



Warrington Town Centre Health Check Assessment

Centre Overview

Warrington town centre is the principal centre in Warrington Borough and provides the main hub of retail and service uses. The Warrington Local Plan explains that Warrington town centre is a sub-regional centre which serves the Borough and surrounding area. The catchment of Warrington in the wider north west region is influenced by the close proximity of the regional centres of Manchester, Liverpool and Chester.

The main focus of retailing in Warrington is the Golden Square Shopping Centre which is located in the north west of the town centre. Golden Square provides a modern, purpose-built, mainly indoor shopping centre which was redeveloped in 2007 to provide an extended and improved shopping environment. Additional retail and service units are located along the more traditional streets in the town centre such as Bridge Street, Sankey Street, Buttermarket Street and Horsemarket Street (which all converge at Market Gate). Warrington's Market Hall is located in the south east part of the town centre. Cockhedge Shopping Centre is located in an edge of centre position to the north east of Warrington town centre. The shopping centre comprises an indoor shopping parade and external retail warehousing units.

Although the core of the shopping centre, at Golden Square, is well occupied, the town centre as a whole suffers from high vacancy rates. However, there are plans in place to redevelop parts of the town centre which would benefit from regeneration, including Bridge Street where outline planning permission (reference 2014/24473) has been granted for a mixed use development.

The retail and service uses present in the centre occupy a variety of properties, with a range of unit sizes and scales present in the town centre. Several national multiple operators are accommodated in the town centre, the majority of which are located in Golden Square, including the anchor Debenhams store. Independent retailers generally occupy units along the traditional shopping streets.

As Experian's latest Goad survey of the centre was completed in February 2014, a site visit of Warrington town centre has been undertaken to update the health check analysis to ensure it is compiled using the most up-to-date diversity of use and floorspace figures. This information has then been used to compare the relevant data with the national average figures and, where necessary, to identify any potential issues with the centre. The survey identified that there was a total of 523 units within Goad's defined town centre boundary, comprising a total gross floorspace of 135,310 sq.m. We have utilised the centre boundary as identified by Goad for our analysis in order to consider an extensive area and to allow a direct comparison with the national average figures (which are calculated using Goad's assessment of the boundary of each centre).

The health check assessment considers any changes that have occurred since the Council produced the Town Centre Health Check for Warrington in 2012.

Warrington Town Centre

Photographs of Warrington Town Centre (November 2014)



Photograph (top left): Golden Square Shopping Centre

Photograph (top centre): Bridge Street, Warrington

Photograph (top right): Market Gate, Warrington

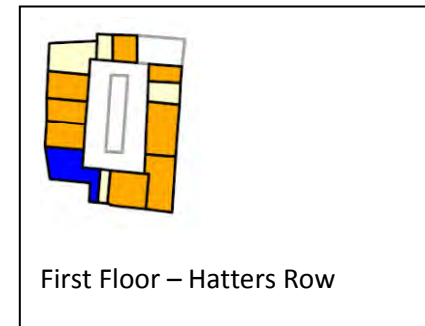
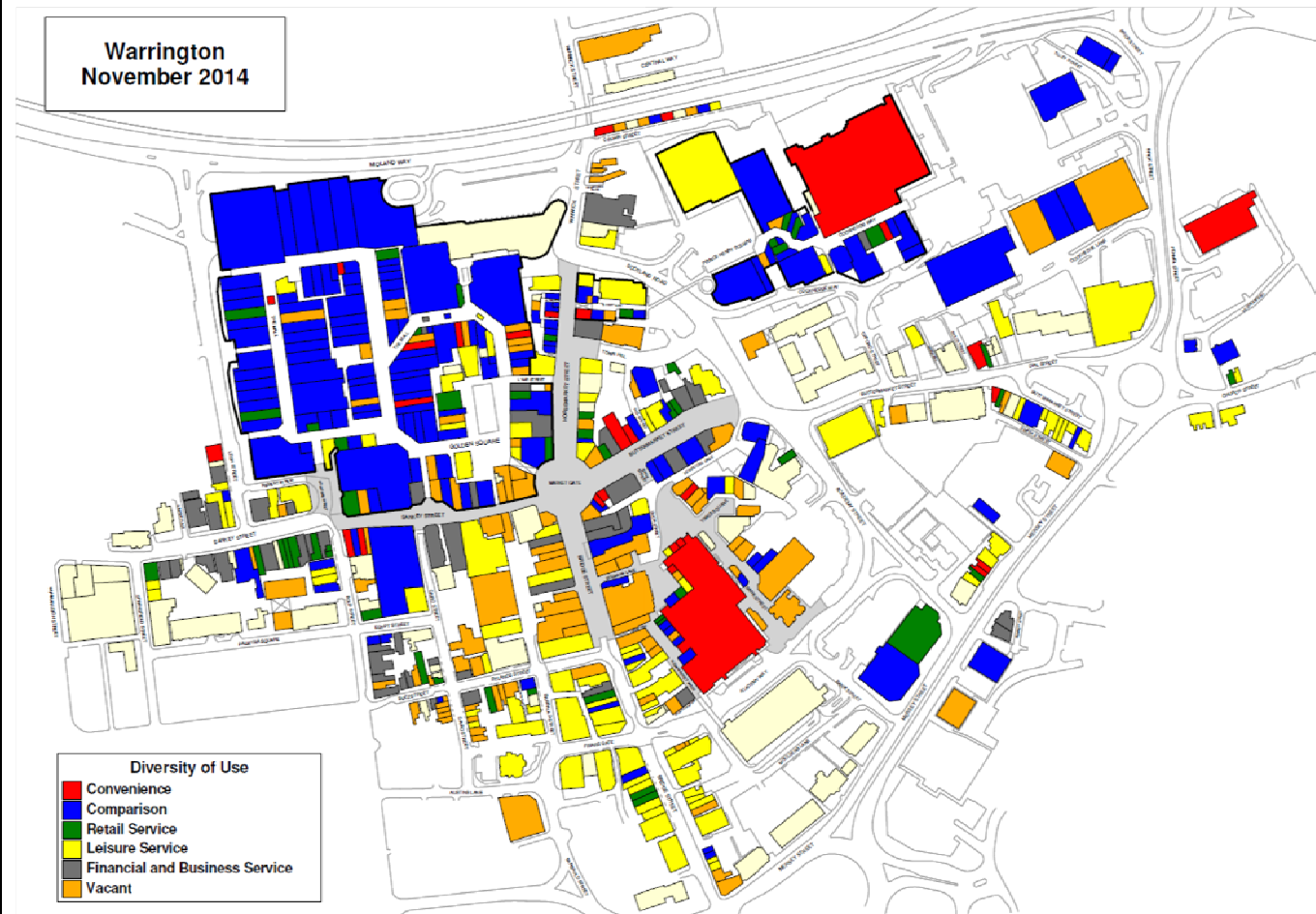
Photograph (bottom left): Warrington Market

Photograph (bottom centre): Old Market at Golden Square Shopping Centre

Photograph (bottom right): Cockhedge Shopping Centre

Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Diversity of Uses in Warrington Town Centre (November 2014)



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Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Table 1: Previous Units in Warrington town centre (2011)

Existing Number of Units			
	No.	Warrington town centre	UK
Convenience	32	10.0%	8.5%
Comparison	179	56.7%	33.5%
Service	43	13.6%	46.0%
Market	1	0.3%	-
Vacant	61	19.3%	11.7%
Total	316	100.0%	100%

Source: Town Centre Health Check 2012 (Warrington Borough Council)

UK average from the Experian Goad Category Report (June 2011, as mid-year)

Town centre boundary broadly comparable to the Experian GOAD town centre boundary

Table 2: Previous Floorspace in Warrington town centre (2011)

Existing Floorspace			
	Sq.m	Warrington town centre	UK
Convenience	11,986	13.3%	14.3%
Comparison	59,745	66.4%	37.0%
Service	2,961	3.3%	38.2%
Market	5,994	6.7%	-
Vacant	9,319	10.4%	9.8%
Total	90,005	100.0%	100%

Source: Town Centre Health Check 2012 (Warrington Borough Council)

UK average from the Experian Goad Category Report (June 2011, as mid-year)

Town centre boundary broadly comparable to the Experian GOAD town centre boundary

Table 3: Existing Number of Units in Warrington town centre (November 2014)

Existing Number of Units			
	No.	Warrington town centre	UK
Convenience	32	6.2%	8.4%
Comparison	158	30.7%	32.6%
Retail Service	58	11.3%	14.1%
Leisure Service	100	19.4%	22.3%
Financial and Business Service	46	8.9%	10.9%
Vacant	121	23.5%	11.4%
Total	515	100.0%	100%

Source: Site Survey & Experian Goad Data – February 2014 and UK average from the

Experian Goad Category Report (September 2014)

Based on the Experian Goad town centre boundary

Table 4: Existing Floorspace in Warrington town centre (November 2014)

Existing Floorspace			
	Sq.m	Warrington town centre	UK
Convenience	16,850	12.5%	15.0%
Comparison	55,320	41.2%	36.2%
Retail Service	6,810	5.1%	7.4%
Leisure Service	23,410	17.4%	23.2%
Financial and Business Service	8,910	6.6%	8.2%
Vacant	23,020	17.1%	9.3%
Total	134,320	100.0%	100%

Source: Site Survey & Experian Goad Data – February 2014 and UK average from the

Experian Goad Category Report (September 2014)

Based on the Experian Goad town centre boundary

The methodology used to determine the diversity of main town centre uses by Warrington Borough Council in producing the Town Centre Health Check 2012 varies somewhat to the methodology used by WYG which uses the Goad town centre boundary and Goad Category Report to determine the diversity of use. Any changes in respect of diversity of use over time should be viewed in this context.



Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Convenience Good Units

Warrington town centre is slightly underrepresented in terms of convenience goods when compared to the national average figure. However, this is to be expected given the centre's role in providing the principal comparison goods destination in the Borough. The proportion of convenience goods units (6.1%) and floorspace (12.5%) in the town centre falls slightly below the respective national average figures (which are 8.4% and 12.5% respectively). Notwithstanding this, there is a reasonable range of convenience goods uses present in the centre including supermarkets, bakers and confectioners, butchers, convenience stores, frozen food stores, a grocer and off licences. The largest supermarket present in Warrington is the Asda store (6,570 sq.m) at the Cockhedge Shopping Centre. A Lidl store is also present in Warrington at Fennel Street Retail Park. Both stores occupy edge-of-centre positions in accordance with the NPPF definition. There is a mix of both national multiple and independent convenience goods operators in the town centre. The majority of national multiple operators are present in Golden Square Shopping Centre, including Greggs, Thorntons, Millies Cookies, Iceland, Holland and Barrett and Timpsons. Independent operators are distributed throughout the town centre including on Sankey Street, Buttermarket Street, Mersey Street and at the Market Hall. There are 32 convenience goods units in the centre in total, which provide 16,850 sq.m gross floorspace.

When comparing the existing proportion of convenience goods unit and floorspace present in Warrington town centre to the amount of convenience units and floorspace recorded as part of the Warrington Town Centre Health Check 2012, it appears that convenience goods provision in the town centre has remained stable since 2012.

Comparison Good Units

Warrington town centre provides a good range of comparison goods units. Although the proportion of units in the town centre (30.2%) is slightly below the national average figure, the proportion of comparison goods floorspace (40.9%) is greater than the national average (36.2%). The majority of comparison goods units are present in the Golden Square Shopping Centre. It is considered that the comparison goods offer in Warrington has improved since the redevelopment of Golden Square as the redeveloped shopping centre provides a modern and comfortable shopping environment. The majority (54.0%) of the comparison goods units in Warrington town centre are occupied by national multiple operators, including Boots, BHS, Next, Primark and TK Maxx. The largest comparison goods units in the town centre are Debenhams (3,060 sq.m gross) and Marks and Spencers (2,290 sq.m gross) at Golden Square and Argos (2,480 sq.m gross) at Cockhedge Shopping Centre. There are also a range of independent retailers present in the town centre; the majority of which are located in secondary town centre areas such as on Buttermarket Street, Hatters Row, Horsemarket Street and in the Market Hall. In total there are 158 comparison goods units in the centre, providing 55,320 sq.m gross floorspace.

When comparing the existing comparison goods units and floorspace in Warrington town centre to the amount of comparison goods units and floorspace recorded



as part of the Warrington Town Centre Health Check (2012), it appears that the amount of comparison goods floorspace in the town centre may have reduced slightly in recent years. Notwithstanding this, the proportion of comparison goods floorspace in the town centre remains higher than the national average and there is a good range of comparison goods stores present in the town centre.

Retail Services

Warrington town centre is slightly underrepresented in relation to retail service units when compared to the national average figures. The majority (64.0%) of retail service units present in the centre are occupied by health and beauty uses, including hairdressers and beauty salons. Other retail service units present in the town centre include seven opticians, four travel agents and the Post Office. The retail service units are distributed throughout the town centre rather than being concentrated in a particular area. In total there are 58 retail service units present in Warrington town centre which provide 6,810 sq.m gross floorspace.

As the Warrington Town Centre Health Check (2012) recorded all service units as one category, it is not possible to directly compare how the representation of retail service uses in Warrington town centre has altered since 2012. Notwithstanding this, it appears that overall the proportion of service units and floorspace in the town centre has improved since the previous health check assessments were undertaken in 2012.

Leisure Services

There are 100 leisure service units present in Warrington town centre which provide 23,410 sq.m gross floorspace. The town centre is slightly underrepresented in terms of leisure services in accordance with the GOAD town centre boundary, as the proportion of units (19.1%) and floorspace (17.3%) is slightly below the respective national average levels (which are 22.3% and 23.2% respectively). In terms of the type of leisure service units present in Warrington town centre, the sector is dominated by take aways (25 units), public houses (19 units) and bars (15 units). Although the Pyramid and Parr Hall cultural venues are located within the south western part of the Local Plan town centre boundary, these uses lie outside the GOAD town centre boundary and therefore are not considered as part of the diversity of use assessment. There is no cinema currently present in the town centre, however a cinema will be delivered as part of the Bridge Street redevelopment proposals. The majority of leisure service units in the town centre are occupied by independent operators, however there are a limited number of national multiple operators including Ask, Costa, McDonalds, Nandos and Subway.

The Warrington Town Centre Health Check (2012) concluded that the range of leisure service units in Warrington at that time was limited, although it was acknowledged that the evening economy had improved slightly since the introduction of two national restaurant chains in the town centre and an indoor roller rink. The town centre continues to be under-represented in terms of leisure service floorspace, however the amount of leisure service units present in the town centre has increased since 2012.

Financial and Business Services

The proportion of financial and business service units (10.3%) and floorspace (7.3%) is comparable to, although slightly below, the respective national average



figures (which are 10.9% and 8.2%). Therefore, it is considered that the town centre is reasonably well represented in relation to this sector. Of the 54 financial and business service units present in the town centre, 18 are occupied by retail banks, eight are occupied by property services and eight are occupied by employment and careers uses. Although there are financial and business service units throughout the town centre, there is a concentration in the vicinity of Bridge Street, Buttermarket Street, Sankey Street and Suez Street.

The Warrington Town Centre Health Check (2012) noted that although banks and building societies are present in the town centre, the town centre is not traditionally a major office location. It remains the case that most of the financial and business units in the town centre are occupied by banks and building societies and the town centre remains slightly under-represented in terms of the financial and business sector.

Non-Retail Units

Warrington town centre also accommodates a mix of other uses which contribute to the overall offer of the town centre. Such uses include educational uses, government offices, advice centres and religious institutions.

Proportion of Vacant Street Level Property

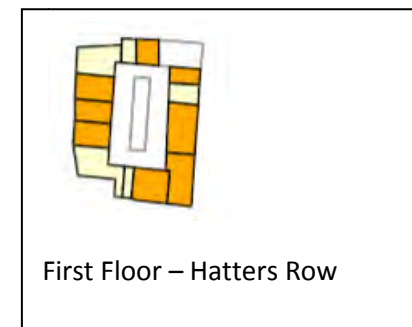
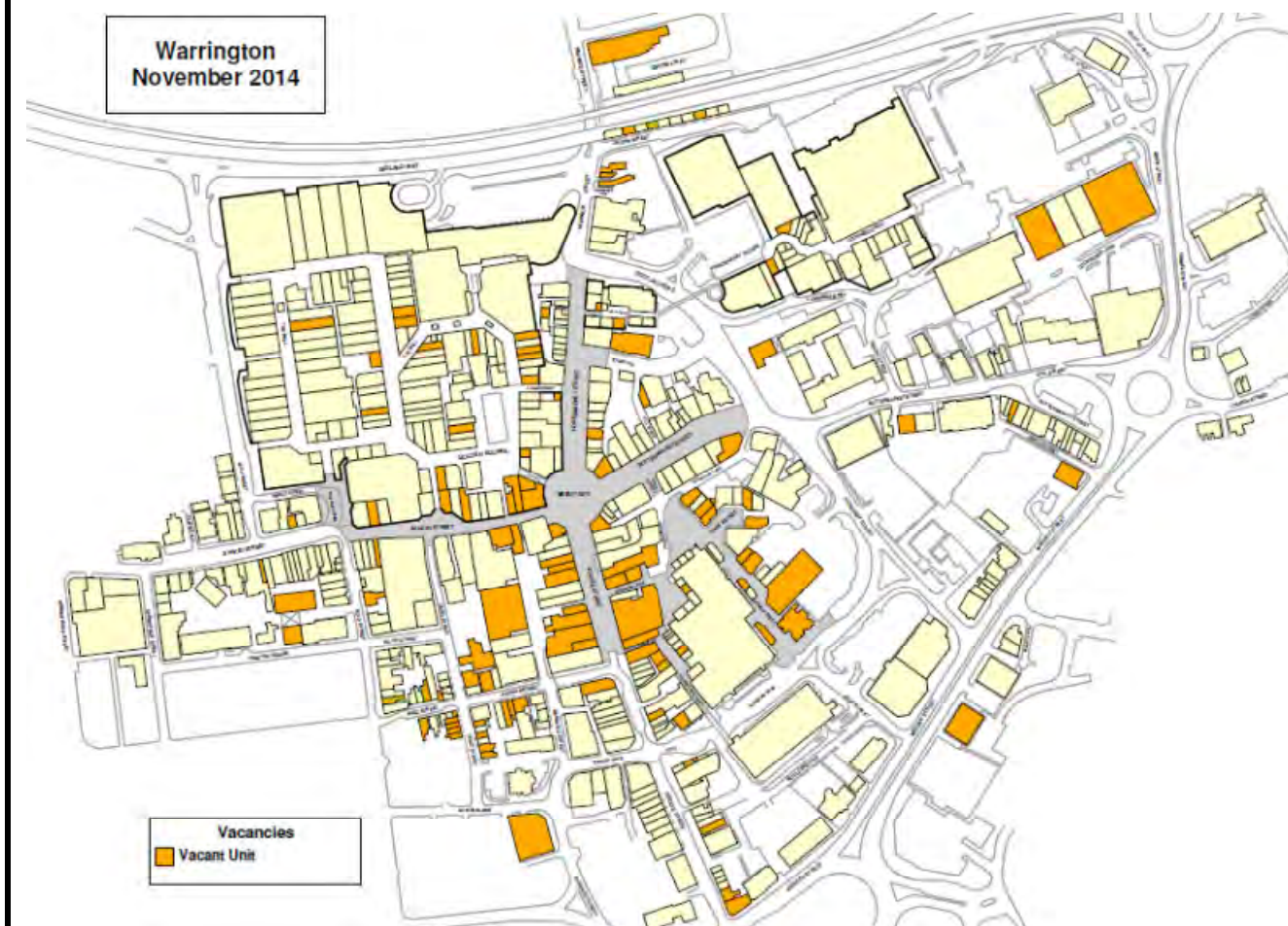
In November 2014, there were 121 vacant units present in Warrington town centre, comprising 23,020 sq.m floorspace. There is a high vacancy rate in the town centre which is demonstrated by the proportion of vacant units (23.5%) and floorspace (17.1%) being substantially greater than the respective national average figures of 11.4% and 9.3%. The vacant units present in the centre vary in size from 10 sq.m gross to 1,920 sq.m gross. The majority of vacant units (80.0%) have a floorspace of less than 200 sq.m gross. Vacant units are present throughout the town centre, however, there is a concentration at the northern end of Bridge Street, along Ryland Street, Cairo Street and Suez Street. It is considered that a number of the vacant units present in the southern part of the town centre have resulted from the focus of the town centre shifting towards the Golden Square Shopping Centre. The units present in Golden Square are likely to be more attractive to retail operators than the units in the wider town centre, given that the modern units have been tailored to retailer requirements and due to the higher levels of footfall in Golden Square.

Since the Warrington Town Centre Health Check was produced in 2012, the proportion of vacant units in Warrington town centre has increased from 19.3% in 2012 to 23.5% in 2014. From review of the diversity of use plans, it appears that a considerable proportion of the units which have become vacant since 2012 are located on Bridge Street. The vacant units in the Bridge Street area can be attributed to the focus of the town centre having shifted to the north west as a result of the improvements to the Golden Square shopping centre. However, it is understood that several of these units have been acquired in preparation for the Bridge Street redevelopment scheme and therefore the vacancies in this part of the centre are considered to be reflective of this.




Photograph (left): Vacant units, Sankey Street
Photograph (centre): Vacant units, Suez Street
Photograph (right): Vacant units, Times Square

Proportion of Vacant Street Level Property



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Customers' Views and Behaviour

In-street surveys were undertaken in Warrington town centre in November 2014 in order to provide an insight into the views and behaviours of customers, residents and visitors. A full analysis of the in-street survey results for Warrington, as well as Stockton Heath and Westbrook is included at Section 4 of the Main Report.

The surveys reveal that the most common reason for respondents being in Warrington on the day of the survey was to undertake clothes or shoe shopping (this being cited by 24.9% of respondents). This reflects the centre's role in catering for non food shopping needs and the higher order status of the centre. Although the most common means of those respondents to the in-street survey travelling to Warrington town centre was by car (46.8%). It is evident that the centre is also accessible by other modes of transport, with 30.7% of respondents reaching the centre by bus, 15.1% walking and 2.4% catching the train. The reasonably high bus usage is likely to be indicative of the ease of access from the bus exchange which is located immediately adjacent to Golden Square Shopping Centre. The higher proportion of bus usage in Warrington when compared to Stockton Heath and Birchwood is also to be expected given the greater number of services available to the town centre.

Respondents were asked to compare Warrington to other comparably sized centres in relation to a number of matters. The majority of respondents considered that Warrington was better or much better than other centre in terms of choice of shops (55.6%), choice of High Street names (52.2%), quality of shops (53.7%) and town centre environment (50.7%). When asked what types of shops or services would be desirable in Warrington, the three most common responses were clothing shops (9.8%), independent/specialist shops (8.3%) and specialist food shops (8.3%). The fact that additional food and non-food shops were cited as desirable in Warrington is reflective of the centre's higher order status and the fact that the community wish to see a wide range of uses available in the centre. When asked what types of leisure facilities they would like to see more of in Warrington, the most common answer provided by respondents was that they would like a cinema in Warrington (26.3%). This is reflective of the lack of such provision. The committed development at Bridge Street incorporates a cinema and therefore represents an opportunity to address this perceived deficiency.

In identifying measures which would help to improve the district centre, the most commonly cited responses were to fill the empty shops (18.0%), cheaper parking (9.8%) and a general facelift (8.3%). The fact that the most commonly referenced answer was to fill the empty shops is reflective of the high vacancy rate in the centre. Similarly, when asked about the biggest weaknesses of the centre, the most common response provided was to fill the empty shops (24.4%). Other common responses were anti-social behaviour (6.8%) and the availability of car parking (6.3%).

It is evident that Warrington is failing to attract a high proportion of visitors in the evening, as the majority of respondents to the survey (60.5%) stated that they had never visited Warrington in the evening. Where respondents had visited Warrington in the evening, the main reason for doing so was to visit a restaurant or cafe (36.4%).



Retailer Representation and Intentions to Change Representation

Warrington town centre is well represented in terms of national multiple retailers, with key retailers present in the centre including BHS, Debenhams, Marks and Spencers and Primark. There are also a range of independent retailers present in the centre which contribute to the overall offer of the centre. Multiple retailers, such as Boots, Marks & Spencer and Primark, can act as anchor tenants in a centre and can add to its appeal and create additional pedestrian footfall. Experian Goad produces a list of the top comparison retailers, which acts as a measure of the vitality and viability of a centre. As shown in Table 5, Warrington town centre contains 24 of the top 28 Goad retailers.

There are currently a total of 177 retail and service operators seeking representation in Warrington town centre in accordance with EGi. These retail and service operators include 42 restaurants, bars and cafes, 27 clothing retailers and 25 fast food takeaways. Although it appears from the data provided by EGi that there are a range of retailers seeking to locate in Warrington town centre, there remains a high proportion of available vacant units present in Warrington town centre. It may therefore be the case that the units that are available are not meeting the specific requirements of the retailers seeking representation.

On the 12th December 2014, outline planning consent (reference 2014/24473) was granted to Warrington Borough Council and Muse Developments for the demolition of existing on-site buildings and structures and the construction of a mixed use development, comprised of a new market hall and other Class A1 retail uses; Class A2 financial and professional service uses; Class A3 restaurants and cafes; Class B1 office uses including a new Council Office building, Class D1 non-residential units including a library, Class D2 leisure uses including a cinema; refurbishment of Academy Way car park; new landscaping and public realm; new vehicular access roads and servicing areas; accommodation and reinstatement works to retained building; site remediation and other associated works. It is aimed that the planning consent will act to transform the Bridge Street area of the town centre by reversing the decline that has taken place in this part of the town centre.

Table 8: Experian Goad list of Major Comparison Retailers
Source: WYG site visit, November 2014

Retailer	In town centre?
Argos	Yes
BHS	Yes
Boots the Chemist	Yes
Burton	Yes
Carphone Warehouse	Yes
Clarks	Yes
Clintons	Yes
Debenhams	Yes
Dorothy Perkins	Yes
H&M	Yes
HMV	No
House of Frasier	No
John Lewis	No
Marks & Spencer	Yes
New Look	Yes
Next	Yes
O2	Yes
Phones 4U	No
Primark	Yes
River Island	Yes
Superdrug	Yes
TK Maxx	Yes
Topman	Yes
Topshop	Yes
Vodafone	Yes
Waterstones	Yes
WHSmith	Yes
Wilkinsons	Yes



Commercial Rents

In accordance with Colliers International data obtained from EGi, the estimated Prime Zone A retail rents for Warrington town centre were £85 per sq.ft in 2013. This is a decrease from the Prime Zone A rents of £145 per sq.ft which were achieved between 2005 and 2008. Although there has been a decrease in Prime Zone A rents in recent years, this is reflective of the trends that have occurred in relation to other nearby centres and nationally, with Prime Zone A rents decreasing as a result of the economic recession. Notwithstanding this, Zone A rents in Warrington have decreased by 41.4% since 2008. This is a more substantial decrease than has been witnessed in the majority of the surrounding centres, including Manchester (16.7%), Liverpool (17.2%), St Helens (40.0%) and Runcorn (30.0%). However, the decrease in Zone A rents since 2008 is greater for Widnes (44.4%) and Northwich (62.5%). Although the decrease in Prime Zone A rents in Warrington town centre since 2008 indicates that demand for retail units in the centre has decreased during this period, it is positive that rental levels have now stabilised. This is possibly a result of the improved floorspace present in the centre as a result of the development of Golden Square Shopping Centre.

Table 6 - Estimated Prime Zone A Rents (£/ sq ft) in Warrington Town Centre and nearby centres

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Warrington	£145	£145	£145	£145	£100	£95	£90	£85	£85
Manchester	£300	£300	£300	£300	£275	£275	£250	£250	£250
Liverpool	£300	£320	£320	£320	£270	£265	£265	£265	£265
St Helens	£100	£100	£105	£105	£90	£85	£90	£85	£75
Runcorn	£60	£60	£65	£65	£55	£50	£50	£50	£50
Widnes	£65	£65	£65	£65	£60	£50	£50	£55	£45
Northwich	£55	£55	£60	£65	£60	£55	£50	£45	£40

Notwithstanding the decline in Prime Zone A Rents in Warrington town centre since 2008, the rental levels have remained higher than other centres in the locality such as St Helens, Runcorn, Widnes and Northwich. In 2013, the Prime Zone A Rents achieved in Warrington town centre were £10 greater per sq.ft than St Helens and £35 per sq.ft greater than Runcorn. However, when compared to larger centres such as Manchester and Liverpool, the Prime Zone A rents of Warrington are substantially less. The Prime Zone A rents achieved in Manchester and Liverpool in 2013 were £165 to £180 per sq.ft greater than those achieved in Warrington.



Pedestrian Flows

An assessment of the general pedestrian flows in Warrington town centre was noted during our site visit on Monday 10th November 2014. It was evident that the greatest level of activity was within Golden Square Shopping Centre which provides an enclosed shopping environment. Reasonable levels of pedestrian footfall were witnessed on Bridge Street, Horsemarket Street, the western end of Buttermarket Street, the eastern end of Sankey Street and in the Cockhedge Shopping Centre. However, the levels of pedestrian activity witnessed along these more traditional shopping streets was not as high as in Golden Square Shopping Centre. Lower levels of pedestrian flows were noted in the south western part of the town centre along streets including the western end of Sankey Street, Bold Street, Egypt Street, Cairo Street, Suez Street and Rylands Street. The area around the Market Hall and the eastern part of Buttermarket Street were also quiet with low pedestrian flows witnessed.

Accessibility

Road Access: Warrington town centre is located in an accessible location in terms of the surrounding road network, with the M62 Motorway to the north, M6 to the east and M56 to the south. The main routes leading into the town centre, including the A49, A57 and A5061 can become congested at peak times. Warrington town centre is located equidistant between Manchester city centre to the east and Liverpool city centre to the west (both being around 32km away). St Helens town centre is located 15km to the north of Warrington and Northwich is located 20km to the south.

Car Parking: The largest car park in Warrington town centre is the multi-storey car park at Golden Square which provides approximately 1,700 spaces and ranges in price from £1.00 (for 1 hour) to £5.50 (over 4 hours). Surface level car parking is available on Winwick Street with a day parking charged at £2.20. Parking is also available at the Cockhedge Shopping Centre and New Town House (at weekends only). In terms of Council owned car parks, the Warrington Market multi-storey car park provides 533 spaces with a charges ranging from £1.00 (0 to 3 hours) to £5.70 (over 4 hours), and the Town Hall car park provides 84 spaces with prices ranging from £1.00 (0 to 1 hours) to £2.30 (2 to 4 hours).

Public Transport: Warrington Central train station is located in the northern part of Warrington town centre off Winwick Street. Regular services are present from Warrington Central to surrounding local areas including Padgate, Birchwood and Sankey for Penketh, as well as to other town and city centres including Liverpool and Manchester. Warrington Bank Quay railway station is located approximately 500m to the south west of the town centre and is located on the national network.



Warrington bus interchange is located directly to the north of Golden Square Shopping Centre. Regular services are available to areas throughout Warrington Borough and surrounding areas including Manchester and Liverpool.

Warrington town centre is considered to be located in an accessible position, which can be reached by both private modes of transport and public transport. The main bus station and railway station are located in central positions thus providing convenience for those accessing the centre by public transport and there are a range of car parks located in the town centre for those accessing the site by private modes.

Perception of Safety and Occurrence of Crime

The policing website (www.police.uk) shows that, in September 2014, 557 crimes were reported within a mile radius of Warrington town centre. The majority (284) of the crimes which were reported related to anti-social behaviour. The number of reported crimes has decreased by 42 compared to the level reported at September 2012. As would be expected, there is a higher crime rate in Warrington town centre than in each of the district centres.

The perception of safety in the Golden Square Shopping Centre is good. Shopping centre staff patrol the centre providing surveillance throughout the day. CCTV is also present in the shopping centre, as well as a customer information desk. There is also CCTV present in the wider town centre and there is a presence from police officers and police community support officers. It is therefore evident that there is a desire to improve the perception of safety in the town. Notwithstanding this, due to the limited amount of pedestrian footfall in peripheral parts of the town centre, the lack of activity does not help to foster a feeling of safety. This is particularly true in areas where there is a high concentration of vacant units and therefore a lack of natural surveillance from active uses.

State of Town Centre Environmental Quality

The state of the town centre environment in Warrington has improved due to the redevelopment of the Golden Square Shopping Centre. Golden Square provides a modern indoor shopping environment which is protected from the elements. The shopping centre is well maintained and includes street furniture to add interest. Advertisements are provided on vacant units within the centre in order to minimise their impact on the overall shopping environment. The environmental quality elsewhere in the town centre is varied. There are a range of modern and historic properties throughout the centre, and the scale, height and massing of properties



along a single street in the town centre can be extremely diverse.

There are several conservation areas present in Warrington. The Buttermarket Street conservation area and Bridge Street conservation area are located at the heart of the town centre and provide recognition of the historic and architectural interest of these areas. In addition, street art and furniture is present in the town centre in order to provide interest to the street scene. Notwithstanding this, the high proportion of vacant units in the town centre detracts from the environmental quality, particularly where vacancies are concentrated. There are also several units which have not been well maintained and are in need of improvements. Although the market hall provides an important contribution to the town centre, it is considered that the building itself lacks interest and transparency, and therefore could act to discourage visitors to the market.

Conclusions

In summary, we conclude that the health of Warrington town centre is varied. Although the centre provides a wide range of retail and service units, which are operated by both national multiples and independent retailers, the centre has a vacancy rate which is substantially greater than the national average. The redeveloped Golden Square Shopping Centre performs well and provides a clean, well-maintained, all weather shopping environment, which has the benefits of onsite parking and the integrated bus interchange. However, other parts of the town centre are not performing as well. There is a particular concentration of vacant units along Bridge Street and in the south west portion of the town centre. The high number of vacant units has resulted in a knock on effective in terms of low levels of footfall and the deterioration of the town centre environment.

Notwithstanding the challenges that the town centre faces, in terms of high levels of vacancies and areas of the town centre which appear 'tired' and in need of improvement, plans are in place to redevelop the Bridge Street area to provide additional retail, leisure and community uses. It is this part of the town centre which is mostly in need of intervention and if the Bridge Street scheme is delivered it will improve the overall offer of the town centre and revive an area of the town centre which is currently failing.



Birchwood District Centre Health Check Assessment

Centre Overview

Birchwood is a district centre which is located approximately 9 kilometres to the north east of Warrington town centre. The district centre is located in close proximity to both the M62 and M6 motorways. As well as serving the surrounding residential community, Birchwood district centre performs an important role in serving the surrounding employment uses at Birchwood Business Park.

Birchwood district centre is focussed on Birchwood Shopping Centre, a purpose built, mainly indoor, single level shopping precinct. The main convenience goods offer in the district centre is provided by the Asda supermarket which is positioned at the western end of the shopping centre. There is also an Aldi supermarket within the centre. In terms of the centre's comparison goods offer, the majority of comparison goods units are occupied by national multiple operators, including Argos, Home Bargains and Pets at Home.

The eastern end of Birchwood Shopping Centre was redeveloped in 2012/2013, with the reconfiguration of units and the extension of the eastern part of the centre to provide additional retail units. The majority of these additional units are now occupied. A planning application was submitted by Birchwood Warrington Ltd in June 2015 which would provide for a net increase in floorspace of 2,342 sq.m at the Shopping Centre.

The centre is well used, with reasonable levels of footfall witnessed throughout the centre. There is a low vacancy rate in the centre and the centre is well maintained.

As Experian's latest Goad survey of the centre was completed in July 2013, a site visit of Birchwood district centre has been undertaken to ensure our assessment is informed by the most up-to-date diversity of use and floorspace figures. We have compared such data with the equivalent national average figures to identify any potential issues with the centre. The survey identified that there was a total of 53 units within Goad's defined district centre boundary, comprising a total gross floorspace of 24,890 sq.m. We have utilised the centre boundary as identified by Goad for our analysis in order to consider an extensive area and to allow a direct comparison with the national average figures (which are calculated using Goad's assessment of the boundary of each centre).

Birchwood District Centre

Photographs of Birchwood District Centre (November 2014)



Photograph (top left): Units in Birchwood Shopping Centre

Photograph (top centre): Asda, Birchwood Shopping Centre

Photograph (top right): External Units, Birchwood Shopping Centre

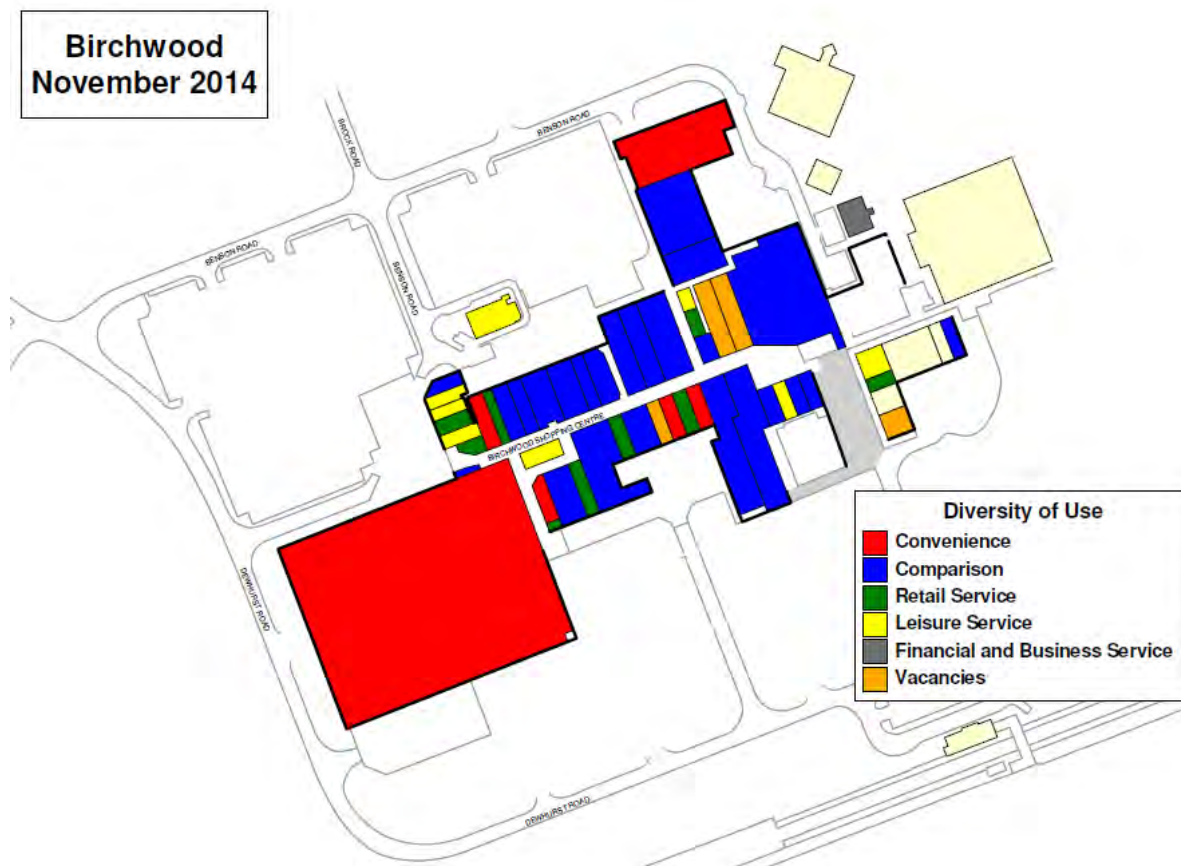
Photograph (bottom left): McDonalds, Birchwood District Centre

Photograph (bottom centre): Aldi and Argos, Birchwood Shopping Centre

Photograph (bottom right): External Parade, Birchwood Shopping Centre

Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Diversity of Uses in Birchwood District Centre (November 2014)



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Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Table 1: Previous Number of Units in Birchwood district centre (2012)

Existing Number of Units			
	No.	Birchwood district centre	UK
A1 Convenience	7	11.6%	-
A1 Comparison	23	38.3%	-
A1 Service	10	16.7%	-
Other	17	28.3%	-
Vacant	3	5.0%	-
Total	60	100.0%	-

Source: Warrington Retail Centre Report 2012 (Warrington Borough Council)

Note: UK Average not provided as categories do not directly correspond with Goad Category Report Centre boundary broadly comparable to the GOAD centre boundary

Table 2: Previous Floorspace in Birchwood district centre (2012)

Existing Floorspace			
	Sq.m	Birchwood district centre	UK
A1 Convenience	11,876	41.9%	-
A1 Comparison	8,628	30.4%	-
A1 Service	1,332	4.7%	-
Other	6,194	21.9%	-
Vacant	305	1.1%	-
Total	28,335	100.0%	-

Source: Warrington Retail Centre Report 2012 (Warrington Borough Council)

Note: UK Average not provided as categories do not directly correspond with Goad Category Report Centre boundary broadly comparable to the Experian GOAD centre boundary

Table 3: Existing Number of Units in Birchwood district centre (November 2014)

Existing Number of Units			
	No.	Birchwood district centre	UK
Convenience	6	11.3%	8.4%
Comparison	24	45.3%	32.6%
Retail Service	9	17.0%	14.1%
Leisure Service	9	17.0%	22.3%
Financial and Business Service	1	1.9%	10.9%
Vacant	4	7.5%	11.4%
Total	52	100.0%	100%

Source: Site Survey & Goad Data – July 2013 and UK average from the

Goad Category Report (September 2014)

Note: This table is based on the Goad town centre boundary

Table 4: Existing Floorspace in Birchwood district centre (November 2014)

Existing Floorspace			
	Sq.m	Birchwood district centre	UK
Convenience	11,880	47.7%	15.0%
Comparison	9,400	37.8%	36.2%
Retail Service	950	3.8%	7.4%
Leisure Service	1,600	6.4%	23.2%
Financial and Business Service	190	0.8%	8.2%
Vacant	870	3.5%	9.3%
Total	24,890	100.0%	100%

Source: Site Survey & Experian Goad Data – July 2013 and UK average from the

Goad Category Report (September 2014)

Note: This table is based on the Goad town centre boundary

The methodology applied by Warrington Borough Council in producing the Retail Centre Report 2012 to determine the diversity of main town centre uses varies from the methodology applied by WYG which uses the Goad town centre boundary and Goad Category Report to determine the diversity of use. Any changes in respect of diversity of use over time should be viewed in this context.



Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Convenience Good Units

Birchwood district centre provides a high proportion of convenience goods units (11.3%) and floorspace (47.7%) when compared to the respective national average figures (8.3% and 14.9%). Indeed, the proportion of convenience goods floorspace in the centre is considerably greater than the national average. The high proportion of convenience goods floorspace can be attributed to the Asda foodstore which provides 10,070 sq.m gross floorspace and is by far the largest unit present in the district centre. An additional convenience goods offer is provided by the Aldi foodstore, two bakers, a confectionery, tobacco and news unit and a shoe repair store. Although the majority of the convenience goods offer in the centre is provided by the two supermarkets, it is considered that the centre provides a good convenience offer for a centre of its size.

The proportion of convenience goods units present in Birchwood district centre has remained relatively stable since the Warrington Retail Centre Report was produced in 2012, although the proportion of convenience goods floorspace has increased slightly. The 2012 Report advised that, in terms of floorspace, the centre is dominated by supermarkets. This remains the case, with the Asda and Aldi in combination providing 11,290 sq.m gross floorspace and the proportion of convenience goods floorspace remains substantially greater than the national average figure.

Comparison Good Units

Birchwood district centre provides a good comparison goods offer. The proportion of comparison goods units (45.3%) and floorspace (37.8%) are greater than the respective national average figures (32.7% and 36.3%). Although there are both national multiple and independent retailers present in the centre, the majority of comparison goods units (58.0%) are operated by national multiple retailers. There are range of comparison goods uses present in the centre including seven clothing stores, four variety stores, two card shops, a chemist, a telephone shop and a pet shop. The largest comparison goods units in the centre are Home Bargains (1,920 sq.m gross), Argos (880 sq.m gross) and the 99p store (810 sq.m gross).

When comparing the proportion of comparison goods units and floorspace at 2014 to the proportion at 2012, it appears that the proportion of comparison goods floorspace has increased since 2012. The 2012 Report noted that there were a large number of national chain stores in the centre and a good mixture of units. This remains the case at 2014.

Retail Services

Although the proportion of retail service units (17.0%) in Birchwood district centre is greater than the national average (14.0%), the proportion of retail service floorspace (3.8%) is less than the national average (7.4%). This can be accounted for as all retail service units in the centre have a floorspace of less than 160 sq.m gross. The majority of retail service units in the centre (56.0%) are occupied by health and beauty uses. There is also an optician, photo processing centre,



post office and travel agents present in the centre.

As the Warrington Retail Centre Report 2012 did not specifically record the number of retail service units present in Birchwood district centre, it is not possible to make a direct comparison in terms of changes which have occurred since 2012. The 2012 Report did conclude that the centre had a good mixture of service units and it is considered that this remains the case at 2014, although the retail service sector is currently dominated by health and beauty uses.

Leisure Services

Birchwood district centre is under-represented in terms of leisure service uses, as both the proportion of leisure service units (17.0%) and floorspace (6.4%) are below the respective national average figures (22.3% and 23.1%). The range of leisure service units in the centre is limited and comprises four cafes, three fast food take aways, a betting office and a public house. Notwithstanding this, there are additional leisure service units located on the edge of Birchwood district centre, namely the Birchwood Leisure and Tennis Complex, which is located to the north of Benson Road.

As the Warrington Retail Centre Report 2012 did not specifically record the number of leisure service units present in Birchwood district centre, it is not possible to make a direct comparison in terms of changes which have occurred since 2012. The 2012 Report did conclude that there were relatively few A3 units present in the centre. On the basis of this, we believe that the A3 representation has improved since 2012, as at 2014 there are four cafes present in the district centre.

Financial and Business Services

The district centre is lacking in terms of financial and business service units. There is only one such unit present in the centre, namely the Your Housing Group property service on Benson Road. There are no standalone banks or building societies located at Birchwood district centre. However, there is a Barclays Bank provided within the Asda store. Given the limited financial and business service units present in the district centre, the proportion of units (1.9%) and floorspace (0.8%) is substantially below the respective national average figures (10.9% and 8.3%).

As the Warrington Retail Centre Report 2012 did not specifically record the number of financial service units present in Birchwood district centre, it is not possible to make a direct comparison in terms of changes which have occurred since 2012. The 2012 Report did conclude that there were relatively few A2 units present in the centre. This remains the case today.

Non-Retail Units

Birchwood district centre also accommodates other uses which contribute to the overall offer of the centre and cater for the needs of the community, including a doctors, dentist and advice centre.

Proportion of Vacant Street Level Property

The vacancy rate in Birchwood district centre is low. In November 2014, there were only four vacant units present in the centre comprising a total of 870 sq.m gross floorspace. The proportion of vacant units (7.5%) and floorspace (3.5%) is substantially less than the respective national average figures (11.5% and 9.3%). Three of the vacant units are located internally within the Birchwood Shopping Centre and the fourth unit is located within the external parade of units to the east of the centre. The vacant units range in size from 130 sq.m gross to 300 sq.m gross. No.25 Birchwood Shopping Centre has recently become vacant as the Card Factory has relocated to No.18 Birchwood Shopping Centre. The other two internally located vacant units are the remaining two units to be let within the redeveloped part of the shopping centre which took place in 2012/2013. The externally located vacant unit was previously occupied by Barclays Bank, which has now located within the Asda store.

Three units which were previously located at the eastern end of Birchwood Shopping Centre and were vacant in 2012 have recently been demolished. Notwithstanding this, the proportion of vacant units and floorspace in Birchwood district centre has increased slightly since the Warrington Retail Centre Report was produced in 2012. However, the number of vacant units has only increased by one unit.



Photograph (left): Vacant Unit, No.25 Birchwood Shopping Centre

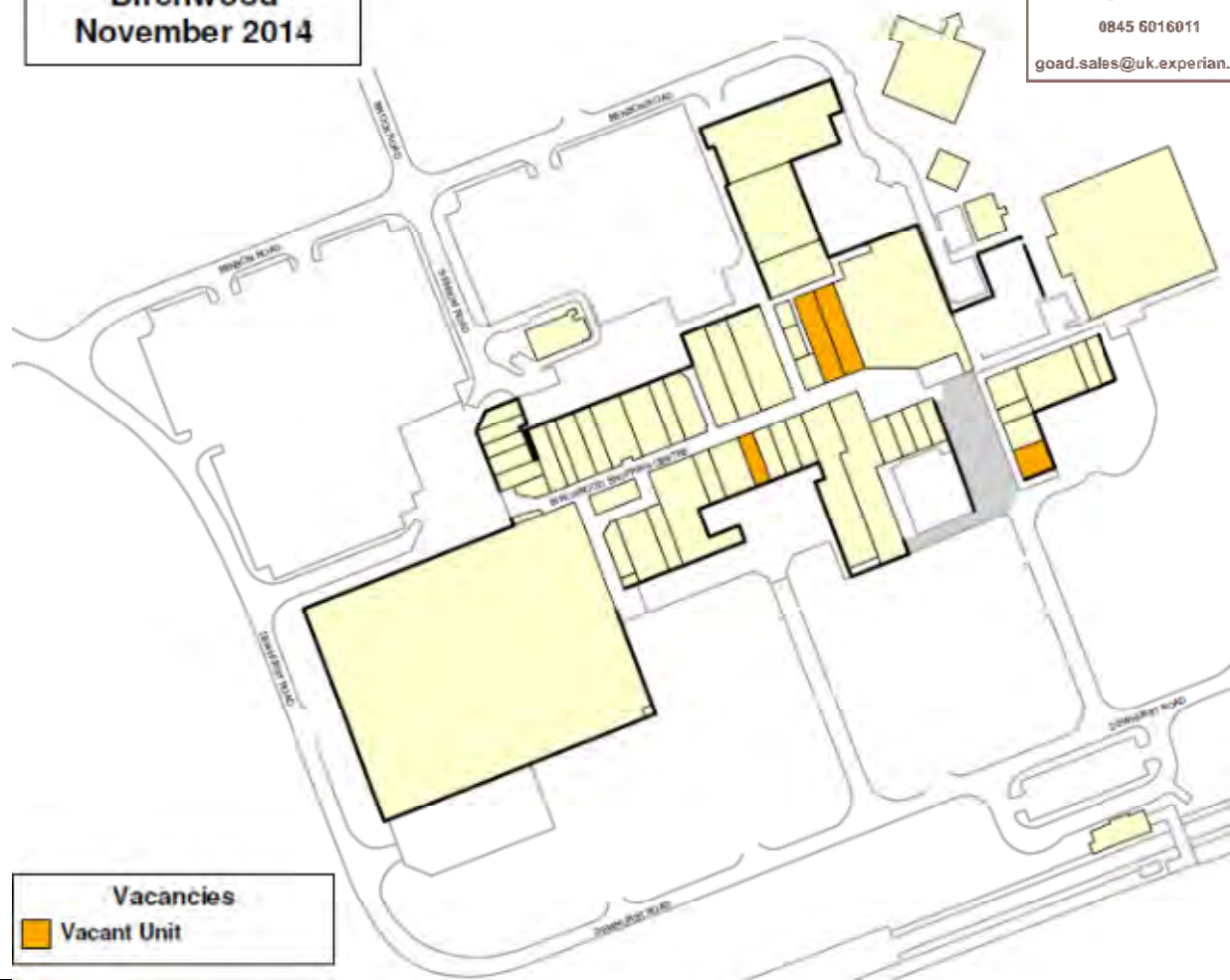
Photograph (centre): Vacant Unit, No.51 Birchwood Shopping Centre

Photograph (right): Demolition of No.38 to No.46 Birchwood Shopping Centre



Proportion of Vacant Street Level Property

**Birchwood
November 2014**



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Retailer Representation and Intentions to Change Representation

Birchwood district centre is considered to be well represented in terms of national multiple retailers for a centre of its size. Such retailers include Argos, Home Bargains, Poundworld, New Look and The Carphone Warehouse. There are also a range of independent retailers present in the centre which contribute to its overall offer. Retailers have recently taken up floorspace within the district centre including The Edge (ladieswear) and Roman (ladieswear).

An outline planning application was submitted by Birchwood Warrington Ltd on 2 June 2015 for the demolition of existing buildings at Birchwood Shopping Centre and a proposed mixed use extension (Use Classes A1/A3/D1) with associated access, servicing, car parking, signage and associated works. The application proposes a net increase in floorspace of 2,342 sq.m, with 2,565 sq.m floorspace to be demolished and 4,907 sq.m new floorspace proposed. The application submission advises that the scheme has been designed to accommodate a B&M and Iceland, as well as food and drink (Use Class A3) and leisure (Use Class D1) uses.

Commercial Rents

Unit Nu 7 and Unit Nu 8 at Birchwood Shopping Centre are currently being advertised by commercial agents, Tushingham Moore, for a rent of £132 per sq.m (£37,500 per annum for 284 sq.m floorspace). Unit 51 Birchwood Shopping Centre is being advertised by commercial agents, CBRE, for a rent of £153 per sq.m (£18,500 per annum for 120 sq.m floorspace). The advertised rents in Birchwood district centre are lower than those advertised in Stockton Heath and Westbrook.

Pedestrian Flows

An assessment of the general pedestrian flows in Birchwood district centre was noted during WYG's site visit on Monday 10th November 2014. Reasonable levels of pedestrian footfall were witnessed throughout most of the district centre, with particularly high flows witnessed in the vicinity of the Asda store. The lowest levels of pedestrian footfall were witnessed at the eastern end of the centre in the vicinity of the externally located units.



Birchwood Shopping Centre provides a favourable pedestrian environment; the majority of units are located internally and therefore are sheltered from weather conditions, and as the shopping centre is pedestrianised there are no conflicts between pedestrians and traffic.

Accessibility

Road Access: Birchwood district centre is located in an accessible location in terms of the surrounding road network. The centre is located in close proximity to the M62 motorway to the north and the M6 motorway to the west. The district centre is located approximately 9 kilometres to the north east of Warrington town centre.

Car Parking: There is a substantial amount of car parking (approximately 1,500 spaces in total) available in the district centre. Surface level car parking is available to the north, south and west of Birchwood Shopping Centre. Customers using the shopping centre are provided with three hours free parking. Parking charges apply for longer stays. It is apparent that the car parking available at the shopping centre is also utilised by those not visiting the shopping centre, e.g local workers and commuters using Birchwood railway station.

Public Transport: Birchwood railway station is located in the south eastern part of the district centre off Dewhurst Road. Regular services are available from the railway station to Warrington, Liverpool and Manchester. A bus station is present to the front of the train station and bus stops are present at the western end of the shopping centre. Regular services are available from Birchwood to the surrounding areas including Birchwood Park, Padgate, Longford and Warrington town centre.

Birchwood district centre is located in an accessible position, which can be reached by both private modes of transport and public transport. The centre is located in close proximity to the motorway network and is easily accessible by car. The car parks surrounding the centre provide ease for those accessing the centre by car. In addition, a railway station and bus stops are located within the centre, with regular services to the surrounding areas.



Perception of Safety and Occurrence of Crime

In accordance with the policing website (www.police.uk), in September 2014 72 crimes were reported within a mile radius of Birchwood district centre. The majority of the reported crimes (36) related to anti-social behaviour. Since September 2011, the number of crimes reported within a mile radius of Birchwood district centre has fluctuated year on year. 96 crimes were reported in September 2011, 57 crimes were reported in September 2012 and 82 crimes were reported in September 2013. The reported level of crime in proximity to Birchwood district centre at September 2014 was lower than Stockton Heath and Westbrook district centres.

The perception of safety in and surrounding Birchwood Shopping Centre is good. Shopping centre staff are available within the public spaces and CCTV is in operation throughout the centre and car parks. The perception of safety could be improved in the eastern part of the district centre in the vicinity of the medical centre and dental surgery, as this part of the district centre does not benefit from the levels of natural surveillance present in the main shopping centre.

State of Town Centre Environmental Quality

The environmental quality of the district centre is good. Birchwood Shopping Centre appears to be well managed and the units within the shopping centre are well maintained. The shopping centre and external areas are clean and the landscaping around the centre is well maintained. Street furniture is present at various locations throughout the centre which adds interest to the centre. The parade of units located to the east of the shopping centre appears somewhat outdated and contrasts with the design of the main shopping centre building. In addition, the demolition of the four units which were previously located at this end of the shopping centre currently detracts from the overall quality of the district centre; however it is acknowledged that the existing state is temporary.



Conclusion

Birchwood district centre is focused on Birchwood Shopping Centre, which provides a single level, mainly indoor shopping environment. The shopping centre is surrounded by a substantial amount of car parking provision, meaning that the centre is attractive for car borne trips. Notwithstanding this, Birchwood train station and bus interchange are located in close proximity to the shopping centre, meaning that the centre is also accessible by public transport.

The centre provides a good range of convenience and comparison goods provision. There is strong representation from national multiples in the centre; however independent retailers also complement this offer. The limited number of vacant units in the centre provides for an active and attractive shopping environment. It is clear that there is also confidence in the centre as floorspace has recently been taken up by new retailers. The centre is well used and provides a valuable resource for the local community in terms of meeting their retail and service needs.

The centre would benefit from additional representation from the service sector, particularly in terms of financial/business and leisure services which are currently limited in the centre. As Birchwood Shopping Centre is closed during the evening, the centre also provides little contribution in terms of the night time economy.

Overall it is evident that Birchwood is a vital and viable centre. The centre appears to be performing well and is key in providing for the needs of the local community.



Stockton Heath District Centre Health Check Assessment

Centre Overview

Stockton Heath is located in the south of Warrington Borough. The district centre is located approximately 4 kilometres to the south of Warrington town centre, with the A49 leading from Stockton Heath to Warrington town centre.

The district centre takes the form of a traditional high street, with the majority of retail and service units located along the main routes within the centre. The two principal routes in the centre are London Road and Walton Road, with additional units on West Avenue and Grappenhall Road. The Forge Shopping Centre is situated to the west of London Road and comprises a small internal arcade of shops. A Morrisons supermarket is located at the edge of the town centre (as defined by Annex 2 of the NPPF) to the north of the Manchester Ship Canal.

The centre provides a relatively diverse retail offer, as well as a range of service uses. In particular, the centre provides a good proportion of leisure service uses which contribute to a buoyant night time economy in the district centre. Both national multiple and independent retailers are present in the centre, which help to contribute to an appealing retail offer.

There are low vacancy rates in the Stockton Heath and the centre is well maintained. The majority of the district centre is located within the London Road Conservation Area which is an indication of the attractive environmental quality at this location. It is evident that Stockton Heath serves an important role in catering for the needs of the local population in the south of Warrington Borough. However, due to the attractive nature of the Stockton Heath, the centre is also a popular destination for visitors from further afield.

As Experian's latest Goad survey of the centre was completed in December 2012, a site visit of Stockton Heath has been undertaken to ensure our assessment is informed by the most up-to-date diversity of use and floorspace figures. We have compared such data with the equivalent national average figures to identify any potential issues with the centre. The survey identified that there was a total of 138 units within Goad's defined centre boundary at November 2014, comprising a total gross floorspace of 23,890 sq.m. We have utilised the centre boundary as identified by Goad for our analysis in order to consider an extensive area and to allow a direct comparison with the national average figures (which are calculated using Goad's assessment of the boundary of each centre).

Stockton Heath District Centre

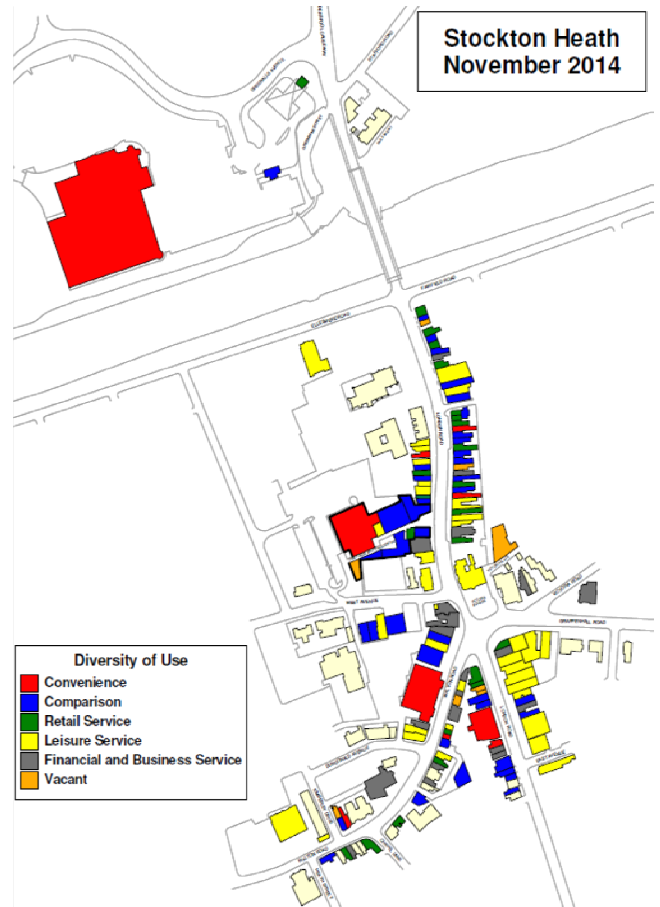
Photographs of Stockton Heath District Centre (November 2014)



- Photograph (top left):** Units on London Road (north)
- Photograph (top centre):** The Forge Shopping Centre
- Photograph (top right):** Morrisons, Greenalls Avenue
- Photograph (bottom left):** Units on London Road (central)
- Photograph (bottom centre):** Units on Walton Road
- Photograph (bottom right):** Units on London Road (south)

Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Diversity of Uses in Stockton Heath District Centre (November 2014)



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Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Table 1: Previous Number of Units in Stockton Heath district centre (2012)

Existing Number of Units			
	No.	Stockton Heath district centre	UK
A1 Convenience	7	5.6%	-
A1 Comparison	29	23.0%	-
A1 Service	34	27.0%	-
Other	53	42.1%	-
Vacant	3	2.4%	-
Total	126	100.0%	-

Source: Warrington Retail Centre Report 2012 (Warrington Borough Council)

Note: UK Average not provided as categories do not directly correspond with Goad Category Report

Centre boundary broadly comparable to the Goad centre boundary. However, boundary excludes three units to the north of the Manchester Ship Canal which are included in Goad boundary.

Table 3: Existing Number of Units in Stockton Heath district centre (November 2014)

Existing Number of Units			
	No.	Stockton Heath district centre	UK
Convenience	10	7.2%	8.4%
Comparison	35	25.4%	32.6%
Retail Service	26	18.8%	14.1%
Leisure Service	38	27.5%	22.3%
Financial and Business Service	21	15.2%	10.9%
Vacant	8	5.8%	11.4%
Total	138	100.0%	100%

Source: Site Survey & Goad Data – December 2012 and UK average from the Goad Category Report (September 2014)

Note: This table is based on the Goad town centre boundary

Table 2: Previous Floorspace in Stockton Heath district centre (2012)

Existing Floorspace			
	sq.m	Stockton Heath district centre	UK
A1 Convenience	2,826	19.5%	-
A1 Comparison	3,052	21.0%	-
A1 Service	2,182	15.0%	-
Other	6,318	43.5%	-
Vacant	139	1.0%	-
Total	14,517	100.0%	-

Source: Warrington Retail Centre Report 2012 (Warrington Borough Council)

Note: UK Average not provided as categories do not directly correspond with Goad Category Report

Centre boundary broadly comparable to the GOAD centre boundary. However, boundary excludes three units to the north of the Manchester Ship Canal which are included in Goad boundary.

Table 4: Existing Floorspace in Stockton health district centre (November 2014)

Existing Floorspace			
	sq.m	Stockton Heath district centre	UK
Convenience	9,860	41.3%	15.0%
Comparison	3,310	13.9%	36.2%
Retail Service	1,890	7.9%	7.4%
Leisure Service	5,870	24.6%	23.2%
Financial and Business Service	2,240	9.4%	8.2%
Vacant	720	3.0%	9.3%
Total	23,890	100.0%	100%

Source: Site Survey & Goad Data – December 2012 and UK average from the Goad Category Report (September 2014)

Note: This table is based on the Goad town centre boundary

The methodology applied by Warrington Borough Council in producing the Retail Centre Report 2012 to determine the diversity of main town centre uses varies from the methodology applied by WYG which uses the Goad town centre boundary and Goad Category Report to determine the diversity of use. Any changes in respect of diversity of use over time should be viewed in this context.



Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Convenience Good Units

Stockton Heath district centre is well represented in terms of convenience goods floorspace. Although the proportion of convenience goods units in the centre (7.2%) is slightly below the national average (8.4%), the proportion of convenience goods floorspace (41.3%) is substantially greater than the respective national average figure (15.0%). The high proportion of convenience goods floorspace in the centre can be largely attributed to the Morrisons supermarket located in an edge of centre position off Greenalls Avenue. The purpose built supermarket is the largest unit in the immediate area, providing a substantially greater level of floorspace than the majority of small scale traditional units present in the centre. The district centre also provides an Aldi supermarket, Co-operative Food store and Sainsbury's Local. In addition, the centre accommodates a bakers, sweet shop, butchers, off licence and shoe repair unit.

The Warrington Retail Centre Report 2012 noted that most larger units in Stockton Heath were occupied by A1 convenience chain stores. This remains the case today, with the largest units in the centre comprising the Morrisons (6,970 sq.m gross), Co-operative Food (1,080 sq.m gross) and Aldi (970 sq.m gross). The proportion of convenience goods floorspace at 2014 is substantially greater than that recorded at 2012. However, this can largely be accounted for by the Morrisons store being included in the Goad district centre boundary, but not being included in the centre boundary for the purposes of the Warrington Retail Centre Report 2012. Notwithstanding this, it appears that convenience goods provision in Stockton Heath has improved since 2012.

Comparison Good Units

The district centre is under-represented in relation to comparison goods when compared to the national average figure. However, this is to be expected given the scale of the centre and its role in catering for convenience requirements. The proportion of comparison goods units (25.4%) and floorspace (13.9%) is less than the respective national average figures (which are 32.6% and 36.2%). The majority (80.0%) of comparison goods units in the centre are operated by independent retailers, however national multiple comparison goods retailers in the centre include Boots, Clarks, Lloyds and WHSmith. The high proportion of independent comparison goods retailers present in the centre provides a diverse and unique offer. Most of comparison goods units in the centre are small scale, with 71.0% of the comparison goods units having a comparison goods floorspace of less than 100 sq.m gross. The largest comparison goods unit in the centre extends to 430 sq.m gross.

In 2012, the Warrington Retail Centre Report recorded 29 comparison goods units in Stockton Heath district centre, providing 3,052 sq.m gross floorspace. Through comparison of the 2012 figures over the subsequent period, it appears that the number of comparison goods units and floorspace in the centre has increased slightly, as 35 units and 3,310 sq.m of gross comparison goods floorspace were recorded at November 2014.



Retail Services

Stockton Heath is well represented in terms of retail service units. The proportion of units (18.8%) and floorspace (7.9%) is greater than the respective national average figures (of 14.1% and 7.4%). Of the 26 retail service units present in the district centre, 12 are occupied by health and beauty services. There are also two dry cleaners, three funeral directors, two opticians, two opticians, two travel agents and a post office present in the centre.

As the Warrington Retail Centre Report did not specifically record the number of retail service units present in Stockton Heath district centre, it is again not possible to make a direct comparison in terms of changes which have occurred since 2012. The 2012 Report did conclude that the centre had a good mix of service units and it is considered that this remains the case at 2014, although the retail service sector is currently dominated by health and beauty uses.

Leisure Services

There is a high proportion of leisure service units (27.5%) and floorspace (24.6%) in Stockton Heath when compared to the respective national average figures (of 22.3% and 23.2%). Of the 38 leisure service units present in the centre, 15 are occupied by restaurants, eight by fast food take aways, five by cafes, three by bars and two public houses. It is therefore evident that Stockton Heath performs a role as a leisure destination, particularly in relation to food and drink uses. The majority of leisure service uses are occupied by independent operators. However, national multiple operators in the centre include Betfred, Costa Coffee, Nandos and Slug and Lettuce.

As the Warrington Retail Centre Report did not specifically record the number of leisure service units present in Stockton Heath district centre, it is not possible to make a direct comparison in terms of changes which have occurred since 2012. The 2012 Report noted that the restaurants and café bars present in the centre had expanded the day time and evening economy. It is considered that the day time and evening economy in Stockton Heath remains strong, as there is a good mix of both independent and national multiple leisure uses present in the centre.

Financial and Business Services

Stockton Heath is well represented in relation to financial and business services. The proportion of units (15.2%) and floorspace (9.4%) is greater than the national average figures (of 10.9% and 8.2% respectively). Of the 21 financial and business services present in the district centre, nine are occupied by property services, four by banks, four by financial services, three by legal services and one building services firm.

As the Warrington Retail Centre Report 2012 did not specifically record the number of financial service units present in Stockton Heath district centre, it is not possible to make a direct comparison in terms of changes which have occurred since 2012.

Non-Retail Units

Stockton Heath also accommodates a mix of other uses which contribute to the overall offer of the district centre, including educational uses and medical services.

Proportion of Vacant Street Level Property

Stockton Heath district centre has a low vacancy rate. There are eight vacant units in the district centre which provide 720 sq.m gross floorspace. The proportion of vacant units (5.8%) and floorspace (3.0%) are substantially less than the respective national average figures (of 11.4% and 9.3%). The majority (75.0%) of vacant units in the centre have a floorspace of less than 100 sq.m gross and the largest vacant unit has a floorspace of 350 sq.m gross. The vacant units are dispersed throughout the centre, indicating that there are no particular areas of the district centre which are seen as undesirable to operators.

At the time of the Warrington Retail Centre Report 2012, there were three vacant units present in Stockton Heath district centre. There has been an increase in the number of vacant units present in the centre since 2012, as, in November 2014, eight vacant units were recorded in the centre. The vacant units which were present in 2012 differ from those that are vacant at 2014, indicating that there has been a recycling of space within the centre. The proportion of vacant units and floorspace at 2014 remains below the national average, which is an indicator of a vital and viable centre.



Photograph (left): Vacant unit, London Road

Photograph (centre): Vacant unit, The Forge Shopping Centre

Photograph (right): Vacant unit, Walton Road



Customers' Views and Behaviour

In-street surveys were undertaken in Stockton Heath district centre in November 2014 in order to provide an insight into the views and behaviours of customers, residents and visitors. A full analysis of the survey results for Stockton Heath, as well as for Warrington and Westbrook, is included at Section 4 of the Main Report.

The surveys revealed the most common reason for respondents being in Stockton Heath on the day of the in-street survey was to visit the bank, building society or post office (11.8%). Other main reasons including to visit the Aldi store on Walton Road, for food and grocery shopping, leisure and social activities and to attend work, school or college. The responses are indicative of Stockton Heath's role in providing for the local community in terms of their day to day retail and service needs. The fact that a high proportion of respondents were undertaking social and leisure activities highlights that Stockton Heath also provides a role in catering for the social and leisure requirements of the community.

Respondents to the in-street surveys were asked to compare Stockton Heath to other comparably sized centres in relation to a number of matters. The majority of respondents considered that Stockton Heath was better or much better than other centre in terms of, quality of shops (63.8%), choice of independent shops (63.7%), range and choice of pubs/restaurants (59.8%), town centre environment (54.9%), choice of shops (52.0%) and cleanliness (50.0%). When asked what types of shops or services would be desirable in Stockton Heath, the two most common responses were clothing shops (14.7%) and independent/specialist shops (8.8%). When asked what types of leisure facilities they would like to see more of in Stockton Heath, the most common answer provided by respondents was that they would like a cinema (7.8%). This is reflective of the lack of such provision in the centre, with residents in the south of the Borough having to travel elsewhere to access cinema facilities.

In identifying measures which would help to improve the district centre, the most popular responses were more car parking (14.7%) and cheaper car parking (13.7%). Similarly, when asked about the biggest weaknesses of the centre, common responses included the availability of car parking (17.6%) and the price of car parking (14.7%). This is reflective of the fact that the level of car parking within Stockton Heath district centre is less than within the district centres of Birchwood or Westbrook. The results of the survey found that although the majority of the respondents (51.9%) travel to Stockton Heath by car, the centre also has a strong walk-in catchment (37.3% walk to the centre).

It is evident that Stockton Heath has a strong night time economy, as 62.6% of respondents to the in-street survey advised that they visited the centre in the evening. The majority (84.4%) of respondents' main reason for visiting in the evening was to eat in a restaurant or cafe. This is reflective of the high proportion of restaurants present within the district centre.



Retailer Representation and Intentions to Change Representation

The majority of units in Stockton Heath are occupied by independent operators which mean that a varied and interesting mix of goods and services are available in the district centre. There are also a range of national multiple retail and service operators, including nine leisure service operators, seven comparison goods operators, five national multiple convenience goods operators, five retail service operators and four financial and business service operators.

National multiple retailers which have located in Stockton Heath since 2012 include Mr Simms Olde Sweet Shop, Mind, Slug and Lettuce, Subway and WHSmith.

Commercial Rents

No.47 London Road is advertised by commercial agents, Morgan Williams, for a rent of £260 per sq.m (£25,000 per annum for 96 sq.m floorspace) and No. 84A is advertised for a rent of £282 per sq.m (£22,000 per annum for 78 sq.m floorspace). The advertised commercial rents in Stockton Heath are the greatest of the three district centres.

Pedestrian Flows

An assessment of the general pedestrian flows in Stockton Heath district centre was noted during our site visit on Monday 10th November 2014. Reasonable levels of pedestrian flows were witnessed throughout the centre, with the greatest levels of activity along London Road, in the vicinity of The Forge Shopping Centre and along the northern part of Walton Road. High levels of activity were also witnessed at the Morrisons store. Some pedestrians were witnessed walking between the Morrisons store and the remainder of the district centre, however the majority of customers appeared to be arriving at the store by private modes of transport. Lower levels of pedestrian activity were witnessed along West Avenue and the southern end of Walton Road.



Pedestrian crossings are present on London Road, outside The Forge Shopping Centre, and at the junction of London Road, Walton Road and Grappenhall Road to aid pedestrian movements through the centre. However, the main routes which run through the centre can become busy.

Accessibility

Road Access: Stockton Heath is located in the south of Warrington Borough. The district centre is located approximately 4 kilometres to the south of Warrington town centre. Junction 10 of the M56 is located approximately 5 kilometres to the south of the district centre and junction 20 of the M6 is located approximately 6 kilometres to the east. London Road (A49), a main route leading to the M56 to the south and Warrington town centre to the north runs through the centre of Stockton Heath with retail and service uses located along this route.

Car Parking: A pay and display car park, providing approximately 200 spaces is located at the rear of The Forge Shopping Centre, off West Avenue. One hour free parking is available, with a charge of £2 for over three hours. A car park (approximately 100 spaces) is also provided to the rear of the Aldi store off Dundonald Avenue which provides 90 minutes free parking. The Morrisons store also provides customer car parking and there is a limited amount of restricted on-street parking provided throughout the centre.

Public Transport: Bus stops are located on London Road and Walton Road providing regular services to the surrounding residential areas, as well as to nearby centres including Warrington, Lymm and Altrincham. There is no train station in Stockton Heath.

Stockton Heath district centre is considered to be in a reasonably accessible location. The district centre has developed at the confluence of the two main routes, the A49 which runs north to south and the A56 which runs east to west. The centre is also located in reasonably close proximity to the M6 and M56 motorways. Both on and off street car parking is available in the town centre, with short stay free parking to assist those travelling to the centre by private modes of transport. However, there is a lesser level of car parking in the district centre boundary than in the other district centre. The centre is also accessible by bus, with well positioned stops serving a number of regular routes to surrounding areas.



Perception of Safety and Occurrence of Crime

In accordance with the policing website (www.police.uk), in September 2014 133 crimes were reported within a mile radius of Stockton Heath district centre. Most of the reported crimes (61) related to anti-social behaviour. Since September 2012, the number of reported crimes has decreased, from 155 in September 2012 to 133 in September 2014. The reported level of crime in proximity to Stockton Heath district centre at September 2014 was higher than for Birchwood and Westbrook district centre.

As the retail and service uses present in Stockton Heath are mainly located along main roads through the centre, there is a good level of natural surveillance. The centre has received a national Purple Flag Award, which recognises the centre provides a safe, welcoming environment to all. Stockton Heath forms part of the Stockton Heath, Appleton, Stretton, Hatton and Walton Neighbourhood policing team. The local policing team target local priorities including reducing shoplifting and anti-social behaviour.

State of Town Centre Environmental Quality

The state of the environment in Stockton Heath is good. The majority of the district centre is designated as a conservation area which is reflective of the special historic and architectural interest of the area. The majority of retail and service uses are located on the ground floor of traditional terraced properties located along the high street and the majority of shop fronts are very well maintained. Purple flags are displayed throughout the centre in recognition of the Purple Flag Award which has been achieved by the centre for the welcoming environment that the centre provides.

Street furniture and planting beds are provided within the centre which contribute to the attractive environment of Stockton Heath. The low vacancy rate in the centre and the good levels of activity help to create a vibrant environment.



Conclusion

Stockton Heath provides a diverse retail and service offer. There are a number of specialist shops and independent retailers located in the centre, which helps to create an interesting offer. There is also representation from national multiple retailers in the centre, which combined with the independent retailers provides a good balance of complementary facilities. There is good representation from the leisure service sector in Stockton Heath which helps to create a vibrant night time offer in the centre in addition to the day time offer. The vacancy level in Stockton Heath is low and the environmental quality of the centre is very good, which helps to create an attractive and appealing centre.

Although the centre contains a lower proportion of comparison goods floorspace when compared to the national average, this is to be expected given the scale of the centre and there remains a good range of comparison goods units present in the centre. Given that the centre is located along the A49 (London Road), the centre does become busy at times in terms of traffic moving through the centre. There are however pedestrian crossings present in the centre to aid pedestrian movements.

Stockton Heath is clearly a healthy centre. The centre provides a diverse offer, including a number of specialist shops. The strong representation from leisure service units means that the centre is well used by the local community both during the day time and into the evening. The centre benefits from a strong walk-in catchment from the residential areas surrounding Stockton Heath.



Westbrook District Centre Health Check Assessment

Centre Overview

Westbrook district centre is located in the north west of Warrington Borough. The district centre is situated approximately 4 kilometres to the north west of Warrington town centre and Gemini Retail Park is located less than a kilometre to the north of the centre.

The district centre is anchored by an Asda supermarket, which is adjoined by a parade of shops, accessed via a covered walkway. An Odeon cinema with adjacent associated food and drink uses is located in the south west part of the centre. The cinema and associated uses are separated from the main hub of the centre by access roads and car parking.

The environmental quality of the centre is good; the units in the centre are well maintained, the centre is clean and benefits from landscaped elements. However, the 1980s purpose built centre does appear a little outdated in design terms.

The majority of units in the district centre are occupied by independent retailers. The limited number of national multiple retailers present in the centre comprise Asda, British Heart Foundation, Cohen's Chemist, Costa Coffee and Frankie and Bennies.

There is no Experian Goad survey available for Westbrook district centre. Therefore, we have utilised the Council's database which informed the Warrington Retail Centre Report 2012 in order to establish the floorspace provided by each unit within the centre. A site visit of Westbrook district centre has been undertaken to update the previous health check analysis to ensure it is compiled using the most up-to-date diversity of use information. We have compared such data with the national average figures to identify any potential issues with the centre. The survey identified that there was a total of 16 units within the district centre boundary at November 2014, comprising a total gross floorspace of 13,497 sq.m.

Westbrook District Centre

Photographs of Westbrook District Centre (November 2014)



- Photograph (top left):** Asda, Westbrook Shopping Centre
- Photograph (top centre):** Units at Westbrook Shopping Centre
- Photograph (top right):** Units at Westbrook Shopping Centre
- Photograph (bottom left):** Medical Centre, Westbrook
- Photograph (bottom centre):** Library, Westbrook
- Photograph (bottom right):** Odeon, Westbrook

Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Diversity of Uses in Westbrook District Centre (November 2014)



Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Table 1: Previous Number of Units in Westbrook district centre (November 2014)

Existing Number of Units			
	No.	Westbrook district centre	UK
A1 Convenience	2	10.0%	-
A1 Comparison	2	10.1%	-
A1 Service	7	35.0%	-
Other	9	45.0%	-
Vacant	0	0.0%	-
Total	20	100.0%	100%

Source: Warrington Retail Centres Report (2012)

Note: This table is based on the district centre boundary as defined by the Warrington Local Plan Core Strategy Policies Map

UK Average not provided as categories do not directly correspond with Goad Category Report

Table 2: Previous Number of Units in Westbrook district centre (November 2014)

Existing Floorspace			
	Sq.m	Westbrook district centre	UK
A1 Convenience	7,558	55.4%	-
A1 Comparison	393	2.9%	-
A1 Service	1,057	7.7%	-
Other	4,645	34.0%	-
Vacant	0	0.0%	-
Total	13,651	100.0%	-

Source: Warrington Retail Centres Report (2012)

Note: This table is based on the district centre boundary as defined by the Warrington Local Plan Core Strategy Policies Map.

UK Average not provided as categories do not directly correspond with Goad Category Report

Table 3: Existing Number of Units in Westbrook district centre (November 2014)

Existing Number of Units			
	No.	Westbrook district centre	UK
Convenience	1	6.7%	8.4%
Comparison	3	20.0%	32.6%
Retail Service	4	26.7%	14.1%
Leisure Service	4	26.7%	22.3%
Financial and Business Service	1	6.7%	10.9%
Vacant	2	13.3%	11.4%
Total	15	100.0%	100%

Source: Site Survey (November 2014), Warrington Retail Centres Report (2012) & Goad UK average from the Goad Category Report (September 2014)

Note: This table is based on the centre boundary as defined by the Warrington Local Plan Core Strategy Policies Map

Table 4: Existing Floorspace in Westbrook district centre (November 2014)

Existing Floorspace			
	Sq.m	Westbrook district centre	UK
Convenience	7,392	55.1%	15.0%
Comparison	577	4.3%	36.2%
Retail Service	470	3.5%	7.4%
Leisure Service	4,472	33.3%	23.2%
Financial and Business Service	52	0.4%	8.2%
Vacant	452	3.4%	9.3%
Total	13,497	100.0%	100%

Source: Site Survey (November 2014), Warrington Retail Centres Report (2012) & Goad UK average from the Goad Category Report (September 2014)

Note: This table is based on the centre boundary as defined by the Warrington Local Plan Core Strategy Policies Map

The methodology applied by Warrington Borough Council in producing the Retail Centre Report 2012 to determine the diversity of main town centre uses varies from the methodology applied by WYG which uses the Goad Category Report to determine the diversity of use. Any changes in respect of diversity of use over time should be viewed in this context.



Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Convenience Good Units

The Asda superstore is the sole convenience goods unit present in Birchwood district centre and therefore the proportion of convenience goods units in the centre (6.7%) is less than the respective national average figure (8.4%). However, the Asda store provides the majority of floorspace (55.1%) in the district centre and therefore the proportion of convenience goods floorspace in the centre is far greater than the national average (15.0%). The Asda store currently provides a 'one-stop-shop' for the convenience goods needs of those visiting the district centre.

The number of convenience goods units present in the centre has decreased since 2012. In 2012, there were two convenience goods units present in the centre, while at 2014 there is a single convenience goods unit.

Comparison Good Units

There are currently three comparison goods units present in Westbrook district centre, namely a chemists, charity shop and carpet shop. The centre is under-represented in terms of both the proportion of comparison goods units (20.0%) and floorspace (4.3%) when compared to the respective national average figures (32.6% and 36.2%).

Notwithstanding the proportion of comparison goods units and floorspace in Westbrook district centre being substantially less than the respective national average figures, the number of comparison goods units has increased by one unit since 2012, (from two units to three units).

Retail Services

The centre is well represented in term of retail service units, with the proportion of retail service units (26.7%) greater than the respective national average figure (14.1%). However, the proportion of retail service floorspace (3.5%) is slightly less than the national average (7.4%), which is reflective of the small scale of the retail service units present in the centre. The majority of retail service units in the centre comprise health and beauty uses (75%). An optician is also present in the centre which is operated by Asda.

Leisure Services

There are four leisure service units present in Westbrook district centre, namely a betting office, cinema, coffee shop and restaurant. The centre is well represented in terms of leisure service floorspace, with the proportion of leisure service units (26.7%) and floorspace (33.3%) in the centre greater than the respective national average figures (22.3% and 23.2%).



Financial and Business Services

The centre is under-represented in terms of financial and business service units and floorspace. The proportion of such floorspace in the centre (0.4%) is substantially less than the national average (8.2%). The sole financial and business service use is an estate agents.

As the Warrington Retail Centre Report 2012 did not specifically record the number of retail, leisure and financial and business service units present in Westbrook district centre, it is not possible to make a direct comparison in terms of changes which have occurred since 2012. Notwithstanding this, the Retail Centre Report noted that at 2012 there was a high proportion of service units present in the centre. This remains the case at 2014, as 69.0% of the occupied units in the centre are occupied by service units (retail, leisure and business/financial).

Non-Retail Units

In addition to the retail and service units which are present in Westbrook district centre, there are additional uses which have an important role in catering for the needs of the local community, namely a dentists, medical centre, library and childcare centre.

Proportion of Vacant Street Level Property

In November 2014, there were two vacant units present in Westbrook district centre, comprising 452 sq.m floorspace. The vacancy rate in terms of floorspace (3.4%) in the centre is well below the national average, however the proportion of vacant units (13.3%) is greater than the national average (11.4%). The largest vacant unit in the centre provides 366 sq.m floorspace and was formerly occupied by Blockbuster video. The second vacant unit has a floorspace of 86 sq.m gross and was formerly occupied by David Pluck betting office which has now relocated within the centre.

Since the Warrington Retail Centres Report was published in 2012, the number of vacant retail units in Westbrook district centre has increased by two units. In 2012, there were no vacant units present in the centre.

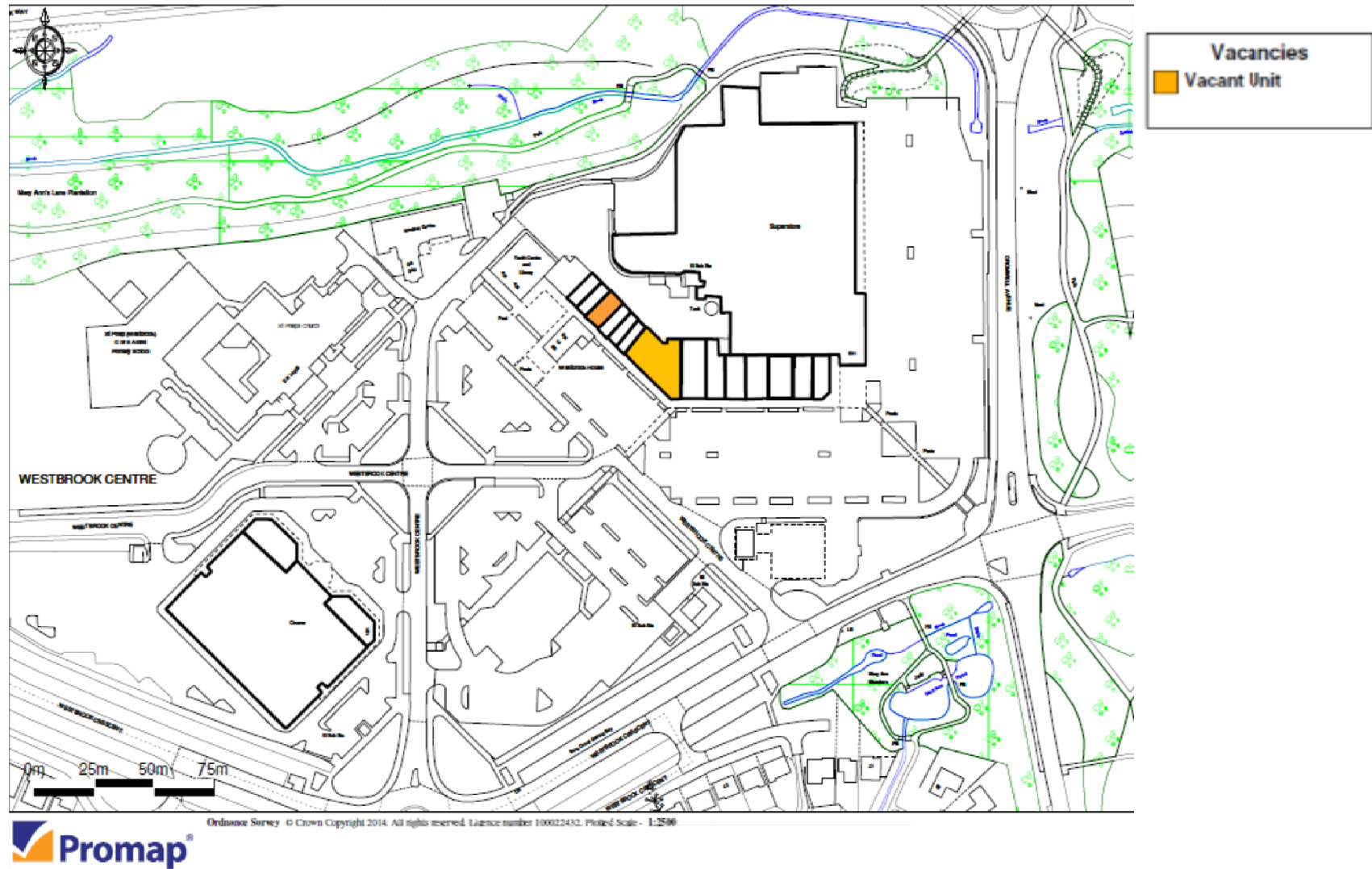


Photograph (left): Vacant Unit, Former Blockbuster Unit



Photograph (right): Vacant Unit, Former David Pluck Unit

Proportion of Vacant Street Level Property





Customers' Views and Behaviour

In-street surveys were undertaken in Westbrook district centre in December 2014 in order to provide an insight into the views and behaviours of customers, residents and visitors. A full analysis of the in-street survey results for Westbrook, as well as Warrington and Stockton Heath is included at Section 4 of the Main Report.

The surveys revealed the most common reason for respondents visiting Westbrook on the day of the in-street survey was to visit the Asda store within the district centre (34.7%). This is unsurprising given that the centre is anchored by the Asda store and that it is this store which provides the greatest level of floorspace within the centre.

When asked what types of shops or services they would like to see more of in Westbrook, the top answers included the desire for more restaurants/cafes (10.9%), more banks (5.0%) and more clothing stores (5.0%). When asked what types of leisure facilities they would like to see more of in Westbrook, the most common answer provided by respondents was that they would like more restaurants/cafes (4.0%). The fact that the most popular answer to these two questions indicates a desire for more restaurants/cafes in Westbrook may be reflective of respondents wanting to see the leisure function provided by Westbrook expanded. There is already a leisure hub present in the centre which includes the cinema, restaurant and cafe. However, it appears to be the case that consumers wish to see additional diversity in terms of the range of leisure services which are available.

Respondents to the in-street surveys were asked to compare Westbrook district centre to other comparably sized centres in relation to a number of matters. Respondents did not provide as many positive responses in comparing Westbrook to other centre, as were received from respondents to the in-street surveys in relation to Warrington and Stockton Heath. Similarly, when asked to provide suggestions of how the district centre could be improved, only a few suggestions were received. Of those who did suggest improvements, the most common were more quality restaurants/cafes and the expansion of the centre. Again, this appears to reflect a desire for a more diverse range or choice of food and drink uses in Westbrook. When asked about the centres biggest weakness, respondents again struggled to identify many weaknesses. Notwithstanding this, those who did cite a weakness referred primarily to the town centre environment and the range and choice of pubs/restaurants available.

It is clear that there is a high reliance on private modes of transport in terms of those travelling to Westbrook district centre, as 84.1% of respondents to the in-street survey had travelled to the centre by car. Only 9.9% of respondents to the in-street survey had travelled to the centre on foot.

It is evident that Westbrook has a reasonable night time economy as 50.6% of respondents to the in-street survey advised that they visited the centre in the evening. As would be expected, the most cited reason for respondent's visiting the centre in the evening was to go to the cinema (27.5%).



Retailer Representation and Intentions to Change Representation

Westbrook district centre is anchored by the Asda store, which provides the majority of floorspace within the centre. Other national multiple retailers present in the centre include British Heart Foundation, Costa Coffee, Frankie and Bennies and Odeon. Although there is representation from national multiple retailers in the centre, the majority of units are operated by independent retailers.

Commercial Rents

Unit 8 Westbrook Shopping Centre is being marketed by commercial agents, Johnson Fellows, at a rent of £182/sq.m (267 sq.m at £48,500 per annum) and Unit 13 is being marketed at a rent of £190/sq.m (84 sq.m floorspace at £16,000 per annum). The advertised rents in Westbrook are higher than those expected in Birchwood, but lower than those expected in Stockton Heath.

Pedestrian Flows

An assessment of the general pedestrian flows in Westbrook district centre was noted during our site visit on Monday 10th November 2014. It was evident that the greatest level of activity was in the locality of the Asda, with high levels of pedestrians witnessed entering and leaving the superstore. Pedestrian activity throughout the remainder of the centre was much quieter, with far fewer pedestrians witnessed walking along the parade of shops which forms the remainder of the shopping centre. Low levels of pedestrian activity were present in the vicinity of the Odeon cinema and adjoining leisure service units. However, this is to be expected given the site visit took place on a Monday morning. Although high levels of footfall were witnessed entering the Asda store, given the high level of occupancy of the car park, it is apparent that a large proportion of the trips to the centre are undertaken by private modes of transport rather than by foot.



Accessibility

Road Access: Westbrook district centre is located in the west of Warrington Borough. The district centre is situated approximately 4 kilometres to the north west of Warrington town centre and Gemini Retail Park is located less than a kilometre to the north of the centre. Access to Westbrook district centre is obtained off Westbrook Crescent which leads to the A574 to the east.

Car Parking: Substantial car parking is provided at Westbrook district centre. Car parking is located to the front and side of the Asda superstore and to the front of the parade of retail and service units. Free parking is provided for customers of the district centre. A separate customer car park is provided to serve the Odeon cinema and adjoining food and drink uses.

Public Transport: Bus stops are located on Westbrook Crescent and Cromwell Avenue, with pedestrian walkways leading though the Asda car park to these routes where the bus stops are situated. Bus stops are also located on Westbrook Crescent to the rear of the Odeon cinema. Regular services are provided to surrounding residential areas and to Warrington town centre.

Although public transport provision serves Westbrook district centre, it is considered that a high proportion of the journeys that are made to the centre are by private transport modes given the plentiful, well used car parking at this location, and as a considerable number of journeys to the centre are made for the primary purpose of undertaking a shopping trip at the Asda store when the use of a car provides convenience when undertaking a main food shop.



Perception of Safety and Occurrence of Crime

In accordance with the policing website (www.police.uk), in September 2014 117 crimes were reported within a mile radius of Westbrook district centre. Most reported crimes (56) related to anti-social behaviour. Since September 2012, the number of reported crimes within a mile radius of the centre has fluctuated, from 133 crimes reported in September 2012, to 92 crimes reported in September 2013, to 117 crimes reported in September 2014. At September 2014, the number of crimes reported within a mile radius of Westbrook was lower than for Stockton Heath but higher than for Birchwood.

The perception of safety in Westbrook district centre is reasonable. There are signs present within the district centre explaining that CCTV is operational within the centre. Due to the compact nature of the centre, natural surveillance is good. However, some of the units present at the western end of the centre are slightly screened from view due to the presence of the overhead office development, meaning that the external environment at this location suffers from poor natural lighting.

State of Town Centre Environmental Quality

The state of the town centre environment in Westbrook district centre is reasonable. The shopfronts are well maintained, the centre is clean and there are elements of landscaping and street furniture within the centre. The design of the shopping centre does appear somewhat outdated, particularly in terms of the covered walkway leading along the parade of shops. Notwithstanding this, the centre remains fit for purpose and the covered walkway acts as a shelter from the elements.



Conclusion

Westbrook district centre is dominated by the Asda supermarket which forms the anchor retail unit in the centre. However, in addition the centre also provides an important leisure function by providing the only cinema within Warrington Borough. As a result, floorspace in the centre is biased toward convenience and leisure, while the proportion of comparison, retail service and business/financial service floorspace in the centre is below the national average. Although the proportion of vacant units in the centre is below the national average, the vacancy rate in the centre has increased since 2012.

It is evident that the majority of the trips to the centre are by private transport modes, as there is ease of access for such modes of transport with a substantial car park provided in the centre. Although the centre is well maintained, it would perhaps benefit from a level of modernisation, particularly in terms of the smaller parade of units which are somewhat overshadowed by the Asda store.

Overall, it is considered that Westbrook is a vital and viable centre. It is evident that the centre performs an important role in catering for day to day needs of the local community, particularly in relation to food shopping. The centre also provides a wider leisure function as the centre houses the only cinema in the Borough. Notwithstanding this, the centre is dominated by the Asda and is reliant on this use. The vacancy rate in the centre has increased over the last two years and therefore this should be monitored to ensure that vacancies do not increase further.