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1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Report

1.1 In January 2015 Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council commissioned Peter Brett Associates LLP to prepare the Prescot Town Centre Masterplan (PTCM) on its behalf. The Council intends to adopt the masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in due course. The main objective of this work is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the performance of the town centre and to develop a vision and physical masterplan, including deliverable projects and proposals. The recommendations of the study will be used to deliver town centre improvements, attract inward investment and inform development management decisions. The key aims of the masterplan SPD as set out by the study brief are as follows:

- a consolidated retail offer that generates more trade;
- a resilient retail offer that complements competing facilities outside the town centre;
- to identify opportunity areas for new commercial activity, as well as cultural and community uses;
- introduce opportunities for a new mix of residential dwellings within the town centre;
- creating an attractive destination with quality public realm that strengthens heritage assets; and
- improved accessibility and linkages with the wider Prescot area.

1.2 The purpose of this Baseline Report is to provide an evidence base that will allow us to set out a coherent vision for the town centre and practicable objectives for achieving that vision as the next stage of our work. The Baseline Report presents the results of a number of inter-related lines of enquiry concerning the current composition and performance of the town centre, its physical environment and infrastructure, and the local property market. In doing so we seek to draw out the town centre’s existing assets, opportunities for improvement, and constraints on the future development of the town centre. Our further work will build on these findings to develop the vision for Prescot Town Centre and the strategic options for delivering this vision.

Structure of the Report

1.3 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- in Section 2 we set out the strategic context for the development of the PTCM including an assessment of relevant policy;
- in Section 3 we provide an assessment of the existing composition and performance of Prescot Town Centre in terms of its main land uses, trade and turnover, in both quantitative and qualitative terms;
Section 4 provides a review of the local property market including a review of demand, rents, and yields;

Section 5 provides an environmental audit of the town centre considering key character areas, assessing the quality of the public realm, and providing an overview of opportunity sites; and

Section 6 assesses infrastructure within the town centre with a focus on transport infrastructure, parking and accessibility.

1.4 Section 7 provides a summary of our findings and sets out the next steps for the development of the PTCM.
2 THE EXISTING POLICY CONTEXT

Introduction

2.1 In this section we set out the existing policy context for the development of the Prescot Town Centre Masterplan and SPD (PTCM). We summarise the key planning policies that should be taken into consideration by the masterplan and we also have regard to existing strategies for economic development. In summarising these policies and strategies we provide our own comments on their implications for the development of the PTCM.

National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published by the Government on 27 March 2012. Following its publication, this document now forms the statutory national planning policy guidance setting out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

Achieving Sustainable Development

2.3 Paragraph 6 of the NPPF confirms that ‘the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development’. This has three dimensions which give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy;
- a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities; and
- an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

2.4 Paragraph 9 adds that ‘pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people’s quality of life’ through a variety of means, including ‘making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages’, and ‘replacing poor design with better design’.

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

2.5 The NPPF makes clear that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making, this presumption in favour of sustainable development means that ‘local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area’ and that ‘Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change’ (unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits, or specific policies contained within the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted).
2.6 Paragraph 15 of the NPPF explains that ‘all plans should be based upon and reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, with clear policies that will guide how the presumption should be applied locally’.

Core Planning Principles

2.7 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF sets out a series of 12 ‘Core Planning Principles’ which should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. These 12 principles include a requirement that planning should be ‘genuinely plan-led’, a ‘creative exercise’ with ‘succinct plans’ to shape the development of an area. LPAs should also support sustainable economic development, and plans should take account of market signals to set out a clear strategy for allocating sufficient land for development, securing high quality design and conserving heritage assets.

Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

2.8 Paragraph 18 of the NPPF confirms that the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity. To this end the planning system should encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. LPAs should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century, and planning policies should recognise and seek to address potential barriers to investment. To this end, LPAs should set out a clear economic vision and strategy for their area, support existing business sectors, and identify priority areas for economic regeneration, infrastructure provision and environmental enhancement.

Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres

2.9 Paragraphs 23 to 27 of the NPPF are of particular relevance to town centre planning. In drawing up Local Plans, LPAs should, amongst other things:

- pursue policies to support the viability and vitality of town centres;
- promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer;
- retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones;
- recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres; and
- plan positively for the future of declining centres to encourage economic activity.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

2.10 Paragraph 29 of the NPPF states that the transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes. Paragraph 35 goes on to state that plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods and people. Developments should be designed and located in order to, amongst other things:

- give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and provide access to high quality public transport facilities;
create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians, avoiding street clutter; and
consider the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of transport.

2.11 Paragraph 40 of the NPPF states that local authorities should seek to improve the quality of parking in town centre so that it is convenient, safe and secure, and that they should set appropriate parking charges that do not undermine the vitality of town centres.

Requiring Good Design

2.12 Paragraph 56 of the NPPF says that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It goes on to say that ‘good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people’. Paragraph 57 states that it is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development.

2.13 Local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive design policies based on stated objectives for the future of an area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area;
- establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places;
- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate uses (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks;
- respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and material, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
- create safe and accessible environments; and
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

2.14 Paragraphs 59 and 60 state that LPAs should consider using design codes where they could help to deliver high quality outcomes (although design policies should avoid being unnecessarily prescriptive) and, whilst it is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness, planning policies and decisions should not stifle innovation.

Plan-Making

2.15 Paragraph 150 of the NPPF makes clear that ‘Local Plans are the key to delivering sustainable development’. Paragraph 152 states that LPAs should seek opportunities to achieve each of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, and net gains across all three. Paragraph 153 goes on to say that Local Plans should be ‘aspirational but realistic’.
2.16 Paragraph 158 of the NPPF explains that the Local Plan must be based on ‘adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area’ and that LPAs should be comprehensive in their assessments, ensuring that they are ‘integrated and that they take full account of relevant market and economic signals’. Paragraph 173 of the NPPF states that pursuing sustainable development requires ‘careful attention to viability and costs in plan-making and decision-taking. Plans should be deliverable’.

2.17 Paragraph 161 confirms that the evidence base should assess the role and function of town centres and the relationship between them, including any trends in the performance of centres, and the capacity of existing centres to accommodate new town centre development.

Planning Practice Guidance

2.18 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was launched by the Government in March 2014 as an online resource to streamline and consolidate over 7,000 pages of previous planning advice. Formal publication of this new resource replaced over 150 circulars, guidance notes and letters. Following its publication, this online resource is the formal supporting documentation to assist in implementing policies set out in the NPPF.

Planning for Town Centres

2.19 The section on ‘Ensuring the vitality of town centres’ provides further guidance on paragraphs 23 to 27 of the NPPF. The guidance is structured around three key aspects of planning for the vitality and viability of centres, the most relevant of which is strategic vision and town centre management.

2.20 The PPG sets out the need to support town centres in generating local employment, to promote beneficial competition within and between centres, and to create attractive, diverse places where people want to live, visit and work. This should be done by planning to meet the needs of main town centres uses in full, whilst adopting a ‘town centre first’ approach.

2.21 The PPG stresses the importance of having a strategic vision for town centres as this will be key to ensuring successful town centres which enable sustainable economic growth and provide a wide range of social and environmental benefits. The NPPG goes on to say that town centre strategies should be based on evidence of the current state of town centres and opportunities to meet development needs and support their vitality and viability.

2.22 LPAs should take ‘full account’ of relevant market signals when planning for town centres and this analysis should be used to inform policies that are responsive to changes in the market as well as the changing needs of business. The guidance notes that:

‘Not all successful town centre regeneration projects have been retail led or involved significant new development. Improvements to the public realm,'
transport (including parking) and accessibility as well as other measures promoted through partnership can also play important roles.’

Comment on National Planning Policy

2.23 The NPPF requires local planning authorities to positively seek opportunities to encourage sustainable development that delivers economic, social and environmental benefits. Planning should be a creative exercise that produces succinct plans and clear policies that take account of market signals. This should include supporting existing business sectors and identifying areas for regeneration, new infrastructure provision and environmental enhancements.

2.24 The PTCM, which will in future be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document by the Council, should reflect the need to support sustainable development. The development of the PTCM is a positive and proactive exercise in ensuring that the future development of Prescot Town Centre delivers economic, social and environmental benefits to the local community. In accordance with paragraphs 153 and 173 of the NPPF the PTCM should be aspirational but also realistic and deliverable.

2.25 The NPPF sets out a range of priorities for LPAs in plan-making and decision-making. Those that are particularly relevant to the preparation of the PTCM include:

- pursuing policies that will support the vitality and viability of town centres and provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer;
- protecting and exploiting opportunities to promote the use of sustainable transport modes whilst improving the quality of parking in town centres; and
- planning positively to achieve high quality and inclusive design, including by establishing a strong sense of place and reflecting local character and history.

Local Planning Policy

2.26 The development plan for Knowsley current comprises the saved policies of the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan (UDP) which was adopted in 2006. We also summarise the relevant policies of the emerging Knowsley Core Strategy which has been submitted to the Secretary of State, with examination expected to resume later in 2015.

Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan

2.27 Chapter 3 of the UDP sets out the vision for the Borough which states that community well-being will be encouraged by developing a vibrant economy with a wide range of job opportunities, valuing citizenship and promoting education and lifelong learning. The vision goes on to state that the Borough will be developed to provide a safe, clean and attractive environment where opportunity, health and social prosperity is available to all.

2.28 The Strategic Objectives that will deliver the vision include:
- Objective 5 – to improve the provision of shopping, leisure and other uses normally associated with town centres, whilst protecting and enhancing existing centres.
- Objective 7 – to protect and and where possible increase opportunities for education, recreation, exercise and play for people in the Borough.
- Objective 8 – to locate major new development where it is accessible by a choice of walking, cycling and public transport, thereby minimising the need to travel by car.
- Objective 9 – to make efficient use of previously developed land and buildings in providing land for new development.
- Objective 16 – to ensure that buildings and features which represent the best of Knowsley’s historic heritage are preserved or enhanced.
- Objective 18 – to stimulate a high design quality in new development which will help to create a sense of pride in Knowsley and its constituent communities, respond to and enhance the character of the townscape, and make the Borough a more attractive place to live and invest in.

2.29 Policy CP1 of the UDP addresses regeneration and development priority areas. It states that the Borough’s town centres, including Prescot, will be the preferred locations for new shopping and leisure development, and that development should be of a scale and nature that is appropriate to the role and function of the centre.

2.30 Policy S1 sets out the retail hierarchy within the Borough, within which Prescot, along with Huyton and Kirkby, forms the highest tier of town centres. These centres should provide shops and a range of other town centre uses that are consistent with maintaining the position of the centres in the ‘Merseyside shopping hierarchy’, and reducing the need for residents to have to travel to other centres outside of the Borough. The policy goes on to state that proposals within town centres should be of high design quality which enhances the character of the centre and its attractiveness as a shopping and service location.

2.31 Policy S5 of the UDP specifically addresses Prescot Town Centre and seeks to encourage new development, redevelopment and/or improvement of existing buildings for new retail, assembly and leisure and other town centre uses. The policy specifically allocates land on the edge of the town centre at the junction of Sewell Street and Kemble Street for mixed use development including retail, assembly and leisure, and residential uses. It goes on to state that the Council may use its land assembly powers to support new development in Prescot and that any redevelopment should strengthen the linkages between the town centre and the South Prescot Action Area.

2.32 Tourism and cultural development within the Borough is subject to Policy EC6 which states that new facilities and the improvement of existing facilities will be permitted provided that they do not cause unacceptable transport or environmental problems, and are of a scale and type that is compatible with other land uses in the surrounding area. Where new facilities are proposed then a sequential approach to site selection should be demonstrated, with first preference given to town centre sites.
2.33 Chapter 11 of the UDP sets out policies in respect of development quality and the built environment. Policy DQ1 addresses design quality in new development and requires that new development should, amongst other things:

- Respond to and enhance the characteristics of the surrounding area, including through preserving or enhancing views of important landscape features or buildings.
- Protecting building and structures that are of intrinsic architectural or historic interest and contribute to the character of the area.
- Provide safe and convenient access for all by a choice of transport, including attractive secure and safe defined pedestrian links.
- Achieve an efficient use of land, and provide appropriate landscape treatment, high quality open spaces and good levels of amenity.

2.34 Policy DQ3 requires that new development which is visible from gateway sites and corridors, including the A57/Prescot Bypass that runs to the north of the town centre, should enhance the visual appearance of those routes. The policy states that the Council will use its land use planning powers to promote environmental enhancements.

2.35 Policies DQ5 and DQ6 relate to development and demolition within the Borough’s conservation areas. These policies seek to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of such areas through consideration of layout, density, design, materials, landscape features, views, pollution, traffic, parking and servicing. Demolition of buildings within conservation areas, will only be permitted where the building has no potential to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area, or where the proposed redevelopment would be of an exceptional quality.

**Knowsley Core Strategy**

2.36 A submission version of the Knowsley Core Strategy, containing proposed modifications, was published in September 2014. The final Core Strategy is expected to be adopted later in 2015 following the conclusion of its examination and the Secretary of State’s confirmation of its soundness and legal compliance. The Core Strategy will be the central document within the new Knowsley Local Plan which will cover the period to 2028.

2.37 The Spatial Vision for the Borough is set out at Chapter 3 of the emerging Core Strategy and states that Knowsley will become known for its ‘successful suburban townships’ that provide a sense of place and community, having sustainable, diverse, more prosperous and healthy populations. The town centres, including Prescot, will have:

> ‘defined and enhanced roles, be regenerated vibrant and welcoming, providing focal points where local residents will choose to shop and access health care, cultural and other key services and facilities.’

2.38 Strategic Objective 4 seeks to promote distinctive, viable and sustainable town centres by improving choice, variety and quality in their range of retail, leisure and
other town centre uses. The supporting text states that town centres should be
developed in a manner that supports local communities and addresses existing gaps
in provision. This will include enhancing the distinctiveness of the centres and
ensuring that they are ‘lively, well designed, well used and well maintained’.

2.39 Policy CS 1 of the emerging Core Strategy sets out the spatial strategy for the
Borough which will be achieved by a focus on development within existing urban
areas, encouraging the re-use of brownfield land and maximising the contribution of
the Borough to the development of the Liverpool City Region, amongst other things.
Spatial development priorities include maintaining and enhancing the Borough’s town
centres, and Prescot Town Centre is identified as one of six Priority Regeneration
Areas.

2.40 Emerging Policy CS 6 states that Huyton, Kirkby and Prescot Town Centres will
enhance their equal role in providing comparison and convenience shopping and a
complementary mix of other town centre uses. In terms of comparison goods
shopping, the policy states that indicative requirements for additional floorspace over
the period to 2028 include 4,100 to 6,800 sq. m gross for Prescot Town Centre, and
that this will help to complement regeneration priorities and improve linkages to
Cables Retail Park. No specific requirement for additional convenience goods
floorspace in Prescot is identified.

2.41 Chapter 6 of the emerging Core Strategy identifies area priorities within the Borough.
For the ‘Prescot, Whiston, Cronton and Knowsley Village’ area the Core Strategy
submission document identifies a number of key issues including:

- the underperformance of Prescot Town Centre in terms of its retail function and
  the need for environmental enhancements to capitalise on its ‘unique heritage
  value’ and improve linkages to Cables Retail Park; and
- the need to protect and enhance environmental and historic assets, and the three
  conservation areas, ‘particularly Prescot Town Centre which is considered to be
  at risk.’

2.42 Policy CS 14 relates specifically to regeneration priorities within Prescot Town Centre.
It states that the future vitality and viability of the town centre will be supported by:

- Encouraging a wider mix of town centre uses, services and facilities in areas
  surrounding Eccleston Street, including key services, residential, employment
  uses, cultural and leisure facilities to create a distinctive identity and a
  complementary evening economy.
- Directing new retail development and other town centre uses towards Prescot
  Town Centre to ensure a healthy and balanced offer, with priority given to
  intensifying the retail function in a consolidated primary shopping area in the area
  of Eccleston Street and surrounding streets.
- Improving linkages and integration between Cables Retail Park and the existing
town centre, including appropriate new town centre development along Sewell
Street, and extending the designated town centre boundary in this direction.
- Using the historic assets of the town centre and surrounding areas, and the recreational potential of Knowsley Safari Park, to maximise tourism and cultural opportunities.

2.43 Policy CS 14 also addresses Cables Retail Park to the south of the town centre and states that the restructuring of the retail provision there will be supported where this would improve design quality and layout, and improve linkages to Eccleston Street. The policy also seeks to support improved facilities for sustainable transport that will enhance accessibility and connectivity between Eccleston Street, Cables Retail Park and South Prescot.

Supplementary Planning Documents and Other Planning Guidance

2.44 Relevant adopted supplementary planning documents (SPDs) and other local planning guidance within the Borough includes:
- Ensuring a Choice of Travel SPD (2010)
- Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy (2014)
- Prescot Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2012)
- Prescot Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan (2012)
- Knowsley Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2012)

2.45 The relevant provisions of these SPDs and guidance are discussed in Sections 3 to 6 of this report. We also note that the Council is currently preparing a Borough-wide Shopfront and Signage Design SPD.

Comment on Local Planning Policy

2.46 It is important that the PTCM supports the vision and objectives of existing and emerging components of the development plan for Knowsley. The UDP is now rather dated but its objectives to improve the provision of shops and services in town centres, encourage the redevelopment of brownfield land, protect heritage assets and promote high quality design, remain consistent with more up to date national planning policy. The specific issues identified by the UDP in respect of Prescot Town Centre remain relevant and need to be addressed by the PTCM. These include the development of land at Sewell Street, the strengthening of links with South Prescot (both Policy S5) and environmental improvements to key routes such as the A57/Prescot Bypass (Policy DQ3).

2.47 The Knowsley Core Strategy is not yet adopted but will replace many of the policy provisions of the UDP in due course. The draft vision and objectives seek to encourage a sense of place and an enhanced role for regenerated town centres, including Prescot. Emerging Policy CS 6 makes an allowance for up to 6,800 sq. m of additional comparison goods retail floorspace within Prescot in the period to 2028, to support its role as one of the three main centres in the Borough, support regeneration priorities and improve linkages with Cables Retail Park. It will be necessary for the PTCM to consider how this might be achieved and, if it cannot be delivered, to consider alternative strategies that would help to meet the same objectives.
2.48 Emerging Policy CS 14 provides a succinct summary of the issues considered to be facing Prescot Town Centre and the PTCM will need to respond to the specific provisions of this policy. It will therefore need to consider how to encourage a wider mix of town centre uses, consolidate the primary shopping area, improve linkages, protect heritage assets and maximise tourism and cultural opportunities.

**Economic Development Strategies**

**Liverpool City Region Growth Plan**

2.49 The Liverpool City Region Growth Plan and Strategic Economic Plan is currently being prepared by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The draft Plan’s vision is for ‘a globally connected City Region delivering sustainable growth, opportunity and prosperity for people and businesses’. The strategy focuses on three areas, comprising the development of a more competitive business base, focusing on market facing or asset based opportunities (specifically global connectivity, low carbon businesses and innovation, science and creativity) and investing in enabling infrastructure and environment.

2.50 The draft Plan’s objectives include increasing the business base of the City Region by more than 20,000 businesses over the next 20 years, investing in transport and key site infrastructure, growing the visitor economy within the region such that it supports 57,000 jobs and is worth £4.3 billion by 2023, capturing and releasing opportunities from a low carbon economy, and creating a dynamic, self-sustaining culture of innovation. Key actions identified by the draft Plan include promoting an entrepreneurial culture to encourage business start-ups, expanding the cultural offer and visitor economy asset base, and ensuring the regeneration of town and district centres in response to changing market dynamics.

**Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy Strategy**

2.51 Although several years have passed since its launch in 2009, the Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy Strategy continues to provide the overarching strategic framework for tourism development in the region up to 2020. The Strategy follows on from the previous ‘Vision 2015’ strategy, ‘The Liverpool City Region: Winning Tourism for England’s North West’, and provides a framework to help achieve the vision which seeks to place the visitor economy at the heart of regeneration within the City Region and support 55,000 jobs (up from 41,000 in 2009) and an annual visitor spend of £4.2 billion (up from £2.8 billion in 2009) by 2020.

2.52 Within the Strategy, there is one lead destination brand for the Liverpool City Region and that is Liverpool. Southport and ‘England’s Golf Coast’ are identified as two further destination brands with considerably smaller but nonetheless significant resonance with the visitor market outside the region. The strategy states that the City Region will optimise benefits from the visitor economy by focusing its investment, and particularly its marketing effort, on the three destination brands. In addition to the brands, investment and marketing will be focused on the three key themes of culture, heritage and conference tourism.
2.53 These themes are further developed in the Liverpool City Region Destination Management Plan, which provides a three year detailed framework of activity, updated annually (the latest available edition being published in 2014). The current plan aims to prioritise activity around three opportunities that are considered to provide the greatest potential for sustainable economic development. These include:

- international and national conferences and exhibitions;
- staycations (overnight domestic visitor markets); and
- international leisure visitors.

Knowsley Economic Regeneration Strategy

2.54 The Borough’s current Economic Regeneration Strategy covers the period 2012 to 2015. Its vision is to create ‘a thriving place with a diverse economy that is ready to capitalise on sustainable investment opportunities’. The strategy’s three strategic goals are to promote conditions for sustainable growth, establish Knowsley as a location of choice, and empower residents to realise their potential. The Borough’s existing strengths are identified by the Strategy and are considered to include superior connectivity, accessible green space, resilient communities and major regeneration projects. The latter includes Prescot, which is said to have benefited from new housing developments, a new joint library and museum facility, town centre events and improvements to local parks.

2.55 The Strategy’s target growth sectors for the Borough are transport, communication and distribution; manufacturing; and finance and business services. Further opportunities are identified in respect of the visitor economy, recognising assets such as Knowsley Hall and Safari Park, and good connectivity with the rest of the North West region. However, ‘local challenges’ include the Borough’s town centres which are considered to be ‘not achieving their full economic potential’, particularly in terms of the evening economy.

2.56 The measures set out by the Economic Regeneration Strategy include marketing the Borough to raise awareness of its strengths, building on social assets and enabling residents to be less reliant on Council services, enhancing business infrastructure and strengthening relationships between schools and businesses.

Comment on Economic Development Strategies

2.57 Economic development strategies relevant to Knowsley comprise the emerging strategy of the Liverpool City Region LEP as set out within the draft Growth Plan and Strategic Economic Plan, the Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy Strategy of 2009, and the Borough’s own Economic Regeneration Strategy.

2.58 The sub-regional strategies are high level but there is scope for the PTCM to support their objectives, including through encouraging business start-ups, creating opportunities to grow the visitor economy and develop cultural assets, and guiding the regeneration of the town centre to respond to changing market dynamics. In terms of the City Region’s visitor economy strategy, there is potential for the future development of Prescot to capitalise on the ‘staycation’ market and drive more
overnight domestic leisure visitors, seven days a week, with a focus on more mature visitors interested in culture, music, heritage, golf and retail activities.

2.59 The Borough’s Economic Regeneration Strategy seeks to improve the attractiveness of Knowsley to investors, address the underperformance of its town centres and create new opportunities for the growth of the visitor economy, amongst other things. The PTCM will need to act as a key tool in realising the full economic potential of Prescot Town Centre, support efforts to make Knowsley a ‘location of choice’ and identify and exploit opportunities to grow the visitor economy, build on social assets and enhance business infrastructure.
3 THE EXISTING COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

Introduction

3.1 In this section we describe and analyse the current mix of uses within Prescot Town Centre as defined by the study area. This analysis is based on Experian GOAD data, our own observations and discussions with key stakeholders. We then proceed to describe the current performance of facilities within the town centre, with a focus on the key retail and leisure sectors. Our performance analysis is informed by published data from various sources including both quantitative and qualitative measures. The purpose of this assessment is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the town centre, opportunities for future development and potential threats to its future performance.

Main Land Uses in Prescot Town Centre

3.2 Experian GOAD survey data from September 2013 has been used to provide a breakdown of existing town centre uses within Prescot Town Centre, full details of which are contained at Appendix A. We also provide an overview of other uses within the town centre including existing residential development and community uses based on our own observations, investigations and discussions with stakeholders.

Retail Uses

Convenience Retail

3.3 The GOAD data indicates that there are 15 convenience goods outlets within Prescot Town Centre providing a total gross floorspace of 2,480 sq. m. In terms of total units this represents 10.6 per cent, and 12.3 per cent. The respective UK national averages are 9.0 per cent and 18.1 per cent, reflecting the fact that convenience outlets within the town centre are mainly smaller stores. We note that the town centre has above average representation of bakers and butchers, both in terms of number the number of units and proportion of floorspace.

3.4 The distribution of convenience goods outlets within the town centre is shown in Figure 3.1 below. There is no particular concentration of these facilities which are spread throughout the centre. The main foodstores are Heron Foods and Farmfoods (to the first floor of the shopping centre), both of which are frozen food specialists. There is a small Co-operative foodstore on Warrington Road but this is very much on the periphery of the town centre and largely performs the role of a neighbourhood convenience store. In addition to these foodstores there are a number of bakers (including Greggs and the popular M. Ray’s on High Street), and independent butchers and greengrocers that are concentrated on Eccleston Street.
3.5 The town centre contains approximately 48 comparison goods outlets, equating to 34 per cent of total units and total floorspace. The current UK average is for comparison uses to comprise 40 per cent of units and 45 per cent of floorspace. Given the current size and function of Prescot Town Centre it is to be expected that the proportion of comparison goods units and floorspace would be below the national average.

3.6 Figure 3.2 shows the distribution of comparison outlets with the town centre. We note that, since the time of the GOAD survey, a number of comparison retailers have vacated their premises. Comparison outlets are now firmly concentrated on Eccleston Street with a number of other outlets to the eastern end of High Street/Warrington Road.

3.7 In terms of the comparison goods sub-categories, we note that the town centre had average representation of ‘mixed and general clothing’ retailers, below average representation in terms of womenswear and no dedicated footwear or menswear stores. There is also below average representation in terms of jewellers, giftware, variety stores, and furniture sub-categories. The number of charity shops, chemists, DIY and household goods, and electrical stores is in line with the national average, whilst there is above average representation of booksellers and stationers (which includes card shops) and florists.

3.8 In terms of retailer representation, there are only a handful of national comparison retail operators within the town centre including Home Bargains and Card Factory. It is clear that such representation has declined in recent years and may continue to do so. There are however, many traditional independent comparison retailers within the town centre.
town centre as well as some high quality new independent such as Grace Lea and Jessie’s Jewels (which have received some support from the Council and its partners).

**Figure 3.2 Comparison Retail Uses within Prescot Town Centre**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food and Drink Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.9 The GOAD data shows that there are 12 units in the ‘restaurants, cafes, coffee bars, fast food and takeaways’ sub-category occupying a total of 1,380 sq. m of floorspace. These figures are approximately half the UK national average indicating that the town centre is underserved by such uses. Public houses do not have a specific GOAD category, although we note that there are six pubs within the town centre, the largest of which is the J D Wetherspoon, the only national food and drink operator with representation in Prescot. There are no national restaurant chains with representation in the town centre, though there is a small independent offer including the Crown of India and Ho’s Restaurant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10 Figure 3.3. shows the distribution of food and drink uses within the town centre, including public houses. Public houses are spread throughout the centre, though there is a concentration of hot food takeways to Market Place and the few cafes/coffee shops are located on Eccleston Street (although we note that there is also a coffee shop facility within M. Ray bakers on High Street). The only food and drink use within Prescot Shopping Centre is the Garden Café.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.11 In terms of other service uses, the GOAD data indicates that the town centre has average representation in terms of hairdressers and beauty parlours and slightly above average representation of travel agents and estate agents. The town centre has strong representation from banks and financial services, with both the number of units and proportion of floorspace being more than twice the national average. Banks with representation in Prescot include Lloyds, RBS, HSBC, Halifax and Natwest. We note that betting shops are not assigned to a particular GOAD category but there are four such facilities within the town centre.

Business, Residential and Community Uses

3.12 There are very few employment premises within the tightly drawn town centre town centre. However, we note that on the Prescot Business Centre provides small office suites on Aspinall Street, where a small Royal Mail delivery office and BT telephone exchange are also located. There are also a number of solicitor’s and accountants offices, and two undertakers. To the west of the town centre, in the vicinity of Pottery Fields, there is a range of small industrial and warehouse units.

3.13 Residential uses within the core study area are limited to a number of terraced properties (mainly at Kemble Street and Atherton Street). There are also a number of flats within the town centre, including the relatively modern developments on Hill Street and on the north side of High Street, and a number of small developments being delivered with the assistance of the Townscape Heritage Initiative. However, the town centre is closely bounded by residential development on all sides. This comprises mainly terraced housing to the north and to the south in the area that sits between the town centre and Cables Retail Park. There has been some more recent
residential development in this area with affordable housing constructed on land at the junction of Station Road and Kemble Street.

3.14 To the west of the town centre, in the Manchester Road, Wood Lane and South Avenue area, there is larger family housing, mainly built in the early to mid-twentieth century. The southern section of the former BICC works, between Cables Retail Park and the railway station, has recently been developed for new housing by Bryant Homes (Speakman Gardens) and George Wimpey (Manor Court). These developments comprise a mix of apartments and 2, 3 and 4 bedroom homes. To the south of Bridge Road, First Step has also completed ‘The Hub’ apartment scheme. These new developments have increased the resident population and the relative affluence of the town centre’s immediate catchment area.

3.15 There are also large social housing developments in close proximity to the town centre. Greenall Court is immediately adjacent to the town centre on Sewell Street and Beaconsfield is located to the east of the town centre between Cyprus Street and Houghton Street. They provide a mixture of large flats and maisonettes and there has been recent investment to refurbish both schemes. Our discussions with Knowsley Housing Trust indicate that demand for housing is both developments is good and that whilst Greenall Court attracts younger, mainly single people, Beaconsfield houses older, long term tenants and families.

3.16 Existing community uses within Prescot Town Centre include the recently developed library and museum facility within the Prescot Shopping Centre. The former Prescot Museum building at the junction of High Street and Church Street has been let by the Council to the Shakespeare North Trust which is currently using it as a base for its community activities. The Borough Council’s Registration Service offices are based on High Street and health facilities within the town centre include two dental surgeries on High Street and Leyland Street, and the Prescot Primary Care Resource Centre/Park House Medical Centre on the edges of the town centre on Sewell Street.

3.17 Prescot Town Hall is located on Warrington Road and provides modern and well equipped facilities that are maintained by the Town Council. These include a large function room, conference and meeting rooms, as well as bar and kitchen facilities. The Prescot Guildhall on St Helens Road and Prescot Cables Football Club on Eaton Street are also located a short distance to the north of the town centre.

3.18 Prescot Parish Church (St Mary’s Church) is prominently located within the town centre and provides a range of services and community activities within the Church Hall. Many facilities are shared with the neighbouring Our Lady’s Roman Catholic Church. Prescot Community Church is also located within the town centre on Kemble Street, though its site is on the market and it may therefore relocate to alternative premises in due course. Other places of worship within the town centre include the Methodist churches on Atherton Street and Kemble Street.

**Vacant Property**

3.19 There are approximately 24 vacant units within the town centre, equating to a vacancy rate of 17 per cent, approximately 4.5 percentage points above the UK
national average. When considered in terms of floorspace, the vacancy rate is almost 24 per cent which is more than double the national average of 10.5 per cent. The location of vacant premises within the town centre, including vacant public houses, is shown below in Figure 3.4.

**Figure 3.4 Vacant Premises within Prescot Town Centre**

Source: Experian GOAD (2013)

3.20 The figure shows that vacant units are concentrated within the Prescot Shopping Centre, including its largest unit that extends to almost 2,000 sq. m. The vacancy rate within the shopping centre has increased further since the time of the GOAD survey. However, the number of vacant units on Eccleston Street has decreased slightly. We also note that the Red Lion public house on Kemble Street and former Cheque Centre on Eccleston Street are now vacant.

**Summary of Key Issues**

3.21 Our analysis of current land uses within the town centre has identified a number of issues that we summarise as follows:

- the vacancy rate within the town centre is significantly higher than the national average and there is a high concentration of vacant units within the Prescot Shopping Centre;
- the comparison retail offer of the town centre is limited, particularly in terms of the clothing and footwear sub-category which is a key determinant of the attractiveness of a retail destination;
- the convenience retail offer of the town centre is reasonable but is not anchored by a main foodstore that would help to support and drive footfall within the centre;
- more generally, representation from national retail and leisure operators within the town centre is weak and appears to have weakened further in recent years;
underrepresentation in terms of food and drink operators; and
there is, however, a good mix of other service uses, independent retail operators
and community uses within the centre.

The Performance of the Retail Sector

3.22 Retail is the main land use within Prescot Town Centre and its performance is critical
to its overall vitality and viability. As noted above, there are a number of current
weaknesses in respect of the diversity of the town centre’s retail offer and the number
of vacant retail units. In this section, we consider other quantitative measures of the
retail sector’s performance, introduce qualitative measures, and set this analysis
within the wider market context.

Market Context

3.23 Town and city centres in the UK are in the midst of a period of significant structural
change. Technological advances, changing shopping patterns, and evolutions in retail
practices all mean that the role and function of the ‘high street’ is changing. It has
been well documented that the traditional role of the high street has been undermined
in recent years by the growth of multi-channel shopping (particularly online retailing),
the recent and prolonged economic down-turn and the associated decline in retail
expenditure.

3.24 A number of independent studies including the Portas Review (2011), The Grimsey
Review (2013) and the Beyond Retail paper (2013) have identified four national
trends which are likely to shape local demand for new retail space in the future.
These key trends are the polarisation of lower and higher-order centres, changes in
the convenience goods sector, the growth in commercial leisure sector and the
growth of multi-channel shopping (illustrated in Figure 3.5 below).

Figure 3.5 Key Trends in Town Centre Development
3.25 The effects of these national trends are to some degree dependent on local circumstances, including the status and performance of individual centres. It is also important to note that the trends seen in recent years do not exclusively threaten town centres but also provide opportunities, particularly if the current economic recovery is sustained.

3.26 The growth of commercial leisure and wider trends in the leisure sector are addressed further below. The key issues underpinning the current and future trends in the retail sector are:

- the after effects of the prolonged downturn in the UK economy, which resulted in the growth of 'value' retail, a greater reluctance to spend amongst consumers, and investors being more cautious in their financial decisions;
- the 'polarisation trend', which has resulted in many retailers concentrating their activity in larger, higher-order shopping destinations and closing smaller stores in lower-order town centres;
- the continued growth of online retailing, which acts as a 'claim' on the total amount of expenditure available to support new retail floorspace within town and city centres, although the increasing popularity of 'click & collect' services suggests potential for synergy between the two retailing formats; and
- changes in the convenience goods market, including the growth of top-up food shopping, the subsequent growth of smaller format foodstores and the more recent challenge to the main operators from discount operators such as Aldi and Lidl.

3.27 It will be important to take all of these market trends into account within the PTCM, to ensure that its vision, objectives, projects and proposals reflect market signals and are therefore both realistic and deliverable.

**Town Centre Trade and Turnover**

3.28 Our assessment of the current performance of the town centre’s retail offer is based on the findings of the Knowsley Town Centres and Shopping Study (KTCSS) that was completed by Roger Tym & Partners (now part of PBA) in 2010, together with the findings of a telephone survey of 1,100 households and a survey of 525 visitors to Prescot undertaken on behalf of the owner of the Cables Retail Park in September 2013.

3.29 The findings of the KTCSS were based on a survey of 1,500 households within the study area undertaken in July 2008. The study area covered all of the Knowsley local authority area, together with parts of the adjoining authorities of Liverpool, St Helens, Halton and Sefton. The results of this survey are now somewhat dated and whilst new retail development within the survey area has been limited since 2008, developments outside of the survey area (notably in Liverpool City Centre) may have affected overall shopping patterns and the subsequent market shares of destinations within and outside of the Borough.
**Comparison Goods**

3.30 The KTCSS found of the total comparison goods expenditure available to residents of the study area, only 17.1 per cent was spent at destinations within the study area. This very low retention rate reflects the limited offer of destinations within the study area, including Knowsley’s three town centres, and the relative attractiveness of destinations outside of the study area that are in close proximity and are easily accessible. Of the retail destinations within the Borough, Prescot (including Cables Retail Park) had the highest comparison goods market share, although this only accounted for a 4.1 per cent market share which was equivalent to an estimated comparison goods turnover derived from residents of the study area of £45.9 million at that time.

3.31 When the estimated turnover of the Cables Retail Park (£21.7 million) is removed, the KTCSS found the comparison goods turnover of Prescot Town Centre to be £24.20 million, equating to a 2.1 per cent market share. This was lower than the estimated comparison goods turnover of Huyton Town Centre (£29.9 million) but higher than the equivalent turnover of Kirkby Town Centre (£19.4 million). However, these turnover figures were insignificant when compared to the turnover of Liverpool City Centre that was drawn from residents of the study area, which the KTCSS estimated to be £413.2 million. Table 3.1 below provides a summary of the main comparison shopping destinations for residents of the study area.

**Table 3.1 Main Destinations for Comparison Goods Shopping**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Destinations within the Study Area</th>
<th>Comparison Goods Turnover from Study Area Residents (£m)</th>
<th>Main Destinations outside the Study Area</th>
<th>Comparison Goods Turnover from Study Area Residents (£m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aintree Retail Park</td>
<td>80.60</td>
<td>Liverpool City Centre</td>
<td>413.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huyton Town Centre</td>
<td>29.90</td>
<td>St Helens Town Centre</td>
<td>84.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prescot Town Centre</strong></td>
<td><strong>24.20</strong></td>
<td>Speke Retail Park</td>
<td>52.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cables Retail Park</td>
<td>21.69</td>
<td>New Mersey Retail Park</td>
<td>37.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkby Town Centre</td>
<td>19.44</td>
<td>Edge Lane Retail Park</td>
<td>32.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tables 4.3 and 4.4, KTCSS Volume 1 (November 2009)

3.32 Within the survey area the KTCSS found that Prescot Town Centre mainly drew its comparison goods trade from three survey zones; Zone 3 (its local zone), Zone 4 (South Prescot) and Zone 8 (Huyton). The town centre’s comparison goods market shares were 14.1 per cent in Zone 3, 7.8 per cent in Zone 4 and 3.9 per cent in Zone 8. In all other survey zones, Prescot Town Centre had a comparison goods market share of 2.5 per cent or less.

3.33 The household survey undertaken on behalf of the owner of the Cables Retail Park in September 2013 is more up-to-date but is not directly comparable to the results of the
KTCSS because it adopted a smaller survey area. The 2013 survey found that within this smaller survey area and in terms of main destinations, Prescot Town Centre had a 2.5 per cent market share in the clothing and footwear sub-sector (compared to a market share of 33.6 per cent for Liverpool City Centre and 19.3 per cent for St Helens Town Centre), and 1.5 per cent in the electrical goods, furniture and flooring, and other non-food goods sub-sectors. Cables Retail Park performed slightly better with market shares of 3.1 per cent for clothing and shoes, 2.7 per cent for electrical goods, and 2.5 per cent for other non-food goods.

3.34 The Prescot Visitor Survey, also undertaken in September 2013, allows for comparisons to be made between different destinations in terms of the shopping patterns of existing visitors to the town. Figure 3.6 below shows the results for the key sub-sector of clothing and footwear and what the survey described as ‘other non-food goods’. This latter category excludes bulky goods such as electrical goods, DIY goods, furniture and floor coverings which were subject to separate questioning. The ‘other non-food goods’ category is therefore likely to include shopping for small household goods, gifts, DVDs etc.

**Figure 3.6 Main Destinations for Non-Bulky Comparison Shopping (%)**

3.35 As Figure 3.6 shows, Liverpool City Centre dominates shopping for clothing and footwear and Cables Retail Park is a significantly more popular destination for this type of shopping than Prescot Town Centre. St Helens Town Centre is also an important alternative destination for clothing and footwear shopping for visitors to Prescot. Conversely, in terms of shopping for ‘other non-food goods’, Prescot Town Centre was the most popular destination, accounting for 16.6 per cent of responses, compared to 15 per cent for Cables Retail Park. These results are considered to reflect the existing retail offer of both destinations.
Convenience Goods

3.36 The KTCSS found that destinations within the survey area retained 56.7 per cent of its residents' convenience goods expenditure, whilst 43.3 per cent was directed to destinations outside of the study area. This is a relatively high level of expenditure leakage given the largely urban character of the study area and that convenience goods shopping tends to be carried out on a more localised basis.

3.37 The Tesco Extra store at Cables Retail Park was the third most popular destination within the study area (after the Asda stores at Aintree and Huyton), with a market share of 8.6 per cent and an estimated convenience retail turnover of £52.4 million. Since the time of the KTCSS the Tesco store has been extended and may now have secured a slightly higher market share. In terms of Prescot Town Centre, no figures were presented for its convenience goods market shares but it can be assumed that this was very low given that the KTCSS found that 84 per cent of retained convenience goods expenditure was accounted for by the thirteen major national operator foodstores that were located in the study area at the time.

3.38 In terms of retention rates on a zone by zone basis, Zones 3 and 4 (containing Prescot Town Centre and Cables Retail Park) performed relatively well with a localised convenience expenditure retention rate of 48.8 per cent. However, this was largely accounted for by the Tesco Extra at the retail park which had a dominant market share of over 30 per cent in both zones. The same store had a market share of over 10 per cent in Zones 1, 2 and 8, covering the areas of Kirkby and Huyton.

3.39 The 2013 household survey found that within its smaller survey area, the Tesco Extra at Cables Retail Park had a 17 per cent market share for main food shopping trips and a 6.3 per cent market share for top-up food shopping trips. In comparison, facilities within Prescot (i.e mainly but not specifically the town centre) had a 3 per cent market share for main food shopping and 8.3 per cent for top-up food shopping.

3.40 The results of the Visitor Survey of September 2013 allow for a comparison of the relative strengths of the town centre and the Cables Retail Park in terms of food shopping. Figure 3.7 below shows the main destinations of respondents for two types of food shopping; main food shopping and top up food shopping.
3.41 Figure 3.7 shows that the Tesco Extra store at Cables Retail Park is the dominant destination for main food shopping trips amongst existing visitors to Prescot. A wide variety of other main food shopping destinations were named outside Prescot, though no single destination accounted for more than 5 per cent of responses, with the exception of Asda at Huyton that was named by 12 per cent of respondents.

3.42 In terms of day-to-day top-up food shopping the results were very different with the Tesco Extra store accounting for a much smaller number of responses and other destinations within Prescot being named by almost half of respondents. We assume that, with the exception of a small number of neighbourhood convenience stores, most of these ‘other’ destinations within Prescot were located in the town centre, indicating that facilities there have a distinct role that differentiates the town centre from the retail park in terms of convenience goods shopping.

Visitor Perceptions

3.43 The 2013 telephone and visitor surveys undertaken on behalf of the owner of the Cables Retail Park also contained some results that provide an insight into visitor perceptions of Prescot Town Centre and its retail offer. It is important to note that in providing answers to both surveys, it may that some respondents did not differentiate between the retail park and the traditional town centre that is the subject of the PTCM.

3.44 Notwithstanding this caveat, the survey results provide some useful information. The household telephone survey asked about the main reasons for visiting and not visiting Prescot Town Centre, and the range of shops and services. Figure 3.8 below summarises responses to the question ‘When you visit Prescot town centre, what is the main purpose of your visit?’. 
3.45 As the survey results show, shopping for convenience goods is the main reason for most visits to the town centre, with comparison goods shopping and visiting services within the town centre being the main reason for about 20 per cent of trips each. We expect that the strong result in terms of convenience shopping reflects the attraction of the Tesco Extra store at Cables Retail Park (respondents not distinguishing between this facility and the actual town centre). This result emphasises the importance of creating stronger links between the retail park and the town centre to drive footfall and trade.

3.46 Indeed, we note that the household telephone survey also asked whether respondents visited Prescot more frequently since the Cables Retail Park had been built. Almost half (49.7 per cent) of respondents said that it had made no difference, but 31.7 per cent said that they visited Prescot more frequently and only 7.4 per cent said that they had visited Prescot less since the opening of the retail park.

3.47 When asked the question ‘What is the main reason that you do not visit Prescot town centre more frequently?’ the largest proportion of respondents (31.6 per cent) said there was no particular reason. The other most popular responses were the poor range of shops and services within the town centre (21.5 per cent) and that the town centre was too far from the respondent’s home (21.1 per cent). These responses appear to confirm that the town centre currently has a small catchment area and that this may be due to its limited town centre offer.

Recent Developments in Prescot

3.48 We note that since the time of the 2008 household survey undertaken as part of the KTCSS, there have been significant changes to retailer representation within Prescot Town Centre. In addition to the closure of the Somerfield foodstore within the Prescot Shopping Centre in May 2008, a number of other retailers have also withdrawn from the town centre. We understand that fashion retailers Dorothy Perkins and M&Co.
have recently vacated their premises within the shopping centre, which went into administration in 2012. The administrator is Deloitte, which has appointed Vale Retail as the asset manager. The scheme was completed in 1989 and let on the basis of 25 year leases, many of which have recently expired or are shortly due for renewal.

3.49 In Table 3.2 below, we set out a comparison of the GOAD data presented within the KTCSS (based on a March 2006 survey that was updated by Roger Tym & Partners in June 2008) and the most recent data from September 2013 which has been summarised earlier in this section and is contained in full at Appendix A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Date</th>
<th>Convenience Goods Floorspace (sq. m gross)</th>
<th>Comparison Goods Floorspace (sq. m gross)</th>
<th>Service Use Floorspace (sq. m gross)</th>
<th>Vacant Floorspace (sq. m gross)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2008</td>
<td>2,590</td>
<td>8,070</td>
<td>4,270</td>
<td>4,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2013</td>
<td>2,480</td>
<td>6,890</td>
<td>5,080</td>
<td>4,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change (2008-13)</td>
<td>-110</td>
<td>-1,180</td>
<td>+810</td>
<td>+600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KTCSS Volume 2 and Experian GOAD

3.50 Table 3.2 shows that the amount of convenience goods floorspace within the town centre remained largely unchanged between 2008 and 2013. However, there was a fairly significant decline in the amount of comparison goods floorspace within the town centre over those five years with the loss of 1,180 sq. m (gross), equivalent to almost 15 per cent of the stock that existed in June 2008. The amount of vacant floorspace, which was already relatively high, increased by 600 sq. m over the period, as did the amount of service use floorspace which increased by 810 sq. m, or 19 per cent.

3.51 The increase in vacant floorspace is unsurprising given the prevailing economic conditions between 2008 and 2013, whilst the decline in comparison goods floorspace is likely to reflect the effects of the polarisation trend described above (whereby national retailers consolidate their store portfolios within fewer, larger centres), the corresponding increase in competition from higher order centres such as Liverpool City Centre, and the increasing claims of online retail activity on available expenditure. The trends identified in Table 3.2 indicate that the retail function of Prescot Town Centre is more focused on convenience shopping, alongside service uses that make up an increasingly large proportion of the available floorspace within the town centre.

3.52 As might have been expected during the economic downturn and given the high vacancy rate within Prescot, retail development activity within the town centre has been very limited in recent years. Planning permission was granted in August 2010 for the erection of a mixed use development on land to the east of Sewell Street on the edges of the town centre (ref: 09/00345/FUL). The approved scheme was to provide a freestanding retail unit of 1,338 sq. m (to potentially accommodate a discount foodstore operator), together with a terrace of four smaller retailer units totalling 1,116 sq. m. Planning permission was renewed in October 2013 (ref: 13/00354/RPP) and is due to expire in October 2018.
Figure 3.9 Approved Retail Scheme at Sewell Street

Source: Planning Application 13/00354/RPP / Cassidy + Ashton

3.53 Our discussions with the owner of the site (the Brookhouse Group which also owns the Cables Retail Park), reveal that whilst demand exists from discount food operators for representation in Prescot, interest in the foodstore unit that forms part of the approved scheme at Sewell Street and other units within the scheme has been weak. We understand from our discussions with the Brookhouse Group that retail operators have been concerned about the profile and visibility of the Sewell Street site.

3.54 Outside the town centre, we note that the Tesco Extra store at Cables Retail Park has recently been extended and that further refurbishment works were carried out in early 2015 to provide new in-store facilities. There have also been changes to the tenant mix elsewhere on the retail park, notably with the introduction of Marks and Spencer Simply Food. We understand from discussions with the owner of the retail park that demand for units is strong and that they are seeking to introduce new tenants. We note that any displacement of existing tenants may provide opportunities to accommodate them within alternative premises in the town centre.

3.55 The Borough Council has also resolved to grant planning permission for the erection of a freestanding store for Home Bargains on land at Manchester Road, Prescot (ref: 14/00478/FUL). The proposed store will provide 2,323 sq. m (gross) of internal retail floorspace, together with an external garden centre area extending to 750 sq. m and parking for 130 vehicles. Home Bargains has an existing store within Prescot Shopping Centre and whilst it has agreed a temporary extension to its lease it is expected to relocate to the Manchester Road site in due course.

Summary of Key Issues

3.56 The key issues identified by this analysis of the performance of the retail sector in Prescot Town Centre are as follows:

- prior to the economic downturn, the town centre was in a weak position with a relatively high vacancy rate, the loss of its main foodstore operator and uncertainty over the future of tenants within the Prescot Shopping Centre;
- the KTCSS had identified that a significant proportion of comparison goods expenditure available to the study area’s residents ‘leaked’ to destinations...
outside of the area. Prescot’s comparison goods market share was just 2 per cent and its turnover was similar to that of Cables Retail Park;

- the town centre mainly drew its trade in comparison goods from residents of the Prescot and Huyton areas, although its market share was no greater than 15 per cent within these areas;
- the Tesco Extra foodstore at Cables Retail Park dominates convenience goods provision within Prescot, although some survey data suggests that it is less significant in terms of top-up food shopping where the town centre may play a greater role;
- since the time of the KTCSS, the vacancy rate within the town centre has increased, its comparison goods offer has contracted and its representation of service uses has increased; and
- there are a number of reasons for this persistent underperformance including the economic downturn, market trends such as the growth of online retailing and the polarisation trend, increasing competition from Cables Retail Park and continuing uncertainty in respect of the Prescot Shopping Centre.

The Performance of the Leisure Sector

3.57 Whilst the town centre has a limited leisure offer at present, this is a growth area that is particularly relevant to Prescot given the strategic opportunities that have been identified to provide new facilities within the town centre and grow the visitor economy within this part of the Borough and the Liverpool City Region. In this section, we provide an overview of the wider market context, an assessment of the town centre’s existing offer and an overview of proposals for new leisure-led development.

Market Context

3.58 The current Mintel Leisure Review (December 2014) estimates the overall value of the UK leisure industry at just over £79 billion. This equates to growth of 2.9 per cent for the year (compared with 2.2 per for the previous year) and overall, 12.7 per cent since 2009 (although in real terms market value has contracted once inflation is taken into account). Nonetheless, the overall value of the sector of £79 billion means the pre-recessionary high watermark of £70 billion achieved in 2007 has been surpassed.

3.59 The return of the UK leisure industry to its pre-recessionary value, after several years in the economic doldrums, is a significant milestone for the sector. However, this achievement paints a rosier picture than is possibly the case, because market value has been inflated by two successive years of VAT increases (in 2010 and 2011), combined with inflation and other increases in taxes and duties. Therefore, it is likely that a substantial proportion of the increase in market value has arisen from rising prices, rather than rising demand.

3.60 Against this subtly shifting backdrop, it is becoming increasingly difficult for forecasters to accurately predict the overall trend within the leisure market over the next five years. Nonetheless, Mintel remain bullish in terms of overall prospects for the UK leisure market, as illustrated below in Figure 3.10.
Figure 3.10 Forecast Growth of the UK Leisure Market

Source: Mintel Leisure Review (December 2014)

3.61 As Figure 3.10 shows, confidence is clearly growing in the market with significant growth predicted in all but the most pessimistic scenarios. In addition to the overall market, it is relevant to consider trends within key sub-markets, notably tourism and visitor attractions, eating and drinking out, hotel/serviced accommodation, entertainment, and health and fitness.

Tourism

3.62 Tourism is a major part of the UK economy, with spending in 2013 is forecast to reach £113 billion, of which £24 billion will come through spending by international visitors on visits to the UK and fares paid to UK carriers and £89 billion will come through spending by domestic residents. Inbound tourism will continue to be the fastest growing tourism sector – with spend by international visitors forecast to grow by over 6 per cent a year in comparison with domestic spending by UK residents at just over 3 per cent. The value of inbound tourism is forecast to grow from over £21bn in 2013 to £57bn by 2025, with the UK seeing an international tourism balance of payments surplus in 2023, almost forty years since the UK last reported a surplus.

3.63 Within the context of Merseyside, Liverpool was the 5th most popular destination for international visitors in 2013 with 562,000 staying visits (up from 550,000 in 2012) making the City Region the 5th most popular destination for all domestic visitors in the UK (1.68 million overnight visits). However, the vast majority of activity and expenditure is concentrated in Liverpool and Sefton, which encompasses the popular seaside resort of Southport. By comparison, the outer boroughs of Halton, Knowsley and St Helens rank a distant fourth culminatively, as highlighted in the latest available Liverpool City Region digest of tourism data (January 2015) which is presented in Figure 3.11 below.
Eating and Drinking Out

3.64 Despite headline trends in recent years highlighting the growth of in-home leisure, eating and drinking out continues to make up a significant proportion of the leisure industry, accounting for two thirds of total spend, with eating out performing significantly better during the past five years than the traditional pub sector.

3.65 Despite this position of dominance, the sector is far from secure. Overall, the bar and pub industry continues to shrink in terms of numbers, with around 50,000 venues estimated to remain in the UK. As licensed premises numbers dropped dramatically in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 recession, so too did turnover, which fell from £26 billion in 2007 to a low point of £20.6 billion in 2010. Following modest growth in 2011, the market maintained steady growth in 2012 to reach £21.6 billion. However it is worth noting that much of this growth has been driven mainly by rising VAT, alcohol duties and cost increases being passed onto consumer prices, with negative market growth in real terms.
3.66 Nevertheless, modest annual growth is forecast in the coming years driven by increasing prices and the recovery of the UK economy encouraging more consumers to relax their budgets a little. Based on these factors, the market is expected to top £24 billion by 2018, 13 per cent higher than the current level.

**Hotels and Serviced Accommodation**

3.67 A picture of the current hotel market in the UK is provided by the September 2014 PWC UK Hotels Forecast. Overall, the research suggests UK occupancy rates remained high in 2013 and 2014, at 74 per cent. Average daily rate (ADR) is expected to have declined by 1.5 per cent in 2013 but grown by 1.4 per cent in 2014, taking the average price for a hotel room in the UK to £83. At the provincial level PWC report that occupancy remains ‘high by historical standards’ at 71 per cent with ADR expected to have reached almost £60 in 2014, albeit still below the 2008 peak.

3.68 However, whilst the general hotel market remains in growth, it is the budget sector which appears to be particularly buoyant at present. Recently released 2014 Q4 data for the hotel market, prepared by HVS, Zolfo Cooper and AM:PM found that in terms of new builds, the budget sector continues to dominate, representing 34 per cent of current supply and 47 per cent of the market’s active pipeline. As budget operators compete for sites an increasing amount of thought has also been put into concepts for the next generation of budget hotels, as highlighted in the following case study at Appendix B (Case Study 1).

**Entertainment**

3.69 The entertainment sector encompasses a range of uses, as highlighted in the following paragraphs. An insight into the cinema market is provided by data released in February 2015 by the European Audiovisual Observatory. This indicates a slight recovery of 0.6 per cent growth in box office takings after ‘ground to a halt’ in 2013, with a decline of 4.3 per cent year-on-year previously noted. This recent trend is partially supported by Mintel in their December 2014 Leisure Review, with a 1.8 per cent decline noted in cinema going for 2013-14, although this remains within the overall context of overall growth (+8.8 per cent) in the UK cinema market since 2009.

3.70 An insight into the theatre sector is provided within the September 2013 report ‘State of Play: Theatre UK’ undertaken by Ticketmaster. The report underscores the extent to which theatregoing is no longer a niche, elitist pastime. A large majority (76 per cent) of the UK population has been to at least one theatre show (including plays, musicals, opera and dance performances) in the past three years, with 63 per cent attending once in the past year – more than music concerts (53 per cent) and sporting events (47 per cent).

3.71 Other trends noted include:

- 16-19 year olds more likely to attend than any age group, although the majority theatre attendees are 25-44 years old.
- Theatre attendees are most likely to also attend the cinema, followed by arts (gallery & museum) venues.
Theatre is a significant tourist draw for the UK. For those who have been to the theatre in the UK from abroad, 62 per cent said their visit was influenced by the cultural scene in the UK.

3.72 Again, Mintel (2013) concur with the positive outlook for the theatre sector, which grew by 3.1 per cent during 2012-13 and has experienced overall growth of 26.3 per cent since 2008.

Visitor Attractions

3.73 In terms of visitor attractions the December 2014 Mintel Visitor Attractions Report indicates that visits to UK attractions increased again in 2014, following on from a successful 2013, boosted by good weather and the ever increasing popularity of London attractions. Visits have increased by 14 per cent since 2009, boosted in large part by the trend towards staycations, which has not significantly declined as the country recovers economically.

Health and Fitness

3.74 The current ‘State of the UK Fitness Industry Report’ produced by the Leisure Database Company reveals that the UK health and fitness industry has more clubs, more members and a greater market value than ever before. The 2014 report also highlights that the industry has experienced another year of growth over the twelve month period to the end of March 2014, with increases of 3.9 per cent in value, 1.5 per cent in the number of fitness facilities and a 4.5 per cent rise in the number of members. However, the growth in the industry continues to be driven by strong performance from the rapidly growing low cost market. This expanding market now accounts for 7.7 per cent of the total number of private clubs and a significant 18.7 per cent of the private sector membership.

3.75 A further emerging trend of particular relevance, given the significant growth in older population groups (and of relevance to Prescot) is an increased awareness of the relationship between exercise and dementia, as highlighted in the case study at Appendix B (Case Study 2).

Implications of Market Trends for Prescot Town Centre

3.76 Our analysis of key market trends relevant to Prescot Town Centre suggests the following;

- Since the economic downturn there has been a turnaround in fortunes across the board in the overall leisure market and tourism remains vibrant, especially within the Liverpool City Region. The challenge will be to provide Prescot with the right platform to build upon its’ latent and tangential strengths, relative to nearby large scale attractors such as the Knowsley Safari Park.

- The hotel sector remains vibrant, although the reality is hotel performance in the provinces continues to lag behind that of London and major cities (including Liverpool which dominates provision within the City Region). Hospitality too has enjoyed continued growth for several years, with eating out in pubs and restaurants the key drivers of growth within the sector.
Following a difficult year in 2012, visitor attractions appear to have rallied in the past two years and resumed the previously unbroken curve of growth that had set the sector apart from others in the leisure market. Within the context of the Liverpool City Region, this growth, together with the strength of the Merseyside visitor attraction product and resilience of the heritage sector, should all augur well for new development in Prescot if a suitably compelling ‘hook’ can be found.

Assessment of Existing Leisure Facilities in Prescot

3.77 In the following section we provide an overview and commentary on key aspects of the existing leisure offer in Prescot Town Centre and the surrounding area, encompassing eating and drinking out, serviced accommodation, visitor attractions, entertainment, and health and fitness.

Eating and Drinking Out

3.78 In contrast with many towns of a similar size, the Prescot evening economy differs in that instead of clusters, facilities are far more spread out. The mainstay of the offer is pubs, comprising mainly independent and leased pubs, with Punch, Amber Taverns and Enterprise noted, alongside a number of privately owned operations. These are generally larger, old style venues which appear to suffer from underinvestment, either by landlord, owner or tenant. There was also one unusual instance of a closure notice being served on a premises (the Red Lion) by the Borough Council and Merseyside Police in December 2014 on the grounds that ‘use of the Red Lion has resulted in serious nuisance to members of the public’. This has subsequently led to the pub now being unoccupied as owners Punch Taverns consider their next steps.

3.79 What the pubs in Prescot Town Centre all have in common, however, is striking similarities in offer, with the majority price-led operations on both food and drink, together with live sport or karaoke. This, together with the disparate location of provision, means it is likely there is less of a circuit in operation with different pubs operating as their own destination. Nonetheless, the pubs are generally of character and, for those in and around the Church (Deane House and the Old Mill), potential assets with the right investment strategy in place.

3.80 In terms of eating out, there is even less variety than in the current licensed offer. The majority of premises are takeaways. Only a handful of generic Chinese or Indian restaurants are present, with persistent evidence of under-investment in buildings and business failure. The only contemporary restaurant in the town centre (the Printhouse) has closed and the freehold is for sale. With the exception of J D Wetherspoon, there are no major branded operators, either in terms of food and drink, or more casual coffee and cake, present within the town centre, with Subway and McDonalds the mainstays of provision at Cables Retail Park.

3.81 Overall, the impression is of a town centre devoid of activity in the evening and night time, whilst the near uniformed shuttered takeaways give a sense of the town centre being closed for business during the day time.
Hotel Accommodation

3.82 Although there is no provision within the study area, the following table illustrates the existing supply of hotels within 1.5 miles of Prescot which could reasonably be expected to service the town centre. Analysis of supply suggests that there is a range of serviced accommodation, principally along the M62 corridor, but that there is no hotel provision in close proximity to the town centre, the Knowsley Safari Park or the M57/A57 interchange.

Table 3.3 Hotel Provision in the Prescot Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel</th>
<th>Star Rating</th>
<th>Bed Spaces ***</th>
<th>Indicative Weekday Rack Rate** (£)</th>
<th>Indicative Weekend Rack Rate** (£)</th>
<th>Trip Advisor Rating</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Village Urban Resort Liverpool</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>74.17</td>
<td>40.83</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>Purpose built complex with substantial leisure facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiston, 1.2 miles from Prescot Town Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park View Hotel and Guest House</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40.83</td>
<td>40.83</td>
<td>2.5/5</td>
<td>Detached period property. Independently owned and operated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Helens, 1.2 miles from</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescot Town Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premier Inn Liverpool Tarbock</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>46.67</td>
<td>46.67</td>
<td>4.5/5</td>
<td>Purpose built budget hotel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarbock, 1.5 miles from Prescot Town Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>244</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on laterooms.com accessed on 01.03.15
**Double/twin occupancy room, ex VAT @ 20%, based on laterooms.com for 01.03.15 (weekday) and 05.03.15 (w/e)
***Assumed double/twin occupancy for all rooms unless otherwise stated, based on number of rooms

3.83 An indication of the current performance of hotels within the Liverpool City Region is presented within the most recent Tourism Summary (January 2015). Key performance data is represented below in Table 3.4. The overall performance data appears to be slightly above provincial hotel performance measurements noted in the PWC annual hotel survey, although below UK averages in terms of key measures such as average daily rate.

Table 3.4 Hotel Performance in the Liverpool City Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupancy</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
<td>£56.43</td>
<td>£56.66</td>
<td>£57.09</td>
<td>£61.13</td>
<td>2.3m</td>
<td>2.4m</td>
<td>2.6m</td>
<td>3.0m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: Liverpool City Region Tourism Summary (2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3.84 Further insight is provided within the ‘Liverpool Hotel Futures’ study (Hotel Solutions/Liverpool Hotel Development Group). Published in 2014, the study forecasts that projected growth in the hotel market is likely to require the development
of between 2,472 (low growth) and 4,140 (high growth) additional hotel bedrooms in the City Region during the ten years leading up to 2025, which equates to between 18 and 29 new hotels.

3.85 The scale of this growth at the high growth rate is similar to the number of new bedrooms that have been developed over the past 10 years, as highlighted below at Table 3.5.

### Table 3.5 Hotel Supply in the Liverpool City Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Hotels</th>
<th>Rooms</th>
<th>Hotels Supply Change 2011-14</th>
<th>Rooms Supply Change 2011-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>6741</td>
<td>+13</td>
<td>+1414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowsley</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halton</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wirral</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sefton</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1158</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Helens</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>190</td>
<td>10611</td>
<td>+16</td>
<td>+1569</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Liverpool City Region Tourism Summary, January 2015

3.86 As this data demonstrates, the market for new hotel business is overwhelmingly centred on Liverpool City Centre, which accounts for 1,414 out of 1,569 new rooms in the City Region, or 90 per cent of all new supply. By comparison, no new supply was recorded in Knowsley during the study period, with very little elsewhere in the ‘Outer Liverpool’ Boroughs.

3.87 The research also suggest that within ‘Outer Liverpool’ (which would include Prescot) budget hotels perform at similar occupancy rates to city centre hotels, but achieved lower room rates, a conclusion supported by the local supply analysis. In general midweek occupancies are stronger than weekends, the latter substantially lower than the levels achieved by city centre budget hotels. Consequently, the study identifies that ‘the priority will be to develop a more distinctive midmarket and budget hotel offer in terms of attracting some of the new, innovative hotel products and brands that are emerging’.

### Visitor Attractions

3.88 Within the town centre, the mainstay of existing provision has been the Prescot Museum, which was previously located in a detached Georgian property on Church Street. However, following the disposal of the building in which it was based the Museum is now housed as part of the library within the Prescot Shopping Centre.

3.89 The Museum’s collection focuses on the story of the town, notably local people, businesses and industries such as watchmaking, pottery manufacture, cable making and coal mining.

3.90 Since the relocation of the Museum into the Prescot Centre, we understand that the visitor numbers have increased significantly, as have the number of enquiries and
requests relating to the Museum collection. The Museum was recognised for its full programme, including exhibitions, collection, outreach work into schools and communities, by being awarded Museum Accreditation Status last year. The Museum is a driver for the local Elizabethan Fayre and the links with Shakespeare North Trust which includes, this year, a touring performance of A Midsummer Night’s Dream with MATE theatre. The Museum has also displayed artwork/historic artefacts in some empty shops within the town centre.

3.91 Nonetheless, the location at the rear of the shopping centre is far from ideal and thought could be taken as to proposals to give more visibility, or indeed other methods employed on a town trail basis which arguably could tell the Prescot story in a more dynamic and accessible way. An indication of the type of lower impact techniques that could be employed in addition to more traditional static presentations are presented in the case study detailed at Appendix B (Case Study 3).

3.92 The Knowsley Safari Park is also located in close proximity to the town centre. One of the Liverpool city Region’s premier paid visitor attractions, it attracted over 450,000 visitors per annum in 2014. The park is situated around Knowsley Hall and since 1971 has been home to an important zoological collection, including elephants, giraffes, lions, bongos, tigers and baboons. The park also includes a narrow gauge railway, 'The Lakeside Railway', on which visitors may tour parts of the site. Other activities provided on site include paintballing, off-road driving challenges, and aerial extreme ropewalks.

3.93 It is also relevant to consider Knowsley Hall, a stately home abutting the Safari Park and the ancestral home of the Stanley family, the Earls of Derby. The Hall has important historic links to Shakespeare, forming the basis for the Shakespeare North project considered below, and operates contemporarily as a visitor attraction and increasingly, as a quality wedding venue. The Hall is an important visitor asset with real and tangible links to Prescot.

**Entertainment**

3.94 A cursory analysis reveals very limited entertainment facilities within the town centre, with pubs showing sports and karaoke the mainstays of provision. No cinema, bingo, theatre, visual arts, or live music was present in Prescot Town Centre at the time of our visits.

3.95 However, some effort has been made in recent years to develop a nascent events product in the town centre, with the Council co-ordinating a programme of activities which includes a Christmas lights switch on (although we understand this is not due to happen from 2015 onwards due to budgetary constraints) and seasonal activities such as Easter egg hunts. More encouragingly, a monthly Producers Market has been running in the town centre since 2011 and has proved successful. Moving forward, these types of events may be an important point of differentiation.

3.96 The town centre also enjoys a developing arts, sports and cultural event product which also provides welcome distinctiveness to the town centre offer. The community and voluntary organisation Prescot Festival is now in its 11th year, hosting a ten day ‘Annual Prescot Festival of Music & the Arts’ in June 2015, supported by other events
during the year and an annual ‘Elizabethan Fayre’. Reflecting Prescot’s tangible links with Shakespeare the town centre has also hosted a number of ad hoc performances and events, most recently performances of ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’.

3.97 In addition to these cultural activities, the Tour of Britain has taken place in Prescot over 3 years with a Stage Finish in 2012 (cycling through parts of Prescot and finishing at Knowsley Safari Park), a full Stage Individual Time Trial in 2013 (including through Prescot Town Centre) and a Stage Start in 2014 (starting at Knowsley Safari Park and incorporating the town centre).

3.98 These events, and in particular the arts and Shakespeare focused activity, are key assets that should be encouraged where possible in the emerging Masterplan.

Health and Fitness

3.99 There are currently no dedicated health and fitness facilities within Prescot Town Centre. However, further afield, there are facilities at the Prescot Soccer and Leisure Centre and in neighbouring Huyton (Knowsley Leisure and Culture Park) and St Helens (DW Sports Fitness, Ruskin Leisure and Queens Park Health and Fitness), comprising a mix of local authority, smaller independent and a single branded operator.

Proposed Development in Prescot Town Centre

Proposed Cinema

3.100 We understand that proposals have been explored for cinema provision in Prescot Town Centre over recent years, with a number of development sites notionally identified within the town centre. These include the consideration of proposals for the provision of a cinema within Prescot Shopping Centre and at a site on Sewell Street. In addition, the current proposals put forward by the Shakespeare North Trust make provision for new cinema screens as an ancillary component of the proposed theatre development (further details below).

3.101 A comprehensive overview of the potential for a new cinema in the town centre is provided within the November 2013 Prescot Cinema Study, prepared by dcinex Consulting on behalf of the Borough Council.

3.102 The report concluded that there are potential options for such a development within the town centre and that there is a potential interest for this from landowners and developers. The report also potential demand for a cinema in Prescot, with a potential audience of 276,000 admissions per annum, resulting in an optimum requirement for a 6-7 screen cinema size with 850 seats.

3.103 A clear picture of the Liverpool City Region cinema market is presented in the 2013 dcinex report, which illustrated limited provision within a 15 minute drive time of Prescot, as demonstrated below in Figure 3.12. Total admissions to cinemas located in the study area (encompassing a total of 93 screens and seating capacity of 19,367), demonstrated in the map as a whole are estimated at 3.7 million (June 2013) and on this basis the average admissions per screen, at 39,234. This was estimated to be 10 per cent below the national average by the Dcinex team.
3.104 Within the study area shaded purple, the level of admissions per screen is 26 per cent below the UK average on a per screen basis and 34 per cent below UK average per seat, indicating limited demand/reflecting the poor level provision of the catchment area. However, it is also possible that this low level of utilisation also reflects the limited supply locally.

3.105 This headline figure, however may reflect limited local supply, which has constrained demand and the natural draw of Liverpool city centre as a big day out, with a movie combined with other forms of leisure and entertainment. Conversely, the report’s authors place great store in their experience as operators and their recent experience in the opening of a new cinema at New Brighton as part of a much larger destination development.

3.106 This positive example of the market overcoming less favourable desk data, together with the potential attraction of a well assembled larger scheme with a range of hooks to a developer (such as the potential development of a wider cultural quarter) provide compelling counters to a supply and demand dataset that on first read may be less favourable towards development.

**Figure 3.12 Potential Catchment Area for Prescot Cinema**

![Figure 3.12 Potential Catchment Area for Prescot Cinema](image)

Source: Prescot Cinema Study (dcinex Consulting)

3.107 The 2013 Cinema Study also shortlisted three potential sites for a cinema, listed below in ascending order:

- Prescot Shopping Centre
- The Old Picture House Site & Cables Retail Park Extension; and
- Printer’s Buildings

3.108 We understand from our discussions with the asset manager of the Prescot Shopping Centre that it has discounted the partial redevelopment of that site for cinema use on
the grounds of unviability. However, given the failure to attract interest from retail operators in the redevelopment of the Sewell Street site (forming the substantive part of the site referred to as ‘The Old Picture House & Cables Retail Park Extension site by the Cinema Study), the Brookhouse Group has also explored options to accommodate a cinema on its site, though that alternative scheme is also considered to be unviable at present.

**Proposed Theatre**

3.109 Aside from the cinema proposals, the project with perhaps the greatest transformational potential for the town centre is the ambitious plans of the Shakespeare North Trust for a new theatre and arts centre. The proposals have been developed by the Trust over the past ten years and, in their current form, encompass a 350-seater main auditorium, together with supporting smaller studio provision and a basement screening room. The scheme is currently more focused on education and encompasses provision for taught post-graduate acting courses, together with activities aimed at local schools.

3.110 The scheme is proposed for the existing car park on Mill Street and is notionally costed at £15 million. If realised, this would represent a major addition to the cultural scene of the Borough and potentially an anchor further leisure development within the town centre. A planning application is expected to be submitted in mid 2015. However, it is also clear that more work is required in terms of costings and development of the business case and funding plan to ensure the project is sustainable and deliverable in its current format.

**Figure 3.13 Proposed Shakespeare North Theatre**
3.111 In the context of theatre, the majority of provision is centred in Liverpool City Centre at present with very little in the outer boroughs. With the exception of Southport, the majority of facilities are nimble, multi-use venues such as the Knowsley Leisure and Culture Park in neighbouring Huyton, or more traditional venues like the St Helens Theatre Royal.

Other Developments

3.112 We are not aware of any significant proposed developments within or in close proximity to the town centre in terms of new entertainment facilities, visitor attractions, hotels, other serviced accommodation or significant food and drink related developments.

3.113 We understand that a masterplan is to be prepared for the future development of the Knowsley Safari Park but that this at the very early stages of its development. The focus of this masterplan will be to improve ancillary facilities at the Safari Park and make them more accessible, including for visitors travelling on foot or by public transport. It will be important for the PTCM to consider linkages with the Safari Park and any proposed development there in due course.

3.114 We also understand that proposals were under development in 2013/14 for a boutique hotel, lodge and spa development in the grounds of Knowsley Hall. This was as part of the much larger Epicentre development on a neighbouring site which is proposed to encompass an international polo club, stabling and equestrian facilities, several indoor arenas, events showground, clubhouse, residential field studies centre and an elite biathlon course. However, we understand that this proposal is now unlikely to proceed.
Summary of Key Issues

3.115 Analysis of current and proposed leisure provision within Prescot and, where relevant the wider Liverpool City Region, suggests the following issues:

- An initial analysis of the existing hospitality offer of the town centre reveals a basic level of provision, largely centred on traditional price-led pubs and takeaways. The challenge remains to develop an environment which is supportive of different forms of provision, to introduce greater variety to the mix and a greater degree of clustering to help more distinctive circuits emerge within the town centre;

- Although the hotel market appears to be thriving at a City Region level, very little of this growth is manifesting itself in the ‘outer boroughs’. Nonetheless, with limited hotel provision locally, excellent accessibility, no new openings in the Borough in the past five years, and the continued growth in the branded budget sector, the potential should exist for additional branded budget provision in the town centre, assuming a suitable site can be identified.

- The town has some interesting stories to tell potentially, including credible links with Shakespeare and a diverse industrial base, including a globally renowned reputation in clock-making. However, it is not clear that the current Museum, recently relocated to the rear of the under-used shopping centre is best placed to tell this tale. Conversely, in Knowsley Safari Park, the town has one of the City Region’s premier visitor attractions on its doorstep and the potential exists to attract some of these visitors to the town centre if a sufficiently interesting offer can be assembled.

- There appears to be very limited entertainment provision within Prescot, with a demand for additional cinema provision credibly advocated within the dcinex report. However, the potential major game changer for the town centre remains the proposals for a 350 capacity theatre and education facility, Shakespeare North. However, it is clear from consultations to date that more research into funding and overall feasibility will be needed to firm up questions of mix, scale, timescale and deliverability that remain outstanding.

- There is limited health and fitness provision within the immediate locality and a surprising lack of branded budget health and fitness provision, relative to market trends and population density.

Summary of Issues

3.116 Our analysis of the current composition of Prescot Town Centre, the performance of its key retail and leisure sectors, and recent or proposed developments, has identified a range of issues that it will be relevant to take into account when developing the vision and strategy for the PTCM and when developing individual masterplan projects.

3.117 The town centre’s retail offer is limited, particularly in terms of key comparison goods sub-sectors such as clothing and retail. It has suffered from the withdrawal of national multiple retail operators over recent years. Whilst convenience retail
provision is reasonable, there is no significant foodstore within the town centre that is capable of acting as an ‘anchor’, driving footfall and supporting trade within the town centre. Nevertheless, there is a reasonable provision of service uses within the town centre and a small but interesting independent retail offer. Overall the town centre has a limited catchment area and is struggling to compete with the Cables Retail Park and other destinations within and outside of the Borough. This underperformance is manifested in a very high vacancy rate, with vacant units concentrated in the Prescot Shopping Centre, the future of which remains uncertain.

3.118 As with the town centre’s retail offer, its leisure offer is limited, particularly in terms of hospitality and the evening economy. However, there are significant opportunities for future leisure development to facilitate the regeneration of the town centre. These opportunities include the town centre’s heritage and links to Shakespeare, the proposed theatre and potential cinema development and the capacity for other forms of leisure provision that would complement existing facilities within the town centre, the adjacent Cables Retail Park and nearby attractions such as Knowsley Safari Park.
4 REVIEW OF THE LOCAL PROPERTY MARKET

Introduction

4.1 This section of the Baseline Report relates to the property market in Prescot. Below we summarise some of the key policy evidence base documents that relate to property and development markets, and consider their implications for the PTCM.

4.2 Building on this evidence, we go on to provide an overview of property market conditions in Prescot Town Centre, covering each of the key property/development markets, namely retail, leisure, residential and office uses. For each we consider the apparent levels of demand that would provide the rationale for any additional development, and we analyse prevailing values (rents and yields in respect of commercial property, as well as sales values in respect of residential development). These factors will enable us to determine the likely viability of development proposals arising as part of the PTCM.

4.3 We then consider the practical issues that may create or constrain development opportunities in Prescot Town Centre. Most notable amongst these is the patterns of land ownership and, in particular, the potential for public sector land assets, along with those of willing potential partners in the private sector, to be brought forward for beneficial (re)development.

Existing Property Market Evidence

Retail Study

4.4 The most up-to-date retail study for the Borough is the Knowsley Town Centre and Shopping Study (KTCSS) of November 2009, carried out by Roger Tym & Partners. This study provided a commentary on the state of the retail sector within the Borough as a whole but also the key centres within it.

4.5 As noted in previous sections, the KTCSS study area was found to be retaining only 17 per cent of comparison goods expenditure and 57 per cent of convenience goods expenditure. One reason for such a low comparison retail retention rate is the close proximity and good accessibility of much larger centres, namely Liverpool City Centre and, to a lesser extent, St Helens Town Centre.

4.6 According to the study, Prescot Town Centre had suffered from a significant loss of vitality and viability. The report recommended that in order to stem the flow of retail expenditure leaving the town, the centre should improve its links with the Cables Retail Park. However, in order to achieve this, some demolition was likely to be required, and the feasibility of this was not clear. Qualitatively, it was recognised that the existing retail floorspace that is available needs to be improved to better reflect current market requirements.
Strategic Housing Market Assessment

4.7 The 2010 Strategic Housing Market Assessment set out the rationale for providing 550 net additional dwellings per annum in Knowsley. It recommended a target balance of new dwellings of 10 per cent one bedroom, 30 per cent two bedrooms, 40 per cent three and 20 per cent four or more bedrooms. The target level of affordable housing set out in the report is 25 per cent of units, split 75 per cent social rent and 25 per cent intermediate ownership, with a focus on 2 bed homes.

4.8 The market analysis included in the 2010 study suggested that values in Prescot were typically a little above the Borough-wide average. However, the 2013 Housing Market Update suggests that values in Knowsley had fallen slightly as a result of the credit crunch and recession, from which the housing market now appears to be slowly, but steadily, recovering. The number of net dwelling completions in the period since 2010 is also shown to be at low levels relative to historic averages, despite no shortage in the supply of available housing land.

Economic Viability Assessment

4.9 An Economic Viability Assessment was undertaken to form part of the evidence base for the Council’s development plan in October 2012. There was a comprehensive assessment of the main development types that are likely to come forward during the plan period. In order to undertake the assessments, consultants Keppie Massie and Arup had assembled evidence for a number of value and cost assumptions for different types of development, as summarised below in Table 4.1.

4.10 Based on these assumptions, the study found that the majority of residential typologies were viable in the context of the development plan policies. It also found that all employment uses are currently unviable, regardless of the policy implications of the development plan. Retail uses were viable in the most part, with comparison retail in the district centres and Prescot Town Centre being the exception. Food and drink uses were the only leisure use to remain demonstrably viable.
Table 4.1 Knowsley Development Values as of 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residential Sales Values</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkby and North Huyton</td>
<td>£1,615 per sq. m (£150 per sq ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halewood</td>
<td>£1,830 per sq. m (£170 per sq ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Huyton, Prescot, Knowsley Village, Whiston, Cronton</td>
<td>£2,099 per sq. m (£195 per sq ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residential Benchmark Land Values</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Value Green Belt</td>
<td>£247,105 per ha (£100,000 per acre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Value Urban</td>
<td>£494,200 per ha (£200,000 per acre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Value Green Belt</td>
<td>£370,000 per ha (£150,000 per acre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Value Urban</td>
<td>£865,000 per ha (£350,000 per acre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Residential Rental Values</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Centre Office</td>
<td>£92 per sq. m (£8.50 per sq ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Park Office (dependant on location)</td>
<td>£108-£151 per sq. m (£10-£14 per sq ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial (dependant on location)</td>
<td>£32-£59 per sq. m (£3-£5.50 per sq ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Uses (dependant on use)</td>
<td>£121-£237 per sq. m (£11-£22 per sq ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison/Small Convenience retail (dependant on size)</td>
<td>£129-£242 per sq. m (£12-£22 per sq ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket</td>
<td>£194 per sq m (£18 per sq ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Residential Land Values</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Centre Office</td>
<td>£740,000 per ha (£300,000 per acre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Park Office (dependant on location)</td>
<td>£250,000-£495,000 per ha (£100,000-£200,000 per acre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel, Food and Drink, Bingo, Cinema and Petrol Stations</td>
<td>£740,000 per ha (£300,000 per acre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Retail (&gt;929 sq. m/10,000 sq ft)</td>
<td>£1,235m per ha (£750,000 per acre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Retail Town Centre (&lt;929 sq. m/10,000 sq ft)</td>
<td>£4.942m per ha (£2m per acre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Retail District Centre (&lt;929 sq. m/10,000 sq ft)</td>
<td>£740,000 per ha (£300,000 per acre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket</td>
<td>£2.471m per ha (£1m per acre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Centre, Residential Institutions and Car Showrooms</td>
<td>£495,000 per ha (£200,000 per acre)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Knowsley Local Plan Economic Viability Assessment (2012)

Employment Land and Premises Study

4.11 The Employment Land and Premises Study undertaken in 2010 was commissioned by the Council to assess the supply, need and demand for employment land and premises. The study was jointly commissioned by Halton, Knowsley, Sefton and West Lancashire Councils.

4.12 Whilst Prescot-specific information within the study is limited, it provides a useful oversight as to the current employment market in the Borough. Whilst the study is now five years’ old, the information collected shows that Knowsley is a strong industrial area with the greatest demand being found in the logistics sector as well as environmental technology firms. The greatest demand was said to be for industrial units of between 186 sq. m and 743 sq. m. At the time of the study, rents for average quality industrial space were in the region of £48 per sq. m, which were moderate and equivalent to values seen elsewhere within the study area.
4.13 The demand for office space was weaker as supply exceeded demand. Most of the demand shown was for small units of up to 46 sq. m. The study identified that a number of business parks available to meet this demand. Achieved rents were in the region of £102 to £156 per sq. m.

**Demand and Values**

4.14 Below we provide a review of the key development markets in Prescot, considering prevailing levels of demand and evidence in terms of rental values and yields. This research and analysis informs our view on the assumptions that should be applied to assessing the viability of any development projects proposed as part of the PTCM. It should be noted, however, that in smaller markets such as Prescot, comparable evidence to inform every assumptions is not universally available. In this case, and particularly in terms of assumed levels of yield, our conclusions are based on the limited local evidence available, supplemented by our understanding of the market in other comparable locations across the region as well as published research.

**Retail and Commercial Leisure**

4.15 The quality of the existing stock in the town centre is variable. Properties along Eccleston Street have clearly been developed at various points over the last century, each reflecting the prevailing styles of the time. Most are small and within buildings of varying quality and maintenance such that it is difficult to create a consistent and high quality environment into which retailers can fit their branding. Internal configurations, frontages and servicing arrangements are also not ideal in some parts of Eccleston Street, as well as Market Street and Leyland Street. In this sense, there is a mismatch between the supply of shops on Eccleston Street where footfall is higher, and the aspirations of modern retailers.

4.16 Within Prescot Shopping Centre, the units are larger and offer more modern space. However, footfall within the centre is significantly lower than on Eccleston Street and as such, the vacancy rate is high and it is understood that several existing tenancies are soon coming to an end, so there is a realistic prospect the vacancy levels will deteriorate further. Having reviewed the pricing and quality of the space, these factors do not appear to be the cause of the high levels of vacancy. Rather, it appears that the poor profile and visibility of the centre, combined with relatively low footfall, are the principal issues. The key challenge therefore is to drive increased usage of the centre generally and direct additional footfall into and within the Prescot Shopping Centre.

4.17 It is understood that the current asset manager of the centre has considered redevelopment options for the site, most recently led by a cinema anchor. However, the scheme is considered to be unviable.

4.18 Our research indicates that demand for retail and leisure uses in the town centre is relatively low. A review of transactional data for the last 5 years has shown that there have only been 30 retail or leisure transactions for this period, covering a total of 3,005 sq. m (32,367 sq. ft). This low level of transactions is indicative of the limited
scale of demand for retail units in Prescot. Of these transactions, six are for lease lengths of 12 months or less, reflecting a relative lack of confidence amongst tenants.

4.19 Another measure of demand is the number of retailer requirements for space within a centre. Currently, there is just one unmet requirement for space in Prescot. As noted elsewhere in this report however, demand for units at Cables Retail Park is strong, with the owner currently seeking to renegotiate several existing leases to introduce new tenants. There may, therefore, be an opportunity to accommodate any displaced tenants into town centre units.

4.20 A review of the Experian GOAD data for the town centre (see Appendix A) shows there to be 24 units (17 per cent) that are currently vacant comprising 4,810 sq. m (23.8 per cent). These figures compare with national averages of 12.4 per cent of units and 10.6 per cent of floorspace being vacant. Nine of the vacant units are located in the shopping centre, including the largest unit in the centre – the former Somerfield supermarket. Vacant property appears to be relatively scattered throughout the town centre with small clusters in some secondary areas and within the shopping centre. Where clusters exist in secondary areas, these could represent redevelopment opportunities.

4.21 The food, drink and leisure sector appears to be under-represented in the town centre. Restaurants, cafés, coffee bars, fast food and take-aways occupy 12 units (8.5 per cent) comprising 1,380 sq. m (6.8 per cent), against national averages of 16.6 per cent of units and 12.1 per cent of floorspace (even though this figure is low compared to the national average, it is still higher than other town centres within the Borough). Of these 12 units, just 5 are restaurants or cafés that are likely to increase dwell-time in the centre, with the remainder being take-aways and pubs.

4.22 From the research undertaken the values that appear to be achieved in Prescot are moderate and in the region of £150 to £200 per sq. m for existing second hand space. This can be considered broadly typical of centres of this size and character. Brand new space may well command a rental premium, but this is a moot point until the high vacancy rate and relative lack of demand are addressed.

4.23 Property yields are the rental value expressed as a percentage of the capital value of the building. Yields reflect the level of risk to the flow of income from tenants, either as a result of perceived weakness in the tenants themselves (i.e. the likelihood of businesses failing), or the potential that tenants will not be attracted and no rental income will be forthcoming. A high yield represents high risk.

4.24 The profile of tenants in Prescot is skewed towards smaller, local retailers that are perceived to be higher risk than national multiple retailers. Also, the level of vacancy within the centre is relatively high, again suggesting that the risk profile is high. As such, we consider that the yields of retail development in Prescot town centre are likely to be in the region of 8-8.5 per cent. This opinion is informed by a small number of investment transactions in the area for which yield information was available; a review of published market analyses such as CBRE’s Prime Rent and Yield Market View (Q4, 2014), making allowances for the fact that Prescot is not a ‘prime’ retail
location; and our experience of assessing the viability of retail uses in similar locations elsewhere in the region. This assumption is in line with those made as part of the Knowsley Economic Viability Assessment.

**Offices**

4.25 Our research indicates that demand for office uses in the town centre is very low. The existing supply of premises in the centre is very limited and largely comprises small, poor quality ‘above the shop’ type space. A review of transactional data for the last 5 years has shown that there have been 35 office transactions covering 9,808 sq. m, although the majority of these are outside of the town centre at nearby business park locations. In this context, it appears unlikely that demand for office space within the town centre would be adequate to justify speculative office development.

4.26 The rental values achieved in the town centre are relatively low, reflecting the quality of the space and the relatively low demand for it. The evidence suggests that rental values for reasonable quality space are currently in the region of £100 per sq. m. At this level, office development would not be viable. Yields for speculative office development are likely to be in the region of 9-10 per cent, reflecting the significant risk that tenants would not be found.

4.27 This opinion is informed by a small number of investment transactions in the area for which yield information was available; a review of published market analyses such as CBRE’s Prime Rent and Yield Market View (Q4, 2014), making allowances for the fact that Prescot is not a ‘prime’ office location; and our experience of assessing the viability of office uses in similar locations elsewhere in the region. This assumption is slightly higher than was applied as part of the Knowsley Economic Viability Assessment. This is because the risks involved in office development within Prescot Town Centre are, in our view, somewhat higher than may typically be seen elsewhere in the Borough where office development is more likely to take place (i.e. in business park locations).

**Residential**

4.28 There are two large development schemes in close proximity to Prescot that are currently being marketed. These are Quinston Grange by Dorbcrest Homes and Speakman Gardens by Taylor Wimpey, which is a phase forming part of a larger development.

4.29 Quinston Grange provides a range of 2 bed apartments, as well as 3 bed semi-detached and 4 bed detached homes. A similar mix of house types can be found at Speakman Gardens. The units available range in size from 2-bed apartments at c. 55 sq. m and small 3-bed houses of 67sq. m, up to the large detached homes of over 150 sq. m. Whilst a range of houses remain available at the Taylor Wimpey site, the Dorbcrest Homes scheme has nearly sold all units.

4.30 The asking prices and the value per sq. m of some of the units currently being marketed are summarised in the table below.
Table 4.2 Values of Current Residential Developments in Prescot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Asking Price</th>
<th>Asking Price per sq. m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Bancroft at Speakman Gardens (3 bed semi-detached)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68 sq. m</td>
<td>£146,995</td>
<td>£2,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68 sq. m</td>
<td>£139,995</td>
<td>£2,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wren at Quinston Grange (4 bed detached)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156 sq. m</td>
<td>£284,950</td>
<td>£1,827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156 sq. m</td>
<td>£280,000</td>
<td>£1,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dewsbury at Quinston Grange (3 bed detached)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108 sq. m</td>
<td>£205,000</td>
<td>£1,908</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.31 The values shown above are asking prices and therefore a discount needs to be applied to reflect likely achievable values. This discount is usually in the region of 5 per cent. This suggests values of £1,705 and £2,055 per sq. m (£158 and £191 per sq. ft), broadly in line with the Knowsley Economic Viability Assessment assumption of £2,100 per sq. m.

4.32 This level of value, and the evidence on the ground of developments taking place and sales being relatively healthy, suggests that residential development in Prescot is viable and that there is scope to increase the residential population of the town, and therefore the catchment of the town centre. In particular, opportunities to increase the number of people living in close proximity to the centre should be explored as a means of increasing spending in the centre.

4.33 One sub-sector of the residential market which may also present an opportunity to enhance the catchment population of the centre is retirement/supported living development. Typically, such developments are located within half a mile or so of shops and services to provide for the day-to-day needs of residents. As such, they tend to take place on brownfield sites close to existing centres and in places with relatively good public transport links. We note that Knowsley Housing Trust (with funding from the Borough Council and the Department of Health) is currently building an extra care scheme on the Watch Factory site on Albany Road, a short distance from the town centre. Both retirement apartments and other forms of supported living developments are a growth sector in the UK. Developers are actively seeking sites of 0.2 – 0.8 hectares (0.5 – 2 acres) that have scope for development at three or more storeys.
Land Ownership Patterns

4.34 The Council has a number of land ownerships within the town centre, covering both operational buildings (Council offices) and assets (such as car parks) as well as vacant sites and incidental open spaces. The location of these sites is shown in the plan at Appendix C. The majority of operational ownerships are centred around the junction of High Street and Church Street. It is understood that the Council-owned car park at Mill Street is the intended location for the Shakespeare North development, should it take place. This development is intended to only occupy the western portion of the car park.

4.35 The level of usage of some of the car parks appears low and there may be scope to rationalise provision and release sites for development. In particular there appears to be a cluster of Council-owned sites south of High Street and east of Mill Street that could be assembled and brought to the development market. Adjacent to the Council-owned areas are three additional parcels of land that could be combined with this site.

4.36 Here, and elsewhere within the centre, the Council may wish to consider the acquisition of neighbouring sites in order to assemble, and then present to the market, sites that are of a scale and profile to attract high levels of developer interest. Such acquisitions may be opportunistic, as properties come on the market; by agreement with current owners; or, where required, using the Council’s compulsory purchase powers (in line with Policy S5 of the UDP).

4.37 There is a longstanding planning permission for retail development at the Brookhouse Group site on Sewell Street but this development has not proved viable. Alternative proposals for a cinema-led redevelopment have been suggested and this scheme could include land in the Council’s ownership at the corner site of Kemble Street and Sewell Street. There are further options to extend this development site to include the Prescot Community Church on Kemble Street which is currently on the market.

4.38 The Prescot Shopping Centre has been in administration since 2012 and to date there have been no buyers found. There have been discussions about potential redevelopment of the site however no plans have been suggested to date.

Summary of Issues

4.39 It is clear from the evidence presented above that demand for additional retail development in Prescot Town Centre is weak. Indeed, even many of the better quality units in the centre remain vacant. In this context, promoting additional retail development as part of the PTCM would appear to be inadvisable, at least until the vacancy rate within the town centre has been significantly reduced.

4.40 It is also clear that the geographic pattern of retail and leisure uses is not beneficial to the vitality and viability of the centre. The ‘blurred edges’ of the shopping area, with town centre uses blending in to residential uses over a broad area, serves to dissipate footfall rather than to focus and concentrate it in areas where it can be capitalised upon by other businesses.
4.41 A proactive approach to delivering a consolidated and focussed retail core within the centre, by taking some premises at the periphery of the centre out of retail use and relocating these activities to within a more tightly defined centre, would be beneficial.

4.42 One of the most fundamental drivers of retail and leisure demand, however, is the number of households within the catchment and the spending power they have. Therefore, the principal means by which the PTCM can affect this fundamental driver is to enable more people to live within and close to the centre. The identification and assembly of sites around the shopping area for residential development should therefore be a priority. Clearly, the Council’s existing land assets present a useful starting point for such an exercise. Similarly, the conversion of town centre uses in peripheral areas to residential uses should be looked on favourably.

4.43 The development of a cinema and associated food and drink uses would drive a significant increase in footfall within the centre, and increase its patronage outside of normal shopping hours. As such, efforts should be made to assist in the delivery of any such proposal and ensure it is effectively integrated into the retail core.
5 ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT AND ASSESSMENT

Introduction

5.1 This section of the Baseline Report includes an appraisal of streets, road corridors, gateways, buildings, public realm and other spaces within Prescot Town Centre in order to identify environmental assets and liabilities. We consider the town centre’s wider context, its historical development and opportunities for future development. This section is supported by a full Environmental Audit that is contained at Appendix D.

5.2 Prescot, one of the oldest settlements in Merseyside, has developed a unique character, derived from its hilltop location and surviving medieval street pattern. With Kings College Cambridge as ‘Lord of the Manor’ the town was, for many centuries, self-governing, which may explain why it became a ‘town of workshops’ with the skilled trades of tool making and watch making becoming more important to the town’s economy than the older industries of coal mining and pottery. The market town of Prescot joined the industrial revolution late at the close of the nineteenth century, but it quickly became an internationally important centre of cable manufacture, with over 10,000 people employed in this industry at its peak.

5.3 The town centre has been designated as a conservation area of special architectural and historic interest. Buildings are predominantly 2 to 3 storeys high and the street pattern largely retains its medieval layout including some narrow cobbled alleyways, a number of Georgian/Victorian buildings of high quality and several listed buildings. Central to the town’s attraction is its urban fabric, the historic and attractive buildings, the streetscape, public realm, open spaces and associated vegetation, which combined provide a character and ambience, which is unique to Prescot.

5.4 These physical attributes are protected to a degree by the conservation area which covers the study area, but constant maintenance, careful, proactive planning control and management of change are essential to ensure the town centre not only continues to prosper, but grasps each and every opportunity to protect what is best, whilst enhancing the environment and managing change for the benefit of those who live, work in and visit the town.

5.5 Prescot’s historic core is also its cultural and retail heart, focused around Church Street, Market Place and Eccleston Street. St.Mary’s Church and its associated open space, including Church Street, the graveyard and vicarage gardens, provides important town centre public/civic space. The town centre provides a number of civic and public facilities, including the Town Hall, Registry Office, library, Post Office, etc. all with easy access via public transport and conveniently located car parking. Prescot Shopping Centre provides a typical, relatively small scale indoor shopping mall environment. It is integrated with and woven into the core town centre fabric, providing direct access to the main retail street, Eccleston Street and free parking facilities which attracts car-borne shoppers. However, as we have explained in previous sections, the shopping centre has a large amount of vacant space.
5.6 The town has experienced significant changes over recent decades and has suffered from industrial and economic decline. This has resulted in the loss of some key buildings within the streetscape and unsympathetic development which has weakened the town’s medieval grain and distinctive character. The compact town centre core provides a modest mix of uses and attractions, but currently has a number of vacant and underused premises.

Recent Studies and Initiatives

5.7 In recent years the Borough Council has prepared a range of studies and guidance that is of particular relevance to the physical environment of Prescot Town Centre. As part of our audit and assessment we have reviewed the most relevant studies, which include:

- Green Space Strategy (2015-2020)
- Prescot Town Centre Conservation Area - Area Management Plan (2012)
- Prescot Town Centre Conservation Area - Character Appraisal (2012)
- Prescot Town Centre Shop front and Signage Design Guide (2013)
- Prescot Town Centre Street Design Manual (2015)
- Public Art Programme

5.8 The main elements from the various studies are highlighted in the commentary below.

Key Diagrams

5.9 In the following diagrams we identify key aspects of the town centre environment, including significant buildings, important views, key open spaces and important streets.

Town Centre Context and Influences

5.10 Figure 5.1 below shows the context of Prescot Town Centre and its key influence. The town centre sits on a south facing hilltop dominated by the visually prominent stone spire of St. Mary’s Church (a Grade 1 Listed building). The town has a split personality, with the older more characterful town area on the hill near the church and a contemporary retail park and new housing at the foot of the hill to the south.

5.11 Prescot is surrounded by larger towns (Widnes to the south, St Helens to the east) and is in close proximity to the city of Liverpool. The town itself is well connected and accessed from the strategic road networks, with Junction 2 of the M57 located approximately 800 metres to the west of the town centre. However, the A57 and Steley Way/Carr Lane effectively bypass the retail core, making the town centre a ‘cul de sac’ rather than a place served by through traffic. Prescot railway station is in serious need of refurbishment, has limited parking and is remote from the town centre, with tenuous pedestrian links through a new housing area, Cables Retail Park and the Prescot Shopping Centre.

5.12 Good, well located bus facilities are provided adjacent the old town centre, with a dedicated bus drop-off area provided at the western end of Eccleston Street. A taxi
rank is located adjacent the bus drop-off and good quality, though not particularly visible or well signed, parking areas are provided at Mill Street with good pedestrian links through to Eccleston Street.

5.13 Knowsley Safari Park, a major tourist attraction, is located only one mile from the town centre on the northern periphery of Prescot. However, the lack of gateway features and poor signage from the park to the town centre currently results in very little synergy between the two destinations.

5.14 The Cables Retail Park dominates the area to the south of the town centre by virtue of its scale and orientation, its large retail outlets, easy accessibility and convenient, free parking. The steep slope between the two levels of shopping makes the pedestrian linkages difficult and the lack of a clear pedestrian route and signage discourage those who may wish to walk to the town centre from the retail park and vice versa.

5.15 The large ‘green’ space to the south west of St Mary’s Church, part of which is the historic graveyard with dense woodland and mature trees, provides a notable publicly accessible amenity area adjacent the town centre, but it offers little recreational value other than as an attractive access route. The closest park is the Eaton Street Park and Recreational Ground that is located to the north of the town centre and provides toddler and children’s play areas, a bowling green, wildflower trail, seating and picnic benches. It has Green Flag accreditation.

5.16 The new Carr Lane highway link from the M57 motorway (Junction 2) to the town centre, has been comprehensively and successfully landscaped, creating a significant gateway and attractive route. This runs adjacent the former Pirelli factory site now proposed as a business park/residential development.
Figure 5.1 Town Centre Context and Influences
The Built Fabric and Visual Attributes of the Town Centre

5.17 Figure 5.2 below identifies the important and significant buildings in and around the town centre and highlights key views and gateways.

5.18 The majority of buildings in the town centre are largely two or three storey houses, built in terraced form between the mid 18th Century and the early 20th Century, although the area does also include a number of prestigious brick houses dating to the Georgian period. The largest historic, landmark buildings are the Grade 1 listed St. Mary’s Church and the Church of Our Lady Immaculate at Vicarage Place. Parts of St Mary’s date back to the 14th Century and the church was repaired and re-roofed in 2014, funded by English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and locally raised funds.

5.19 Most of the listed buildings and other buildings of architectural interest are located to the west of the town centre. The hilltop location of the buildings around St Mary’s Church is particularly prominent and retains much of its medieval layout including some narrow cobbled alleyways, providing a well-defined part of the town centre.

5.20 Many of the buildings along Eccleston Street and High Street were originally built as dwellings, but have since been converted to commercial uses, creating streets with a largely domestic sense of place. The Prescot Shopping Centre development was constructed in the 1980s and was a significant introduction into the historic fabric of the town centre. It expresses a contemporary building form and massing towards the southern elevation which is adjacent to the car park, but integrates and respects the domestic scale of the streetscape to Eccleston Street.

5.21 There are a number of large and significant buildings to the edges of the town centre, with the most visible being the blocks of 1960s flats in Sewell Street (Greenall Court) and at Beaconsfield, and the Cables Retail Park. All of these developments have a detrimental impact upon the urban grain of the town centre.

5.22 There are a number of attractive framed views of St Mary’s Church and its spire in and around the main streets of the town centre, in particular from Eccleston Street and views up the hill from Sewell Street. The Church can also be glimpsed in attractive views from High Street. The north/south streets afford dramatic distant views across the Cheshire Plain to the Welsh Hills, with the most significant views from the hill top area around St. Mary’s Church.

5.23 We have identified four important inner gateways to the town centre located on the primary road network along the A57, Warrington Road and Steley Way. The eastern and western roundabouts on Steley Way are attractively landscaped, creating a good sense of arrival and acting as gateway locations for the town centre. The A57 / A58 and the A57 / Church Street junctions are poor arrival gateways for the town centre, being dominated by large advertising hoardings. The gateway at the junction of the A57 and Church Street has great potential for improvement, being located within a group of attractive buildings and being adjacent to the proposed site of the Shakespeare North theatre.
Figure 5.2 Town Centre Built Fabric and Visual Attributes
Streetscape and Public Realm

5.24 Figure 5.3 below highlights the green landscape network and the pedestrian routes in and around the town centre.

5.25 The town centre retains much of its historic medieval layout (St Mary’s Church and Churchyard, Market Place and Eccleston Street). The traditional main shopping street, Eccleston Street and the area surrounding St Mary’s Church provide a network of pedestrianised areas and open spaces in the heart of the town centre. The area immediately around the Church and Church Street has been carefully landscaped in recent years with quality materials and detailing which has enhanced its status and attractiveness. However the paved plateau below the Church and Cenotaph (Market Place) is looking ‘tired’ and has unrealised potential to positively contribute to the town centre’s public realm.

5.26 Street furniture and paving materials used in the pedestrianisation of the western end of Eccleston Street are in a poor state of repair. Various streetscape enhancement schemes have been implemented over the last 10 years, but the materials that have been used within the town centre are all quite different in terms of their type, source and design detailing. Generally these enhancement schemes are adding quality and amenity value, but they are not consistent in terms of materials and character.

5.27 There is a lack of ‘green’ open space in the heart of the town centre. However, to the west and south west of St. Mary’s Church, the cemetery, vicarage and the vicarage gardens provide a significant area of green space, containing numerous mature trees. Though not within the defined town centre boundary this area has great visual amenity and can be easily accessed from the main shopping street and public transport interchange.

5.28 Aspinall Street and Sewell Street are relatively wide, open streets that connect the elevated town centre to the lower areas to the south of the town centre. Aspinall Street is the main access road for the Prescot Shopping Centre car park and provides a direct, though relatively steep and poorly signposted, pedestrian link between the town centre and Cables Retail Park. Sewell Street provides a similar link between the Tesco store at the retail park and the attractive western end of the town centre.

5.29 To the north of the town centre, Hope Street (which is largely residential in character) connects High Street to Eaton Street Park and Prescot Cables Football Club, although there is no signage to direct visitors to the town centre to these nearby facilities.
Figure 5.3 Streetscape and Public Realm in the Town Centre
Town Centre Character Zones

5.30 In order to examine and evaluate the character and quality of the streetscape and townscape we have identified nine ‘zones’ (A-I) within the town centre which have a degree of consistency, a unifying character and/or similar issues. These ‘zones’ are mapped at Figure 5.4 and described below. Further details of the character zones are contained within the full Environmental Audit at Appendix D.

**Zone A – St Mary’s Church**

5.31 This zone contains a large cluster of attractive buildings many of which are listed. This area is focussed upon the Prescot Parish Church (St. Mary’s Church) and its environs. The church is a dramatic and attractive local landmark due to its elevated position, its backdrop of mature trees and prominent stone spire, which is visible over a very wide area. At ground level in the immediate vicinity of the church the view is equally attractive, a distinctive historic character and sense of place provided by Church Street and the enclosing properties to the north, and Vicarage Place to the West. Vicarage Place is a ‘hidden gem’, an original cobbled street with fine listed buildings to one side.

5.32 Church Street benefited from a good quality public realm enhancement project several years ago, with the use of granite setts and natural stone paving mirroring the character of Vicarage Place. Indeed, previous public realm enhancements, including the redevelopment of the public car parking to the north east, have successfully reinforced the historic character of this part of the town centre, providing a strong precedent for any future development or public realm improvements.

5.33 However, there are areas and buildings which have suffered neglect or inappropriate conversion and alterations. The row of buildings on the eastern edge of Market Place are potentially attractive, but several are now vacant or in a poor state of repair. Those in active use include several fast food outlets that feature unattractive signage and shuttered shopfronts during the daytime. These buildings have been identified as a priority for the Townscape Heritage Initiative and works to one property are due to commence in March 2015.

5.34 To the west and south west of St. Mary’s Church, the cemetery, vicarage and the large gardens to the vicarage provide a significant area of green space, containing numerous mature trees. Though not within the defined town centre boundary this area has great visual significance, providing the setting for the church and pedestrian access routes from the west. However, it could be better integrated with the town centre and developed to provide a wider recreational and amenity resource.

5.35 The area around the Church links into Sewell Street to the south. This street provides a relatively broad and important link to Cables Retail Park, the new housing beyond the retail park, and the developing business park that is located adjacent to the new Carrs Road link. Located on the eastern side of Sewell Street, just outside of Zone A, there is a significant vacant development site located between the Tesco store and Market Place. Future development of this site could have a significant influence on the setting of Zone A.
Zone B – Transport Hub

5.36 Zone B is probably the most clearly defined of all the zones that we have identified. It is the location of the bus interchange, taxi rank and the main town centre car park at Mill Street which are situated between the buildings on Church Street, the shops on Eccleston Street and the buildings along High Street.

5.37 Though accessed from the main route past/through the town (the A57/High Street) the transport facilities within this zone are not particularly visible, generally hidden behind buildings, advertisement hoardings and planting. However, the facilities are well located to provide good access to the town centre. The construction of the car parks and the bus interchange is relatively recent and even though the zone is generally defined by the unattractive rear facades of adjoining properties, once inside this area it is very attractively detailed and landscaped.

Zone C – High Street and the A57

5.38 Zone C is a linear corridor defined by properties to both sides of the A57 which runs in a west/east direction immediately north of the town centre. The A57 (Derby Street) rises up from the west as it approaches the town centre which is located on the higher ground. The section of road which defines the northern edge of the town centre is High Street, which then becomes Warrington Road as it passes along the eastern edge of the town centre towards Cables Retail Park.

5.39 High Street contains a wide variety of buildings, many of them with heritage and visual value, with attractive form and fenestration. The buildings range from small terraces to large individual properties, with an equally wide range of uses, from civic buildings such as the former library, registry office and new Town Hall, to shops, flats and restaurants. None of the buildings are more than three storeys in height.

5.40 The larger footprint buildings and those of the greatest architectural merit are to the western end of High Street. Travelling east there are significant gaps in the building edge along the southern side of the zone with many of these gaps now ‘plugged’ with large, dominant advertising hoardings, which screen undeveloped plots of land behind. These large hoardings are a significant detractor, making no positive contribution to the general street scene or sense of place.

5.41 At the eastern end of Zone C, towards Warrington Road, the buildings provide a more solid facade, generally smaller units with less architectural individuality or merit and containing a variety of retail uses.

Zone D – Ackers Street

5.42 This zone encompasses Ackers Street and the forecourt parking area to the Victoria House flats which front onto Warrington Road. This zone provides a well-used and significant pedestrian access route into the town centre from bus stops on Warrington Road and the residential areas to the east and north east. However, it is dominated by car parking and highways, with very poor footpath provision and obstructed pedestrian desire lines.
5.43 The western end of the zone culminates in an attractive two storey ‘flat iron’ building which is sandwiched between Ackers Street and Eccleston Street. Opposite this building is a pay and display car park on Cyprus Street, which is ideally positioned for town centre users, but difficult to find for visitors. Ackers Street is relatively attractive with street trees to the western end and within the car park. The eastern end of the zone in front of the Victoria House flats is much less attractive, dominated by parked cars and areas of asphalt which is highly visible when travelling along Warrington Road. The flats themselves though large and relatively imposing are not as visually detrimental to the streetscape as the parked cars.

5.44 A lack of clear, attractive and safe routes for pedestrians to and from the town centre is the main issue here, particularly with the imminent development of a retirement village to the east of the town centre on the Watch Factory site on Albany Road. Rationalising the car parking and integrating pedestrian desire lines within an enhanced environment would make a significant difference.

5.45 At the end of Cyprus Street there is a small green space (the site of a former Chapel), which contains a number of grave stones and trees. This is a valuable, but largely unrealised asset which could form part of a wider pedestrian improvement plan.

Zone E – Leyland Street and Atherton Street

5.46 These two streets have been recently identified for environmental and streetscape enhancement. The works to Leyland Street are now completed and have changed the quality of the streetscape significantly. The proposals for Atherton Street are well advanced, similar to those implemented along Leyland Street and completed to detail design stage.

5.47 The two streets provide good access and linkages between High Street and Eccleston Street. Leyland Street also provides access to one of the town centre car parks via Hill Street. Both streets have inherent character provided by the facades of turn of the century terraced properties. Leyland Street is slightly tighter in scale with two storey terraces to both sides. Originally large trees (we believe plane trees) were located within the road, which caused overshadowing and obstruction. These have been replaced with smaller street trees, set in steel grilles, within a new paved surface comprising granite setts to the roads, granite kerbs and granite slabs to the footpaths. Kerbs have been set with low profiles for easier pedestrian access and the general amenity of the street has received a significant uplift due to the quality of the new paving and street design.

5.48 Atherton Street also has inherent character, but the buildings to either side are larger. To the west the terraced properties are three storey, one is listed and the others provide a consistency of architecture and an attractive facade to the street. On the opposite side of the street, Prescot Methodist Church has significant presence and architectural interest and the proposed works to Atherton Street will provide a continuation of the improved public realm to Leyland Street, helping to reinforce the character of these two short, but in urban design terms significant, streets.

5.49 At the southern end of Leyland Street a mural has been fixed to the gable of no. 45 Eccleston Street. This helps to enliven the street scene and enclose a small paved
area with seating. The area is gated to prevent vehicle access from Leyland Street and could be improved further by enhancing the bland building facade opposite the mural.

**Zone F – Eccleston Street**

5.50 At the heart of the town centre Eccleston Street provides the ‘backbone’ or ‘spine’ to the town centre, each of the other character zones around it feeding or connecting into it. This is the pedestrianised retail ‘high street’, which provides the main run of shops within the town centre.

5.51 The architecture is varied, with older properties scattered amongst more recently constructed buildings. Building frontages are also variable in terms of architectural quality, signage and condition. Some properties have rear service access but others are entirely reliant on servicing from the front. However, the street is attractive and has, in recent years, been subject to major repaving works which injected more character into the street scene. Unfortunately the sandstone setts, stone slabs and stone kerbs are not weathering well and broken slabs, missing patched up paving and uneven surfaces are now looking tired and in need of repair.

5.52 Where adjacent zones link into the street there are some well-designed and executed landscape treatments, notably links to the car parks, the area around the Church and the recently repaved Leyland Street. However, the materials which have been used around the town centre for the various streetscape improvements are all quite different in terms of their type, source materials and detailed design.

**Zone G – Prescot Shopping Centre and Car Park**

5.53 On the northern half of this zone sits the two storey indoor Prescot Shopping Centre and to the south a two tier car park which serves the centre providing currently unrestricted, free parking for shoppers. The centre is generally in good condition, though it suffers from a high vacancy rate. It also currently provides well used free parking, though the lower tier of the car park is only accessed via long ramps and a steep flight of steps.

5.54 The shopping centre building is located in an elevated position and its upper floor is clearly visible when viewed from the south of the town on the skyline above the Cables Retail Park. To the north, the centre links into the main shopping street, Eccleston Street, at two locations. The former print works building, now vacant and semi-derelict, sits adjacent to the car park in the north western corner. Clearly visible from the shopping centre car park it blights this particular area, but does offer potential for redevelopment.

5.55 Architecturally the shopping centre’s southern facade is not unattractive, but as a large footprint building, on elevated ground and with an extensive southern facade, it does have significant visual impact. The centre is linked to streets on all sides, to the west, the car park links into Market Place through a narrow pedestrian passage, to the east it sits on Aspinall Street with the car park entrance and service yard located to the top of the street. The lower car park directly fronts Kemble Street, but at a
higher level along much of its length. The level differences between Kemble Street and the shopping centre is a severe impediment to pedestrian access.

**Zone H – Aspinall Street**

5.56 Aspinall Street is a relatively wide open street which connects directly into Station Road which in turn provides a link into Cables Retail Park. The street is relatively steep but is significant in terms of its links to the retail park and as the access road for the shopping centre car park and service yard.

5.57 It has an open ‘feel’ with the car park to the west and large footprint buildings set well back to the east, including the post office building, telephone exchange and former job centre. These larger buildings have very little if any architectural merit, however further up the street there are several buildings which make a more positive contribution. A row of four terraced properties, a church converted to apartments and a relatively new infill development adjacent the church, all have qualities which add to the ambience and attractiveness of the northern section of the road. Tree planting is also a strong visual feature to the northern end of the road and help to screen the service yard to the shopping centre.

**Zone I – Kemble Street**

5.58 Kemble Street defines the southern edge of the town centre. Of all the zones it is the one which exhibits the most dereliction, mainly due to the general condition of the properties on the southern side of the road. These include poorly maintained terraced houses, a vacant site opposite the Red Lion pub, the attractively elevated Prescot Community Church and some newer infill terraced properties and flats. The footpaths are in poor condition and much of the northern edge of the street is overshadowed by the climber clad wall which retains the lower tier of the Prescot Shopping Centre car park, and trees associated with the car park entrance.

5.59 There is no parking permitted on the street with double yellow lines to both sides and, to the western end, pedestrian barriers along the kerb edge make access and crossing the road difficult. Three residential terraced streets to the south link into Kemble Street and these are Chester Street, Williams Street and Station Road. These streets have seen significant investment in the traditional terraced properties, with the apparently coordinated improvements creating a much enhanced sense of place.
Figure 5.4 Town Centre Character Zones

ZONE A
St Mary's Church

ZONE B
Transport Hub

ZONE C
High Street & A57

ZONE D
Ackers Street

ZONE E
Atherton & Leyland Streets

ZONE F
Eccleston Street

ZONE G
Prescot Centre & Car Parking

ZONE H
Aspinal Street

ZONE I
Kemble Street

TOWN CENTRE ZONES & CHARACTERISTICS
A - St Mary's Church
B - Transport Hub
C - High Street & A57
D - Ackers Street
E - Atherton & Leyland Streets
F - Eccleston Street
G - Prescot Centre & Car Parking
H - Aspinal Street
I - Kemble Street
Opportunity Sites

5.60 We have identified various sites throughout the town centre which are either vacant, are the subject of development proposals or provide potential to be redeveloped or to accommodate new development in the future. The location and extent of these sites is shown in Figure 5.5 and we summarise their key attributes below in Table 5.1.

5.61 The key opportunity sites are at Sewell Street (Sites 2-4), land to the rear of Market Place (Site 5) and on Church Street (Site 12). All these sites are derelict or substantially vacant and provide significant short term opportunities to introduce new uses and deliver environmental improvements. Sites at Mill Street (Site 1) and the Prescot Shopping Centre (Site 15) also provide strategic opportunities to improve or reorientate the town centre’s offer. A range of smaller sites have been identified throughout the town centre that provide opportunities for ‘infill’ development that could remedy existing development that detracts from the overall character and appearance of Prescot.

5.62 The development of these sites including potential uses, layout and design will be considered further at subsequent stages of the PTCM. Not all sites will present viable development opportunities but those that do will need to be developed in a manner that supports the overall vision and objectives of the PTCM.
Figure 5.5 Opportunity Sites in the Town Centre
### Table 5.1 Town Centre Opportunity Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Number</th>
<th>Site Area (Ha)</th>
<th>Site Ownership</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>KMBC</td>
<td>Site of the proposed Shakespeare North theatre it currently comprises the Council-owned car parking at Mill Street, a taxi rank that is accessed from Church Street and the former Prescot Museum which the Council has leased to the Shakespeare North Trust. The location of the site is significant being adjacent to Eccleston Street, St Mary’s Church, the bus interchange and the potential gateway at the junction of High Street and Church Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2, 3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>KMBC (2) Private (3 &amp;4)</td>
<td>The majority of this site is in the ownership of the Brookhouse Group which benefits from an extant planning permission for retail development. There has been little operator interest in the retail scheme and alternative proposals for a cinema-led development have been explored. Future development of the site will have a critical role in improving links between the town centre and Cables Retail Park. Comprehensive redevelopment could be achieved by including Council-owned land at the junction of Sewell Street and Kemble Street, together with the Prescot Community Church on Kemble Street (the freehold of which is currently on the market).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>This site was previously used as a printers. Whilst it is screened from Market Place the derelict building has a negative impact on views from the east. The backland location limits the range of potential alternative uses but it is possible that the site could form part of a larger scheme for the redevelopment or upgrading of the Prescot Shopping Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 &amp; 7</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Located to the eastern side of Aspinall Street these visually unattractive buildings could provide a development opportunity if a viable site could be assembled from the existing land ownerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>This site sits between Eccleston Street, Chapel Street and the A57, and comprises a number of large, traditional but poorly maintained buildings that front onto Warrington Road. If the site could be successfully assembled it would provide a large and prominently located development opportunity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9&amp;10</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>These small sites to the south of High Street currently accommodate advertisement hoardings that significantly detract from the street scene on this key route through the town centre. Their sympathetic redevelopment could deliver environmental improvements. It is possible that site no. 10 could be incorporated into a more comprehensive redevelopment of adjoining Council-owned land.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Site Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Number</th>
<th>Site Area (Ha)</th>
<th>Site Ownership</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>KMBC</td>
<td>A library occupied this site until recently when it was relocated to a unit within the Prescot Shopping Centre. Planning permission for change of use of the library to provide a single residential property was granted in December 2013 (ref: 13/00423/FUL).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>This site comprises the former Blockbuster store on Church Street, vacant garage premises on West Street, and advertisement hoardings and a small landscaped area on High Street. It occupies a prominent gateway location adjacent to the historic core of the town centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>This site is located outside of the town centre boundary but is functionally well related. It is occupied by St Mary’s Church vicarage and discussions with the Vicar indicate that it may be available for redevelopment in due course. The site has a very attractive setting that would be well suited to high quality residential development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>A small but prominent site on High Street that could be potentially developed to complement the proposed Shakespeare North theatre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>The Prescot Shopping Centre is in administration and the administrator, Deloitte, has appointed Vale Retail as the asset manager. As noted elsewhere, the centre suffers from a high vacancy rate although it accommodates important town centre facilities such as the post office and library. The car park is currently well used but suffers from access issues associated with its location and topography. Potential may exist to introduce alternative uses at the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>There is longer term potential for the attractive Methodist Church on Atherton Street to be reused for other purposes, including other community uses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Issues

5.63 Our environmental audit and assessment has identified a number of key issues in the town centre that it will be important to take into account when developing the PTCM. The town centre’s key environmental assets include:

- A prominent hill top location with St Mary’s Church providing a highly visible landmark.
- The remains of a medieval street layout with a number of listed Georgian/Victorian buildings and other buildings of architectural merit.
- Evidence of good levels of investment in public realm improvements.
- Significant redevelopment opportunities.

5.64 Some of these positive features are illustrated below in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6 Environmental Assets in the Town Centre

5.65 However, there are a number of existing shortcomings that will need to be addressed by the PTCM wherever possible. Some are illustrated at Figure 5.7 and include:

- The bypassing of the town centre’s retail core by the A57 and Steley Way / Carr Lane which reduces its prominence and visibility.
- A lack of clearly defined gateways and a poor sense of arrival.
- Poor accessibility and visibility of the town centre car parking areas from the primary road network.
- Poor and difficult pedestrian connectivity between the town centre and Cables Retail Park.
- Evidence of dilapidation and vacant premises with non-active facades, requiring the introduction of new uses, upgrading and renovations.
- The variable quality of shop signage and frontages.
- Numerous intrusive advertisement hoardings on key sites along primary routes.

**Figure 5.7 Environmental Shortcomings in the Town Centre**
6 TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE REVIEW

Introduction

6.1 This section presents a review of the transport infrastructure and services in Prescot Town Centre and in its immediate vicinity. As has been demonstrated in earlier sections of this report, transport is a key issue for the future development of the town centre and will need to be carefully considered in preparing the PTCM. The town centre context is provided below, along with a review of the local highway network and car parking options, whilst the remainder of this section focuses on the walking, cycling and public transport offer in Prescot.

6.2 As part of this baseline review, we have reviewed policy and background documents that are relevant to the town centre and which are referred to in this section as appropriate. The review provided below has been informed by a site visit to Prescot Town Centre in mid February 2015. It should be noted that this coincided with the half term holiday period for schools in the area, and this is taken into consideration with regard to our observations of the transport infrastructure at this time.

Town Centre Context

6.3 Prescot is located close to Junction 2 of the M57, which connects to the M62 in the south, providing access to Liverpool to the west and Manchester to the east. The M57 provides connections to the M58, M6 and Preston to the north. The main public transport facilities within the town centre are shown in Figure 6.1 below to provide context for the remainder of this section. It should be noted that this plan does not show the location of the town centre car parks, which are indicated on a separate plan later in this section and are discussed at that stage.

6.4 Retail activity within the town centre is concentrated on the western section of Eccleston Street, which is pedestrianised and has restricted vehicular access (further details of which are discussed later in this section). Prescot Shopping Centre is located immediately south of this pedestrianised area as shown in Figure 6.1.

6.5 Prescot Rail Station is located approximately 750 metres to the south of the town centre, whilst Prescot Bus Station is located to the west of Eccleston Street and to the east of Church Street. Although outside of the town centre boundary, it should be noted that Cables Retail Park is located approximately 300 metres to the south of the town centre and is accessed from Steley Way along its southern frontage.
Local Highway Network

6.6 Details on the existing highway network in Prescot are provided below, with reference to traffic flow data where relevant. The network is discussed in terms of the key east to west and north to south routes that dissect and border the town centre, together with a specific section on the highway network in the vicinity of the bus station. Following this, commentary is provided on how routes through the existing highway network are currently used by vehicles to access facilities in the town centre, including the existing off-street car parks.

6.7 It should be noted that at the time of our visit to Prescot, there were no particular highway capacity issues observed on the local highway network within the vicinity of the town centre. Observations were undertaken around midday, and anecdotal evidence from the draft Prescot Town Centre Regeneration Framework Accessibility Study produced for the Council in 2010 suggests that there are no major issues at peak times either.

East to West Routes

6.8 The A57 (Liverpool Street / Derby Street / High Street / Warrington Road) is the main route that runs along the northern boundary of the town centre. This connects Prescot to the M62, Warrington and Widnes to the south-east, and the M57 and Liverpool to the west. Within the town centre, the A57 is a single carriageway road and is subject to a 30 miles per hour (mph) speed limit. The A57 widens to a dual carriageway approximately 0.5 km to the northwest of the town centre. Given its A-road status and based on existing signage in the area, this route carries strategic traffic accessing destinations to the east and west of Prescot, as well as traffic...
associated with localised trips to the town centre. In terms of traffic flows on this route, we would highlight the following key points for consideration as the masterplan moves forward:

- 2015\(^1\) forecast data included in the draft Accessibility Study indicated that two-way traffic flows on the A57 between Manchester Road and Church Street could be in the region of 1,600 vehicles in the weekday morning peak hour, 1,100 vehicles in the weekday evening peak hour and 1,300 vehicles during a Saturday peak hour. Given that this equates to a vehicle every 2 to 3 seconds at peak times, and whilst there are a number of controlled crossing points for pedestrians as will be discussed later in this section, consideration should be given to potential severance issues for pedestrian movements across the A57; and

- in terms of potential safety issues for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists, it is also worth noting that overall HGV movements on this section of the A57 are relatively low and account for less than 2 per cent of total traffic, whilst buses account for less than 4 per cent based on the most recently available Department for Transport data for 2013\(^2\). Data from the CrashMap\(^3\) website indicates that for the most recently available three year period of data between 2011 and 2013, there were a total of 20 Personal Injury Collisions (PICs) along the A57 between Manchester Road and Steley Way, 3 of which were classified as ‘serious’ and 17 ‘slight’. There were no accidents during this time that caused a fatality.

6.9 To the north of the A57 and the northern boundary of Prescot, the A58 provides connections to St Helens to the north-east. Whilst not located within the study area, this route serves an important function as a by-pass to the town centre, carrying in the region of 1,800 two-way vehicle movements in the weekday morning and evening peak hours, and approximately 1,300 two-way movements during a Saturday peak hour. Traffic is directed from the M57 roundabout to St Helens via the A58, and vehicles travelling east and west along the A57 in the vicinity of the town centre are also signed to St Helens via the A58.

6.10 It should be noted that the A58 route was identified in the Merseyside Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3, 2011-2024) for an Integrated Corridor Management Strategy to reduce congestion. Measures identified included the installation of SCOOT variable traffic signals to improve vehicle queue lengths, CCTV surveillance and vehicle messaging signs to warn drivers of congestion or direct them to other routes. We understand that these measures have now been implemented and will help to ensure that the knock-on effects of congestion on the A58 are minimised.

6.11 West Street lies immediately to the south of A57 and is to the west of the town centre boundary. It is a single carriageway road, subject to a 30 mph speed limit, and has a

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\(^1\) This was based on traffic count data from years prior to 2015, with growth factors applied to obtain forecast 2015 flows.

\(^2\) 2013 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) data, Counter Number 36582

\(^3\) CrashMap uses data collected by the police, which is approved by the National Statistics Authority and summarised in annual Department for Transport (DfT) reports.
7.5 tonne weight restriction in place to prevent general HGV movements along this route, with the exception of those requiring access. On-street parking occurs along various sections of West Street, which narrows the carriageway width available to traffic passing through. At its eastern end, West Street turns into Church Street, with vehicles required to travel north to the A57 due to the location of the bus station. Further details on the traffic flow movement restrictions in the vicinity of the bus station are discussed later in this section.

6.12 To the east of the bus station area, and to the south of the A57, lies Eccleston Street. The western section of Eccleston Street is pedestrianised whilst the eastern section is a one-way road in an eastbound direction to its junction with the A57. Vehicles can access this section of Eccleston Street from the A57 via Atherton Street.

6.13 Immediately to the southern boundary of the study area is Kemble Street, which provides the main east to west route for local traffic in the town centre between Sewell Street and the A57. Kemble Street is a single carriageway road and is subject to a 30mph speed limit, and lies between Prescot Shopping Centre to the north and Cables Retail Park to the south.

6.14 To the south of Kemble Street, lies Steley Way; this also provides east to west connections between Sewell Street and the A57, together with general vehicular access to Cables Retail Park. It also connects to Carr Lane which completes the east-west route to the south of the town centre. Steley Way is again subject to a 30 mph speed limit and is a single carriageway road.

6.15 To the west of a roundabout between Steley Way and Sewell Street, Manchester Road runs in a north-west to south-east direction and connects to the A57 to the west of the town centre. Manchester Road is also of single carriageway form, is subject to a 30mph speed limit, and has traffic calming features in the form of speed cushions. Given that Manchester Road is fronted by residential properties on both sides for the majority of its length, it is assumed that the traffic calming features were implemented to serve a dual purpose of slowing vehicle speeds and deterring vehicles from using this as a route to the town centre from the A57.

North to South Routes

6.16 Direct routes allowing north to south and south to north vehicular movements within and around the town centre are limited. Vehicles are required to route via the A57 and then along the east-west routes of Kemble Street and Steley Way to access key local facilities. Limited north to south movements can be made from Kemble Street and Steley Way via Sewell Street, Aspinall Street and Cyprus Street. Further details regarding these links are provided below.

6.17 Aspinall Street is a single carriageway road and is subject to a 30 mph speed limit. There are ‘no waiting at any time’ on-street parking restrictions (double yellow lines) in place on both sides of the carriageway for the duration of its length, although we did observe some vehicles parking on-street at the time of our site visit. Aspinall Street is a cul-de-sac and does not provide a through route to and from Eccleston
Street and Atherton Street to the north. It does, however, provide access to the car park and service yard at Prescot Shopping Centre from Kemble Street to the south.

6.18 As noted above, **Atherton Street** is located immediately to the north of Aspinall Street, though there is no through route for vehicles provided between the two. Atherton Street is a one-way road in a southbound direction, connecting the A57 with Eccleston Street to the east of the pedestrianised shopping area. The road provides designated parking bays on its western side, whilst there are single yellow lines present on the eastern side restricting on-street parking to specified times. At the time of our site visit, cars were parked on both sides of the carriageway, with the majority on the eastern side mounted onto the footway to provide sufficient carriageway width for vehicles to pass.

6.19 It is noted that Atherton Street is subject to a Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) project to improve the streetscape and provide wider footpaths, however the implications for the on-street parking behaviour observed will need to be considered. The 2010 Accessibility Study proposed the re-opening of the link between Atherton Street and Aspinall Street to improve north-south connectivity in the town centre, although this has not been implemented.

6.20 **Cyprus Street** is a cul-de-sac located to the east of Aspinall Street, and is accessed from Kemble Street to the south. It is a single carriageway road and has designated parking bays for resident permit holders along its western side. On the eastern side of the carriageway, there are also a series of laybys providing unrestricted on-street parking. Despite this, we have observed parked vehicles mounted to the footway outside of these laybys. Cyprus Street provides access to a Council owned car park at its northern end, however it should be noted that no signage is provided to direct vehicles to this facility from Kemble Street.

6.21 **Sewell Street** is a single carriageway road immediately to the west of Cables Retail Park and is subject to a 30mph speed limit. This connects the Manchester Road / Cables Way / Sewell Street / Steley Way roundabout to the south, with Kemble Street, Market Street and the bus station area to the north.

6.22 **Mill Street** is an access road from the A57 to the Council-run Mill Street car park, providing 104 spaces. There is no vehicular connectivity to the bus station located to the south of this, although pedestrian connectivity is provided via footways between the car park and bus station area.

### Bus Station Area

6.23 The highway network in the immediate vicinity of the bus station is comprised of Church Street and Market Place. Specific commentary is provided in relation to this area due to the various traffic flow restrictions currently in place and issues observed on-site in terms of how this section of the highway network currently operates.

6.24 Access to the bus station area from the north is from Church Street, which itself is accessed via the A57 or from West Street. The bus station itself is a two-way route, with two shelters provided on either side of the carriageway. Vehicular flow through this section of the network is restricted to buses and taxis only, and the carriageway...
connects directly through to Market Place to the south. It should be noted that there is no physical restriction, such as automatic bollards or gates, to prevent unauthorised vehicles from using this through route to Market Place.

6.25 To the south of the bus station through route, there is a parallel section of carriageway that is also named Church Street. This is signed as a ‘Pedestrian Zone’, with no vehicles allowed except for access. Approximately halfway along this section of Church Street, there are manual removable bollards provided to prevent vehicles from travelling through to Market Place to the south and no entry signs are provided where it meets Market Place to indicate that northbound access is not permitted to this street.

6.26 At the southern end of Church Street, a crossroads is formed between the bus station through route, the pedestrianised section of Eccleston Street and Market Place. A Puffin crossing for pedestrians is provided at this point, whilst a series of street signs is provided to indicate the following:

- that there is no entry onto Church Street;
- that access to the bus station area is restricted to buses and taxis only; and
- that there is no access at all for vehicles on Eccleston Street between 10am and 5pm, with vehicles allowed for access purposes only between 5pm and 10am. When permitted, access is allowed in an eastbound direction only and the alignment of the junction is such as to make clear that vehicles should access from the south (Market Place) only.

6.27 On Market Place to the south of this crossroads, the carriageway is relatively narrow despite needing to cater for two way vehicular traffic for access to and from the bus station. To the east of the carriageway, a parking layby is provided and a number of vehicles were observed parking in this area during our site visit. On the western side, the layout of the carriageway suggests that this was provided for the purpose of a parking layby, however there are ‘no waiting at any time’ restrictions (double yellow lines) in place.

6.28 On Market Place to the south of this crossroads, the carriageway is relatively narrow despite needing to cater for two way vehicular traffic for access to and from the bus station. To the east of the carriageway, a parking layby is provided and a number of vehicles were observed parking in this area during our site visit. On the western side, the layout of the carriageway suggests that this was provided for the purpose of a parking layby, however there are ‘no waiting at any time’ restrictions (double yellow lines) in place. It should be noted that there are vehicle entry restrictions to the south of this area also (see below), and that the Council has indicated that there are currently issues with vehicles ignoring these restrictions, which are not properly enforced.

6.29 To the south of the Market Place carriageway, a junction is formed with Sewell Street and Kemble Street. There is a change of surfacing at this point, with the Market Place surface being block paving and the other areas being tarmacadam. There is a sign on both sides of the northbound entry point to Market Place stating that it is a ‘Pedestrian
Zone’, with no access for vehicles except for buses and taxis. It should be noted, however, that the sign on the western side is obscured by trees.

6.30 With the above layout around the bus station in mind, the following operational issues have been observed in this area:

- many vehicles were observed to ignore or not notice the ‘Pedestrian Zone’ signs on Market Place and enter this area. After progressing further north and realising that there is no permitted access to either Church Street, the bus station or Eccleston Street, those vehicles then had to turn around and head back south;
- as previously stated, numerous vehicles were observed to have been parked on the eastern side of Market Place where there are no parking restrictions. Based on the ‘Pedestrian Zone’ signs, however, those vehicles should not be allowed to enter and park in this location; not even for the purpose of access;
- the ‘Pedestrian Zone’ signs on Market Place are in conflict with the signs for the pedestrianised area on Eccleston Street. The former state that there is no access at all except for buses and taxis, whilst the latter state that any vehicles are allowed for access purposes between 5pm and 10am. Given that vehicles are required to drive through Market Place in order to access Eccleston Street, the current signage is therefore incorrect and confusing for drivers; and
- the narrow widths on Market Place require any vehicles passing through here, which should only be buses or taxis based on the current signage, to give right of way to one another despite the carriageway being intended for two way traffic.

**Parking and Access to Town Centre Facilities**

6.31 Having considered the arrangement of the highway network above, details are now provided of the off-street parking available in the town centre, and general vehicular access to town centre facilities. Reference is also made to on-street parking opportunities, which are limited but will need to be considered further as part of the PTCM.

6.32 Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) will be introduced in May 2015 and so the responsibility for on-street enforcement will pass from the Police to the Council. The Council will also continue to enforce the off-street parking facilities under its control. Once CPE is introduced, careful monitoring should take place to see how levels of illegal on-street parking changes in the town centre.

**On Street**

6.33 On street parking for visitors is relatively limited within the town centre and its immediate vicinity, although there is considerable off-street parking capacity available and this is reviewed in detail later in this section. Areas where visitors can park on-street include sections of West Street to the west of the town centre, and Cyprus Street, Houghton Street and Pottery Fields to the east of the town centre. Parking is also available on Atherton Street to the north of the town centre.
6.34 Further on-street parking is available on a number of the residential streets surrounding the town centre, however these areas are restricted by permit to resident-only use. Specific locations where this restriction is in place include Cyprus Street (western side), Station Road Boulevard, Chester Street, Williams Street and Garden Walk.

6.35 Aside from the locations referred to above, many streets in the vicinity of the town centre have parking restrictions in place in the form of single and double yellow lines. The latter restriction is in place along Ackers Street, Aspinall Street and Market Place, although as noted above, we have observed vehicles parked in these areas. This is an important point to note given the significant capacity available in nearby off-street car parks.

**Off Street**

*Locations and Access*

6.36 With regard to off-street parking, there are five existing car parks within the town centre and its immediate vicinity that are available for use by the general public; three of which are in Council ownership and two which are in private ownership. The location of these car parks is shown in Figure 6.2 below, together with the total number of spaces available in each.

**Figure 6.2 Car park locations within Prescot Town Centre**

6.37 With reference to the car park locations detailed above, we make the following comments in terms of their ease of access:
- **Mill Street** is the largest Council-owned car park, providing 104 spaces to the western edge of the town centre boundary. This car park provides the closest and most convenient access to the main town centre facilities on Eccleston Street. The car park is signed from the east and west on the A57 at its junction with Mill Street, however there are no signs further afield on the eastbound and westbound approaches of the A57 (or from the A58 to the north) to direct visitors to this parking facility. From the A57 to the east of Prescot, vehicles are directed along Kemble Street to town centre parking facilities, whilst from the A58 vehicles are directed to turn east on the A57 for town centre parking (which ultimately leads them to Kemble Street).

- **Moss Street** is a Council-owned car park, providing 19 spaces to the north of the A57. This car park is signed only by a pole directly opposite the car park on the opposite side of the A57 carriageway, but is visible to vehicles approaching from both directions. This car park is again not signposted from further afield. The Council indicates that drivers tend to drive through Moss Street car park to access Ray's Bakery car park, which is cheaper.

- **Cyprus Street** is a Council-owned car park, providing 53 spaces on the eastern edge of the town centre boundary and is accessed via Kemble Street. Whilst vehicles are directed to Kemble Street from wider signing on the A57 and A58, there is no signage provided at the junction of Kemble Street and Cyprus Street to direct vehicles towards this facility despite it being well located for access to facilities on Eccleston Street.

- **Prescot Shopping Centre** is a privately owned car park located on Aspinall Street, providing a total of 210 spaces and is again accessed via Kemble Street. There is signage for this car park at the Kemble Street/Aspinall Street junction and, as previously noted, vehicles are directed to Kemble Street from the A57 and A58 by existing signage. Parking is provided for free and the Council advises that it is frequently full by 09:00 due to its use by workers in the town centre. However, at around 14:00 or 15:00, staff at the nearby post office depot staff finish for the day, freeing up the most convenient spaces for shoppers.

- **Cables Retail Park** is a privately owned car park, providing 910 spaces to the south of the town centre and is accessed from Steley Way. There is signage for Cables Retail Park, but not as a town centre parking facility, on both A57 approaches at its roundabout junction with Steley Way and Kemble Street to the east of Prescot. There is also a sign for the retail park on Manchester Road at its roundabout junction with Sewel Street and Steley Way immediately to the south-west of the retail park, however there is no signage further to the west on the A57 to direct vehicles along Manchester Road.

- **Ray's Bakery Car Park** is a privately owned car, which is of a similar size to the adjacent Council-owned Moss Street Car Par. Parking is free with any purchase from the bakery.

- **Prescot Town Council Car Park** is a privately owned car park with 30 spaces. The car park is for Town Hall users only, but no barrier system is in place.
The Deanes House Pub Car Park is a private car park located off Church Street, with approximately 25 spaces. Parking is priced at £3.00 per day, which is reduced by £1.00 for those who use the pub.

6.38 To summarise, the current traffic signs that are in place in Prescot direct all vehicles approaching from the north and east of Prescot to town centre car parking via the A57 and Kemble Street. From that point, vehicles are only then directed to the Prescot Shopping Centre car park which is in private rather than Council ownership. No signing is provided to the Cyprus Street facility. From the west of Prescot, vehicles are also again directed along the A57 and Kemble Street, however there is a small sign indicating the location of the Mill Street car park at its junction with the A57. With regard to Cables Retail Park, signs are again provided from the A57 and Manchester Road, however this is not signed specifically as a parking destination and is located outside of the town centre boundary.

6.39 Taking the above into consideration it is reasonable to conclude that the use of all car parks in the town centre is not being maximised through the current signage that is in place, particularly in terms of the available facilities at Cyprus Street, Moss Street and, to a lesser extent, Mill Street.

Charging Regime and Occupancy Levels

6.40 As part of our site visit we undertook spot counts of the Council-owned car parks and the two larger private car parks detailed above during the afternoon on Tuesday 17th February 2015. This information is summarised in Table 6.1 below, together with details of the charging structure and maximum lengths of stay permitted. As noted in the introduction to this section, this was during the half-term school holiday period and the occupancy data collected may therefore differ from a weekday during school term times.

Table 6.1 Off Street Car Park Occupancy Data and Charging Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Car Park</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Charges</th>
<th>Occupancy Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total Spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cables Retail Park</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Free for a maximum of 3 hours</td>
<td>908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescot Shopping Centre</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Free for a maximum of 3 hours</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill Street</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>Maximum stay 2 hours – 60p per hour (no return within 1 hour)</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus Street</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>Maximum stay 9 hours – 80p for up to 1 hour, £1.20 for up to 2 hours and £2.40 for over 2 hours</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moss Street</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>Maximum stay 9 hours – 80p for up to 1 hour, £1.20 for up to 2 hours and £2.40 for over 2 hours</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.41 As can be seen in Table 6.1, the two car parks in private ownership at Prescot Shopping Centre and Cables Retail Park, which are the largest available in Prescot and which benefit from the clearest signage, had the highest occupancy rates of 59 per cent and 62 per cent respectively. Both of these operate on a free of charge basis, for a maximum period of three hours. Despite the relatively high occupancy levels, there were still 374 spaces unoccupied at Cables Retail Park and 79 spaces unoccupied at Prescot Shopping Centre.

6.42 With regard to the Council-owned car parks, it should be noted that Mill Street operates on a ‘short stay’ basis and is free of charge for two hours, with penalty charges then in place for any stays over this period of time. The Cyprus Street and Moss Street car parks are ‘long stay’ car parks and operate with the same charging structure, however there is very limited or no signage directing vehicles to these facilities.

6.43 In terms of the Mill Street car park, our survey data indicates that this was only 25 per cent of spaces were occupied at the time of our visit, with 82 spaces of the 110 available unoccupied. Whilst this car park is free of charge for up to two hour stays, the low occupancy levels may be due to a combination of poor signage, the availability of free parking for three hours at Prescot Shopping Centre and Cables Retail Park, and the shopping offer at these two destinations being more popular than Eccleston Street which is located in close proximity to the Mill Street car park.

6.44 The Cyprus Street car park is also shown in the table above to have a very low occupancy level at only 17 per cent, with 44 of the available 53 spaces unoccupied. One causal factor for this low occupancy level is again likely to be poor signage and visitors simply not knowing that the car park is there. Another factor is that the two private car parks are more conveniently located and are free of charge for up to three hour stays. This car park is therefore only likely to be utilised by people wanting to stay for periods longer than three hours.

6.45 Finally, there were a total of 9 spaces occupied out of the 19 available at the Moss Street car park, equating to an occupancy level of 47 per cent. Whilst smaller than the Cyprus Street long stay facility, the slightly higher usage in percentage terms at Moss Street is likely to be due to its more prominent location on the main A57 route through the town centre.

6.46 Based on the data presented above, there were a total of 711 vehicles occupying the 1,300 available off-street car parking spaces in Prescot at the time of our visit, equating an overall occupancy rate of 55 per cent. This therefore means that there were a total of 589 spaces unoccupied during this period. It is also worth noting that of the 589 spaces available, 453 of those were located at the privately owned car parks at Prescot Shopping Centre and Cables Retail Park and 136 were located in Council-owned parking facilities.
Pedestrian and Cycling Infrastructure

6.47 This section considers the existing pedestrian and cycle infrastructure in the town centre and along routes between key destinations in Prescot. As part of our site visit, an audit of these routes was carried out to determine the overall quality of the pedestrian environment for people in the town centre.

A57 High Street

6.48 As detailed in earlier sections of this report, the A57 forms the major route through Prescot and carries a significant volume of traffic that could potentially lead to severance issues for pedestrians and cyclists. This route is on the northern edge of the town centre boundary, and given that there are residential areas and the Moss Street car park to the north of the A57, appropriate consideration should be given to the environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

6.49 With regard to pedestrians, there are footways to both sides of the A57 carriageway and street lighting is provided. However, in some areas, the footways are narrow and the presence of street signage in the footway could present issues for pedestrians, wheelchair and pushchair users (see the photo at Figure 6.3 below, which was taken near to the Moss Street car park).

Figure 6.3 A57 Narrow Footways and Restricted Width for Pedestrians

6.50 In terms of pedestrians being able to move safely across the A57 from north to south (and vice-versa), it should be noted that there are a number of signalised Puffin crossings provided at the following locations:

- to the west of Church Street;
- to the east of Hope Street; and
- to the west of Queens Road.
6.51 These therefore provide ample safe and controlled crossing points at regular intervals along the A57, whilst it should also be noted that there are controlled pedestrian crossing movements provided on all arms of the signalised A57 High Street / A58 St Helens Road junction. This junction also provides advance stop lines for cyclists, however there is no further cyclist provision, such as cycle lanes, provided on this section of the A57.

Prescot Town Centre

6.52 The western section of Eccleston Street, which forms the main outdoor shopping area in the town centre, is pedestrianised. However, there are no wayfinding or directional signs present in the Eccleston Street area to direct visitors to and from the car parks, bus station and rail station (i.e. the modes of transport in which they may have used to travel to Prescot).

6.53 Access to and from Prescot Shopping Centre on foot is possible from Eccleston Street, with entrances onto the pedestrianised area. It was noted, however, that there was no signage to Prescot Museum, which has recently relocated into the shopping centre.

6.54 For visitors arriving to Prescot by bus, Eccleston Street is readily accessible by foot from the bus station which is located immediately to the west of the shopping area. Footways, street lighting and dropped level kerbs with tactile paving are provided at appropriate points for pedestrians to walk between the station and the shops, whilst a Puffin Crossing is also provided for pedestrians at the western end of Eccleston Street.

6.55 Whilst Cables Retail Park is located outside of the town centre boundary, there is still potential for visitors to park at the retail park and walk into the town centre. For such trips, pedestrian access is provided between the Next and Outfit stores in the centre of the retail park, which provides access onto Station Road Boulevard. Whilst a site visit has not been undertaken at night, there appeared to be limited lighting along the route between the stores mentioned, and pedestrians must also cross the delivery service road at the rear of the retail park to join Station Road Boulevard. Furthermore, no signage is provided to indicate this as a route towards the town centre.

Access to and from Prescot Rail Station

6.56 Given that some visitors may travel to and from Prescot by rail, and may then walk to the town centre, the pedestrian infrastructure from the rail station has also been considered.

6.57 At Prescot Rail Station itself, information boards are provided that show a number of different public transport maps, with details of local bus services and onward destinations. However, no map provided of the town centre to identify the location of key local amenities and facilities for anyone travelling onwards by foot. With regard to cycling provision, five Sheffield stands are provided at the station for cyclist use.
6.58 In order to access the town centre from the rail station, pedestrians are required to walk along Station Road Boulevard, with the most direct route from there being through Cables Retail Park. An alternative would be along Sewell Street to the west of this. However, there is no existing signage provided (either pedestrian or vehicular) to direct pedestrians to the town centre and navigating is therefore difficult unless the individual concerned is familiar with the area. In addition to this, and although observed to be generally lightly trafficked at the time of the site visit, there is no formal uncontrolled or controlled crossing facility provided for pedestrians to cross Bridge Road from the station.

### Public Transport

#### Bus Services

6.59 A range of bus services operate in and around Prescot Town Centre, with the majority of services calling at Prescot Bus Station, which is located off Church Street and near to Eccleston Street on the western edge of the town centre. Two shelters are provided on either side of the carriageway at the bus station, together with bus schedule information.

6.60 In addition to the bus station, the majority of key services do a loop along the A57 and Sewell Street, stopping at locations along this route including near to Cables Retail Park. For services travelling along the A57, the majority of stops provide shelters and bus schedule information. However, there are a small number which provide only bus stop poles and signs, and are located at narrow sections of footways that could create potential issues for pedestrians.

6.61 A map of the key bus services is shown in Figure 6.4 below for information, whilst Table 6.2 provides a summary of the most frequent services from the bus station, Sewell Street / Cables Retail Park and the A57 (High Street). The summary of bus services provided below shows that Prescot is well served and easily accessible by bus during weekdays and weekends. There are therefore good opportunities for visitors to access the town centre by sustainable modes of transport.
### Figure 6.4 Key Bus Services in and around Prescot Town Centre

![Map of Prescot Town Centre showing key bus services](image)

#### Table 6.2 Key Bus Services in Prescot Town Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Routes to this destination</th>
<th>Bus Stop Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>10, 61, 61A, 61D, 139</td>
<td>Prescot Bus Station, CRP and A57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Helens</td>
<td>89, 97, 137, 138, 139, 194, 195, 297</td>
<td>Prescot Bus Station, CRP and A57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>61, 61D</td>
<td>Prescot Bus Station and CRP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>61, 61D</td>
<td>Prescot Bus Station and CRP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiston</td>
<td>99, 111, 139, 264</td>
<td>Prescot Bus Station and A57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiston Hospital</td>
<td>99, 194, 195</td>
<td>Prescot Bus Station and A57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alder Hey</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>Prescot Bus Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billinge</td>
<td>137, 138</td>
<td>Prescot Bus Station and A57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huyton</td>
<td>61, 61A, 61D, 89, 139, 248, 264</td>
<td>Prescot Bus Station, CRP and A57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halewood</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>Prescot Bus Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainhill</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>Prescot Bus Station and A57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wavertree</td>
<td>61, 61A, 61D, 139</td>
<td>Prescot Bus Station, CRP and A57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rail Services

6.62 As detailed earlier in this section, Prescot Rail Station is located approximately 650m to the south of the Town Centre and 300m to the south of Cables Retail Park. The station offers frequent services to and from a number of destinations, including Liverpool, Wigan and St Helens, together with local areas such as Huyton and Eccleston Park. A summary of the services to and from these locations is provided in Table 6.3 below, which demonstrates that Prescot is readily accessible by rail in relatively short journey times.

Table 6.3 Rail Service Frequencies from Prescot Station

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Trip Time</th>
<th>Weekday frequency per hour (first and last service)</th>
<th>Saturday frequency per hour (first and last service)</th>
<th>Sunday frequency per hour (first and last service)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>24 minutes</td>
<td>2 (0604 – 0021)</td>
<td>2 (0604 – 2331)</td>
<td>1 (0911 – 0058)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wigan</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>2 (0552 – 2350)</td>
<td>2 (0920 – 2322)</td>
<td>1 (0906 – 2333)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Helens</td>
<td>8 minutes</td>
<td>2 (0552 – 2350)</td>
<td>2 (0920 – 2322)</td>
<td>1 (0906 – 2333)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Issues

6.63 Based on the above review of the transport infrastructure in and around the town centre of Prescot, the key points can be summarised as follows:

- The A57 is a busy route along the northern edge of the town centre, carrying the equivalent of 2 to 3 vehicles per second (combined in both directions) at peak times. Whilst no significant congestion issues were observed during our site visit, providing safe movements for pedestrians along and across the A57 should remain a key consideration moving forward with the PTCM. It is noted, however, that there are a number of Puffin Crossings already provided for pedestrians along the A57.

- North-south connections for vehicles through the town centre are limited, with vehicles predominantly directed to the town centre via the east-west routes of the A57 and then Kemble Street.

- There are various conflicting signs and carriageway markings in the vicinity of the bus station area that cause confusion for drivers and will need to be considered as part of the PTCM.

- On-street parking is limited for visitors in the town centre, however this is not considered to be a particular issue given the number of off-street parking spaces that are available. We did note, however, that a number of vehicles were parked on double yellow line restrictions along Ackers Street, Aspinall Street and Market Place.

- The three Council-owned off-street car parks and the larger private off-street car parks at Prescot Shopping Centre and Cables Retail Park provide a total of 1,300 spaces. At the time of our spot surveys, there was a 55 per cent occupancy rate
across these spaces overall, with 589 spaces therefore unoccupied and available for use. It should be noted that these counts were undertaken during the afternoon and it was half-term; occupancy levels may differ during the school term periods.

- The private car parks at Prescot Shopping Centre and Cables Retail Park account for the most off-street spaces in the vicinity of the town centre and are the most well-utilised with occupancy levels of 62 per cent and 59 per cent on the date referred to above. These car parks do have the clearest signage and this may therefore account for their popularity, together with the fact that they offer free parking for longer periods (up to three hours) than the Council-owned car parks.

- Of the three car parks in the town centre owned by the Council, one operates on a short stay basis (maximum stay 2 hours) and the other two operate on a long stay basis. All have time charges in place. These facilities are significantly less well utilised, with occupancy ranging from 17 per cent to 47 per cent at the time of our visit. This may be accounted for by their poor existing signage and the fact that visitors are not aware of their existence, and due to the fact that they do not offer free parking for as long as the privately owned car parks.

- The pedestrian environment in Prescot Town Centre and the immediate vicinity is generally of good quality in terms of surfacing and street lighting, however there is a lack of signage to direct pedestrians around the town centre and to key facilities. This is particularly the case for any person trying to find their way between the rail station and the town centre.

- Bus services are frequent in the town centre and offer good opportunities to access Prescot from surrounding areas. The bus station itself is also ideally located next to the shopping street of Eccleston Street for easy access to the town centre.

- The rail station is approximately 650 metres from the town centre, which equates to less than a ten minute walk. The services available at the station again offer good opportunities for people to access Prescot by rail, however as previously noted better directional signs are required for visitors arriving at the station to guide them to the town centre.
7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Introduction

7.1 Peter Brett Associates has been commissioned by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council to prepare the Prescot Town Centre Masterplan (PTCM) on its behalf. The main objective of this work is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the town centre and to develop a vision and physical masterplan, including deliverable area-based projects and proposals. The Council intends to adopt the PTCM as a Supplementary Planning Document.

7.2 The purpose of this Baseline Report has been to provide an evidence base that will allow us to set out a coherent vision for the town centre and practicable objectives for achieving that vision as part of the next stage of our work. We have reported the results of a number of inter-related lines of enquiry concerning the current composition and performance of the town centre, its physical environment and infrastructure, and the local property market. In this final section we present a summary of our findings.

The Policy Context

7.3 In Section 2 of this report we reviewed the existing policy context, considering both planning and economic policies at national, sub-regional and local levels. It will be important that the PTCM supports and builds upon existing policy objectives.

7.4 We have noted that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local planning authorities to positively seek opportunities to encourage sustainable development that delivers economic, social and environmental benefits. The PTCM should reflect the need to support sustainable development and act as a positive and proactive exercise in ensuring that the future development of Prescot Town Centre delivers economic, social and environmental benefits to the local community. In accordance with paragraphs 153 and 173 of the NPPF the PTCM should be aspirational but also realistic and deliverable.

7.5 Turning to local planning policy, the Knowsley Unitary Development Plan (UDP) seeks to improve the provision of shops and services in town centres, encourage the redevelopment of brownfield land, protect heritage assets and promote high quality design. The Knowsley Core Strategy is not yet adopted but will replace many of the policy provisions of the UDP in due course. Emerging policy makes an allowance for up to 6,800 sq. m of additional comparison goods retail floorspace within Prescot in the period to 2028 and it will be necessary for the PTCM to consider how this might be achieved and, if it cannot be delivered, to consider alternative strategies that would help to meet the same objectives. The Core Strategy also identifies specific objectives for the town centre to which the PTCM will need to respond. These include encouraging a wider mix of town centre uses, consolidating the primary shopping area, improving linkages, protecting heritage assets and maximising tourism and cultural opportunities.
7.6 Economic development strategies relevant to Knowsley comprise the emerging strategy of the Liverpool City Region LEP, the Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy Strategy, and the Borough’s own Economic Regeneration Strategy. The sub-regional strategies are high level but there is scope for the PTCM to support their objectives, including through creating opportunities to grow the visitor economy, develop cultural assets and guide the regeneration of a town centre. The Borough’s Economic Regeneration Strategy seeks to improve the attractiveness of Knowsley to investors, address the underperformance of its town centres and create new opportunities for the growth of the visitor economy, amongst other things. The PTCM will need to act as a key tool in realising the full economic potential of Prescot Town Centre.

The Current Performance of the Town Centre

7.7 Our analysis of the performance of the town centre was set out in Section 3. It identified a range of issues that it will be relevant to take into account when developing the vision and strategy for the PTCM and when developing individual masterplan projects.

7.8 The town centre’s retail offer is limited, particularly in terms of key comparison goods sub-sectors such as clothing and retail. It has suffered from the withdrawal of national multiple retail operators over recent years. Whilst convenience retail provision is reasonable, there is no significant foodstore within the town centre that is capable of acting as an ‘anchor’, driving footfall and supporting trade within the town centre. Nevertheless, there is a reasonable provision of service uses within the town centre and a small but interesting independent retail offer. Overall the town centre has a limited catchment area and is struggling to compete with the Cables Retail Park and other destinations within and outside of the Borough. This underperformance is manifested in a very high vacancy rate, with vacant units concentrated in the Prescot Shopping Centre, the future of which remains uncertain.

7.9 As with the town centre’s retail offer, its leisure offer is limited, particularly in terms of hospitality and the evening economy. However, there are significant opportunities for future leisure development to facilitate the regeneration of the town centre. These opportunities include the town centre’s heritage and links to Shakespeare, the proposed theatre and potential cinema development, and the capacity for other forms of leisure provision that would complement existing facilities within the town centre, the adjacent Cables Retail Park and nearby attractions such as Knowsley Safari Park.

7.10 In Section 4 we reviewed the local property market in Prescot. This analysis made clear that demand for additional retail development in Prescot Town Centre is weak. Many of the better quality units in the centre remain vacant and the geographic pattern of retail and leisure uses dissipates footfall and is not beneficial to the vitality and viability of the centre. However, there was healthy demand for residential development in the Prescot area and further such development could help to support the retail function of the town centre.
Town Centre Strengths

7.11 Whilst Section 3 and 4 of this report gave good overview of the market performance of the town centre, Section 5 and 6 have provided an assessment of the town centre’s environment and its accessibility. Taken together, the key assets of the town centre can be summarised as follows:

- the town centre has a reasonable complement of convenience retail facilities, including independent operators, and has a distinctive role as a destination for top-up food shopping;
- the town centre has a good service offer, including representation of banks and estate agents;
- Prescot has an interesting industrial heritage and credible links to Shakespeare. Together with its close proximity to the Knowsley Safari Park (a major visitor attraction), the potential exists to assemble a cultural or leisure offer that might attract new visitors to the town centre;
- the town is well connected to the strategic road network and occupies a prominent hill top location;
- the town centre retains much of its medieval street layout with a number of listed Georgian/Victorian buildings and other buildings of architectural merit;
- the town centre has benefited from good levels of investment in public realm improvements over recent years; and
- there are significant redevelopment opportunities within the town centre.

Town Centre Weaknesses

7.12 Despite the strengths summarised above, the town centre has some significant weaknesses that pose threats to its future vitality and viability. These weaknesses can be summarised as follows:

- the town centre mainly draws its trade in comparison goods from a limited catchment area and a high proportion of residents’ expenditure ‘leaks’ to more distant destinations;
- the vacancy rate within the town centre has increased since the start of the economic downtown, largely as a result of a significant contraction in the town centre’s comparison retail offer;
- the Tesco Extra foodstore at Cables Retail Park dominates convenience goods provision within Prescot and the town centre lacks its own main foodstore that would act as an anchor and help to drive trade and footfall;
- the Prescot Shopping Centre has gone into administration and its future remains uncertain;
- the existing food and drink offer of the town centre is limited and the provision of other leisure and entertainment facilities is poor;
- the town centre has a lack of clearly defined gateways and a poor sense of arrival;
the town centre has poor north-south connections, including pedestrian connectivity between the town centre and Cables Retail Park;

town centre car parks suffer from poor accessibility and/or poor visibility from the primary road network;

vacant and derelict premises blight several parts of the town centre. Elsewhere there is evidence of dilapidation and variable quality in terms of shop frontages and signage.

Next Steps

7.13 The next steps in the development of the PTCM are as follows:

our analysis of strengths and weaknesses will inform a consideration of strategic options and the development of a vision for the town centre which will be tested with stakeholders. The vision will underpin the PTCM and set out the overarching economic, social and environmental objectives for the future development of the town centre;

a number of strategic objectives will be developed in order to deliver the vision and a long list of potential masterplan projects will be developed based on the vision and objectives. Where appropriate, these potential projects will be discussed further with the Council, key stakeholders and other interested parties;

the draft masterplan document will be prepared and will contain an overarching spatial framework plan and a description of how the proposed masterplan projects will help to deliver the stated objectives. This will include an implementation plan describing how the PTCM might be delivered; and

the Council will put the draft masterplan to public consultation, prior to it being adopted by the Council as a Supplementary Planning Document in due course.
## TABLE 1 - Prescot Town Centre Diversity of Uses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goad Code</th>
<th>Operator Type</th>
<th>No. of Units</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Floorspace (sq.m)</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>UK Average Index (UK=100)</th>
<th>Floorspace Index (UK=100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1A</td>
<td>Bakers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.55%</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>5.09%</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1B</td>
<td>Butchers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>0.89%</td>
<td>0.41%</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1C</td>
<td>Greengrocers &amp; fishmongers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.36%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1D</td>
<td>Grocery and frozen foods</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.55%</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>5.19%</td>
<td>12.85%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1E</td>
<td>Off-licences and home brew</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.71%</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>0.94%</td>
<td>0.31%</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1F</td>
<td>Confectioners, tobacconists, newsagents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.71%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.15%</td>
<td>2.10%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>10.64%</strong></td>
<td><strong>118</strong></td>
<td><strong>12.27%</strong></td>
<td><strong>18.13%</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2A</td>
<td>Footwear &amp; repair</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.28%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2B</td>
<td>Men's &amp; boys' wear</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.85%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2C</td>
<td>Women's, girls, children's clothing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.84%</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>2.57%</td>
<td>3.29%</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2D</td>
<td>Mixed and general clothing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.55%</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>2.92%</td>
<td>6.31%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2E</td>
<td>Furniture, carpets &amp; textiles</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1.73%</td>
<td>3.69%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2F</td>
<td>Booksellers, arts/crafts, stationers,copy bureaux</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.96%</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>6.63%</td>
<td>3.12%</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2G</td>
<td>Electrical, home entertainment, telephones and video</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.96%</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>2.72%</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2H</td>
<td>DIY, hardware &amp; household goods</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.42%</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6.23%</td>
<td>4.85%</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2I</td>
<td>Gifts, china, glass and leather goods</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.71%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
<td>0.91%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2J</td>
<td>Cars, motorcycles &amp; motor accessories</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2K</td>
<td>Chemists, toiletries &amp; opticians</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.55%</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>5.19%</td>
<td>3.92%</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2L</td>
<td>Variety, department &amp; catalogue showrooms</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>6.28%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2M</td>
<td>Florists and gardens</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>1.43%</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2N</td>
<td>Sports, toys, cycles and hobbies</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.58%</td>
<td>2.23%</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2O</td>
<td>Jewellers, clocks &amp; repair</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2P</td>
<td>Charity shops, pets and other comparison</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.67%</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>2.82%</td>
<td>2.98%</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>34.04%</strong></td>
<td><strong>84</strong></td>
<td><strong>34.08%</strong></td>
<td><strong>45.49%</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3A</td>
<td>Restaurants, cafes, coffee bars, fast food &amp; take-aways</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.51%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>6.82%</td>
<td>12.11%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3B</td>
<td>Hairdressers, beauty parlours &amp; health centres</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.64%</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>3.96%</td>
<td>4.69%</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3C</td>
<td>Laundries &amp; drycleaners</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.42%</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>0.54%</td>
<td>0.41%</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3D</td>
<td>Travel agents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.42%</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>0.89%</td>
<td>0.67%</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3E</td>
<td>Banks &amp; financial services (incl. accountants)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.51%</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>9.15%</td>
<td>4.41%</td>
<td>207</td>
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<tr>
<td>G3F</td>
<td>Building societies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.43%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3G</td>
<td>Estate agents &amp; auctioneers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.96%</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>3.76%</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>173</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>35.46%</strong></td>
<td><strong>96</strong></td>
<td><strong>25.12%</strong></td>
<td><strong>24.89%</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| G4A       | Employment, careers, Post Offices and information | 4 | 2.84%      | 247             | 4.75%      | 1.05%                     | 452                       |
| G4B       | Vacant units (all categories) | 24 | 17.02%     | 4810            | 23.79%     | 10.64%                    | 224                       |
| **TOTAL** |               | **28**       | **19.86%**  | **146**          | **28.54%** | **11.69%**                | **244**                   |
| **GRAND TOTAL** |         | **141**      | **100%**    |                  | **100%**   |                          |                           |

Source: Experian GOAD 24/09/2013 (UK Averages December 2014)
APPENDIX B LEISURE CASE STUDIES
Case Study 1 – The Next Generation of Budget Hotels

Is this the next generation budget hotels?

Budget hotels have moved on significantly since their boom years in the nineties, now providing a real, modern and convenient competitor to established three star hotels. However, with development sites becoming ever more challenging and costs rising, the race is on to provide more for less in the sector with many new entrants, such as the utilitarian Easyhotel using modular forms of accommodation to revolutionise the sector.

In 2013, the architecture newspaper BD and Bdonline.co.uk asked designers to create rooms which make a 14sqm space feel generous and luxurious. A dozen designs were shortlisted, featuring everything from walls with real-time interactive views, to floating beds, moveable pods and layouts that can be customised via social media.

Designed by Michael Trentham Architects, Hotel Obscura (pictured to the right) presents the idea of a windowless room by introducing large interactive screens showing real-time views chosen by the guest, which can also be used to access the internet and entertainment systems.

Premier Inn has also unveiled a new room concept which allows guests to control lighting and entertainment using a mobile phone app. The budget hotel chain, intends their next generation rooms to the most “space-efficient and digitally savvy” in the country.

Pictured to the right, the rooms will each feature an en-suite bathroom, wardrobe, desk, bed, free Wi-Fi and a 40” smart screen television, all contained within 11.4m2.
Case Study 2 – Exercise and Dementia Care

Options for integrating health and fitness with dementia care?

Although exercise on prescription is nothing new, the value of exercise in preventing the development of Alzheimer's disease in elderly people is increasingly recognised with health and fitness facilities forming a part of larger retirement and specialist dementia communities. This development is a result of an increasing studies, such research published in July 2013 by the University of Maryland School of Public Health in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease, which found that benefits of exercise to dementia sufferers were significant and included:

- Improved general cardiovascular health (relating to the heart and blood vessels), reducing the risk of high blood pressure and heart disease
- Reduced the risk of some types of cancer (in particular breast and colon cancer), stroke and type 2 diabetes
- Improved physical function - maintaining muscle strength and joint flexibility as a way of helping people maintain independence for longer
- Helping to keep bones strong and reducing the risk of osteoporosis (a disease that affects the bones, making them weak and more likely to break)
- Improved cognition - exercise may improve memory and slow down mental decline
- Improved sleep
- Opportunities for social interaction and reducing the feeling of isolation
- Reducing the risk of falls - physical activity can improve strength and balance, and help to counteract the fear of falling
- Enhanced confidence about the body and its capabilities - through improved body image and a sense of achievement.

Discussing the findings, Dr. J. Carson Smith, assistant professor in the Department of Kinesiology noted that; “We found that after 12 weeks of being on a moderate exercise program, study participants improved their neural efficiency – basically they were using fewer neural resources to perform the same memory task. No study has shown that a drug can do what we showed is possible with exercise”.

As a consequence, developers are increasingly looking at options for the integration of health and fitness facilities into retirement and dementia villages, with the next generation of developments likely to incorporate dual use health and fitness facilities with both consumer and therapeutic uses.
Case Study 3

Tourist trail App for Android / iPhone – Geopark Shetland

Geopark Shetland has completed a number of interpretive panels, displays and geo-art exhibits in the islands. While there is scope to continue developing on-site interpretation of this kind, the existing infrastructure is sufficient to allow a move into new kinds of interpretation, and in doing so, strike a balance between on-site interpretation and landscape impact.

Advances in digital, and mobile phone technology have provided an opportunity to create interpretation using a range of media – audio, visual and textual – to link related sites and to make information available in a portable format for users to access at their own pace. This information can be changed and added to over time, making it sustainable in the longer term.

Geopark Shetland and Shetland LEADER have developed a map based application for Android and iPhone based around geosites in Shetland. The application introduces users to ‘Geopark Shetland’, and highlights the concept and aims of the Geopark via a map-based and linked with phone GPS systems. The maps are populated with a number of key sites, with users able to access text, audio, visual and graphic content about them, helping them to learn about and enjoy the natural and cultural heritage of Shetland.

Moving forward, Mintel (Visitor Attractions, 2014), for example cite the 2013 launch of Apple’s new iOS operating system a significant game changer in developing similar trails, and in particular a new feature within in call iBeacon. In principle, Mintel assert that iBeacon could be used “to create trails which people could follow to find out more information about an attraction and its exhibits”. This would be achieved “through placing small transmitters, known as beacons, around a building or in a specific room in a building, allowing relevant content to be pushed to a user’s mobile device as they walk past various beacons”. Mintel are similarly effusive of the potential for VVR, particularly as next generation headsets such as Oculus Rift near mass launch in 2015.
APPENDIX C   KMBC LAND OWNERSHIP PLAN
Zone A – St Mary’s Church

Concrete paving around War Memorial

Church Street entrance off A57
Description

This is one area within the town centre which has unquestionable character and where you gain a real feel for the heritage of the town.

The area is focussed on the Prescot Parish Church (St. Mary’s Church) and its environs. The Church is a dramatic and attractive local landmark due to its elevated skyline position, backdrop of mature trees and prominent stone spire, which can be seen over a very wide area.

At ground level, in the immediate vicinity of the church, the view is equally attractive, with a distinct character and ‘heritage’ sense of place provided by Church Street and the enclosing properties to the north, and Vicarage Place to the West. Vicarage Place is a hidden heritage gem, an original cobbled street with fine listed buildings to one side. Church Street was the recipient of a particularly high quality public realm enhancement project several years ago, with the use of granite setts and natural stone paving mirroring the inherent character of Vicarage Place.

This zone contains a large cluster of attractive buildings many of which are listed. Previous public realm enhancement, including the redevelopment of the car parking to the north east at Mill Street, have successfully built upon this inherent historic character, providing an excellent precedent for any future enhancements or developments.

There are areas and buildings which have suffered neglect or inappropriate conversion and interventions. The row of buildings on the eastern edge of Market Place are potentially attractive buildings, but several are now vacant or in a poor state of repair. Those being actively used include several fast food outlets mainly providing for a night-time economy they are spoilt by unattractive signage and shuttered facades during the daytime.

To the west and south west of St. Mary’s Church, the cemetery, vicarage and the vicarage gardens provide a most significant area of green space, containing numerous mature trees. Though not within the defined town centre boundary this area has great visual, amenity and access significance on the edge of the main retail street, close to the bus terminus and taxi rank. It is a major area of green space immediately adjacent the town centre, which is otherwise generally devoid of public ‘green’ open space. It provides the setting for the church, an access route for pedestrians and amenity for residents and visitors. However, it could be better integrated with the town centre and potentially developed to provide a wider recreational and amenity resource.

Good & Bad Attributes

Architecture

- Number of landmark and listed buildings of architectural merit.
- Inappropriate shop fronts or signs degrade heritage area character
- Greenall Court provides a poor backdrop to an important public space
Public Realm

- The significant large ‘green’ open space around St Mary’s Church with its historic graveyard open to the public
- Use of low quality materials & derelict toilet building at Market Place
- Good quality public realm investment along Church Street

Opportunities

- Re-balance the pedestrian and vehicular movement
- Potential opening of bus terminal for two-way traffic completing the traffic circulation around the core town centre
- Potential public access to and use of mature landscaped walled gardens adjacent to the Vicarage
- Upgrade Market Place as a multi-purpose public space encouraging seasonal events and street markets
- Potential redevelopment site on the edge of the (junction of Sewell and Kemble Street)
- Upgrading Sewell Street to create a distinct landscaped, vehicular and pedestrian link from Cables Retail Park, and an enhanced gateway to and through the heritage area.
- Potential gateway enhancement and development opportunity at the junction of Church Street - West Street - A57.
- Improve the shop fronts and associated signage to the properties facing Market Place.
- Potential redevelopment opportunity of the printer’s works building, creating new active frontage onto the Market Place.
Market Place has unrealised public realm potential
Zone B – Transport Hub & Car Parking

Description

Probably the most clearly defined of all the zones which we have identified, this is the location of the bus terminus, taxi rank and main town centre car park. The car park, taxi rank and bus terminus is located on ‘backland’ between the buildings on Church St, the shops on Eccleston Street and buildings along High Street.

Though accessed from the main route past/through the town, the A57 (High Street section), it is not particularly visible, generally hidden behind buildings, bill boards and planting. However, it is very well located for providing town centre parking. The construction of the car parks and the bus terminus is relatively recent and even though the zone is generally defined by the unattractive rear facades of properties, once inside the zone it is very attractively detailed and landscaped, with good general amenity.
Good & Bad Attributes

General
- Number of connections to the main shopping street via narrow alleyways
- Poor car park signage from A57
- Key bus terminal location
- A number of adjacent derelict sites and vacant properties
- Bus, taxi and servicing access

Architecture
- A number of architecturally attractive buildings are close to or front onto the car park. The attractive Old Mill pub is located within the car park.

Public Realm
- Well detailed car parking layout and use of quality materials.
- Framed views of the St Mary’s Church spire and distant views of the Welsh Hills
- Attractively landscaped and detailed bus terminal area
- Advertising hoarding sites denude character and sense of place

Opportunities
- Potential Shakespeare Theatre development on the Mill Street car parking site
- Potential opening up of the hoarding sites increasing visibility of car park from A57
Zone C – High Street & A57

Description

Zone C is a linear corridor defined by properties to both sides of the A57 which runs in a west/east direction immediately north of the town centre. The road essentially provides a bypass of the town centre. The A57 (Derby Street) rises up from the west as it approaches the town centre which is located on the higher ground. The section of road which defines the northern edge of the town centre is High Street, which then becomes Warrington Road as it passes along the eastern edge of the town toward the Cables Retail Park.

High Street contains a wide variety of buildings, many of them with heritage and visual value, with attractive form and fenestration. The buildings range from small terraces to large individual properties, with an equally wide range of uses, from civic buildings; the former library, registry office, new Town Hall, to shops, flats and restaurants. None of the buildings are more than 3 storeys in height. The larger footprint buildings and those of most architectural merit are to the western end of High Street. Travelling east there are significant gaps in the building edge along the southern side of the zone many of these gaps now ‘plugged’ with large, dominant advertising hoardings, which screen undeveloped plots of land behind. These large hoardings are a significant detractor, they contribute nothing to the general street scene or sense of place. They do however represent potential development sites, which in time could be infilled to once again provide a more consistent and attractive
edge to the street.
At the eastern end towards Warrington Road the buildings provide a more solid facade, generally smaller units with less architectural individuality or merit and containing a variety of retail uses.

Good & Bad Attributes

General
- Important civic and municipal buildings
- Access to three town centre car parks

Architecture
- A range of properties from small terraced houses to large individual buildings, with a mix of uses; retail, residential and commercial

Public Realm
- Dominant advertising hoardings denude character and sense of place
- Bus route and heavy trafficked primary road

Opportunities
- Possible pedestrian linkage improvement to the Bowling Green
- Improve signage to the Mill Street car parking
- Develop the advertising hoardings sites with active usages or amenity improvements
- Establish clear and attractive inner gateways to the town centre
- Establish safe and attractive pedestrian routes from the watch factory development site to the town centre
Zone D – Ackers Street

Description

This zone encompasses Ackers Street and the frontage and parking forecourt to the Victoria House flats which front Warrington Road. This zone is significant in that it provides a well used and significant pedestrian access corridor into the town centre from bus stops on Warrington Road and the residential areas to the east and north east. However, it is dominated by car parking and highways, with very poor footpath provision and obstructed pedestrian desire lines. The western end of the zone culminates in an attractive two storey ‘flat iron’ building which is sandwiched between Ackers St. and Eccleston St. Opposite this building is a pay and display car park, ideally positioned for town centre users, but difficult to
find for visitors. Ackers Street is relatively attractive with street trees to the western end and within the car park. The eastern end of the zone in front of the Victoria House flats is much less attractive, dominated by parked cars and asphalt areas. This area is highly visible when travelling along Warrington Road. The flats themselves, though large and relatively imposing, are not as visually detrimental to the streetscape as the parked cars.

Lack of clear, attractive and safe routes for pedestrians to and from the town centre is the main issue here, particularly with the anticipated development of a retirement village to the east on the watch factory site. Rationalising the car parking and integrating pedestrian desire lines within an enhanced environment would make a significant difference.

At the end of Cyprus Street there is a small green space (the site of a former Chapel), which contains a number of grave stones and trees. This is a valuable, but largely unrealised asset which could form part of a wider pedestrian improvement plan.

Good & Bad Attributes

General

- Poor pedestrian access and highly visible parking area

Architecture

- Dominant four storey housing blocks
- ‘Flat Iron’ building an attractive end stop to street

Public Realm

- Conflict and confusion between pedestrian movement and public/private car parking

Opportunities

- Enhance and upgrade the old graveyard for improved public use
- Rationalise the Victoria House and Pennington Gardens car parking creating a clear pedestrian route to the main shopping street
- Improve pedestrian experience and links to bus stops and new watch factory development site
Zone E – Leyland & Atherton Street

**Description**

These two streets have been recently identified for environmental and streetscape enhancement. The works to Leyland Street are now completed and have changed the quality of the streetscape significantly. The proposals for Atherton Street are well advanced, similar to those implemented along Leyland Street and completed to detail design stage.

The two streets provide good access and linkage between High Street and Eccleston Street. Leyland Street also provides access to one of the town centre cars park via Hill Street. Both Streets have inherent character provided by the back of footpath facades of the turn of the century terraced properties. Leyland Street is slightly tighter in scale with two storey terraces to both sides. Originally large trees (we believe plane trees) were located within the road, which caused overshadowing and obstruction. These have been replaced with smaller street trees, set in steel grilles, within a new paved surface comprising granite setts to the roads, granite kerbs and granite slabs to the footpaths. Kerbs have been set with a low profile for easier pedestrian access and the amenity of the street has received significant uplift due to
the quality of the paving and the streetscape design.

Atherton Street also has inherent character, but the buildings to either side are larger. To the west the terraced properties are three storeys, one is listed and the others provide a consistency of architecture and an attractive western facade to the street. Prescot Methodist Church has significant presence and architectural interest and the proposed works to this street will continue the uplift provided along Leyland Street, improve the ‘sense of place’ and reinforce the character of these two short, but in urban design terms significant, streets.

To the southern end of Leyland Street a mural has been fixed to the gable of No. 45 Eccleston Street. This provides a feature of interest for pedestrians and helps enclose a small paved area with seating. The area is gated to prevent vehicle access from Leyland Street suggesting a small pedestrian plaza; it could be improved further as the building facade opposite the mural is unfortunately rather bland and uninteresting.

Good & Bad Attributes

General
- Neglected facades and church building of architectural merit

Architecture
- Three storey late Georgian terraced houses of architectural merit on one side of Atherton Street

Public Realm
- Recent investment in streetscape improvement on Leyland Street
- Committed investment and streetscape improvement to the Atherton Street
- Good public art (‘Shakespeare mural’)

Opportunities
- Upgrade and renovate the Methodist Church building and adjacent site
- Removal of advertising hoardings to open potential corner development site
Zone F – Eccleston Street

Description

At the heart of the town centre Eccleston Street provides the ‘backbone’ or ‘spine’ to the town, each of the zones around it feeding or connecting into it. This is the retail ‘high street’, a part-pedestrianised street, which provides the main run of shops within the town centre.

The architecture is varied, with older properties scattered amongst more recent building interventions; the building facades are also variable in terms of architectural quality, signage and condition. However, the street has character and in recent years it was subject to a major repaving and pedestrianisation exercise which injected more character. Unfortunately the sandstone setts, stone slabs and stone kerbs are not weathering well and have reached a tipping point, whereby broken slabs, missing patched up paving and uneven surfaces are now looking tired and in need of repair and it is debatable whether the paving conveys a
positive or negative influence.

Where adjacent zones link into the street there are some well designed and executed landscape treatments notably links to the car parks, the area around the Church and the recently repaved Leyland Street. Though it should be noted that the materials which have been used around the town for the various streetscape improvements are all quite different in type source and design detailing. These enhancement schemes are adding quality generally, but they are not consistent in character or materials.

**Connections through medieval alleyways to car park and A57/High Street**

**Good & Bad Attributes**

**General**
- Large potential development site at the eastern end with sub-standard, dilapidated and vacant buildings
- Blank facade at the junction of Leyland and Eccleston Street, opposite mural
- Narrow medieval alleys connecting street with High Street
- Vehicular use on pedestrianised street damaging surfacing

**Architecture**
- Most of the buildings are two to three storey
- Direct access to Prescot Shopping Centre
- Number of part or fully vacant shops and upper floors

**Public Realm**
- Negative impact on streetscape from some poorly designed modern shop fronts and over dominate fascias, poor quality signage and neglected or boarded up vacant shops
- Street furniture and pedestrian materials are in poor state of repair

**Number of historic buildings of architectural merit**
Opportunities

- Upgrading and enhancement of the pedestrianised street surfacing
- Review and upgrade the street furniture
- Potential re-development corner site bounded by Chapel Street, A57 and Eccleston Street
- Rationalising and improving the shop front canopies, awnings and signage
Zone G – Prescot Shopping Centre & Car Park

Description

This zone comprises two halves, on the northern half of the zone sits the two storey indoor Prescot Shopping Centre, to the southern a two tier car park which serves the centre providing currently unrestricted, free parking for shoppers. The centre is in good general condition, it contains the library, museum and post office and as such has particular significance for the community. It also currently provides well used free parking and is relatively accessible, though the lower tier parking is set significantly lower than the upper
requiring long ramps and steep flights of steps, neither to current DDA standards. Several large tenants have now moved out of the centre and vacancy rates appear to be high.

The shopping centre building is located in an elevated position and its upper floor is clearly visible when viewed from the south of the town on the skyline above the Cables Retail Park buildings. To the north the centre links into the main shopping street, Eccleston Street at two locations. The entrances are modest interventions along the street, which contribute successfully to the street scene. The former print works building, now vacant and semi-derelict, sits adjacent the car park in the north western corner. Clearly visible from the shopping centre car park it blights this particular area, but does offer potential for redevelopment.

Architecturally, the shopping centre’s southern facade is not unattractive, but as a large footprint building, on elevated ground and with an extensive southern facade, it does have significant visual impact. The centre is linked to streets on all sides, to the west, the car park links into Market Place through a narrow pedestrian passage, to the east it sits on Aspinall Street with the car park entrance and service yard located to the top of the street. The lower car park directly fronts Kemble Street, but at a higher level along much of its length. The level differences between the Kemble Street and the shopping centre is a severe impediment for pedestrians.

Indoor shopping centre connects with rear car park and main traditional shopping street

Extreme change in levels and pedestrian links to Cables Retail Park

**Good & Bad Attributes**

**General**
- Number of vacant shops
- Introduction of public services and facilities; post office, Museum and Library

**Architecture**
- Large building footprint with contemporary elevations
- Derelict and vacant facade of the print works building creates a rundown environment to the car park and Market Place pedestrian link

**Public Realm**
- Has poor direct pedestrian links to the south because of extreme change in levels and its remoteness
- Free car parking conflicts with chargeable town centre parking
Opportunities

- Potential redevelopment of vacant shops for other uses, including cultural and social use
- Potential re-development of the derelict print works building
Zone H – Aspinall Street

Vehicle access to Prescot Shopping Centre

Obscured access to Cables Retail Park

Buildings which do not contribute to the amenity of the street. The former post office has lost two street trees from its frontage denuding amenity
Description

Aspinall Street is a relatively wide open street which connects directly into Station Road which in turn provides a link into the Cables Retail Park. The street is relatively steep, and it has significance as a direct pedestrian link between the Cables Retail Park and as the access road for the shopping centre car park and service yard.

It has an open ‘feel’ with the car park to the western side and large footprint buildings set well back to the eastern side, including; the post office building, telephone exchange and former job centre. These larger buildings have very little if any architectural merit, however higher up the street there are several building and trees which do contribute positively to the street scene. A row of four terraced properties, a church converted to apartments and a relatively new infill development adjacent the church, all have qualities which add to the ambience and attractiveness of the northern section of the road.

The trees are a strong visual feature, particularly the one at the junction with Eccleston Street, but the ones either side of the shopping centre service entrance are also important in partially screening the service yard. Lower down the road, in front of the Post Office sorting office, trees have been removed in recent years, which has unfortunately denuded the character and amenity of the street.

Good & Bad Attributes

General
- Attractive properties at northern end
- Amenity of street degraded by shopping centre service yard
- Provides access to the large town centre car park
- Tight vehicular turn from Kemble Street (from west)

Public Realm
- Attractive trees particularly to the northern end
- Loss of trees in front of the former Post Office has reduced amenity
- Provides the most direct access to the Cables Retail Park

Architecture
- Attractive Church successfully converted to residential use
- Attractive, relatively new residential infill development
- Shopping centre facade integrates well with the street and surrounding properties
- Property at the bottom of the road would benefit from physical improvement

Opportunities
- Several large footprint buildings on the east of the road have potential for re-development
- Enhancement of the road as a key link between the retail park and town centre
- Introduce seating / resting areas for pedestrians
Zone I – Kemble Street

Description

Kemble Street defines the southern edge of the town centre. Not particularly heavily trafficked it links into Sewell Street/Market Place at its western end and the junction of Aspinall Street and Station Road to the east. Of all the zones it is the one which exhibits most dereliction, mainly due to the general condition of the properties on the southern side of the road, which include poorly maintained terraced houses, a vacant site opposite the Red Lion Pub and some newer infill terraced properties and flats.

The footpaths are in poor condition and much of the northern edge of the street is overshadowed by the climber clad wall which retains the lower tier of the Prescot Shopping Centre car park and trees associated with the car park entrance.

There is no parking permitted on the street with double yellow lines to both sides and to the western end pedestrian barriers along the kerb edge make access and crossing the road difficult. Three residential terraced streets to the south link into the street, Chester Street, Williams Street and Station Road. These streets have seen significant and consistent investment in the terraced properties, the coordinated improvements creating a much
enhanced sense of place. A similar approach to enhancing Kemble Street with the redevelopment of the vacant site, the Prescot Community Church and possible highway improvements, would have a significant impact upon the fortunes of the street, the quality of the properties while allowing for the potential integration of the street with the development site to the south on Sewell Street.

Good & Bad Attributes

General
- Derelict and poorly maintained properties to the southern edge of the road.
- Two way traffic with no street parking

Architecture
- Infill housing of variable architectural quality
- Provides access to three upgraded and attractive terraced streets
- Poor quality of buildings at junction with Market Place
- Currently disused pub is a potentially attractive building

Public Realm
- Narrow poor quality footpaths
- Trees to the shopping centre car park exit provide amenity value
- Degraded quality of streetscape negatively impacts on heritage area.

Opportunities
- Potential redevelopment of Community Church site with retained building facade