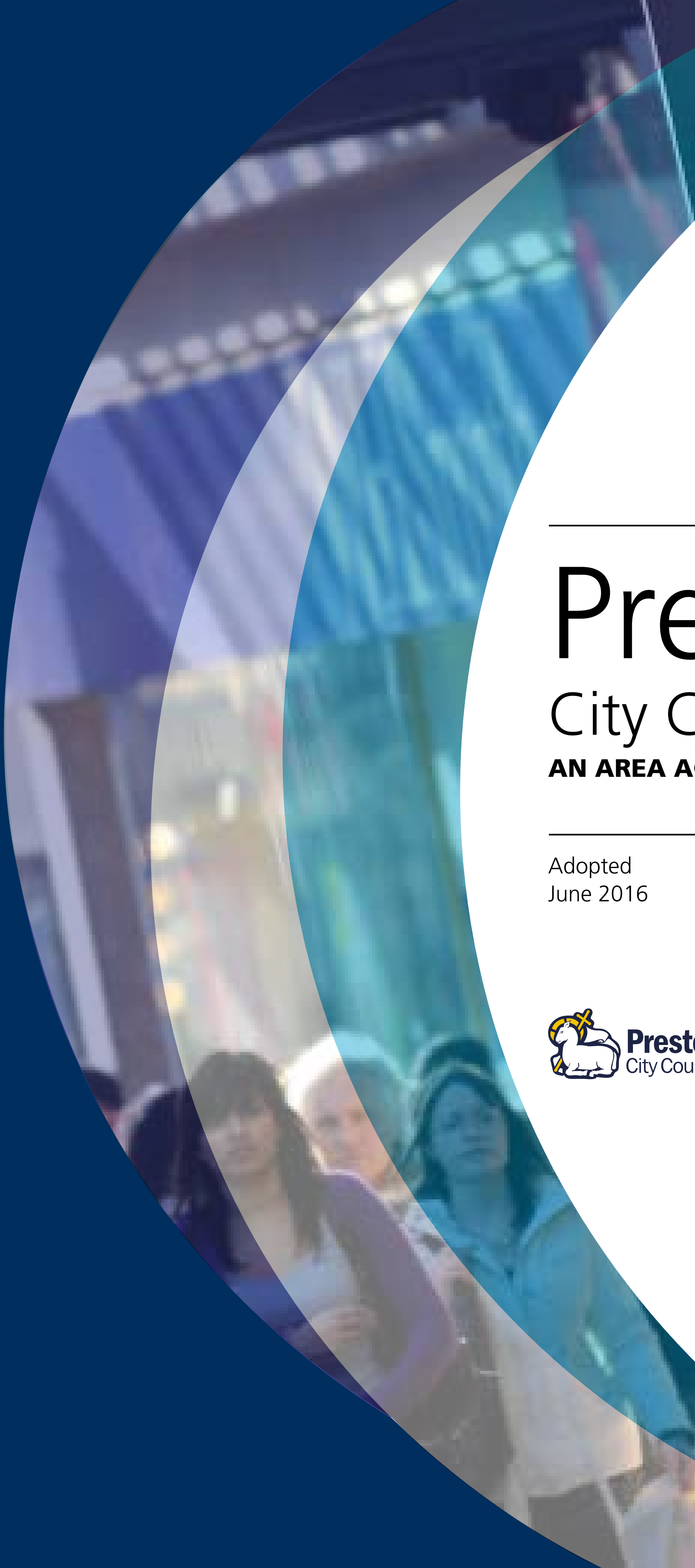

Preston

City Centre Plan

AN AREA ACTION PLAN TO 2026

Adopted
June 2016

Preston City Council

Preston LDF City Centre Plan

Contents

Preface

Preston City Council is in the process of preparing new planning policies for the future. All Local Planning Authorities are required to produce a Local Plan, formerly known as a Local Development Framework (LDF), which is comprised of a group of planning documents that set out their vision, planning strategies and policies. This new folder of documents will replace the current Preston Local Plan, which was adopted in April 2004.

The Central Lancashire Core Strategy, adopted in July 2012, is the first planning document to become part of Preston's new Local Plan. The Preston Local Plan was adopted in July 2015, and sits alongside the City Centre Plan completing the statutory development plan coverage across Preston.

Why do we need a City Centre Plan?

Context

Preston lies in the heart of Lancashire, situated at the hub of north-south communication links. The city is located at the lowest bridging point of the River Ribble, at a cross-road of the north-west region's major motorway networks. It has easy access to the M6, M61, M55 and M65. Preston Railway Station serves both local and national routes on the West Coast Main Line from London to Glasgow. The city continues to grow, and is now home to a population of approximately 140,200 (2011 Census).

The city centre plays an 'above and beyond' role in the context of its broader locality and has assets that are at least sub-regionally significant, meaning the city centre has a significant natural draw. Such assets include the University, Crown Courts and Railway Station. The city centre plays a critical role in the wider Lancashire economy, put simply; investing in economic growth in Preston will encourage wider growth in the Lancashire economy[1].

Central Lancashire, comprising the districts of Preston, Chorley and South Ribble has a combined population of almost 350,000, for which Preston acts as the main urban centre. Preston's shopping population is considered to be 308,000, whilst there are some 650,000 households within 20km of the city centre. The city, in line with Manchester and Warrington within the North West, has an employment density of just under 1 (0.97). This figure is higher than the UK average and means that in Preston there is almost one job available for every working age person. It is therefore imperative in considering the city centre that its broad existing role is considered, as well as the potential role it could fulfil to an even broader spatial area, should existing and future assets be appropriately exploited.

[1] Strength from Within: Supporting Economic Growth in Preston, Centre for Cities (December 2011)

Past, Present & Future

Preston's original development was, in part, due to its commanding geographical location, on an elevated bluff overlooking the River Ribble. The importance of the town as a trading/commercial centre was acknowledged in the 12th Century when it was awarded a market charter. The late 18th and early 19th Century brought about the Industrial Revolution, Preston prospered and the population grew exponentially.

Although the decline of the textile industry meant that by 1901 Preston suffered from high levels of economic distress, the town managed to reinvent itself as a regional service centre building on a more diverse economic base. Indeed, between 1901 and 2011, of all towns and cities in England, only Warrington managed to improve its economic performance better than Preston[2].

Between 1998 and 2008 Preston became a city, and benefitted from significant private sector growth. However, whilst approximately 17,000 private sector jobs were added to the Central Lancashire economy during this period, the city centre actually lost jobs, meaning it was not the driver of economic growth[3].

In the recessionary period since 2008, Preston has faced challenging economic times. Preston has not however suffered as badly as other towns and cities across the country, demonstrating resilience in the economy of the city, especially in terms of employment levels. Despite this resilience, more needs to be done to support the business environment to ensure the city centre can fulfil its potential and act as the driver of economic growth in Lancashire through the course of the plan period to 2026.

This process has already begun. In early 2012 the Council, in partnership with the Preston Vision Board and Lancashire County Council launched a Preston City Centre Investment Prospectus. This was a statement of intent: Preston is open for business. The city has enormous potential to grow, with unrivalled connectivity with the rest of the country by road and rail and is home to a world-class university.

At a time when town and city centres are the subject of national debate and concern[4], facing increased competition and a changing retail landscape, it is crucial that we embrace this, that we aim to restore vitality, vibrancy and purpose to the city centre and deliver something new for Preston.

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[2] Cities Outlook 1901, Centre for Cities (July 2012)

[3] Private Sector Cities – A New Geography of Opportunity, Centre for Cities (June 2010)

[4] The Portas Review – An Independent Review into the Future of our High Streets (December 2011), The Grimsey Review – An Alternative Future for the High Street (September 2013)

Production of the City Centre Plan

Various consultation stages have taken place so far on city centre issues; these are shown in **Table 1.** We thank all those who submitted comments during these early stages. The table highlights the current stage and provides a timetable beyond to adoption of the plan.

Table 1: City Centre Plan Production

Stage	Consultation/Details	Date
'Issues & Options' Evidence gathering, generating issues and options, establishing city centre boundary	Sites for Preston: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (Issues and Options)	December 2010 - February 2011
	'Your City, Your Say'	January 2012
	Sites for Preston: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (Preferred Options)	May 2012 - July 2012
	Preston City Centre Plan: An Area Action Plan to 2026 (Issues Paper)	November/December 2012
'Preferred Options'	Preston City Centre Plan: An Area Action Plan to 2026 (Preferred Options)	October 2013 - December 2013
'Publication'	Final opportunity for formal representations on the 'soundness' of the Plan	October 2014 - December 2014
'Submission/ Examination'	Submission of the Plan to the Planning Inspectorate, along with all representations submitted at Publication stage. Independent Examination in Public by a planning inspector	February 2015 - June 2016
'Adoption'	Council adopts final Plan	30 June 2016
Monitoring and Review		

Section 1

Introduction

Vision & Objectives

City Centre Strategy

Introduction

1.1 Preston City Centre is set for widespread improvements, growth and regeneration. The City Centre Plan 2012 – 2026 sets out the Council's long-term vision and objectives for the city centre, with the overarching aim of reinvigorating the economy. The plan sets out the policies and proposals that will help manage new development to help deliver something new for Preston, something that will bring people from all sections of the community back into the city centre to work, live and spend reversing the trends observed across the country.

1.2 The City Centre Plan forms part of the Council's statutory development plan and will be used to promote and coordinate investment and help reach decisions on planning applications within the city centre.

How does this Plan fit with other Planning Documents?

1.3 Preparation of this plan has taken place within the context of a number of other plans and strategies. Further detail is included in **Appendix A.**

1.4 The City Centre Plan sits within a planning framework for Preston overarched by the Central Lancashire Core Strategy. The Core Strategy, adopted in July 2012, sets the strategic spatial priorities for Central Lancashire (Preston, South Ribble and Chorley areas). The city centre sits within the 'Central Preston Strategic Location' for growth and investment.

1.5 The Preston Local Plan was adopted in July 2015. The Local Plan allocates and identifies land to develop, and to conserve, to meet the spatial aspirations set out in the Core Strategy. Whilst the Local Plan includes policies that are relevant to general development proposals in all areas of Preston (see Section 4), it does not, in its entirety, apply to the city centre.

1.6 The City Centre Plan therefore completes the planning coverage for Preston.

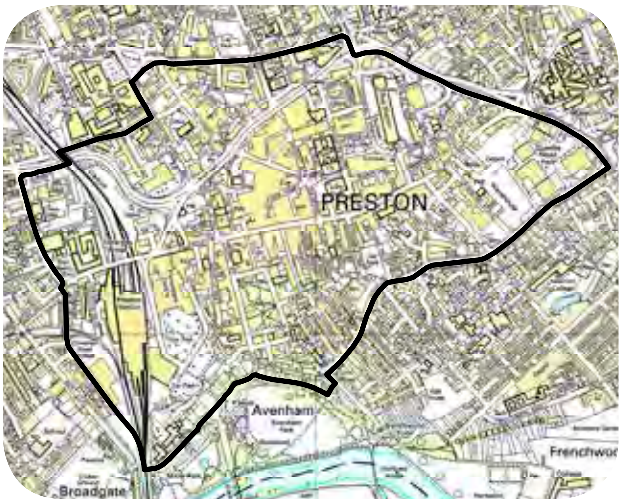

HARRIS
MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

The City Centre Plan

What area does the City Centre cover?

1.7 The area forming the city centre, and therefore covered by this plan, is shown below and on the accompanying Policies Map.

City Centre Boundary Map



How is the Plan set out?

1.8 The plan starts by identifying the main issues, identified through previous consultations, and then suggests the overall vision and objectives for the city centre; these follow on from those identified in the Core Strategy and Local Plan. The plan is then divided into three key themes which focus on key spatial issues such as shopping, employment, accessibility, housing and heritage, which apply across the city centre area.

1.9 Five 'Opportunity Areas' are identified within the city centre, each with its own policy, vision and development opportunity. Each Opportunity Area will help to realise the vision for Preston City Centre by 2026 through delivering on the issues and objectives identified in the plan. The Opportunity Areas are shown on the Policies Map.

City Centre Opportunities & Issues

1.10 Preston City Centre is the administrative centre of Lancashire and the primary location for non-food shopping. It is a major focus for employment, local government, legal services, further and higher education, as well as leisure opportunities. At the sub-regional level the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Growth Plan highlights the significant role that Preston has to play in shaping the economic growth and future of Lancashire.

1.11 Preston is identified nationally as a city with significant economic prospects. Preston's City Deal, agreed with Government on 13th September 2013, is an infrastructure-led programme that will see accelerated build of employment and residential sites in Preston (including South Ribble). Cumulatively the impact of City Deal will be over 17,000 new houses built in the next 15 years, and more than 20,000 new employment opportunities, including those higher-value, high-skilled jobs at the Enterprise Zone.

1.12 This will be supported by Preston's position between Lancashire's two Enterprise Zone sites at Samlesbury and Warton, both international centres for aerospace manufacturing and advanced engineering. The Enterprise Zone gives the city centre the opportunity to realise genuine spin-off employment and economic benefit. Whether these benefits are in direct business investment or growth, or through an increasing, and increasingly affluent, population with service-sector and leisure related needs and spend.

1.13 City Deal brings forward large-scale infrastructure investment, in particular on a new Preston Western Distributor road to the west of the city and to the widening of the existing A582 to the south of the city. Whilst not part of current funding plans, the long-term commitment, as articulated by the Central Lancashire Highways & Transport Master Plan, is for a new road crossing of the River Ribble, joining these two investments. The broader agglomerative benefit to Lancashire, Preston and the city centre from such a crossing would be significant, albeit in the short and medium term there will be other benefits presented.

1.14 The city centre is ideally placed to take advantage of these opportunities and provide the chance for it to be a driver of economic growth. Forecasts for City Deal suggest a minimum of 6,000 job opportunities created in the city centre over the next 15 years. Ensuring that the city centre becomes the natural choice for residents of planned new housing developments to shop, work and engage in cultural/leisure activities will be of fundamental importance to the development of the city centre. If the city can do this then increased footfall and spend will help to reduce vacancy rates and the city centre will become increasingly vibrant. This plan aims to facilitate these opportunities to ensure they are realised for the city centre.

1.15 However, there are a number of issues, identified through previous consultation stages which need to be addressed if Preston is to achieve its aspirations for growth in the plan period.

1.16 The issues identified through the consultation exercises have resulted in three key themes which the plan is framed around; **Securing Economic Vitality, Creating a Sense of Place,** and, **Enhancing Accessibility & Movement.**
Each issue therefore corresponds to a key theme.

1.17 The plan aims to address these issues, by developing policy approaches through each theme, promoting land uses that support city centre jobs, the business environment, and therefore shops, whilst creating residential areas that benefit from a mixture of uses, cultural activity and demand a leisure offer available throughout the day and evening. The city centre's historic assets will be actively used to support this planned growth and investment. Promoting the city centre as a place to work and live will ensure people are using the city centre at all times of the day, enhancing safety and contributing to the attractiveness and vibrancy of the location.

'Securing Economic Vitality' Issues

Issue 1

City Centre Workforce & Ageing Office Accommodation

The private sector workforce in the city centre has reduced and as a result has lost value. Whilst there is widespread availability of office accommodation in the city centre most of this is ageing, poor quality and not fit for purpose. Much of this stock sits vacant or underused. There has been no significant investment in new office development for some time, making it increasingly difficult for the city centre to compete with out of centre business parks.

Issue 2

Shopping Offer/Declining Retail Ranking

Although the city centre has a wide-ranging shopping offer, and is the main non-food shopping centre for Lancashire, for many years there has been very little investment in new floorspace. However, demand for shopping is strong and always has been, investment has been restrained mainly due to the failure to secure a deliverable regeneration scheme. As a result, Preston's retail ranking has fallen, the proportion of vacant shops has risen as the city centre is struggling to keep up with the changing retail environment and the growth of internet shopping.

Issue 3

Limited Leisure, Culture and Tourism Offer

Despite the city centre achieving the 'Purple Flag Award' for the quality of evening entertainment, the leisure offer needs to be diversified and appeal to a wider section of the population. The cultural offer is not fully developed, and with Preston's ideal geographical location, there is a significant opportunity to attract more staying visitors.

‘Creating a Sense of Place’ Issues

Issue 1

Harnessing the Value of Heritage

There is a rich legacy of historic assets in the city centre, such as Market Place (Flag Market) and Winckley Square where their buildings, monuments, spaces and landscapes combine to create a clear and defined sense of place. These areas contribute to Preston’s ‘uniqueness’, yet they lie underused and in need of investment. Assets such as these need to be utilised more efficiently to contribute to sustainable economic growth.

Issue 2

Low Levels of Housing

The city centre currently has relatively few houses and flats, resulting in a low city centre population, leading to low demand for services and facilities outside of working hours.

‘Enhancing Movement & Accessibility’ Issues

Issue 1

Access & Movement

The transport network in and around the city centre currently prioritises accessibility by car at the expense of pedestrians and cyclists. Pedestrian permeability from key transport hubs through to the core of the city centre is poor, with the quality of public realm lacking on key routes.

Issue 2

Public Transport Hubs

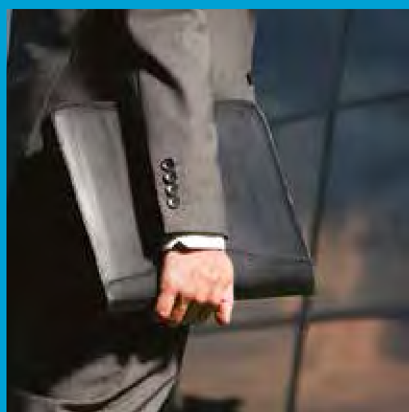
The two public transport hubs, the bus station and railway station, are situated on opposite ends of the city centre. The arrival experience, connectivity and functionality the bus station currently offers is poor and fails to deliver a high quality public transport service. Similarly, the presentation and prominence of the railway station needs improvement to facilitate its function as a transport gateway and interchange and to take advantage of future investment possibilities, including HS2.


Purple
Zone
Caffè RITAZZA

City Centre Vision & Objectives

2.1 This chapter sets out the overall vision for **Preston City Centre in 2026.** It also includes a number of key objectives which will help in achieving this vision.

2.2 In formulating the overall vision, account has been taken of the two distinct, but complementary strands to planning for the future of Preston City Centre. Improving the business environment is critical in this regard, as such the vision set out in the Preston City Centre Investment Prospectus has been included within the overall vision. However, allied to this is our spatial vision for the city centre, how we want it to look and operate in 2026. The vision set out in the Core Strategy has therefore also influenced the overall vision.



A Vision for Preston City Centre in 2026

Our Vision ...

- Is of a confident and competitive city, centrally located within Lancashire famed for its creativity and entrepreneurial flair, driving a flourishing globally connected economy.
- Is for Preston to be distinctive and stand out from the crowd as a supporter of business through strong civic leadership working collaboratively with the private sector.
- Is to create and establish a positive image for Preston reflecting the dynamism of the city and the Central Lancashire sub-region.

'In 2026, Preston will have become a regenerated and transformed city, and will have strengthened its position as a first class destination for retail, cultural, entertainment, business and higher education services, in Lancashire.

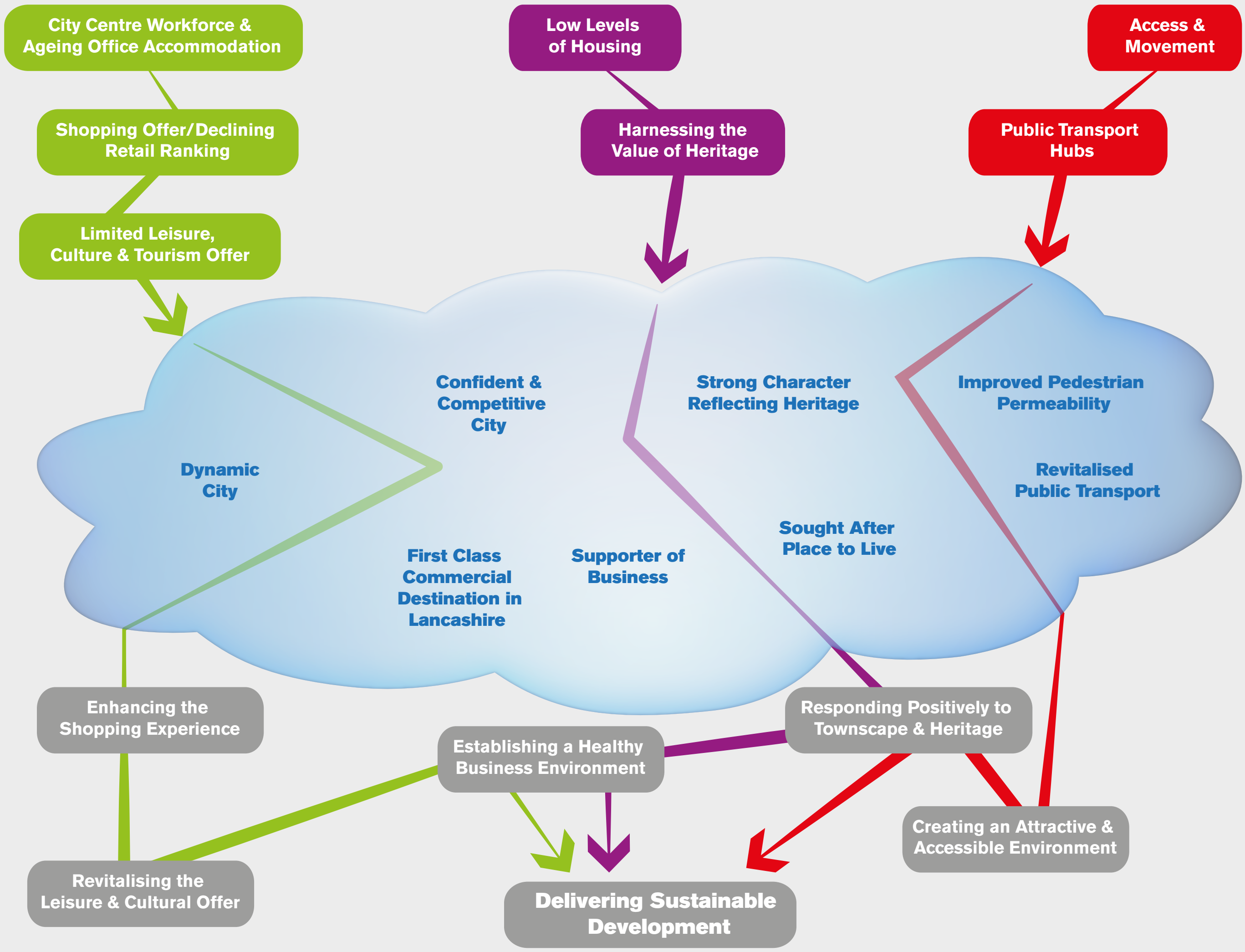
It will be easy to walk around the city centre, with improved connections in all directions of travel, creating pleasant, attractive and safe streets and paths. Public transport will be revitalised to provide facilities catering for current and future needs.

The character of the city centre, enriched and re-energised by its fine historic and cultural heritage, will be enhanced by well-designed buildings. Those buildings and places we love for their heritage value or simply their sense of place will be conserved and improved.

The city centre will include new, high-quality housing, offering a sought after place which meets 21st Century lifestyles.'

City Centre: Issues-Vision-Objectives

2.3 The diagram below demonstrates the linkages between the city centre issues, the vision and the objectives the plan needs to work towards. Clearly, many of the issues are 'cross-cutting', in that they can be addressed by more than one aspect of the vision or the objectives – the diagram below attempts to simplify this, and should not be considered exhaustive.



City Centre Objectives

2.4 The following objectives have been refined through evidence gathering and consultation, and are borne out of the issues identified in this plan. Taken together, the objectives will help to deliver the vision. Table 2 also shows the fit with the objectives of the Core Strategy, to demonstrate the consistency between the two documents.

Table 2: City Centre Objectives

Objective Reference	Objective	Link to Core Strategy Objective
OB1 Establishing a Healthy Business Environment	To facilitate the expansion of the city centre workforce, to drive economic growth and generate vitality and increase footfall supporting shops, leisure and cultural uses in the city centre.	SO1, SO10, SO14
	To make Preston a hub of business and skills, providing modern, high-grade accommodation for new and existing businesses, focussing on specialist and knowledge based industries and links to the university.	
OB2 Enhancing the Shopping Experience	To expand, improve and enhance the shopping experience in the city centre, strengthening its position as a main shopping destination in Lancashire, and to improve the city centre's position in the national retail rankings.	SO1, SO11
OB3 Revitalising the Leisure & Culture Offer	To enhance the city centre as a hub for leisure, culture and tourism, complementing other land uses and attracting more visitors throughout the day and evening to a more diverse range of activities.	SO1, SO11, SO12
OB4 Responding Positively to Townscape & Heritage	To ensure the conservation and enhancement of the city centre's heritage assets, promoting self-sufficiency through economic use where the asset is underused.	SO15, SO16, SO17
	To secure development with high standards of design, that integrates well with surroundings and is sympathetic to the character of the city centre.	
OB5 Creating an Attractive & Accessible Environment	To revitalise and modernise the public transport service within the city centre, seeking opportunities to transform the public transport hubs, reducing the need to travel by private car.	SO3, SO4
	To improve connectivity and the pedestrian environment throughout the city centre.	
OB6 Delivering Sustainable Development	To deliver a sustainable mixture of uses to ensure city centre vibrancy at all times of the day and promoting the city centre as an attractive and sustainable place to live.	SO1, SO3, SO5, SO20, SO21, SO22
	To ensure existing buildings are used efficiently, and that new development strives to be as environmentally, economically and socially sustainable as possible.	

City Centre Strategy

3.1 The overall strategy for the city centre is to encourage and facilitate sustainable new development, including optimising the use of existing buildings, that will maintain, and enhance, the vitality, viability and vibrancy of the centre, whilst also preserving and enhancing environmental quality. In order to achieve this Preston needs to adapt; jobs need to be created; the shopping, leisure, tourism and cultural offer needs to be diversified; vacant and under-used land and buildings, especially heritage assets, need to be put to more productive use; public transport services and facilities need modernising; and the environment for pedestrians and cyclists must be improved.

3.2 The following chapters address these key areas of change under three themes:

- Securing Economic Vitality
- Creating a Sense of Place
- Enhancing Movement & Accessibility

Sustainable Development

3.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) introduced, at the heart of national policy, a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This should be seen as a 'golden thread' running through both plan and decision-making. Core Strategy Policy MP (Model Policy) clarifies the operational relationship between national planning policy and the Central Lancashire approach. Both Local Plan Policy V1 and the equivalent City Centre Plan Policy CC1 ensure this presumption in favour of sustainable development has full coverage at the Preston district level.

Policy CC1

Model Policy

When considering development proposals within the city centre, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within the Framework. The Council will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Planning applications that accord with policies in this City Centre Plan will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision, then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account whether:

(a) any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole and those contained in the Core Strategy and Local Plan; or,

(b) specific policies in the Framework, Core Strategy and Local Plan indicate that development should be restricted.

Section 2

Securing Economic Vitality

Creating a Sense of Place

Enhancing Movement & Accessibility

Securing Economic Vitality

'Ensuring Preston City Centre is a key driver of economic growth, both in Preston and in Lancashire'

Employment

4.1 Jobs are a crucial part of the economy. Where jobs are created however can have a direct effect on the performance of a city centre. Preston is a medium sized city and, in recent times, private sector job creation in the city centre has fallen in trend with similar sized cities. Private sector jobs have been increasingly based away from the city centre, to the point where the city centre has 'hollowed out' i.e. lost private sector jobs.

4.2 This means that there are fewer city centre jobs in knowledge intensive industries and an increasing reliance on service sector jobs, such as in shopping. This is a critical issue, not because shopping is not an important part of the city centre economy, but because the type of jobs that drive footfall in the city centre, footfall that the shopping industry relies upon are diminishing.

4.3 Research recently published by Centre for Cities emphasises the importance of turning our attentions to job creation and the wider city centre economy. Put simply, if Preston has more jobs in peripheral locations it reduces the number of people in and around the city centre five days a week, which in turn reduces the size of the shopping market for the retail industry.

4.4 The plan acknowledges the importance of the wider city centre economy. Whilst improving the shopping offer is a key priority, the plan seeks to facilitate job creation and wider economic growth, which will in turn help to increase demand for shopping and leisure uses and fulfil the plan ambition to boost the high street.

4.5 Whilst the city centre does have a reasonably strong public and private job sector, for example in local government and legal occupations, it is an overall objective of the Core Strategy to enhance the city centre as a prime location for business investment and skills development. The Core Strategy establishes the city centre as the focal point for new employment provision, directing all 'regional' and 'sub-regional' office developments, as well as other 'regionally significant' employment schemes to the city centre.

4.6 The plan therefore has an important role to play in ensuring the provision of modern office space, in the right location, to encourage inward investment and allow for the expansion of existing businesses. Preston is well placed to benefit from nationally significant economic opportunities, being centrally located in relation to the Lancashire Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing Enterprise Zone, part of which will be exploiting the economic potential of new and emerging industries, and a central location within the UK.

[5] Beyond the High Street: Why our City Centres Really Matter, Centre for Cities (September 2013)

4.7 The city centre already offers a wide range of office provision, for example, Winckley Square remains a highly sought after location for solicitors, accountants and other professionals. However much of the purpose built office accommodation is ageing, of sub-prime quality and exhibits increasing vacancy levels. There has been no significant investment in new office development within the city centre for some time, making it increasingly difficult for the city centre to compete with out of centre business parks.

4.8 In accordance with the Framework and Core Strategy Policy 1 and 9, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, new office development must be located within the city centre. This approach applies unless it can be sequentially demonstrated that a development proposal cannot be accommodated within the city centre. As such, the plan promotes and encourages new office development in appropriate locations across the city centre, subject to the policies set out in this plan.

4.9 The plan highlights that the Corporation Street, City Centre North and Horrocks Quarter Opportunity Areas are ideally located to deliver modern, high quality and sustainable offices that are currently absent from the city centre. The plan also promotes the re-use of underused properties in Winckley Square for office use, to support the existing cluster of professional business activity in this location. More information is included in Section 3 of the plan.

4.10 Employment in the city centre is not however restricted to offices. The plan also promotes creative and commercial industries, research and development business use – in the Corporation Street Opportunity Area for example, and small-scale general industrial business use – in the Stoneygate Opportunity Area for example.

4.11 Whilst the plan seeks to secure an expanding city centre workforce, and in doing so will always seek to prioritise the re-use of vacant office accommodation for employment use, it also seeks to promote flexibility of use. The Government has amended the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) to remove the need for planning permission for the change of use of vacant offices to housing. The plan promotes this flexibility, especially given the quantity of vacant, purpose built, office stock in the city centre. Some of this stock has the potential to be re-occupied by city centre workers, however a significant amount is no longer viable for office use, and has the potential to be put to better use as housing. This would also help to improve vibrancy in the city centre by increasing footfall at all times of the day. In the light of the changes to the GPDO the Plan will seek to balance the need for new housing within the city centre, with the need to expand the city centre workforce.

Policy EV0
Employment

Development proposals that improve the quality and range of city centre office accommodation (Use Class B1(a)) will be focussed primarily within the Corporation Street Opportunity Area (Policy OP1), the City Centre North Opportunity Area (Policy OP3) and the Horrocks Quarter (Policy OP5).

Development proposals for office accommodation (B1(a)) which will help to ensure the appropriate regeneration and reoccupation of buildings in the Winckley Square Opportunity Area will also be permitted subject to Policy OP2.

Development proposals involving small-scale business accommodation, including B1 business and B2 general industrial uses, will be focussed in the Stoneygate Opportunity Area subject to Policy OP4.

Shopping

4.12 For many people a key role of the city centre is that of a destination for shopping. The city centre not only serves the residents of Preston in this respect, but also acts as the main non-food shopping destination in Central Lancashire. The Core Strategy identifies the city centre as the only 'Tier 1' centre, at the top of the retail hierarchy in Central Lancashire.

4.13 The city centre is a medium sized centre, with the main shopping provision focussed on Fishergate, from where access can be gained to the two large indoor shopping centres – the Fishergate Shopping Centre and the St Georges Shopping Centre. The area immediately surrounding Fishergate – Market Street, Cheapside and Friargate, is also dominated by retail uses.

4.14 Preston Markets are situated immediately to the north-east of the civic core of the city centre. The Markets are comprised of the indoor Market Hall and the outdoor listed market canopies. The Market Hall contains stalls on two levels, with food dominating on the ground floor and non-food on the first. The outdoor canopies are occupied by a standing market, with the exception of Tuesdays and Thursdays when they are used for a popular car boot/flea market.

4.15 Radiating out from the core of the city centre are secondary shopping areas, such as Friargate Brow, Church Street and streets south of Fishergate such as Cannon Street and Guildhall Street. Whilst these areas are much less retail dominated, a number of independent traders appear to be operating successfully.

4.16 Although Preston's overall retail ranking has declined in recent years (from 29th in 2009 to 54th currently[6]), only Manchester, Liverpool and the Trafford Centre are ranked higher than Preston in the north-west. This reflects the scale of reach and important role the city centre plays, the current quality of the shopping environment and the level of interest from retailers not currently represented in the area.

4.17 The City Centre Business Improvement District (BID) has played an active role in enhancing the business environment in the city centre since its inception in April 2009. The City Centre BID, whose future is secured until at least 2016, has the capability to generate approximately £2.5 million pounds over a five-year period to invest in improvement projects, and will therefore play an instrumental role in delivering the aspirations of the plan.

[6] Javelin Group (VENUESCORE 2014-15)

4.18 Despite this seemingly strong performance, almost 24% of units in the city centre sit vacant, a figure higher than the national average. Whilst many of these units are small, outdated and are situated on the periphery of the city centre core, it is a sign of the challenging times facing retailers. The retailer environment is increasingly 'multi-channel', with shoppers no longer simply purchasing goods in-store and there now exists more options for purchasing goods than there has ever been. Retailers are responding to these challenges by adapting the way they communicate with customers and consolidating or changing the format of their retail floorspace.

4.19 Whilst the retailer demand for floorspace may not be as strong, the city centre has not benefited from any significant investment within the past decade. This lack of investment has stifled the retailer environment; retailers are looking to invest in the city centre, but cannot find the right type of accommodation. The Retail & Leisure Study[7] would suggest that this is the case. Over the lifetime of the plan there exists a significant amount of capacity for additional non-food goods. No additional floorspace is currently required for food goods; however this takes into account the delivery of a foodstore, which already benefits from planning permission, in the Horrocks Quarter area of the city centre.

4.20 The Retail & Leisure Study examines spatial opportunities for the city centre to expand during the plan period to cater for this increasing retail capacity. In doing so, the study recommends that the Primary Shopping Area (PSA) (identified in the Preston Local Plan (2004) as the Principal Retail Core) should be expanded.

4.21 The PSA identified in Policy EV1 and shown on the Policies Map reflects the Preston Local Plan (2004) designations of the Principal Retail Core and the City Centre Shopping Area. Extensions to the PSA, as shown on the Policies Map are proposed; these extensions can be divided into two types – those which reflect the current pattern of commercial development in the city centre and those which have redevelopment potential to create new floorspace.

4.22 Extensions to the PSA proposed on Friargate Brow and Guildhall Street/Cannon Street/Glovers Court/Avenham Street, merely reflect current uses in those areas. It is not envisaged that either have significant redevelopment potential and could not therefore contribute much new commercial floorspace.

[7] Preston City Centre Retail & Leisure Study, Deloitte LLP (May 2013)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J·D
SPORTS

4.23 New development, and therefore new commercial floorspace, could however be accommodated in the extensions to the PSA proposed on part of the Bus Station Site, and the Fishergate Shopping Centre Car Park. Both these proposed extensions to the PSA are recommended expansions in the Retail & Leisure Study.

4.24 One further amendment is proposed. The Principal Retail Core in the Preston Local Plan (2004) includes the Former St Joseph's Orphanage site on Theatre Street/Mount Street. This site is proposed to be excluded from the PSA and whilst it is a development opportunity, it is considered that the introduction of commercial uses on this site is highly unlikely, indeed the site is allocated for housing under Policy SP4. It is considered that the site is more closely associated with the Winckley Square Opportunity Area, and as such is incorporated within this area and discussed further in Section 3 of the plan.

4.25 The PSA therefore incorporates the core shopping streets of Fishergate, Friargate and Friargate Brow, along with important streets such as Cheapside, Market Street, Orchard Street, Lune Street and Lancaster Road. Both the main indoor shopping centres, along with the St Johns Centre and the Guild Hall Arcade are also included, along with part of the Bus Station site and the Fishergate Shopping Centre Car Park.

4.26 Whilst the PSA, in line with the Framework, will always be the first choice location for new shopping development (unless material considerations indicate otherwise), it is important to note that, a sites inclusion within the PSA does not preclude other forms of development, specifically other main town centre uses[8]. Especially with regards to the proposed extensions to the PSA, the allocation demonstrates that the areas are considered suitable for a wide range of development opportunities, including shopping.

4.27 Although the Retail and Leisure Study identifies significant capacity for additional non-food floorspace in the long term, owing to the uncertainties surrounding the shopping sector presently, the forecasts do not paint a precise picture of the exact scale of this capacity growth. This fact, along with other variables such as the scale and phasing of housing growth in Preston, mean that it would be inappropriate for the plan to be overly prescriptive about the level of growth anticipated over the period to 2026. The plan is considered flexible and able to cater for some modest expansion and development in the short term if required, with the emphasis very much being on optimising the use of existing floorspace.

[8] As defined by National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012), Annex 2 (Glossary)

4.28 The Council envisages a review of the plan, if required, in approximately three years' time (2018). The Retail and Leisure Study does not identify potential for any significant addition to the amount of non-food shopping floorspace in this timeframe. The Council will update the evidence base underpinning the plan by 2018 to assess any changes in the shopping and leisure potential for Preston. This update may trigger a review of the plan at that time.

4.29 However, there is a clear, immediate need to enhance the quality of what the city centre has to offer and to improve the shopping experience for customers. This is a cross-cutting issue for the plan to face. In shopping terms, the plan needs to be flexible to cater for modern retailer requirements, providing for an appropriate mixture of floorspace and type and format of store, and helping to encourage flexibility in opening hours of shops to cater for customers' needs in a changing retail environment.

4.30 The Issues & Options consultation in late 2012 discussed the theme of flexibility and sought views on creating a 'Local Development Order' (LDO) for part(s) of the city centre where planning permission may not be required for certain types of development, which may help to encourage economic activity. The public response to this was not clear-cut, with views expressed for and against.

4.31 Since this consultation however, the Government have introduced amendments to the GPDO, in addition to those identified in paragraph 4.11, to provide increased flexibility, enhancing the prospects for start-up businesses and pop-up shops whilst also helping to assist in reducing the number of vacant shops. **Table 3** summarises the changes that are now permitted development until May 2015. It is important to note that this only applies to units covering a floorspace no larger than 150m^2.

Table 3:

Summary of New Permitted Development Rights

Change of Use Now Permitted Development:	
From any of the following:	**To any of the following:**
A1 (Shops)	**A1** (Shops)
A2 (Financial & Professional Services)	**A2** (Financial & Professional Services)
A3 (Restaurants & Cafe's)	**A3** (Restaurants & Café's)
A4 (Drinking Establishments)	**B1** (Business)
A5 (Hot Food Takeaways)	
B1 (Business)	
D1 (Non-Residential Institutions)	
D2 (Assembly & Leisure)	

4.32 In addition, the Government have introduced further amendments to the GPDO, in April 2014, to allow (amongst other things) the change of use from shops (A1) and financial and professional services (A2) to residential (C3), and also from shops (A1) to a bank or building society.

4.33 Finally, the Government have recently consulted on a third batch of new permitted development rights[9]. The consultation focussed on increasing housing land supply and providing even more flexibility for the high street. The new permitted development rights, if introduced, will seek to allow a wider range of uses to convert to residential (C3) and support a broader range of uses on the high street by making it easier to create restaurants & café's (A3) and leisure (D2) uses.

4.34 The plan embraces this flexibility, as it will meet the plans objectives to boost economic activity and vibrancy in the city centre, as well as leading to a reduction in the number of vacant units. The Council also considers that these broadening flexibilities negate the need for an LDO within the city centre. The term "shopping" in Policy EV1 refers to Use Classes A1 to A5 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).

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[9] Technical Consultation on Planning, DCLG (July 2014)

4.35 The Preston Local Plan (2004) identified primary and secondary shopping frontages within the city centre. These designations controlled the range of uses deemed acceptable in particular parts of the city centre, for example, ensuring that primary frontages were dominated by shops in the interests of maintaining active frontages.

4.36 The Council has considered this approach and decided that the plan will not designate primary and secondary frontages within the city centre. Times have changed, and the emphasis of the plan is to boost economic activity in the city centre. If the plan were to designate frontages, the only plausible policy approach would be restrictive in nature. This does not conform to the Council's vision for the city centre, and indeed, would be obstructive when placed in the context of the Government's clear intentions to broaden the scope of permitted development.

Policy EV1

Main Shopping and Other Main Town Centre Uses

a) Shopping

Within the Primary Shopping Area (as extended), as defined on the Policies Map, shopping development, including major redevelopment proposals, will be permitted in accordance with Policies 1 and 11 of the Core Strategy.

Shopping proposals within the Horrocks Quarter Opportunity Area will be subject to the provisions of Policy OP5.

Any shopping proposal located outside the Primary Shopping Area (as extended) or the Horrocks Quarter Opportunity Area must demonstrate there are no suitable or available sites to accommodate the development within the Primary Shopping Area (as extended) or the Horrocks Quarter Opportunity Area. When such proposals also exceed 2,500 square metres, an impact assessment will also be necessary.

Within the Opportunity Areas, shopping proposals will not be required to demonstrate compliance with the sequential test assessment where such uses are specifically permitted by and comply with Policies OP1 to OP5 as relevant.

The Council will work with the City Centre BID, retailers and businesses, to help encourage and promote later opening hours within the Primary Shopping Area to increase activity and vibrancy within the city centre in the early evening.

b) Other Main Town Centre Uses

Proposals for other main town centre uses, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework, will be supported both within the Primary Shopping Area (as extended) and elsewhere within the city centre. This will be subject to the provisions in Policy EV2 in the case of cinema development, and the provisions of the Opportunity Area Policies.

Leisure & Culture

4.37 A major part of the attractiveness of any city centre is the leisure, culture and evening economy offer, and how this complements the shopping function. There are numerous social, environmental and economic benefits to enhancing the leisure and cultural offer and creating a more inclusive and diverse evening experience in the city centre.

4.38 Developing and expanding the city's cultural offer, particularly in relation to its existing heritage assets, will be important to support and develop Preston's visitor economy. It is important that the City's cultural and heritage assets are seen not as individual pieces but have the capacity to form a distinct offer. Heritage tourism is a significant contributor to the U.K. economy and one that has been estimated to grow by 3.8% a year until 2018[10]. In the North West the visitor economy has been estimated to be worth £14.3bn a year and employ 225,000 people nearly 7% of the workforce[11]. Given the potential value of the visitor economy identifying the opportunities for it to develop should be a priority.

4.39 The main cultural venue in the city centre is the Harris Museum and Art Gallery. It is of regional significance as a visitor attraction with 220,000 visitors each year[12] of which 70% are from outside Preston with a further 500,000 annual users of the Library. It has the potential to be developed to enhance its role as a cultural attraction and to act as a driver for high end cultural tourism which could have a significant benefit for the wider city centre.

4.40 Preston is one of only two places in the region that has been awarded Purple Flag retaining this status in 2016, which means that Preston is recognised as being one of the safest, cleanest and most enjoyable places for a night out.

4.41 Despite this achievement, the leisure offer, and specifically the evening economy is limited, tending to cater for the young adult market from 9pm onwards. Between 5pm and 9pm there is scope for additional leisure activity to take place – the city centre does not benefit from any notable family based leisure attractions, such as a centrally located cinema, and this is compounded with the closure of most shops by 5:30pm. The range of facilities on offer could be significantly improved to encourage more people to travel into the city centre in the early evening, and to retain people already working in the city centre.

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[10] Heritage and the Economy, English Heritage (2014)

[11] Great Destinations, NWDA (2008)

[12] 2012 – 2013 figures

4.42 The main entertainment venue in the city centre is the Guild Hall & Charter Theatre. Built in 1972, the complex was extensively refurbished through a £4 million Arts Lottery Grant in 1999. The venue plays host to numerous productions, shows, concerts and events, attracting over 300,000 visitors every year, making a significant contribution to the economy of the city centre.

4.43 In spite of this, the level, scale, and therefore draw of productions at the venue has waned over time. Facilities are dated, and the commercial offer in the Guild Hall Arcade has declined. In October 2014, Preston Guild Hall Ltd, a private company, purchased the building from the Council. The building will continue to be run as an entertainments venue and will be subject to major investment.

4.44 Surveys undertaken to inform the Retail & Leisure Study suggest that very few people perceive the choice/quality of places to eat or the range of leisure attractions to be a strength of the city centre. This is also evidenced by the extensive range of national restaurants, bars and café's that have a published requirement for a presence in the city centre if suitable accommodation can be found. The surveys also suggest that the city centre does not currently play a role in meeting either cinema going or health and fitness needs.

4.45 In addition, the public response during previous consultations confirmed that enhancing the leisure, culture and evening economy offer must be addressed in the plan. To deal with these issues it is clear that the plan needs to propose something fundamental. A recently completed Cinema Study for Preston identifies an immediate need for a new city centre cinema of around 9-12 screens in size Preston already benefits from a higher than average family based population, and with significant housing growth proposed in the plan period through the Local Plan, and brought forward through City Deal, this will only increase further.

4.46 In accordance with the Framework and Core Strategy Policy 12, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, the priority location for new leisure and cultural uses is the city centre. Proposals for new leisure and cultural uses defined as 'main town centre' uses in the Framework outside the city centre will need to satisfy the sequential assessment, and where relevant, the impact assessment.

4.47 As such, the plan encourages new and enhanced leisure and cultural facilities across the city centre in recognition of the critical role these uses will play in delivering a vibrant and vital city centre economy and experience. This encouragement is outlined in more detail in Section 3 of the plan.

City Centre Cinema

4.48 As discussed in paragraph 4.45, the Cinema Study identifies the need for one new large city centre cinema. The Cinema Study, in conjunction with an accompanying economic regeneration impact report , examines a number of city centre locations for accommodating such a facility, recognising that the cinema would also be accompanied by a number of food and beverage units and an appropriate level of convenient car parking. Whilst recognising the merits of other potential locations in the city centre, both reports conclude that the optimum location for the cinema, for both operational reasons and cumulative regenerative benefits, is the Markets Quarter area of the City Centre North Opportunity Area. The same recommendation was also made in the 2013 Retail and Leisure Study.

4.49 The plan therefore, through **Policy EV2**, allocates the Markets Quarter area of the City Centre North Opportunity Area (**Policy OP3**) for a new multiscreen cinema in the city centre. This allocation accords with the outcomes of both the Cinema Study and economic regeneration report, and will ensure the economic and physical regenerative benefits of this intervention are maximised.

[13] Cinema Provision Preston City Centre – Dcinex Consulting – September 2014

[14] The Economic and Regeneration Impact of a Cinema Development in Preston City Centre – Ekosgen – August 2014

Policy EV2

City Centre Cinema

Based on the evidence set out in the documents listed below, the allocated location for a multi-screen cinema and food and beverage units with associated car parking in the city centre is the Markets Quarter area of City Centre North.

List of documents:

i) Preston City Centre Redevelopment Review
Benoy (February 2012)

ii) Options Appraisal – Final Report
Drivers Jonas Deloitte (February 2012)

iii) Preston City Centre Retail and Leisure Study
Deloitte (May 2013)

iv) Cinema Provision Preston City Centre
Dcinex Consulting (September 2014)
("the Cinema Study")

v) Economic and Regeneration Impact of a Cinema Development in Preston City Centre
Ekosgen (August 2014)

Subject to appropriate design considerations and other relevant policy requirements, a development scheme incorporating a cinema within the Markets Quarter area and in line with the recommendations of the evidence base detailed above will be supported and permitted.

Any proposals for a multi-screen cinema elsewhere within the city centre will be assessed against evidence submitted by the applicant to address the following criteria:

- The impact on the delivery of a multiscreen cinema in the allocated location; and
- The regenerative impact of the proposal on the wider city centre.

Tourism

4.50 An assessment of hotel need in Preston through the plan period was undertaken by consultants in 2013. This appraisal analysed both the existing supply of hotels within the area and the performance of these, against the current and projected levels of demand for hotel bed-spaces, in order to conclude on the future need for new hotels.

4.51 The Hotel Study[15] found that Preston's hotel market is strong, having consistently out-performed provincial UK occupancy since 2007. This strong hotel market is underpinned by a high demand from the corporate sector and the University, which creates high levels of mid-week demand that existing hotels are not regularly satisfying.

4.52 The Hotel Study identifies an immediate need for a branded, full service, upper 3* hotel in a prominent location in the city centre, as well as market demand for a small boutique style hotel/restaurant with rooms in a historic location such as Winckley Square.

4.53 In the first five years of the plan, the Hotel Study identifies potential for the market to absorb a further 100+ hotel bedrooms, which could rise to approximately 700 bedrooms over the entire plan period, however to a large extent this will depend on the successful delivery of the wider regeneration aspirations of the plan.

4.54 The position of the city centre within the Central Lancashire hierarchy means that the priority location for new hotels is the city centre: Core Strategy Policy 11 states that development providing for tourists and visitors (particularly business-based tourism) will be supported in the city centre. Indeed, as a main town centre use, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, new hotels must be located within the city centre, unless it can be proven that they cannot be accommodated by satisfying the assessments set out in the Framework.

4.55 Therefore the plan seeks to promote sites for hotel use in prominent locations, such as Ringway, in the early plan period. It is also envisaged that historic buildings in the core of the city centre, such as the former Post Office building, could be converted to provide hotel accommodation. Allied to this, the plan will promote Winckley Square as a suitable location for a 'niche' hotel offer. Section 3 discusses these aspects in more detail.

[15] Hotel Needs Assessment: Preston, Lancashire, GVA RGA (April 2013)

Creating a Sense of Place

Conserving and enhancing the City Centre's architectural heritage and key historic assets with a new, vibrant built environment equipped to take Preston into the 21st Century'

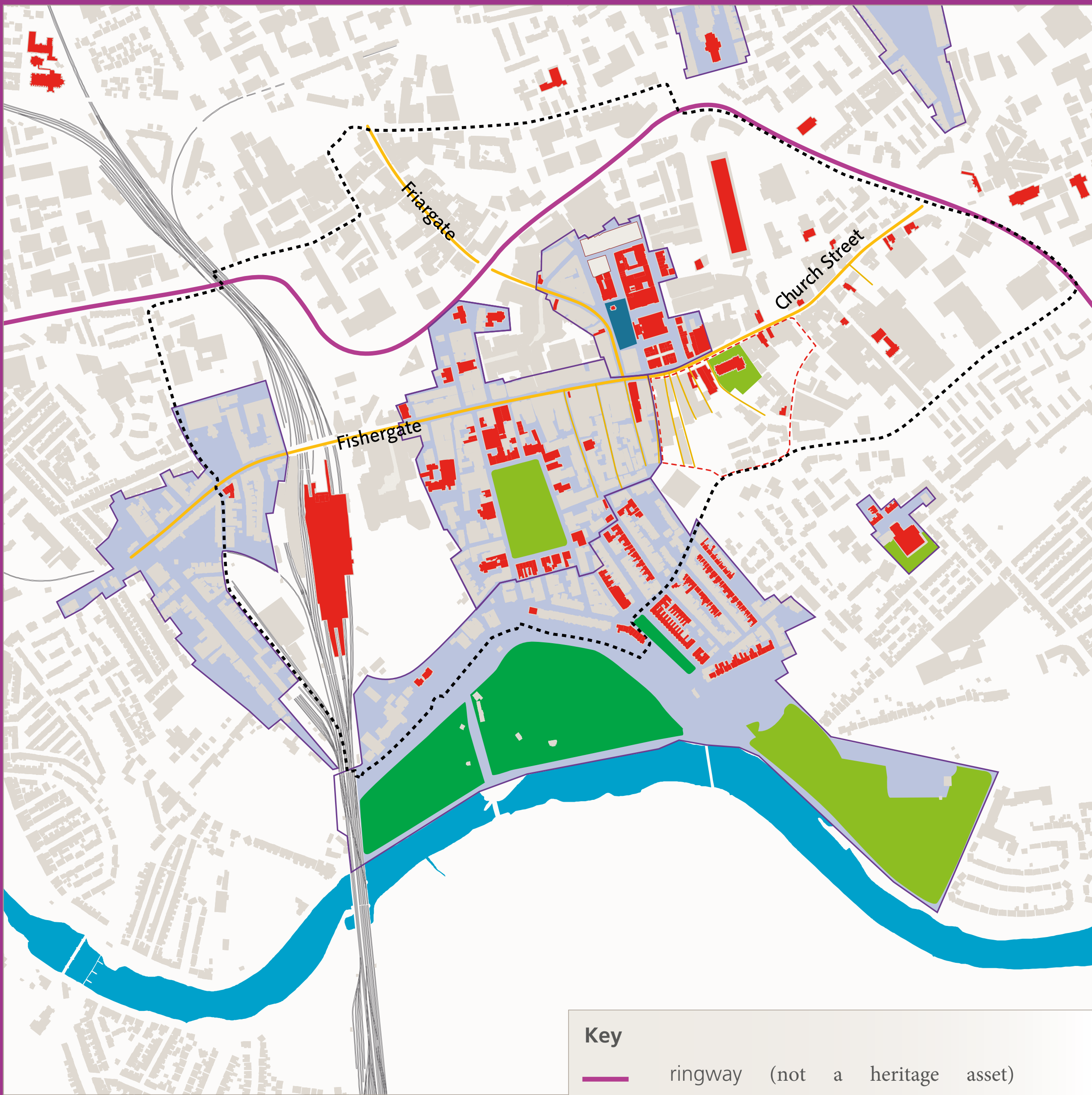
The Built & Natural Environment

5.1 The city centre benefits from a rich legacy of historic buildings and spaces that together create an attractive townscape combining medieval street patterns with more formally planned developments built in the 19th Century. A city centre that offers a high quality and economically active historic environment helps to project a positive image, create investor confidence, attract high value jobs and improve competitiveness.

5.2 A significant part of the historic urban form of the city centre remains intact, with the oldest streets of Fishergate, Church Street and Friargate still providing the main structure of the city centre.

5.3 Market Place, known locally as the Flag Market, contained on two sides by the Grade I listed Harris Museum and Art Gallery, the Grade II* listed Sessions House and the Grade II listed Former Post Office, lies at the junction of Fishergate and Friargate. It is the main civic space in the city centre and has significant townscape and heritage value. To the north of the Flag Market are the two covered market structures both listed at Grade II. These open sided structures form distinctive features within the city centre which, together with the adjacent former Magistrates Court (Amounderness House) and Town Hall, both Grade II listed, form a further group of buildings with significant heritage value.

Heritage assets



Key

- ringway (not a heritage asset)
- city centre boundary
- listed building
- conservation area
- stoneygate (area of historic importance)
- key historic routes
- historic street pattern
- flag market/market square
- listed park/garden
- other key green space

5.4 South of Fishergate lies Winckley Square. The Square is Georgian in origin and contains over twenty listed buildings and a key area of green space in the heart of the city centre. The Square hosts a cluster of high value professional services and therefore a significant amount of economic activity. It has the potential to form a 'green' link between the city centre shopping core and the restored Avenham and Miller Parks which front onto the River Ribble.

5.5 Four of Preston's twelve Conservation Areas are within (or partly within) the City Centre Boundary. The plan, and accompanying Policies Map, will look to identify opportunities to enhance the character of those conservation areas (Avenham, Fishergate Hill, Market Place and Winckley Square) to support the wider objectives of the plan.

5.6 These surviving elements of Preston's heritage provide a strong context to guide new development. Whilst it is clear that Preston needs to fully realise its city ambitions, and in doing so must embrace new development, the conservation and enhancement of historic townscape and heritage assets will be fundamental to ensuring that the City has an unrivalled 'unique' offer to workers, visitors and residents alike.

5.7 The City Council recognises the importance of the City's heritage assets in delivering the aims of successful place-making and sustainable growth. It has actively engaged with Heritage England through its Urban Panel and the Heritage Lottery Fund to secure their views and support for heritage led regeneration in the City. The outcome of this has been the preparation of a City Centre Heritage Investment Strategy for the City Centre. This sets out the key priorities for investment across the City Centre with a focus on the Opportunity Areas identified in this Plan.

5.8 Both Winckley Square and City Centre North are identified as Opportunity Areas in the plan, which will help ensure the character and heritage of these areas are protected, and appropriate complementary development that optimises the use of city centre assets is encouraged.

5.9 In addition, the following related policies in the Local Plan will be applicable, and therefore used to inform planning decisions, within the city centre:

- Policy EN8 (Development and Heritage Assets)
- Policy EN9 (Design of New Development)

The Central Lancashire Design SPD will also be relevant to the decision making process as it sets out the key design principles and information requirements that underpin and

5.10 The plan recognises the important role Green Infrastructure can play in enhancing the urban environment. The creation of greener neighbourhoods has recognized positive impacts on quality of life, perceptions of an area, and public health. However Green Infrastructure also plays an important role in supporting ecological networks, and managing environmental risks such as flooding. Whilst the plan does not propose a Green Infrastructure policy specifically for the city centre, in addition to Core Strategy Policy 18, the following related policies in the Local Plan will be applicable, and therefore used to inform planning decisions within the city centre:

- Policy HS3 (Green Infrastructure in New Housing Developments)
- Policy EN2 (Protection of Existing Green Infrastructure)
- Policy EN3 (Future Provision of Green Infrastructure)
- Policy EN10 (Biodiversity and Nature Conservation)
- Policy EN11 (Species Protection)

Public Realm

5.11 The Public Realm Framework Interim Planning Statement (IPS), adopted in November 2011, identifies a vision for public realm across the city centre. This is based on the creation of a network of attractive, legible, accessible and safe routes and spaces that connect areas of the city centre to each other and the city centre neighbourhoods beyond. The Public Realm Framework identifies a number of strengths and weaknesses with the appearance and functioning of the city's streets and public spaces. It highlights the fact that while the city benefits from a high quality townscape based around a clear network of historic streets and spaces there are clearly a number of areas where improvements to the quality of the public realm, including green spaces, are needed. More detailed area specific issues and the scope for their enhancement are set out in the individual Opportunity Areas in Section 3 of the City Centre Plan.

5.12 The range of problems identified include:

- Areas of pedestrian/vehicle conflict within the central core of the city.
- A cluttered streetscape caused by an over provision of street furniture.
- Traffic signs, railings and streets and spaces which promote vehicular accessibility and movement over the needs of pedestrians or other forms of transport.

The Public Realm Framework sets out a number of principles on how development should contribute to the quality and functioning of the city's public realm and the key issues that any environmental improvements should take account of. These are set out in **Policy SP1**.

Policy SP1

Public Realm Design Principles

Development proposals or environmental schemes should support the following principles for the enhancement of the public realm within the city centre:

- Promote ease of pedestrian movement over that of vehicles.
- Enhance the city's townscape and historic environment through the use of quality materials, street furniture and planting.
- Reduce visual clutter within the public realm, including co-ordination and careful design of street furniture, materials and signage.
- Use of public art and lighting to give identify to, and enhance the city.
- To provide locations for public events, street theatre, festivals and markets to animate streets and spaces.
- Promote, enhance, and where required by Local Plan policies, provide, Green Infrastructure in appropriate locations across the city centre in order to improve the urban environment.

5.13 A key objective of the Public Realm Framework is to reinforce the major existing links of Fishergate, Church Street and Friargate and to ensure that new development proposals are integrated into this network of primary streets. This objective was supported by representations received during previous consultations; these suggest that efforts to enhance the environment and public realm should be initially focussed on Fishergate and Church Street. The second phase of the Fishergate Central project is due to be completed by summer 2016. Subsequent phases will look to integrate the proposals for the City Centre North Opportunity Area (CCNOA) (para. 7.26–7.66) with this scheme.

5.14 A public realm masterplan for the CCNOA, which applies the principles of Policy SP1 and continues the approach of the Fishergate Central project, is being prepared by the County Council in partnership with the City Council and the key stakeholders for the regeneration of the area. This will provide an additional level of detail to that shown on the Policies Map and the Public Realm Framework and will be used to support planning applications in the CCNOA as they come forward during the Plan period.

5.15 There has been an ambition for a considerable time to transform the environment on Fishergate, and through to Church Street. Fishergate is the city's principal street, connecting all of the city's assets and Opportunity Areas, but is dominated by traffic and cluttered street furniture, detracting significantly from the ease of pedestrian movement and the general shopping experience. The plan seeks to enhance the pedestrian experience both visually and practically – reducing the number and speed of vehicular movements will be a fundamental part of realising this.

5.16 The commitment to transforming Fishergate is demonstrated by the work that has already commenced, and is being delivered by Lancashire County Council, with the support of the Council and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The first stage at the western end of Fishergate, 'Fishergate Central Gateway' has recently been completed. The next phase of the project will proceed eastwards from the junction of Fishergate and Lune Street. The project has already positively influenced the reoccupation of long-standing vacant buildings, such as the Grade II listed former HSBC bank, and it is envisaged that it will continue to encourage investment in vacant and underused property such as the listed Miller Arcade and the Baptist Church.

5.17 This project is the first stage in radically improving the public realm and pedestrian environment on Fishergate, and to further extend these improvements to other parts of the city centre, as shown on the Policies Map, in order to promote economic activity and create jobs. The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership has negotiated a 'Growth Deal' with the Government to secure the investment required to continue the shared space scheme from Winckley Street to the bus station.

5.18 However, funding is not currently sourced for the entire project to be completed. The council will continue to support Lancashire County Council in seeking funding opportunities to implement these improvements in the plan period, and the plan will, through Policy SP2, will help to protect these routes from development that would serve to undermine the deliverability of desired improvements.

Policy SP2

Public Realm Improvements

General public realm and pedestrian priority improvements will be supported throughout the city centre, as indicated on the Policies Map.

Development which would have a negative impact on the ability of the Council to achieve these desired improvements will not be supported.

City Centre Gateways

5.19 A key element of any city centre is the quality of its entrance gateways and equally, the quality of its public realm when moving through the city. In both respects, the city centre currently suffers from a number of problems.

5.20 The major gateways to the city centre, as identified on the Policies Map, tend to be traffic dominated spaces with limited urban quality. The sense of entry to the city centre that they provide is generally poor. Clearly, there are opportunities for environmental improvements to each of the major gateways that will improve pedestrian permeability without detracting from their principal role – to move traffic around the city centre. Indeed, improvements have already taken place at several locations; including where Friargate and Corporation Street cross Ringway.

5.21 Whilst some of these gateways lie outside the confines of the city centre boundary, they are immediately adjacent to it and the role they perform for the city centre is crucial. The plan, through Policy SP3, will support environmental improvements in these areas and where applicable, will conform with any proposals emerging from adjoining strategies, such as the Inner East Preston Neighbourhood Plan.

5.22 The two public transport hubs in the city centre also act as major gateways. The Retail & Leisure Study shows that the majority of people who arrive in the city centre by bus alight at the bus station, similarly the majority of people leaving the city by bus, board at the bus station. The railway station handles millions of passengers every year, indeed, aside from Manchester and Liverpool city centre stations it is the busiest in the North West. The arrival and departure experience at both these important hubs provide is neither functional nor pleasant for users. However, as part of the Fishergate Central Gateway Project, works to improve the railway station forecourt commenced in September 2014.

Policy SP3

City Centre Gateways

Development proposals or environmental schemes should seek to improve the public realm, cycling infrastructure, pedestrian facilities, and accessibility of the major gateways to the city centre (as defined on the Policies Map), in order to enhance the city centre arrival experience.

Development which would have a negative impact on the ability of the Council to achieve these desired improvements, will not be supported.

Housing

5.23 New housing in the city centre could help to achieve the aspirations set out within the plan. In simple terms, more housing in the city centre will increase the number of people in the city centre, helping to improve economic and social activity at all times of the day and night. This increased activity will play an important role in boosting the local economy and enhancing the vibrancy of the city centre.

5.24 Housing is therefore an issue the plan should address; responses to previous consultations suggest there is general support for the plan to identify sites within the city centre to deliver new homes. In accordance with the spatial distribution of housing development set out in the Core Strategy the 'Central Preston Strategic Location' ought to deliver at least 600 new homes by 2026. The Central Preston Strategic Location is defined by the Core Strategy, and encompasses both the city centre and the adjacent Inner East Preston area (subject to a separate Neighbourhood Plan). Despite this fact, and working on the basis that the housing requirement as set out in Policy 4 of the Core Strategy should be seen as a minimum, the plan seeks to deliver all 600 new homes within the city centre.

5.25 Within the confines of the city centre, especially the Primary Shopping Area (PSA), there is very little housing accommodation. There is a plentiful supply immediately to the south of the city centre – but this area is not well connected to the PSA. Numerous new residential schemes have been granted planning permission within the city centre, but as these schemes have been mostly dominated by new-build flats and apartments and consented prior to 2008, they have succumbed to the prevailing economic and market conditions, proving to be unviable.

5.26 The amendment to the GPDO discussed earlier in the plan, means that there is potentially more scope for a supply of new housing in the city centre to come from the conversion of vacant commercial premises. Indeed, the Council has already received prior notifications of intentions for conversion, and in the context of the amount of out-dated vacant office accommodation, this source of new housing is generally welcomed across the city centre. Given that several such schemes are currently under construction within the city centre, the plan is justified in making an allowance for new housing from this source. The plan also encourages the use of upper floors of shops throughout the city centre as a source of new housing, in line with the 'flats above shops' principles.

5.27 Whilst the plan seeks to deliver a housing supply contribution that accords with the Core Strategy, it is important to point out that the Preston Local Plan contains the 'borough-wide' housing land requirement. In doing so, the Preston Local Plan accounts for all net completions and extant planning permissions within the city centre and utilises these factors in calculating a forward looking 'borough-wide' housing requirement.

5.28 Therefore, in order to avoid any confusion, the plan will seek to provide a contribution to the City's overall housing land supply of at least 600 new homes in accordance with the Core Strategy, from 2010 to 2026 (the Core Strategy plan period). The City's housing land requirements are generally a matter for the Preston Local Plan and the supporting annual Housing Land Position Statements. Sites within Inner East Preston will also contribute towards achieving the minimum number of 600 new dwellings – the Tetrad site has permission for 189 units.

Table 4:

City Centre Sources of New Housing

Source	2014-2019	2019-2024	2024-2026
A. Housing Supply Contribution 2014 - 2026	600		
B. Dwellings completed 2010/11 – 2014/15 *(including 104 from Prior Notifications)*	239		
C. Remaining contribution at April 2015 (A-B)	361		
D. Prior Notification Permitted Development change of use: Offices (B1a) to Dwelling Houses (C3) Shops (A1) to Dwelling Houses (C3) Financial & Professional Services (A2) to Dwelling Houses (C3)	84	0	0
E. Sites with planning permission *(excluding Prior Notifications)*	215	9	0
F. Additional Opportunity Area Contributions *(windfalls)*	153	20	0
G. Total existing contribution *(D+E+F)*	481		
Residual Requirement to be met by allocations *(C –G)*	-120		

5.29 Table 4 demonstrates that, by taking into account completions since 2010 and by making reasonable allowances for "Prior Notification" conversions of commercial floorspace into residential and also for windfall sites coming forward[16], the existing supply comfortably meets the Core Strategy's indicative, minimum supply figure for Central Preston of 600 new homes. The sites allocated in the City Centre Plan under Policy SP4 mean that ample provision is being made in the plan for new housing.

5.30 Indeed, the Government has recently announced plans to identify 30 'Housing Zones' on brownfield land across the country to try and unlock development and increase housing supply. The scheme intends to achieve this through funding, planning simplification and dedicated support from the Government and the Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS).

5.31 The Council, working in collaboration with the County Council, submitted a bid for Housing Zone designation to Government which was approved in March 2015. The Preston Housing Zone (PHZ) addresses part of the Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal, concentrating on the particular challenges to deliver housing growth on brownfield sites. The PHZ covers the entire city centre, and extends north into the main urban area and has an overall objective of ensuring urban sites are developed to complement the extensive housing developments proposed in semi-rural locations on the edge of the urban area.

[16] Housing Land Position Paper March 2015 (Preston City Council)

5.32 Whilst the delivery of new housing, including within the allocations identified in **Policy SP4**, does not rely on the PHZ bid being successful, the early delivery of new housing within allocation **SP4.1** and the Winckley Square Opportunity Area (**Policy OP2**) will certainly be facilitated by the PHZ. The plan recognises the benefits of the city centre being identified as part of the PHZ and supports the role that this designation will play in enhancing the deliverability of stalled sites.

5.33 Accounting for the representations received in previous consultations the plan seeks to focus new housing allocations within the Stoneygate area. Stoneygate is identified as an Opportunity Area in the plan and is considered the most appropriate part of the city centre for new housing, including small family housing, for many reasons. It is the part of the city centre that most closely relates to existing housing areas outside the city centre, and there are several opportunities to make optimal use of vacant and underused land in the area – some of which have previously had planning permission for housing use. **Policy OP4** supports the role Stoneygate can play in contributing to housing land supply in the plan period.

5.34 **Policy SP4** allocates sites within the city centre to at least meet the remaining housing requirement. Where no specific landowner information is available relating to the potential capacity of these sites, the plan assumes a blended density of 70 dwellings per hectare. This density has been chosen to reflect the potential for an equal proportion of higher density (100 dwellings per hectare) and lower density (40 dwellings per hectare) proposals to come forward overall. In all cases, the Council will seek on-site affordable housing in line with Core Strategy Policy 7 (Affordable and Special Needs Housing), and will apply the guidance set out in the Central Lancashire Affordable Housing SPD.

5.35 Whilst the plan, in principle, welcomes new housing across the city centre it is important to note the conflict that can occur between housing and city centre uses in amenity terms. Noise and air pollution can be key issues for residents. However the plan acknowledges that these issues can often be mitigated through the planning application process.

5.36 Where a growth in pupil numbers is directly related to housing development and existing school places are not sufficient to accommodate the potential additional pupils, Lancashire County Council would seek to secure contributions, either through the Community Infrastructure Levy in accordance with Regulation 123 of the Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 (as amended) or a planning obligation under S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as appropriate, towards additional places. Only by securing such contributions can Lancashire County Council mitigate against the impact on education infrastructure which new development might have.

Policy SP4
Housing Allocations

The sites listed below (and as shown on the Policies Map) are allocated for housing development. The allocated housing land equates to an estimated total of 242 dwellings over the plan period. Where relevant, guidance on design and mixture of house types is included in Section 3 of the plan.

Ref	Site	Area (ha)	Total Units	2014-19	2019-24	2024-26
Site Specific Allocations						
SP4.1	Former St Joseph's Orphanage, Theatre Street	0.4	81	81	0	0
SP4.2	Avenham Street Car Park	0.6	42	0	22	20
SP4.3	Rear Bull & Royal Public House	0.2	14	0	14	0
SP4.4	North of Shepherd Street	0.4	28	0	0	28
SP4.5	Grimshaw Street/ Queen Street/ Manchester Road	1.0	70	0	0	70
SP4.6	Former Byron Hotel, Grimshaw Street	0.1	7	0	7	0
	Total	**2.7**	**242**	**81**	**43**	**118**

Student Accommodation

5.37 The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) main campus sits on the northern boundary of the city centre. The university has expanded rapidly over the last decade and now has over 30,000 students enrolled. The continued growth of the University, supported by the Council, provides a challenge in ensuring sufficient accommodation is available to house students.

5.38 A significant amount of new, purpose-built, student accommodation has been delivered in the past decade, however very little of this development has occurred within the City Centre Boundary. Local Plan Policy HS6 (University of Central Lancashire) seeks to ensure that new student accommodation is clustered in sustainable locations close to the main campus – the area identified on the Local Plan Policies Map does not encroach into the city centre.

5.39 The Local Plan policy does not however prohibit new student accommodation outside of the defined HS6 area, therefore development proposals within the city centre will be subject to the criteria contained within Policy HS6 of the Local Plan.

5.40 Given the close proximity to the main campus, and the envisaged affiliation the uses on the site will have with the university, the plan identifies student accommodation as a potentially acceptable use within the Corporation Street Opportunity Area.

5.41 Although an allowance is not made within Table 4, any new build student accommodation that is provided within the city centre will be classified as a source of new housing and will therefore contribute to the overall housing requirement, as set out in the Preston Local Plan.

Enhancing Movement & Accessibility

'Revitalising and modernising public transport facilities and prioritising pedestrian movement through the heart of the City Centre'

6.1 This section sets out how journeys into, out of, and within the city centre can be made easier and more pleasant to support the economic growth and development aspirations of the plan. In line with Core Strategy and the Central Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan, the plan achieves this by focusing on, where possible, sustainable forms of transport. This includes the scope to revitalise public transport facilities and prioritise pedestrian movement through the heart of the city centre. In doing so, the plan seeks to reduce the reliance on cars and, in conjunction with schemes outside the city centre boundary, reduce the throughput of traffic. The plan however also recognises that in order to achieve sustainable economic growth, good accessibility is essential for all modes of transport, including cars.

Fishergate

6.2 In order to realise the ambitions for Preston, substantial physical improvement needs to take place to the public realm within the city centre. Central to this improvement is Fishergate, which runs through the heart of the Primary Shopping Area (PSA). To the south of Fishergate and Church Street lies the Fishergate Shopping Centre and the Opportunity Areas of Winckley Square, Stoneygate and Horrocks Quarter. To the north are the Corporation Street and City Centre North areas and the St Georges Shopping Centre. Fishergate is the city's principal street, and is the primary pedestrian route between the railway station and the bus station. Consequently, Fishergate acts simultaneously as the main shopping street in the city centre and is important for the movement of pedestrians, buses, taxis and cars. This creates a conflict between pedestrians and cars that detracts from the shopping experience.

6.3 The Fishergate Central Gateway Project, referenced in paragraphs 5.13 to 5.18, will transform the city centre by enhancing the pedestrian experience through the heart of the city centre. It will achieve this through introducing principles of 'shared space'. This will reallocate vehicular space to pedestrians therefore shifting the focus to more sustainable forms of travel. The added space afforded to pedestrians will encourage greater social interaction where people can come together to meet friends, go for a coffee and join in activities thus adding to the overall shopping experience. Additionally, through careful design and mitigation of traditional traffic management techniques, the speed of vehicular movement will be reduced. These key aspects come together to create an attractive, safe and tranquil social environment which will increase the propensity to walk in the city centre.

6.4 The first phase of the project, 'Fishergate Central Gateway Project', involving public realm and pedestrian facility improvements along Fishergate from Lune Street to County Hall has recently been completed. This is the first step in improving pedestrian links between the railway station and both the university and the bus station, helping to reinforce the definition of the railway station as a gateway to the whole city centre.