

Leigh Town Centre Strategic Regeneration Framework



Draft for consultation

**Believe
in Leigh**





Councillor David Molyneux, Leader Wigan Council

As part of The Big Listening Project in 2019, we spoke to 6,000 residents across the borough to find out what is important to them. Vibrant and thriving town centres was a key theme highlighted by local people, so we have created this new Strategic Regeneration Framework for Leigh town centre to set out our vision for the future and explain what needs to be done to achieve it.

Since the Big Listening Project took place our communities have faced new challenges as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has inevitably had an impact on our town centres – businesses have been hit by restrictions on trading and social distancing measures. However, the pandemic has also highlighted what we need from our town centres – the importance of shopping locally and supporting local businesses, the value of easily accessibly attractive green spaces and

the need for adaptable town centres with a mix of uses – not overly reliant upon retail but also providing opportunities to form leisure and culture activities, food and drink establishments and places to live and work.

We are setting out a bold and ambitious plan for physical change that will attract investment and support the wider regeneration of Leigh. We are committed to working with partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors to deliver the step change in quality that we deserve – a place we can be proud of.

Importantly, we are putting people at the heart of our plans for Leigh town centre.

We will continue to listen to our community and ensure we are responding to what our residents, businesses and key stakeholders want to see happen.



Councillor Lord Peter Smith Chair of Believe in Leigh Board

We believe in Leigh!

Our town has talented residents, loyal businesses and fantastic social, cultural and heritage assets.

This SRF gives us the opportunity to celebrate and capitalise upon these assets and set ourselves a clear route-map for shaping future development and ensuring our town centre is the best it possibly can be and resilient to future challenges.

Together through the Believe in Leigh initiative we already have made great improvements to the town centre – through delivering the vision set out in the SRF we can deliver more. We can coordinate our efforts and investment to deliver what is right for Leigh creating a town centre that thrives in the future.

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1. Introduction

The Strategic Regeneration Framework

The Deal 2030 is the borough-wide plan, developed through wide ranging consultations with residents, to make the borough the best possible place to live and work over the coming decade. It identifies three themes, 'Our People, Our Place' and 'Our Future'. For the people of Leigh, a key priority is the regeneration of Leigh Town Centre to ensure that now and in the future it is at the heart of the Leigh community, providing good amenities, transport links, homes, employment and a vibrant street scene.

This Strategic Regeneration Framework builds upon the feedback received during the Big Listening Project which informed the Deal 2030 and through consultation undertaken as part of the Believe in Leigh initiative. It capitalises on the many assets of the town centre and sets a 'route map' for ensuring Leigh is a vibrant town centre which plays its part supporting the sustainable growth of the borough and the wider region.

The Strategic Regeneration Framework establishes an exciting and ambitious vision for Leigh Town Centre over the next 10 years, it sets out:

- Objectives
- Urban design principles
- Action plan

The Framework focuses on 'place' but recognises that Leigh's people are critical to delivering this vision and there are clear links to other areas of activity centred upon meeting the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

Leigh is already undergoing dynamic change and our vision for the town centre builds on this, it is not a prescriptive masterplan for the town centre but is flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances and new opportunities as they arise. It sets a clear framework to ensure that development is of the highest quality, integrated with its surroundings and fully considered in terms of its ability to deliver against our objectives.

There is already funding identified for Leigh from the Believe in Leigh initiative and funding secured through other sources. This SRF is intended to help steer that investment and maximise its impact through attracting additional investment from other sources and by ensuring a comprehensive approach to the transformation of the town centre.

This Framework reflects the shared commitment of council and the community of Leigh to make the town centre the best it can be – a vibrant and attractive place with something for everyone.



Vision

Leigh is a thriving and sustainable town, an exemplar for the 21st Century. The reinvigorated town centre is buzzing with activity at the heart of residential neighbourhoods; the countryside is on the doorstep and accessible; and the town is growing and accommodating greater diversity and choice for new and existing residents. Leigh is a great place to call home and achieve all your ambitions.

Objectives

1. Leigh will have an attractive, durable and greener urban **environment**, with its historic buildings celebrated and in active use, complemented by good quality new development, and an enhanced, well connected, green environment making the most of the canal, and will be responsive to the challenges of climate change.
2. Leigh will have a full range of good quality **homes** to meet all needs and aspirations, with more town centre living, including provision for older people, and will be a location of choice as a place to live and bring up a family.
3. Leigh will be an accessible place where people can **move** around and access the whole town easily and conveniently, with high numbers walking and cycling, public transport being the option of choice for longer journeys and goods being despatched and delivered with minimum disruption.
4. The **people** of Leigh will enjoy a wide range of opportunities for a happy, content and rewarding life, at home and through learning, work, leisure and culture, within a strong and supportive community that is resilient to change.
5. Leigh will be a much healthier town with people living more active lives taking advantage of the parks, open space and off-road routes, with big reductions in the numbers of people obese or at high risk of heart disease and big improvements in mental **well-being**.
6. Leigh will have a diverse and modern **economy**. It will be a location of choice for start-ups and existing businesses to prosper and businesses to invest. Leigh will take full advantage of its position at the heart of North West England.
7. The people of Leigh will be much more closely **engaged** with what happens in the town and the community further **empowered** to make positive change to improve life chances, with community groups being more supportive to one another.
8. Leigh Town Centre will be a thriving and joined-up place where people want to live, work and invest, offering a wide and diverse range of, **retail, culture and leisure** experiences for the whole town, neighbouring communities and visitors from further afield.





Purpose and status

This Framework is a draft for consultation – we really need and value your feedback on what the Framework proposes. In particular we would like you to consider the following:

- Are all the issues captured?
- What does Leigh Town Centre need to offer to be an attractive town centre in the future?
- Have the right priorities been identified?

The Framework will then be finalised taking on board feedback from this consultation.

The final Leigh Town Centre Strategic Regeneration Framework will be used to guide and attract both public and private sector investment into the town and to promote and shape development.

This Framework is not considered as a Supplementary Planning Document at this time, but it could form the basis of one in the future.

2. Leigh Town Centre – the strategic opportunity in context

Leigh enjoys an excellent strategic location – between Manchester and Liverpool, close to the A580 East Lancashire Road and easily accessible from the motorway network.

The town is the second largest in Wigan Borough and is the largest centre in a hinterland which includes Astley, Atherton, Golborne, Hindley Green, Lowton and Tyldesley. It is well positioned to draw from a large and growing population catchment area.

Leigh is not directly on the railway network, but there is an aspiration to improve rail connectivity. The nearest stations are at Atherton and Daisy Hill. It also benefits from the successful guided bus route which provides a convenient connection to Manchester in around 60 minutes.

Town centres everywhere are considering how they need to adapt to respond to not just our changing retail habits but other aspects of our lifestyles that have been heavily influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic. Our town centres need to become more diverse places. It is not enough to rely on shops - as a society we are looking for somewhere pleasant to spend time – to live, eat, drink, play, work, engage in arts, sports or cultural activities and enjoy a shopping experience that cannot be achieved on-line.

Leigh town centre already has many attributes that mean it is well positioned to evolve in step with changing economic, environmental and social demands. It is important to ensure we capitalise upon these whilst addressing some of the weaknesses that could threaten the ability of the town to fulfil its potential.

This framework sets out the route map for this journey.

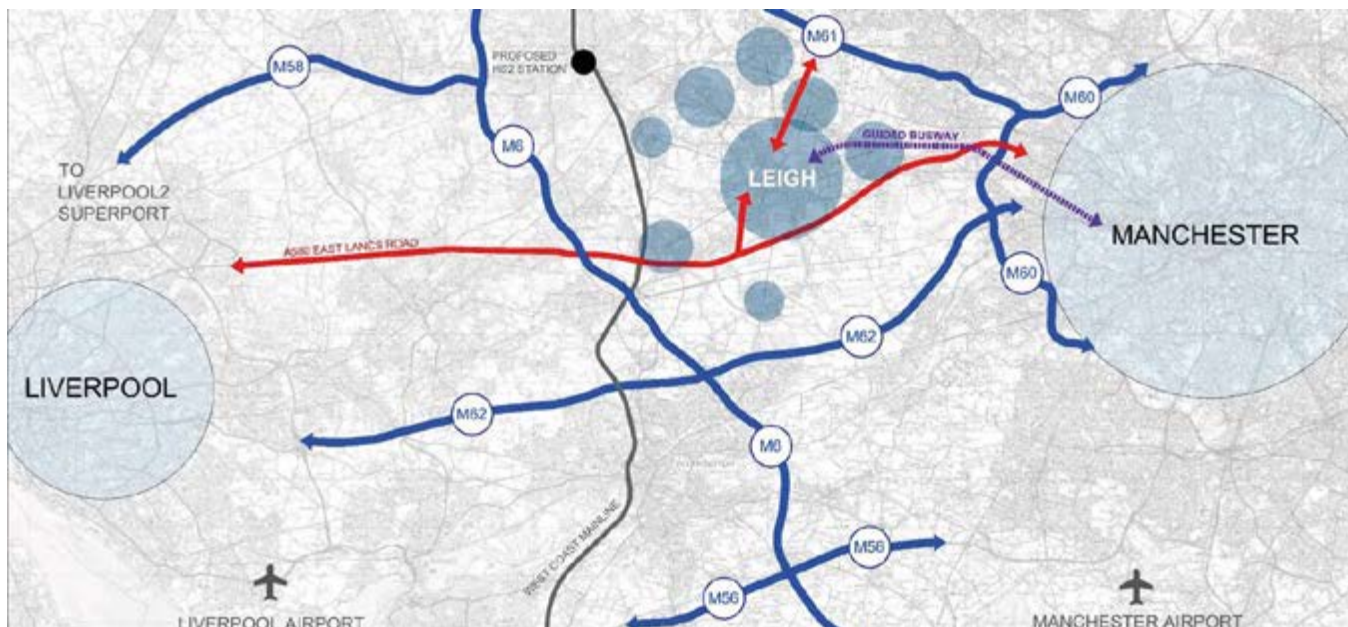
Leigh has an important role within Greater Manchester and is part of the Mayors Town Centre Challenge initiative. The proximity to Manchester offers opportunities for Leigh businesses to strengthen trading links and for commuting – Leigh can offer quality business space and homes that are more affordable than the regional centre but still within easy reach, this is a key potential driver of future growth.

Leigh also has an important role serving neighbouring towns and villages. There is significant growth in new homes proposed in and around Leigh. If the town centre offer is right Leigh will benefit from more people spending locally and help to ensure new and existing communities are stitched together.

The town is surrounded by amazing green infrastructure, with Pennington Flash Country Park, Lilford Park, the former Bickershaw Colliery and the canal just south of the town centre.

Leigh has some fantastic attributes and is well positioned to respond positively to the challenges facing the town centre and evolve into a centre that is exciting, vibrant and at the heart of the communities it serves.

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Policy Context

The Deal 2030 is the council's ambitious plan for Wigan Borough and has been developed by everyone – residents, community organisations, businesses and public sector bodies. It sets 10 strategic goals which are grouped under Our People, Our Place and Our Future. Creating vibrant town centres is one of the strategic objectives and is interlinked with other objectives – as the heart of our communities our town centres can be social hubs, drivers of the future economy and cultural hearts. This framework is key to delivering the outcomes of The Deal.

The council is also taking a **Community Wealth Building** approach which will help tackle economic inequality locally and create a fairer borough with opportunities for all. It aims to place control of our local economy in the hands of our local people, businesses and communities.

The importance of town centres is recognised in the Borough's economic strategy '**We are Wigan**'. The town centre's business base is retail focussed but there are major businesses and employers on the edge of the town centre.

The Fire Within is the borough's cultural manifesto for the next five years. It seeks to promote the growth of the cultural sector and widen participation in cultural activity. Culture offers exciting opportunities in Leigh in relation to Turnpike Gallery, Leigh Spinners Mill and a growing town centre events programme.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes clear that creating high quality buildings and places is fundamental to the planning

and development process. The NPPF not only encourages quality in design and development but it also states that poor design which fails to take opportunities for improving character and quality in an area, including in the way it functions, should be refused.

The Government has also published a National Design Guide, providing the latest guidance and advice on design. This explains and illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.

The detail provided in this Framework provides the additional local guidance encouraged by the National Guidance and any development proposed within Leigh will be assessed against the criteria of the combined policies. The town of Leigh has many opportunities and its communities are expecting the highest quality of development to achieve the stated Vision.

The Framework also links closely to the Local Plan and planning guidance. The Local Plan sets policies that guide development and factors that must be considered in determining planning applications, including issues such as retail, urban design, heritage, transport, parking and housing.

The Local Plan emphasises the importance of vibrant town centres and this framework is in conformity with it. This framework translates planning policy and guidance into a finer grain of detail to inform future development in Leigh Town Centre.





3. Leigh Today

People – Population



2017 Estimates - 46,474 people

25-35
45-55

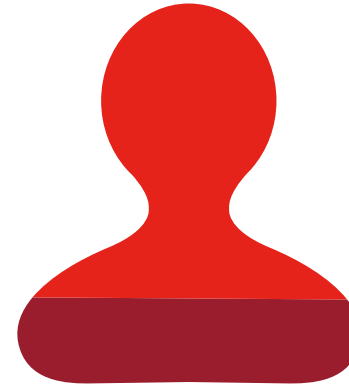
The most common age brackets in the Leigh area are 25-35 and 45-55



17% of population in state pension age range



Semi Routine 17.5% & Lower
Managerial/professional 17.2%



April 19 - 1600 Claimants of
Universal Credit (7545 - 21%)

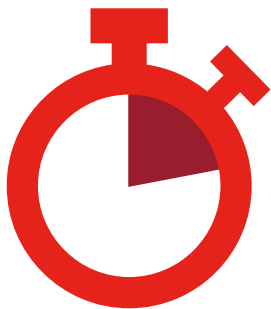
Economy

The economy of Leigh is dominated by retail. The majority of employees within Leigh work in either the retail or health sectors, this is as expected given the town centre retail core and other retail areas at Parsonage and the Loom. Leigh Infirmary and Atherleigh Park mental health hospital account for many employees in the health sector. The main primary employment area is to the south east of the town centre at Leigh Commerce Park.

Travel to work times are relatively low, with the main areas commuted to in Wigan, Warrington and Bolton, all within easy access of Leigh. Most people commute by car, public transport usage is relatively low due to buses being the only public transport option.

Average wage figures show that people who work outside of Wigan Borough earn more than those who work within the borough.

Total number of businesses in Leigh by type



Average travel to work time
28 minutes



60% use car/van for commuting



8% use public transport for commuting



31,733 Economically active

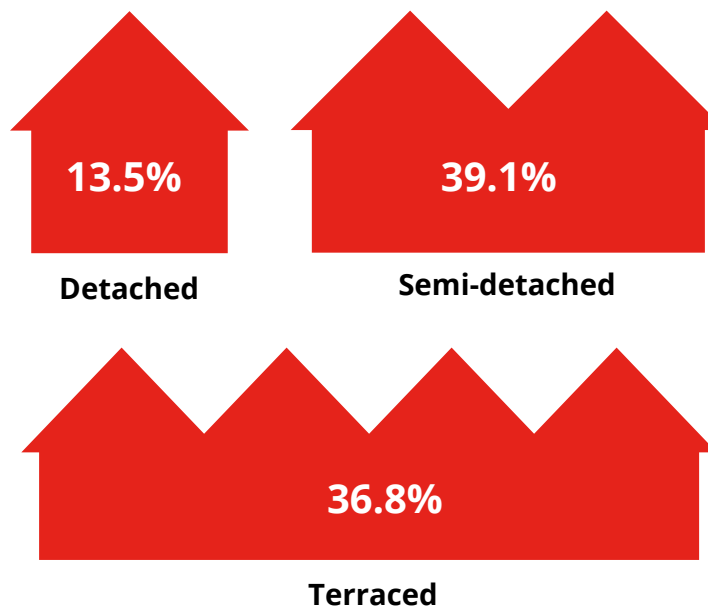
Housing

Leigh has a higher proportion of terraced (37%) and semi-detached (39%) and significantly smaller proportion of detached (14%) homes, than average for the region. House prices tend to be lowest in central Leigh where terraced housing is predominant (average £70,500).

House prices peak south of the town centre around the Pennington area (average £236,500). There is a relatively high level of owner occupation (63%) in Leigh than average for the region and one third of these own outright. Most social rented properties are rented from the Council – the main Registered Social Landlords active in the area are; Jigsaw and Your Housing. Past investment has been relatively successful in improving the internal and external fabric of homes and providing for on-street parking in targeted areas. There are some issues associated with the management of some private rented sector properties particularly near the town centre.

Housing completions average at around 150 per annum over the past 5 years. There is a significant amount of new housing development proposed in Leigh over the lifetime of this SRF with c. 4,500 new homes with planning permission – key sites are at Westleigh Waterfront (400), North Leigh (1,800) and West Bridgewater Street (226). There are also several smaller potential housing sites in the town centre. The conversion of Mather Mill indicates a key emergent sector – targeting young professionals as an affordable, attractive alternative to Manchester City Centre.

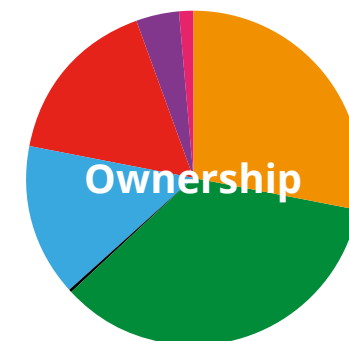
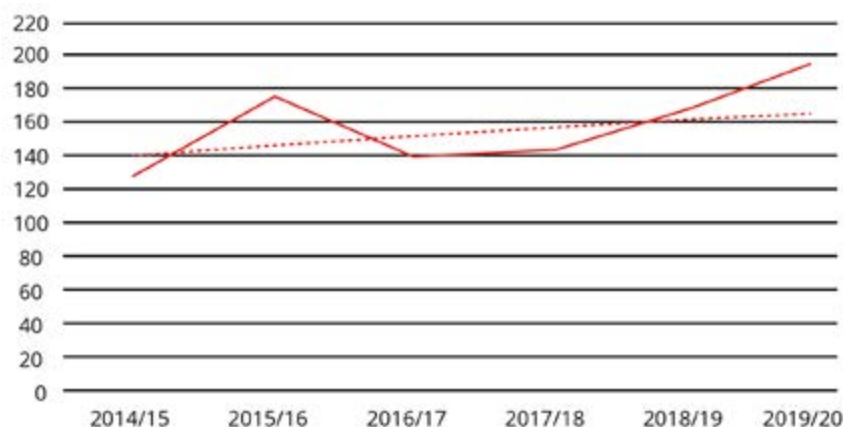
Leigh Area Housing Types



9.1%

Flats purpose built block

Leigh Area Housing Completions



- Owns outright 5,255
- Owns with a mortgage or loan 6,534
- Shared ownership 74
- Private rented 2,785
- Rented from Council 3,171
- Other social rented 738
- Other 18

Environment

Leigh is surrounded by a high-quality network of green infrastructure, the majority of which is a legacy of Leigh's industrial past. To the south and west lie Pennington Flash and the former Bickershaw Colliery. Pennington Flash was formed after years of coal mining which caused the land to sink creating a subsidence 'flash' (lake). The area underwent extensive reclamation to create the country park that is there now. Part of the former Bickershaw Colliery site has undergone major reclamation to create new housing but there are still extensive areas of colliery spoil. This has created a matrix of important habitats and recent investment in the area is creating an attractive area to visit and enjoy.

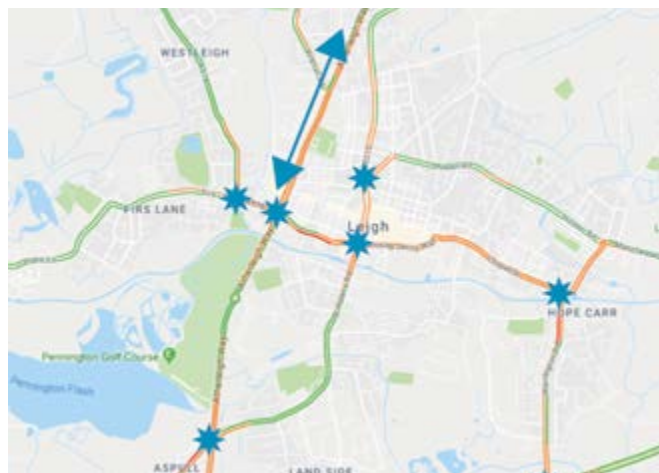
Other important environmental assets include Pennington Hall Park which has Green Flag status, Lilford Park, Hope Carr Nature Reserve and the canal. However, there is a lack of quality green space in the town centre and the canal is not well integrated with the town centre.



Movement

Leigh has good strategic road connections, but the local network is congested, difficult to navigate and creates a poor environment for pedestrians. Atherleigh Way bypasses the town centre to the west, but a significant amount of through traffic is still directed through the town centre and inner residential areas. Congestion is experienced at the Atherleigh Way/Twist Lane junction and Spinning Jenny Way/ King Street junctions and along Leigh Road. These key roads are unattractive for pedestrians and sever parts of the town centre.

There are one-way street networks in residential streets close to the town centre and significant amount of car parking in and around the town centre – but the lack of convenient car parking emerges as a key concern amongst residents and businesses. There are proposals for significant investment in pedestrian and cycle routes through the Beeline initiative.



Well-being

Leigh has the highest prevalence of smoking in Wigan Borough. It also has above borough averages for; obesity, dementia, learning disabilities, mental health problems, cardiovascular disease, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

There are other issues within Leigh that link to people's health, for example fuel poverty is above the borough average. The rate of drug and alcohol misuse clients in treatment is also higher in Leigh than in the rest of the borough.

Leigh Infirmary provides elective, diagnostic and rehabilitation services with a small drop in unit to supplement the emergency provision in Wigan. In 2017 Atherleigh Park mental health hospital opened, this provides high quality inpatient services for adults with mental health problems, as well as patients with dementia and memory conditions across the North West Boroughs Healthcare Trust.



Retail, Culture and Leisure

The Civic Square is a cultural hub within the town centre. Turnpike Centre is a jewel of brutalist architecture with striking sculptured façade (by William Mitchell). It includes the library and the Turnpike Centre art gallery which is a key community asset offering a range of exhibitions, opportunities for the community to engage in culture and arts and meeting space for local groups. Leigh Town Hall is being refurbished to create a new home for the archives and new museum and exhibition space.

Leigh Sports Village is a state-of-the-art facility for sport, education, health and leisure a short distance south of the town centre. The centre piece is a 12,000-capacity stadium which is home to Leigh Centurions Rugby League team and Manchester United women's, under-23 and under-19s teams. The stadium is also used by high profile international artists and sporting events, putting Leigh on the map and creating exciting opportunities for raising Leigh's profile and stimulating economic growth. The complex also includes an athletics track (Leigh Harriers), Leisure Centre, Wigan and Leigh College, hotel and supermarket.

Retail in Leigh Town Centre is focused around Bradshawgate, the Spinning Gate Shopping Centre, the Indoor Market, The Loom and Parsonage Retail Park. Bradshawgate is a traditional High Street, comprising a mix of national and independent retailers with an existing loyal customer base. The Spinning Gate Shopping Centre has 40 retail units. The Indoor Market is large, popular and thriving.

The Loom is the most recent addition to the town centre – a £50m complex including a cinema and restaurant.

There is an active programme of community-based events in the town centre notably the Leigh 10k, Leigh Carnival and canal festival.



Engagement and Empowerment

There has already been a significant amount of consultation with local residents and businesses through Believe in Leigh and the Big Listening Project. The views expressed by local people as part of these consultations have informed the proposals in this draft SRF.

For example, we recognise that the future of the town centre is important to local people, that anti-social behaviour and crime are key concerns and that people are keen to see local shops and streets improved. The diagram below captures some of the key concerns expressed as part of the Believe in Leigh residents survey in 2018 (the larger the font the more frequent the comment was made).



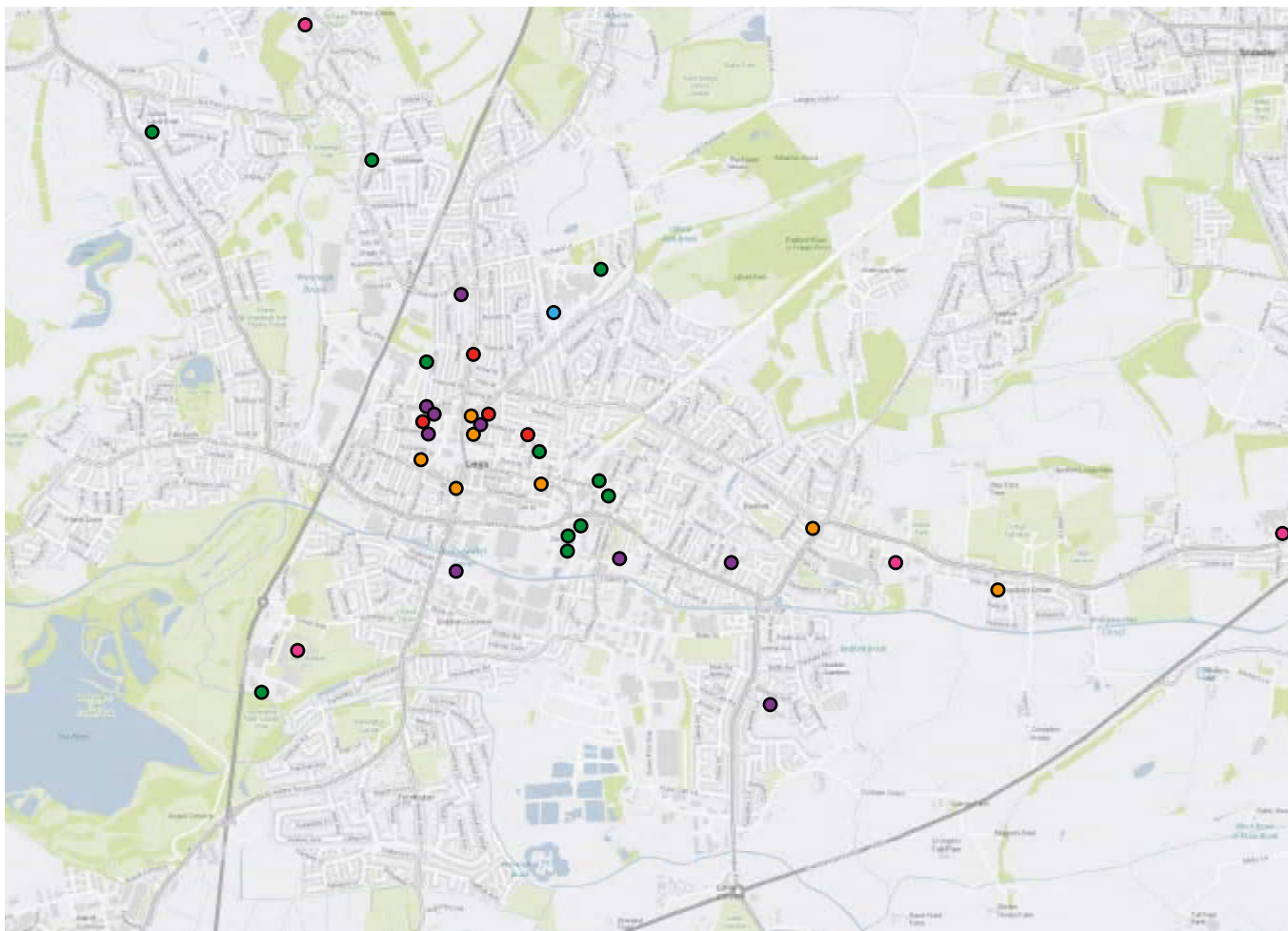
This SRF is focussed on the physical place but complements a wide range of ongoing activity to address 'people-focussed' issues. These include for example, the establishment of the Place and Community Partnership Board to provide a strategic response to community safety issues, the delivery of the Community Cohesion Plan which bring together a range of partners including Greater Manchester Police and education providers and continued engagement with Leigh Youth Voice to ensure young people are involved in plans that affect their future.

Social Infrastructure

Leigh benefits from a wide range of social infrastructure. There are 6 primary schools in or close to the town centre. These feed into 4 secondary schools in the wider area (St Mary's High School, Westleigh High School, Lowton Church of England High School, Beford High School). Wigan and Leigh College offers a range of further and higher education courses at their campus at Leigh Sports Village (which is a centre of sporting excellence) and The Image Centre.

There are numerous doctor and dentist surgeries in the town centre. Leigh Infirmary is located 1km north of the town centre and provides elective, diagnostic and rehabilitation services to complement the A&E site in Wigan. Atherleigh Park £40 million mental health hospital (opened 2017).

There are a range of active community groups and social enterprises that are assets to the town. These include Compassion in Action, Leigh Neighbours and Community Cafe. Youth facilities include The Youth Council and Prince's Trust and safe zones have been established in response to concerns raised by young people.



Community Groups



Dentists



Primary Schools



GPs



Hospitals



High Schools

SWOT of Leigh Today

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a strong sense of community and pride in Leigh • The town centre already has a large residential population • Leigh is surrounded by a high-quality green infrastructure network • There is an abundance of built heritage assets including listed buildings and conservation areas • The guided bus has been a great success easing access to and from Manchester • The retail sector is performing well with low vacancy and high rates of independent traders • Leigh Sports Village offers world class facilities • Leigh offers excellent easy access to the wider road network • There is a thriving indoor market • The town centre still retains a good representation of high street banks • New developments such as Pennington Wharf have been highly successful • A quality housing offer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are concentrations of poorer housing stock and pockets of unbalanced communities both within the town centre and in the wider area • High levels of deprivation are found in pockets throughout the area • Despite good road connections there are considerable problems with congestion along key routes • Busy main roads sever connections between parts of the town centre • There are some areas of poor environmental quality and dereliction • There is a fractured and broken streetscape on some of the key routes into the town centre • Some small-scale infill development is of poor design • The town performs relatively poorly in terms of its performance against key health and wellbeing indicators • The lack of a railway station serving the town • Leigh does not have a diverse economy • Vacant commercial properties have an adverse effect on perceptions of the town |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leigh has a growing population catchment as housing developments come forward in the wider area • There will be considerable investment in new homes both within the town centre and the wider area • The Bridgewater and Leeds Liverpool Canals are key under-used assets within proximity of the town centre • There will be increasing demand created for new development sites to meet need • Develop new employment sites business incubators/start up space to provide more local employment opportunities • Create an alternative night-time economy of restaurants and bars • Capitalise on successes to date and use them to drive further investment • Capitalise on community energy and commitment • Aim for a carbon neutral town centre • Improve physical sites to complement the people focused work delivered through other projects and partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception and experience of Anti-social behaviour • Demand for retail space is likely to continue to decrease • Low land values will continue to make the financial viability of new development difficult • Lack of investment or unsympathetic development will erode the special historic character of the town • Demand and lack of appropriate commercial space • Town centre fails to respond to continuing changes to shopping and lifestyle habits as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic |

4. Leigh Town Centre Place Assessment

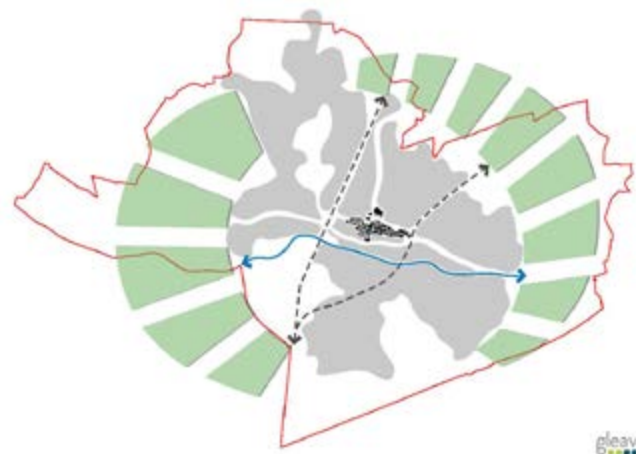
Evolution of place

The historic development of the town from early origins as a coal and mill town linked by the canal, and then the railway in late 19th and early 20th century, has given Leigh a form and shape which is still much in evidence today. This early shape of the town has been changed by post-war modernisation, notably traffic focussed infrastructure and larger format development. The green collar surrounding the built up area remains a very strong and attractive feature of the town.

Leigh sits on the edge of the Lancashire plain which gives it a relatively flat townscape that is advantageous for mobility. There is only a slight elevation in the town's principal streets and buildings (e.g. Church). The neighbourhoods that surround the town centre are predominantly residential with defined areas of employment and the Sports Village.



Green collar surrounding built up area



Town core and key infrastructure



Post war infrastructure growth

A detailed analysis has been undertaken of the urban form of Leigh town centre and four character areas have been identified. There is some overlap between them, but they generally have quite distinct features and attributes:

1. **Outer Retail Edge “Big Box Collar”**
2. **Town Centre West**
3. **Town Centre East**
4. **Town Centre Core**

Each character area has been assessed in terms of strengths and weaknesses taking into consideration quality place making criteria: built form and continuity; character and heritage; movement and accessibility; diversity; adaptability; legibility and public realm.

This has built up an understanding the town as a whole – a ‘one town centre’ approach – with a clear focus on where there are opportunities for positive change.





1. **Outer Retail edge - `Big Box Collar`**

This area is physically separate from the historic town centre. It wraps around the west and south of the town centre comprising Parsonage Retail Park, The Loom and industrial premises/sites. The large floor plate retail and leisure uses are set within extensive parking areas, offering little amenity or opportunity for linked trips/ extended stays within the town centre.

2. **Town Centre West**

This is a residential area with strong character and previous environmental improvements from earlier decades are still evident. Other uses are mostly complementary to residential use with schools and community facilities adding activity and value. There is a concentration of rented properties in this area. The two primary routes of Railway Road and Walmsley Road provide important connections from the west to the town centre, though the dominance of traffic and lack of clear sightlines mean that they are not particularly attractive routes.

3. **Town Centre East**

This is primarily a residential neighbourhood with a tight grid street pattern of terraced dwellings close to the core of the town centre. The proximity to the retail area gives rise to local conflicts with heavy service traffic, parking and unnecessary through traffic. This is detrimental to residential amenity and conflicts with pedestrians and cyclists.

At the eastern edge includes some historic buildings and the guided bus way. The area also includes some trade uses which conflict with residential amenity. There are opportunities to strengthen the relationship between the residential streets, the historic buildings at this edge of the town centre.

4. **Town Centre Core**

The town centre core compromises the main hub of retail and leisure uses. There are some vacant units, but overall vacancy is not particularly high compared to the national average. The key focal points are Bradshawgate, the Market and Spinning Gate Centre which are positive assets for the town. There has been some investment in the public realm, but this is not comprehensive.

The existing bus station is functional and important for users, however there are opportunities to enhance the townscape at this key gateway site and improve views towards the Spinning Gate Centre.

The core area is fractured by the busy junction of Spinning Jenny Way/ St Helens Road/ Market Street. This junction is difficult and unattractive for pedestrians and hinders the linkages across the town centre and in particular to the canal.

Summary of Place-making Issues

- Town centre is stretched but still strong around Spinning Gate, the Market and Bradshawgate.
- The historic fabric in terms of building form and the street plan has considerable merit, however there are some instances of erosion of historic character from unsympathetic alteration and lack of investment.
- The neighbourhood connections have been severed by road infrastructure, car parking and priority given to the car.
- The canal is a special asset, but Leigh is not taking advantage of its proximity to the town centre.
- Leigh benefits from already having a significant residential population within the town centre area.
- The canal side environment offers significant opportunity for a quality offer and broader benefit.
- There is a lack of quality green space within the centre. Play provision and amenity is very limited and existing individual dwellings have restricted private amenity given the nature of terraced and urban streets.
- The historic grid of streets and flat typography should make walking, cycling and mobility access extremely convenient.
- Accommodating unnecessary traffic through the town centre and residential areas is detrimental to local and community amenity and safety.
- The town lacks cohesion – it is difficult to navigate through it by car and on foot. Major roads and busy junctions sever key parts of the town from one another and make the town centre feel disjointed.
- The Civic Square could be a major attractor with the Town Hall, Turnpike Gallery and Parish church overlooking it, but it has poor connections and the public realm detracts from the character of the buildings.
- The main approaches to the town centre are not inviting and do not contribute positively to the image of Leigh.
- There are a significant number of sites and buildings with potential for development or enhancement – bringing forward these sites would have a really positive impact.



Urban Design Principles

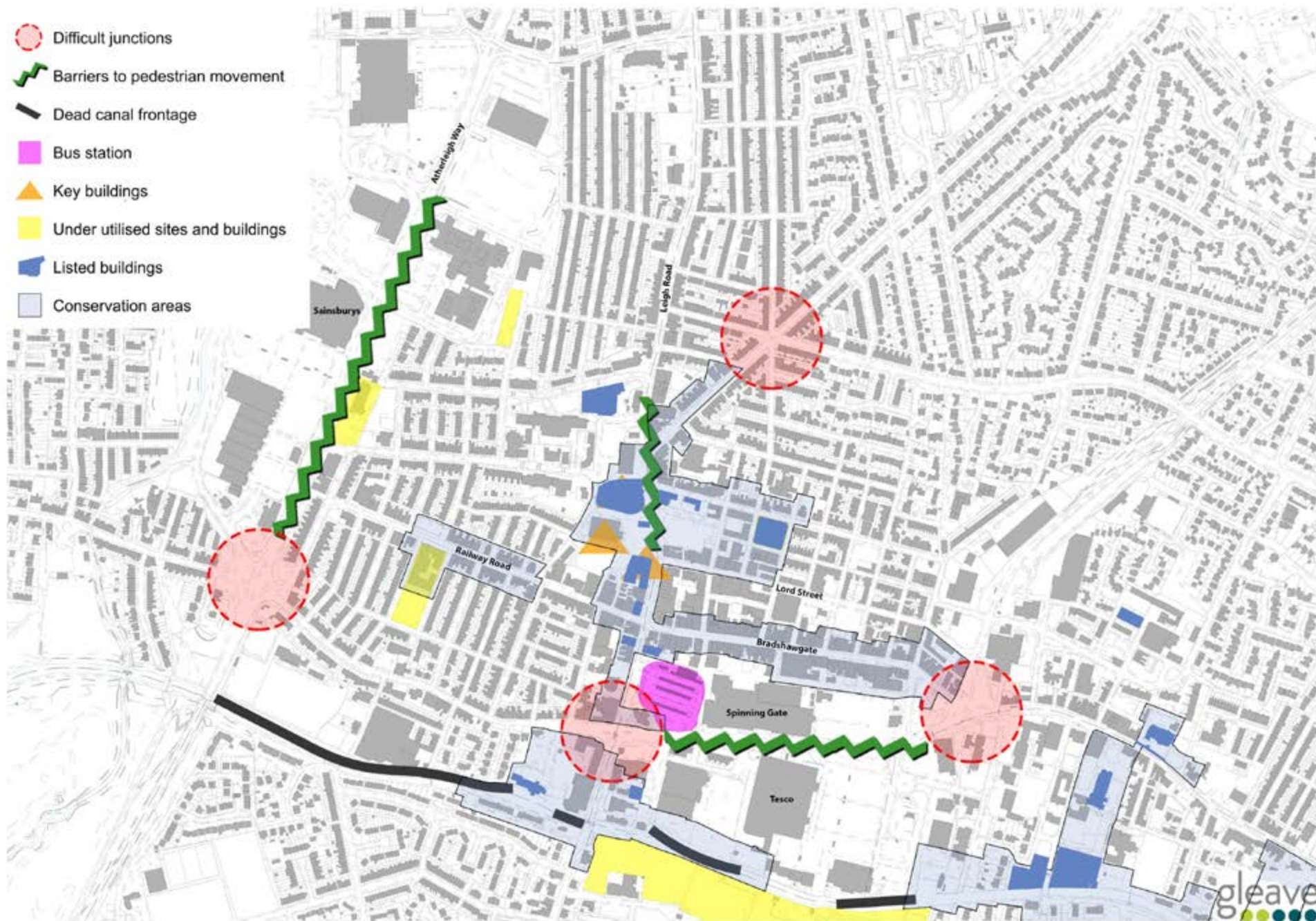
The ten characteristics of a well-designed place set out in the National Design Guide will form the urban design principles to shape and guide development:

- Development should understand and relate well to its site and context, including its heritage, history and culture.
- Development should respond to the existing local character, be well-designed, high quality and attractive and create character and identity.
- Development should use land and space efficiently, include appropriate building types and forms, and incorporate clear destinations.
- Development should provide for an integrated network or routes for all modes of transport, a clear structure and hierarchy of connected streets and well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users.
- Development should provide for high quality, green open spaces with a variety of landscapes and activities, including play, improve and enhance water management and support rich and varied biodiversity.
- Development should create well-located and designed, high quality, attractive and safe public spaces where people will want to spend time.
- Development should include a suitable mix of uses, either within the site itself or within the locality, include within residential development a mix of tenures, types and sizes of homes, and be socially inclusive.

- Development should create healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environments, be well-related to external amenity and public spaces and have quality and convenient but discrete provision for storage, waste, servicing and utilities.
- Development should follow the energy hierarchy, including through the selection of material and construction techniques, and be resilient to climate change.
- Development should facilitate good management and maintenance, be adaptable to changing needs and evolving technologies and create a sense of ownership within the community.

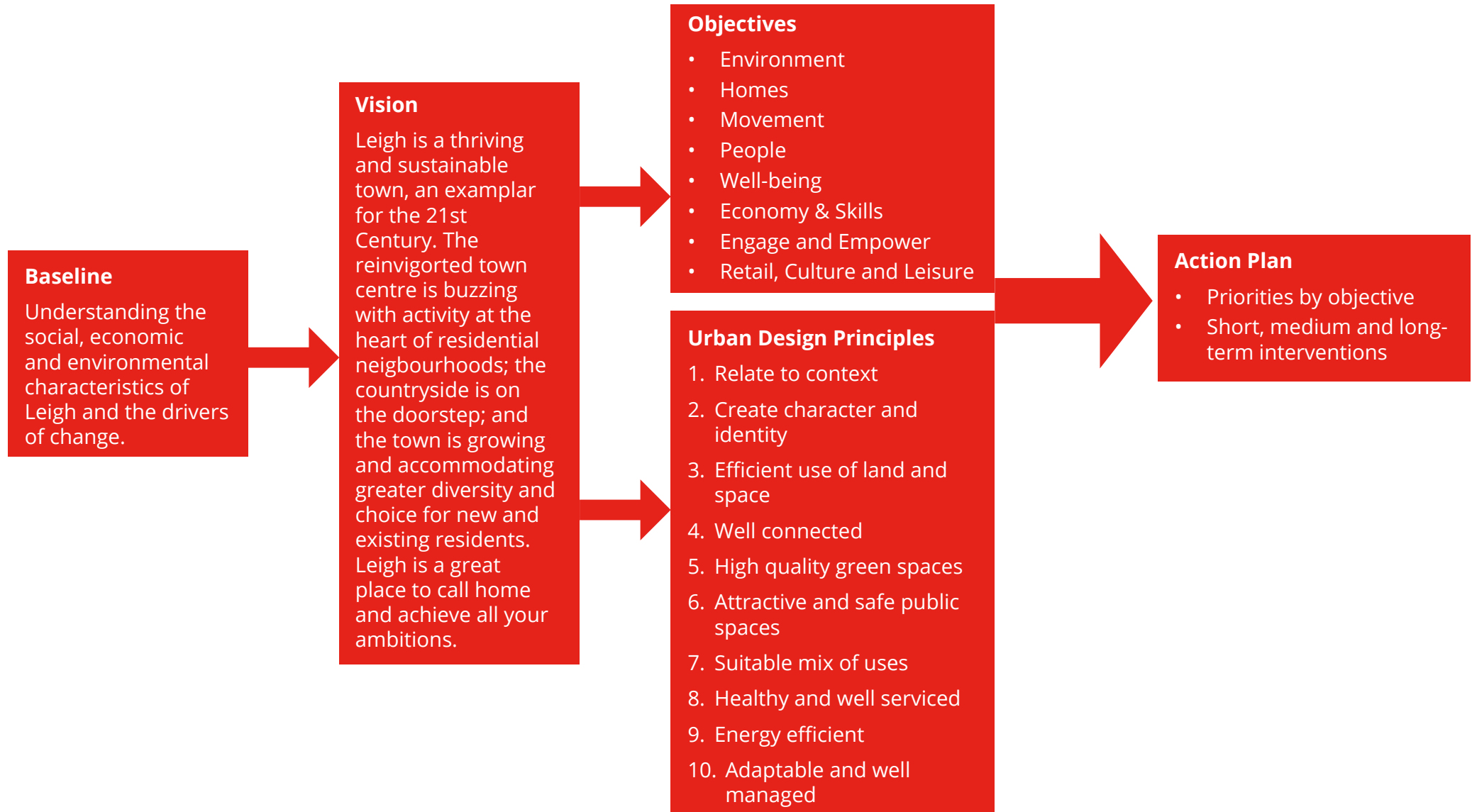


Constraints and Opportunities



5. A Future for Leigh: Action Plan

This Framework sets a vision and route-plan to guide the future development in Leigh – it is deliberately not prescriptive. Flexibility is essential to respond to the continually changing forces that are shaping our town centres. The vision, objectives and urban design principles have been informed by an understanding of the key drivers for change and the town's characteristics in consultation with stakeholders.



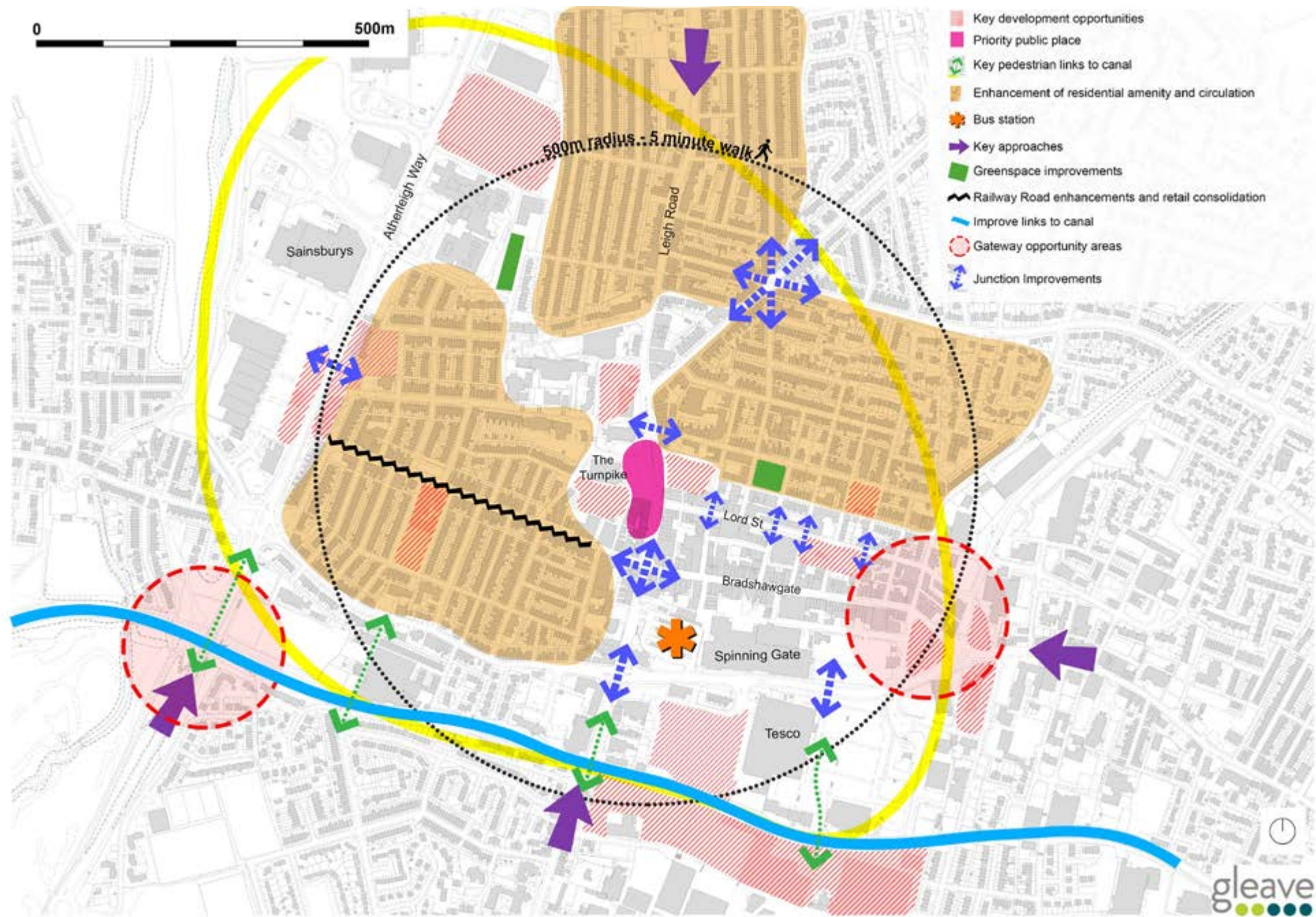
A Place-Making Framework plan

There is a clear arc of place-making opportunity in the town centre with the Civic Square and Bradshawgate at its heart. The overarching actions are to:

- Better connect the outer commercial anchors at Parsonage Retail Park and Leigh Sports Village to the heart and create `one town centre` experience.
- Provide significant environmental improvements within the residential neighbourhoods and prioritise good quality safe access to the central core and beyond.
- Break the traffic dominated collar at Atherleigh Way, Spinning Jenny Way, Lord Street, Market Place and Railway Road to make routes across the town centre easier and more attractive to pedestrians.
- Introduce quality public realm and new open space into the heart of the town centre.
- Promote new infill development and facilitate the redevelopment of vacant/ under-utilised sites and premises. These sites may be suitable for a range of uses, but in particular residential – the town centre should be a first class place to call home.
- Prioritise gateway site opportunities which will have a game-changing impact on the perception of Leigh as a town centre of choice.
- Ensure that the canal is embraced as an accessible asset and amenity of the town centre with improved routes and connections to it and across it.



Place Making Masterplan



Action Plan: Key Actions by Objective



Environment

1. Make the town centre greener with green spaces, street trees, green walls and green roofs, green spaces and create habitats for nature
2. Fully utilise the opportunities the canal presents as a green corridor
3. Improve the key approaches into the town centre
4. Enhance the historic built environment
5. Support the climate change agenda by ensuring new development is designed to high environmental standards.



Homes

1. Provide a mix of quality new homes of different types and tenures in the town centre - a home for all.
2. Promote neighbourhood management
3. Work with landlords to raise standards particularly in the private rented sector



Movement

1. Prioritise pedestrians throughout the town centre
2. Reduce the severance caused by major roads
3. Reduce through traffic in the town centre
4. Ensure that car parking provision is optimised with spaces where they are needed but other car parks redeveloped for more productive uses.



People

1. Create a town centre that residents can genuinely be proud of
2. Ensure access to life-long learning opportunities and raise aspirations
3. Be an age friendly town
4. Provide vulnerable people with the care and support they require

Wellbeing

1. Promote healthy lifestyles including walking and cycling as part of every day life
2. Work with partners to address crime and anti-social behaviour
3. Promote access to healthcare services in the community
4. New developments to consider well-being through good design and landscaping

Economy & Skills

1. Support the vitality of the core town centre
2. Create spaces for businesses to thrive including start-ups and growing businesses
3. Ensure people are equipped to make the right choices about their jobs and careers



Engage and Empower

1. Support the establishment and development of a town centre business forum
2. Continue to work with partners to provide opportunities for people to become active members of their community
3. Continue to empower young people to play an active role in the future of their town centre

Retail, Culture and Leisure

1. Develop the Civic Square as a vibrant hub for civic and cultural activity, capitalising upon the Turnpike Centre and Town Hall
2. Nurture the establishment of independent traders and a quality evening offer at Leighs "east end" (Bradshawgate)
3. Capitalise on facilities at Leigh Sports Village and improve linkages for residents.
4. Improve the offer at the market

Action Plan: Short, Medium and Long Term Interventions

| Action | Short (years 0-2) (Lead partner) | Medium (years 3-6) (Lead partner) | Long (years 7 plus) (Lead partner) |
|-------------|--|---|---|
| Environment | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sites identified to create a series of linked green spaces, including street tree planting across the town centre. (Council) 2. Feasibility assessment completed for the enhancement of St Helen's Road frontage, near West Bridgewater Street. (Council) 3. Leigh town centre's four Conservation Areas reappraised with priorities for enhancement identified. (Council) 4. Planning enforcement action concentrating on unauthorised changes to buildings within the town centre and Conservation Areas. (Council) 5. Western approach to town centre on the canal around Twist Lane/ Leigh Miners RLFC improved. (Landowner/Council support) 6. Opportunities to enhance the bus station and its relationship with the wider town centre identified. (Council/TfGM) 7. Promote 'In Bloom' opportunities to enhance the attractiveness of Leigh. (Council/Community) 8. Invest in infrastructure at Pennington Flash Country Park, including the visitor centre. (IHL/Council) 9. Enhancement of the Leigh Civic Square. (Council) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A new pocket park is created, and new street trees are planted in the town centre and at gateway locations. (Council) 2. Delivery of the enhancement of St Helen's Road frontage (near West Bridgewater Street). (Council/Developer) 3. Implement the priorities identified in Conservation Area Appraisals. (Council) 4. Expand planning enforcement work on unauthorised changes to buildings within the town centre and Conservation Areas. (Council) 5. Enhancement to the bus station and surrounding environment. (Council/TfGM) 6. Ensure that any development along the canal is designed to optimise the relationship between the town centre and canal corridor. (Council) 7. Improve physical linkages between the town centre and Pennington Flash, Lilford Park, Pennington Hall Park, utilising the canal corridor and other off-road routes. (Council/Landowners) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver the remaining improvements identified in Conservation Area Appraisals. (Council) 2. Promote a greener, carbon neutral town centre. (Council, all Partners). |

| Action | Short (years 0-2) (Lead partner) | Medium (years 3-6) (Lead partner) | Long (years 7 plus) (Lead partner) |
|--------|--|---|---|
| Homes | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New council homes start construction at: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Wharfdale, Henry Street b) Railway Arches Car Park, Brown Street (Council) 2. Further opportunities for the building of council homes within the town centre are identified. (Council) 3. Facilitate commencement of development on site at: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) West Bridgewater Street b) Former College building, Railway Road c) Rear of former College building, Railway Road (Council/ Private Sector) 4. Identify potential opportunities and feasibility for residential use of upper floors above businesses (also business and cultural/leisure). (Council/Private Sector) 5. New communities are under construction at Westleigh Waterfront and North Leigh Park that are serviced by Leigh Town Centre. (Private Sector) 6. A range of tools such as an Ethical Landlord scheme and an action plan for empty properties are developed and implemented to enhance neighbourhoods. (Council/ Private Sector) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New council homes are completed at: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Wharfdale, Henry Street b) Railway Arches Car Park, Brown Street (Council) 2. Development has taken place or commenced or is in the pipeline for further council homes within the town centre (Council) 3. Development is completed at: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) West Bridgewater Street b) Former College building, Railway Road c) Rear of former College building, Railway Road (Council/Private Sector) 4. In partnership with building owners, a programme of intervention to provide good quality residential accommodation on upper floors above shops is in place. (Council/ Private Sector) 5. Construction of new communities is continuing at Westleigh Waterfront and North Leigh Park leading to increased use of Leigh Town Centre. (Private Sector) 6. A range of tools to improve neighbourhoods are being successfully implemented including bringing empty properties back into use for affordable housing (Council) 7. Problem private rental sector properties are identified and acquired to ensure affordable, well managed and maintained properties. (Council) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opportunities to expand town centre housing offer including specifically for young professionals and older people are implemented. (Council) 2. The establishment of attractive large-scale housing sites is expanding the town centre catchment. (Private Sector) 3. Delivery of quality new homes within Leigh town centre (Private Sector) 4. Improved property and management standards are in place to alleviate demand on social housing stock in Leigh. (Private Sector) |

| Action | Short (years 0-2) (Lead partner) | Medium (years 3-6) (Lead partner) | Long (years 7 plus) (Lead partner) |
|----------|--|--|---|
| Movement | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Construct a new pedestrian bridge across the canal to connect West Bridgewater Street and The Loom/Canal towpath. (Council/ Private Sector) 2. Pedestrian and cycling environment is improved on the B5215 corridor, including crossings at Atherleigh Way, Spinning Jenny Way and Leigh Road. (Council) 3. Review town centre traffic circulation to identify priority opportunities to reduce unnecessary through traffic. (Council) 4. A town centre parking strategy is developed (with full consultation) identifying options for the use of technology and signage for improved traffic management. (Council) 5. Investment underway to enhance pedestrian and cycle routes to key destinations within and around the town centre including on and off - road routes. (Council) 6. Improve wayfinding and pedestrian routes from the town centre to Leigh Sports Village and other attractors to increase footfall and promote sustainable travel choices. (Council) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continuing investment to enhance pedestrian and cycle routes to key destinations in and around town centre. (Council) 2. Enhance route between Loom car park and east end of Bradshawgate to maintain and enhance night-time economy uses. (Council) 3. Continuing implementation of schemes to reduce unnecessary through traffic in the town centre. (Council) 4. Measures identified in the town centre parking strategy are implemented, including use of technology and signage. (Council/Private Sector) 5. Linkages improved between Bradshawgate/ Railway Road junction and Civic Square to enable easier pedestrian access between retail core and cultural offer. (Council) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver further changes to town centre traffic circulation needed to reduce unnecessary through-traffic. (Council) 2. Explore options for the extension of the guided busway/ bus priority route to connect Leigh with Leigh Sports Village and Wigan town centre – potentially linked to wider highway investment proposed (to create a link between the M6 and M61) across the borough. (Council/ TfGM) |

| Action | Short (years 0-2) (Lead partner) | Medium (years 3-6) (Lead partner) | Long (years 7 plus) (Lead partner) |
|--------|---|--|---|
| People | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A programme of cultural and community events is delivered in partnership with local organisations and people. (Council/Community) 2. Promote opportunities for local groups and organisations to bid for Community Investment Funding to support children and young people in Leigh (Council) 3. Support people to secure safe, affordable, long term accommodation (Council) 4. Set up a Town Centre Task Force and Finish Group and a multi-agency action plan to address anti-social behaviour issues in the town centre (Council/Police/Community) 5. Ensure people are involved in the design of future infrastructure and development from the outset. (Council and Developers) 6. Involve local people in 'In Bloom' to increase the attractiveness of Leigh (Council/Community) 7. Develop a Leigh Community Cohesion Plan to support strong community relationships and our diverse communities (Council/Community) 8. Enhance local youth provision linking with existing facilities, assets and providers in the town" (Council) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver a set of regular events and activities which bring people into the town centre. (Council) 2. Ensure communities and services are working together to identify and address issues at the earliest opportunity and put multi-agency solutions in place (Council/Partners) 3. Identify opportunities to improve youth offer within the town centre (Council/Youth groups) 4. Bring together residents, neighbourhood policing teams and other services to support young people and reduce anti-social behaviour and crime (Council) 5. Ensure the boroughwide Place and Community Safety Partnership provides leadership in tackling community safety issues in Leigh. (Council/Police/Partners) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a range of new sustainable community assets, involving a wide cross section of residents in Leigh (Council/Community) 2. Enable existing and emerging community organisations and spaces, to bring together people in Leigh and offer opportunities for learning and self-development. (Council/Community) 3. Create a safe and vibrant town centre offer based on the needs of local people, with increased foot fall and usage levels. (Council) |

| Action | Short (years 0-2) (Lead partner) | Medium (years 3-6) (Lead partner) | Long (years 7 plus) (Lead partner) |
|--------------------|--|---|--|
| Well-being | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invest in the Local Delivery Pilot Fund, in a range of projects to increase physical activity and improve the wellbeing of people in Leigh (Council/NHS/Partners) 2. Actively promote wellbeing services in the local area through community and voluntary organisations. (Council/Voluntary Sector) 3. Improve the attractiveness of the Town Centre Environment to encourage people to come into the town (Council/Businesses/ Partners) 4. Consider the routes into the town centre and ways to encourage residents to travel by public transport, bike or on foot. (Council, developers, residents) 5. Build in access to walking, cycling and a range of leisure activity through the design of spaces in the town centre and beyond (Council) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase physical activity in communities through available funding programmes. (Council/Partners/VCSE) 2. Provide access to integrated employment support, whilst undergoing health treatment (Council/ NHS/ Partners) 3. Ensure plans for the town centre cater for a wide range of groups, for example is Autism or dementia friendly (Council) 4. Improve transport links across Leigh and the borough to ensure access for Leigh residents to health facilities (Council/Partners) 5. Develop plans to increase clean air and reduce pollution to improve the health of residents in Leigh (Council) 6. Ensure future town centre developments are designed to create safe and attractive places that encourage residents to come together and enjoy their local town (Council, developers, Residents) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a thriving town centre with opportunities for more social interactions, that offers activities for all age groups (Council, developers, residents) 2. To promote a greener, carbon neutral town centre. |
| Economy and skills | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achieving a more visible town centre presence for Wigan and Leigh College (WALC with support from Council) 2. Local businesses to support town centre businesses and activities through employee incentives and use of local supply chain (Businesses/Council) 3. Deliver and support an enhanced market offer (Council) 4. Assess Leigh's night-time economy and identify the practical steps required to support this sector to grow. (Council) 5. Delivery of a work and skills hub for young people in Leigh. (Council) 6. Support local businesses to develop Kick Start opportunities in Leigh (Council/Businesses) 7. Support the delivery of the borough's Employment and Skills Strategy in Leigh. (Council) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitate the establishment of a viable flexible business space which is stimulating demand for follow-on space. (Council/Developers) 2. Deliver a programme of interventions to provide good quality upper floor space for business use. (Council/Landowners) 3. Support and enhance the online presence of local businesses and retailers. (Council) 4. Support the private sector with investment to drive a diverse and safe night-time economy. 5. Have a well-established and successful shop-local scheme for businesses and residents (Council/Businesses) 6. Support the delivery of the borough's Employment and Skills Strategy in Leigh. (Council) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take action to ensure Leigh has a good range and depth of business accommodation in the town centre with a low rate of vacancies (Council) 2. Put policies in place to ensure a move towards a more balanced economy with greater representation in growth sectors (Council) 3. Create the right environment to enable more opportunities for higher paid, skilled jobs within Leigh (Council) 4. Support the delivery of the borough's Employment and Skills Strategy in Leigh. (Council) |

| Action | Short (years 0-2) (Lead partner) | Medium (years 3-6) (Lead partner) | Long (years 7 plus) (Lead partner) |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|
| Engagement and empowerment | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Roll out 'Our Town' Community engagement activities in Leigh (Council) 2. Develop a town centre business forum, in collaboration with local community leaders and organisation to work together on plans to improve the town centre (Council/Businesses/Voluntary sector) 3. Maximise funding opportunities for people to develop community ideas, by working in partnership with voluntary and community sector organisations and groups to support funding bids (Council/Businesses/Voluntary sector) 4. Support the development of a vibrant volunteer culture in the town. (Council/Businesses/Voluntary sector) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage social entrepreneurship and business skills in young people, in partnership with local community organisations. (Council/Businesses/Voluntary sector) 2. Provide opportunities for young people to co-produce youth provision in the town centre. (Council/Businesses/Voluntary sector) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with local businesses to create opportunities for people, including placements and employment, creating community wealth and social value. (Council/Businesses/Voluntary sector) 2. Provide opportunities for young people to co-produce local services. (Council/Businesses/Voluntary sector) |

| Action | Short (years 0-2) (Lead partner) | Medium (years 3-6) (Lead partner) | Long (years 7 plus) (Lead partner) |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|
| Retail, leisure and culture | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide enhanced exhibition and meeting space in the refurbished Town Hall including the Revealing Wigan Archives. (Council) 2. Support the growing cluster of independent traders at the east end of Bradshawgate (Council) 3. Identify potential opportunities and feasibility for leisure and cultural use of upper floors above businesses (also business and homes). (Council/Landowners) 4. Enhance the existing indoor market (Council) 5. Commission a feasibility study into extending the Turnpike Centre and improving interface with Civic Square (Council, GM Evergreen Fund) 6. Expand partnership working across the local cultural sector to deliver against agreed prioritise. (Council/Voluntary sector) 7. Develop a cultural partnership to deliver on priorities including The Turnpike, WigLe Dance, Leigh Film Society, Leigh Spinners and others (Council/Voluntary sector) 8. Develop and undertake a programme of activity to celebrate 50 years of the Turnpike in 2021. (Council/Turnpike) 9. Develop and undertake a programme of activity to capture the benefit of hosting Rugby League World Cup and UEFA Women's Euro Cup at Leigh Sports Village in 2021 with clear links to town centre to increase footfall. (Council/LSV) 10. Explore ideas to celebrate the famous people from Leigh and create options for a physical monuments/artwork/town trails. (Council/Community) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grow the number and range of cultural events with partners and community groups to increase the offer in the town centre (Council/Voluntary sector) 2. Civic Square is enhanced to become more attractive space for the whole community to use. (Community) 3. Implementation of the preferred options from feasibility of extending the Turnpike (Council/Arts Council?) 4. Opportunities explored to improve amenity at Parsonage Retail Park and encourage linked trips with less reliance on car. (Council/Private Sector) 5. Continued delivery of the five-year Cultural Manifesto (Council) 6. Deliver the preferred options to celebrate famous people from Leigh in the form of monuments/artwork/town trails. (Council/Community) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a more visible cultural sector in Leigh Town Centre (Council) 2. Enable larger proportions of local people to become engaged in cultural activity (Council) |



Delivering Change

This Leigh Town Centre Strategic Regeneration Framework sets out a vision for collaborative action over the next 10 years. It is a long term vision and will take time to deliver. The council and Believe in Leigh board have a key role in delivering this strategy but the vision can only be realised through partnership working across all sectors of the community and with private sector investors and developers playing their part.

We need to work within Leigh's existing infrastructure – roads, canal, buildings – to shape the town centre, we are not starting from scratch! The council and other public sector partners own some sites where we can directly influence development, but the majority of land and buildings are in private ownership. It is therefore essential that we work together with the private sector to facilitate the delivery of the right kind of development in the right places.

A range of tools will be used to implement this SRF:

Planning policy and development

management – the council's planning policy framework is formed by the Local Plan and supported by supplementary planning documents. We will look for opportunities to augment this to support delivery of this Framework. The council has already introduced proposals for an Article 4 Direction to bring more conversions of properties to homes in multiple occupation (HMOs) under the control of the planning system in central Leigh. We anticipate other policy measures may include:

production of development briefs or design codes for key sites; review of conservation areas (including refresh of appraisals and management plans); and additional article 4 directions.

Private sector land and building owners – we will work with land and building owners to support development and access funding where appropriate. Where private owners' current activities or future aspirations undermine the SRF vision, the council will consider how it may intervene to ensure the delivery of appropriate and sustainable development.

Council-owned land and buildings – we will consider how council owned sites and buildings can be most productively used to contribute to delivering the vision. This will include: directly investing in the buildings to improve the condition and/or uses (e.g. the refurbishment of Leigh Town Hall); working with public, private and community sector partners to develop proposals for key land and buildings; direct development; disposal of sites; and using its assets and expertise to facilitate partners to deliver appropriate schemes.

Attracting investment and funding – this Framework will be a key tool in accelerating development, accessing funding and attracting investment. Demonstrating a shared vision for the future of the town centre and a clear route plan for delivery will give potential investors in both the public and private sector the confidence to commit resources. This Framework will be used to attract investment

and steer it towards key opportunities where regeneration impact is greatest. It will help define the funding priorities for Believe in Leigh, be used to lever funding from the private sector and underpin bids for public sector funding.

Developers – attracting development is critical to delivering positive change, this Framework articulates to developers the type and quality of development sought in the town centre and will help to shape emerging proposals. There are a wide range of developers already active in the Leigh area. We will work with these and seek to attract new developers to the area to secure the best development for Leigh. Opportunities for capturing social value will be explored to support the vision of this Framework. The council will also continue to consider opportunities for direct development and for partnerships with Registered Social Landlords in particular to bring forward homes to meet specific needs (such as the Etherstone Street dementia housing scheme).

Developer contributions – the council will seek to negotiate appropriate contributions from developers to mitigate the impact of new development, for example through enhanced social, green and transport infrastructure.

Enforcement – the council will seek to ensure that development is in accordance with planning and building control regimes and will consider pursuing enforcement action where appropriate to rectify any breaches.

Neighbourhood management – a neighbourhood management approach is essential to tackle some of the issues facing our residential areas. We will continue to bring together key partner agencies and services (fire, police, health, youth, registered social landlords and private landlords) to make neighbourhoods safe and attractive places to live.

Town centre management – a partnership approach to town centre management will be important to ensure all the inter-related town centre issues are addressed comprehensively. This should include partners including; Greater Manchester Police, the council's regulatory services, business and community representatives. Approaches such as Town Centre Ambassadors should be considered.

Business support – the council will continue to work with existing business and inward investors to support the growth of the local economy and enhance workforce skills.

Community engagement and support – The Deal 2030 acknowledges that delivering vibrant town centres for all can only be done with the support of the community. The role of the community is summarised in “your part” of The Deal as: visit your town centre; keep it clean and tidy; attend local events.

Monitoring and review

This Leigh Town Centre Strategic Regeneration Framework is designed to be used as a tool to guide investment and shape development. The council and Believe in Leigh will monitor performance against the eight objectives and progress against the action plan.

Several sites already have emerging proposals or are under construction such as Hilton Park and Great Bridgewater Street. There is still a role for this Framework to play in reinforcing the need for quality in the delivery of development, its future management and stewardship and also to ensure new development is stitched into its surroundings. Sites will advance at different paces – there are some opportunities for short term action, other developments will take several years to materialise.



Believe in Leigh

Our places shape us – they influence where we go, when we go there, how we get there and how we feel. Leigh town centre has the potential to become a vibrant heart and focus for the surrounding community. A successful town centre will drive economic prosperity and well-being throughout Leigh. We believe in Leigh.

