

2021-
2026

Biddulph Town Council Regeneration Plan





Regeneration Plan

WRITTEN BY:

Mrs Sarah Haydon, Chief Officer

CREATED:

May 2021

REVIEW DATE:

May 2026

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 Biddulph Town Council is aspirational in its approach to town centre regeneration. The purpose of this document is to provide a vision for the town centre, which will guide the activity of the Council over the next five years.

1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan (due to be adopted in 2022) identifies the vision for the town as:

The Garden Town of Staffordshire is recognised as such by all who live in, work in or visit our parish. It is seen to have a rich history and positive future where the wellbeing and prosperity of all is nurtured and valued. Development is planned for the benefit of the community; particularly in terms of design, infrastructure, sustainability and green spaces.

This Regeneration Plan supports the vision through enhancements to the economic opportunities available within the town.

1.3 The Town Council has set aside funding for capital projects and other improvements in the town and hopes to encourage investment into the town centre by landowners, investors, developers and other public sector bodies.

1.4 The development of this document take place at a time when there is an emphasis on actions that will make a positive impact on climate change. In addition, in the post-pandemic world, there is a renewed focus on ‘quality of life’ and on local people being empowered to make decisions about their towns. The Town Council is deeply committed to these ideals, which are fundamental to the improvements identified below.

1.5 As the country emerges from a period of uncertainty, there is a renewed focus on localism, both locally and nationally. The Town Council identifies that more people working at home will have an impact on the commercial property sector. Tourism will also become more important, as people seek activities that are more local to them and their families.

OVERVIEW OF THE TOWN- WHERE ARE WE NOW?

2.1 There have been settlements in and around the town for several hundred years, but the town of Biddulph was created in 1894, made up of seven small communities– Biddulph, Gillow Heath, Knypersley, Biddulph Moor, Bradley Green, Brown Lees and Biddulph Park. Today, the town includes a range of businesses from light industrial to retail, commercial and service sector.

2.2 The town centre is set in the valley between Biddulph Moor and Mow Cop and boasts spectacular scenery on all sides. Biddulph is the ‘gateway’ town to Cheshire and Stoke-on-Trent. The town became known as the ‘Garden Town of Staffordshire’ because of the strong voluntary sector presence of ‘Biddulph in Bloom’ and the spectacular National Trust Biddulph Grange Gardens.



Photo courtesy of Ian Stanway



Photo courtesy of Judie Tingle

2.3 As part of the Neighbourhood Plan development, community engagement highlighted the aspiration to maintain and support the town centre, including promoting the re-use of vacant units and buildings, promoting the re-use of

heritage assets and ensuring the suitable future and diversity of this rural garden town. In addition, the following non-planning issues were identified:

- Consider pedestrianisation of the Town Centre or a 'Flexible event space' following further consultation;
- Retain visitors from Biddulph Grange, attracting them into the town;
- Promote tourism opportunities;
- Improve Cycling provision in the town;
- Improve bus provision and movement around the town;
- Assess appropriate parking solutions and use of highways;
- Prioritise repairs to pavements;
- Promote festivals and community events;
- Work with utility companies to support 'pop-up' units on short term rents;
- Promote Biddulph Town Hall as a community asset, securing its long-term future and viability.

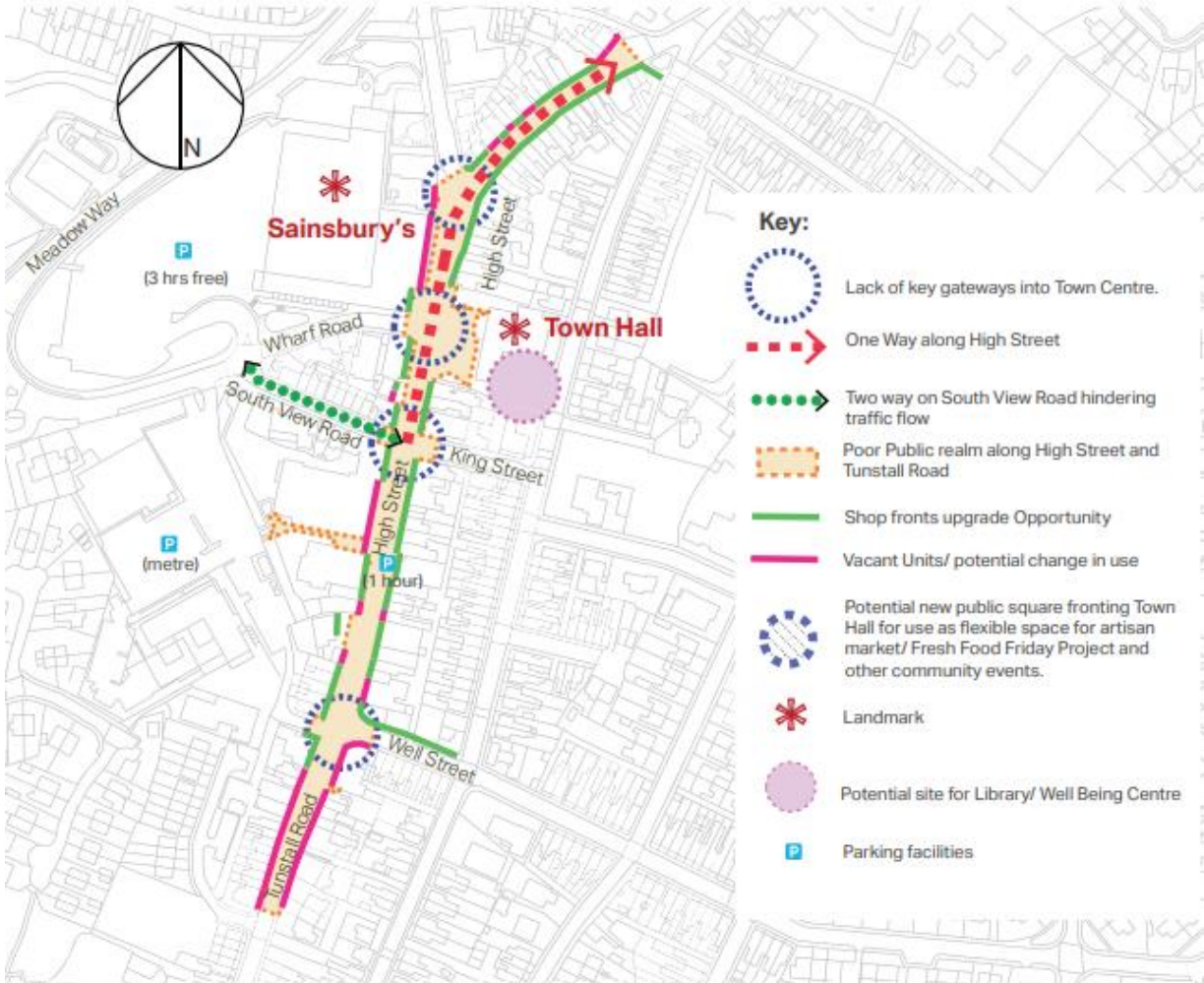
These aspirations form the starting point for this Regeneration Plan, which aims to provide further detail about how these priorities will be achieved.

2.4 As part of the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Working Group identified the need to develop a Neighbourhood Development Order. The Order is a response to the analysis of outcomes from community engagement and gathering of local evidence; the intention is to support the regeneration and economic development of Biddulph Town Centre. This includes supporting enterprise and improving the environment of the town. The document focuses on improvements to shop frontages.

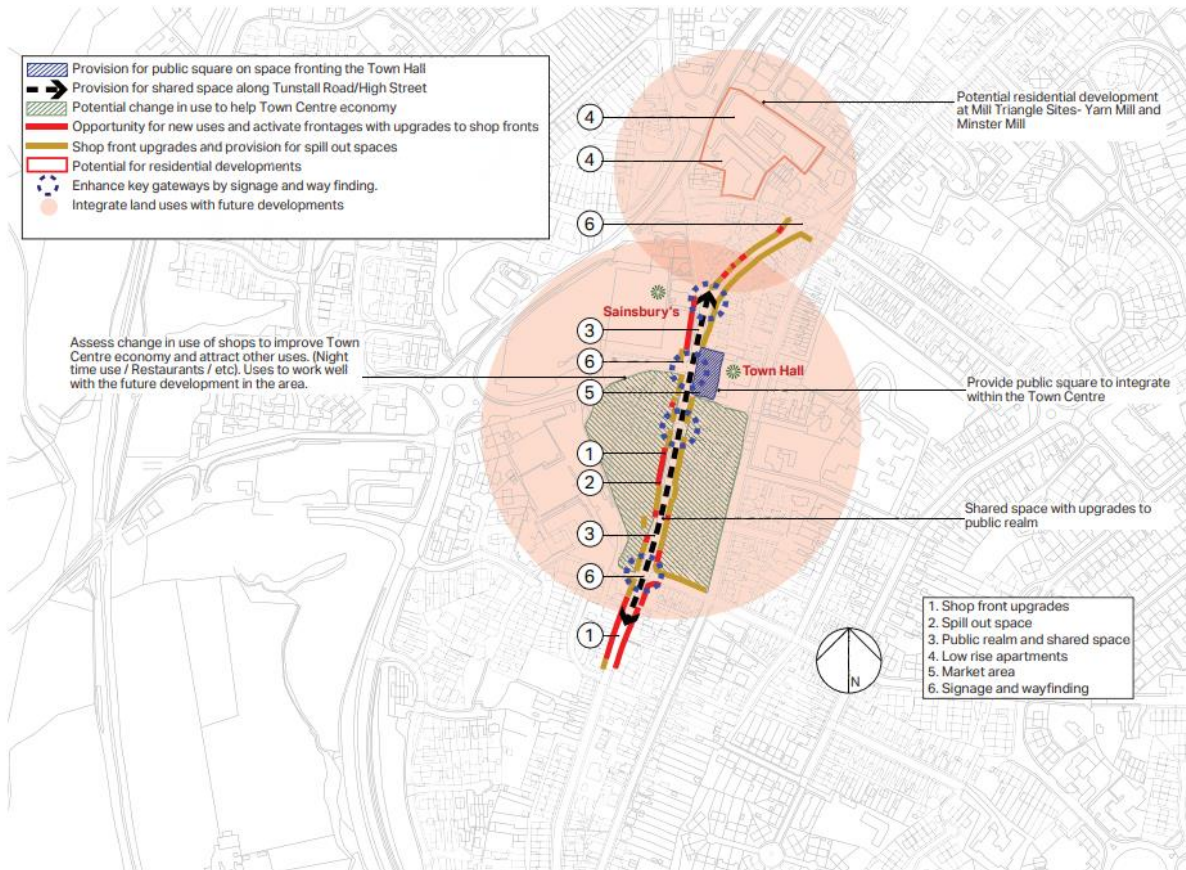
2.5 The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group commissioned consultants AECOM to create a masterplan for the town centre. This identified the following land uses:



Analysis led to identification of the following issues:



Which led to the following draft framework plan:



2.6 There has been a significant amount of work within the town centre over the past 20 years. Prior to that, the town lacked an identity, had a large number of derelict and boarded up shops and areas; levels of deprivation were high and the town seemed to lack any real character. These photographs were taken at the start of the Biddulph in Bloom project:





Biddulph is now a much different place. A new supermarket, health centre and inner relief road provided investment and accessibility improvements within the town centre. However, there is still work to do in order to ensure that the town can be sustainable in the future.

2.7 An analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats facing the town and the Town Council identified the following:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES- OUR LIMITATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambitious Town Council with a strong reputation both locally and regionally • Effective partnership working with proactive voluntary sector • Drive to enhance the voluntary and community sector to ensure sustainability • Strong evidence base with additional emerging data and options appraisals • Safe and welcoming town centre and people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of engagement and structure to manage regeneration at a town level. Improved communication is necessary. • Some pots of funding are not available to town and parish councils, but must be accessed by principal authorities • Need to develop a clear idea about what the 'town type' is: market town, floral town, tourist destination, etc.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment from the Town Council; opportunities of match funding. • Development of 'shovel ready' projects • Potential to improve and enhance the night time economy • Strong brand- 'Garden Town of Staffordshire'; engenders pride, commitment and attachment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding and lack of investment in the town as a result of not being 'chosen' by the principal authorities or by lack of investment available from central government.

OUR APPROACH TO REGENERATION

3.1 Biddulph Town Council is proactive, innovative and aspirational, but we know our limitations. The Town Council is not a major land owner, nor do we have statutory powers that can enforce or implement certain improvements. However, the Town Council is a good partner. Funding is available for capital improvements; staff and Councillors have the energy and enthusiasm to complete 'leg work' within the town, to research issues and to canvas public opinion. We are clear about the improvements needed within the town, and work collaboratively within the town with partners to implement these enhancements.

3.2 There is a lack of detailed strategic planning that focusses on Biddulph as a town. The Neighbourhood Plan has started to draw together an evidence base. In addition, some priorities are identified in The Growth Strategy for Staffordshire Moorlands in relation to wider strategic objectives; this document also identifies that Biddulph is part of the South Cheshire growth region. The Town Council has taken the decision to lead on this process by working to really understand the town and the requirements of the community; engagement with businesses and other partners is fundamental to ensuring 'buy-in'.

3.3 Through understanding 'place' methodology, the Town Council has identified that Biddulph is a 'Multifunctional town'. There is relatively flat footfall throughout the year, the retail offer, opening times, events, services and other uses are focussed on the local community. It is important that we understand what we are, in order to have a well-defined vision for the future.

3.4 It is clear that there is real potential for investors in Biddulph. The town is surrounded by beautiful scenery, is accessible for those who want to commute into Staffordshire and Cheshire and the cities beyond those areas. There is a concentration of bespoke shops, good parking and an attractive appearance as a result of temporary and permanent features. Property is increasingly sought after, both from a rental and sales perspective. Now is the time to focus funding and energy on further improvements, to ensure sustainability in the longer term.

OUR PRIORITIES

4.1 The priorities identified below are underpinned by those listed in the Neighbourhood Plan. Identifying these key actions will focus our resources for the next five years.

NURTURING OUR GREEN SPACES AND ENHANCING OUR COMMUNITY ASSETS

We will:

- Embrace Biddulph's environmental and wildlife assets and tackle climate change. We will enhance open spaces, bringing biodiversity and colour into the town centre. An Environment and Climate Change Working Group has an action plan to drive forward relevant initiatives.
- Ensure that enhancements to public realm within the town centre will improve links into surrounding green spaces.
- We will create safe links and spaces within the town, focusing on the needs of cyclists and walkers in the area.
- We will engage with national projects such as the Refill scheme, to make our town more attractive to visitors and environmentally friendly. We are clear that all small changes make a difference in tackling climate change.
- Establish a 'local listing' process that takes into consideration our community assets and heritage features. We will work to enhance, restore and improve these assets, where possible. This process will recognise the importance of retention, refurbishment or re-purposing of existing buildings to introduce new temporary and permanent uses to the town centre.

SUPPORTING NEW AND EXISTING COMMUNITIES

We will:

- Improve community facilities, ensuring accessibility, flexibility and economically viable opportunities for communities. Our focus will be on Biddulph Town Hall, Biddulph Grange Country Park Visitor Centre and the public convenience buildings within the town centre, ensuring they have a clear role.
- Ensure that the places our residents live are vibrant and that vacant shops and disused buildings are minimised.

- Work with creative and artistic communities to support and showcase the incredible talent within our community, promoting festivals and community events.
- Be business-friendly. We will investigate: digital connectivity/ wifi hotspots; Business Improvement Districts; 'Buy Local' schemes; options for embryo and pop-up businesses; and, lobby to provide support with business rates.
- Work to establish a traders forum. We appreciate that business owners in the town have a wealth of valuable experience to support these proposals.
- Invest in footfall analysis to ensure we have a clear idea of town centre usage. This information will be supplemented by enhanced signage and support for traders. The aim will be to understand the anchors and enhance the 'offer' available to visitors. We will adopt a 'people first' approach, improving the flow and place marketing.

STRENGTHENING THE TOWN CENTRE AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY WITH PHYSICAL ENHANCEMENTS

We will:

- Consider pedestrianisation of the town centre and/ or a 'flexible event space' following further consultation. This will necessitate the development of town centre improvement programmes that attract grant funding.
- Improve public realm, making the town centre attractive and accessible for visitors. This will involve an assessment of appropriate parking solutions, the use of highways and the prioritisation of repairs to pavements. We will work with Amey and Staffordshire County Council to identify public realm improvements that are both easily achievable and aspirational.
- Consider improvements to transport and infrastructure within the town centre, focusing on bus and taxi services. The aim is to reduce the dominance of vehicular traffic and create a cleaner, greener and healthier town centre. This will improve cycling provision

ENCOURAGING TOURISM

We will:

- Create opportunities for attractions to promote their offer within Biddulph Town Hall.
- Provide incentives for shoppers to come into the town centre.
- Endeavour to retain visitors from Biddulph Grange, attracting them into the town.

INTEGRATING WELLBEING INTO ALL WE DO

The Town Council will identify opportunities to enhance physical, mental, emotional and social health factors. This will include:

- Enhancements to cycling provision within the town.
- Opportunities to engage in art and cultural activities.
- The installation of a Changing Places facility within the town centre.
- Commencement of phase 2 of the Station Road community garden.
- Opportunities to purchase fresh seasonal food through markets and events, which also promote existing town centre traders.

FUTURE INVESTMENT

5.1 With a focus on the priorities identified above, the Town Council will seek appropriate funding sources for match-funding initiatives. We will continue to identify local and national projects for grant funding.

DELIVERY

6.1 The Town Council will consider this Plan on an annual basis and complete a full review after five years.

6.2 We will develop a suite of measures that will help to identify improvements. These may include benchmarking with other towns, analysis of footfall, empty properties, community events, etc.