WIRRAL'S TOWN, DISTRICT AND LOCAL CENTRES

STUDY AND DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

June 2011

1. INTRODUCTION

Wirral's town, district and local centres are important to local communities as well as supporting the Borough's economy and providing valuable local jobs. However, these centres are facing a range of challenges from shop closures, linked to the recession, to changes in shopping patterns and the increasing use of the internet. These challenges are being faced by town centres across the country and a Government review is underway to look at the state of the nation's high streets and what can be done to revive them. Within Wirral there is concern that some of our centres are facing decline and that their role and function may have to change if they are to be 'fit for purpose' and regain their vibrancy and vitality.

A Strategy for Town Centres, Retail and Commercial Leisure in the Borough was prepared in 2009, but given the current context Wirral Council has agreed that further work should be carried out to develop a detailed evidence base for each of the centres in order to guide future actions and inform the development of centre-specific plans.

This study and delivery framework therefore examines the current position of Wirral's twenty-three town, district and local centres drawing on both quantitative and qualitative assessments. It sets out recommendations for policy formation through the Local Development Framework (LDF) as well as identifying opportunities for supporting the future sustainability of each of the centres. The framework will underpin the development of individual centre action plans, ensuring that they are coordinated, pragmatic and deliverable, but also reflecting that the role of each town centre will differ according to its character and function.

The framework does not address Birkenhead (including Grange Road West/Oxton Road and Argyle Street/Market Street) as detailed work has already taken place as part of the Integrated Regeneration Strategy for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters which has been adopted as a material planning consideration and which will inform the Core Strategy.

2. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

2.1 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Section 3 sets out the background and context to this work, including an analysis of national retail trends, shopping patterns in Wirral; and the current 'health' and performance of the centres,
- Section 4 outlines key areas of national policy that impact on Wirral's retail centres;
- Section 5 outlines how the assessment of the 23 centres covered by this framework was carried out and sets out both quantitative and qualitative information relating to each of the centres. It also puts forward short, medium and long term options for possible interventions;
- Section 6 draws on the individual centre assessments, together with the analysis of national policies, to provide an overall summary of the state of the centres and sets out a number of proposed actions that could support the future sustainability of the centres.

3. CONTEXT

In March 2008, Roger Tym & Partners were appointed by Wirral Council to prepare a Strategy for Town Centres, Retail and Commercial Leisure in the Borough ("the RTP Report"), to update earlier work and inform the evidence base for Wirral's Core Strategy Development Plan Document, which when adopted will form part of the land use planning framework for the Borough. One of the main elements of the RTP report – an assessment of the performance of the Borough's town and local centres – revealed that many were showing some signs of weakness with the poorest performing mostly located in the older urban areas of the Borough. Typical problems identified included a high level of shop vacancies, pressure on parking and poor public realm. The recession appeared to have had a visible impact on some of Wirral's town centres, resulting in the increased closure of shops, many of which remain vacant.

In agreeing the report, Wirral Council's Cabinet recognised that more detailed work would be needed to tackle the problems identified. This study and delivery framework is the first stage in that process. The town centre framework will set out some realistic options given the reduced level of funding available to intervene and regenerate areas, as well as setting out some long term aspirations for centres which are only likely to come forward in a much more vibrant economy or when funding streams become more readily available.

3.1 National retail trends

While this framework is focused on the situation in Wirral, national trends in retailing provide an important context.

The changing nature of town and local centres

Nationally retail growth has been increasingly focused on the non-food sector and this probably accounts for the growing focus of the major supermarket operators on non-food sales. National commentators suggest that there is evidence of increasing retail polarisation, with larger centres capturing an increasing market share, compounded by trading difficulties experienced by many of the mid-market retailers (such as Woolworths) which were traditionally seen as the mainstay of small and medium-sized town centres. Mergers in the financial services sector have reduced the number of bank and building society branches in some smaller town centres. Coupled with this has been a loss of local distinctiveness and diversity in some centres as the number of independent retailers has reduced. Many traditional shopping centres in older urban areas have experienced increasing levels of vacancy resulting from an increasing over-supply of units which are often in a poor state of repair and unsuited to modern retailer requirements.

Changes in convenience retailing

According to the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD) the UK Grocery Sector generated £150.8bn in sales during the 2010 calendar year. This was made up of £32.1bn in the convenience sector (see below), £6.1bn "traditional retail", £107.8bn hypermarkets, superstores and supermarkets (including discounters) and £4.8bn online.

A change evident in many smaller centres and of particular relevance to this study, has been the growth in the number of convenience stores, and reduction in the number of independent butchers, bakers greengrocers etc. The IGD defines a convenience store as one which is:

- less than 278 sqm and open for long hours;
- retailing food and drink for consumption off the premises as their main business activity; and
- retailing at least 11 out 15 core product categories such as bakery, chilled/frozen food, fruit and vegetables, milk, groceries/newspapers, health/beauty, soft drinks/alcohol etc.

The IGD has identified five categories of convenience store ownership:

Co-operatives - continues to expand, with the incorporation of Somerfield stores into the Co-op group. Total sales were £3.8bn in 2010 from 2,448 stores.

National Multiples such as Tesco Express - continuing to expand and according to the IGD generating the highest amount of sales per store - £32,037 on average each week. Total sales were £5.0bn in 2010 from 2,912 stores.

Petrol Forecourt shops – generally owned by car dealers or petrol retailers – store numbers are continuing to decline, although there are increasing numbers of stores operated by the multiples and "symbol groups". Total sales in 2010 were £4.3bn from 6,506 stores.

Symbol and franchise retailers - a symbol group retailer is an independent retailer that is effectively a member of a larger organisation known as a "symbol group operator" (such as SPAR and Costcutter). In addition to branding, the retailer benefits from improved buying terms, the option to sell own label products, and new shop technology (such as checkout scanning). This is the fastest growing sector in convenience retailing. Total sales were £12.1bn in 2010 from 16,072 stores.

Non-affiliated independent retailers – the IGD notes that the number of non-affiliated independents fell from 21,950 to 20,860 in the 2009-10 financial year, a decline of 5.0%. Although store numbers in this segment are in long-term decline, the IGD notes that the non-affiliated independent store segment still accounts for 41.3% of all UK convenience stores, and so remains an important route to market for many businesses. Total sales in 2010 were £6.9bn from 20,351 stores.

By 2015, the IGD expects the convenience sector to be worth £41.3bn in annual sales, an increase of £10.4bn on the latest year. This represents a 33.7% increase over a five year period. The IGD estimates that convenience multiple stores are expected to contribute mostly to this growth, with over 1,000 additional stores forecast to open by April 2015 with expansion driven by the key supermarket operators.

Although independent grocery retailers are declining in number, the IGD notes that consumer interest in local and regional food has grown significantly over recent years, and there are a number of factors to suggest this will continue to be the case going forward including:

- Continuing shopper interest in how food is produced and where it comes from;
- Shoppers claiming their intent to buy more local and regional food going forward; and
- A desire on the part of some shoppers to support their own communities in tougher times.

The proportion of shoppers specifically buying local food has doubled over the last five years (from 15% to 30%) according to the IGD. Furthermore, more locally produced foods/farmer's markets and farm shops are two of the top four improvements requested by shoppers in 2010. One issue is that there is no widely accepted definition of what constitutes "local", but the IGD suggests that "the essence of localness is that food hasn't traveled far from producer to consumer and that it is considered by the consumer to be local at the point of consumption".

The growth in internet retailing

The internet accounts for a rapidly growing proportion of retail sales particularly in the non-food sector - 10.5 per cent of all retail sales – up from 7.9 per cent in November 2009. In relation to convenience retailing as indicated above IGD figures suggest internet grocery retailing in 2010 was worth £4.8bn or 3.2% of total grocery sales of £150.8bn – an increase of 21% on the previous year. Although currently a relatively small proportion of total grocery sales, online sales are expected to double in size over the next five years to £9.9bn and will be the fastest-growing grocery sector.

In relation to non-food shopping, recent Experian forecasts suggest non-food non-store sales (including catalogue shopping) could increase from 8.2% of all sales in 2008 to 13.9% in 2014 with convenience sales increasing from 5% of total sales in 2008 to 9.6% in 2016. Identifying the share of internet sales is complicated by the fact that on the one hand some deliveries are effectively made through existing stores, whilst on the other, stores can be used to view products with purchases taking place on the internet. This, supported by the availability of smart phones with internet access, has meant that shoppers can have instant access to price information from competitors, both on the high street and online.

Future retail Development Prospects

The recession has had a significant impact on the pipeline of shopping centre schemes coming forward. A recent report by the British Council of Shopping centres noted that while in 2008 around 8 million sq ft of retail floorspace came onto the market, in 2012 there is effectively none, with future predictions suggesting perhaps 1 million sq ft in 2014 and 3.4 million sq ft in 2015, although these figures are very much dependent on a revival of the economy, which is uncertain at present. Alongside high profile closures such as Woolworths, other high street non-food retailers have been reducing their store portfolios. The main supermarket operators are, however, continuing to open new stores in a range of formats. Alongside this national research by the Local Data Company (2010) has shown that the average vacancy level in shopping areas has reached an average of 13%. There are higher levels of vacancy in the north than the south of England. The report concludes that what is happening is not simply the result of the economic recession but the emergence of significant overcapacity in the market, resulting from factors such as the growth in the use of the internet and retailer requirements for larger trading formats which are hard to accommodate in town centres.

The impact of the recession

The recession has also had an impact on growth in consumer spending: the RTP report indicated that forecasts of future growth in retail spending by households on both food and non-food goods will grow at lower levels than before the recession for a number of years to come. More recent forecasts of expenditure growth are, if anything more pessimistic. There is some evidence from the British Retail Consortium that spending on “big ticket” items has suffered more than day-to-day items, so the convenience goods and services which are the mainstay of many of the Borough’s smaller centres may be less affected.

3.2 Shopping patterns in Wirral

The RTP report includes an assessment of current shopping patterns of Wirral residents based on surveys carried out in April 2008 and March 2009, by a specialist market research company, to enable an assessment of the impact of the opening of the first phase of Liverpool One (in mid-2008) to be made. A full breakdown of the results is presented in the RTP report, but some of the key headlines are highlighted below.

Table 1 ***Where do Wirral residents do their non-food shopping?***

Non-Food – Comparison Shopping	**Market Share**
Birkenhead	26%
Croft Retail and Leisure Park	12.4%
Other Town, District and Local Centres in Wirral	26.6%
Market Share of non-food shopping in Wirral Centres	**65%**
Out of Borough – eg, Liverpool, Chester, Cheshire Oaks	23%
Internet / Catalogue (special forms of trading)	10%
Longer Distance trips – eg Trafford Centre, Ikea	2%
Market Share of Out of Borough non-food shopping	**35%**

Where do Wirral residents shop for food and other convenience goods?

In relation to convenience (day-to-day and food-related) spending, the survey findings indicated that 96 per cent of residents do their convenience shopping in freestanding supermarkets/superstores located within Wirral and in the town, district and local centres - similar levels were identified in the earlier 2004 study. Within the Borough itself, local convenience shopping patterns are dominated by the large supermarkets/superstores, the nine largest of which accounted for 64 per cent of all convenience spending by Wirral residents in 2009 - up from 61 per cent in 2003. The highest market shares are achieved by Asda in Liscard, Asda Bromborough, Tesco Extra Bidston, Sainsburys Upton and Asda Arrowe Park.

Leisure

In relation to leisure spending, the survey findings indicated that Liverpool is the most important destination for spending at restaurants, but that West Kirby, Liscard, Bromborough Village and Heswall are all popular in their local zones. Liverpool and Birkenhead are the top locations for spending in pubs and bars but again the pattern of spending is localised. New Brighton and the Croft Leisure Park are the most popular destinations for leisure.

3.3 Requirements for future retail development

The purpose of this study is not to undertake a new assessment of the "need" for additional floorspace, but the findings of the RTP report are relevant in indicating whether the Borough's smaller shopping centres will need to accommodate significant levels of additional retail floorspace.

In relation to convenience retail floorspace, the RTP assessment concluded that there was no required need for additional convenience floorspace in the Borough up until 2026 and for comparison goods there was no need for additional floorspace until 2014.

In relation to leisure services, RTP suggested that this sector is anticipated to grow by £64.1m in the period to 2021. On the basis of current spending levels, around 60% of this spending growth will go to eating and drinking establishments: there is therefore scope to accommodate additional food and drink outlets in the Borough's existing centres. The remainder of growth in expenditure on leisure services, it is anticipated by RTP, is likely to go to a range of activities with no single activity capturing any single market share.

While the emerging Core Strategy indicates that a sizeable element of future floorspace provision could be accounted for by the large scale mixed use proposals at Wirral Waters proposals, there is a requirement to consider, in the context of the "town centres first" approach, to what extent the Borough's existing centres have the potential to accommodate additional development.

3.4 Review of the performance of Wirral's centres

An important element in considering future options for the Borough's shopping centres is establishing a baseline understanding of the "health" of each centre (also known as "vitality and viability") to identify whether it is improving, stable or declining. This can be done by undertaking a "health check", which entails assessing the performance of the centre against a series of indicators, considering changes in its performance over time and how it has performed relative to national trends and comparable centres elsewhere. This exercise was undertaken by RTP for each of the Key Town Centres and the 14 Traditional Suburban Centres defined in the adopted Wirral UDP and the findings are set out in Volume 1 Section 3 of the RTP report.

RTP scored each centre against a number of key indicators of a centre's 'health' to arrive at on overall summary of performance which is presented in Table 3.1 in the main report. This is summarised in the table below:

Table 2 Overall summary of the RTP Health Check Assessment

Very Healthy or Healthy	Exhibiting some signs of weakness	Significant signs of Weakness or decline	Require major Intervention to remain Viable
Heswall	Birkenhead	Hoylake Town Centre	New Ferry
West Kirby	Liscard	New Brighton(Victoria Rd)	New Brighton (Seabank Road)
Moreton	Bromborough Village	Seacombe (Poulton Road)	Birkenhead (Oxton Road)
Tranmere Urban Village	Prenton (Woodchurch Road)	Borough Road (Prenton Park)	Birkenhead (Grange Road West)
Upton Village	Wallasey Village		Laird Street
	Claughton Village		
	Lower Bebington		
	Dacre Hill		
	Irby Village		

3.5 Wirral's Network and Hierarchy of Shopping Centres

In developing a strategy for the Borough's shopping centres, two key considerations are identifying a pattern of provision (or network) which reflects the local characteristics of Wirral and assessing what the roles and relationships are between the centres in the network (the hierarchy). Drawing on their review of centre performance, the RTP report included an amended hierarchy of centres in the Borough. After consultation as part of the Core Strategy work this has been slightly modified and expanded for inclusion in the Core Strategy as set out below.

Table 3 Hierarchy of Centres

Hierarchy of Centres	
Sub-regional centre	
Birkenhead Town Centre (including Grange Road West, Oxton Road and Argyle Street)	
Town Centres	
Heswall	Liscard
Moreton	West Kirby
District Centres	
Bromborough Village	Hoylake
Woodchurch Road (Prenton)	
Local Centres	
Borough Road (Prenton Park)	Claughton Village
Dacre Hill	Eastham (Mill Park Drive/New Chester Road)
Greasby (Arrowe Road/Mill Lane)	Irby Village
Laird Street	Lower Bebington
New Ferry	Oxton Village
Seacombe (Poulton Road)	New Brighton (Seabank Road)
Tranmere Urban Village	Upton Village
New Brighton (Victoria Road)	Wallasey Village

This network and hierarchy of centres forms the basis for the work in this study, with the exception of Birkenhead (see Introduction).

There are also a large number of smaller local parades and individual shops which all contribute to the Borough's retail offer, which fall outside the direct scope of this study.

4. POLICY ISSUES

4.1 Planning and town centres

National planning policy in Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4) advocates a "town centres first" approach and includes policies which guide the formulation of planning policy and consideration of planning applications. The Government's overarching objective set out in PPS4 is to achieve sustainable economic growth by: building prosperous communities and improving their economic performance; reducing the gap in economic growth rates between regions; promoting regeneration and tackling deprivation; delivering more sustainable patterns of development, reduce the need to travel, especially by car and respond to climate change, promoting the vitality and viability of town and other centres as important places for communities.

Locally, Wirral's town centres enjoy a degree of protection through their inclusion in the Development Plan for the Borough, currently the Unitary Development Plan (adopted in February 2000) which – as mentioned above - will be replaced by the LDF Core Strategy (aimed for adoption in 2012). The Core Strategy will also identify objectives and priorities for the Borough's centres, and this study is intended to help inform this process.

4.2 Business Rates

Business rates are often cited as a having a major impact on the viability of small businesses including those operating from retail centres. Business rates are a tax on non domestic property and rate bills are calculated by multiplying a property's rateable value by an annual multiplier set by the Government. Rateable values are calculated by the Valuation Office Agency on a 5 yearly cycle based on the evidence of actual rents agreed between landlords and tenants and broken down to a price per square metre. The current Rating List came into effect on the 1st April 2010 and is based on rental values that were passing in 2008. This list will continue to remain in place until the 31st March 2015.

There are a number of rate relief schemes currently in place that are available to retail businesses. This includes:

- Small Business relief. This will run to the end of September 2011 and provides relief of 100% for those businesses with a rateable value of £6,000 or less. It also provides tapering relief for those businesses with rateable values of up to £12,000;
- Empty Property relief – this is for three months after the shop becomes empty;
- Charitable and Discretionary rate relief – charities and not-for-profit organisations may be eligible for 100% rate relief (the local authority will be required to fund up to 25% of the cost)
- Hardship rate relief – This may be granted in exceptional circumstances by Members and the local authority will be required to fund 25% of the cost.

In March 2011 the Government announced the setting up of 21 new Enterprise Zones (EZ). The Mersey Waters Enterprise Zone has been designated as an EZ and businesses operating within the EZ will benefit from a business rate discount worth up to £275,000 over a five year period.

The Localism Bill, currently before Parliament, contains provisions that will enable local authorities to introduce discretionary business rates discounts. It is proposed that these discounts will be funded locally and that greater flexibility would enable a broader range of local issues to be addressed.

4.3 Licensing

National planning policy set out in PPS 4 sets out the types of shops that are likely to be present in a local centre (PPS4 Annex B). This might include amongst other shops, a small supermarket or convenience offer, a newsagent, a sub-post office, hot food takeaway and pharmacy. This is not a definitive list, but it suggests that centres will have a mix of uses within them. Clearly market conditions will drive the businesses that operate from shopping centres, but the operation of licensing permissions can also have a role to play.

Wirral Council carries out its licensing function in respect of the Licensing Act 2003 through its Licensing Policy agreed in December 2010. The Policy sets out the principles that the Licensing Authority will generally apply and it seeks to provide clarity for applicants and residents to enable them to understand the objectives being promoted and the matters that will be considered in the determination of licenses. In relation to linkages with the planning system, the Licensing Policy emphasises that there are two separate processes with licensing considering the impact on public nuisance and planning the impact on amenity.

The Licensing Act 2003 states that individual applications must be considered on their individual merits. As a result whilst many centres have a mix of uses, some have a number of businesses with similar uses, such as bars and hot food takeaways, and the Licensing Authority can only address this under specific circumstances. This would be through consideration of the cumulative impact of a significant number of licensed premises concentrated in one area and would require a ‘special policy’ to be adopted.

The effect of adopting such a special policy would be to create a presumption that applications for new premises licenses, or variations, will normally be refused unless the applicant can demonstrate that there will be no negative cumulative impact on one or more of the licensing objectives. However, the granting of an amendment to the statement of Licensing Policy in respect of cumulative impact must be based on firm evidence from ‘responsible authorities’ such as the Police that crime and disorder, or nuisance, are taking place and are being caused by the customers of licensed premises. If these exact conditions are not met then an amendment cannot be granted. To date no centre in Wirral has met these tests for the introduction of a special policy.

As a result licensing should only be seen as a tool to support the mix of uses within a centre under very specific circumstances and it is therefore necessary to consider a range of approaches to help centres regain or retain their vibrancy.

4.4 Vacant Space above shops

Many town centres – particularly in older urban areas - include shop units with upper floors which have potential for residential or other uses, but which are often left vacant. The national Living over the Shop (LOTS) project (which ran until 2007) suggested that much of the vacant space consists of former offices or storage or long-abandoned residential uses (often vacant for 30 years or more) and very little is in the form of habitable dwellings. Often minimal repairs are carried out to vacant upper floors and many become eyesores. This is despite favourable planning regulations which enable the change of use of part of a building with an A1 (retail) or A2 (financial/professional) use to A1 or A2 plus a single dwelling without needing planning permission. In addition, Flat Conversion Allowance was introduced by HM Revenue and Customs in 2001 which allows an owner to write off their income tax for the business premises for the full costs of the renovations of the upstairs dwelling, including putting in external access.

In practice, a number of obstacles are cited as reasons why upper floors above shops remain vacant:

Security – the owners of betting shops, jewellers, banks, building societies and off-licences are often concerned about occupants in a flat above gaining illegal access to their premises through the ceiling, especially if the owner/manager doesn't live on the premises. Insurance may be conditional on the flat above not being let or alternatively increased insurance premiums may outstrip the rent that could be achieved, resulting in the flat remaining empty.

Ownership – is often not straightforward. The LOTS project looked to tackle the ownership obstacles to turning vacant space above shops into residential use. In many cases the organisation which controls the property may not be the freeholder. Where the entire property has been let to the retailer occupying the ground floor (the most common pattern) it is that company, rather than the freeholder, which is in control of the property and which would need to take the initiative in using the upper floor for residential or other purposes. Many retail properties are controlled by absentee companies, including national retailers, investment companies and financial institutions such as pension funds. Local branch managers generally have little or no involvement with the decisions about the use of the property, requiring negotiations with the company at national level.

The LOTS project recognised that owners would want a secure long-term investment which protects their interest. In practice this meant a commercial lease, not a residential lease and no involvement whatsoever with the management of any residential letting. The LOTS project developed an innovative two-stage legal arrangement in which the owner grants a fixed-term commercial lease to an intermediary, such as a housing association, and the intermediary then grants an Assured Shorthold Tenancy to the occupier. However assembling the parties and negotiating terms was in some cases a lengthy process which could take an average 4 years

Mortgage finance - where mortgage finance is required, a flat above a shop or commercial premises has several risks which could influence a mortgage decision by a lender including the nature of the business (for example a hot food takeaway with late trading hours and food smells may affect the ability of the lender to re-sell the property). If the flat above has a connected access to the commercial premises then insurance would be very difficult to arrange separately and this would also restrict lending.

4.5 Control over different uses in town centres

The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, with subsequent amendments, puts uses of land and buildings into various classes of land use.

Permitted development rights are granted to enable changes between certain use classes under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.

Table 4 Use Classes

TCPA (Use Classes) Order 1987 (As Amended) (last amended by the TCPA (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Order 2010)	**Use / Description of development**	**Permitted change**
A1 Shops	Retail sale of goods to the public - shops, post offices, travel agencies and ticket agencies, hairdressers, funeral directors and undertakers, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, sandwich bars (sandwiches or other cold food purchased and consumed off the premises), internet cafés	No permitted change
A2 Financial & Professional Services	Financial services - banks, building societies and bureaux de change. Professional services (other than health or medical services) - estate agents and employment agencies. Other services - betting	A1 (where there is a ground floor display window)

	shops (principally where services are provided to visiting members of the public)	
A3 Restaurants & Cafés	Restaurants and cafes - use for the sale of food for consumption on the premises. Excludes internet cafés	A1 or A2
A4 Drinking Establishments	Use as a public house, wine bar or other drinking establishment	A1, A2 or A3
A5 Hot Food Takeaway	Use for the sale of hot food for consumption off the premises	A1, A2 or A3

National policy expects Local Planning Authorities to support a diverse range of uses when developing town centre policies. However, local control can be limited because most town centre uses are entitled to change under the current legislation. Given the general support in national policy for town centre uses within town centres, any further restriction on the proportion of a particular use within a centre or frontage would need to be supported by evidence that the concentration or 'clustering' of uses is or would have an adverse impact on the function and character of a centre, perhaps by displacing other retail options.

The focus of local policies which aim to restrict clustering is usually on A2 financial and professional uses and the A3-A5 uses, especially hot food takeaways. A typical policy might indicate that the specified use class should not exceed 10% (for example) of the total frontage or form a group of no more than 2 adjacent units and, that between individual or groups of non-retail uses there shall be at least two intervening retail (Class A1) uses.

In relation to hot food takeaways, as well as maintaining a balance of uses, prevention of "clustering" could also reduce problems associated with rubbish/litter, cooking smells and anti-social behavior. A high proportion of takeaway food outlets which often do not open during daytime hours can result in "dead frontages" to the streets and can adversely impact on the appearance and attractiveness of a centre due to the use of roller shutters on fronts of shops.

Measures to limit clustering might be applied across the whole of a centre or in a larger centre, within specified frontages where the objective is to maintain a defined primary shopping area. National policy in PPS4 supports the identification of primary and secondary shopping areas and advises that Local Planning Authorities set out policies which make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations. Such an approach would enable a core retail area to be defined where the focus should be on sustaining A1 retail uses. However, employing blanket exclusion zones where for example applications for Takeaway Food Outlets would always be refused could result in units remaining vacant for extended periods of time which itself would have an adverse effect on the health of a centre.

While it is therefore possible to exert some control over the balance between retail and other uses in a shopping centre, the inclusion of all retail uses within Class A1 limits the scope for control over the composition of the existing retail offer in a town centre - for example where an independent retailer is replaced by a national multiple. It has been suggested in some quarters that the A1 Use Class should be sub-divided so that for example, food and non-food retailing are in separate use classes. There is however scope for control where there is a change of use to or from A1 from another Use Class. Where a proposal is submitted for a change of use away from A1 retail in declining areas for example, evidence could be requested to show the premises are unlikely to be used for permitted purposes, such as proper marketing for retail uses for a specified period – six months or longer for example. Usually when imposing some form of restriction, scope for judgment on a case by case basis is often necessary.

5. ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUAL CENTRES

This section of the report describes how the assessment of the centres was carried out. The report then addresses each of the 23 centres in turn.

The Assessment Process

The assessment of Wirral's town centres has drawn on a range of information, studies and surveys. This has included a review of:

- national retail planning policy and national studies;
- the 2004 and 2008 Wirral Strategy for Town Centres, Retail and Commercial Leisure carried out by RTP;
- the Preferred Options Draft for Core Strategy, 2010;

Land use surveys

An analysis has been undertaken of the characteristics of each of the town centres, including the composition of retail and other uses, vacancy rates and land use change (detailed maps can be found at Appendix A). A pie chart which summarises the percentage of uses with a centre is included in the analysis for each centre. A key for the uses identified in the pie charts and maps (Appendix A) is below:

Convenience – food/day to day retailing - supermarkets, newsagents, off-licences, bakeries, green grocers etc

Comparison – non-food retailing – fashion, electrical, book shops, charity shops, DIY, opticians, pet shop, toy shops, car sales, post offices with significant retail sales

Service – banks, building societies, estate agents launderettes, hairdressers restaurants, cafes, hot food takeaways, day nursery, community centres, funeral directors, dentists, sun bed studios, health centres, post office (without retail sales), pubs, nightclubs, travel agents, video hire, taxi offices etc

Vacant – empty at ground floor level

Office – office uses such as accountants whose primary purpose is not to provide a service to visiting Members of the public. Council offices are included in this category

Residential – at ground floor level in a converted shop unit

Miscellaneous – any other uses which do not fall into the above categories including, ambulance/fire stations/police stations, places of worship

Economic and accessibility profiles

In addition economic and accessibility profiles have been developed reflecting the composition of the communities surrounding each of the centres. Data is presented showing the size of the population in key categories taken from Office of National statistics (ONS) mid-year population estimates (2009), average household income (from CACI 2009 data) and the numbers claiming job-seekers allowance (May 2011).

The independent Acorn Geodemographic Classification has also been used to inform the economic profile of each centre. This is a consumer targeting tool. It combines geography with demographics and lifestyle information about the places where people live with their underlying characteristics and behaviour in order to create a tool for understanding the different types of people in different areas throughout the country. It is used by retailers, financial and public sector organisations. The information drawn from Acorn is presented as an independent analysis, to give a snap shot of the population mix. While each centre's catchment may comprise up to fifteen different Acorn categories, in the interests of clarity, only the two most commonly occurring Acorn categories within each centre catchment are presented in this Study (where there is 'tie' between two categories both are presented). Clearly not everyone living within the catchment falls within these top two categories, but they do provide a very broad indication of the characteristics of the communities surrounding each centre. The classifications have been summarised in this report.

An assessment of the accessibility of each centre using the "Accession" software package has been undertaken and the findings presented under the "Accessibility" section in each profile, and visually in a series of maps which can be found in Appendix A.

Townscape Appraisal and mapping

A detailed appraisal of the townscape and environmental character of each centre has been undertaken based on a series of field visits to each centre by the Council's Urban Design Officer. This work has resulted in the production of a series of Townscape maps and diagrams for each of the centres and these are set out in the sections below. These are illustrative maps which reflect the findings of the survey work and also show some potential intervention options for consideration.

The Townscape maps include a summary of the key conclusions and recommendations. These are not intended to provide detailed proposals for physical change but set out options for possible future interventions and improvements to the built environment as part of the wider action planning process.

At this stage the maps identify key features and characteristics of the existing urban form. The location and grouping of key services, relationships with surrounding land uses / immediate context, the existing car parking provision and vehicular flow, pedestrian links and key routes through and into the centre are important to this understanding.

The identification of key services (light blue) within the townscape plan is important to the understanding of a particular centre and its relationship to other uses. In the interests of clarity, a broader definition of services than the land use survey has been adopted for this exercise, with services in this context including key community facilities including banks, post offices, doctors and dentists, libraries, community centres, and the main anchor convenience or staple grocery provision within the centre. The presence or lack of such services is generally a good indication of the health of the centre as they are generally uses that provide a draw and increase pedestrian flow within a particular area.

Concentrations of vacant units (pink) and ground floor residential conversions (red) are the most significant and damaging indication of decline and often go hand in hand with expanses of inactive frontages, a general lack of vibrancy/ activity within any particular area and a poor quality environment.

A significant concentration of all three characteristics may be an indication that there is an over-supply of retail units in a centre. In such cases the plans identify potential 'areas of vulnerability' where there may be scope to adopt measures to manage change away from retail uses in the future as part of an action planning process.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis.

A qualitative assessment has also been made of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each of the centres and this has been informed by comments received from:

- meetings held with Trader organisations across the Borough;
- responses to an on-line survey from residents and businesses.
- Site visits by officers between February and April 2011

Key findings from the qualitative assessment include:

- Concerns over the future of centres and the role they will play
- Availability of parking in the centres and control over on street parking
- Lack of signage to centres
- Concerns over supermarkets taking trade away from centres
- Loss of key services in town centres
- Empty shops in centres
- Poor appearance of centres
- Increasing number of hot food takeaways and hours of opening

The individual responses are attached as Appendix B

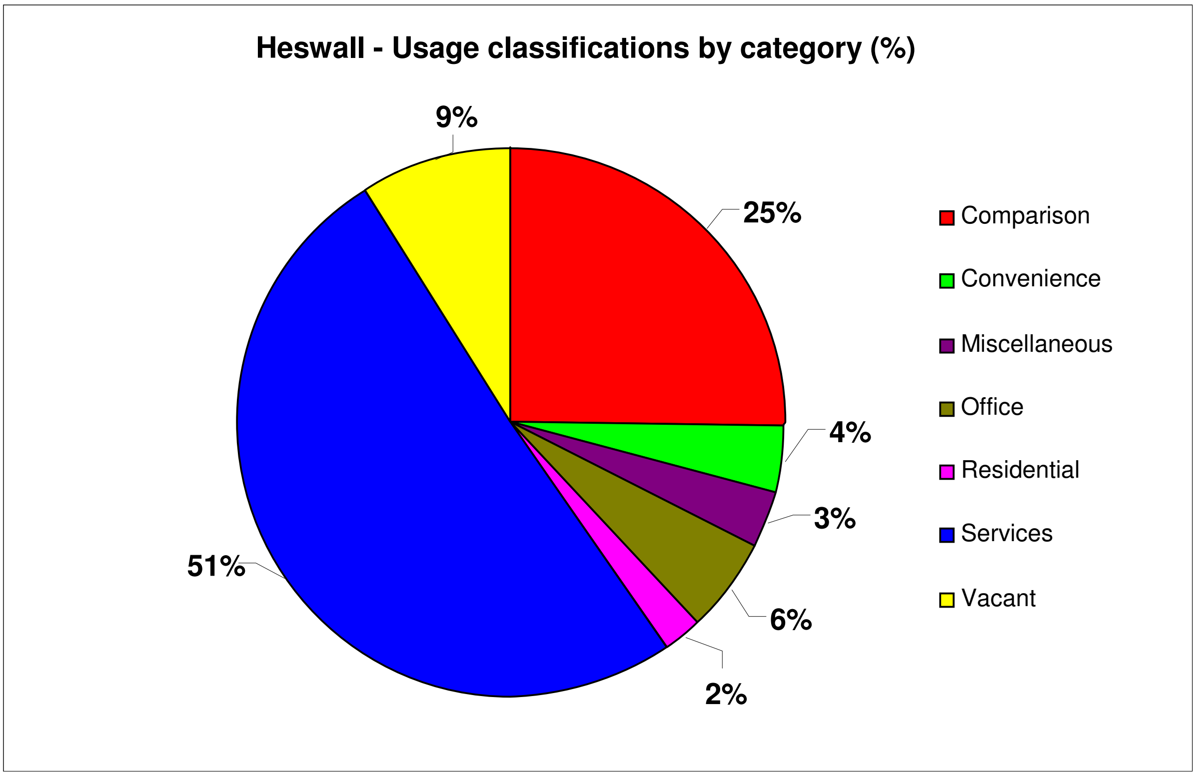
ASSESSMENT OF THE SHOPPING CENTRES

5.1 Heswall

The RTP report assessed Heswall as being a generally pleasant, vibrant and stable town centre evidenced by the healthy convenience retail offer and a mix of high quality independent retailers and a good range of eating and drinking places. The centre has low vacancy rates and a generally pleasant town centre environment.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is less than half the average across all the centres studied of 10% and almost exclusively confined to the national supermarket chains. The percentage of comparison retailers is slightly above the study average of 19% with strong representation from independent retailers, while service uses match the study average of 50%. The percentage of vacant floorspace is below the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the predominant uses are offices separate to ground floor businesses (38%), residential (31%) and vacant (23%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Heswall Ward has a population of 12,874 with an average household income of £44,500. The Job Seekers Allowance claimant rate for Heswall is 1.5%. The population aged 0-19 is 2,694, Working age is 16-64 Male/16-59 female is 6,556 and 60+ is 4,676.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Heswall it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - People tend to be older and retired couples. Many live in rural towns and villages, often in areas where tourism is important. They are prosperous, live in detached homes and many have two cars. Employment is typically in managerial and professional roles. The majority own their homes outright, and with no mortgage to pay are able to invest their money in a wide range of financial products. In their leisure time they enjoy gardening and golf. They appreciate good food and wine, and will go on regular holidays. These older, affluent people have the money and the time to enjoy life.

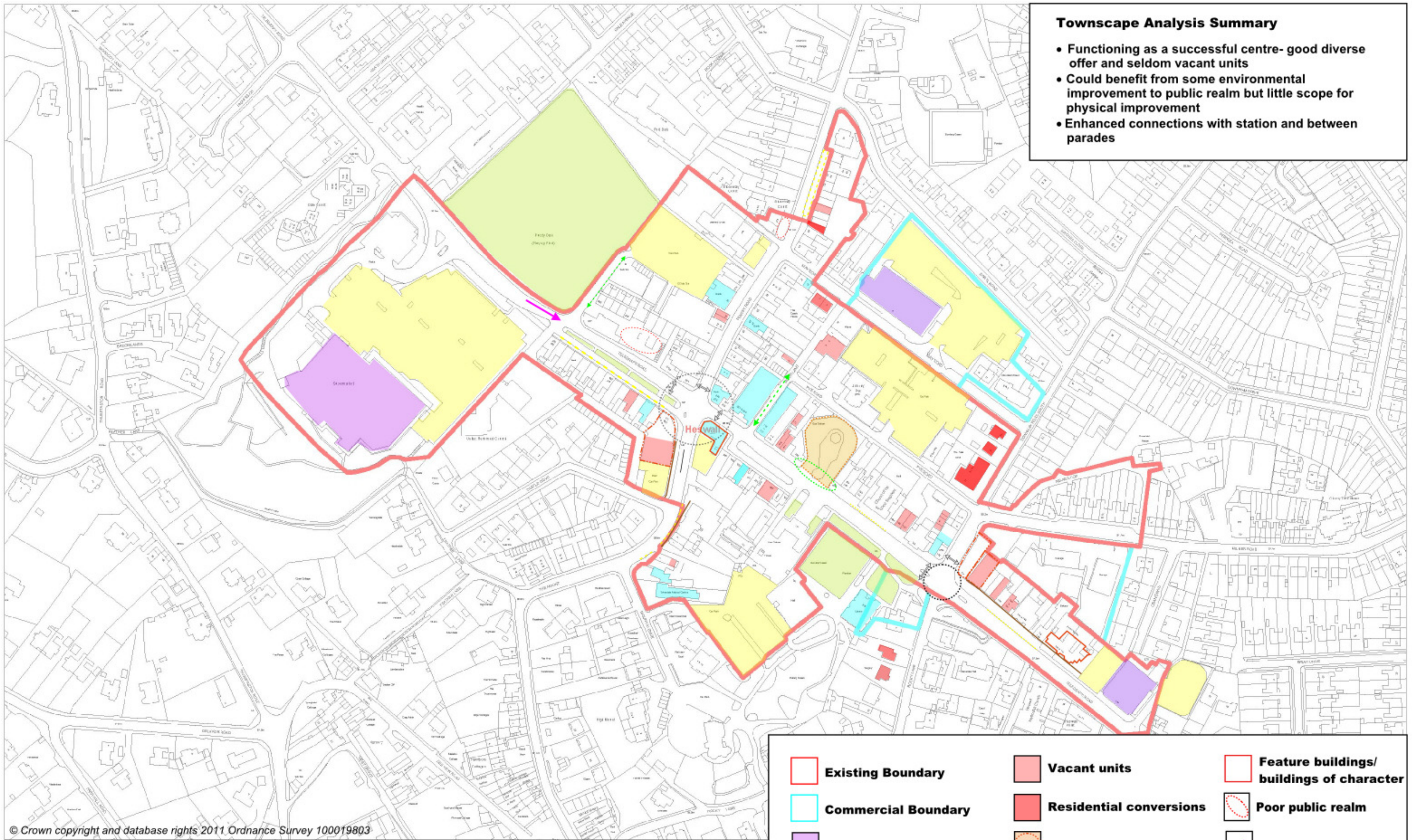
Group 2 - People are some of the most affluent people in the UK. They live in wealthy high status suburban, rural and semi-rural areas of the country. Households are a mix of middle-aged families, empty nesters and wealthy retired. They are very well-educated individuals with high levels of academic qualifications. Most are employed in senior managerial and professional occupations or are running their own businesses. In short, these are consumers with the money and the space to enjoy very comfortable lifestyles.

Accessibility

Heswall has a population of approximately 3,600 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Heswall is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 102,000 people (33% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 51,000 people (17% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 96,000 people (31% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 51,000 people (17% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
A wide range of national retailers, service uses as well as a supermarket and high end specialist food retailer Range of independent retailers Strong evening economy	The centre is divided by a busy road junction
Opportunities	**Threats**
Potential development site on the corner of Telegraph Road and Pensby Road	Any future loss of businesses in the centre



Townscape Analysis Summary

- Functioning as a successful centre- good diverse offer and seldom vacant units
- Could benefit from some environmental improvement to public realm but little scope for physical improvement
- Enhanced connections with station and between parades

Existing Boundary	Vacant units	Feature buildings/ buildings of character
Commercial Boundary	Residential conversions	Poor public realm
Supermarket	Transport node	Gateway
Key local services	Landscaped areas	Inactive frontage
Car Parking areas	Poor pedestrian links	Pedestrian crossing
Off road parking	Poor quality buildings	Busy junction/ barrier to pedestrians

Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework

Heswall

Townscape Appraisal

In physical terms the centre functions well with a good environment, a strong sense of place and arrival as a destination point. Overall the environment is of a high quality but there are isolated areas that could benefit from some environmental improvement to the public realm. The diverse retail offer and low vacancy rate results in only a few areas of inactive frontage which are mainly located away from the main retail core. This ensures a natural flow between areas and visual interest guides the pedestrian despite the busy junctions/ roads and in some cases poor public realm. While Heswall has the benefit of a centrally located bus station, some of the pedestrian connections between the bus station and the centre could benefit from improvement as could the overall environmental quality within this area.

Summary

Heswall is continuing to function extremely well as a centre. The socio-economic profile of the catchment provides strong support for the centre and its role for convenience food shopping as well as for lifestyle shopping and luxury items. The centre also boasts numerous restaurants with a healthy evening economy which sustains the local surrounding population. The centre has very little need for intervention, is self sustaining and prosperous in its own right.

Options for Intervention

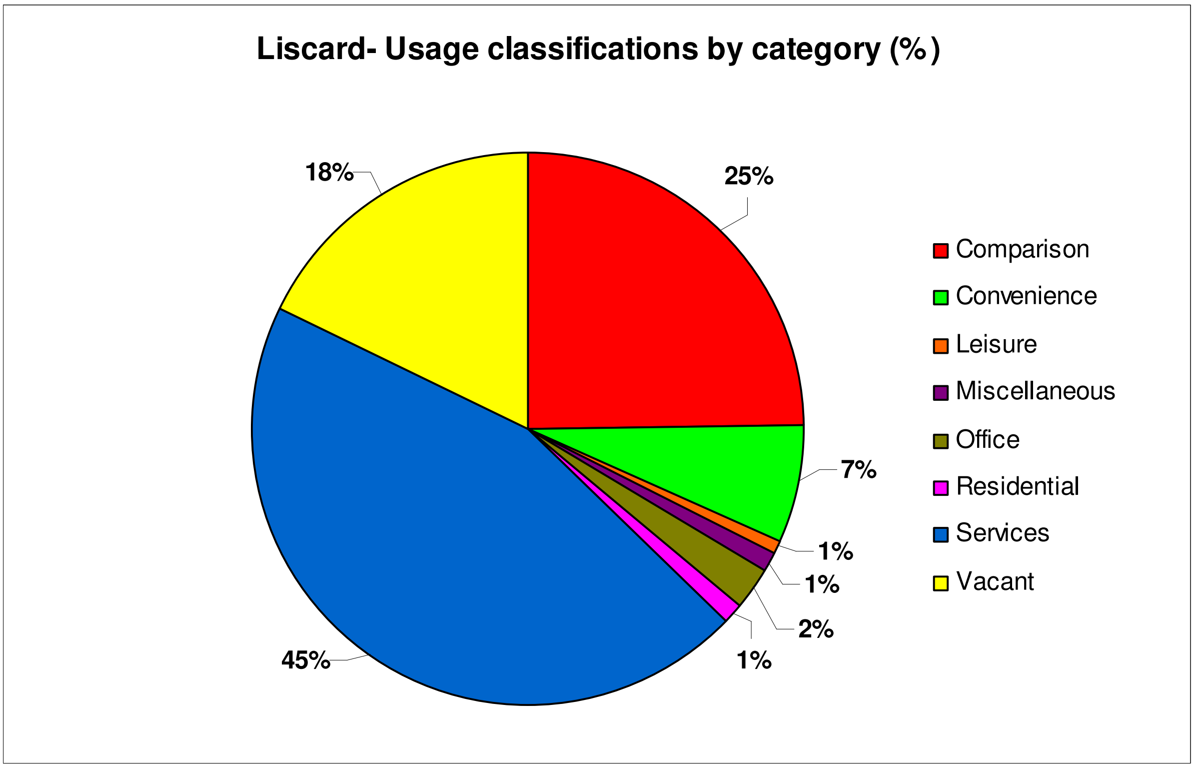
Early Interventions • Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc • Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean) • Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)
Medium Term Interventions • Continue to offer a wide range and choice of uses and grow the retail offer • Improved pedestrian links between the centre and the train station
Long Term Aspirations • Sustain the development of the centre • Public realm improvements within specific areas to improve the environmental quality

5.2 Liscard

The RTP report assessed Liscard as being a relatively busy centre, but that key indicators of vitality and viability suggested that its long-term decline has continued. They noted that supermarket provision was limited to Asda at one end of the centre and the comparison offer is focused on the lower end of the market with many more discount stores opening. Its position had slipped in the retail rankings, vacancy rates were above average and environmental quality remained lack-lustre despite recent improvements.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is below the average across all the centres studied of 10% and is mainly national chains. The percentage of comparison retailers is slightly above the study average of 19% and is a mix of mainly national chains in the central core and independent retailers in the secondary frontages. Service provision is slightly below the study average of 50%, but Liscard has retained a good selection of financial services as well as a post office. The percentage of vacant floorspace is however above the study average of 12% and is spread throughout the centre.

In relation to upper floor uses, the predominant uses are residential (45%), offices related to the ground floor business (30%) and offices separate to the ground floor business (15%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Liscard Ward has a total population of 14,661 with an average household income of £32,500. The Job Seekers Allowance claimant rate for the Ward is 6.4%. The population aged 0-19 is 3,675, Working age 16-64M/59W is 8,923 and 60+ is 3,350.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Liscard it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1- These tend to be home-owning families living comfortably in stable areas in suburban and semi-rural locations. People are employed in a range of occupations, including middle management and clerical roles. There also reasonable numbers of shopworkers and skilled manual workers. Incomes are at least of average levels and many earn well above the national average.

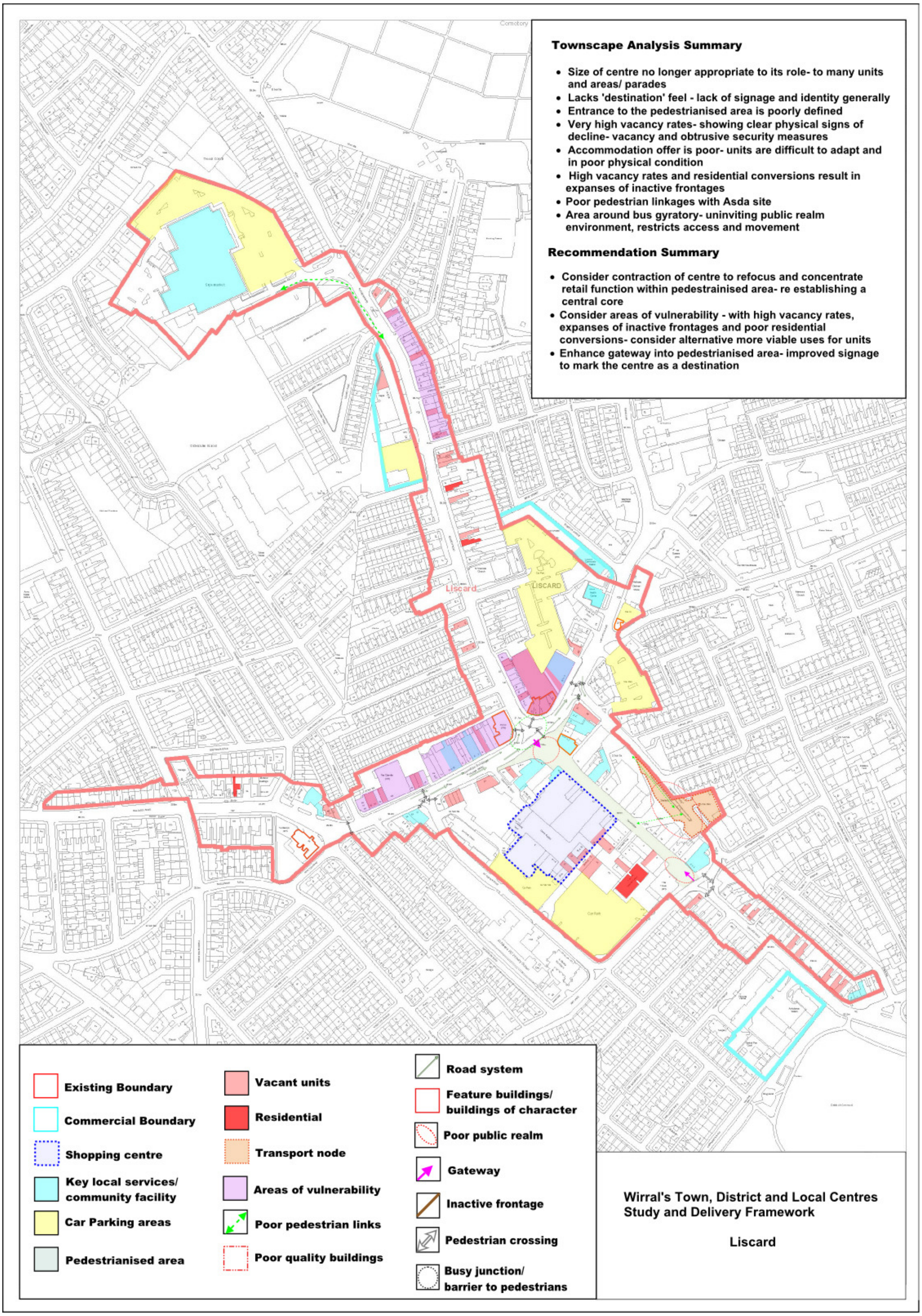
Group 2 - These are communities where most employment is in traditional manual occupations. Families and retired people predominate with some young singles and single parents. Incomes range from moderate to low and unemployment is higher than the national average, as is long term illness. There are pockets of deprivation in this group.

Accessibility to the centre

Liscard has a population of approximately 9,100 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Liscard is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 134,000 people (43% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 133,000 people (43% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 128,000 people (41% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 121,000 people (39% of the population of the borough) within 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
A range of national retailers within the Cherry Tree Centre and Liscard Way A mix of independent retailers within the town centre Good access to the centre by public transport Large residential population surrounding the centre A mix of retail and services uses with the Town Centre	Withdrawal of some higher end national retailers and growing dominance of budget retail chains resulting in a limited shopping offer Vacant units are appearing in the Cherry Tree Centre and the surrounding shopping streets Poor signage to Liscard as a shopping destination Traffic on gyratory impacting on pedestrian flows and accessibility Potential for expanding catchment limited by physical geography The location of ASDA does not maximise the potential for linked trips The large secondary shopping areas along Seaview Road The core shopping centre lacks a visual presence Evening economy appears to serve only the local catchment
Opportunities	**Threats**
Opportunity to extend the Cherry Tree Centre Development opportunity site - old cinema site on the corner of Liscard Village and Seaview Road Potential development site by Asda and Kwik Fit	Loss of more key businesses and service uses Continued decline and increase in of empty shops, in particular along Liscard Road


Townscape Analysis Summary
• Size of centre no longer appropriate to its role- to many units and areas/ parades
• Lacks 'destination' feel - lack of signage and identity generally
• Entrance to the pedestrianised area is poorly defined
• Very high vacancy rates- showing clear physical signs of decline- vacancy and obtrusive security measures
• Accommodation offer is poor- units are difficult to adapt and in poor physical condition
• High vacancy rates and residential conversions result in expanses of inactive frontages
• Poor pedestrian linkages with Asda site
• Area around bus gyratory- uninviting public realm environment, restricts access and movement
Recommendation Summary
• Consider contraction of centre to refocus and concentrate retail function within pedestrainised area- re establishing a central core
• Consider areas of vulnerability - with high vacancy rates, expanses of inactive frontages and poor residential conversions- consider alternative more viable uses for units
• Enhance gateway into pedestrianised area- improved signage to mark the centre as a destination
Liscard
LISCARD
Existing Boundary
Commercial Boundary
Shopping centre
Key local services/ community facility
Car Parking areas
Pedestrianised area
Vacant units
Residential
Transport node
Areas of vulnerability
Poor pedestrian links
Poor quality buildings
Road system
Feature buildings/ buildings of character
Poor public realm
Gateway
Inactive frontage
Pedestrian crossing
Busy junction/ barrier to pedestrians
Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework
Liscard

Townscape Appraisal

Liscard is focused around a central pedestrianised area (Liscard Way) acting as the main retail focus area and including the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre. The boundary of the centre takes in a much wider area, however, incorporating secondary shopping frontages extending along Liscard and Wallasey Roads and a long stretch of frontage extending along Seaview Road up to and including the Asda supermarket site. These secondary frontages themselves are much more traditional in form and are integrated within the residential areas. The centre benefits from good public transport links and a large residential population in its immediate catchment.

The overall environmental quality within the centre is poor and is showing clear physical signs of decline with proportionally high vacancy rates (especially on the secondary frontages), dereliction, poor conversions and obtrusive security measures all contributing to this. The assessment points to an over-supply of traditional shop units on the secondary frontages and a lack of more modern retail provision outside the core area.

The main retail focus area ‘turns its back’ on the surrounding roads and neighbouring residential uses and the retail offer consequently lacks visibility to passing trade and visitors. This results in the core area lacking a shopping destination ‘feel’ and the pedestrianised area is poorly defined and uninviting when viewed from the main through routes. Areas affected by high levels of vacancy have been identified as areas of vulnerability within the townscape analysis: blocks affected include those at the junction of Seaview and Wallasey Road, Liscard Road and the northern extent of Seaview Road close to the Asda superstore. Pedestrian movement within and around the centre (particularly between the core and secondary areas) is restricted by the dominance of traffic and busy vehicular flow on the central gyratory, making the general environment uninviting for pedestrians. Additionally the Asda superstore on Seaview Road site is isolated from the core area with poor pedestrian linkages and it would appear to function largely independently of the centre with little opportunity for linked trips. The general design of frontages is poor throughout with some inappropriate residential conversions and poor quality shop front design. The Asda supermarket is not integrated within the centre and results in an inactive unanimated frontage.

Summary

Liscard is the main shopping area for north Wirral and second only to Birkenhead. However, there is some evidence that the retail offer has continued to decline since the completion of the RTP report. The centre has a substantial population catchment within walking distance, as well as very good access by public transport to the centre, although the gyratory impedes some pedestrian movement. The socio-economic data suggests that the population has some disposable income to spend on shopping and leisure activities although this is limited in some areas. The area has limited opportunities for growth apart from the long-standing proposals to develop the Cherry Tree centre and the former cinema, neither of which has yet come to fruition. Parking is considered to be an issue by shoppers and traders in the area.

The centre is increasingly characterised by lower end national chains and independent shops, although the vacancy rate in the Cherry Tree Centre is low and the opening of Tesco has enhanced the convenience offer. The management of the Cherry Tree Centre are pro-active in filling vacant units with temporary solutions when possible and has attracted a Costa Coffee shop to the central square which appears to be busy. Footfall in the core area appears to be holding up - however, the roads which lead off the central gyratory are showing signs of decline with some vacant units and a large proportion of service uses. Overall, the centre has an appears to have an oversupply of traditional shop units on the arterial roads leading to the central core and needs to modernise in order to attract larger retailers.

Options for Intervention

Early Interventions

- Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc
- Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)
- Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)
- Signage to and from the car park to the town centre
- Signage from the M53
- Marketing and promotion of the centre and any events

Medium Interventions

- Potential boundary change to the shopping centre
- Public space in the pedestrian area for events and attractions
- Improving the evening economy offer
- Improving the connectivity to the residential catchment
- Improve pedestrian movements around the centre

Long Term Aspirations

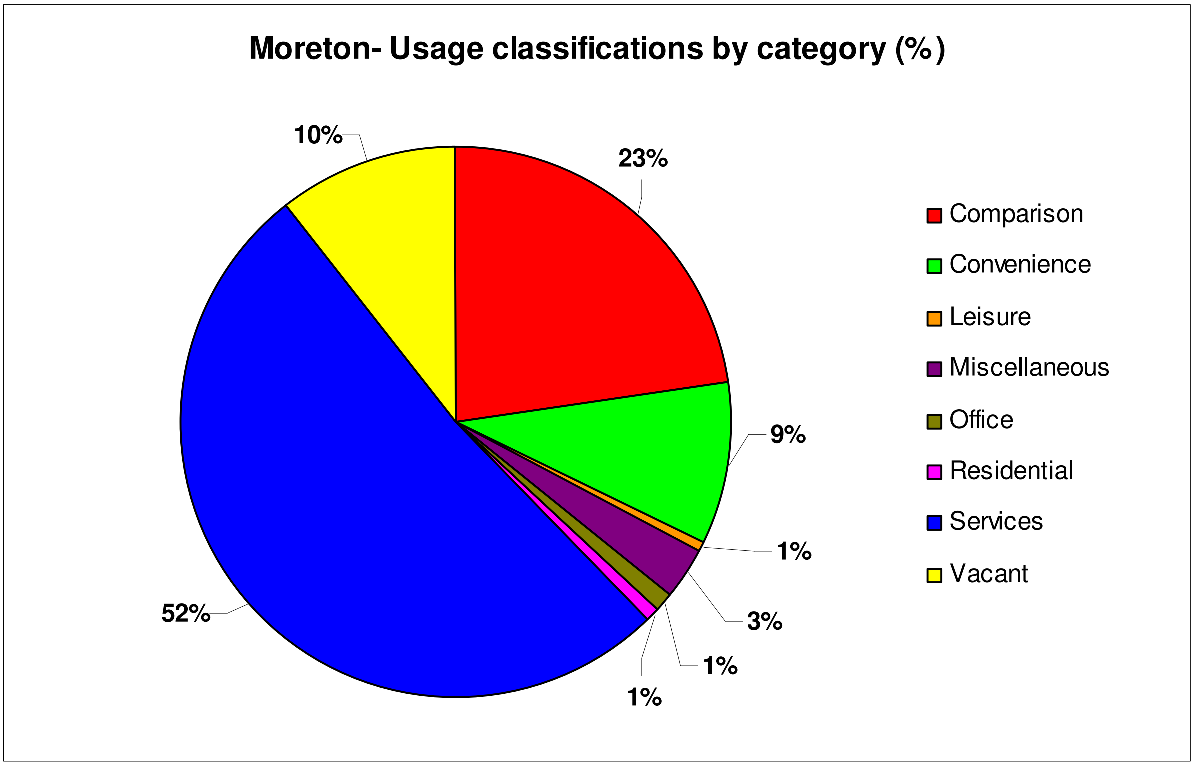
- Improve the retail commercial floorspace to accommodate modern retailers
- Defining the function and role of the Town Centre

5.3 Moreton

The RTP report assessed Moreton as being a relatively busy and stable centre, which is generally clean and tidy and has a low vacancy rate and adequately meets the day-to-day retail needs of local residents and has a thriving service sector but a more limited comparison and convenience offer. It was noted that the centre would benefit from additional parking but that few sites were available to address this.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the split of uses are very much in line with the averages across all the centres studied: the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is slightly below the study average of 10% and is a mix of independent retailers and national chains. Comparison provision is just above the study average of 19%. Service uses are slightly higher than the study average of 50% - the centre has retained a number of banks and a post office in addition to estate agents and other uses - and the level of vacant floorspace is slightly below the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the predominant uses are residential (38%), offices related to the ground floor business (30%) and offices separate to the ground floor business (13%).

Socio-economic Profile

Moreton falls between two Wards, Leasowe and Moreton East and Moreton West and Saughall Massie. The population for these Wards are 14,549 and 13,771 respectively, with an average income of £24,398 and £32,797. The Job Seekers Allowance rates are 5.4% and 3% respectively. The demographic profile for Leasowe and Moreton East is 0-19 yr olds 3,814, Working age is 16-64M/59F is 8,698 and aged 60+ is 3,308. The demographic profile for Moreton West and Saughall Massie is 0-19 yr olds 3,195, Working age is 8,332 and aged 60+ is 3,427.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Moreton it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1- These established communities are made up of empty nesters and retired older couples. The working population is a mix of lower management, supervisory, manufacturing and retail jobs. They have very little mortgage to pay, many will have a reasonable disposable income. These people have managed their incomes well, and have adequate financial resources to feel confident and secure about the future.

Group 2- These are low income families living on traditional low-rise estates. Some have bought their council houses but most continue to rent. Incomes are low and unemployment relatively high. Jobs are in factories, shops and other manual occupations. Money is tight and shopping tends to focus on cheaper stores and catalogues.

Accessibility

Moreton has a population of approximately 7,300 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Moreton is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 174,000 people (56% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 144,000 people (46% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 150,000 people (48% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 143, 000 people (46% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

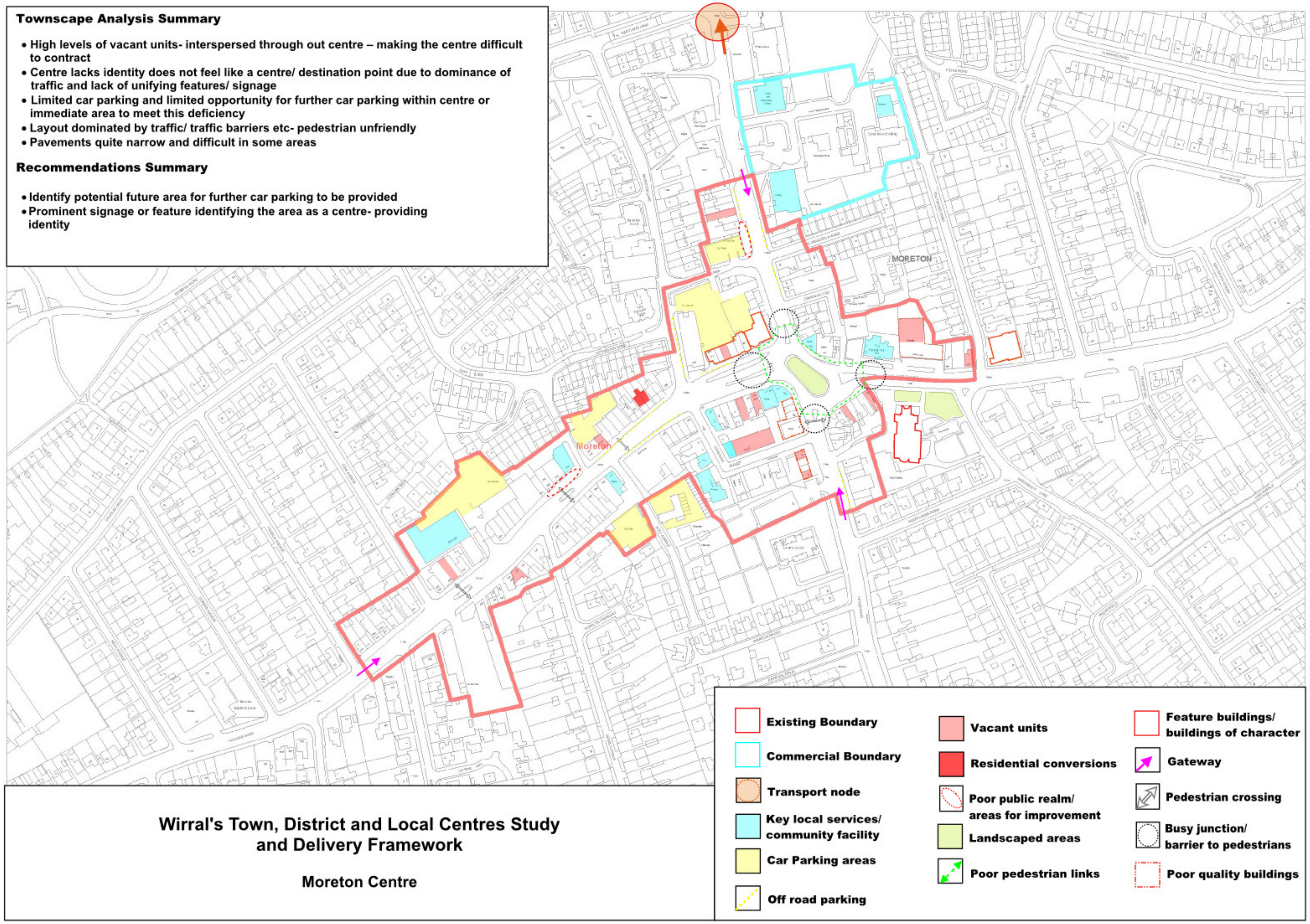
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
A range of national and independent retailers. A mix of retail and service uses. Accessibility to the centre is good. The centre appears to be bustling and busy	Increasing number of vacant units. Poor public realm within parts of the centre Dominance of the service sector Lack of car parking sites within the town centre Evening economy appears to focus on the local population Pedestrian flows are inhibited by busy road junction Number of hot food takeaways and the impact on the perception of the vitality of the town centre due to day time closures
Opportunities	**Threats**
Promoting a range of retail and leisure uses into the centre	Loss of businesses within and surrounding the centre

Townscape Analysis Summary

- High levels of vacant units- interspersed through out centre – making the centre difficult to contract
- Centre lacks identity does not feel like a centre/ destination point due to dominance of traffic and lack of unifying features/ signage
- Limited car parking and limited opportunity for further car parking within centre or immediate area to meet this deficiency
- Layout dominated by traffic/ traffic barriers etc- pedestrian unfriendly
- Pavements quite narrow and difficult in some areas

Recommendations Summary

- Identify potential future area for further car parking to be provided
- Prominent signage or feature identifying the area as a centre- providing identity



Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework

Moreton Centre

Townscape Appraisal

The centre lacks any real sense of 'arrival' largely due to the dominance of traffic on the main through routes running through the centre, dividing the different areas. The centre of activity is focused around the busy Moreton Cross junction where there is an uninviting environment for pedestrians - traffic barriers are a dominant feature within the streetscape and pavements are narrow and difficult in some areas.

The centre is showing some physical signs of decline with vacant units interspersed throughout; however there are no obvious areas of vulnerability where there are high concentrations of vacant units. However, a combination of vacant units, a relatively high proportion of night time uses and obtrusive security measures results in large expanses of inactive frontages in some parts of the centre during daytime opening hours and this potentially discourages pedestrian flow in these areas with a general lack of visual interest within these parts of the centre. There is limited car parking and restricted opportunities for further car parking within the centre or the immediate area.

Summary

Moreton is a relatively healthy centre with a mix of convenience, comparison and service uses within the centre. The centre is well situated for transport links and benefits from being on a main route through Wirral. The concern over car parking is important to the perception of visitors and shoppers to the centre. Only some very limited options to expand off-street car parking provision have been identified. The centre has a growing night time economy and ensuring a balance of uses (such as hot food takeaways) will be an important consideration in the future.

Options for Intervention

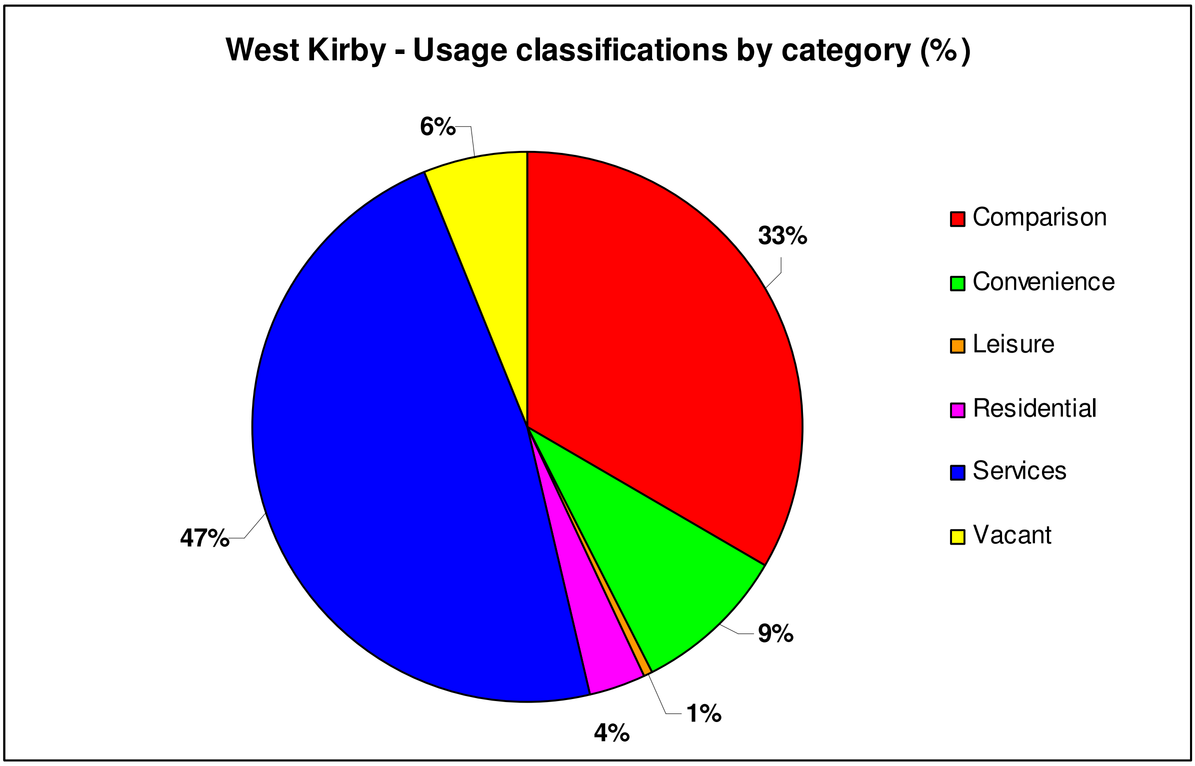
Early Interventions • Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc • Identification and consideration of car parking options where appropriate • Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund) • Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)
Medium Term Interventions • Look at measures to enhance pedestrian movement within the centre
Long Term Aspirations • Sustain and grow the retail offer in the centre

5.4 West Kirby

The RTP report assessed West Kirby as being an attractive, vibrant and stable town centre. This was evidenced by the healthy convenience offer, the good range of specialist and independent shops as well as a thriving evening economy with a good choice of restaurant and cafes. They also noted the good tourism and leisure offer and pleasant town centre environment.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is slightly below the average across all the centres studied of 10%. The percentage of comparison retailers is the highest of all the centres studied and significantly above the study average of 19% - the centre has retained a diverse range of independent retailers. Service uses are slightly below the Borough average of 50% while the percentage of vacant units is half the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, there appears to be high level of vacancy (58%), followed by offices separate to ground floor businesses (23%) and residential (11.5%).

Socio-economic Profile

The West Kirby and Thurstaston Ward has a population of 12,608 with an average household income of £47,500. The Job Seekers Allowance claimant rate for West Kirby and Thurstaston is 2.5%. The population aged 0-19 is 2,873, working age 16-64M/59W is 6,897 and 60+ is 3,921.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within West Kirby it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - These are the most prosperous people living in our main cities. They are very well educated and tend to be employed in senior managerial and professional occupations. Households are a mix of families, couples, singles and some retired. Given the urban nature of these areas, property is a mix of terraced and detached houses, and converted and purpose built flats. The houses tend to be large, with four or more bedrooms. These are affluent neighbourhoods so car ownership is high, even if travel to work is often by public transport. Incomes are high and these individuals have high levels of savings and investments.

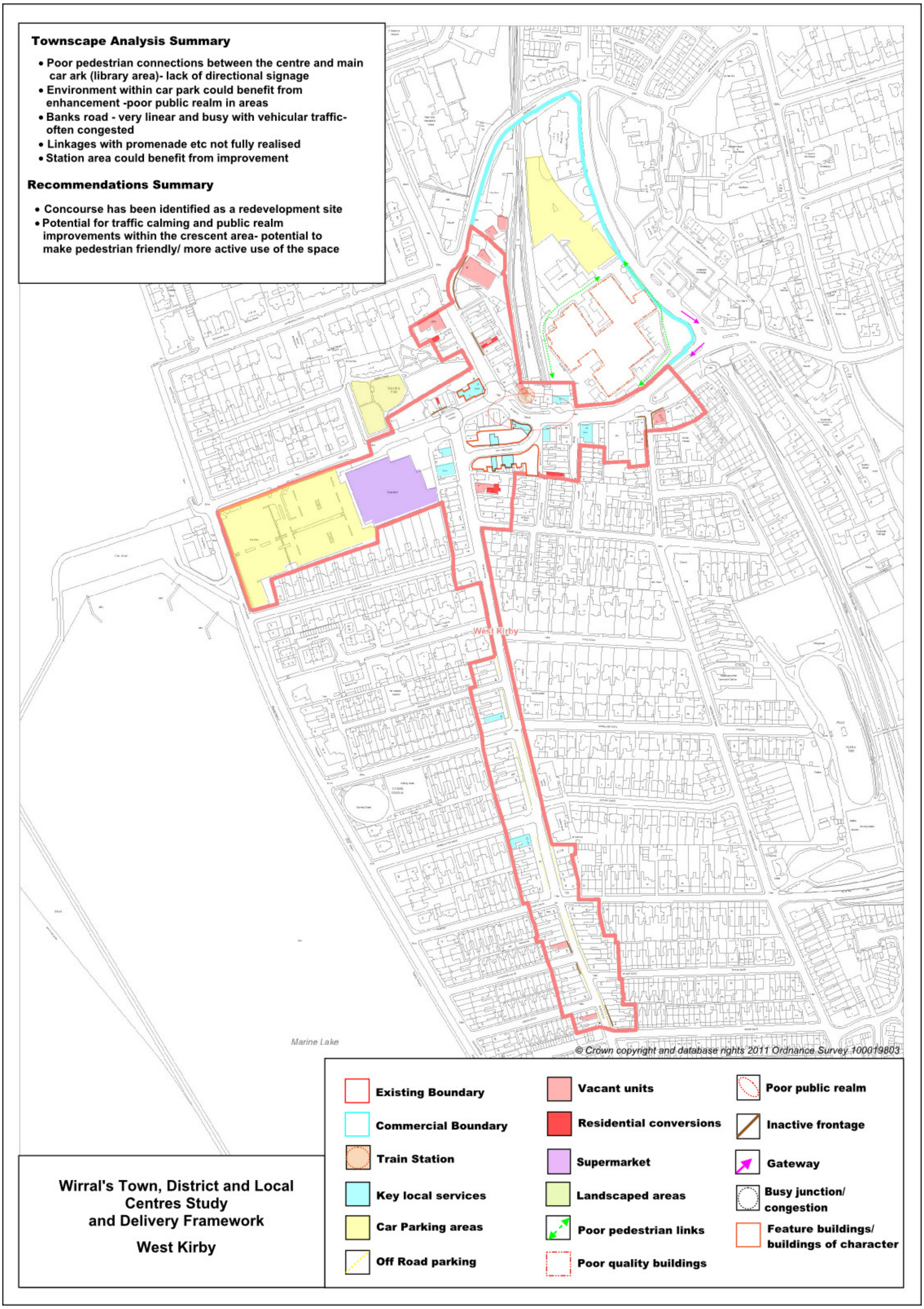
Group 2- These are comfortably-off retired people found in many seaside towns and elsewhere around the country. There are many over 75s as well as younger retired. A lot of the households are pensioner couples or singles. Retirement homes are also common.

Accessibility

West Kirby has a population of approximately 4,100 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. West Kirby is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 94,000 people (30% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 81,000 people (26% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 83,000 people (27% of the population of the borough) and during the evening75, 000 people (24% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
A large range of independent shops, boutiques and restaurants along Banks Road. A vibrant café culture Very good access by public transport Civic uses located in the centre A large supermarket anchor.	Limited tourist accommodation offer Signage to the centre from the main carpark Accessibility to the southern end of banks Road from the centre Traffic levels along Grange Road are high.
Opportunities	**Threats**
Potential redevelopment of the Concourse. Potential to redevelop the train station	Loss of any independent shops and key service uses from the centre. Loss of diversity of retail offer


Townscape Analysis Summary
• Poor pedestrian connections between the centre and main car ark (library area)- lack of directional signage
• Environment within car park could benefit from enhancement -poor public realm in areas
• Banks road - very linear and busy with vehicular traffic- often congested
• Linkages with promenade etc not fully realised
• Station area could benefit from improvement
Recommendations Summary
• Concourse has been identified as a redevelopment site
• Potential for traffic calming and public realm improvements within the crescent area- potential to make pedestrian friendly/ more active use of the space
West Kirby
Marine Lake
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Existing Boundary
Commercial Boundary
Train Station
Key local services
Car Parking areas
Off Road parking
Vacant units
Residential conversions
Supermarket
Landscaped areas
Poor pedestrian links
Poor quality buildings
Poor public realm
Inactive frontage
Gateway
Busy junction/ congestion
Feature buildings/ buildings of character
Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework
West Kirby

Townscape Appraisal

The centre comprises two main sections. The main retail core centred around the station and Crescent area and the long linear frontage extending primarily down the western side of Banks Road and encompassing a small section of the eastern side at the southern tip of the centre. Grange Road is a significant through route and presents a constraint to pedestrian movement. Other than that, in physical terms the centre functions well with a good environment, a strong sense of place and arrival as a destination point. The retail offer is diverse and there are no significant concentrations of vacant units or large areas of inactive frontages. There are areas in need of enhancement including the pedestrian linkages between the main car park to the rear of the Concourse and the centre which are weak. The environmental quality of the car park area could also benefit from enhancement. Linkages with the promenade are not fully realised and could be improved through signage, marketing and public realm improvements.

Summary

Overall, West Kirby is a vibrant and flourishing centre which has a buoyant comparison retail offer in particular and low vacancy rate. The centre has many independent boutiques and shops with a wide variety of lifestyle businesses. The centre benefits from its waterfront location and good sustainable transport connections with tourism bringing in thousands of visitors each year. The centre serves the prosperous community who use and spend within the centre. There is little intervention required in West Kirby, however managing and maintaining the unique character and mix of independent shops is important to the ongoing vitality of the centre.

Options for Intervention

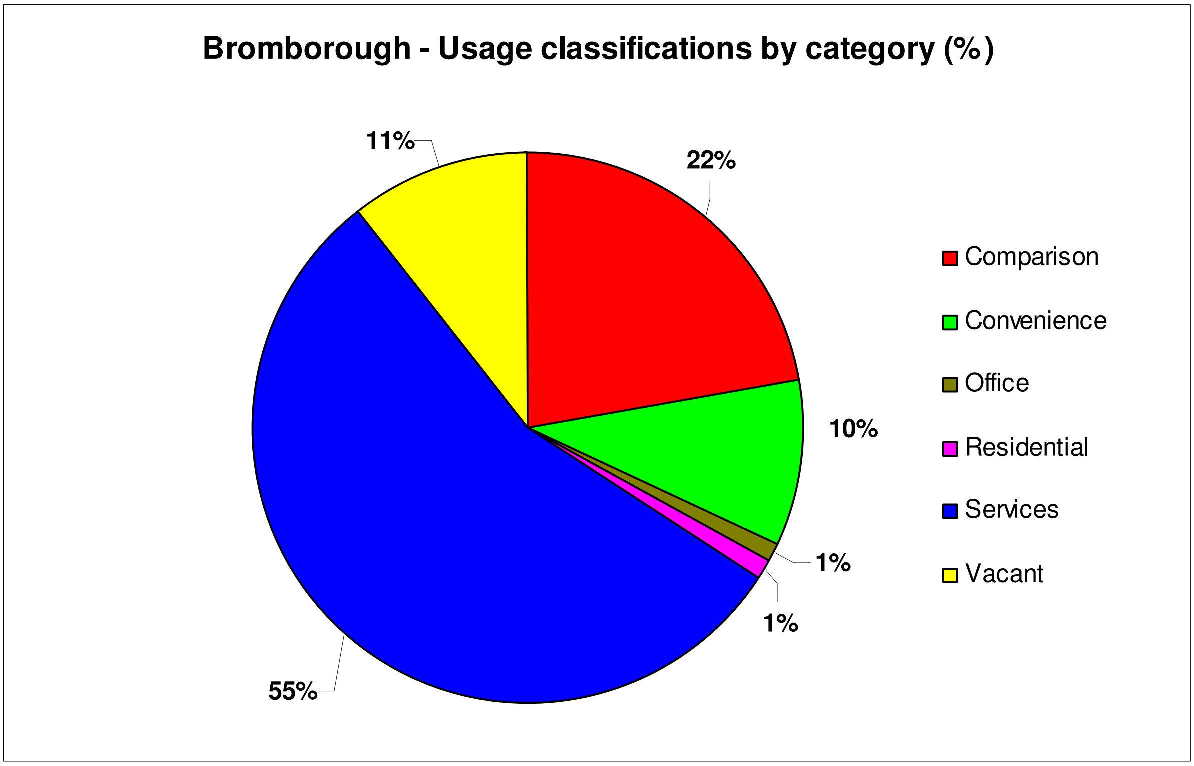
Early Interventions • Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc • Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean) • Improved linkages and signage to the centre from the main car park at the Concourse
Medium Term Interventions • Continue to offer a wide range and choice of uses and grow the retail offer • Potential redevelopment of the concourse • Further enhancement of public realm in the centre to improve pedestrian movements • Enhanced connections with the water to expand and diversify the retail offer
Long Term Aspirations • Sustain the development of the centre

5.5 Bromborough village

The RTP report assessed Bromborough Village as being a small-scale but relatively stable centre, with low vacancy and which appears busy with a clean, pleasant environment. The retail offer was considered to be quite limited in both its scale and range, with only a few comparison shops but with some independent shops.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the split of uses is very much in line with the average across all the centres studied: the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is the same as the study average, the percentage of comparison retailers is slightly above the study average of 19%, while service uses are slightly above the study average of 50% and vacancies are slightly below the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the predominant use is offices related to the ground floor business (49%) followed by residential (23%) with vacant property at just under 10%.

Socio-economic Profile

The Bromborough Ward has a population of 13,885 with an average household income of £28,403, 5.4% are claiming Job Seekers Allowance. The population aged 0-19 is 3,313, Working age 16-64M/59W is 8,464 and 60+ is 3,208.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Bromborough Village it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1- These tend to be home-owning families living comfortably in stable areas in suburban and semi-rural locations. People are employed in a range of occupations, including middle management and clerical roles. There also reasonable numbers of shopworkers and skilled manual workers. Incomes are at least of average levels and many earn well above the national average.

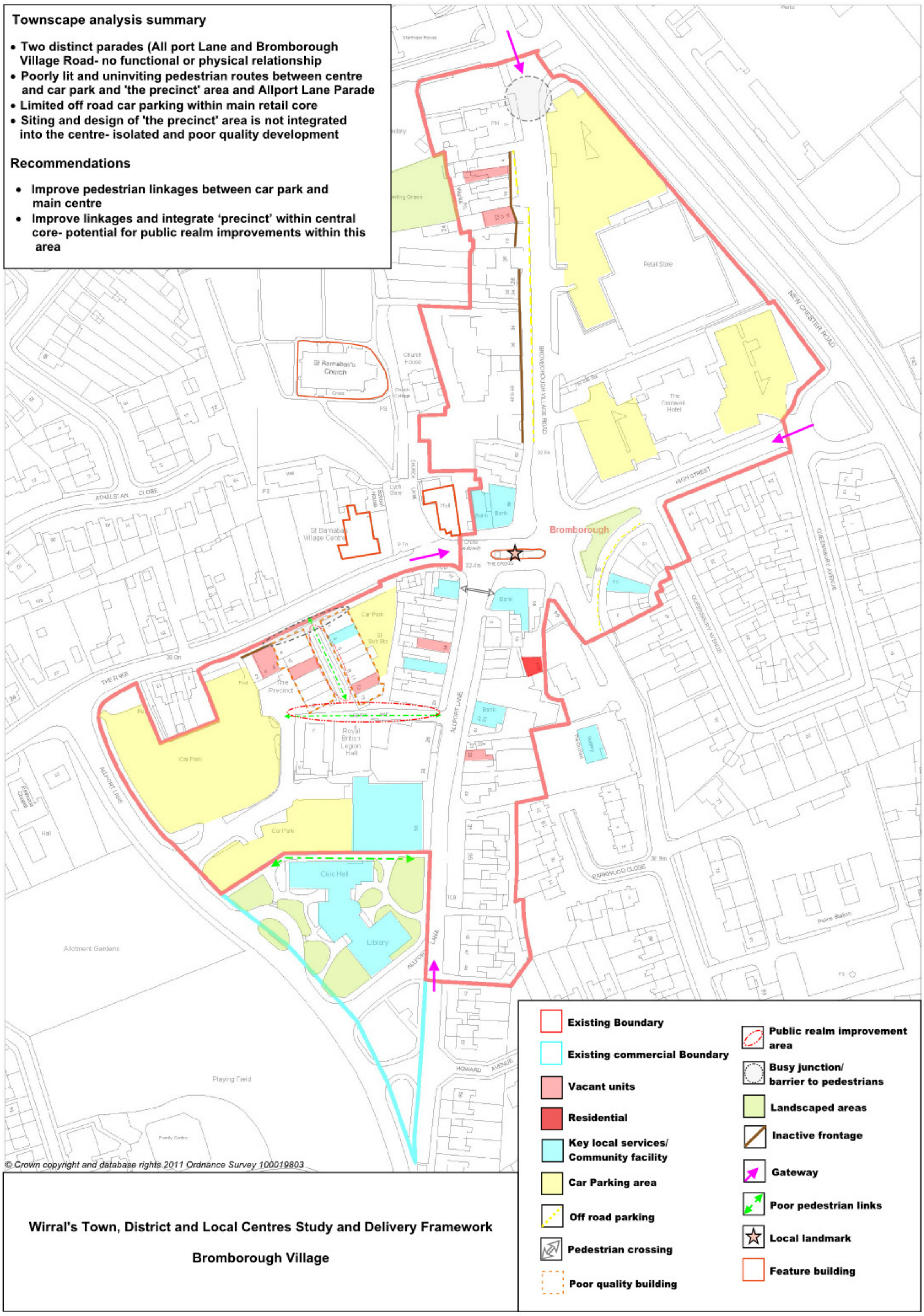
Group 2- These are low income families living on traditional low-rise estates. Some have bought their council houses but most continue to rent. Incomes are low and unemployment relatively high. Jobs reflect the general lack of educational qualifications and are in factories, shops and other manual occupations. Money is tight and shopping tends to focus on cheaper stores and catalogues.

Accessibility

Bromborough has a population of approximately 4,200 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Bromborough is accessible by public transport in 30minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 83,800 people (27% of population of the borough) and during the evening (7pm-10pm) 91,000 people (29% of the population of the borough) can access the centre in 30 minutes by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 88,000 people (28% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 87, 000 people (28% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Good range of retail uses including banks, butchers, Post Office and Boots. An extensive free car park located next to the shopping precinct Good bus services along Allport Lane A range of Council facilities including a Library and Civic Centre Strong community/trader support	Lack of signage from the A41 to Bromborough and a lack of signage from the car park to the centre of the village Restricted car parking along Allport Lane Poor retail offer in The Rake precinct which is disconnected from Allport Lane Weak connecting links through from the car park and precinct to Allport Lane Disconnected retail offer on Bromborough Village Road to Allport Road Proximity of Croft Retail Park
Opportunities	**Threats**
Potential to introduce on street parking Opportunity to improve the public realm especially in the precinct Investigate potential for developing the precinct Introducing traffic management changes along Allport Lane	Future loss of any major retailers in the centre Decline in retail offer and more vacant units



Townscape analysis summary
• Two distinct parades (All port Lane and Bromborough Village Road- no functional or physical relationship
• Poorly lit and uninviting pedestrian routes between centre and car park and 'the precinct' area and Allport Lane Parade
• Limited off road car parking within main retail core
• Siting and design of 'the precinct' area is not integrated into the centre- isolated and poor quality development
Recommendations
• Improve pedestrian linkages between car park and main centre
• Improve linkages and integrate 'precinct' within central core- potential for public realm improvements within this area
Bromborough
Retail Store
St Barnabas's Church
Church House
The Cromwell Hotel
NEW CHESTER ROAD
HIGH STREET
BROMBOROUGH VILLAGE ROAD
ATHELSTAN CLOSE
THE RAKE
ALLPORT LANE
QUEENSBURY AVENUE
PARKWOOD CLOSE
HOWARD AVENUE
St Barnabas Village Centre
THE CROSS
Car Park
The Precinct
Royal British Legion Hall
Bank
Civic Hall
Library
Allotment Gardens
Playing Field
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Existing Boundary
Existing commercial Boundary
Vacant units
Residential
Key local services/ Community facility
Car Parking area
Off road parking
Pedestrian crossing
Poor quality building
Public realm improvement area
Busy junction/ barrier to pedestrians
Landscaped areas
Inactive frontage
Gateway
Poor pedestrian links
Local landmark
Feature building
Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework
Bromborough Village

Townscape Appraisal

The centre comprises of two distinct clusters of businesses along Bromborough Village Road and Allport Lane. In physical terms the centre appears to function well although there are opportunities for improvement. The pedestrian routes between centre and car park along Legion Lane and 'the precinct' area are poorly lit and uninviting and the main route has a service area feel with no obvious pathway for pedestrians. Within the main retail area around Allport Lane there are an increasing number of vacant units interspersed through out but their impact on the centre overall is limited as they are not clustered.

The siting and design of The Rake Precinct is not integrated into the centre and is isolated. The change of level between this area and The Rake isolates the development further. It is however relatively well occupied and improved integration by better linkages between the Precinct and the rest of the centre is therefore considered more appropriate. The oversized planters which run along the length of The Rake Precinct contribute little to the physical environment and present a barrier to pedestrian movement.

Summary

Bromborough is beginning to show signs of struggling as a centre with some empty properties and a decline in the retail offer. However, the centre does still have some key services and retail businesses which offer a reasonable choice for shoppers. It also benefits from a large car park and civic uses. A major concern for the centre was a lack of on-street parking and also the growth in the number of empty shops. Bromborough has a large surrounding population and also had good access to public transport. The centre could benefit from some small scale interventions to help rejuvenate the centre. The centre has an economic mix in the vicinity which is likely use the centre for general shopping needs as well as for essential services.

Options for Intervention

Early Interventions

- Design SPD for ‘town centres’ dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front/ securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc
- Consider policy on focusing controlling the mix of uses in the centre
- Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)
- Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)
- Working with traders’ on re-branding ‘Bromborough Village’
- Signage to and from the car park to the town centre
- Signage from the A41 to Bromborough
- Temporary trial of on-street parking along Allport Lane (underway)
- Improved lighting from the car park to Allport Lane.

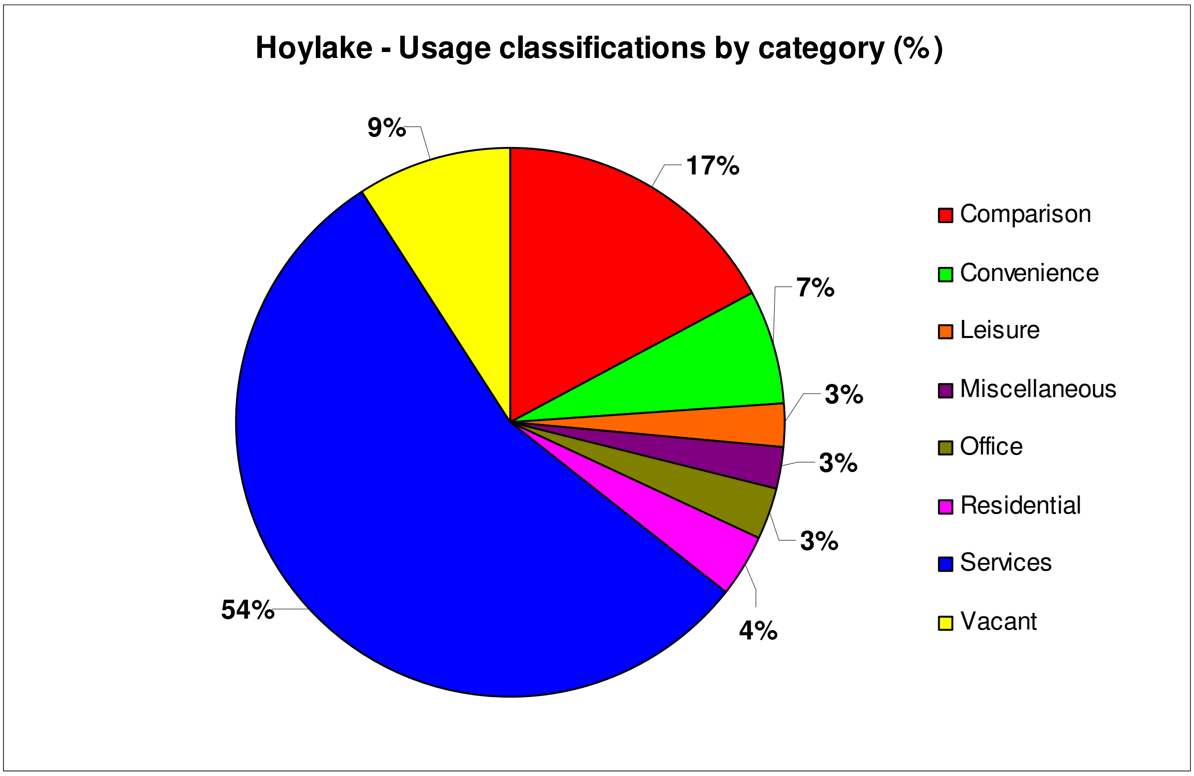
Medium Term Interventions • Improve pedestrian linkages between car park and main centre and civic buildings
Long Term Aspirations • Improved linkages and better integration of the ‘precinct’ within centre. Public realm improvements to create a public open space to improve the pedestrian flow between the two areas

5.6 Hoylake

RTP assessed Hoylake as showing signs of ongoing decline, with a limited and contracting comparison retail sector, with particularly poor representation from clothing retailers. The centre is characterised by a significantly high vacancy rate with low footfall, limited operator demand and poor physical environment in parts. The more thriving service sector (pubs and wine bars) gave rise to some concerns about anti-social behaviour.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is just below the average across all the centres studied of 10%. Similarly comparison provision is a couple of percentage points below the study average of 19%. The provision of service uses are just above the study average of 50% while vacancy levels are 3 percentage points below the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the predominant use is residential (59%) followed by offices separate to the ground floor business (16%) and offices related to the ground floor business (15.5%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Hoylake and Meols ward has a population of 12,834 with an average household income of £35,608. The Job Seekers Allowance rate for the ward is 2.5%.
The population aged 0-19 is 2,918, working age 16-64M/59W is 7,208 and 60+ is 3,791.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Hoylake it suggests that the four most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows (There is a tie on the most prominent groups in Hoylake which resulted in four categories):

Group 1 -These are comfortably-off retired people found in many seaside towns and elsewhere around the country. There are many over 75s as well as younger retired. A lot of the households are pensioner couples or singles. Retirement homes are also common.

Group 2 - These are young adults, many just starting out on their careers. They are in their twenties and early thirties. There are a lot of students and young singles in their first jobs, as well as young couples and some young families with children under five. Most of the individuals are well educated to A-level and degree standard. They will often be employed in lower managerial, professional and clerical occupations, and are on the first rungs of the corporate ladder

Group 3 - These are the most prosperous people living in our main cities. They are very well educated and tend to be employed in senior managerial and professional occupations. Households are a mix of families, couples, singles and some retired. Given the urban nature of these areas, property is a mix of terraced and detached houses, and converted and purpose built flats. The houses tend to be large, with four or more bedrooms. These are affluent neighbourhoods so car ownership is high, even if travel to work is often by public transport. Incomes are high and these individuals have high levels of savings and investments. They read the major broadsheets and have a cosmopolitan outlook, being interested in theatre, the arts, classical music and eating out in good restaurants.

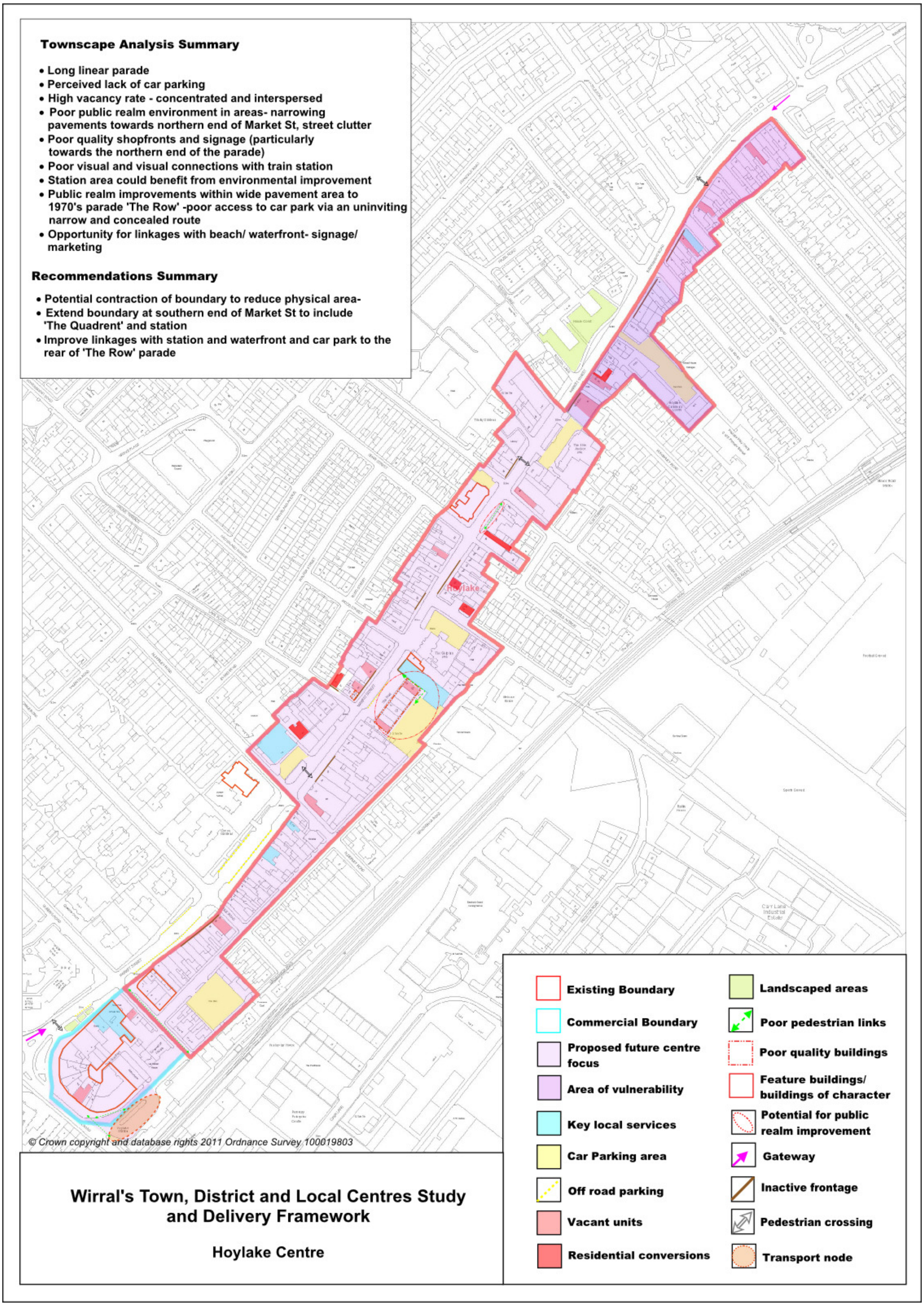
Group 4 - These are wealthy families with mortgages. They live in established suburbs, new housing developments around commuter towns, and villages and rural areas. They are younger than other affluent groups, so most households are still likely to be making mortgage repayments. Incomes are good since many have managerial and professional occupations

Accessibility

Hoylake has a population of approximately 4,900 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Hoylake is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 94,000 people (30% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 74,000 people (24% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 76,000 people (25% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 70,000 people (23% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Coastal location Recent significant public realm improvements to the core of the centre. Key services are within the centre as well as some independent shops. Accessibility by public transport is very good. Large surrounding residential catchment. Broad range of evening economy uses Strong community support	Long linear retail centre with varying road and pavement widths. Vacant units dispersed within rows of shops and a cluster of vacant units around Lee Road. Concerns over impact of evening economy offer Lack of identifiable core to the centre Loss of financial services from the centre Poor links between coast and town centre Limited opportunities to grow the population catchment due to coast, Green Belt and railway
Opportunities	**Threats**
To utilise the location of the centre in relation to tourist attractions No obvious development site opportunities within the existing centre. The opportunities represented by the golf economy. Build on existing environmental improvements to the centre	Loss of any key services from the centre


Townscape Analysis Summary
• Long linear parade
• Perceived lack of car parking
• High vacancy rate - concentrated and interspersed
• Poor public realm environment in areas- narrowing pavements towards northern end of Market St, street clutter
• Poor quality shopfronts and signage (particularly towards the northern end of the parade)
• Poor visual and visual connections with train station
• Station area could benefit from environmental improvement
• Public realm improvements within wide pavement area to 1970's parade 'The Row' -poor access to car park via an uninviting narrow and concealed route
• Opportunity for linkages with beach/ waterfront- signage/ marketing
Recommendations Summary
• Potential contraction of boundary to reduce physical area-
• Extend boundary at southern end of Market St to include 'The Quadrent' and station
• Improve linkages with station and waterfront and car park to the rear of 'The Row' parade
Hoylake
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Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework
Hoylake Centre
Existing Boundary
Commercial Boundary
Proposed future centre focus
Area of vulnerability
Key local services
Car Parking area
Off road parking
Vacant units
Residential conversions
Landscaped areas
Poor pedestrian links
Poor quality buildings
Feature buildings/ buildings of character
Potential for public realm improvement
Gateway
Inactive frontage
Pedestrian crossing
Transport node

Townscape Appraisal

Hoylake is a long, linear centre and lacks a distinctive core area, although it includes a number of important feature buildings contributing to a strong sense of character. The quality of the environment and public realm is generally good. There are vacant units both concentrated and interspersed through out the centre making the contraction or refocusing of the main retail core more difficult.

An area of vulnerability has, however, been identified to the northern extent of the centre. This is characterised by higher vacancy rates and expanses of inactive frontage due to the nature and grouping of particular uses. Within this area, the public realm environment could benefit from improvement with narrowing pavements towards the northern end of Market Street proving a barrier to pedestrian movement and poor street lighting in some areas. Although the overall environmental quality of the centre is good there are a number of poorly designed frontages interspersed throughout the centre and most recently a number of poorly proportioned UPVC shop fronts that are out of keeping with the buildings.

The proximity to the train station and the beach/ waterfront are key assets of the centre that are not utilised to their full potential. Pedestrian connections and directional signage is generally poor and it would benefit from enhancement. The station forecourt and area between could benefit from environmental improvements, improved linkages, signage, and marketing for other aspects of the centre.

Summary

Hoylake is a very long linear centre which has a range of retail and service uses. The centre is well connected by public transport and also has a large residential catchment within walking distance. Hoylake also has a vibrant evening economy with a mix of restaurants, bars and cafes. The centre does have some vacant units particularly towards the Meols end of the centre, which is performing poorly as part of the centre. The proportion of units given over to comparison retailing is below average, which given the size of the centre is surprising. The centre would benefit from a more central focus and broadening the retail offer to attract people to visit the centre for more comparison shopping with linked trips to other key services and leisure pursuits.

Options for Intervention

Early Interventions

- Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc
- Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)
- Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)
- Sign posting to and from the centre to the train station. Sign posting to and from the promenade to the centre.
- Linkage with emerging Neighbourhood Vanguards
- Consider need for policy on focusing controlling the mix of uses in the centre
- Opportunity to work with local groups/organisations to market the centre

Medium Interventions

- Consider opportunity for potential boundary change to the shopping centre - northern parade down to Lea Road block is identified as an area of vulnerability
- Potential extension of boundary at southern end of Market St to include 'Quadrant' block

Long Term Aspirations

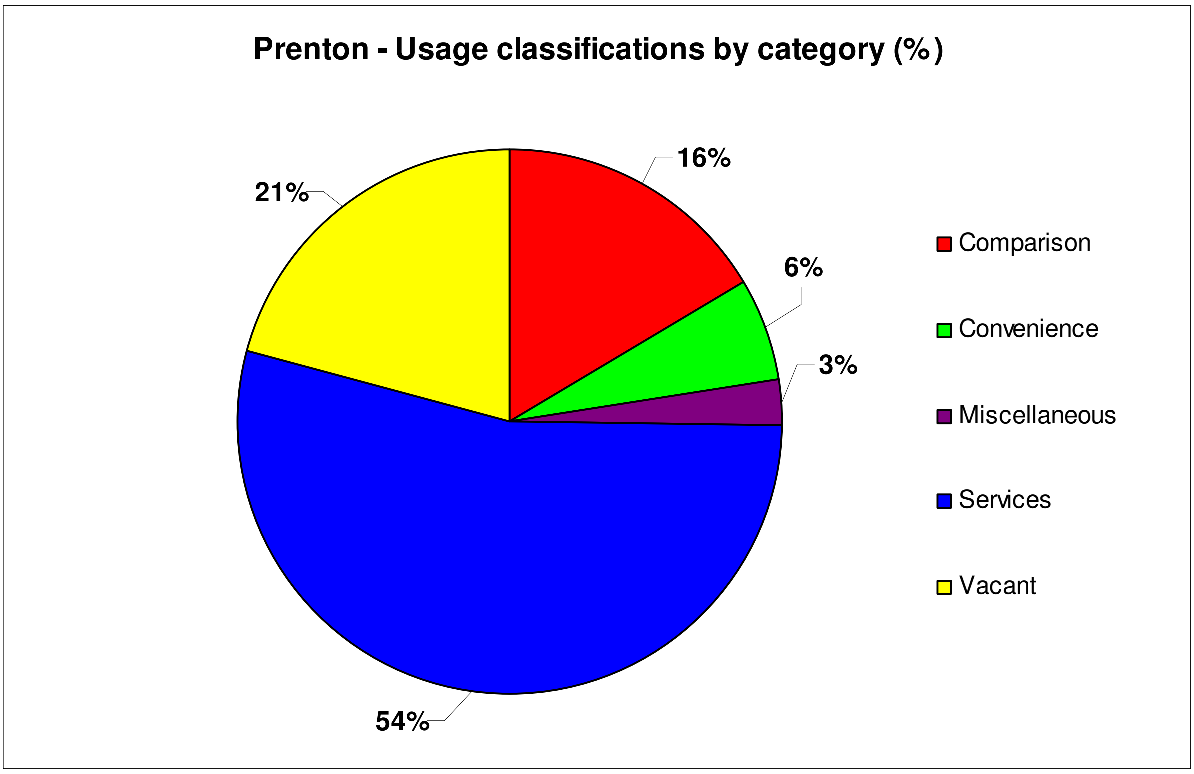
- Focus retail uses into the core of the centre to improve and manage the retail offer.

5.6 Prenton (Woodchurch Road)

RTP assessed (Woodchurch Road) as being a relatively small centre, with a reasonable convenience sector provision, but a more limited non-food offer. Prenton was increasingly dominated by service uses, particularly take-away shops and estate agencies. RTP considered that the centre is generally attractive, well-lit, accessible and adequately meets the convenience and day-to-day service requirements of local residents.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing (4 units) is significantly below the average across all the centres studied of 10% and three of the four units are national chains. Comparison provision is also below the study average of 19%, while service uses are just above the study average of 50%. Vacancy rates are nearly double the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the most predominant use is residential (36%) followed by offices related to the ground floor business (31%) and vacant uses (24%).

Socio-economic Profile

Prenton (Woodchurch Road) falls between two Wards. The surrounding population for Prenton Ward is 14,091 and Oxton 13,305 with an average household income of £31,297 and £34,500 respectively. The Job Seekers Allowance rates for Prenton is 3.9% and Oxton is 3.8%. The population for Prenton Ward aged 0-19 is 3,455, Working age 16-64M/59W is 8,470 and 60+ is 3,458. The Population for Oxton Ward aged 0-19 is 2,795, Working Age 16-64M/59W is 8,008 and 60+ 3,613.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Prenton it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - These are some of the most affluent people in the UK. They live in wealthy high status suburban, rural and semi-rural areas of the country. Households are a mix of middle-aged families, empty nesters and wealthy retired. They are very well-educated individuals with high levels of academic qualifications. Most are employed in senior managerial and professional occupations or are running their own businesses. In short, these are consumers with the money and the space to enjoy very comfortable lifestyles.

Group 2 - These tend to be home-owning families living comfortably in stable areas in suburban and semi-rural locations. People are employed in a range of occupations, including middle management and clerical roles. There also reasonable numbers of shopworkers and skilled manual workers. Incomes are at least of average levels and many earn well above the national average.

Accessibility

Prenton has a population of approximately 6,300 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Prenton is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 192,000 people (62% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 158,000 people (51% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 176,000 people (57% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 158,000 people (51% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

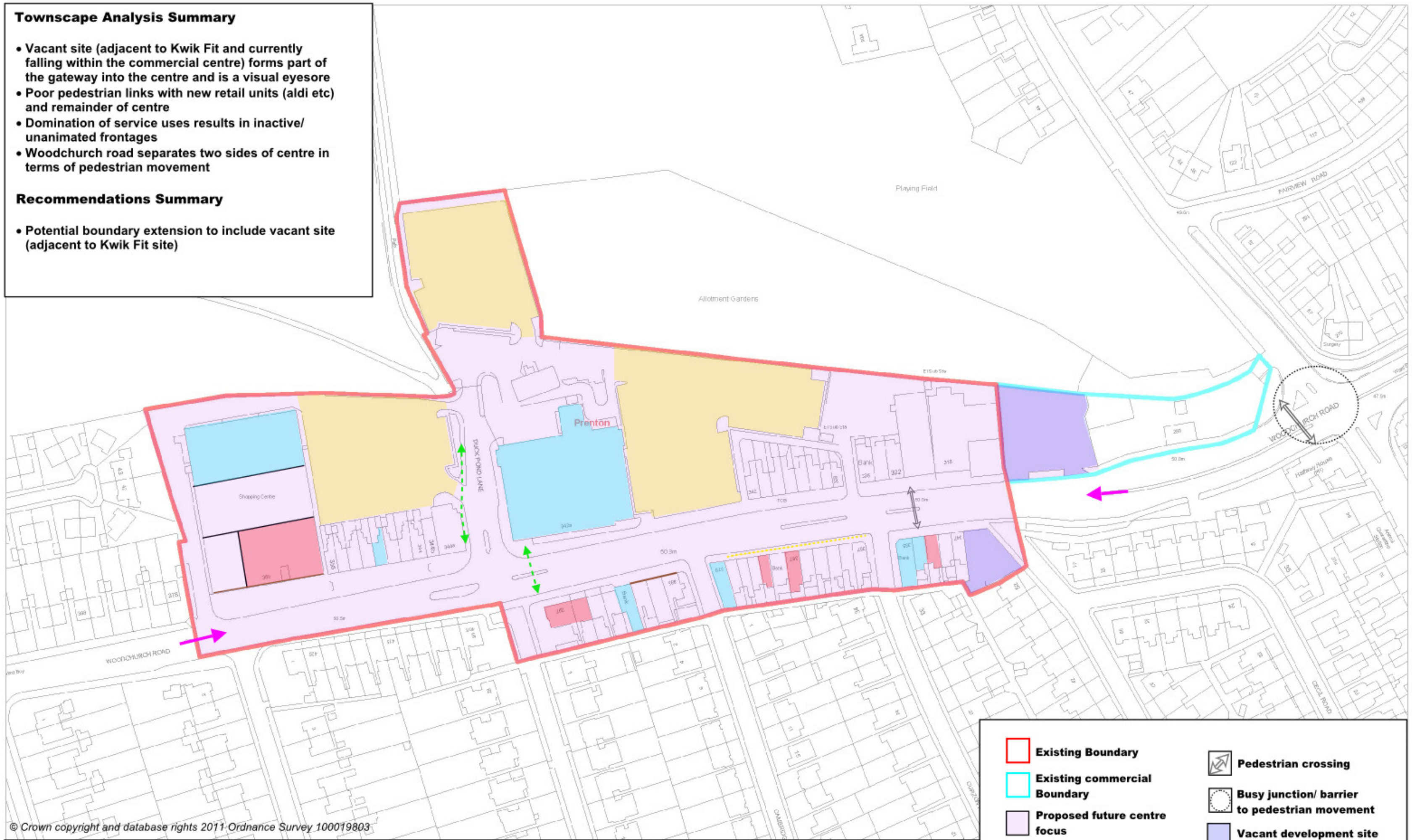
Strengths	Weaknesses
The centre has a very strong convenience and service offer Accessibility to the centre is good via public transport A high density residential area surrounds the centre	A busy main road passes through the centre which restricts pedestrian movements Limited comparison offer in the centre Temporary impact of prominent development sites in appearance of the centre Limited carparking opportunities aside from supermarket carparks
Opportunities	**Threats**
Potential opportunity site on the corner of Woodchurch Road and Elm Road Potential development site adjacent to Kwik Fit (outside of centre boundary in the commercial area)	Potential impact of Asda (Birkenhead) on supermarket trading in the centre Heavily reliant on the supermarket anchors

Townscape Analysis Summary

- Vacant site (adjacent to Kwik Fit and currently falling within the commercial centre) forms part of the gateway into the centre and is a visual eyesore
- Poor pedestrian links with new retail units (aldi etc) and remainder of centre
- Domination of service uses results in inactive/ unanimated frontages
- Woodchurch road separates two sides of centre in terms of pedestrian movement

Recommendations Summary

- Potential boundary extension to include vacant site (adjacent to Kwik Fit site)



Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework

Prenton

Townscape Appraisal

The centre is divided by Woodchurch Road into two distinct areas - the shopping frontages on the southern side of Woodchurch Road and the supermarket and recent retail development at the western extent of the centre and both appear to function independently. The units within the frontages are dominated by service users: there is a limited comparison retail offer and convenience retailing is mainly restricted to the supermarkets within the centre. The most recent Aldi store and retail units are in terms of layout and design isolated from the centre and the pedestrian links between are poor. The four-lane Woodchurch Road limits pedestrian movement between the north and south areas of the centre to the two pedestrian crossing points at Duck Pond Lane and Curzon Road. The centre does not have a strong sense of arrival as a centre given its position on Woodchurch Road. There are additionally two vacant/ derelict sites which detract from the aesthetics of the centre – on the corner of Elm Road and a site adjacent to Kwik Fit. The latter currently falls within the designated commercial centre boundary but forms part of the gateway into the centre and is currently an eyesore. The domination of service uses within the main frontages results in some inactive/ unanimated frontages and there is a perceived parking issue on the southern side of the centre.

Summary

Prenton is a busy centre with several large convenience supermarkets and a range of service uses within the centre but with a limited comparison offer. Prenton is located on a busy road through the Borough and is well connected by public transport as well as being accessible by car. The centre also benefits from a large prosperous population within walking and easy travelling distance to the shops. There are a few opportunity sites on the edge of the centre which could be considered for complementary uses in the future.

Options for Intervention

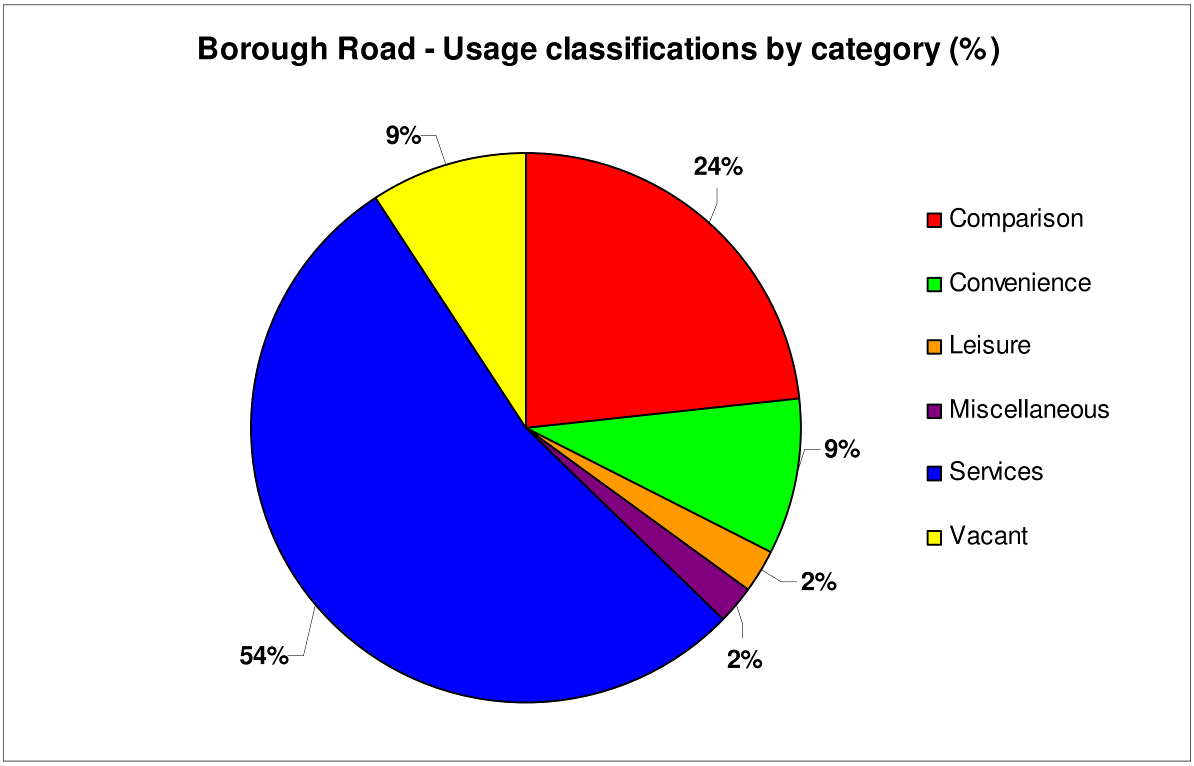
Early Interventions • Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc • Work with traders organisation / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean) • Improved signage to the centre • Guiding development of vacant sites in the centre through a design brief
Medium Term Interventions • Sustaining the centre and the mix of uses • Potential boundary extension to include vacant site (adjacent to Kwik Fit site)
Long Term Aspirations • Sustaining the retail role of the centre

5.7 Borough Road – Prenton Park

RTP assessed Borough Road as performing a very localised role, meeting some of the day-to-day convenience and service needs of local residents, with a limited convenience and comparison offer and scope for improvement in its physical environment.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is just below the average across all the centres studied of 10%. Comparison and service uses are just above the study averages of 19% and 50% respectively while the percentage of vacant units is 3 percentage points below the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the most predominant use is residential (84%), followed by offices related to the ground floor business (8%) and storage related to the ground floor business (5%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Prenton Ward population is 14,091 with an average household income of £31,297. The Job Seekers Allowance claimant's rate for Prenton is 3.9%. The Population for Prenton Ward aged 0-19 is 3,455, Working age population 16-64M/59F is 8,470 and aged 60+ is 3,458.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Borough Road it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - These are communities where most employment is in traditional blue collar occupations. Families and retired people predominate with some young singles and single parents. Incomes range from moderate to low and unemployment is higher than the national average, as is long term illness. There are pockets of deprivation in this group.

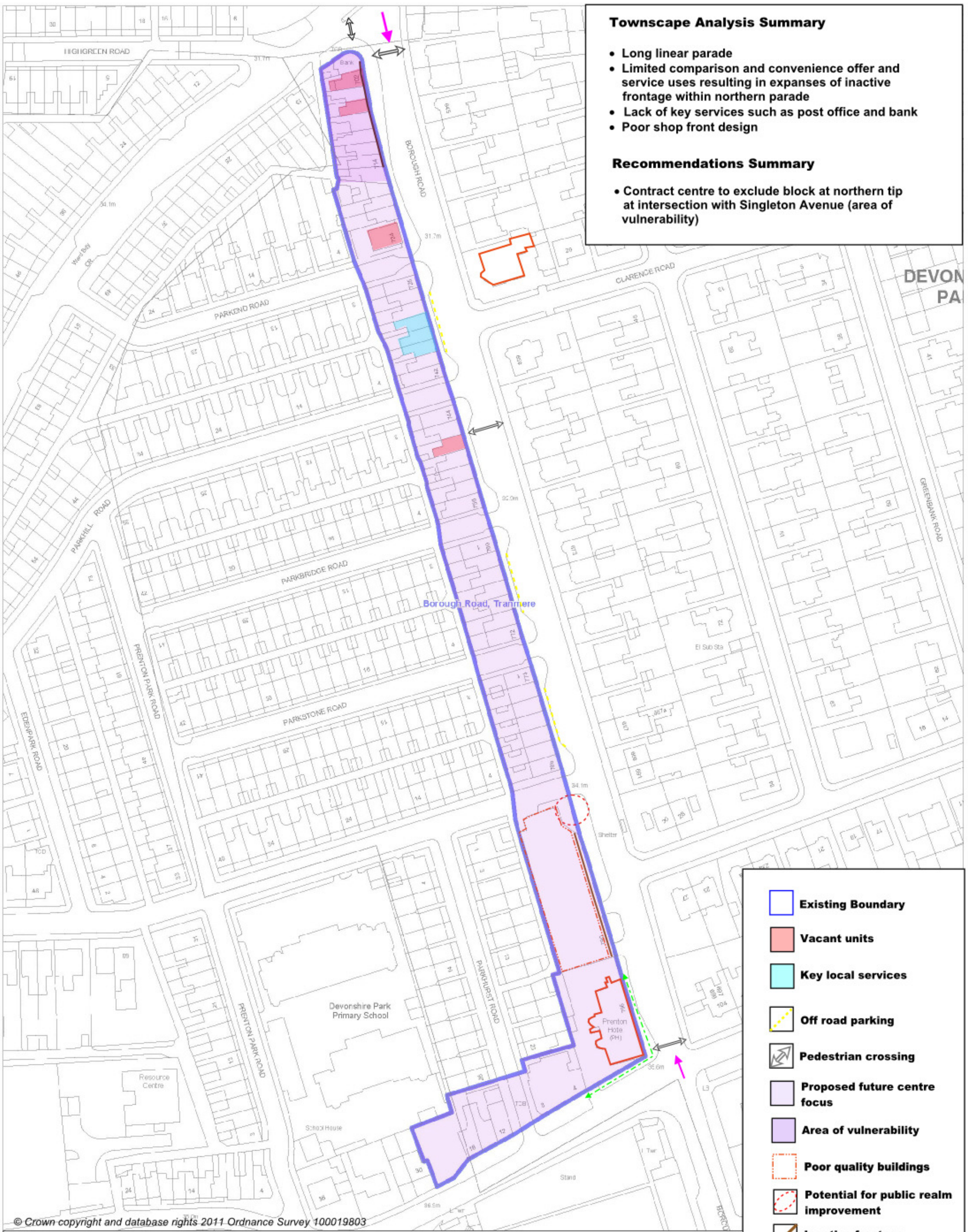
Group 2 - These tend to be home-owning families living comfortably in stable areas in suburban and semi-rural locations. People are employed in a range of occupations, including middle management and clerical roles. There also reasonable numbers of shopworkers and skilled manual workers. Incomes are at least of average levels and many earn well above the national average.

Accessibility

Borough Road has a population of approximately 9,700 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Borough road is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 167,000 people (54% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 162,000 people (52% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 153,000 people (49% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 161,000 people (52% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Good accessibility to the centre A large surrounding residential population Continues to meet some of the day to day needs of local residents	Long linear centre along one side of a very busy commuter road Poor public realm and appearance of the units Lacking some key uses e.g Bank and Post Office Overuse of the on street parking facilities – with double parking often an issue
Opportunities	**Threats**
To consider scope for localised promotion of the centre to surrounding neighbourhoods	Little opportunity for any expansion



Townscape Analysis Summary

- Long linear parade
- Limited comparison and convenience offer and service uses resulting in expanses of inactive frontage within northern parade
- Lack of key services such as post office and bank
- Poor shop front design

Recommendations Summary

- Contract centre to exclude block at northern tip at intersection with Singleton Avenue (area of vulnerability)

- Existing Boundary
- Vacant units
- Key local services
- Off road parking
- Pedestrian crossing
- Proposed future centre focus
- Area of vulnerability
- Poor quality buildings
- Potential for public realm improvement
- Inactive frontage
- Gateway
- Poor pedestrian links
- Feature buildings

Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework

Borough Road- Tranmere

Townscape Appraisal

The centre is a long linear parade showing signs of decline primarily towards the northern extent (close to the junction with Singleton Avenue) which has a cluster of vacant units. The centre is also limited in terms of its retail offer, and there is a lack of key services such as a post office and there are expanses of inactive frontage and a general lack of vibrancy for the main part of the centre. The centre itself does not feel like a destination point and there is no real sense of arrival. The general quality of the shop fronts could also be improved and obtrusive security measures reduced.

Summary

Borough Road has a mix of convenience and comparison units. The centre has a large residential catchment within walking distance and is very accessible by public transport. The centre is performing relatively well as a local centre, providing for the day to day needs of local residents.

Options for Intervention

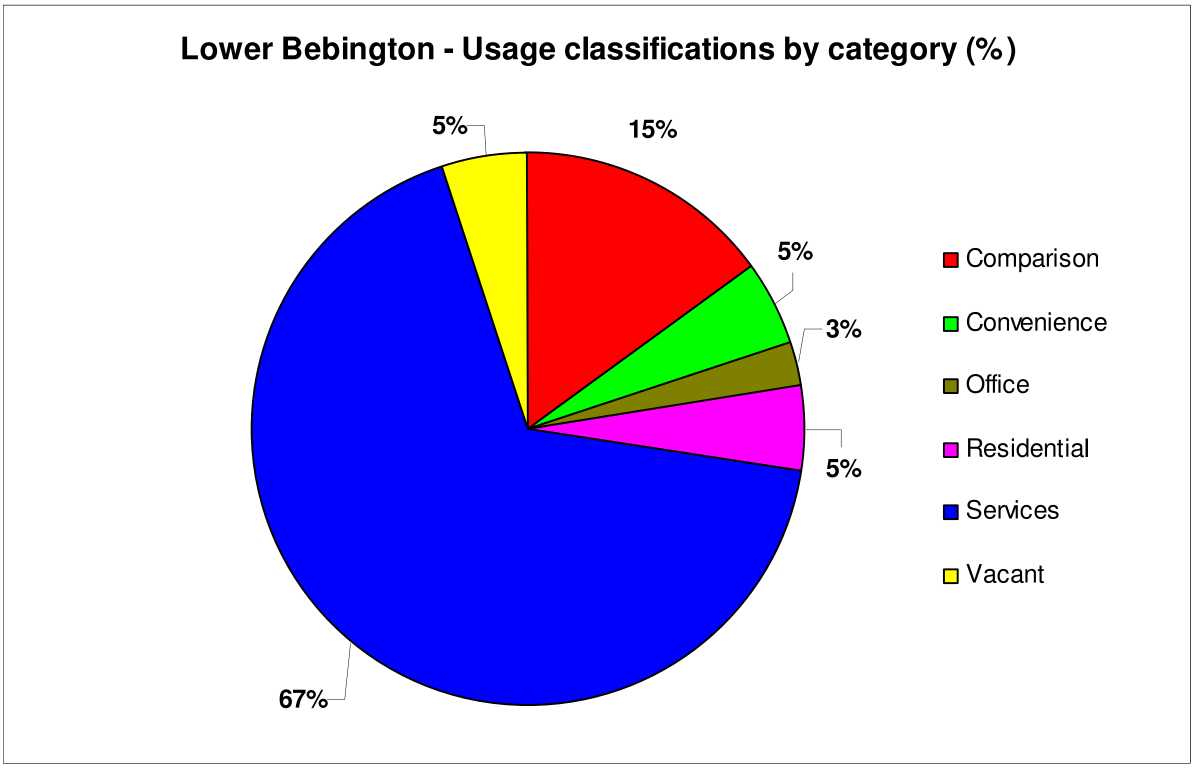
Early Interventions • Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc • Linkage with emerging Neighbourhood Plans • Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund) • Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)
Medium Term Interventions • Opportunities for potential boundary change to the shopping centre within areas of vulnerability
Long Term Aspirations • Review and manage the future role and function of the centre

5.9 Lower Bebington

The RTP report assessed the centre as performing a reasonable top-up role for local residents (dominated by service uses) and is healthy in this respect, benefiting from a low vacancy rate, a clean and well-maintained physical environment and provision of adequate free car parking.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is only half of the average across all the centres studied of 10% and comparison provision is also below the study average of 19%. Service uses by contrast are significantly above the study average of 50% and is the highest of all centres studied. Vacancy levels are less than half the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the most prevalent use is offices related to the ground floor business (46%), followed by offices separate to the ground floor business (38.5%). Residential uses and vacant units are both just under 8% of the total.

Socio-economic Profile

The Bebington Ward has a population of 15,053 with the average household income being £36,500. Bebington has 3.4% of the population claiming Job Seekers Allowance. The population aged 0-19 is 3,710, working age 16-64M/59W is 8,520 and 60+ is 4,050.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Lower Bebington it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - These are young adults, many just starting out on their careers. They are in their twenties and early thirties. There are a lot of students and young singles in their first jobs, as well as young couples and some young families with children under five. Most of the individuals are well educated to A-level and degree standard. They will often be employed in lower managerial, professional and clerical occupations, and are on the first rungs of the corporate ladder

Group 2 - These tend to be home-owning families living comfortably in stable areas in suburban and semi-rural locations. People are employed in a range of occupations, including middle management and clerical roles. There also reasonable numbers of shopworkers and skilled manual workers. Incomes are at least of average levels and many earn well above the national average.

Accessibility

Bebington has a population of approximately 5,900 people located within a 10minute walking time to the centre. Bebington is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 121,000 people (39% of population of the borough) and during the evening (7pm-10pm) 116,000 people (37% of the Population of the borough) can access the centre in 30 minutes by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately134,000 people (43% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 114,000 people (37% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

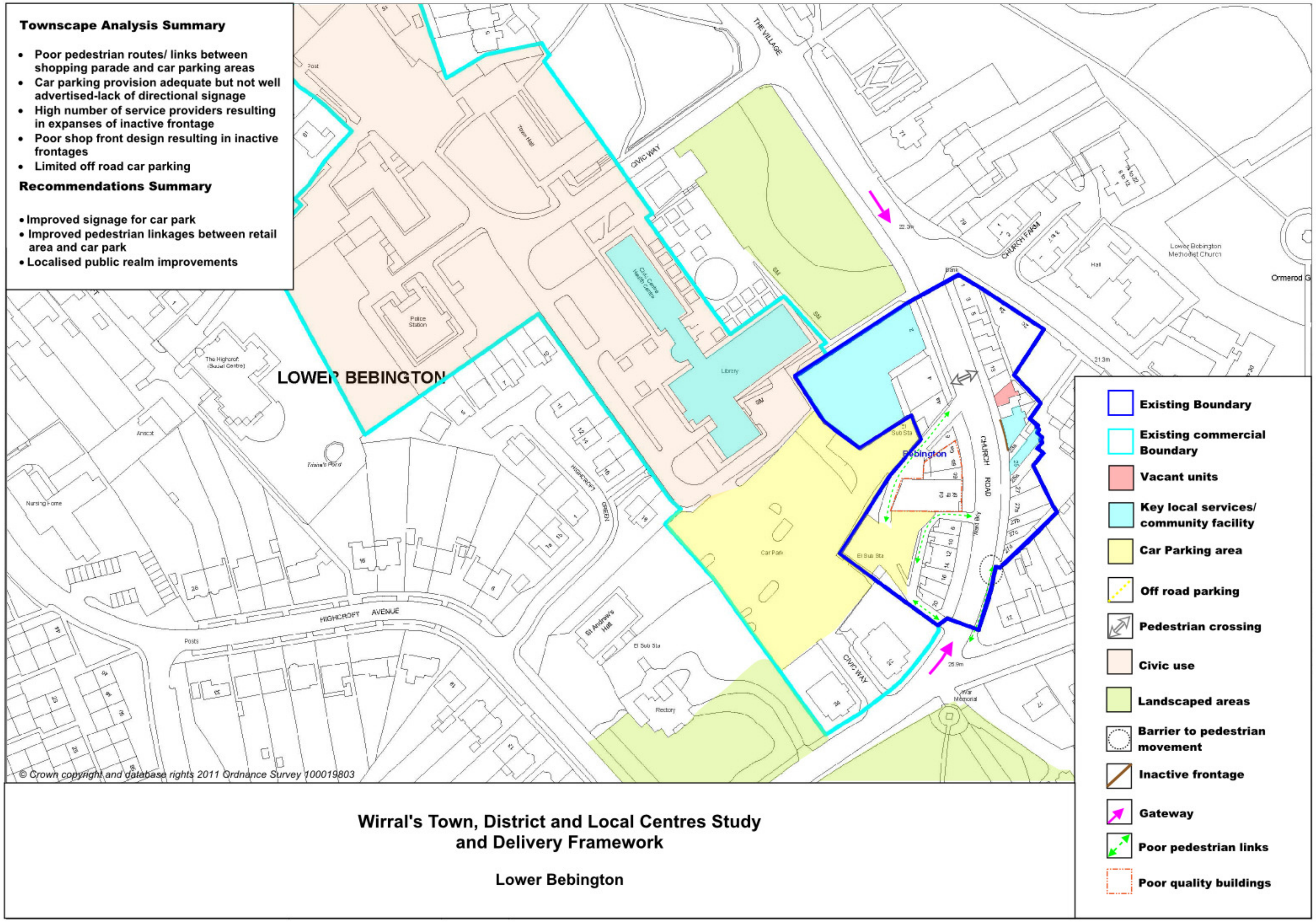
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
A mix of Council and other public facilities which are located adjacent to the centre including a free car park. Good mix of retail uses including convenience and service uses in the centre The centre is attractive and has reasonably good public realm within a compact centre. Large employer (Unilever Research Centre) in close proximity to the centre Good accessibility to the centre	Limited opportunity areas for growth A large proportion of service uses (Estate Agents) in the centre Located on a busy road Limited comparison offer
Opportunities	**Threats**
Improvement to links to and from the carpark Improve signage to carpark	Loss of any key uses from the centre

Townscape Analysis Summary

- Poor pedestrian routes/ links between shopping parade and car parking areas
- Car parking provision adequate but not well advertised-lack of directional signage
- High number of service providers resulting in expanses of inactive frontage
- Poor shop front design resulting in inactive frontages
- Limited off road car parking

Recommendations Summary

- Improved signage for car park
- Improved pedestrian linkages between retail area and car park
- Localised public realm improvements



Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework

Lower Bebington

Townscape Appraisal

The general environmental quality of Lower Bebington is pleasant and it generally functions well in urban design terms and there are no physical signs of serious decline. There are, however, a number of areas that would benefit from enhancement. The most direct pedestrian link between the shopping frontages on Church Road and the car parking adjacent to the Civic Centre lacks directional signage and is a poor quality environment, as it is in part the servicing area for some of the retail units. The level of parking provision appears adequate, however. There is also a high number of service providers within the centre resulting in expanses of inactive frontage. There are also an isolated number of poor quality shop frontages within the centre.

Summary

Bebington has a large and quite affluent residential catchment surrounding the centre. The centre is functioning well and benefits from having civic uses in the centre which brings in people on a daily basis who use the shops and other key service uses. The percentage of units given over to convenience and comparison retailing is below the study average however and service uses predominate. The centre is quite self sustaining and should be maintained and encouraged to keep a range of uses.

Options for Intervention

Early Interventions

- Design SPD for ‘town centres’ dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc
- Signage to and from the car park and Civic Centre to the town centre
- Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)
- Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)
- Improve signage from the car park to the centre

Medium Term Interventions

- Encouraging more independent shops
- Environmental improvements to pedestrian routes between centre and car park

Longer Term Aspirations

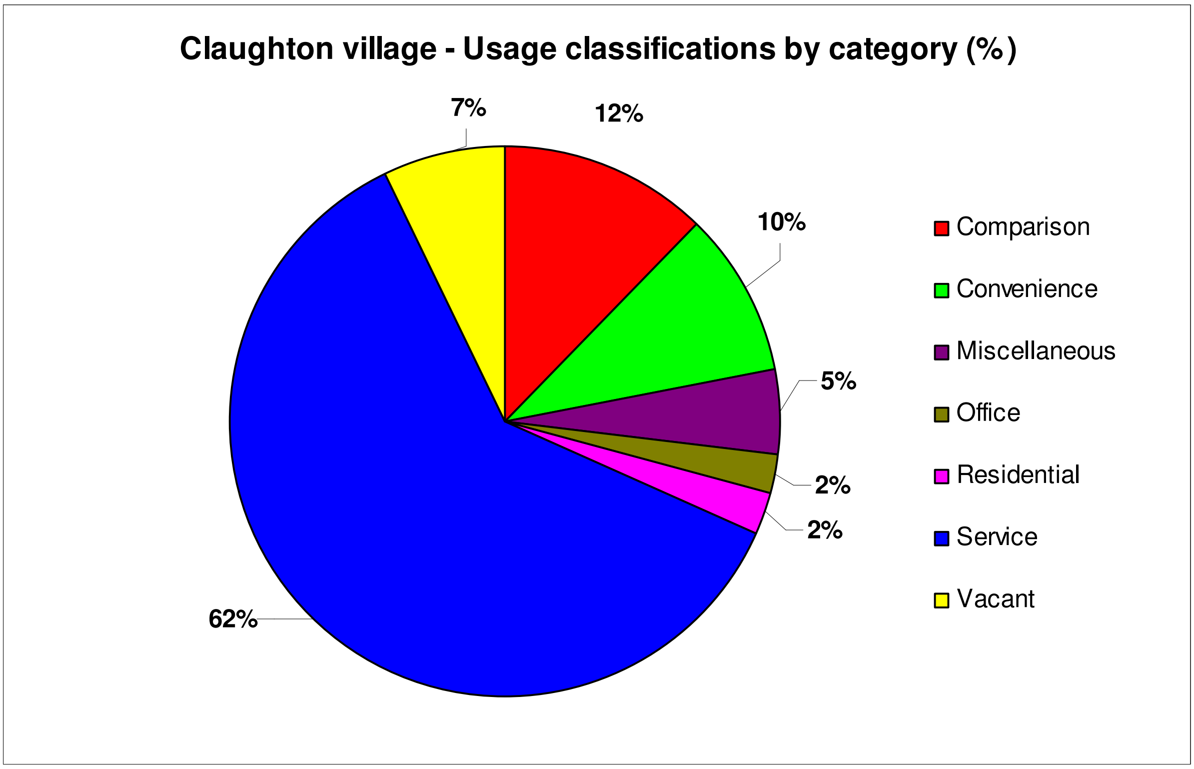
- Maintain and sustain the retail centre

5.10 Claughton

The RTP report assessed the centre as catering for the day to day service needs of local residents, comprising mainly convenience and service uses and is healthy in this respect. The centre was clean, well-maintained with a pleasant environment and no vacant units.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing matches the average across all the centres studied of 10%. Comparison provision is however significantly below the study average of 19% while service provision is significantly above the study average of 50%. The percentage of vacant units is significantly below the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the most prevalent use is residential (60%), followed by offices separate to ground floor use (24%) and offices related to the ground floor business (9%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Claughton Ward population is 14,345 with an average household income of £40,898. The Job Seekers Allowance rates for Claughton are 4.8%. The population aged 0-19 is 2,977, Working age 16-64M/59W is 7,819 and 60+ is 4,581.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Claughton it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - These are communities where most employment is in traditional manual occupations. Families and retired people predominate with some young singles and single parents. Incomes range from moderate to low and unemployment is higher than the national average, as is long term illness. There are pockets of deprivation in this group.

Group 2 - These tend to be home-owning families living comfortably in stable areas in suburban and semi-rural locations. People are employed in a range of occupations, including middle management and clerical roles. There also reasonable numbers of shopworkers and skilled manual workers. Incomes are at least of average levels and many earn well above the national average.

Accessibility

Claughton has a population of approximately 6,900 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Claughton is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 235,000 people (75% of population of the borough) and during the evening (7pm-10pm) 201,000 people (65% of the population of the borough) can access the centre in 30 minutes by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 234,000 people (75% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 191,000 people (61% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

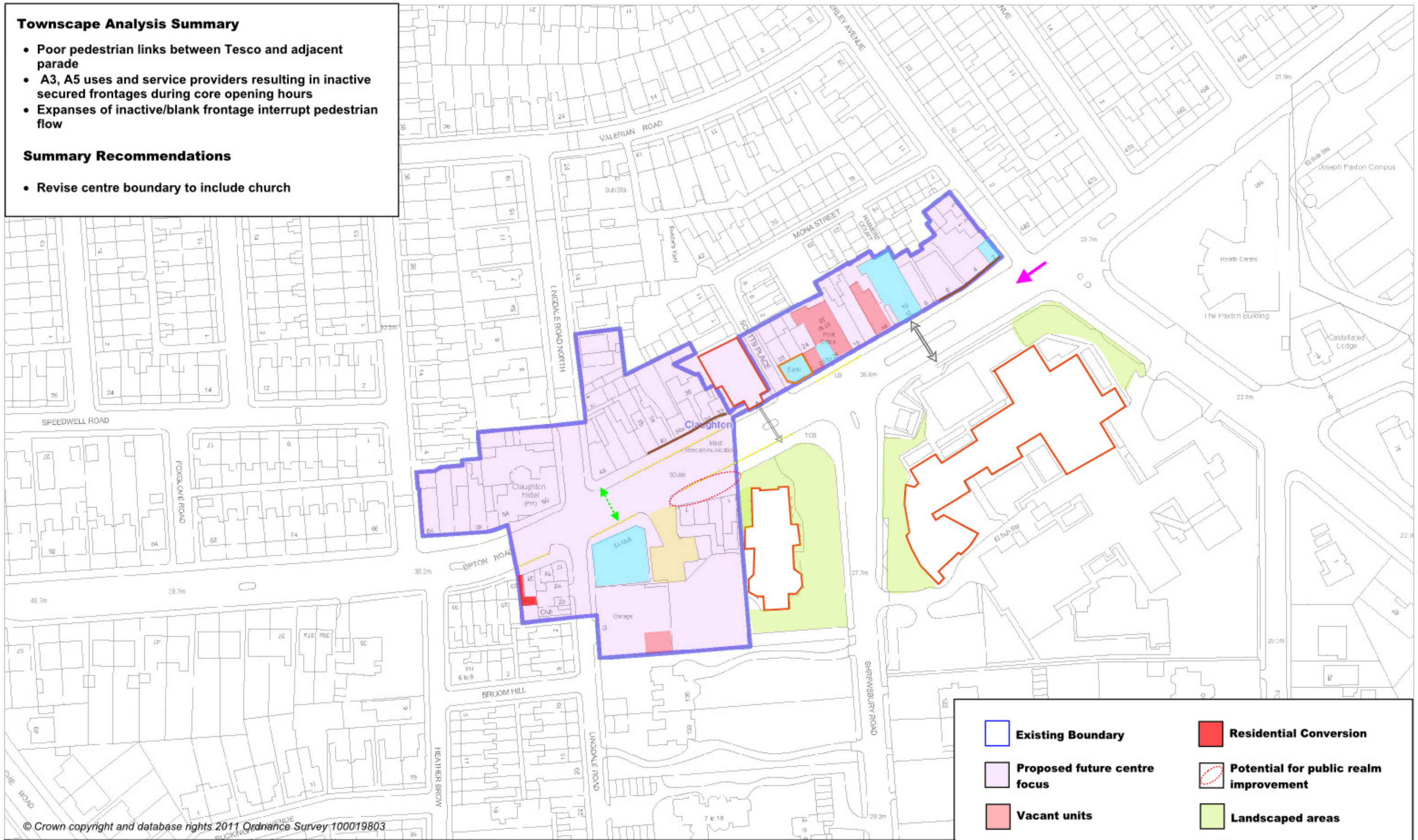
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Good convenience offer as well as other key service uses in the centre A recent development including a health centre and pharmacy Close proximity to the Sixth Form College Large residential catchment	A few vacant units beginning to appear in the shop rows Located on a busy main road through the centre which restricts pedestrian movements
Opportunities	**Threats**
Potential development site within the centre, if the garage becomes vacant Investigate opportunities to improve public realm in the centre	Loss of key uses from the centre

Townscape Analysis Summary

- Poor pedestrian links between Tesco and adjacent parade
- A3, A5 uses and service providers resulting in inactive secured frontages during core opening hours
- Expanses of inactive/blank frontage interrupt pedestrian flow

Summary Recommendations

- Revise centre boundary to include church



Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and delivery Framework

Claughton

Townscape Appraisal

The centre functions well and overall is of a good environmental quality. The pedestrian links between the centre and the recent Tesco development could benefit from enhancement. The convenience and comparison retail offer is fairly limited which in physical terms results in expanses of inactive/blank frontage, combined with a significant number of A3 and A5 uses that are closed and often secured during core retailing hours and these areas of frontage have a lack of animation and a general lack of vibrancy. There are also isolated areas where the public realm would benefit from improvement including the wide pavement area in front of the parade on the southern side of Upton Road. Pedestrian linkages within the western extent of the centre linking the Tesco site and the main frontage on the north side of Upton Road parade could also benefit from enhancement.

Summary

Claughton performs well as a local centre (although with a limited comparison retail offer in particular) and is very accessible by public transport to a large proportion of the borough. The centre is in close proximity to Birkenhead Sixth Form College which bring students into the centre during the day. Claughton has a busy road through the centre which links into Birkenhead and therefore the centre is likely to get some passing trade as well.

Options for Intervention

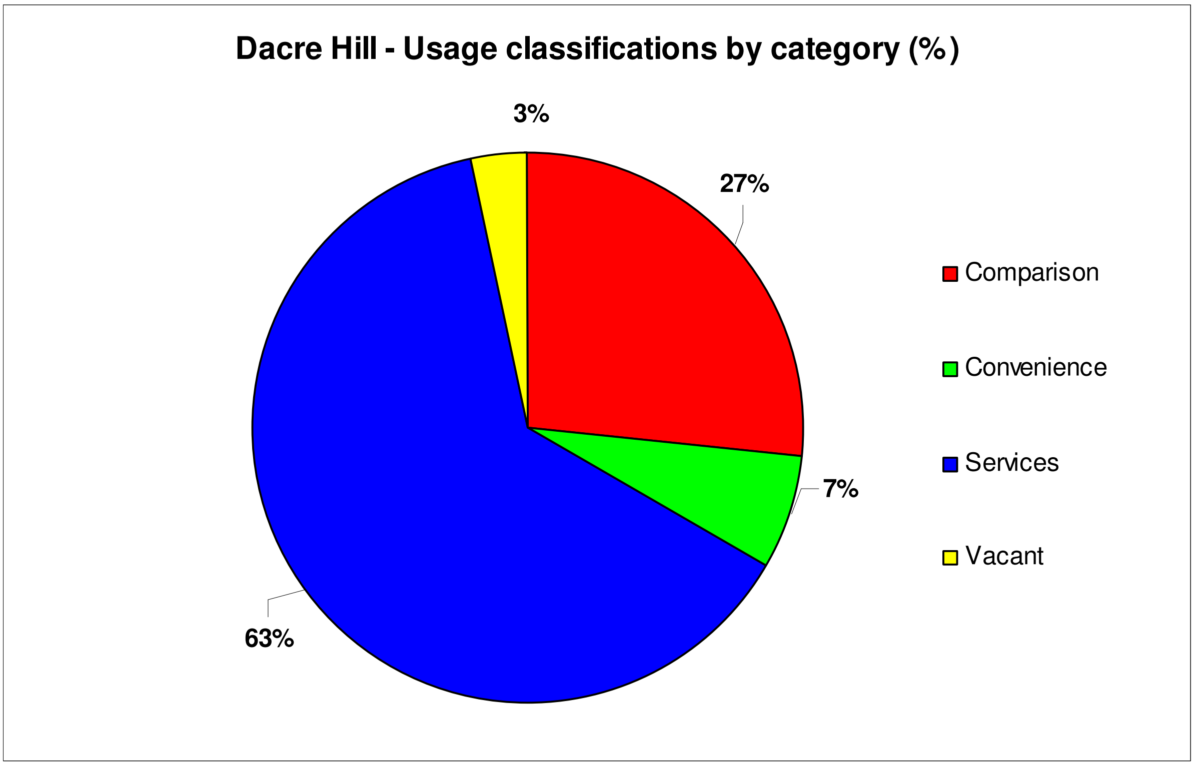
<table>
<tr><td>Early Interventions
Design SPD for ‘town centres’ dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc
Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)
Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Medium Term Interventions
Potential boundary change to the shopping centre to include the church
Improved pedestrian links between Tesco and adjacent parade</td></tr>
<tr><td>Long Term Aspirations
Focus retail uses into the centre and sustain the local function of the centre.</td></tr>
</table>

5.11 Dacre Hill

RTP assessed Dacre Hill as a centre able to cater for most day to day top up shopping anchored by Tesco Metro. Comparison and service provision was relatively limited. The physical environment was judged to be generally pleasant and the centre was clean and tidy, with no vacant shop units

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is 3 percent below the average across all the centres studied of 10%, while comparison provision is above the study average of 19%. Service provision is significantly above the study average of 50% while the vacancy rate is a quarter of the study average of 12% and is the joint lowest of all the centres included in this study.

In relation to upper floor uses, the most prevalent use is residential (85%), followed by offices related to ground floor business (12%) and vacant (4%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Rock Ferry Ward has a total population of 13,988 with an average household income of £19,297. The JSA claimant rate for Rock Ferry is 9.2%. The population aged 0-19 is 3,936, working age 16-64M/59W is 8,293 and 60+ is 2,937.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Dacre Hill it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1- These tend to be home-owning families living comfortably in stable areas in suburban and semi-rural locations. People are employed in a range of occupations, including middle management and clerical roles. There also reasonable numbers of shopworkers and skilled manual workers. Incomes are at least of average levels and many earn well above the national average.

Group 2 - These are low income families living on traditional low-rise estates. Some have bought their council houses but most continue to rent. Incomes are low and unemployment relatively high. Jobs reflect the general lack of educational qualifications and are in factories, shops and other manual occupations. Money is tight and shopping tends to focus on cheaper stores and catalogues.

Accessibility

Dacre Hill has a population of approximately 7,600 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Dacre Hill is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 83,800 people (27% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 91,000 people (29% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 139,000people (45% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 126,000 people (41% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

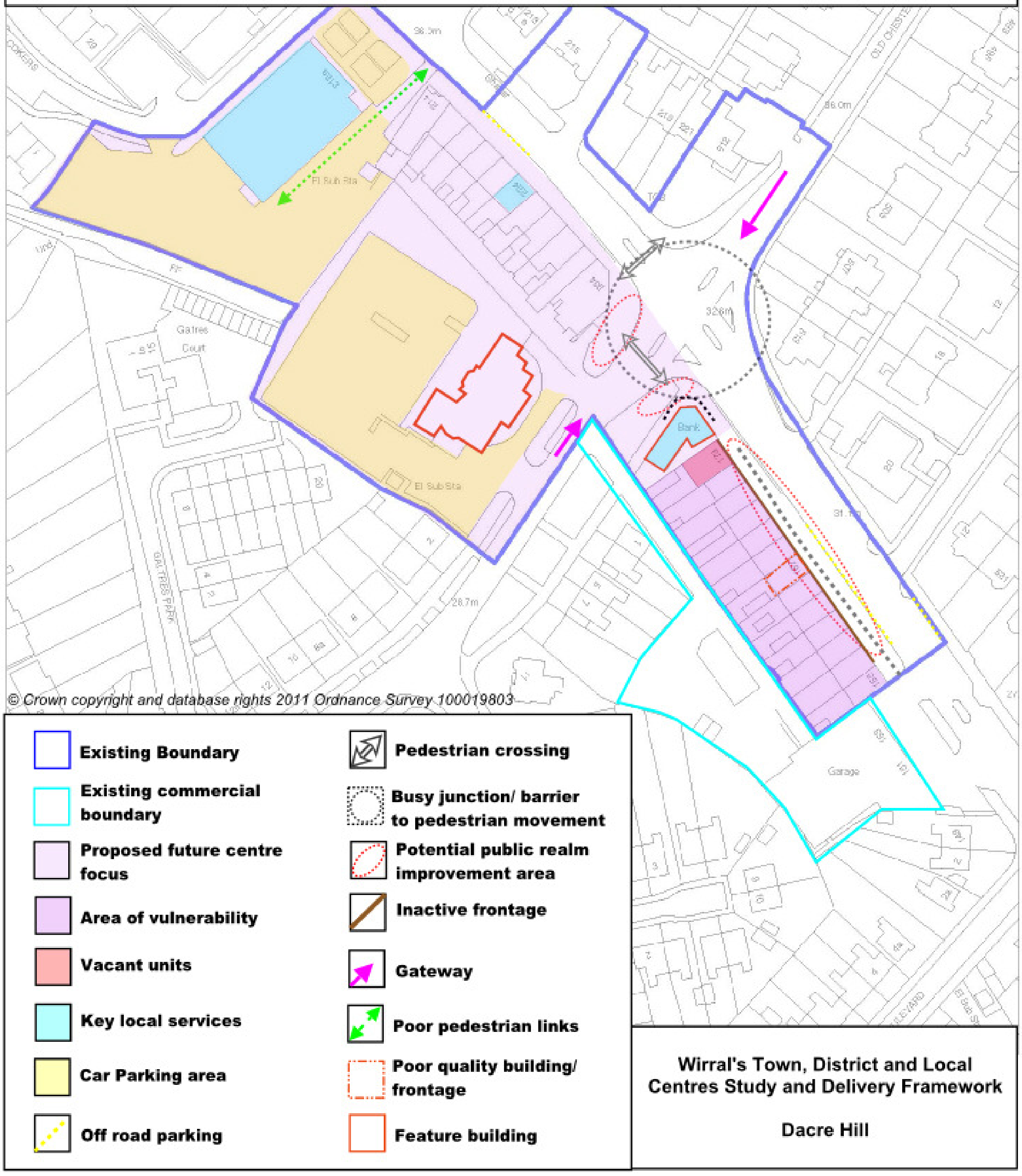
Strengths	Weaknesses
Tesco provides an anchor supermarket in the centre Access by bus to the centre is good The centre has a range of key service uses. The public realm in the centre is quite good with wide pavements throughout the centre.	Busy road through the centre Large unit occupied by car showroom on the corner There are no crossing facilities at the central traffic lights. Access to the row of shops with steps to the front –along the pavement
Opportunities	**Threats**
To focus retail uses into the centre The garage site has potential (in the commercial area)	Some poor quality shop fronts Loss of any key services

Townscape Analysis Summary

- Poor pedestrian links between Tesco and main retail parades
- Major junction dividing two shopping parades- north and south
- Large expanses of blank frontage due to dominance of service uses and nature of uses within Old Chester Road parade
- Poor quality public realm- level change and ramps providing a barrier to pedestrian movement
- Poor shopfront design

Recommendations summary

- Revise boundary with a minor contraction excluding commercial premises on the eastern side to main parade at no. 612 and 215 Dacre Hill
- Potential further boundary revision- blocks within 'area of vulnerability' will be subject to monitoring and consideration at area action plan stage



Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework

Dacre Hill

Townscape Appraisal

The centre comprises two main frontages on Bebington Road and Old Chester Road that are divided by a major road junction which presents a physical barrier to pedestrian movement. There are additionally a number of commercial premises on the northern side of Bebington Road that bear no physical or functional relationship with the remainder of the centre.

The high number of service uses on the New Chester Road frontage results in large expanses of inactive frontages. The public realm within this area is generally of a poor quality with ramps and changes in level providing a barrier to pedestrian circulation and directing footfall away from the shop frontages and to the roadside. The general standard of design of the frontages within this area is poor and often lacking in any visual interest.

The main retail core is now focused around the Tesco development and main frontage on Bebington Road. Pedestrian linkages between the Tesco and the centre are generally poor with no clear pedestrian pathway leading from the car park and the centre.

Summary

Dacre Hill is a small centre with an anchor Tesco supermarket located in the centre. The centre provides meets some day to day needs for local residents and is reasonably accessible by public transport. Service uses predominate and the centre would benefit from improvement in the offer and range of services it provides.

Options for Intervention

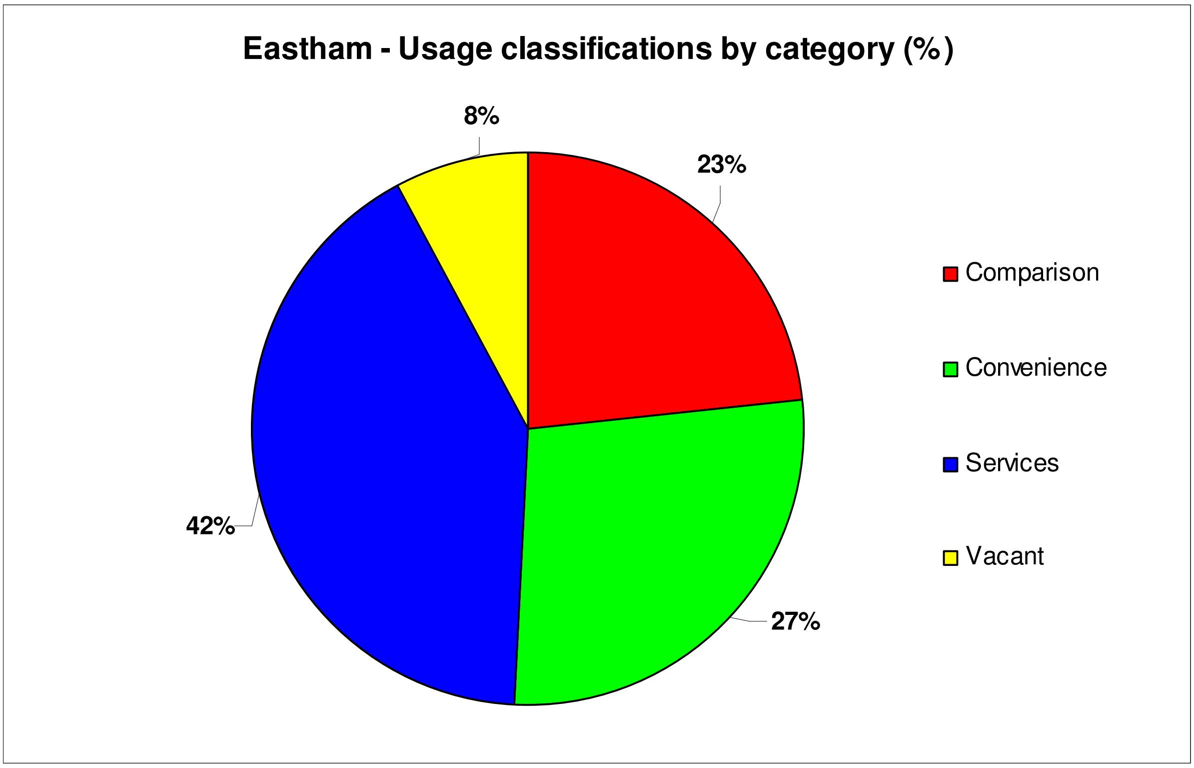
Early Interventions • Design SPD for ‘town centres’ dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc • Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean) • Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund) •
Medium Interventions • Potential to look at improving the junction crossing • Improve pedestrian links from Tesco and the rest of the shops • Consider scope for boundary change to exclude non retail uses on the eastern side to main parade and potential revision to areas of vulnerability within Old Chester Road parade
Long Term Aspirations • Potential for improvements to connections within wide pavement area in front of car showroom/ garage •

5.12 Eastham

Eastham is a small cluster of retail units located off the A41 in south east Wirral and is a new centre in the hierarchy. The centre focuses around the recent Tesco/Health centre development and consists of a number of retail and service uses, with a separate frontage on the New Chester Road. (The centre was not assessed in the RTP report).

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is the highest of all the centres and well over twice the average across all the centres studied of 10%. Comparison provision is also in excess of the study average of 19% while service provision is below the study average of 50%. Vacancy levels are below the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the most prevalent use is residential (61%) followed by office related to ground floor business (17%) and unknown (11%).

Socio-economic Profile

Eastham Ward has a population of 13,567. Eastham has 2.9% of residents claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and an average household income of £41,695. The population aged 0-19 is 3,054, working age 16-64M/59W is 7,735 and 60+ is 3,840.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Eastham it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1- These tend to be home-owning families living comfortably in stable areas in suburban and semi-rural locations. People are employed in a range of occupations, including middle management and clerical roles. There also reasonable numbers of shopworkers and skilled manual workers. Incomes are at least of average levels and many earn well above the national average.

Group 2 - These established communities are made up of empty nesters and retired older couples. The working population are in a mix of lower management, supervisory, manufacturing and retail jobs. They earn modest salaries and significant numbers of women work part-time to boost the overall household income.

Accessibility

Eastham has a population of approximately 5,100 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Eastham is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 60,000 people (19% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 55,000 people (18% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 57,000 people (18% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 55,000 people (18% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

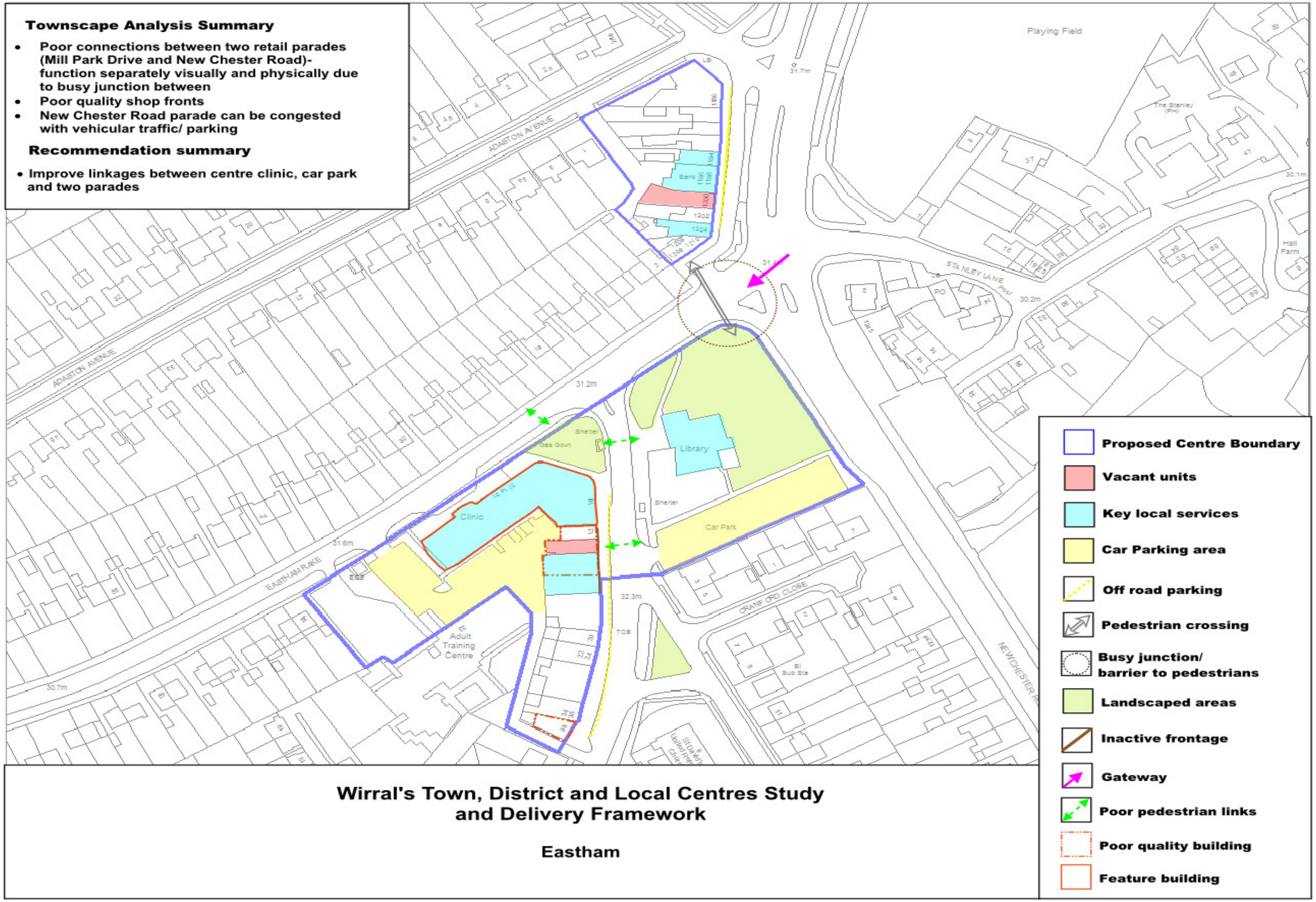
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Recent small regeneration development in the centre with supermarket, health centre and residential above it The centre has a large established residential population surrounding the centre Council facilities are located adjacent to the centre including a free car park Good mix of retail and service uses and independent shops	The centre is located on busy road junction with poor pedestrian route between the two frontages on Mill Park Drive and Old Chester Road
Opportunities	**Threats**
Potential for an additional crossing point on Eastham Rake	There are no obvious expansion sites surrounding the centre Loss of key services

Townscape Analysis Summary

- Poor connections between two retail parades (Mill Park Drive and New Chester Road)- function separately visually and physically due to busy junction between
- Poor quality shop fronts
- New Chester Road parade can be congested with vehicular traffic/ parking

Recommendation summary

- Improve linkages between centre clinic, car park and two parades



Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework

Eastham

Townscape Appraisal

The centre comprises two compact retail frontages (Mill Park Drive and New Chester Road) that are separated by Eastham Rake and have little visual and physical connections between them, but complement each other in terms of the retail and service offer. The Mill Park frontage is now focused around the new Tesco store. This is a high quality development which with the health centre has provided a visual and functional focus to the centre. The general environmental quality of this area is high with landscaped areas, civic buildings and a number of character buildings creating a strong sense of place. There are however a number of poor quality shop frontages within both parades and several buildings that would benefit from general maintenance.

Summary

Eastham is a small local centre which is functioning well. The recent Tesco development has provided a focus to the centre with additional retail and residential units in the centre. There is a large residential catchment around the centre which is located off the A41. There are few vacant units within the centre and it provides key services to the area. The centre is divided by a reasonably busy road (Eastham Rake) which would benefit from an improved pedestrian link.

Options for Intervention

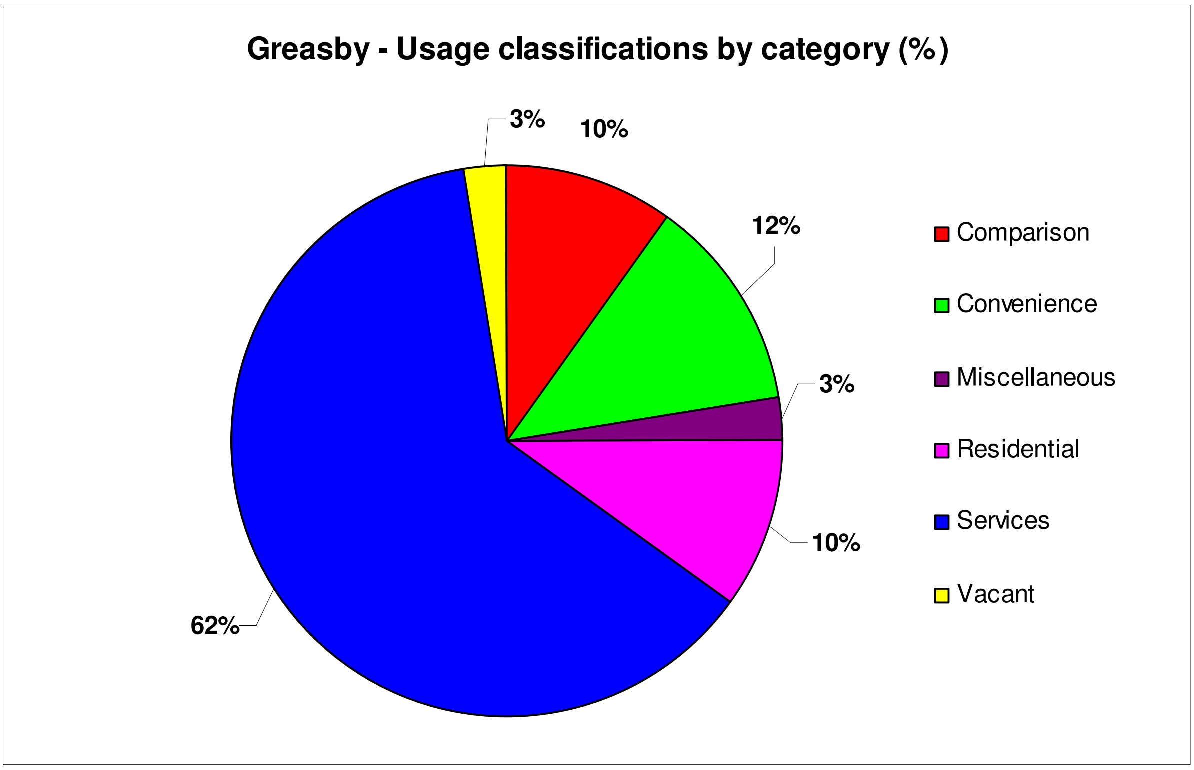
Early Interventions • Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc • Improved signage from the A41 • Build on the existing positive uses in the centre • Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean) • Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)
Medium Term Interventions • Investigate potential for a pedestrian crossing from Tesco to the opposite side of Eastham Rake (to the shops on the A41 corner)
Long Term Aspirations • Sustain and focus retail growth into the centre

5.13 Greasby

Greasby is a new centre in the retail hierarchy and has a good mix of retail uses which are mostly independent shops. The centre is small but showing good signs of vitality and use. (The centre was not assessed in the RTP report).

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is just above the average across all the centres studied of 10%. Comparison provision is just over half the study average of 19% while service provision is significantly in excess of the study average of 50%. Vacancy levels are extremely low and are a quarter of the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the most prevalent use is residential (74%) followed by offices related to the ground floor business (19%) and offices separate to the ground floor business (6.5%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Greasby, Frankby and Irby Ward has a population of 14,060 with an average household income of £40,797. The Job Seekers Allowance claimant rate for the Ward is 2%. The population aged 0-19 is 3,120, Working age 16-64M/59W is 8,056 and 60+ is 4,182.

Information drawn from Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Greasby it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - These people tend to be older empty nesters and retired couples. Many live in rural towns and villages, often in areas where tourism is important. They are prosperous, live in detached homes and many have two cars. Employment is typically in managerial and professional roles. The majority own their homes outright, and with no mortgage to pay are able to invest their money in a wide range of financial products. In their leisure time they enjoy gardening and golf. They appreciate good food and wine, and will go on regular holidays. These older, affluent people have the money and the time to enjoy life

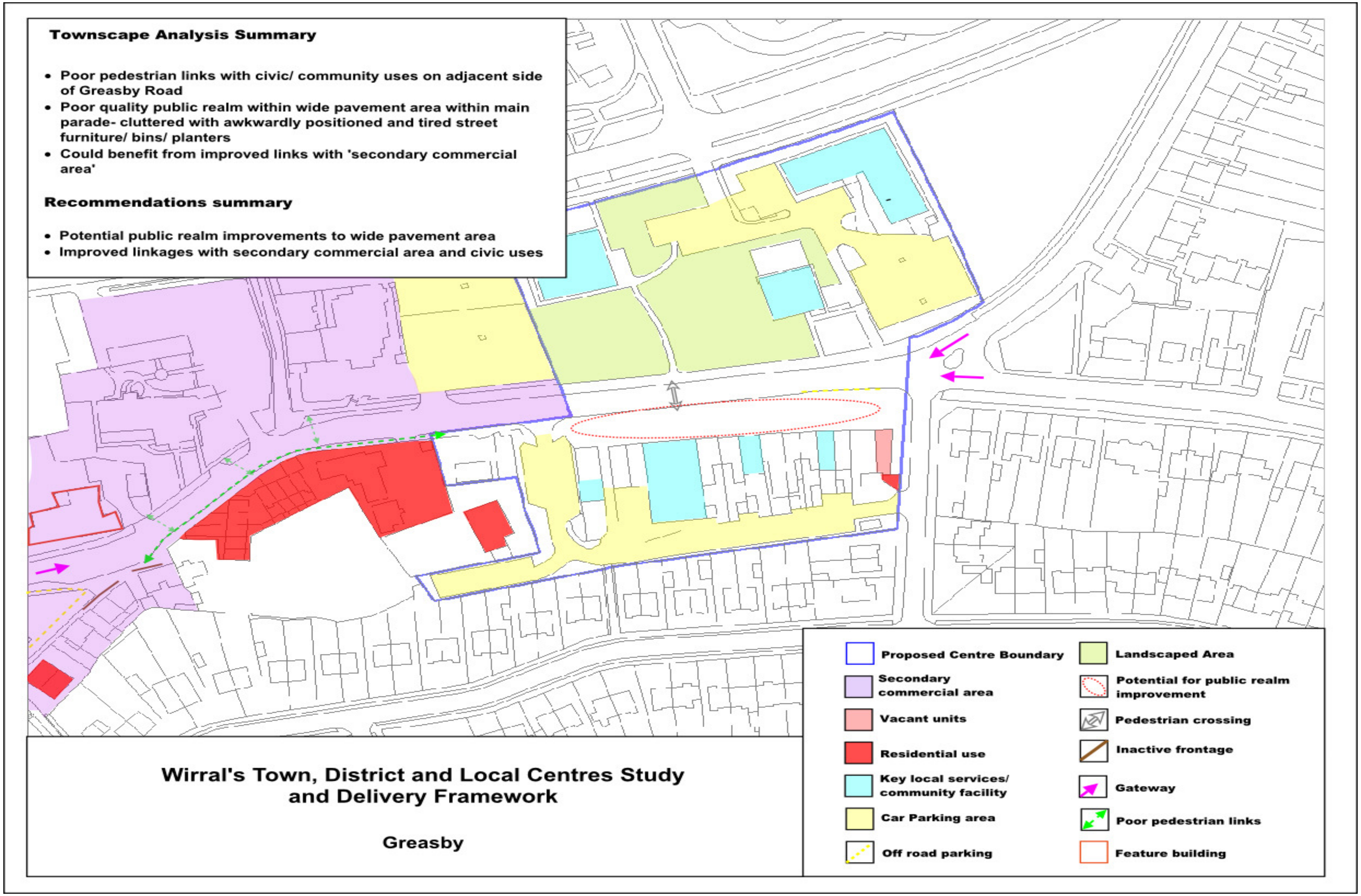
Group 2 - These are wealthy families with mortgages. They live in established suburbs, new housing developments around commuter towns, and villages and rural areas. They are younger than other affluent groups, so most households are still likely to be making mortgage repayments. Incomes are good since many have managerial and professional occupations

Accessibility

Greasby has a population of approximately 5,700 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Greasby is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 145,000 people (47% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 98,000 people (31% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 98,000 people (32% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 97,000 people (31% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Good range of Civic uses are located in the centre The centre has a range of key services Accessibility to the centre is good by public transport The centre has a large built up residential population surrounding the centre Good convenience offer and quality of independent retailers	Poorly considered and underutilised public realm to the front of the shops Lack of signage to the centre from Greasby Road
Opportunities	**Threats**
Better utilise the public space available Expand the range and choice available in the centre	Loss of any key retailers and services from the centre


Townscape Analysis Summary
• Poor pedestrian links with civic/ community uses on adjacent side of Greasby Road
• Poor quality public realm within wide pavement area within main parade- cluttered with awkwardly positioned and tired street furniture/ bins/ planters
• Could benefit from improved links with 'secondary commercial area'
Recommendations summary
• Potential public realm improvements to wide pavement area
• Improved linkages with secondary commercial area and civic uses
Proposed Centre Boundary
Secondary commercial area
Vacant units
Residential use
Key local services/ community facility
Car Parking area
Off road parking
Landscaped Area
Potential for public realm improvement
Pedestrian crossing
Inactive frontage
Gateway
Poor pedestrian links
Feature building
Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework
Greasby

Townscape Appraisal

The centre comprises a main retail frontage on the southern side of Greasby Road and a range of civic facilities on the north side, including a community centre, library and health centre set within high quality landscaped areas. There is however a secondary area to the immediate west of the centre which comprises of a number of commercial premises, mainly drinking establishments and a small retail parade. Residential properties divide the two areas on the southern side and they appear to function totally independent of one another.

The pedestrian linkages and natural flow between the two areas is poor and hindered by the residential properties which results in little visual impact and no natural draw between the two areas. The pedestrian links with civic/ community uses on adjacent side of Greasby Road would also benefit from enhancement. The wide pavement area within the main retail parade is currently cluttered with awkwardly positioned and tired street furniture, poor surfacing and traders using the area as a retail area in an informal manner. This area is not utilised to its full potential and could benefit from some overall public realm works to improve the general environment. The environmental quality of the centre as a whole however, is good with the landscaped areas and character buildings creating a strong sense of place overall.

Summary

Greasby is a flourishing centre which has a range of retailers and a good local offer. The centre has a number of key services and has a surrounding catchment population who may have the time and income to support their local centre. The centre also benefits from the civic uses in the centre which offers the potential for linked trips within the centre. Overall the centre is functioning well and provides a good quality local provision.

Options for Intervention

Early Interventions

- Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc
- Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)
- Improve the signage from the main road to the shopping centre to Greasby Road
- Environmental improvements within public realm area to improve surfacing, remove unnecessary clutter and unused street furniture
- Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)
- Design of potential retail development or any future development within the Red Cat car park 'potential development site' is integrated within the centre and does not undermine main retail core

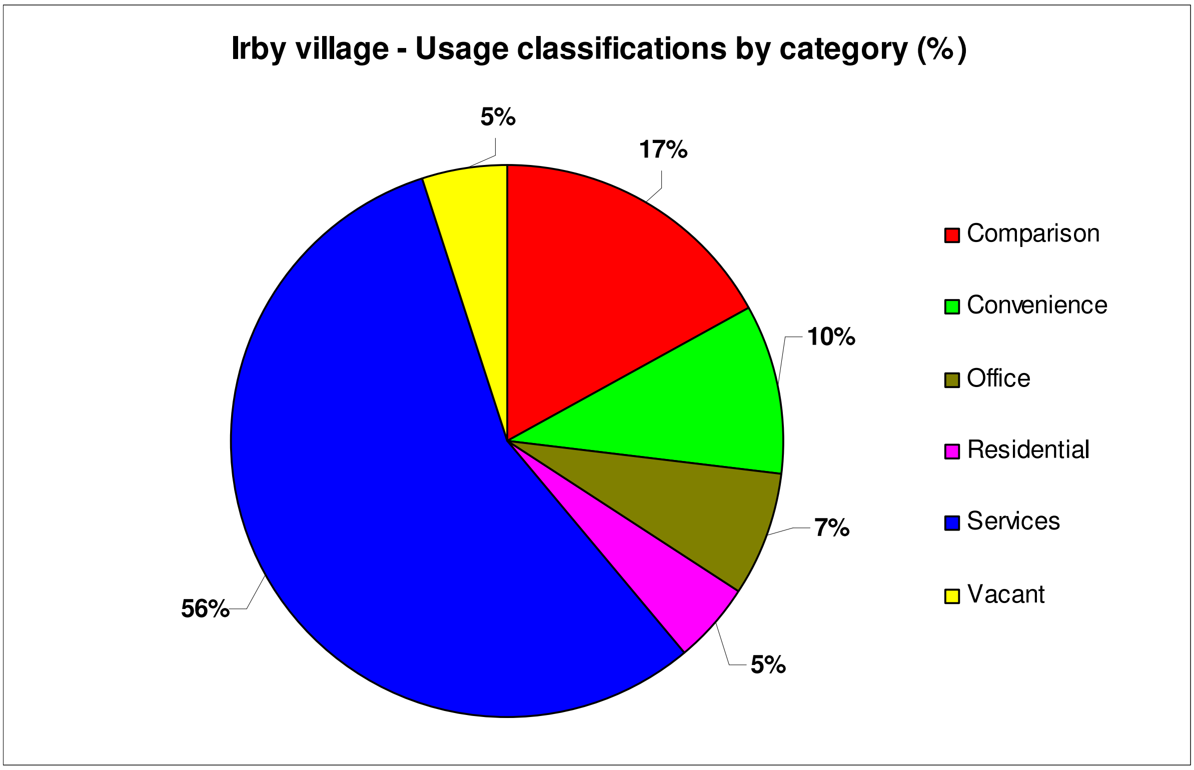
Medium Term Interventions • Promote more effective use of this area- encouraging active use of the area with pavement (cafes etc), canopies, street furniture to increase vibrancy
Long Term Aspirations • Sustain the retail function of the centre and the range of services that the centre provides.

5.14 Irby

RTP assessed Irby Village as a having a significant service offer with very limited convenience and mainly specialist comparison provision. The centre was considered to be pleasant and attractive, which benefits from adequate car parking and has units which are in a reasonably good condition.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing matches the average across all the centres studied of 10%, while comparison provision is a couple of percentage points below the study average of 19%. Service provision is above the study average of 50% while vacancy is less than half the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the most prevalent use is residential (61%) followed by offices related to the ground floor business (28%) followed by offices separate to the ground floor business (5.6%) and unknown (5.6%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Greasby, Frankby and Irby Ward has a population of 14,060 with an average household income of £40,797. The Job Seekers Allowance rate for the ward is 2%. The population aged 0-19 is 3,120, working age 16-64M/59W is 8,056 and 60+ is 4,182.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Irby it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - These tend to be home-owning families living comfortably in stable areas in suburban and semi-rural locations. People are employed in a range of occupations, including middle management and clerical roles. There also reasonable numbers of shopworkers and skilled manual workers. Incomes are at least of average levels and many earn well above the national average.

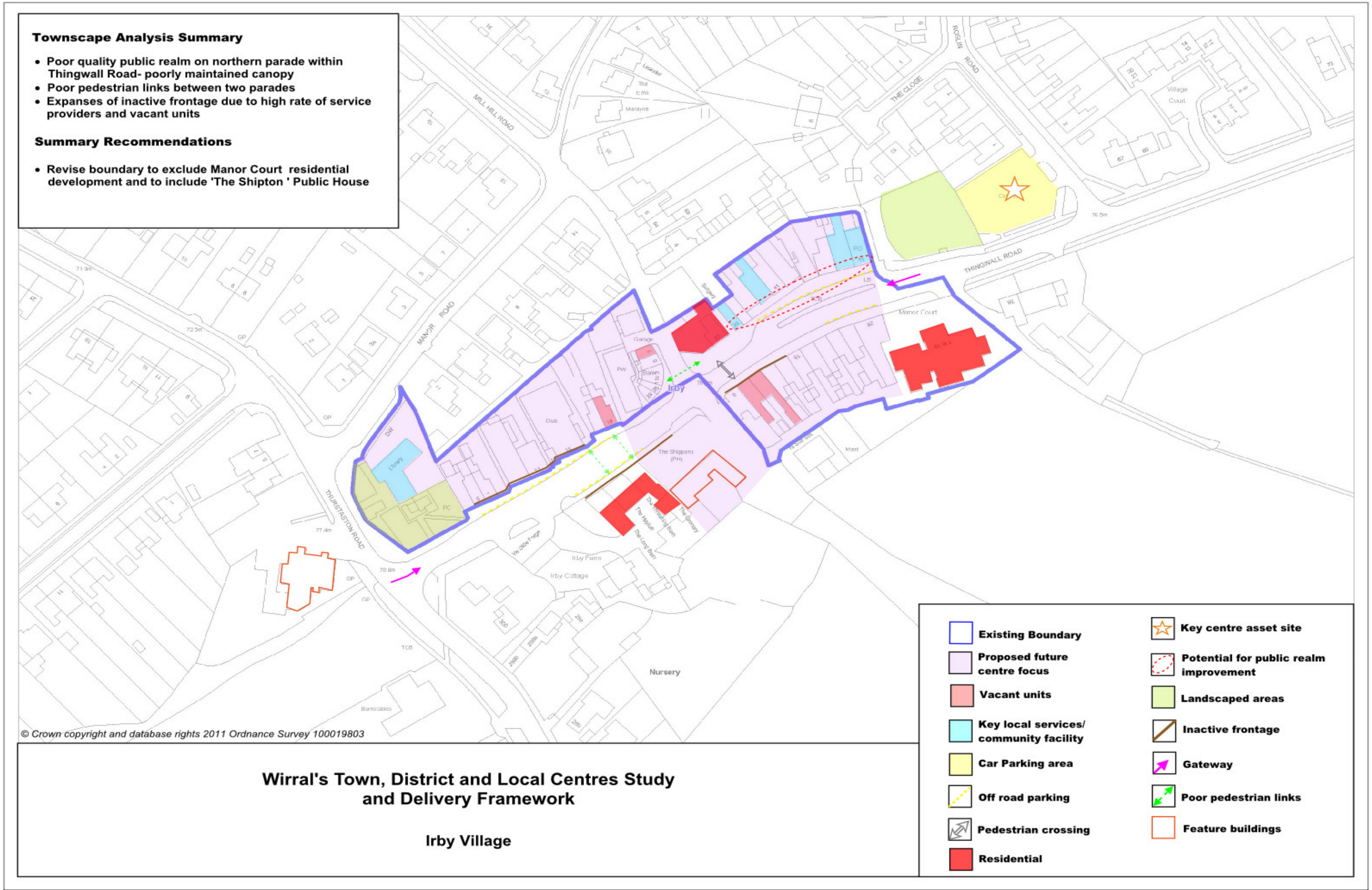
Group 2 - These are wealthy families with mortgages. They live in established suburbs, new housing developments around commuter towns, and villages and rural areas. They are younger than other affluent groups, so most households are still likely to be making mortgage repayments. Incomes are good since many have managerial and professional occupations

Accessibility

Irby has a population of approximately 3,000 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Irby is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 113,000 people (36% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 104,000 people (33% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 114,000 people (37% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 100,000 people (32% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
A good range of individual retailers within the centre and some key service uses The centre has an established residential population surrounding the centre Good accessibility to the centre by public transport Attractive streetscene within the centre Proximity of carparking to the centre	Some pepper-potting of vacant shops in the centre Improvements to the public infrastructure Poor range of convenience and service offer Canopy over the shops is in need of repair
Opportunities	**Threats**
Expand the range and choice available in the centre Potential to capitalise on the growing high quality retail offer	Loss of any key services from the centre


Townscape Analysis Summary
• Poor quality public realm on northern parade within Thingwall Road- poorly maintained canopy
• Poor pedestrian links between two parades
• Expanses of inactive frontage due to high rate of service providers and vacant units
Summary Recommendations
• Revise boundary to exclude Manor Court residential development and to include 'The Shipton ' Public House
MILL HILL ROAD
MANOR ROAD
THURSTASTON ROAD
THINGWALL ROAD
THE CLOSE
ROSLIN ROAD
Manor Court
Village Court
Irby
Library
Club
Garage
Surgery
The Shippons (PH)
Irby Farm
Irby Cottage
Nursery
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Existing Boundary
Proposed future centre focus
Vacant units
Key local services/ community facility
Car Parking area
Off road parking
Pedestrian crossing
Residential
Key centre asset site
Potential for public realm improvement
Landscaped areas
Inactive frontage
Gateway
Poor pedestrian links
Feature buildings
Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework
Irby Village

Townscape Appraisal

The centre is divided into two main frontages either side of the Mill Hill Road junction. The offer is quite varied with the centre incorporating commercial, retail and residential uses. The main retail area has quite high levels of occupancy, however it lacks a sense of place or arrival. The tired, poor quality canopy over the pavement area to the northern side of Thingwall Road does little to enhance the pedestrian experience. Linkages between the main retail area and the linear parade extending down to Thurstaston Road are weak and the residential use at the key junction between interrupts pedestrian flow between. The vibrancy of the centre is also affected by the high level of service providers which results in expanses of inactive frontages.

Summary

Irby consists of a mix of retail and service uses. The centre is mainly made up of independent retailers and as well as a few high quality restaurants. There are a few vacant units in the centre and whilst it is attractive it could benefit from some visual enhancements and a wider range of shops. Irby's surrounding residents tend to be comfortably well off working families, which may explain why the level of activity in the centre during the day is less than expected. The centre is also very accessible by public transport but provision appears to be focused on commuters to Birkenhead and Liverpool. Overall, the centre is attractive and does have niche retailing. The centre would benefit from building upon the niche market of independent shops to attract more people to shop and visit the centre.

Options for Intervention

Early Interventions
- Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc
- Work with traders/ Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)
- Signage to and from the car park to the town centre
- Environmental improvements to canopy area
- Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund
- Marketing and promotion of the centre

Medium Term Interventions
- Potential boundary change to the shopping centre - to exclude a residential block and to include the Shippons Public House

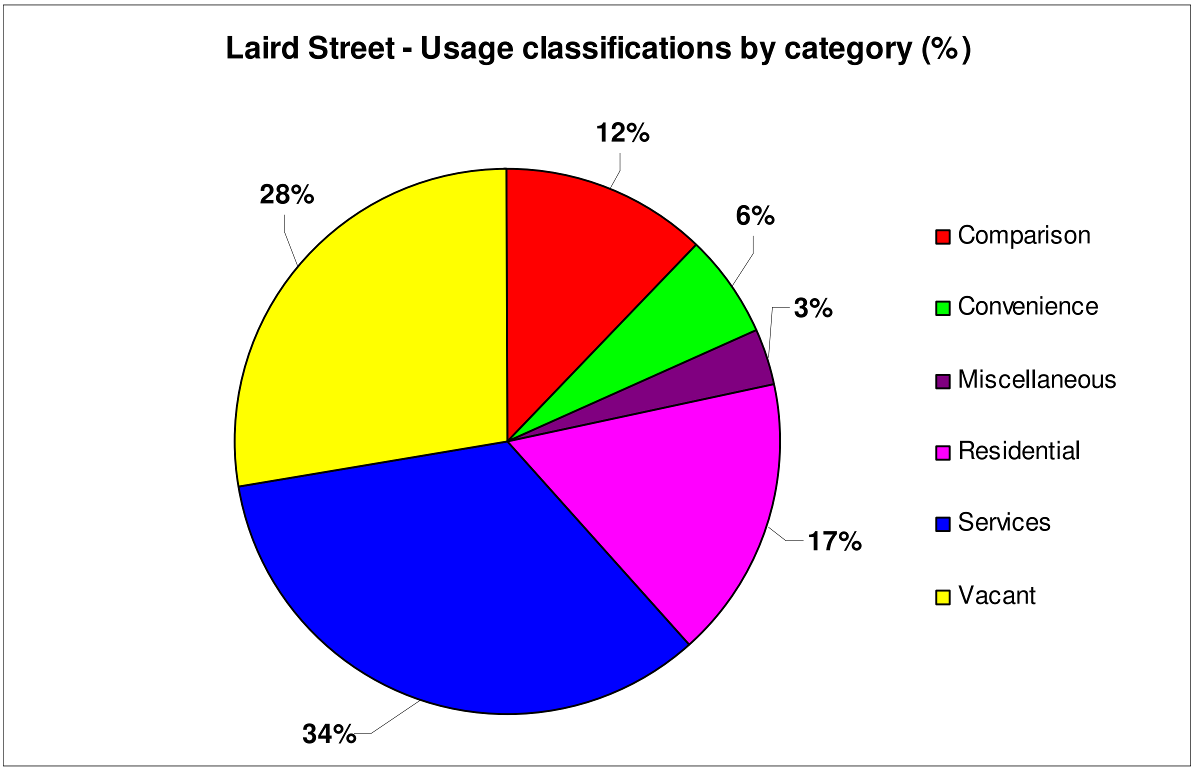
Long Term Aspirations
- Focus retail uses into the centre and sustain the retail offer.

5.15 Laird Street

RTP assessed Laird Street as a centre with a reasonable convenience offer capable of meeting day-to-day needs with service uses confined to hairdressers and takeaways and a limited comparison offer. Vacancy rates were high in the centre and there are many issues around the appearance and condition of the shops with unattractive shutters and with the general environment feeling unsafe and run down. The centre was considered to be showing signs of acute distress.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is just over half the average across all the centres studied of 10% and the percentage of comparison and service units are significantly below the study averages of 19% and 50% respectively. The percentage of vacant units is the second highest of all the centres studied and over double the study average of 12%. The centre also has the highest percentage of ground floor residential uses of all the study centres (17%).

In relation to upper floor uses, the most prevalent use is residential (68.6%) followed by vacant (21%) and offices related to ground floor business (6%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Bidston and St James Ward has a total population of 14,431 with an average household income of £16,699. The total Job Seekers Allowance claimant rate for the Ward is 9.3%. The population aged 0-19 is 4,261, Working age 16-64M/59W is 8,621 and 60+ is 2,760.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Laird Street it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 -These are communities where most employment is in traditional manual occupations. Families and retired people predominate with some young singles and single parents. Incomes range from moderate to low and unemployment is higher than the national average, as is long term illness. There are pockets of deprivation in this group.

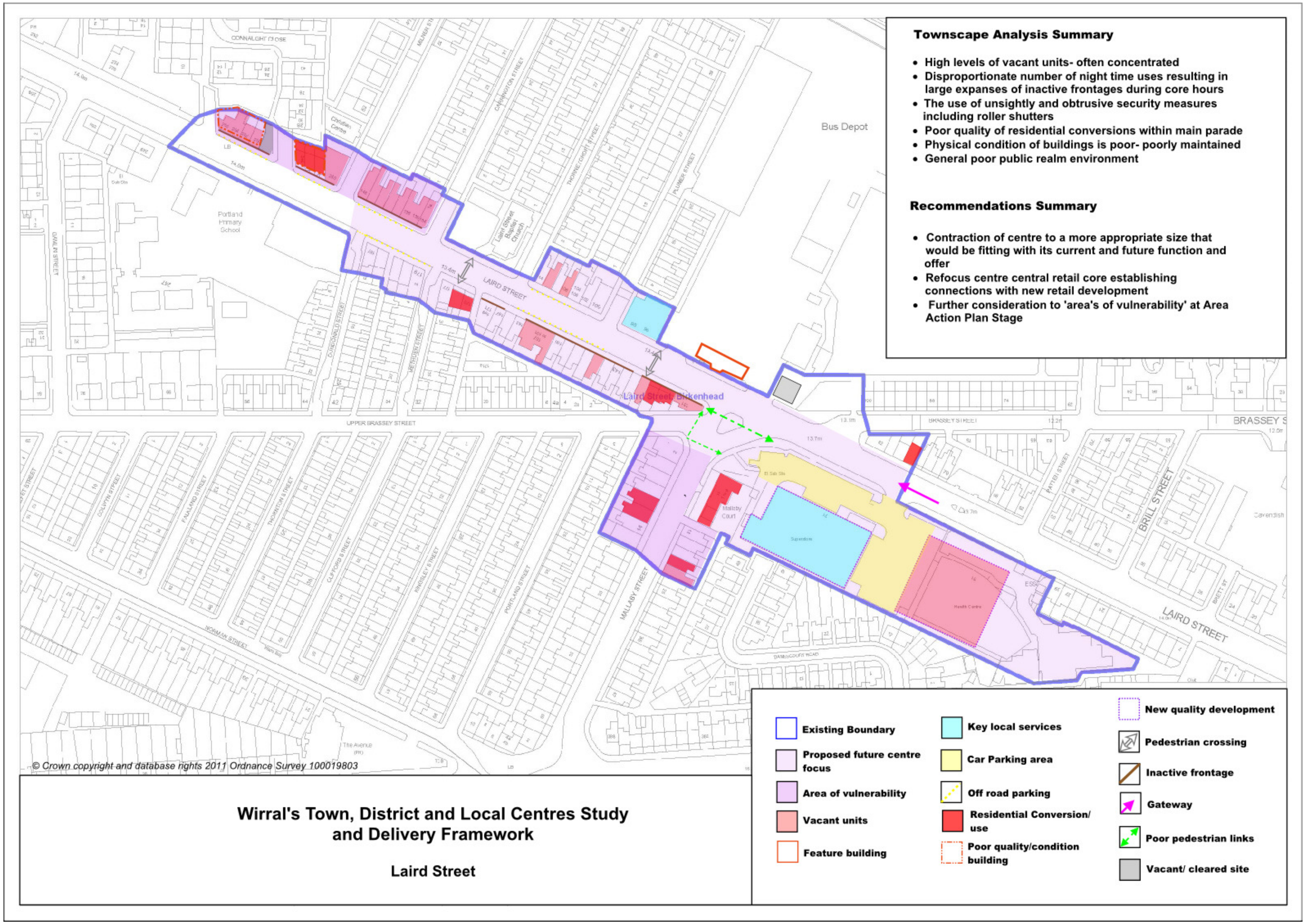
Group 2 -This urban group is characterised by high numbers of single adults. These include single pensioners, young singles and lone parents. With such low incomes, these households have little, if any, discretionary spend. They are unlikely to have cars and rely on public transport. Life for this group is undoubtedly difficult, with restricted finances and employment opportunities.

Accessibility

Laird Street has a population of approximately 6,500 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Laird Street is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 223,000 people (72% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 227,000 people (73% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 225,000 people (72% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 221,000 people (71% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
A new supermarket development and health centre Accessible by public transport	A significant proportion of the units are A5 uses (takeaways) Located on a busy main road which restricts pedestrian flows Dominating advertising boards and unattractive public realm around the centre Dominant evening economy with little active frontage during the day Degree of separation between Aldi and the Health centre and the linear shopping parade High number of empty shop units which have a very poor appearance which adversely impact on the functioning of the centre
Opportunities	**Threats**
Cleared HMRI housing sites surrounding the area Opportunity for development on the bus depot site should it become available	Temporary population decline around the centre Increasing number of vacant units



Townscape Analysis Summary

- High levels of vacant units- often concentrated
- Disproportionate number of night time uses resulting in large expanses of inactive frontages during core hours
- The use of unsightly and obtrusive security measures including roller shutters
- Poor quality of residential conversions within main parade
- Physical condition of buildings is poor- poorly maintained
- General poor public realm environment

Recommendations Summary

- Contraction of centre to a more appropriate size that would be fitting with its current and future function and offer
- Refocus centre central retail core establishing connections with new retail development
- Further consideration to 'area's of vulnerability' at Area Action Plan Stage

Townscape Appraisal

The centre is a long linear parade with the new Aldi supermarket development provides a new focus to the south eastern extent .Although visually this has become a focal point and refocuses activity within the area it is isolated from the rest of the centre. The carpark fronts Laird Street itself and linkages between the development and the main parade (extending west) are weak.

The high vacancy levels are a clear indication of the level of decline that the centre is suffering. The vacant units are often concentrated and affecting entire blocks. The retail offer within the centre is limited and there is a disproportionate number of night time uses as well as poor quality residential conversions that are interspersed thorough out, particularly within Malleby Street. This results in large expanses of inactive frontages during core opening hours with parts of the centre lacking in visual interest and generating little pedestrian footfall. In turn the high vacancy rates result in generally poorly maintained buildings and the use of unsightly and obtrusive security measures including roller shutters. The overall design quality of the centre is therefore weak with poor quality shop frontages, public realm and it has a general run down feel.

There are a number of poorly designed residential conversions within the main frontage and the buildings themselves are generally of an unattractive physical condition and are often poorly maintained.

Summary

Laird Street is a long linear parade of shops with two supermarkets and a medical centre situated and is adjacent to a recent HMRI demolition scheme. The shop fronts are in an extremely poor state of repair, with many derelict and empty retail units. The remaining units are mostly made up of takeaways. The centre seems to be providing a very poor retail and service offer to the local community. The centre is in need of serious consideration as to the role and function it provides going forward.

Options for Intervention

Early Interventions

- Design SPD for ‘town centres’ dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc
- Policy on the number of A5 uses within an area
- Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)
- Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)
- Consider policy on focusing controlling the mix of uses in the centre
- Integration with HMRI proposals establishing connections that may come forward

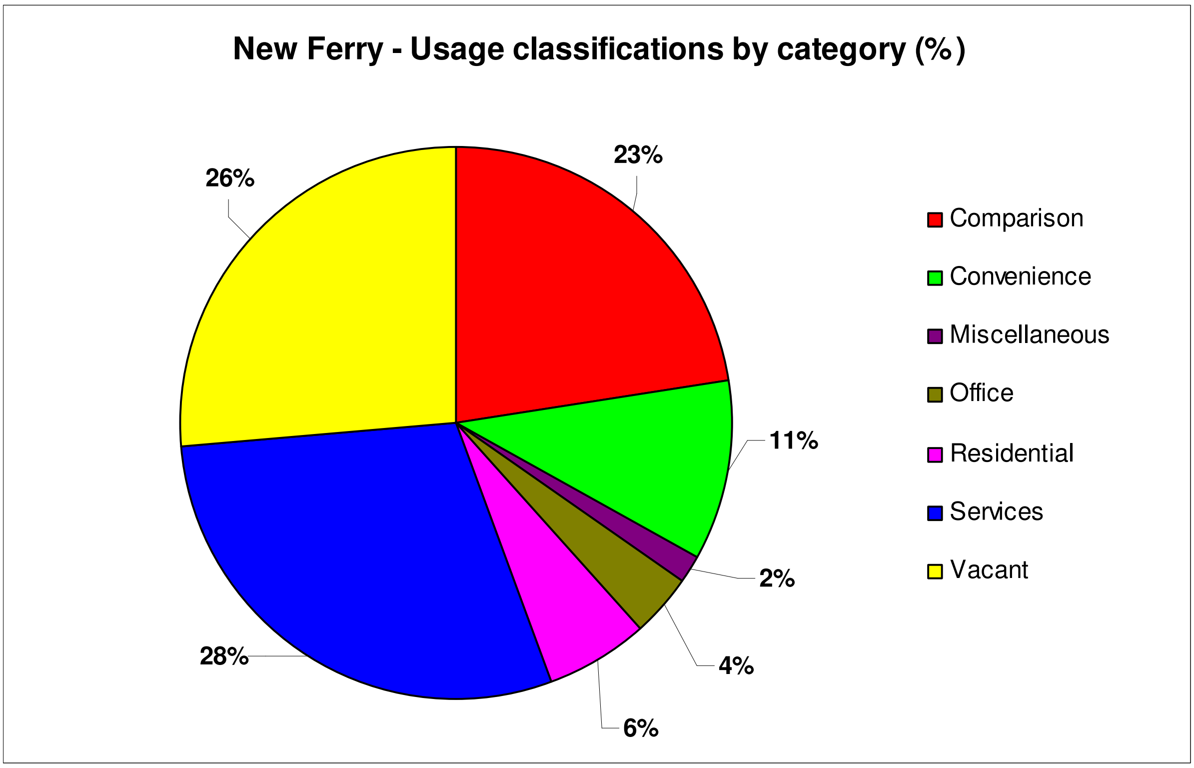
Medium Term Interventions • Potential boundary change to the shopping centre – to reduce the size of the centre and further consideration to 'areas of vulnerability' • Focus retail uses into the main shopping centre
Long Term Aspirations • Managing the scale and role of the centre going forward - Potential further boundary revision- blocks within 'areas of vulnerability' will be subject to monitoring and consideration

5.16 New Ferry

RTP assessed New Ferry as a centre in continuing long-term decline. It has a limited comparison offer, a convenience sector catering for a localised catchment and limited service representation. The high number of derelict and vacant units dominated the town centre environment and the gateways into the centre, which would benefit from consolidation around a central core. The farmers market was highlighted as a key asset.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is just above the average across all the centres studied of 10%: comparison provision is 4 percentage points above the study average, while service provision is just over half the study average of 50%. The percentage of vacant units is just over double the study average, while 6% of ground floor units are in residential use.

In relation to upper floor uses, the most prevalent use is residential (45%), followed by vacant (20.5%) and offices related to ground floor uses (14%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Bromborough Ward has a population of 13,885 with an average household income of £28,403. The Job Seekers Allowance claimant rate for the Ward is 5.4%. The population aged 0-19 is 3,313, Working age 16-64M/59W is 8,464 and 60+ is 3,208.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within New Ferry it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - These tend to be home-owning families living comfortably in stable areas in suburban and semi-rural locations. People are employed in a range of occupations, including middle management and clerical roles. There also reasonable numbers of shopworkers and skilled manual workers. Incomes are at least of average levels and many earn well above the national average.

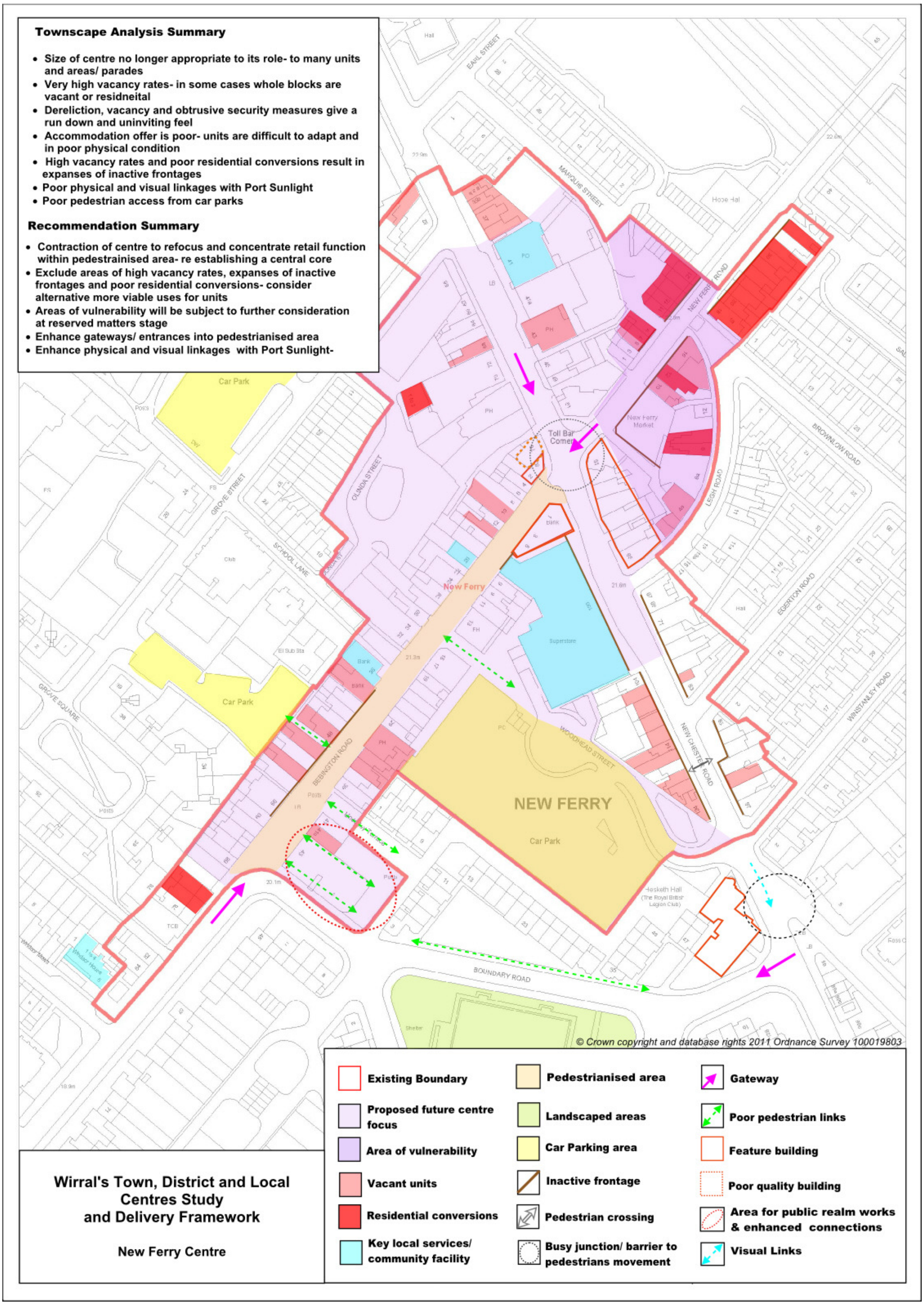
Group 2 - These are low income families living on traditional low-rise estates. Some have bought their council houses but most continue to rent. Incomes are low and unemployment relatively high. Jobs reflect the general lack of educational qualifications and are in factories, shops and other manual occupations. Money is tight and shopping tends to focus on cheaper stores and catalogues.

Accessibility

New Ferry has a population of approximately 6,700 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. New Ferry is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 129,000 people (42% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 116,000 people (37% of the population of the borough) people can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 122,000 people (39% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 116,000 people (37% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
A range of national retailers as well as some niche businesses Wirral's farmers market once a month Accessibility to the centre is good via public transport as well free carparking The central shopping area is pedestrian friendly Close proximity to Port Sunlight Village Recently refurbished street furniture A high density surrounding residential area Several public houses Youth facilities in the centre	A poor perception of the centre from visitors Low quality shop fronts and unattractive roller shutters Overspill outside from the public houses The quantity and poor appearance of empty shops The state and appearance of the rear of retail units Over abundance of charity shops and over spill onto pedestrian area (displaying of goods) Varying quality of the pedestrianised surface in the centre Poor link from the main carpark to the centre
Opportunities Attract visitors from Port Sunlight to New Ferry Promotion of New Ferry as an extension of Port Sunlight with events and links to the centre Potential to redevelop vacant shops on New Chester road Improve signage to the centre from both Port Sunlight and from New Chester Road Capitalising on the farmers market	**Threats** Continuing decline of the centre and increased number of empty shops Population decline Loss of any of the main service providers in the centre (Post Office in future) Concern about potential Increased crime and deprivation in the centre



Townscape Analysis Summary
• Size of centre no longer appropriate to its role- to many units and areas/ parades
• Very high vacancy rates- in some cases whole blocks are vacant or residneital
• Dereliction, vacancy and obtrusive security measures give a run down and uninviting feel
• Accommodation offer is poor- units are difficult to adapt and in poor physical condition
• High vacancy rates and poor residential conversions result in expanses of inactive frontages
• Poor physical and visual linkages with Port Sunlight
• Poor pedestrian access from car parks
Recommendation Summary
• Contraction of centre to refocus and concentrate retail function within pedestrainised area- re establishing a central core
• Exclude areas of high vacancy rates, expanses of inactive frontages and poor residential conversions- consider alternative more viable uses for units
• Areas of vulnerability will be subject to further consideration at reserved matters stage
• Enhance gateways/ entrances into pedestrianised area
• Enhance physical and visual linkages with Port Sunlight-
EARL STREET
MARQUIS STREET
NEW FERRY ROAD
Toll Bar Corner
New Ferry Market
Car Park
GROVE STREET
SCHOOL LANE
OLINDA STREET
New Ferry
Superstore
BEBINGTON ROAD
WOODHEAD STREET
NEW FERRY
Car Park
NEW CHESTER ROAD
LEIGH ROAD
EGERTON ROAD
BROWNLOW ROAD
WINSTANLEY ROAD
GROVE SQUARE
BOUNDARY ROAD
Hesketh Hall
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Existing Boundary
Proposed future centre focus
Area of vulnerability
Vacant units
Residential conversions
Key local services/ community facility
Pedestrianised area
Landscaped areas
Car Parking area
Inactive frontage
Pedestrian crossing
Busy junction/ barrier to pedestrians movement
Gateway
Poor pedestrian links
Feature building
Poor quality building
Area for public realm works & enhanced connections
Visual Links
Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework
New Ferry Centre

Townscape Appraisal

The centre is focused around a central pedestriansed area and sits within close proximity to Port Sunlight. The environmental quality of the centre is poor with proportionally high vacancy rates, dereliction, poor conversions and obtrusive security measures which all contribute to the centres run down and uninviting feel. The size of centre is no longer appropriate to its role. It is suffering decline and has very high vacancy rates through out the centre which often affects entire blocks. Within the south eastern area of the centre there are entire blocks that stand vacant. However high levels of vacancy are not limited solely to these areas and are interspersed through out.

The general condition of buildings and public realm is poor and in need of maintenance. The visual and physical pedestrian connections between the centre, the residential village at Port Sunlight and car parking areas are poor. The general design of frontages is poor throughout with inappropriate residential conversions and poor quality design. The Co-op supermarket is not integrated within the centre and results in an inactive unanimated frontage where it fronts New Chester Road and a poorly defined and uninviting entrance from the pedestrianised area.

Summary

New Ferry has significantly declined over the years, with a reduced retail offer and many vacant units. However, New Ferry does have some very niche businesses which flourish including renowned butchers and specialist sporting shops. New Ferry also has the only Farmers Market on Wirral in the nearby Community Centre. New Ferry benefits from a large residential catchment and being in very close proximity to Port Sunlight village. However, the links and benefits of this location are not being utilised to there potential. The offer has severely declined and there are concerns that people are no longer doing their weekly shopping in the centre given its relative proximity to Birkenhead and the Croft Retail Park. New Ferry needs serious interventions and controls to restructure the retail function of the centre.

Options for Intervention

Early Interventions

- Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc
- Promotion/ marketing to improve links between the farmers market and the centre
- Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)
- Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)
- Improve linkages and signage from Port Sunlight Village to New Ferry to direct visitors to the opportunities in New Ferry
- Maintenance of the surface of the pedestrianised area – link to 'deep clean' work

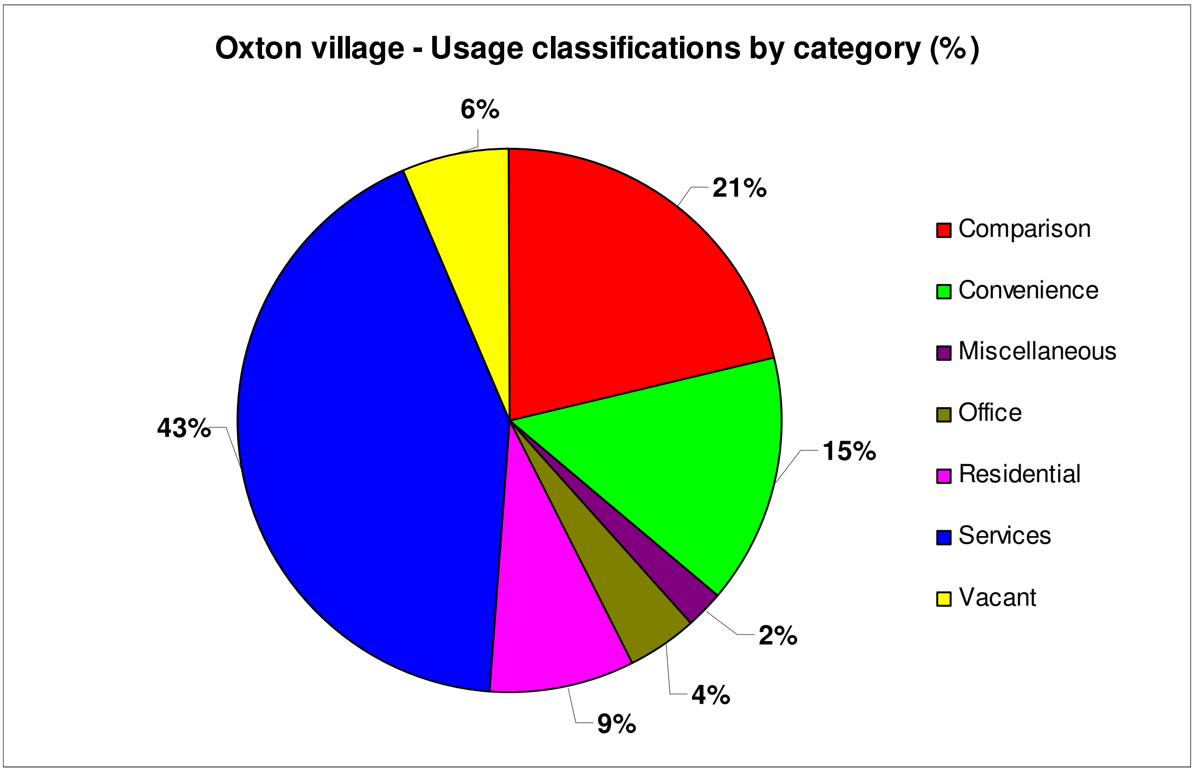
Medium Term Interventions
• Potential boundary change to the shopping centre (at the end of New Chester Road and Bebington Road) – to exclude areas of high vacancy rates, expanses of inactive frontages and poor residential conversions • Consideration of alternative and complimentary uses for areas excluded from retail area for 'area's of vulnerability' • Focus retail uses into the pedestrianised main shopping centre
Long Term Aspirations
• Creation of a public space in New Ferry centre to link to Port Sunlight Village and New Ferry together

5.17 Oxton Village

Oxton is new to the retail hierarchy and is a vibrant centre with a high number of independent shops and boutiques as well as a good restaurant and café culture. The centre has retained a distinct village feel and is a Conservation Area. (The centre was not assessed in the RTP report).

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience and comparison retailing are both above the average across all the centres studied of 10% and 19% respectively, while service provision is below the study average of 50%. The percentage of vacant units is less than half the study average of 12% while 9% of ground floor uses are in residential uses.

In relation to upper floor uses, 74% of units are in residential use followed by offices related to the ground floor business (15%) and vacant (5%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Oxton Ward has a population of 13,305 with an average household income of £34,500. The Job Seekers Allowance claimant rate for the Ward is 3.8%. The population aged 0-19 is 2,795, working age 16-64M/59W is 8,008 and 60+ is 3,613.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Oxton Village it suggests that the three most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1- These are comfortably-off retired people found in many seaside towns and elsewhere around the country. There are many over 75s as well as younger retired. A lot of the households are pensioner couples or singles. Retirement homes are also common.

Group 2- These are the most prosperous people living in our main cities. They are very well educated and tend to be employed in senior managerial and professional occupations. Households are a mix of families, couples, singles and some retired. Given the urban nature of these areas, property is a mix of terraced and detached houses, and converted and purpose built flats. The houses tend to be large, with four or more bedrooms. These are affluent neighbourhoods so car ownership is high, even if travel to work is often by public transport. Incomes are high and these individuals have high levels of savings and investments. They read the major broadsheets and have a cosmopolitan outlook, being interested in theatre, the arts, classical music and eating out in good restaurants.

Group 3- These are communities where mostly employment is in traditional manual occupations. Families and retired people predominate with some young singles and single parents. Incomes range from moderate to low and unemployment is higher than the national average, as is long term illness. There are pockets of deprivation in this group.

Accessibility

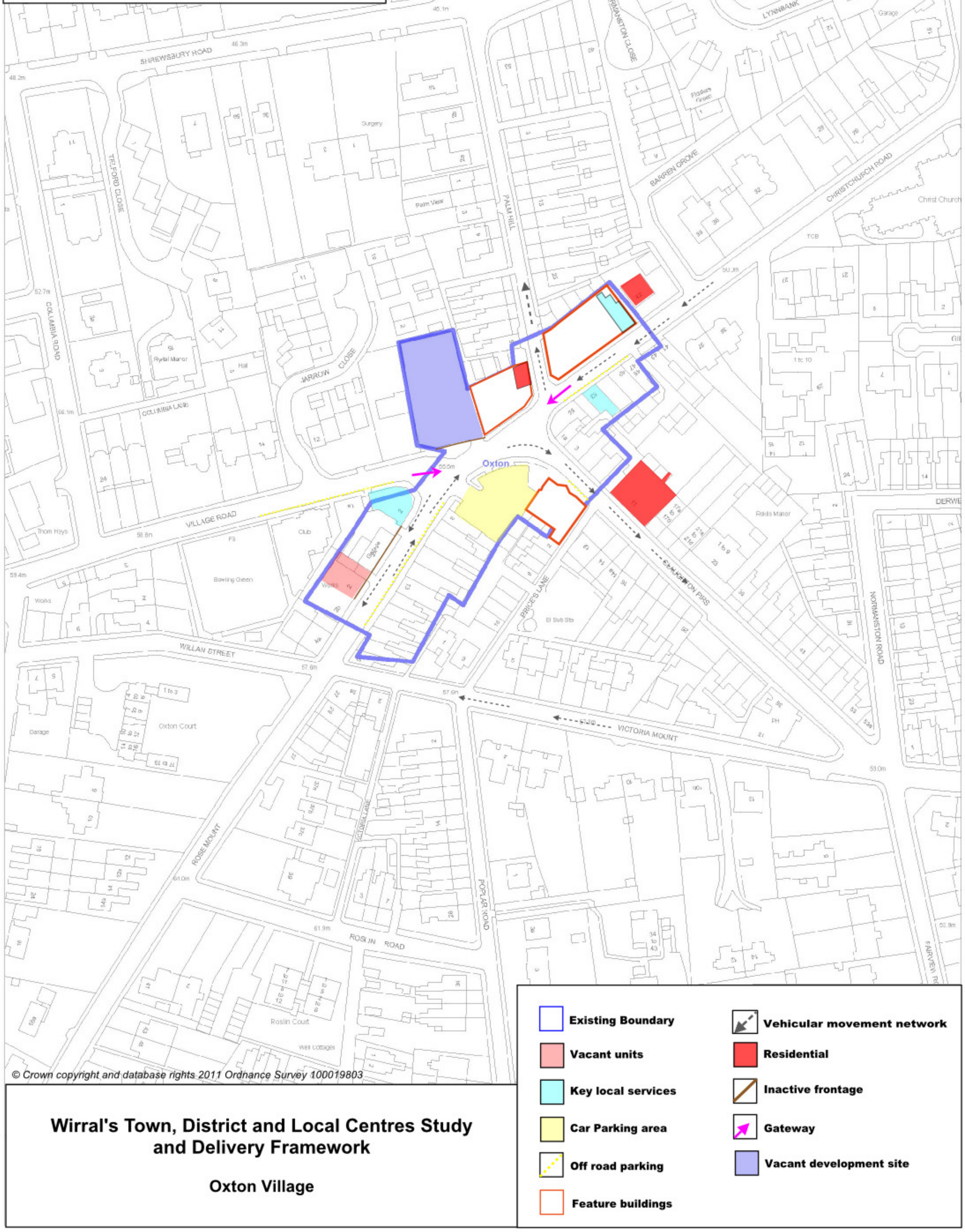
Oxton Village has a population of approximately 7,500 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Oxton Village is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 145,000 people (46% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 117,000 people (38% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 162,000 people (52% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 120,000 people (38% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
A high quality range of specialist shops, cafes and restaurants The village has retained its character and heritage Access through the centre is pedestrian friendly with not much through traffic and good bus links A large residential catchment surrounding the centre High quality food and drink offer	Signage to the centre is poor and can be difficult to locate The centre has lost its banking facilities but retains a ATM cash point
Opportunities	**Threats**
Potential development site in the centre (HSBC)	Loss of key retailers and services in the centre

Townscape Analysis Summary

- Vacant development site (former bank site)-planning permission but could become an eyesore over time
- Insufficient car parking- limited off road- resulting in congestion
- Limited number of poor quality advertisement signs and shop fronts that detract from the overall quality and character of the centre



Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework

Oxton Village

Townscape Appraisal

Oxton Village is small, compact and focused. The overall environmental quality is good and the buildings are in general terms well maintained. It has a strong sense of place, identity and incorporates a number of character buildings. At present there is very little scope for interventions of a physical nature. The vacant development site which was the former bank site has an extant planning permission but remains undeveloped. This is presently secured and maintained but has the potential to become an eyesore over time. Additionally there are a limited number of poor quality advertisement signs and shop fronts that detract from the overall quality and character of the centre although at present there are isolated examples of this. Within the immediate vicinity of the centre there is a general lack of car parking provision with limited off road parking which can result in congestion.

Summary

Oxton Village is a very well functioning and flourishing centre with range of comparison goods available at independent shops and well as a thriving cafe culture and Michelin Star standard restaurant on offer. The surrounding population have the time and means to spend within the centre and it is a self sustaining and prosperous centre. It is also a Conservation Area, ensuring that the design and appearance of the shopping area is maintained.

Options for Intervention

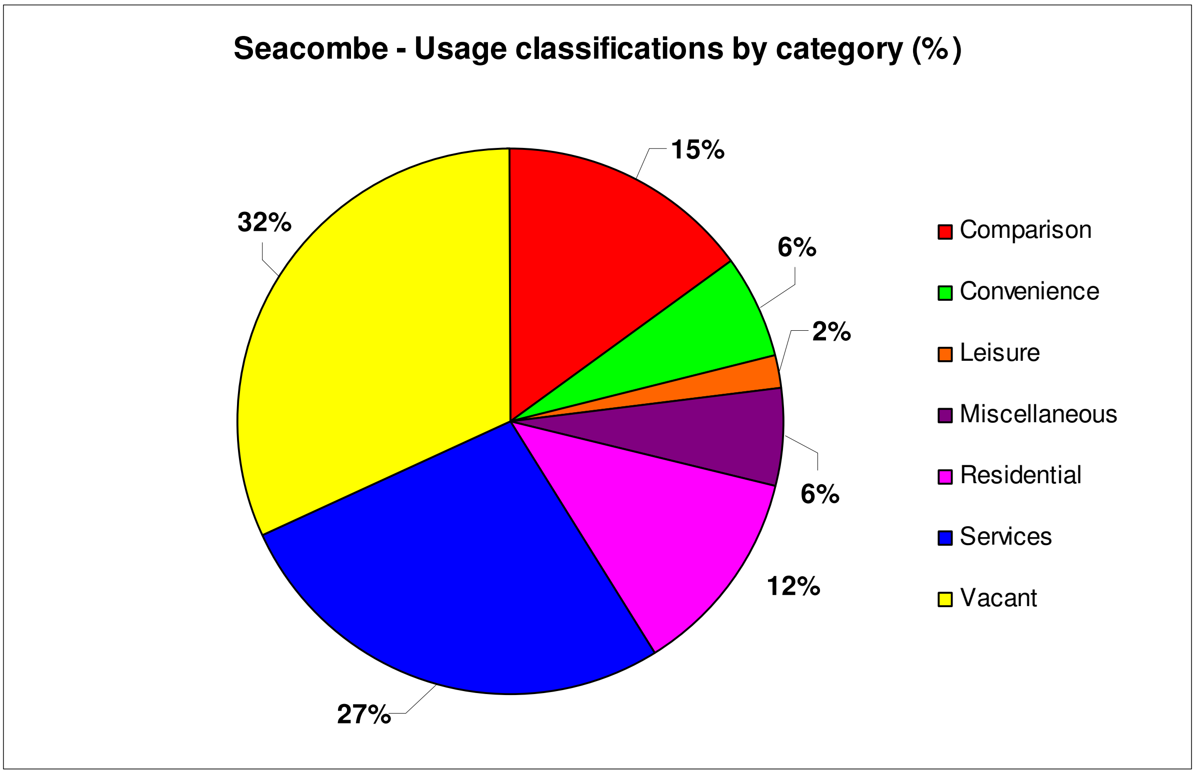
Early Interventions • Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units and shop front design with specific reference to historic buildings and preserving the village character • Work with traders / Area Forum to maintain the environment (Deep Clean) • Improve signage to the Village from Birkenhead Park and Storeton Road • Promote the offer available in the centre • Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)
Medium Term Interventions • Opportunity for development on the vacant site within the centre of the village
Long Term Aspirations • Sustain the range and quality of the retail offer in the centre

5.18 Seacombe – Poulton Road

RTP assessed the centre as being in significant decline, being very run down and unattractive with high level of vacancy. Although Tesco Express had improved the convenience retail offer, the comparison and service representation was generally poor. With the exception of the Tesco development most units were assessed to be in a poor state of repair and the centre was considered to be no longer viable in its present form.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is just over half the average across all the centres studied of 10%, and comparison and service uses are significantly below the study averages of 19% and 50% respectively. The percentage of vacant units is over two and half times the study average of 12%, while 12% of ground floor units are also in residential use.

In relation to upper floor uses, the most prevalent use is residential (88%), followed by offices related to the ground floor business (8.6%) and vacant uses (4%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Seacombe Ward has a population of 15,084 with an average household income of £22,808. The Job Seekers Allowance claimant rates for the Ward are 9.3%. The population for the Ward aged 0-19 is 4,564, Working age 16-64M /59F is 9,296 and aged 60+ 2,533.

<u>Information drawn on from the Acorn geodemographic classification</u>

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Seacombe it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - These are communities where most employment is in traditional manual occupations. Families and retired people predominate with some young singles and single parents. Incomes range from moderate to low and unemployment is higher than the national average, as is long term illness. There are pockets of deprivation in this group.

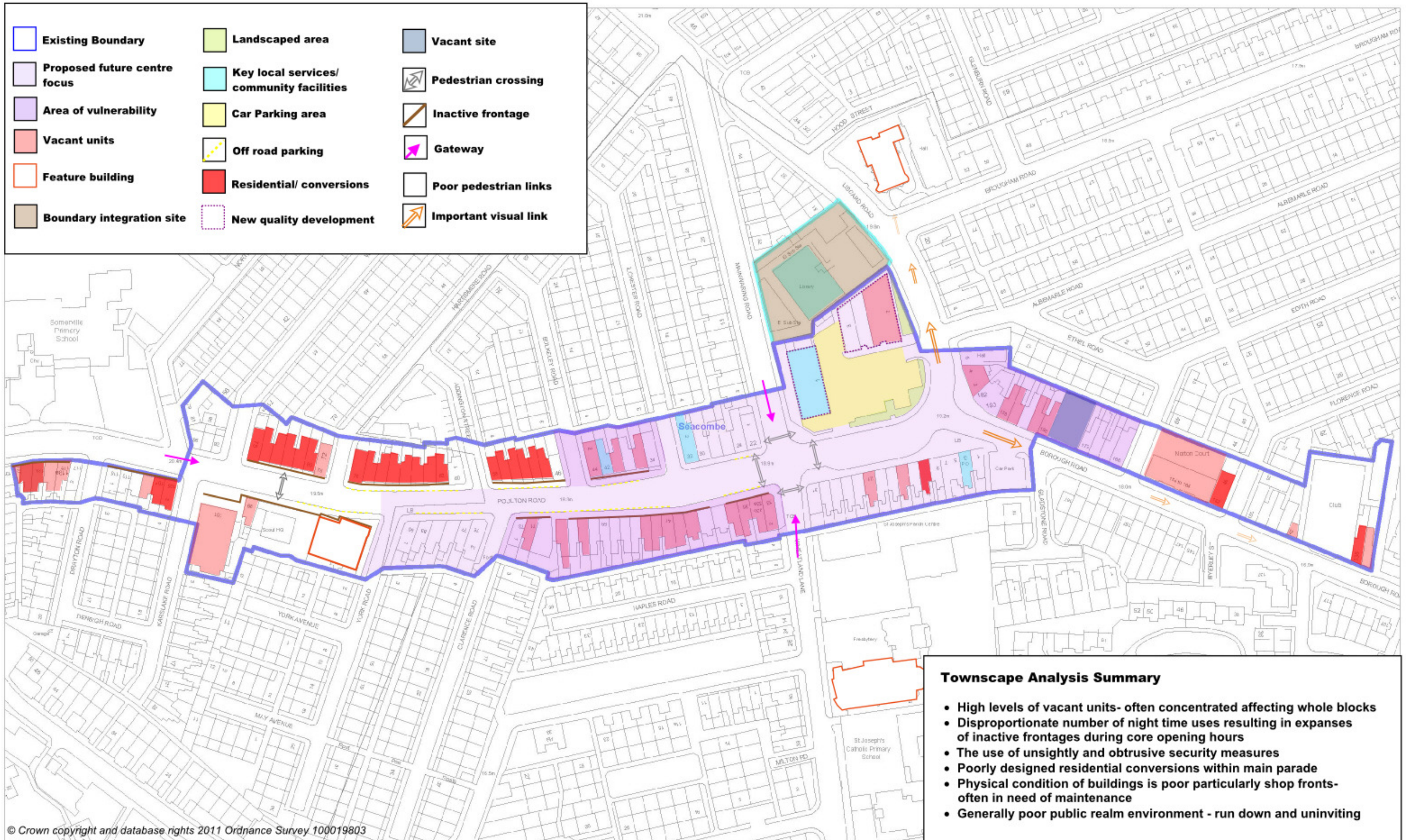
Group 2- This urban group is characterised by high numbers of single adults. These include single pensioners, young singles and lone parents. Unemployment levels are above average and long term illness levels are high, which reflects the relatively high numbers of older people. With such low incomes, these households have little, if any, discretionary spend. They are unlikely to have cars and rely on public transport. Life for this group is undoubtedly difficult, with restricted finances and employment opportunities.

Accessibility

Seacombe has a population of approximately 10,000 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Seacombe is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 104,000 people (33% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 83,000 people (27% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 97, 000 people (31% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 81, 000 people (26% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
The recent small scale regeneration scheme in the centre with additional retail units Accessible by public transport A large surrounding residential catchment	A large number of poor quality residential conversions within the centre High proportion of A5 uses Very poor public realm throughout the centre and declining in quality and appearance Very long linear centre Very high number of vacant units
Opportunities	**Threats**
Opportunity site at the old Kwik Save site. Opportunity to consolidate the centre around the new regeneration scheme (Tesco site)	Declining quality and maintenance of the buildings.



Townscape Analysis Summary

- High levels of vacant units- often concentrated affecting whole blocks
- Disproportionate number of night time uses resulting in expanses of inactive frontages during core opening hours
- The use of unsightly and obtrusive security measures
- Poorly designed residential conversions within main parade
- Physical condition of buildings is poor particularly shop fronts- often in need of maintenance
- Generally poor public realm environment - run down and uninviting

Recommendations Summary

- Potential contraction of centre to size that would be appropriate to its current and future function and offer
- Refocus centre central retail core establishing connections with new retail development (Tesco) and new units
- Further consideration to 'area's of vulnerability' at area action plan stage

Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework

Seacombe

Townscape Appraisal

The new Tesco development and new retail units provide a high quality focal point for the centre. The centre also benefits from a number of character buildings and important strategic views - including framed views to the World Heritage Site from Borough Road.

The high vacancy levels are a clear indication of the level of decline. The vacant units are often concentrated and affecting entire blocks. Added to this there are a disproportionate number of night time uses and poor quality residential conversions that are both concentrated and interspersed thorough out the centre. Combined these issues result in large expanses of inactive frontages during core opening hours with parts of the centre having no visual interest and generating little pedestrian footfall. In turn the high vacancy rates result in generally poorly maintained buildings and the use of unsightly and obtrusive security measures including roller shutters. The overall design quality of the centre is therefore weak with poor quality shop frontages, poor public realm environment and general run down feel.

Summary

Seacombe is a large centre which is not functioning well for its size and population catchment. Many of the units within the centre are vacant and in an extremely poor state of repair or have been converted into low quality residential conversions. The centre has recently benefited from a small regeneration scheme including a small supermarket and 3 additional retail units. Unfortunately one still remains vacant, however, it has brought a much needed focus to the centre as well as providing some off street parking. Refocusing the centre around this development would be beneficial to maintain the centre and allow the vacant units to be considered for other uses in the future.

Options for Intervention

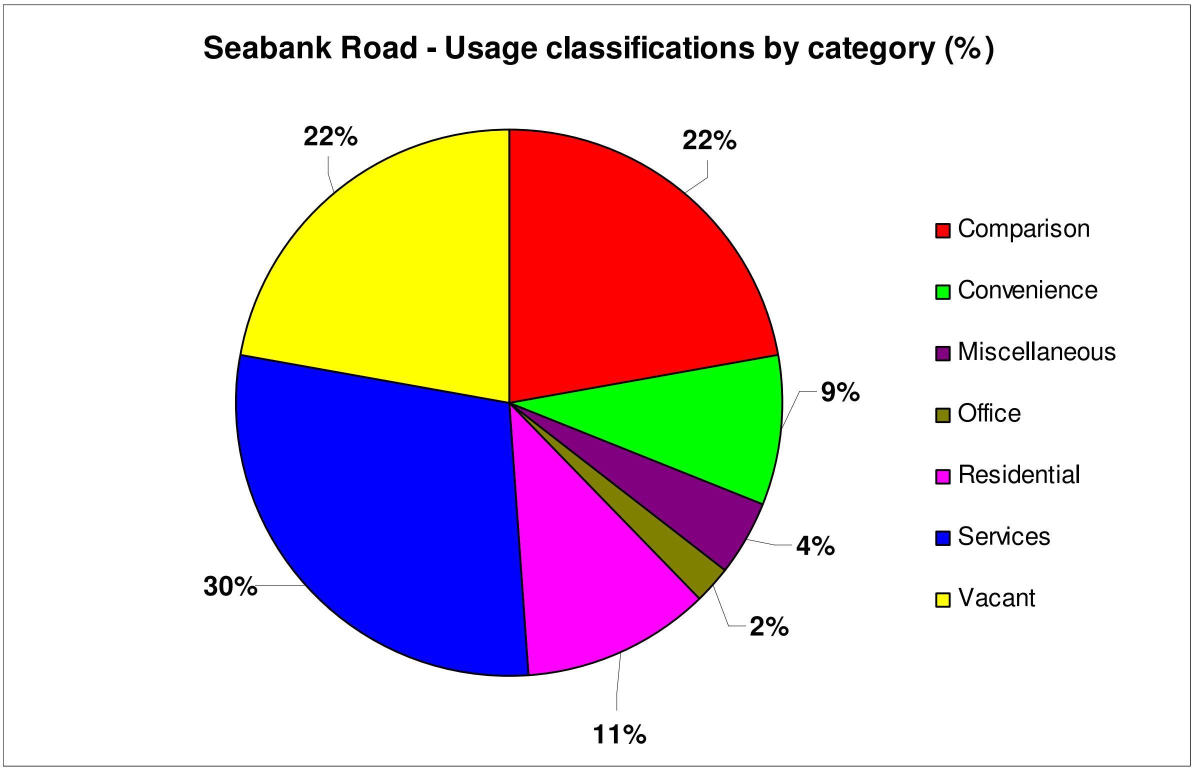
Early Interventions • Design SPD for ‘town centres’ dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc • Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund) • Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)
Medium Term Interventions • Refocus and concentrate centre around central retail core establishing connections with new retail development (Tesco and new units). • Potential boundary change to the shopping centre to exclude major areas of residential conversions and existing vacant properties.
Long Term Aspirations • Further consideration to the function and role of the Town Centre- possibility of further boundary contraction to exclude areas in greatest decline. • Consideration of alternative and complementary uses for areas excluded.

5.19 New Brighton – Seabank Road

RTP assessed Seabank Road as experiencing significant decline and now functioning as a local service centre with a limited convenience and comparison retail offer. Vacant property was identified as a major issue, adversely impacting on the appearance of the centre and requiring action to limit the blighting effect from empty units and prevent further decline.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is just under the average across all the centres studied of 10%, while comparison provision is just over the study average of 19%. The percentage of service uses is significantly below the study average of 50% while the percentage of vacancies is nearly double the study average of 12%. 11% of units are in residential use.

In relation to upper floor uses the most prevalent use is residential (91%) followed by offices related to ground floor businesses (7%) and offices separate to ground floor (2%)

Socio-economic Profile

The New Brighton Ward has a total population of 14,018 with an average household income of £32,797. The Job Seekers Allowance claimant rates for the Ward are 6%. The population for New Brighton Ward aged 0-19 is 3,343, Working age population 16-64M/59F 8,514 and 60+ 3,287.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Seabank Road it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - These tend to be home-owning families living comfortably in stable areas in suburban and semi-rural locations. People are employed in a range of occupations, including middle management and clerical roles. There also reasonable numbers of shopworkers and skilled manual workers. Incomes are at least of average levels and many earn well above the national average.

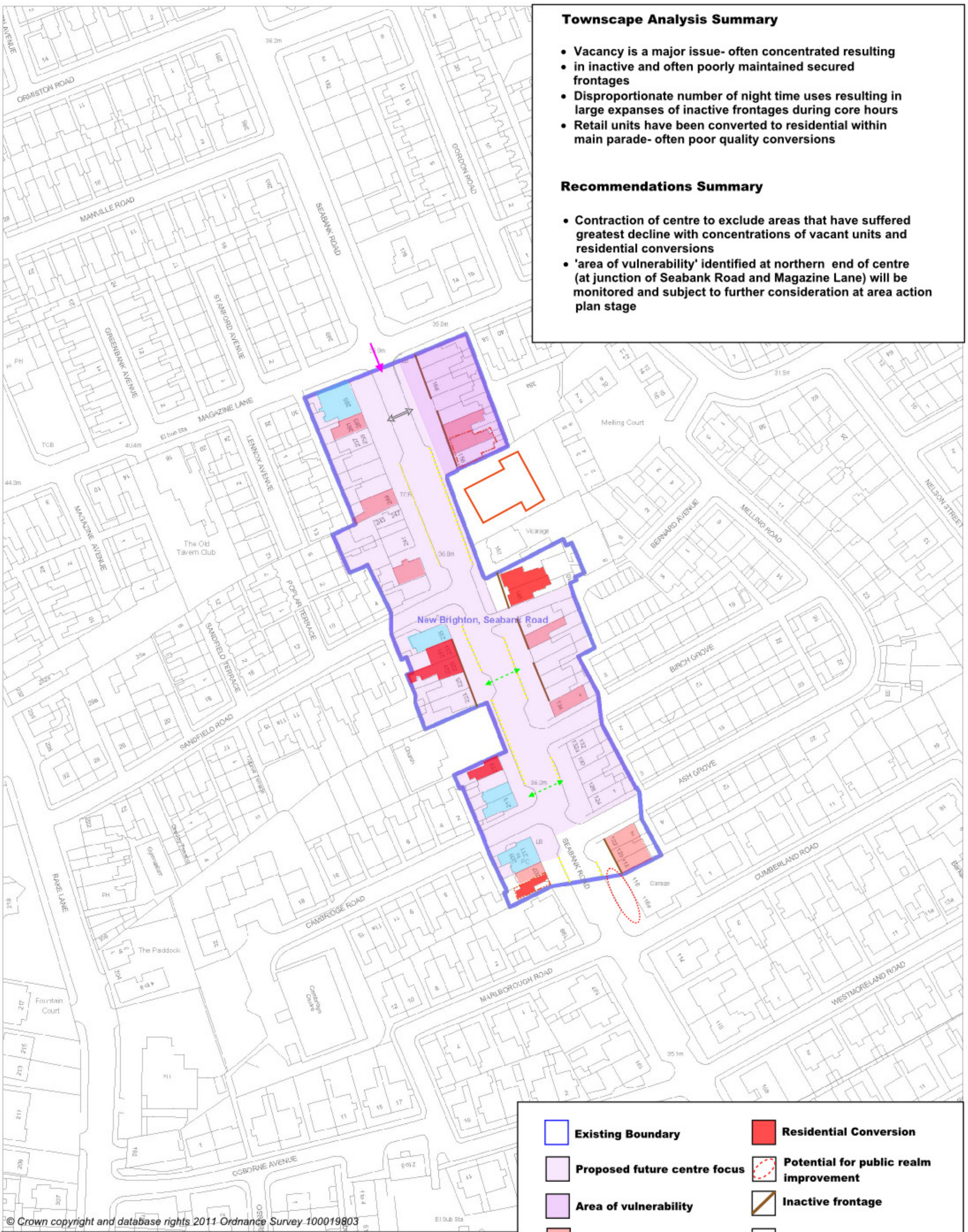
Group 2 -These are comfortably-off retired people found in many seaside towns and elsewhere around the country. There are many over 75s as well as younger retired. A lot of the households are pensioner couples or singles. Retirement homes are also common.

Accessibility

Seabank Road has a population of approximately 9,500 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Seabank Road is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 77,000 people (25% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 77,000 people (25% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 85,000 people (27% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 82,000people (26% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Large residential population surrounding the area Attractive public realm in the form of canopies and wide pavements Accessible by public transport A few specialist shops	Lack of signage to the centre and distinguishing the centre as a shopping area Poor residential conversions High levels of vacancies in the centre Imbalance of service uses compared to retail units Poor appearance of streetscape Loss of key service uses
Opportunities	**Threats**
The New Brighton development increasing passing trade opportunities	Continuing loss of retail uses



Townscape Analysis Summary

- Vacancy is a major issue- often concentrated resulting
- in inactive and often poorly maintained secured frontages
- Disproportionate number of night time uses resulting in large expanses of inactive frontages during core hours
- Retail units have been converted to residential within main parade- often poor quality conversions

Recommendations Summary

- Contraction of centre to exclude areas that have suffered greatest decline with concentrations of vacant units and residential conversions
- 'area of vulnerability' identified at northern end of centre (at junction of Seabank Road and Magazine Lane) will be monitored and subject to further consideration at area action plan stage

Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework

New Brighton- Seabank Road

Existing Boundary	Residential Conversion
Proposed future centre focus	Potential for public realm improvement
Area of vulnerability	Inactive frontage
Vacant units	Gateway
Key local services	Poor pedestrian links
Off road parking	Feature buildings
Pedestrian crossing	Poor quality buildings

Townscape Appraisal

There are clear signs that the centre is suffering with high levels of vacant units concentrated together resulting in inactive and often poorly maintained secured frontages. There are also a high proportion of night time uses resulting in large expanses of inactive frontages during core trading hours. However the improvement works including the canopies lining most of the parade provides a unified feel and a strong sense of place that visually screens and lessens the impact of the of poor quality residential conversions and inactive frontages

Summary

Seabank Road is functioning quite poorly as a retail centre. The retail offer is very limited. Key uses including a small corner convenience store and a hardware shop. Service provision is limited. Whilst some of the businesses there may be functioning very well in their own right, as a centre it has very disparate uses which are mixed in with empty units and some residential conversions.

Options for Intervention

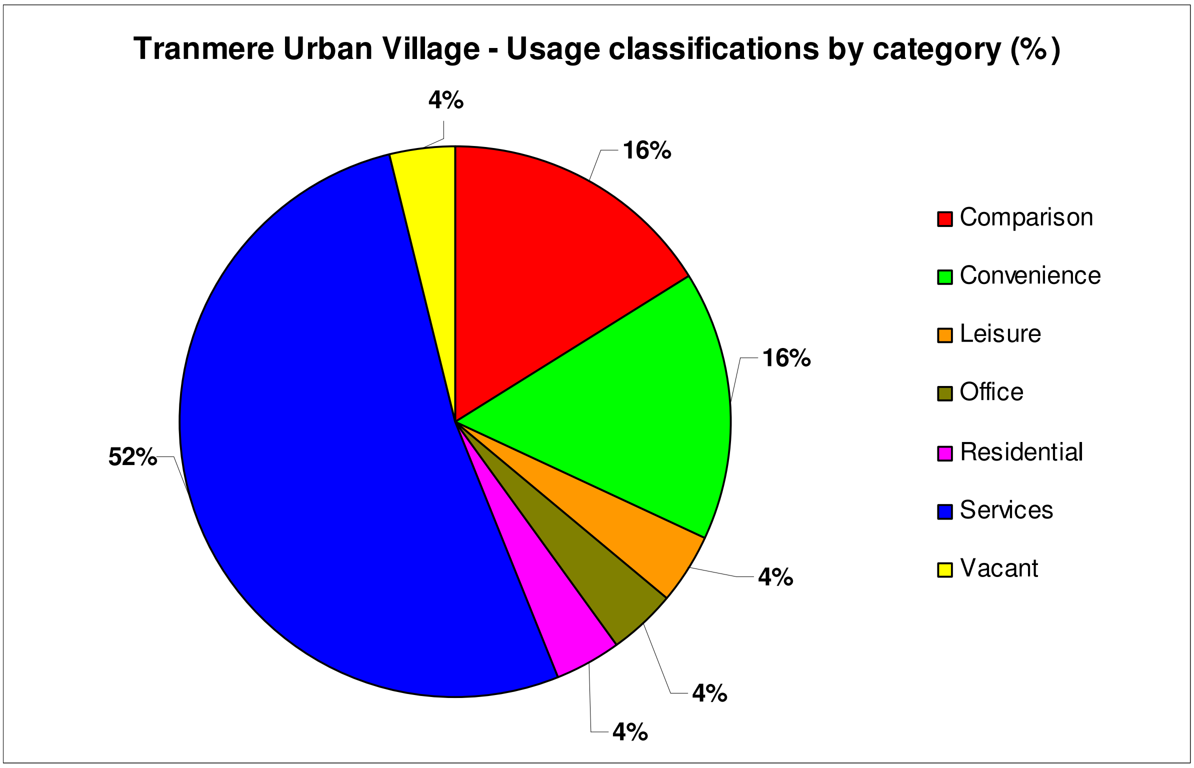
Early Intervention • Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc • Work with traders / Area Forum to maintain the environment (Deep Clean) • Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)
Medium Term Intervention • Improve signage on arrival to the centre • Consider the future boundary of the centre and further consideration to 'areas of vulnerability'
Long Term Aspiration • Effectively control the role of the centre in the future

5.20 Tranmere Urban Village - Old Chester Road

Following its redevelopment and consolidation as part of Tranmere Urban Village regeneration project, RTP assessed the centre as significantly more attractive and healthy than it was previously. While limited, the retail and service offer is adequate to cater for the day to day needs of local residents.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is above the average across all the centres studied of 10%, while comparison provision is slightly below the study average of 19%. Service provision is just above the study average of 50% while the percentage of vacant units is a third of the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the most prevalent use is residential (61%), followed by offices related to ground floor businesses (22%) and offices separate to ground floor businesses (17%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Rock Ferry Ward has a population of 13,988 with an average household income of £19,297. The Job Seekers Allowance claimant rate for the Ward is 9.2% The population aged 0-19 is 3,936, Working age population 16-64M/59F 8,293 and aged 60+ is 2,937.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Tranmere Urban Village it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - These are communities where most employment is in traditional manual occupations. Families and retired people predominate with some young singles and single parents. Incomes range from moderate to low and unemployment is higher than the national average, as is long term illness. There are pockets of deprivation in this group.

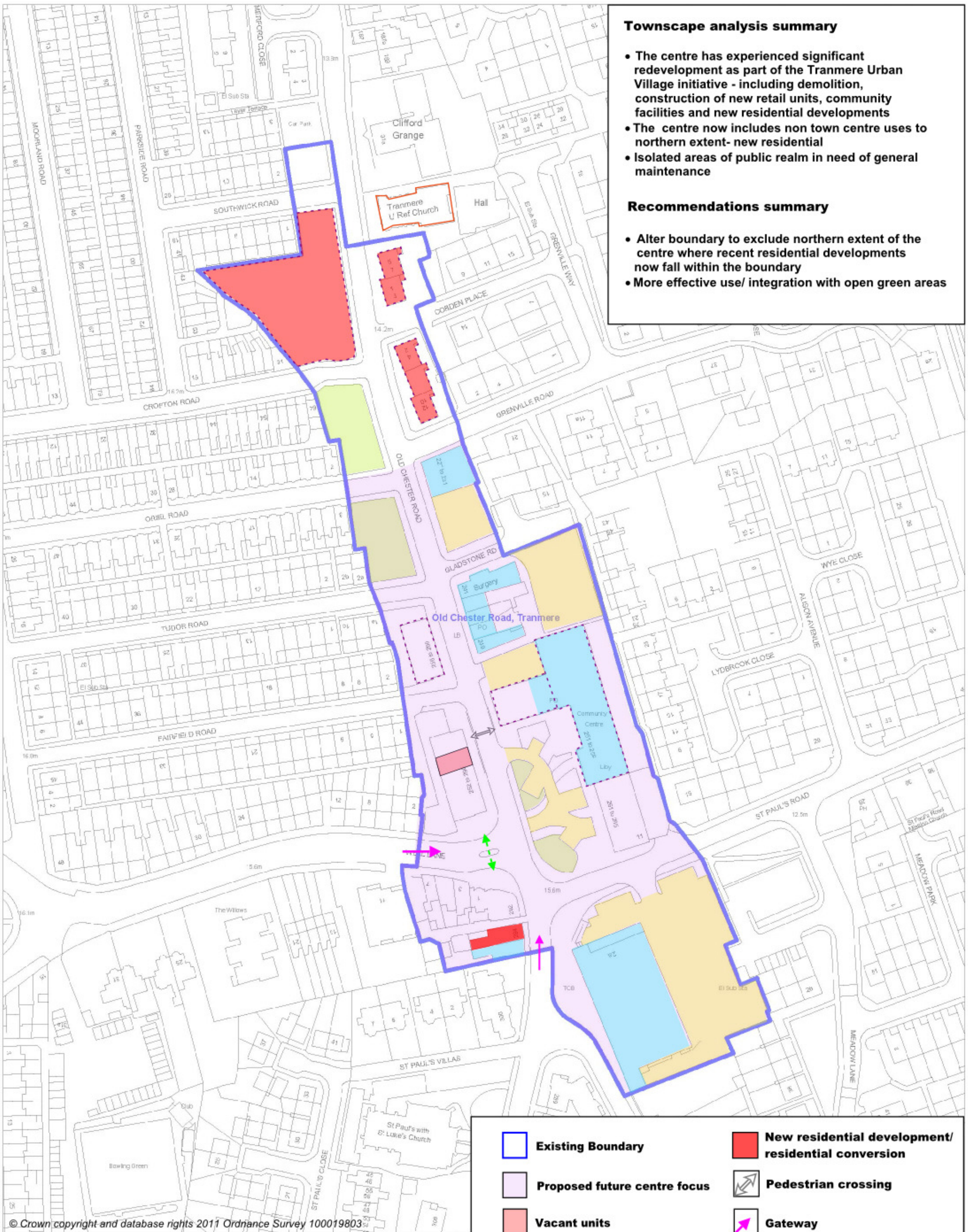
Group 2 - This urban group is characterised by high numbers of single adults. These include single pensioners, young singles and lone parents. Unemployment levels are above average and long term illness levels are high, which reflects the relatively high numbers of older people. With such low incomes, these households have little, if any, discretionary spend. They are unlikely to have cars and rely on public transport. Life for this group is undoubtedly difficult, with restricted finances and employment opportunities.

Accessibility

Tranmere Urban Village has a population of approximately 7,700 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Tranmere Urban Village is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 150,000 people (48% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 128,000 people (41% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 142,000 people (46% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 128,000 people (41% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Vibrant consolidated centre with a mix of uses which meets today's needs Good accessibility by public transport Key Council and other services located in the centre	Limited evening economy
Opportunities	**Threats**
Alter the boundary to reflect the changes to the centre after the consolidation	Loss of key retailers



Townscape analysis summary

- The centre has experienced significant redevelopment as part of the Tranmere Urban Village initiative - including demolition, construction of new retail units, community facilities and new residential developments
- The centre now includes non town centre uses to northern extent- new residential
- Isolated areas of public realm in need of general maintenance

Recommendations summary

- Alter boundary to exclude northern extent of the centre where recent residential developments now fall within the boundary
- More effective use/ integration with open green areas

Existing Boundary
Proposed future centre focus
Vacant units
Key local services/ community facilities
Car Parking area
Feature Building
New residential development/ residential conversion
Pedestrian crossing
Gateway
New quality development
Poor pedestrian links
Landscaped areas

Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Framework

Tranmere Urban Village

Townscape Appraisal

The centre has experienced significant redevelopment as part of the Tranmere Urban Village initiative, this included clearance of existing run down premises and construction of new retail units and a community centre. The overall environmental quality within the centre is good and given the extent of recent works there is little scope for interventions other than isolated areas of public realm in need of general maintenance. As a result of the refocusing and concentration of the main retail core around the new development, the centre now includes non town centre uses, albeit complimentary and new residential developments to the northern extent of the centre.

Summary

Tranmere Urban Village has been recently redeveloped as part of a regeneration scheme. The development includes good quality public realm and a range of new retail premises in the core, integrated with community facilities. The centre is very accessible to surrounding residents to walk too, as well as being easy to reach by public transport. Consumers in the surrounding neighbourhoods are likely to have limited money to spend on convenience and comparison goods. The centre is a successful example of consolidation of a centre which had an oversupply of traditional shops units to create a vibrant and well used centre

Options for Intervention

Early Interventions

- Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc
- Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)
- Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)

Medium Term Interventions

- Revise boundary change to reflect the recent successful regeneration scheme which redesigned and contracted the centre.

Long Term Aspirations

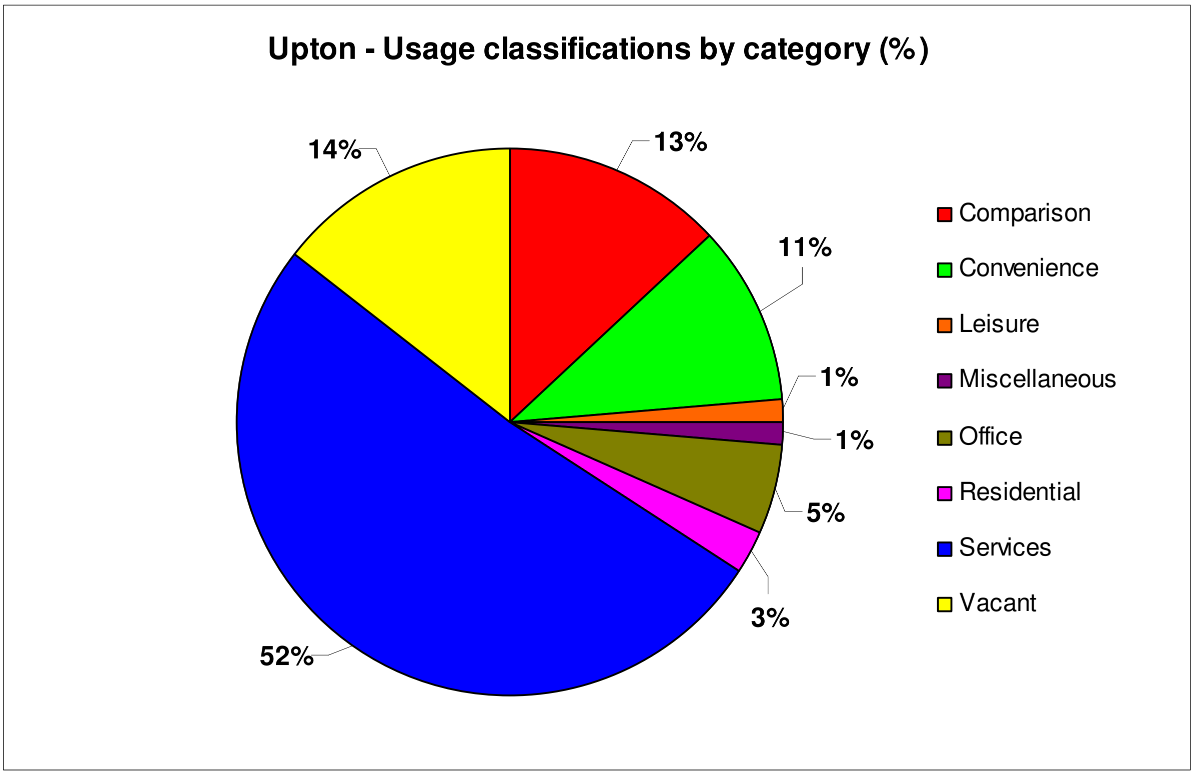
- Maintain the role and function of the centre

5.21 Upton

RTP assessed Upton as being a relatively healthy centre, which adequately caters for the day to day needs of local residents. The units are small but are well-kept, and the physical environment of the centre is generally clean and pleasant. The majority of units are occupied by service providers with more limited convenience and comparison uses.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is just above the average across all the centres studied of 10%, while comparison provision is significantly below the study average of 19%. Service provision is slightly above the study average of 50%, while the percentage of vacant units is above the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the most prevalent use is residential (71.6%) followed by offices related to the ground floor business (12%) and offices separate to the ground floor business (10.4%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Upton Ward has a population of 15,412 with an average household income of £29,899. The Job Seekers Allowance claimant rate for the Ward is 5%. The demographic profile for the Ward is aged 0-19 3,777, Working age population 16-64M/59F is 8,702 and aged 60+ is 4,229.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Upton it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - These tend to be home-owning families living comfortably in stable areas in suburban and semi-rural locations. People are employed in a range of occupations, including middle management and clerical roles. There also reasonable numbers of shopworkers and skilled manual workers. Incomes are at least of average levels and many earn well above the national average.

Group 2 - These are low income families living on traditional low-rise estates. Some have bought their council houses but most continue to rent. Incomes are low and unemployment relatively high. Jobs reflect the general lack of educational qualifications and are in factories, shops and other manual occupations. Money is tight and shopping tends to focus on cheaper stores and catalogues.

Accessibility

Upton has a population of approximately 4,800 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Upton is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 189,000 people (61% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by173,000 people (55% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 204,000 people (66% of the population of the borough) and during the evening170,000 people (55% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

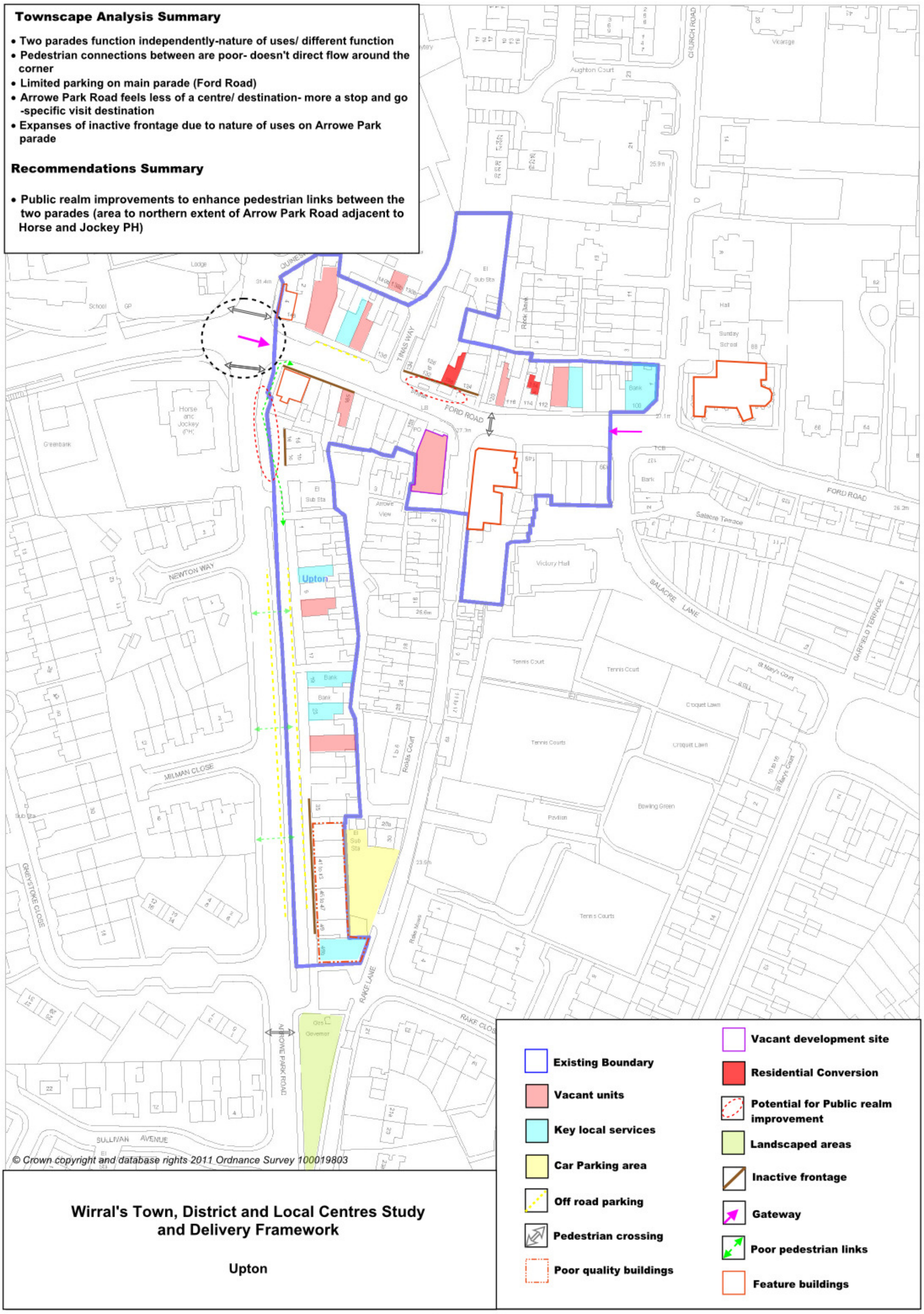
Strengths	Weaknesses
Accessibility is good to the centre. Character and heritage in the centre Key services and a mix of retail uses within the centre	Disjointed centre with poor connectivity between Arrowe Park Road and Ford Road Some vacant retail units in the centre Limited convenience offer Limited off road carparking
Opportunities	**Threats**
Improve connectivity around the centre	Loss of the key services in the centre

Townscape Analysis Summary

- Two parades function independently-nature of uses/ different function
- Pedestrian connections between are poor- doesn't direct flow around the corner
- Limited parking on main parade (Ford Road)
- Arrowe Park Road feels less of a centre/ destination- more a stop and go -specific visit destination
- Expanses of inactive frontage due to nature of uses on Arrowe Park parade

Recommendations Summary

- Public realm improvements to enhance pedestrian links between the two parades (area to northern extent of Arrow Park Road adjacent to Horse and Jockey PH)



Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework

Upton

Townscape Appraisal

The centre comprises of two parades that are physically divided, functioning independently and providing different retail offers. Arrowe Park Road comprises of a long liner parade benefiting from sufficient off road parking. The nature of uses within this parade is dominated by service providers and it has on street parking. The Ford Road area is more of a destination with a more varied retail offer. The environmental quality of this area also differs with greening, consistency in architectural style, character buildings and views of local landmarks from the area giving the area a strong sense of place.

The pedestrian connections between the two areas are poor with the junction of Arrowe Park Road providing little visual interest to naturally guide pedestrians around a relatively sharp and busy corner. The limited parking on street (Ford Road) also seems to have affected the retailers that it attracts, with key services that would usually be prevalent in the centre being situated within the Arrowe Park Road frontage presumably for the benefit of car parking.

Summary

Upton is very accessible by public transport and has a reasonably large residential population. The centre is performing reasonably well and has a range of service uses. The centre has a feel of functioning in two parts. There is an opportunity to improve the connections between the two frontages. The economic mix of the residents surrounding Upton indicates that it is mainly families living in suburban housing. Upton is an attractive centre which appears to serve the needs of the local community well.

Options for Intervention

Early Interventions

- Design SPD for 'town centres' dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc
- Work with traders / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)
- Improve signage to the centre and between Arrowe Park Road and Ford Road
- Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)

Medium Term Interventions

- Sustain and grow the retail offer

Long Term aspirations

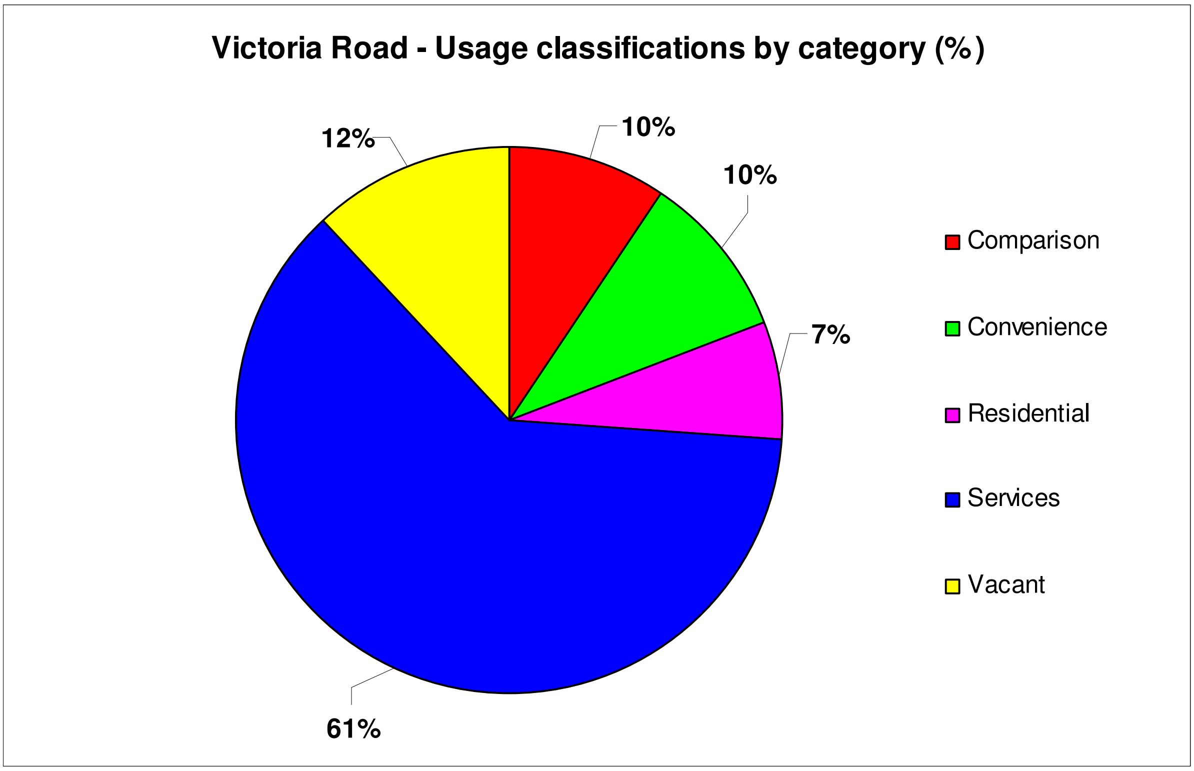
- Public realm improvements to enhance pedestrian links between the two areas of the centre

5.22 New Brighton – Victoria Road

RTP assessed New Brighton as a once thriving seaside resort that has declined substantially over recent years. The retail offer was limited and there was a relatively high vacancy level although the majority of the units were attractive, in good condition and the centre is clean, tidy and well maintained with adequate car parking. It was noted that the regeneration of New Brighton was now underway and this might have beneficial spin-off benefits for the centre.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing matches the average across all the centres studied of 10% while comparison provision just over half the study average of 19%. Service provision is above the study average of 50% while the percentage of vacant units also matches the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the most prevalent use is residential (75%) followed by offices related to the ground floor business (10%) and offices separate to the ground floor business (7.5%).

Socio-economic Profile

The New Brighton Ward has a total population of 14,018 with an average household income of £32,797. The Jobs Seekers Allowance claimant rate for the Ward are 6%. The population for New Brighton Ward aged 0-19 is 3,343, Working age population 16-64M/59F 8,514 and 60+ is 3,287.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Victoria Road it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - These are comfortably-off retired people found in many seaside towns and elsewhere around the country. There are many over 75s as well as younger retired. A lot of the households are pensioner couples or singles. Retirement homes are also common.

Group 2 - These are communities where most employment is in traditional blue collar occupations. Families and retired people predominate with some young singles and single parents. Incomes range from moderate to low and unemployment is higher than the national average, as is long term illness. There are pockets of deprivation in this group.

Accessibility

Victoria Road has a population of approximately 6,200 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Victoria road is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 81,000 people (26% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 79,000 people (26% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 76,000 people (25% of the population of the borough) and during the evening 78,000 people (25% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

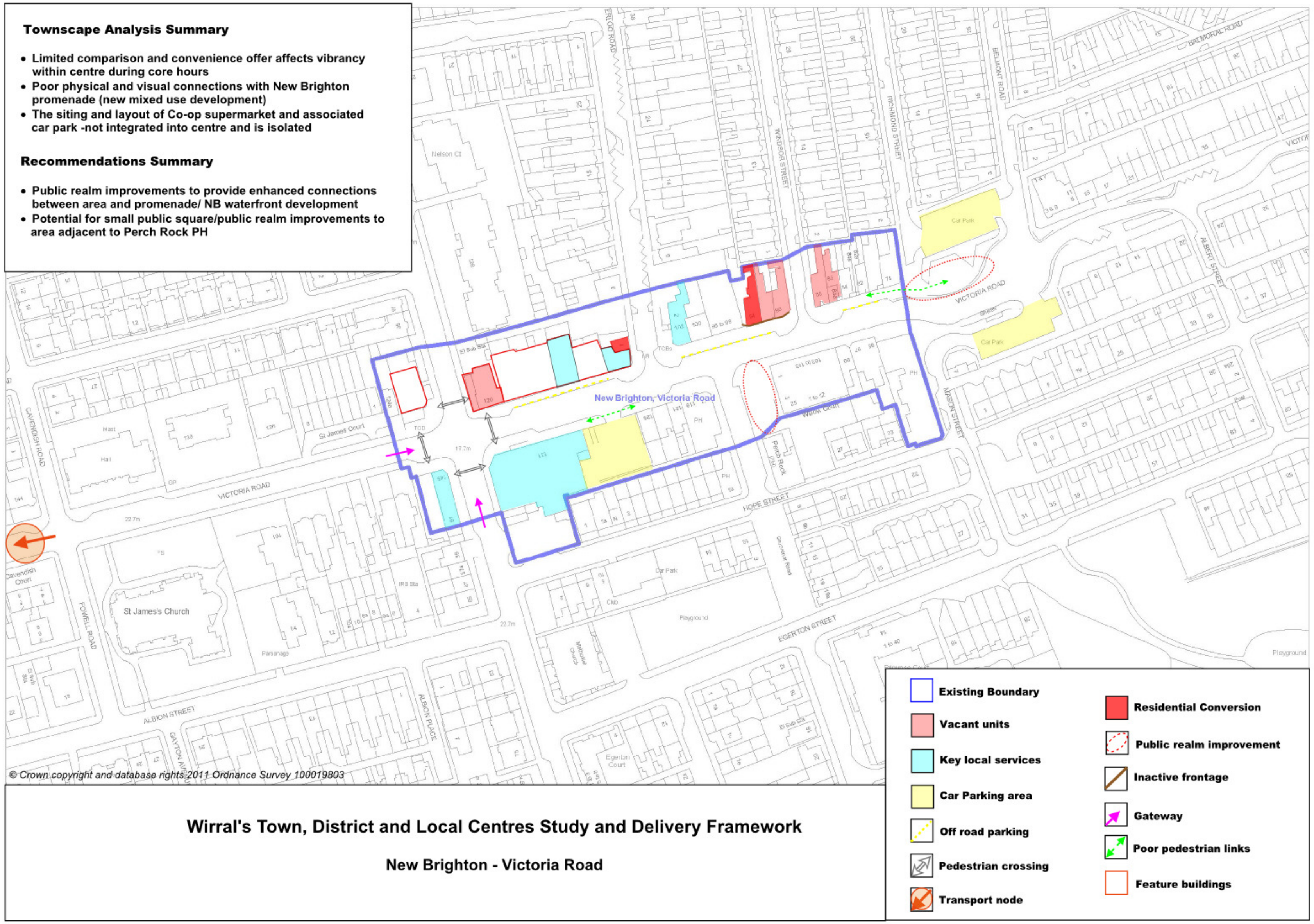
Strengths	Weaknesses
Accessibility to the centre is good by public transport Key service uses in the centre Good quality public realm Range of retailers including chains and independent retailers On street parking is available An improving evening economy offer with restaurants and public houses	Appearance of the shop frontage in the evening is poor with unattractive roller shutters Poor signage from Rowson Street to the shopping area on Victoria Road Restricted residential catchment due to coastal location
Opportunities	**Threats**
Opportunity to link to the regeneration scheme at New Brighton Promenade	Loss of trade to the centre Loss of the evening economy Loss of key services

Townscape Analysis Summary

- Limited comparison and convenience offer affects vibrancy within centre during core hours
- Poor physical and visual connections with New Brighton promenade (new mixed use development)
- The siting and layout of Co-op supermarket and associated car park -not integrated into centre and is isolated

Recommendations Summary

- Public realm improvements to provide enhanced connections between area and promenade/ NB waterfront development
- Potential for small public square/public realm improvements to area adjacent to Perch Rock PH



Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework

New Brighton - Victoria Road

Townscape Appraisal

The centre functions well in physical terms but has a limited comparison offer in particular. The night time economy is quite varied which is of overall benefit but due to the limited retail offer this is at the expense of the centre as it results in a lack of vibrancy and inactive frontages within the centre during retail opening hours. The general environmental quality is good although there are areas that would benefit from improvement in encouraging a more active ‘street café culture’ that would be fitting with its changing function. The visual and physical connections with New Brighton promenade are poor and could be enhanced in light of new mixed use development. The siting and layout of the Co-op and associated car park is not integrated into centre and results in a poor relationship whereby it functions as an isolated site.

Summary

Victoria Road is a small retail centre with a small comparison offer as well as some independent shops and restaurants. The centre functions well to serve the local community, as well as providing an evening economy for visitors to the New Brighton Floral Pavilion. The regeneration development at New Brighton is still underway and once it is open should bring even more visitors to the area. Victoria road could benefit from the additional visitors and prosper if it attracts people to visit and use the shops and restaurants.

Options for Intervention

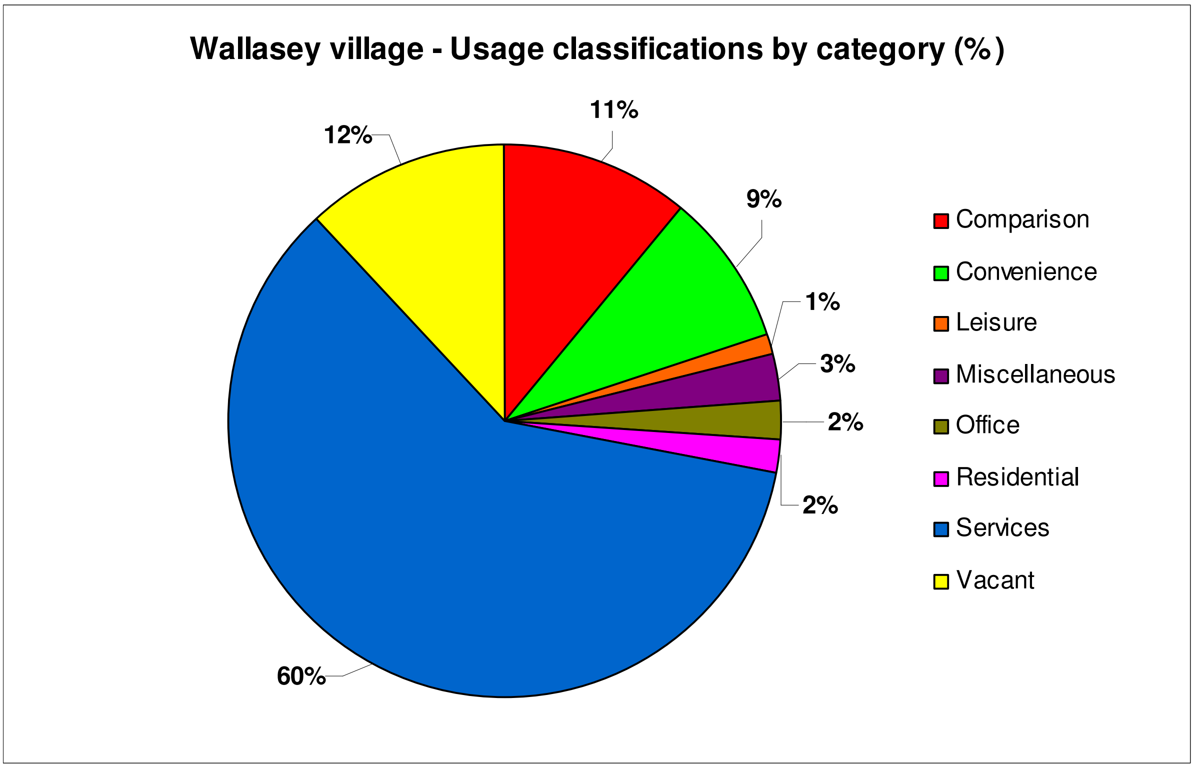
Early Intervention • Design SPD for ‘town centres’ dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc • Work with traders / Area Forum maintain the environment (Deep Clean) • Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)
Medium Term Interventions • Improve signage on arrival to Victoria Road • Ensure links with the regeneration development at New Brighton and promenade
Long Term Aspirations • Potential for small a public square within central area

5.23 Wallasey Village (Grove Road and Leasowe Road)

Wallasey Village comprises two distinct parades of units, which are separated by residential development. RTP assessed the centre as continuing to decline, with a low grade physical environment, some vacancies and with scope for improvement around the Grove Road area. The retail offer is focused on the sale of top up convenience items and local service provision.

Uses within the centre

A survey was undertaken for each centre to classify the use in each unit. A detailed map of this can be found in Appendix A. A summary of the percentage in each classification is shown below.



At ground floor level, the percentage of units given over to convenience retailing is just below the average across all the centres studied of 10%, while comparison provision is just under half the study average of 19%. Service uses are in excess of the study average, while vacancies match the study average of 12%.

In relation to upper floor uses, the most prevalent use is residential (80%), followed by offices related to the ground floor business (12%) and vacant (6%).

Socio-economic Profile

The Wallasey Ward has a population of 14,853 with an average household income of £33,399. The Job Seekers Allowance claimant rate for the Ward is 3.2%. The population aged 0-19 is 3,341, Working age 16-64M/59W is 8,928 and 60+ is 3,966.

Information drawn from the Acorn geodemographic classification

The Acorn System provides a snap shot of some of the most common characteristics found within a particular population, in order to provide a tool for understanding the social and economic make up of a centre and its residents. Acorn sets out a number of standard categories that are applicable across the country and within Wallasey Village it suggests that the two most prominent groups have characteristics that can be described as follows:

Group 1 - These are wealthy families with mortgages. They live in established suburbs, new housing developments around commuter towns, and villages and rural areas. They are younger than other affluent groups, so most households are still likely to be making mortgage repayments. Incomes are good since many have managerial and professional occupations.

Group 2 - These tend to be home-owning families living comfortably in stable areas in suburban and semi-rural locations. People are employed in a range of occupations, including middle management and clerical roles. There also reasonable numbers of shopworkers and skilled manual workers. Incomes are at least of average levels and many earn well above the national average.

Accessibility

Wallasey Village has a population of approximately 8,200 people located within a 10 minute walking time to the centre. Wallasey Village is accessible by public transport in 30 minutes Monday to Friday (9am-5pm) by approximately 102,000 people (33% of population of the borough), during the evening (7pm-10pm) in 30 minutes by 101,000 people (32% of the population of the borough) can access the centre by public transport. During the weekend on Saturday the centre is accessible by public transport in 30mins between 9am-5pm by approximately 105,000 people (34% of the population of the borough) and during the evening103,000 people (33% of the population of the borough) can reach the centre in 30 minutes.

SWOT Analysis

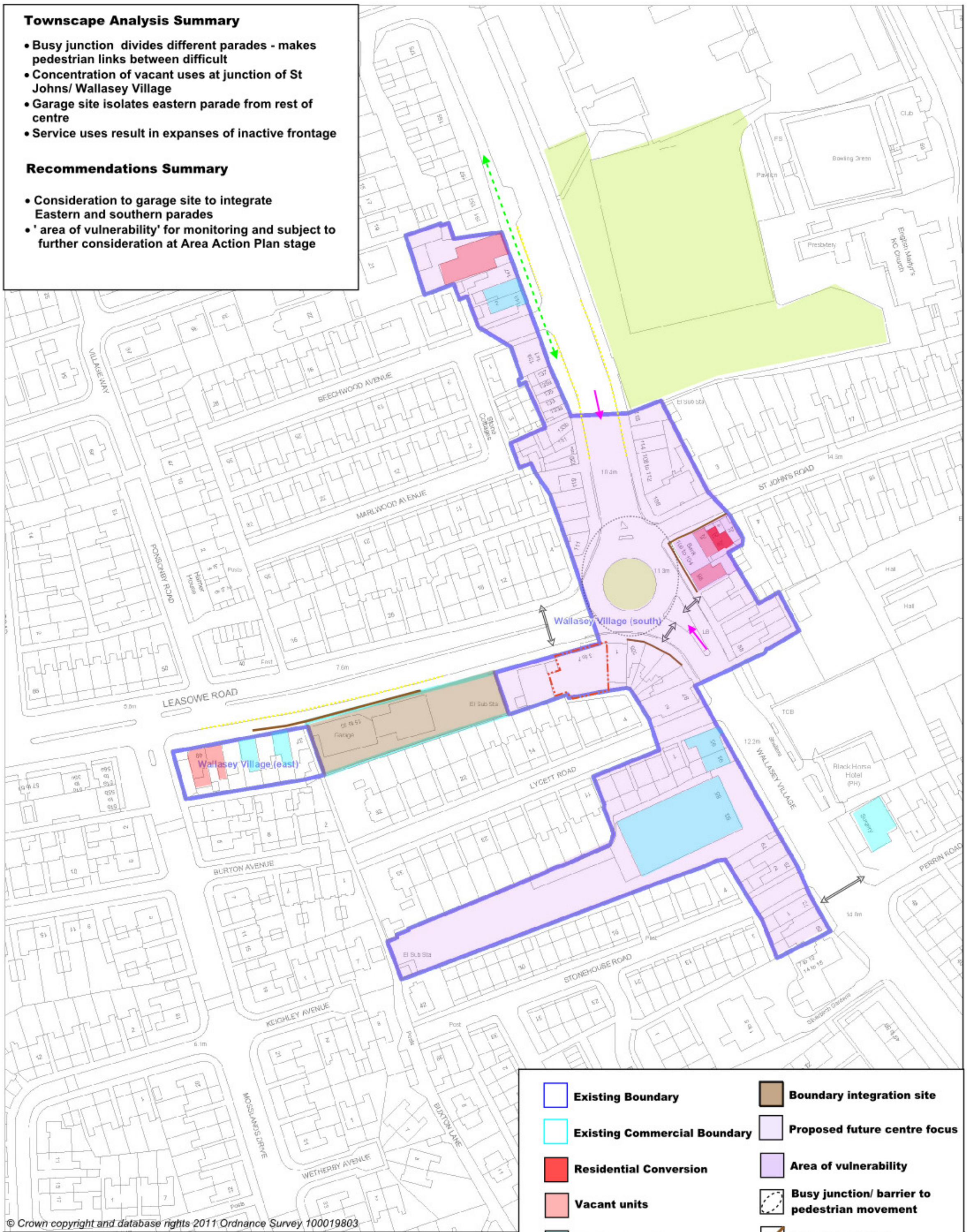
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Grove Road Accessibility to the centre by public transport is good A reasonable service and food and drink based offer A high density residential area Some recent redevelopment in the centre Leasowe Road The centre is anchored by the Co-op Secondary education college is located in close proximity Accessibility by public transport is good (Wallasey Village train station and bus stops)	Grove Road The centre is divided by a busy road and lacks linkage to other parts of lower Wallasey Village A large proportion of service sector uses which have inactive frontage Leasowe Road Very disjointed centre due to the roundabout and the Co-op store being located on the edge of the centre The centre has high volumes of traffic Poor pedestrian access around the centre A poor service offer in the centre
Opportunities Grove Road Current vacant former car sales Leasowe Road Expand the range of retailers in the area	**Threats** Grove Road Proliferation of non-retail uses Leasowe Road Growth of non-retail units and loss of convenience food anchor

Townscape Analysis Summary

- Busy junction divides different parades - makes pedestrian links between difficult
- Concentration of vacant uses at junction of St Johns/ Wallasey Village
- Garage site isolates eastern parade from rest of centre
- Service uses result in expanses of inactive frontage

Recommendations Summary

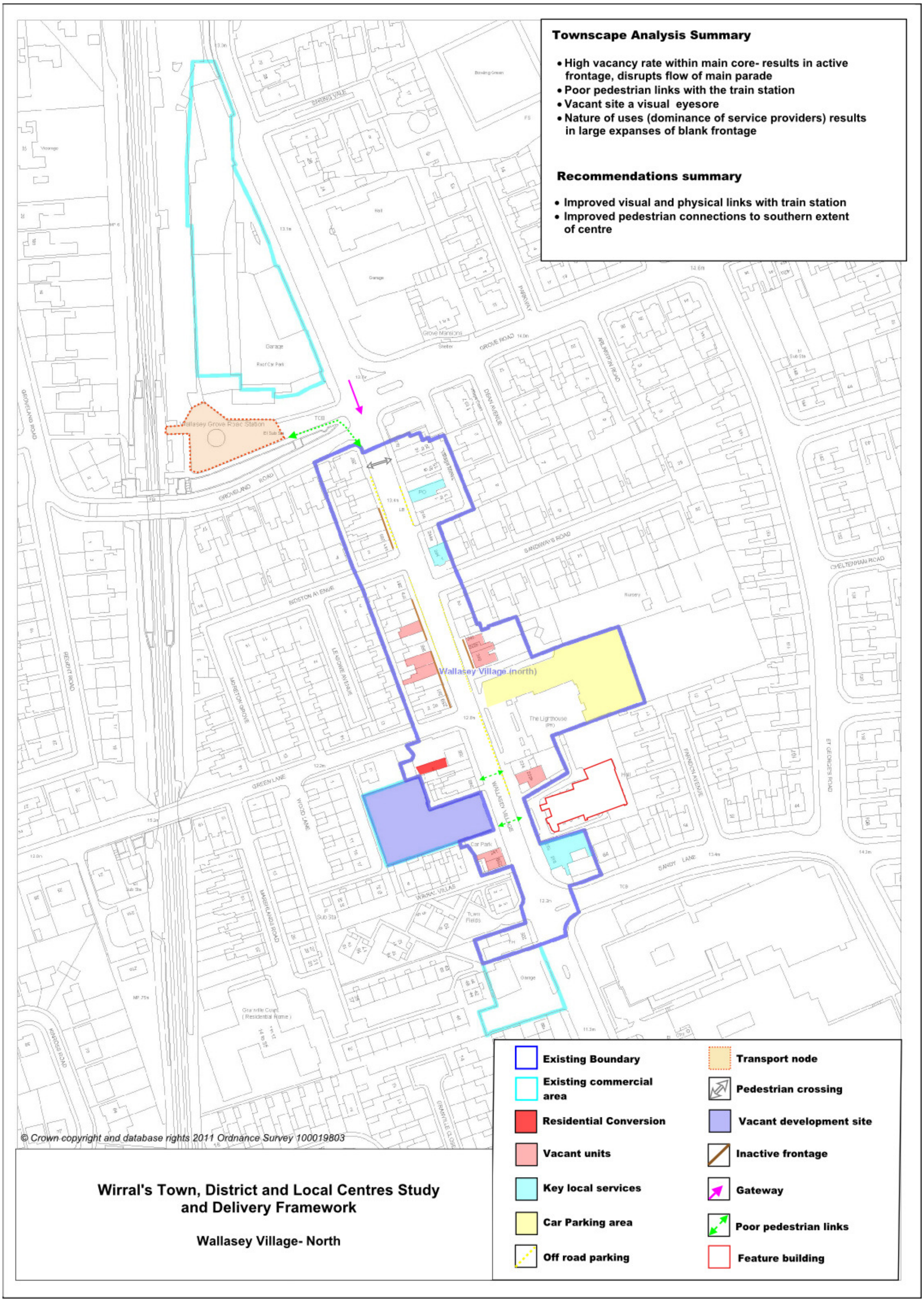
- Consideration to garage site to integrate Eastern and southern parades
- ' area of vulnerability' for monitoring and subject to further consideration at Area Action Plan stage



Existing Boundary	Boundary integration site
Existing Commercial Boundary	Proposed future centre focus
Residential Conversion	Area of vulnerability
Vacant units	Busy junction/ barrier to pedestrian movement
Key local services	Inactive frontage
Pedestrian crossing	Gateway
Off road parking	Poor pedestrian links
Landscaped area	Poor quality buildings

Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework

Wallasey Village- South


Townscape Analysis Summary
• High vacancy rate within main core- results in active frontage, disrupts flow of main parade
• Poor pedestrian links with the train station
• Vacant site a visual eyesore
• Nature of uses (dominance of service providers) results in large expanses of blank frontage
Recommendations summary
• Improved visual and physical links with train station
• Improved pedestrian connections to southern extent of centre
Wallasey Village (north)
The Lighthouse (PH)
GROVE ROAD
GROVELAND ROAD
SANDYWAYS ROAD
BIDSTON AVENUE
GREEN LANE
SANDY LANE
WALLASEY VILLAGE
© Crown copyright and database rights 2011 Ordnance Survey 100019803
Existing Boundary
Existing commercial area
Residential Conversion
Vacant units
Key local services
Car Parking area
Off road parking
Transport node
Pedestrian crossing
Vacant development site
Inactive frontage
Gateway
Poor pedestrian links
Feature building
Wirral's Town, District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework
Wallasey Village- North

Townscape Appraisal

Wallasey- Leasowe Road

The centre comprises a number of frontages divided by and set around a busy junction. The flow around the centre is disjointed primarily due to the dominance of vehicular movement within the area, the heavy traffic flow on routes through and the busy junction which makes pedestrian movement between the areas difficult. The Wallasey Road East area is isolated from the main centre area by the garage site which does not fall within the designated centre. This is an important site in integrating the eastern and southern parades. Overall the occupancy levels through out the centre are high but there is a concentration of vacant uses at the junction of St Johns/ Wallasey Village. There is a high proportion of service uses through out the centre which results in expanses of inactive frontage and poor quality shop fronts.

Wallasey – Grove Road

The centre is showing signs of decline with concentrations of vacant units within the central parade. The nature of uses also results in expanses of inactive frontages and disrupts the flow of movement within the main parade. The centre has a run down feel with obtrusive security measures contributing to this. The centre is within close proximity to the train station but the weak pedestrian linkages between mean its potential as a key asset to the centre is not fully realised.

Summary

Wallasey Village comprises two distinct clusters of activity. To some extent the clusters each function separately and both are located close to train stations. The surrounding population is flourishing. A large proportion of the population are within easy walking distance. It is easily accessible by public transport .The frontages are predominately service based however, the bank has been lost from the centre. Whilst there is a reasonable convenience offer, especially at the Leasowe Road end, comparison retail is more limited.

Options for Intervention

Early Interventions

- Design SPD for ‘town centres’ dealing with conversion of units, residential conversion of commercial premises, shop front, securing premises while both occupied and vacant, etc
- Work with traders organisation / Area Forum to improve the environment (Deep Clean)
- Work with traders / Area Forum to encourage improved appearance of the shop fronts and shutters – painting and maintenance (Empty Shops Fund)

Medium Term Interventions

- Potential boundary revision within ‘area of vulnerability'
- Improved visual and physical links with train station

Long Term Aspirations

- Improved visual and physical links with train station

6. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Overall summary of the state of the town centres

In terms of retail provision, the land use surveys suggest that many of the national trends highlighted in Section 3 of this study are evident within Wirral's town, district and local centres, although the pattern does vary across the Borough. For example Hoylake has retained a large number of independent retailers and has relatively few national multiples in the centre. Across the Borough, local grocery provision is increasingly focused on the convenience store and supermarket sectors, although there remain a number of butchers and greengrocers (in particular), some of which anecdotally attract custom from a wider catchment than the rest of the centre. On average however, only 10 per cent of units within a centre are given over to convenience retailing.

In relation to comparison retailing, the picture is mixed: a number of centres, for example Prenton (Woodchurch Road) have virtually no comparison retail offer, being focused on convenience and service uses; however some centres included specialist non-food shops which appear to serve a wider catchment. The progressive replacement of mid-market retailers with discounters is particularly evident in Liscard, but is also happening to a lesser extent in some of the Borough's smaller centres, along with the growth in the charity shop sector.

The service sector is now a very significant element, with the average percentage of units given over to service uses across all the centres studied being 50%. The food and drink sector is an important element in a number of centres such as Heswall, West Kirby, New Brighton and Hoylake. The loss of banking facilities (including cashpoints) is an issue in many centres.

The highest percentages of vacant shop units are generally found in the traditional local shopping centres in the east of the Borough - in some cases significantly above the study average of 12 per cent, with potentially limited prospects for re-use for retail purposes in some cases.

The analysis of demographics has highlighted considerable variation in the size and composition of the walk-in catchment populations surrounding the centres. For example, Irby has a relatively small catchment population characterised by families and working people, whilst Greasby's catchment population is considerably larger, consisting of a higher proportion of older people who are likely to have the time and resources to support their local centre.

The analysis from the maps has shown that the role of the areas will need to be considered further through the Action Plan process, with a view to proposing alternative uses that would compliment the remainder of the 'future centre focus area' and potential opportunities for contraction. Where areas of vulnerability have been identified many of the plans propose 'future centre focus areas' with a view to refocusing and concentrating the main retail function within a particular area. In other instances where it is clear that a particular block/s has lost its retail function and no longer contributes to the function of the centre it is proposed that the boundary is altered to exclude the area in question. At present the townscape plan recommendations are a basis for further areas of consideration and a number of policy interventions would need to be considered. The plans also identify sites that are vacant and potential opportunity sites, many of which are key assets to the centre or have the potential to provide greater integration to two parades or areas of a centre. Again this could guide development of the sites, at the Action Plan stage, in terms of the form, scale and use of the site to improve the performance of the centre and promote a more integrated layout.

As well as providing an understanding of the functional working of the centre the analysis also identifies many assets of the built and natural environment that contribute to its overall environmental quality and character. In this respect the townscape analysis identifies a number of physical features including buildings of character, important features acting as local 'landmarks', important views in or out of the centre, greenspaces within or adjacent to the centres which contribute to the environment, and areas of public realm in need of improvement. This information provides a more qualitative understanding of the key features and attributes of each centre and therefore strengths or opportunities to develop further proposals.

Overall, the updated survey work has shown that the broad pattern of the “health” of the Borough’s centres has shown some changes since the Roger Tym report. In broad terms the outcome of the assessment work is summarised below:

Healthiest centres	**Showing signs of weakness**	**Major intervention needed**
Heswall	Liscard	New Ferry
West Kirby	Bromborough Village	New Brighton (Seabank Road)
Upton Village	Moreton	Laird Street
Tranmere Urban Village (Old Chester Road)	Prenton (Woodchurch Road)	Seacombe (Poulton Road)
Oxton Village	Wallasey Village	
Greasby	Lower Bebington	
Eastham	Irby Village	
	Dacre Hill	
	Hoylake Town Centre	
	Borough Road	
	Victoria Road (New Brighton)	
	Claughton Village	

- The healthiest centres - suggested interventions relate to applying policies, for example regarding design of shop fronts, building on strengths through marketing, events etc.

- Centres showing some weaknesses – this includes issues such as the diversity of their retail offer, level of vacancy and other matters such as the quality of public realm or car parking. A range of measures have been identified, mostly small scale, which collectively could have a positive impact on the vitality and viability of the centre in question. Some boundary changes might be required in the longer term – with the potential for this to be examined through the action planning process.

- Centres requiring major intervention - as identified in the RTP report, the key to a sustainable future is an acceptance that a centre may be physically too big for its current and future role in the hierarchy of centres. In the case of New Ferry, Laird Street and Seacombe, significant changes to the boundaries of the centres may need to be contemplated as part of a process of refocusing the centres.

6.2 Identification of Issues and Proposals

The individual assessments and the review of policies and practices have resulted in the identification of issues and proposed actions that fall into two key areas:

- cross cutting issues that are common to all our town centres which can be addressed through a Borough wide approach;
- the requirement to develop detailed centre specific action plans based on the evidence base set out in this Framework and summarised in the table above.

Proposed actions to progress these two areas are set out below.

6.3 Settlement Area priorities

The Council's emerging Core Strategy Development Plan document identifies eight Settlement Areas, based on the main groups of settlements within the Borough.

Proposal: Preferred Option 2 in the Council's Core Strategy Preferred Options Report (November 2010) indicates that a series of Settlement Area Policies will be prepared for the Draft Core Strategy to set out a priorities for each area, including existing centres. These will enable the key land use implications and future priorities for the centres covered by this study to be reflected within the Core Strategy.

6.4 Potential restrictions on the number and distribution of non-retail uses in centres

There is evidence from the fieldwork and consultations that the number and concentration of non-retail uses in some centres can have a negative impact on the functioning of the centre. As discussed above in Section 4 it is possible to exert some control over the balance between retail and other uses in a centre through planning restrictions.

Proposal: Based on our assessment a policy approach restricting the proportion and distribution of non-retail uses within the whole centre would be potentially appropriate for the majority of the centres featured in this study. Larger centres - Liscard, Moreton, West Kirby, Hoylake, Heswall, Bromborough Village would require additional work to identify whether restrictions should be applied to specified frontages and to which Use Classes any restrictions should apply.

This detailed work could be done as part of the action planning process for each centre using the "proposed centre focus" areas identified on the urban design analysis maps as a starting point and including an assessment of which Uses Classes should be addressed by the policy.

Consideration will be given as to how such a policy might be introduced – perhaps by way of an "enabling" policy or policies in the Core Strategy (including within the individual Settlement Area Policies) or other Development Plan Document, backed up by a Supplementary Planning Document(s).

6.5 Design and appearance of town centres including design of shop fronts and conversions of shop units to residential use.

It has been evident from the fieldwork that there is considerable variation in the quality of design of shop fronts and also the quality of conversion of former shop units to residential uses. Design quality is an important contribution to the overall public realm and 'feel' of a centre, and the need for overarching guidance on the design of shop fronts (in both traditional and contemporary buildings) would contribute to achieving this.

Proposal: Currently UDP Policy SH8 sets out criteria for assessing proposals which include the provision of shop fronts (to be read alongside Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 43 aimed at traditional shop units). UDP Policy SH5 sets out the criteria for the ground floor conversion of shop units to residential uses in small shopping centres and parades in Primarily Residential Areas but does not include design criteria. Coupled with an 'enabling' policy in the Core Strategy Development Plan Document it is proposed that this existing policy guidance could be enhanced by a wider ranging Supplementary Planning Document.

6.6 Utilisation of upper floor uses in centres

As part of the land use survey undertaken for each centre, an attempt to classify the use of upper floors above shops was undertaken. The survey work suggests a mixed picture in relation to upper floor uses in the centres including residential, storage and business uses. Few upper floors are showing obvious signs of disuse or decay within the shopping centres considered in this study, with the exception of New Ferry, Seacombe and Laird Street – where the upper floor is often owned or rented by the ground floor occupier but remains unused.

Proposal: The conversion of part of a building in use for Class A1 (shops) or Class A2 (financial and professional) purposes to a single flat does not require planning permission and current UDP Policy SH7 permits the conversion of upper floors above shops for office uses or for residential uses not covered by permitted development rights. It is therefore proposed that further work takes place with the Council's Empty Property Team to identify the potential to make better use of upper floors in the centres.

However, while ground floor occupiers have been asked where possible for information on upper floor uses, it is suggested that as part of the action planning process, more detailed verification of the extent of upper floor uses for each centre is undertaken, drawing on additional data sources, such as the Valuation Office to establish the level of use (or under-use) in more detail.

6.7 Town/local centre boundary changes on future revisions to the Proposals Map

The assessment and survey work identified that a number of centres had boundaries that extended beyond their current retail heart and that the outer edges of these boundaries were characterised by vacant units and/ or residential conversions. This would suggest that some centres may be physically too big for their current and future role and that changes to the boundaries of the centres may need to be considered in order to promote and secure a long term viable future for them. This would also reflect the findings set out in Section 3 of this Study that changes in consumer behaviour has led to significant overcapacity within local centres.

Proposal: Although not part of the Core Strategy, the follow-on Site Allocations Development Plan Document is likely to include a Proposals Map on which revised centre boundaries can be defined. The urban design maps in this study provide a basis for this work through their identification of areas of vulnerability and the proposed "future centre focus". In addition the potential over supply of local shopping centres may require a review of the status of some smaller centres.

6.8 Business Rates

Concern was expressed by some consultees about the levels of business rates and the impact these had on the viability of their business. There are a number of rate relief schemes in place and proposed changes to the system are being promoted by the Government through the Localism Bill.

Proposal: The impact of any proposed changes being put forward through the Localism Bill will need to be fully assessed. However, there are currently a number of rate relief schemes in place (see Section 4) and there is potential scope to further raise awareness and increase take up of these schemes, particularly the extended small business relief scheme, through a range of Council communications.

6.9 Car parking

Issues around car parking were raised by a number of trader groups and consultees. Concerns related to a perceived lack of parking within the centre, the control of on-street parking (particularly in relation to short-stay parking to facilitate convenience shopping trips) and the level of car parking charges. In respect of the latter issue, the consultation work was largely completed by the time the "free after three" initiative was introduced. This allows free parking after 3.00pm and applies to both on- and off-street pay and display car parking.

Proposal: Assessment of the impact of the "free after three" initiative will inform future policy development in respect of car parking. In addition traffic management information can inform the issue of on-street parking and it is proposed that, where appropriate, options for how concerns can be addressed can be considered by traders through the action plan process, in conjunction with the Council's Traffic Management Team.

6.10 Support for Traders Groups – Town Centre Traders' Toolkit

A key finding of the town centre assessments has been the positive role that local trader organisations can play in supporting and promoting the sustainability of local shopping centres. Whether this is through the marketing of a centre as having a distinctive offer or role, or through increasing activity by holding events and displays, trader groups can add value to the activities of individual businesses and shops. Some centres have well-established traders groups which are providing local retail businesses with a common voice in dealings with the Council and other stakeholders. Elsewhere there are some centres where interest was expressed in setting up a group, but further support and guidance was potentially needed to make this happen.

Proposal: It is therefore proposed that the setting up of trader groups should be encouraged and supported through the development of a Town Centre Traders' 'Toolkit'. The "Toolkit" could include a number of elements:

- Facilitating initial meetings of traders to ascertain interest in setting up a traders group, identifying resources etc
- Information on funding sources
- Information on future events promoted by the destination marketing team
- Access to best practice advice through the Council's membership of the association of town centre management
- Signposting key contacts within the Council – particularly linkage to related activity:
    - The Empty Shops Fund. Each of the Area Forums has been allocated resources for 2011/12 to provide financial help to re-open or re-use empty shops in order to increase the vitality of a local shopping centre and to encourage more people to visit the centre.
    - Deep Clean / Refurbishment work – a focused programme of street cleansing including a deep clean, repairs and environmental enhancements is taking place within the centres in consultation with local traders and Area Forums.

6.11 Development of Action Plans

The individual town centre assessments have resulted in information for each town centre including:

- maps setting out the key characteristics of each centre including the composition of retail and other shop uses , vacancy rates, land use change etc;
- maps and diagrams illustrating the accessibility of the centres;
- maps showing an initial urban design/ environmental quality assessment;
- a SWOT analysis and consultation results for each centre

- an economic profile of each centre
- options for intervention – short, medium and long term proposals.

Proposal: This information provides a firm evidence base for the development of specific action plans for each centre. These plans will link to the emerging LDF Core Strategy as well as to any relevant Neighbourhood Development Plans and/or Area Forum Neighbourhood Plans. These action plans would address in more detail issues such as:

- Clustering of non-retail uses and the appropriate policy response;
- Detailed assessment of upper floor uses;
- Detailed work on scope for contraction (or expansion) of the centres and how this would be managed;
- Potential detailed environmental improvements;
- Traffic management and parking;
- Centre-specific design and other guidance;
- Options for the local marketing of the centre and linkage to any Borough wide initiatives. This reflects the findings of Section 3 of this study which outlines the continued shopper interest in buying locally produced food.

The development of these detailed action plans will allow traders, residents and agencies to work together to identify options which they could progress through partnership working. It will be critical for local traders, businesses, residents and relevant partners to be fully involved in this process as many of the solutions will be driven by the private sector. It would therefore be expected that the Action Plans would reflect local circumstances and could range from plans that included long term aspirations to plans that addressed a single short term issue and were taken forward by Traders on a task and finish basis.