

2. SITE APPRAISAL UPDATE

The Amended Framework represents an evolution from the original concept and proposals to more fully embrace its potential as a town centre extension. As such, this section concentrates only on the key changes arising in particular the merits of extending the development area. Reference should be made to the The Rock Triangle Framework as to the case for development of the original area.

The original Appraisal considers three distinct but interrelated themes: place, movement and economics. The Audit section went on to analyse the characteristics of the development area so as to identify the key development principles which represent the Framework itself.

Through this approach, the Framework is grounded in a thorough assessment of the nature and character of the development area and its surroundings.

2.1 Place

The amended Framework covers an extended area to the west of The Rock which includes:

- Hornby Buildings - located at the end of the pedestrianised part of The Rock, this is a local landmark building but one which is showing its age. It is home to a number of retail and service outlets but due to its design and form, a large part of the upper floors have been vacant for a number of years and continue to deteriorate. The architectural design is of 'art deco' style.
- The former Cinema building - this building is now occupied by a nightclub with frontage retail kiosk style units. The building is unremarkable in appearance and of no particular architectural importance. There is an opportunity to redevelop this site in conjunction with the adjacent Hornby Buildings.
- Thwaites public house - This property was formerly the Showboat PH and is now operated as the Phunky Dory's Diskobah. It is a largely single storey building of no particular architectural merit. There is an opportunity to improve the integration of the site with the surrounding area. The reconfiguration of the property in that respect or complete redevelopment of the site should be encouraged.

The revised Framework envisages the creation of a visually striking statement building, on the site of Hornby Buildings / former Cinema building, at this key location to provide a 'new' Hornby Buildings that will better function in terms of its relationship to The Rock, the Millgate Centre and The Rock Triangle and contribute more to the vitality of the town centre.

The above properties are shown on the photographs overleaf. It is also noted that there are no strong landscape features within the extension area, which is dominated largely by surface tarmac areas and the building forms of the multi-storey car park, Hornby Buildings, the public house and the nightclub.

In relation to the eastern area, the original Framework identified the United Reformed Church as a building to be retained. Since then, the Church has expressed a desire to relocate to a new modern facility that they consider would provide a better environment for Church services and functions. A site has been identified—the School Brow car park in the northern part of the Town Centre—to accommodate a new facility, designed specifically for the United Reformed Church. Furthermore, a review of the Church building fabric has identified weaknesses in the structural integrity of the building and the need for extensive building and restoration work.

Whereas the existing Church is one of the better buildings within The Rock Triangle area, it is not of special architectural merit, it is not listed nor does it lie within a conservation area.

The original Framework also envisaged the retention of the Medical Centre and the LA Fitness building. These buildings were identified for retention not for their architectural merit but for their economic value.

The Medical Centre, through the Bury Primary Healthcare Trust, has identified a need for extra accommodation to cater for additional facilities over and above existing. The opportunity exists to maintain the economic and social value of this use through a relocation within the Development Area.

The retention of the LA Fitness building—which is of poor visual quality but would have been hidden previously by new development and the Church—would compromise the quality of the revised proposals. The intention therefore is to redevelop this site and potentially relocate this user elsewhere within the development.



Hornby Buildings—interesting but under-used building with opportunity to re-develop with a statement building of high architectural quality with current users incorporated / relocated



Sol nightclub building—poor visual quality with large expanse of dead frontage to side and rear with an opportunity to create new landmark building in this location and incorporate / relocate users



Bury United Reformed Church—opportunity to relocate to new purpose-built facility designed to meet modern-day needs and requirements and to incorporate site within development area



Thwaites PH - largely single storey structure with an opportunity to reconfigure or redevelop as part of an initial or future phase



LA Fitness building—industrial form building in a town centre environment with an opportunity to relocate user and redevelop site



Minden Medical Centre—opportunity to expand the facilities will require a relocation to a new purpose-built centre

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2.2 Movement

Although The Rock Triangle area is within easy walking distance of the heart of the town centre, the original Framework identified the barrier effect of The Rock / Rochdale Road and emphasis was placed within the original Masterplan on improving the quality of the link to and from the pedestrianised part of The Rock.

Through the provision of a new north-south route along the edge of the Site, there is now an opportunity to close part of the Rock to traffic. This would further improve the integration of The Rock Triangle area with the rest of the Town Centre. It would also enable a better environment to be created for pedestrians and the experience of shopping, visiting and living in this particular part of the town would be enhanced as a result.

The eastern part of the Town Centre is served by a number of bus routes. The closure of part of The Rock would influence those routes and additional bus facilities would need to be provided at various key locations. There is an opportunity to provide a major bus pick up and drop off area in a new public space at the intersection of the Rochdale Road and Angouleme Way as well as adjacent to the new medical centre facility. New pedestrian crossings should be provided in the vicinity of new bus stops.

Taxi provision currently exists outside the Sol nightclub. This would need to be relocated, and improved, as part of any detailed development scheme. This facility could be provided by way of an integrated bus / taxi facility.

Accessibility of the development for all is a key design requirement that will need to be taken into account as part of the detailed development process. This will also need to address the expansion of shopmobility services, to support the existing facility within the Millgate Centre.

The development scheme should also provide for a variety of pedestrian routes, from the heart of the Town Centre onto The Rock, towards the Moorgate Retail Park, along Rochdale Road, and towards the Bus Depot site. The current pedestrianised area of The Rock should be dramatically upgraded as part of a comprehensive public realm improvement scheme.

The original Framework envisaged the development of both surface and multi-storey car parking. Multi-storey car parking is more effective and efficient in terms of the use of land and would enable a greater number of spaces to be provided. Any such provision would need to be made available for town centre use as a general shoppers and visitors car park.



Opportunity for an enhanced connection into the historic main street of the town centre, The Rock



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2.3 Economics

An update to the market assessment has been undertaken, building upon the findings set out in the original Framework. In particular, this section has been informed by the conclusions of the Bury Retail Study, referred to above.

Retail

Bury town centre is the largest centre within the Borough. The Drivers Jonas study identifies the capacity for some 56,000 sq.m. of additional new comparison floorspace and 2,700 sq.m. of new convenience floorspace in Bury by the year 2008.

The Study also identifies a number of weaknesses in the Centre including the lack of a department store and cinema, the small floorplates of retail stores, the barriers to pedestrian movement and the high level of trade 'leakage' to competing centres.

The original 'Bury but Better' Town Centre Strategy identified the opportunity of extending the Millgate Centre onto the Markets area, in the knowledge of developer interest at the time. The retention of the Markets in this location however precludes an extension to the Millgate of significant scale. The only realistic and appropriate option to accommodate the need for further retail provision on a significant scale is The Rock Triangle site.

If such provision is not provided for, then the high level of trade leakage to competing centres will be exacerbated - particular as competing centres are all seeking to improve their shopping offer through new development.

The Rock Triangle development scheme has the potential to accommodate up to 50,000 sq.m. of mixed retail and food and drink floorspace accommodating a department store and a range of retail units including the larger units to meet the identified qualitative need.

Elsewhere within the centre, a series of complementary development projects could be brought forward, as envisaged in the Town Centre Vision and Development Strategy, including potentially an extension to the Marks and Spencer unit, to connect directly with the Rock, large space unit development at Princess Parade and the potential development of land south of the Old Post Office.

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Leisure

The original Framework recognised the limited development that has taken place in the commercial leisure sector.

A re-audit of that sector has identified scope for a town centre multi screen cinema, bowling alley, bingo hall and nightclub.

The potential for such facilities is recognised in the Bury Retail Study.

The development should seek to include provision for a large multi screen cinema, subject to end-user demand, and large leisure units suitable for uses such as bingo, nightclub and bowling.

The expansion of the food and drink sector through the provision of a range of new eating places should be supported.

Offices

The scope for additional quality affordable office space within or on the edge of town centre was originally identified as an option which could be incorporated within a mixed use scheme.

Given current proposals elsewhere serving Bury Town Centre, for a more extensive amount of office development, such as at the Bury Ground site, the potential for a significant amount of office development is now more limited and its inclusion on a significant scale within The Rock Triangle would dilute market interest from other regeneration initiatives.

Residential

The Bury Town Centre residential living market is still in its relative infancy compared to many other metropolitan towns and cities. However there is strong demand for apartments in locations within or close to the town centre with specific interest in The Rock Triangle site.

Demographic projections indicate a growing market for accommodation for single persons and couples and the market for apartments is expected to grow.

The inclusion of residential uses within the development should be promoted and supported with the potential for 100-200 residential units, helping to fuel the growth of the apartment sector in the Town Centre and provide additional homes in a highly sustainable location.

3. ANALYSIS UPDATE

3.1 Re-Analysis

The re-appraisal of the development opportunity also enables a re-analysis of the Development Framework's strengths and weaknesses.

The strengths and weaknesses identified in the original assessment remain on the whole valid. However, in addition, a further strength of the revised proposals is the improved integration of the site with the heart of the town centre.

The impact of the revised proposals has been audited in relation to the themes of place, movement and economics. The following conclusions of that appraisal can be drawn:

- The additional area contains no buildings of over-riding architectural or visual interest that would need to be preserved. The most interesting building, Hornby Buildings, should be replaced, together with The Sol nightclub, with a new statement building of higher architectural quality to better fulfil its pivotal role between the Rock, the Millgate Centre and The Rock Triangle
- There are conflicts between cars, service vehicles and pedestrians in the extension area that could be mitigated through new development
- The additional area will allow the quality of development proposed for The Rock Triangle, in terms of urban and architectural design, to be extended across to Hornby Buildings and the adjacent area
- The closure of part of The Rock, to facilitate better integration, can be facilitated through its replacement with a new north-south link road further east
- There will be a need to provide additional bus, taxi and cycle infrastructure and facilities within the final development scheme
- The need for additional comparison and convenience goods floorspace can be met by this development scheme together with other planned proposals for other areas of the town centre, providing space to attract new retailers into the town including a new department store
- The need for additional leisure including a town centre cinema can be provided for, together with additional food and drink outlets

- The market for residential apartments can be expanded through the inclusion of this element into a mixed use scheme bringing 24 hour vitality to the Eastern Gateway area
- The revised proposals means there is no need to relocate the town's Market and bus station to meet the requirement for additional retail floorspace

The original Framework document identified a development project that would deliver significant physical, economic, social and transportational benefits. The inclusion of the additional development area enables these benefits to be expanded upon.

The other key re-assessments that have been required are on the Minden Medical Centre, the United Reformed Church and the LA Fitness buildings as these buildings were envisaged for retention within the original Framework.

The conclusions to the re-assessment are:

- The opportunity to provide additional town centre medical facilities through the Primary Health Care Trust can only be realised fully through the relocation of the Minden Medical Centre to larger premises
- The opportunity for the United Reformed Church to relocate to a new purpose-built facility elsewhere in the town centre can be facilitated through this development. The Church building itself is not identified as being of special architectural or historic importance and the structural integrity of the building is compromised by building defects
- The LA Fitness building is of low visual quality—originally to be 'hidden' by the Church but now to be exposed— and would compromise the architectural integrity of the completed development

In relation to the extension area, the opportunity to relocate the users within the nightclub (Sol) and public house properties should be investigated in addition to the relocation of retail and service tenants from Hornby Buildings.

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3.2 Relationship to Town Centre Vision and Strategy

In implementing the fundamental principles of the 'Bury but Better' Town Centre Vision and Strategy, The Rock Triangle Development Framework respects the guiding themes of:

Reinforcing Bury as a market town

The amended development principles more fully reflect the existing urban grain of the town centre. The Bury Markets can be retained *in situ* maintaining its national reputation as a strong trading anchor for the expanded town centre.

The development form proposed by the Illustrative Masterplan will create new places of local distinction of scale and massing to maintain the function of Bury as a compact and walkable market town.

Making the most of Bury's heritage

There is a general lack of heritage interest in the Eastern Gateway area of the town centre. The revised proposals provide a greater opportunity to create a new heritage, building upon the quality of the old elsewhere.

There is an opportunity to expand the 'zone of urban quality', as referred to in the Vision and Strategy report, by revitalising run-down areas of land through high quality buildings and open spaces.

The development would enable St Johns Gardens to function more as a town centre square, providing a key area of green open space to residents and users of The Rock Triangle.

The Rock is the traditional high street of the town centre. Respecting that heritage, the development can re-energise the Rock, with the additional footfall to be generated providing a boost to existing businesses and fuelling further regeneration initiatives and property improvements.

The development can be designed to provide a key vista towards the spire of the Church of St Mary the Virgin, the key landmark building in the town centre.

The new development 'blocks' can be designed with regard to the distance and spaces of other blocks in the town centre, respecting the town's urban grain.

Creating an accessible town centre

The connections by foot, by bus, by taxi, by cycle and by car can be significantly improved; new car parking and a link road can be developed; new bus facilities can be provided; shopmobility facilities can be enhanced; and buildings and spaces can be made accessible to all. There is an opportunity to create a new integrated bus / taxi facility to serve the eastern quarter of the town centre.

Creating an attractive, compact town centre

A fine grain pattern of development can be established to accord with the historic urban form of the town centre and enable buildings of high architectural quality to be set around new public spaces.

The pattern of planned pedestrian routes provide the accessible and compact town centre concept with a variety of different routes to promote permeability and linkages between different parts of an active town centre.

Managing the quality of the town centre

Through working with the Council and the wider community, town centre management initiatives can be put in place which will ensure that the quality of development is sustained as part of a high quality town centre as a whole. The opportunity to facilitate the creation of a business improvement district can also be explored.

Broadening the role of the town centre

The provision of new facilities such as large format retail stores, a department store, a multi screen cinema, a wider range of restaurants and eating places and new residential apartments will broaden the role of the town centre and enable it to be more vibrant as a result.

This will not only broaden the role of the town centre but enable it to compete effectively with other towns, cities and out of town shopping attractions. By building on the key strengths of quality urban environments and compactness, the town centre can offer a distinctive experience that enables it to be sustainable and attractive into the future.

4. DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

This Consultation Draft Framework sets out the principles and parameters to guide a future planning submission. The Framework retains an element of flexibility to allow for creativity in the end development solution but any scheme that varied from the Framework would have to be justified in the light of special and exceptional circumstances.

This section builds on the earlier analysis to establish a set of guiding principles. The illustrative masterplan overleaf translates those principles in a graphical form. The principles set out in the original assessment have been reviewed, augmented and updated as below:

4.1 Place and Urban Design

- Buildings should be sited where they front the main streets
- Buildings facing The Rock should be designed so as to provide an active streetscene
- Any perceived bulk of large development blocks should be minimised and absorbed within a finer grain of built structures
- A 'new' Hornby Buildings should be developed of high architectural quality and of increased size
- Blank walls and servicing areas should be minimised
- Buildings should be set at different heights to create variety
- Buildings fronting onto the new link road should present attractive frontages and contribute to the streetscene
- Frequent windows and doors should be included so as to provide activity and animation to the streetscene
- The Medical Centre, Bury United Reformed Church, LA Fitness centre and Sol nightclub should be relocated as and where appropriate
- The opportunity to reconfigure / redevelop the Thwaites public house should be encouraged to improve the integration of this property / site with the surrounding new development
- Public art which could include specialist lighting should be incorporated within the scheme design proposals
- A new central street for pedestrians should be created through the site west-east—new buildings should face onto this street
- New public squares should be created
- St Johns Gardens and links to and from it should be enhanced
- The pedestrianised part of The Rock should be upgraded as part of the development scheme
- The Angouleme Way / Rochdale Road roundabout should be removed to improve accessibility particularly for pedestrians

- Safety and accessibility should be integrated into scheme design
- The site should be covered by the town's CCTV system
- Durable and high quality materials should be used throughout

4.2 Movement

- The function of Rochdale Road between The Rock / Hornby Buildings and Angouleme Way / Rochdale Road roundabout should be replaced with a new link road along the eastern edge of the site
- Priority should be given to pedestrians on key pedestrian routes and existing poorly performing / non-existent routes improved / created in particular connections to and from the Market and Millgate Centre, along Angouleme Way and Clerke Street
- A new town centre multi storey car park of a size to be agreed with Bury Council should be provided to incorporate safety, security and access for all features
- New bus stops / lay-bys should be integrated into the final scheme
- Taxi ranks that extend over and above current facilities should be incorporated into the final scheme
- New cycle routes and parking for cyclists should be provided
- Provision should be made for shopmobility services to improve accessibility for the mobility impaired
- The retention of car parking numbers to serve the town centre during construction should be agreed with Bury Council'
- Appropriate servicing routes and layouts should be developed

4.3 Economics and Use

- A range of uses should be included within a mixed use development
- Space for up to 50,000 sq.m. of mixed retail and food and drink floorspace should be provided to include for a new department store and large format retail stores
- Space for smaller retail units should be incorporated to provide an opportunity to relocate existing traders and provide space for local independent retailers
- An area of the site should be specifically identified for apartments
- Additional uses above ground floor retail should be incorporated wherever possible
- Provision should be made for new leisure facilities including a multi screen cinema together with food and drink outlets
- An area of the development site should be identified for a new primary health care facility with full access facilities for those arriving by car, bus, cycle or foot
- The developer should explore with Bury Council the scope to jointly fund a town centre manager