

APPENDIX 2

Baseline Report

Leek Town Centre // Draft Final Masterplan Report // June 2012



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 BE Group in conjunction with Taylor Young and Aecom, has been commissioned by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (the District Council), Advantage West Midlands (AWM) and Staffordshire County Council (SCC) to produce a Masterplan for the Town Centre of Leek. This will inform the District Council's Local Development Framework. The Town Centre boundaries are identified in the study brief, and in this respect it is noted there is no specific geographic definition for Leek Town Centre in planning policy terms.
- 1.2 This Baseline Report represents the first step of the process that will lead to the production of the Masterplan. It has been prepared from a detailed document review of national, regional and local planning policy in relation to town centres, as well as both generic and locally focussed reports on retailing and regeneration.
- 1.3 This desktop research has been complemented by a thorough understanding of place. Surveys have been undertaken by Planners, Regeneration Specialists, Urban Designers, Landscape Architects, Transport and Property Specialists.
- 1.4 To supplement this and to further the understanding of wider Town Centre issues, an analysis of census based information has been undertaken to understand the socio-economic position of the catchment for Leek.
- 1.5 The findings of these different strands of research are set out in this report, which brings them together with the more anecdotal evidence established through meetings, conversations and discussions with various key stakeholders, as well as the detailed site survey work. This has included workshops with District Council Councillors; local stakeholders (Leek Town Councillors; land and property owners; community and residential interest groups) and Leek Chamber of Trade. A project launch exhibition event was also held to gather residents and visitors opinions.
- 1.6 The conclusions offer a strong position on which to base the next stage of this commission, which is to develop options for change and development in the Town Centre.
- 1.7 This report is divided into nine sections. The following section places Leek and this study into context, looking at its location, background, socio-economic profile, documentation and policy review. Sections 3 and 4 report on Town Centre uses

and the local property market. Section 5 comprises the urban design analysis, commenting on the built form and fabric of the study area, and the public realm with particular reference to urban design, streetscape, open space and pedestrian movement. Section 6 addresses access and movement. Section 7 provides baseline information for the fifteen Opportunity Sites identified at the study outset, or during the course of the research. Section 8 contains feedback from the three workshops. The final section concludes the report and sets out the next steps in the Masterplan process.

2.0 CONTEXT

2.1 Leek is the administrative centre for the District of Staffordshire Moorlands. It is situated in north east Staffordshire, close to the south west boundary of the Peak District National Park. It is the largest population centre in Staffordshire Moorlands. Leek lies approximately 10 miles north east of Stoke-on-Trent, the closest major conurbation. The nearest connection to the national motorway network is 15 miles south west, Junction 15, M6 at Clayton. Figure 2.1 shows the town in its context.

Figure 2.1 – Location Plan

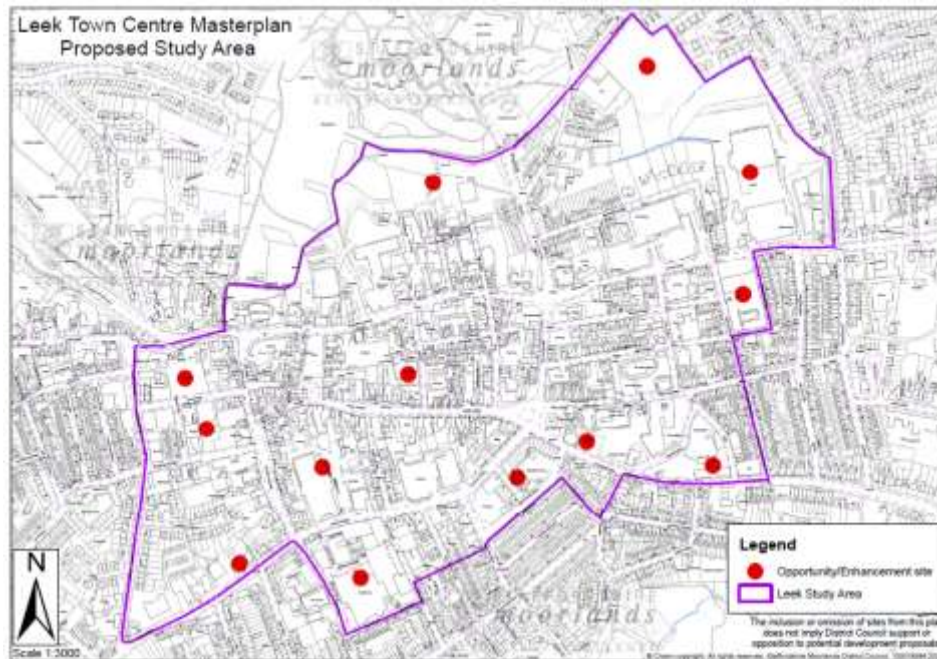


Source: Multimap.co.uk

2.2 Although a market town sitting in a rural hinterland, during the industrial revolution Leek became a textiles manufacturing centre. The mills from the town's textile era still influence the Town Centre landscape. Despite the distance to the national motorway network, Leek is just over 10 miles from the A50(T) Stoke to Derby road that provides a link between the M6 and M1 motorways. It is well connected by A road routes to Macclesfield (and Manchester); Buxton; Ashbourne (and Derby); Stoke-on-Trent and Stone.

2.3 The Town Centre Masterplan study area is shown in Figure 2.2. This has been set by the District Council, though there is no defined town centre boundary, in planning terms, in the adopted Local Plan. Figure 2.2 includes the thirteen Opportunity Sites identified in the commissioning brief.

Figure 2.2 – Study Area Boundaries



Source: Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

2.4 This report does not consider land within these boundaries in isolation. It takes into consideration the immediate and wider context within which the study area is situated.

Policy Review

2.5 In setting the context for the Town Centre Masterplan, a review has been undertaken of relevant national, regional and local policy guidance. The policy review, as it affects land use and regeneration proposals, is summarised in the following paragraphs.

National Policy

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005) (PPS1)

2.6 PPS1 states that sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning. It outlines the Government's commitment to promoting sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development by making suitable land available for development; protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment; ensuring high quality development; and, ensuring that development contributes to

the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities.

- 2.7 PPS1 states that planning policies should provide a high level of protection for the most valued townscape and landscape areas, particularly those with national designations. In relation to design, PPS1 states that good design ensures usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning.

Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport (2001) (PPG13)

- 2.8 PPG13 encourages land use planning to influence the location, scale, density, design and mix of land uses to reduce the need to travel, reduce the length of journeys and to make services and facilities accessible via public transport and non-car modes of transportation.
- 2.9 PPG13 states that the Government places great emphasis on people being able to travel safely whatever their chosen mode. It notes that the planning system can influence road safety through its control of new development. PPG13 states that mixed-use development can provide very significant benefits, in terms of promoting vitality and diversity and in

promoting walking as a primary mode of travel. A mix of land uses should be promoted through planning policies.

Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres (2005) (PPS)

- 2.10 PPS6 defines Government planning policy with regard to Town Centres. Key objectives include:
- To promote the vitality and viability of Town Centres
 - Planning for the growth and development of existing centres
 - Promoting and enhancing existing centres, by focusing development and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all
 - Enhancing consumer choice by making provision for a range of shopping, leisure and local services, which allow for genuine choice to meet the needs of the entire community, particularly socially excluded groups
 - Supporting efficient, competitive and innovative retail, leisure and tourism, with improving productivity
 - Improving accessibility, ensuring that existing or new development is, or will be, accessible and well-served by a choice of means of transport

- 2.11 There is a key focus on the sequential approach to retail development and the assessment of impact. Other key messages include the importance of sustainable travel and less reliance on the private car, and planning to avoid social exclusion.
- 2.12 The guidance also refers to the importance of measuring and monitoring the vitality and viability of Town Centres through the use of health checks utilising a range of identified indicators. These indicators have been taken fully into consideration in the preparation of the following sections of this report, and include such issues as diversity of use, rents, vacancies, accessibility.
- 2.13 PPS6 stresses the importance of having a realistically defined Town Centre boundary, and the possibility of having both primary and secondary defined retail frontages, the latter to help encourage diversity and flexibility. PPS6 is supplemented by a range of national reports on the state of Britain's high streets, pertinent points of which are reported below.

Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Prosperous Economies (2009) (PPS4)

- 2.14 PPS4 will soon replace PPS6. A consultation paper on the new PPS4 was published in May 2009. The proposed changes include the removal of the requirement for out-of-centre retail developments to undertake a needs based assessment as part of their planning application. Otherwise, the paper reinforces the 'Town Centre first' approach and recommends strong sequential testing. Significantly, there is also a presumption in favour of permitting economic development. The scope of this PPS is greater than Town Centres but it will be supported by a 'Planning for Town Centres' best practice guide.

Regional Spatial Strategy

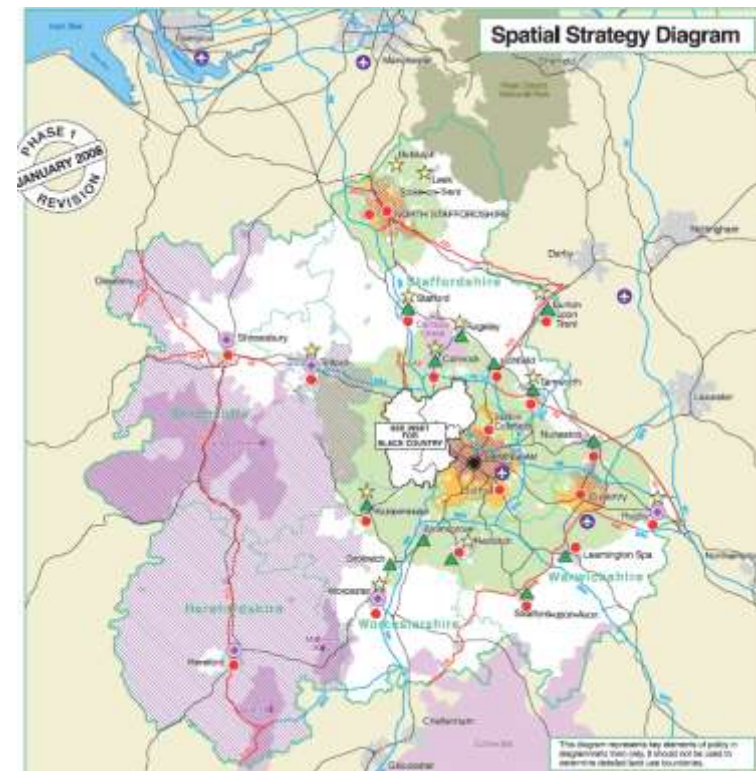
- 2.15 Following the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, regional planning guidance has become part of the statutory development plan and has been renamed as a Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). All planning documents must now be in conformity with its policies.
- 2.16 Leek lies within the West Midlands Region and is covered by the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), the most recent version of which was updated in January 2008. As

seen Figure 2.3 below the town lies outside the Major Urban Areas of the Region. As such it is subject to the 'Rural Renaissance' strategy, falling within the category of rural areas...

"which are subject to strong influences from the MUAs and which are relatively prosperous and have generally good access to services. For these, the main priority will be to manage the rate and nature of further development to that required to meet local needs, whilst ensuring that local character is protected and enhanced;" [RSS, 2008, paragraph 5.5].

2.17 Leek is defined as a Local Regeneration Area, and the Green Belt context is clearly shown (Figure 2.3). Leek does not though fall within the network of 25 town and city centres identified for major retail, cultural, leisure or office development [paragraph 7.55, RSS].

Figure 2.3 – Spatial Strategy Diagram



Source: West Midlands RSS

2.18 The most relevant policy would appear to be PA14: Economic Development:

POLICY PA14: Economic Development and the Rural Economy

A. Development plans and other strategies should support the sustainable diversification and development of the rural economy through the growth of existing businesses and the creation of new enterprise. This should be undertaken in ways that meet local employment needs, maintain viable and sustainable local communities, conserve and enhance environmental assets and respect local character and distinctiveness.

B. Development plans should ensure that, subject to policy PA15, most economic development is concentrated in towns and other large settlements accessible to their rural hinterlands. Development should be consistent with the character and environment of the settlement.

Local Planning Policy

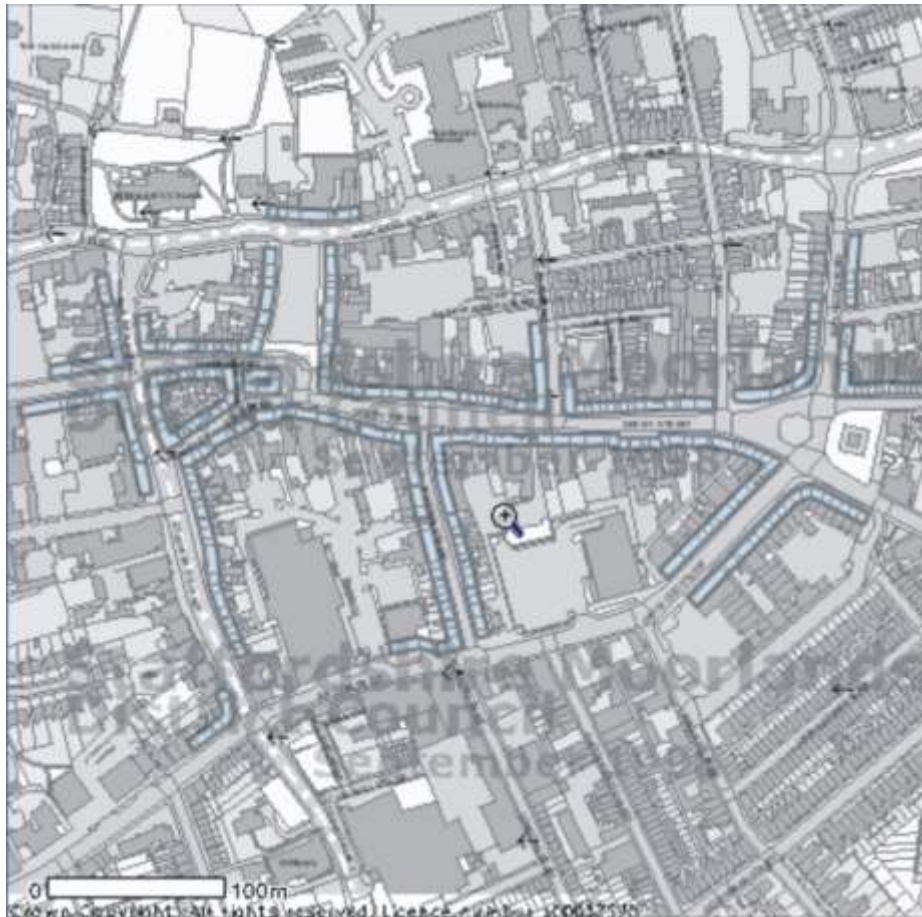
2.19 The current adopted statutory plan for the Staffordshire Moorlands district is the Local Plan, adopted in 1998. However, this baseline report has been produced at the time the Core Strategy, within the new Local Development Framework, is very close to adoption; a Submission Version having been published in May 2009. For this reason, the following summary focuses on the Core Strategy as the key

planning document, as it certainly will be in the life of this Masterplan. The Site Specific Plans and Allocations DPD is not due to be adopted until December 2010 but the Core Strategy will be the key document informing development control decisions.

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and Proposals Map

2.20 The Proposals Map is due to be updated in line with the Core Strategy. At present the current Proposals Map is that taken from the Local Plan, although the only saved policy in relation to Town Centres in Policy S7: Town Centre Shopping Streets. The Proposals Map identifies Town Centre Shopping Streets within the Town Centre. Within these areas policy S7 seeks to preserve retail character, only permitting non A1 (retail) uses if this does not create a concentration of non-shopping uses. There is no Town Centre boundary defined on the Proposals Map (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4 – Leek Town Centre – Town Centre Shopping Streets



Source: Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan Proposals Map

Core Strategy

2.21 The key planning document affecting Leek Town Centre is the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy. The Strategy has several Spatial **Objectives** that have strong relevance to the Town Centre Masterplan:

SO3. To develop and diversify in a sustainable manner the District's economy and meet local employment needs in the towns and villages.

SO4. To provide new housing that is affordable, desirable, well-designed and meets the needs of residents of the Moorlands.

SO5. To ensure the long-term vitality and viability of the three market towns of Leek, Biddulph and Cheadle.

SO7. To support and enhance the tourism, cultural, recreation and leisure opportunities for the District's residents and visitors.

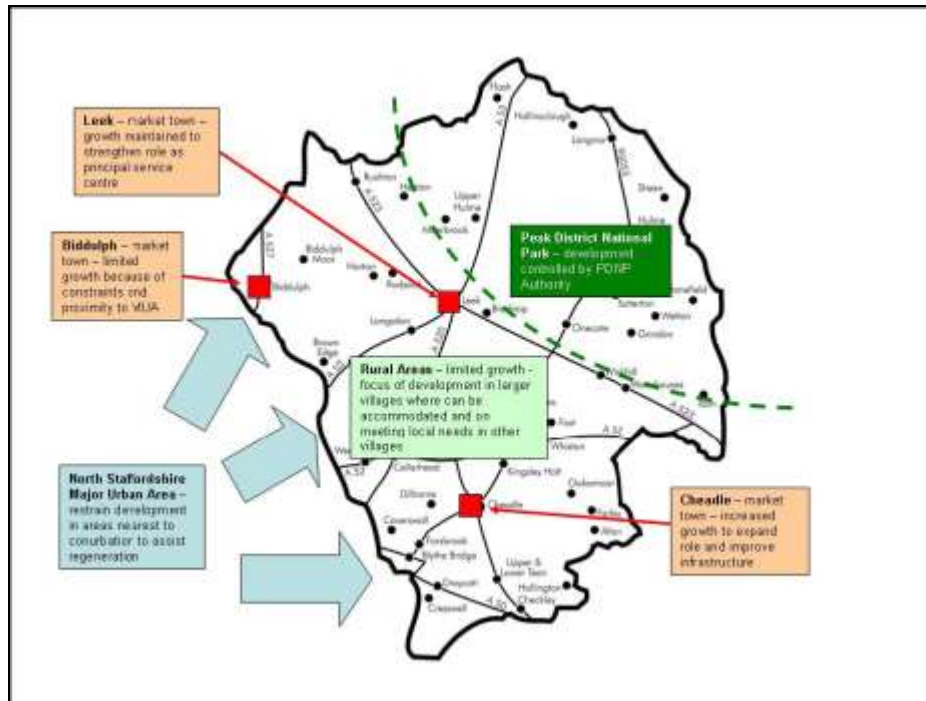
SO8. To promote local distinctiveness by means of good design and the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic, environmental and cultural assets throughout the District.

SO10. To deliver sustainable, inclusive, healthy and safe communities

SO11. To reduce the need to travel or make it safer and easier to travel by more sustainable forms of transport.

2.22 Figure 2.5 summarises the proposed development approach across the district.

Figure 2.5 – Diagrammatic Illustration of Proposed Development Approach



Source: Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy

2.23 The Vision for Leek is as follows:

Leek will be an increasingly important civic and service centre for its population and the District and will further strengthen its role as the principal town in the District. The quantity and quality of the retail offer in the town centre will have improved further, and the diversity of employment opportunities, facilities and services it offers increased. It will have enhanced its role as a tourist attraction, building on its special character, heritage and built environment assets. Britannia Building Society and other major employers in the town will grow, but will be balanced by new businesses on improved existing and new employment sites. Underused and poorer quality areas, such as Cornhill and the Churnet Works, will have been regenerated providing new development opportunities and its mill buildings will have been conserved with new uses. The bus station will be served by a reliable public transport system whilst access and car parking in the town centre will be improved with the provision of a new multi storey facility.

2.24 The supporting text outlines the strategy and rationale for the Town:

Leek, as the largest town in the District serving a wide area, will be promoted as the principal service centre and market town. It is the administrative centre for the District, already

has a wide range of services and facilities and provides a high proportion of the District's jobs and has good transport links with the rest of the District. The Council's Development Capacity Study and Housing Land Availability Assessment both demonstrate scope for further growth. It is also a key market town in North Staffordshire and has a major role to play in the development of the tourist offer and as a service and employment base to support the rural economy of the sub-region.

Whilst Leek is already a highly sustainable settlement which has the capacity to take further growth, this needs to be of an appropriate scale and nature and in locations which do not undermine its distinctive character. Its role will therefore be reinforced by focusing development on expanding the range of housing and community facilities the town can offer; by creating further employment growth and increasing the diversity of employment opportunities to meet existing and future needs; by strengthening the role of Leek as a principal service and retailing centre for the District; and by promoting and investing in Leek's special character and heritage and strengthening its role as a visitor destination.

2.25 This current masterplanning exercise is referred to in the Core Strategy (at paragraph 7.13):

Preference will be given to accommodating the bulk of the increases in retail provision within the town centres. Masterplans will be produced for the town centres of Leek and Cheadle.

Both towns face development pressures and the preparation of Masterplans will ensure future developments are accommodated in a planned and more sustainable manner...

The Masterplans will identify the scope for retail growth and other related changes to enhance the function of the town centres and will help identify suitable town centre sites for enhanced retail provision both through the intensification of existing sites and the conversion of sites in public ownership.

2.26 The following should also be noted, in relation to retail growth and the masterplanning process:

However, it is recognised that it may not be possible to accommodate all of the required growth within the town centres, whilst some retailing such as bulky goods, would benefit from a location with good road access. Therefore where retail growth cannot be accommodated within the town centre then a site or sites will be identified on the edge of the

town centres. The Masterplanning process will be timed to feed into the statutory planning process, with key opportunities taken forward in the Site Allocations DPD.

2.27 The role of Leek town centre will also be enhanced through measures to increase their appeal through a locally distinctive retail offer with more major retailers, including a major new supermarket anchor store, support for independent shops and a flourishing market and through improved access into and around the town centre. In Leek the Strategy will also focus on improving commercial activity and vitality on the edges of the town centre and reusing vacant or underused floorspace.

2.28 Table 1 outlines the quantum of growth that is allocated to the three principal towns in the district. It should be noted that this relates to the towns as a whole, not just the Town Centres.

Table 1 – Retail Capacity Growth – Staffordshire Moorlands Principal Towns

Town	Housing (net dwelling completions 2006-2026)	Affordable Housing Target	Employment (additional employment land 2006-2026)	Retail (additional convenience and comparison goods floorspace)
Leek	1800	450	7.2 hectares	3000 sqm convenience 12000 sqm comparison (of which 50% is for bulky goods retailing)
Biddulph	1200	400	4.8 hectares	AAP Proposals
Cheadle	1500	550	4.8 hectares	2500 sqm convenience 6000 sqm comparison (of which 50% is for bulky goods retailing)

Source: Staffordshire Moorlands District Core Strategy

2.29 The strategy for Leek as a whole is set out below, with special attention paid to actions 3 and 4, which will be delivered through the masterplanning process, with key phrases highlighted in bold:

SS5a – Leek Area Strategy

The Council and its partners will seek to consolidate the role of Leek as the **principal service centre** and a **market town**.

This will be achieved through the following actions:

1. Continue to meet the housing and community needs of Leek and its rural hinterland

2. Create employment growth and increase the diversity of employment opportunities to meet existing and future needs

3. **Strengthen the role of Leek as a principal service and retailing centre for the District** by:

- the **sensitive redevelopment and expansion** of the town centre to increase the quantity and quality of the retail offer, **improve linkages between areas** and **establish new development opportunities** in accordance with Policy TCR1. This will be identified through a Town Centre Masterplan;
- **consolidating the main retail core** and the market area and protecting and enhancing its distinctiveness, vitality and viability;
- enabling the **provision of additional bulky goods retailing** in accordance with Policy TCR2;

- supporting improvements to the range and diversity of educational, health, cultural and community services and facilities in the town, including the provision of a new community arts and cultural facility and campus improvements at Leek College;

- **improving accessibility** to the town's major retail, service and employment areas, particularly by public transport, from the rest of the District;

- **managing car parking** to support the role of Leek as a destination for shopping, employment, entertainment and tourism without leading to congestion of the town centre, including consideration of the need to provide a new multi-storey car park.

4. Promote Leek's special character and heritage and strengthen its role as a visitor destination by:

- **conserving and enhancing** buildings, sites and areas of heritage and cultural importance, complemented by new distinctive, sensitively designed, high quality, sustainable buildings;

- promoting **environmental enhancements** in and on the edges of the town centre, establishing the **Market as a central feature**, creating **strong, high quality 'gateways'** into the centre and improving signposting;

- *increasing tourist opportunities for visitors through additional high quality accommodation, promoting links with the Peak District and the development of new tourist attractions linked to the Churnet Valley tourist corridor (see policy SS7).*

2.30 Leek is the largest settlement in the District with an already well established range of facilities and services serving the whole of the District. Despite this the town has lacked opportunities for retail and economic growth and has not fully developed its tourism and cultural potential. The proposed strategy for Leek therefore seeks to strengthen its role as the principal town in the District.

2.31 Retail Policy supports further retail development in Leek on Town Centre or edge of centre sites. The proposed policy approach seeks to be pro-active in the development of Leek Town Centre through a range of measures focusing retail, office, leisure and cultural development within them and actively planning for their growth and enhancement to meet the needs of all members of the community as well as maintaining local distinctiveness. The Policy for Leek Town Centre is set out in TRC1 (see below). The definition of the Town Centre boundaries should be informed by the

Masterplan, which will also progress these actions spatially and with appropriate recommendations for implementation.

TCR1 – Development in the Town Centres

The vitality and viability of the town centres of Leek and Cheadle (defined on the Proposals Map of the Site Allocations DPD [NB.-not yet available] will be protected and enhanced by positive management as follows:

- 1. Focusing and promoting retailing as well as other key town centre uses such as offices, leisure and cultural facilities within the town centres where they contribute to vitality and viability.*
- 2. Supporting positive measures and proposals which enhance and regenerate the shopping and town centre environment and promote their tourism potential.*
- 3. Enhancing local distinctiveness by supporting proposals which help retain, attract or expand the provision of independent retailers in the town centres including niche markets.*
- 4. Ensuring new development is well related to pedestrian shopping routes.*
- 5. Ensuring there are adequate parking facilities in suitable locations in and around the town centres and good access to*

the town centres by those using public transport, cycling or walking.

6. Setting out design principles to improve and enhance the distinctive heritage of the town centres including minimising the risk of crime.

7. Promoting housing on upper floors within the primary shopping areas and elsewhere in the town centres where this does not jeopardise their vitality and viability.

8. Only permitting new retail, leisure, office and other key town centre uses outside town centres where they are consistent with the approach set out in PPS6 in terms of need, scale, sequential approach to site selection, impact on other centres, including those beyond the district boundary, and accessibility and are consistent with the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy policies for non-strategic centres.

9. Protecting the retail function in the heart of the town centres by designating primary and secondary shopping frontages (to be defined in the Site Allocations DPD), as set out in the Primary and Secondary Frontages Policy.

2.32 The use of primary and secondary frontages as a tool for maintaining vitality in the main shopping streets is consistent with the approach that has been used successfully in the Biddulph AAP. It should be noted that as yet these frontages

have not been spatially defined on plan, although the extant Local Plan defines Primary Shopping Frontages alongside saved policy S7 (see above). The strategy for Primary and Secondary frontages is set out below. The Town Centre Masterplan should inform the definition of these frontages:

Primary Frontages

In primary frontages, proposals for changes of use to A1 retail will be supported. Development falling within other use classes will only be permitted where it will not create a concentration of non-shopping uses and result in an unacceptable change in the retail character of the immediate area or have an adverse effect on the vitality or viability of the town centre. Proposals for residential use at ground floor level in primary frontages will not be supported. Any non-A1 use must be complementary to adjacent shopping uses in terms of its operational characteristics and retain a display frontage appropriate to a shopping area.

Secondary Frontages

In secondary frontages, development falling within other use classes will be permitted where it will contribute to the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.

Conservation Area Appraisal

2.33 Most of the study area lies within the Leek Conservation Area. A Conservation Area Appraisal has been recently prepared. This defines the special character of the town:

“Leek is a planned settlement dating to the early 13th century that grew up beside an earlier church and road. The town retains its medieval street pattern and market place, and a wide range of historic buildings dating from the 15th century onwards. The surrounding mills and terraces mark the emergence of a fully-fledged silk industry in the 19th century. In the town centre the modest scale of the early housing contrasts with the more dramatic designs of the late 19th century buildings. Elsewhere changing needs and aspirations are reflected on the style of the mill buildings, and in a range of approaches to workers terraces and more affluent housing.”

2.34 Key views and vistas are described, to and from the town, and the surrounding countryside. The Conservation Area is divided into four contrasting character areas:

- The central section with the market square and St Edward’s Church

- The southern section with Albion Mill and St Mary’s Church
- The western section with Wellington Mill and West Street
- The eastern section with Getliffe’s Yard and London Mill.

2.35 The medieval Market Place is the hub of the town and has a 17th century market cross and important historic buildings on each side. Another area of heritage importance is St Edward Street, with the churches of St Edward and St Mary at either end and many fine buildings between. Also important is the Nicholson Monument (war memorial) and the area around it. A number of large Victorian mills also provide important historic landmarks. The work of the Sugden family and William Morris is also of notable historic importance in the town.

2.36 Landmark buildings include:

- St Edward’s Parish Church
- The Swan public house, at the corner of the original market square
- The Ash Almhouses

- Market Place with the Red Lion, Market Hall and Market Cross
- The Bird in Hand and Sheepmarket
- The Nicholson Monument (war memorial)
- Trinity Church
- St Edward's Church
- St Mary's Church
- Foxlowe
- Albion Mill
- Wellington Mill
- All Saints Church
- The Nicholson Institute.

2.37 Negative factors and threats are also described, including poor maintenance, loss of buildings, inappropriate alterations and heavy traffic. Several negative impacts have been well mitigated with effective landscaping and street furniture. Lack of co-ordination, poor quality 20th century buildings and the need for better environments on approach roads remain key priorities.

Regeneration Strategies

2.38 **Leek Action Plan** was published in May 2008 as part of the Better Welcome programme, led by the Action for Market Towns Initiative. The Vision for Leek is as follows:
“Our future vision is that the friendly market town of Leek will offer visitors an even better welcome. The town will have a reputation for antiques and fine arts, set against a backdrop of industrial and Victorian architecture. Leek will be known for its range of traditionally styled independent shops and proud of its connections with William Morris. The antiques, arts, local produce, culture and other themes will be celebrated through a calendar of events and festivals. The proximity to Alton Towers will be exploited but Leek will stand alone as a relaxed, friendly and cultured town acting as a gateway to the Peak District.”

The three recommended top projects were signage/interpretation/plaques, a town centre lighting project and re-developing a historic mill as a museum.

Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

2.39 A district-wide Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide has been produced in draft by the District Council. This will

subsequently be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. This document highlights universal principles of good design and stresses the importance of context and local distinctiveness. A series of design principles are explained and a series of useful checklists are provided. This Guide has been studied by the design team for this masterplanning exercise and will inform the masterplanning process.

Socio-economic Profile

- 2.40 Key socio-economic statistics have been researched relating to Leek. For the purpose of this analysis 'Leek' comprises the wards of Leek North, Leek East, Leek South and Leek West. It therefore takes into account of the position of the Town Centre, which lies at the centre of these wards. The population of these four wards is 19,915.
- 2.41 A range of indicators have been chosen to illustrate the population's characteristics. These cover the demographics of the population, economic activity, social grade, educational attainment and car ownership. These statistics have been compared with district, regional and national figures to enable fuller comparison.

Population

- 2.42 Table 2 illustrates the distribution by age groups of the catchment population, alongside the district, regional and national comparisons.

Table 2 – Catchment Population (Proportion)

	Total Population	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90+
Leek	19,915	11.2	12.2	11.3	15.3	13.3	13.1	10.0	8.6	4.3	0.9
Staffordshire Moorlands District	94,487	10.7	12.2	9.9	14.3	14.0	15.5	10.9	8.1	3.6	0.5
West Midlands	5,267,308	12.5	13.4	12.1	15.6	13.1	12.7	9.2	7.5	3.4	0.6
England	49,138,831	12.4	12.8	12.7	15.6	13.3	12.6	9.3	7.3	3.6	0.6

Source: Census, 2001#

2.43 The highest proportion of people living in Leek is in the 30-39 age group, and the smallest proportions are in the age bands for those aged 60 plus. The figures generally follow a similar demographic profile to that of the district, regional and national averages, with figures varying by less than two percent in all but one of the age bands. The only exception is that the proportion of 50-59 year olds in Leek is 2.4 percent less than the comparable proportion for the district. However the Leek figure is similar to both the regional and national figures.

Economic Activity

2.44 The economic activity profile is sourced from the 2001 census.

Table 3 – Economic Activity – Leek

		Leek	Staffordshire Moorlands District	West Midlands	England
Persons aged 16-74		14,279	69,757	3,780,783	35,532,091
Economically Active (percent)	Employed	62.3	63.3	59.7	60.9
	Unemployed	3.3	2.2	3.8	3.3
	Full-time Student	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.6
	Total	67.9	67.8	66.0	66.9
Economically Inactive (percent)	Retired	15.6	15.9	13.9	13.5
	Student	2.8	2.7	4.6	4.7
	Looking after home/family	5.2	5.2	6.5	6.5
	Permanently Sick or disabled	6.0	6.0	5.7	5.3
	Other	2.5	2.3	3.4	3.1
	Total	32.1	32.2	34.1	33.1

Source: Census, 2001

2.45 Table 3 indicates the Leek catchment area generally mirrors the structure of the wider geographic areas. The percentage of residents in employment is marginally lower than the district average but exceeds the regional and national averages. The number of students is low, at just over half the percentage average for the West Midlands and England.

2.46 The 2001 unemployment rate for Leek was in line with the national average (at 3.3 percent), although higher than the Staffordshire Moorlands figure. The UK entered into recession in 2008 resulting in unemployment rates of 6.0 percent in England, and 7.2 percent in the West Midlands, by December 2008 (Annual Population Survey, 2009). Unfortunately updated data at a more local level is not yet available.

Social Grade

2.47 Social grade is an important indicator for disposable income and affluence of the catchment area, used by investors and developers when researching new locations. Table 4 shows that, as with all three other areas, the greatest proportion people in Leek are classified as grade C1.

Table 4 – Social Grade, Leek

	Leek	Staffordshire Moorlands	West Midlands	England
Persons aged 16+	15,812	75,997	4,093,944	38,393,304
AB: Higher and intermediate managerial/administrative/professional	17.9	20.1	19.5	22.2
C1: Supervisory clerical junior managerial/administrative/professional	26.9	28.0	27.2	29.7
C2: Skilled manual workers	18.2	20.2	16.7	15.1
D: Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers	20.3	16.8	19.4	17.0
E: On state benefit unemployed lowest grade workers	16.7	14.8	17.1	16.0
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Census, 2001

2.48 Leek has higher proportion of the lower social grades (C2, D and E) by comparison with the district, regional and national averages. The proportion of social grade AB is 2.2 percent lower than the district's figure. It is also less than the West Midlands and national figures, and this indication of less

affluence may require a different type of retail/commercial offer.

Educational Attainment

Table 5 – Persons aged 16-74 Educational Attainment Leek (Percentage)

	Leek	Staffordshire Moorlands	West Midlands	England
No Qualifications	35.0	33.8	34.0	28.9
Level 1	18.3	17.1	16.7	16.6
Level 2	18.4	18.8	18.5	19.4
Level 3	6.1	6.4	7.4	8.3
Level 4/5	14.9	15.7	16.2	19.9
Other Qualifications/level unknown	7.3	8.3	7.2	6.9
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Census, 2001

2.49 The highest proportion of people aged 16-74 in Leek have no qualifications. This follows the trends seen in the district, the region and the country, although the figure for Leek is higher. For those with qualifications, similar proportions of people in Leek are educated up to Level 1 and Level 2. However, a considerably smaller proportion of people have achieved

Level 3 and 4/5 qualifications. The figure is 7.3 percent below the national average, reflecting the social grade structure mentioned above.

Car Ownership

2.50 When considering the context of Leek Town Centre it is important to consider the level of car ownership, as an indicator of accessibility and affluence.

Table 6 – Car Ownership Leek

	Leek	Staffordshire Moorlands	West Midlands	England
No cars or vans	17.7	10.7	19.5	19.5
1 car or van	47.7	40.0	41.4	41.9
2 or more cars or vans	34.5	49.3	39.0	38.6
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Census, 2001

2.51 Overall the percentage of households with access to a car (82.2 percent) is slightly higher than the regional and national picture. However it is around 7 percent below the district-wide average. Whilst the majority of the population have access to at least one car, the percentage of households with

access to two or more cars is substantially below the district average of 49 percent. Almost one in six households has no access to a car. Collectively this demonstrates a trend towards less affluence as fewer households can afford to run two cars or even a single car, in what is a rural area with limited public transport provision.

Summary

2.52 Key messages from this policy review are:

- The Masterplan must have regard to national policy and guidance. This highlights the need for sustainability, high quality design, reducing the need to travel and protecting the viability of Town Centres
- Regional policy identifies Leek as a Local Regeneration Area outside the Major Urban Areas and network of towns identified for major development. However, it does support the role of rural towns acting as a service centre for their rural hinterland and a focus for development, whilst ensuring local character is preserved
- The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan is soon to be superseded by the LDF but the designation of Town Centre Shopping Streets in the town remains relevant as a saved policy

- There is no Town Centre boundary defined in local policy documents
- The emerging Core Strategy's approach for Leek is for a market town with growth maintained to strengthen its role as a principal service centre. This means improving the quantity and quality of the retail offer; increasing the diversity of employment opportunities and service facilities; and enhancing its role as a tourist attraction, through promotion of its special character and heritage
- Leek is considered to be already a highly sustainable settlement with the capacity for further growth, of an appropriate scale and nature so as not to undermine its distinct character
- The current masterplanning process is highlighted as the means to identify the scope for retail growth and other related change in the Town Centre. This will then feed into the Site Allocations DPD
- The retail strategy for Leek includes sensitive redevelopment and expansion of the Town Centre to increase the quality and quantity of the retail offer, improving linkages between areas and establishing new development opportunities. The main retail core

and the market area should be consolidated, protecting its distinctiveness and vitality. Additional bulky goods provision should be accommodated (this may have to be outside the Town Centre)

- Most of the study area is within a Conservation Area. The character of this area is a key asset. This is based on its medieval street pattern and historic buildings, a number of nineteenth century mill buildings and an association with the Arts and Crafts movement and the work of key figures such as William Morris and the Sugdens. This unique character needs to be preserved and used as a unique selling point for the Town Centre.

2.53 From the socio-economic review the key messages are:

- Just over half the catchment population is aged under 40. The highest percentage share is aged 30-39. The Town Centre Masterplan should reflect the needs of this young clientele, whilst acknowledging around 14 percent of the population is aged over 70
- 37 percent of the working age population comprises social grade D/E, which has relevance to the level of disposable income and affluence. It impacts on the type of place Leek could be in the future and planning

for this. Almost 18 percent of households have no access to a car. This is a challenge for a rural market town with a constrained public transport infrastructure.

3.0 TOWN CENTRE USES

Leek Town Centre in Context

- 3.1 Leek is the main town in the Staffordshire Moorlands District with a population of approximately 20,000 (Census 2001). From a market town, it has developed into an administrative and service centre. It serves a significant rural hinterland, reflecting its historical agricultural and manufacturing importance. The City of Stoke-on-Trent is ten miles to the south west of Leek.
- 3.2 The town is close to the Peak District National Park, the River Churnet and southern uplands of the Pennines. Whilst the textile industry has declined, Leek has retained its historic feel and the Town Centre accommodates many buildings of architectural interest. In particular are the Nicholson Institute on Stockwell Street, St Edward The Confessor on Church Street, and numerous buildings around Market Place and St Edward Street. More recent employment led developments have been outside the Town Centre study area, for example the Britannia Building Society, Cheddleton Road. Leek is also known for its antiques and pine furniture stores.

- 3.3 Leek is the primary shopping and service centre in Staffordshire Moorlands. The primary retail area, as defined in the Local Plan, is extensive, comprising the north end of St Edward Street, Stanley Street, Sheep Market, Market Place, Derby Street, the Smithfield Centre and the southern ends of Haywood Street and Ball Hays Street. The secondary retail area comprises High Street, Strangman Street and the rest of St Edward Street to the west; Brook Street to the south; Market Street, Bath Street, Stockwell Street to the north; and finally, the start of Fountain Street and Ashbourne Road to the east.

Retail Catchment Area

- 3.4 The Leek catchment area extends predominantly north and east, taking in the villages of Meerbrook, Upper Hulme and Rudyard and east towards Warslow and Wetton. It competes with Buxton to the north, Ashbourne to the south east, Cheddleton to the south, Stoke-on-Trent to the south west, Biddulph to the west and Congleton to the north west.
- 3.5 According to the Staffordshire Moorlands District Retail Study (2006), evidence from household and shopper surveys suggests Buxton, Macclesfield and Ashbourne are Leek's

main competitors, in terms of their quantity and quality of product offer.

- 3.6 In terms of captured spend, Leek performs best for convenience goods. Its primary catchment area retains 85 percent of available spend. In the outer zones this falls to between 23 and 32 percent, which is still a respectable proportion considering the draw of Stoke-on-Trent and Macclesfield. Leek does less well for comparison goods spend, capturing from the primary catchment area only 30 percent and 35 percent respectively for non-bulky and bulky goods.
- 3.7 The Household Survey indicates most shoppers visit Leek to do their main food shopping (83 percent of those surveyed), with most going to Morrisons (outside of the study area). Only 12 percent said that they also make linked trips to the Town Centre. The Town Centre does perform relatively well for some comparison goods, particularly so for small, high value personal and luxury items. However, it attracts a low proportion of clothes, footwear and fashion trips; most being lost to Stoke-on-Trent (Hanley), Buxton and Macclesfield.

Retail Ranking

- 3.8 Management Horizons Europe publish annual rankings of over 3000 retail centres across the UK. The most recent data for 2008, shows Leek is classed as a 'local centre' and is ranked 405th in the UK. An estimated £49.9m is spent on comparison (non-bulky) goods and £26.6m on bulky goods in the Town Centre every year.
- 3.9 By far the most significant centre in the surrounding area is Stoke-on-Trent (Hanley) which is ranked 65th. Newcastle-under-Lyme is ranked 182nd. Within Staffordshire Moorlands Cheadle is ranked 919th with an estimated annual spend level for comparison goods being about one third of Leek's figures.
- 3.10 In comparison to its considered competing centres (Ashbourne, Buxton and Macclesfield), Leek is most similar to Buxton in terms of spend captured. It captures about half the amount of spend achieved by Macclesfield, but nearly three times as much that captured by Ashbourne.

Table 7 – Retail Rankings

Name	Major Class	Population	Comparison Spend		Rank
			Non Bulky x£1,000	Bulky Spend x£1,000	
Stoke-on-Trent - Hanley	Major Centres	169,005	262,018	133,809	65
Newcastle-under-Lyme	Major Centres	80,690	128,387	66,143	182
<i>Macclesfield</i>	<i>Regional Towns</i>	<i>58,427</i>	<i>107,672</i>	<i>56,840</i>	<i>222</i>
Stoke-on-Trent - Longton	Urban Centres	43,611	67,296	34,183	337
Leek	Local Centres	30,989	49,989	26,572	405
<i>Buxton</i>	<i>Regional Towns</i>	<i>30,189</i>	<i>45,853</i>	<i>23,782</i>	<i>439</i>
Stoke-on-Trent - Tunstall	Urban Centres	20,228	31,251	15,915	610
Stoke-on-Trent - Festival Retail Park	Retail Parks	20,011	31,165	15,935	613
Uttoxeter	Rural Centres	16,271	27,271	14,413	681
Stone	Local Centres	14,964	25,801	13,651	711
Stoke-on-Trent - Trent	Local Centres	13,590	21,210	10,817	821
<i>Ashbourne</i>	<i>Rural Centres</i>	<i>12,092</i>	<i>18,972</i>	<i>10,147</i>	<i>891</i>
Cheadle	Local Centres	10,821	17,954	9644	919

Source: Management Horizons Europe, 2008

Retail Capacity Projections

3.11 The Staffordshire Moorlands District Retail Study (2006) identifies capacity for an additional 3407 sqm of gross retail

floorspace in Leek by 2016 (see Table 8). This is a fairly modest but realistic projection, based on current market shares, accounting for the impact of internet trading, and modest increases in expenditure growth rates and sales density figures.

3.12 The Study does however increase the market share captured by Leek, in order to project a higher capacity (up to 19,365 sqm) by 2016. This is because evidence from the household and shopper surveys suggests that qualitatively, Leek is underperforming. There is therefore scope to focus on improving the quality of the retail experience in Leek, which in turn should increase the market share captured by the Town Centre. Increasing the quality of the retail offer is however linked to expanding the quantity of supply, as well as aesthetic and access improvements. Yet, the retail calculations are based on declining population projections, which questions the ability of Leek to capture such a large share of the market from its competitors.

Table 8 – Leek Gross Retail Capacity Projections based on Increased Market Share (and Current Market Share)

Leek	2008	2013	2016
Convenience	2596 (-)	2813 (238)	2975 (343)
Comparison – Non Bulky	7154 (273)	8409 (997)	9204 (1463)
Comparison – Bulky	5318 (298)	6455 (1091)	7186 (1601)
Total	15,068 (571)	17,677 (2326)	19,365 (3407)

Source: GVA Grimley, 2006

3.13 The earlier North Staffordshire Retail and Leisure Study (2005) noted that by 2016, capacity is identified for up to 2,431 sqm of convenience floorspace for the whole of North Staffordshire. Based on GVA Grimley's calculations, Leek's projection alone would exceed this. With regards to comparison retail floorspace, the study identifies (in North Staffordshire) capacity for a further 44-51,000 sqm by 2016 (Leek's projection fits within this).

3.14 Based on this evidence, the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy concludes that 15,000 sqm is needed by 2026 (3000 sqm for convenience and 12,000 sqm for comparison goods).

Diversity of Retail Uses

3.15 BE Group has prepared a premises' uses plan for the Leek Town Centre study area (Appendix 1). Table 9 breaks down these uses with floorspace (obtained from the Valuation Office 2005 data). Figures are provided for the study area as a whole, and for Derby Street (as the prime retail street).

Table 9 – Retail Uses

Outlet	Derby Street (No.)	Derby Street (floorspace, sqm)	Proportion in Derby Street, by floorspace	Study Area Total (No.)	Study Area Total (floorspace, sqm)
Supermarket	-	-	0.0	3	4254
Mini Market/Off Licence	1	227	41.7	4	544
Newsagent	1	135	31	5	436
Bakers	1	52	100	1	52
Butchers	1	395	74.5	2	530
Greengrocers	-	-	0.0	2	124
Confectioners/Cards	2	120	100	2	120
Total Convenience	6	929	15.6	19	6060
Charity Shop	5	594	50.3	9	1182
Footwear and Repair	2	223	48	4	465
Clothes	6	1107	32.3	21	3430
Furniture, Carpets and Textiles	1	231	4	28	5782
Booksellers, Arts and Gifts	4	976	45.7	14	2137
Gas, Electrical	-	-	0.0	4	447
Computers and Printing	-	-	0.0	2	102
Mobile Phones	1	107	77.5	2	138
DIY, Hardware and Housewares	2	398	6.5	17	6127
Cars, Motorcycles – sale and/or repair and motorparts	-	-	0.0	2	507
Chemists, Drugstore and Optician	6	1188	72.7	12	1633
Catalogue	-	-	0.0	1	824

Outlet	Derby Street (No.)	Derby Street (floorspace, sqm)	Proportion in Derby Street, by floorspace	Study Area Total (No.)	Study Area Total (floorspace, sqm)
Florists	-	-	0.0	4	272
Toys, Hobby, Cycle and Sports	2	511	46.8	6	1093
Jewellers and Repair	1	40	9.3	4	429
Video/Music rental and/or sale	-	-	0.0	4	243
Other Comparison	-	-	0.0	1	19
Total Comparison	30	5375	21.6	135	24830
Restaurants and Cafes	3	472	12.4	25	3793
Pubs/Clubs	2	N/a	-	17	N/a
Hot Food Takeaways	-	-	0.0	13	1048
Total Food/Evening Economy	5	472	9.8	55	4841
Hairdressers, Beauty Parlours, Tattooists, Tanning Salons	-	-	0.0	22	1251
Laundries and Dry Cleaners	-	-	0.0	1	96
Travel Agents	1	124	31.3	3	396
Undertakers	-	-	0.0	1	114
Photographers	1	25	7.7	2	325
Total Service	2	149	6.8	29	2182
Solicitors	2	757	45.9	7	1648
Betting Office	1	103	36.7	3	281
Banks and Financial Services	3	959	46.9	9	2045
Building Societies	2	497	21.3	3	2336
Estate Agents and Valuers	3	275	64	4	430

Outlet	Derby Street (No.)	Derby Street (floorspace, sqm)	Proportion in Derby Street, by floorspace	Study Area Total (No.)	Study Area Total (floorspace, sqm)
Other	-	-	0.0	2	321
Total Financial and Professional Services	11	2591	36.7	28	7061
Vacant Premises					
- On the market	1	-	-	17	-
- Not on the market	-	-	-	28	-
TOTAL	55	9516	21.2	311	44974

Source: Valuation Office

3.16 Key points to note are:

- There are only two butchers, two greengrocers and one baker in the study area
- There are three supermarkets within the study area, all located close to the Town Centre. Morrisons is excluded as the store is located outside the study area
- More than half the charity shops in the study area are located on Derby Street
- Of 28 furniture, carpets and textiles stores in the study area, only one is located on Derby Street – suggesting the importance of peripheral Town Centre locations for this kind of retail. Similarly this is true for booksellers, arts and gifts stores

- Of 21 clothes shops in the study area, less than a third are on Derby Street
- One fifth of the study area's comparison floorspace is located on Derby Street
- Reflecting its Arts and Crafts reputation, the numbers of outlets and floorspace taken by antique shops, art and art dealers, crafts are substantially above the national averages.

3.17 Whilst, there are 25 restaurants or cafes in the study area only three are on Derby Street. There are 12 restaurants, 13 takeaways and 17 pub (in use). Only 10 percent of the total

floorspace dedicated to the evening economy is located on Derby Street.

3.18 Non-financial services are dominated by hairdressers and beauty salons. There is a good mix of financial and professional services in the Town Centre, strongly represented on Derby Street.

3.19 In addition to the supermarkets and banks, other major national retailers in the town include Argos, Boots, WH Smith, Wilkinson’s, Clintons, Superdrug, Phones 4 U and New Look. The latter is the only major national clothing retailer in Leek Town Centre.

3.20 Table 10 breaks down the study area uses by planning classification. This includes non-retail uses. Just under 60 percent of commercial premises are dedicated to A1 (shops). A2 (Financial & Professional Services) is the next greatest use. All use classes are represented except C1 (Hotels) and D2 (Residential Institutions).

Table 10 – Study Area Planning Uses

Planning Use Type	Number of Premises	Proportion
A1 Shops	184	57.9
A2 Financial & Professional Services	31	9.7
A3 Restaurants & Cafes	25	7.9
A4 Drinking Establishments	16	5.0
A5 Hot Food Takeaways	13	4.1
B1 Business	17	5.3
B2 General Industry	4	1.3
C1 Hotels	0	0.0
D1 Non-residential Institutions	23	7.2
D2 Residential Institutions	0	0.0
Sui Generis	5	1.6
Total	318	

Source: BE Group 2009

Retail Vacancy Level, Rents and Values

3.21 At the time of the physical survey thirteen retail premises were on the market within the Town Centre Masterplan study area. All but one were vacant. A further 28 ground floor properties were identified as vacant, but did not appear to be marketed. Collectively they represent a vacancy rate of over 14 percent by premises number.

- 3.22 In addition the study area includes a number of vacant sites and former mills, which are included as Opportunity Sites. These are considered in Section 7.
- 3.23 However, only seven of the premises are within the primary retail area (as defined by the Local Plan). Of these, two properties on Derby Street and St Edward Street are now no longer available. Four relate to premises at the Smithfield Centre.
- 3.24 Consequently although a vacancy rate of 14 percent has been noted this is the consequence of empty properties mainly in tertiary rather than prime or secondary retail areas. The primary retail area has a very low vacancy rate, with none of the circa 60 premises on Derby Street being vacant. Data collated by the Town Centre Co-ordinator suggests the vacancy level for this area to be only 6.5 percent – approximately half the current UK Town Centres average.
- 3.25 The thirteen identified retail premises are scheduled in Table 11.

Table 11 – Marketed Commercial Premises in Leek

Address	Comment
Retail	
23 – 25 Derby Street	Has recently come off the market (after site survey was completed)
19 – 21 Edward Street	Vacant but was sold recently (after site survey was completed)
2 – 6 Brook Street	Peripheral Town Centre location. Comprises residential premises and adjoining retail unit, currently used as an antiques sales area. For sale at £245,000 or for lease at £15,000/year. The building is not listed, but is in a Conservation Area
8 Sheep Market	Property of 230 sqm, located in a prime central location. A historic terraced retail premises, available freehold at £269,950 or leasehold at £11,000/year
12 Stanley Street	Recent sold by Bury & Hilton but still vacant
7 Cawdry Buildings, Fountain Street	Recently put on the market. Significant interest reported, Premises of 116 sqm, on the market at £7950/year
14 Smithfield Centre, Haywood Road	Available for £9000/year (58 sqm). It was previously The Entertainment Store (a music shop)
15 Smithfield Centre, Haywood Road	Available for £19,500/year (204 sqm), though is currently occupied by the Pine Shop
25 Smithfield Centre, Haywood Road	Available having been vacant for two years. Numerous offers have reportedly been made but have then fallen through, due to poor credit availability
The Former Ticket	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council is

Address	Comment
Office Smithfield Centre	currently seeking a sub-lessee
The Talbot Hotel, 1 Ashbourne Road	Planning permission to convert and extend to create 14 apartments with ground floor retail unit. 0.3 acre site. Little interest in the scheme. Guide price £500,000 for freehold.
The White Lion, 2 Ashbourne Road	For sale for guide price of £350,000. Present owners have no aspirations for development and want to sell as soon as possible
32 Russell Street	To let. Former Moorland Tackle Shop

Source: BE Group 2009

3.26 Consultations with owners and agents indicate that two further units at the Smithfield Centre will be coming to the market. One is already vacant, but the current lease is still in place. A property on Market Place is also to become available in the near future.

Retail Rents and Values

3.27 Derby Street is the prime retail pitch, with Zone A rents achieving £20-£30 per sqft. A review of past transaction data provides details of 15 retail premises sold and two retail premises let over the last five years. These are listed in Table 12. More recent transactions ascertained from retail agents include:

- 38 Derby Street. Previously a jewellers, the premises has been recently occupied by MIND (a charity). It was reportedly leased for just over £10,000/year, reflecting a Zone A rent of £25 per sqft
- 67 Derby Street. Previously occupied by an estate agent, the property is now leased by Sixty 7 Design House (hand crafted gifts). It was reportedly leased for just over £10,000 per annum
- 23 – 25 Derby Street has recently been leased by a charity. The rent agreed is approximately £18,000/year, despite being advertised for £22,000/year. The agreed rent reflects a Zone A rent level of £28 per sqft
- 19 – 21 Edward Street sold in April for an undisclosed fee. The freehold was advertised for £110,000.

Table 12 – Retail Property Deals in Leek over the Last Five Years

Address	Date of Deal	Deal Type	Freehold, £	Income Potential, £/Year
10 Derby Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 5AW	04/05/2004	Auction	52,000	N/k
1-3 Southbank Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 5LS	19/07/2004	Auction	N/k	N/k
9/11 Derby Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 6HN	30/11/2004	Auction	645,000	36,500
17/17A Sheep Market Leek Staffordshire ST13 5HN	08/12/2004	Auction	144,000	7,000
1 Stockwell Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 6DH	17/10/2005	Auction	240,000	N/k
15 & 15A Sheep Market Leek Staffordshire ST13 5HN	05/06/2006	Auction	N/k	7,995
17 Derby Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 6HR	03/07/2006	Auction	550,000	28,500
Fountain Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 6JS	27/11/2006	Auction	90,500	N/k
9 Stanley Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 5HG	23/04/2007	Auction	N/k	10,350
83 Haywood Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 5JN	22/05/2007	Auction	342,500	15,000
62 St Edward Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 5DL	04/06/2007	Auction	N/k	N/k
15/15A Fountain Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 6JS	17/07/2007	Auction	205,000	11,000
Gaunt Buildings 4 Derby Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 6HP	10/09/2007	Lease	N/k	18,000
62 St Edward Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 5DL	26/11/2007	Auction	N/k	N/k
32 Derby Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 5AB	15/12/2007	Lease	N/k	N/k
32 Derby Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 5AJ	14/07/2008	Auction	280,000	22,100
6/8 Derby Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 5AB	09/12/2008	Auction	N/k	48,500

Source: EGi

Retail Demand

3.28 Examination of retailer requirements on the property database EGi would suggest there are 61 national retailers reportedly looking to locate in Leek. 40 percent of those who identify floorspace requirements are looking for units of up to 300 sqm. Only one fifth require space of less than 100 sqm. However, as the list includes retailers such as IKEA, this ‘evidence of demand’ should be treated with caution. That Leek is referred to is a reflection that for most of the retailers it is one of a (often large) number of towns they could potentially consider for a new store.

3.29 The Town Centre Coordinator has been targeting specific retailers, to try and encourage their interest in Leek. Relationships have been developed with:

- M&S Simply Food Plus. Has been interested for several years. Original need of 603 sqm has now increased to 1533 sqm. Want a town centre location, not fringe of centre site
- Pizza Express
- Costa Coffee
- Country Casuals
- Next.

3.30 Town Centre enquiries data for the period 2005-2009 has been provided by the Town Centre Co-ordinator. This is summarized in Table 13. It includes both retail and other business premises enquiries.

Table 13 – Town Centre Premises. Enquiry and Fill Rates

		<1000 sqft	1-2999 sqft	3-5999 sqft	6-9999 sqft	10,000> sqft	Total
2005	Enquiries	16	1	0	0	0	17
	Filled	11	0	0	0	0	11
2006	Enquiries	37	7	3	2	3	52
	Filled	22	5	0	0	0	27
2007	Enquiries	44	10	5	0	4	63
	Filled	25	7	3	0	0	35
2008	Enquiries	26	4	3	3	4	40
	Filled	17	2	2	1	0	22
2009 (to Sept)	Enquiries	11	4	0	0	3	18
	Filled	8	2	0	0	1	11
TOTAL	Enquiries	134	26	11	5	14	190
	Filled	83	16	5	1	1	106

Source: EGi

3.31 Table 13 shows a high point for enquiries in 2007. Although 2009 represents less than a full year, the impact of the recession is no doubt reflected in the lesser rate of enquiries. However, there has been a consistently strong conversion rate of at least 50 percent each year. Small premises of less than 91 sqm (1000 sqft) dominate, representing around 80 percent of all the business taking space in the Town Centre.

Leek Markets

3.32 The Butter Market is a permanent indoor market, with 24 units. It is fully occupied by 20 businesses. Goods sold range from convenience (butchers, sweets) to comparison goods (hardware, furniture, memorabilia). These are not included in Tables 9 and 10.

3.33 To the rear of the Butter Market, the Trestle Market provides traditional market stalls on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. On Wednesdays there are 18 regular traders who take up 25 stalls (of 28 available).

3.34 The Friday Trestle market is outsourced to a contractor. The Saturday Trestle Market is less popular with only 13 regular traders who take up 23 tables (of 31 available).

3.35 An outdoor market is operated on Wednesdays and Saturdays in Market Place. The covered timber stalls are only a few years old, are simple to set up and are attractive. The Saturday Craft and Antique Market is outsourced to a contractor. Usually 20 to 25 stalls are occupied.

3.36 A Farmers' Market is held once a month. The number of stalls taken has declined from 35 three years ago to 25. Two years ago it won a national competition for 'best fine food market' run by the National Association of Butter Markets.

3.37 The Market Manager reports that the indoor market is still performing well, but the outdoor market has been struggling for some years. It is perceived that the market's success depends on associated events and attractions, and well resourced promotions. However, it is accepted that markets nationally are declining due to competition from cheaper stores (Matalan, Wilkinson's); the dominance of supermarkets; and growth of special forms of trading (internet, mail order and home deliveries). Markets are no longer the 'economical' shop and are instead speciality attractions. In Leek, the number of casual traders is declining which is the first sign of market decline.

Town Centre Business Survey

- 3.38 A business survey was carried out to gather empirical evidence about the retail and commercial markets in Leek, as well as to gain local traders' views of the Town Centre.
- 3.39 264 surveys were distributed. Whilst distributing the questionnaire consultants engaged with traders and explained the importance of local businesses' views in the Masterplan process. Those unable to complete a survey on the day were left a questionnaire and pre-paid reply envelope, to complete and return within two weeks. The questionnaire is included at Appendix 2.
- 3.40 52 completed surveys were received (Table 14), representing a 19.7 percent response rate. This is a disappointing rate (Cheadle achieved over 40 percent), despite the efforts made to encourage responses. To generate more response Leek Chamber of Trade re-issued the survey by email to all its members but this achieved only two additional responses.

Table 14 – Breakdown of Business Survey Responses

Survey	Number	Proportion, percent
Face-to-face interview completed	6	2.3
Questionnaire received in post	46	17.4
Questionnaire left – no response	212	80.3
Total	264	100.0

Source: BE Group, 2009

- 3.41 St Edward Street generated the strongest response. The remainder was fairly distributed across the Town Centre.

Table 15 – Location of Businesses Taking Part in Survey

Street	Number	Proportion, percent
St Edward Street	8	15.4
Derby Street	6	11.5
Smithfield Centre	6	11.5
Haywood Street	5	9.6
Stanley Street	5	9.6
Getliffe's Yard	4	7.7
Market Place	4	7.7
Russell Street	3	5.8

Street	Number	Proportion, percent
Sheep Market	3	5.8
Other	8	15.4
Total	52	100.0

Source: BE Group, 2009

Tenure

3.42 23 percent of businesses stated that they own the freehold of the premises they occupy. This is quite a high proportion when compared to other towns, an indication of the strength of independent retailing in the town and the long-term interest in its welfare. These businesses are spread around St Edward Street, Russell Street, Sheep Market, Stanley Street, Haywood Street and Market Place.

Business Churn

3.43 51 percent of businesses surveyed have been in Leek for over ten years, the longest being 60 years. However, there is a high proportion of newcomers, 15 percent having started up in the last year. 34 percent have been in Leek for between one and ten years.

3.44 No previous data is available with which to compare change in business presence over time. However, the survey

identified ten businesses that are looking to relocate within two years. Two are closing down, three require bigger premises in Leek, and one wants a better position. Another is looking to move because the evening economy is too quiet to support them. Three did not state their reasons for wishing to move.

3.45 For those wishing to relocate within the town, Derby Street and Market Place are the most preferred locations. Moderate quality, leasehold premises are preferred. Retirement and the lack of trade were given as the reasons for the two outlets that are to close.

Employment

3.46 The businesses surveyed employ 147 people (84 full time, 63 part time). Unusually, only 35 percent of the businesses employ part time staff. The majority employ full-time staff. Only eight percent employ five or more staff. Those who employ more mainly consist of national multiples.

Opening Hours

3.47 Most open Monday to Saturday, usually from 9.00/9.30am to 5.00/5.30pm. Only ten percent stated that they open on Sundays. Eight percent do not open on Saturdays.

Customer Base

3.48 By far the majority of businesses stated that their main customer base is Leek residents (representing 60-70 percent on average). Other important catchment areas include Stoke-on-Trent, Macclesfield, Congleton, Buxton and Cheadle. Others stated as far afield as Manchester and London for more specialist items. The survey suggests that the role of Leek is two-tier. On one hand it is a local retail centre, servicing the needs of the town and communities immediately surrounding it. On the other hand, it offers an attractive day out primarily for city dwellers.

The Good Features of Leek

3.49 The most commonly identified good features were the number and range of independent shops, which contribute to Leek’s unique character; the market; and the general ambience, character and architectural interest of the Town Centre. Responses from the 49 businesses who answered this question are summarised in Table 16. Some businesses gave more than one answer.

Table 16 – Good Features of Leek identified by Businesses

Good Feature	Tally
Independents and individuality	18
Market	13
Ambience/architecture/character	12
Range of shops	7
Friendly service and people	6
Facilities are within walking distance of each other	5
None	4
Eating out/cafes	3
Easy parking	3
Loyal customers	3
Well presented shops	1
Safe	1
Near to Peak District	1
Supermarkets	1
Total	78

Source: BE Group, 2009

The Bad Features of Leek

3.50 By far, the most commonly identified bad feature relates to car parking in the Town Centre. Mostly this is the belief there is a lack of parking, although the expense and time limits

imposed are also identified. The number of charity shops and lack of retail choice, particularly for clothing, were also identified as key concerns. Responses are summarised in Table 17. Again some businesses gave multiple answers.

Table 17 – Bad Features of Leek identified by Businesses

Bad Feature	Tally
Car Parking (mostly lack of)	25
Too many charity shops	16
Lack of choice, particularly for clothes	12
Empty shops and pubs	5
Unkempt image	4
Council	3
Traffic wardens	2
Expensive Business Rates	1
Distance of Post Office from Town Centre	1
Access to Town Centre	1
Declining market	1
Pedestrianisation of Derby Street	1
Town Centre management	1
Lack of interesting independent shops	1
Lack of support for small businesses	1
Lack of secure bike stores	1
Non-retail taking prime positions	1

Bad Feature	Tally
None	1
Too many independent shops	1
Impact of supermarkets	1
Lack of bus routes to Town Centre	1
Total	81

Source: BE Group, 2009

Trade

- 3.51 Businesses were asked how trade has changed in the last five years, and also in the last year, to try and understand the impact of the recession. Table 18 summarises the responses.

Table 18 – Business Trade

Business Trade, percent	Decreased	Increased	Stayed the Same
Last 5 years	48	25	27
In last year	44	28	28

Source: BE Group, 2009

- 3.52 Opinion is divided over how trade has changed in the last five years. Almost half feel trade has decreased, compared to a quarter who report an increase. 27 percent feel it has remained static. Interestingly the figures show a slight improvement during the last 12 months, suggesting the

recession has not affected trade as much as might have been thought.

Footfall

3.53 A higher proportion of businesses view footfall to have decreased in the last five years (54 percent). This reduced slightly for the last year, suggesting there may have been a slight improvement. A fall in footfall was noted more by businesses in the Smithfield Centre, Haywood Street area; Getliffe’s Yard; and the Buttermarket, Market Place, Stanley Street stretching into St Edward Street area (Table 19).

Table 19 – Business Footfall

Business Footfall, percent	Decreased	Increased	Stayed the Same
Last 5 years	54	27	19
In last year	50	24	26

Source: BE Group, 2009

Suggestions to Increase the Number of Shoppers

3.54 By far the most common suggestion to increase the number of shoppers is to improve Town Centre car parking provision. Whilst most commented on the perceive lack of car parking, others feel the existing car parking is poorly advertised;

signage is poor; more should be provided at the market; some should be free of charge, and that a multi-storey car park should be built.

3.55 Other frequent suggestions include better promotion of the Town Centre; attracting bigger, well known brands (particularly for clothing); more events and markets. Suggestions are summarised in Table 20.

Table 20 – Suggestions to Increase the Number of Shoppers

Suggestions	Tally
Improve parking (amount, provide free, at market, publicity of it, multi-storey)	26
Advertising of the town centre	12
Attract bigger clothing names	8
Provide more events and markets	7
Attract larger businesses	5
Better access to the town centre	2
Improve traffic congestion	1
Provide a cinema or theatre	1
Improve the market	1
Move the cattle market to Wednesdays	1
Attract higher quality shops	1

Suggestions	Tally
Reduce the number of charity shops	1
Reduce small business rates	1
Encourage better access for motorcycles	1
Attract a McDonalds or KFC	1
Improve maintenance of the town centre	1
Provide information boards/signs for each street	1
Reduced the number of events and street closures	1
Promote the town's history	1
Provide bigger retail outlets	1
Provide more shops for younger people	1
Promote Sunday trading	1
Provide a Park 'n Ride	1
Relocate the Post Office to the town centre	1
Total	78

Source: BE Group, 2009

Suggestions to Improve the Town Centre's Appearance

3.56 A wide range of suggested improvements have been put forward by the survey respondents. Primarily these are around filling empty retail premises, either by attracting new occupiers or finding interim measures e.g. public art. Other common suggestions include providing more flowers and an improved maintenance regime for the Town Centre, in terms of tidiness and cleanliness.

Table 21 – Suggestions to Improve the Town Centre's Appearance

Suggestions	Tally
Fill empty premises/interim measures	11
Provide more flowers	7
Better maintain the town	6
Work with businesses to improve shop fronts	3
Provide better signage and information	3
Improve the Smithfield Centre	3
Support café culture e.g. wider pavements	2
Reduce number of charity shops	2
Reduce retail rents	1
Hold the farmers' market once a month	1
Improve the bus station	1
Demolish the Smithfield Centre	1
Improve the approaches/gateways to the town centre	1
Provide water displays	1
Increase pedestrianised areas	1
Improve seating	1
Total	45

Source: BE Group, 2009

Impact of Out of Town Supermarkets

3.57 In view of the emerging proposals at Churnet Works, businesses were asked to comment on their views about the impact of out of town supermarkets upon the Town Centre. Business opinion is mixed. 58 percent of those who answered the question were opposed, stating there would be far reaching negative effects on Town Centre retail trade. 28 percent however thought that it could have a positive effect and draw more shoppers into the Town Centre. But this would only be if appropriate links are built with the Town Centre e.g. via a Park 'n Ride or better road routes. The remainder expressed no opinion.

Additional Comments

3.58 Around half the businesses made additional comments. Many reiterated points covered in the preceding paragraphs. Table 22 summarises points not previously mentioned.

Table 22 – Additional Comments

Comments	Tally
Reduce business and waste disposal rates for small businesses	5
No more pedestrainisation	2
Shuttle bus to Town Centre to bring in shoppers	2

Comments	Tally
Leek is about independent retail and not clone town	2
Council assistance to stop shops closing	1
Too many traffic wardens	1
Buxton attracts more visitors	1
The market has declined	1
Leek is drab and unattractive	1
Toilets and planting has improved greatly in the town	1
Market day is not necessarily good for trading	1
Leek should be primarily for visitors	1
Information maps should be provided at key points	1

Source: BE Group, 2009

Leek Town Centre Public Launch

3.59 A public event took place on Wednesday 5th August to launch the Town Centre Masterplan. The aim of this event was to raise awareness and interest in the study. Attendees were invited to complete comments forms to help identify key issues and concerns. The exhibition material was left on display for two weeks at Moorlands House to generate further comments. It was also posted on a dedicated webpage, to allow people to return comment forms by email. This resulted in the receipt of 293 individual comments.

- 3.60 Results are detailed in Appendix 3. A diverse range of comments were received. In order of frequency of mention, these comprise concerns about the Town Centre's retail offer; the provision of an arts centre/cinema/theatre development; access to the Town Centre; the availability of car parking, and the need to protect and enhance the architectural merits of the Town Centre. Other concerns relate to pedestrianisation; the public realm proposals at Market Place; the market; general repair and upkeep; public toilets and visitor attractions. About a quarter of the total comments received are positive about Leek. These refer to its beauty, uniqueness, heritage and market town feel.
- 3.61 During the baseline research it was established that Leek is now included in the AWM and Skillsmart Retail (the Skills Sector Council for Retail) programme covering 15 West Midlands market towns. This is a programme supporting independent retailers to tackle the recession. Skillsmart Retail's Location Model will start to address problems of poor individual skills; identify the collective retail offer; benchmark Leek against other towns. Issues identified through the process will be followed up by Business Link West Midlands with a series of bespoke workshops.

Summary

- 3.62 An up to date picture has been produced of non-residential ground floor uses within the Town Centre study area. This provides the baseline in terms of uses and occupancy levels. There is a high incidence of independent retailers. Only 20 percent are national multiples, compared to the UK Town Centres average of 34 percent.
- 3.63 The primary retail area is focused on Derby Street. This reflects in the fact there are no vacant retail units, despite the national economic situation.
- 3.64 Leek Town Centre is Staffordshire Moorlands' primary retail destination. Leek has a role as an administrative, service and visitor centre, as well as that of a market town providing shopping for the town and its rural environs. Yet despite its attraction, and desire to be a visitor destination, the retail offer is restricted at weekends. Only 10 percent of the retailers responding to the business survey open on Sunday.
- 3.65 Although the greater share of businesses consider trade has fallen over the last five years, one in four report there has been growth. And the latter figure increases when only the last year is considered. Twice as many businesses state

there has been a drop in footfall, compared to those who consider it has increased. Figures for the past year are more positive than for the last five years.

3.66 Although the Town Centre study area as a whole has a retail vacancy rate of over 14 percent, within the core town centre retail area the rate is only 6.5 percent. This represents a figure half that of the UK Town Centres current average – suggesting Leek is withstanding the challenges of the economic recession upon its retail offer.

3.67 Buxton, Ashbourne and Macclesfield are considered to be Leek's main competition, in terms of their quantity and quality of product offer. Stoke on Trent also captures some comparison goods spend, particularly, clothes, fashion and footwear. Nevertheless Leek is positioned at 405th in the latest ranking of UK Town Centres, placing it above both Buxton and Ashbourne.

3.68 The emerging proposals by Sainsbury's at Churnet Works are seen by almost 60 percent of the retailers responding to the baseline questionnaire as a threat to the Town Centre. This is because of the distance and topography which will mitigate against linked trips. Evidential support for this argument is

provided by the fact the existing Morrison's supermarket generates only 12 percent linked trips to the Town Centre.

3.69 Public observations collated from the baseline launch exhibition suggest the key issues surround the Town Centre retail offer; the lack of a Community/Arts Centre; access to the Town Centre and car parking provision.

4.0 LOCAL PROPERTY MARKET

Introduction

4.1 This section considers the following additional property market sectors, in terms of Leek's Town Centre:

- Office
- Leisure
- Public/Community
- Residential

It also addresses key property ownerships and development opportunities.

Office Sector

Supply

4.2 Most of the study area office supply is focused on converted Victorian mills, rather than first floor/above shop premises or purpose built accommodation. The majority of the current supply is provided by Amos Group Ltd. Key properties include Newspaper House (Brook Street), Cross Street Mill, Portland Mill and Eaton House.

4.3 These buildings provide a range of offices in terms of quality and size at rents equating to up to £6 per sqft. Much of the available supply represents small office space of less than 160sqm. Details of current space available are provided in Table 23.

Table 23 – Office Properties To Let

Address	Rent (per sqm)/Sale Price	Lease Terms	Size (sqm)	Comments
Suite F1a, 1 st Floor, Newspaper House, Brook Street	£60	Leasehold	60	A retail unit (Bedz Bedzz and Beyond) lies on the ground floor.
Suite F1b, 1 st Floor, Newspaper House, Brook Street	£58	Leasehold	100	The first floor office suites are available. The second floor is fully tenanted (2 x 80 sqm).
Ground Floor, Newspaper House, Joliffe Street	£59	Leasehold	156	There have been some enquiries mainly from local businesses.
Ground Floor, Newspaper House, Joliffe Street	£59	Leasehold	156	For the section of the

Address	Rent (per sqm)/Sale Price	Lease Terms	Size (sqm)	Comments
Ground Floor, Newspaper House, Joliffe Street	£59	Leasehold	156	building accessed by Joliffe Street there have been some enquiries from local businesses – more interest in the individual floor basis than as a whole.
Portland Mill, Portland Street	£27	Leasehold	Up to 4647	The mill is very old and the cost of sub-dividing into various sizes varies. The size range available depends on tenant requirements
Cross Street Mill				Requested data still not supplied

Source: BE Group, 2009

Demand

4.4 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and Leek United

Building Society both occupy administrative office space in the Town Centre. Britannia Building Society house some 1500 people in their out-of-town office campus. Consultations with local property agents indicate that there is no significant demand for offices in Leek Town Centre. It is felt there may be some demand for a limited number of smaller offices to meet the needs of local micro businesses: primarily start-ups looking for serviced space of approximately 27 sqm.

4.5 There appears to be no demand for industrial/workshops premises within the study area because of the close proximity of Barnfields Road Industrial Estate, approximately one mile outside the Town Centre.

4.6 The district-wide Employment Land Study (2006) provides additional commentary on demand. It notes the office market is dominated mainly by professional firms. Offices range from 50 to 200 sqm, achieving rents of approximately £5/sqft. There are no new build office developments in the district. For new offices rents of £10-12/sqft would be expected.

4.7 The importance of Leek as an employment centre is recognized in the LDF Core Strategy Submission Document. This sees almost one third of the district-wide additional

employment land requirement (equating to 7.2 ha) being provided in Leek.

- 4.8 Research has established little evidence of recent transactions relating to the Town Centre's office market. In the last five years two deals are noted, though both relate to the same Derby Street property, which was bought then resold a year later.

Leisure Sector

- 4.9 The nearest cinemas are in and around Stoke-on-Trent. The firm 'Staffordshire Reels on Wheels' (based at Blythe Bridge) provides mobile screenings at local venues across the county.
- 4.10 Rudyard Lake is a popular nearby tourist attraction offering walking, boating, sailing and fishing. It is located just three miles north west of Leek and is also home to the Rudyard Lake Steam Railway. Other nearby attractions are:
- Alton Towers
 - The Peak District National Park
 - The Churnet Valley Railway
 - The Leek Arts Festival in May every year
 - Blackbrook Zoo, located six miles south east of Leek.

- 4.11 The James Brindley Mill and Museum is located north west of the study area boundary on Mill Street. The museum operates a restored water-powered corn-mill built by James Brindley and has a section dedicated to Brindley's life and achievements.

- 4.12 Across the town centre there appears to be a number of shops that are targeted, at least partially, to the visitor/tourist market. Most are located in around Market Place and include:
- Pronto Delicatessen, Sheep Market
 - White Heart Tea Rooms, Stockwell Street
 - Mr Simms Olde Sweet Shoppe, Derby Street
 - Garden Gate Tea Rooms, south of Stanley Street (Pickwood Area)
 - Tourist Information Centre
 - Various antiques shops and trade warehouses.

- 4.13 These are primarily daytime attractions. Leek's evening economy is limited to pubs, takeaways and one club – Metropolis on Russell Street. Ari's cellar bar opened at the start of 2009 to replace the former sports bar of JD's. It holds entertainment evenings such as Leek Soul Bar – Motown & Soul Club Classics.

4.14 There are five hotels within, or immediately adjacent, to the study area. These are The Green Man; The Hatcheries; Curshaws; Peak Weavers and The White Hart. All are small, collectively totalling only 30 bedrooms. The largest, The Green Man, has only eight rooms. The Three Horses Inn and Country Hotel, located three miles north east towards Buxton, has 26 rooms and is the only medium sized hotel in the area. As noted in the Staffordshire Moorlands Hotel Market Review (2006) this is a surprisingly low level of provision for the district's principal town.

4.15 Nevertheless the Hotel Market Review states that other than an obvious undersupply of accommodation for local companies there is little additional demand for accommodation, except perhaps during the main summer period. It suggests building of Leek's brand and reputation as a visitor destination, which could lead to justification of a high standard 3 star hotel offering function rooms and restaurant facilities.

4.16 Outside the town, by far the largest local attraction is Alton Towers, located approximately 12 miles to the east. In addition to being an established theme park, the resort offers

a water park, a spa, two hotels (The Alton Towers Hotel and Splash Landings), with a third hotel planned. Recent developments include a new sea life aquarium. The resort attracted 2.4 million visitors in 2005 and employs 2900 people.

4.17 The vacant Talbot Hotel is included within one of the study area's identified Opportunity Sites. Its reuse could enhance hotel accommodation in the town. It is of an appropriate size to house a restaurant or bar/restaurant facility. Ego Restaurants and Wetherspoon's both have requirements for the town, along with a number of other leisure operators.

Public/Community Sector

4.18 Whilst Leek has a number of community facilities, there are key ones located outside the Town Centre. These include Brough Park Leisure Centre, located off Ball Haye Road, and Leek Moorlands Hospital. The leisure centre includes swimming and teaching pools; gym; sports hall; a mix of indoor and outdoor sports facilities; café bar and crèche.

4.19 Within the Town Centre study area facilities include the Nicholson Institute Library; Millward Hall Youth Centre; Britannia Sports and Social Club and Central Club.

4.20 Other public buildings include Leek College (Stockwell Street); offices for the Staffordshire Social Services (Leek Area Office); Bank House Community Centre and the Citizens Advice Bureau. The Fire Station is located on Springfield Road and the Police Station on Fountain Street. In addition to the Hospital, there is Leek Health Centre on Fountain Street and Moorlands Medical Centre on Regent Street.

Other Activities

4.21 Leek is also benefiting from the Better Welcome Programme. The programme is aimed at assisting market towns in the West Midlands by helping to improve their tourism offer and encouraging local people and other town interest groups to play an active role in the future success of their area. Aspects of the Better Welcome Programme include new street signage; tourist information boards and new 'welcome' signs to be installed at gateway locations.

Residential Sector

4.22 Living above shops is not a significant element of Leek's residential market. Only 22 retail properties include a flat above (EGi 2005 Rating List, 2009). All streets in the study

area contain some residential accommodation, apart from Church Street and Silk Street.

4.23 Housing mainly consists of terraced housing, although there are significant areas of semi-detached properties on Eversley Avenue and Salisbury Street. There are also some large detached properties along Rose Bank Street. There are no new residential developments within the town centre.

4.24 There are planning applications with consent for residential development at two locations in the town: The Talbot Hotel (consent for 14 apartments); and consent for the conversion of a Russell Street property into four town houses.

4.25 Leek residential values are generally in line with the Staffordshire values however, averages are slightly below Cheadle and notably below regional levels. House prices are illustrated in Table 24. It should be noted that prices were obtained by a postcode search, and it may be these postcodes will not exactly match to the Town Centre study area defined for the masterplan process.

Table 24 – Average Residential Values (April – June 2009)

Location	Flats	Terrace	Semi-Detached	Detached
Leek Town Centre (postcode ST13)	No sales	£91,647	£125,089	£212,714
Cheadle Town Centre (postcode ST10)	No sales	£99,250	£137,770	£224,577
Staffordshire	£91,171	£94,161	£125,858	£220,855
West Midlands Region	£109,287	£117,348	£142,886	£246,328

Source: HM Land Registry, 2009, via postcode searches

- 4.26 The LDF Core Strategy Background Report (2008) notes Leek has seen an average of 63 dwellings completed annually over a 12 years period. These have included large sites at Pickwood Vale and Ashenhurst Way as well as the redevelopment of several mills and the former Grand Cinema site. The report noted commitments of over 600 dwellings – 60 percent of which were already under construction.
- 4.27 The Core Strategy Submission Document (2009) identifies 30 percent of the district's total housing allocations for 2006-2026 for Leek. This translates to an annualized development rate of 90 dwellings – almost 50 percent higher than has been achieved in the last 12 years. Of the 1800 dwellings total, the

amount to be allocated on new sites is 1045. 25 percent of the total figure is targeted as affordable housing.

Summary

- 4.28 The Town Centre has only limited demand for office accommodation, despite its administrative centre status for the district. Demand, reflecting Leek's comparatively small market town status, relates to public sector and private sector financial and professional services provision. Supply is dominated by converted industrial mills accommodation. There has not been any modern speculatively constructed office space.
- 4.29 Whilst there are some leisure facilities within or adjacent to the Town Centre, there is widespread recognition of the need to connect the town's visitor attraction appeal to an improved evening economy offer. There is strong public demand for provision of a new Community/Arts Centre facility to be located in the Town Centre.
- 4.30 For the principal town in Staffordshire Moorlands there is very limited hotel provision within or adjacent to the Town Centre. Only 30 rooms spread across five establishments. Yet the Hotel Market study (2006) suggests Leek will need to build its

brand and visitor experience reputation before it would be realistic to seek to attract a new hotel facility.

- 4.31 The Town Centre study area includes areas of residential property, mostly in the form of terraced or semi-detached housing. Residential property prices are below both county and regional averages. Brownfield site development opportunities are constrained, especially as there appears to be no market for apartments (which could be delivered by the redundant or underutilized mills). The LDF Core Strategy proposes 1800 new homes to be developed by 2026, in Leek, of which 755 are to be on brownfield land.

5.0 TOWNSCAPE

5.1 A site survey of the Leek Town Centre study area was undertaken by Taylor Young's urban design team during July. The analysis covers the built form, fabric and public realm. Particular reference is made to urban design, streetscape, open space and pedestrian movement.

Figure Ground and Historical Development

5.2 The Town Centre figure ground study (Figure 5.1) illustrates built form, open areas and urban corridors in order to give an understanding of positive and negative space. Comparison of the present day figure ground with associated historic plans for 1899 and 1938 (Figures 5.2-5.3) demonstrates the extent to which the Town Centre has changed, especially along the Brook Street/Haywood Street corridor and police station area.

5.3 Built form in the historic core area, between Stockwell Street and Derby Street and through the St Edward Street corridor remains relatively intact with the Market Place acting as a consistent local focal point.

Figure 5.1 – Figure Ground

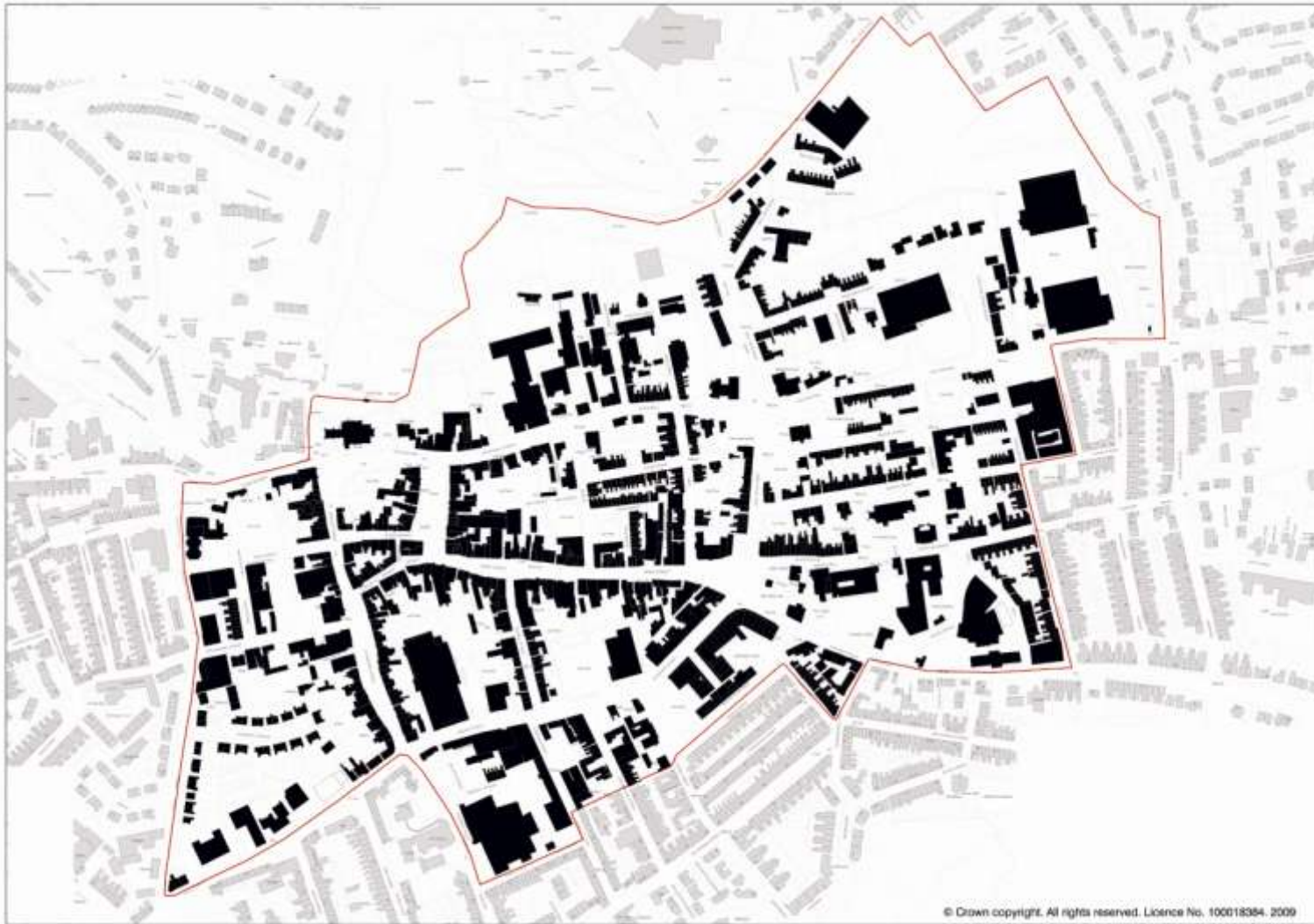
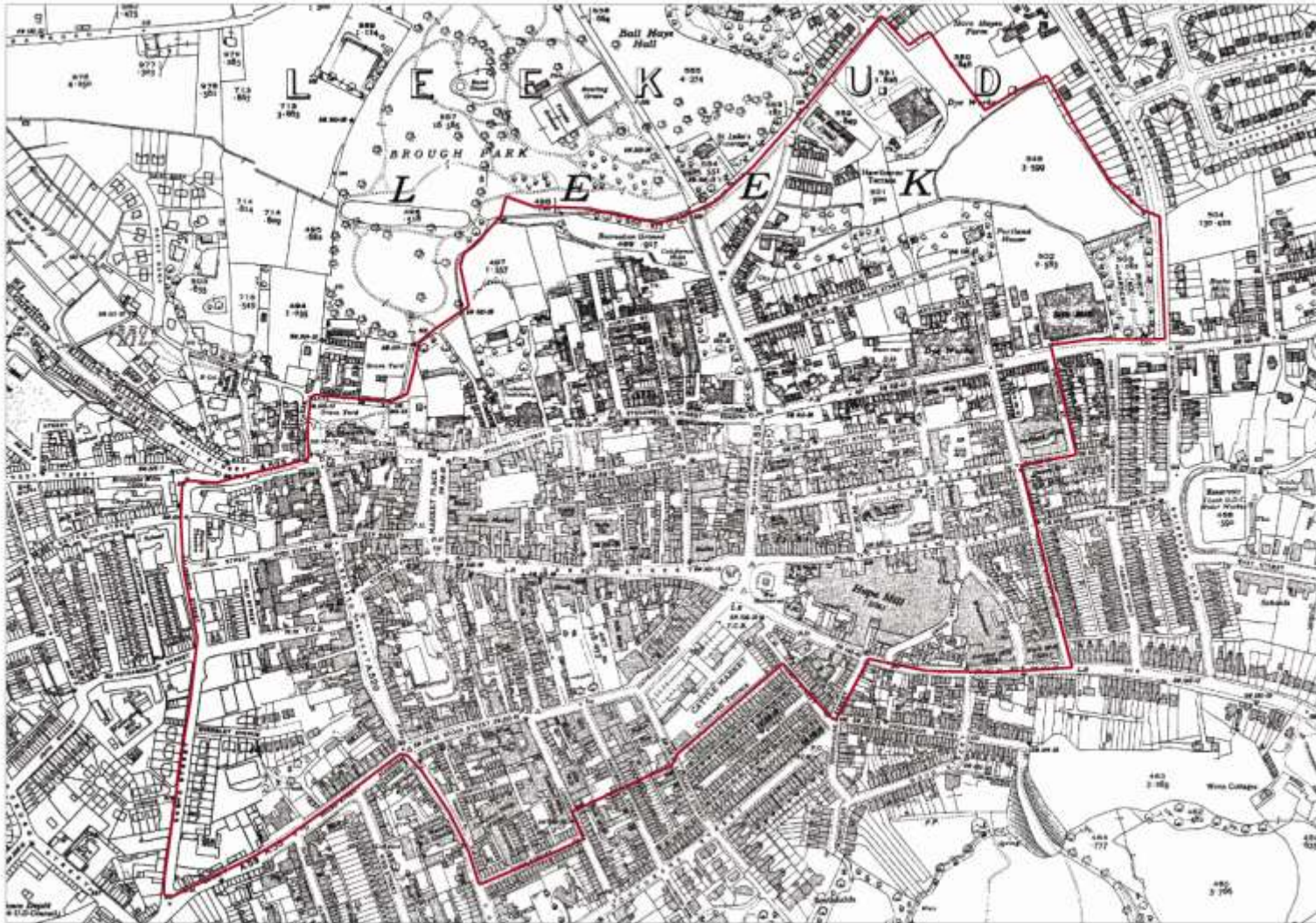


Figure 5.2 – 1899 Historical Map



Figure 5.3 – 1938 Historical Map



Character Areas

5.4 The townscape assessment has identified nine character areas within the Town Centre study area boundaries.

Western Fringe – This is a peripheral area, behind the St Edward Street frontage and has the feel of an edge of centre area. There is a mix of uses here. This is outside the Conservation Area and there are few buildings of merit. The area also lacks strong local character.

Historic Core – This is the heart of the Town Centre and its medieval core. Strong local character is derived from the Market Place/St Edward Street, the wealth of historic buildings and medieval street pattern. This area is also the retail core, although there are no large retail units or anchor stores.

Stockwell Street Area – This is an attractive area with many fine buildings and strong local character. Historically outside the Town Centre many of the buildings have institutional, office or residential uses, giving the area an edge-of-centre feel. Steep topography also provides strong local character here.

Northern Fringe – This is a back land area, often difficult to access and largely hidden from the rest of the study area. Its

uses are residential and employment, with a large area of unused space and steep topography.

Buxton Road Gateway – The approach from Buxton Road is marked by large buildings providing large format uses that cannot be provided in the Town Centre core. Many of these are converted from previous uses. There are a number of attractive buildings. Uses are generally retail and employment.

St Lukes – this area, named after the church within it, is residential in nature and has the feel of a distinct neighbourhood. It has a strong historic character with a terraced street form.

Ashbourne Road Gateway – The approach on Ashbourne Road is defined by the large historic mills interspersed with more contemporary buildings. The area has a steep change in level and also includes the police station and other land that lies at the edge of the St Lukes area.

Nicholson War Memorial – The large and impressive War Memorial defines this area. Surrounding uses are varied but are generally secondary retail. In many ways this area forms a secondary town centre core.

Brook Street Area – This lacks cohesiveness and strong character. There are a number of large format buildings and a mix of uses that includes employment, large format retail and

residential. This is outside the Conservation Area and its historic character has been compromised.

Figure 5.4 sets out the boundaries of the character zones.

Figure 5.4 – Character Areas



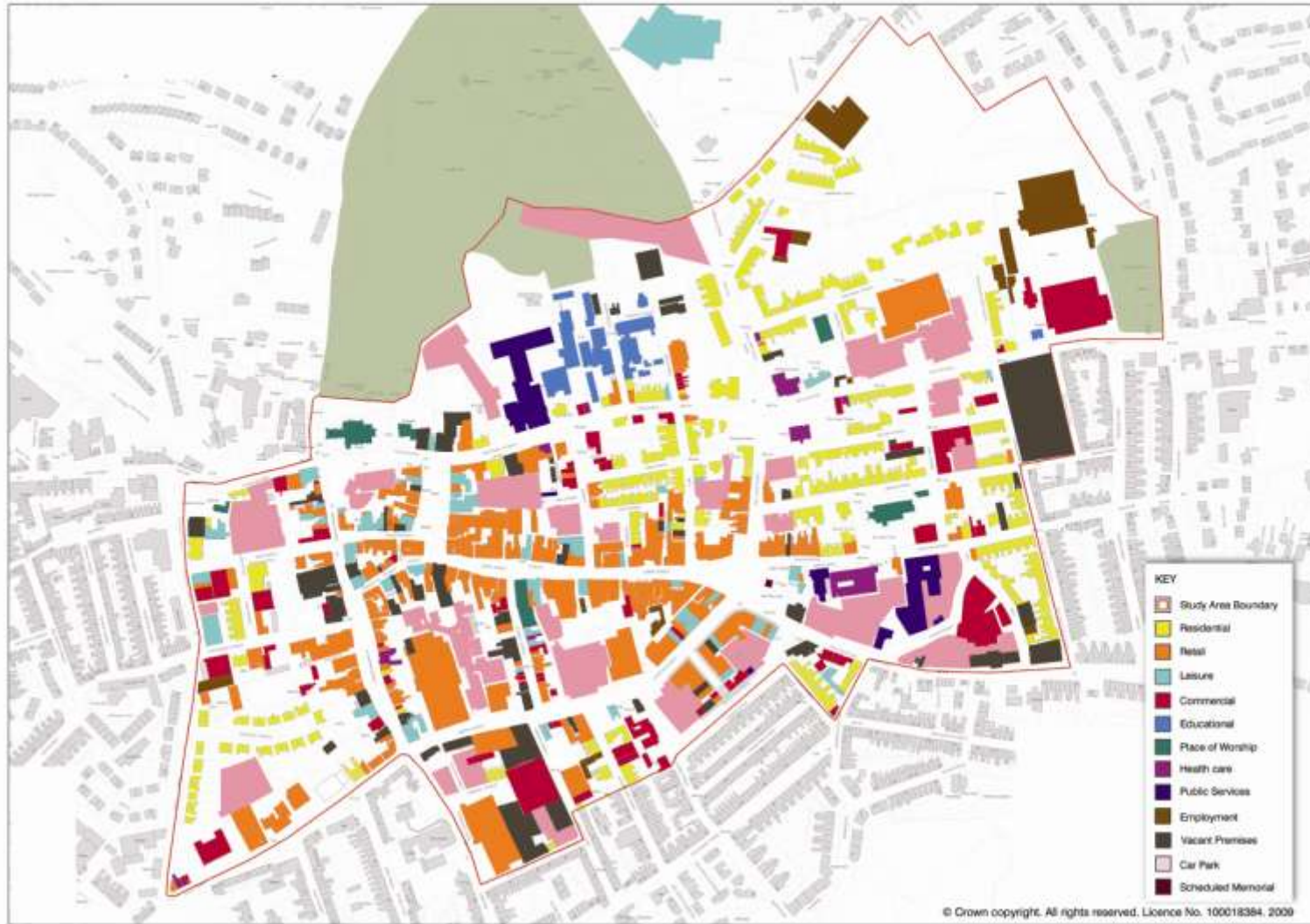
Land Uses

- 5.5 Leek is an attractive market town that was historically dominated by industrial mill buildings (Compton/London Mill, Silk Mill on the now Aldi site, Silk Mill at the now Police Station location) alongside workers housing, administrative functions and shopping. In the last 50 years or so, the housing and industrial uses have diminished making way for retailing, commerce and administrative uses that now dominate the Town Centre. Large format retail uses (The Co-op, Wilkinson, Aldi, etc.) and associated surface parking have also tended to shift some of the retail focus away from the historic core areas of Market Place and Derby Street.
- 5.6 Retail and commercial uses are clustered around Derby Street and its surroundings with a heart that is focused on the Market Place. This is widely recognised as the town's best set piece. Derby Street remains the main high street destination, but lacks major retail anchors.
- 5.7 Stockwell Street to the north has a relatively well defined street form, green character (within site plots) and some strong architectural set pieces, i.e. the Nicholson Library within Leek College. The mixture of uses including small scale offices, professional services, residential, education and

public services provides a diversity of form that is welcome. Further east uses become more residential, with a distinct and well-defined neighbourhood around Earl Street and Portland Street. There are a number of mill buildings within this neighbourhood providing a strong sense of place, one of which has been successfully converted to residential. Buxton Road is defined by larger scale uses including the Co-op supermarket and Eaton House office building.

- 5.8 Car parking is also a dominant land use across the whole of Leek Town Centre with the number and disposition of car parks tending to have a negative impact on the spatial character. This is demonstrated on Figure 5.5 Land Uses, which also provides a review of the planning uses for non-residential premises within the Town Centre study area.

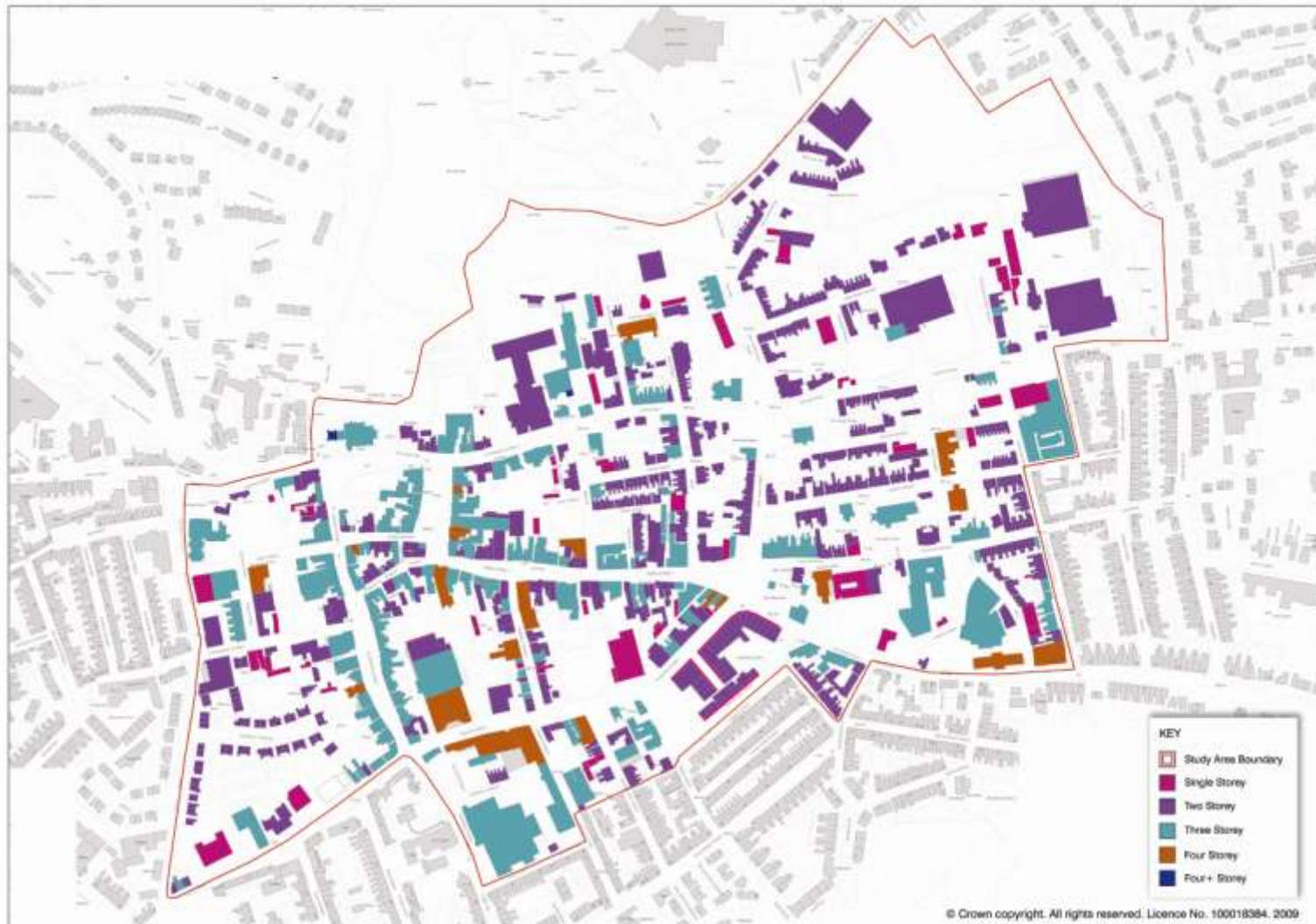
Figure 5.5 – Land Uses



Building Heights

- 5.9 Variation in building heights across the whole of Leek Town Centre achieves a diverse skyline with strong character and sense of place. The majority of buildings tend to be two or three storeys. There are a small number of single and four storey buildings, the latter taking advantage of the large change in level across a number of sites. An exception to this appealing variation is the large format retail building on Brook Street (Pickwood Road Site) that tends to dominate the immediate environment. Figure 5.6 sets out the building heights assessment in plan form.

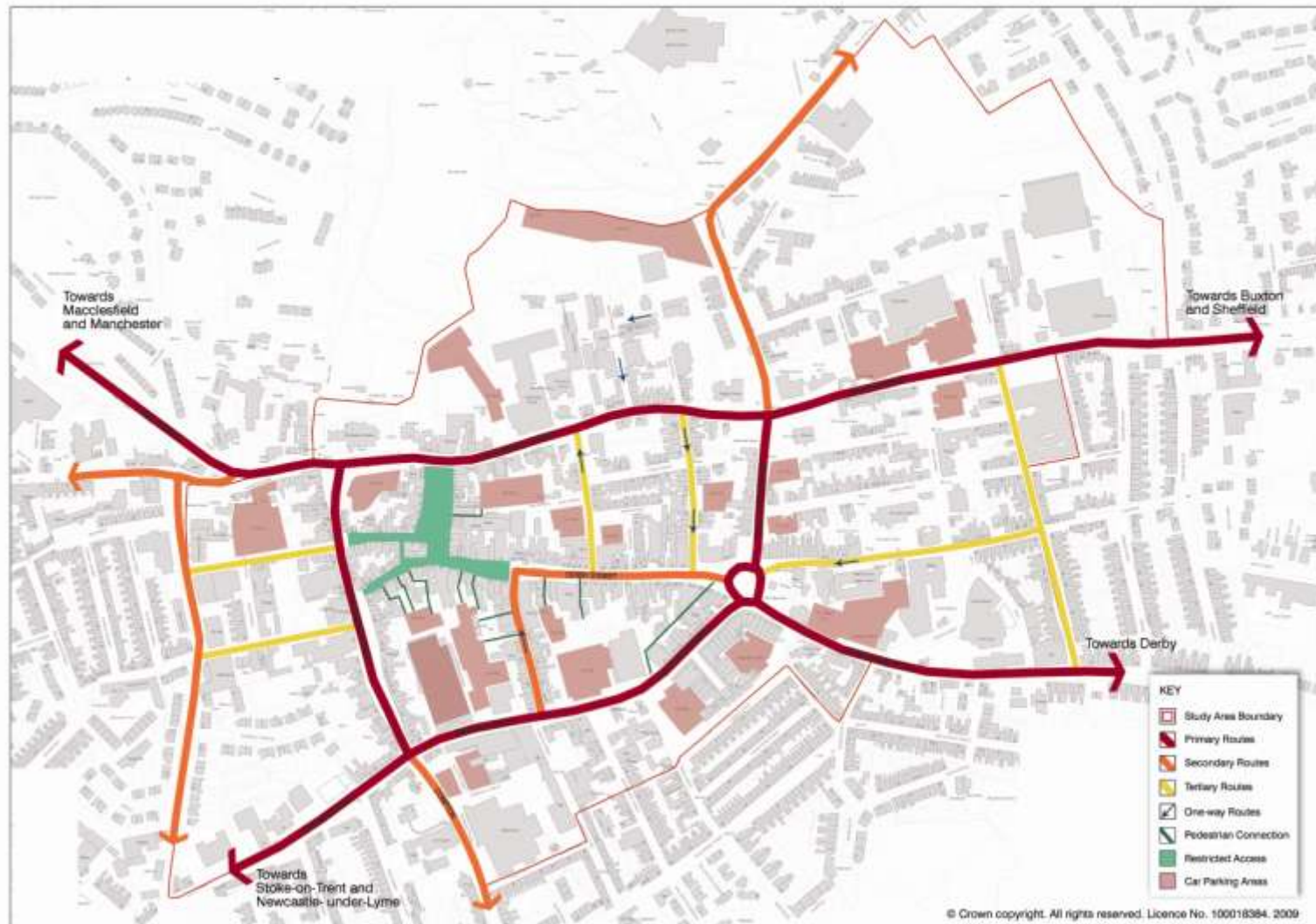
Figure 5.6 – Building Heights



Movement and Linkages

- 5.10 Examination of the principal movement network in Leek Town Centre illustrates a ring network comprising Stockwell Street to the north, Brook Street/ Haywood Street to the south, Ball Haye Street to the east and St Edward Street to the west (Figure 5.7). This network both constrains and influences use and perception of the Town Centre. Increasing volumes of movement along these routes inevitably impacts on the environment creating in some places a poor pedestrian experience and issues associated with severance between different areas.
- 5.11 Restricted access has been introduced in the areas around Market Place and Derby Street. However the distinction between pedestrian and vehicular usage is confused resulting in movement conflicts. A series of narrow pedestrian connections exist between these areas and the principal routes. These are generally historic routes that are not overlooked and can tend to be intimidating.

Figure 5.7 – Movement and Linkages



Topography

- 5.12 Throughout the Town Centre topography is a major factor, determining local character, street form, views and dominant sites. The majority of the Town Centre core sits on a plateau with surrounding areas falling away from this point. The large changes in level in the Town Centre can be most clearly seen along Brook Street. This forms the bottom of a distinct valley, particularly at the intersection with Compton and St Edward Street where both rise dramatically from this junction.
- 5.13 A further 'valley' exists to the north of the Town Centre beyond building plots along the Stockwell Street corridor. The valley defines the southern edge of Brough Park and has a tendency to discourage connection with the Town Centre.
- 5.14 The topography is shown in Figure 5.8.

Figure 5.8 – Topography



Townscape

- 5.15 Leek Town Centre has a significant number of townscape assets and a strong historic core that have a propensity to work in isolation of one another. This is somewhat as a result of the influence of topography described previously but also a consequence of a lack of coherent signage and orientation. The townscape is illustrated in Figure 5.9.
- 5.16 St Edward Street is a major thoroughfare with a strong local character and a rich mix of uses. At its northern end St Edward's Church marks a strong gateway to the Town Centre. The southern end has strong scale and form with a semi-developed niche retail quarter focusing on antiques and a further distinction in the form of St Mary's Church that creates a dominant closure to surrounding views. A second retail heart is formed around the Derby Street / Fountain Street roundabout. This is marked by a more contemporary retail parade that also includes the bus station backing onto an attractive residential frontage. The area includes a major gateway, centred on the iconic Nicholson War Memorial defined by a number of quality surrounding buildings but lacking in clear definition principally as a result of the overbearing influence of the highway. To the southern edge of the Town Centre, large format uses (Wilkinson/ Aldi/ Topps Tiles) and the poor definition to the street creates an expansive, poorly enclosed area that lacks character and provides a poor pedestrian environment.
- 5.17 The number of high quality listed and significant buildings that are distributed throughout the Town Centre will inevitably have an influence over future plans. Their contribution to the character of Leek must be recognised and enhanced through improved setting wherever possible.
- 5.18 The main shopping area and focus for the Town Centre is Derby Street. Several small alleys and side streets connect Derby Street to large format shopping including the Pickwood Road Area to the south of the high street. Just off Derby Street is the Market Place and associated historic market buildings. The square holds a general market every Wednesday and antiques market on Saturdays. Outside of these times the space is generally used for public parking.
- 5.19 The square is a focal point and key destination in the Town Centre, its strong historic character plays an important role in the identity of Leek.

- 5.20 Traffic is restricted along Derby Street; limited access is achieved from Russell Street, therefore Derby Street has a semi-pedestrianised quality. The pedestrian environment is nevertheless relatively confused as a result of potential conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians.
- 5.21 Other public spaces in the Town Centre include the space associated to the Nicholson Memorial and gardens, the Bus Station Square and Getliffes Yard, a small arcade of boutique shops. The War Memorial Square is somewhat segregated from the heart of the town by the Fountain Street and Ashbourne Road, yet it should play a vital role as a focal point for civic activity. The Bus Station Square is a cluttered environment, dominated by a large number of seats and other street furniture. These elements weaken connections between Haywood Street and the Bus Station.
- 5.22 The surrounding areas are generally residential, and include predominantly terraced houses to the south and post war semi-detached property to the north. Though these areas are well within walking distance of the Town Centre the steeply sloping topography and busy main roads may deter many local people from making the journey into the centre on foot.
- 5.23 To the north of the Town Centre lie Leek College and Brough Park. The College is particularly central, less than five minutes from Derby Street and parts of the park are also very close, some less than 100m from the Market Place. Access to the park is poor though, and the barrier created by the busy Stockwell Street reinforces the severance.
- 5.24 The main distributor roads into the town are Mill Street, Buxton Road, Board Street and Ashbourne Road. The most heavily trafficked roads around the town, Brook/Haywood Street, St Edward Street and Stockwell Street, are connected to these regional distributors.
- 5.25 St Edward Street provides another cluster of retail in the town, but the area feels separated from Derby Street and the Market Place and is a less attractive environment for shoppers as its character is heavily defined by a busy road.
- 5.26 There is little by way of announcement of the Town Centre when approaching by road. Visual connections to Derby Street are limited, though the memorial provides a good reference point. The main Town Centre roads offer little to create a positive experience, large buildings with passive

frontages and open areas of car parking on St Edward Street and Brook Street create nondescript approaches.

5.27 Figure 5.10 illustrates the key features of the public realm.

5.28 The summary of the public realm assessment is:

- The important public spaces in the Town Centre, the Market Place, War Memorial Square and Brough Park are affected by roads, creating severance issues and diminishing the quality of the spaces
- Derby Street requires some upgrading but is a relatively comfortable area for shoppers, however connections to the important retail area at Pickwood Road are poor
- The main roads through the Town Centre including Brook/Haywood Street, St Edward Street and Stockwell Street are heavily dominated by traffic, poor overlooking, relatively narrow pavements and high degrees of enclosure created by large buildings, can make an unpleasant place for pedestrians
- Street trees and other green infrastructure will help to enhance, soften and define certain public spaces in the Town Centre

- The topography of the Town creates changes in level which may deter local people from walking to and from the Centre
- Connections to the public parking areas are poor and may become no-go areas in the evening.

Figure 5.9 – Townscape

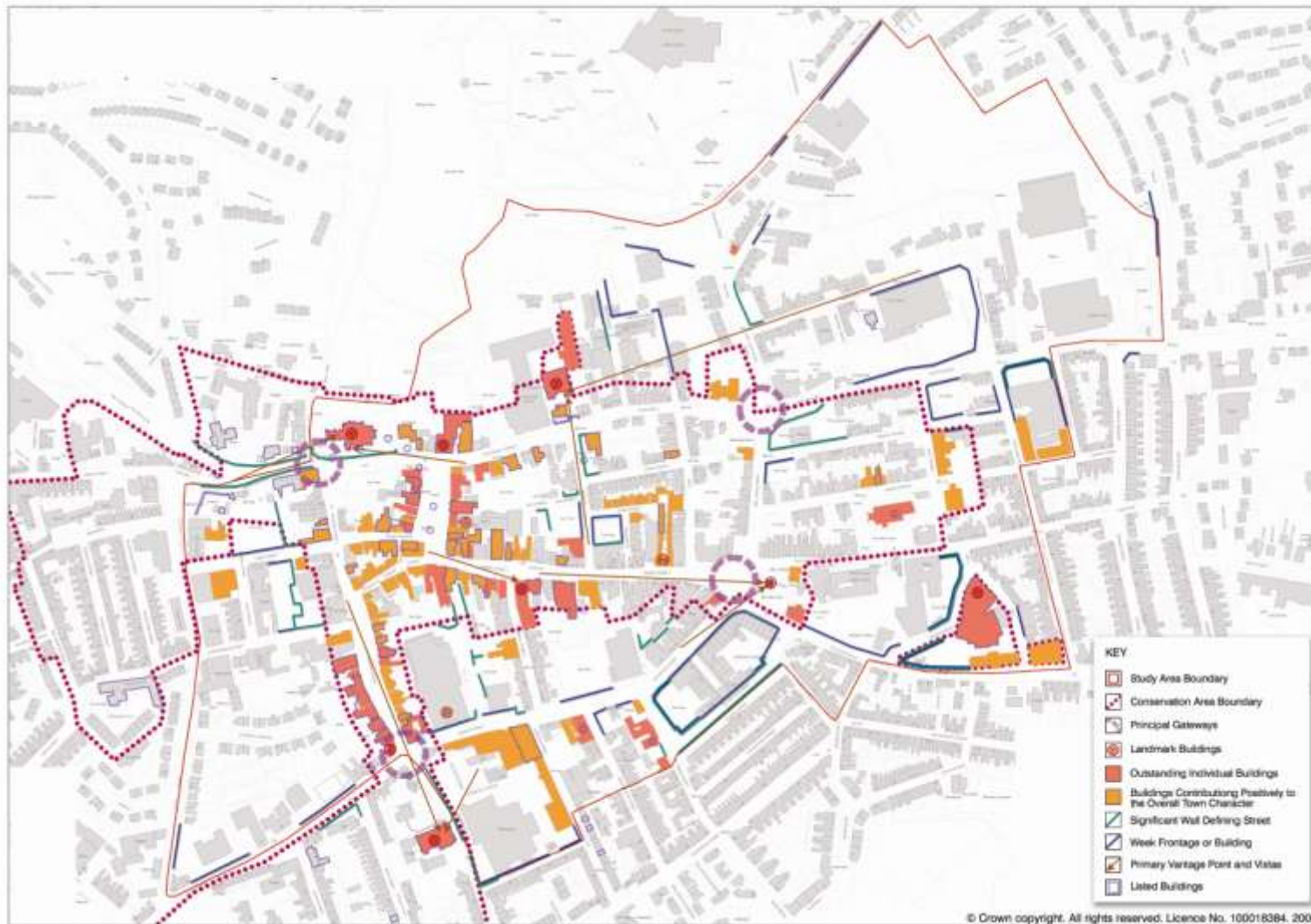


Figure 5.10 – Public Realm

Key features in the public realm

1 Clock tower and gateway

The clock tower is a prominent landmark in the town centre and a good aid to orientation. Roads wrapping around the 'monument' create separation and segregate this civic area from the high street and other prominent public spaces.

2 Bus station and station square

The transport hub is located to the rear of a small shopping square which has both benefits and drawbacks: the visual and noise issues associated with the station are masked by the buildings however it gives a poor first impression of the town to visitors arriving by bus and maybe difficult to find to those unfamiliar with the town. The present concourse is an uncomfortable environment for waiting particularly in the evening.

The pedestrianised area at the centre of the shopping square is fairly cluttered, the design of the space accommodates a large amount of seating and additional street furniture, the large number of items may have been included to discourage skateboarding or vehicular access.

3 Auld car park

This car park is free for 2 hours to customers. The frontage onto Haywood Street is weak and adds to the fragmented nature of the street with larger units set in open areas of car parking. There is a connection through to Derby Street, this is not well overlooked and may feel unsafe in the evenings.

4 Brook Street/ Haywood Street

This is a fairly unattractive traffic dominated environment. Waiting traffic, narrow pavements poor overlooking and large buildings fronting the street create particularly uncomfortable environment for pedestrians discouraging movement on foot along the street. There are well used connections north from Wilkinson and Auld to Derby Street, however these are not the well lit or overlooked and may become no go areas in the evening.

5 Pickwood Road area and large format shopping experience

There is a considerable change in level across the Wilkinson site this is taken up with a series of steep steps and ramps which create a constrained access point. The retail frontages face into the car park and not the street, which is fronted by a service entrance.

6 Market Square

The market square is a small formal space well connected to the High Street. There is an general market on Wednesdays and Antiques market on Saturday, on other days the space is well used for public parking. There are many attractive buildings fronting the space, the scale and proportion of these relate well.

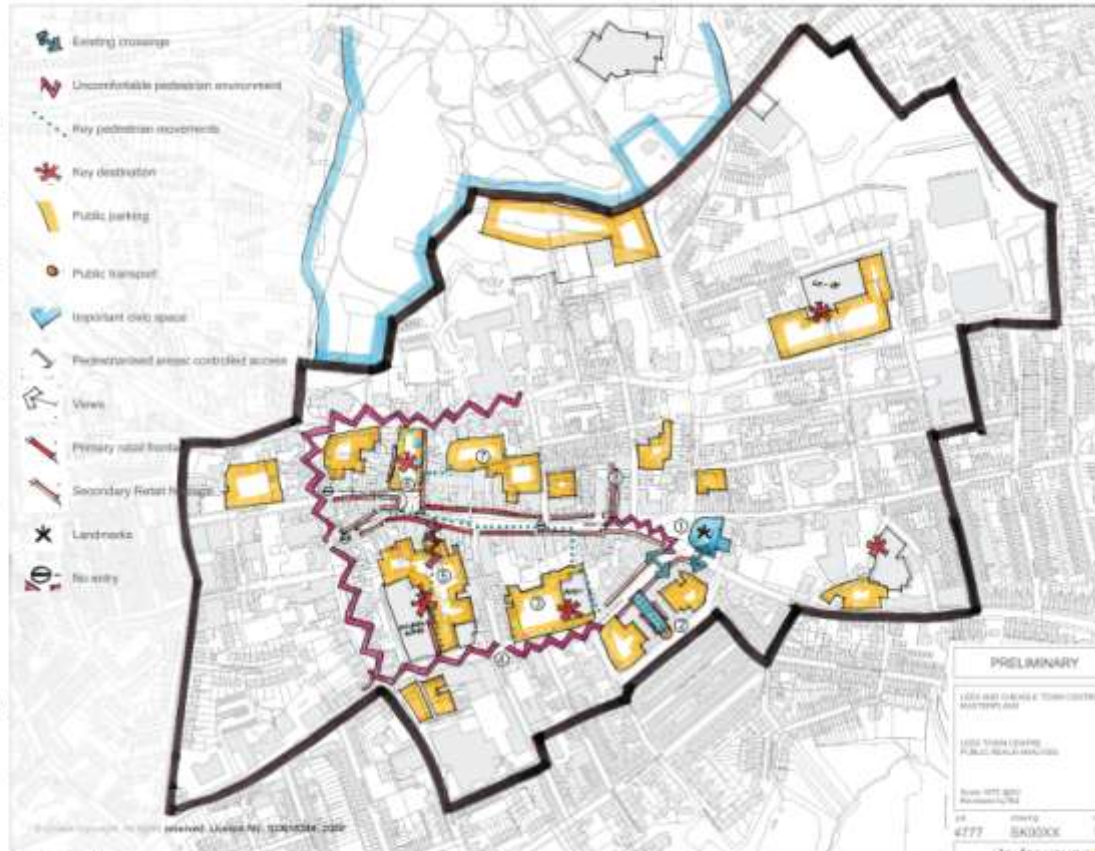
The square is well connected to the wider area; routes past historic butter market and through the Trestle Market connect back to the Silk Street car parks. A pedestrianised section of Derby Street forms one end of the square and brings some additional vitality to the square and acts as over spill for the market. Stockwell Street forms the opposing edge of the square; this is a busy main road and acts as a barrier to pedestrian movement beyond.

7 Silk street car parks and connections to the town centre

These are the largest public car parks in the town. Though the car parks are well located for Derby Street, the quickest routes are through the historic markets surrounding the market square; these routes may not feel safe in the evenings. There are good views across the town and the surrounding areas from these spaces, providing good orientation points.

8 Getliffes Yard

This is an attractive arcade space just off the main high street offering a good environment for the small boutique shops.



9 Derby Street

This is the main shopping street, controlled access creates a semi-pedestrianised zone for shoppers. There are good connectors to the high street from the surrounding car parks and to the other large format shopping in the Pickwood Road Area.

10 Brough Park

This large park is close to the Town Centre but separated from the shopping areas by busy main roads and poorly located access points.

Opportunities and Constraints

5.29 Figure 5.11 sets out analysis of the opportunities and constraints identified from the townscape assessment.

These are described as follows:

- Comprehensive strategy that provides coherence to intervention areas – The diversity of existing townscape within Leek will require a range of different interventions from ‘keyhole surgery’ type improvements to more comprehensive facelifts and re-structuring. Proposed uses will vary according to the wider land-use strategy and site characteristics
- Focused change that recognises the existing grain – The historic core area generally performs well but will benefit from focused interventions, especially public realm improvements to enhance linkages and smooth transition between residential neighbourhoods and the Town Centre
- Improved pedestrian and cycle connections – The traffic ring around the Town Centre acts as major severance for pedestrian/ cyclists. Two of the most important issues are the treatment of the public realm and the Town Centre’s connection with its wider neighbourhood. The streets and squares of a town are the places that shape its character, personality and

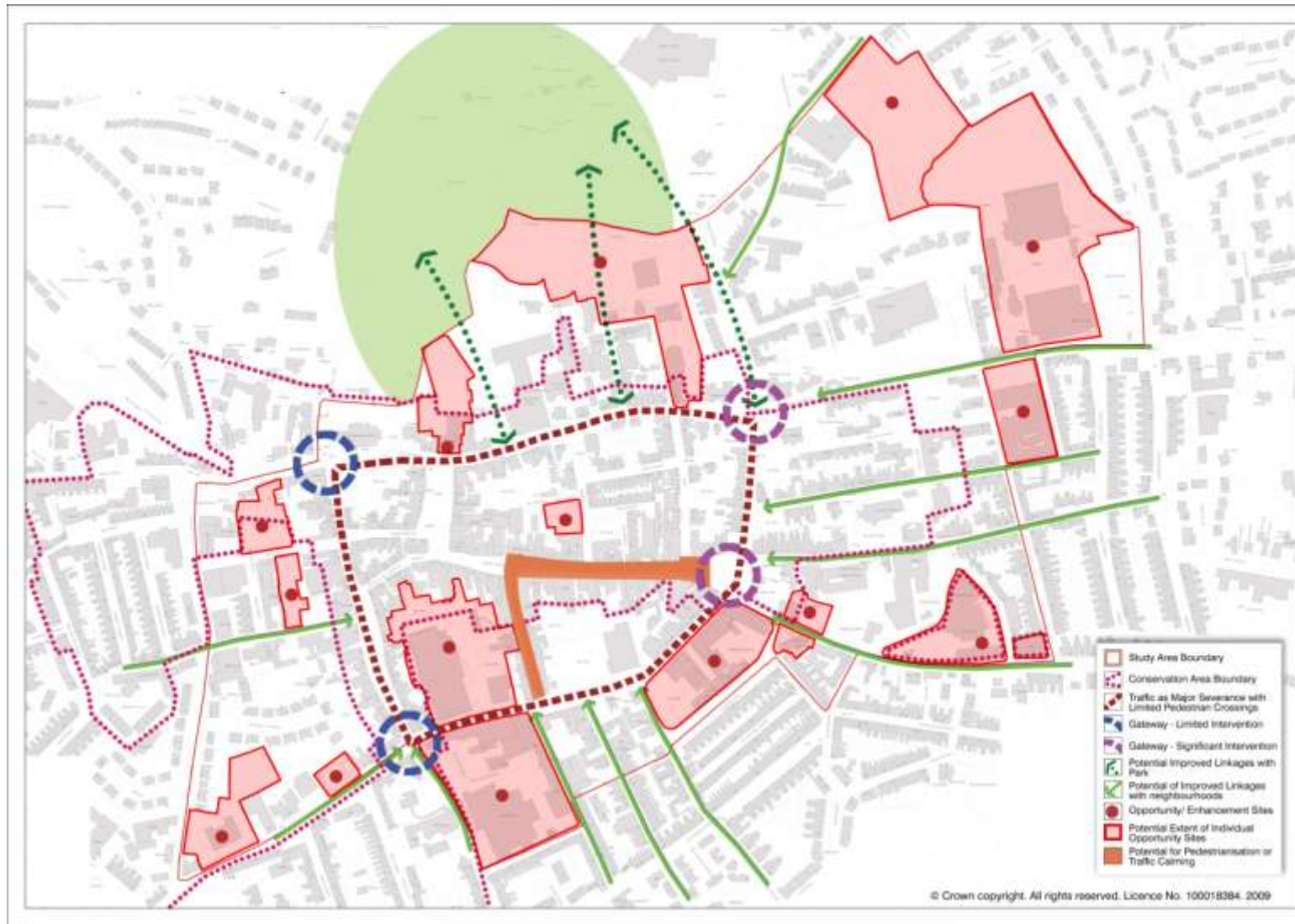
the appearance. Pedestrian connection and improved accessibility will need major intervention to improve linkages with existing neighbourhoods

- Gateway improvements – To be undertaken at each of the four major intersections. This will be as a minimum improved signage and orientation in conjunction with the movement strategy, through to more fundamental changes at the Nicholson War Memorial gateway
- Extended/enhanced pedestrian areas – The existing pedestrian environment centred on Market Place and Derby Street (west) should be enhanced and potentially extended to include Derby Street (east) and Russell Street. This will be undertaken in conjunction with the wider movement strategy
- Introduction of finer grain built form where possible – The finer grain character of the majority of more attractive areas of the Town Centre should be extended through to areas such as the Brook Street corridor in combination with better connections to Derby Street
- Greater distribution/diversity of public transport offer – The relationship of the bus station and how public transport operates across the Town Centre should be

examined in order to deliver people to the correct locations

- Enhanced and new circuits – Created in order to encourage greater exploration of the Town Centre
- Introduction of a greater diversity of uses – Including night time, arts, leisure and offices, all of which could contribute to an increased stay and linked trips to the town
- Creation of green infrastructure – Introduction of green elements within the Town Centre core together with a strategy that links the underutilised asset of Brough Park back into the Town Centre through a combination of development and improved connections.

Figure 5.11 – Opportunities and Constraints Map

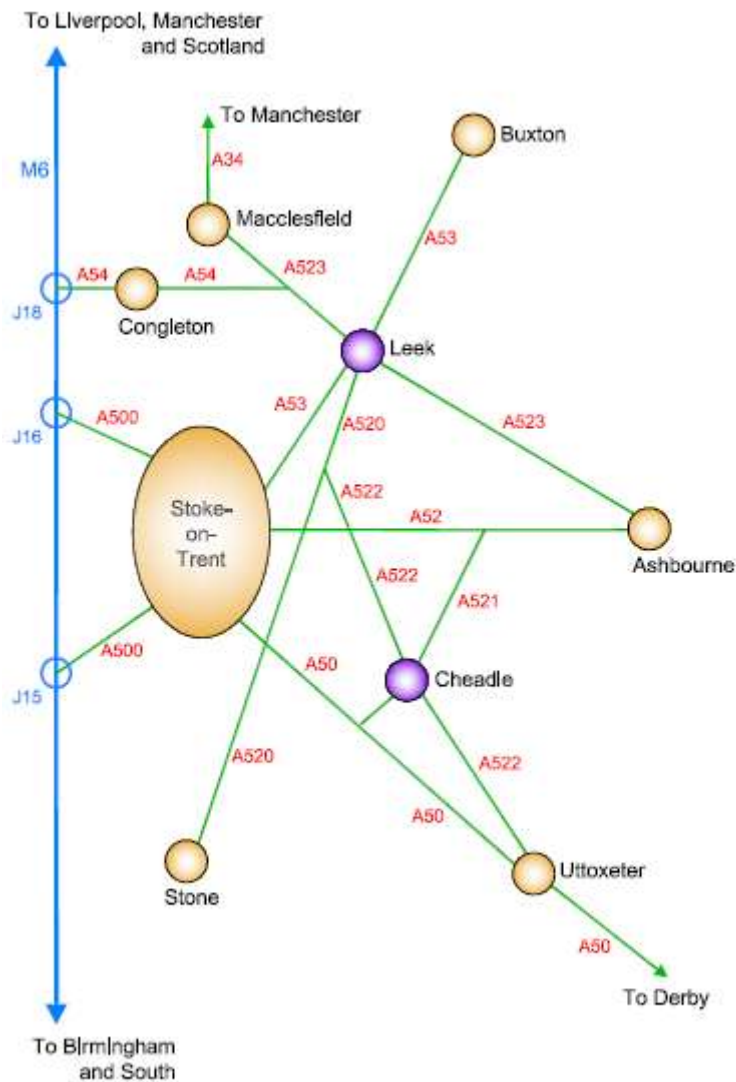


6.0 ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

Strategic Context

- 6.1 Leek is located at the confluence of five primary routes. Despite relatively good levels of accessibility by private car, there is sporadic and irregular public transport provision. Leek is not connected to the national rail network – a notable issue given the town’s size.
- 6.2 Access from the north west is by the A523, connecting with Macclesfield and ultimately Stockport and Manchester. This route continues through the town south-eastwards heading towards Ashbourne before joining the A52 towards Derby. To the north east, the town is served by the A53 primary route which extends northwards towards Buxton. South west of Leek the A53 forms the main route into Stoke-on-Trent and provides the most obvious connection with the motorway network, joining the M6 at junction 15 via the A519. The fifth primary route into Leek, the A520 heads due south from the town and provides a connection with the lesser centres of Cheddleton, Werrington, Blythe Bridge and Stone.
- 6.3 As noted previously, Leek is not situated close to a rail station. An historic rail line from Stoke-on-Trent passes near to the town, however this has been non-operational for some years. To the south of Leek, a branch of the line – the Churnet Valley Railway- is currently used for recreational purposes. Given its lack of connectivity, this has limited functional value.
- 6.4 Geographically, Leek’s closest international airport is Manchester situated some 30 miles to the north, however both Liverpool John Lennon and Nottingham East Midlands airports are within 90 minutes drive being respectively 53 and 50 miles distant.
- 6.5 The strategic context of Leek Town Centre is shown in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 – Strategic Context



Transport Policy Context

6.6 A number of key policy and strategy documents at a regional, sub-regional and local level have potential implications for transport in the Leek area.

Staffordshire Local Transport Plan 2006 -20011

6.7 This document identifies three current main issues that the Local Transport Plan (LTP) will aim to tackle with the implementation of LTP 2. These are:

- Accessibility
- Road Safety
- Highway Maintenance.

6.8 The County's key aims in terms of long-term transport strategy goals are stated as:

- To provide the transport infrastructure and services necessary to support continued economic growth in Staffordshire
- Ensuring access for everyone to key facilities and services
- To protect the natural environment and the fabric of historic settlements

- To develop a transport system which is safe for all users and which encourages the use of sustainable modes.

6.9 To achieve these aims the strategy states the desired measures by which these issues will be tackled. A road hierarchy review will take place, in which the existing road networks will be assessed to see how the current network will fare in the future due to changing travel patterns. There will also be a Speed Management Strategy produced in a bid to make the surrounding road networks safer. Another measure is an upgrade of the current urban traffic systems in order that the county's road networks capacity can be maximised and conditions improved for local buses. There will be more cycle and pedestrian areas surrounding the main Town Centres to encourage more sustainable modes of transport. There will be a strong continued commitment to the introduction of green travel plans and public transport marketing.

***Staffordshire Moorlands Local Development Framework
Core Strategy May 2009***

6.10 This document sets a Vision for Leek, which includes:

“The bus station will be served by a reliable public transport system whilst access and car parking in the town centre will be improved with the provision of a new multi storey facility.”

6.11 The Local Development Framework also outlines the following aspirations for delivering this vision:

- Continue to meet the housing needs of Leek and its hinterland
- Create employment growth and increase the diversity of employment opportunities to meet existing and future needs
- Strengthen the role of Leek as a principal service and retailing centre for the district
- Promote Leek's special character and heritage and strengthen its role as a visitor destination
- Create major regeneration mixed use opportunities and related infrastructure improvements for the following strategic sites:
 - Cornhill, Leek – uses which may be suitable are employment, tourism and leisure; any development shall make provision for a link between the A520 and A53 to the south of the

town and links to the canal and Churnet Valley railway

- Churnet Works, Macclesfield Road, Leek – uses which may be suitable are employment, residential, retail, leisure. Any development shall make provision for appropriate off-site highway improvements.

6.12 The Local Development Framework will replace Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, which contains car parking standards for development in the District.

Leek Action Plan – Better Welcome Programme May 2008

6.13 The Leek Action Plan sets out the findings of research carried out within the town on visitor profiles. This data has been found to provide many telling conclusions with regard to the accessibility and sustainability of the town.

6.14 The use of private transport to Leek dominates with 90 percent of visitors using private transport and the remainder using mainly public transport. There is a large proportion of repeat visitors, underlining the importance of influencing the travel behaviour of these groups. 58 percent of visitors visit

more than five times a year. A further 29 percent visit between two and five times.

6.15 Research carried out for the Leek Action Plan established the lack of pedestrian crossings facilities contributed to the negative impression of the town.

Staffordshire Moorlands Parking Strategy 2008-2011

6.16 The Parking Strategy outlines proposals to change parking policies, provision and management to meet the future needs of the District.

6.17 The Strategy directly mentions Leek and raises it as a concern in terms of congestion. Strategic parking provision for the District is noted as a key means of tackling this issue; however it was found that within Leek the provision of parking spaces meets the required demand. As a result, the parking strategy focuses on the continuing review of the use of public car parks and the revision of charging levels to deter long stay parking which, it is felt, is commonly used by commuters.

6.18 The main objective of the parking strategy as it relates to Leek is to attract more short stay parking for business and retail users.

Staffordshire Moorlands District Cycling Strategy

6.19 The District Council considers cycling has a key part to play in the district's future. This document outlines key objectives that could be achieved by an increased participation from residents:

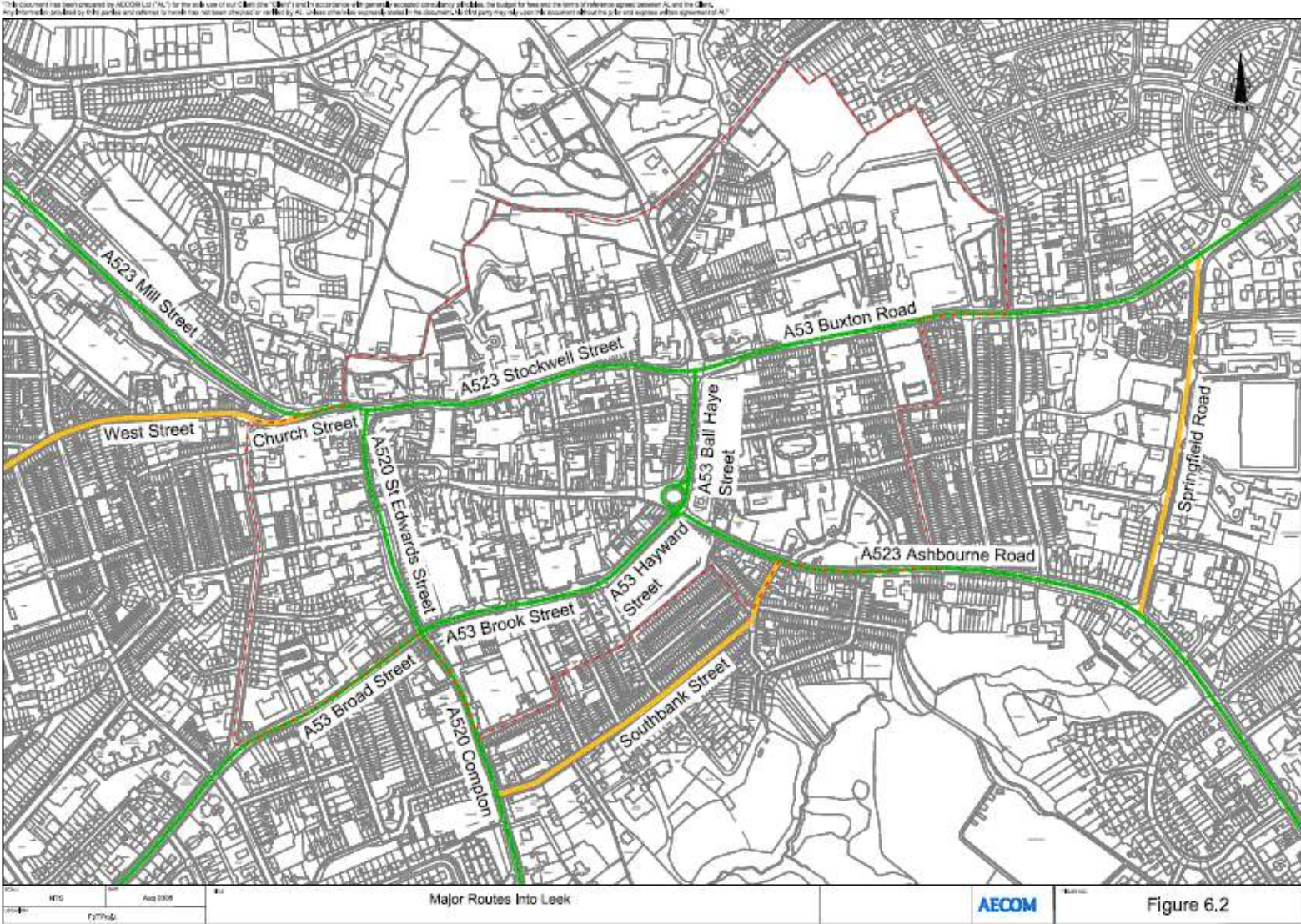
- To build a sense of community and enrich lives
- To improve health and wellbeing
- To be a cleaner and greener transport alternative, which will protect and improve the environment
- To travel easily and safely and being able to access all services needed by all.

6.20 Cycling is seen as a way of achieving two of the local goals set in the LTP2 i.e. improving quality of life and promoting regeneration within the District. The District Council aims to meet these objectives through various methods such as improving safer routes and storage facilities across the area, providing more education and training aimed at cycling and by promoting interchange between different modes for longer journeys.

Local Context

6.21 The major routes into Leek town centre are shown in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2 – Major Routes into Leek



6.22 Leek Town Centre is enclosed within an inner ring road structure formed at the confluence of the A53, A523 and A520 primary routes. The ring road is formed by the A523 Stockwell Street to the north, the A520 St Edward Street to the west, the A53 Ball Haye Street to the east and the A53 Brook Street/Haywood Street to the south. Traffic gyrates around this system in both directions via four busy junctions. These are summarised below:

- The three-arm priority junction of Mill Street (A523), Stockwell Street (A523), and St Edward Street (A520). This node is busy and caters for a high proportion of HGV traffic. However it has associated issues given that it is unsignalised and situated on a steep gradient
- The four-arm signalised junction of Stockwell Street, Buxton Road (A53), and Ball Haye Road (A53). This junction can become congested at peak times given its proximity to the Co-op supermarket
- The five-arm roundabout junction between Ball Haye Road, the unclassified Fountain Street, Ashbourne Road(A523), Haywood Street (A53), and the unclassified Derby Street. This is a large roundabout with an irregular shape that has a substantial take-up

of land and some rather unusual deflection movements for approaching traffic

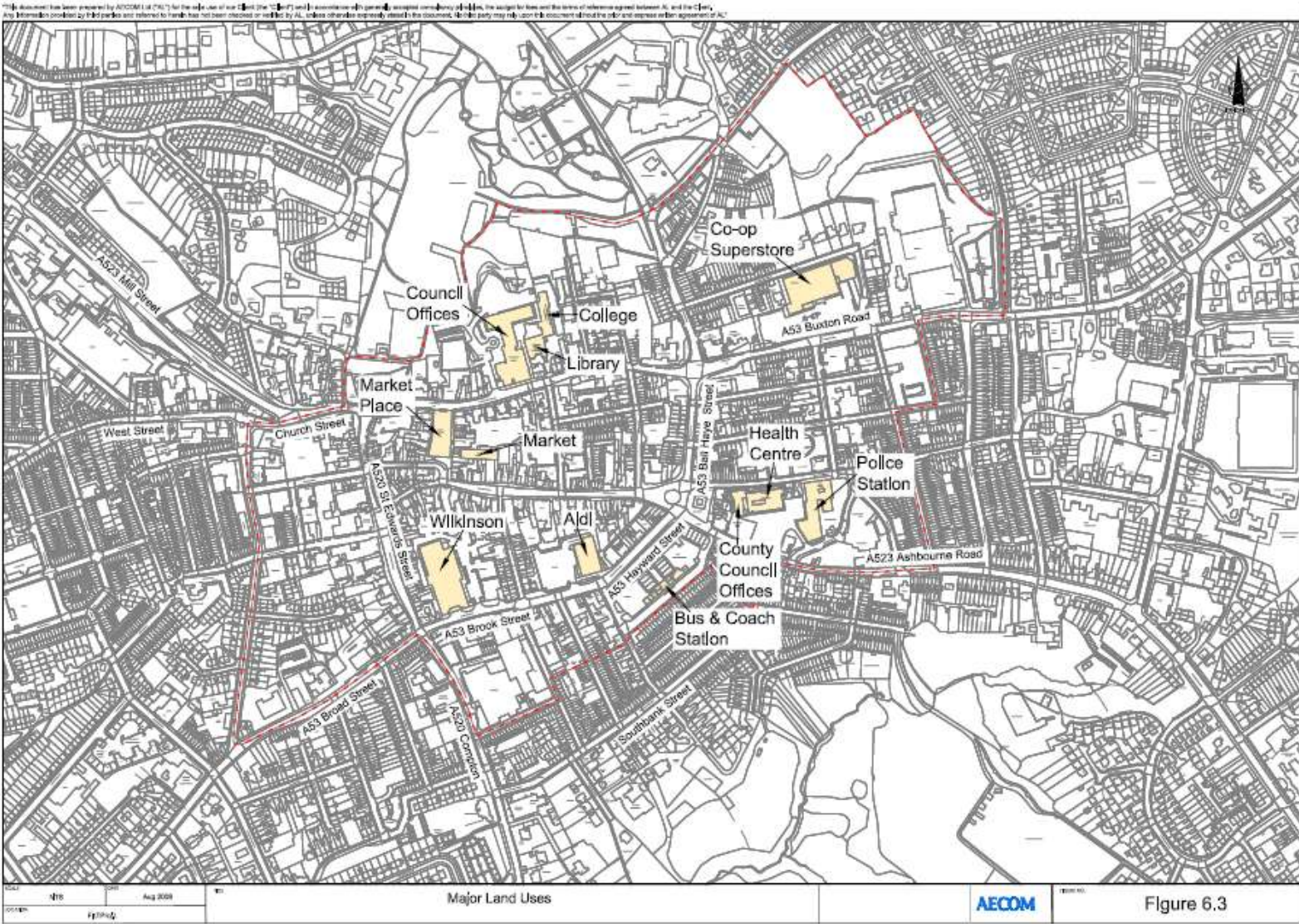
- The four-arm signalised junction of Broad Street (A53), St Edward Street, Brook Street (A53), and Compton (A520). This is an extremely busy junction, heavily constrained by surrounding land-uses and with no facilities for pedestrians. It is used by a variety of vehicle types including HGVs, buses and service vehicles accessing the nearby Wilkinsons/Argos development.

6.23 A simple one-way system is currently in operation within the central areas of the town centre on Russell Street, Derby Street, Market Street, Ford Street and Bath Street. This broadly operates in a clockwise direction. A smaller clockwise gyratory also exists around Market Square and on Sheep Market/Stanley Street although this is closed to all motorised vehicles with the exception of loading requirements.

6.24 The main employers within the Leek area include the Kerrygold factory, the Britannia Building Society and other large industrial units on the Barnfield and Churnet Works industrial estates. Within the town centre, a number of

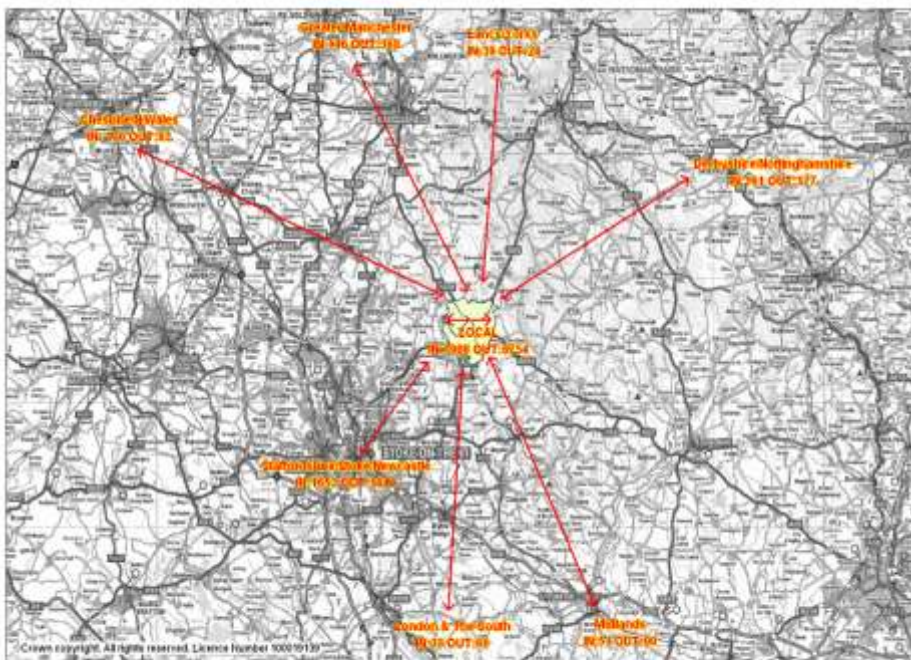
smaller employers are important. Figure 6.3 shows the primary land-uses within Leek Town Centre and these include offices for both Staffordshire Moorlands District and Staffordshire County Councils.

Figure 6.3 – Major Land Uses



6.25 Journey to Work data obtained from the 2001 census is illustrated in Figure 6.3a. This shows the assumed number of in and outbound commuters travelling to work each day between Leek and neighbouring areas.

Figure 6.3a Journey to Work Data to and from Leek



Census 2001 Travel-to-work data for Leek, Staffordshire (All trips).

6.26 Figure 6.3a shows that, as expected, the overwhelming majority of external journey-to-work trips are made between Leek and Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-Under-Lyme, and other parts of Staffordshire. Most journey-to-work trips for Leek are internal however, and this figure includes the local employers mentioned above including Kerrygold, Britannia and Churnet Works etc.

6.27 Leek has a Further Education college on Union Street to the north of the Town Centre and there are plans to open a new campus, as part of the University of Staffordshire, with direct access off Stockwell Street.

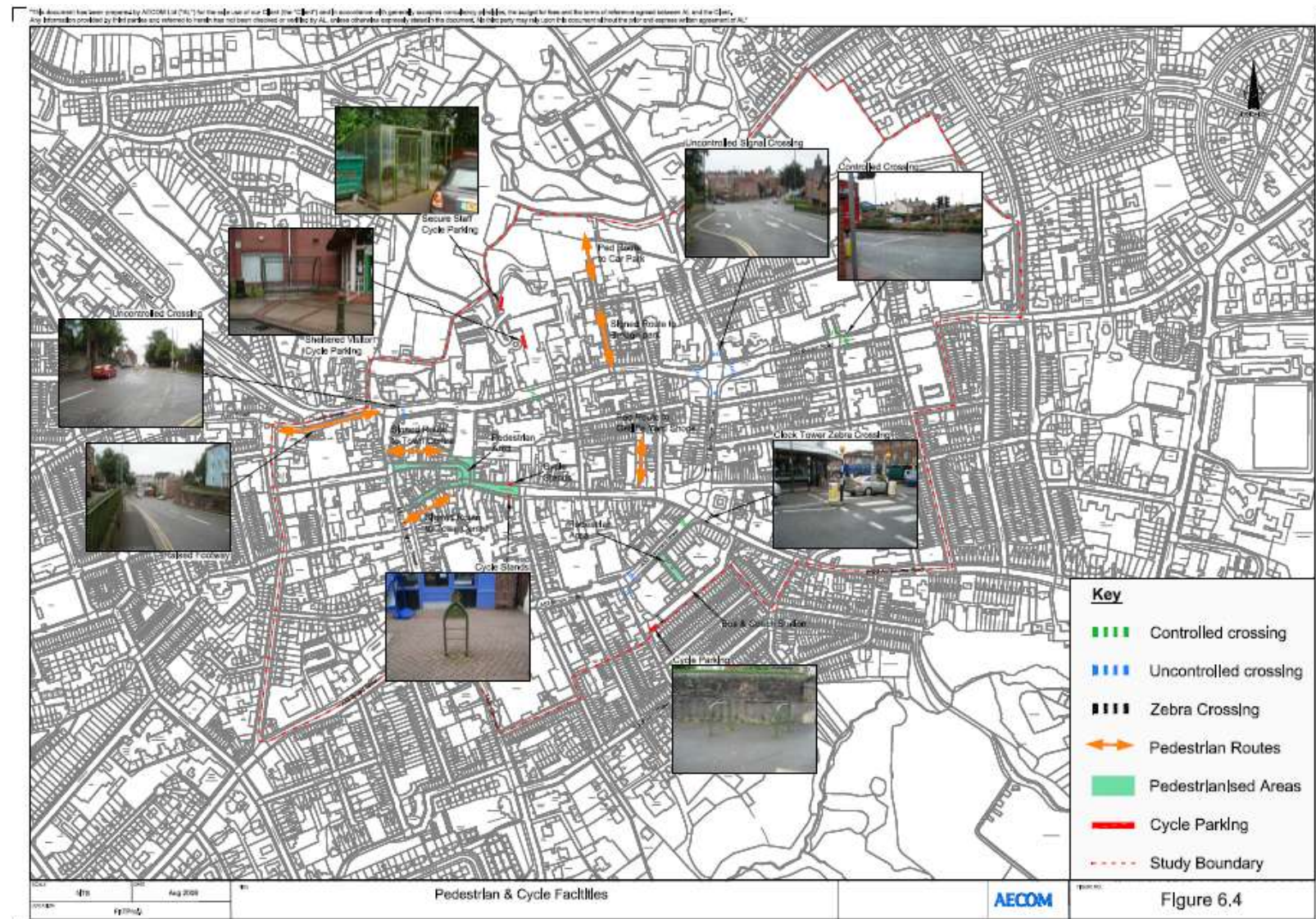
6.28 In terms of retail, the Town Centre has a large Co-op to the east of centre with its own signalised access junction from Buxton Street. Brook Street has a large retail development including Wilkinsons and Argos with associated surface and multi-storey car parking and further to the east there is an Aldi and associated car park. Development proposals are emerging for a large Sainsbury's store on the Churnet Works site, off Macclesfield Road, which would provide a large amount of additional out of town centre retail capacity, albeit with potential traffic implications for the Town Centre. It is considered hugely important to ensure that any large

new retail development supports and not hinders the regeneration of the Town Centre.

Pedestrians and Cyclists

- 6.29 The main pedestrian and cycle facilities and infrastructure for Leek are shown in Figure 6.4.

Figure 4 – Pedestrian and Cycle Facilities



- 6.30 Leek Town Centre is partially pedestrianised on Sheep Market between St Edward Street and the Market Place, on Stanley Street between St Edward Street and Derby Street, and on Derby Street between Stanley Street and Russell Street. Motorised traffic is prohibited at all times in this area apart for loading purposes.
- 6.31 Elsewhere in the Town Centre facilities for pedestrians and cyclists are relatively sparse. Signalised crossing facilities exist on Stockwell Street, Haywood Street (providing access to the bus station), and Buxton Road (in connection with the signalised Co-op access). In addition, there are controlled zebra crossings on Ball Haye Street and Ashbourne Road (adjacent to the Clocktower roundabout junction). However these are often poorly observed, with vehicles often queuing across the crossings and blocking the way for pedestrians.
- 6.32 All other crossings at major junctions are uncontrolled and, in the case of the signal junction between Brook Street, Broad Street, St Edward Street, and Compton, entirely non-existent. This creates a serious issue of pedestrian severance between the town centre and surrounding residential areas. This is due to the surrounding listed buildings constraining the nature of the junction, and the difficulty in implementing pedestrian phases without compromising an already overcapacity junction. Despite this, there is need to improve pedestrian facilities at this location from a road safety perspective, and this remains a key aspiration of the local authority.
- 6.33 Whilst the Town Centre itself does not have any dedicated cycle lanes, advisory or mandatory, there are a number of signed cycle routes. These include routes to the Town Centre from the west via Strangman Street and Sheep Market, routes to Brough Park from Stockwell Street, and routes to Rudyard Miniature Railway via a combination of on and off-street routes. In addition, Fountain Street, Queen Street, Derby Street and Stanley Street are considered advisory cycle routes.
- 6.34 Cycle parking facilities are sparse but available around the Town Centre. Sheltered stands are provided at the District Council offices (with secure bicycle accommodation for staff), and unsheltered stands are located on Derby Street and adjacent to the bus station. The total provision of spaces is small for a town of Leek's size. Further stands are considered desirable at major trip attractors including St Edward Street and the Wilkinson/Argos development.

Public Transport

Public Transport Services

- 6.35 As previously noted, Leek does not have a rail station, and although there are aspirational proposals to reconnect the town to the rail network via a potential new station at Barnfields (south of the town), these are at best some years off. As such, all public transport journeys to and from Leek are currently bus related.
- 6.36 There are a large number of routes which often have low and irregular frequencies. All bus services within the town serve Leek Bus Station, and the main bus corridors within the town include Broad Street/Brook Street/Haywood Street, Ball Haye Road, and Ashbourne Road. Table 25 highlights these available routes and notes the approximate frequency and operator for each:

Table 25 – Buses Serving Leek Town Centre

Bus No.	Route	Mon-Fri Daytime Frequency	Operator
10/10A	Leek – Alton Towers	6 per day	Alton Towers Transport
16	Leek – Cheddleton	1-2 per hour	Proctors

Bus No.	Route	Mon-Fri Daytime Frequency	Operator
	– Hanley		Coaches/D&G Coaches/Scraggs
18	Haregate – Leek – Endon – Hanley	3 per hour	First Potteries
106	Leek – Cellarhead – Longton	3 per day	D&G Coaches
108	Ashbourne – Leek – Macclesfield	9 per day	Clowes Coaches
108	Leek – Ashbourne – Derby	1 per 3 hours	TM Travel
108	Leek – Macclesfield – Stockport	1 per 3 hours	Bakers Coaches
118	Hanley – Leek – Buxton	1 per 3 hours	D&G Coaches
165/166	Leek Town Circular	6 per day	Clowes Coaches
194	Leek – Brown Edge – Burslem – Hanley	3 per day	Clowes Coaches
195	Leek – Biddulph – Congleton	1 per day	Clowes Coaches
234/235/236	Leek – Ipstones – Cheadle	8 per day	Clowes Coaches
405	Leek – Hartington – Leek	2 per day	Phil's Travel
423/424	Leek – Biddulph – Mow Cop	4 per day	Bakers Coaches
443	Barrow Moor – Leek – Ipstones	1 per day	Clowes Coaches

Bus No.	Route	Mon-Fri Daytime Frequency	Operator
445	Leek – Blackshaw Moor	2 per day	Clowes Coaches
447	Leek – Bridge End Circular	4 per day	Clowes Coaches
456	Leek – Longnor – Leek	2 per day	Clowes Coaches
463	Leek – Cheddleton Circular	4 per day	Clowes Coaches
493	Brown Edge – Leek	1 per day	D&G Coaches
495	Leek – Kniveden Lane	3 per day	Clowes Coaches

Source: Staffordshire County Council

6.37 Table 25 highlights the large number of extremely low frequency routes that serve the town. This large number of bus numbers can cause confusion with the travelling public as can the lack of a clockface timetable in the case of many of these services. These factors may serve to put off potential customers and encourage private car use.

6.38 Figures 6.5a, 6.5b, and 6.5c show bus bandwidth diagrams for the hours of 08:00-09:00, 12:00-13:00 and 19:00-20:00 during a typical weekday. These highlight the number of bus services in each direction travelling along a given

section of road during the course of each hour. During the morning peak and the working day, the number of services along each section is similar with the exception of Buxton Road which is served only irregularly. Furthermore, the only busy section of the network is the gyratory around the bus station and the adjacent roads.

6.39 The main issue is the fact that bus services drop-off quite sharply after the evening peak period with many routes either unserved after this time or served only very infrequently. During the whole hour, only six services depart the bus station and the majority of these head southwards towards Hanley, Endon and Ashbourne. The north has only one bus service in each direction during this hour and this travels along Ball Haye Road towards Haregate.

Figure 6.5a – Bus Bandwidths 08.00-09.00 Weekdays

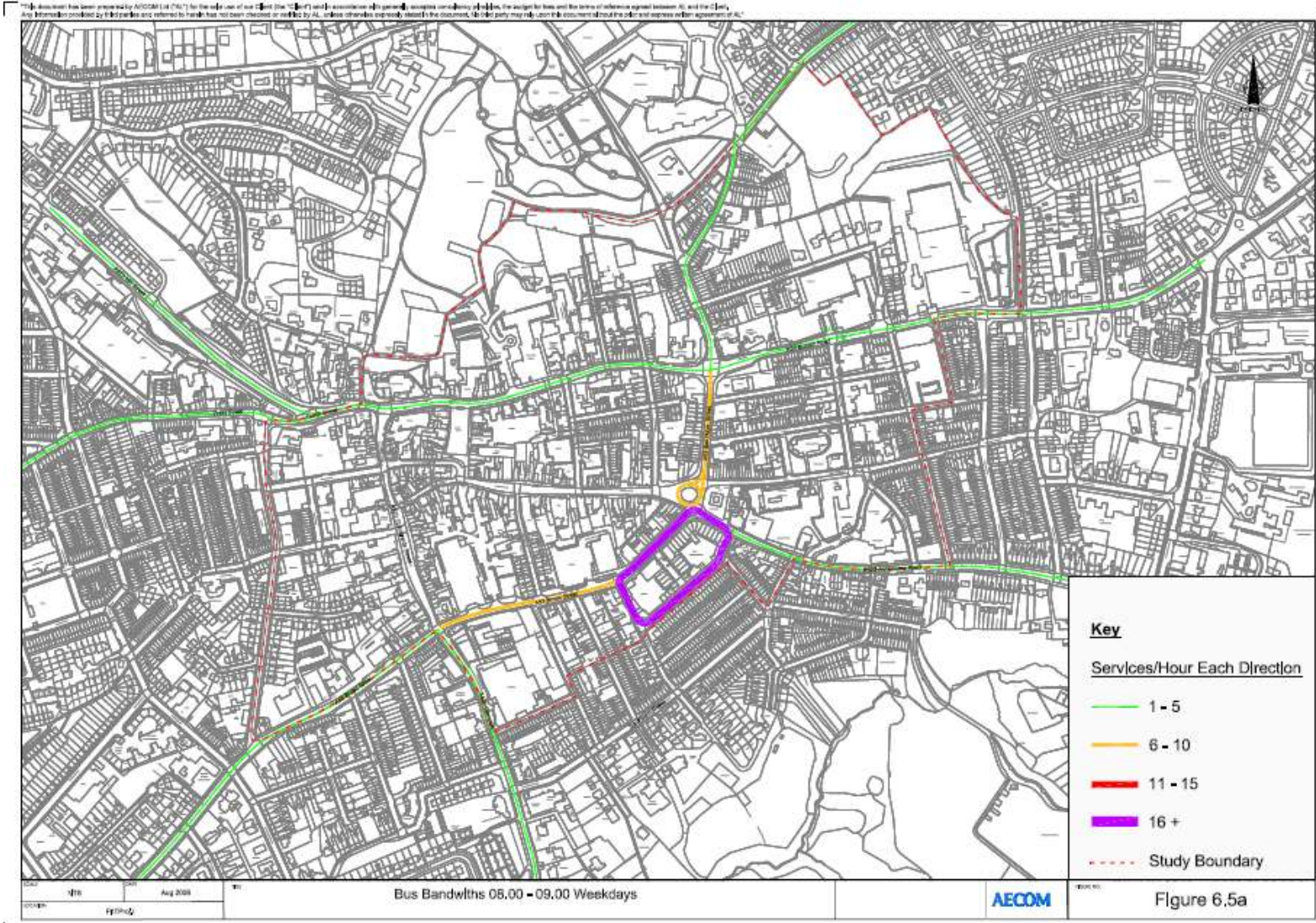


Figure 6.5b – Bus Bandwidths 12.00-13.00 Weekdays

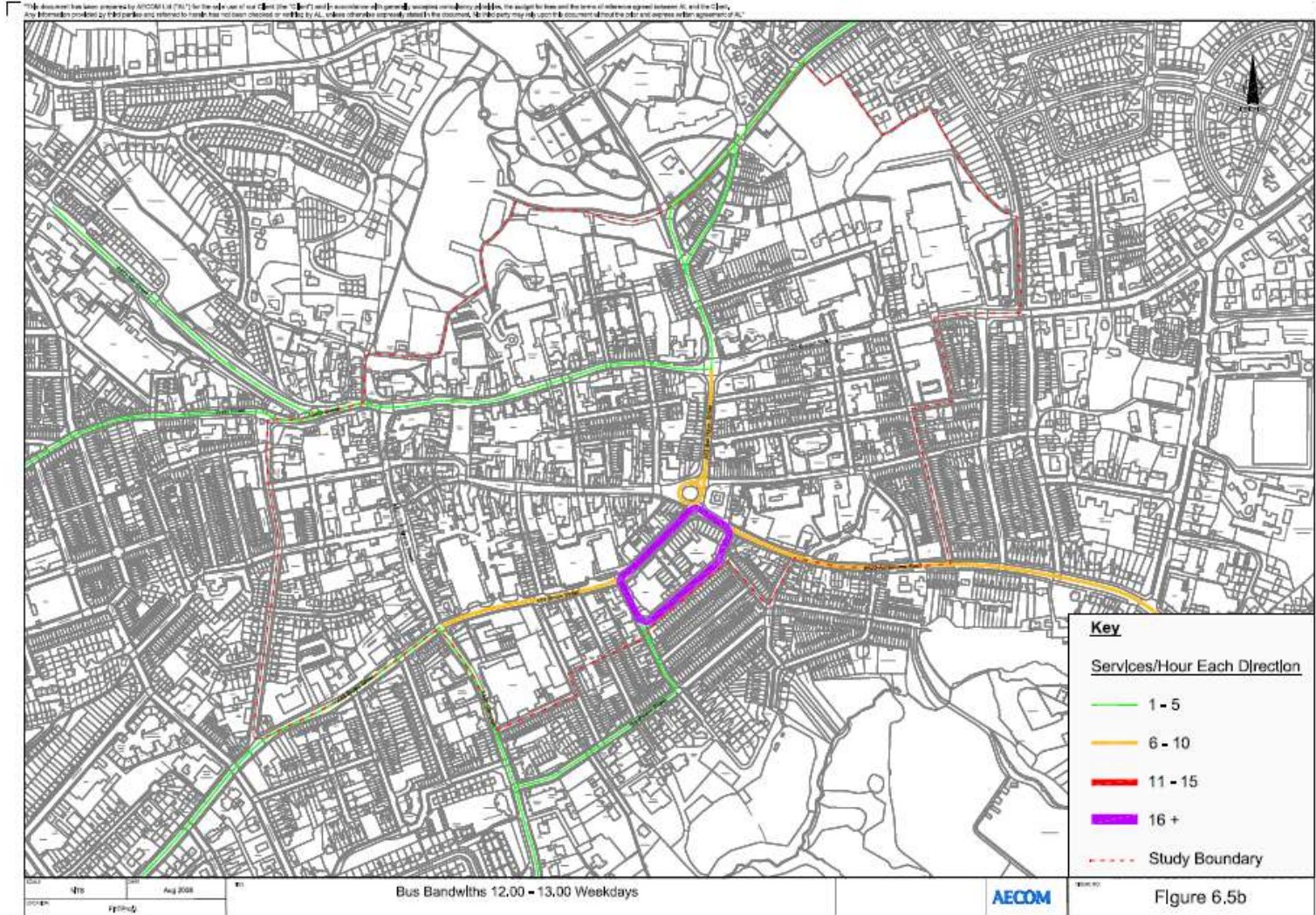
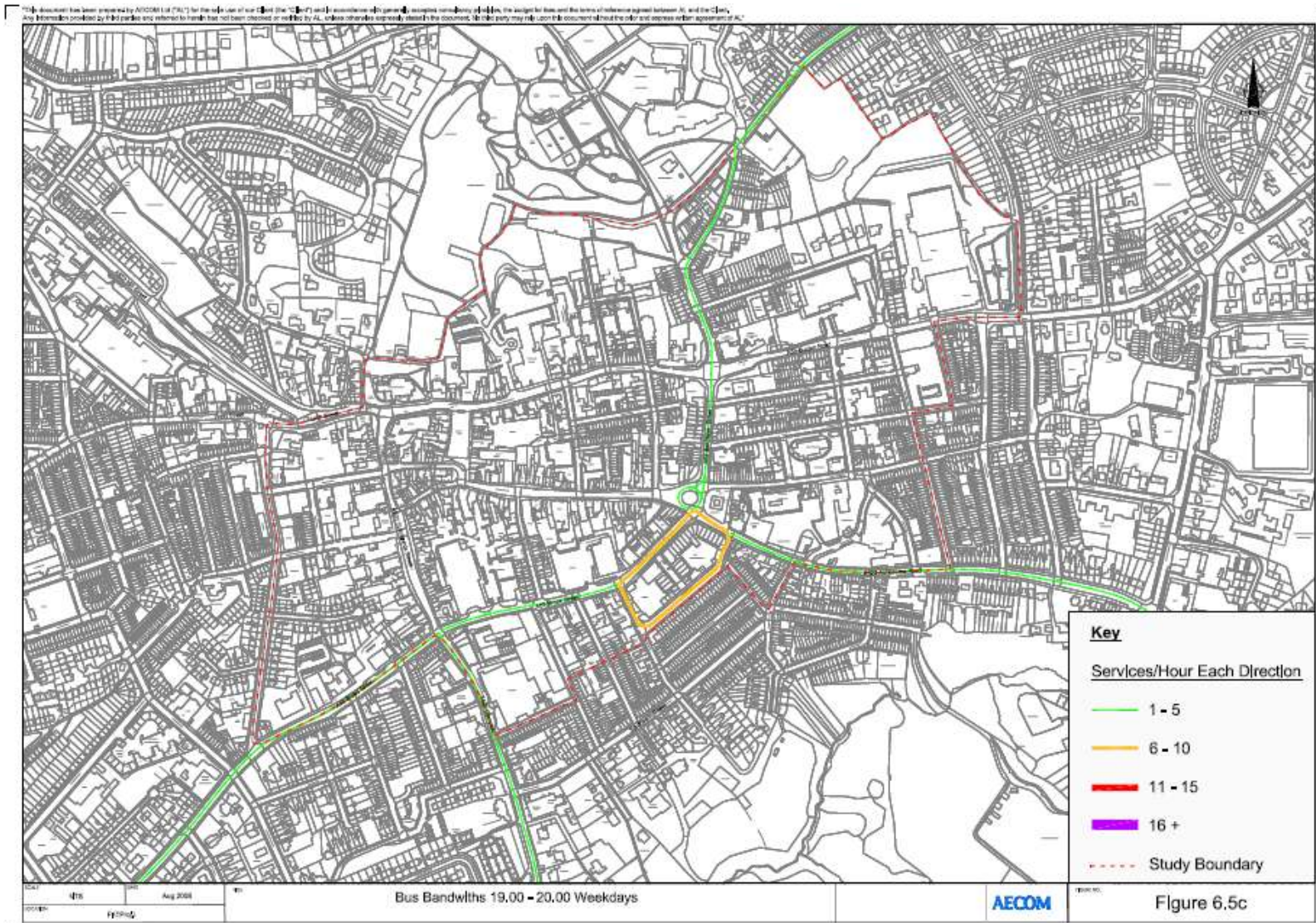


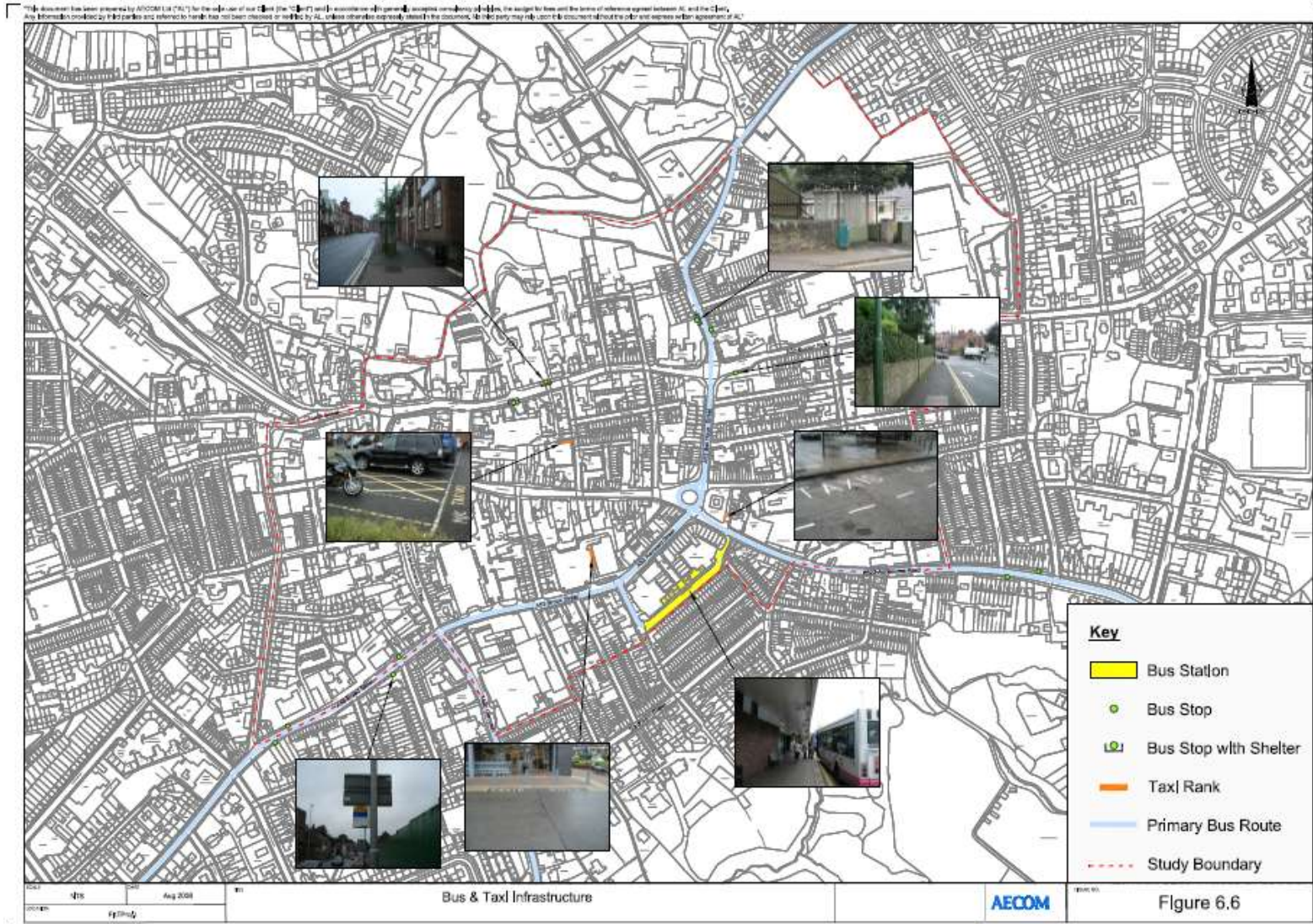
Figure 6.5c – Bus Bandwidths 19.00-20.00 Weekdays



Public Transport Infrastructure

- 6.40 Town Centre bus and taxi infrastructure is shown in Figure 6.6. This highlights the location of bus stops within the study area, the proportion of these that have shelters, and the location of taxi ranks around the Town Centre.
- 6.41 Apart from the bus station, there are few stops along the main bus route close to the retail core of the town and only one of these (on Ball Haye Road) has a shelter. The stops on Stockwell Street have shelters but this is not a frequent bus route and these are therefore not heavily used throughout much of the day.
- 6.42 For services to the south east and south west, stops are located on Ashbourne Road at its junction with Parker Street. However these are outside the Town Centre study area. On Broad Street stops are located opposite the King Street and Sneyd Street junctions. These too are rather peripheral and do not effectively serve the main retail core. The stops adjacent to King Street are useful for the secondary retail centre on St Edward Street, but the lack of crossings at the St Edward Street, Brook Street junction reduces safety and accessibility.
- 6.43 Taxi rank facilities are located outside Aldi on Brook Street and adjacent to the Clocktower junction on Ashbourne Road. There is also a stand for one taxi at the Market Street West car park facility. Again, these facilities are rather peripheral and less effective at serving the main pedestrian and retail zone within the town centre.

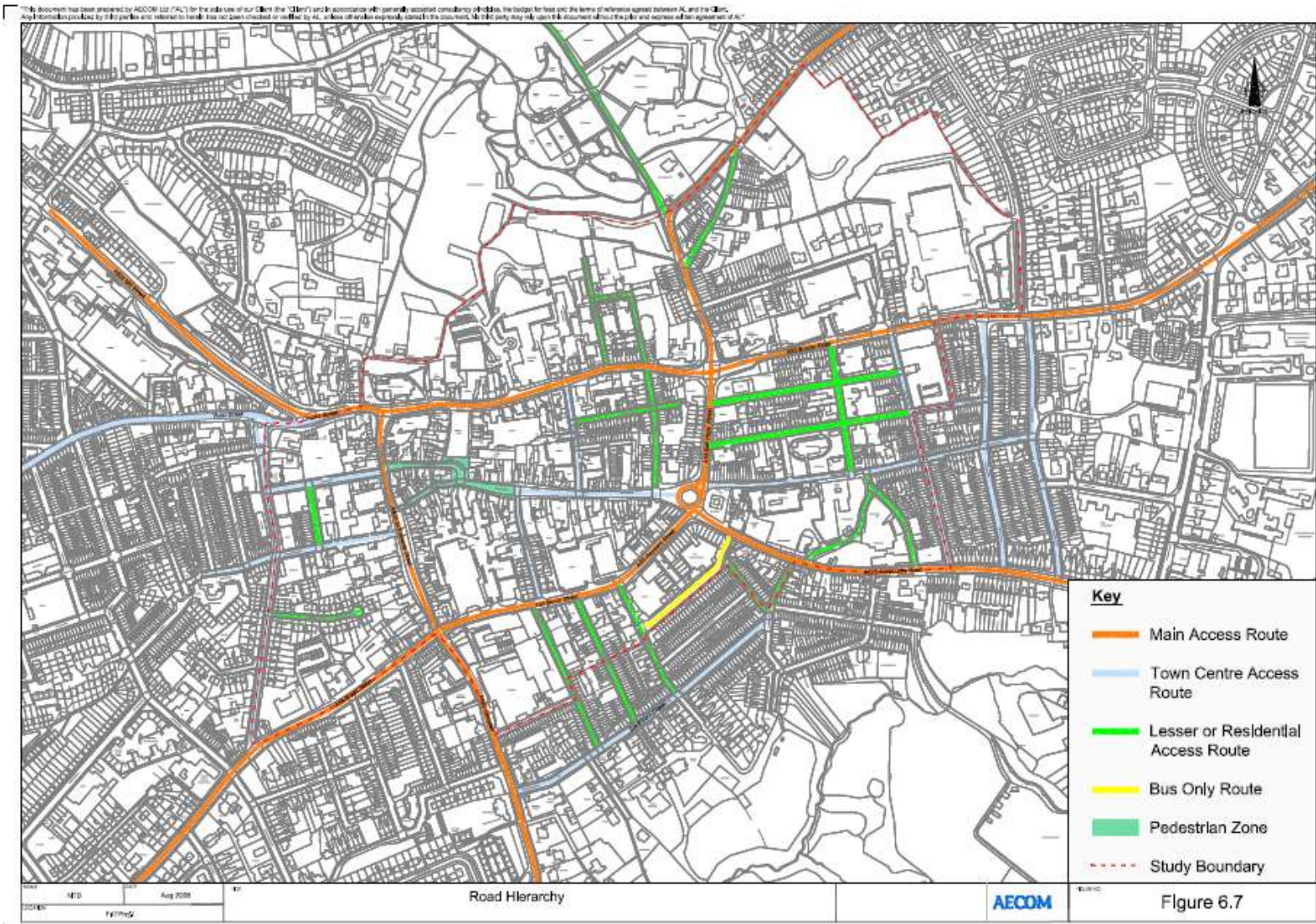
Figure 6.6 – Bus & Taxi Infrastructure



Traffic Movements

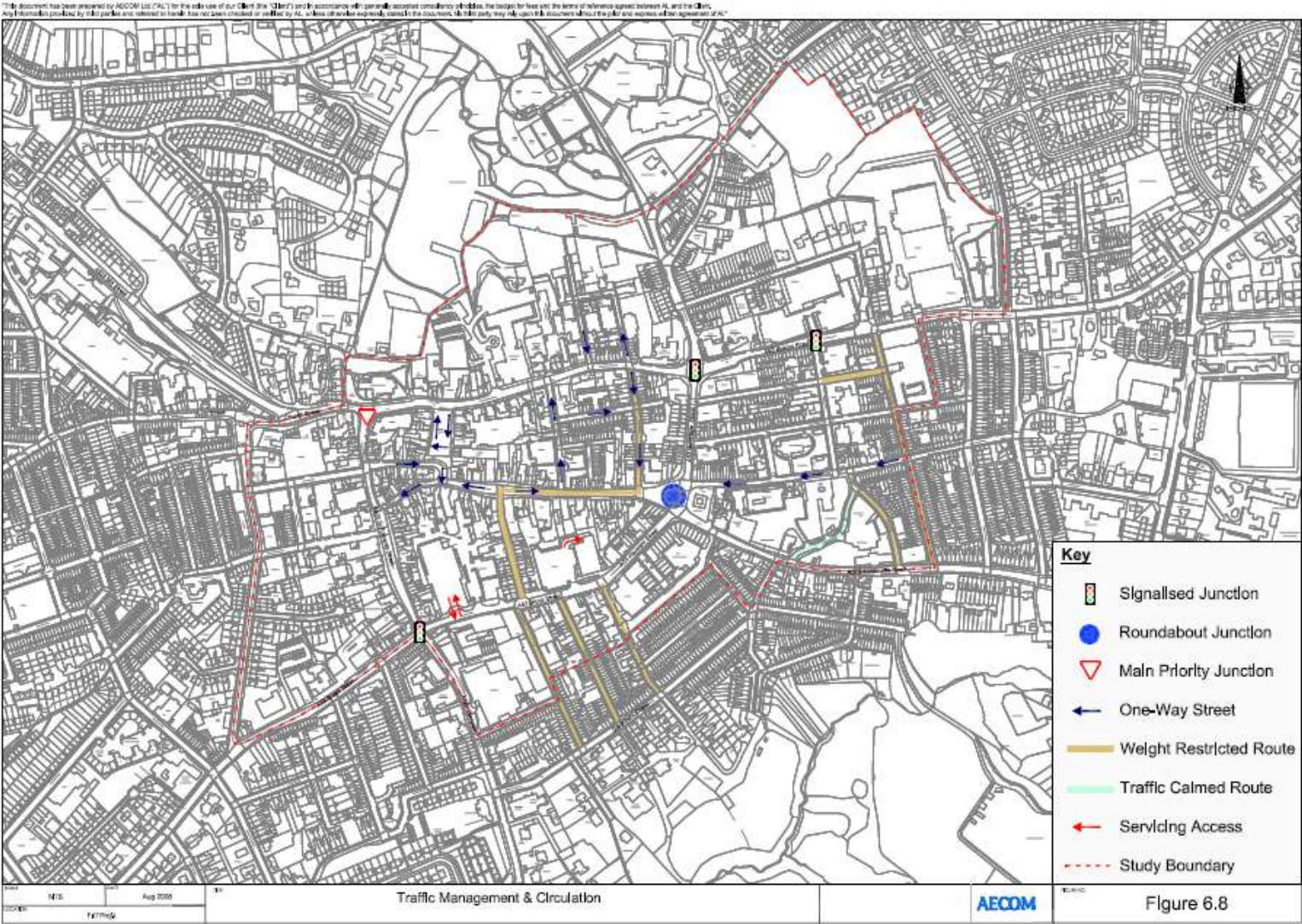
- 6.44 Figure 6.7 highlights the observed road hierarchy within Leek Town Centre. It shows the five main access points via Mill Street, Ball Haye Road, Buxton Road, Ashbourne Road, Compton, and Broad Street. This diagram highlights that the network is arranged to encourage traffic to circulate via the ring road structure but has little opportunity to penetrate into the heart of the Town Centre.

Figure 6.7 – Road Hierarchy



6.45 This fact is further reinforced by the Traffic Management and Circulation plan shown in Figure 6.8. This plan highlights that a simple one-way system, combined with a partial Town Centre pedestrianisation scheme, restricts traffic movements on and around Derby Street and ensures that it follows a proscribed route to access car parking areas north of Derby Street. Superficially this traffic management scheme appears to be a positive asset of the Town Centre. However, given the relative inaccessibility of public transport and the large number of smaller parking facilities north of Derby Street (see later Parking section), this can lead to congestion on Derby Street. This congestion is further exacerbated by the presence of on-street parking.

Figure 6.8 – Traffic Management and Circulation



- 6.46 As noted previously, the main ring-road is punctuated by four large junctions. In addition to the lack of pedestrian facilities at these junctions (noted previously), there are further issues in terms of traffic flow at three of the junctions. Firstly, the priority junction at Mill Street/Stockwell Street/St Edward Street is widely felt to have flow and potential safety issues given the steep gradients and consequent limited visibility at this location. The high proportion of HGV traffic along the A523 adds to these issues and can cause capacity constraints given the unwillingness of vehicles to pull out with limited visibility. As a result a solution involving signalisation may be required.
- 6.47 The signal junction of St Edward Street, Brook Street, Broad Street and Compton is overcapacity at present. It is heavily constrained by the existing building frontage which largely comprises listed buildings. As a result, stop lines are set back much further than they would otherwise need to be, dramatically increasing the amount of lost time at these signals. Together with the lack of pedestrian provision noted previously, this indicates the junction is in need of a package of improvements. LINSIG modelling has shown that the addition of pedestrian phases cannot be accommodated under the current configuration.
- Consequently more radical solutions, such as the banning of certain movements, may be required as long as this is achievable within the current Town Centre context.
- 6.48 The large roundabout junction between Ball Haye Street, Derby Street, Haywood Street et al is widely considered to be inappropriate for the purpose given that it requires an extremely large land-take and is difficult to negotiate for pedestrians and cyclists. The geometry of the roundabout is also irregular requiring vehicles, especially from Haywood Street, to make a large deflection to the left, leading to several instances of motorists failing to observe correct roundabout regulations. The location of the Clocktower monument at this junction serves to sever this important asset from the main Town Centre and contributes to its impression as an undersold and underexploited commodity.
- 6.49 A one-way system has previously been proposed for Leek Town Centre which would have turned the ring-road system into a clockwise gyratory. Under these proposals junction improvements were suggested including signalising some important nodes (e.g. the junction of Stockwell Street and St Edward Street) and adding pedestrian phases to some signalised junctions (including the junction of St Edward

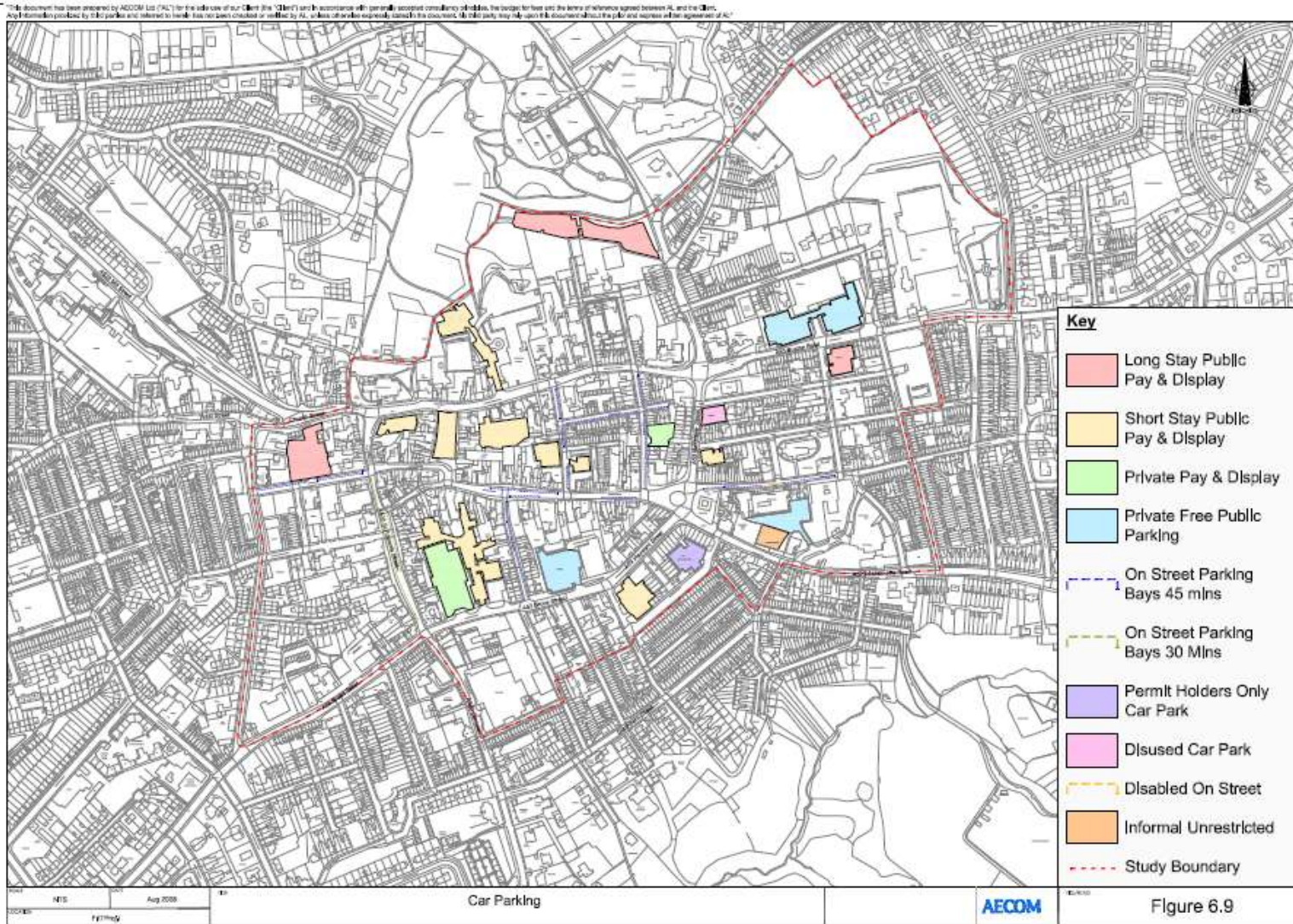
Road and Brook Street). Whilst this system had benefits in terms of easing capacity constraints and improving road safety the scheme lacked support. In light of the issues noted here, however, it may be worthwhile to re-examine this scheme for inclusion within the Masterplan.

- 6.50 Other important highway scheme proposals within Leek include the construction of a new bypass to the south of the Town Centre, linking the A53 Newcastle Road with the A520 Cheddleton Road. The bypass would follow the rough alignment of Sunnyhills Road from the A53 through the Barnfields Industrial Estate to emerge on the A520 at the roundabout adjacent to the Britannia Building Society building. This scheme would also tie in with a potential new rail station located on the disused Leek – Stoke-on-Trent line within the industrial park, although this scheme is some years from realisation. If successful, the bypass and potential park and ride could have highly positive effects in terms of cutting congestion within the Town Centre and relocating through-traffic from the overcapacity St Edward Street/Compton/Broad Street/Brook Street junction.

Parking

- 6.51 Figure 6.9 highlights the location of the main on and off-street parking provision within Leek Town Centre. Off-street car parks are divided into Council-owned long and short-stay facilities: privately owned pay and display; free facilities, and permit holder and otherwise business related facilities. Formal on-street provision consists of limited waiting bays set at either 45 minute or 30 minute duration as shown. This does not, however, include the large amount of unrestricted on-street parking space around the Town Centre and on adjacent residential streets.

Figure 6.9 – Car Parking



Off-Street Parking Provision

6.52 The Council-owned parks are generally smaller and more dispersed facilities. All follow a common charging regime between 09:30 and 15:30 (outside of which parking is free of charge). Short stay facilities have a maximum stay of 3 hours and are charged as follows:

- 0-1hr = 45p
- 1-2hrs = 65p
- 2-3hrs = 85p.

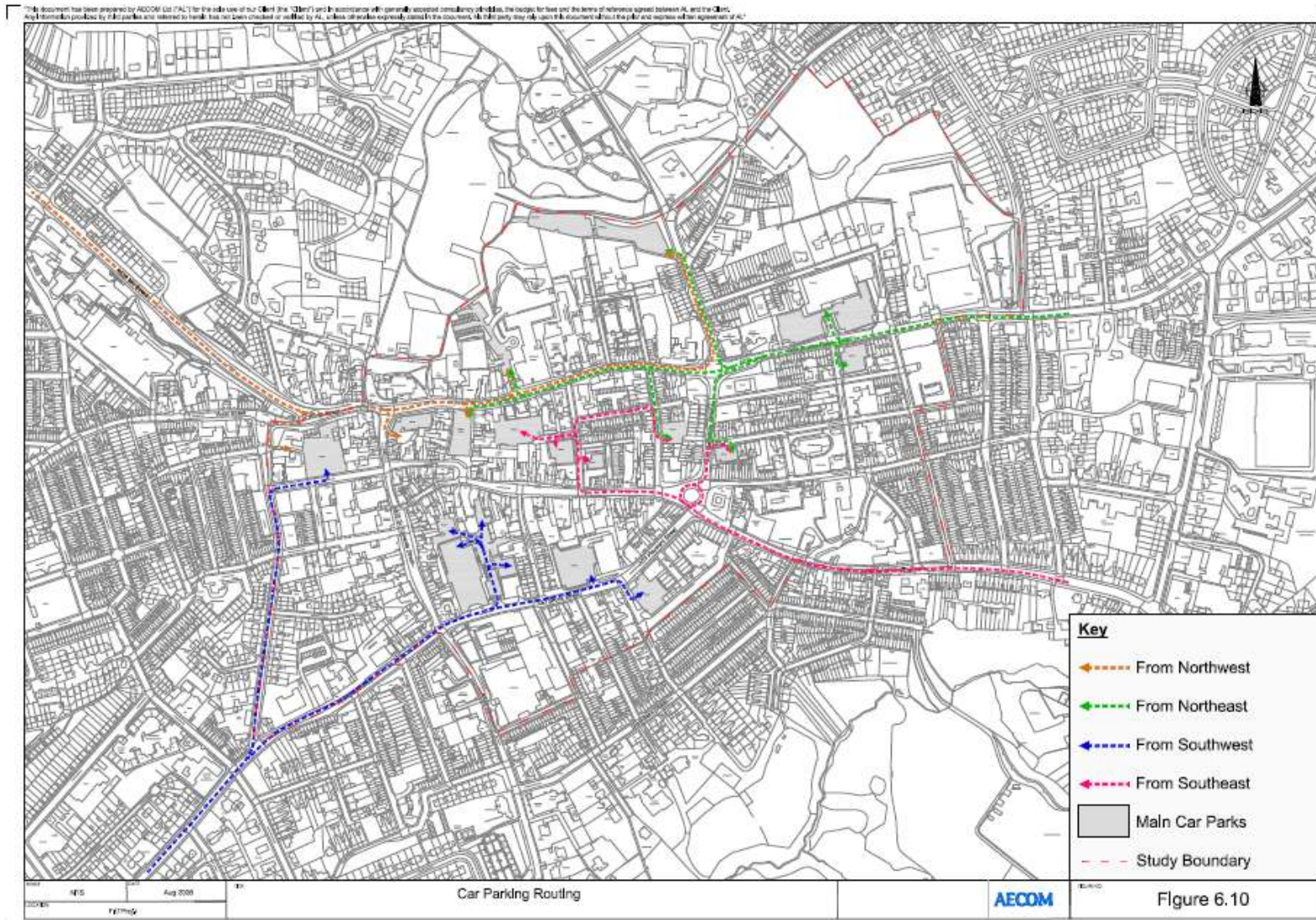
6.53 In contrast, long stay facilities have an unlimited maximum stay and are charged as above with stays over three hours being charged at £1.50. Consequently parking charges within the Town Centre are fairly nominal and do not act as a particular deterrent to accessing the town by car. The central short stay parking facilities are generally well used, although the more peripheral long stay parking is much less well-used. This is especially true of the large Vicarage Road car park which is situated well to the north (and downhill) of the retail core requiring a long and steep climb to access shops and services.

6.54 Privately owned car parks are generally larger facilities related to a particular development or area as in the case of

the Wilkinsons/Argos multi-storey, and the Aldi and Co-Op store car parks. Of these, the latter large free car parks are well used catering for a proportion of linked trips into the Town Centre. The private pay and display facilities are, by contrast, not well used perhaps, in the case of the multi-storey, due to the preponderance of more accessible surface car parking nearby.

6.55 Figure 6.10 shows the obvious routeing of vehicles to the main car parks from each of the four main access directions. The main block of central car parks are most accessible from the south east, with the Wilkinsons and Aldi store facilities best accessed from the south west. Fewer facilities are available from the north although those that are include the Market Place (available on non-market days only) and the free Co-Op store car park, anecdotally used frequently for Town Centre parking.

Figure 6.10 – Car Parking Routing



On-Street Parking Provision

- 6.56 On-street parking is available in a variety of locations and is generally more popular and well-used than the off-street provision. As such there is a high demand for the available on-street space. In areas of specific high demand, waiting is limited to either 30 or 45 minutes depending on the location as shown in Figure 6.9. This relatively high turnover of vehicles parking on-street highlights the short-staying nature of the typical visitor to the Town Centre who will currently be more likely to 'pop' into a single shop rather than spending time and money browsing around the town.
- 6.57 Further away from the retail core, on-street parking is generally unrestricted and used for a variety of purposes including by local residents, by employees not wishing to pay for a day's parking within the Town Centre, and in certain cases by shoppers or other shorter stay Town Centre users. There are no resident permit holder spaces within the Town Centre indicating that there is currently no shortage of available on-street parking for residents. However, should some of the many residential developments currently at the planning stages be constructed, this situation may change.

- 6.58 An area of particular concern is the Well Street/Cross Street area adjacent to London Mill. The conversion of this listed industrial building to residential uses may put significant parking pressures on the local road network which is already oversubscribed due to the proximity of some mixed local uses including the Police Station, Health Centre, and a restaurant business. In this case, a residents parking scheme may have to be considered depending on the forecast level of demand.

Road Safety

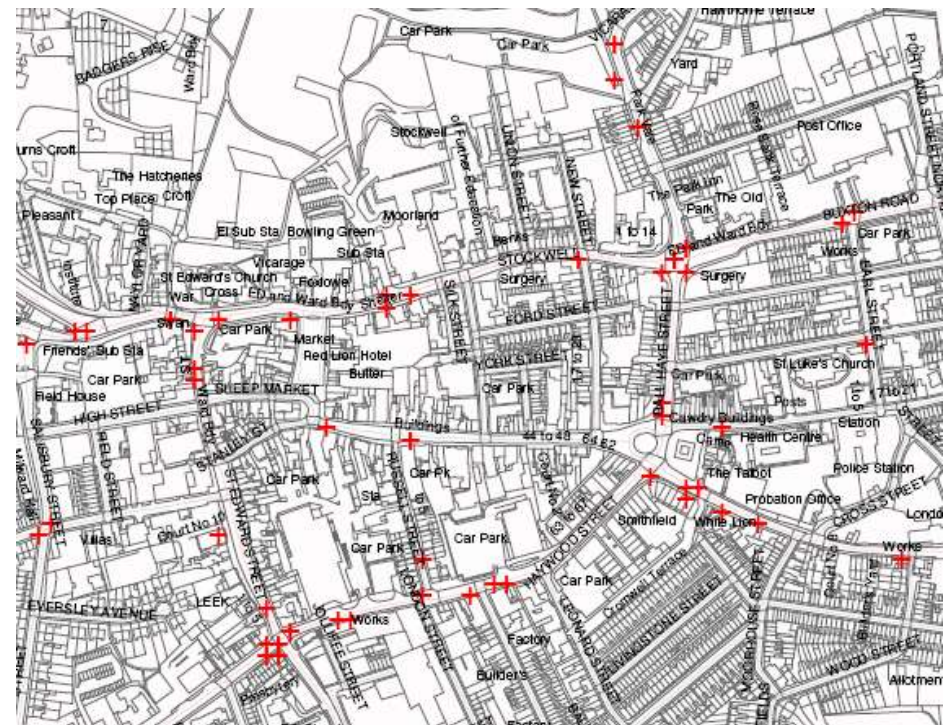
- 6.59 Figure 6.11 and Table 26 summarise the accidents occurring within Leek Town Centre over the last 5 years.

Table 26 – Leek Town Centre 5 Year Personal Injury Accident Summary

Year	Severity				Conditions		Road User	
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Wet	Dark	Ped	Cycle
2004	0	0	13	13	4	2	1	1
2005	0	1	12	12	5	3	4	1
2006	0	0	14	14	3	2	3	1
2007	0	2	17	17	8	2	1	1
2008	0	1	14	14	5	3	4	0
2009	0	0	6	6	2	1	1	2
Total	0	4	72	76	27	13	14	6

Source: Staffordshire County Council

Figure 6.11 – Location of Accidents within Leek Town Centre



Source: Staffordshire County Council

6.60 Figure 6.11 shows that the accidents are relatively spread out across the town centre. Nevertheless it is possible to define a small number of hot-spots:

- The signalised junction of the A53 Broad Street/Brook Street with the A520 St Edward Street/Compton

- The signalised junction of the A523 Stockwell Street and A53 Ball Haye Road/Buxton Road
- Along the A53 Brook Street/Haywood Street
- Along the A523 Ashbourne Road.

6.61 Accidents at these locations account for 29 percent of the total collisions occurring within the Town Centre.

6.62 It is considered particularly relevant that two of these hotspots are located in areas where pedestrian crossing facilities are poor or non-existent. This is reflected in the relatively high proportion (26 percent) of accidents involving vulnerable road users.

6.63 In general, however, the number of serious accidents is small on a year by year basis. This suggests that, aside from the lack of adequate pedestrian facilities at certain junctions, there is no systematic accident problem within Leek Town Centre.

Summary of Key Issues and Emerging Opportunities

6.64 The key issues noted, and suggested possible opportunities for improvement are summarised as:

- There is evident pedestrian severance between the retail core and the outer residential areas due to the busy inner ring-road system and the lack of available controlled pedestrian crossing facilities. This is particularly severe at the four busy junctions surrounding the Town Centre
- Bus public transport is in most cases infrequent, irregular and follows a non-clockface timetable leading to a large number of various highly infrequent bus routes. These are in need of consolidation and simplification into a smaller number of higher frequency services serving the various important local destinations dependant on the town
- Leek is not connected to the rail network and suffers from inaccessibility and long journey times by public transport from destinations further afield. There are proposals to establish a new station and bring the former Stoke – Leek rail line back into use, but these plans are currently unfunded and some years from realisation
- The inner ring road system has a high proportion of HGV traffic from the local industrial areas. These can add to congestion issues and cause greatly increased

damage to the road network. Consideration of a new signage strategy may be required to redirect these vehicles away from the Town Centre

- Of the four busy junctions around the retail core, three are in need of improvement and possible redesign including signalisation of the three-arm priority junction; the addition of pedestrian phases to the southern signal junction; and possible redesign of the large roundabout junction currently severing the Town Centre from the Clocktower monument. These improvements could be undertaken as part of a more radical traffic management scheme such as a proposed one-way system on the inner ring road
- Pedestrian and cycle facilities are sparse and low in number for a town of Leek's size. Cycle parking is available but it is difficult to find, often unsheltered, and small in size and scope. There are also no on or off-street cycle lanes or paths around the Town Centre, despite the existence of several signed cycle and walking routes
- Public transport provision is extremely poor after 18:00 with most services finishing either prior to, or during, the evening peak hour. As such, the evening economy in Leek is almost entirely reliant on the

private car. As part of the bus route consolidation exercise, certain supported routes could be rolled out to ensure a wider availability of evening public transport

- Public transport infrastructure is generally poor. The bus station is run-down and in need of rejuvenation and the majority of bus stops on the main public transport routes do not have seating or shelters. A comprehensive upgrade in the quality of public transport infrastructure could therefore be considered
- The publicly owned parking offer comprises largely smaller and more dispersed facilities spread around the Town Centre. This can lead to additional vehicle kilometres in searching for the most appropriate parking location. Some of the larger facilities such as Village Way and the Wilkinson's multi-storey car park are inaccessible and poorly used as a result. A rationalisation of parking and a comprehensive signage strategy could be required to combat this
- On-street parking in the Town Centre is often limited to a short amount of time encouraging high turnovers and discouraging longer and more leisurely linked stays. On-street parking restrictions should also be reviewed as part of the wider parking strategy to

encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more
within the Town Centre.

7.0 OPPORTUNITY SITES

7.1 This section addresses each of the fifteen Opportunity Sites identified at the outset, or during the course of the baseline study work. These sites are identified in Table 27.

Table 27 – Leek Town Centre Opportunity Sites

Site Name	Site Size (Hectares)
California Mill	1.89
Former British Trimmings Site	1.23
Eaton House & Surrounding Areas	2.55
Portland Street Mill Area	0.47
London Mill/York Mill Area	0.61
War Memorial Area	0.19
Smithfield Centre & Bus Station	0.74
Compton Mill Area	1.31
Pickwood Road	1.13
Former Broad Street Garage Site	0.10
Land to rear of St Edward Street	0.14
High Street Car Park Area	0.26
Market Street West Car Park Area	0.10
Premier Garage*	0.48
Foxlowe Site*	0.41

Source: BE Group 2009

*NB. Additional site identified at Baseline Stage

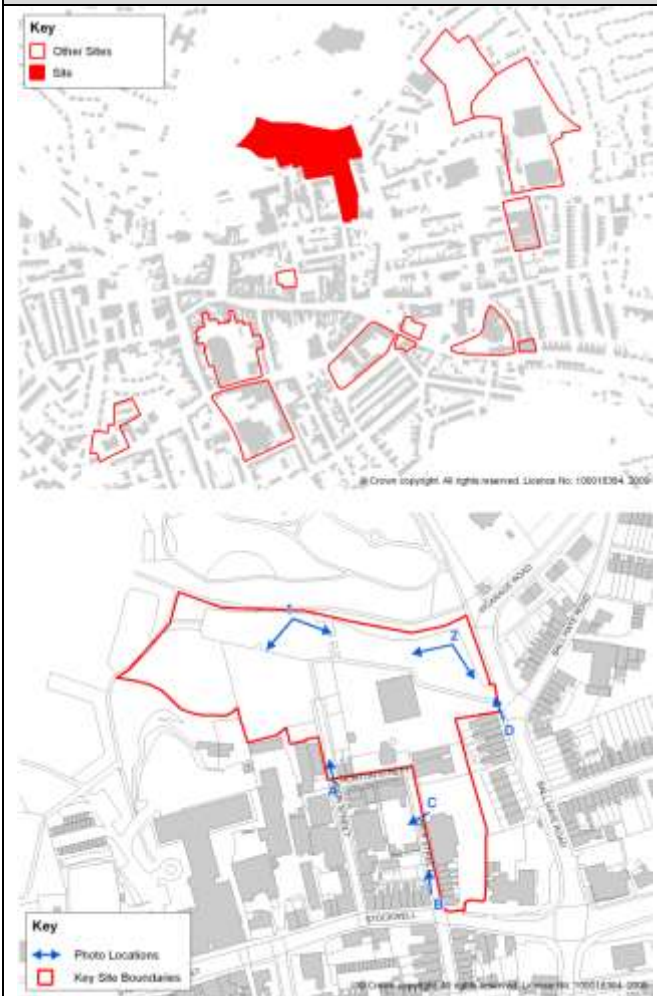
7.2 Each of these sites is considered to have the potential for re-use, through redevelopment or refurbishment, to deliver new facilities to enhance the Town Centre offer.

7.3 Proformas are provided for each site, incorporating a brief description of the principal characteristics; allocation plan; photographic illustrations; ownership details.

7.4 Where it has been possible to engage the owners in discussion, aspirations or emerging proposals are noted along with a short summary of issues and opportunities.

7.5 Information provided in confidence is excluded from the summaries.

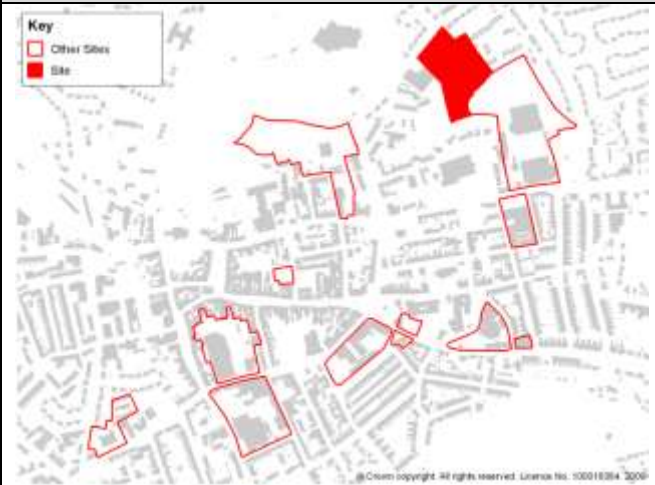
LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – California Mill Area



Principal Characteristics:
Former Mill and backland site with several smaller buildings and considerable vacant/under-used land. Frontage to Ball Hays Road and Stockwell Street. Steep topography. Part owned by College, part owned by Council. Part of the site is in use as a car park, as a long stay by Council officials, the college and on market day by the general public. Residential use to the east and mixed use to the west. Significant level change will influence solutions. Site to the east has consent for apartments, not yet implemented. Significant, although potentially problematic site, in need of comprehensive masterplan.
Area: 1.89 Ha

Ownership	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council own car park. Leek College own much of vacant land. Two private landowners for properties on east side of New Street.
Owner Aspirations	College keen to see re-organisation of ownerships as part of long term property development strategy.
Issues and Opportunities	Need to re-structure land ownerships to facilitate development of derelict buildings/vacant land. Commercial vehicle access to Blackmore & Chell site is issue due to narrow street configuration. Car park underused and constrained by change in levels/poor quality of pedestrian access.

LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – Former British Trimmings Site



Principal Characteristics:

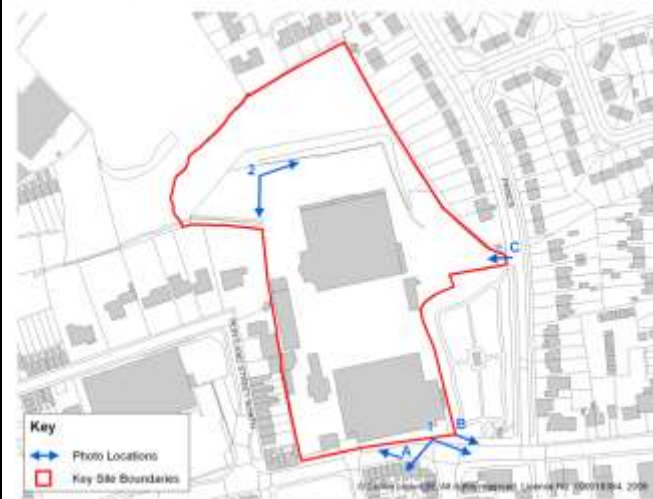
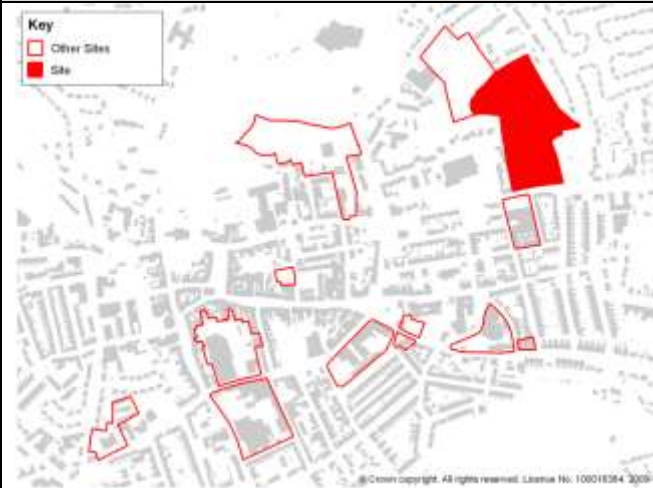
Vacant, overgrown site in peripheral location. Frontage to Ball Haye Road. Site falls away to rear. Domestic scale housing to the east, employment land to other aspects. Extant permission for offices and housing on the site. It is generally accepted that the site is not appropriate for offices as it is too remote from the Town Centre and poorly accessed. Recent interest from Moorland Housing for Extra Care use with affordable housing.

Constrained site – should be considered together with adjacent Eaton House/Adams Food site to the south-east.

Area: 1.23 Ha

Ownership	Moorlands Housing
Owner Aspirations	Original thoughts for mixed residential – B1 office scheme have been dropped as site considered too peripheral for office use. Now preparing application for 88 extra care units (30 percent to be shared ownership).
Issues and Opportunities	Change of use from employment required. Topography, and location suggest residential would be appropriate use.

LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – Eaton House and Surrounding Areas



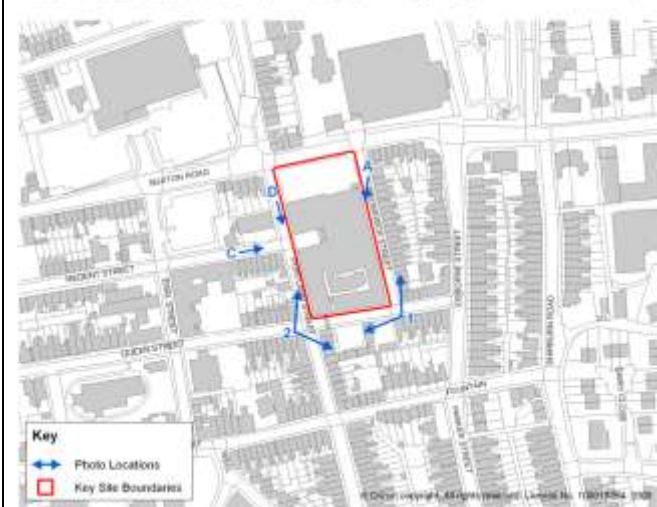
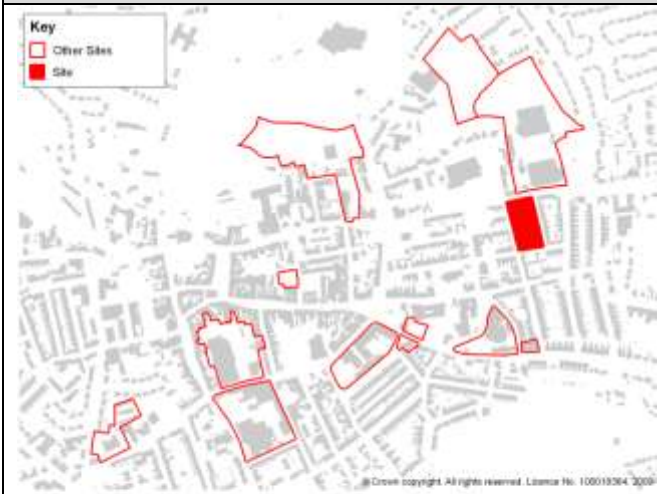
Principal Characteristics:

Large site including Eaton House (recently refurbished 1930s office building) at frontage to Buxton Road with Adams Food Limited employment site to rear. Large footplate buildings, although Eaton House is only 2 storey. Surrounded by residential to the east and south and Co-op Foodstore to the west. Birch Gardens are to the immediate east. The Adams Food site is surplus to requirements and owner has proposed a housing use in the LDF process. Potential for a mixed-use scheme with housing, employment and possibly retail on the frontage. Site could be combined with Former British Trimmings Site.

Area: 2.55 Ha

Ownership	Adams Foods (part of Kerrygold) and Cresnet Trustees and Robert Patrick Thorneycroft
Owner Aspirations	Adams Foods consider site will become surplus at some future stage. Interested in alternative use – residential or retail. Eaton House owner interested in redevelopment for alternative use.
Issues and Opportunities	As retail site could be sequentially preferable to Churnet Works. However site represents substantial employment land location (job generator) within masterplan area. Topography precludes integration with British Trimmings site.

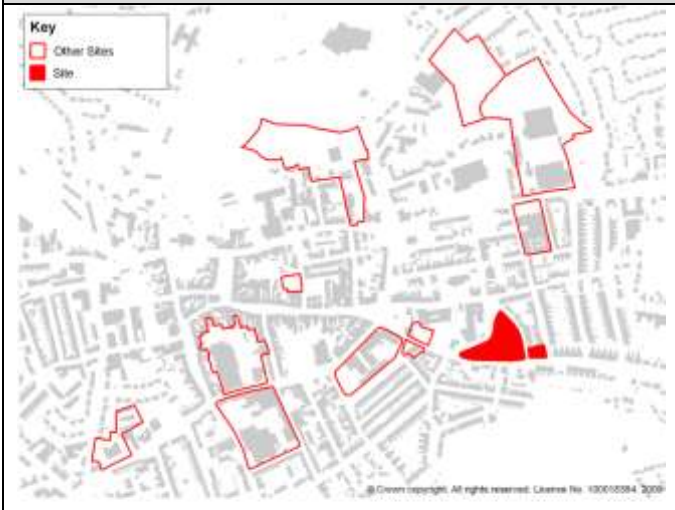
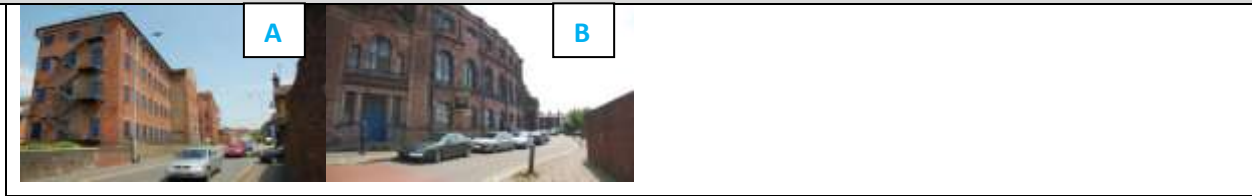
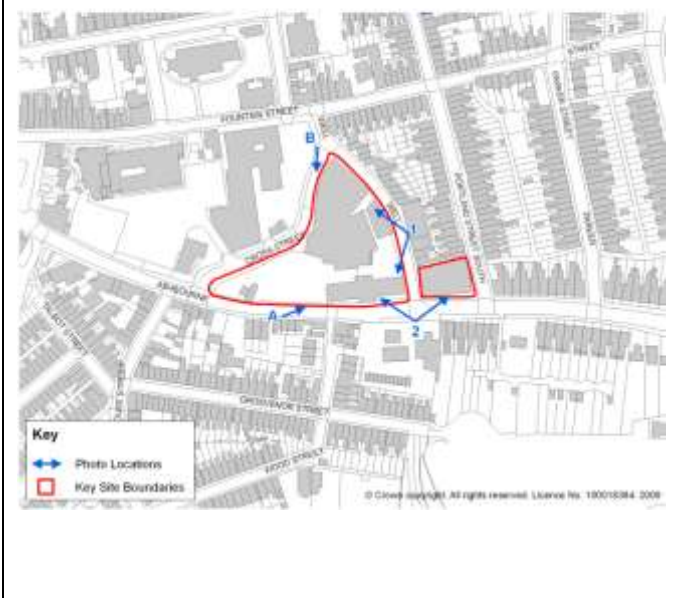

LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – Portland Street Mill Area



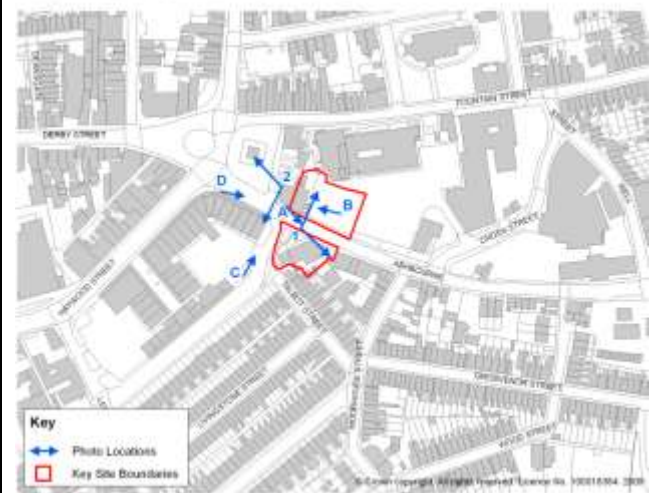
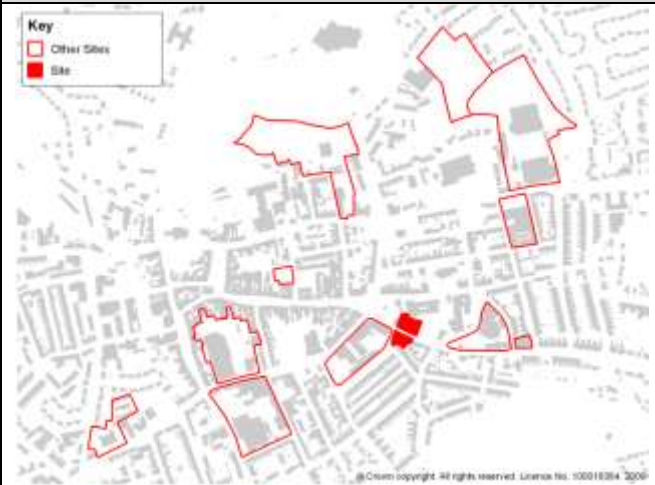
Principal Characteristics:
Former textile mill, surrounded by housing, opposite Eaton House on Buxton Road. Mill is not listed but does have some architectural merit, although compromised with later development. The site is currently part occupied with employment uses and part vacant. Related former mill site to the south has already been successfully converted to residential use, with interesting overhead footbridge linking the two. Interest for retail on the Buxton Road frontage.
SMDC see the site as a residential/employment in use, as small employment sites in and around the Town is important and there is a need to maintain premises for these businesses.
Area: 0.47 Ha

Ownership	Amos Developments.
Owner Aspirations	Following unsuccessful marketing as small format food retail site, intention is now to retain and refurbish for offices and other employment uses.
Issues and Opportunities	Appropriate edge of town centre employment location. Buildings have some architectural merit.

LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – London Mill/York Mill Area

	
	
<p>Principal Characteristics: Three related large mill buildings and associate land on the gateway to the Town Centre at Ashbourne Road. Mills are striking buildings of 3-4 large storeys. Both London Mill buildings (to east of Well Street which dissects the site) are listed and whole site is within the Conservation Area. Domestic residential uses to north, east and south with a petrol filling station immediately opposite and police station to the west. A large part of the site, with Ashbourne Road frontage, is vacant, with a small house to the west. Frontage building has been already refurbished as accommodation for Alton Towers staff. Heritage constraints, size of the buildings and lack of parking makes redevelopment difficult. Most likely use is residential/commercial on ground floor. Comprehensive re-development of this site is required to create a high quality gateway and treatment to these important buildings. Area: 0.61 Ha</p>	
<p>Ownership</p>	<p>York Mill – Charles Adams London Mill – Jacob & Sheila Ezair</p>
<p>Owner Aspirations</p>	<p>Residential use.</p>
<p>Issues and Opportunities</p>	<p>Scale of buildings and their future use challenged by lack of apartments market in Leek. The heritage status (London Mill is Grade 2 listed) and lack of external areas for parking impact on development proposals. Key frontage site on approach to Town Centre.</p>

LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – War Memorial Area including The Talbot and White Lion



Principal Characteristics:

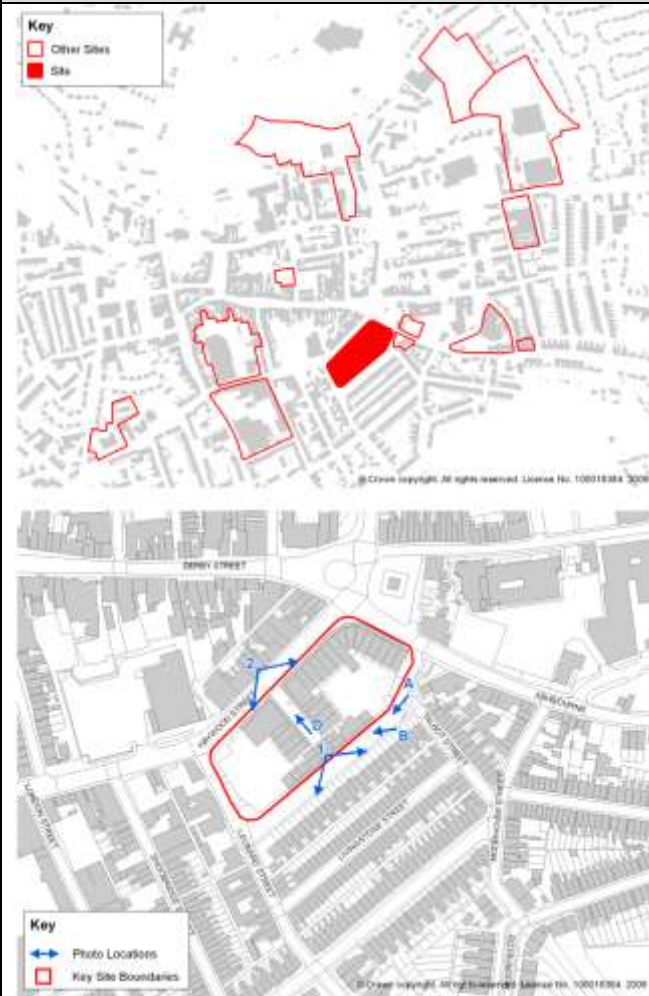
Two public houses, both now vacant, with associated land, opposite the Nicholson War Memorial. Both have some architectural and heritage merit and would define this important gateway well if they were not vacant. Surrounding uses are residential and retail.

The Talbot has an existing consent for 14 apartments and retail on the ground floor, not implemented. The White Lion is vacant, but no alternative uses have been proposed. White Lion has a “Town Centre Shopping Street” frontage in the Local Plan. Likely uses may be restaurant, with residential above. High quality development/refurbishment is needed to define gateway and enhance setting of the Memorial.

Area: 0.19 Ha

Ownership	The Talbot Hotel (in administration) White Lion – owned by Admiral Tavern’s (Pyramid) Ltd
Owner Aspirations	Both sites for sale as investments. Neither owner wishes to retain.
Issues and Opportunities	Talbot Hotel has consent for conversion to ground floor retail with apartments above. Not attracted any interest. Building in poor quality condition. The White Lion vacant and on market as public house – but pub market has shifted west to Market Place area.

LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – Smithfield Centre and Bus Station



Principal Characteristics:

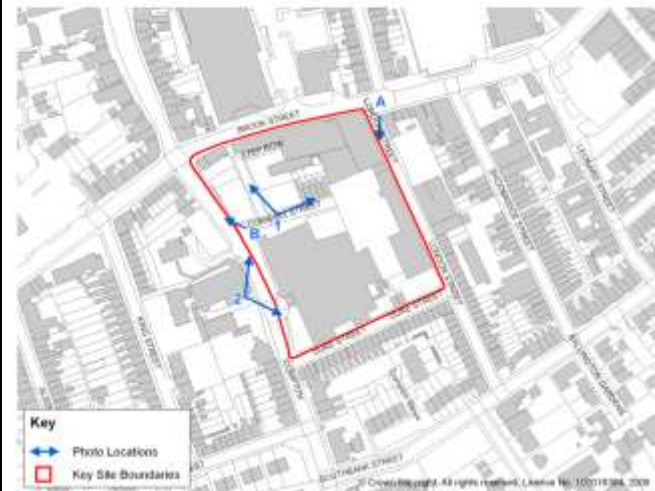
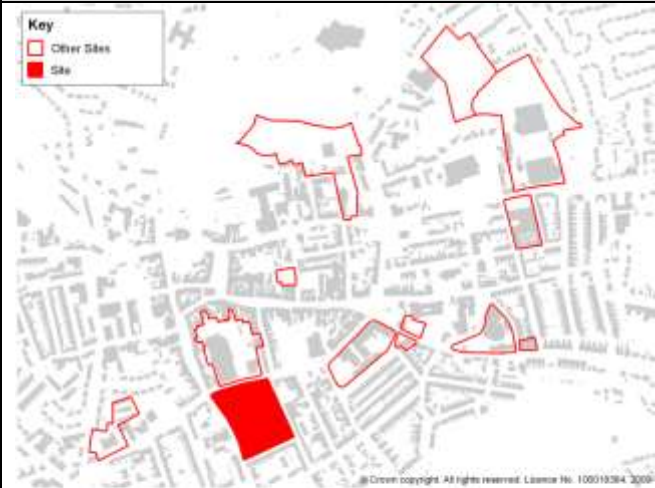
Small, two-storey 1960s development with secondary retail units, public space and bus station (small number of bus stands). Not attractive, but in good use and provides secondary retail space. Public space and upper storey canopies are particularly unsightly. Outside Conservation Area. More secondary retail to the north, bus station faces attractive residential setting. The Haywood Street frontage is defined as a Town Centre Shopping Street in the Local Plan.

Ideally the scheme needs redeveloping or revamping to improve its appearance, but remain as retail. Secondary retail works well adjacent to bus station and forms a link to the Town Centre core.

Area: 0.74 Ha

Ownership	Dean Property Group
Owner Aspirations	Retain as retail investment but would like to see pedestrian connections improved; directional signage from town centre; enhancement of public space.
Issues and Opportunities	Successful retail investment, though scope to improve appearance and public realm. Car park and bus station leased to SMDC. Bus station needs enhancement.

LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – Compton Mill Area

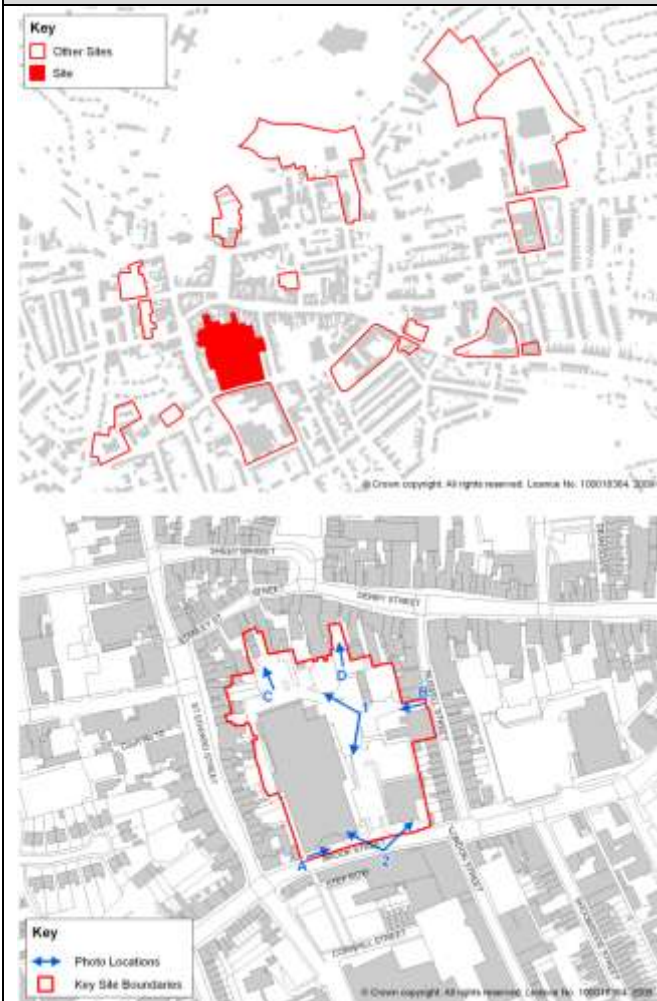


Principal Characteristics:

Masons Mill is a large, three-storey, vacant mill building, with no special architectural or heritage interest. Consent has been granted for demolition and redevelopment for retirement apartments and affordable housing. No work has started on redevelopment. Adjacent is four-storey Compton Mill which is a mix of attractive old buildings incorporating a 1960 extension. The element fronting London Street is Grade II listed. This is in use for a variety of antiques businesses. Both mills are outside the Conservation Area. Access is not good with a sloping road running parallel to Compton Street. There is some parking at the back of the site. The District Council see Compton Mill being retained and improved with retention of the current uses. Improvements could focus on the antiques sector. Area: 1.31 Ha

Ownership	Multiple private owners, including Amos Developments, (Brook Street frontage); Chris Taylor (London Mill)
Owner Aspirations	Brook Street frontage to be retained for mixed commercial/leisure uses.
Issues and Opportunities	Compton Mill is part listed, which would influence any future redevelopment proposals. London Mill is vacant with consent for retirement homes development. Access to the site is poor.

LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – Pickwood Road Area



Principal Characteristics:

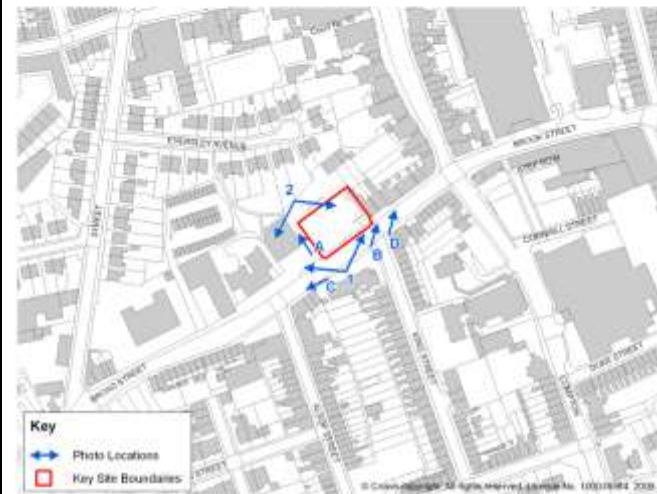
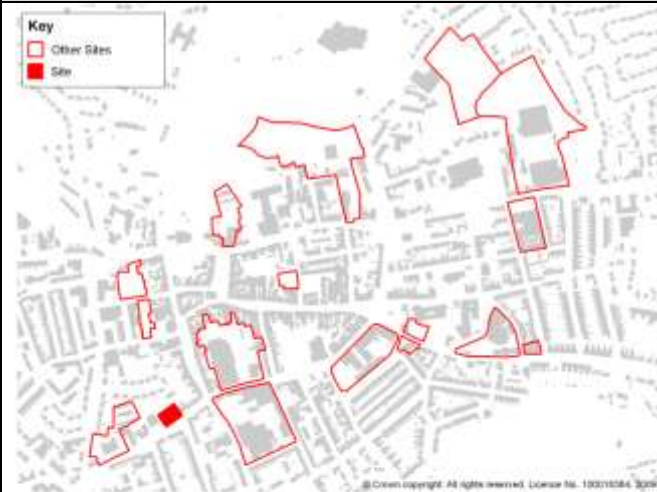
Significant infill site with large format retail in large modern units (Argos and Wilkinsons) in single, large, unattractive building. Poorly configured with no street frontage and also includes public car parking. Site slopes significantly down from the north. Frontage to, and access from, Brook Street, with rear of retail core units on other three sides, to which the site should provide better pedestrian linkage. Site is outside the Conservation Area but adjacent buildings to north and east are within. Only the south-east corner is defined as a Town Centre Shopping Street in the Local Plan.

There is a need to masterplan this area bringing in underused yards, and creating through routes (it was once historically the site of a road linking Derby Street and Brook Street). There is current interest from retailers.

Area: 1.13 Ha

Ownership	Mix of private owners plus Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, who own surface car parks.
Owner Aspirations	None known.
Issues and Opportunities	Key site location, but underused decked parking above retail. Poor linkages to Derby Street, but with scope to improve. Potential re-configuration of site, including restructuring of the built form, could deliver larger floorplates suited to modern retail needs.

LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – Former Broad Street Garage Site



Principal Characteristics:

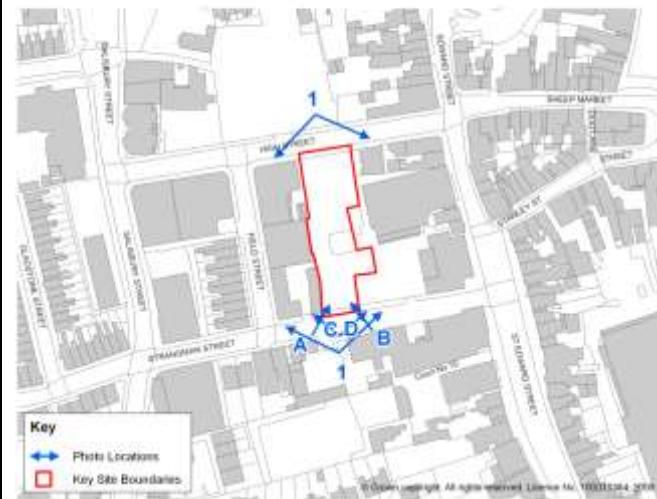
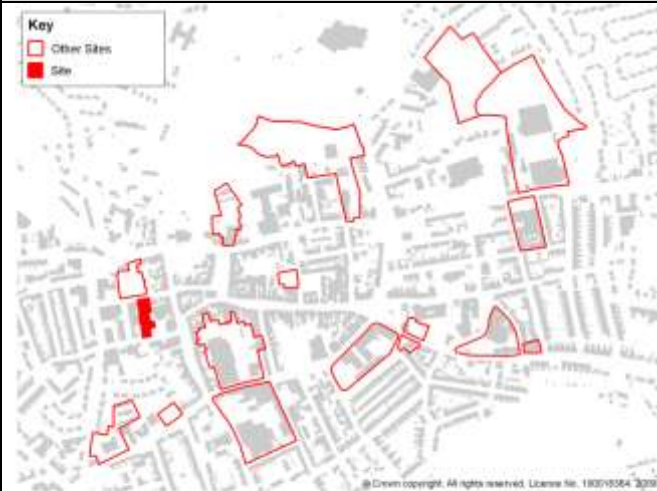
Vacant, cleared site on Broad Street frontage and adjacent car dealership site to the west, includes small car parking area to the rear. At the edge of retail core and outside the Conservation Area, with Halfords to the west and antiques cluster to the east. This frontage is not defined as a Town Centre Shopping Street on the Proposals Map. Residential on the opposite side of Broad Street is within the Conservation Area.

There is interest for retail and restaurant uses for this vacant site. There are issues with the size of site and access from the highway. Consent for a mixed use retail scheme lapsed in 2008. An alternative use could be B1. The site should also be seen in the context of proposals for the Premier Garage site and the changing character of Broad Street.

Area: 0.1 Ha

Ownership	Oakgate Group
Owner Aspirations	Seeking to dispose of site for ground floor retail with residential units above.
Issues and Opportunities	Challenges of a) no apartments market for Leek Town Centre, and b) peripheral retail location.

LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – Land to rear of St Edward Street (Former Kwik-fit Site)



Principal Characteristics:

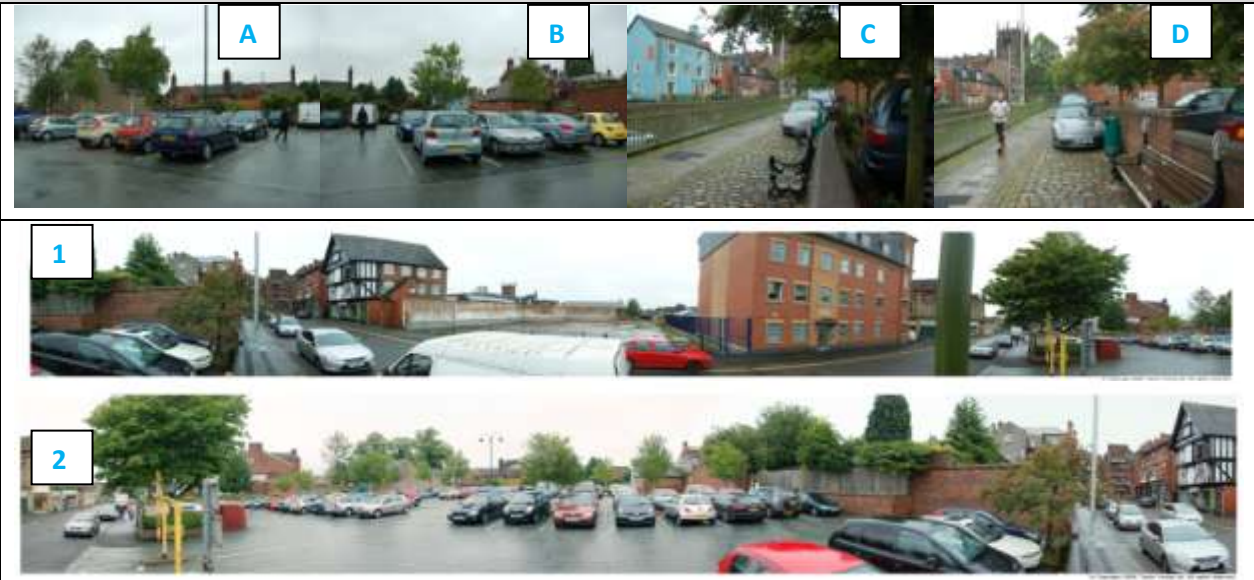
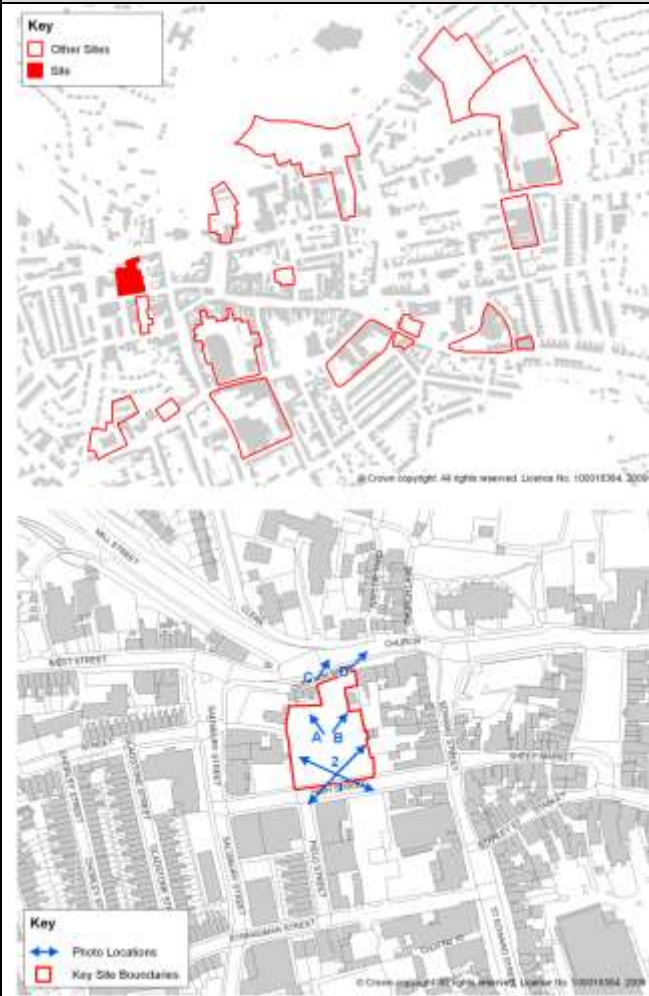
Cleared site used as low grade temporary car parking. Fronts High Street and Strangman Street, surrounded by residential (including new 3-storey apartment scheme), retail and commercial uses on both street frontages. The site falls from north to south with retaining wall half way down. Within the Conservation Area but not adjacent to any buildings of interest. High Street frontage is defined as a Town Centre Shopping Street in the Local Plan.

Expected to be promoted for residential uses but could be suitable for several uses. Needs to front north streets, possibly as two separate plots. Should also be seen in the context of proposals for High Street car park site.

Area: 0.14 Ha

Ownership	Moorlands Housing
Owner Aspirations	Development of residential accommodation, with related workshop space (this to be on High Street frontage), for people with learning difficulties.
Issues and Opportunities	Possible scope to expand site, to achieve St Edward Street frontage, should adjoining Post Office site become surplus to requirement.

LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – High Street Car Park Area



Principal Characteristics:

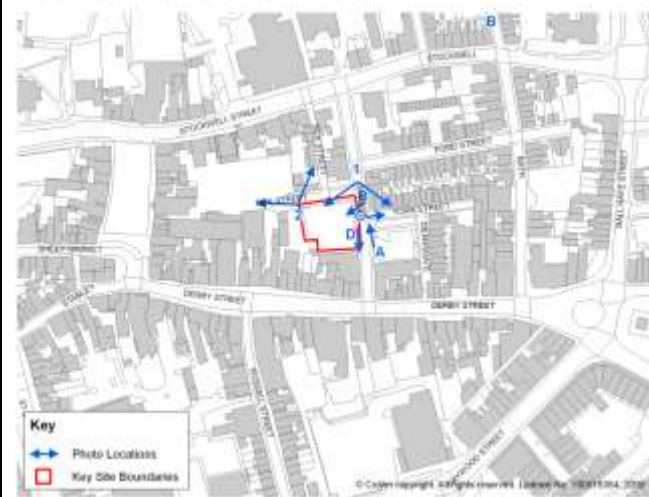
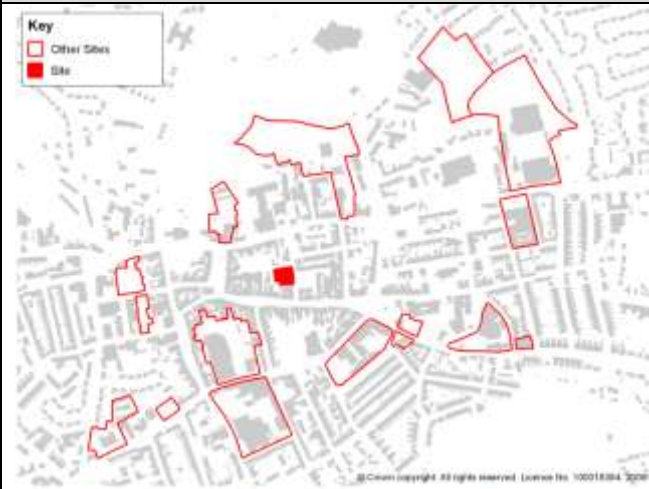
Currently in use as a public car park. Surrounded by mixed Town Centre uses which back onto the site. Frontage is to High Street, which has retail, commercial and residential uses. The northern half of the site (and all surrounding properties that back onto the site) is within the Conservation Area. Town Centre Shopping Street designation stops just short of this site on High Street.

This site could provide a mixed retail/residential scheme. Loss of car parking would have to be accommodated elsewhere. It is opposite the former Kwik Fit site and should be considered alongside this site.

Area: 0.26 Ha

Ownership	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Owner Aspirations	Retain as public car park.
Issues and Opportunities	Location provides scope for being Town Centre gateway car park. Potential to increase level of provision through decked or multi-storey facility, though northern half impacted by Conservation Area Status.

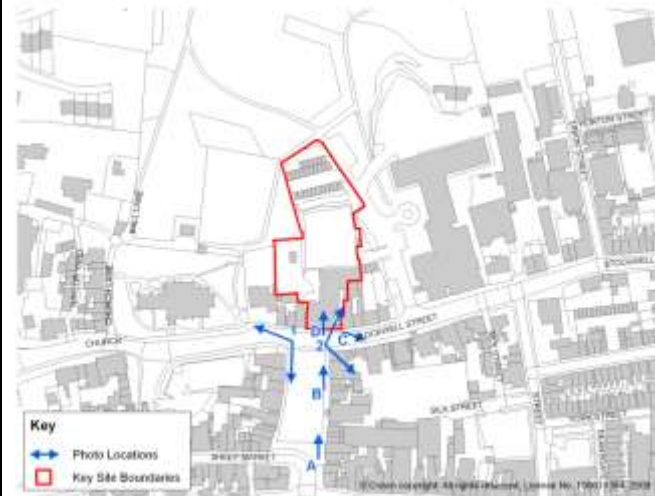
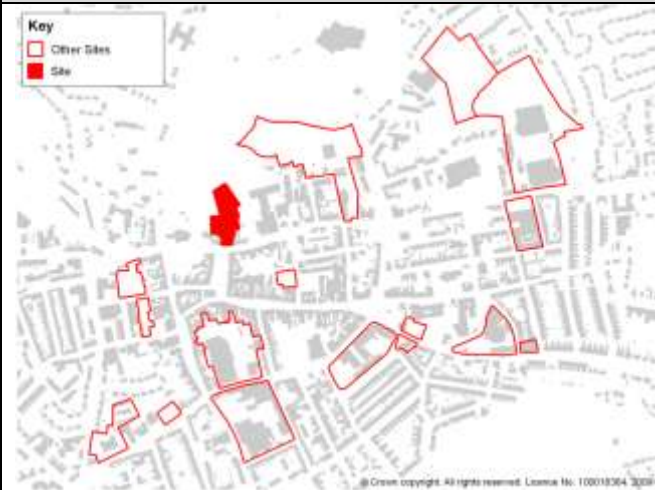
LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – Market Street West Car Park Area



Principal Characteristics:
Currently used as public car park (owned by SMDC), this was formerly the site of the Town Hall. Located in the heart of the retail core (and the Conservation Area) the site is surrounded by Town Centre uses in properties that mostly back onto the site, many of which are of townscape value (especially the club site to the immediate south). It also links to a larger public car park to the west, access to which should be considered. It is nonetheless a rather small site, fronting Market Street. The Market Street frontage is defined in the Local Plan as a Town Centre Shopping Street. This could be a potential development site with an appropriate use fronting Market Street.
Area: 0.1 Ha

Ownership	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Owner Aspirations	Preferred location for new Community/Arts Centre proposed arising from SMDC commissioned study.
Issues and Opportunities	Retailers' survey indicates concern about the impact from loss of strategically located Town Centre car park.

LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – Existing Foxlowe Site



Principal Characteristics:

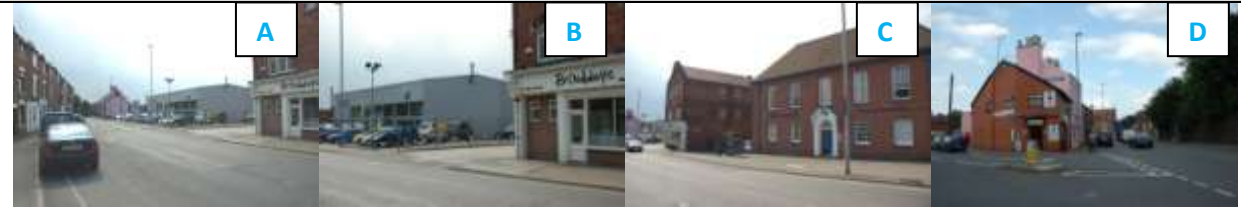
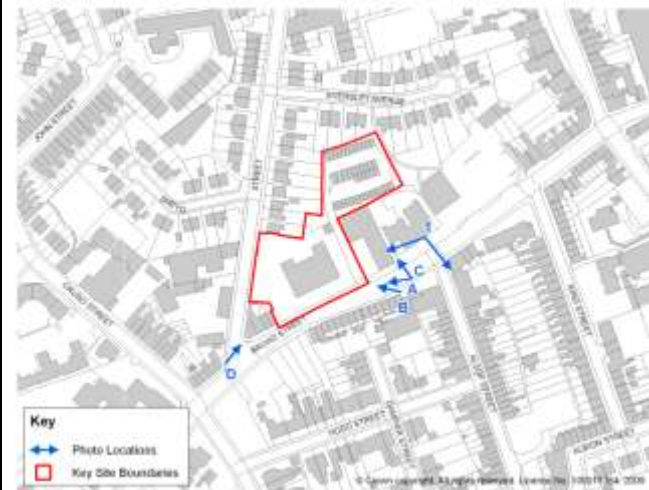
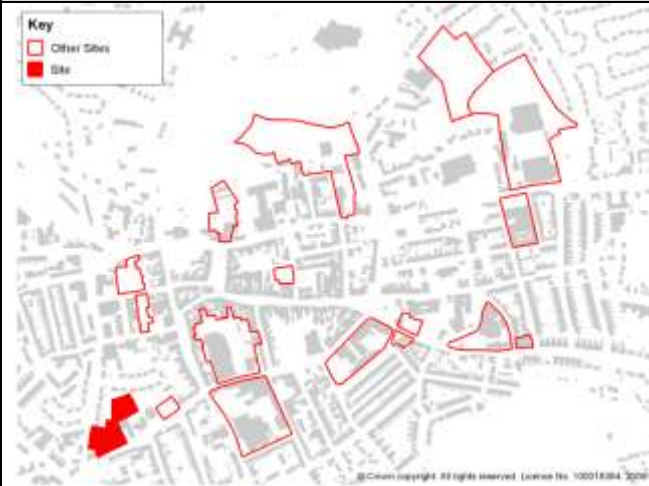
Foxlowe is a historically important listed building on Stockwell Street. This is an impressive Georgian mansion in fine condition, and was previously used as a licensed premises. It is directly opposite Market Place where it contributes strongly to its setting. The site also includes significant land to the rear, including a public car park, over a notable change in levels. The Stockwell Street frontage is defined on the Proposals Map as a Town Centre Shopping Street.

At present the site forms a strong contribution as part of the Town Centre uses in quality townscape buildings around Market Place. However, the site could also offer potential to provide linkage to the under-used land to the rear and Brough Park beyond.

Area: 0.41 Ha

Ownership	John Ball
Owner Aspirations	Re-use of existing building as bar facility – lease negotiations for this underway – and residential development on land to the rear, accessed through car park adjacent to Moorlands House. Alternatively, owner willing to sell whole of the property.
Issues and Opportunities	Public consultation identifies this as the considered best location for Community/Arts Centre facility. Issue of right of way through car park and implications for site redevelopment.

LEEK OPPORTUNITY SITE – Premier Garage



Principal Characteristics:

This is an important gateway site at the corner of Broad Street. It is currently occupied by a Volkswagen car dealership consisting of a large, low-rise shed-type structure and outdoor sales space. The site also includes a surface car parking area to the interior of the block, in the same ownership. The site is outside the Town Centre (this is not defined as a Town Centre Shopping Street) and outside the Conservation Area (which it faces on Broad Street). There are historic three-storey buildings to the east on Broad Street. Broad Street has retail and commercial uses, residential uses are to the north. This is a high profile opportunity site. Suitable uses should be considered.

Area: 0.48 Ha

Ownership	Premier Garage
Owner Aspirations	Retention as car dealership, though were circumstances to change in the future, seen as redevelopment opportunity for alternative commercial and residential uses.
Issues and Opportunities	Site's current use suggests this is only a potential opportunity at some future occasion. Potential gateway site, outside Conservation Area.

8.0 BASELINE TESTING WORKSHOPS

8.1 The draft baseline findings have been presented at three workshop events. These have been held with District Council Councillors; Key Stakeholders and Leek Chamber of Trade. Feedback gathered from the events is summarised below.

District Council Councillors

8.2 Much of the concern relates to access and movement issues associated with the Town Centre. Points raised were:

- Traffic congestion problems, generally within the Town Centre, but specifically at either end of St Edward Street (which leads to some rat-running through the retail heart)
- The pedestrianised areas of Derby Street and Market Place fail to act effectively as areas where pedestrians are supposed to have priority
- Pedestrian crossings could be improved e.g. the Stockwell Street crossing is inappropriately placed. The desire line is at Market Place. There is no appropriate crossing for the College students either
- To facilitate pedestrian connections between the Town Centre and Brough Park, introduce a suspension

bridge at the end of Union Street linking to the Park and the leisure centre

- There is limited market demand for public transport
- Pedestrian linkages around the Town Centre are unfriendly to both able bodied and disabled people.

8.3 A number of issues were raised around the topic of car parking. These were:

- Market Place should not be used as a car park, despite the income generation it provides
- Replace the numerous small, dispersed parking areas with one large car park
- Introduce decked parking to some of the existing busy car parks
- Talbot Hotel car park and adjacent space could capture gateway traffic, but it may not be sufficiently connected enough to the Town Centre
- Car parking layout associated with Pickwood Road could be improved
- To encourage full use of the car park to the rear of California Mill, charges should be introduced at the leisure centre. Leisure centre users could get their parking tickets validated on use.

8.4 Comments were also raised about the town's economy, and in particular the Town Centre's retail offer. These entailed:

- 75 percent of shops close on a Sunday, yet tourists come at the weekend. Only one café opens on Sundays. So business is missing Sunday trade
- A better quality market is needed. When it rains people visit Leek – but the market traders do not
- The tourism potential is not pushed, but at the same time the Town Centre lacks night time economy; lacks entertainment venues; lacks hotel and venue facilities
- The town is missing pavilion gardens; seating on the main streets; directional signage; something for College students to do
- There are not enough good quality products outlets
- Britannia's workforce, although only a short distance away, do not come into Leek Town Centre. A shuttle bus link could encourage lunch time visits.

8.5 Other observations were made regarding the condition of the Town Centre's public realm:

- The War Memorial is isolated by traffic and unattractive shops

- Leek does not fully exploit its Grade I listed church
- Brough Park is a missed opportunity. It should be made more accessible; refurbish the bandstand; introduce night-time lighting
- More greenspace is required. The historic buildings are beautiful but the street scene detracts from their setting
- Few buildings, apart from the War Memorial and the church, are lit. This could be improved.

Key Stakeholders

8.6 As with the Councillors, traffic and access matters featured in the discussions. Aspects raised were:

- The lack of directional signage is a major issue, and can create danger on Stockwell Street. Signage to car parks is confusing and not linked together
- The bus station, although in the right location, requires environmental improvement. However public transport links are poor
- Car parking provision – build a multi-storey car park at California Mill; parking is expensive and limited in scale; existing car park adjacent to California Mill is perceived as unsafe; parking at Wilkinson's is

- underused, with poor access and pedestrian/vehicle conflict; build multi-storey car parks at either end of the Town Centre (one behind the War Memorial and one on High Street)
- The need for more effective speed reduction on Stockwell Street
 - Traffic congestion on Derby Street (parking on one side gives impression of being one-way rather than two-way street – it needs better signage)
 - Could the car park off Buxton Road, opposite the Co-op, be used for coach parking?
- 8.7 Comments about the retail offer included there are not enough modern shops to attract people to the town; there should be a mixed offer for local residents, town centre workers and for visitors; there is no room for more retail in the town centre; more eateries are needed.
- 8.8 Market Place and Derby Street are the existing primary retail areas. Further secondary areas are Brook Street, Fountain Street, Smithfield Centre. There is limited opportunity to buy food from local shops. The impact of the adjacent food stores has been significant.
- 8.9 The tourism offer should be improved. An arts facility and cinema is lacking and these could be drivers for both tourism and the night time economy. There is no proper marketing of the town's beautiful heritage buildings. The town should capitalise on the antiques trade (it is a centre of 'whitewood' products, a niche within a niche) and the proximity to Alton Towers and the Peak District.
- 8.10 Public realm improvements are also necessary. These relate to the public toilets; Derby Street's streetscape (as the prime shopping street); the War Memorial area.
- Opportunity Sites**
- 8.11 Former British Trimmings Site/Eaton House Area – housing would fit with the adjacent uses, but the loss of employment land would be a problem. Could Eaton House site deliver a north east gateway car park?
- 8.12 Portland Mill Area – the mill buildings have been changed over time. Seen as future employment site, but what impact will this have on the adjacent residential area?
- 8.13 California Mill Area – questionable what new uses there might be because of the site's topography.

8.14 Compton Mill Area – buildings of little architectural merit, but London Mill has planning consent for residential use.

8.15 Foxlowe Site – seen as the most appropriate Arts Centres site.

8.16 Market Street West Car Park – too restricted a site for an Arts Centre. Could it be sold for development?

8.17 High Street Car Park – another level of parking on this site would not impact on its physical context. It is in a good location for parking.

8.18 York Mill/London Mill – could these be a possible conversion opportunity to introduce hotel use?

Chamber of Trade

8.19 The consultation with Chamber of Trade members identified a variety of comments and suggestions. These are grouped to access and movement; retail and the economy; public realm; and specific views on the Opportunity Sites.

Access and Movement

- Convert one of the vacant mills into a car park. Macclesfield has done this, and it is not readily

obvious that this is the new use

- Need for more short stay on-street parking
- Consider introducing user friendly streets – shared use.

Retail and Economy

- Need for the supply of start-up units, as the town is not going to attract large companies. The experience is local companies start small and grow
- The Mills Strategy produced a number of years ago showed large gap funding is needed to bring about their re-use
- The Town Centre has the advantage of several brownfield employment sites – and these should be used
- Tourism is an economic driver to be exploited for the Town Centre
- The wider Leek area should look to capitalise on its canal connection.

Public Realm

- Integrate Brough Park into the Town Centre Masterplan area. The Park is hidden, difficult to

access, and not signed. It needs 'green walls' – a clever idea for drawing people from the Town Centre through visual links. Public areas of the park are removed from the Town Centre. The play area offering is poor.

Opportunity Sites

- Eaton House Area – should be retained in business use rather than allow alternative higher value uses
- High Street Car Park – oppose decked investment as it would result in loss of views
- London Mill/York Mill – London Mill includes an electricity substation which constrains development
- Pickwood Road – whilst there are several access points to Derby Street these are not public rights of way and are closed at night
- Compton Mill – consider as a multi-storey car park, with high level pedestrian bridge over Brook Street
- Market Street West Car Park – could become Town Centre greenspace as it represents only a small car park.

9.0 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

9.1 This report has drawn together analysis of pertinent documents, the Town Centre, its location and relationships with surrounding places. It comments on spatial analysis and analysis of the property market – but with particular emphasis on retailing.

Context

9.2 Town Centre regeneration is a key tenet of national planning policy. Market towns like Leek are being challenged as local shops and services close, but because of their higher incidence of independent traders, can importantly offer local distinctiveness and local retail.

9.3 Regional policy identifies Leek as a Local Regeneration Area outside the Major Urban Areas and network of towns identified for major development. However, it is considered to fit to statements supporting the role of rural towns as service centres for their hinterland and a focus for development, whilst ensuring local character is preserved.

9.4 No Town Centre boundary is defined in local policy documents. There is reference to primary and secondary

shopping areas. The emerging LDF Core Strategy sees Leek as a market town with increased growth (in the form of housing and employment) to strengthen its role as a principal service centre. The scale of housing growth is significant, being equivalent in population terms to a one fifth expansion of the town. This has implications for the Town Centre.

9.5 Socio-economic analysis provides pointers for influences upon the Town Centre's offer. Just over half the population is aged under 40, with the largest percentage of all the age groups being in the 30-39 years age bracket. The Town Centre offer needs to address how it can attract and retain loyalty from the younger population.

9.6 Around 37 percent of all the working age population fall into the two lowest social grades – DE – which impacts on the available disposable income and affluence.

9.7 Almost 18 percent of households have no access to a car. This is a challenge for a rural market town with a constrained public transport infrastructure.

Property Analysis

9.8 Leek is the primary retail centre for Staffordshire Moorlands district. Though assessed as a 'local centre' in the UK Town

Centres ranking, Leek provides a role as a market town, administrative centre and employment generator for the district.

- 9.9 The town has a high percentage of independent traders (around 80 percent) and a notably below average share of national multiples. It is not therefore at risk of being characterised as part of ‘Clone Town Britain’.
- 9.10 Although there is a marginally above national average vacancy rate for the Town Centre study area retail outlets (over 14 percent compared to 13 percent), this is not the case for what is considered to be the true Town Centre area. There the vacancy rate is only 6.5 percent – half the national average.
- 9.11 The Town Centre office market is small, in terms of both supply and demand. There is no speculatively built modern, quality accommodation.
- 9.12 The Town Centre needs to connect the town’s visitor attraction appeal to an improved evening offer. It is considered the tourism potential is underplayed, with existing assets not fully exploited. There is strong public demand for delivery of a Community/Arts/Heritage facility, to be

prominently sited in the Town Centre. This would also be a driver for the improved evening offer.

- 9.13 The Town Centre includes significant areas of residential property, although little is in the form of ‘living above the shop’. Most is in the form of terraced or semi-detached housing. Prices are below county and regional averages. There is little evidence of an apartments market, which provides a challenge to the re-use of the numerous redundant or underused mills.

Townscape and Landscape

- 9.14 Leek has a strong historic core with a number of outstanding buildings contributing the overall character. The historic core is focused around the Market Place/St Edward Street. Together with Derby Street this is the traditional retail core at the heart of the town, although there are no large retail units or anchor stores.
- 9.15 The rectangular form of the Town Centre has created a principal movement network which constrains and influences use and perception of the Town Centre. There are major gateways at street intersections, but these are traffic

dominated, creating poor pedestrian environments, severance and a poor sense of arrival.

- 9.16 The main shopping focus is Derby Street, with several small alleys and side streets connecting to large format shopping. Associated with Derby Street is Market Place – a focal point and key destination because of its continuing use as an outdoor market. A second retail heart is formed by the Derby Street/Fountain Street roundabout – an area that includes the iconic Nicholson War Memorial.
- 9.17 The number of high quality listed and significant buildings distributed throughout the Town Centre (most of which comprises a Conservation Area) will have influence over future plans.
- 9.18 The identified Opportunity Sites present scope for comprehensive re-development that could deliver appropriate town centre uses.

Access and Movement

- 9.19 There is pedestrian severance between the retail core and the outer residential areas due to the busy ring road network and the lack of controlled crossing facilities.

9.20 Town Centre traffic includes a high proportion of HGV traffic from the local industrial areas, adding to congestion issues. There is a need to redirect these vehicles away from the Town Centre.

9.21 Three of the four major road junctions need to be improved, which might be part of a more radical traffic management scheme around the Town Centre.

9.22 Leek is disconnected from the rail network. Bus services are poor, with provision extremely limited after 6pm. As such the evening economy is almost entirely reliant on the private car.

Opportunity Sites

9.23 The fifteen Opportunity Sites provide specific development opportunities to be incorporated within the overall masterplan framework. It must be recognised that for some ownership issues, owners aspirations and existing uses mean that realising the opportunity may be a medium or long term action.

Emerging Objectives

9.24 Taking into consideration all that is set out in this report, the emerging strategic objectives are:

- Clarify and strengthen the car park offer
- Redefine the four key gateway junctions
- Address public transport infrastructure improvements
- Consider wider area road and/or rail network improvements
- Determine the Arts/Heritage Centre location
- Improve pedestrian and cycle connections
- Consider extending/enhancing pedestrian areas
- Create enhanced and new circuits
- Introduction of a greater diversity of uses
- Create green infrastructure in the Town Centre, with improved connections to Brough Park
- Comprehensive strategy that provides coherence to intervention areas, ranging from 'keyhole surgery' type improvements to more comprehensive restructuring
- Focused change that recognises the existing grain – public realm improvements to enhance linkages and smooth transition between residential and Town Centre areas.

Next Steps

- 9.25 The findings of this report were presented to the study's Management and Steering Groups in September 2009. They

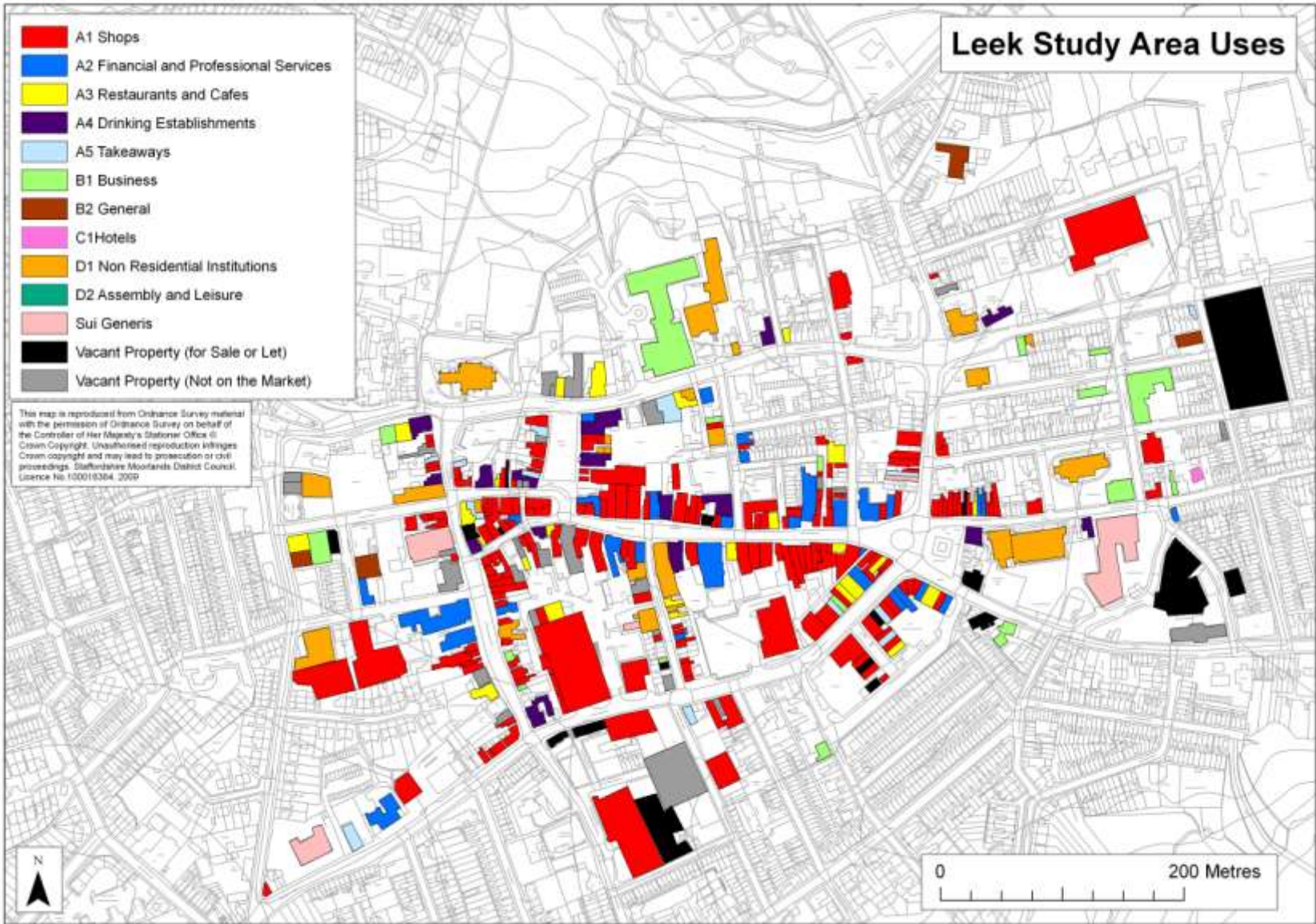
have also been presented to Councillors, key Stakeholders and businesses.

- 9.26 Details of the Opportunity Sites gathered through the baseline analysis, plus other sites and opportunities, will be used to develop design options. These will be presented to a further round of consultation workshops in late September and early October, which will inform the development of the Options Report.

- 9.27 The design options will then be the subject of public consultation in mid-October. Comments received will be reported to the Management and Steering Groups, and then taken into consideration in the development of the draft Masterplan. This will then undergo a four week period of public consultation, during December. Comments received at that stage will then be considered in the development of the preferred Masterplan and related documentation.

Appendix 1

Use Classes Plan



Appendix 2

Retailer Survey Questionnaire

LEEK TOWN CENTRE RETAILER SURVEY

Your Details

Company: _____
Contact Name: _____ Position: _____
Address: _____
Tel No: _____
Business Activity: _____

Your Premises

- 1) How long has the business been in Leek? _____
- 2) How long at the current address? _____
- 3) Do you own the premises? Yes No
- If not, please provide landlord contact details: _____

Your Business

- 4) How many people do you employ? _____ Full Time _____ Part Time
- 5) Does your business suffer from any skill shortages? If so, what? _____
- 6) What are your days and hours of opening? _____
- 7) What percentage of your customers come from:
- | | | | |
|--------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Leek | _____ % | Stoke-on-Trent | _____ % |
| Buxton | _____ % | Newcastle-under-Lyme | _____ % |
| Macclesfield | _____ % | Cheadle | _____ % |
| Congleton | _____ % | Ashbourne | _____ % |
| Other | _____ % If so where from? _____ | | |

Future Accommodation

8) Are you considering moving premises within the next:

12 months?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	2-3 years?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>		No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered Yes to question 8 please respond to questions 9a-9h otherwise please go to question 10 (re: Leek)

9a) Why do you wish to move?

9b) Will you be relocating within Leek town centre?

Yes (please go to 9c) No (please go to 9d)

9c) If so - please indicate preferred town centre location(s) below:

Smithfield Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	St Edward Street	<input type="checkbox"/>
Derby Street	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sheep Market	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stanley Street	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brook Street	<input type="checkbox"/>
Market Place	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other	_____		

9d) Why are you leaving Leek town centre?

9e) What size of property are you considering (please specify in sqft or sqm)?

9f) Tenure required? Freehold Leasehold

9g) Quality of premises preferred? Prestigious/New Moderate Basic/Budget

9h) What do you consider to be the most important factor(s) when seeking alternative accommodation? Please state below.

Leek

10) What are the good features of Leek as a shopping centre?

11) What are the bad?

12) Over the last 5 years has:

TRADE	Increased <input type="checkbox"/>	Decreased <input type="checkbox"/>	Stayed the same <input type="checkbox"/>
FOOTFALL	Increased <input type="checkbox"/>	Decreased <input type="checkbox"/>	Stayed the same <input type="checkbox"/>

13) Over the last year has:

TRADE	Increased <input type="checkbox"/>	Decreased <input type="checkbox"/>	Stayed the same <input type="checkbox"/>
FOOTFALL	Increased <input type="checkbox"/>	Decreased <input type="checkbox"/>	Stayed the same <input type="checkbox"/>

14) What could be done to increase the numbers of shoppers in the town centre? (e.g. advertising, initiatives, better access, markets or events)

15) What could be done to improve the town's appearance?

16) What do you think about out-of-town/edge of town retail developments and their impact on town centres?

Additional Comments

17) If you have any additional comments please use the space below.

Thank you for your assistance. All comments will be treated in confidence. If you would like any further information on this survey please contact Ciara Sweeney at BE Group on 01925 822112
Please return the questionnaire in the enclosed pre-paid reply envelope by
18th August 2009 or fax back to 01925 822113

Appendix 3

Public Launch Comments

Leek Town Centre Masterplan

Launch Day - Wednesday 5th August 2009

Market Stall 10am - 4pm: Approx. 50 people attended

Churnot Room, Moorlands House 5 - 7pm: Approx 20 people attended.

Total - 49 individuals completed comments forms on the day, 46 in post

Comment Category	Tally
Access - alleyways need improvement	1
Access - deliveries only before 10am or after 4pm	1
Access - disagree with by-pass	1
Access - important to consider/improve wheelchair access	1
Access - improve gateways to town	1
Access - improve pavements on Market Place	2
Access - improve public transport in and to Leek	2
Access - Leek needs a railway connection - especially if more house to be built	1
Access - more drop-kerbs for wheelchair users	1
Access - needs by-pass to take through traffic out of town centre	7
Access - too much traffic in town centre	2
Access - pedestrian crossing needed on Broad Street/St Edwards Street	2
Access - pedestrian crossing needed on Russell Street/Brook Street	1
Access - plan good links between St. Edwards Street, Derby Street, Silk Street and Market Place	1
Access - prevent traffic flow through Sheep Market and down Stanley Street	2
Access - signage to Wilkinsons area needed	1
Access - signage in general needed	2
Arts Centre - Foxlowe (theatre, exhibition space, heritage, community facility)	35
Arts Centre - not on Market Street/old Town Hall site	5
Arts Centre - Old Post Office	3
Arts Centre - Quick Fit	1
Attractions - Churnet Valley Railway, extend along canal basin	2
Attractions - need visitor centre and attractions in Canal Basin with shuttle bus to town centre	3
Conservation - better enforcement of conservation, no to plastic doors	2
Conservation - conserve the beautiful buildings/character of Leek	17
Conservation - must keep mills preserved/ find better uses for them	5

Employment - need for industrial starter units at Cornhill	1
General - adopt good quality, simple design	3
General - Ashbourne is better than Leek	1
General - Buxton is better to Leek	2
General - can we invite public to put forward creative ideas for sites, Dragon's Den style?	1
General - improve the main street	1
General - keep the town as it is, new things will spoil it	7
General - Leek needs to generate its own income, it is becoming a dormitory town	1
General - Macclesfield is better than Leek	1
General - more public seating is required - there is none!	1
General - need to attract more people to Leek	4
General - town centre boundary needs to be redrawn - it is too large	1
General - all areas in town centre should be eligible to shop front improvements grant	1
General - the library is good	1
General - consider eco-initiatives	
Leek - is attractive/has nice environment	5
Leek - is good for ...shops	6
Leek - could be a lot better	1
Leek - great little town	3
Leek - greening Leek is important (more trees on Derby Street)	4
Leek - needs some modern architecture/facilities	2
Leek - is Market Square and the Butter Market	1
Leek - is a beautiful old market town	3
Leek - is better than Buxton	2
Leek - is better than Stafford/Biddulph	2
Leek - is good for a day out	1
Leek - is cared for	1
Leek - has an interesting history	1
Leek - is good for...antiques	1
Leek - is good for...farmers market	1
Leek - needs a museum/arts & heritage centre/theatre	17
Leek - needs somewhere to hold wedding receptions	1
Leek - needs a town hall, a focus	3
Leisure - move nightclubs to edge of town centre	1

Maintenance - drains are always blocked bottom of London Street	1
Maintenance - keep the town tidy	6
Market - has declined considerably	1
Market - increase market days	1
Market - keep the market as it is	2
Market - reduce market stall rental to encourage take-up	1
Market - improve quality and choice at Wednesday market	3
Market - needs more support from the Council	1
Market Place - cobble stones need filling in/replacing to prevent falls	2
Market Place - is the heart of Leek	3
Market Place - leave it alone	2
Market Place - no to bollards and proposed paving	4
Market Place - remove bollards at top of Market Place	1
Parking - do not reduce car parking	5
Parking - free parking for market traders	1
Parking - free parking on market days or until 11pm daily	1
Parking - High Street Car Park should be double decked	1
Parking - improve car parking	5
Parking - is good	2
Parking - is good value	1
Parking - is poor	2
Parking - need more (there are only two long stay car parks) (disabled spaces)	8
Parking - use main roads for car parking	1
Pedestrianisation - Car access to pedestrianised areas need better enforcement	2
Pedestrianisation - more needed	14
Public realm - the town needs plaques highlighting Leeks Historical Heritage	1
Public realm - more trees/flower beds in town centre	2
Public Toilets - access to Silk Street public toilets is hazardous	1
Public Toilets - more needed - there are only toilets at Silk Street and Bus Station	1
Public Toilets - need public toilets in Wilkinsons area	2
Retail - antiques cluster has declined considerably following 9/11	1
Retail - bigger swimming pool and gym needed	1
Retail - encourage attractive shop fronts	4
Retail - Leek has very friendly shopkeepers	1

Retail - more shops for young people, ladies clothing and children e.g. Next, Topshop	3
Retail - more shops needed	6
Retail - need to attract more specialist/independent shops	1
Retail - need to promote good quality, upmarket shops	1
Retail - no more charity shops	9
Retail - encourage small businesses to replace betting shops	1
Retail - no to out-of-town retail	8
Retail - support/concessions needed for start-up businesses and existing independents	2
Retail - the range of shops is very good	3
Retail - yes to out-of-town retail	2
Retail - small businesses should be supported	2
Total Comments Received	307
Number of Comments Forms Completed	95
* Two comments were also received from residents who expected options and drawn plans at this stage	

Source: BE Group, 2009

