Agenda item 6

Cabinet – 14 April 2010

Darlaston Strategic Regeneration Framework Strategy

Portfolio: Councillor Andrew, Deputy Leader and Regeneration

Service: Regeneration

Wards: Darlaston North and South

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Summary of report

1.1 This report describes the key conclusions of the recently completed Darlaston Strategic Regeneration Framework and seeks cabinet endorsement of the Strategy. A summary version of the completed strategy titled "Darlaston Strategic Regeneration Framework: Summary Report" is attached **(see Appendix A)** and copies of the full strategy document will be made available for reference in Members' Group rooms and on the Council's Committee Information website (CMIS).

1.2 The regeneration strategy covers an area of approx 1.3 square miles (3.4 square kilometres). This area covers a significant portion of Darlaston, including all major residential neighbourhoods, the District Centre, and surrounding industrial areas including a small proportion of the adjoining Darlaston Strategic Development Area (DSDA) **(See Appendix B).**

1.3 Darlaston has suffered a steady but severe level of decline since the 1980's as a result of structural change in the manufacturing industry. The historic success of Darlaston as a prosperous Black Country town was intrinsically linked with the level of local employment and activity within this sector. This decline manifests itself as a town with high levels of social deprivation, areas of poor housing and unbalanced tenure / mix, poor environment, and a district centre performing poorly - evident through a severe lack of animation, passing trade and vacant retail units with the exception of ASDA as the only attractor to the centre. A poor road network compounds the issue through segregation and barrier to movement for residents and businesses.

1.4 The strategy aims to provide a vision and a basis for implementing actions to begin to reverse this decline and address the future prosperity of Darlaston, building on the strong sense of community in the area.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Cabinet welcomes the investment and focus being given to Darlaston through these tough economic times in line with policies already followed in Moxley, Bentley, Brownhills, Goscote and Willenhall

2.2 That Cabinet agree the themes, strategy and projects detailed in the Darlaston Regeneration Framework Study, summarised in **Appendix A**.

2.3 That specific regard is paid to the following projects identified as priority interventions within the framework strategy:

2.4 **King Street Bullstake** – Primarily environmental works to facilitate the reinstatement of one way vehicular traffic along King Street (limited to bus and taxis movement) with the inclusion of bus stops. Re-routing bus movements will have the effect of increasing footfall along King Street, will help to address the relationship of the ASDA store with the remainder of King Street – particularly pedestrian movement to and from the store.
Project Value (indicative) – £675,000
Potential Funding/Intervention (indicative) – S106 contributions from local development, a bid to the Local Transport Plan (LTP) round three, Urban Challenge Fund, Council Capital Programme.

2.5 **Town Hall Yard & The Forge** – Creation of approx 15,000sq ft of retail space to attract operators such as Wilkinsons, Home Bargains etc who generally like to operate in the vicinity of larger retail stores such as ASDA - creating a magnet for users of ASDA to move across King St. To complement this, an improved walkway through to the Town Hall including a retail arcade for smaller operators will improve the integration of the Town Hall with the centre as an improved community based facility. Works at the Town Hall are proposed to include a new 'commercial' kitchen to facilitate a variety of functions.
Project Value (indicative) – £2.5mill
Potential Funding/Intervention – (indicative) Private investment, Accord Housing land, Council facilitating land assembly.

2.6 **The Leys** – Housing scheme at the northern gateway into Darlaston Centre, approx 70 – 80 residential units on primarily Council owned land. Project also indicates the reconfiguration of the roundabout to two signal controlled junctions to further enhance the development opportunity.
Project Value (indicative) - £6.5mill (residential elements) £400,000 (road reconfiguration)
Potential Funding/Intervention (Indicative) – Private/RSL investment, LTP3, Urban Challenge Fund, Council land and to facilitate land assembly.

2.7 **St Lawrence Way (Referred to as Wesleys Fold in Appendix A)** – Two options have been identified for this site a) Housing development – likely to be by an RSL led scheme with potential for elderly persons provision given the location to the district centre b) A 'value' retailer such as Aldi / Lidl whom like to locate near ASDA and other such larger retailers. The impetus behind this is two fold, one being increasing offer and attractiveness to the centre and two realising funds to contribute towards the King St Bullstake proposals.

Project Value (indicative) – 'Value' food retailer approx £3.5mill private investment.
Potential Funding/Intervention (indicative) – Retail scheme agreement with current land owners, release of S106 money and developer contributions towards other schemes. RSL agreement to develop out the site suitably for residential purposes. Council intervention through land assembly and partnership working, integration with the wider regeneration proposals.

2.8 The above projects are the four main priority projects within the wider strategy and are seen as being instrumental in the delivery of the overall aspirations for the Darlaston area.

3. Background information

3.1 The Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) plays a major role in the regeneration of the Borough, complementing the initiatives being delivered in the Walsall Regeneration Company (WRC) area and within the strategic corridors. The SRF was agreed by Cabinet in March 2006 and the first tranche of area-based priorities was approved at Cabinet in October 2006. Darlaston was agreed as the first of the second tranche of SRF areas by Cabinet in June 2008. The SRF is being pursued jointly with whg and other key partners and is based around housing-led regeneration with the objective of securing sustainable communities. Geographically the thrust of the SRF is dominated by the key district and local centres and their surrounding neighbourhoods. Cabinet has previously endorsed studies in Brownhills, Willenhall, Bentley, Moxley and Goscote Lane Corridor, and these have or are being prepared through extensive engagement with local communities; a process that is managed through a Project Reference Group (PRG) comprising ward Councillors, local residents and key stakeholders. The delivery of the SRF in these areas is aimed at achieving social, economic and environmental regeneration and maximising the widest community benefit. The comprehensive regeneration of these neighbourhoods is also reflected in the approach to the Transforming Learning (TL) and other programmes which aim to link more holistic regeneration with a broader delivery of services by both the Council and partner organisations.

3.2 Work on the Darlaston Strategic Regeneration Framework is intended to further complement the continuing relationship with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) which is currently engaging with the Local Authority and partners as part of its single conversation approach. This new business approach aims 'to create affordable, well served, enjoyable and attractive places where people want to live', and will therefore have a much broader remit than just housing. This process consists of the stages outlined below:

- Single Conversation Strategic Report (already submitted and approved by HCA)
- Local Investment plan (LIP)
- Individual Outline Business Case (OBC) for each priority area

3.3 The Single Conversation report sets out the broader strategic context for Walsall. This is underpinned by the Local Investment Plan (LIP) which will set out the investment required to deliver the agreed vision and economic purpose for the

area by detailing local investment priorities and funding requirements. It will cover the period 2010 to 2014 and as one of the six priority areas within the LIP the Darlaston Strategic Regeneration Framework Strategy is an extremely important tool in realising the potential future investment opportunity by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). Cabinet will recall receiving a report on the LIP at its previous meeting.

3.4 The specific regeneration objectives identified for the Darlaston Framework Strategy are to:

- Address the long term dysfunction of the housing market in the area;
- Address the long term deterioration of the district centre in terms of vibrancy, offer and economic activity;
- Create a sustainable community addressing the needs of the boroughs most diverse population;
- Recognising and addressing the distinct relationship between the district centre of Darlaston, the surrounding residential areas and the regionally important Darlaston Strategic Development Area;
- Address the provision and access to open space within the area;
- Identify opportunities to improve connectivity, legibility and sense of place through creating high quality public realm;
- Improve accessibility and the quality of the environment.

3.5 The key themes and priority projects, which are summarised in **Appendix A**, have been formed following extensive consultation with partners and the local community. A Project Reference Group, made up of ward councillors and key community representatives has been established, and it has been integral in driving the project and leading the community involvement in the Framework Study's development. At their meeting on the 31st March 2010 the Darlaston Project Reference Group endorsed the findings of the Darlaston Strategic Regeneration Framework Strategy as the most appropriate means to enable continued proactive involvement by Walsall Council and its partners, in the realisation of a prosperous and rejuvenated future for Darlaston.

3.6 A key outcome of the Framework Study is the identification of 5 strategic themes for Darlaston, out of which are generated a number of projects which aim to deliver these themes.

The themes are as follows:

1) A good place for Business;
2) A skilled and confident workforce;
3) A good place to live;
4) An easy place to get around; and
5) A strong town centre

3.7 The projects identified to address the themes are broadly defined as of three different types, being:

A) **Economic Initiatives** – measures to generate employment and economic activity and address the skills of the workforce;

B) **Environmental Improvement and Transport Schemes** – Improvements to the public realm, buildings and landscape area together with transport initiatives;

C) **Development Projects** – Where the Council, the WRC and WHG actively promote development with partners.

Further detail on the themes and projects are identified in **Appendix A .**

3.8 Given the current difficult economic climate the strategy will need to identify an innovative and creative approach to delivering development of the 26 identified sites throughout the study area, which are detailed in the framework programme included in **Appendix A.** Delivery of projects will be focused around those which the local authority and its partners have a direct influence over and those which are deemed as being of strategic importance in the delivery of the overall strategy. Projects that meet these criteria have been identified as follows:

Economic Initiatives

3.9 Supporting Existing Business – Local focus through the creation of a Business Hub on the site of the former Boat Public House. Location of such a facility here would potentially provide a business shop, business advisory service and meeting / conference facility. Such a facility could also provide for the provision of incubation space, in partnership with the Rubery Owen Innovation Works, as a 'first rung' workspace provider.

3.10 Educational achievement – The development of the Grace Academy is a considerable attribute towards the future educational attainment of local children. The Principle Head of the Academy is a member of the Project Reference Group and as such foresees the development of the Academy as being a component part in the development of the wider regeneration aspirations for the Darlaston area. There is also considerable opportunity for the Academy to work in partnership with the local community by providing adult learning and skills development opportunity as well as more general community benefit through the use of the schools facilities during the evenings and the weekends.

Environment and Transport:

3.11 King St / Bullstake: Public realm improvements and reopening of King Street to buses. Shared surface treatment of the Bull Stake area with different surfacing and wider pavements refocusing pedestrian movement away from ASDA and towards the remainder of King Street. Shared spaces such as this also refocus the domination of vehicle movements by creating areas of pedestrian importance adding a sense of vibrancy and animation to the area. Furthermore improving pedestrian footfall also increases the performance of the local retail offer.

3.12 Shopfront Improvements: Most notably improving the visual amenity of the Pinfold St shops which are recognised as being of poor quality, providing a particularly poor gateway into the centre of Darlaston. Improving the visual amenity and general environment is intended to improve the overall attractiveness for further investment and continued / new retail take up.

Development Projects:

3.13 The Forge and Town Hall Yard: Development of the town hall as a much more active community venue and development of the link between the Town Hall and King Street, creating retail units which would provide for a suitable retailer as a draw from ASDA in the direction of the Town Hall with smaller retail units within an arcade setting. This would create a more prominent visual link and walkway promoting the interaction between the Town Hall and the remainder of Darlaston centre.

3.14 Site at St Lawrence Way: (Referred to as Wesleys Fold in Appendix A). Site owned by whg and Accord housing; potential for development of a housing scheme or town centre value supermarket if planning policy issues can be overcome. This project would require land assembly, partnership working and the potential for a land swap with the Leys site as discussed below (dependent upon which development option for the site is pursued).

3.15 The Leys: Assembly of a fairly significant residential site to the northern edge of the town centre. There is the potential for the acquisition and relocation of a number of land uses in favour of a more suitable residential development on this strategically important gateway site. There is the potential of a land swap with whg and Accord, who own the above site, enabling suitable development of both this and the Wesleys Fold site. Development would require reconfiguration of the road infrastructure in the area, particularly the roundabout at the junction with New Street.

3.16 Hall Street Recreation Ground: Whilst this site is deemed to be of significant importance with regards to the provision of leisure use within this part of Darlaston, there is the potential for a small scale residential development on part of this site to fund improvements to the leisure facilities. The site currently houses an all weather playing surface, bowling green and leisure building, all of which are in a relatively poor state of repair.

3.17 Former Servis Site, Darlaston Rd: The former Servis site is the largest development opportunity in the vicinity of the district centre. The strategy reflects the current residential permission, however given the current market situation the strategy also reflects the potential to develop the site for other suitable uses. If alternative uses are pursued with the Servis site, opportunities will be taken to assemble a larger site which includes land to the north, immediately adjacent to the district centre.

3.18 The strategy needs to be robust and aspirational in terms of guidance which can stimulate appropriate interest and deliver change but equally flexible enough to respond to changes in market conditions. The impetus behind the strategy is that of both a visionary document which outlines realistic aspiration for Darlaston and the means by which to realise this.

3.19 For the transformation of Darlaston to be achieved, there will need to be an improvement in the economic base, the district centre and housing quality. Where possible, the Darlaston Regeneration Framework Strategy complements other regeneration activity in the Darlaston area to improve the local economic base, including work being undertaken by Walsall Regeneration Company within

the Darlaston Strategic Development Area (DSDA). Darlaston will also complement, and benefit from, proposals for the improvement of the highway network within the DSDA, which itself is the subject of a £30m business case submission to the Department of Transport. .

3.20 The Strategy will also reflect and build upon recent developments with the Grace Academy, demonstrating the regenerative benefits such proposals carry with them for the wider area. The strategy also represents and builds upon the planning permission for residential development at the former Wincanton Logistics site on Richards Street, and the Council's current activity to dispose of the former Darlaston Multi Purpose Centre on Victoria Road for residential development. Finally the proposals for the district centre have further compounded working relationships between the Council and the District Centre Partnership, which has been integral in the strategy's development and fully supports the proposals under consideration.

3.21 In addition to new build housing delivered through the strategy, steps are also being taken to improve existing housing stock in Darlaston. The national standard for private sector housing quality is the Housing Health and Rating System (HHSRS) which replaces the old 'fitness' definitions. The latest borough wide private sector stock condition survey (2007) highlighted that private homes in the Darlaston LNP area have a higher rate of failures at Category 1 HHSRS level based than the borough as a whole (16.5% compared to 13%). The Council approved a new Private Sector Renewal Assistance Policy in January 2010 which highlighted that assistance for repair / maintenance for homes would be prioritised at Home Repair Assistance to tackle category 1 failures. For the past 2 years, the council has benefited from Regional Housing Pot funding which has been used to offer this discretionary assistance. As part of the overall SRF strategy, it is proposed to continue to seek assistance in line with the Private Sector Renewal Assistance Policy

3.22 The work on the Darlaston Strategy and the projects identified within, coupled with the aspirations of the wider local investment plan remit demonstrate a considered and linked approach to the delivery of the Darlaston Strategy in line with the Walsall Regeneration Company aspirations for the Darlaston Strategic Development Area and the work underway around the Willenhall Area Action Plan. These three areas of considerable proposed regeneration activity play a considerable role in the realisation of the boroughs wider regeneration goals.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 **Financial**:

4.1.1 Financial resources to undertake projects within the framework programme will be required. A bidding process for capital funding alongside a proactive approach to securing external grants and developer contributions (through S106 agreements) will take place to ensure the comprehensive delivery of the Framework Study. The completion of the study will help the Council to position itself with external partners, particularly the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), in achieving the HCA's "Total Place" agenda and delivering the Local Investment Plan. Given the current difficult economic climate, the Council will

need to consider ever more elaborate and innovative methods to secure funding and create the conditions for investment to facilitate delivery of the projects identified within the report. Members must also be aware that constraints across the economy may mean that the delivery of the study may take longer now than under a thriving economy.

4.1.2 In the event that a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) is necessary to acquire property to deliver any project, the costs of a CPO would be underwritten in full by the promoter of any scheme.

4.1.3 The sale of Council-owned sites to a developer will require Cabinet approval. Cabinet will therefore be provided with an opportunity to determine the development model option that provides best value as necessary, at a future meeting.

4.1.4 Total investment (indicative) to implement the four priority projects as identified within **Appendix A** is approx £18.3 million. It is proposed that £5.3 million of public money will be required to realise the development of these, the exact make up of which is to be confirmed when progressing the development of these projects.

4.2 **Legal**:

4.2.1 Land assembly may be required to enable development of a number of the strategic sites within the study area. The Council will endeavour to facilitate negotiations with private land owners and work in partnership to resolve issues around the assembly of privately owned land to facilitate development.

4.2.2 Should negotiated acquisition of key sites fail, the Council will consider acquisition through initiating CPO powers. The regeneration strategy sets the foundation to enable such action, though further advice will be obtained from Legal Services on the appropriate means to facilitate such action most effectively. If required, a further report will be submitted to a future Cabinet meeting.

4.2.3 The Authority has powers under various statutes to pursue the compulsory purchase of land if acquisition of privately owned property cannot be negotiated. Under Section 226(1) (a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the local authority has the powers to acquire compulsorily any land in its area if it thinks the acquisition will facilitate the carrying out of development, redevelopment or improvement on or in relation to the land.

4.3 **Staffing**:

4.3.1 As with all other SRF strategies, the development of the Darlaston SRF has been undertaken in partnership with whg. Due to the strategic location of this study with the Darlaston Strategic Development Area (DSDA), considerable professional input has been sought from officers of the WRC. The process has also included officers from Accord Housing, primarily due to their land holdings in the area and location of their regional offices in the centre of Darlaston.

4.3.2 It is imperative that the delivery of the strategy continues to build upon, and further develop, internal working relationships and external partnership working. It is intended that the Development Team will continue to lead in the development of the strategy, seeking professional advice and input from the numerous partner organisations, especially where proposed development immediately affects partner land ownerships.

4.3.3 Land assembly, marketing, preparation of development briefs and other such activities will require the considered input of a number of specialist officers to enable effective realisation of the strategy's aspirations.

5. Citizen impact

5.1 The regeneration benefits for Darlaston citizens brought by the successful delivery of the Framework Study will include:

- a significantly wider housing choice (tenure and property type);
- a revitalised town centre offering a vibrant and active destination, that is economically successful and offers a range of services for the local community;
- a higher quality local environment;
- improved community facilities for the area including significantly improved areas of open space;
- a sustainable future for the area

5.2 The above improvements will create a significantly enhanced area. The delivery of these projects in partnership will the local community and other agencies will lead to greater local pride and citizen involvement.

5.3 Individual property owners may be directly affected through the acquisition of property by negotiation or compulsory purchase where necessary to facilitate development. Council intervention through compulsory purchase would only be pursued if it becomes unavoidable and where a failure to do so would prejudice land assembly and the wider regeneration of the area.

5.4 The strategy recognises the particular diversity of the local community in Darlaston and has made proactive measures to ensure involvement in the development of the strategy from all groups. The delivery of the strategy hopes to further foster these relationships.

6. Community safety

6.1 Current vacant sites and under-used green spaces are being subjected to vandalism and related anti-social activity, including littering and fly tipping. The Framework Study brings forward proposals to redevelop a number of vacant sites, so that a new positive use can be found.

6.2 New buildings and residential layouts will offer the opportunity to incorporate "Secured by Design" standards to ensure that crime is designed out of new developments.

6.3 The strategy will encourage greater activity within the public realm and on open spaces to discourage anti-social behaviour. The wider strategy will also look at the spectrum of public realm within the area, reducing crime and the fear of crime as derived from areas of poor surveillance and low activity.

7. Environmental impact

7.1 The Framework Study for Darlaston provides a clear statement of the expectation for high quality design for new buildings and the public realm, whilst making the most of the natural assets of the area. The project will transform the environment of the area by redeveloping vacant sites, creating high quality new dwellings, removing eyesores and improving open spaces.

7.2 A key principle of the Framework Study is to create an environmentally sustainable, low carbon community.

8. Performance and risk management issues

8.1 **Risk**: The principle risks are:

8.2 Risk 1 - Lack of market interest in development sites (Risk Level Medium)

8.2.1 The Framework Study is both a broad identification for delivery as well as being an important document for marketing the development opportunities in Darlaston. It is anticipated that the document will be used to improve investor / developer confidence in the area and attract that investment and development.

8.3 Risk 2 – Failure to attract sufficient resources to fund priorities. (Risk Level Medium)

8.3.1 The regeneration framework provides the basis for a coherent resourcing strategy for Darlaston and articulates the Council's and whg's ambitions in regenerating this area. The framework provides the Council and its partners with a robust "bidding tool" when approaching investors and external partners for support.

8.4 Risk 3 - The community is not continually engaged and not kept informed of progress and thus they become despondent or frustrated, and there is a resistance to the changes. (Risk Level Low)

8.4.1 The Darlaston community has been engaged in the framework study from the outset and has informed the proposals. This will continue through the implementation phase, by building upon existing relationships and forging new ones as the implementation moves forward. The Darlaston PRG will remain a key tool in community consultation and dissemination.

8.5 Risk 4 - The assembly of land by negotiated acquisition is delayed by an unwillingness to sell amongst private landlords. (Risk Level medium)

8.5.1. The risk of delay to the process is likely to be reduced by involving owners, keeping the community fully informed on the partners' intentions, and fully communicating owner's rights in relation to compulsory purchase.

8.6 **Performance management**:

8.6.1 The delivery of SRF projects is a priority within the 2010/11 Regeneration Service Plan.

8.6.1 The redevelopment of previously developed areas will make a contribution to future brown-field housing completions, and the national indicator NI154 'net additional homes provided'

9. Equality implications

9.1 The delivery of the Framework Study will bring benefits to the whole Darlaston community. The redevelopment of sites, the enhancements to the local environment and the building of new housing will present opportunities to engage with many sectors of the community, and ensure issues of equality and accessibility are taken into account and enhanced.

10. Consultation

10.1 A Darlaston PRG was formed with representation from the local community, key stakeholders, and ward members through the Darlaston Local Neighbourhood Partnership. The role of the PRG is as an overall project steering group, who have helped appoint a consultancy team and assisted officers in developing and consulting upon the proposals within the Framework Study, making key decisions throughout the project's development and guiding the direction of the strategy.

10.2 As the Framework Study takes on a delivery agenda, the role of the PRG will be important in continuing to represent local interests.

10.3 Consultation events were held in July 2009, October 2009 and March 2010. These have successfully sought local opinion on proposals, including the draft Framework Study. Local residents have, and will continue to have, the opportunity to become involved in the regeneration of the Study Area by influencing decision making within the projects outlined in the framework programme. Across the three consultation events over 250 members of the local community took part, many giving an extremely insightful view into Darlaston and their aspirations for the areas future.

10.4 Should Cabinet approve the Study it is intended that publicity will be undertaken to inform the local community of the recommendations.

Background papers

1. Darlaston Regeneration Framework Study June 2008 (approval of Darlaston as next area of focus in the SRF programme)
2. Strategic Regeneration Framework Delivery Priorities- Cabinet report 18 October 2006
3. District Centre strategic regeneration framework – Cabinet report 22 March 2006

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14 April 2010

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Portfolio holder – Regeneration

14 April 2010

DARLASTON STRATEGIC REGENERATION FRAMEWORK: **FINAL REPORT**

MARCH 2010

urbed

15/03/2010

For all matters regarding this project please contact Jonathan Brown by calling: 0161 200 5500
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A real town with a real town centre and a broad mix of jobs and people – lots of eggs and lots of baskets! A place that people are proud of and where they want to stay.

VISION:

Themes & strategy

Our analysis suggests five strategic themes should underpin this vision for Darlaston in order to bring about the transformation of the town over the coming 15-20 years.

A good place for business...

Protecting what the town has, growing and attracting new business thereby diversifying the town's economic base.

- Protect viable industrial sites from the pressures of housing development.
- Support existing employers.
- Create start-up business space and support for new business.
- Create a ladder of premises as businesses grow.
- Exploit the employment potential of the town centre.

A skilled and confident workforce

Creating, within a generation, a skilled and flexible workforce, able to compete in the jobs market and attract employers.

- Use the Deprived Neighbourhoods Fund and Working Neighbourhoods Fund to focus on Darlaston.
- Use the new Grace Academy as a catalyst for learning in Darlaston
- Increase accessibility by providing a range of learning centres (outpost of Walsall college)

A good place to live

Encouraging a range of housing - affordable and aspirational together with the facilities of a thriving town.

- Create a balanced housing market with a mix of housing types and tenures, especially family housing
- Continue investment in the quality of social housing
- Improve the quality and integration of new development
- Improve the environmental performance of housing
- Improve access to community facilities and shops
- Expand and improve the open space network

An easy place to get around

Investing in better connections – walking, cycling and public transport

- Create strong walking and cycling routes to the SDA
- Improve accessibility to Walsall and beyond by public transport improvements and integrated bus facility in the town centre
- Reduce the dominance of traffic around the town centre
- Support the long terms aspirations of connecting Darlaston to the tram system and reopening the railway to passenger services.

A strong town centre

The town centre should be the focus for initiatives to improve the town because of its visibility and potential to support economic growth.

- Revive King Street as the town's high street
- Provide more comparison retail floorspace to attract national retailers
- Provide better quality convenience retail floorspace in the town centre
- Create opportunities for new development in the town centre to strengthen and diversify the mix of uses
- Create a community and cultural hub with a range of activities and facilities for local residents
- Enhance the historic townscape character of the center

Sites &

Legend

Areas of change

Land Use / Development

- New employment opportunities
- Employment improvement areas
- New residential opportunities
- Mixed use opportunities
- New modern retail development
- New office development
- Town Hall 'Multipurpose' Community hub

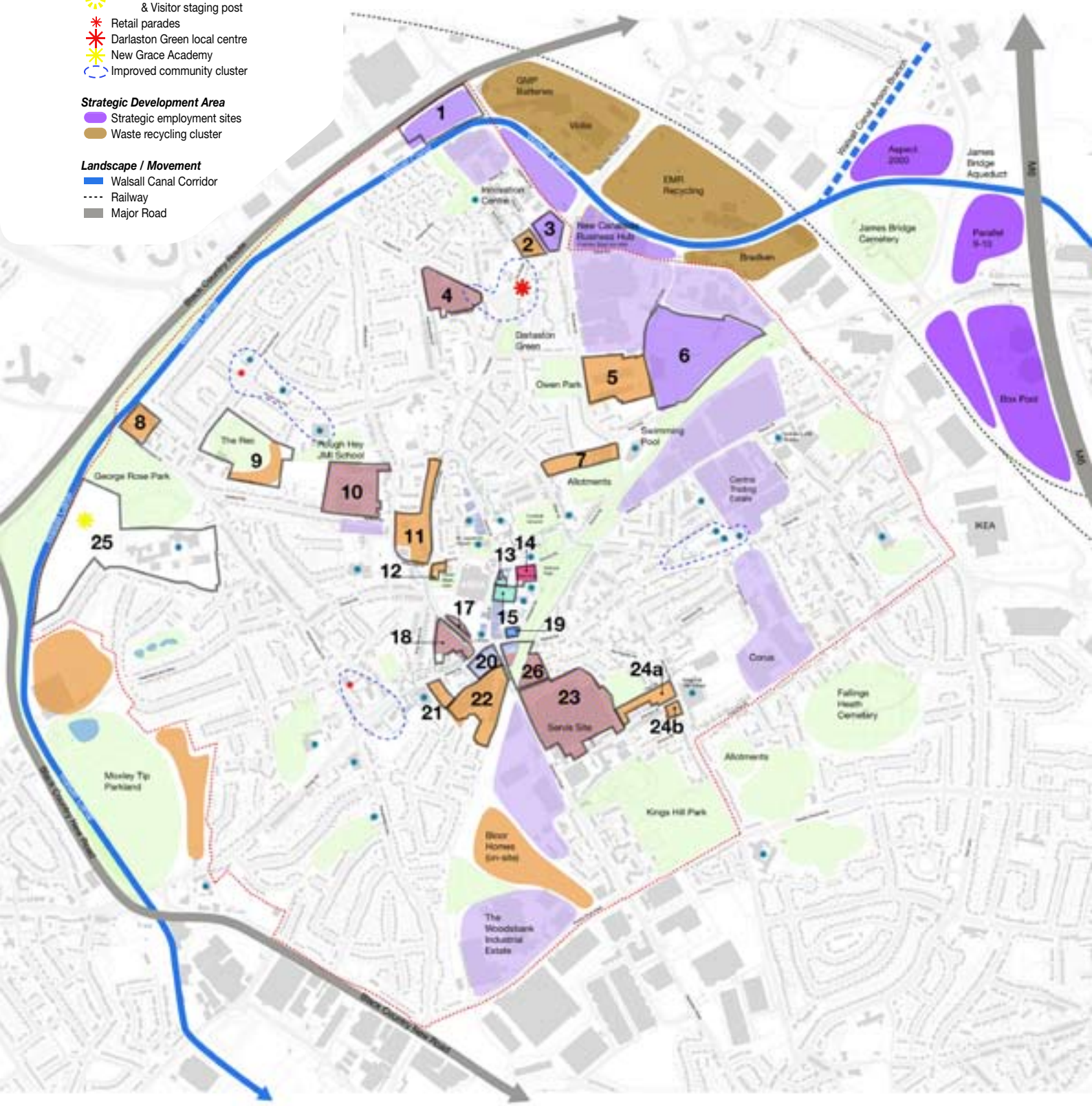
- District Centre
- Study area boundary
- Community facilities
- New canalside business hub & Visitor staging post
- Retail parades
- Darlaston Green local centre
- New Grace Academy
- Improved community cluster

Strategic Development Area

- Strategic employment sites
- Waste recycling cluster

Landscape / Movement

- Walsall Canal Corridor
- Railway
- Major Road



Allocations

The three options described on pages 8 and 9 had different implications for the use and allocation of sites throughout the town. These have been reviewed in the light of the preferred option and the vision and themes outlined above to produce the agreed allocations plan to the left (see Preferred Options Report for a full description of these sites).

These are suggested policy designations and, following adoption of this report, would become a material consideration in dealing with planning applications. They are not however sites that we would propose the public sector actively promoting through public funding or facilitation. The sites within the SDA fall outside our study boundary.

1. Willenhall Road: 1.7ha, currently vacant and allocated for employment. It is proposed that this remain as an employment site (indeed it has planning permission for 6,800m^2 of warehouses 535m^2 of offices

2. Booth Street: 0.4ha site used as a warehouse leased by Premier Aftercare but with no planning designation. It is proposed that this become a residential site (14 dwellings) to complement Darlaston Green.

3. Perry Street: 0.6ha site currently largely vacant. It is proposed that it be promoted for employment uses as part of the new employment hub around Bentley Road South.

4. Victoria Centre: 1.2ha site next to Darlaston Green. This is currently a good employment site occupied by Premier Gates. It is not however allocated and if the employer were to leave there would be value in developing it for a mix of residential (43 dwellings).

5. Richard Street: Former Wincanton site (1.9ha) now vacant and with consent for 90 houses.

6. The Flatts, South of Heath Road: Manheim car storage, auctions and car breakage (5ha) A big site allocated as Core Employment Land (JP5) but with low employment density. It will however be opened up by the new road and is allocated as a core employment site so should remain in employment use.

7. Former Multi-purpose centre, Victoria Road: Vacant Walsall Council premises (0.8ha) to be allocated for residential (30 dwellings)

8. Wolverhampton Street: Partially vacant warehouses (1.5ha) with no planning designation. Proposed residential site to create a gateway to the town (60 units)

9. Hall Street Recreation Ground: See Projects

10. Alma Industrial Estate: Partially vacant 2ha site with no planning designation. This is proposed as a mixed-use development of housing (up to 80 units) and employment.

11&12. The Leys and New Street: See projects

13,15 & 17 Town hall yard: See projects

14. Town Hall, Victoria Road: See projects

17 & 18. Wesley's Fold: See projects

19. Picturedrome Way: Car park with potential for office development (opportunity for a public sector user)

20. Pinfold Street/Darlaston Road: See projects

21. Pinfold Street/ Alma Works: Vacant 2.5ha industrial and commercial site. Proposed to be allowed to go for residential development to support the town centre (100 units).

23. Servis Site, Darlaston Road: 5ha vacant factory site with no planning designation and a residential planning consent. Capacity for 160-200 units.

24 Johnson Street: 0.65ha vacant site owned by Walsall Council and adjacent vacant telephone exchange. Proposed for residential use (30 units)

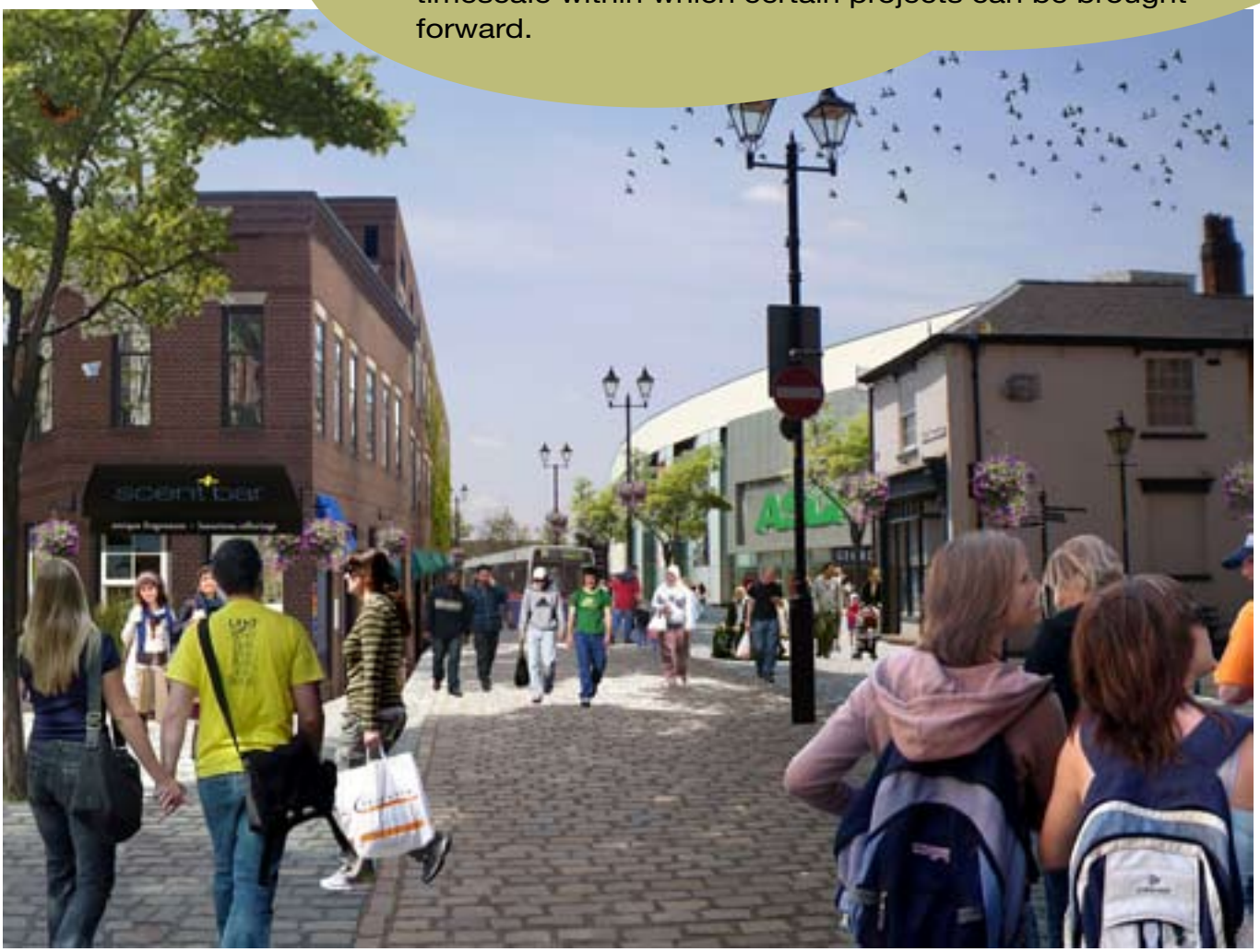
25. Darlaston Academy: Proposal for a 1500 place Academy involving the redevelopment of the existing school, development on part of George Rose Park and investment in the quality of the remainder of the park. This is a committed project.

Projects:

In addition to the land allocations described in the previous section we are proposing three types of project that the public sector partners should actively promote. These are:

1. Economic initiatives
2. Environmental improvement and transport schemes
3. Development projects

We are aware that there is limited scope for new public funding to be available for new projects in the Darlaston area. As far as possible the projects are therefore designed to make use of existing funding programmes or to generate funding through capital receipts and developer contributions. This will clearly impact the timescale within which certain projects can be brought forward.



1. Economic initiatives

There is a need to put in place a 10-year programme to reposition the Darlaston economy so that it is better placed to meet future challenges and opportunities. The programme of business and economy interventions will need to be aligned with the Walsall SRF and the Joint Core Strategy, as well as the activities and programmes of AWM and other regional and sub-regional partners.

Five economic initiatives have been identified as important to the future prosperity of Darlaston. However, in most cases the mechanisms to address these issues already exist. The key challenge is to shape and target these existing instruments to address the specific issues facing the Darlaston, rather than to invent new ones.

1.1 Existing Businesses Support
Advice and support to existing local businesses is currently routed through Business Link. There is potential to increase the take-up of business support services by providing a local service outlet in Darlaston. This could be via a High Street shop (equivalent to the JET facility) or in the SDA. On balance the better location would the Boat Pub site as proposed by WRC. This Business Hub could include meeting rooms, conference facilities, counselling and support, secretarial support and perhaps workspace.

1.2 Enterprise development
It is also important to encourage new business formation and self-employment. Advice to would-be entrepreneurs is also a function of Business Link. The provision of a Business Hub (as suggested above) would provide companion services for start-ups. Managed workspace and incubation facilities could also be included on the Boat Pub site. It will also be important for a locally available portfolio of grow-on space to be available to businesses that succeed in capitalising on early stage growth potential.

1.3 Attracting inward investment
The main opportunity is the Strategic Development Area (SDA) which is projected to crearte 2,800 jobs. Marketing this site is the responsibility of AWM, the Black Country Investment Service and WRC, supported nationally by UKTI. The challenge is to ensure that a proportion of these jobs benefit local residents. This will require ongoing work from local agencies, training providers and the JET centre.

1.4 Educational achievement
The success of the Academy will be a vital component of the SRF for Darlaston. there is also an ongoing job to be done to raise the aspirations of students. A higher proportion of 16-18 year olds need to go on to college or university. Those not staing in education need training in technical and vocational skills that will equip them to be competitive in job market. Walsall College is vital in this respect and there is a need for stronger links between the College and Darlaston

1.5 Workforce Training and Support
Ensuring that the workforce has the skills and qualifications expected by employers is vital to the long term prospects of any economy. The Regional Skills Action Plan sets clear skills goals for the region in line with the 2020 Leitch Review targets. This promotes a new way of working with a larger role for business. The Walsall Lifelong Learning Alliance (WLLA) has responsibility for the 'Increasing Skills Levels' action plan. At a local level there are Neighbourhoood Employment and Skills Plans (NESPs) operating in several Darlaston wards. Specific actions are being targeted at area's working age population who are not in education, employment or training (the so-called NEETs). As part of this WLLA has run a Bite Size campaign with 700 free taster courses for adults living or working in the borough. Further interventions of this kind would be beneficial, especially as the proportion of NEETs has grown significantly as a result of the 2007-2009 recession.

Projects:

Legend

Areas of change

1 King Street/Bullstake
2 Shop front improvements
3 Green corridors
4 Park Improvements
5 Rapid Transit and Trains

Land Use / Development

Park improvements
Public realm improvements
New and improved linkages
Enhance/Improve junction/entrance
Rapid Transit Station
Rapid Transit/Cycle Route
Property and shop front improvements
New tree planting and management
Strategic route improvements
Public Art landmark location

Landscape / Movement

Walsall Canal Corridor
Railway
Major Road

1.

Economic initiatives: Measures to generate employment and economic activity and address the skills of the workforce

2.

Environmental improvement and transport schemes: Improvements to the public realm, buildings and landscape areas together with transport initiatives.

3.

Development projects: Where the Council, the WRC and WHG actively promote development with partners.

2. Environment and Transport

There is always a huge amount that needs to be done to improve the environment of a town like Darlaston and capital environmental improvement works can be difficult to fund. However the improvements to King Street and the Bull Stake in the town centre are crucial. The following projects are also priorities when funding permits.

2.1. King Street/Bullstake: We have consulted on the possibility of repoening King Street to buses so that people arriving by bus are dropped off on the high street. There is some nervousness about this but an acceptance that drastic action is needed. The plan therefore proposes a public realm scheme to reinstate the street and to create a series of bus stops along the blank gable of the Asda. At the Bull Stake the intention is to resurface the street and widen pavements to create the feeling that traffic is intruding on a town centre pedestrian environment. This would have the effect of reinstating this space as the heart of the town and is quite compatible with the levels of traffic that use the street. This would also assist the shops on Pinfold Street.

2.2. Shopfront improvements: There is a need for improvements to a number of shopping parades. The most prominent of these is the Pinfold Street parade although there are also proposals for shop front/local centre improvements in Darlaston Green and Walsall Road. This could all be covered by a shop front improvement scheme with up to £10,000 available per shop as a 50% contribution to improvements (say 25 units total). Halton Council run a very successful scheme of about this scale that has been successful in renewing a run down section of high street.

2.3. Green corridors: Improvements to the footpath and cycle routes along the canal and the Darlaston Linear Park along the former railway line. Parts of the linear park are relatively easy to achieve, however other sections have been incorporated into factory premises and will not be possible to implement immediately.

2.4: Park improvements: George Rose Park, Kings Hill Park, and the Yorke Crescent pocket park all suffer from under-investment in maintenance. There is a need to cut back vegetation, improve paths and facilities in a rolling programme of improvements.

2.5. Trams, Trains and buses: The main project is the relocation of the main town centre bus stops to King Street. This will better integrate bus services into the town centre. The reopening of the Wolverhampton, Walsall Line to passenger services and the creation of a station at James Bridge and much longer term projects. There are plans for an extension of the Tram along the former railway line into the town centre but this is not currently funded. The masterplan should preserve this possibility but it is beond the scope of this study to take it any further.

Projects:

3. Development Projects

The majority of the proposals shown on the map on Page 18 will be brought forward by the market as the economy recovers. However there are certain projects where the public sector needs to make things happen. There is not likely to be significant public investment available to Darlaston so that we need to target interventions. With the right lever, quite small interventions can have a big effect. The key levers in Darlaston are we believe are:

3.1. ASDA: It is proposed that the planning authority accept Asda's aspirations for a decked car park and mezzanine level within the store on condition that the entrance is reconfigured to face King Street. The plans show a glazed arcade between the car park and the store so that the entrance to the store can stay in the same place. S106 contributions would assist funding the remainder of the package.

3.2. The Forge (Site 14): The development of the Town Hall as a much more active community venue. The main thing needed to facilitate this is a professional kitchen to allow it to cater for banquets and weddings plus active management to ensure that the building is fully used and becomes the heart of community life.

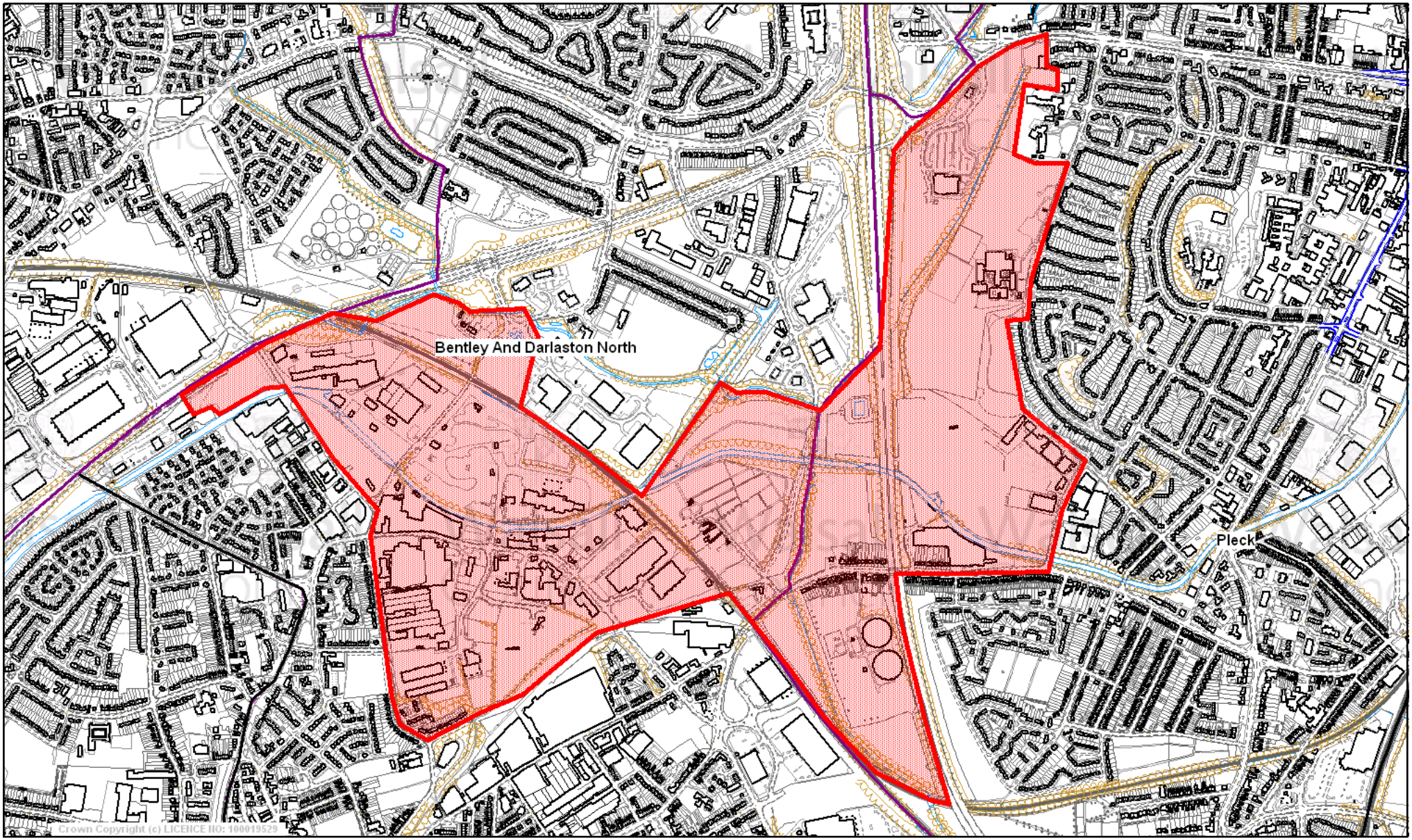
3.3. Town Hall Yard (Sites 13,15,16): An anchor retail development on King Street to attract people from ASDA. There are various retailers who like being near to an ASDA and the scheme is designed to create large footprint units that would be attractive to these stores. Adjacent to these units the existing alley is turned into an arcade to provide some smaller units to repocate local shops and to lead people through to the town hall. There is scope to turn the car park in this location into a Yard including a beer garden for the pub.

3.4. Wesleys Fold (Site 18): We have explored a potential housing scheme on this site. However the preferred option shows a budget supermarket which would increase the attraction of the town centre and potentially provide a capital receipt. While the land is owned by WHG there is potential to use the land receipt to invest in the town centre by providing WHG with an equivalent land swap. To the south the Accord Accord Housing Association is redeveloped in line with their plans.

3.5. The Leys: The assembly of a significant residential site on the edge of the town centre. This includes the acquisition/relocation of a series of underused buildings and the creation of a development brief including the roundabout and the edge of the memorial gardens. This site covers 1.7ha and will yield 70 units. Potentially generate a small capital receipt. Council to acquire the site with WHG and appoint a development partner.

3.6. Hall Street Recreation Ground (Site 9): There is a need to sort out this facility which has fallen into disrepair. There is a need for capital spending to repair the damage done to the facilities together with a new management regime, possibly in conjunction with the academy or the Council's leisure services. This could be funded by enabling residential development (20 units) to provide capital to provide surveillance over the space.

Appendix B - DSDA Boundary



Walsall Council

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Date 9/3/2010

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