

## **BRIEFING NOTE**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 7**

**TO: REGENERATION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**  
**DATE: 22 April 2014**

**RE: WALSALL MARKET FEASIBILITY STUDY**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to update the Regeneration and Performance Panel on progress made to date, on the Walsall Market Feasibility Study since the Panel's last update 6 March 2014. The feasibility study, as led by the Walsall Markets Working Group, has now reached a point where a conceptual design for the permanent Walsall Market is now known and a direction of travel is forming. The purpose of this report is therefore to explain the progress, provide an understanding of the design and layout for Walsall Market and seek agreement to the project's next steps.

### **Background**

The Markets Working Group was established in 2012 to consider the future of Walsall Market. GVA/The Retail Group were appointed thereafter and worked with the Markets Working Group on future options for Walsall Market, in terms of both location and design. The Working Group made recommendations to Cabinet through the Scrutiny Panel which Cabinet endorsed, agreeing to the commissioning of a more detailed Feasibility Study. In Autumn 2013, a thorough tendering process was conducted, resulting in Arup being appointed for this more detailed piece of work in October 2013.

### **Progress since last update (06/03/14)**

At its meeting 6 March 2014, Scrutiny resolved to:

- Note the contents of the update report;
- Agree for public consultation on the layout and design of the market in the preferred location (The Bridge) to take place at the end of March;
- Agree to receive further reports in line with the timeline presented;
- Agreed that members of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel continue to engage in the work being carried out, through participation in the Markets Working Group, public consultation and the regular updates to the Panel.

Scrutiny will recall that the work undertaken by Arup has to recommend a preferred location that followed desktop research work and built upon a previous report by GVA/Retail Group, The analysis of a first phase consultation process carried out in January 2014 has also informed Arup's recommendation.

### **Preferred Location for Walsall Market**

This research process has involved Arup undertaking an assessment of location deliverability. Arup have devised and applied a series of criteria to form the recommended preferred location; Table 1 sets out the 12 location choices proposed by the first phase public consultation process with the criteria applied to that analysis (see Appendix A). The assessment takes account of a number of economic, developments and design considerations as well the consultation responses and formed a 'traffic light' analysis of the location options for the consultation purpose. Sitting behind the 'traffic light' analysis is a

more detailed commentary against each criterion which will form part of the future planning application and is attached as Appendix B. Green marks represent criteria that demonstrates good deliverability with red representing a criteria that is undeliverable.

Following the assessment some locations have not been taken forward for further consideration due to their non-compliance with multiple major criteria. Other locations scored more positively in regard to the assessment criteria and therefore formed the basis of Arup's initial recommendation to the Markets Working Group, that the permanent location of Walsall Market should be positioned in and around The Bridge.

Potential Market Location	Complies with planning policy	Enhances public realm	Unconstrained by infrastructure	Positive impact on trading	Compatible with other uses	Is accessible to all	Affordable and low risk
A Bradford Street	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
B The Bridge and lower Park Street	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
C Digbeth	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
D Lower Hall Lane	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
E Upper Park Street	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
F Gallery Square	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
G Old Square Shopping Centre	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
H Victorian Arcade	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
I Jerome Retail Park	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
J Saddlers Centre	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
K Shannon's Mill	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
L Tesco / Crown Wharf	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Table 1: Assessment Criteria applied to develop the preferred location

### Walsall Market Conceptual Design

Following the last meeting of the Scrutiny Panel, the Markets Working Group has met two further times to oversee the second phase of consultation which has sought to consult on a conceptual design for the market in the preferred location, in and around The Bridge. At its meeting 10 March 2014, the Markets Working Group was presented with a series of design options for the layout and design of Walsall Market in this location and the Group was asked to agree the design principles that formed the eventual design which was consulted upon; the design layout and visualisation that formed the consultation material for an event held over two days (21 and 22 March 2014) is shown in Appendix C. This same design was also subject to an engagement event held with market traders on 18 March 2014. The design principles consulted upon were formed of the following:

- The Bridge being the preferred location following the analysis shown in table 1
- The clustering of approximately 70 stalls in one location to provide a focal point for the market, set within a new market square and assumes the removal of the plinth and the fountain. The number of stalls is a reduction from the current number of stalls (circa 100) but reflects an approximate 30% vacancy rate for Walsall Market. Arup's analysis indicates that Walsall is currently following national trends of decline in terms of occupancy rates of market stalls, largely due to competition from discount stores, as well as internet and superstores.

- A judgement that the current, permanently fixed, tubular metal, traditional stalls appear outdated and would be replaced with modern, demountable marquee-style stalls that enable the market to contract and expand and ability to create an event space. This flexibility will ensure vibrancy through the minimisation of void stalls
- Stalls laid out in way that enables back- to- back trading and takes into consideration vehicular and pedestrian access, alongside loading/ unloading arrangements and circulation space between stalls and building lines.
- An improved street scene and public realm provided high quality materials that set the tone for the market and will help to define and connect areas of the town centre. Careful use of materials will also highlight the existing architecture and heritage features of the area, resulting in a cohesive environment for people to shop within. It is proposed that the good-quality existing paving in and around The Bridge area will be reused as part of the new design to support value for money principles.
- A proposal to include an area where canopies, tables and seating can be arranged to support a new food offer vision for Walsall Market. The canopies in the proposed seating area will also be demountable, ensuring full flexibility of the space as a whole. This proposal is subject to further due diligence and negotiations to be undertaken as part of next phase of the project as it is currently located within the 'Old Square Phase 1 Exclusion Zone'
- Repositioning of pieces of public art and important monuments into locations which enable them to have greater visibility and serve to improve legibility in the town centre.
- Proposed waste management areas for the collection and management of trade waste.
- A recommendation that in order to serve a revitalised fresh food offer at Walsall Market, the Council should provide trader storage in a location near to the market. Walsall Market is considered unusual in being an outdoor market with no complementary indoor market that, in working examples, provides storage facilities.

### Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement

At its meeting of the 31 March 2014, the Working Group was provided with feedback information from the second stage of consultation. The analysis of this consultation material is on going and will be formed into a consultation report for the purposes of the future planning application, however for the purposes of this report the information is summarised as follows:

#### 2- Day Consultation Event

- 388 people viewed the exhibition boards. 82 paper responses were received and 4 online responses
- The majority of respondents support the proposal to locate the market at the Bridge and lower Park Street. 62 respondents support the location, 22 respondents do not support the location.
- 63 respondents support the proposed layout of the new market, 18 respondents do not support it.
- The majority of respondents rated the proposals as either "very good" or "good".

#### Market Traders Event

Approximately 45 traders attended the event and through round table discussions provided feedback. The key issues that the traders raised were:

- Robustness of the demountable stalls and the ability for them to withstand regular use, the erecting and taking down and inclement weather

- The back-to-back arrangements are a new way of working; how will this work what might be the impact on trading areas and access for customers?
- Adequate provision needs to be made for loading/ unloading and accessibility to stalls.
- Provision should be made for catering vehicles and trailers to support the food offer
- What is the opportunity for the inclusion of a mixture of permanent and demountable stalls?
- Trader storage is a necessity if the food offer at Walsall Market is to be sustainable; as is suitable waste management arrangements and the ensuring the right power and water provision is made available.

In addition to the above, all major landowners and all town centre retail businesses were invited to attend a 'retailers presentation' on 21 March 2014. 7 responses from retailers have been received to date whereby 6 of the 7 support the location of the Bridge and all 7 agreed with the proposed design and layout.

The first and second stage consultation processes have been important to inform the progression of the design, and the Working Group has been encouraged by stakeholder's willingness to engage and provide feedback. Further opportunities for stakeholder consultation will be available at the next stage of the project and again through the future planning application.

The consultation feedback provided has also enabled Arup and the Development & Delivery Service, who oversees the management of the Markets Service to consider the capital and revenue implications of the proposals to ensure the project can be delivered within the current capital budget and to minimise the operational costs of the changes. Many of the concerns expressed by the market traders are understandable given that the design remains conceptual however the design challenge brought by the traders will continue to shape the proposals and it is important to ensure the operational aspects of the design are fully thought through. The role of the market traders is therefore important and their engagement will continue to be sought. The Working Group has therefore acknowledged that more work is now needed to progress the design from a concept to a fully formed proposal that is capable of being implemented. The working group therefore wishes to extend the feasibility study's timeline beyond the original April 2014 date to enable this detailed work to take place.

## **Next Steps**

### **Design and Operation Considerations**

The Arup design team now have the benefit of all the stakeholder feedback including the requirement by the Council to ensure that the revenue implications of the proposals are better understood. Further research will be carried out to ensure best practice from other Council's operating a similar market as that proposed for Walsall is brought to bear on the design process, and answers to the questions raised by the market traders will be sought. Learning from others, and having a better understanding of the operational requirements of the proposals, will also enable the Council to develop revised and new management plans and arrangements to help ensure the permanent market is successful.

Following this review of the operating considerations of the proposals, further revisions to the design and layout will be made, and a review of the capital costs to implement the scheme will be made. It may be necessary, depending of the extent of these revisions, for further public and stakeholder consultation to take place. A commitment has been made to

continue to hold events with the market traders to engage them in the design process, and our existing retailer/ business networks will also be used to keep these stakeholders up to date.

### Implementation Programme

During the next stage of the project the Arup design team will also develop an implementation programme so that the Council and its stakeholders can understand how the market and town centre might continue to operate under a 'business as usual' premise whilst the changes to improve the market take place. It is recognised that Walsall town centre is currently going through a much welcomed programme of development and change, with projects such as the redevelopment of Old Square Phase 1 now underway. It is acknowledged that this change can bring disruption: The Council will wish to ensure that it minimises the impact on existing businesses during this transitional period and so the implementation of the permanent market will be carefully planned to take account of any other development activity occurring simultaneously in the town centre. How this activity will impact can only be known as this project and others progress; should provisions need to be made to adjust and flex the timescales around different projects to support the town centre then this will be done in consultation with the Scrutiny Panel, the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Transportation, and key stakeholders/ statutory consultees.

It will be important, if a resolution can be obtained from the Cabinet to extend the timeline for developing the detailed design and implementation plan, that the feasibility study and implementation of this project remains an item of business for the Regeneration and Performance Scrutiny Panel, supported by the Markets Working Group. It is therefore proposed that a Cabinet Report is sent to the meeting of the 30 April 2014 that sets out the direction of travel of the feasibility study and seeks agreement to continue the work that is necessary to provide a permanent Walsall Market.

A revised work plan will now be developed with Arup and the Working Group to ensure the detailed design is undertaken in an expedient and comprehensive way.

### Recommendations

To note the contents of this update report and specifically the preferred location and design concepts for Walsall Market.

To recommend to Cabinet the direction of travel for the project and seek agreement for the design concepts to be developed further for the permanent Walsall Market.

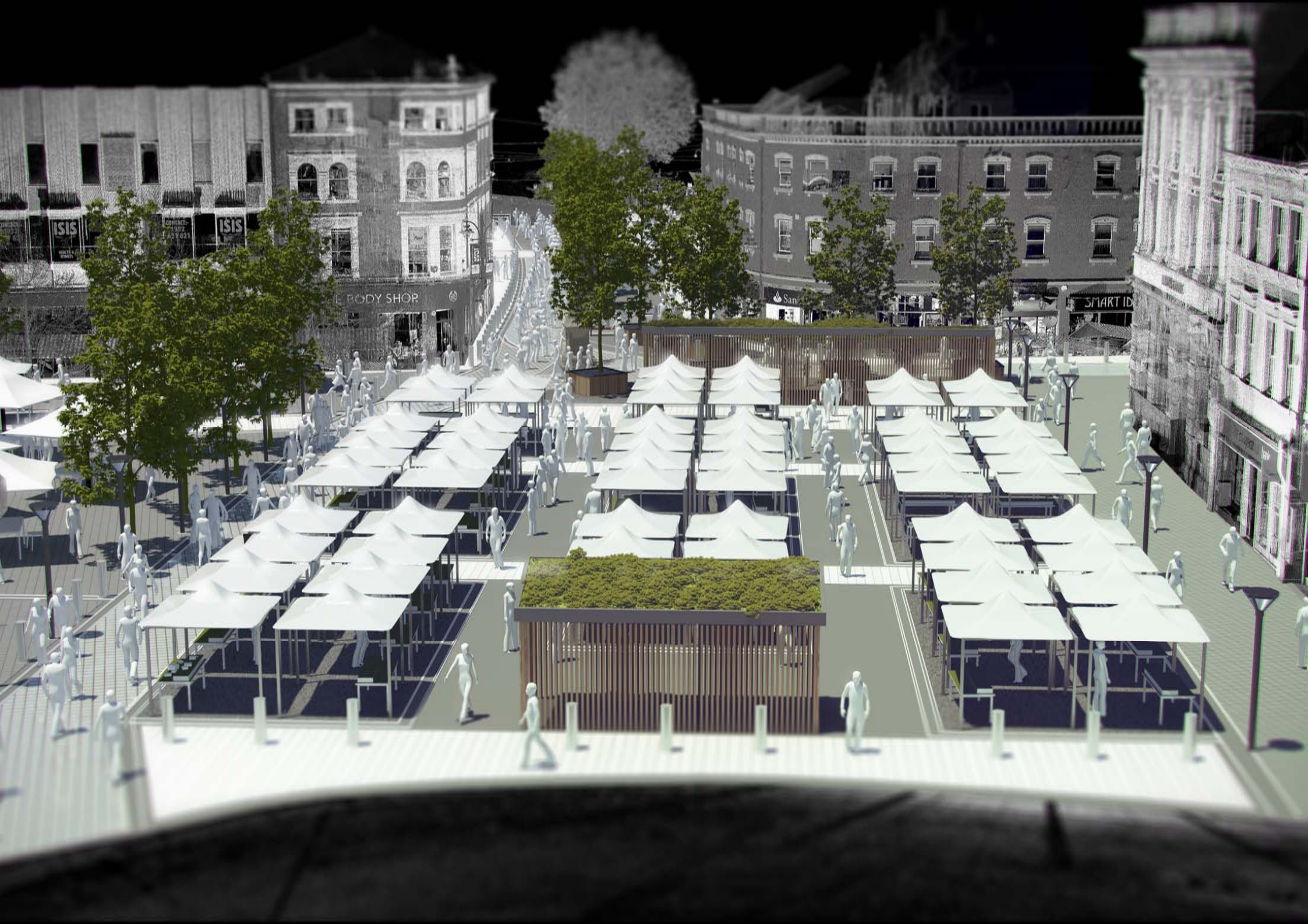
To agree to receive further reports in line with the next steps for the project and continued design development for Walsall Market.

### Author

Jo Nugent  
Team Leader- Borough Wide Development  
Development Team  
☎ 01922 654752  
[nugentj@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:nugentj@walsall.gov.uk)

Emma Segal  
Senior Regeneration Officer, Town Centre  
Development Team  
☎ 01922 654749  
[segale@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:segale@walsall.gov.uk)





## **Appendix A**

### **Location criteria used to compare and assess potential locations for the market**

<b>Location requirements</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Planning policy</b>	
The market should be located within the Primary Shopping Area (PSA).	The PSA is defined in Policy WA1 of the Walsall UDP saved policies and the Black Country Core Strategy.
The market should be within a defined redevelopment opportunity area.	The new market should be located within a development/investment opportunity area as identified in Policy WA7 of the UDP.
The development should integrate positively with the surrounding uses.	The new market should accord with Policy S3 of the UDP Integration of Development into Centre.
<b>Urban realm</b>	
Does the market contribute positively to the public realm?	Is there an opportunity to enhance and/or increase the existing public realm such as accommodating special events and street entertainment?
<b>Civil infrastructure</b>	
Avoidance of buried utilities	To minimise programme and cost escalation.
Vehicles routed in strengthened areas	To avoid long term pavement failure
Provision of storage facilities where required.	As deemed necessary for equipment and produce storage.
<b>Viability and vitality</b>	
To accommodate 70 market stalls of 3m depth and 3m frontage.	Is there physically sufficient space to meet the minimum requirement (70 stalls)
The new market should not adversely impact on the role of the PSA or prejudice any redevelopment potential in a way that would harm the retail role of the wider town centre.	To accord with the regeneration emphasis for economic development outlined in the Black Country Joint Core Strategy.  Avoidance of exclusion zone.
Pedestrian movement	Proximity to main desire line areas and through routes.
<b>Accessibility and permeability</b>	
Access for emergency vehicles and deliveries	Building regulations define access for fire services to buildings and local council regulations define general access to retail areas.
Policy requirements	Policy TRAN4 of the Black Country Core Strategy states that new developments should link to existing

	<p>walking and cycling networks, and to public transport nodes and interchanges. The links should be safe, direct and not impeded by infrastructure provided for other forms of transport.</p> <p>Policy GP6 Disabled People states that developments to which the public have access to will only be permitted if designed to provide good access for disabled people.</p>
<b>Setting</b>	
Compatibility with surrounding uses	Relationship with surrounding retail units, listed buildings, conservation areas and other facilities such as public open space. A sense of identity.
Visibility	A visible market is key to its success. The market needs to be a prominent use within the primary retail area.
<b>Deliverability</b>	
Affordability	The cost of relocating the market to each location.
Risk	Is there likely to be stakeholder and public support for the location (e.g. traders, retailers, general public).
Programme	Reliance on third parties and timing of surrounding development proposals.



**Appendix B**  
**Location Scoring Matrix**

Potential market locations	Planning policy	Public realm	Civil infrastructure	Viability and vitality	Accessibility and permeability	Setting and visibility	Deliverability
Existing market location (Base case)	Inside PSA. Temporary planning permission only.	Numerous impressive architectural frontages, dating back to the Victorian era that could be enhanced from improved adjacent public realm.	Storm water culvert passes below western building frontages, restricting above ground loading and buried foundation use	Restricts retail frontages. Limited by exclusion zone.	Part of the main shopping area and close to public transport and public car parks.	Within the Bridge Street Conservation Area. Located on natural thoroughfare routes within the town.	Limited by the exclusion zone. Objections from local retailers in current format.
Bradford Street	Inside PSA.	Numerous impressive architectural frontages, dating back to the Victorian era that could be enhanced from improved adjacent public realm.	Storm water culvert passes below western building frontages, restricting above ground loading and buried foundation use	Potential to accommodate 20-30 stalls.  Partly restricts retail frontages.	Excellent links from public transport and pedestrian routes.	Within the Bridge Street Conservation Area. Located on natural thoroughfare routes within the town.	Public area under the control of Walsall Council.
The Bridge and Lower Park Street	Inside PSA.	Numerous impressive architectural frontages, dating back to the Victorian era that could be enhanced from improved adjacent public realm.	Storm water culvert passes below western building frontages, restricting above ground loading and buried foundation use	Potential to accommodate 40-60 stalls with removal of podium.  Partially within the exclusion zone.	Excellent links from public transport and pedestrian routes.	Within the Bridge Street Conservation Area. At the crossroads of the town centre.	Public area under the control of Walsall Council, but reliant on the removal of the podium, and restricted in size by the exclusion zone.

<p>The Digbeth area</p>	<p>Within the PSA.  Development opportunity area, as per Policy WA10 of the UDP.  Within the St Matthew's Quarter as identified in the APP Issues and Options document.</p>	<p>Forms an existing public open space/square, which could be enhanced.  Future proposed development of the Old Square shopping centre will impinge into this space reducing its viability.</p>	<p>Anecdotal evidence of underlying drainage channels not recorded on records.</p>	<p>Potential to accommodate 50-60 stalls.  Development of Old Square shopping centre will reduce available stall space.  Partially within the Exclusion Zone.</p>	<p>Pedestrian accessibility would be improved by the completion of the former Tesco Metro redevelopment, which would attract customers to this area of the town centre.</p>	<p>Within the Bridge Street Conservation Area. Located on natural thoroughfare routes within the town.  Will be improved by the development of St Matthews Quarter.</p>	<p>Largely within the current exclusion zone and potential future Old Square Market phase 2 development.</p>
<p>Lower Hall Lane</p>	<p>Inside PSA  Within the St Matthew's Quarter as identified in the APP Issues and Options document.</p>	<p>Limited opportunity in current state, but maybe enhanced by future development of St Matthew's Quarter.</p>	<p>Existing ATM facility restricting stall positioning.</p>	<p>Potential to accommodate 15-25 stalls.  Close to secondary retail units, no real positive benefit.</p>	<p>Accessible to vehicles, but narrow access roads.</p>	<p>Located away from natural desire lines.</p>	<p>Affected directly by the St Matthews Quarter development.</p>
<p>Upper Park Street</p>	<p>Inside PSA.</p>	<p>Listed Public house could be enhanced from adjacent public realm works, but other buildings offer less opportunity for enhancement.</p>	<p>Old footpath areas adjacent to building frontages lack adequate structural capacity for vehicles. Rail tunnel support beams lack capacity for vehicles.  Multiple existing telephone and</p>	<p>Potential to accommodate 40-50 stalls.</p>	<p>Excellent links from public transport and Pedestrian routes.</p>	<p>Located on busy thoroughfare routes within the town.</p>	<p>High risk of the areas being dug up to replace the rail tunnel.</p>

			signage features with limited scope for relocation.				
Gallery Square	Whilst located within the town centre boundary it is located outside of the PSA, (UDP Policy WA1) and development opportunity areas (UPD WA7).	The market could increase the number of visitors and vibrancy of the existing public open space. There is also potential for canal side activities (UDP Policy LC9 (a)) adjacent to the site.	No known major restrictions	30-40 stalls depending on layout.	Good connectivity, but on the edge of the current pedestrian zone.	Out of sight of main pedestrian desire lines	No known objections Public events?
Old Square Shopping Centre	Inside PSA. Within the St Matthew's Quarter of Walsall Town Centre, an area identified for regeneration potential.	Indoors	Indoors	10-15 stalls in non-retail space, but potentially 18,000sqft market hall scheme prepared by Threadneedle to accommodate 60-80 stalls.  Adjacent to the former Tesco Metro redevelopment with potential pedestrian links. However, the site is within the Old Square Phase 2 development area and therefore could constrain the	One way and narrow passage with limited vehicle access.	Part of the historic core of the town centre.  Accessed by narrow passageway and not therefore immediately obvious.	Reliant on third parties associated with the Old Square Phase 2 proposals.

				flexibility of this proposal.			
Victorian Arcade	Inside the PSA.	Contains a variety of heritage listed buildings that could benefit from public realm improvements	Indoors	Good compatibility with retail units.  10-15 stalls only, with limited space between shop frontages.	Narrow access, with no provision for vehicles	A Listed Building, locating the market within the arcade would need to protect and enhance the historic character of the arcade.  Accessed by narrow passageway and not therefore immediately obvious.	Reliance on third parties associated with land ownership and leaseholders.
Jerome Retail Park	Outside of the PSA	Open modern modular retail park with limited scope for improvements via public realm changes	No known major restrictions	60-80 stalls depending on location.	Good access, but poor connectivity with the town centre.	Away from town centre and natural desire line.	Reliance on third parties associated with land ownership and leaseholders.
Saddlers Centre	Inside the PSA.	Indoors	Indoors	20-30 stalls within non-retail areas, but potentially up to 35,000sqft available to accommodate 60 stalls with room for expansion.	Walsall rail station is contained within the Saddlers Centre.	Partially within the Bridge Street Conservation Area. Linked to Walsall rail station creating forced pedestrian movement and good visibility.	Reliance on third parties associated with land ownership and leaseholders.

Shannon's Mill	<p>Inside the PSA.</p> <p>Within the St Matthews Quarter as defined by the AAP Issues and Options Document.</p>	Area may be enhanced by future development.	Significant variation in ground levels may inhibit flexibility of future market space.	<p>Sufficient size to accommodate 70 stalls with expansion potential.</p> <p>Adjacent to the planning consent (Norton and Proffitt Ltd) for development within the St Matthews Quarter.</p> <p>Not within primary shopping frontage or on core desire line route.</p>	Limited access from George Street due to topography. Access restricted to Lower Hall Lane only.	Would not be visible to shoppers and located to the rear of major development proposal (Norton and Proffitt) and other retail units including the Asda superstore.	Programme for the Norton and Proffitt is uncertain due to recent Judicial Review proceedings.
Crown Wharf Shopping Park	Outside of the PSA.	Open modern modular retail park with limited scope for improvements via public realm changes	No known major restrictions	Existing retail, but potential to distract from the retail core.	Good access by car from further afield. Limited connectivity with the town centre.	Out of sight of main pedestrian desire line.	Reliance on third parties associated with land ownership and leaseholders.



