

# **3.0 Policy Background**



Eastern Gateway Today



## 3.0

### 3.1 National policy context

Central Government guidance has over recent years highlighted the important role of design within the planning system and its contribution to successful regeneration, place making and delivery of the sustainable communities plan.

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering sustainable development (PPS1) states that 'Good design ensures attractive, useable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning'.

Furthermore PPS1 states that design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted. Good practice in planning for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design is set out in By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice; Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention; and Planning and Access for Disabled People: A Good Practice Guide.

Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres states that it is essential that town centres provide a high-quality and safe environment if they are to remain attractive and competitive and that policies for the design of development for main town centre uses, regardless of location, and for development in town centres, should promote high quality and inclusive design, in order to improve the character and quality of the area in which such development is located and the way it functions.

Planning Policy Guidance note PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) and PPG16 (Archaeology and Planning) are both relevant to development within and in the vicinity area.

By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice is the governments core urban design guidance document. It identifies the following objectives or principles of design; they are mutually reinforcing:

1. **Character** – to promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture.
2. **Continuity and enclosure** – to promote the continuity of street frontages and the enclosure of space by development which clearly defines private and public areas.

3. **Quality of the public realm** – to promote public spaces and routes that are attractive, safe, uncluttered and work effectively for all in society, including disabled and elderly people.
4. **Ease of movement** – to promote accessibility and local permeability by making places that connect with each other and are easy to move through, putting people before traffic and integrating land uses and transport.
5. **Legibility** – to promote legibility through development that provides recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks to help people find their way around.
6. **Adaptability** – to promote adaptability through development that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions.
7. **Diversity** – To promote diversity and choice through a mix of compatible developments and uses that work together to create viable places that respond to local needs.

### 3.2 Local policy context

#### Newcastle Under Lyme Local Plan 2003

A number of design related policies form part of the are relevant to the study area they include the following:

Policy S15 states that ‘the external design and appearance of all new development or extensions and alterations to existing buildings must be in visual harmony with the character of the area in which the development is situated. Buildings should be massed and grouped together so that in conjunction with varied space between buildings and imaginative landscape treatment they create notable architectural compositions that add distinction to their surroundings and seek to maintain local distinctiveness.’

Policy R11 states that ‘any development adjoining the ring road should add to the attractiveness of the approaches to the Town Centre. Buildings and the treatment of spaces and edges should display a high quality of design, reflecting visual importance of prominent locations and, where appropriate, provide landmark features at main road junctions’.

#### **Local Development Framework**

The Local Plan will be replaced by the Local Development Framework (LDF). The preparation of the Newcastle Town Centre Action Plan (AAP) has commenced and a draft is planned by the Autumn of this year. It will form a part of the LDF. The study will provide an input into this process and offers the potential to consider the wider implications of developing integrated urban design policy and guidance for the wider town centre area. The AAP will reflect Newcastle’s potential, identified by Renew

North Staffordshire, to become a fine example of how town centre living can become attractive and popular. Furthermore the AAP will enable an integrated consideration of the regeneration potential of prominent development sites within the study area, the Lower Street corridor and other central locations facing significant change.

#### **Market Renewal Prospectus**

The Market Renewal Prospectus prepared by Renew North Staffordshire (March 2004) recognises ‘that a high quality of urban design has to be integral to the redevelopment of the conurbation’. It recognises the role of North Staffordshire Architecture and Urban Design Centre, established by Urban Vision, to promote design led regeneration and urban renaissance within the sub region.

#### **Public Realm Strategy**

The Public Realm Strategy (March 2004, Taylor Young) identified a number of issues with a potential impact on the study area they include the following:

- Copthall House and Jubilee Baths are identified as prominent gateway sites with significant townscape potential, albeit longer term opportunities;
- Nelson Place is identified as a location for a proposed gateway feature;

- Potential exists to strengthen pedestrian connection between the town centre and the Brampton/King Street Professional Quarter;
- Potential exists for an at grade pedestrian crossing on Barracks Road linking Queen’s Gardens with Jubilee Baths.

#### **Staffordshire Local Transport Plan**

The Brunswick Street/George Street A52 and the King Street A53 are both designated within the Local Transport Plan (LTP) as Quality Partnership Routes. Key bus services to Hanley, Stoke rail station and beyond operate on these routes. Discussions with local transport officers indicate that despite the designation of the routes as Quality Partnership Routes, there are no on-road bus priority measures (such as bus lanes) on these routes, nor are there any elsewhere within the study area. There are no other area specific proposals contained within the LTP.

# **4.0 Context Analysis**





## 4.0

### 4.1 Introduction

The following sections sets out the findings of a context analysis:

- Study area wider context;
- Historical development;
- Land use structure;
- Movement and access structure;
- Building design overview;
- Streetscape and landscape design overview;
- Urban analysis;
- Identifying potential.

### 4.2 Study area wider context

#### Strategic location

The study area forms the eastern gateway to Newcastle town centre from Hanley and Stoke. However, the immediate sense of arrival is poor reflecting the nature, scale and appearance of frontage development and the quality of the public realm. The study area is located on the boundary between Newcastle and the City of Stoke on Trent. It lies within the North Staffordshire Pathfinder area in which Renew will be putting forward proposals for work and improvements over the next 10-15 years as part

of its housing market renewal programme. Plan 06 shows the location of the study area within this wider geographical context.

#### A major arterial route

The significance of Brunswick Road (A52) as a major arterial route to and from the town centre and as a strategic route within the conurbation is reflected in the heavy volumes of traffic and bus services which use it. The A52 is one of a number of such arterial routes (most with historic origins) which connect to the ring road. These routes share some similar characteristics and shared problems but also have individual aspects such as the form (height, scale and massing) of frontage development, the mix of land uses, the nature of the highway and traffic management regime (eg. dual carriageway, one way routing) and consequent knock on impacts on the quality of the pedestrian environment.

#### Impact of the ring road

The ring road acts as a significant barrier to pedestrian and cycle movement between the study area and the town centre. It has also perhaps acted to stifle the potential of the area and affected its image and perception in the minds of visitors, residents and the business community. Although originally continuously linked to the town centre (Hassell Street formerly connected directly with High Street) the area has become remote, inward looking and fragmented. It

is possible that the majority of town centre visitors regard it, if they are aware of it, as little more than a car parking area. However, more recent market interest and current development activity suggest that the availability of sites and the close proximity of prime retail frontages, the bus station, adjacent conservation areas, professional office accommodation within and adjacent to the area and good road connections now combine to make the area attractive for investment and therefore with significant potential for change.

#### Other potential areas of change

It is recognised that other potential areas of change exist in the wider AAP area including the Lower Street corridor. Possible tensions between these areas in terms of conflicting or competing land use proposals and urban design objectives will be resolved through the AAP preparation process. This will enable the study area to be set within a more integrated framework. This process may result in the need to make some adjustments to the vision, guidance and potential interventions identified in this study. Plan 07 shows the study area in relation the wider town centre and Lower Street corridor.



Plan 06 - Study area within the context  
of North Staffordshire conurbation



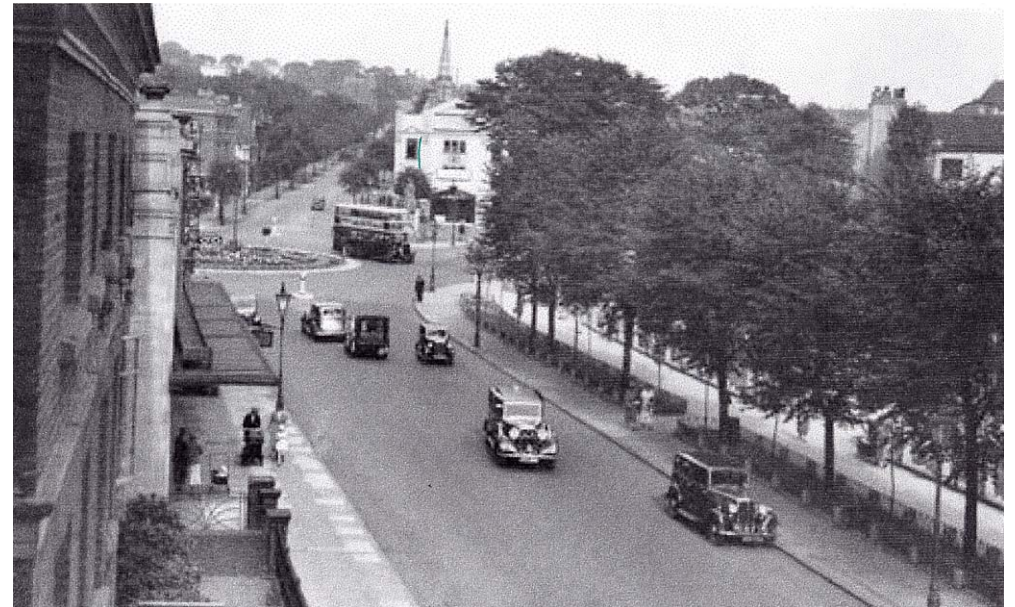
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**Plan 07 - Study area within the context of the Town Centre**



Station, 1964



Ironmarket, Newcastle - 1930's



## 4.0

### 4.3 Historical development

A desktop study of the historical development of the area was based upon the following:

- an analysis of Ordnance Survey mapping – 1836, 1898, 1952, 1963 and 1979 and comparisons with current map data;
- an analysis of selected historic photographs;
- research into the location and nature of listed buildings, conservation areas and historic features within and adjoining the study area; and

- consultation with Staffordshire County Council officers with responsibility for conservation to gather relevant background information.

An outline character appraisal and photographic survey were also undertaken, the former being summarised in Appendix 1.

#### Listed buildings and conservation areas

Listed buildings and conservation areas are identified on Plan 08. Part of the study area lies within the Town Centre Conservation Area. Stubbs Walk conservation area lies to the south of George Street and Hassell Street and is dominated by the open space that gives it its name, St. Pauls Church and its landmark spire, Newcastle School and historic residential and office properties on Marsh Parade and Mount Pleasant. Brampton Conservation area lies to the north of the study area and includes the open spaces of Brampton Park and Station Walks. Its southern boundary extends south over King Street to include the Borough Arms Hotel.



Nelson Place, 1925



Brunswick Street, 1930's

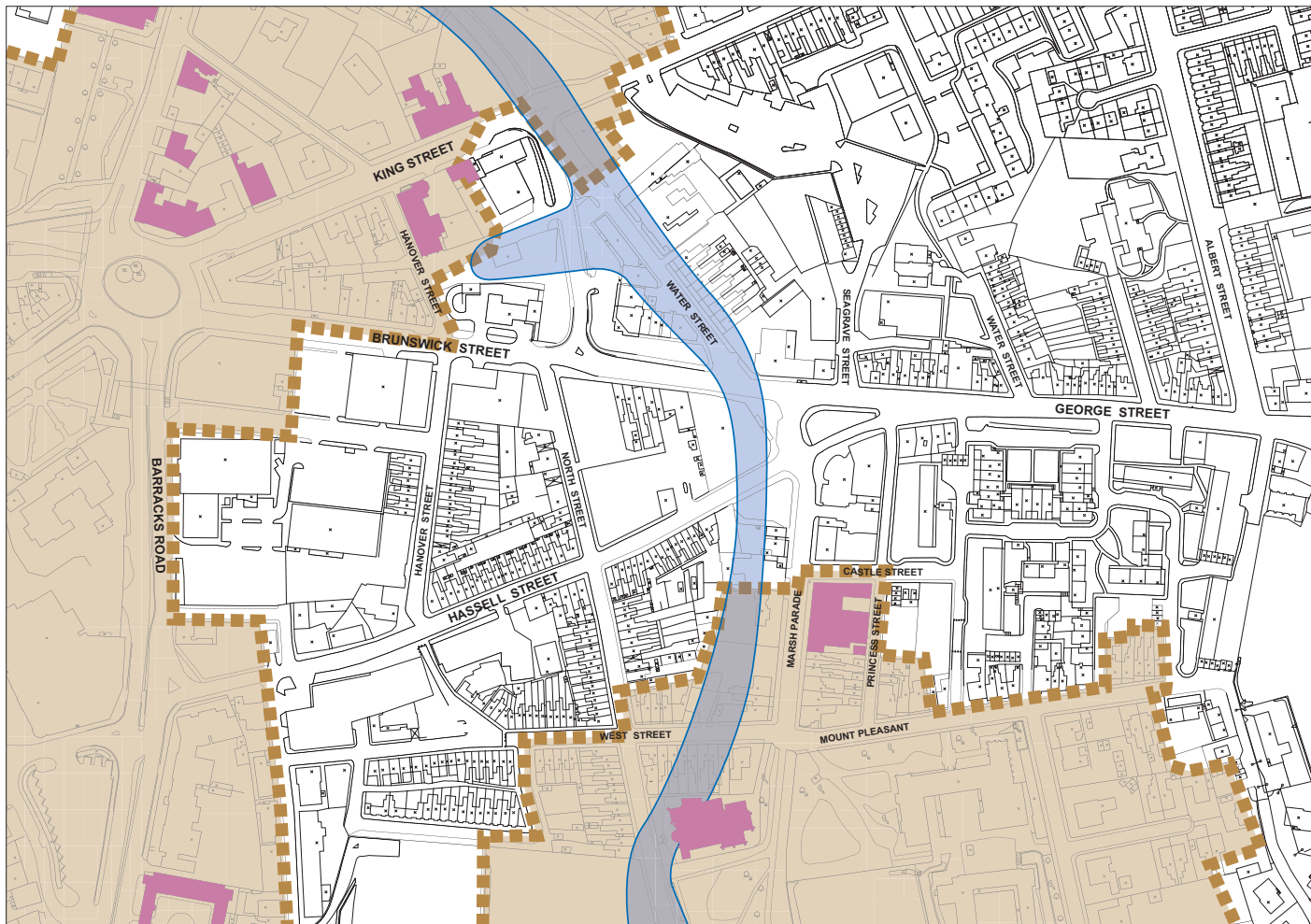




Historic Map, 1898



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**Plan 08 - Conservation Areas  
and Listed Buildings**

Listed Buildings

Conservation Areas

Approximate Line of Gresley's Canal



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### Origins and development

- Brunswick Street and Hassell Street (formerly Hassells) appear to be of ancient date running as they do from the heart of Newcastle up to what is now George Street and then joining the old roads connecting with Hanley and Stoke;
- Both are shown on the 1836 one-inch OS map at which time the study area had begun to develop; The map also shows the line of a branch of the Newcastle Upper Canal, known as the Sir Nigel Gresley Canal (Plan 08);
- The 1898 OS map shows the pattern of development and its immediate environs to have pretty much reached its modern form and extent contained by the NSR Market Drayton railway line to the north and Newcastle School and Stubbs Walks to the south;
- A mix of buildings reflects the late nineteenth century expansion typical of many industrial or semi industrial Midlands towns – Terraces of high density housing are interspersed with workshops and other pockets of small scale commercial activity;
- This 1898 density of urban grain is relieved by public and larger industrial buildings including an extensive saw mill (on the site of the vacant leisure building and timber yard);
- A rail head and goods yard occupied the majority of the block defined by Brunswick, Water, King and Hanover Streets;

- Development over the first 60 years of the twentieth century was generally small scale and piecemeal including the erection of the public baths and motor garages along Hassell Street;
- The crystal ballroom (now the Zanzibar nightclub) was built on the site of an earlier billiard hall sometime after 1955;
- During the 1960's and 1970's major changes occurred – Bagnell Street was widened and extended to form Barracks Road, the railway and goods yard closed and were redeveloped, the theatre-cinema at Nelson Place was demolished to make way for Copthall House and the tight grid of small streets to the south of George Street were redeveloped as a modern housing estate;
- The ring road cut the area off from the town centre and eroded the spatial qualities of Nelson Place, which in the 19th and early 20th centuries had been a focus of civic events and celebrations;
- Clearance of garages and the redevelopment of the saw mill site as a leisure building and car park completed the transformation of the area to what we see today.

### Prevailing and former uses

- Railway use dominated the northern edge of the study area while larger-scale industrial and public premises – saw mill, school, barracks, chapel, public baths etc. occupied the area nearest the town centre;

- The remainder of the area was occupied by a mixture of small scale residential, retail, and commercial uses, the exception being the block formed by the triangle of Brunswick, Hassell and North Streets which over time accommodated a range of commercial and public uses;
- The historic pattern of mixed use is still reflected in the current structure of the area.

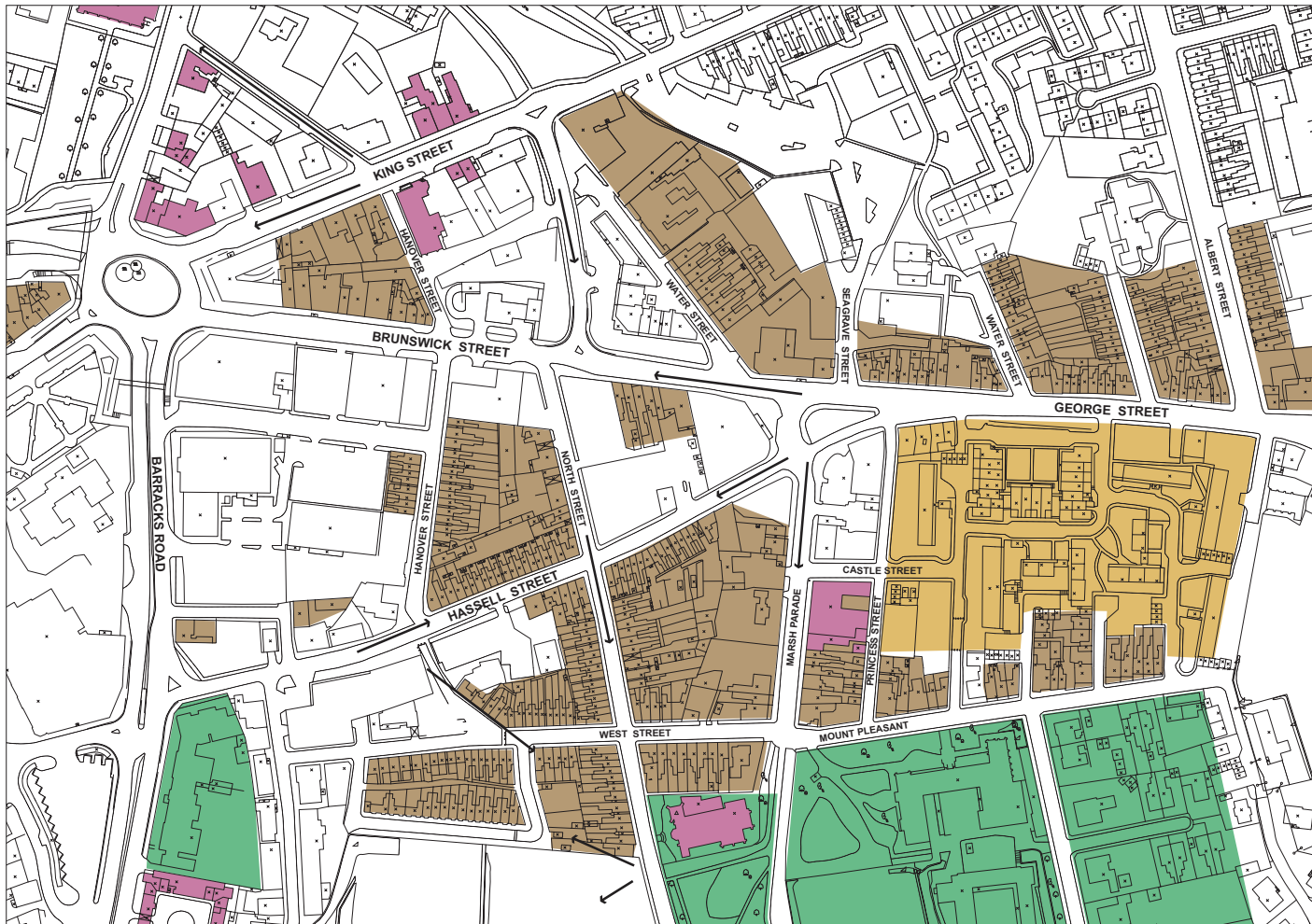
### Character areas

The character of the study area can be summarised in terms of three distinct zones that lend a positive sense of place as follows. They are shown on Plan 09.

- Zones with a fine grained traditional character – terraced housing intermixed with small-scale commercial and industrial premises;
- Zones with a more open and spacious traditional character;
- Zones with a loose, urban structure of bulky buildings moderately green landscape, predominantly housing.

All other areas are of neutral or negative character. Many of these areas are the result of relatively recent clearance and the introduction of large expanses of car parking.

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**Plan 09 - Character Analysis**

- Fine grained traditional character
- Leafy and open traditional character
- Post 1945 open estate character
- Listed Buildings
- Key view



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## 4.4 Land use structure

### Mixed use character

The study area has a mixed use character including housing, retail (eg. small specialist shops, timber merchant, car showroom), pubs, restaurants, takeaways, offices, car parks, a primary school, dance school and commercial premises. The pattern of land uses reflects aspects of the historical development of the area. It also possibly reflects a more edge of centre location and lower rents as compared to more prime locations within the town centre core. Principal land uses were surveyed within the study area and are shown on Plan 10.



Hassell Street

### Committed development

Committed development includes a Kwikfit retail unit on Brunswick Street and a significant residential apartment scheme on Hassell Street/Garden Street. The latter is currently on site.

### Major Planning Applications

Planning applications have been submitted for mixed use development on the Zanzibar (former nightclub) site and Titleys site both on Brunswick Street. Both are major applications and a significant density of development is proposed.

However, the overwhelmingly majority of proposed floor space is for residential apartment use. If delivered these developments, combined with the Hassell Street residential scheme, would create a new local resident profile. One that maybe more transient but also more affluent.

The appropriate redevelopment of the prominent Zanzibar site could make a major contribution to establishing a more positive image of the area and stimulate further investment and development activity.

The committed development schemes and planning applications suggest that the study area – its close proximity to the town centre (primary retail, bars and



George Street

restaurants) bus station, road links and the quality of areas to the immediate north and south of the study area – is an attractive location for investment.

### The evening economy

The closure of the Zanzibar nightclub, a significant venue within the town centre, may have a knock impact on the future viability of complementary evening economy uses such as takeaways, pubs, restaurants and taxi companies. However, the potential changes to the local residential profile as a result of new development may offer new business opportunities by providing a new resident customer base. This may encourage the market to respond, stimulating new investment better quality development and creative refurbishment of existing buildings. The closure of Zanzibar may also have the benefit of reducing incidence of anti-social behaviour within the area.



## 4.0

### Council land ownership

The Council own a number of sites within the study area; most are surface car parks. The Jubilee Baths and adjacent School Street car park represent a significant land holding with good access to the inner ring road and within a short walking distance of the town centre. It is understood that the long term viability of the Jubilee Baths, including the potential provision of another public swimming pool facility elsewhere in the town centre, is currently being considered by the Council.

### Car parking

Car parks closer to the ring road would appear to be used by short stay visitors to the town centre in preference to existing multi storey provision. King Street car park would appear to be used by Aspire employees (an organisation with a contract parking agreement with the Council), by employees of local businesses (such as those employed by professional services companies) and short stay visitors to local businesses and shops. However, we are unaware of any surveys to confirm the above or levels of occupancy. It has been suggested that pay and display car parking is an important aspect of supporting the local professional office sector which is of town centre significance. Furthermore redevelopment of car park sites should result in replacement provision, if necessary in the form of on site parking or multi storey car parks.



Hassell Street Car Park



Scott Street Car Park



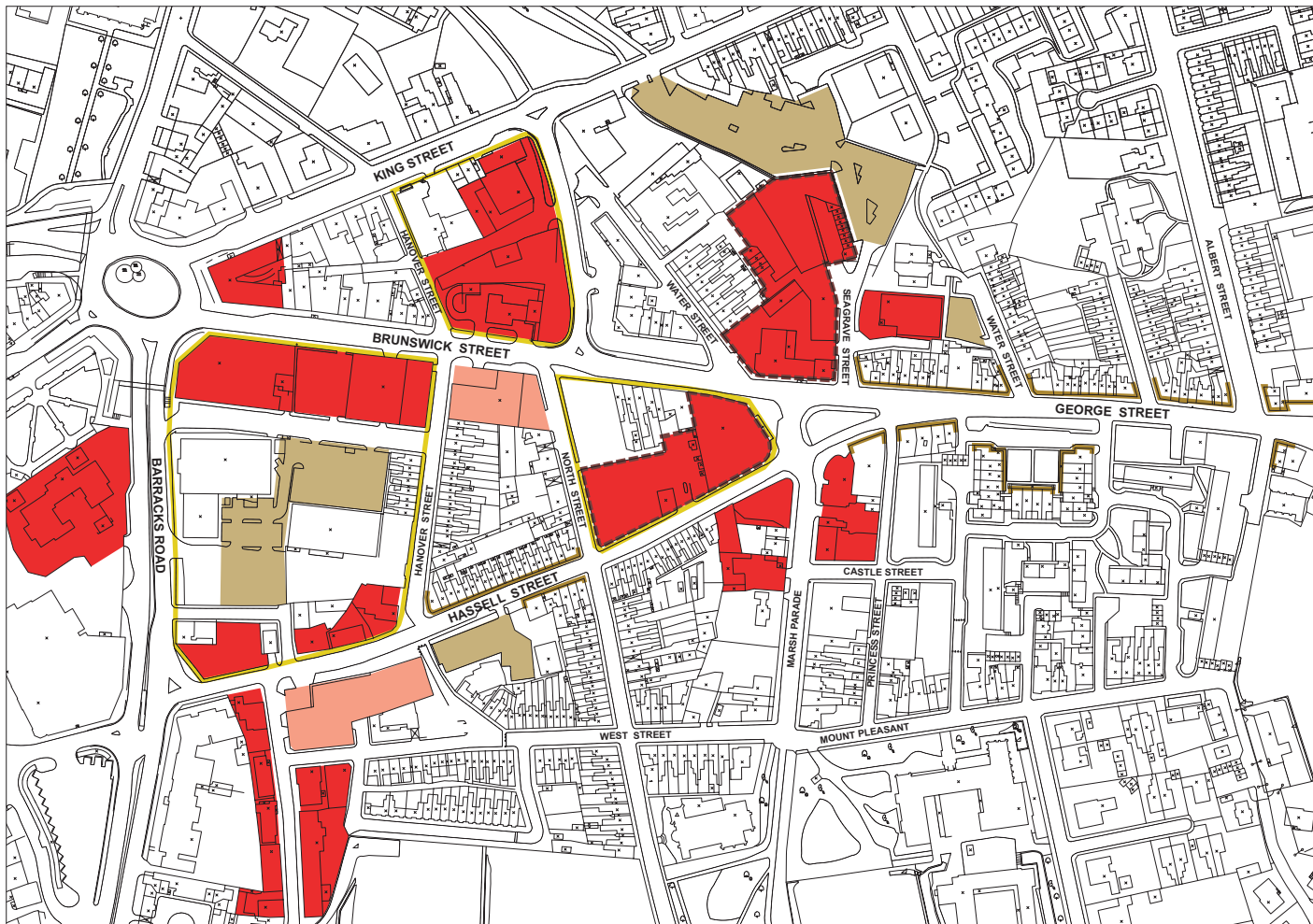
Hassell Street/Marsh Place Car Park



School Street Car Park



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**Plan 11 - Potential Development Sites**

- Potential Development Site ■
- Site with current planning application
- Potential to restructure block
- Committed development ■
- Surface parking ■
- Potential for frontage improvements ■



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## 4.5 Movement and access structure

### Vehicular routes network

The primary vehicular routes impacting on the study are:

- Brunswick Street/George Street A52 linking to Stoke;
- King Street A 53 linking to Hanley; and
- Barracks Road the eastern section of the ring road.

The vehicular route network is shown on Plan 13.



Brunswick Street

### A52

Whilst the A52 – Borough Street – A53 one-way gyratory can be busy it appears to function reasonably well. However, concerns have been highlighted by local authority officers regarding the gyratory operation during peak periods and it is understood that the junctions are sensitive to peak traffic, which often results in queuing.

Pedestrian crossing provision is lacking along the length of the A52 within the study area. There are two signalled pedestrian crossings, located on the approach to Barracks Road / A52 roundabout and on George Street. Observations showed that pedestrians often cross the road away from designated crossings, suggesting that pedestrian desire lines are not reflected in the choice of crossing locations. Given the busy nature of the A52, this is potentially dangerous.

The configuration of the A52 / Shelton New Road priority junction means that vehicles turning left onto Shelton New Road are effectively making a straight-ahead movement and were observed to occasionally not indicate nor slow down. The provision of a pedestrian island at the junction does not resolve the potential hazards to pedestrians of this arrangement. The close proximity of the A52 / Albert Road priority junction may also lead to pedestrian confusion about where indicating vehicles are intending to go.

### Nelson Place

The Nelson Place roundabout provides connection to the ring road, Queen Street, King Street and Brunswick Street via the linked one way gyratory of King Street and Borough Road. This roundabout is not signalised and an underpass provides pedestrian linkage from the study area to Queen's Gardens and the wider town centre.



Hassell Street



## 4.0

### Car Parking

Council owned pay and display car parks can be found at the following locations:

- Hassell Street/Windsor Street;
- Hassell Street;
- King Street;
- School Street (on street);
- Wharf Street.

Private car parking sites include:

- Hassell Street/North Street;
- Land at the corner of Marsh Parade and Hassell Street.

Free on street car parking is available throughout the area with standard restrictions on duration of stay.

The amount and combination of on street and open surface car parking provision gives a poor impression of the area. Boundaries to car park sites are poorly defined and the general appearance is low grade. The area would seem to provide car parking for users of the town centre within the inner ring road, the study area (including local residents) and the adjoining areas.

### Public Transport

Brunswick Street forms part of the 888 service bus route linking Stoke to Newcastle. Bus stops are located on Brunswick Street. The majority of stops have a passenger shelter. No information is available about the local area at stops. Some flag only stops have no timetable display cases.

First Group operate the local high-frequency 'Overground' bus network, covering the North Staffordshire area. The table below provides a summary of the key bus services that run through the study area to key destinations beyond.



Bus stop, Brunswick Street

### Key Bus Routes through the Study Area

Service Number	Locations Served	Approximate Frequency		
		Monday - Friday	Saturday	Sunday
28	Newcastle, Stoke, Longton, Hanley	15	20	60
29	Hanley, Stoke Rail Station, Stoke, Newcastle, Keele University	15	20	30
34/34A	Kidsgrove, Newcastle, Festival Park, Hanley	20	20	60
101	Hanley, Newcastle, Trentham, Stone, Stafford, Stafford Rail Station	20	20	60

Newcastle under Lyme bus station is located opposite the south-eastern corner of the study area, providing access to further local bus links as well as longer-distance National Express coach services.

Stoke on Trent rail station is located on the West Coast Main Line offering frequent rail services to London, Birmingham and Manchester as well as services to Derby, Nottingham, Crewe and the local rail network. The number 29 bus service between Newcastle under Lyme and Hanley provides connections to the rail station at frequencies of up to 15 minutes.



Brunswick Street/Hassell Street



Subway to Town Centre



Subway from Town Centre



Pedestrian crossing Brunswick Street

### **Pedestrian route network**

Primary pedestrian routes link the study with the town centre within the ring road via King Street, Brunswick Street, Hassell Street and Nelson Place. These east west routes connect with a north south secondary route network which is of more local significance. The pedestrian route network is shown on Plan 00.

The spines form sections of radial routes which are dominated by the adverse impacts of vehicular traffic including severance of pedestrian routes, excessive traffic speeds, narrow footways, noise, and pollution. The pedestrian environment is low grade. The number and frequency of pedestrian crossings is low and those that exist are poor quality. This is all the more ironic given the centre of the study area is less than five minutes walk from Queen's Gardens/Ironmarket or the Bus Station and that Hassell County Primary School and Newcastle Under Lyme School are closely associated with the immediate area.

### **Summary**

Aside from the lack of pedestrian provision on the A52 and heavy traffic flows on the A52 / A53 gyratory and Barracks Road, due to their nature as key road links, there appear to be few major vehicular traffic problems in the study area aside from some congestion during peak periods.