Table 4.1.

4.8 An underlying principle of the development of the sites is to increase the number of Town Centre visitors/users, their dwell time (including out of hours) and spend. Obviously the delivery of these sites will not happen in isolation and therefore a range of overarching actions related to improving linkages, access and public realm will be fundamental to the realisation of the new future for the Town.

4.9 To support the delivery of the opportunity sites there is a need for:

- The Council to ensure that there are appropriate sites available to support retail and leisure investment (acquisition may be required to achieve this)
- Their land assets in the Town to be used to leverage private sector investment
- The Council to work with landowners to support them to overcome barriers to delivery to stimulate investment
- The Town to be promoted to raise awareness of the investment that is and will be made in the Town and the opportunities that this will create.

Table 4.1 Priority Opportunity Sites

Site	Options	Lead	Priority	Phasing
1. Wrexham Terrace Car Park	▪ Remain as car park ▪ Landmark development - leisure or residential	Council - potential to use site to leverage investment by third party on other priority sites	High	Short/Medium
2. Former Victoria High School Site	▪ Preferred Site for UTC by partners ▪ Residential (if UTC does not proceed on site)	Council	Medium	Short
3. Victoria Centre/Asda	▪ Modernisation and reconfiguration of the store to create better linkages with the Town Centre core and potentially with an improved pedestrian link to the UTC site	Asda	High	Short/Medium
4. Royal Arcades and adjoining lands	▪ Focus for new retail and leisure investment	Site is currently on the market. Critical that the site is bought by an active developer who will seek to deliver new retail and leisure investment	High	Short
5. Chester Street Car Parks	▪ Retail/leisure/car parking and Town Centre related uses linked to stimulating investment in the Town Centre	Council - depends on future uses of surrounding sites	Low	Medium
6. Phoenix Leisure Park	▪ Remain as leisure ▪ Residential ▪ Potentially additional retail	Future of the site could be linked to the aspirations for the new owner of site 4	High if linked to delivery of Site 4	Short/Medium
7. Vernon Way Retail Park and adjoining land	▪ Remain as retail but improve linkages to Town Centre and Civic & Cultural Quarter	Private but Council to encourage increased access through site to Town Centre	Medium	Short/Medium
8. Civic and Cultural Quarter (south)	▪ Target public sector occupiers to relocate ▪ Creation of cultural asset and Christ Church	Council with other public sector partners	Medium	Short/Medium
9. Lyceum Square/Market Shopping Centre	▪ Remain retail/leisure/public realm ▪ Remove car parking from Lyceum Square ▪	Owners on their land	Medium	Medium/Long
10. High Street and Oak Street Car Parks	▪ Landmark development - leisure/retail/residential ▪ Potential site for Rapid Transit Link Stop	Council should seek to bring its site forward ideally in conjunction with surrounding landowners	High	Short/Medium
11. Grand Junction Retail Park	▪ Remain as retail	Council seek to reduce congestion around and improve linkages to core Town Centre	Low	Medium
12. Mill Street	▪ Redevelopment for residential (Retail should be focused in Town Centre core)	Private - may require public sector support to bring forward as residential site	Medium	Medium
13. Macon Way	▪ Out of town retail for bulky goods only	Private	Low	Short
14. Nantwich Road	▪ Mixed use residential/local retail/leisure	Private	Medium	Medium/Long

Overarching Actions – Sites

- S1 - Work with owners to bring priority sites forward to support new retail, leisure and residential investment in the Town. Aim to diversify uses to encourage more visitors to the town and grow evening economy
- S2 - Lobby for relocation of Cheshire Archive to Crewe Town Centre - various options are being considered. Municipal Building would provide a sustainable future use for this Listed Building whilst also strengthening the Town's cultural offer and provide an opportunity to increase footfall in the vicinity of the Theatre
- S3 - Need to encourage greater collaboration of occupiers to encourage them to work together to support the long term future of the Town. Longer term consider scope to establish Business Improvement District.

Improving access by all modes of movement

4.10 The underlying objective of the second priority theme is to make it easier to get into and around the Town Centre by foot, bicycle, bus, car and potentially rapid transit link. There are opportunities to build on the current Local Sustainable Transport Fund programme (ending in March 2015) to influence travel behaviour for short local journeys within the Town.[4]

4.11 Current constraints undermining the attractiveness of the Town to existing and potential users include:

- Congestion particularly along Earle Street and its bridges and the Grand Junction Retail Park roundabout - a key gateway to the Town Centre core
- The gateways to the Town Centre being dominated by car parks which do not "showcase" what the Town Centre has to offer in its heart
- Confusion for new visitors to the Town as to where they should park to access the Town's facilities
- Poor permeability between the car parks and the key destinations within the Town that fail to encourage linked trips to extend the length of stay in the Town and thus the amount that they spend when visiting. Specifically, the links between the Phoenix Leisure Park and the Town, the Civic and Cultural Quarter and the Town Centre core and the various retail areas and the Town Centre core
- The existing Bus Station which fails to provide an attractive gateway to the Town Centre for bus passengers.

[4] see www.allchangeforcrewe.co.uk/smartertravel

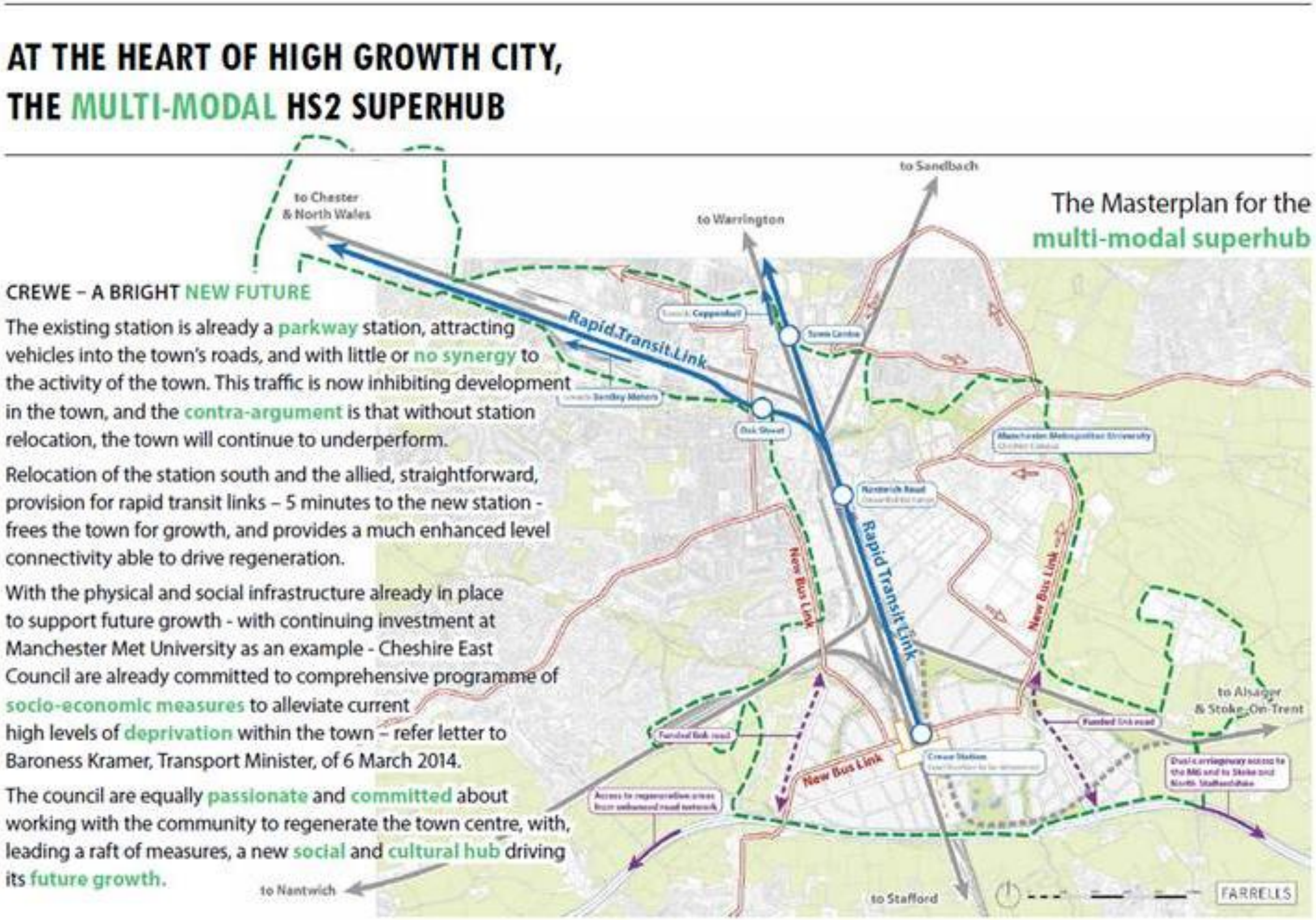
4.12 Going forward the Town must:

- Build on the Local Sustainability Transport Fund (LSTF) programme by promoting more sustainable forms of travel in walking and cycling particularly in and around Crewe to reduce congestion and encourage visitors to explore what the Town has to offer (see www.allchangeforcrewe.co.uk/smartertravel)
- Improve access generally and specifically for pedestrians walking within the Town. Scope exists to enhance the linkages between the Town's public squares to encourage Town Centre users to dwell in its more attractive locations and create a pedestrian priority zone through the Town Centre core supported by a range of car parks around the edge of the Town Centre
- Have a clearer car parking strategy providing accessible cheap short stay parking with long stay parking on the edge of the Town. Once the overall number of spaces required to service the Town Centre has been identified it is anticipated that it will be possible to develop some of the existing car parks to attract new occupiers and diversify the Town's offer. It may be found that to meet the needs of modern occupiers particularly leisure occupiers that a multi storey car park may be required
- Establish an approach to future bus services for the Town which meets modern and future bus passenger requirements.

4.13 The Regeneration Delivery Framework should be used to engage with HS2 to ensure that the major benefits that will accrue to the Town as a result of the transformational project are harnessed by the Town Centre. Specifically in terms of the emerging proposals to improve links between the Stations and the Town Centre. The proposals for an integrated rapid transport system will play a critical role in increasing footfall in the Town and the careful consideration to the location of station should take account of the recommendation of the Regeneration Delivery Framework. Figure 4.3 below identifies the current thinking on the multimodal HS2 North West Gateway Hub and how it will integrate with its catchment.

4.14 The Framework seeks to prioritise the hierarchy of travel. This is in line with existing Council policy which seeks to improve pedestrian facilities so that walking is attractive for shorter journeys, including supporting the priority of pedestrians at the top of the road user hierarchy and making sure that in settlements, town centres and residential areas, the public realm environment reflects this priority. Improving facilities so that cycling is attractive for short journeys and encouraging increased use of public transport is also supported in recognition of Crewe's relative flatness.

Figure 4.3 North West Gateway Hub for HS2



Over-arching Actions - Access Improvements

- A1 - Assessment of options for new Bus Interchange - short term option and then longer term option to support emerging investment proposals for the Town
- A2 - Review of existing car parking provision - need to determine which of car parks can be released for redevelopment and ensure sufficient car parking to support Town Centre at appropriate price
- A3 - Further improvements in cycling as part of a programme to reduce congestion - next phase to recent improvements being delivered as part of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) Programme and cycling strategy
- A4 - Tackle pinch-point and congestion at Earle Road. Lobby to deliver as part of HS2 investment
- A5 - Creation of pedestrian prioirty zone - need to encourage people to explore more of the Town, dwell longer and spend more money.

Improvements to the Public Realm

4.15 The attractiveness of a Town Centre is critical to the experience of the user. Currently there are only a few examples in the Town of high quality public realm. Going forward careful thought needs to be given when key development sites are brought forward as to how the public realm between these sites and the Town's existing offer can be improved.

4.16 A key objective of the Framework is to improve the quality and amount of the public space and the realm that links key spaces, buildings and the Town's heritage and cultural offer in the Town Centre and to the Railway Station/proposed HS2 North West Gateway Hub. The Regeneration Delivery Framework builds upon the Green Infrastructure Action Plan for Crewe which has already established a number of priorities for greening the Town. The priority needs to be given to key gateways and routes/corridors.

4.17 All new development will need to demonstrate how they have sought to knit into and enhance the existing public realm and establish their own with the aim of increasing the overall attractiveness of the Town. In particular, all new development on the edge of the Town should carefully consider public realm, creating quality, welcoming routes - all leading into the Town Centre core which will be pedestrian focused to stimulate movement between the Town's destinations and seeking to improve both the daytime and evening economy and experience.

4.18 The Regeneration Delivery Framework will seek to enhance the use of the Town's public squares, some of the most attractive areas of the Town. It will seek to use these as focus points to encourage visitors to dwell for longer and thus the likelihood of spending more money. The active use of squares for events and pavement cafes will also be encouraged to increase footfall and activity levels in the Town. Investment in planting and public art will be encouraged. In the Town Centre core in particular, wide pavements should be utilised for cafes and pop-ups/events to create more activity around the Town.

4.19 The Framework does not recommend the commissioning of expensive bespoke street furniture but the introduction of clear principles in respect of the quality of the hard and soft landscape in the Town to enhance the experience of all users. The focus on all public realm will be on scheme that minimise the ongoing cost of maintenance so that the impact is sustained for the longest period.

4.20 It does however recognise the role of public art in enhancing the experience of visitors. Consideration should be given to the appropriate commissioning of public art to encourage visitors to move through the Town Centre.

Overarching Actions - Public Realm

- P1 - Determine programme of public realm and access improvements within the Town Centre and between the Town Centre and Rail Station (and longer term to link to HS2 North West Gateway Hub Station). Use the Regeneration Delivery Framework recommendations to determine an appropriate capital spend programme including focus on making the Town as easy as possible to get to and then encourage users to park up and walk around the Town and to dwell longer
- P2 - Delivery of public realm improvement including public art and green infrastructure - use the Regeneration Delivery Framework to establish expectations on quality of public realm and secure contributions to improve gateways, key corridors and public squares.

Protection of the Town Centre

4.21 As the market starts to improve and the Framework attracts development interest to the Town, the Regeneration Delivery Framework must set out clearly the types of uses that will be acceptable within the Town Centre which support its overall objective.

4.22 This needs to be achieved on numerous levels:

- Through the formal planning framework setting a clear policy context for the Town specifying which uses will be acceptable in which areas with the emphasis on supporting mixed use investment in the designated Town Centre, providing enhancement in vibrancy and increased visitor/consumer footfall and spend, and deterring any retail proposals outside of this area that could undermine this
- Until the Core Strategy and land allocations plan are in place, use the Regeneration Delivery Framework to support the determination of planning applications ensuring that they support its objectives and add to the overall experience of the Town
- Raising expectations that Crewe will not accept poor quality and ill thought-out schemes. That, with appropriate recognition of viability, key stakeholders will work with the private sector to support higher quality buildings and public realm in the Town to enhance its attractiveness.

5.0 The Planning Review

5.1 This Section provides a brief overview of the current and emerging planning framework in order to make recommendations on the most appropriate future policy to support the objectives of the Regeneration Delivery Framework.

Local Planning Framework

5.2 In terms of Crewe Town Centre, Cheshire East Council's Local Plan comprises the Saved Policies contained within the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011. Given that the Cheshire East Council's Local Plan Strategy is at examination stage and the relevant emerging policies have also been taken into account, in addition to the supporting evidence base which includes the Draft Crewe Town Strategy Consultation (2012) and the Green infrastructure Action Plan (2012).

Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011 - Saved policies

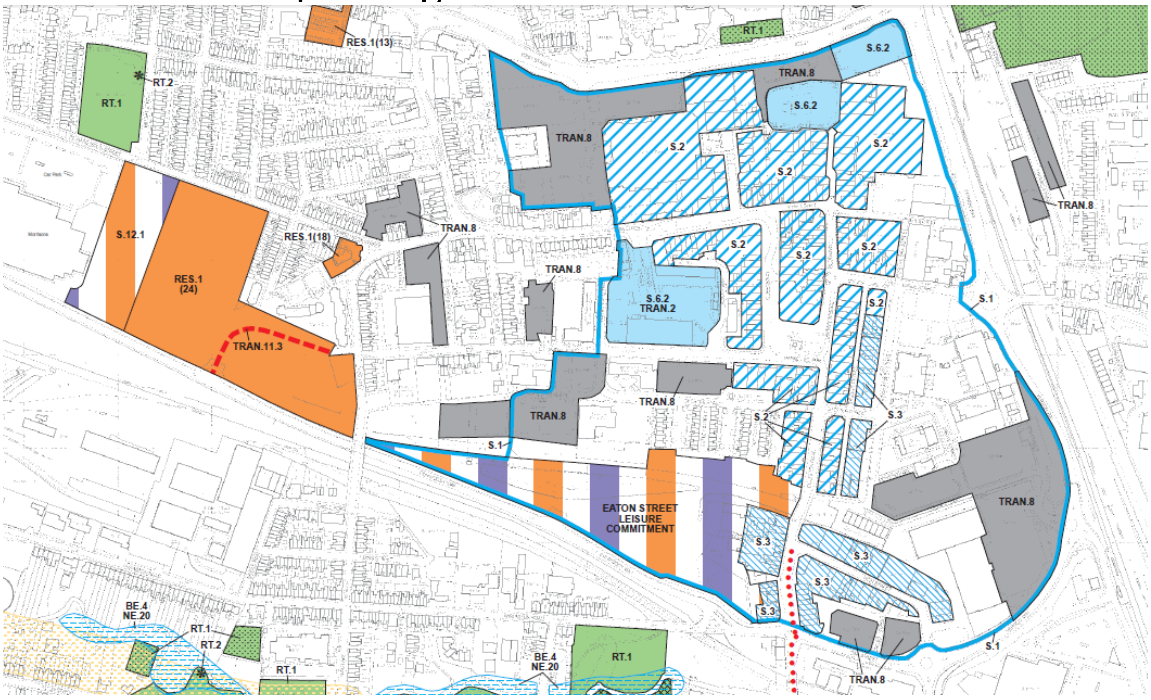
5.3 Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan notes that Crewe Town Centre is the largest shopping area within South Cheshire, and whilst there has been investment during the 1980s there is a need for further investment to support its viability, vitality and sustainability. The Cheshire Retail Study (2011) recognises Crewe as the main focus for retail spend and capacity in East Cheshire with capacity for almost 10,000 sq m of retail in the Town. Crewe is defined as a Primary Town Centre within the now revoked Cheshire Replacement Structure Plan (2011).

5.4 Given this context the extant, saved policies take a protectionist approach to preserving and enhancing the retail offer specifically, as well as considering additional leisure and community uses as a complementary offer. Policy S.1 defines the area of Crewe Town Centre, as identified in Figure 5.1. Grand Junction Retail Park is excluded from the S1 boundary, and has been defined by Cheshire East Council planners as an out of centre development, due to the barrier of the railway line.

5.5 Proposed Town Centre uses/developments outside the defined boundary will be defined as edge of centre/out of centre. As a result, major retail development, and leisure uses sited outside the S1 boundary will have to demonstrate there is a need for the development, that a sequential test has been undertaken (in line with National policy/NPPF paragraph 24) and that such schemes will not have a detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of the defined Town Centre (Policies S.10 and S.11).

5.6 The Council's current policies further delineate the types of frontages within the Town Centre boundary, through a typology of Primary/Secondary frontages. This approach is in line with Government policy (NPPF, paragraph 23). For areas defined as Primary Frontages non-retail uses are not generally permitted unless this provides leisure/civic use which is complementary to A1 uses, and that the overall balance of A1 uses is maintained (Policy S2). The Primary shopping frontages relate to the areas of the Town Centre to the north of High Street and east of Sandon Street (this includes the following identified development sites: 3, 4 and 9 (see Section 5)). Areas defined as Secondary frontages (Policy S3) have greater flexibility in that changes of use are permitted to encompass retail, leisure, business or entertainment uses. The secondary frontages are sited closely to the Town's civic/community uses and the Leisure quarter of the Town (Eaton Street) (this includes opportunity site 10, see Section 4 of this Framework).

Figure 5.1 Crewe Town Centre boundary, identified by blue bounded line (extract from Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan Proposals Map)



Area Specific Policies and implications

5.7 There are a number of saved policies which affect other opportunity sites (identified in Section 4) as follows:

- Site 4 is identified as a suitable location for providing an extension to the existing retail offer (Market Centre Extension, Policy S.6.2). This is currently used as the Crewe bus station, but this may change following a review of the location and form of the future bus interchange. As part of any redevelopment proposals, the policy identifies the need for replacement car parking and operational car parking in this location. *This should not be a barrier to investment as any new retail or leisure opportunity is likely to require good access to car parking*

- Policy S.12 allocates the southern section of the Town Centre as a mixed use regeneration area. This relates to the Phoenix Leisure Park (Site 6) which, following securing planning permission now provides for a 5-screen Odeon cinema, Bingo hall and bowling alley. Recent planning history confirms that there are proposals to provide for a larger cinema complex through extension into the bowling alley unit (reference: 13/4748N). *Any future use on this site must support the Town Centre and seek to improve linkages to the Town Centre core*

- Site 2: North of West Street is the preferred location for a proposed University Technical College and comprises the former Victoria High School but this sits outside the Crewe Town Centre boundary. Development here is affected by policy RT 1 which seeks to protect open space unless a needs assessment can justify that there is no requirement for playing pitch provision.

- Site 14: Nantwich Road is covered by Policy S9, which confirms the Council's objectives for this area to be retail focused. There is flexibility in bringing forward non-retail uses but these must be complementary to the existing area, and not have a detrimental impact on residential amenity. The policy notes that residential amenity should be preserved in this location. This approach is also reinforced within the Draft Town Centre Strategy. *The proposals for improvements in this area are unlikely to be impacted by the general policy which seeks the same outcome.*

Emerging Local Plan Strategy - Key Messages

5.8 Cheshire East Council's emerging Local Plan Strategy recognises the importance of retail planning in ensuring the vitality and viability of Town Centres is maintained and enhanced, with specific reference to this within the Strategic Priorities (Strategic Priority 1). Specific policies which will be of relevance to the development and regeneration of the Town Centre going forward include Policy EG 5 'Promoting a Town Centre First Approach to Retail and Commerce'. This policy recognises and defines Crewe as a Principal Town, noting that this should be the primary focus for high quality comparison retail uses in addition to other town-centre uses, including residential. This policy also reinforces the sequential test/impact assessment approach for approving edge of centre/out of centre town centre uses.

5.9 Crewe Town Centre is also identified as a Strategic Location within the emerging Local Plan, as part of the wider Central Crewe area (SL 1) (Figure 5.2). This confirms the Council's overarching priorities for Crewe in encouraging improvement, regeneration as well as introducing and improving green infrastructure. These priorities are to be achieved through the following:

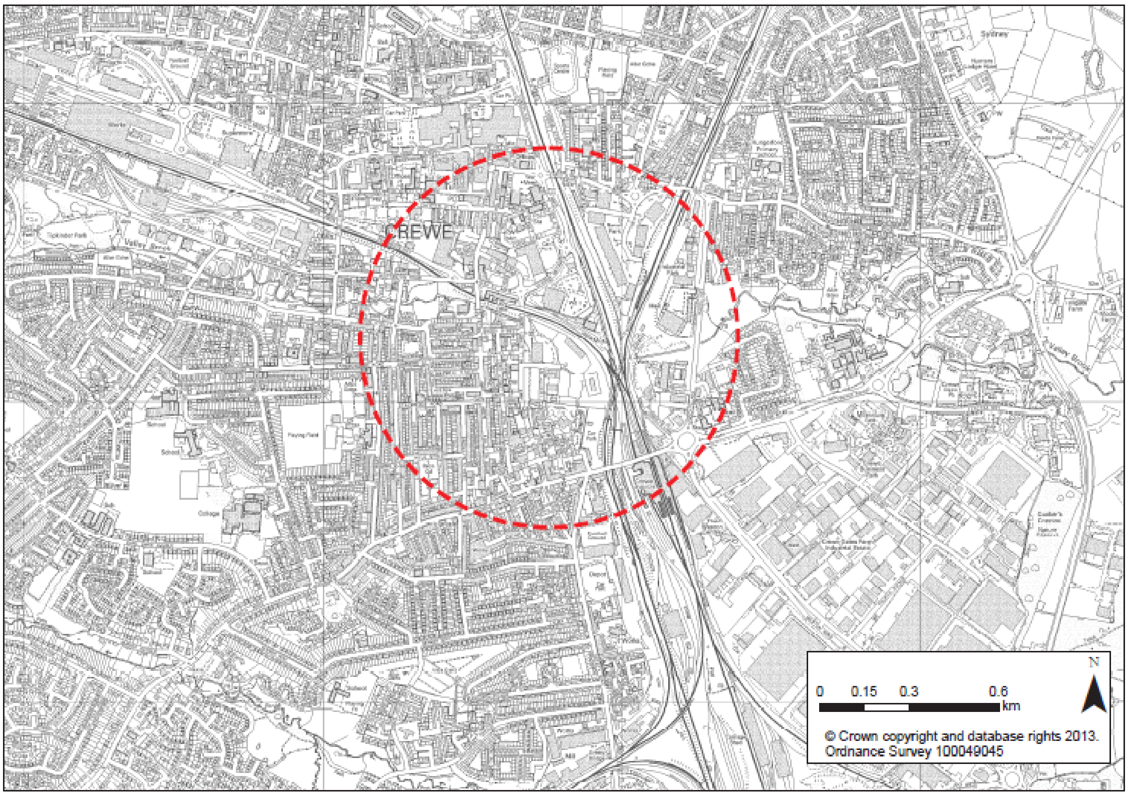
1. Introducing new homes (apartments, family housing and student accommodation)
2. Providing comparison retail and leisure uses, including at least one anchor store and large-scale leisure use within the Town Centre Boundary and up to 5,000 sq m floorspace in Mill Street
3. Diversifying uses within the wider Crewe area, including commercial, cultural offer, multi-use facilities and promoting 24 hour uses to support vibrancy of the Town Centre, as well as a new leisure facility at Crewe Alexandra Football club
4. Delivering a variety of transport and environmental improvements including car parking, facilities around and linkages to Crewe Railway Station, green infrastructure improvements, civic space enhancement and a new bus interchange
5. Improving existing and providing new green infrastructure.

5.10 Introducing residential development is seen as key in regenerating the Town Centre, enhancing key gateway sites, the built environment, and promoting linkages and connections with the Railway Station.

5.11 Whilst there is not a specific residential figure identified for Crewe Town Centre, the Local Plan Strategy confirms capacity for approximately 250 dwellings across the wider Crewe urban area. This figure takes into account brownfield land capacity. There have been a number of representations to the Local Plan which question the level of demand and viability for these units within the Town Centre. The Council has confirmed however that the 250 dwelling figure relates to the Crewe wider area as opposed to Town Centre specifically, although this could be significantly increased as a result of the HS2 North West Gateway Hub Station.

5.12 Whilst the development of Mill Street is noted as a priority area for additional retail provision[5], the references to retail use relate back to an extant outline mixed use consent for this site incorporating 53 units, food retail of 1,329 sq m and comparison floorspace of 2,787 sq m (planning reference: P07/0639) which was granted in April 2013, and will therefore lapse in 2016. Mill Street is also referenced within the draft Crewe Town Strategy, which need to provide predominantly residential uses in this location. As such, going forward the Regeneration Delivery Framework considers that residential use would be more appropriate on this site. It would support footfall and improve the quality of linkages between the Town Centre and Railway Station. It is however, recognised that public sector support may be required to bring this site forward due to issues with viability.

Figure 5.2 Central Crewe Strategic Location (Source: Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, 2014)



Draft Crewe Town Strategy Consultation (August, 2012)

5.13 The draft Crewe Town Strategy (2012) forms part of the Local Plan Strategy evidence base. Key objectives are around the knowledge economy and business growth, connectivity and linkages (particularly in terms of the links between the station, Town Centre and Grand Junction Retail Park), identifying physical development opportunities (including identifying retail and leisure uses in the Town Centre), liveability and aspiration (with a focus on regenerating the Town Centre as well as key locations including Mill Street, West Street and Nantwich Road), as well as changing the image and perception of Crewe to encourage inward investment and attract people to Crewe as a place to live.

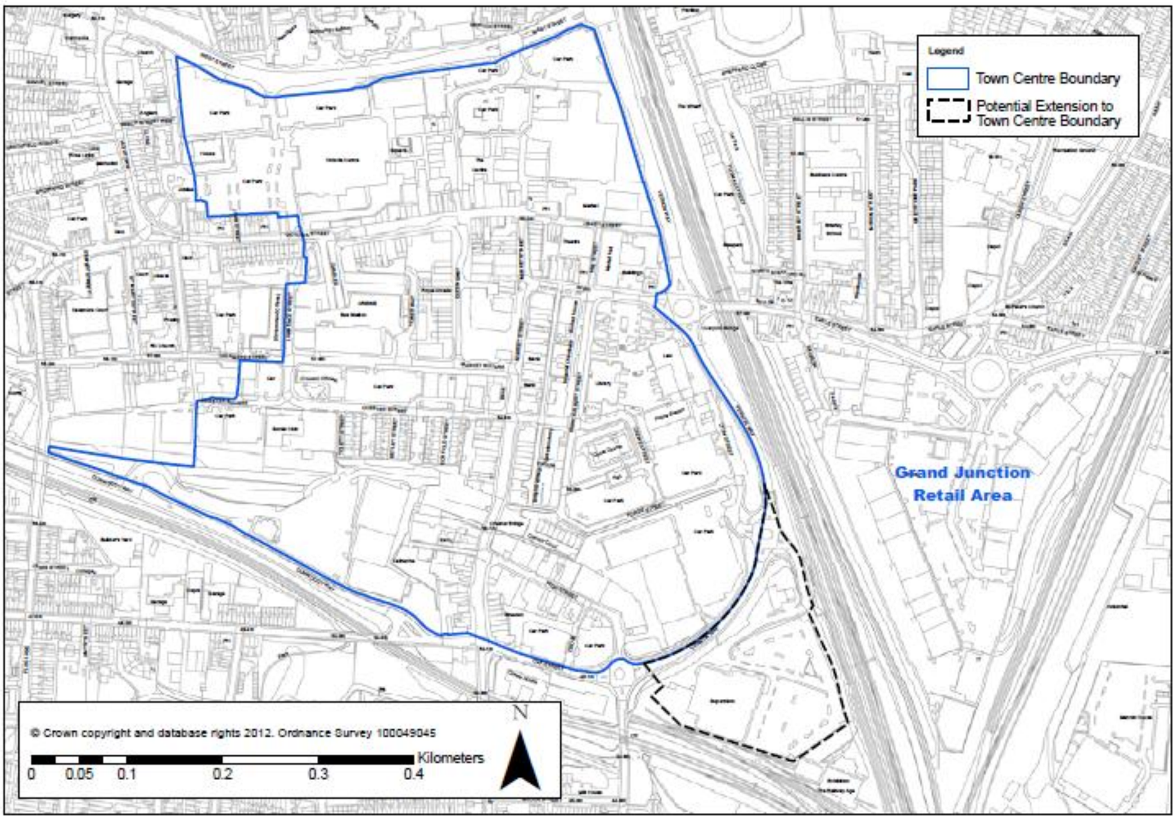
[5] The Growth Strategy for residential use, as opposed to encouraging additional out-of-town retail provision which could undermine the Town Centre

5.14 In terms of the identified development sites the following is of interest:

- Mill Street (Site 12) is identified as a potential development area within the draft strategy (site H1). It is noted that this, along with an adjacent site to the south, has the opportunity to bring forward 140 dwellings as part of a mixed use scheme, including retail and offices, which would help to tie together the railway station and the Town Centre
- Student accommodation has been suggested as coming forward at Oak Street (Site 10), as well as providing a mix of uses at ground floor level
- The Council is seeking to encourage residential development around Chester Square
- Opportunity areas are identified including redevelopment of the existing bus station and existing surface level car parks, to provide new retail and residential uses
- West Street (including Site 2) is seen as a residential gateway into town, providing social housing and student accommodation, as well as a family housing offer. The Council also recognises the opportunity to re-use community facility buildings in this location
- Nantwich Road (Site 14) is identified within the Framework as playing an important role for independent traders/retailers, with the Council seeking to maintain the popularity of this area through planning and regeneration policy/strategy
- Grand Junction Retail Park (Site 11) is also identified as requiring to be managed in terms of the retail impact on the Town Centre, aiming to discourage expansion opportunity.

5.15 The draft Town Strategy also refers to the delineation of the existing Town Centre boundary, with a suggestion that this is extended to incorporate Tesco (see Figure 5.3 below).

Figure 5.3 Indicative Crewe Town Centre Boundary extension (Source: Draft Crewe Town Strategy, 2012)



Green Infrastructure Action Plan

5.16 A further part of the evidence for the Local Plan Strategy in developing the Town Centre is the Green Infrastructure Action Plan which seeks to enhance the built environment through management and enhancement of existing green spaces, in addition to greening the Town Centre through identifying new opportunities. This references West Street as a key priority area in delivering a green environment as well as the peripheral routes around the Town Centre boundary (Vernon/Dunwoody Way). *The recommendations of this Regeneration Delivery Framework are in line with the principles of this Action Plan.*

5.17 Government technical consultation (DCLG, May 2014) and changes in permitted development rights and use classes order which could have implications for the level of control that the Council can exercise in terms of retail use policies and protection to Primary Shopping Frontages. The proposed changes include expanding the A1 retail class to incorporate the majority of financial and professional services currently classes as A2 use. This extended class will exclude betting shops and pay day loan shops however.

5.18 Existing permitted development rights allow changes of use from A1 to A2, A3 and B1 uses as of 30th May 2013. This is a temporary measure only however and is only permitted for a period of two years. Permitted rights which came into power from April 2014 allow for a new class IA which allows change of use from A1/A2 uses to C3 residential use, via a prior approval process, to enable up to 150 sq m to be able to change to residential use without requiring planning permission. There is also greater flexibility in changing retail (A1) to a bank/ building society without requiring LPA approval.

Future Planning Strategy Recommendations

5.19 The primary objective of future planning policy must be to protect the Town Centre from uses within it, and in the wider area, that will undermine its vitality and viability. As such the emerging policy framework which supports promoting a Town Centre First Approach is critical (Policy EG5). The designation of Crewe Town Centre as a Strategic Location is also supported as this provides the Town Centre with an appropriate status to encourage investment, regeneration and improving green infrastructure.

5.20 In terms of boundary the Regeneration Delivery Framework supports the indicative Crewe Town Centre Boundary extension as identified in Figure 5.3. It makes sense to include the Tesco Store as part of the core Town Centre. Although Grand Junction Retail Park is close to the Town Centre, given the nature of its occupiers and its separation from the Town Centre by the railway line, it clearly functions as an out of town location and should not be included within the boundary. The Regeneration Delivery Framework will however seek to improve linkages and movement between the two areas but as a planning policy their inherent differences need to be recognised as do the other out of town sites.

5.21 Within this Town Centre Core specific uses should not be too tightly defined to allow flexibility to encourage proposals that support the overall vitality and viability of the Centre even if they are not retail. Retail will continue to be the key use but it must be complemented by other uses including leisure. A Primary Retail area could be identified but it needs to be clear that this may not be exclusively retail but about supporting uses that enhance the retail offer. As such planning applications must be considered on their individual merit to support the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.

5.22 In terms of the out of town sites the Regeneration Delivery Framework recommends the following recognition of their planning status:

- Grand Junction Retail Park (Site 11) - is clearly an "out of town" offer accommodating a range of users who target such locations however unlike many such retail parks it is relatively close to Crewe's Town Centre. Going forward the site should be continued to be recognised as an out of town retail location but efforts made to improve connectivity between the two destinations

- Mill Street (Site 12) - consider the re allocation of the site for residential use in order to support investment in this key site between the Town Centre and the Station/HS2. Although it is acknowledged that the site has an extant planning permission for retail, discussions with the owner have identified issues with viability and it would be worth engaging further with the owners to determine whether a residential scheme could be made to work on the site to allow retail to be focused within the Town Centre. The site provides an opportunity to diversify the residential offer in this part of Town close to the Station whilst also improving the public realm of an area which currently detracts from the wider area

- Macon Way (site 13) - site should be protected to provide suitable location for retailers who do not thrive in Town Centre locations including trade counters uses/bulky retail and light industrial locations. It is important to offer this type of use to complement the Town Centre Core and this site provides a good accessible location. Given its location on a road that essentially operates as a ring road from a function perspective this site is a better location for bulky retail that Mill Street. Reserve matters have been submitted for the delivery of a bulky goods retail unit

- Nantwich Road (site 14) - area specific designation recognising its strategic location close to the Station and the Town Centre. It is an area that has the potential to see investment as the proposals for HS2 are firmed up. As such, the importance of quality design and investment in public realm must be encouraged in any future planning applications that are brought forward.

5.23 A number of the potential opportunity sites identified in this Framework (1,3,5,7 and 14) are affected by the Council's car parking/transport policies which require existing car parking spaces to be re-provided or that investment is made into enhancing public transport (TRAN 8), as part of proposed development in these locations. In order to increase the flexibility of this policy going forward, the Council will need to consider consolidation opportunities, car park management and shared facilities, whilst still fulfilling the necessary car parking standards.

5.24 Given the significant changes that are occurring in the retail market in terms of demand for regional and sub regional town centres the focus should not be on protecting retail uses per se but to encourage a wide range of uses which support the attractiveness of the Town Centre. The focus within the defined Town Centre should be on uses which enhance the Town Centre function including retail, leisure, business and residential uses with each application being considered on its merit in terms of how it can support the objectives for the Town Centre.

5.25 The importance placed on encouraging residential investment in the Town Centre by the emerging planning policy is fully supported. This will be critical to supporting the aspirations of the Regeneration Delivery Framework in particular to increasing the overall catchment area of the Town Centre and encouraging the amount of footfall and extending the core hours of activity. This in turn should support the existing cultural offer of the Town.

5.26 It is recommended that this part of the Regeneration Delivery Framework report is given consideration at Cabinet to establish it as a material consideration in determining planning applications. It is also recommended that, to give the strategy further status, public consultation should be undertaken prior to being signed off by the Cabinet, potentially as an Area Action Plan.

6.0 Next Steps

6.1 This Regeneration Delivery Framework and its supporting Implementation Plan set out a series of site specific and overarching actions to respond to the agreed objectives for the Town Centre. The implementation of the Regeneration Delivery Framework will support the realisation of the Vision.

6.2 In the short term the priority actions will be driven by Cheshire East Council and will include:

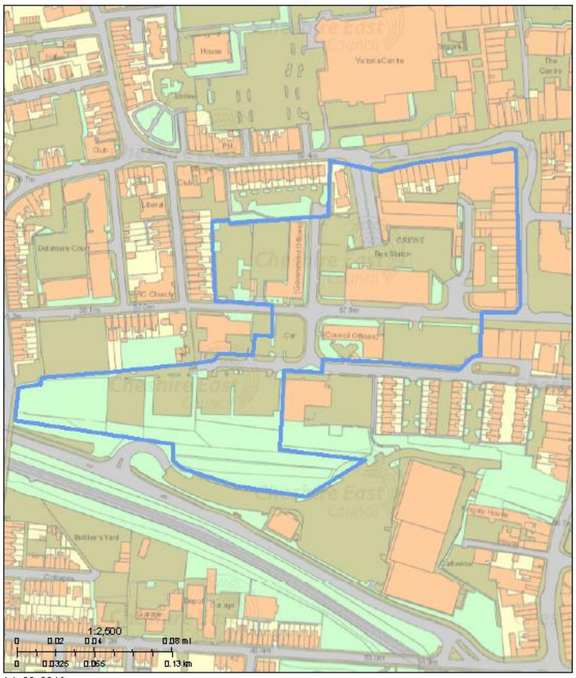
- Undertaking a series of feasibility studies including: assessment of options for the bus interchange and Car Parking Strategy (to determine which sites are surplus to requirements)
- Establishing a framework which will support the emerging planning policy to enhance and protect Crewe Town Centre
- Undertaking strategic acquisitions to ensure sufficient attractive sites are available to attract retail and leisure investment
- Driving forward the recommended actions and support the delivery of the opportunity sites including engaging with landowners, developers and potential retail/leisure occupiers
- Establishing appropriate governance and delivery structures to support the delivery of the Regeneration Delivery Framework
- Establishing appropriate resources to support the implementation of the Regeneration Delivery Framework. This will include seeking to link benefits to be invested back into the locality, fronting bids for funding and lobbying Central Government
- Lobbying on behalf of Crewe Town Centre to ensure that its profile is raised within the business community, Cheshire & Warrington Enterprise Partnership, North West and nationally and it is able to tap into opportunities to support economic development
- Engaging with local businesses, residents and potential investors to share how the transformation of Crewe Town Centre will be delivered
- Ensuring strong links are established between the Regeneration Delivery Framework and potential larger-scale delivery strategies, specifically High Growth City.

Appendix A - Consultees

Organisation	Contact
All Change for Crewe Board	
Cheshire East Council	Cllr Michael Jones Dorothy Flude (Crewe South Cllr) Steve Hogben (Crewe South Cllr) Mo Grant (Crewe North Cllr) David Newton (CreweEast Cllr) Caroline Simpson Jez Goodman Chris Jackson Karen Tierney Glyn Roberts Andrew Sellors Allan Clarke Fintan Bradley Jenny Marston Andrew Ross
Quad	Nick Davies Phil Smith
Manchester Metropolitan University	Prof. Neil Fowler Acting Dean for the Crewe Campus UTC Board Member
Church of England Diocese of Chester	Venerable Ian Bishop Reverend Tim Watson
Savills (agents for UBS Grand Junction)	Tim Price
Threadneedle	Nicholas Buckland
Clowes Developments	Ian Melville
HOW Planning	Matthew Robinson
New River Retail	Robert Pennington
Scottish Widows/Aberdeen Asset Management	Haseeb Hassan
Redefine	Nick Gregory
Albermarle	Insert name
Egan property Asset Management	Insert name
Odeon	Insert name
Sainsbury’s	Reid Crane
Primark	Patrick Wymer
New Look	Emma Lessani/James Ingrey
Matalan	Anthony Darbyshire
M&S	Helen Nash
Lidl	Ed Whalley
Asda	John Mutton
Legat Owen (Wellington House)	Stephen Wade

Appendix B - Development Areas

Potential Development Area 1



July 29, 2014

Cheshire East Council

N

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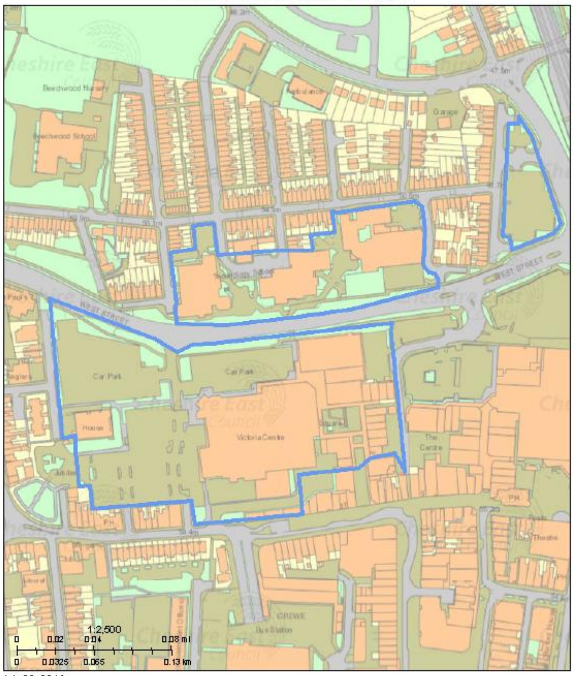
Potential Development Area 2



July 29, 2014

Cheshire East Council

N

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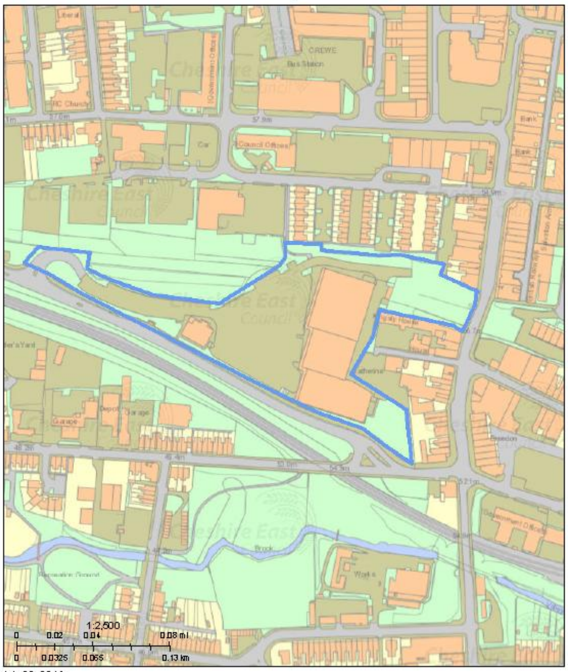
Potential Development Area 3



July 29, 2014

Cheshire East Council

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Potential Development Area 4

July 29, 2014

Cheshire East Council

N

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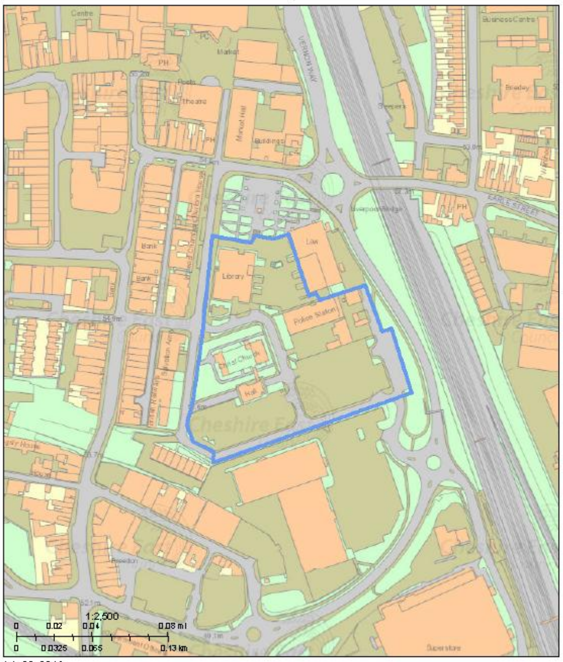
Potential Development Area 5



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Potential Development Area 6

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Cheshire East Council

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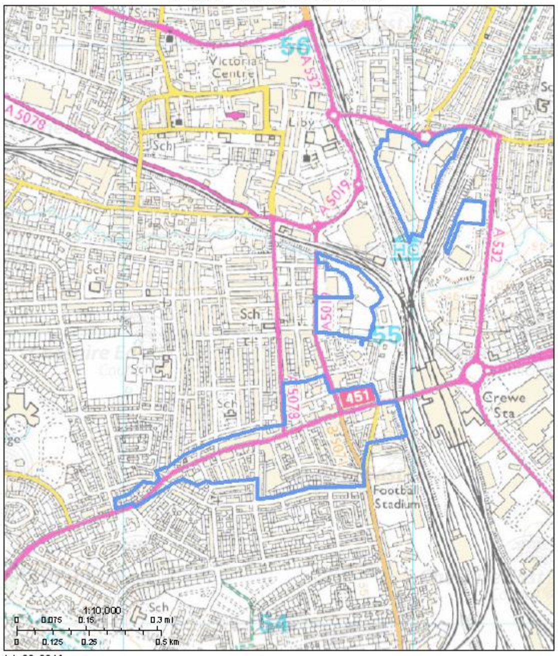
Area 7 - Out of Town Sites



July 29, 2014

Cheshire East Council

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