

Town Council response to the Future High Street Fund: Revitalise Town Centre

Background

The Town Council understands that the basis of the Future High Street Fund is across 5 themes:

1. Re-imagining the road network
2. Creating Space for People
3. Experiential Town Centre
4. Transformative Town Centre Living Space
5. Business and Co Work

And the projects considered will include:

- Investment in physical infrastructure
- Improving the public and other transport access
- Improving flow and circulation within the town centre, congestion relieving infrastructure
- Investment in physical infrastructure and land assembly needed to support new housing and workspace development to regeneration of the high street in places of under used retail units

This has been summarised to us as **Roads, Homes, Jobs and Public Space**. It is on this basis that the Town Council has based its response. However, the background details for the Town Council's responses are contained in its document 'Summary, Opportunities and Recommendations' which should be referenced and is looking at long term improvement to the Town and not necessarily on the timeframe of the Future High Street Fund, which we understand is 2024.

Investing in physical infrastructure

Former Grammar School Site



The Town Council recognises the need for capital investment in the Town and believes the major catalyst for this would be the development of the former Grammar School site. This site sits within the Town Centre and has been in steady decline for many years. The grade 2 listed building is an iconic building within the community and its appearance is symbolic of a community who feel abandoned and forgotten. On this basis, whilst recognising the process is a drawn out one, we believe that the Borough Council should issue a Compulsory Purchase Order not only the former Grammar School site but also the local Conservative Club. The site of the Conservative Club is ideal to allow improvement to the highway at this junction of Ilkeston Road and Church Street and would help to improve pedestrian flow towards the Memorial Park and vice versa the Town Centre whilst reducing the traffic tailbacks at peak times.

The Compulsory Purchase Order for the former Grammar School and an amendment to the planning brief to allow a significant community usage would be instrumental in any form of revitalisation of the Town. There is also the need to overcome the legal restrictions on demolishing the former science block on the school site which restricts any development from being effective in delivering value for money for the developer and improving the vista for the Town. Nothing is more depressing than coming up Mansfield Road and seeing a dilapidated 1960s tower which does not give a welcoming entrance to the Town Centre. The Town Council does recognise that any development of the site would need to be financially attractive to any developer and, therefore, residential development is inevitable but this must be of the type which is needed in the Town, something we will come on to in the 'homes' section of our response.

The site lends itself for a form of community use such as a cybercafé, or small starter business unit or front of house support for sole traders. The important thing is that this element must be self-sufficient to ensure their sustainability. It also needs not to duplicate what already exists within the Town. It is important that any development should incorporate electric car charging points, solar panels and access to super- fast broadband. There could be the possibility of developing a multi storey car park on site which would be a strategic car park for the Town centre allowing for development of the other car parks in the Town to offset costs and an option which the Borough Council may wish to pursue.

To summarize

- **Compulsory Purchase of former Grammar School site and existing Conservative Club**
- **Improvement to traffic junction of Ilkeston Road and Church Street**
- **Demolition of former Science Block**
- **Appropriate housing development on the site to reflect local needs**
- **Development of a transport hub to incorporate buses /taxis etc. on site including a multi storey car park**
- **Restriction of traffic on Wilmot street to the junction with Mundy Street to improve pedestrian flow**
- **Revisit design brief for former Grammar School site to more reflect mixed use development to incorporate electric car charging points and solar panels**
- **Derbyshire County Council carry out a traffic survey of all the main routes into Heanor**

Market Place



The above proposals for the above site could also incorporate a transport hub for the local buses which would take them off the Market Place and Wilmot Street. Thus, allowing for the Market Place element of Wilmot Street to be pedestrianised or cars restricted to allow a better flow of pedestrian from the Market Place, through the former Grammar School site and to the Memorial Park. The access and egress from the existing Market Place car park could then be re-configured directly on to the Main Road. Obviously, the taxi rank would also have to be relocated. There could also be electric car charging points put on the car park.

In respect of the part of the Market Place which is not a car park we believe this has great potential to be developed as public open space which would allow social and cultural activity, street entertainment, concerts etc. The potential to cover this part of the Market Place would add to the flexibility of the area. As a consequence, a redesign or relocation of the toilet block is essential.

To achieve this Derbyshire County Council would have to amend/rescind the Traffic Regulations for the element of this part of the Market Place which is designated as public highway for the then purposes of easier access and egress for emergency vehicles. The Town Council have already written to Mike Ashworth, Strategic Director, Economy, Transport and Environment at Derbyshire County Council requesting an amendment to the traffic regulation.

These changes would not only enhance the shopping experience for this part of town but also encourage people to gravitate towards it was part of the changes suggested above allowing for a whole new type of experience in a pedestrian friendly atmosphere it would also breed new life into the retail shops in the area and probably encourage some change of usage to better reflect the needs of this part of the Town. There is no doubt that there is a marked lack of bespoke shops around the Market Place.

Also an improvement in the traffic around the Market Place to reduce vehicle and public conflict could be achieved by adapting the traffic flow on Godfrey Street to Market Place to restrict loading/unloading to prior to 10am, much the same as Oxford Street in Ripley, and blocking the road off at other times to allow more pedestrian access. This was raised with the County Council last year and the deputy cabinet member for Highways who agreed to put it in the Highway programme. Obviously, this will need to be prioritised to ensure it meets the timescale of the Fund but would allow for the whole of the Market Place to be pedestrian friendly and a car free zone.

On a more immediate issue there is the need to resolve the pigeon problem on the Market Place, once and for all. The nesting of pigeons in the roofs of shops adjoining the Market Place has not only health and safety issue but does not present an attractive sight for visitors.

To summarize

- **Restrict car access to Wilmot Street to junction with Mundy Street as part of making the area more pedestrian friendly and development of the former Grammar School site**
- **Remove traffic regulations on top part of Market Place**
- **Cover part of the Market Place to allow social and cultural exchanges and entertainment making it pedestrian friendly.**
- **Review Toilet block whether to remove, replace with a kiosk or redesign**
- **Restrict vehicular access to Market Place at junction with Godfrey Street for loading only and for certain times of the day**
- **A large public realm may allow for digital screening of events supported by advertising on the Market Place**

Development of former Cresswell Site and Red Lion Square

The vacant site of the former Cresswell Shop on Red Lion Square gives an opportunity for some development on the site rather than allowing it to continue to be a blot on the landscape. It may well be suitable for some housing which could be utilized to fund improvements elsewhere. However, there is also a need to look at the Red Lion Garage in this area which due to the parking situation and lack of enforcement tends to be an area packed with many cars which has detrimental appearance for the area and raises many complaints from residents. The relocation of the business would not only allow it to expand and have adequate facilities to meet its needs but also help resolve the long standing car parking issues. If looked at in conjunction with the Cresswell Site opposite it there is potential to create a development which would enhance the appearance of this part of the Town and help those businesses that are situated there.

To summarize

- **Look at developing the former Cresswell Site on Derby Road**
- **Relocate the Red Lion Square Garage**

Heanor Police Station

Heanor Police station is likely to be surplus to requirement before the 2024 deadline for the completion of the Future High Street Fund allocations they will be having a replacement facility on the same site as Heanor Fire Station on Ilkeston Road on that basis. The Town Council would like to work with partners to acquire the building to allow it to become a community hub and drop-in centre rather than leave it liable to become a Home of Multiple Occupancy. With its ideal location it could become a focus for young people activity i.e. cybercafé, youth club facility etc.

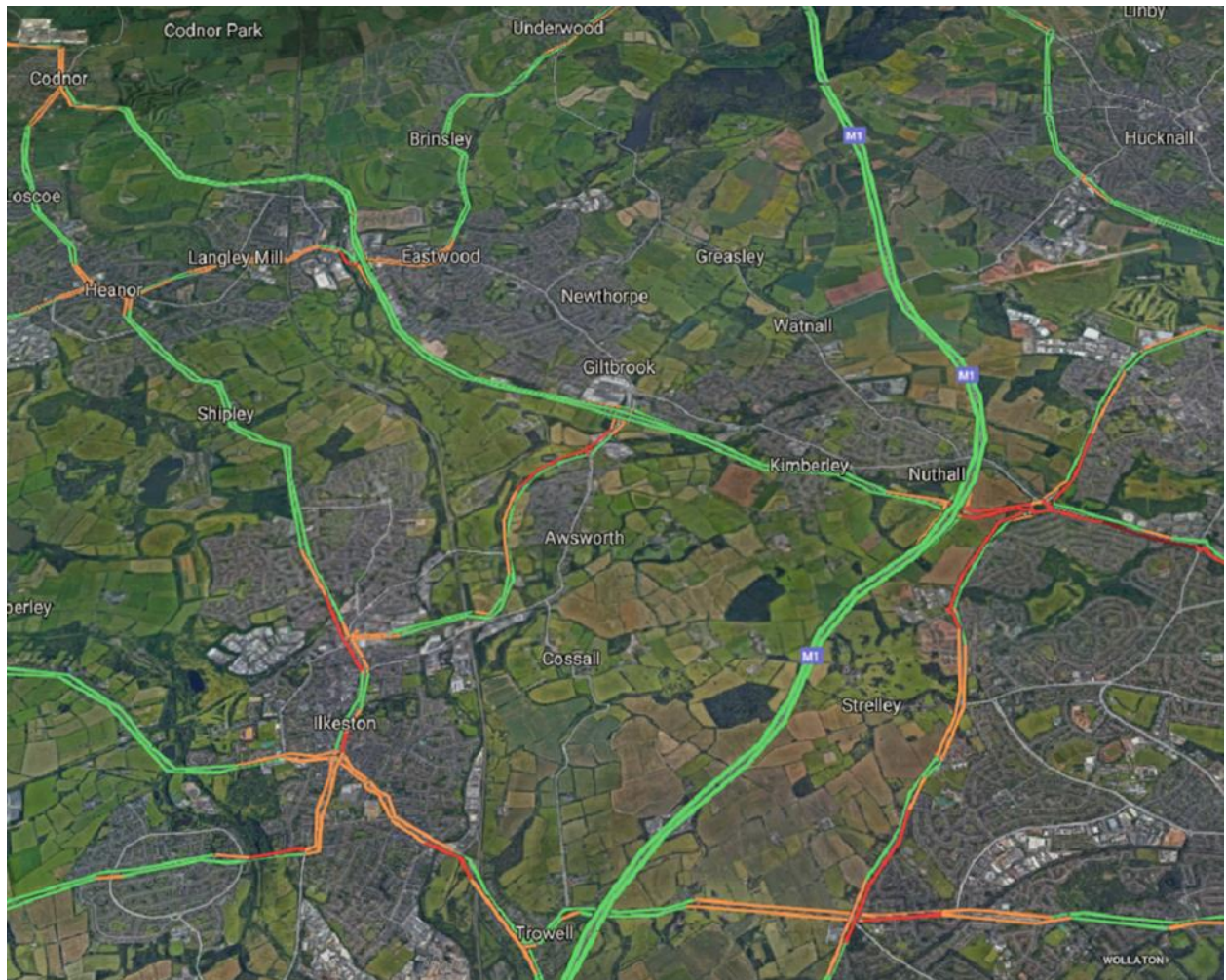
To summarize

- **Look to purchase Heanor Police Station when it becomes surplus to requirement and use for a community facility**

Improving the public and other transport access

From the previous analysis of the issues the Town faces it is evident that the transport system is both an advantage (access to major Cities, easy access to M1, local Train station and reasonable public transport) and a disadvantage with significant congestion, car parks in the wrong location and increasing housing developments.

Changes to the provision of parking on the Market Place as outlined above will make a significant improvement to public access to the Market Place. If proposals for the former Grammar School site are taken on board then the creation of a transport hub on that site will allow for the development of an integrated transport system.



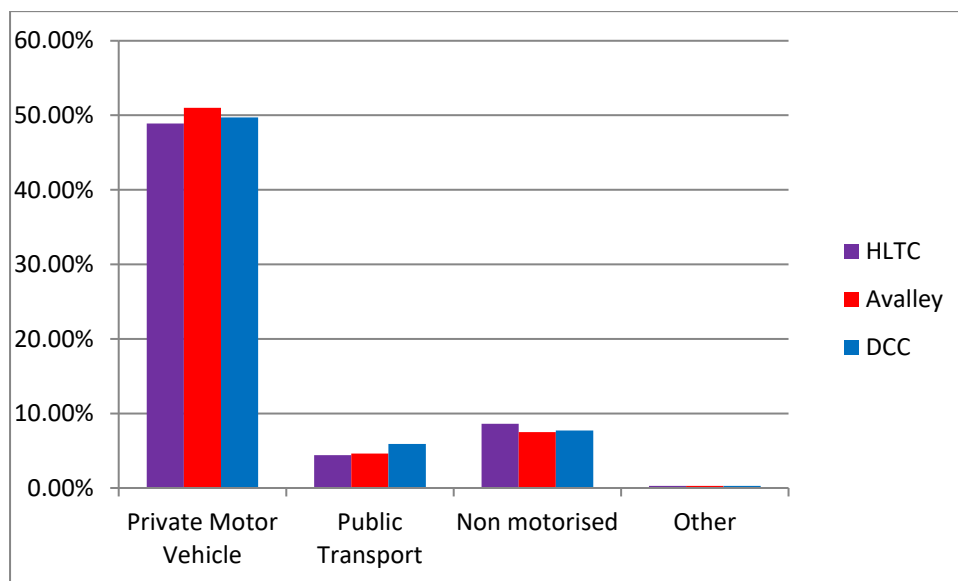
- Routes marked RED are standing traffic
- Routes marked ORANGE are slow moving
- Routes marked GREEN are unimpeded flow

Note the heavy congestion around Langley Mill station, in several routes through Ilkeston and the A610/A6009 to the East of the M1.

There is significant congestion at the junction of Mansfield Road and Church Street, Heanor with anecdotal evidence suggesting that the traffic lights at this junction are at capacity. The proposal for the Compulsory Purchase of the Conservative Club would allow road improvement to the junction of Church Street and Ilkeston Road as could the development of a transport hub on the former Grammar School site.

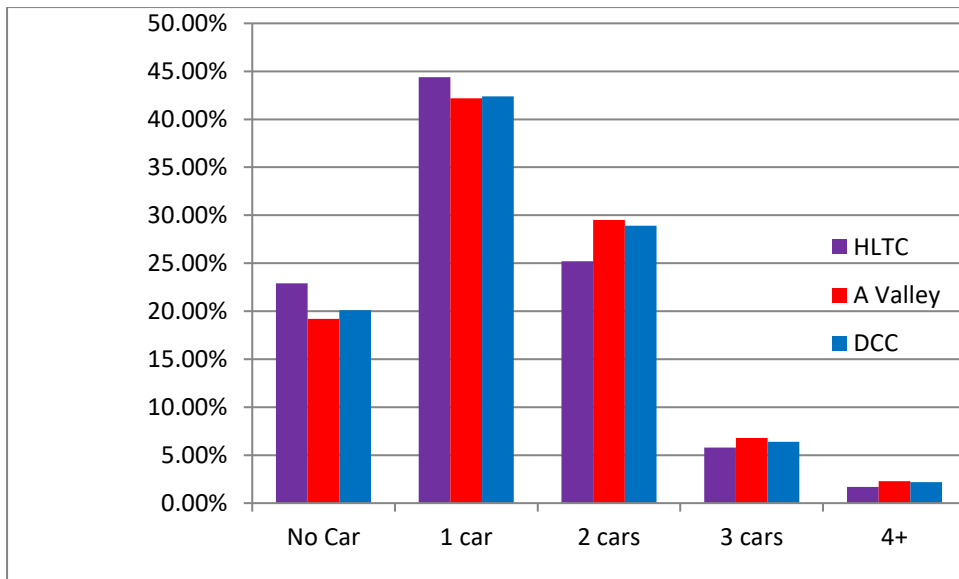
With the proposals for the by-pass no longer an option and the Borough Council looking to build houses on the former site for the by- pass even more pressure will be put on the Town's infrastructure. Any proposed solution can only be achieved by working with the Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council and should start with an intensive traffic survey/ green transport plan. However, this cannot be done in isolation and must also include public transport and any potential for proposals around the tram extension into Amber Valley and Langley Mill becoming a transport hub.

The chart below shows how residents go to work



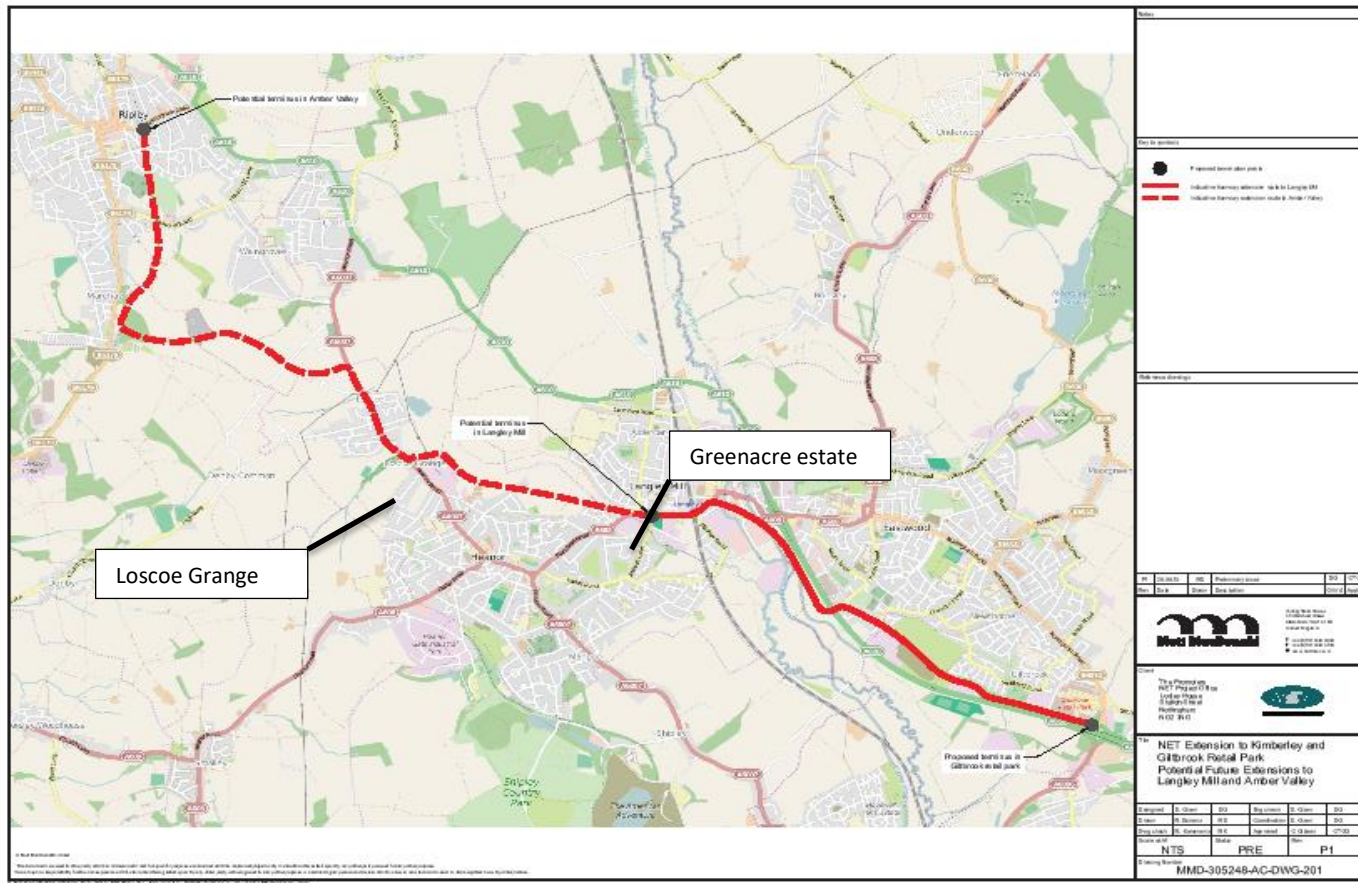
Source Derbyshire Observatory 2011 Census

This chart shows the breakdown of access to transport by household



Source Derbyshire Observatory 2011 Census

The potential of the Tram extension fits well with this aspect which is why a contribution to the feasibility study would be a positive step plus encouraging people using cycles or electric cars to come into the Town. The possibility of an electric driven transport connection between the Langley Mill hub and the hub on the former Grammar School site would not only be seen to integrate transport but also encourage people to travel to and from Heanor via the Train/tram thus contributing to a greener form of transport but also recognising the low car ownership in the Heanor area. The Town Council have already moved towards this by installing a cycle rack on the Market Place and are looking to expand their number. As the only Town in the Borough not to have electric car charging points the Town Council are looking to work with the County Council to apply to the government for a funding grant under the relevant scheme of the Office of Low Emissions Vehicles for having electric charging points on its own property or, if this is not possible, look at other partners in the Town to identify an appropriate location. The map below is an indicative plan included in a report for Broxtowe Borough Council.



Source Broxtowe Borough Council

To summarize

- The need for Derbyshire County Council to carry out a transport study of the wider Heanor area and work with environmental groups and local partners to develop a green transport plan
- The Borough Council should develop an integrated transport plan as part of its local plan review which could include developing transport hubs at Langley Mill and in Heanor
- The need to support the proposed tram extension into Amber Valley by contributing to the feasibility study by Broxtowe Borough Council to include an impact assessment on Heanor and the possibility of linking a transport Hub in Heanor with one at Langley Mill
- Look at potential improvements to Langley Mill Train Station, especially access on Platform 2 and increasing number of trains stopping at Langley Mill as part of an integrated transport plan
- Need to work with Derbyshire County Council and to apply to the government for a funding grant under the relevant scheme of the Office of Low Emissions Vehicles for having electric charging points situated in the Town

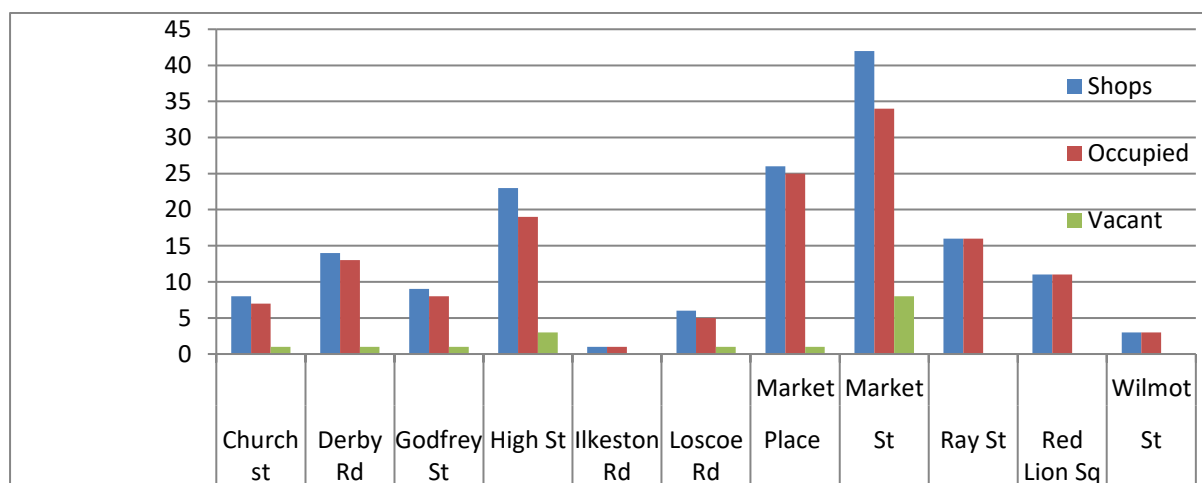
Improving flow and circulation within the town centre, congestion- relieving infrastructure

The proposal set out in the previous section would help achieve all the parts of this section. A total redevelopment of the former Grammar School with a multi storey car park and transport hub would improve road traffic circulation in the Town allowing the Market Place to be developed into a totally pedestrian friendly area. A recent survey by community Group Heanor Vision showed that 52% walked and 6% used the bus show it is important not to see increasing car parking as a panacea for all the Town’s issues.

The Town Council have suggested to Derbyshire County Council, and according to the then Deputy Cabinet member for Highways it is in the County Council Highways 3 programme. the implementation of a restriction on loading/unloading and vehicle access to Market Place from Godfrey Street which we believe will have a positive effect on this area. This may need to be pursued with the County Council and the timeframe for implementing it would be close to the end of the Future High Street Fund deadline.

A suggestion to help improve people flow and to slow traffic could be to raise the traffic crossing areas, not unlike as in Eastwood, which would reduce traffic speed.

A recent survey of the type of retail within the Town suggested by the Town Council and carried out by the Borough Council can be shown of the chart below.



There needs to be a mechanism to encourage bespoke outlets around the Market Place. The current shop usage in that part of the Town with bookmakers, hairdressers and fast food outlets is not an attractive aspect. This could happen by having a grant system which would help businesses set up for a guaranteed minimum period.

There is no doubt that the closure of the Town Centre Bureau has had an impact on the footfall around the Market Place with at least one shop directly closing as a consequence. An option could be for the Borough Council to re-open the facility within the Town Hall even if it is on a limited basis.

To summarize

- **The need to recognise that the majority of residents access the Market Place either by foot or by bus, therefore any proposals must reflect this**
- **The need to pursue Derbyshire County Council about the suggested changes to traffic flow on Market Place, where it accesses from Godfrey Street**
- **Examine the option of raising the road where pedestrian crossing are to slow down traffic**
- **Actively encourage bespoke outlet by using a grant system**
- **Re open the Borough Council's Town Centre bureau facility within the Town Hall**

Investment in physical infrastructure and land assembly needed to support new housing and workspace development to regeneration of the high street in places of under used retail units.

As stated previously the Town Council would see the Compulsory Purchase of the former Grammar School site include the Conservative Club as a positive means of helping to improve traffic flow within the town. It would also help through mixed development allow additional community facilities, residential homes and starter businesses thus putting new life into the Market Place area. The potential to purchase the Police station when it becomes surplus to requirement and develop as a facility for young people would be a positive step. The potential to relocate the Red Lion Garage and develop the former Cresswell Site allows this area of the town to be improved and link in better with Tesco and the Retail Park and the High Street.

There needs to be recognition by the Borough Council, as part of its Local Plan review, to expand the definition of the Town Centre to include Ray Street, to the junction with Mundy Street, and Derby Road, to just past Abbott Street junction. This would then recognise the true extent of the Town's retail shops. As part of that recognition of the revised town centre there must also be recognition to protect the percentage of retail units within the newly defined town centre to a minimum of say 40% as part of the new Local Plan. The Borough Council's current policy of allowing retail units and prime sites on the Market Place to become Homes of Multiple Occupancy is detrimental to the town.

There is a need to positively encourage over the shop living, not only does it provide added security for the shop owners, income for the landlord but also reduces the need for transport and encourages people to spend in the local economy. Also, there is a need to actively encourage diversity of the shopping experience. Finally, it needs to be a recognition that the main shopping area for the Town has now moved from the Market Place down to the Retail Outlet and Tesco.

To summarise

- **The land acquisition as stated in other sections should be pursued**
- **As part of the revised Amber Valley Local Plan the Town Centre needs to be redefined to include Red Lion Square up to its junction with Derby Road, and Ray Street up to its junction with Mundy Street**
- **A minimum number of retail outlets within the defined Town Centre should be specified**
- **The Borough Council should be more proactive in encouraging above the shop living rather than converting retail to HMOs**

Housing

We understand that the Borough Council are looking to develop the following sites within the Town as part of their contribution, namely Leafy Lane and Whysall Street.

Leafy Lane is identified as being capable of supporting 12 houses and even in their own report the Borough Council admits that it is ‘.....unlikely to have any discernible effect in respect ...to address inequalities given that it will not provide any affordable housing and is unlikely to include a wide mix of residential use..’ In this respect the Borough Council has no strategic objections to this site being developed although the inclusion of solar panels and electric charging points on the development would be a positive move,

Whysall Street is identified for 76 houses and the Borough Council has recognised that it backs onto a significant number of listed buildings. However, this will result in the loss of 63 car parking spaces. Although these car parks are underutilised it will put pressure on the existing car parks in the Town especially as it will result in a reduction in the number of long stay car parking in the Town.

The proposals for these sites will reduce the amount of 1 Hour free car parking available in the Town by 58%, the number of disabled car parking spaces by 50% and the overall car parking spaces by 21.5%.

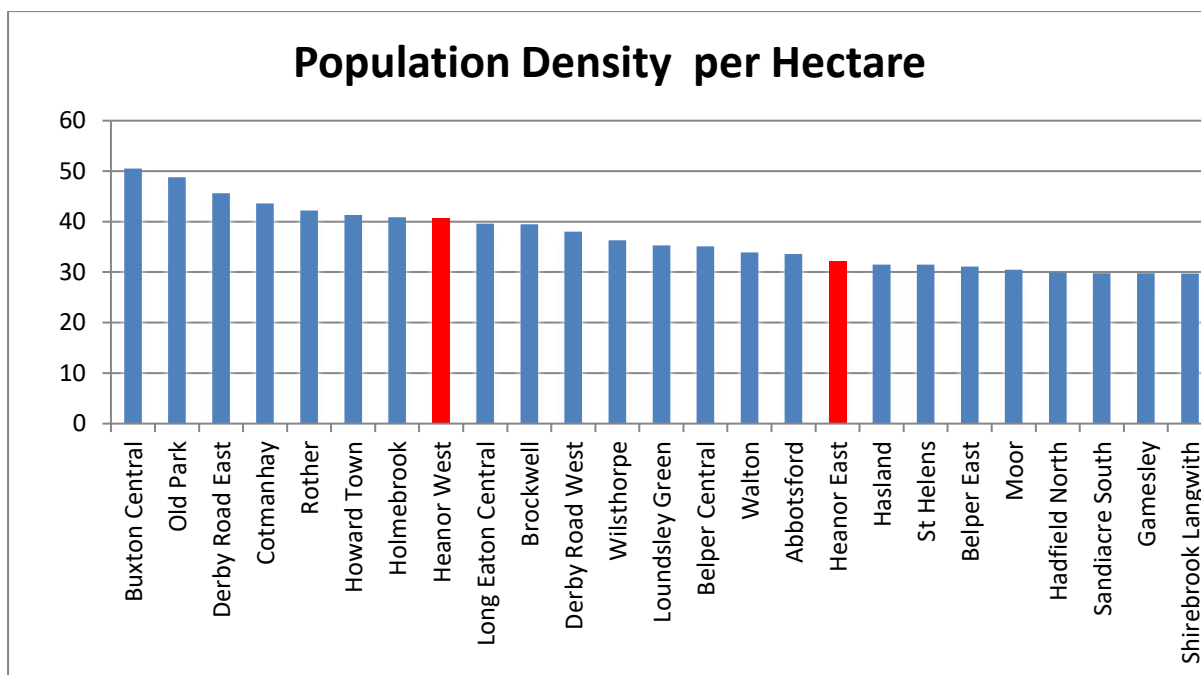
With the government having expanded the eligibility for disabled parking this does seem a strange time to be reducing the number of eligible spaces. Heanor would then have only 11 disabled spaces out a total number of 233 car parking spaces. That is just 4.72% of the total.

One solution would be as stated elsewhere, developing the former Grammar School site and creating a multi storey car park on part of the site. This would allow the car parking lost by this development to be mitigated. However, the town has a built-in resistance to paying car parking charges and it would seem sensible to use this opportunity to have a review of the Borough Council's car parking strategy.

As with any proposal to improve the Town car parking is an ongoing issue and the Borough Council has always recognised the unique problem Heanor has by allowing for a lower parking charge than the other 3 towns. During 2014 /15 the Borough issued car parking permits for all residents which allowed a degree of free parking and, again, Heanor's problems were recognised by these permits allowing longer free parking in Heanor, up to 10am in the morning and after 4pm in the afternoon on weekdays. Following a further review, the Borough Council in 2018 introduced 1 hour free parking in a designated number of car parks within the Town to try to stimulate visitors. These car parks, Whysall Street East and West, Ilkeston Road and Wilmot Street, two of which are have been identified to be developed for housing thus reducing by 50% the number of free car parking spaces.

In recognition that housing development will be one of the main match funding streams for any proposals it is important to highlight a number of key points.

The population of the Town's area is increasing mainly in line with 2011 census but there are significant variations in each of the wards with Heanor East ward (0.69%) growing at a rate significantly more than the Borough average (0.56%). However, a major concern is the continuing increase in population density in Heanor West which has increased from the 2011 census 40.70 per hectare to revised 2017 figure of 41.74 per hectare. It remains in the top 25 most densely populated in Derbyshire at number 8, as against being at number 12 in 2001 at 37.70 per hectare. This makes Heanor West the most densely populated area in Amber Valley. Heanor East increased in density from number 23 in 2001 (at a density of 30.10 per hectare) to number, 17 at 32.10 per hectare. This sees these particular areas create significant problems on the Town's infrastructure which appears to go unrecognised by those making decisions about our Town.



Source 2011 census Derbyshire County Council

This produces a conundrum in deciding the type of housing to build and Heanor like a lot of Amber Valley suffers from a lack of a 'affordable housing'.

In Derbyshire County Council's 'Older people's housing - commissioning strategy for Derbyshire 2019 to 2035' it states about Amber Valley '.... There is ... a lack of mainstream housing suitable for older people who wish to live in the local communities.... Any new developments should provide a mix of tenures to extend choice and options to older people and reflect local housing affordability.... Encourage development of housing that enables downsizing and independent living in older age across all tenures....'

This is a statement which we believe also reflects the position within the Heanor and Loscoe area and it is a worrying trend within the Parish that new builds do not reflect this or the housing demands of the local area.

Indeed, statistics show that Heanor and Loscoe have the lowest percentage of two-bedroom properties across Amber Valley and Derbyshire. Both Heanor East and West wards have the lowest number of 1 bedroomed property than Amber Valley, Derbyshire and the East Midlands. Yet the Parish has the highest percentage of 3 bedroomed properties more than Amber Valley, Derbyshire and the East Midlands. This imbalance needs to be rectified to stabilise the local housing market and it will only be through the local plan and working with the Borough Council that this can be achieved. Also given that Heanor West is the 8th most densely populated ward in Derbyshire and the highest in Amber Valley building larger properties will only make the situation worse.

In the Borough Council’s own current local Plan about the core strategy H1 it states ‘The Borough Council will require new housing developments to contribute to deliver the following proportions of housing types within the Borough as a whole:

A) At least 30% family housing of 3 bedrooms or more

B) At least 40% smaller houses of 2 bedrooms or less

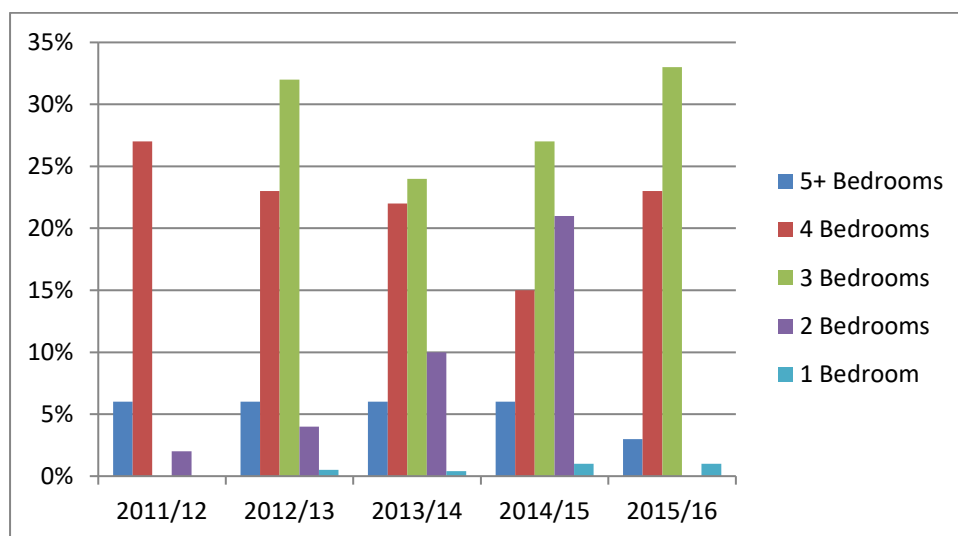
C) Housing for elderly or disabled people such as bungalows or suitable flatted accommodation

It is this policy that we feel the Borough Council should be adhering to and ensuring that the right profile is developed for our community rather than turning it into a commuter belt which would be detrimental to the aspirations of the Future High Street Fund objectives

Breakdown of homes by bedrooms

Ward	Households	1 bedroom			2 bedrooms		3 bedrooms		4 bedrooms		5 or more bedrooms	
	Number	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Heanor East	2,488	160	6.4	684	27.5	1,423	57.2	192	7.7	28	1.1	
Heanor West	2,517	190	7.5	689	27.4	1,229	48.8	367	14.6	40	1.6	
Loscoe	2,216	108	4.9	646	29.2	1,247	56.3	187	8.4	25	1.1	
H&LTC	7,221	458	6.3	2,019	28.0	3,899	54.0	746	10.3	93	1.3	
Amber Valley	52,596	3,261	6.2	16,182	30.8	23,950	45.5	7,293	13.9	1,843	3.5	
Derbyshire	332,637	23,218	7.0	97,247	29.2	151,970	45.7	47,987	14.4	11,719	3.5	
East Midlands	1,895,604	153,288	8.1	502,502	26.5	860,782	45.4	291,736	15.4	83,599	4.4	

Breakdown of percentage of new builds by type 2011-2016 in Amber Valley



Source; AVBC 2016 Baseline data for Core Strategy

Also, in deciding the type of housing it needs to be recognised that Heanor does suffer from examples of extreme deprivation, low wages and fuel poverty.

Breakdown of Deprivation by dimension

	Heanor East	%	Heanor West	%	Loscoe	%	HLTC	%	Amber Valley	DCC
Not deprived	959	38.5	980	38.9	835	37.7	2774	38.4	43.4	43.5
Deprived in 1 dimension	784	31.5	836	33.2	701	31.6	2311	32.1	31.2	31.3
Deprived in 2 dimensions	593	23.8	550	21.9	568	25.6	1711	23.7	20.5	20.2
Deprived in 3 dimensions	141	5.7	139	5.5	107	4.8	387	5.4	4.6	4.7
Deprived in 4 dimensions	11	0.4	12	0.5	5	0.2	28	0.4	0.3	0.3

	No of house holds	Heanor and Loscoe Town Council	Amber Valley	Derbyshire
Households not deprived	2774	38.4	43.4	43.5
Households deprived in 1 dimension	2321	32.1	31.2	31.3
Households deprived in 2 or more dimensions	2126	29.4	25.4	25.2

The ability of residents to afford new properties is also a major issue with the average house cost being £150,000 needing an average wage of circa £37,500 when the local average wage is circa £29,473. This is made worse by the high proportion of fuel poverty averaging 13.68% against the Borough average of 12.4%, Derbyshire 11.6% and England 11.1%. In these circumstances there needs to be more affordable housing built within our community. The table below, clearly, shows that this is an issue within Heanor because of the low wage economy.

	0-5K	5-10k	10-15k	15-20k	20-25k	25-30k	30-35k
Heanor East	3.3%	12,5%	14,8%	12.2%	9.6%	8.4%	7.3%
Heanor West	3.1%	12.7%	15.1%	12.5%	10%	8.5%	7.4%
Loscoe	3.2%	12.1%	14.2%	11.8%	9.4%	8.2%	7.2%

Source paycheck CACI 2013

To summarize

- **A review of the Borough Council’s Car Parking Strategy needs to be carried out given that two of its car parks will be part of a development plan for housing**
- **The Borough Council needs to recognise the high density of Heanor and ensure any developments are appropriate.**
- **Any housing development should be of a type which reflects the needs of the local population preferably being 1 or 2 bedroomed properties to allow for downsizing**
- **The low wage economy in Heanor needs to be recognised and a significant number of affordable houses should be included in any developments**