

Burnley Town Centre Strategy

January 2016

***Foreword by
Cllr Sue Graham
Executive Member for Regeneration
Burnley Borough Council***

“Burnley, as a town, has made major progress in regenerating and rejuvenating itself in recent years. It’s my role to ensure that we continue to drive forward with ambitious plans to transform Burnley, making it an even more attractive place where people choose to work, live and visit.



Burnley Town Centre is at the heart of this, and is vitally important in bringing people together, providing essential services and creating jobs and investment.

The Council, working with business and community partners, will do all that we can to ensure that the town centre is vibrant, thriving and providing a high quality offer.

This strategy sets out our clear vision for Burnley Town Centre and how we will work towards achieving it.”

Why do we need a strategy?

Burnley Town Centre plays an important role in the economy serving an immediate population of 110,000 in Burnley and its immediate surrounds and 270,000 people within a 15 minute drive time. Alongside Blackburn, the town is a sub-regional centre for retail, business, civic and cultural activities in Pennine Lancashire

However, like all town centres throughout the Country, changes in shopping habits, retailing and leisure patterns mean that it needs to adapt and change. The retail sector was hit hard firstly by the economic down turn at the turn of the decade and more recently by growth in on-line retailing and changing consumer habits. Indications are that retail growth will remain muted but there will be strong growth in the leisure sector. Town Centres needs to respond to these national trends and an increasingly demanding consumer.

Town Centres of the future must contain a good mix of high quality retail and leisure, providing consumers with a quality experience that is about more than just shopping.

“The new high streets won’t just be about selling goods. The mix will include housing, offices, sport, schools, or other social, commercial and cultural enterprises. They should become places where we go to engage with other people, where shopping is just one small part of a rich mix of activities”. Portas Review 2011

Town Centres have always provided a wider social and economic role. Burnley town centre is currently supporting approximately 5,000 jobs (Nov 2015). It has a strong presence of professional and public services and there is approximately 400,000 sq ft of office space in the town centre. Just like retail, the needs of office users are changing with digitisation, flexible working and imposed efficiencies’ leading to reduced demand for office accommodation.

The success of Burnley Town Centre is central to the wider economic strategy for the borough. The town centre needs to carve out a high quality retail offer and combine this with a wider leisure, cultural and social experience during the day and into the evening that will underpin Burnley as an attractive place to live and work.

Burnley Town Centre has some strong assets in its fine Victorian architecture and a town centre retail offer which has fared relatively well in difficult circumstances. But we shouldn’t be complacent. Burnley has not benefitted from the levels of investment that other towns and cities in the region have seen. The last significant town centre retail development was completed in 2014, with a refurbishment of the Market Square and reconfiguration of 7 smaller units in Charter Walk Shopping Centre to create 3 larger premises, providing a current total of 26,623sq ft of retail

space. The last major leisure development was St Peter's Health and Leisure Centre, a joint project between Burnley Borough Council and the NHS, completed in 2006 at a cost of £29m.

This strategy sets out a clear direction for the town and provides a framework for planning, development and town centre management activities. Burnley Borough Council alone cannot deliver this strategy and we will work with key partners, including Lancashire County Council, property owners, retailers and businesses to deliver a town centre that is fit for the future.

Strategic Context

The Town Centre Strategy is written in the context of a number of existing plans and strategies and sits within an existing and emerging planning policy framework.

- *Lancashire Strategic Economic Plan (2014)*
- *Burnley's Future, Community Strategy*
- *Burnley's Future, Economic Strategy 2007 -2017*
- *Burnley Borough Local Plan (2005)*
- *Burnley's Local Plan (in preparation)*
- *Burnley Town Centre Public Realm SPD (2011)*
- *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012)*
- *Burnley Retail Leisure and Office Assessment 2013*

Burnley Town Centre is identified as a strategic employment location in the Lancashire Strategic Economic Plan sitting strategically on the Arc of Prosperity. Burnley's Community Strategy and Burnley's Economic Strategy identify the town centre as a strategic economic priority.

The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) makes it clear that local plans should promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for their management and growth. The Framework stresses that retail and leisure are key town centres uses and that town centres are the preferred location for such uses. It is recognised that whilst Town Centres will continue to perform important economic and civic functions their role in retailing is changing and it is important for local plans to establish a future direction for town centres, building on their distinctive assets.

The emerging local plan indicates that Burnley Town Centre should grow and retain its status as a sub-regional shopping centre serving a wider catchment for retail, leisure and services. The emerging local plan is proposing policies for the town centre that will:

- Strengthen the retail offer focussing on a more tightly defined core town centre boundary

- Protects the town centre from out of town retail and leisure developments
- Concentrates future office (B1a) uses in the town centre
- Encourages quality restaurant, café uses
- Protects and enhances the town centres' heritage assets
- Identifies sites for future retail, leisure and office uses
- Encourages housing in the town centre

The emerging local plan will also allocate sites for future retail, leisure and office development.

Burnley Town Centre – Where are we now?

This section of the strategy sets out the current position of the town centre, its strengths, weaknesses and opportunities going forward.

Burnley Town Centre benefits from being relatively compact and largely retained within the inner ring road. However, there has been a significant amount of retail and leisure growth outside of the ring road including a cinema and bowling alley, large format supermarkets and retail parks.

The Town Centre retains much of its Victorian character of attractive buildings and logical streets, intersected by waterways. The centre is enclosed to the South by the imposing embankment of the Leeds's Liverpool Canal and to the West by the mills of the Weavers Triangle.

The main shopping area is centred on St James's Street and the Charter Walk Shopping Centre, flanked by a number of primarily independent retail areas including Standish Street, Kierby Walk, and St James's Street West that are occupied by smaller independent retailers and services. A large market hall is situated on the first floor of the Charter Walk Shopping Centre and has approximately 60 traders. Hammerton Street and its surrounds have until recently been the centre of a lively night time economy.

As a sub-regional centre, Burnley Town Centre serves a retail catchment beyond the administrative boundaries of the borough, with a population of 270,000 people within a 15 minute drive time. Burnley Town Centre retains a healthy level of non-food (comparison) retail expenditure from its catchment of 55.8% (69.9% in the borough as a whole). A broad range of other destinations compete for borough's comparison retail expenditures including Manchester (6%), Blackburn (4.7%), Nelson (3.9%) and Colne (3.9%). Convenience (food shopping) is dominated by free standing stores around the town centre and elsewhere in the catchment area. The town centre accounts for only 5.7% of convenience food expenditure (NLP 2013).

Evidence suggests that foot fall has declined over the last decade since 2005. The highest levels of footfall remain the Mall, Charter Walk, St James's Street (East) and Curzon Street where footfall has increased by 27%.

The town centre also serves as an important service centre for public and professional services, with approx. 400,000 sq ft of office space in the town centre (the third highest in Lancashire). Burnley Borough Council occupies a number of buildings, including the Town Hall which is the focus of the town's civic life. Lancashire County Council also has offices, as well as the central library on the edge of Vitry Square, opposite is the police station and law court. Office space is occupied by a range of professional services and customer service centres. Calico Group are another notable town centre occupier recently renovating offices adjacent to the bus station.

The town centre is benefitted by a monitored CCTV system with cameras covering the majority of the town centre. A community radio scheme which links the control room, retailers and the police is also in operation. The main issues around crime in the town centre are public order offences associated with the night time economy, shoplifting at the major retailers and anti-social behaviour around St James's St West. Burglaries and auto crime in the town centre are low.

INSERT PLAN

What are the challenges we face?

Burnley town centre faces challenges from issues which all town centres are encountering, and issues which are specific to Burnley.

Burnley town centre faces significant competition as a result of changing shopping habits and a wealth of alternative options for consumers. Online shopping provides 24 hour convenience and out of town retail parks offer accessible, purpose built units with free parking. Town centres are therefore competing with each other and out of town alternatives, leading to challenges around car parking, infrastructure, the retail and leisure offer, events and attractions.

A key part of the town centre experience is the evening / night time offer. The traditional drinking/clubbing industry is struggling in the wake of extended opening hours, cheap supermarket alcohol and increased health awareness. This is having a major impact on the Hammerton Street area both with closing businesses and businesses opening later. Further, a lack of a central town centre leisure development including cinema and associated food and drink establishments means there is a clear gap in the evening economy. As a result the town centre struggles with a perception that it is a late night drinking place with limited alternatives.

The strong presence of professional services in the town centre is underpinned by the presence of Crown and County Court functions, together with a high number of banks, all of which are vulnerable to rationalisation over the coming years and could leave prominent landmark buildings vacant. Burnley Borough Council and Lancashire County Council also own properties and deliver services in the town centre and are being affected by significant financial cuts meaning that both the public sector estate and delivery of services could suffer.

Despite a plentiful supply of office accommodation in the town centre Burnley is not perceived as an office destination and is reliant on a local market. Much of the existing office accommodation, particularly in around Parker Lane, is dated with 86% of stock predating 1940. The stock does not meet modern business needs, lacks dedicated car parking and requires considerable investment. This has led to a large amount of vacant office space with companies preferring out of town high quality serviced office accommodation with good car parking. This is compounded by there having been 15,364m² of B1a office space completed in the borough since 2005, but not of it located in the town centre, despite a 'town centre first' policy.

Burnley's traditional market hall faces challenges affecting markets nationally and as a result of its location. General retail markets across the country have been facing decline in recent years with decreasing footfall and stall occupation as a result of increased competition from online, supermarket and discount retailers, and negative perceptions about market trading and shopping. This is compounded by Burnley Markets' first floor location which creates a physical barrier which can be off-putting to customers.

What opportunities are there for the town centre?

There are opportunities for Burnley town centre to successfully compete with, yet stand out from, other town and shopping centres.

A revision of planning policy in the form of the developing local plan provides an opportunity to encourage a more diverse range of uses including leisure, restaurants and cafés into the town centre, helping to provide the right mix of retail, leisure and services as well as tackling vacant premises.

The town centre currently retains high levels of comparison shopping, however there is capacity for 35,000 sq. ft of additional comparison goods floor space (NLP 2013) to enable the town to further improve its' retail offer. There is also opportunity for convenience retail in the core of the town centre, which is currently not provided despite there being adequate floor space. The town's independent retail areas which are closely linked with the main retail areas offer a diverse mix of interesting and unique businesses which, with support, can help to create vibrant and unique shopping areas which help to define the town centre's personality and help it stand out.

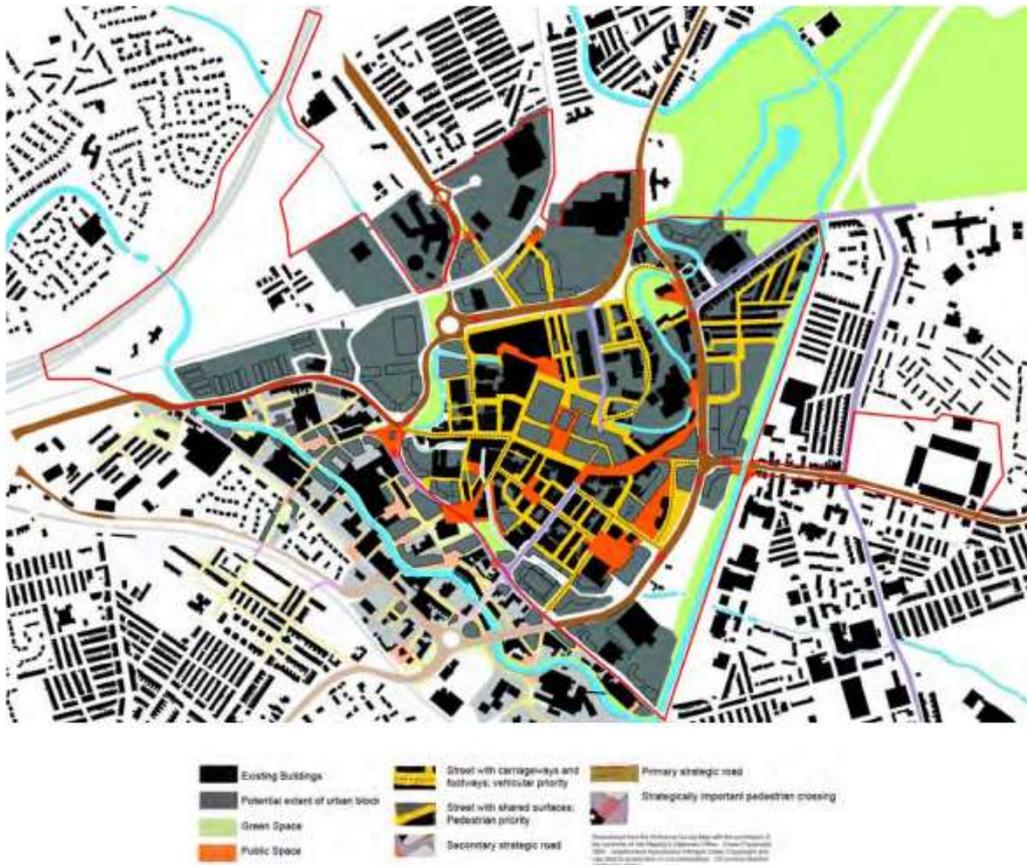
A number of new restaurants and bars have opened or are opening in the town centre which will strengthen the town's offer in terms of food and drink and the night time economy. In addition the former Pioneer site provides an opportunity for a major leisure development bringing a cinema, other family orientated leisure facilities and restaurant chains into the town centre. With support for new and existing night time economy businesses to develop and grow there an opportunity to change perceptions of the town's nightlife and bring new visitors into the town centre in the evening.

Burnley Borough Council and Lancashire County Council have committed £3m to a new public realm scheme along St James' Street the aim of which is to create an attractive and contemporary public space. As well as providing an attractive environment to enhance the visitor experience, it also provides an opportunity to 'animate' the town centre with events and attractions to increase visitor 'dwell' time and in turn lead to an increased spend in the town centre.

There is a growing student population in the town and the introduction of student accommodation into the town centre will support an extended leisure offer and nightlife offer.

There are funding opportunities available for the town centre. The town centre has an extensive conservation area which provides potential for funding to support and enhance the heritage. In addition there is potential for funding to improve infrastructure such as capacity at key junctions and pedestrian links to outer areas of the centre such as the Weavers Triangle.

The review of the car parking strategy provides an opportunity to review current provision and develop actions to improve the quality, quantity and location of car parking in the Town centre, with a view to ensuring the facilities meet the needs of shoppers and businesses.



Supplementary Planning Document: Town Centre Public Realm Map

Our Vision – Where do we want to be?

“Burnley has a distinctive and attractive town centre which is inclusive and relevant to people of all ages and backgrounds. It offers a high quality retail, cultural and leisure experience for residents and visitors.”

In 2030 Burnley has a distinctive town centre, offering a high quality experience for residents and visitors. It is the place of choice for residents of Burnley and its wider catchment area.

The town centre is an inclusive place that is welcoming and relevant to people of all ages and all sectors of the community. Excellent customer service underpins a high quality experience.

The main shopping area has been redeveloped attracting high quality businesses including major chains, specialist independent retailers, a new cinema, leisure activities and a quality food and drink offer. A regular programme of quality town centre activities, entertainment and attractions are provided which attract high numbers of visitors.

The public realm creates a strong setting for the town's historic buildings intersected by contemporary developments.

The Civic and Business District has been transformed with new creative businesses, leisure and housing bringing new life to the town's Victorian heart enhanced with new modern office accommodation and a bustling Mechanics Theatre.

Objectives and priority actions

Retail and Services

To re-establish the town as the first choice shopping and service destination for residents in Burnley and the surrounding area

- Encourage new retailers to the town centre with a focus on higher quality retail and more convenience
- Retain and support existing retailers
- Support independent retailers to create vibrant shopping areas with reduced vacancy rates (St James's St West, Standish St, Keirby Walk)
- Work with the owners of Charter Walk to support further growth and development of the Shopping Centre
- Develop and deliver a programme of town centre animation, entertainment and attractions to attract customers and increase dwell time

Culture and Leisure

To develop a vibrant leisure, entertainment and cultural offer in the town centre with the Burnley Mechanics as a go to destination.

- Bring forward a major town centre leisure development
- Encourage new leisure users, particularly high quality national food chains into the town centre
- Encourage shops to open later to create more evening uses
- Support the continued growth of The Mechanics
- Develop and deliver a programme of quality animations, entertainment and events in the town centre
- Explore opportunities to link with and promote the town centre's heritage as a way of animating the town centre

Business

To strengthen the role of the town centre as a business hub with a strong Civic and Business District.

- Ensure that rationalisation of services and estate does not have a negative effect on the town centre office market
- Work with agents and property owners to attract more businesses to Burnley Town Centre
- Use the council's estate and council owned land to attract new occupiers
- Actively implement a town centre first policy for offices
- Adopt a flexible approach to the occupation of surplus empty office space and support other uses where appropriate e.g. conversion to residential accommodation or creative use
- Review car parking strategy and facilities for shoppers and office car parking

Living

To create a choice of high quality town centre accommodation including an enhanced offer for the borough's growing student population.

- Establish a Joint Venture with a private sector partner to bring forward town centre residential offer utilising Burnley Borough Council estate
- Work with UCLAN and private sector to develop new student accommodation to support planned growth of UCLAN.
- Work with partners to establish starter homes at On The Banks

Built Environment and Public Realm

To enhance the quality of buildings, streets and public realm making the most of the town's historic buildings and conservation area

- Deliver a programme of public realm improvements with priority to St James's Street and Curzon Street
- Explore options to deal with eyesore and derelict buildings/land in and around the town centre
- Work with property owners to deliver improvements to shop fronts in independent retail areas
- Work with Charter Walk to create a better environment and linkages to the North of Charter Walk
- Develop a long term plan for the West end of the town to address underutilised and inappropriate uses of buildings and sites
- Deliver a programme of enforcement against property owners to improve appearance of eyesore and derelict properties and increase occupation

Access and Car Parking

To provide easy access into and around the town centre with good car parking to suit a variety of users

- Review and update Town Centre Car Parking Strategy
- Deliver improvements to key junctions and Pedestrian crossings creating better links to the Knowledge & Innovation District and Weavers Triangle.

How will we deliver the strategy?

This strategy sets out some clear objectives and priority actions which will be supported by a 5 year action plan. This will identify project sponsors and lead officers for each action who will work with partners and stakeholders to ensure successful delivery of each action. The plan will be a working document which will be updated on a rolling basis and will include key performance indicators to measure success. Delivery will be subject to affordability and significant private sector leverage.

The Town Centre Management team will re-establish the Town Centre Partnership made up of key town centre stakeholders who will meet on a quarterly basis. The action plan will be reported on and progress checked at the partnership meetings.

There will also be a Town Centre Newsletter published and distributed on a regular basis to all town centre businesses and organisations which will report on progress with the action plan.

An annual report on the strategy and progress with the action plan will be delivered to the Executive.