

Runcorn Town Centre

Draft Supplementary Planning Document

Consultation Draft

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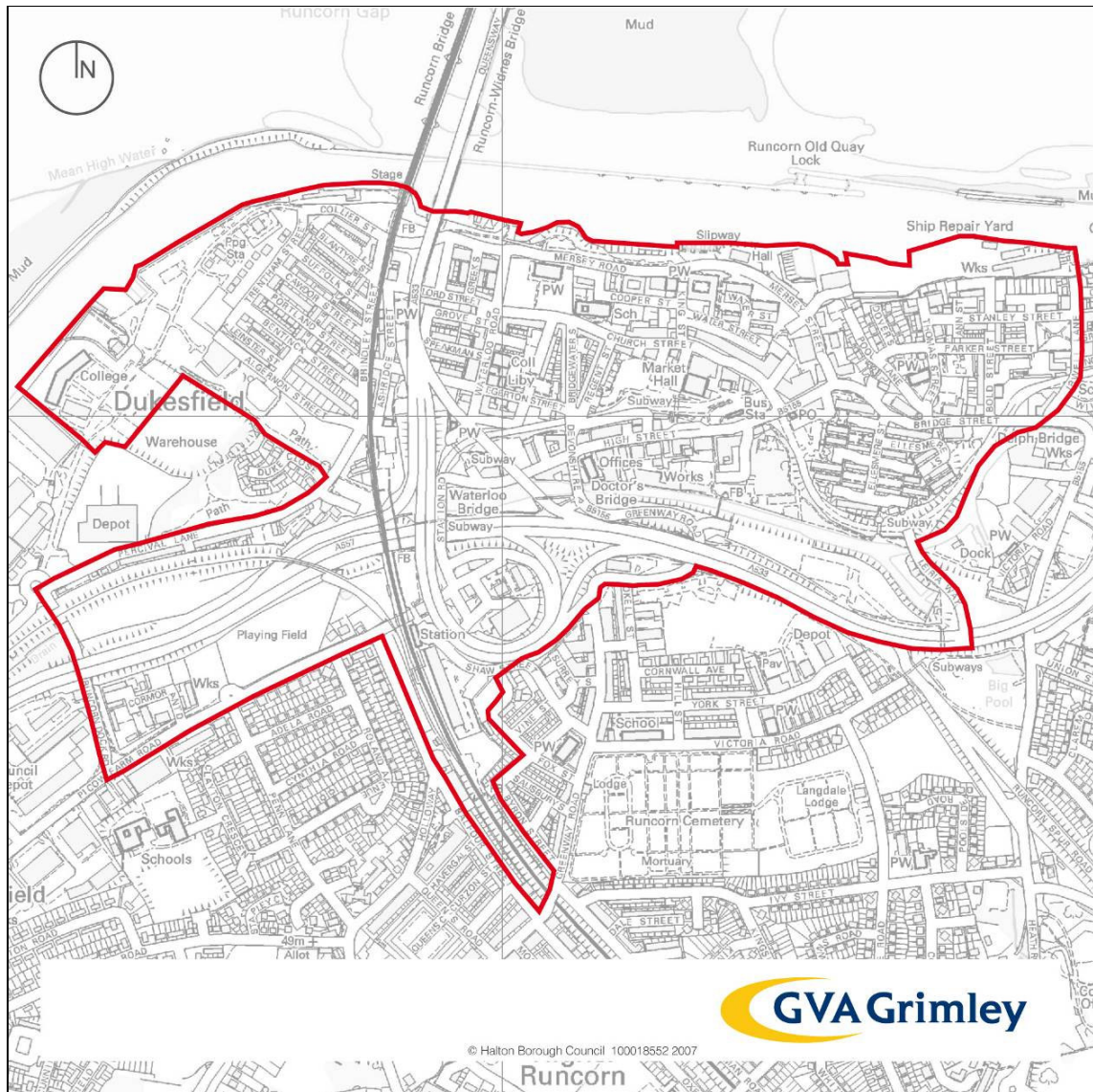
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1. PURPOSE OF THE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

- 1.1 This document is a draft version of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Runcorn Town Centre. It has been prepared for the purposes of public consultation and approved by Halton Borough Council's Executive Board Sub-Committee.
- 1.2 Runcorn Town Centre is one of three main shopping locations within Halton Borough. This SPD has been prepared to update and build upon the Council's previous 1997 Town Centre Strategy, dealing specifically with land-use planning matters for the centre. This SPD also develops the opportunities set out within the draft Runcorn Town Centre Strategy issued for public consultation in February 2007.
- 1.3 The document serves to provide additional supplementary planning guidance to the saved policies of the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The UDP identifies Runcorn and Weston Docklands as one of six Action Areas within Halton Borough that require significant development or redevelopment to secure their regeneration. The eastern-most parcel of this action area falls within the defined area of Runcorn Town Centre.
- 1.4 There are a range of additional land-use allocations within the defined Runcorn Town Centre area identified on the UDP proposals map. These are referenced in Appendix B. The development opportunities set out within this SPD are therefore complementary to the relevant UDP saved policies, and provide Halton Borough Council, as the determining planning authority, with greater detail and certainty to control and guide new development within the defined boundary shown at figure 1.1.
- 1.5 This SPD has been prepared under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 12: *Local Spatial Planning*. Post-consultation, the draft SPD will be the subject of a Council resolution to formally adopt it as a supplementary planning document, and subsequently form part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Halton.
- 1.6 Before this SPD can be used with any weight for development control purposes, it must first be prepared in consultation with the general public, stakeholders and other interested parties, and their views taken into account before it is finalised for adoption.

Figure 1.1: Runcorn Town Centre Area



Purpose

- 1.7 The purpose of this SPD is to complement the adopted policies of the Halton UDP, establishing and identifying potential development or improvement opportunities within Runcorn Town Centre to help sustain the existing community and deliver regeneration benefits within the area. The SPD will specifically lend itself to address the following issues:

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- Enable Runcorn Town Centre to prosper without damaging the health of any other centres;
 - Safeguard and strengthen the individual role of each town centre as safe and accessible places to shop, work and enjoy;
 - Co-ordinate public and private investment decisions;
 - Improve the economic prosperity of the Borough through the creation of new employment opportunities; and
 - Ensure the highest standard of design and architecture within each town centre.
- 1.8 The content of this SPD will be used alongside the saved policies of the Halton UDP and other relevant Council Supplementary Planning Documents to determine planning applications submitted to the Council for approval comprising land within the defined Runcorn Town Centre area. It also provides a useful tool for the Council to seek to enhance any development proposals which do not satisfy the principles and policies set out within both this SPD and the UDP.
- 1.9 All those who have or may have an interest in the vitality and viability of the town centre are encouraged to follow the practical guidance set out within this SPD wherever such opportunities arise, whether or not planning permission or other consents are required.
- 1.10 This SPD is accompanied by a number of supporting documents, including a Sustainability Appraisal, an Appropriate Assessment (a requirement of the Habitats Directive) and a Statement of Consultation.

Structure of the Document

- 1.11 The following sections of this SPD are structured to establish the context of Runcorn Town Centre in light of existing national, regional and local planning policy, culminating in the identification of potential land-uses across the area, and the phased delivery of this new development. The delivery of the development opportunities identified within this SPD are supported by the following:
- Strategic policies which will be applied across the centre; and
 - Sub-area policies and proposals which will apply within each of the individual sub-areas.

2. CONTEXT AND LOCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Historical Context

- 2.1 Halton Borough has three town centres at Widnes, Runcorn, and Halton Lea. Runcorn Town Centre is the smallest of the three, a quarter of the size of Widnes and Halton Lea, comprising 14,000 sq. m of retail floorspace across c. 160 individual units.
- 2.2 The development of Runcorn Town Centre followed the commercial and industrial growth of Runcorn on the south bank of the Mersey, arising from the development of the Bridgewater Canal in the 1770's, the mainline railway, and the Manchester Ship Canal in the latter half of the 19th century.
- 2.3 The town received a further boost in 1905 at the opening of the transporter bridge, which at the time of construction provided the sole vehicular link between Runcorn and Widnes up to 1961. This development helped to consolidate Runcorn Town Centre as the main town centre in Runcorn, which was home then to a population of c. 30,000.

Figure 2.1: Runcorn Town Centre (1945)



Aerial view of Runcorn Town Centre in 1945 showing original street pattern with Transporter Bridge (top left of image)

Figure 2.2: Transporter Bridge



View of the approach to the Transporter Bridge, which provided the sole vehicular link between Runcorn and Widnes until 1961.

- 2.4 Runcorn was designated as a New Town in 1964. This led to the expansion of the town by the New Town Development Corporation, with the creation of new homes, jobs and facilities for c. 70,000 people to the south and east of the town. This increased Runcorn's total population to c 90,000.
- 2.5 The continued growth of Runcorn, on the back of further development by the New Town Development Corporation around this time, did however contribute to the steady decline and neglect of the Town Centre. Chief amongst these were:
- The construction of Shopping City (re-branded as Halton Lea), a purpose-built shopping and commercial centre located 2.5km to the south-east of the Town Centre. The existing Town Centre suffered as a result, becoming a district or large neighbourhood centre.
 - The creation of a segregated busway network that cut through the Town Centre between Church Street and High Street, effectively split the centre in two.

- The creation of a grade separated expressway road network, linked to the Silver Jubilee Bridge across the Mersey. This effectively by-passed the Town Centre following the line of the Bridgewater Canal to reinforce the Canal barrier.
- Redevelopment of land to the south of Church Street to provide a covered market hall and surface level open car park.
- Redevelopment of the buildings along the north side of Church Street, and southern Bridge Street to provide modern flexible unit shops with rear servicing.

2.6 As a result, the Town Centre struggled for a number of years to adapt to its redefined role within Runcorn's retail hierarchy. This was not helped by the creation of a poorly defined and disjointed physical environment, ultimately leading to a period of neglect and decline.

Figure 2.3: Runcorn Town Centre Central Area (1983)



Aerial view of Runcorn Town Centre central area in 1983 showing the elaborate busway interchange severing linkages between Church Street (top) and High Street (bottom).

Figure 2.4: Runcorn Town Centre (1983)



Aerial view of Runcorn Town centre in 1983 showing new Silver Jubilee Bridge (top left) and expressway network (bottom) effectively bypassing the town centre.

2.7 To address these problems, the Halton Partnerships secured £13 million in 1996 from the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) Challenge Fund for a package of projects aimed at tackling the historical legacy of industrial decline and the negative effects of the New Town expansion. This bid established four main areas for improvement, as follows:

- To revitalise commercial activity within the Town Centre;
- To revitalise the existing housing stock;
- To revitalise the community, including health, employment and skills; and
- To revitalise the environment, maximising the town's attractive locational attributes and assets.

2.8 This bid facilitated the development of 39 projects between 1996 and 2003, with 75% of funding spent on capital projects including:

- Improved vehicular access via Leiria Way, layout of the town centre, and existing foot and cycle linkages;
- Levering in new retail investment;
- Improvements to the physical appearance of the Town Centre and shop fronts, and canal side locations; and
- Increased levels of activity within the Town Centre, aided through the delivery of new housing stock, a local college, and a new arts centre.

2.9 Each project has thus far delivered benefits to the viability and vitality of the Town Centre. However, significant regeneration and investment is still required.

Figure 2.5: Runcorn Town Centre (2000)



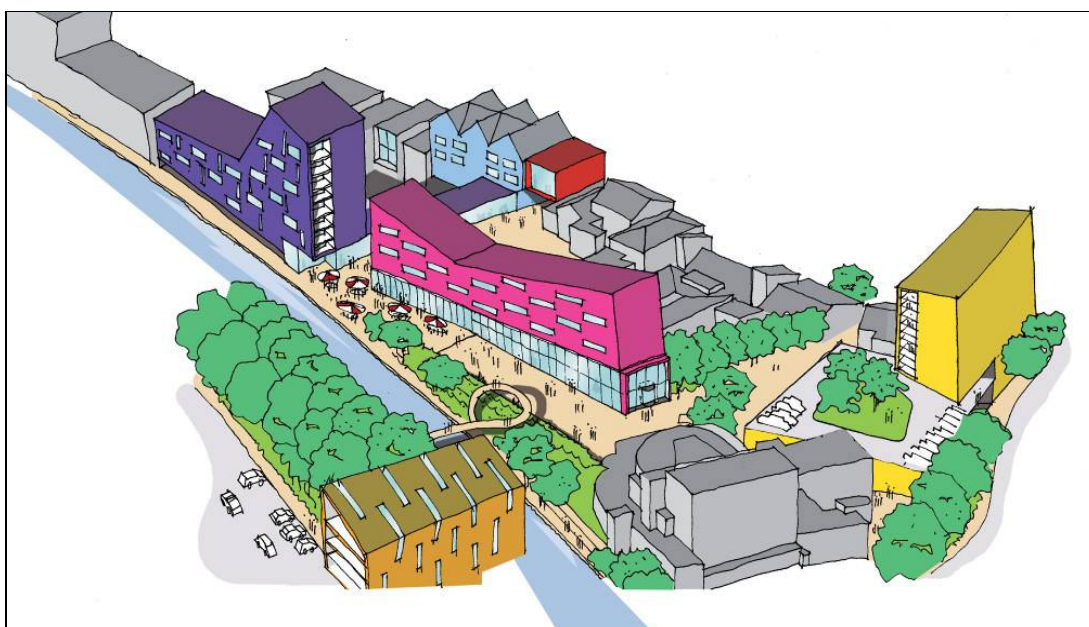
Aerial view of the Town Centre in 2000 showing the new access road from Daresbury Expressway (bottom right) and construction of the new bus station (top right).

Locational Characteristics

- 2.10 The character of Runcorn Town Centre can be broken down into a number of discrete sub-areas largely defined by the underlying topography and the layout of streets, roads, waterways and the railway.
- 2.11 There is a recurring theme of poor circulation and poor permeability, a by-product of the transport networks which converge upon the town at the crossing point of the river Mersey, creating physical barriers to access (see Figure 2.7).
- 2.12 The character of the Town Centre is defined by the quality of the views to the north, which offer an impressive sense of scale with some of the best views found on the north facing Runcorn slopes, which lie above the older town.
- 2.13 The Promenade to the north of Mersey Road includes waterside pocket parks, visitor car parking and some limited interpretation boards from which excellent views of the Mersey and the Silver Jubilee Bridge can be enjoyed. 466 new apartments (by Bryant Homes – The Deck) are also currently under construction to the east of the promenade.
- 2.14 The Bridgewater Canal is located to the south of the town centre and has recently received a number of improvements under the Bridgewater Way Programme – a leisure scheme aimed at regenerating the waterside area along Runcorn’s length of the Bridgewater Canal as part of a wider transformation, connecting numerous communities along the 39 miles stretch of waterway.
- 2.15 Complementary investment has also led to the opening of the Brindley Arts Centre on the north bank of the Bridgewater Canal, which currently terminates at the Runcorn Basin to the west. In former times the Bridgewater Canal continued westwards and joined the Manchester Ship Canal. The original route and alignment of the canal (now dismantled beyond the Runcorn Basin) is protected from development under current planning policy, although the alignment and layout of the “Runcorn loops” of the expressway (leading to the Silver Jubilee Bridge) currently limits the opportunity for the original route to be reopened.
- 2.16 Within the town centre, an emerging Canal Quarter now straddles the Bridgewater Canal incorporating land to the rear of High Street and south of the town. A developer competition was conducted in 2005, with Urban Splash selected as the preferred developer for the area. Following this, Alfred Hall Monaghan Morris (AHMM) were the winners of the architectural competition which culminated in an exhibition of eight submissions at The Brindley Arts Centre in March 2006.

- 2.17 To date, AHMM have produced a feasibility study outlining the scheme and a number of options for the various parts of the site. The current scheme includes a library and public square adjacent to the Brindley Arts Centre, mixed use retail, office and residential accommodation behind and on High Street and terraced housing on the Southern site. The housing on the Southern site was proposed to take the form of apartments in the competition entry, although there is flexibility. However, for the site to be entirely residential is only possible if the North and South site are delivered in tandem, with leisure provided on the North site.

Figure 2.6: Canal Quarter - North Bank Proposal Sketch



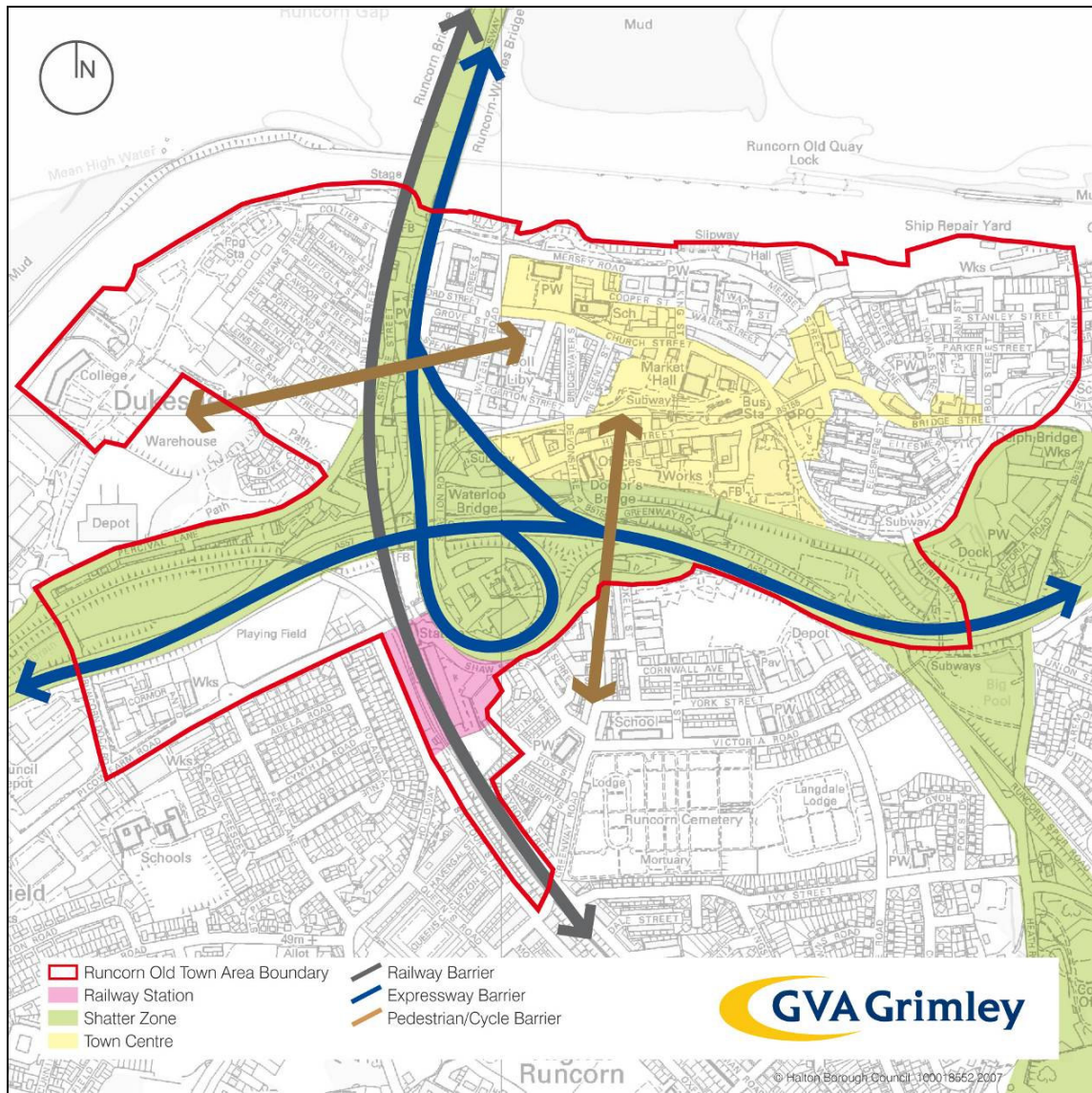
Source: Halton Borough Council

- 2.18 In developing the scheme, English Partnerships have funded site investigations, a commercial viability study and a parking and access study.
- 2.19 Development Agreement negotiations are set to conclude in 2008, followed by a planning application and funding application in 2009. Halton Borough Council will continue to acquire properties, where possible, on High Street (Camden Buildings) which fall within the scheme boundary.

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- 2.20 The proposed waterside developments at the Canal Quarter and at the Deck overlooking the Mersey Estuary will complement the town's convenience centre helping to create nodes of activity stimulated by the waterside character of the town.
- 2.21 The Town Centre has a mixed character and is laid out around well-defined streets, with the changes of level giving the town its own sense of place. The buildings are predominantly small-scale. The town's transport infrastructure makes the area distinctive with the Silver Jubilee Bridge acting as a local 'iconic' structure.
- 2.22 As the smallest of the Borough's three centres, Runcorn Town Centre serves as the dominant convenience centre within Runcorn's local catchment and is increasingly seen as performing a district centre role.
- 2.23 The prominence of the location of the area is however frustrated by a number of site constraints which comprise the following:
- Contamination: Halton Borough Council recently produced a Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy Review (2006), which recognised the risks to development of potential contamination within the town and reaffirmed the Council's commitment to management of such risk. The Review will take the Strategy through to 2011. Hence, sites identified as suitable for development are subject to varying degrees of risk associated with land contamination due to the legacy of past chemical works in the area.
 - Flood Risk: The Flood map affecting this area is available on the Environment Agency's web site <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/>.
 - Bridgewater Canal: The canal segregates the Town Centre from the main residential locations to the South therefore acting as a constraint on development and limiting access opportunities into and out of the Town Centre.
 - The Daresbury Expressway: The expressway road network, which includes grade-separated routes, has effectively created a large barrier between the town and the residential suburbs lying to the south.
 - The Railway Infrastructure: Expansive elevated rail structures physically segregate one local area to the next. The poor pedestrian routes are shared primarily with vehicles, yet are preferable to subways. Examples include low quality connections between the Station, traditional residential areas (west of the railway) and also between the houses and Runcorn Basin. Pedestrian routes are also diverted along convoluted routes using subways and stairways to circumnavigate the expressway.

2.24 The following plan illustrates the main physical constraints within Runcorn Town Centre.

Figure 2.7: Runcorn Town Centre Constraints Plan



3. THE MERSEY GATEWAY PROJECT

- 3.1 A key characteristic of the local area is the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB), a Grade II listed structure linking the two towns of Runcorn and Widnes. However, the Bridge is now operating beyond its capacity at over 80,000 vehicles every weekday, significantly exceeding its original operational capacity, thus creating a congestion bottleneck during peak hours.
- 3.2 To relieve the increasing problem of congestion, Halton Borough Council is promoting the delivery of a New Mersey Gateway Crossing across the River Mersey, situated c. 1.8km upstream of the SJB¹.
- 3.3 The case for an additional crossing of the Mersey at Halton dates as far back as 1978, in which a number of options for route alignment have been considered culminating in the submission of a Major Scheme Appraisal to the Department for Transport in July 2003 as part of Halton's Local Transport Plan.
- 3.4 The vision for the Mersey Gateway is that it is *'more than just a bridge'* but the *'catalyst'* that will connect communities and lead to regeneration and investment throughout Halton, Cheshire, the Liverpool City Region and the North West.
- 3.5 The main objectives of the Mersey Gateway Project are to:
- relieve the congested Silver Jubilee Bridge, thereby removing the constraint on local and regional development and better provide for local traffic needs;
 - apply minimum toll charges to both Mersey Gateway and the Silver Jubilee Bridge consistent with the amount required to satisfy affordability constraints and to manage road travel demand to ensure the delivery of transport and environmental benefits by maintaining free flow traffic conditions on the MG and SJB;
 - improve accessibility in order to maximise local development and regional economic growth opportunities;
 - improve local air quality and enhance the general urban environment; and
 - improve public transport links across the river and to encourage the increased use of cycling and walking; and

¹ Halton Borough Council has also produced a Parking and Access Study (2008) for the authority inclusive of access plans to improve accessibility throughout Halton.

- restore effective network resilience for transport across the River Mersey.

3.6 The reconfiguration of public transport and sustainable movement modes will be achieved through the Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy (STS). The principal objective of the STS is to *'identify and promote a network of high quality, safe, affordable, accessible and environmentally friendly travel measures for local residents, businesses and visitors to Halton, which support the key objectives of Halton's Local Transport Plan and the Mersey Gateway Project'*.

The Route

- 3.7 The scheme comprises 2.4 km of new dual 3-lane highway, a major river estuary crossing and several crossings of other obstacles (i.e. road, canals and a railway).
- 3.8 From the existing A562 Speke Road, the route would head eastwards towards a new junction called the Ditton Interchange, which would replace the Ditton roundabout. It would cross St Helens Canal, Widnes Warth Saltmarsh, Astmoor Saltmarsh and Wigg Island, as well as the Mersey Estuary itself, before turning southwards over the Manchester Ship Canal and across Astmoor Industrial Estate on the southern side of the river. It would connect into the existing road network in Runcorn by joining the Central Expressway and would join up with the M56 Motorway at Junction 12 to the south of Runcorn.

De-Linking Arrangements

- 3.9 The Mersey Gateway Project would reduce the volume of traffic crossing the Silver Jubilee Bridge by directing the natural movement of through traffic over the new crossing, a process known as 'delinking' from the strategic highway network, which will require the physical process of removing unnecessary pieces of highway infrastructure.
- 3.10 Significant analysis has been undertaken to establish the potential de-linking arrangements for Runcorn Town Centre and to investigate the benefits and opportunities which would arise through the removal of redundant infrastructure as compared to leaving the existing link roads in place.
- 3.11 The preferred option for de-linking is shown in figure 3.1 and presents the indicative routes that would be formed through the removal of the redundant infrastructure – namely the 'Runcorn Loops' and the A533 flyover. Key features of this preferred option are set out in the following paragraphs.

Local Accessibility

- 3.12 The de-linking process would remove the direct links to the Silver Jubilee Bridge encouraging non-local traffic to use the Mersey Gateway, resulting in significantly less congestion and traffic flow and returning Runcorn Town Centre infrastructure to local uses. This would ultimately improve local access to the Silver Jubilee Bridge from the local highway network and provide a local link across the river between Widnes and Runcorn.
- 3.13 The preferred approach would improve local vehicular, pedestrian and cycling links connecting the town centre with the Station, Higher Runcorn, West Runcorn and each other. Improved pedestrian and cycle links would also provide direct access to the Silver Jubilee Bridge and existing designated routes.
- 3.14 In terms of public transport the de-linking arrangements support existing bus routes and development opportunities likely to generate additional demand for public transport. Enhanced public transport interchange facilities at Runcorn Station would be provided by at-grade access and general accessibility improvements.
- 3.15 The removal of redundant infrastructure would also result in safer pedestrian and cycling routes without underpasses.

Regeneration and Development Opportunities

- 3.16 The preferred approach for de-linking maximises the potential for development and regeneration in the area. An indication of the areas available for regeneration for the preferred option is estimated at 3.4 hectares as compared to an estimate of 1.7 hectares to leaving the existing link roads in place.
- 3.17 The preferred approach also offers enhanced development and land-use potential through accessibility improvements as a result of the de-linking process and access to national rail services. A higher density of development would also be supported with less parking and reduced reliance on road links given good accessibility to public transport.
- 3.18 In addition, the preferred de-linking option allows for the re-joining of the Bridgewater Canal with the Manchester Ship Canal, which was previously restricted by the height of the A533 approach to the existing SJB.

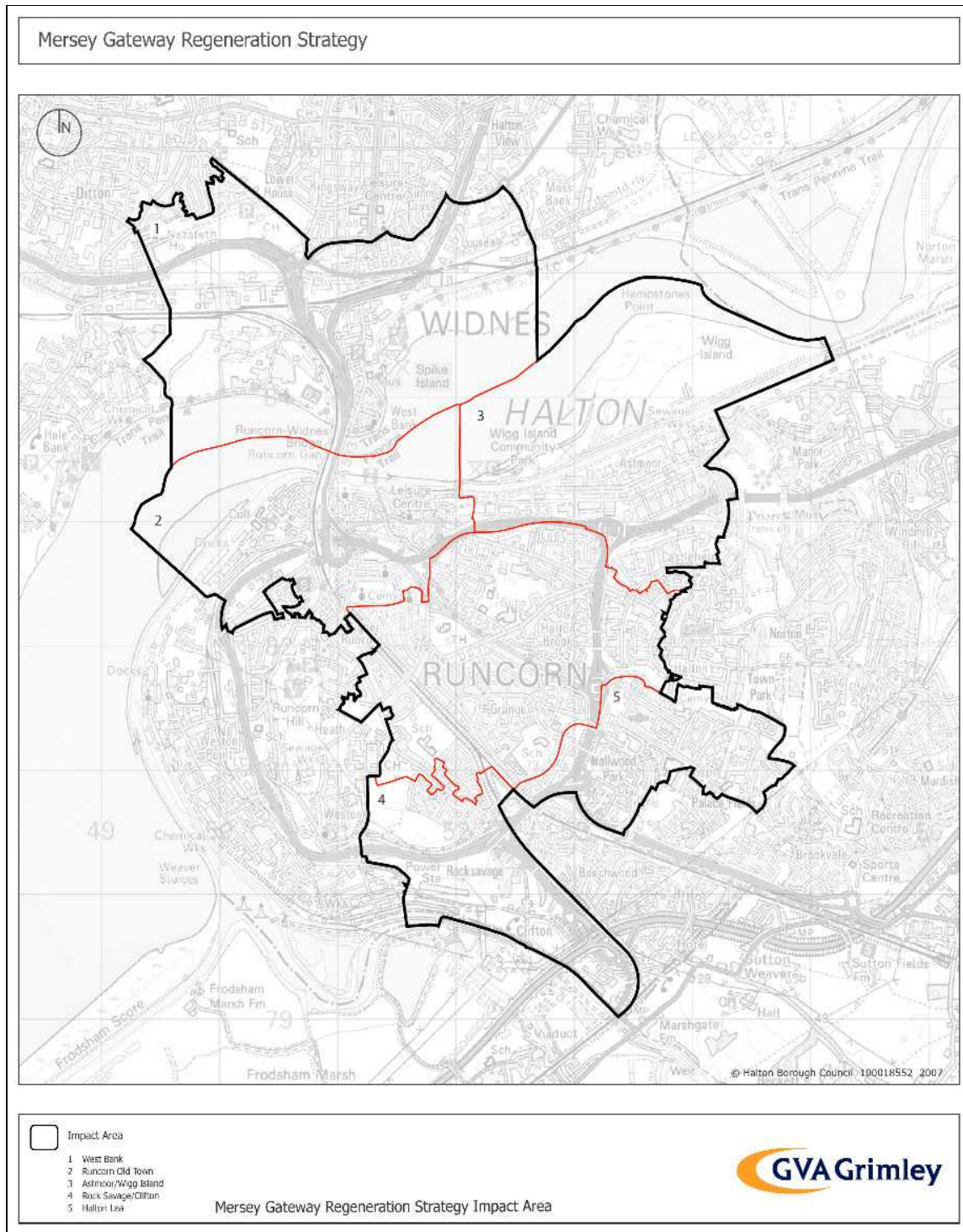
Figure 3.1: De-Linking Preferred Option



The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy

- 3.19 The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (May, 2008) is an important element of the Mersey Gateway project. Based on the adopted vision of 'more than just a bridge', it is concerned with how the bridge can deliver a new context for place-shaping, set the agenda for a sustained economic, social, physical and environmental regeneration programme over the next 20 to 30 years and reconnect the communities of Runcorn and Widnes and facilitate regeneration and investment throughout Halton, Cheshire, the Liverpool City Region and the North West.
- 3.20 The Regeneration Strategy is **Bold**; it is **Challenging** and it will **Change Perceptions**:
- **Bold** – A visionary and ambitious holistic framework for investment in Halton within a detailed phased 20-year delivery horizon, setting the agenda for new capital and revenue investment based upon the opportunities that the Mersey Gateway will create;
 - **Challenging** – A plan for dealing with some of the most contaminated and constrained land in the country, as part of an ambitious place-shaping regeneration programme, based upon the opportunities that the Mersey Gateway will create;
 - **Changing Perceptions** – Setting a new agenda for investment in delivering a place that people can be proud of and that people aspire to live and work in, invest and spend time.
- 3.21 The Regeneration Strategy covers an area in excess of 20 square kilometres within the borough of Halton (figure 3.2), including the Runcorn Town Centre SPD area. The Regeneration Strategy also incorporates Halton Lea Town Centre, Astmoor Industrial Estate, Rocksavage and Clifton and also includes the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge as well as the proposed route of the new Mersey Gateway.
- 3.22 The area was agreed with the Council to provide a statutory planning basis for policy development due to its influence on the Local Development Framework. Several key elements of this SPD have been informed by the Regeneration Strategy, building upon some of the principles, objectives and development opportunities in the document.

Figure 3.2: Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy – Area of Influence



4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 This section of the SPD outlines the planning policy context applicable to all emerging development proposals within the defined Runcorn Town Centre area. This SPD revises and updates the previous Runcorn Town Centre Strategy prepared in 1997, and the draft Runcorn Town Centre Strategy SPD published in 2007. The saved policies of the Halton UDP should be read alongside this document as a whole as other generic policies, not addressed within this SPD, will also be of relevance in determining and future development proposals. This SPD should also be read in conjunction with other relevant Council planning policy and corporate documents.

4.2 Planning policy of relevance to new development within Runcorn Town Centre is set out at three tiers; national; regional; and local. Those policies of direct relevance to the regeneration and redevelopment of Runcorn Town Centre are discussed below:

National Policy

4.3 **Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1): *Delivering Sustainable Development***, states that planning policy should promote the delivery of high-quality design through new developments. It recognises the need to focus development that attracts a large number of people, especially retail, leisure and office development, in existing centres to promote their vitality and viability, social inclusion, and sustainable patterns of development.

4.4 **Planning Policy Statement: *Planning and Climate Change – Supplement to PPS1*** sets out the contribution of spatial planning to reducing emissions and stabilising climate change when providing for new development and infrastructure to serve the needs of communities. The guidance aims to:

- Ensure planning policy contributes towards the Government's Climate Change Programme;
- Deliver energy efficient homes;
- Deliver sustainable patterns of urban growth; and
- Secure developments that shape places resilient to the effects of climate change in ways consistent with social cohesion and inclusion.

- 4.5 Government policy on new retail development is set out within **PPS6: *Planning for Town Centres***. This establishes the key objective to promote the vitality and viability of town centres by virtue of:
- Planning for the growth and development of existing centres;
 - Promoting and enhancing existing centres, focusing development in such centres and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all;
 - Delivering more sustainable patterns of development, ensuring that locations are fully exploited through high-density, mixed-use development; and
 - Promoting sustainable transport choices, including reducing the need to travel and providing viable alternatives to the private car.
- 4.6 To deliver the Government's key objectives, PPS6 requires proposals for town centre uses outside of existing centre's to demonstrate the need for development that it is of an appropriate scale, sequentially compliant and accessible, and will not unacceptably impact upon the vitality and viability of existing centre's.
- 4.7 **PPS9: *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation*** refers to the role of urban renaissance in enhancing biodiversity. The guidance specifically states that development proposals should;
- Promote sustainable development by ensuring that biological and geological diversity are conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development;
 - Conserve, enhance and restore the diversity of England's wildlife and geology by sustaining, and where possible improving, the quality and extent of natural habitat;
 - Enhance biodiversity in green spaces and among developments so that they are used by wildlife and valued by people, recognising that healthy functional ecosystems can contribute to a better quality of life and to people's sense of well-being; and
 - Ensure that developments take account of the role and value of biodiversity in supporting economic diversification and contributing to a high quality environment.
- 4.8 **PPS23: *Planning and Pollution Control*** seeks to ensure the sustainable and beneficial use of land. Within this aim, polluting activities that are necessary for wider social and economic reasons should be carefully sited and planned, and subject to such planning conditions so that their adverse effects are minimised and contained within acceptable limits.

- 4.9 PPS23 states that the planning system should focus on whether the development itself is an acceptable use of the land, and the impacts of those uses, rather than the control of processes or emissions.
- 4.10 The presence of ground contamination is considered to affect or restrict the beneficial use of land, though development can present an opportunity to deal with it. Where land is affected by contamination, *“development can provide an opportunity to address the problem for the benefit of the wider community and bring the land back into beneficial use.”*
- 4.11 The Governments objectives for contaminated land are set out in DEFRA Circular 01/2006, *Contaminated Land*. These include:
- a. *to identify and remove unacceptable risks to human health and the environment;*
 - b. *to seek to bring damaged land back into beneficial use; and*
 - c. *to seek to ensure that the cost burdens faced by individuals companies and society as a whole are proportionate, manageable and economically sustainable.*

Regional Policy

- 4.12 Regional planning policy for the North West is set out in the North West of England Plan – Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (2008). RSS comprises several policies of direct relevance to the regeneration objectives of Runcorn Town Centre, as follows:
- 4.13 **Policy DP1 (Spatial Principles)** sets out the key principles underpinning the RSS, namely:
- Promote sustainable communities;
 - Promote sustainable economic development;
 - Make the best use of existing resources and infrastructure;
 - Manage travel demand, reduce the need to travel, and increase accessibility;
 - Marry opportunity and need;
 - Promote environmental quality;
 - Mainstreaming rural issues;
 - Reduce emissions and adapt to climate change.

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- 4.14 **Policy DP4 (Make the Best Use of Existing Resources and Infrastructure)** affords priority to developments in line with the regional and sub-regional spatial framework set out in Policy RDF1. Developments are required to conform to the following sequential approach:
- (i) using existing buildings and previously developed land;
 - (ii) using other suitable infill opportunities; and
 - (iii) the development of other land where this is well-located in relation to housing, jobs, other services and infrastructure.
- 4.15 The accompanying text advises that the re-use of disused land and buildings, where appropriate, is vital to enhancing the image of the North West.
- 4.16 **Policy W5 (Retail Development)** promotes retail investment consistent with the scale and function of centres so not to *"undermine the vitality and viability of any other centre or result in the creation of unsustainable shopping patterns"*. Although this policy makes no specific reference to retail investment within Runcorn, the accompanying text states that this *"does not preclude the investment of resources in other centres particularly where this will assist in the regeneration of the centre and the wider area"*.
- 4.17 **Policy RDF1 (Spatial Priorities)** affords priority for growth and development within the regional centres of Manchester and Liverpool, and then the inner areas surrounding these regional centres. Runcorn is afforded third tier priority for growth and development, focused in and around its town centre.
- 4.18 **Policy LCR3 (Outer part of the Liverpool City Region)** refers to the outer part of the Liverpool City Region, beyond the city centre and its inner areas. The policy aims to focus economic development in towns and cities, including Runcorn.
- 4.19 **Policy EM3 (Green Infrastructure)** requires schemes to incorporate environmental and socio-economic benefits by:
- Conserving and managing existing green infrastructure;
 - Creating new green infrastructure; and
 - Enhancing its functionality, quality, connectivity and accessibility.

Local Policy

- 4.20 The saved policies of the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) provide the planning policy framework for the Borough, specifically in respect of its social, economic and environmental development.
- 4.21 The UDP contains a number of strategic aims and objectives, set out in Part 1 of the UDP. These include **Policy S14**, which promotes the delivery of a New Crossing over the River Mersey to relieve congestion on the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge, and form part of an integrated transport system for Halton. With respect to Halton's town centres, they include the aim to increase their vitality and viability, and the need to ensure that no retail development is permitted within one town centre which would seriously harm the success of another.
- 4.22 Part 2 UDP policies seek to implement the broad aims and objectives contained within Part 1. Those directly relevant to this SPD are as follows:

Policy TC1 – Retail and Leisure Allocations

- 4.23 This policy sets out the Borough's retail and leisure allocations, based on an assessment of need and a sequential approach to site selection. Runcorn Town Centre includes several retail and leisure allocations, namely:
- Central Area – Mixed retail (A1, A2, A3);
 - Land rear of 59-69 High Street – Leisure (D2), retail (A1, A2, A3), first floor residential and offices;
 - Camden Gardens – Leisure (D2), theatre;
 - Crosville Bus Depot – Leisure (D2), food and drink (A3); and
 - Land at Chapel Street – Retail warehousing (non food), food and drink (A3), hotel, offices.

Policy TC2 – Retail Development to the Edge of Designated Shopping Centres

- 4.24 This policy introduces criteria for assessing when new retail development will be permitted on the edge of centre locations. Retail proposals located to the edge of the retail core of existing centres will be required to demonstrate that there is quantitative and qualitative need for the additional facilities, and that there are no suitable sites available within the retail core of the centre in question. In addition, new development should be located within easy walking distance, and serve to enhance the shopping environment.

Policy TC4 – Retail Development within Designated Shopping Areas

- 4.25 Retail development within Primary Shopping Areas and designated neighbourhood centres will be permitted provided that proposals contribute to the centre's vitality and viability, and are of a size and scale commensurate to the character and function of the centre. The most appropriate location for many local shops will be in existing neighbourhood centres.

Policy TC5 – Design of Retail Development

- 4.26 This policy establishes the design criteria for considering new retail development and extensions. Retail development is required to contribute positively to the environmental quality of the Borough's town centres as well as develop and enhance local character. Retail schemes of good design will help to strengthen and promote the town centre's viability and attractiveness.

Policy TC6 – Out of Centre Retail Development

- 4.27 This policy sets out the criteria to assess out of centre retail proposals, including small-scale retail developments, to meet local needs. The UDP is clear in its aims and objectives that retail development should be located within existing town centres in order to safeguard the continued viability of those centres, and to aid their regeneration by enhancing their vitality and viability. Proposals for out of centre retail development will need to comply with the policy tests set out in TC6.

Policy TC8 – Non-Retail Uses within Primary and Secondary Shopping Areas

- 4.28 This policy permits Class A2 (financial and professional services) and Class A3 (sale of food and drink) uses and other appropriate non-retail uses at ground floor level within Primary and Secondary Shopping Areas, the number and concentration of which is subject to the requirements of Runcorn Town Centre. Within Runcorn's Primary Shopping Area, up to approximately 20% of outlets should be Class A2 and Class A3 and other appropriate non-retail town centre uses. Within Runcorn's Secondary Shopping Area, up to approximately 50% of outlets should be Class A2 and Class A3 and other appropriate non-retail town centre uses.

Policy TC10 – Runcorn Town Centre Mixed Uses Area

- 4.29 The following uses will be permitted within the Mixed Town Centre Uses Area of Runcorn:
- Financial and Professional Services (A2);

- Food and Drink (A3);
- Business uses (B1);
- Hotels (C1);
- Residential Institutions (C2);
- Dwelling Houses (C3) as part of a mixed development, where appropriate;
- Non-residential institutions (D1);
- Assembly and leisure (D2);
- Retail (A1) provided it would serve local needs; and
- Other non-retail uses appropriate to a town centre.

Policy LTC1 – Development of Major Leisure and Community Facilities within Designated Shopping Centres

- 4.30 Proposals for major leisure and community facilities within Primary and Secondary shopping areas will be permitted provided they are of a size and scale appropriate to the character and function of the centre, and contribute to the centres vitality and viability. These should be located in areas accessible by public transport, and help contribute to the attractiveness of the Borough's town centres outside of shopping hours.

Policy LTC2 – Development of Major Leisure and Community Facilities on the edge of Shopping Centres

- 4.31 Proposals for major leisure and community facilities located to the edge of primary and secondary shopping areas will be permitted subject to satisfying specific criteria. This will include demonstrating that there is a quantitative and qualitative need for the additional facilities, and that no suitable sites are available within the primary and secondary shopping areas in question. Proposals should be minded to take into account walking distances and linkages to and from the proposed site, public transport interchanges, and shopping areas. Edge of centre leisure proposals must not only be within easy walking distance, but also serve to enhance the quality of the local shopping environment.

Policy LTC3 – Development of Major Leisure and Community Facilities in out of centre locations

- 4.32 Proposals for major leisure and community facilities within out of centre locations will not be permitted unless all criteria can be satisfied. This includes demonstrating a need for

development, that it would not affect the vitality and viability of the town centres, and that the site is accessible by a choice of transport modes other than the car thus reducing the need to travel.

Policy TP16 – Green Travel Plans

- 4.33 This policy requires all new development proposals comprising jobs, shopping and services which are likely to generate significant employment opportunities to include proposals for a Green Travel Plan.
- 4.34 The UDP seeks to implement these objectives as spatial policies and proposals, where appropriate.

General Policy

- 4.35 Other UDP land-uses policies relating to development around the defined Runcorn Town Centre area can also contribute to the regeneration aims for the area; to promote social, economic and environmental regeneration. These are set out within Appendix B.

Local Development Framework

- 4.36 The Halton LDF is intended to replace the UDP as the principal planning policy framework for Halton over the next few years. In the meantime – under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 – it is necessary to continue to ‘save’ a number of UDP policies until replaced, merged or deleted as appropriate by emerging LDF documents.
- 4.37 The Council’s Local Development Scheme (2007)² provides details on key emerging Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) relevant to development within Runcorn Town Centre, as follows:

Development Plan Documents (DPDs)

- **Core Strategy (DPD)** – this will establish the vision and objectives for future spatial development across the Borough, scheduled for adoption in 2009;

² The Council’s Local Development Scheme is subject to annual review through the Council’s Annual Monitoring Report, and in line with the new PPS 12: *Local Spatial Planning* (June 2008), thus the projected dates for preparation of these documents may be subject to change.

- **New Residential Development (DPD)** – this will allocate sites for residential development within Halton, and comprise detailed policies on the delivery of new housing provision. Scheduled for adoption in 2012;
- **New Employment Development (DPD)** – this will allocate future employment sites across the Borough alongside an accompanying policy framework. Scheduled for adoption in 2012;
- **New Retail and Leisure Development (DPD)** – this will allocate sites for retail and employment development, incorporating specific policies to control the delivery of these facilities. Scheduled for adoption in 2012;
- **Runcorn and Western Docklands Regeneration Area (DPD)** – this will provide detailed guidance for the comprehensive development or redevelopment of the Runcorn and Weston Docks area. Scheduled for adoption in 2011.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

4.38 There are a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (adopted and emerging) that will be of relevance to development proposals within the defined Runcorn Town Centre area. Key amongst these are:

- Shop Fronts, Signage and Advertising;
- Designing for Community Safety;
- Design and of New Industrial and Commercial Development;
- Design of New Residential Development;
- Transport and Accessibility;
- Provision of Open Space; and
- Affordable Housing.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

4.39 The Council's SCI was adopted in July 2006, outlining the consultation process to be applied by the Council in the preparation of its future Local Development Documents. This SPD will be consulted upon in accordance with the provisions of the SCI.

Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)

4.40 The Runcorn Town Centre SPD is intended to contribute towards the implementation of the Halton Sustainable Community Strategy (2006). This Strategy co-ordinates the resources of local public, private and voluntary organisations towards common purposes. The vision of the Strategy is that;

“Halton will be a thriving and vibrant Borough where people can learn and develop their skills; enjoy a good quality of life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality; sustained by a thriving business community; and within safer, stronger and more attractive neighbourhoods.”

4.41 The SCS also includes a priority for the borough titled ‘Halton’s Urban Renewal’ with an objective *“to revitalise the town centres to create dynamic, well-designed high quality commercial areas that can continue to meet the needs of local people, investors, businesses and visitors.”*

4.42 Halton Borough Council is committed to contributing to achieving the priorities of the SCS. The Council’s priorities are set out in the Corporate Plan. This plan also has five priorities, including ‘urban renewal.’

4.43 The priorities in the SCS and the Corporate Plan are based on the priorities set by the people of Halton. These were identified through community involvement via area panels, focus groups, and a telephone survey. The Corporate Plan was based on the same community involvement and statistical information compiled for the State of the Borough Report, 2005.

Waterside Strategy

4.44 The Waterside Strategy was launched in March 2005. As it relates to Runcorn Town Centre, it seeks to achieve the better integration of the waterside frontages into the town centre to achieve the following broad aims:

- Environmental improvements;
- Generate additional economic activity;
- Bring derelict and underused sites into active high-quality uses;
- Develop a brand image for the Town Centre based upon its canal heritage;
- Create a leisure, retail and commercial focus on the Bridgewater Canal with secondary residential; and

- Create a residential focus on the Manchester Ship Canal, with ancillary retail and commercial.

4.45 This SPD seeks to build upon the strategic aims of the Waterside Strategy to help achieve a more cohesive town centre that relates better to its canal frontages.

Local Transport Plan 2

4.46 The Halton Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2006/07 – 2010/11 states that the ability of local people to access work, learning, healthcare, shopping, leisure and exercise can significantly impact on their quality of life and opportunities. The Local Transport Plan contains four shared priorities, as follows:

- *Tackling Congestion* – to facilitate the emerging regeneration of Runcorn and Widnes, there is the need to address the problem of congestion arising from increased levels of car ownership to deliver a freer flowing road network and associated economic and quality of life benefits. The delivery of a second Mersey crossing is recognised as an important means of addressing localised road congestion, alongside traffic management, public transport improvements, walking and cycling, and travel planning/smarter choices.
- *Delivering Accessibility* – the ability of people to access places of work, learning, healthcare, shopping, leisure and exercise can significantly enhance the quality of life. Schemes and initiatives to improve accessibility to important services and amenities are encouraged in the Local Transport Plan.
- *Safer Roads* – a key Government target is to reduce the number of annual road casualties across UK roads. The provision of a safe environment and reducing the impact of traffic on local communities is a key ambition, delivered through a range of traffic safety, traffic calming and speed management measures.
- *Better Air Quality* – reducing the environmental impact of road-based transportation is a driving ambition of European policy, adopted at local level through the Local Transport Plan. Opportunities to promote alternative transport modes are encouraged, notably walking, cycling, and public transport.

4.47 Helping to ensure that people can access the services which they need and want is not just a matter of improving local transport, but also of improving the provision of other services and developments in more accessible places at more accessible times. In addition, good access is a crucial element in attracting new businesses to relocate to the area or to establish themselves. The LTP is aimed at meeting the targets in the SCS - clearly this demonstrates

that both this SPD and the LTP are ultimately trying to achieve the same goals and each will benefit the other.

Halton's Biodiversity Action Plan

4.48 The Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) process is the current system for the protection, conservation and enhancement of wildlife in the United Kingdom. As part of the Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Halton's BAP – of relevance to the Runcorn Town Centre area – focuses on:

- [Wildlife Corridors](#); and
- [Action Areas for People & Nature](#).

4.49 Development proposals within the defined Runcorn Town Centre area will be required to have regard to these policy provisions.

5. VISION AND OBJECTIVES

5.1 The vision for this SPD is to:

're-establish Runcorn Town Centre as a vibrant waterside location that provides for the day to day shopping needs of it's immediate catchment whilst offering a wider complementary function to the neighbouring town centre, as a focus for local independent shops, niche retailers and service providers, and as a centre for cultural and leisure activity'.

5.2 It is important to build upon the existing strengths of the Town Centre. It has the potential to develop as a 'market town' where its special historic location - on the banks of the River Mersey - can be used to create a vibrant place to live, shop or visit, defined by its waterway, rail and road networks.

5.3 Underpinning the vision is a strong economic rationale. A focus for this growth is within the business services sector, with the Town Centre well placed physically to benefit from growth when considering the accessibility opportunity offered by Runcorn Station - providing direct rail links to London, Birmingham and Liverpool.

5.4 Yet, at present, the Town Centre lacks the commercial, retail and leisure offer to fully take advantage of future opportunities. At present there is a necessity to rationalise the existing transport infrastructure providing access into, and out of, the Town – particularly the overcomplicated road system. The expansive elevated and 'loops' structures that link the Daresbury Expressway to the SJB impede movement from one local area to the next. In particular a number of unsatisfactory routes form low quality connections between the Railway Station, traditional residential areas (west of the railway) and also between the houses and Runcorn Basin. Pedestrian and cycle movement is also diverted along convoluted routes using subways and stairways to navigate the expressway. It is these deficiencies that the SPD principally looks to address.

5.5 Building on this vision, this SPD provides an opportunity for under-utilised or vacant land in the Town Centre to be brought forward to support the economic aspirations of the area by diversifying the residential offer, offering mixed use employment and commercial space alongside a revitalised public realm sympathetic to the 'market town' tendencies of the area.

Existing Opportunities

5.6 To inform the preparation of this SPD, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of the existing Town Centre has been undertaken and is reproduced at Appendix C. The main findings from the SWOT analysis are:

a) Strengths

5.7 Runcorn Town Centre is the dominant convenience centre within its local catchment. The centre has developed a strong complementary role to Halton Lea specialising in financial and professional services with specialist traders also increasingly evident. Shop fronts and environment are generally very good and there are below average vacancies. Recent developments have improved the centres appeal.

b) Weaknesses

5.8 The Town Centre lacks mainstream offer with few national multiples present. The centre lacks identity or prominence and suffers from convoluted access routes, poor legibility (differentiation & linkages between areas), poor signage and fails to maximise on its key environmental assets. Parking in the central core car parks and the commercial streets surrounding them is quite congested on a weekday, where there can be little if any spare capacity between 9am and 3pm. This is limiting capacity for higher-value short-stay parking in this central retail location

c) Opportunities

5.9 There is remaining capacity to support additional convenience goods retailing to further consolidate the centres strength in this area. Current development proposals at the Canal Quarter and The Deck together with remaining central development sites present great opportunities to build upon the recent successes of the Central Area redevelopment and the Brindley Arts Centre. These should create a more cohesive and attractive centre, consolidating its retail role and developing an enhanced leisure and cultural functions throughout the day and into the evening. The operation of the existing town centre parking offer would benefit from a system whereby much of the existing long-stay parking was displaced into the spare capacity of the outer car parks. Further, the opportunity to introduce car parking charging and enforcement measures warrant further investigation.

d) Threats

- 5.10 Increased retail competition from surrounding centres (Halton Lea, Widnes and Liverpool), and in leisure terms from Widnes, Frodsham and Stockton Heath. Failure to fully integrate new developments whereby they act as stand-alone developments without generating wider 'spin-off' benefits for the centre as a whole. The need to build on and carry forward the achievements from the previous SRB backed investment (i.e. maintaining the shop frontages/street scene improvements to the same high standard). Introduction of parking management and restrictions for central car parks increases the threat of overspill of parking uses into areas surrounding the Town Centre.
- 5.11 Analysis of the factors above has informed the development of a primary series of Objectives to deliver the regeneration of Runcorn Town Centre, which are to be implemented imminently.
- 5.12 Furthermore, the long-term ambition of the Mersey Gateway Project, detailed in chapter 4, enables the facilitation and development of a related and interconnected set of Objectives, which will act as a catalyst in achieving the vision of this SPD.

Priority Regeneration Objectives

- 5.13 A number of priority regeneration objectives for Runcorn Town Centre have emerged from both the existing context, and the proposals of the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy. These are as follows:
- **Objective 1 – Enhance Employment Role:** Initiate physical redevelopment of Runcorn Station Gateway for high value employment uses, following environmental and secured by design principles utilising the improved access and visibility, achieved through de-linking of A553 (and 'loops') infrastructure.
 - **Objective 2 – Expand Specialist Retail & Leisure Role:** Providing accommodation and development opportunities for the refocusing of the role of the Town Centre for specialist niche traders to complement the roles of the boroughs other town centres and capitalise on the 'market town' appeal. Initiate physical opportunities for the development of leisure uses in the Town Centre– particularly in the new Canal Quarter- to develop a vibrant, cultural and safe day and night-time economy building on the achievements at The Brindley.
 - **Objective 3 – Improve Community Facilities:** Provide opportunities for the development of improved services and public realm upgrades across the Town Centre. This should focus on protecting, managing and enhancing the cultural, built and natural environment and promoting cycle and walking facilities between the Station, Town Centre, surrounding

residential neighbourhoods and the waterside. Re-open the closed section of the Bridgewater Canal to meet the Manchester Ship Canal for business and leisure travel uses. Utilise the Halton Parking & Access (2008) study to achieve improved parking and accessibility.

- **Objective 4 – Enhance Public Transport:** Rationalise the existing A553 road infrastructure through de-linking providing improved and simplified bus access to Runcorn Town Centre and Runcorn Rail Station via the Town Viaduct and High Street and new Station Gateway Quarter³. Consider options to re-model the existing bus station to enhance circulation.
- **Objective 5 – Increase & Diversify Housing Offer:** Increase, and diversify, the housing offer within Runcorn, providing resource efficient and affordable housing – with a particular focus on developing sites made available through infrastructure removal in Runcorn Town Centre to meet forecast population expansion. Build on waterfront achievements at The Deck to encourage the appropriate and economically viable development of housing within the Canal Quarter. This would establish a north-south activity corridor that supports food, drink and complementary uses for the sustainability and wider regeneration of the Town Centre and expand the user-base of the Town Centre’s retail and leisure offer.
- **Objective 6 – Sustainable Development:** To use land, energy and water resources prudently, minimising the production of waste and increasing re-use, recycling and recovery of waste.

³ Halton Borough Council have established a ‘de-linking Topic Group’ to consult on the rationalisation of the A553 infrastructure.

6. STRATEGIC POLICIES

- 6.1 The following Strategic Policies are applicable to all new development proposals within the defined Runcorn Town Centre. As a SPD, this document cannot formally designate sites for development.
- 6.2 However, it is able to identify development principles for existing opportunities. Sites that are identified as new opportunities can, if necessary, be taken forward as designations through the Local Development Framework.

Strategic Policy: SP1

Opportunities to enhance the environment and increase the localised population by infill residential development (including as part of appropriate mixed-use schemes) should be identified and promoted.

- 6.3 An increased population will provide additional customers for convenience businesses, increase footfall and activity levels, and provide a more vibrant atmosphere.

Strategic Policy: SP2

The Town Centre's role within its localised catchment should be protected and enhanced wherever possible. Opportunities for additional convenience provision should be identified and promoted.

- 6.4 The Council will undertake periodic retail capacity studies to identify any quantitative and qualitative gaps in provision to inform the provision of up-to-date development plan policies.

Strategic Policy: SP3

The Town Centre should build upon its strong complementary retail role to Halton Lea, providing a location for uses not well catered for within its larger neighbour, particularly retail services and specialist or niche retailers, serving the needs of the whole community.

- 6.5 Developments that maintain or enhance the centre's specialist retail offer will be for the private market.

Strategic Policy: SP4

The Town Centre should build upon its complementary leisure role to Halton Lea, providing a location for uses not well catered for within its larger neighbour, particularly entertainment, leisure and food and drink. Opportunities exist, building upon the success of the Brindley Arts Centre, to develop the cultural and leisure role of the centre creating a safe and attractive day and evening destination serving the needs of the whole community, and reducing the need to travel outside of the Borough to competing destinations.

Strategic Policy: SP5

The Canal Quarter and The Deck developments should facilitate the introduction of a new north/south activity corridor, incorporating Public Hall Street, capable of attracting and supporting food, drink and complementary uses building upon the successes of the Brindley Arts Centre, waterside environmental improvements and promoting the Town Centre as a cultural, leisure and entertainment destination to the benefit of the whole community.

- 6.6 The Council recognises the strong opportunity for the development of enhanced leisure facilities within the centre, building upon the success of the Brindley Arts Centre and utilising the areas waterside frontages and other environmental assets.
- 6.7 The commercial and passive leisure developments and improvements at the Canal Quarter and The Deck / Promenade provide an opportunity to establish better links between the two waterside locations, helping to integrate the centre as a whole and introducing a north-south leisure orientated activity corridor.
- 6.8 The Council recognises that opportunities to re-model the existing bus station to support improved accessibility, circulation and the introduction of a new north/south activity corridor should be encouraged and supported.

Strategic Policy: SP6

Opportunities to develop new leisure based activities based around or on the Bridgewater Canal, including developments associated with the potential re-opening of the Runcorn Locks and/or the creation of a second Cheshire Canal Ring should be encouraged and supported.

- 6.9 The Bridgewater Canal remains navigable, and provides valuable opportunities for waterborne and waterside leisure activities.
- 6.10 The revised access arrangements to the Silver Jubilee Bridge arising from the proposed Mersey Gateway Project de-linking works will result in the removal of the current highway that blocks the route of the Bridgewater Canal. These works will open up the opportunity to re-instate this section of the canal route.
- 6.11 In the longer term, there is the possibility of re-establishing the Runcorn Locks, linking Runcorn Basin with the Manchester Ship Canal and via the Weaver Navigation recreating a second 'Cheshire Ring.' Such a route is likely to be very attractive to leisure craft and holiday-makers. Runcorn basin would become a layover point for craft waiting to enter the lock 'staircase' creating opportunities for commercial activities to service the needs of waterborne and other visitors.
- 6.12 Developments that maintain or enhance the centre's waterborne or canalside leisure offer will be for the private market. Policy GE29 of the UDP places a presumption against development that would prejudice the operation or attractiveness of the canal environments.

Strategic Policy: SP7

Applications for Change of Use and those required to be supported by a Design and Access Statement will be expected to demonstrate that their proposed development either:

- **Contributes positively towards the aims of reducing greenhouse gas emissions; or**
- **Represents the most appropriate environmental solution.**

- 6.13 The issues surrounding climate change and 'global warming' are among the most problematic facing modern society worldwide. In order to ensure that the Borough is developed in a sustainable manner and minimise its contribution to climate change, it is important that even minor developments are located within appropriate locations to minimise the need to travel, and designed and constructed to minimise their energy requirements.
- 6.14 Policies S10 and BE1 of the UDP require development proposals to clearly demonstrate how they will minimise greenhouse gas emissions and how their detailed proposals will maximise efficiency in the use of resources. Design and Access Statements will provide the appropriate

mechanism to demonstrate that environmental issues have been adequately addressed through the application proposals.

Strategic Policy: SP8

Improve pedestrian and cycling linkages within the centre and from surrounding areas by:

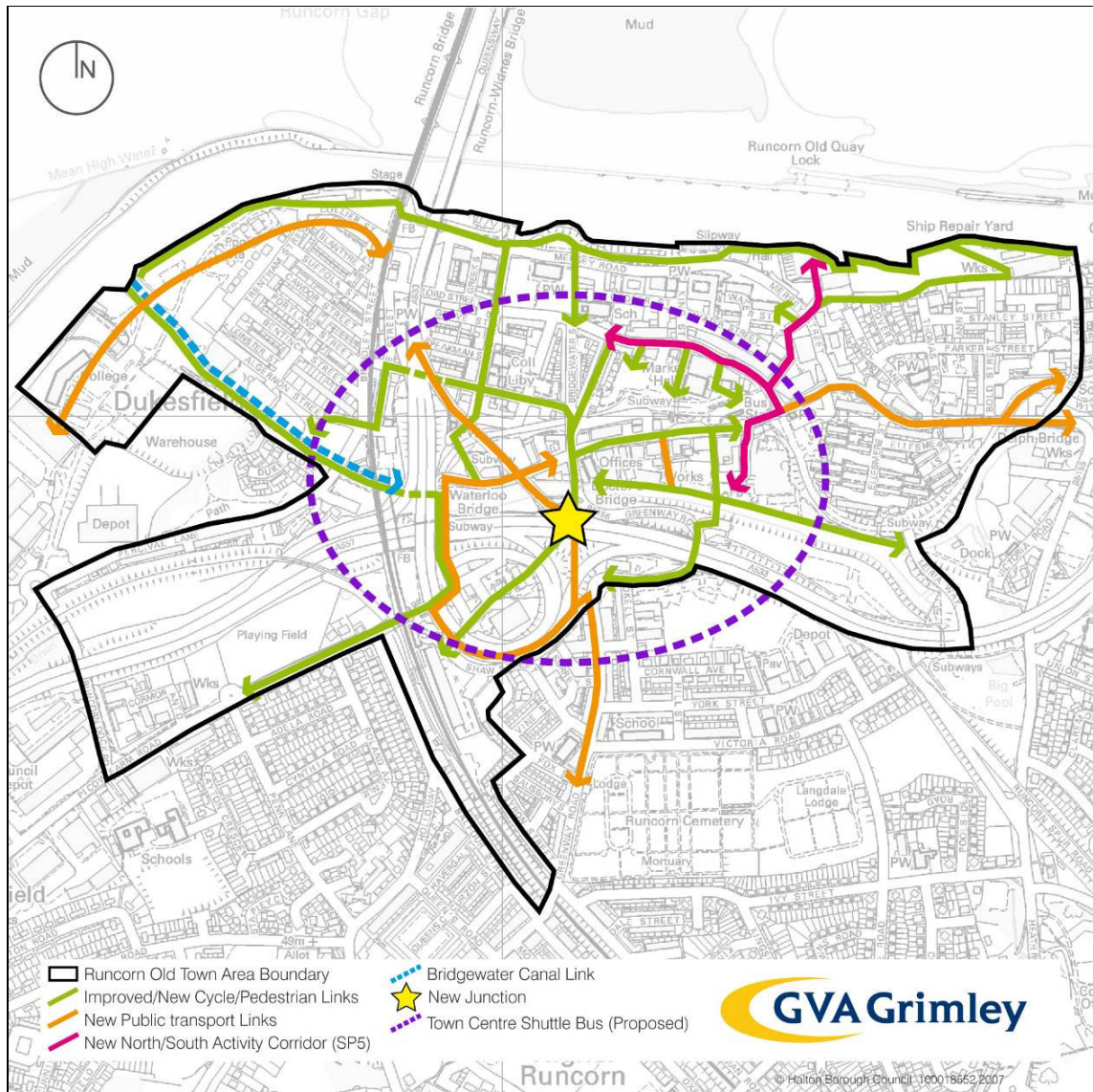
- The enhancement of existing pedestrian and cycling routes; and
- The creation of a new network of pedestrian and cycle paths within the centre, including:
 - along the proposed new north-south activity corridor from the Brindley Arts Centre to the Promenade;
 - from Runcorn Station to the High Street, Regent Street, Central Area, Church Street and the Promenade sub areas;
 - from the High Street sub-area to Runcorn Docks; and
 - from the Bridge Street sub-area along the Promenade to Runcorn Docks to the west of the Town Centre.
- Linkage of new routes with strategic cycle network through the proposals of the Halton Sustainable Transport Strategy.

6.15 **The Council will seek contributions for this from all new developments within the Town Centre through planning obligations. This may include contributions towards parking, and travel planning (trip demand management), which should be examined in Transport Assessments submitted as part planning applications.**

6.16 Recent improvements generated by the central area redevelopment have created the opportunity to fully integrate the different elements of the town centre. Further improvements to the footpath and cycle network are required to fully realise this aim.

6.17 The Council will seek planning obligations from all major new developments within the town centre areas to provide contributions towards the creation of a safe and attractive environment. This will include the improvement of linkages to surrounding areas by the enhancement of footpaths and cycle linkages, as shown on Figure 6.1 overleaf.

Figure 6.1: Runcorn Town Centre Movement Plan



Strategic Policy: SP9

Development of sites incorporating or adjoining greenways should be in accordance with the provisions of UDP policy TP9.

- 6.18 Halton's greenway network is made up of proposed and potential off-road routes for walking, cycling and where appropriate, horse-riding. These connect people to facilities and green spaces.
- 6.19 Development proposals which incorporate a greenway will be expected to enhance the condition and appearance of proposed routes and implement potential routes. Where proposed development adjoins a greenway, extensions and improvements to the network will be sought through negotiation.

Strategic Policy: SP10

The supply of safe and attractive short-stay shopper's car parking is essential to the vitality of the centre. The Canal Quarter redevelopment and/or other schemes significantly affecting the existing provision or likely demand for parking should contribute to the development and subsequent implementation of a comprehensive access and parking study. This study will also need to address issues of long stay car parking for traders and commuters.

- 6.20 The availability of short-stay car parking has been identified as a major issue for the centre. Almost a third of cars are parked for seven or more hours, limiting the spaces available to other visitors during the day.
- 6.21 Where any development scheme is demonstrated to significantly alter the existing parking provision or the demand for parking spaces, it will be expected to contribute to, or conform to, a comprehensive Access and Parking Study. The results of this Study will be used to inform the work of the Parking Partnership⁴.

Strategic Policy: SP11

Develop a Parking Partnership with all private car park operators within the centre that will review and monitor the demand for, provision and management of car parking

⁴ Halton Borough Council has now produced a Parking and Access Study for Runcorn Town Centre – however, this is subject to approval by the Council's Executive Board. As redevelopments occur, the Parking and Access Study will require updating as appropriate.

spaces. All new developments will be required to provide adequate car parking provision, adopting a co-ordinated approach having regard to additional sites for development arising from the Mersey Gateway Project.

- 6.22 The Local Transport Plan identifies that the Council will seek to develop a Parking Partnership with private car parking operators. This is important in and around the Town Centre where much of the car parking provision is in private control.
- 6.23 Long stay car parking, either by rail commuters or local shop staff is believed to be a significant issue affecting the centre. Long stay parking obviously restricts the availability and convenience of parking for shoppers and others visiting the centre during the day to conduct their business.
- 6.24 The largest Council owned car park (to the rear of High Street) is scheduled for redevelopment. Whilst the Canal Quarter development will be expected to provide a level of replacement provision, this will probably be in private hands.
- 6.25 The Council will seek to facilitate the development of a co-ordinated approach to parking management within the centre by developing a Parking Partnership, involving the main parking operators within the centre.

Strategic Policy: SP12

Environmental and frontage improvements secured through the previous SRB programme should be maintained and where possible enhanced by public and private sector partners and stakeholders as appropriate.

- 6.26 The frontage improvements secured during the SRB programme continue to have a beneficial effect on the centre, with very few individual shop fronts being adjudged to be of poor quality.
- 6.27 Any proposals for new shop fronts are expected to be of high quality in accordance with policies BE1, BE2 and BE3 of the UDP and the Shop Fronts, Signage and Advertising SPD.
- 6.28 Following SRB, NRF and WNF funding, there will be continued investment in Commercial Property Improvements with the benefit of a grant scheme.

Strategic Policy: SP13

All new developments must include secure, concealed bin storage, and all existing units will be encouraged to create secure, concealed bin storage areas.

- 6.29 Secure, concealed bin storage areas are required within the town centre to reduce the risk of arson and to improve the general appearance of the area.
- 6.30 Policy BE1 of the Halton UDP requires that development must be designed to minimise the risk of crime; not cause unacceptable pollution or nuisance; and must provide for waste storage and collection in a suitably screened and enclosed area.

Strategic Policy: SP14

Proposals should, where possible, increase the quality and quantity of public art within the Town Centre.

- 6.31 UDP Policy BE2 states that developers should take account of the provision of public art and the integration of art and craft work into the design of development schemes. Supporting text to the policy explains that the Council will actively encourage developers to spend a percentage of the total development cost or a fixed amount of money on providing art and craftwork and, on seeking the influence of artists and craft skills alongside architects and building professionals, to ensure integration of art and craftwork features as an essential part of the design.
- 6.32 In accordance with policy BE2, the Council will seek all new development within the centre to allocate 1% of the total development costs towards the enhancement of public art within the Town Centre. This will be required to be either directly provided on or off site; or via a commuted sum towards the provision of public art in the defined area. All public art must be demonstrated to be provided within a publicly accessible or visible locality. Where appropriate, maintenance and other revenue implications will be taken into account when provision relates to a specific work of public art.

Strategic Policy: SP15

Provide a co-ordinated approach to the future provision of street furniture and ensure that it is usable by all members of the public, is well located and does not cause a safety issue. The Council will consider the development of a 'design palette' to secure uniformity to create a better visually more integrated centre.

- 6.33 The provision of street furniture needs to be well managed and co-ordinated. It will also need to be durable, easy to maintain and fit for purpose, and placed with consideration to ensure that it will contribute to the aesthetic and functional qualities of public spaces.

6.34 Furthermore, the use of a co-ordinated 'design palette' will help to visually integrate the centre, reduce visual clutter, and produce a more welcoming environment.

6.35 The Council will seek planning obligations from all new developments within the town centre to provide monies towards the creation of a safe and attractive environment, including the provision of high-quality and co-ordinated street furniture.

Strategic Policy: SP16

Key points of vehicular and pedestrian access into the town centre should be enhanced with attractive entrance features such as landscaping, art forms or other 'gateway' features.

6.36 These gateways should also be well linked to the town centre through the use of appropriate routes, signage and lighting. They are displayed spatially in Figure 5.1. Environmental enhancement to High Street in particular is perceived as important to upgrade the quality of public realm in the town centre.

6.37 Key vehicular and cycle 'gateways' include:

- Bridge Street;
- Leiria Way;
- Greenway Road / Devonshire Place;
- New Station Gateway Quarter / Greenway Road;
- Station Road / Devonshire Place.

6.38 Additional key pedestrian access 'gateways' include:

- High Street Bus Station;
- Bridgewater Canal footbridge;
- Bridgewater Canal towpaths;
- St. John's Brow;
- Victoria Road / Runcorn Spur Road underpass;
- Mersey Road;
- New Station Gateway Quarter / Greenway Road / Bridgewater Street;

- Promenade;
- Picow Farm Road / Station Road.

6.39 Key internal nodes, sub-zone interfaces include:

- High Street / Church Street junction;
- Church Street / Granville Street / King Street;
- Regent Street;
- High Street / Canal Quarter routes;
- High Street / Station Gateway Quarter routes
- Central Area car park / entrances;
- Brindley Plaza.

6.40 The overall importance and significance of key gateways into and out of town centres are often overlooked. The first impressions of visitors to the town centre, whether arriving by car, public transport, on foot or bicycle is of great importance. The quality and appearance of approach routes and the outer edge that the town centre presents to the 'outside world' are crucial to the formation of a positive town centre image and identity.

6.41 In its role as both highways authority and local planning authority, the Council will seek to improve these gateways into the Town Centre, particularly from Runcorn Station, using planning obligations from town centre development to make the town centre more attractive to both pedestrians and car users.

Strategic Policy: SP17

All new developments should make suitable provision for safe and convenient cycle access linked to existing or proposed routes where the opportunity exists, and provide for convenient, safe, secure and covered cycle parking that is likely to be attractive to potential users in line with UDP policy TP6.

6.42 An important element of encouraging the greater use of sustainable forms of transport is the availability of alternatives. The provision of new cycle facilities should ensure that any bicycles are safe from theft and are not causing a hazard to other road/footpath users.

- 6.43 Where the provision of cycle lockers is not practicable, for reasons of security, 'Sheffield' style bicycle racks will be required in preference to the less secure 'butterfly' designs.
- 6.44 Where development proposals require off-site access improvements, or the development is incapable or unsuitable for the on-site provision of cycle parking either due to site constraints or highway safety issues, payment in lieu of on-site provision as part of a planning obligation may be acceptable.

Strategic Policy: SP18

Improve directional signage to and within the town centre, in accordance with the provisions of the Parking and Access Study. All signage should be co-ordinated to ensure a consistent approach is taken to design, location and naming across the Town Centre.

- 6.45 Road linkages into and around the Town Centre can be very confusing for visitors to navigate. This can make it very difficult for visitors to find their way into the centre and then gain a sense of where they are in relation to other parts of the centre, or how to find their way back out. Whilst some improvements have taken place already to improve accessibility, better directional signage would be beneficial both in terms of updating and further additions.
- 6.46 The development of the Mersey Gateway project and the de-linking of the Silver Jubilee Bridge will prompt a comprehensive overhaul of the current key vehicular access points, which should streamline the arrangements.
- 6.47 Halton Borough Council will seek planning obligations from all new developments within the town centre to provide monies towards the creation of a safe and attractive environment, including the provision of appropriate signage.

Strategic Policy: SP19

Applications for new development likely to attract significant visitor numbers will be expected to provide locations for, or contribute towards, the maintenance or enhancement of the centre's CCTV security system to the benefit of the public safety and the operation of the centre as a whole.

- 6.48 The provision of CCTV coverage helps both in deterring crime and anti-social behaviour and in reducing the fear of crime.

- 6.49 New development may aid the provision of an effective CCTV network by providing mounting or fixing points for cameras or contributing to the provision of the service. These matters are dealt with in more detail in the Community Safety SPD.
- 6.50 Halton Borough Council will seek planning obligations from all new developments within the town centre likely to attract significant visitor numbers to provide monies towards the creation of a safe and attractive environment, including the provision of CCTV coverage.

Strategic Policy: SP20

Recycling facilities should be rationalised and/or improved.

- 6.51 At present, recycling facilities are located to the rear of Somerfield in the Central Area car park and smaller facilities at Leiria Way and Top Locks car park.
- 6.52 The Leiria Way facility in particular is not ideal, having a limited capacity, and thus would benefit from replacement or improvement. The policy does not preclude the development of additional recycling facilities, as appropriate, in connection with further developments.
- 6.53 The Council will seek opportunities, possibly in conjunction with existing operators or new developments, to secure the rationalisation or improvement to recycling facilities provided within the centre.

Strategic Policy: SP21

All new developments or redevelopments must not prejudice the comprehensive development opportunities attributable to the Mersey Gateway Project.

- 6.54 The Council recognises the strong opportunity for the holistic redevelopment and enhancement of the Town Centre offered by the Mersey Gateway Project. Any proposals for development or redevelopment that may prejudice such opportunities, particularly in relation to the Station Gateway Quarter, will not be accepted.

Strategic Policy: SP22

All new development proposals should seek to protect and enhance ecological and biodiversity features where possible.

- 6.55 The enhancement of the local environment to support the wider regeneration of the Town Centre is an important ingredient to ensure its long-term sustainability. Proposals should

adhere to the relevant policies of the UDP to ensure the retention and enhancement of important ecological features, and maximise the opportunity to enhance biodiversity.

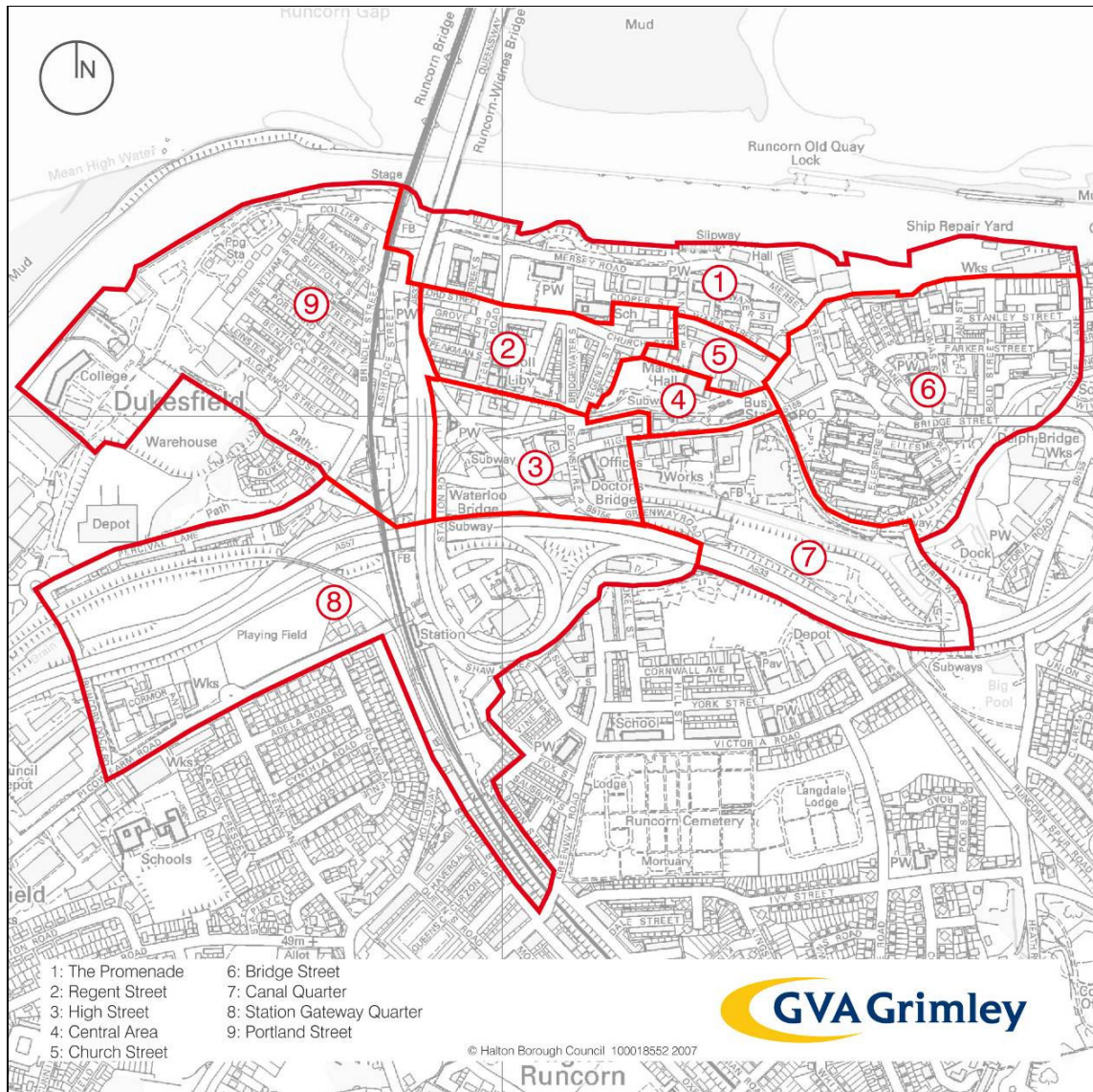
- 6.56 Where appropriate development proposals should include Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to minimise the risk of flooding and protect the quality of water courses.

7. SUB-AREA POLICIES

7.1 This section of the SPD sets out a number of key principles and overarching development principles which will apply to the redevelopment of Runcorn Town Centre. It comprises detailed SPD policy, outlining the development proposals for a number of sub-areas (Figure 7.1 provides a visual overview), including:

- Promenade and The Deck
- Regent Street and western approaches
- High Street
- Central Area
- Church Street
- Bridge Street and eastern approaches
- Canal Quarter and southern fringes
- Station Gateway Quarter
- Portland Street - Dukesfield

Figure 7.1 Runcorn Town Centre Sub-Areas

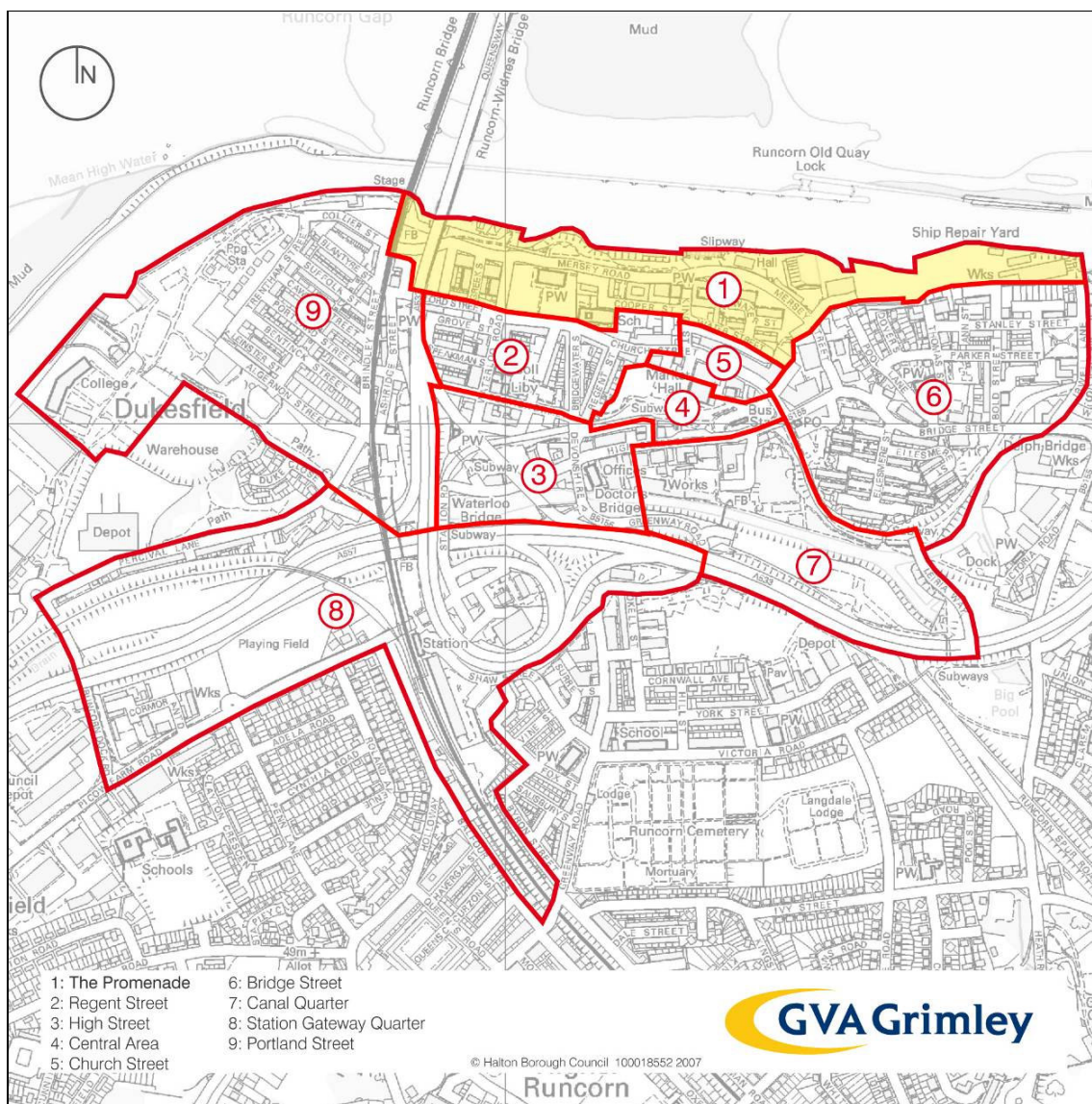


Promenade and The Deck

Overview and Existing Character

- 7.2 The Town Centre benefits from a large waterside frontage along the southern bank of the Manchester Ship Canal, with the River Mersey beyond. Access between and views through from the main retail and activity areas to the promenade and beyond are largely blocked by intervening development.
- 7.3 This area forms the northern extent of the town centre fronting the Manchester Ship Canal, with the River Mersey beyond. The area encompasses the recently improved ½ mile promenade stretching to Dukesfield to the west and “The Deck” residential development site to the east comprising 466 waterside apartments with 3 units for complementary commercial uses. Within this area are also located the Grade II* Church of All Saints, and a substation (formerly the Hearse House), which is Grade II listed. These are important features which should be retained and protected from development where possible.
- 7.4 This development represents a key opportunity for the delivery of the main strategic objectives of this Town Centre Strategy and will support wider aims and strategies of the Council and its strategic partners. The development will transform a previously industrial site affording new public access to the waterfront with a high quality, desirable residential development offering panoramic views of the Silver Jubilee Bridge and across the River Mersey.
- 7.5 Together with the redevelopment at the Canal Quarter, this will introduce a significant boost to the walk-in population available to the Town Centre helping transform the image of the area, to become a highly desirable residential location.
- 7.6 With the inclusion of complementary commercial uses within the western end of The Deck site, the potential exists to create a northern node of activity to anchor the proposed new activity axis running south via Public Hall Street to High Street and the Canal Quarter / Brindley area.
- 7.7 There are currently a lack of high-quality linkages between the waterfront and the other town centre areas, with Mersey Street acting as a town centre by-pass for traffic to and from Dukesfield and the new Waterside Place and Maritime Quay housing developments.

Figure 7.2: Promenade and The Deck Sub-Area:



Policy

Spatial Strategy and Interventions

- PD1: The Council will support development proposals that maximise public access to the Promenade and the waterfront, enhancing their usage for leisure and as a safe, accessible pedestrian and cycling corridor. Recognitions should be made to the constraint caused at present by the steep topography and solutions proposed in

redevelopment proposals.

- PD2: Contributions towards improved linkages to the wider pedestrian and cycle network will be sought through negotiation in respect to any future proposals for redevelopment on land between the rear of Church Street and the Promenade. Redevelopment proposals should incorporate measures that support these objectives.

Layout and Design

- PD3: Development of sites adjoining the Promenade or between the Promenade and the main retail area on Church Street will be expected to enhance the condition and appearance of existing or proposed pedestrian or cycle through routes.
- PD4: Development of sites adjoining or overlooking the Promenade will be expected to maintain or enhance the areas attractiveness as a pedestrian / cycle route and leisure facility.

Transport and Movement

- PD5: Any proposals for redevelopment on land between the rear of Church Street and the Promenade will be expected to contribute positively towards increasing the pedestrian permeability of the area, establishing clear, legible and attractive pedestrian through routes.

Justification

7.8 The policies above highlight that the Promenade and waterfront, with their views over the Mersey and the Silver Jubilee Bridge represent a valuable environmental asset to the Town Centre. With the location of the College and new residential developments to the west, the area's importance as an attractive pedestrian route to, and past, the Town Centre is also enhanced.

7.9 Pedestrian linkages between the Promenade and Church Street are particularly poor. The existing intervening development includes elements such as undercroft parking areas that present a strong vertical barrier to pedestrian movement. The policies outlined above seek to

ensure that any proposals involving significant redevelopment within this area will be expected to address this deficiency.

Regent Street and Western Approaches

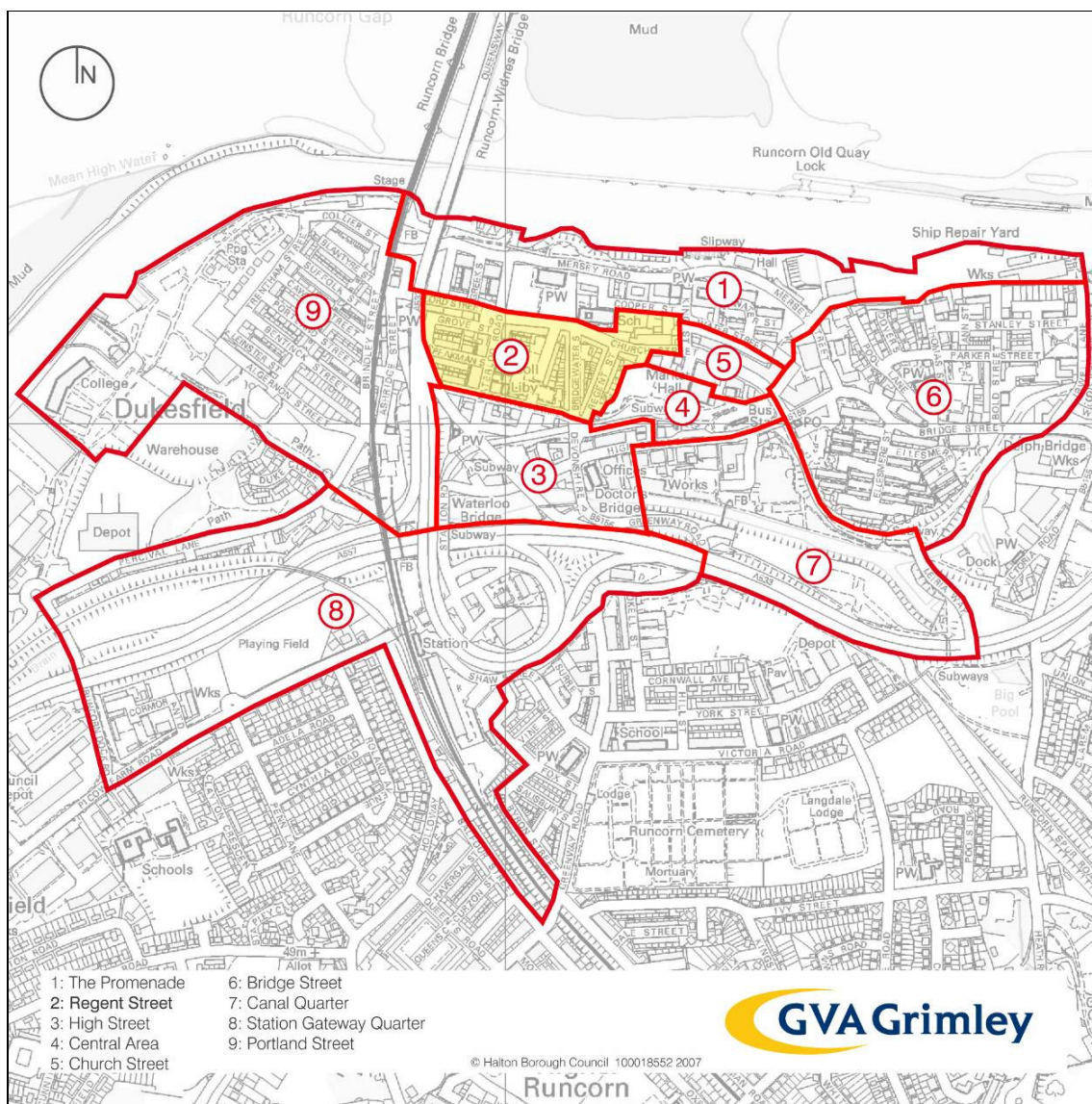
Overview and Existing Character

- 7.10 This area of the Town Centre comprises the historic, now secondary retail frontages on Regent Street with predominantly residential areas behind, including interspersed community uses.

Regent Street and the western fringes of the centre comprise a predominantly secondary retail and commercial area, serving as a transitional zone to the residential areas to the west. A number of small retail units also exist, converted from former residential uses.

- 7.11 There are currently around 30 small 2 storey shop units situated on Regent Street and Western Church Street, generally of good quality, and housing a mix of uses including specialist retail traders and retail services. Units on Church Street to the east of Regent Street are mostly in good or excellent condition, aided by the take-up of the Councils shop front improvement programme. Quality deteriorates further to the west, with poor frontages.
- 7.12 The area is generally undulating, sloping uphill from the junction of Regent Street and Church Street to Devonshire Place. The road network has been converted to a one-way operation, providing valuable short stay on-street car parking.
- 7.13 Bridgewater Street, running broadly parallel to Regent Street, facilitates one-way vehicular movements in the opposite direction, providing the thoroughfare for traffic heading to Church Street and Dukesfield from the south and west via Station Road and Greenway Road.
- 7.14 Land to the west of Bridgewater Street is made up primarily of residential development, alongside interspersed commercial uses arranged around a basic grid road layout including traffic calming and some one-way running.

Figure 7.3: Regent Street & Western Approaches Sub-Area



Policy

Spatial Strategy and Interventions

- RS1: Reinforce the existing neighbourhood through the addition of some higher quality residential development where possible.
- RS2: Support, and seek, investment within the existing residential stock.

- RS3: The Council will support redevelopment proposals for commercial purposes (A3 Restaurant/Café, A4 Drinking Establishment, A5 Hot food take away or A2/B1 office uses) where 'gap sites' exist or come available where the proposed uses are considered suitable and are deemed to improve the existing character of the area.

Layout and Design

- RS4: Buildings should not exceed three storeys in height in order to preserve the suburban residential character of the area.

Transport and Movement

- RS5: Key pedestrian routes linking Regent Street to Church Street, High Street at its northern and southern ends should be protected and wherever possible enhanced in quality and adapted to include safe cycling facilities, as shown on Fig. 6.1. The Council will utilise its Development Control and Highways powers to improve the connectivity between Regent Street and surrounding residential and commercial locations.
- RS6: Pedestrian and cycle routes from the High Street area to Waterloo Road and the Promenade in the north, and linking into the new Station Gateway Quarter to the south, should be improved and upgraded as part of any scheme of development within these areas.

Justification

7.15 These policies seek to primarily improve the quality of existing housing stock in the area through refurbishment, alongside diversifying the current housing offer through new residential development where appropriate. New development would be dependent on the private market and is to occur through selective demolition of vacant buildings and development of underutilised gap sites. The demolition of any buildings will need to have regard to any historical or conservation merit associated with any particular structure.

7.16 The policies seek to reinforce the character of the area through such refurbishment and redevelopment to create a high quality gateway corridor in this edge-of-town-centre location. Combined with the healthy commercial offer present in the area, and any redevelopment for specialist commercial uses, these proposals would look to attract further residents to the area.

- 7.17 Strengthened and providing new key pedestrian and cycle paths will add to the attraction of the neighbourhood and dramatically improve east-west permeability from the Regent Street area to the Town Centre and to residential communities in the Portland Street area further to the west. In addition, improvement to the pedestrian and cycle routes from the Promenade, along Waterloo Road linked to the new Station Gateway Quarter will provide a valuable north-south sustainable access corridor from railway station through to residential neighbourhood to the waterside (see Fig. 6.1).

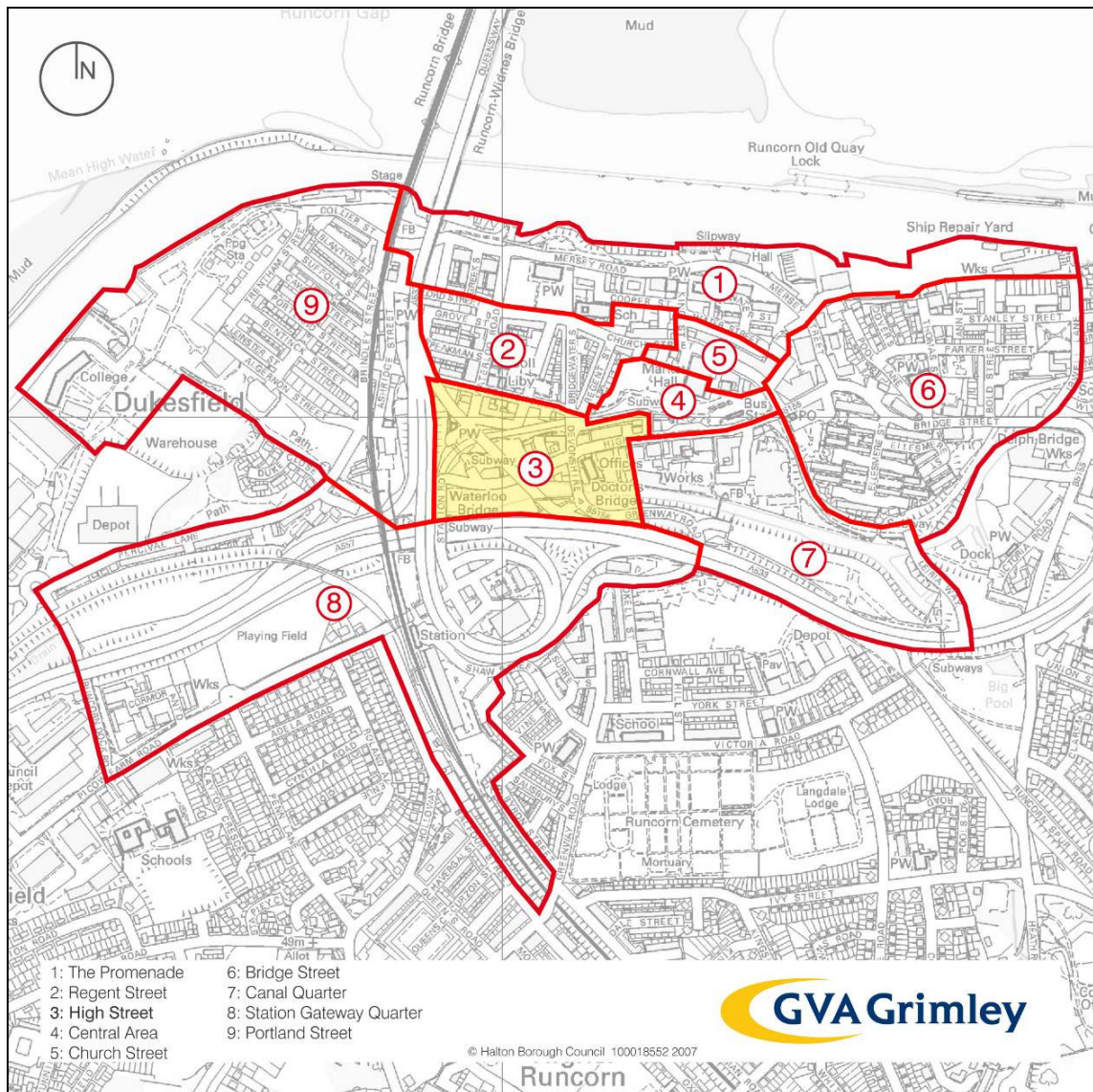
High Street

Overview and Existing Character

- 7.18 This area contains a mix of predominantly commercial and service uses accommodated in a variety of building types and architectural styles. The professional services sector dominates within the area, alongside evening leisure uses.
- 7.19 The quality of the structures varies along the street. The eastern end is less attractive. However, the western end, particularly at its junction with Greenway Road/Devonshire Place contains a number of visually attractive Victorian buildings. A number of Grade II listed buildings and features are also located along the street.
- 7.20 The area benefits from excellent accessibility, serving as the main east-west axis route through the town centre for cars and bus services, linking directly with the main access points from the south. The bus station, central car park and taxi rank are all accessible via High Street. Runcorn mainline railway station lies about a 5 minute walk to the south-west.
- 7.21 The development opportunities within this area are primarily linked to the future development of the Canal Quarter, lying immediately behind to the south. The Canal Quarter redevelopment will need to include certain properties currently fronting onto High Street. Precisely which buildings and what uses their sites will be put to will be determined as site feasibility studies and detailed design work is progressed. Successful implementation of the Canal Quarter scheme will act as a springboard for wider regeneration activities in this area.
- 7.22 In addition, the proposed construction of the new Mersey Gateway Bridge will result in significant changes to the highway network and access routes into the Town Centre as the Silver Jubilee Bridge is “de-linked” from its high capacity feeder roads. This will affect local traffic management and access arrangements with the Town Viaduct being converted to two-way usage as access to and from the Silver Jubilee Bridge. This will terminate in a new junction where the Town Viaduct presently meets Devonshire Place, Greenway Road and the Daresbury Expressway.
- 7.23 This may result in additional development opportunities as land is released from highway use and other land has constraints from development lifted. Furthermore, it will provide opportunities for new, or upgraded, pedestrian and cycle links within the Town Centre along revised highway sections or released land as shown in Fig. 6.1.

7.24 The revised highway and access arrangements will also provide the opportunity to remove physical barriers to the reopening of the former route of the Bridgwater Canal (west of Runcorn Basin to the head of Runcorn Locks) thereby creating the potential for this waterway to be re-instated.

Figure 6.4: High Street Sub-Area



*Policy**Spatial Strategy and Interventions*

- HS1: The Council will support development that utilises or enhances the canal side environment, or supports waterborne leisure activities. In particular, the Council will support proposals for development around the canal.
- HS2: The Council will consider favourably any proposals for the re-instatement of the Bridgewater Canal to the west of Runcorn Basin. The restoration of Runcorn Locks and the connection of the Bridgewater Canal to the Manchester Ship Canal / Weaver Navigation will be supported.
- HS3: The units at High Street contain a number of vacancies and represent a significant redevelopment opportunity. The Council will support proposals for its comprehensive redevelopment for suitable commercial uses taking into account proposals for the wider area.

Layout and Design

- HS4: The Council will expect any proposals for development affecting or adjoining the Bridgewater Canal to be developed to a high standard, to enhance leisure opportunities and fully consider the needs of the canal users, including providing for safe and attractive pedestrian access to the waterside.

Transport and Movement

- HS5: Where appropriate, contributions will be sought from development proposals to support the 'Bridgewater Way' by providing upgraded public access along an improved towpath and to support environmental improvements to upgrade High Street as a key Town Centre 'gateway'.

Justification

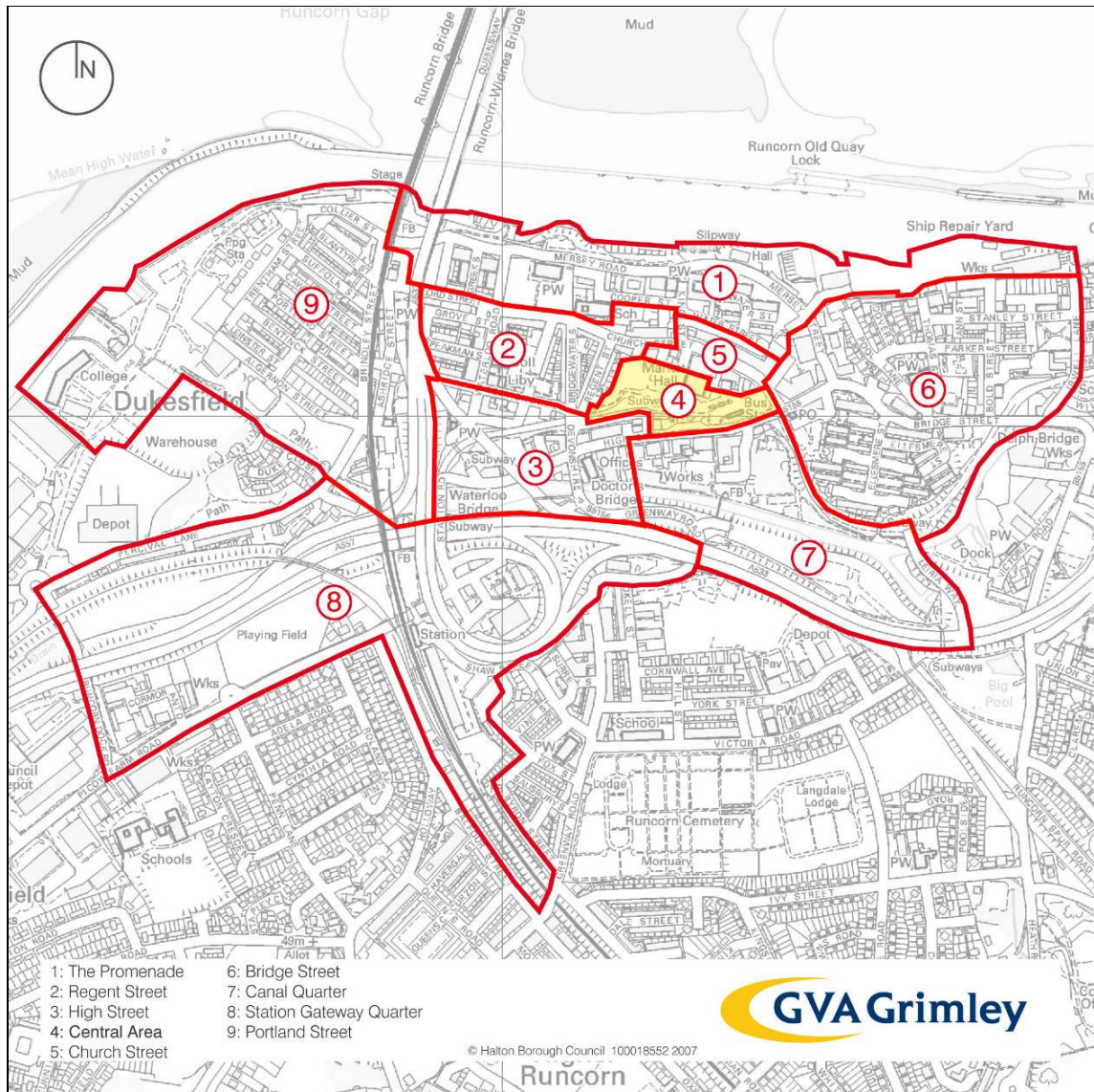
- 7.25 Revised access arrangements to the Silver Jubilee Bridge resulting from the Mersey Gateway Project may remove the current highway that blocks the route of the Bridgewater Canal. Should this occur, the policies above enable the re-instatement of this section of the canal.
- 7.26 In the longer term, the policies support the possibility of re-establishing the Runcorn Locks, linking Runcorn Basin with the Manchester Ship Canal and via the Weaver Navigation recreating a second 'Cheshire Ring'. Such a route is likely to be very attractive to leisure craft and holiday-makers. Runcorn basin would become a layover point for craft waiting to enter the lock 'staircase' creating opportunities for service industries to service the needs of waterborne and other visitors. Any proposals would be subject to the agreement of the Manchester Ship Canal Company and the control of leisure craft.
- 7.27 The policies above recognise that the units at High Street contain a number of vacancies and represent a significant redevelopment opportunity that could contribute effectively to achieving the vision for the Town Centre if linked successfully to the new Station Gateway Quarter, Central area and Canal Quarter.

Central Area

Overview and Existing Character

- 7.28 This area comprises the recently reconfigured area between Church Street and High Street.
- 7.29 Various redevelopment schemes have taken place over recent years, the most recent of which, an SRB funded programme, witnessed the reclamation of land previously given over to the grandiose busway interchange, creating a new more compact bus station (to the east), new premises for the Council's Direct Link (One-Stop Shop), new retail stores and units (including Somerfield's supermarket), a new indoor market hall, reconfigured central car park, and taxi rank.
- 7.30 The central area now represents the main point of arrival for those travelling by bus, taxi or private car into Runcorn Town Centre. The Somerfield's supermarket (formerly Kwik Save), with its adjacent customer car park (accessible via High Street and Devonshire Place) provides the centre with a much-needed convenience anchor store, which should attract new customers to the Town Centre, increasing patronage and thereby adding to Runcorn Town Centre's viability and overall vitality.
- 7.31 This redevelopment work has provided the opportunity to re-establish attractive pedestrian linkages between Church Street and High Street, which would help to unify the centre around a new core without sacrificing accessibility. This will help to integrate and connect the proposed Canal Quarter development with the rest of the centre.

Figure 7.5: Central Area Sub-Area



Policy

Spatial Strategy and Interventions

- CA1: Any redevelopment of sites within the central area should have regard to the requirements for the future operational development of the bus station.
- CA2: The Council will support proposals for the re-use or redevelopment of the north side of High Street. This site presents a number of challenges that any proposals for

redevelopment must address. Proposals will be expected to:

- a) present active commercial ground floor frontage onto High Street with retail or commercial uses above;
- b) present an improved aspect, possibly incorporating an active ground floor frontage to the important pedestrian route along Granville Street;
- c) ensure that any rear servicing area from Loch Street is suitably screened from public view; and
- d) if possible and appropriate, provide a pedestrian route from Granville Street to Loch Street.

Layout and Design

- CA3: The Council will support proposals to improve the layout, visibility and design of pedestrian crossings at the entrances to the bus station.
- CA4: The Council will expect any proposals for redevelopment affecting or adjoining key pedestrian routes to enhance the street scene and fully consider the needs of the pedestrian, providing safe and attractive routes across the centre.

Transport and Movement

- CA5: The Council will support re-modelling proposals that enhance the operational efficiency, convenience and attractiveness to passengers of the central area bus station facilities. Development proposals should not unduly impede buses accessing or exiting the station or traversing the Town Centre, either directly or indirectly.
- CA6: Key pedestrian routes linking High Street to Church Street (see Fig. 5.1) and beyond should be protected and enhanced wherever possible in relation to the following:
 - a) Granville Street: The northern section of this street has been pedestrianised and now forms the principal pedestrian through-route from Church Street to the new indoor market and Somerfield units. The south side of the street runs along the side of the main access to the central car park.
 - b) Alcock Street / Vicar Street: These routes are valuable to allow pedestrian

travel between the bus station and Church Street, yet are substandard and require improvement.

- c) Princess Street: This is a valuable, but less attractive route from the rear of the central car park to the western end of Church Street. This presently detracts from the character of the area, but provides a valuable cut-through.

Justification

- 7.32 The policies above seek to ensure that the quality and range of retail provision within this central area is of a suitably high standard to merit its position as the primary destination for visitors to the Town Centre.
- 7.33 It seeks to establish a higher quality, sustainable, safe and accessible shopping environment and public realm whether access is via the bus station, by car, on foot or by cycling. In particular, the policies above look to support sustainable modes of movement within the Town Centre, with improvement to the bus station and access through public transport viewed as particularly important.
- 7.34 The policy also seeks to preserve, improve and extend pedestrian and cycle linkages from the central area to the Church Street sub-area. This, therefore, facilitates onward strategic linkages to residential neighbourhoods within the promenade sub-area including The Deck residential development.
- 7.35 The importance of the area in providing locally accessible employment is also recognised within the above policies. The policies seek to maximise opportunities within the central area sub-area to establish higher value retail and service uses, which also enhance the physical character of Runcorn Town Centre.

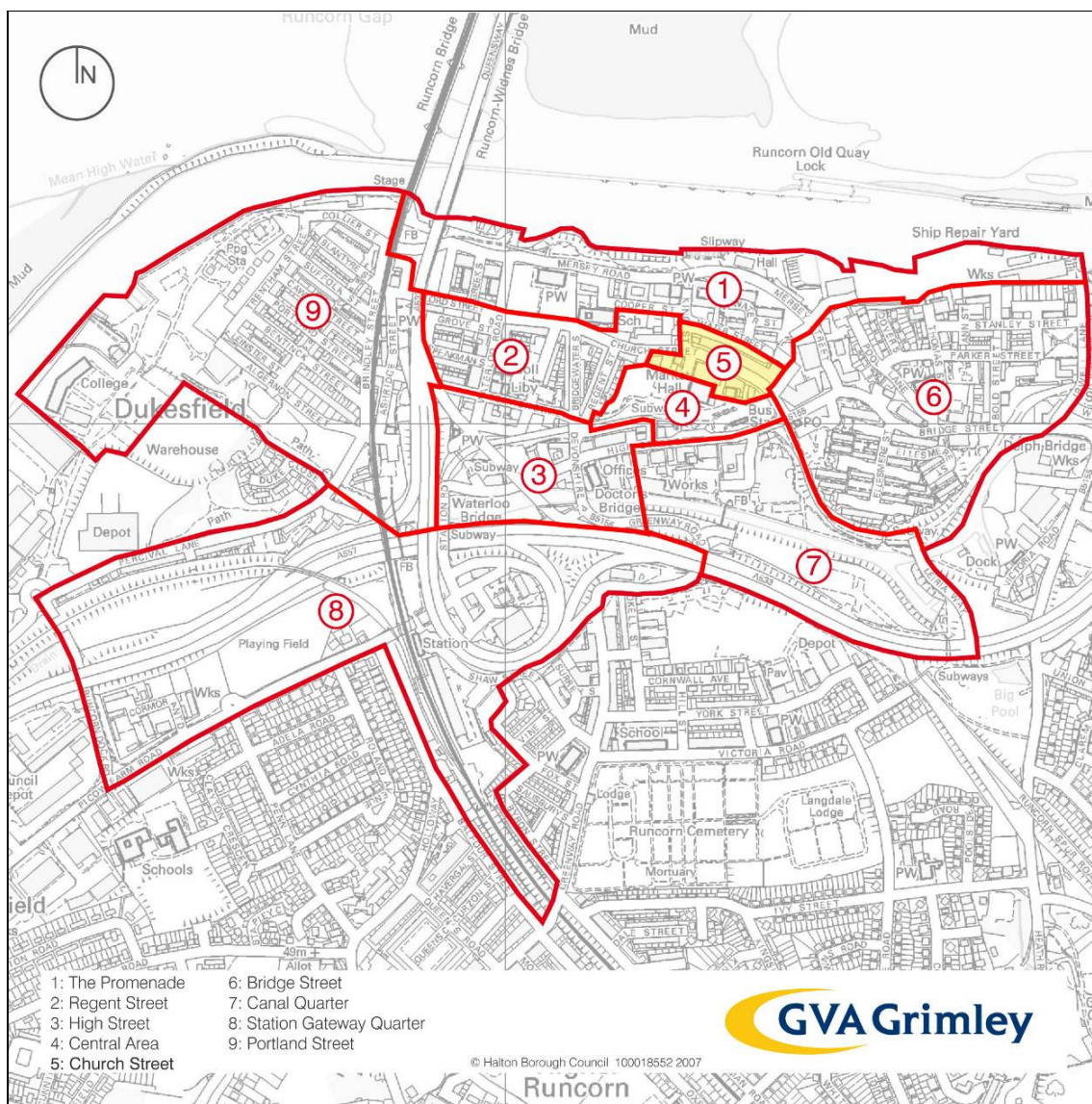
Church Street

Overview and Existing Character

- 7.36 Running on an east to west axis, Church Street forms the retail heart of the Town Centre providing accommodation for a range of traders mostly in 1960's style 2 storey, custom built shop units. The easternmost of these properties have flat roofs, the westernmost having brick fascias to the second floor and traditional pitched roofs. These units, whilst being visually nondescript, appear mostly well maintained and offer modern accommodation housing a mix of national multiple and independent traders. This area forms the backbone of the centres offer for day-to-day shopping needs.
- 7.37 The southern side of the street comprises 19th century two and three storey buildings, mostly well maintained and benefiting from part publicly funded improvements to the ground floor fascias. These units are typically smaller than those opposite and house a range of mostly independent traders offering a range of services.
- 7.38 There are currently six non-retail units within the defined primary shopping area on Church Street, minimising the scope for further diversification.
- 7.39 Traffic-calming measures are in place albeit not pedestrianised, alongside 39 on-street short stay car parking spaces.
- 7.40 Recent central area developments have only been partially successful in creating a cohesive hub to the centre and pedestrian links from Church Street would benefit from further improvements. Pedestrian linkages from the bus station to Church Street are particularly unattractive and detract from the image of the centre⁵.
- 7.41 The Market Hall and central core retail development is not highly visible from Church Street. Prominent, feature signage, gateway arches or street furniture could be used to highlight linkages and better tie the retail zones together.

⁵ Proposed linkages from the bus station to Church Street will need to take account of rear servicing to property numbers 19 to 41 Church Street, the Market Hall and adjacent retail units.

Figure 7.6: Church Street Sub-Area



Policy

Spatial Strategy and Interventions

- CS1: Church Street's role as the Primary Retail Area for day-to-day (convenience) goods within the Town Centre should be maintained and enhanced wherever possible. The Council, where possible, will primarily seek to improve the convenience goods offer of the area, as well as other community amenities.

- CS2: The Council will support re-use of the existing buildings within Church Street where redevelopment proposals are deemed fundamental to achieving part of the overarching vision of Runcorn town centre as a leisure and cultural destination. Support will be given for change of uses where they include A1 retail, A3 (Restaurant / Café), A4 (Drinking Establishment) or another use that would support the day time economy or the establishment of the leisure based activity corridor.

Layout and Design

- CS3: Any proposals for redevelopment affecting or adjoining key pedestrian routes are to enhance the public realm and street scene and fully consider the needs of the pedestrian, providing safe and attractive through routes across the centre, as shown on Fig. 6.1. Proposals for linkages from the bus station to Church Street will need to take account of the rear servicing arrangements of property numbers 19 to 41 Church Street, Market Hall and adjacent retail units. Proposals will be supported where DDA compliant pedestrian and cycle linkages are facilitated between Church Street, Public Hall Street and Mersey Road.
- CS4: Development must be designed to a high standard having due regard to its setting in the Principal Retail Area. Ground floor active uses must address the street frontage.
- CS5: Upper floor uses will be expected to complement or be compatible with the full range of ground floor uses proposed in any redevelopment.
- CS6: Proposals to increase the visibility of the New Market Hall from the main shopping areas in Church Street will be supported including prominent feature signage, gateway arches, paving treatments or street furniture to improve the inter-linkages between the two retail zones. Proposals should be of a high quality and actively add to the street scene.

Transport and Movement

- CS7: Pedestrian and cycle routes from Church Street northwards to the Promenade and The Deck and southwards to the bus station, new retail market development and beyond should be improved and upgraded as part of any scheme of development within these areas. Proposals and opportunities to re-model the existing bus station to support this corridor will be supported.

Justification

- 7.42 The policies above seek to ensure that the quality and range of retail and service provision within the Principal Retail Area is significantly improved to serve existing and future communities. It seeks to establish a more sustainable distribution of retail provision within Runcorn Town Centre to ensure that the day-to-day shopping requirements of residents are accessible on foot and by cycling.
- 7.43 The policy also seeks to improve and extend linkages to the waterfront promenade helping to unlock leisure based and cultural development opportunities, arranged around the key focal points such a leisure based activity corridor along Church Street and Public Hall Street, forming a north-south axis between the Canal Quarter and The Deck residential development.
- 7.44 At present, the topography acts as a constraint on the delivery of DDA compliant pedestrian and cycle links to form this corridor. Therefore, the Council will support proposals where DDA compliant pedestrian and cycle linkages are delivered between Church Street, Public Hall Street and Mersey Road as part of a comprehensive redevelopment proposal for the leisure corridor.
- 7.45 Furthermore, the bus station presently impedes circulation through this corridor, and proposals to re-model the bus station to facilitate to improve circulation and accessibility will be supported where they enable the delivery of the leisure based activity corridor.

The importance of the area in providing locally accessible employment is also recognised within the above policies. The policies seek to maximise opportunities within the Church Street sub-area to establish higher value retail and service uses, which also enhance the physical character of Runcorn Town Centre.

Bridge Street and Eastern Approaches

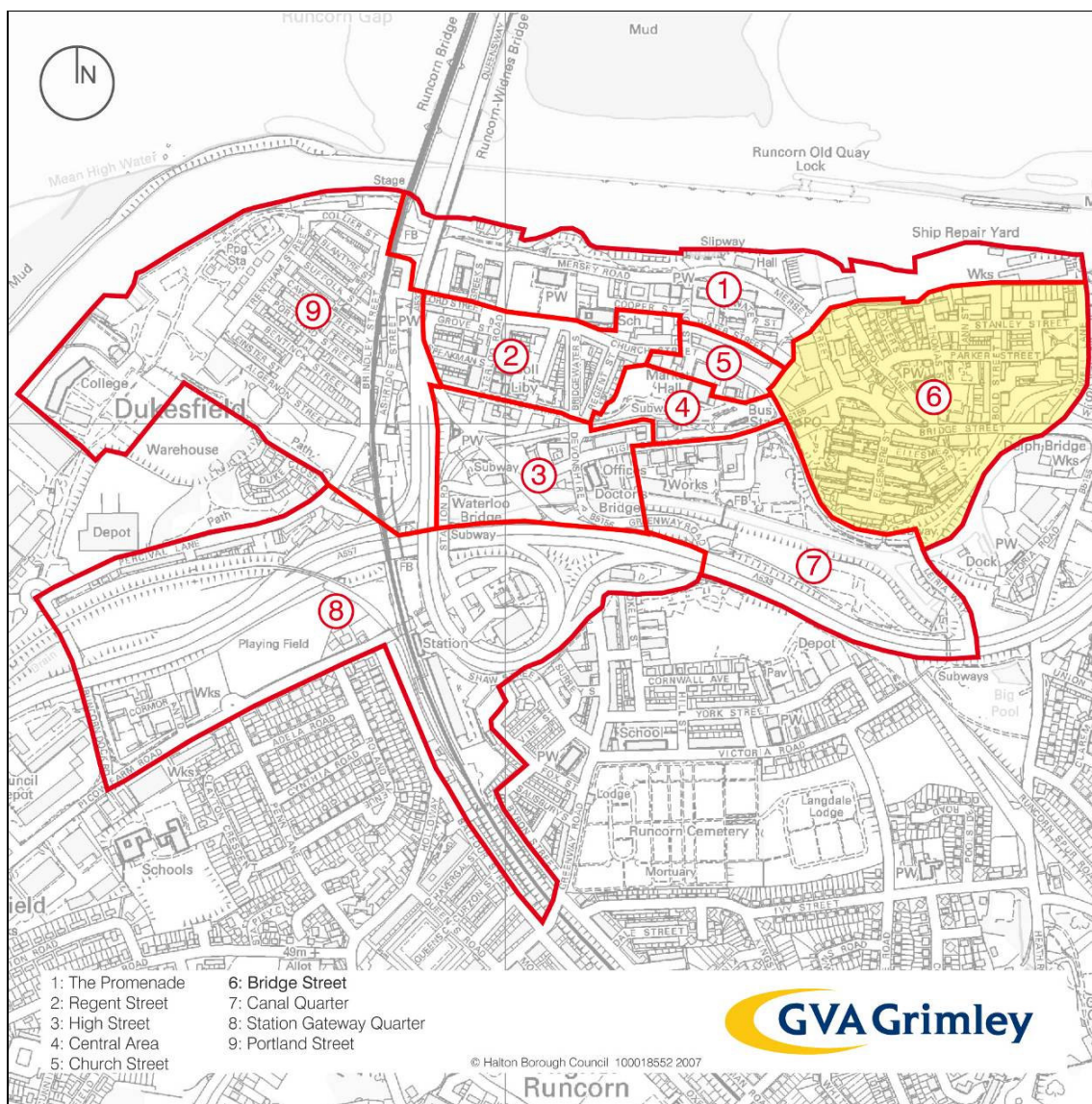
Overview and Existing Character

- 7.46 The general make-up of this area comprises secondary retail frontages on eastern High Street, with predominantly residential areas beyond, with interspersed community and commercial uses along Bridge Street. The area also comprises a number of listed buildings, including the Old Police Station, the Royal Hotel, and the Church of the Holy Trinity.
- 7.47 Bridge Street and the eastern approaches extend eastwards from the cross roads created by High Street, Church Street and Leiria Way. The area retains a number of historic street patterns, including Thomas Street, Bold Street, Stanley Street, and Parker Street.
- 7.48 Retail units extend eastwards downhill for approximately 60m along High Street, comprising 2 and 3 storey 1960's style blocks on the southern frontage with a mix of 1960's style units and older properties on the north. The units on the south of the road mostly house service and leisure outlets.
- 7.49 Bridge Street has excellent accessibility, lying on the principal access routes from the east and the new Leiria Way access road from Daresbury Expressway. The central bus station lies opposite the area, across Church Street. On-street parking is available on the north side of High Street between Church Street and Mersey Road, and a Council operated free car park sits behind the units on the south side of High Street.
- 7.50 There is little further development opportunity on the principal frontages in this area. However, the area is situated in the heart of the proposed new activity corridor stretching between 'The Deck' redevelopment to the north, and the Canal Quarter to the south.
- 7.51 This presents an opportunity for a new development along the route between these two sites, with the underused area around Public Hall street offering particular scope for the creation of a new link route, which could support new A3 (Restaurant/Café), A4 (Drinking Establishments) and complementary uses, thereby combining with the existing leisure provision on High Street and Church Street to create a circuit. Consideration will need to be given within any proposals for the servicing of new development. Servicing could be integral to development proposals or provided via Public Hall Street and Church Street within specified timescales.
- 7.52 With the redevelopment of the Canal Quarter, the site currently occupied by Leiria Way Car Park should increase in prominence and with increased activity in the area, may become an

attractive development site. Compensatory car parking provision would be required in this instance, in line with the Halton UDP maximum car parking standards to satisfy car parking supply and demand. Together with the adjacent units fronting eastern High Street, potential exists for the creation of a significant development parcel capable of exploiting the sites natural topography to accommodate retail units fronting High Street with a large space user fronting the rear car park above.

- 7.53 The section of busway between Bridge Street and Leiria Way appears to offer very little in the way of improved running times to bus operators and potentially opens up a site for development through its removal. The route involves buses running a total distance of 500m, and negotiating the roundabout junction at Leiria Way. Only 40% of this route is dedicated busway, with the other 60% being shared with general traffic. The removal of this section of busway would require buses to be diverted along Bridge Street, a distance of only 350m.

Figure 7.7: Bridge Street and Eastern Approaches Sub-Area:



Policy

Spatial Strategy and Interventions

- BS1: The Council will seek to establish a direct pedestrian footpath between The Deck (Mersey Street) and Church Street.
- BS2: The Council will support proposals for development and conversions to suitable

uses in support of a leisure corridor between the Canal Quarter and The Deck.

- BS3: Existing buildings along Public Hall Street appear to be of little particular architectural merit and their demolition and replacement would be appropriate should they prove unsuitable for conversion. However given their positioning and basic form, it is preferable they are retained and incorporated into a new high quality development.
- BS4: The Council will support a suitable comprehensive redevelopment scheme for the units fronting Bridge Street and Leiria Way provided that the resultant development provides:
 - a) an improved elevation and corner treatments, particularly to the key Bridge Street / Church Street intersection;
 - b) for uses in conformity to the prevailing development plan policy;
 - c) active frontages onto Bridge Street;
 - d) a more efficient use of the site (potentially including a single large space user on the upper level accessed from the higher southern elevation); and
 - e) sufficient parking spaces to service the development in accordance with Highway Authority requirements.
- BS5: The Council will consider favourably any proposals that individually or cumulatively can make better use of the section of busway between Bridge Street and Leiria Way to the benefit of the wider area. Acceptable uses would include residential or commercial uses exploiting the canal side location. General retail uses will not be acceptable.

Layout and Design

- BS6: Upper floor uses will be expected to complement or be compatible with the full range of ground floor uses proposed in any development or conversion.
- BS7: Any proposed development or conversion will be expected to involve improvements to the street scene and lighting in character with vision for the Town Centre.

Transport and Movement

- BS8: Development as per policy BS5 will be expected to:
 - a) include suitable traffic control measures for buses entering and exiting the remaining busway at Bridge Street
 - b) incorporate any residual requirements for a through route between Bridge Street and Leiria Way, as determined necessary by the Local Highways Authority;
 - c) support the Bridgewater Way by providing upgraded public access along an improved towpath⁶; and
 - d) accommodate replacement bus stops on the Bridge Street frontage (if deemed necessary by the Highways Authority).

Justification

- 7.54 The Council has supported the redevelopment of the Canal Quarter and The Deck, as being intrinsic elements of the wider Town Centre renaissance. The redevelopment of these areas should be fully integrated into the wider centre and form key attractions at either end of a new activity corridor.
- 7.55 The Council will seek to secure improvements to the axis between these two major development sites and considers that Public Hall Street offers an ideal opportunity to establish a direct pedestrian link supporting an enhanced leisure quarter. Furthermore, Bridge Street and Leiria Way form further key opportunity sites for the extension of an enhanced leisure quarter to include supporting residential and commercial uses. At present, the topography acts as a constraint on the delivery of DDA compliant pedestrian and cycle link along Public Hall Street. Therefore, the Council will support proposals where DDA compliant pedestrian and cycle linkages are delivered between Church Street, Public Hall Street and Mersey Road as part of a comprehensive redevelopment proposal for the leisure corridor.
- 7.56 National pub chain, JD Wetherspoons, has recently opened a new public house (The Ferry Inn), including a rear beer garden at the heart of this axis in the former Kwik Save unit on the corner of Church Street / Public Hall Street. This forms the first development of this leisure quarter and sets a precedent for future development of the area.

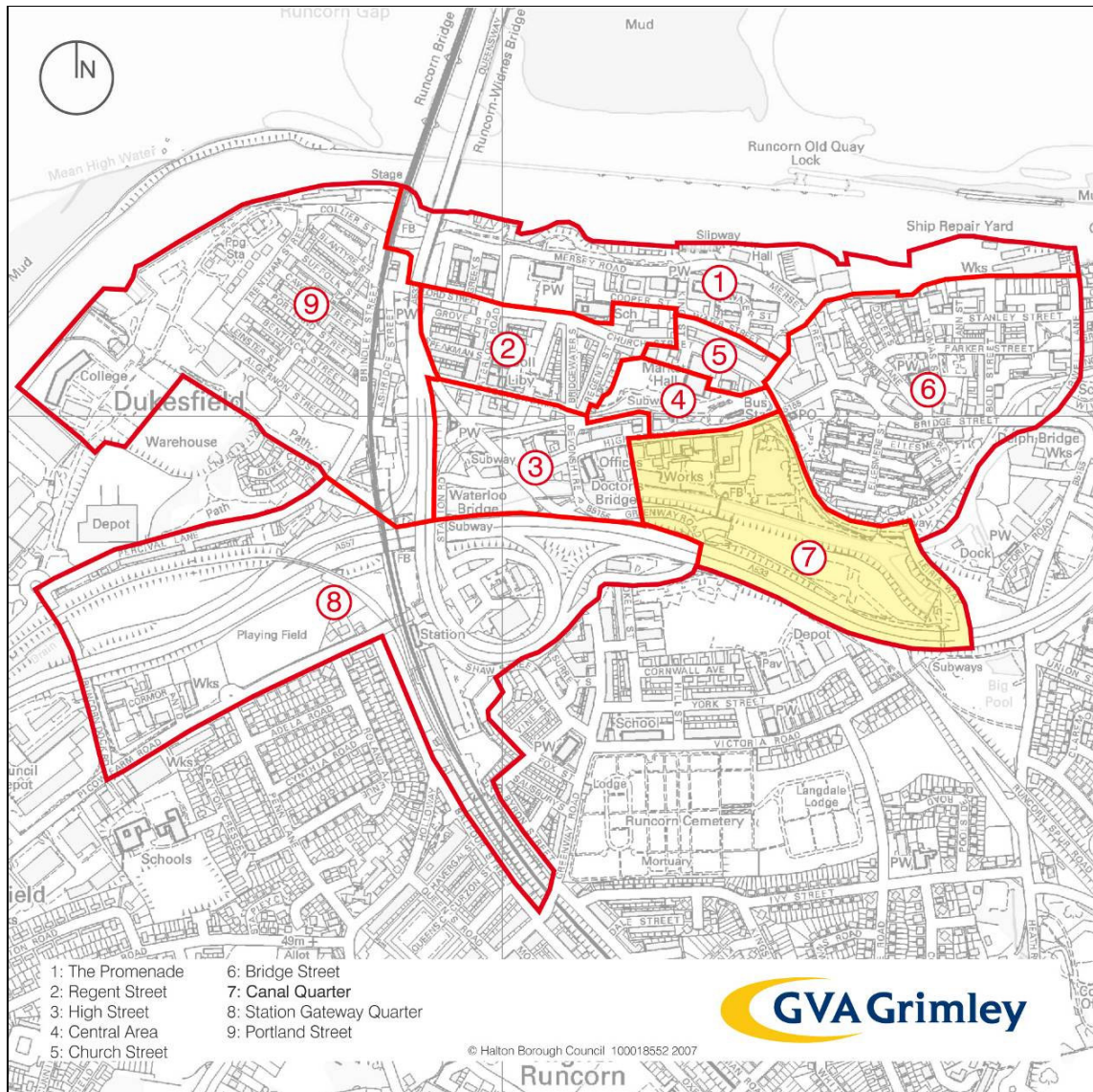
Canal Quarter and Southern Fringes

Overview and Existing Character

- 7.57 The Canal Quarter straddles the Bridgewater Canal to the immediate south of the Town Centre including the area to the rear of High Street.
- 7.58 The Canal Quarter currently houses the award winning Brindley Art Centre, offering a range of events including live theatre, music, participatory workshops and art-house cinema.
- 7.59 Future development will be expected to build upon the success of the Brindley Arts Centre, fully utilising the environmental and leisure opportunities presented by the canal, and contributing to the revitalisation of the centre as a whole.
- 7.60 In 2005 the Council undertook a developer competition to select a preferred development partner to devise and implement a suitable programme of redevelopment to rejuvenate the Canal Quarter, introducing new uses and creating a quality, well-connected environment where people want to live, work and visit.

⁶ Improvements have been undertaken to date from the Town Centre to Preston Brook.

Figure 7.8: Canal Quarter and Southern Fringes



Policy

Spatial Strategy and Interventions

- CQ1: The Council will work closely with its selected development partners, (or their successors) to achieve a comprehensive redevelopment of the Canal Quarter area to the benefit of the Town Centre and the borough as a whole.
- CQ2: The Council will, where necessary and appropriate, seek to use its compulsory

purchase powers to ensure that land ownership constraints do not hinder the implementation and delivery of the comprehensive redevelopment of the Canal Quarter area.

- CQ3: The Council envisages a coordinated comprehensive approach to the delivery of the Canal Quarter scheme. Sufficient parking provision should be included to meet the Council's maximum parking standards. The development will be expected to adhere to the development principles detailed in the 'Runcorn Town Centre Canal Quarter Developer Competition Brief' (January 2005) and must be of the highest standard of design, including imaginative and contemporary architectural styles that incorporates 'iconic' landmark buildings. Key elements of the scheme include:
 - a) Extensive public realm improvements centred on the Brindley Arts Centre including improvements to the northern towpath, creation of a piazza / public square;
 - b) North bank commercial and residential development. This will incorporate leisure and A3 (food & drink) uses originally envisaged being located on south bank site.
 - c) Delivering a new activity node based around the Brindley Arts Centre forming the southern extent of the new corridor of activity running via Public Hall Street towards the Promenade at The Deck. A suitable scheme of street lighting for the corridor and other improved pedestrian routes should be included.
 - d) New or improved pedestrian footbridge linkages between the northern and southern canal banks.
 - e) South bank development. By relocating the intended leisure and A3 (Food & Drink) uses to the north bank, the south bank area is expected to accommodate mostly residential development with the possibility of including a hotel use at the eastern end of the site. The site should be self sufficient in terms of parking provision.

Layout and Design

- CQ4: All residential units within the Canal Quarter should achieve the Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 or above.

Transport and Movement

- CQ5: The Canal Quarter development must create safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle routes through the site connecting to the wider pedestrian and cycle networks. Of particular importance are the linkages between :
 - a) The Brindley Arts Centre to Church St. / Public Hall St.: The development is expected to create the southern section of the proposed 'corridor' linking key activity nodes at the Brindley Arts Centre towards the Promenade (via Public Hall Street)
 - b) Greenway Rd. to Granville St.: The development is expected to create an attractive accessible route between, Greenway Road, across the canal (possibly utilising the existing footbridge) through the northern site to Granville Street.
 - c) Greenway Rd. to Alcock St.: The development is expected to create an attractive accessible route between, Greenway Road, across the canal (possibly utilising the existing footbridge) through the northern site to Alcock Street.
 - d) Devonshire Place ~ Leiria Way: The existing towpath along the northern side of the Bridgewater Canal should be respected, maintained and where appropriate improved to form a safe, attractive and accessible pedestrian route for walkers and cyclists. Access to the towpath and the wider pedestrian and cycle network should be maximised wherever possible.
- CQ6: Development proposals will be expected to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Highways Authority that suitable provision has been made for safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle access within the site and connecting to the wider pedestrian and cycle network. In particular, that suitable through routes (as outlined) are provided and that the scheme contributes to the wider aims of this and the Waterside Strategy. A Parking Management Plan will be required to implement the findings and recommendations of the Parking and Access Study, alongside environmental improvements to High Street.

Justification

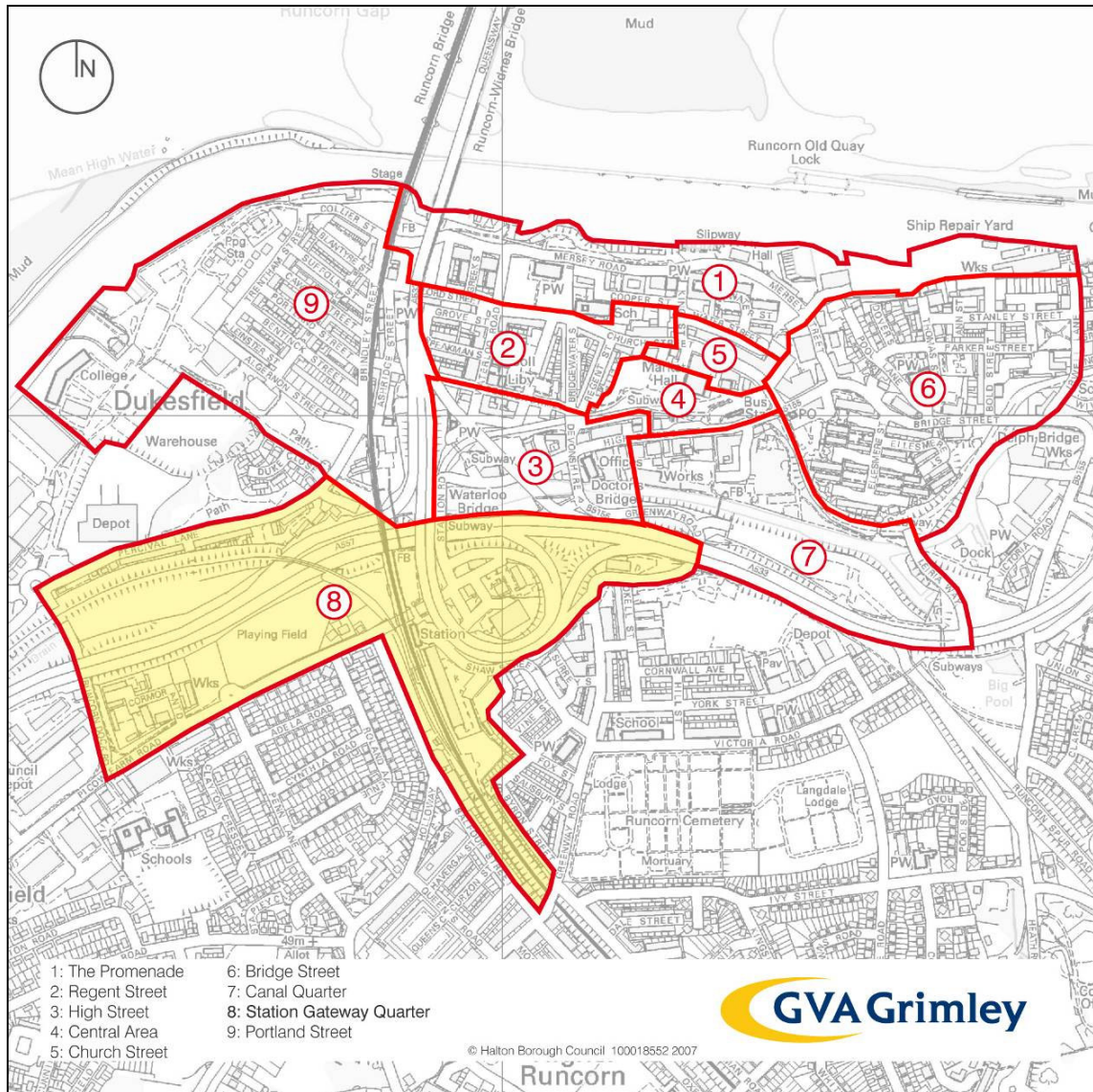
- 7.61 The policies prioritise the Canal Quarter as the principal development in the Town Centre, recognising that it has the ability to build upon recent successes and - in line with the vision - transform the Town Centre into a prime leisure and evening destination for the wider community. Together with the Deck development, it has the potential to rejuvenate the Town Centre by introducing new residential populations in the heart of the area.
- 7.62 The majority of the land holdings required for its delivery are in Council ownership, however, where necessary, the Council or its development partner may need to acquire additional land to fully realise the development. Where this cannot be secured through negotiation, the Council may seek to exercise its powers to compulsorily purchase the necessary land and this is recognised in the policies above.
- 7.63 The policies illustrate the importance of the Canal Quarter as a flagship development. As part of the commitment to securing the highest quality of contemporary design across the site, residential units will be expected to achieve a minimum of 4 stars under the Code for Sustainable Homes Standard.

Station Gateway Quarter

Overview and Existing Character

- 7.64 At present this area principally contains Runcorn Railway Station, which provides access to the West Coast Mainline, therefore linking Runcorn directly to the key centres of Birmingham, Liverpool and London. Other uses include commercial premises within the 'Loops' highway structure and a residential neighbourhood in a grid formation to the east of the station and south of the town centre.
- 7.65 However, the economic and social opportunities presented by this key public transport gateway are presently not exploited to maximise the full potential of the area and its linkages to Runcorn Town Centre. In particular, the expressway road network, which includes grade - separated routes, has effectively created a large barrier between the town, the Station and the residential suburbs lying to the south. The Daresbury Expressway and the Weston Point Expressway are both aligned broadly east to west.
- 7.66 Heavily planted roadside margins, and featureless grass verges, compartmentalise areas north and south of the key route enclosing views for the motorist resulting in them by-passing the Town Centre visually and physically. This also provides a significant barrier to pedestrians and cyclists, who are diverted along convoluted routes using subways and stairways to circumnavigate the expressway.
- 7.67 Furthermore, the expansive elevated rail structures running from north to south impede east-west movement, a number of unsatisfactory pedestrian routes form low quality connections between the Station, traditional residential areas (west of the railway) and also between the houses and Runcorn Basin.
- 7.68 The proposals of the Mersey Gateway Project provide the opportunity to initiate physical redevelopment of underutilised areas in the vicinity of Runcorn Station utilising the improved access and visibility, which could be achieved through remodelling at the Runcorn Loops. The quality of employment and commercial offer within the gateway would be emphasised, where further accessibility improvements would include new pedestrian crossings and public realm improvements making the Station more accessible from other areas of the town.
- 7.69 The removal of the A557 eastern approach slip-road onto the Silver Jubilee, as part of the removal of unnecessary infrastructure, would also release land for a number of high quality development opportunities for employment use to the west of the Station.

Figure 7.9: Station Gateway Quarter Sub-Area



Policy

Spatial Strategy and Interventions

- SG1: The Council will support proposals for a comprehensive redevelopment scheme supporting a mix of A2 (Financial and Professional Services) / B1 (Business) / A3 (Restaurants and Cafes) / C1 (Hotels) employment development opportunities. Provision should be focused toward encouraging small to medium sized local

enterprises as well as larger floorplate uses.

- SG2: Development within the area will be expected to demonstrate its contribution to local employment for residents of Runcorn as well as wider Borough and regional objectives.

Layout and Design

- SG3: Development should seek to improve the area as a key gateway location between Runcorn Railway Station and the Town Centre.
- SG4: Buildings within the area should retain existing residential amenity and protect important vistas of the iconic Silver Jubilee Bridge.
- SG5: The area should provide a focus for high quality public realm improvements and major development proposals should be targeted toward improving the image of key routes and gateways within the area and linking to the Town Centre.
- SG6: Development proposals should include ground floor frontage and active uses addressing the public realm and fronting the associated new movement corridors.

Transport and Movement

- SG7: Public transport connections between the area and the Town Centre should be facilitated, as shown on Fig. 6.1.
- SG8: Where possible communal car parking should be encouraged and parking should be accommodated in less visible locations. Attention should be paid to the findings of the Halton Parking and Access Study.
- SG9: Pedestrian, cycle and vehicle links should be established to existing neighbourhoods and key destinations within the Town Centre.

Justification

- 7.70 The existing expressway network and associated 'Loops' and elevated structures leading to the Silver Jubilee Bridge currently block movement between the town centre, station area, and impede movement for residents living to the south of the expressway. The policies above

provide support for the main transformations arising for Runcorn Town Centre (from the Mersey Gateway Project), which aim to unlock the potential of this area through redevelopment of land presently occupied by the 'Runcorn Loops' structure and tackling the issues of severance by removing obsolete road infrastructure.

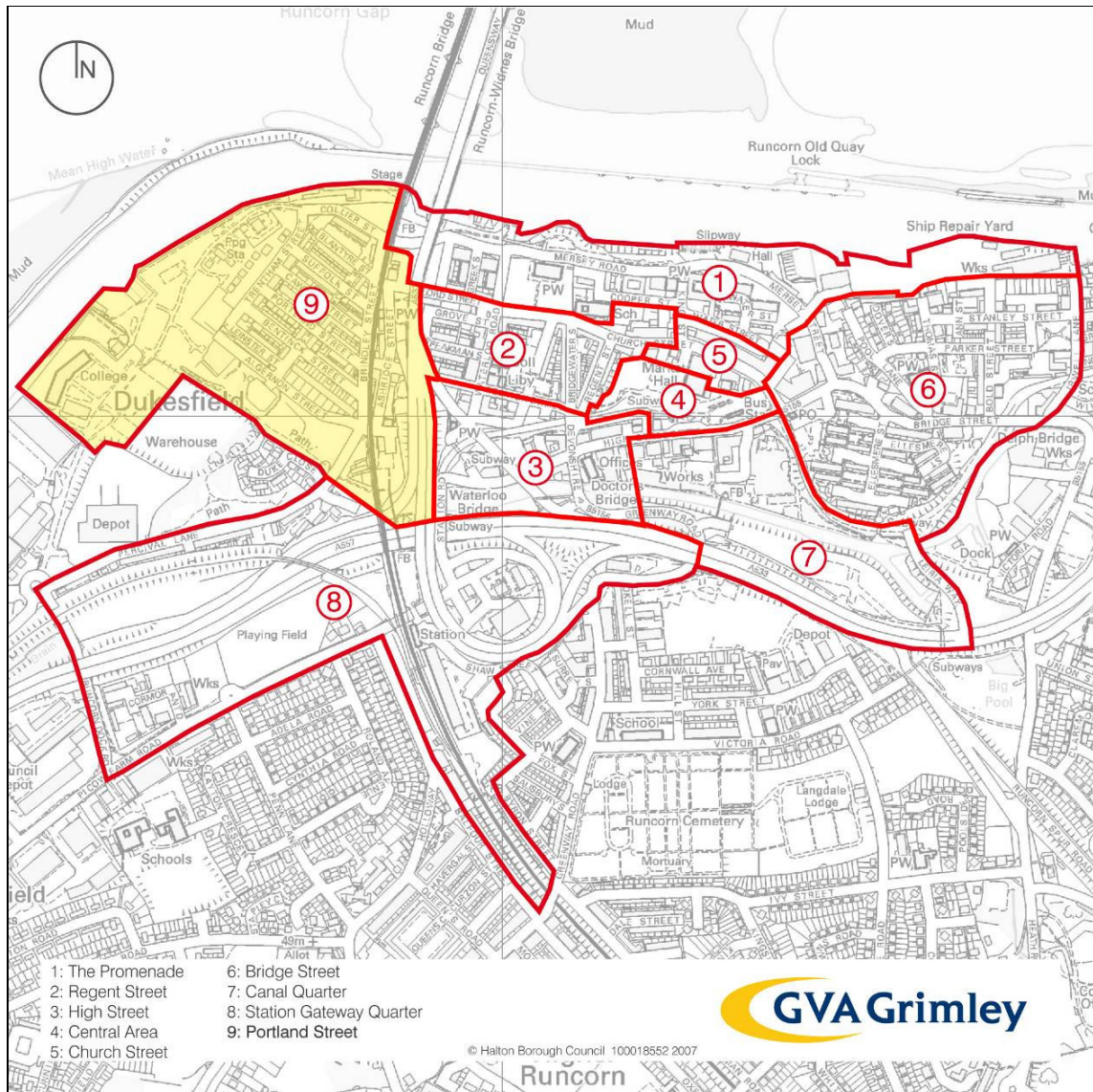
- 7.71 The policies provide support for actions to vastly improve the relationship between the core of the town and the suburban residential hinterland, with the potential to re-link the railway station, which is currently isolated from the Town Centre by the canal and expressway, through a new Station Gateway Quarter. This new gateway area will provide a range of employment development opportunities focused on a mix of A2 (Financial & Professional Services), A3 (Restaurants and Cafes), B1 (Business Uses), and a high quality C1 (Hotel) use. It seeks to address the limited supply of employment land within the Town Centre targeted toward the encouragement of local employment and business creation. It also seeks to meet the development needs of the projected growth in identified economic sectors.
- 7.72 This will also facilitate improvements to connectivity with areas to the west of the A533 Queensway Expressway, which are also poor, presently separating both the station area, and the town centre, from the college area and Runcorn Docks.
- 7.73 The Queensway Expressway, which runs northwards to the Queen's Silver Jubilee Bridge, will take on a new role in the future – focused upon establishing stronger links between Widnes and Runcorn, and encouraging pedestrian, cyclists, and tourists, to linger and enjoy the dramatic aerial structure and views across the Mersey. Therefore, the policies support the de-linking of parts of the network, which will also allow the Silver Jubilee Bridge to serve local needs by re-linking the two towns of Widnes and Runcorn and improving their inter-connectivity.

Portland Street - Dukesfield

Overview and Existing Character

- 7.74 This area of the Town Centre comprises predominantly of residential areas, including interspersed community uses, situated to the west of the Town Centre and Regent Street sub-area. Halton's Riverside College is also situated within this area, with high quality public and sustainable transport linkages from the College to the Town Centre seen as necessary and appropriate.
- 7.75 Residential dwellings are generally of good quality and mix, with the area sloping downhill in a southern direction. Residential streets are arranged around a basic grid road layout.
- 7.76 To the south of the area lies the (former) alignment of the Bridgewater Canal, which has been protected to facilitate re-establishment of the Runcorn Locks, linking Runcorn Basin with the Manchester Ship Canal and via the Weaver Navigation recreating a second 'Cheshire Ring'.

Figure 7.10: Portland Street Sub-Area



Policy

Spatial Strategy and Interventions

- PS1: Linked to Policy HS2, the Council will consider favourably any proposals for the reinstatement of the Bridgewater Canal to the west of Runcorn Basin. The restoration of Runcorn Locks and the connection of the Bridgewater Canal to the Manchester Ship Canal / Weaver Navigation will be supported.

- PS2: The Council will support proposals to establish service industries to service the needs of waterborne and other visitors should Policy PS1 be invoked. Acceptable uses will include A1 (Shops), A3 (Restaurants and Cafes), C1 (Hotels) and D2 (Outdoor Leisure) uses. Appropriate access and servicing must be demonstrated within any development proposals.
- PS3: Reinforce the existing neighbourhood through the addition of some higher quality residential development where possible.
- PS4: Support, and seek, investment within the existing residential stock.
- PS5: Linked to Policy PS1, the Council will support proposals to utilise the corridor in proximity to the reinstatement Bridgewater Canal for outdoor leisure, greenspace and recreational purposes.

Layout and Design

- PS6: Buildings should not exceed three storeys in height in order to preserve the suburban residential character of the area.
- PS7: All development should seek to enhance the key view of the Silver Jubilee Bridge.
- PS8: Any proposals for residential developments near the waterfront should recognise the requirement to be set back from the waterfront to enable public access to the waterfront itself.

Transport and Movement

- PS9: The Council will support proposals to re-instate the Bridgewater Canal to the west of Runcorn Basin. Proposals must include satisfactory canal tow paths, including accessibility for pedestrian and cycle usage from the High Street sub-area.
- PS10: All development will allow pedestrian/cycle movement along the waterfront.
- PS11: The Council will support proposals for the establishment of a new town centre shuttle bus service providing a linkage between Dukesfield and the Town Centre in line with the objectives of the Halton Sustainable Transport Strategy.

Justification

- 7.77 Revised access arrangements to the Silver Jubilee Bridge resulting from the Mersey Gateway Project propose to remove the current highway section that blocks the route of the Bridgewater Canal. Should this occur, the policies above enable the re-instatement of this section of the canal.
- 7.78 In the longer term, the policies support the possibility of re-establishing the Runcorn Locks, linking Runcorn Basin with the Manchester Ship Canal and via the Weaver Navigation recreating a second 'Cheshire Ring'. Such a route is likely to be very attractive to leisure craft and holiday-makers. Runcorn basin would become a layover point for craft waiting to enter the lock 'staircase' creating opportunities for service industries to service the needs of waterborne and other visitors.
- 7.79 Therefore, the policies prioritise the canal corridor for recreational, leisure and service-based commercial uses to extract the maximum benefits in employment and economic, environmental and leisure terms.
- 7.80 Furthermore, policies seek to consolidate the existing residential neighbourhood to ensure its long-term sustainability and viability as part of the Town Centre – ensuring it benefits from regeneration elsewhere in the area. Primary focus is given to improving the quality of existing housing stock in the area through refurbishment, alongside diversifying the current housing offer through new residential development where appropriate. New development would be dependent on the private market and is to occur through selective demolition of vacant buildings and development of underutilised gap sites.

8. DELIVERY AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL MATTERS

- 8.1 The vision for Runcorn Town Centre, like the aspiration established for the wider Regeneration Strategy, is both bold and challenging, but intentionally so, as the vision is about changing perceptions and setting a new agenda for investment in delivering a place that people can be proud of and that people aspire to live and work in, invest and spend time.
- 8.2 It is also a vision that will not be delivered in the matter of a few years but represents a sustained programme of investment of at least fifteen years, timed to fit alongside the construction and operation of the Mersey Gateway Bridge.

Phasing of Development

- 8.3 It is important to emphasise that the Strategic Objectives of the SPD, and the majority of the sub-area policies, can be implemented immediately, yet are predominantly dictated by the market and private sector delivery.
- 8.4 In addition, development opportunities that are dependent on the Mersey Gateway Project proposals are to be brought forward as opportunities in a phased manner, which takes account of the delivery timescale of the Mersey Gateway, public sector funding streams and market demand projections.
- 8.5 Therefore, development of Runcorn Town Centre is proposed to take place within three broad phases proceeding in 2016 and completing in 2031. The diagrams below show the estimated phasing programme for the Mersey Gateway related regeneration of Runcorn Town Centre in detail.
- 8.6 The first phase of development (figure 8.1) is scheduled to take place simultaneously to the scheduled opening of the Mersey Gateway in 2014. It is at this stage that consideration will be given to the removal of any redundant existing highway sections linked to the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge. This process will result in a number of opportunity sites being brought forward for redevelopment – principally the Station Quarter.

Figure 8.1: Phase 1 (2016-2021)

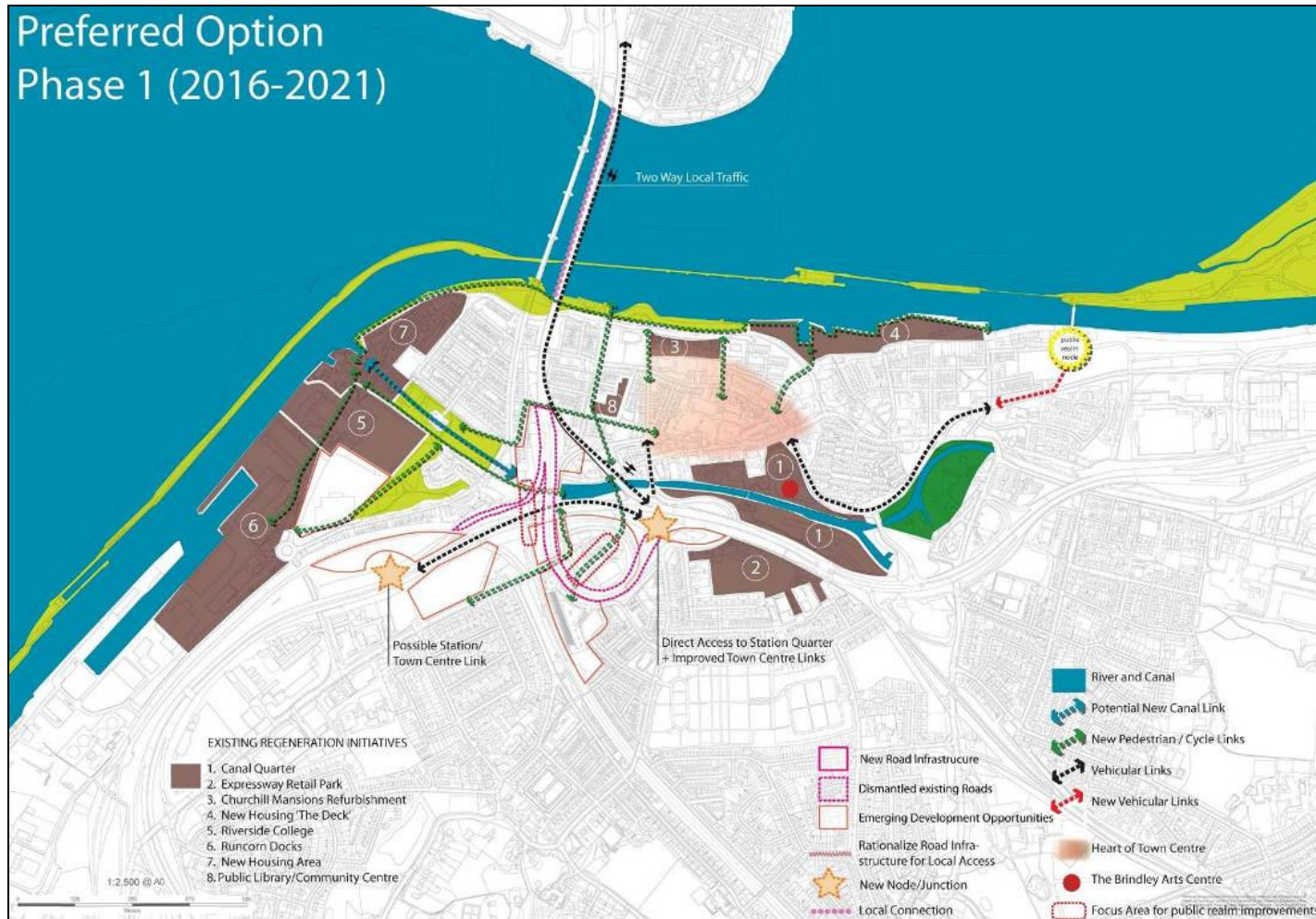
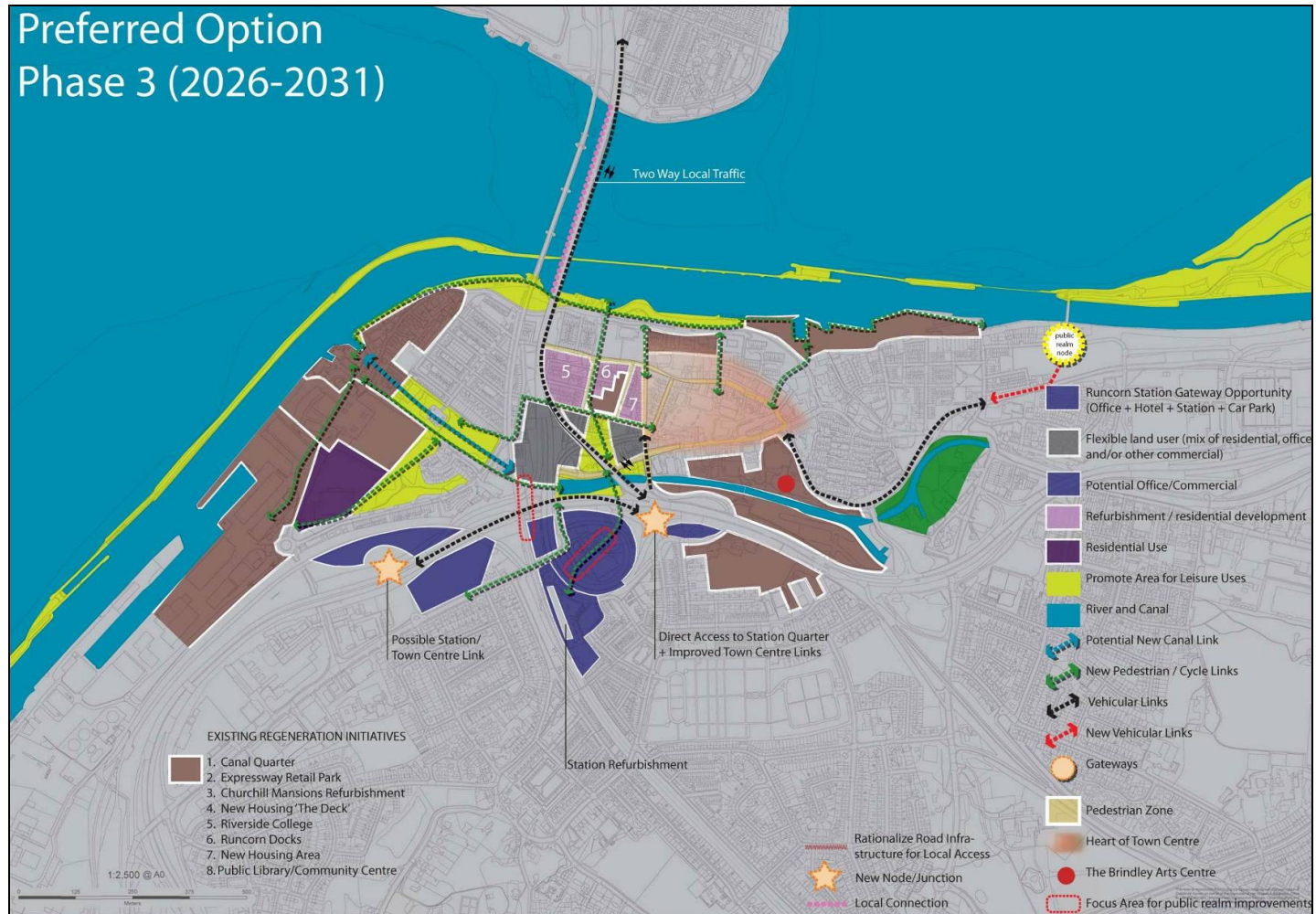


Figure 8.2: Phase 2 (2021-2026)



Figure 8.3: Phase 3 (2026-2031)



8.7 Phase 2 (figure 8.2) is programmed to commence in 2021, taking 5 years to complete and with the majority of opportunity sites, arising from infrastructure alterations during Phase 1, to be brought forward for regenerative development during this period.

8.8 Phase 3 (figure 8.3) will occur from 2026 until 2031 and will form the final segment of proposed development and infrastructure.

Development Control Matters

8.9 The determination of development proposals within Runcorn Town Centre will be in accordance with the saved policies set out in the UDP and the contents of this SPD. The contents of this SPD are summarised here in order to set out clearly what the Council will expect in terms of the types of development that will be permitted. This section is however by no means exhaustive. It is recommended that applicants hold pre-application discussions with officers at Halton Borough Council prior to submission of any planning application(s).

General Requirements for all Development Proposals

8.10 Development proposals within Runcorn Town Centre are required to:

- Comply with all relevant saved UDP policies;
 - Identify any environmental constraint issues such as contamination, noise, air quality, flooding, landscaping, and visual impacts, and provide suitable improvements, solutions or mitigation measures;
- Contribute to the identified highway and traffic management improvements;
 - Meet appropriate car parking standards for parking, as set out in the UDP, RSS and the Council's SPD on transportation and accessibility;
 - Contribute towards parking requirements (on/off-site) in line with the parking requirements of the Halton Parking and Access Study.
- Facilitate and improve access to public transport services, including cross-river;
 - Facilitate appropriate public access to greenspace and movements through the area and cross-river through enhanced foot and bicycle linkages;
 - Provide environmental landscaping improvements that will make a positive contribution to improving the visual appearance of Runcorn Town Centre – in particular to the public realm of High Street;

- Adopt appropriate building design and layout in accordance with the requirements of this SPD and the Halton UDP, creating an attractive environment, and protecting and enhancing existing environmental assets and mitigate against environmental constraint issues;
- Incorporate trees and woodland planting in accordance with the objectives of the Mersey Forest; and
- Allow for the retention wherever possible of any existing trees of good quality in accordance with the principles of British Standard 5837.

Employment Proposals

- 8.11 Proposals for new employment uses will normally be acceptable for B1 / B2 uses, particularly where this respects and serves a local catchment population.
- 8.12 Proposals for new employment uses will be restricted to A2 / B1 uses within the new Station Gateway Quarter and the new Office Quarter.
- 8.13 Proposals for redevelopment, development, alteration or extension to existing employment activity will be required to:
- Adhere to the overall vision and objectives for Runcorn Town Centre and conform with design policies and environmental standards adopted by Halton Council;
 - Incorporate the principles of Manual for Streets and Secured by Design into layout and design where appropriate;
 - Have regard to the Council's Design of New Industrial and Commercial Development SPD and the North West Best Practice Design Guide; and
 - New commercial developments should seek to achieve a Very Good BREEAM rating and concurrently provide the opportunity for and encourage renewable energy generation through building design.

Residential Development

- 8.14 Proposals for new housing development within Runcorn Town Centre will be required to:
- Increase the variety of housing available in Runcorn Town Centre to increase choice – mixed tenure and type including the provision of additional affordable housing;

- Densities will be consistent with the objective of providing a mixed tenure and type but as a general principle will not be below 40 dwellings per hectare;
 - Incorporate the principles of Manual for Streets and Secured by Design into layout and design;
 - All new homes will be required to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes 3 and higher;
 - Have regard to the Council's Design of New Residential Development SPD and the North West Best Practice Design Guide;
 - Provide greenspace provision within any residential proposals in accordance with UDP Policy H3 and the Council's Provision of Open Space SPD.
- 8.15 The release of individual sites for development will be in accordance with a scheme of works intended to ensure that development does not proceed ahead of the infrastructure works required and necessary to support it.

Transport Proposals

- 8.16 All development proposals will respect the proposals of this SPD. All development proposals will be required to enable safe and convenient public transport, pedestrian and cycle routes throughout the area and beyond.
- 8.17 All proposals should provide car parking at suitable locations in accordance with Halton Borough Council's adopted parking standards.

Retail Development

- 8.18 Proposals for Town Centre uses will normally be acceptable for A1, A3, A4 and a restricted proportion of A5 uses and only where they support improved and enhanced local services and where they provide for an improved visitor experience, particularly around the new Station Gateway Quarter.

Flood Risk

- 8.19 Applicants seeking planning permission should carry out a flood risk assessment on sites in excess of 1 hectare, and for those sites situated in flood zones 2 and 3 in accordance with the provisions of PPS25 *Development and Flood Risk*. Applications should refer to the Halton Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (October 2007) to assess whether their site is location with in area of flood-risk. Developers will need to consider any advice from the Environment Agency concerning flooding issues in the design of their development. Wherever possible,

appropriate mitigation measures should be proposed which should include Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems to restrict run-off to existing rates or better. Surface water run-off rates from any greenfield sites should also be restricted to greenfield rates (including making allowances for climate change).

- 8.20 Table D.2 of PPS25 recognises residential development as more vulnerable to flood risk. Thus, in accordance with Table D.3 of PPS25, the applicant will need to demonstrate a positive exception test for any residential schemes. With regard to mixed use development proposals, a sequential approach should be made whereby only part of the site is located within flood zone 2 & 3, thus ensuring more vulnerable classes of development are steered away from areas of higher risk of flooding.

Contamination

- 8.21 Developers should undertake their own site investigations in accordance with Policy PR14 (Contaminated Land) of the Halton UDP before any planning application for development is determined.

Waste

- 8.22 Conforming to the adopted policies of Halton Borough Council, for all new development, Site Waste Management Plans will be required to maximise the re-use and recycling of construction waste. As part of any scheme, there should be provision included for recycling facilities.

Archaeology

- 8.23 An Archaeological desk study assessment should be undertaken in accordance with the provisions of the North West Best Practice Design Guide, and submitted with all planning applications affecting known or potential areas of archaeological interest. Where potential impacts are identified, appropriate mitigation measures should be proposed and subject to the agreement of the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development.
- 8.24 The completion of an archaeological assessment and, if appropriate, a programme of field evaluation prior to the determination of a planning application will be required to allow for any further archaeological mitigation to be established at any early stage. Further archaeological mitigation (excavation, watching brief, etc) may then be secured through planning condition.

Disability Discrimination Acts (DDAs)

- 8.25 There are Disability Discrimination Acts (DDAs) of 1995 and 2005. The need to comply with the DDA should be considered as inherent within all policies that promote development within the centre where there is access to buildings and public areas. There is also a need to comply with the DDA for improvements that are outwith of the planning system, for example in relation to existing buildings. Consideration should be given to the requirements of DDA in the early stages of drawing up a proposal, alongside access requirements identified by UDP policies BE18-20.

The Council's Responsibilities

In order to achieve its vision for the regeneration of Runcorn Town Centre, the Council will enter into negotiations with developers to secure the environmental and physical improvements described in this SPD through appropriate planning conditions and planning obligations where necessary.

APPENDIX A: CONTACTS AND USEFUL INFORMATION

Further information relating to the purpose of the intended SPD:

To access a downloadable copy of the Planning Policy Guidance notes or Planning Policy Statements detailed in Section 4, or for further general planning information, visit the Communities and Local Government (CLG) website at www.communities.gov.uk or for a hard copy contact Communities and Local Government by telephone on 0870 1226 236.

To access a downloadable copy of 'By Design, Urban Design in the planning system: Towards Better Practice' and 'Safer Places', documents relating to urban renewal, urban design and creating sustainable communities, and general planning information visit the Communities and Local Government website at www.communities.gov.uk. Manual for Streets can be purchased from the Department for Transport at a cost of £22.50, quoting ISBN 9780727735010, or downloaded from www.dft.gov.uk.

Investing in the High Street can be purchased from the Civic Trust for £25.00. The Civic Trust, Winchester House, 259-269 Old Marylebone Road, London NW1 5RA.

Going to Town: Improving Town Centre Access can be downloaded free of charge from the National Retail Planning Forum (NRPf) at www.nrpf.org. A hard copy can also be purchased online at the same website address.

Further information on the Secured By Design initiative, including details relating to the standards required for a development to receive Secured By Design accreditation may be found at www.securedbydesign.com

For further information regarding any development which may affect a historic building or conservation area 'Building In Context' will be able to provide advice. It is available from English Heritage and the Commission of Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and can be downloaded free of charge from <http://www.cabe.org.uk> or for a hard copy contact English Heritage at: Customer Services Department, PO Box 569, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 2YP, Tel: 0870 333 1181, Fax: 01793 414 926

Further information on the Halton UDP can be found online at www.halton.gov.uk or by phone on 0151 424 2061, email at forward.planning@halton.gov.uk or by post to Environmental and Regulatory Services, Environment Directorate, Halton Borough Council, Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn, WA7 2GW.

You can find out about the planning system and how it works at www.planningportal.gov.uk.

Local information

For advice relating to submitting a planning application, for pre-application discussion or to purchase a copy of this SPD or any other SPD contact:

Planning and Policy
Environmental and Regulatory Services
Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

Tel: 0303 333 4300

Fax: 0151 471 7304

Email: forward.planning@halton.gov.uk

Website: www.halton.gov.uk

If further highways or transport information is required, please contact the:

Highways, Transportation and Logistics
Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

Tel: 0151 424 2061

Fax: 0151 471 7521

Website: www.halton.gov.uk

If further access information is required, or information relating to building control please contact the;

Building Control Consultancy

Environment Directorate

Halton Borough Council

Rutland House

Halton Lea

Runcorn

WA7 2GW

Tel: 0303 333 4300)

Email: building.control@halton.gov.uk

Website: www.halton.gov.uk

APPENDIX B: LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

Halton Unitary Development Plan (2005)

Land-Use Policy Designations within Runcorn Town Centre

Policy	Summary
<p><i>Policy RG4 – Action Area 4: Runcorn & Weston Docklands</i></p>	<p>Policy RG4 of the Halton UDP identifies the Runcorn & Weston Docklands Action Area as in need of regeneration, with preference for the development of freight handling and storage and distribution activities. The policy identifies appropriate land uses as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business (B1); • General Industry (B2); • Storage and Distribution (B8); • Open space; • Uses ancillary to an employment area; and • Education and housing. <p>Policy RG4 advises that part of the Action Area should be developed for a rail freight facility as appropriate, and that existing rail links should be enhanced within any new development. The supporting text acknowledges the role of the Action Area in the handling and storage of freight, and states that the redevelopment of the area for employment uses will provide much needed employment. The commercial dock should be maintained and enhanced where commercially possible, and the line of the Bridgewater Canal safeguarded.</p> <p>Policy requires the “<i>visual quality of the built and natural environment should be enhanced</i>”, and the quality of design of any development to enhance its surroundings in order to raise the overall image and appearance of the area.</p> <p>Any new development within this Action Area should maximise its waterside location and the that of the Weaver Navigation within the area. Increased public access to the waterside is encouraged where “<i>compatible with continuing commercial use of the waterway, whilst ensuring public safety</i>”.</p>

<p><i>Policy BE3 – Environmental Priority Areas</i></p>	<p>This policy defines the two Environmental Priority Areas within the Borough, focused largely upon the waterfront / townscape fringes of Runcorn and Widnes. Within the Environmental Priority Areas, Policy BE3 advises that development proposals should be:</p> <p>(a) of a quality of design that enhances the character and appearance of that area; and</p> <p>(b) of a high quality of design in terms of landscape, boundary treatments and facing materials.</p> <p>The westernmost part of Runcorn Town Centre is situated within the designated Environmental Priority Area. Proposals for development in this area will therefore need to have full regard to the provisions of Policy BE3.</p>
<p><i>Policy BE5 – Other Sites of Archaeological Importance</i></p>	<p>This policy states that development proposals likely to have an unacceptable affect on other known sites and monuments of archaeological significance will not be permitted. Appropriate mitigation measures may be appropriate with the agreement of the Local Planning Authority.</p>
<p><i>Policy BE6 – Archaeological Evaluations</i></p>	<p>Where development proposals may affect sites of known or suspected archaeological importance, the Council may require the applicant to submit an archaeological evaluation prior to the determination of any planning application. The prime archaeological objective is the preservation in situ of important remains. Potential measures by which this can be achieved include design modification and landscaping within sensitive areas.</p>
<p><i>Policy BE9 – Alterations and Additions to Listed Buildings</i></p>	<p>The predominant consideration in applications for internal or external works to a listed building or structure will be the preservation of the special architectural or historic features and character of the building or structure. This policy sets out the special criteria which apply for proposals which seek to alter or extend a listed building, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensions must respect the character and scale of the original buildings and not be allowed to dominate; • The replacement of doors, windows and other features in non-traditional materials will not be permitted; • Attention should be paid to the retention of the original plan form, roof

	<p>construction, and interior features of merit, as well as the exterior of listed buildings;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensions must as far as possible be built of materials matching those of the original building. <p>All alterations and additions should not unacceptably affect the essential character of the building, and it should be in-keeping with its architectural style and features. Development should be of a high standard of design and external appearance and materials will be expected to match, as near as possible, those of the existing buildings in kind and in detail.</p>
<p><i>Policy BE10 – Protecting the Setting of Listed Buildings</i></p>	<p>It is a requirement of this policy that development likely to affect the setting of a listed building should aim to preserve both the character of that setting and its historic relationship to the listed buildings. This will include the preservation of trees and other landscape features. Close control will be afforded to the quality of design of development in close proximity to a listed building.</p>
<p><i>Policy BE12 – General Development Criteria Conservation Areas</i></p>	<p>This policy states that development affecting a Conservation Area will only be permitted if it will preserve or enhance the special architectural or historical character and appearance of the area. Development proposals will need to apply a high standard of design which respects the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, including building materials and boundary treatments. Development should also harmonise with adjoining buildings to enhance the existing street-scene and views and vistas. Important architectural and historical street features, landscape and ecological features should be enhanced where possible.</p> <p>Victoria Promenade at West Bank was designated as a Conservation Area in 1978.</p>
<p><i>Policy BE13 – Demolition in Conservation Areas</i></p>	<p>Policy BE13 states that demolition of buildings or structures will only be permitted provided that they do not contribute to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. Consent for demolition of a building or a structure within a Conservation Area will only be permitted where one or more of four exceptional circumstances are satisfied, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is proved to be wholly beyond economic repair;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is incapable of reasonable beneficial use; • It is not of intrinsic architectural, historic or townscape importance and its removal or replacement would enhance the appearance or character of the area; or • Its removal would allow the redevelopment or rehabilitation of an adjacent larger site which is underused, neglected or derelict if this would enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
<p><i>Policy GE6 – Protection of Designated Greenspace</i></p>	<p>Development within designated and proposed Greenspace will not be permitted unless it is ancillary to the enjoyment of the Greenspace, or in the case of designated Greenspace within educational use, it is specifically required for educational purposes. Exceptions may be made where the loss of the amenity value is adequately compensated for where either of the following criteria can be satisfied:</p> <p>(a) Development on part of the site would fund improvements that raise the overall amenity value of the Greenspace; or</p> <p>(b) The developer provides a suitable replacement Greenspace of at least equal size and amenity value, or significantly enhances the amenity value of nearby Greenspace.</p> <p>No proposals should result in a loss of amenity for local residents by forcing them to travel to a less convenient location and that in all exceptional cases, there would need to be clear and convincing reasons why development should be permitted or that loss of amenity value could be adequately compensated. The accompanying text states that Greenspace, regardless of whether or not it is publicly accessible, makes an important contribution to the quality of life of those who live and work within the Borough. Parts of the Runcorn Town Centre area incorporate greenspace allocated under policy GE6. Development proposals should therefore seek to retain this existing greenspace, or provide compensatory greenspace in accordance with the provisions of Policy GE6.</p>
<p><i>Policy GE19 – Protection of Sites of Importance for</i></p>	<p>The Mersey Estuary is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), part of which is encompassed by the Runcorn Town Centre area. Policy GE19 seeks to restrict development and/or land use change if it is likely to have an unacceptable effect on a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (i.e.</p>

<i>Nature Conservation</i>	SSSI). Development and/or land use change will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the reasons for the proposals outweigh the need to safeguard the nature conservation of the site.
<i>Policy GE23 – Protection of Areas of Special Landscape Value</i>	This policy advises that development will not be permitted where it will result in an unacceptable effect on the visual and physical characteristics of a site of special landscape value. Where existing built-up areas are ‘washed over’ by an Area of Special Landscape Value designation, development that does not significantly affect the landscape will be permitted.
<i>Policy GE24 – Protection of Important Landscape Features</i>	This policy advises that development will not be permitted where it will result in an unacceptable effect on the visual or physical characteristics for which a site was designated as having ‘Important Landscape Features’. Development proposals should seek to protect existing Important Landscape Features, and where possible maintain and enhance them.
<i>Policy GE29 – Canals and Rivers</i>	Policy GE29 restricts proposals adjacent to the St. Helen’s Canal, the Bridgewater Canal or the Trent and Mersey Canal, or adjacent to the River Mersey, River Weaver or Weaver Navigation will not be permitted unless in accordance with the policy criteria. Proposals should not have an unacceptable effect on tourism and recreational potential, or landscape, wildlife and heritage value.
<i>Policy GE30 – The Mersey Coastal Zone</i>	<p>Proposals for development within the Undeveloped Coastal Zone will not be permitted unless the development specifically requires a coastal location, relates to the recreational use of the zone, or is necessary for reasons of human health or public safety. Proposals which would contribute to regeneration, such as within Runcorn Town Centre, and/or to the enhancement of environmental quality, tourism and recreation will be encouraged. Development within the Developed Coastal Zone need not be limited to those which require a coastal location. However, proposals within the Developed Coastal Zone should pay particular regard to environmental quality, and where possible to improving accessibility to the coast.</p> <p>Part of Runcorn Town Centre lies within the Mersey Coastal Zone. Development proposals within this area should conform to the provisions of this policy.</p>

<p><i>Policy PR14 – Contaminated Land</i></p>	<p>This policy establishes a number of criteria which must be satisfied prior to the determination of any planning applications for development on or adjacent to land which is known or suspected to be contaminated, comprising the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit details to assess the nature and degree of contamination (type, degree and extent of contamination); • Identify remedial measures required to deal with any hazard to safeguard future development and neighbouring uses; • Submit details of a programme of implementation for the roll out and completion of mitigation measures to be agree with the Council. <p>The requirement to undertake the above will be controlled either by planning conditions or, when necessary, by planning obligations. Within Southern Widnes, there are historic areas of landfill, notably at Ditton Road, ICI Coal Stockyard, and Spike Island. An assessment of their potential contamination may therefore be required as part of any planning application.</p>
<p><i>Policy TP2 – Existing Public Transport Facilities</i></p>	<p>Proposals likely to have an adverse effect the use of the Runcorn Busway as part of the public transport network will not be permitted. Proposals should seek to preserve, and improve as appropriate, the present or future use of existing stations, their interchange facilities or railway lines.</p>
<p><i>Policy TP8 – Pedestrian Improvement Schemes</i></p>	<p>Where appropriate, pedestrian improvement schemes will be implemented within town centres in the interests of the environment and safety. Within Runcorn Town Centre, the following schemes will be implemented during the plan period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regent, Runcorn; • Church Street, Runcorn (full pedestrianisation)
<p><i>Policy TP9 – The Greenway Network</i></p>	<p>The 'Greenway Network' comprises proposed and potential off-road routes for walking, cycling and, where appropriate, horseriding. Development proposals for sites that incorporate a greenway network should enhance the condition and appearance of the route, implement the route and appropriately segregate the route, whilst affording priority to pedestrians, cyclists and horseriders at any junction. Where development proposals adjoin a greenway network, improvements and extensions to the network will be sought through</p>

	<p>negotiation.</p> <p>Furthermore development will not be permitted should it have a detrimental effect on access onto or through the greenway network, or should it have an unacceptable affect on the amenity of the network by way of noise, smells or other forms of pollution.</p>
<i>Policy H1 – Provision for New Housing</i>	<p>Sufficient housing land will be provided for 330 new dwellings per annum (net of clearance) in line with the requirements of RSS (2003). The Runcorn Town Centre area includes a number of Phase 1 Allocated Housing Sites / Committed Sites covering the period 2002-2007. Future housing development is phased beyond this period.</p>
<i>Policy H8 – Non Dwelling House Uses</i>	<p>Within existing residential areas, proposals for development other than Class C3 (dwelling houses) will be considered mainly with regard to their effect on residential amenity. In such cases, it must be demonstrated that proposed development will not detract from the character of the area or the amenity of residents; will not result in an over-concentration of non-dwelling houses uses to the detriment of the character of the area or amenity of residents; and where car parking is to be provided fronting a highway, one third of that area should be provided with soft landscaping and screening.</p>
<i>Policy E3 – Primary Employment Area</i>	<p>Development falling within Use Classes B1 (Business), B2 (General Industry), B8 (Storage and Distribution) and Sui Generis industrial uses will be permitted in the designated Primary Employment Areas. Restricting such uses to appropriate locations – i.e. where the use already exists – will <i>“diversify the local economy away from the over dependence on heavy chemical industry and improve the environmental quality of the Primary Employment Areas”</i>.</p>

APPENDIX C: SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p><u>Attraction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominant convenience centre within its catchment. • New Somerfield anchor store. • High proportion of independent / specialist shops (a unique selling point). • Range of professional and personal services (estate agents / hairdressers etc.). • Range of community facilities. <p><u>Accessibility</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved central car park. • Free parking. • On-street parking in main retail areas. • New bus interchange. • Public Transportation node / interchange. • Number of bus services (23 routes including 9 high frequency services). • Presence of nearby main line train station. • Good access by foot & bicycle <p><u>Amenity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly good quality environment. • Human scale of centre. • Attractive location (e.g. canal / river / bridges). 	<p><u>Attraction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor representation of national multiples. • Limited retail offer. • Limited leisure / entertainment offer. • Lack of prominence. • Lack of brand / image. • Limited catchment / lack of market penetration into New Town areas. • Cinema located at Halton Lea. • Few restaurants. • Over representation of service and specialist outlets generating infrequent visits. • Limited amount & variety of office / business space. <p><u>Accessibility</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusing traffic circulation pattern / junctions / busway etc. • Poor signage • Barriers to access; canal / expressway <p><u>Amenity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor perception of night-time offer. • Dominance of drinking establishments. • Poor perception of crime / violence. • Brindley Arts Centre hidden from view. • Undeveloped sites / semi-derelict buildings.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p><u>Attraction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Brindley Arts Centre. • Remaining capacity to support additional retail floorspace (foodstore). • Success of new housing developments (Canal Street / Riverside) proving market. • Proposed The Deck redevelopment. • Canal Quarter redevelopment. • Addition of new leisure opportunities. • Bridgewater Canal proposals (Runcorn Locks and new Cheshire Loop) <p><u>Accessibility</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canal Quarter redevelopment to include improved parking provision. • Peripheral developments to fund pedestrian route improvements. <p><u>Amenity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment proposals to improve environment of Canal Quarter / The Deck and linkages to town centre. 	<p><u>Attraction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased competition – Halton Lea. • Increased competition – Widnes. • Increased competition – Other. • Internet shopping (threat to specialist retailers). • Need to generate and maintain additional footfall. <p><u>Accessibility</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mersey Gateway (new river crossing). • Availability of short-stay shoppers parking (issue re. commuter parking). • New town centre residential areas. • Concentration of A3 (hot food takeaways) along certain frontages. <p><u>Amenity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private sector funding needed to maintain SRB aided improvements (shop fronts etc.) • Need to improve vitality and increase investor confidence to secure fresh investment.