



TRAFFORD
COUNCIL



URMSTON TOWN CENTRE: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

WORKING DRAFT - MAY 2015

TRAFFORD - FIRST FOR TOWN CENTRES

CONTENTS

		Page number
1.	BACKGROUND	3
2.	VISION AND OBJECTIVES	14
3.	KEY PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES	15
4.	IMPLEMENTATION	21
5.	KEY ACTIONS	24
APPENDIX 1.	OPPORTUNITIES PLAN	26
APPENDIX 2.	DRAFT TRAFFORD LOCAL PLAN: LAND ALLOCATIONS POLICIES MAP	27
APPENDIX 3.	ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS	28

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

As a shopping and leisure destination, Urmston town centre primarily serves local residents from the north of Trafford including the nearby areas of Davyhulme and Flixton.

In 2007, a major transformation of the town centre commenced when the old Shopping Precinct was demolished and a £45 million retail, leisure and residential development named Eden Square was constructed on the site. Other assets in Urmston are the market, which operates on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and nearby green space at Goldenhill Park and the Memorial Gardens which provide recreational facilities.

Although Urmston has managed to maintain a town centre vacancy rate below the national average, the town centre is not immune from the pressures which have caused many town centres across the country to decline through out-of-town retail, internet shopping, the global economic recession and changing retailer strategies. However, a strong independent business community has helped keep Urmston town centre vibrant and, in February 2015, the Manchester Evening News reported that Urmston is now being revitalised by a community of enthusiastic independents in an article headlined “Suburb Winning the Fight Against the Big Boys”. There are elements of the town centre offer which could be improved or strengthened to ensure the town centre continues to meet the needs and aspirations of local residents and visitors.

Ensuring the vitality of town centres is a priority for Trafford Council and there is a commitment to ensuring that local people are able to shop, eat, drink, relax and access key services within their town centre. The Urmston Town Centre Improvement Plan aims to achieve this by establishing a vision for the town centre, identifying priority areas for future development and setting out the key actions that are necessary to deliver change and growth.

1.2 Location

The town of Urmston is part of the Metropolitan Borough of Trafford, in Greater Manchester, and lies six miles to the south west of the city of Manchester. Historically, Urmston was part of Lancashire. The southern boundary is marked by the River Mersey and the Mersey Valley, with Stretford lying to the east and Flixton to the west. Davyhulme lies to the north of the town centre.



Junctions 9 and 10 of the M60 motorway, located approximately one mile from the town centre, connect Urmston to the rest of Greater Manchester and the motorway network. The main car parking serving the town centre is the  privately owned facility at Eden Square which offers free short stay parking, although there are some smaller Council owned car parks and on-street parking nearby. There is a railway station in the heart of the town centre that connects to Liverpool and Manchester via Warrington, and Liverpool South Parkway (for Liverpool John Lennon Airport). Urmston is not served by Metrolink; the nearest Metrolink stations are located in Stretford and Eccles. The area is generally well served by bus services, providing transport to many parts of Greater Manchester including Manchester city centre, Bolton, Stockport, the Trafford Centre and Altrincham.

1.3 Strategic Context

1.3.1 Trafford Local Plan: Core Strategy (January 2012)

As Urmston town centre has recently undergone a major regeneration scheme (Eden Square), the Core Strategy does not anticipate that there will be any further substantial change within Urmston during the Plan period, although it identifies that there is some potential for smaller scale redevelopment of other existing sites (e.g. Victoria Parade). The Core Strategy sets an objective to protect and enhance the existing town centre, consolidate and improve the convenience and comparison retail offer, and support the diversification to other uses.

1.3.2 Retail and Leisure Study (2007)

This Study set out a requirement for the comprehensive redevelopment of the town centre, including the provision of a large modern food store within the town centre. This policy aspiration was delivered through the Eden Square scheme. In addition to the main town centre regeneration aspirations, the Study also sought to promote wider town centre regeneration through improvements to the physical environment, landscape, design and public transport facilities.

Victoria Parade is identified as a redevelopment opportunity for retail-led mixed use development with significant emphasis on “improving the overall physical environment within the area and the site’s linkages / integration with the existing retail circuit”.

The Market Place is located away from the primary shopping areas of the town centre and lacks any direct physical linkages; the Study also recommended that, although it is privately owned, the Council should seek to secure qualitative improvements to the physical environment increase the attractiveness to local residents.

1.3.3 Urmston Town Centre Road Map (2014)

A Town Centre Road Map was produced in early 2014 which provided a short-term overview covering physical, economic and community development activities taking place in Urmston town centre. The Improvement Plan represents a progression from this work with a greater focus on the physical aspects of the town centre and delivery.

1.3.4 Draft Land Allocations Plan (2014)

The Council is currently preparing the Trafford Local Plan: Land Allocations Plan which will provide detailed, site specific guidance for allocated sites and will be accompanied by a new Policies Map (see Appendix 2 for draft). The objective of the Plan is to deliver the vision and objectives set out in the Council's adopted Core Strategy and help to ensure that Trafford is a thriving, diverse, prosperous and culturally vibrant place. The Land Allocations Plan will do this in many ways including: identifying sites for housing, employment and other development; setting design and infrastructure requirements for major sites; and setting Town, District and Local Centre boundaries and Primary Shopping Areas.

The Council has consulted on the first draft Land Allocations Plan (LAP). The draft LAP identifies the following action areas for Urmston, which are included in Section 3 of this document:

- Victoria Parade including Units 2-10 Higher Road
- Urmston Market, Railway Road
- Land at Station Road / Urmston Railway Station

It was originally anticipated that a second draft LAP would be published in early 2015, informed by the comments received during consultation on the first draft. However, since the preparation of the first draft LAP, work has begun on a Joint Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF). Initial consultation took place in 2014 and all GM authorities are contributing to the baseline evidence for the spatial framework, scheduled for adoption by Autumn 2018. Consequently, it has been decided to put the preparation of the LAP on hold until the Joint GMSF has progressed further.

1.4 Urmston Town Centre Boundary

URMSTON TOWN CENTRE: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

WORKING DRAFT - MAY 2015

The area referred to as the “town centre” within the Improvement Plan is defined in the Trafford Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as shown in Figure 2. The areas included in the Improvement Plan are listed below (property numbers are shown in brackets when only part of a road is included):

URMSTON TOWN CENTRE: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

WORKING DRAFT - MAY 2015

Flixton Road (1 – 65)

Crofts Bank Road (1 – 24)

Primrose Avenue

Atkinson Road

Railway Road (1 – 4 & Urmston Market)

Higher Road (1 – 9)

Greenfield Avenue (1 – 12)

Stretford Road (1 – 11)

Station Road

Hilton Avenue

Gloucester Road (52 – 82)

Church Road (1 – 14)

The rationale for using this boundary is that it includes: the main shopping area; a strong leisure offer including bars and restaurants; public services including the Library; the main town centre car parks; a large supermarket; and the key action areas identified within the Land Allocations Plan. This area also includes a number of sites where there are opportunities for intervention or new development.

In addition, Goldenhill Park and the Memorial Gardens will be considered to be part of the town centre environmental improvements since they are important in terms of encouraging recreation and increasing dwell times in the town centre (see Section 3.2).

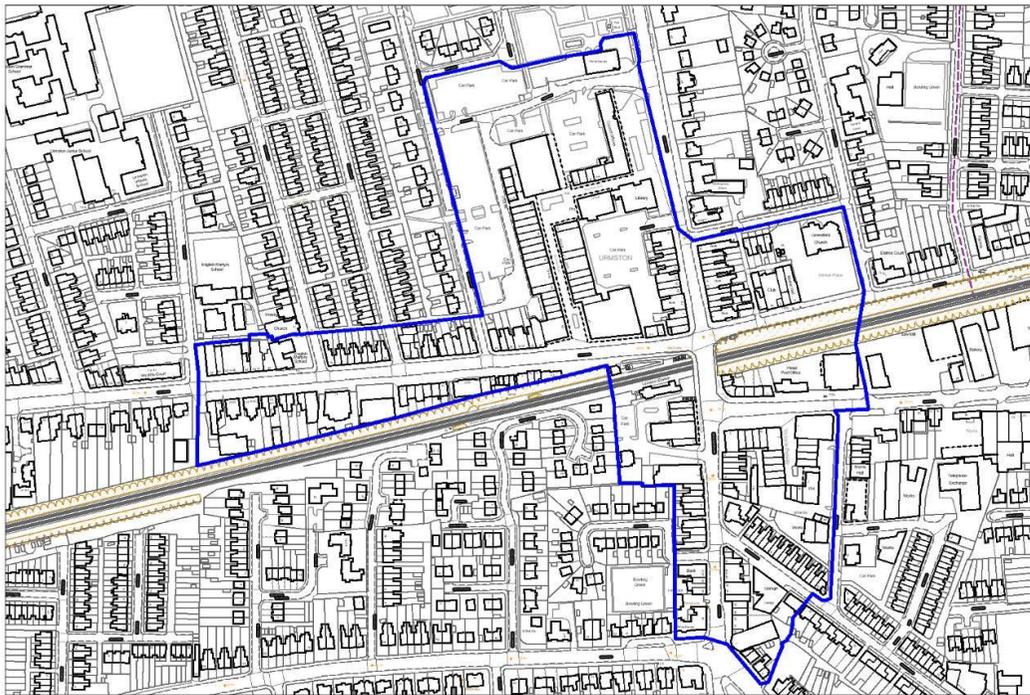


Figure 2. Urmston Town Centre Boundary

1.5 Local Demographic

Population - The town centre serves Urmston's total population (including Davyhulme and Flixton) of around 43,000.

Employment and Earnings - Overall, Trafford is a relatively affluent Borough:

- 78.3% of the population are economically active which is higher than the North West (75%) and Great Britain (77.4%).
- Unemployment at 6.1% is lower than the North West (7.9%) and Great Britain (7.2%).
- 52.1% of Trafford's population are Managers, Directors and professional occupations which is higher than the North West (41.2%) and Great Britain (44.5%).
- Trafford residents are relatively well paid. The average weekly wage is £573 compared to the north-west average (£483) and Great Britain average (£518).
- The largest employment sector in Trafford is Services (85.9% of employees) with particularly strong representation in the following sectors:
 - Financial and Retail is 32.7% compared to NW (20.1%) and GB (21.5%)
 - Wholesale and Retail is 19.5% compared to NW (16.6%) and GB (16.1%)

Qualifications - Trafford's population is well educated. 60.4% of the working age population are educated to equivalent of NVQ Level 3 (A-Levels) or above compared to 51.9% North West and 55.6% for Great Britain. 40.5% of the population are educated to equivalent of NVQ Level 4 (degree level) or above, compared to 31% North West and 35.3% Great Britain.

Socio-economic characteristics – Acorn provides an understanding of different types of people within a local area. The majority of people in the Urmston area are described as 'Affluent Achievers' and 'Comfortable Communities'.

Table 1. Acorn Scores for Urmston's population

Category	Score
Affluent Achievers	44.25
Comfortable Communities	34.50
Rising Prosperity	2.00

- Affluent Achievers includes wealthy professionals with large houses.
- Comfortable Communities includes families in larger, suburban housing, comfortable older people, smaller houses and starter homes.
- Rising Prosperity includes younger professionals in smaller flats, metropolitan professionals and career climbers.

1.6 Town Centre Performance

Number of properties - There are approximately 205 ground floor properties in Urmston town centre.

Vacancy rate – The vacancy rate for March 2015 was 5.8%, significantly below the North West average of 16.9% and UK average of 11.8%.

Independent businesses - The independent business sector is strong in Urmston town centre accounting for around 70% of the retail and leisure businesses.

Parking provision - Parking is well distributed, throughout Urmston town centre. The majority is within Eden Square which is in private ownership but there are also smaller Council owned car parks on Park Road North, Manor Avenue and Atkinson Avenue. On-street parking spaces are available on Flixton Road, Gloucester Road and Crofts Bank Road. The numbers of car parking spaces are shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 2. Number of private parking spaces

Private Car Parks	Number of spaces
Eden Square	486
Total	486

Table 3. Number of council of off-street parking spaces

Council Car Parking	Number of spaces
Park Road North	100
Manor Avenue	74
Atkinson Road	25
Total	199

Table 4. Number of on-street parking spaces

On - Street Car Parking	Number of spaces
Flixton Road	31
Gloucester Road	15
Crofts Bank Road	3
Total	49

Car parking in Urmston is relatively inexpensive:

- Eden Square offers free parking for the first 3 hours, £2.50 for 3-5 hours and £10.00 for over 5 hours.
- On-street parking is a nominal 20p for the first hour and 60p for 2 hours. This is the same as elsewhere in Trafford and amongst the lowest in the North West.

Urmston Rental levels (indicative only):

- **Office space** – circa £120-140 per sq.m / £11-13 per sq.ft.
- **Retail space** – circa £180-210 per sq.m / £17-20 per sq.ft. (on an overall basis)

Crime – Urmston has a crime rate of 47.2 per 1,000 population. The Greater Manchester average is 70.03

1.7 Priority Areas

The following are identified as priority areas within the town centre due to their retail and leisure offer, and/or their ability to influence the economic growth of the town centre.

1.7.1 Crofts Bank Road / Station Road (see Figures 3 & 4) - Crofts Bank Road provides the main gateway into the town centre coming from the direction of the J9 and J10 of the M60 and provides the access to the Eden Square Car Park. It continues as Station Road which is the main access to the town centre from the direction of Stretford.

As it runs through the town centre, the character of Crofts Bank Road changes from residential to business before becoming a traditional retail high street which extends down Station Road, after crossing the Railway line. The majority of businesses are independent retailers selling a broad range of goods. Businesses include banks, chemist, newsagents, butchers, a jewellery shop and a furniture shop alongside cafes, restaurants and hot food takeaways.

A site on Station Road next to the Railway Station is identified within the draft Land Allocations Plan (see section 3.1.2) and is currently fronted by single storey retail and café uses which are of a poor design quality, and include car parking and servicing to the rear.



Figure 3. Crofts Bank Road



Figure 4. Station Road

1.7.2 Flixton Road (see Figures 5 & 6) - Flixton Road is a traditional High Street containing a wide mix of retail, leisure and professional service uses, largely independently owned. This includes a number of specialist retailers such as shops selling dancewear, vintage goods and confectionary, there are also a number of estate agents and pubs, cafes and restaurants. Eden Square can be accessed from Flixton Road and some of the units within the Eden Square development, including the Gym and Estate Agents, face onto Flixton Road. The footway on the southern edge is wider with tree planting, which will increase as part the upcoming environmental improvement works. There is on-street short stay parking to serve the neighbouring premises.



Figure 5. Flixton Road



Figure 6. Eden Square from Flixton Road

1.7.3 Railway Road / Market (see Figures 7 & 8) - The market place in Urmston is located away from the primary shopping areas of the town centre and lacks direct physical linkages. Railway Road has low quality retail uses along their northern frontages, some of which are connected to the Market operation and therefore are closed on non-market days giving the street a poor appearance. The railway line runs parallel to this road restricting development along the southern edge.

Urmston Market is privately owned and can be accessed from both Railway Road and Primrose Avenue. It has declined in recent years resulting in concerns from traders and the local community.



Figure 7. Railway Road



Figure 8. Urmston Market, Railway Road

1.7.4 Higher Road and Victoria Parade (see Figures 9 & 10) - The lower end of Higher Road connecting to Station Road contains a mix of town centre type retail and leisure uses. Further away from the town centre the uses become less dense with the Royal Mail Sorting Office, car sales and repair centres and trade timber and building supplies.

Accessed from Higher Road, Victoria Parade is a 1960's precinct development of poor design quality with narrow circulation space and small unit sizes. In physical terms, the Parade 'turns its back' on the existing retail circuit and lacks a prominent frontage on to Station Road or Higher Road. It was previously anchored by a small Co-op supermarket which closed in 2012, and has now been converted to a children's soft play centre and café with pop up shops fronting the unit. However, the existing retail offer is poor with several vacancies and it is clear that the Parade does not contribute in qualitative terms to the existing town centre retail offer. Five of the units are being refurbished for restaurant and leisure uses as at February 2015, which is subject to a planning application for change of use which will greatly enhance the offer in this area of the town centre.

There is a vacant former Council Transport Depot site further down Higher Road which is identified for potential residential development (22 units) in the Trafford Land Allocations Plan and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2013). However because this is beyond the town centre boundary this has not been identified as a key project in this plan.



Figure 9. Victoria Parade



Figure 10. Higher Road

1.8 Retail Market

The vacancy rate at 5.9% is significantly below the north-west average and there is a good mix of multiple retailers and independents. The greatest concentration of vacant premises within the primary shopping area is around Victoria Parade, although 5 of the units are now being developed for restaurant and leisure uses which will cut the town centre vacancy rate even further.

Despite the low vacancy rate and high quality independents, certain types of shops are under-represented, for example men's clothing, shoes and electronic goods, which is likely to reflect the challenge faced by the close proximity of Urmston town centre to the Trafford Centre and Trafford Retail Park. Although, there are three town centre supermarkets, the town centre has managed to retain traditional, independent butchers and green grocers that have been lost from many other town centres. There are also a number of specialist/niche retailers present as well as shops selling bulky goods such as furniture and appliances. The budget offer is well serviced by the likes of Quality Save and Poundland and a number of different charity shops.

Although the relatively affluent local catchment might otherwise support a proportion of "higher-end" retailers, this section of the market is already well served by the Trafford Centre which lies only 2 miles away; therefore it is important that Urmston continues to differentiate its offer from the Trafford Centre with its independent and specialist offer. The generally smaller sizes of units that are available in Urmston town centre are suitable for smaller, independent / niche retailers.

1.9 Office Market

Urmston currently has a limited quantity of office space and there is no purpose-built office accommodation in the vicinity of the town centre. Urmston is not seen as a focus for new office accommodation at the current time as the town centre is close to Trafford Wharfside, Trafford Centre Rectangle and the City Centre, where there is a significant quantity of available space. The only immediate opportunities for new office accommodation in the town centre would currently be on vacant upper floors above retail units.

1.10 Residential Market

The residential property market in Trafford has historically been strong, relative to the performance of the regional and sub-regional market, with average prices being c£230,000 (January 2015). Residential property prices in Urmston are slightly lower than the average for Trafford with values now around £200,000. Although property is more expensive than some nearby areas such as Stretford and Eccles, prices remain lower than the south of the borough where average house prices in Altrincham are starting to approach £400,000. The construction of Eden Square created additional residential properties in the town centre; however the scope for new residential development within Urmston town centre is limited by the shortage of available development sites, with the former Council Transport Depot on Higher Road being one of the nearest opportunities (see 1.7.4).

2.0 VISION AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Vision

The vision is: *'To ensure Urmston town centre is a prosperous, vibrant, attractive and safe destination with a shopping, leisure, services and employment offer that meets the needs of residents and visitors.'*

To achieve this Vision: *'The Improvement Plan will help to deliver a strong sense of place within Urmston town centre with an enhanced retail and leisure offer served primarily by high quality independent businesses operating alongside national chains in an attractive and well maintained shopping environment. The town centre will include a range of quality restaurant and café uses alongside family orientated entertainment activities contributing to a vibrant evening economy.'*

There will be a clear and distinctive identity that distinguishes the town centre from other competing retail centres, taking advantage of its excellent transport links by rail and road and its environmental assets including links to Goldenhill Park.'

2.2. Objectives

The Urmston Town Centre Improvement Plan will assist the Council and key stakeholders to identify and realise the opportunities which exist within the town centre over the next 5 years. It will secure the successful regeneration of Urmston town centre and provide a prosperous, vibrant, attractive and safe destination. The objectives of the Plan are:

- 1) To encourage private sector investment that realises the full potential of Urmston town centre.
- 2) To improve the overall quality of the town centre and improve its retail, leisure and services offer, particularly the evening economy.
- 3) To maintain the percentage of vacant properties within the town centre below the regional average and develop unused, under-used or derelict properties for a mix of uses.
- 4) To promote the town centre shopping and leisure offer and increase footfall, dwell time and spend.
- 5) To create a strong sense of place within the town centre and improve key town centre gateways.
- 6) To encourage town centre businesses and other stakeholders to work together to deliver change.

3. KEY PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

The following section identifies a number of development and investment opportunities in Urmston town centre, building upon previous strategic work carried out by Trafford Council. It is important to note that the area within the Urmston town centre boundary is almost fully developed with few vacant sites, which restricts the scope for new development opportunities. However, there may be scope for substantial redevelopment of Victoria Parade and land on Station Road next to the Railway Station (see Section 3.1.1 and Appendix 2).

3.1 Priority Sites

3.1.1 Victoria Parade including Units 2-10 Higher Road (*Objectives 1-5*)

A redevelopment of Victoria Parade represents a good opportunity to significantly improve the retail offer to the south of the railway, which is already predominantly secondary in nature and will complement the recent regeneration of the central area through the Eden Square development. The Parade forms a cul-de-sac off Higher Road and is disconnected from the main retail circuit, without a prominent frontage on to Station Road, which may have contributed to its decline.

The draft Land Allocations Plan identifies the site as an area for improvement within the town centre, being suitable for retail-led mixed use development with significant emphasis on improving the overall physical environment within the area and the sites linkages / integration with the existing retail circuit. The redevelopment would comprise primarily retail (Use Classes A1 to A5), office (Use Class B1), 18 residential units, and community facilities (Use Classes D1 and D2), as appropriate. However, the immediacy of any comprehensive redevelopment has been overtaken by recent proposals from one of the main property owners who is currently refurbishing five of the units for leisure uses, including an English brasserie, an American-style restaurant, a Mediterranean tapas bar, a pizza bar serving wood-fired pizzas and a frozen yoghurt cafe. The developers are currently seeking to secure planning permission. It is hoped that this scheme will help to breathe new life into the Square which has been underoccupied for many years and will complement the recent openings of a Children's soft-play area and café and artisan bakery within Victoria Parade and other restaurant, café and bar uses on Higher Road.



Figure 11. Victoria Parade. Five of these units are currently under refurbishment.

Victoria Parade is visually unattractive but there are no current proposals to enhance the frontages of the units as part of the current refurbishment works. This is an aspect of the development which could be discussed with the owners/ developers. New businesses coming into Victoria Parade could use funding for frontage improvements which would improve the

image of the area. The Council will be proactive in promoting this opportunity.

3.1.2 Land at Station Road / Urmston Railway Station (Objectives 1-5)

The Draft Land Allocations Plan identifies this site, adjacent to Urmston Railway Station, as a redevelopment opportunity. This site is fronted by poor quality single story fronted retail / café units including a discount furniture shop and a charity shop. To the rear there is low quality managed parking for the station and servicing/ parking for the adjacent businesses. There is a pedestrian entrance to the station at one corner of the site which currently presents a visually unattractive route to the station.



Figure 12. Current access to the Station Road / Urmston Railway Station site

The Plan identifies the site for a high quality mixed use development incorporating improved access and car parking facilities for railway station users. This site is identified for a mix of uses primarily retail (Use Classes A1 to A5), office (Use Class B1), 19 residential units, and community facilities (Use Classes D1 and D2), as appropriate. This could be complemented by improving the overall physical environment on Station Road, investing in improvements to enhance the 'shopping experience' (e.g. street furniture).

The development of this site is likely to be a longer term proposal.

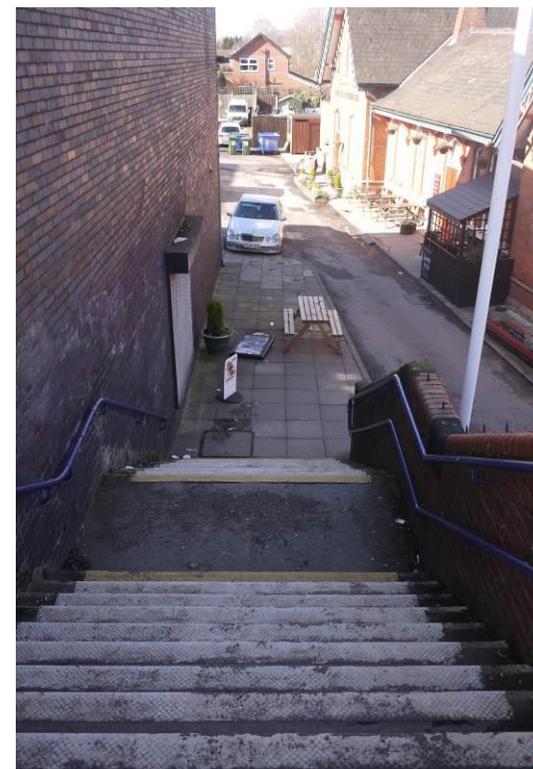


Figure13. Pedestrian access to Urmston Railway Station from Station Road

3.1.3 Urmston Market, Railway Road (Objectives 1-2, 4-5)

The market place in Urmston is located away from the primary shopping areas of the town centre and lacks any direct physical linkages. It has declined in recent years resulting in concerns from traders and the local community. It is privately owned which makes Council intervention difficult but notwithstanding this, the Retail and Leisure Study (2007) recommended that the Council should seek to secure qualitative improvements in the physical environment so as to increase the attractiveness of the market to local residents. Accordingly, the Land Allocations

Plan recognises that the Market provides a valuable service to the community and supports proposals for the enhancement or refurbishment of Urmston Market, including proposals to improve linkages between the market and the Town Centre.



Figure 14. Urmston Market - Outdoor

Trafford Council officers have liaised with the owners of Urmston Market to offer support in securing funding to regenerate the market area, and in organising events to increase footfall; unfortunately, the owners have indicated that they are reluctant to invest financially at this time and feel that events will not sustain long term footfall. Dialogue between the Council and the owners of the Market will continue going forward, to discuss their aspirations for the Market and the site, the potential for redevelopment and how investment can be attracted.

3.2 Environmental Improvements *(Objectives 2, 4-5)*

The Council will support public realm enhancement and accessibility improvements in order to support the sustainable development of Urmston town centre. A programme of environmental improvement works is partially complete to carry out the initial priorities identified by the Urmston Partnership with the works being implemented from February 2015. This will be funded through Trafford Council's Town Centre Investment Fund. These will include parking improvements for Higher Road (1 hour and 2 hour Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) are to be created), new tree planting, installation of two bins on Crofts Bank Road and a notice board on Crofts Bank Road. The locations are shown in Appendix 3. Nine businesses have signed an agreement to acquire ownership and maintenance responsibility for planters to be installed.

Improvements to Goldenhill Park will take place in Spring 2015. It is envisaged that the improvements to Goldenhill Park which will create a green connection/environment close to the town centre, will encourage dwell time appealing to adults and their children. Further improvements will take place to the play area and Memorial Gardens subject to the confirmation of available funding. The Council and Urmston Partnership are working with the newly formed Friends of Golden Hill Park group to develop the plans.

3.3 Other Key Initiatives

In addition to physical development, it is important to try to bring vacant units into occupation and support existing businesses. Some key activities are identified in the following section:

3.3.1 Alternative Uses for Vacant Units (*Objectives 3-5*)

Inventive ways to ensure use of vacant units should be explored to improve the town centre environment and attract footfall, including:

Window Displays – Independent retailers could create window displays in vacant units based around particular themes e.g. key times of year.

Arts/Events – Local community groups, schools or colleges could hold exhibitions or promote their services. Pop-up Health and Wellbeing Centres have previously been set up in Stretford and Altrincham town centres and a similar approach could be used in Urmston, if funding could be secured.

Pop-up shops – Vacant units could be used to provide short term occupation for retailers trying to test the market or promote a new product.

Initial discussion of ideas for uses and business engagement will be carried out through the Urmston Town Centre Partnership and Locality Partnership. This should also include the Management of Eden Square who currently have a small number of vacant units.

3.3.2 Loan Scheme (*Objectives 1-4*)

The Town Centres Loan Scheme was launched in 2013 to provide loans of up to £10k to assist businesses that plan to occupy a vacant town centre unit and in total £39,000 has been lent to four new businesses in Urmston. Around £20,000 is currently still available to assist businesses. and the existing marketing of the scheme will continue using local estate agents, banks and solicitors to make their clients aware of the scheme. Estate Agents will be asked to display posters advertising the scheme in the windows of their properties.

If future demand increases, consideration should be given to expanding the scheme, if additional funding can be identified, including Section 106 contributions.

3.3.3 Business Rates (*Objective 3*)

One of the most frequent complaints by businesses in Trafford's town centres is about the level of business rates payable on town centre property. Business rates are based on a proportion of the rateable value of a property, set by central government, which broadly represents the

annual rent the property could have been let for on the open market on a particular date. For the current rating lists, this date was set as 1 April 2008 when the property market was at its peak. Commercial property values have fallen since 2008 and other economic factors have made it more difficult for businesses to turn a profit, however the rates that businesses are liable to pay have stayed the same. This has caused hardship for many businesses and the Government's decision to delay the revaluation will mean businesses will pay rates based on 2008 values until 2017.

Advice has been given by an experienced business rates consultant that there is unlikely to be a sufficient case for a widespread appeal from businesses in Urmston at the current time. However, this situation will continue to be monitored if vacancy rates rise, key retailers relocate from the town centre or any disruption is caused by construction works, which could all constitute a Material Change and be grounds for appeal.

A priority action in the area of business rates is to identify eligible businesses who have not taken up relief schemes that are available to them including:

- Retail Relief - Eligible retail properties where the rateable value of the property is less than £50,000 can receive up to £1,000 relief on their 2014/15 Non-Domestic Rates bill. This will increase to £1,500 in 2015/16.
- Small Business Rates Relief – Until 31 March 2016 properties with a rateable value of £6,000 or less receive 100% relief (doubled from the usual rate of 50%) therefore won't pay business rates. The rate of relief will gradually decrease from 100% to 0% for properties with a rateable value between £6,001 and £12,000.

All the information is available on the Trafford Council website and is included in the booklet distributed with the business rates bills. In addition, a fact sheet will be prepared to assist businesses and will be promoted via the Town Centre Partnership and placed on the Town Centre website.

3.3.4 Sponsorship (*Objectives 1, 4*)

Opportunities for sponsorship should be pursued in order to raise money to enable events and deliver regeneration activities. There are four areas for which this should initially be explored:

- Sponsorship of events (including Summer and Christmas) – to enable more frequent or better quality events.
- Sponsorship of Christmas tree and lights.
- Sponsorship of newsletters, websites and other publicity materials.
- Sponsorship of lamp post banners along key routes within the town centre and its surrounds.

National retailers, such as supermarkets, have proved difficult to engage in the past, particularly in terms of securing financial contributions, but efforts should be made to establish contact with them as key town stakeholders. The Town Centre Partnership would be a key driver in securing their support. Sponsorship opportunities do not need to be restricted to town centre businesses; there may be businesses elsewhere in the Borough who may wish to contribute in exchange for acknowledgement of their contribution on advertising and signage.

3.3.5 Increasing the Residential Offer (*Objective 1 & 3*)

Increasing the amount of residential accommodation in Urmston town centre would help to support the town centre economy including retail and the evening economy. The scope for new residential is limited to opportunities around Victoria Parade (3.1.1) and Land at Station Road (3.1.2) but there may be opportunities that exist around the conversion of vacant upper floor space which can be converted under permitted development rights, subject to prior approval. The role of the Council in bringing forward such development is limited.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Partnership Working

It is essential that all stakeholders, and in particular businesses and property owners, are involved in delivering improvements to Urmston town centre. The Trafford Partnership is a single body which brings together organisations from across the public, private, voluntary, faith and community sectors and local residents. Members of the Trafford Partnership work together to achieve a common vision to ensure Trafford is a place where residents achieve their aspirations and communities thrive. The Trafford Partnership takes a locality working approach, working collaboratively and innovatively to make best use of local assets. This means bringing together stakeholders, including individual residents, businesses, community and faith groups, councillors, community leaders and public sector bodies, to work in partnership, share resources and enable new ideas to develop.

Locality working is delivered through a locality planning process, which will be led by four Locality Partnerships, made up of Councillors, partners including the police, health services and council, and Community Ambassadors. The Urmston Town Centre Partnership and local businesses have a key role in participating in positive action to improve Urmston town centre and support the local community, influencing local priorities and shaping service delivery.

Locality Partnership - Urmston town centre is within the Urmston and Partington Locality Partnership (UPP Local) area which has responsibility for deciding local priorities and shaping local services. The wards included in this area include Urmston, Davyhulme East, Davyhulme West, Flixton and Bucklow St Martins (Partington). The Urmston and Partington Locality Partnership is undergoing a process of “Locality Planning” that should be completed by June 2015 and will determine the priorities for the Partnership.

Urmston Town Centre Partnership (*Objectives 4 & 6*) – With less public sector resources, it is important to ensure that all stakeholders, particularly businesses and property owners, are involved in the delivering activity in Urmston town centre. The Partnership contains a variety of representatives from the public and private sectors including local business representation. The legal status and structure of the Partnership should be reviewed to understand what the best approach is to deliver the positive changes that Urmston needs. For example, there may be financial advantages to gaining charitable status e.g. a development trust with charitable status could get rates relief if the Partnership were to take on responsibility for pop-up shops.

To maximise its role the Partnership should continue to encourage engagement with a diverse range of representatives including multiples / independents and representation from Eden Square, Crofts Bank Road, Station Road, Flixton Road and Higher Road. Its objectives will need to remain focused and achievable, such as encouraging more people to shop and stay longer in the town centre and improving its overall appearance, building on its successes to date. A particular initiative could be for retailers to come together to offer discounts to promote the

leisure and retail offer. This could target particular events or times of year such as Christmas and be promoted through the Town Centre Website as well as via printed leaflets.

4.2 Funding

The Improvement Plan identifies some of the key areas for investment in Urmston town centre. The delivery of many of the projects will rely on private and public sector funding. The Council, for example, has allocated £55,000 to deliver initial public realm improvement works which will provide tree planting and raised planters and for the Town Centre Loan Scheme.

Developer Contributions - Investment from the public sector can act as a catalyst for growth and further investment in future years could yield economic benefits. The Council could look to secure developer contributions, including via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) List, and other funding that can be used to kick-start further private sector investment that will improve Urmston town centre. In terms of the existing CIL provision, the scope is limited for Urmston town centre. For wider provision to be made for Urmston town centre, the right evidence will need to be available at the time of the CIL 123 list review, scheduled for late 2015.

The use of Council resources and other public funding can provide support and confidence to the private sector in delivering significant new private investment within Urmston.

External Funding Opportunities - External funding opportunities to deliver regeneration and economic development activities should be continually monitored. At the current time, the scope for public sector funding for retail areas is generally more limited than other employment sectors, as it is more difficult to demonstrate genuine economic growth rather than displacement of activity from other areas.

4.3 Business Support

Direct Business Support (*Objective 1-4*) - Trafford Council's Economic Growth Team provides advice and support to new businesses that make enquiries. A list of potential business support opportunities is available on the Business Section of the Economic Growth Team website and is circulated to businesses that make enquiries. However the team is able to provide a more tailored package of support for individual businesses with town centre specific enquires, including the following:

- Site / premises search.
- Business Support Listings sheet (currently Altrincham specific but work is underway to revise and extend it to the other town centres).
- Referrals to partners for finance/ business support (e.g. Blue Orchid, Business Growth Hub, Access to Finance).

URMSTON TOWN CENTRE: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

WORKING DRAFT - MAY 2015

- Liaison / Signposting to other Council departments (e.g. Planning, Environmental Health, Trading standards, Business Rates).
- Advice on business rates (Rateable Values, Rates Relief Schemes).
- Advice on lease negotiations.
- Funding through the Town Centres Loan Scheme.

A future area of work could be to place greater emphasis on the targeting of individual retailers and leisure operators that are looking to expand regionally or nationally. The recently completed Town Centre Profiles will serve as a promotional tool to make business aware of local strengths and demographics.

Urmston Town Centre Website (*Objective 4*) – The Urmston Town Centre Partnership has a website containing key information about the town centre <http://www.urmstontowncentre.org.uk>. This should be promoted as widely as possible by ensuring that the link is mentioned in all town centre advertising and publications, for example, events in the town centre or the Library. Any town centre businesses or organisations with websites including Eden Square should also link to the website.

The business directory could be improved by including addresses of businesses and a map of the town centre would assist visitors. Where other external websites exist (either business or leisure), web links should be provided to ensure visitors can easily access information they require. A downloadable map would assist visitors with locating businesses and points of interest within the town centre.

5.0 KEY ACTIONS

This Improvement Plan identifies the main opportunities to deliver a qualitative uplift to the town centre to ensure that it is accessible to users and create a strong and attractive destination of choice meeting the needs of local residents and visitors. The Urmston Town Centre Improvement Plan will assist the Council and key stakeholders to identify and realise the opportunities which exist within the town centre within the next 5 years. To deliver the main actions in the plan the following key actions are required:

	Project or Activity	Section	Objective	Action	Lead	Time
1	Victoria Parade including Units 2-10 Higher Road	3.1.1	1-5	Discuss potential for frontage improvements with owners. Encourage frontage improvements for any loan applications coming forward in this area.	EG	Short
2	Land at Station Road / Urmston Railway Station	3.1.2	1-5	Prepare a development brief for the site.	PI / P&D	Short
3	Urmston Market	3.1.3	1-2, 4-5	Engage with owner to discuss future plans for the site and prepare action plan.	EG/ P&C / PI	Short
4	Environmental Improvements	3.2	2,4-5	Deliver tree planting, planters, bins and noticeboard.	H	Short
				Explore potential funding sources to deliver future phases of improvement to Goldenhill Park play area and Memorial Gardens.	H/ PI / EG	Short
5	Alternative Uses for Vacant Units	3.3.1	3-5	Initial discussion of ideas for uses and business engagement through the Urmston Town Centre Partnership and Locality Partnership.	EG / P&C	Short
6	Loan Scheme	3.3.2	1-4	Continue to monitor and promote loan scheme targeting estate agents, banks and solicitors etc.	EG	Ongoing
7	Business Rates	3.3.3	3	Identification and contact of businesses who haven't claimed reliefs.	BR / EG	Short
				Promote business Rates Fact Sheet.	EG	Short
				Continue to monitor circumstances which could give grounds for appeals to the Valuation Office.	EG	Ongoing
8	Sponsorship	3.3.4	1, 4	Identify potential sponsorship opportunities.	P&C / H / EG	Short/ Medium
				Develop sponsorship packages and engage businesses.	P&C / TCP H / EG	Ongoing

**URMSTON TOWN CENTRE: IMPROVEMENT PLAN
WORKING DRAFT - MAY 2015**

15	Increasing the Residential Offer	3.3.5	1	Support appropriate office conversion schemes and potential future residential development in potential redevelopment of Victoria Parade and Land at Station Road / Railway Station	PI / P&D	Ongoing
16	Town Centre Partnership	4.1	4	Review purpose and legal structure to ensure it is fit for purpose and operates in the most effective way.	P&C / EG	Short
17	Retailers Forum	4.1	4	Identify potential businesses to sit on Retailers Forum.	PI / EG	Short
				Establish group and identify terms of reference	PI / EG	Short
18	Direct Business Support	4.3	1-4	Continue to promote the business support offer provided by Economic Growth Team.	EG	Ongoing
19	Town Centre Website	4.3	4	Implement improvements to Town Centre website.	P&C	Short/ Ongoing

(Lead Service Key: Planning = PI / Property and Development = P&D / Economic Growth = EG / Highways = H / Partnerships and Communities = P&C / Business Rates = BR / TCP = Town Centre Partnership)

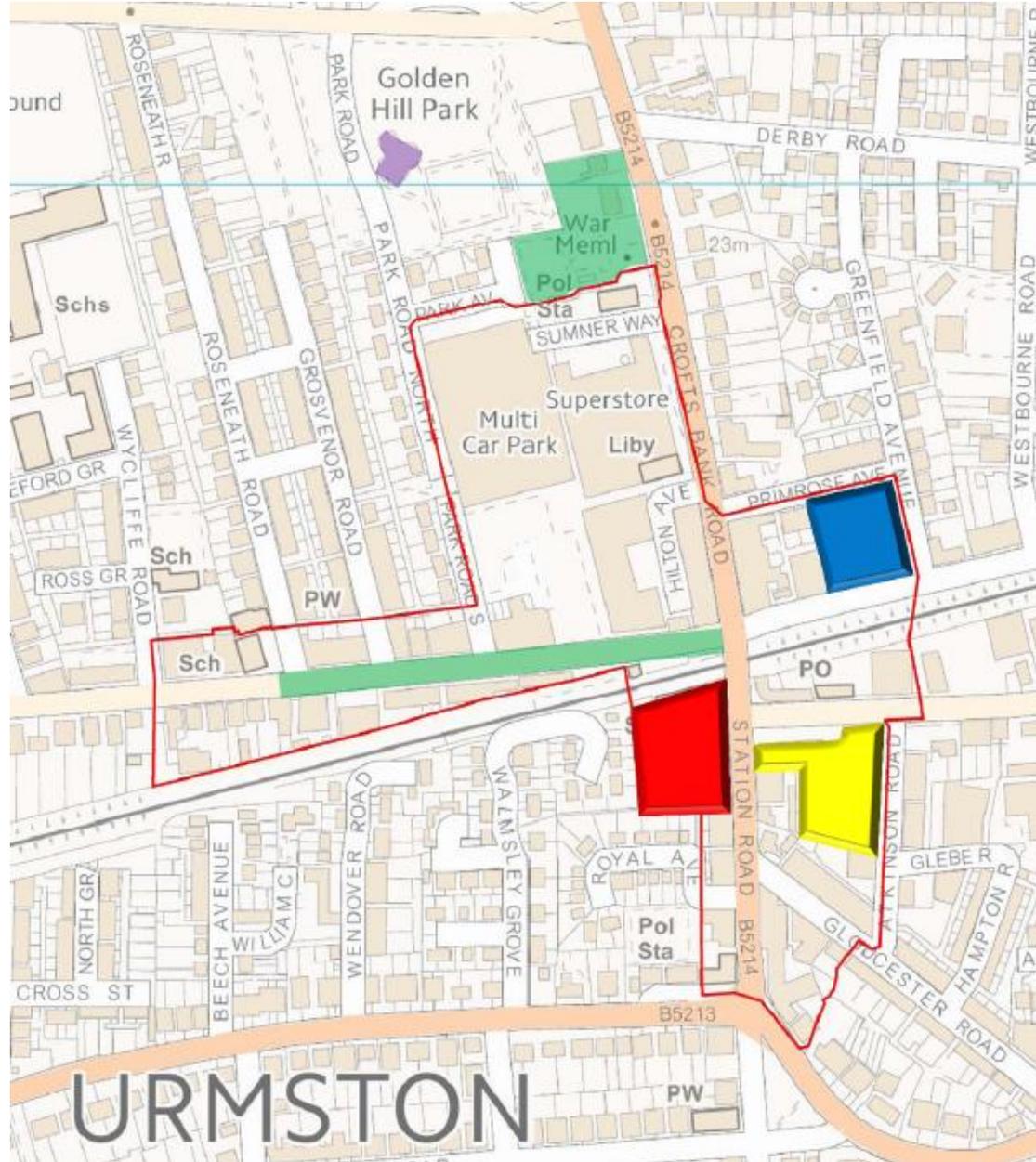
Timescales: Short = <1 year, Medium = 2-3 years , Long = 4-5 years

URMSTON TOWN CENTRE: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

WORKING DRAFT - MAY 2015

APPENDIX 1 – OPPORTUNITIES PLAN

**URMSTON TOWN CENTRE: IMPROVEMENT PLAN
WORKING DRAFT - MAY 2015**



Key:

- The Market 
- Land at Station Road / Railway Station 
- Victoria Parade 
- Environmental Improvements 
- Play area 

URMSTON TOWN CENTRE: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

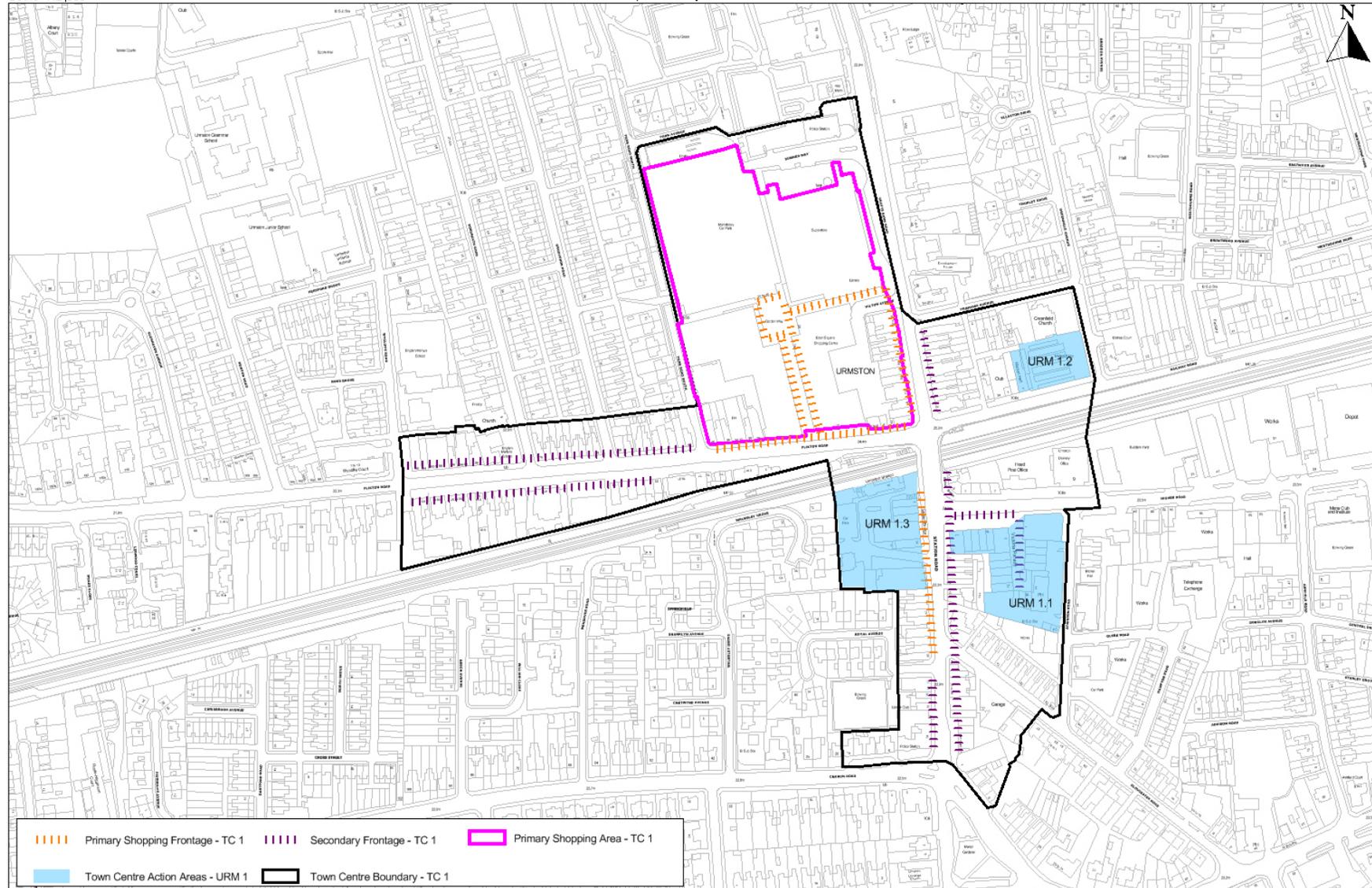
WORKING DRAFT - MAY 2015

APPENDIX 2 – DRAFT TRAFFORD LOCAL PLAN: LAND ALLOCATIONS POLICIES MAP

URMSTON TOWN CENTRE: IMPROVEMENT PLAN
WORKING DRAFT - MAY 2015

Trafford Local Plan: Land Allocations Consultation
 Draft Policies Inset Map January 2014 - Urmston Town Centre

Scale 1:2,500



© Crown Copyright and database right 2013. Ordnance Survey 100023172.

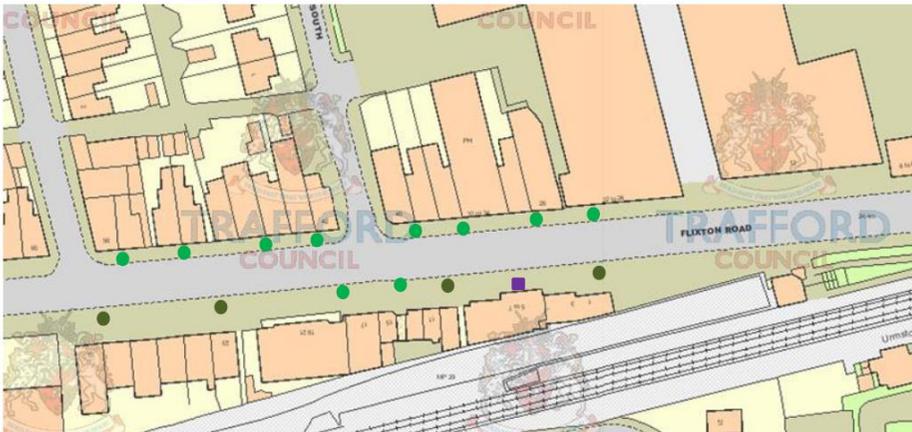
APPENDIX 3 – ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

1) Trees and Planters

Key:

- Proposed new trees (15)
- Existing trees
- New planters (11)

NOTE: Initial compost and some perennial plants to be provided for all 11 new planters



Map 1: Flixton Road between Grosvenor Road and Eden Square



Map 2: Crofts Bank Road and Railway Road



Map 3: Flixton Road between Wycliffe Road and Grosvenor Road



Map 4: Station Road and Higher Road

URMSTON TOWN CENTRE: IMPROVEMENT PLAN
WORKING DRAFT - MAY 2015
2) Bench and Litter Bins

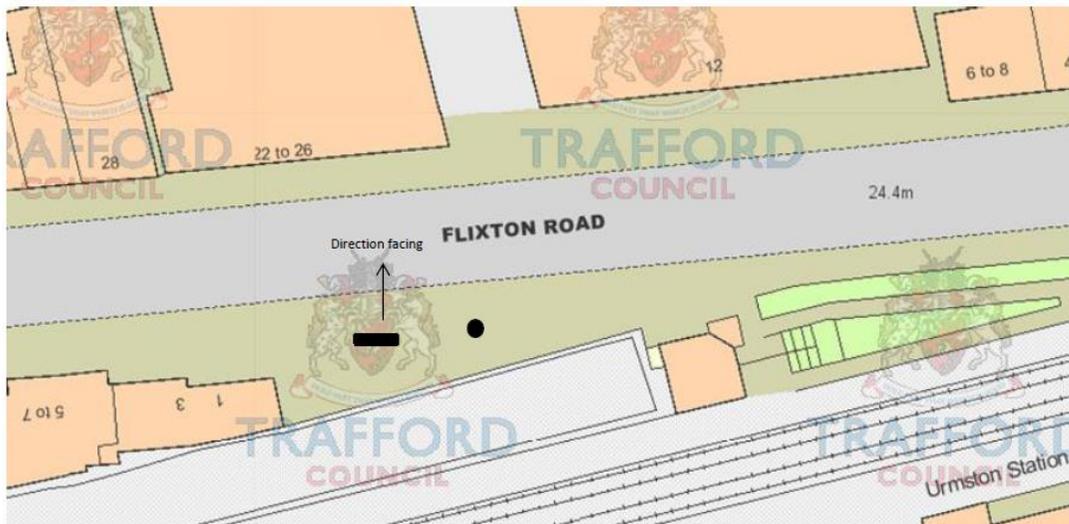


Key:

- Proposed new litter bins (2)

Map 5: Litter bins on Crofts Bank Road

3) Urmston Partnership Noticeboard



Key:

- ▬ Proposed Noticeboard
- Existing Clock

Map 6: Location of Notice Board

4) Parking Bays on Higher Road

Current TRO's on Higher Road include 'no waiting' and 'no loading' zones.
The proposed new TRO's which allow parking for a period of one and two hours are outlined on the map below (figure 2).

