Area description

The Priory Street opportunity area is located close to the Market Place, east of Wolverhampton Street, and is focused around Stone Street Square and ‘Crown Square’. Much of the opportunity area is within the existing town centre conservation area recognising that there are considerable historic and townscape qualities present. There are a mix of uses present across the opportunity area including an important civic function, small scale shops and retailers, offices, pubs and bars.

The area is identified as a cultural quarter in the UDP (policy DTC2 (IX) and policy DTC2 (X)). No significant change is proposed within the plan, but the importance of conserving the historic fabric of the area is highlighted.

Vision

The Priory Street area is a real asset within the town centre. The historic feel, the character of buildings and the spatial qualities of the streets and squares that they enclose are particularly strong.

Proposals around Priory Street therefore focus on maintaining buildings through finding new and sustainable long term uses and repairing the fabric of the area where insensitive re-development has taken place or where there are gaps in street frontages. New uses will include a mix of specialist retailers, bars, cafes and residential conversions on upper floors. The Old Court House on Priory Street has recently been converted to apartments acting as a potentially important catalyst for change of use within the area.

Building on the high quality of the recently completed Stone Street Square, public realm improvements will focus on enhancing the appearance of Priory Street and the area at the Wolverhampton Street junction, to be known as Crown Square. Back alleys and passages will also be cleaned and enhanced to improve pedestrian routes around the area.
Development components

**Access** – pedestrian accessibility around the area will be improved through enhancements to Court Passage and to other alleyways. Priory Street and Wolverhampton Street are both important routes within the town centre and principal points of access to potential development sites should be taken from these streets.

**Frontages** – as a priority new frontage development will be opened onto Stone Street Square south where there is currently a blank elevation. There is already strong frontage development onto Priory Street and Wolverhampton Street and this will be maintained.

**Corners and landmarks** – given the strong townscape and built heritage qualities of the area there are a number of attractive landmarks and well defined corners. The Wolverhampton Street/Priory Street junction is a notable example, as is Stone Street.

**Viewpoints and vistas** – there is a strong viewpoint down Stone Street from the High Street where the tower of the court house terminates the vista. This should be maintained.

**Built form** – the historic, attractive built form is a key attribute of the area and preservation and re-use of existing buildings will therefore be a priority. There is an important opportunity to introduce new development on the southern side of Stone Street Square to provide an active new edge to the space.

**Mix of uses** – a mix of commercial, retail, restaurant and café uses will be maintained at ground floor level with predominantly residential uses occupying upper floors.

**Accommodating the car** – where necessary operational car parking should be discretely accommodated within the centre of blocks away from the street.

**Public realm** – the refurbishment of Stone Street Square represents a significant investment in the quality of the public realm by Dudley council. Although the small loss of parking has been criticised, it has established a far more attractive setting for town centre activities and must be viewed as an essential first step in revitalising the area. It provides a benchmark in terms of environmental quality for the remainder of the town centre area and will give encouragement for private investors and developers to not only regenerate adjoining buildings but also enhance other parts of the town centre to an equally high standard.

The public realm comprises the streets, footpaths and open spaces of Dudley town centre which are contained by buildings and other structures. The design, quality and appearance of the public realm is an important component in defining the character of a place. It greatly influences people’s perceptions of a place and is vital to attracting and sustaining investment.
Trident Triangle

Area description

The Trident Triangle opportunity area is located between Upper High Street, Wolverhampton Street and Inhedge Gardens. It is focused on the Trident Centre, a purpose built shopping precinct dating from the 1960’s, the retail frontage along Upper High Street and Inhedge Gardens, which is one of the key areas of open space with in the town centre. The area is largely retail in nature, although there are a number of vacant units.

The area is identified within the UDP as being an opportunity site (site c - Trident Centre / Inhedge) (policy DTC2 (VI)); the boundary largely corresponds with the opportunity area. The plan promotes the redevelopment of the area with a strong focus on residential development which is a preferred use, and the area is identified as a priority site. Strong frontage development along Upper High Street and Inhedge Gardens are design requirements, as is respect for the historic block structure and historic grain remaining in the area.

Vision

As the retail focus of Dudley town centre shifts to meet modern needs and aspirations so the existing retail areas need to be re-invented and re-juvenated. Trident Triangle will demonstrate how this can be achieved through the re-development of retail units along the south western end of the High Street and replacement with apartments - town houses fronting not only the street but Inhedge Gardens to the north.

The remainder of the Trident Centre will be reconfigured to suit the needs of modern retailers and restaurant operators, and to provide a lively frontage onto the High Street. The Old Meeting House will be given an enhanced setting through the creation of a new public square, with pedestrian access enhanced through and around the Inhedge by improving natural surveillance from adjoining houses and apartments. Inhedge Gardens will be restored and enhanced creating part of a strengthened network of intimate streets, squares and courtyards from St Thomas’ (top church) through to Priory Street, Stone Street Square, Tower Street and beyond to the castle.
Development components

Access – the existing vehicle access point from Wolverhampton Street will be retained and a new surface level access point taken from the High Street. This should be through an arch or gateway ensuring that the street frontage is largely unbroken. Pedestrian accessibility will be enhanced particularly from the High Street to Inhedge Gardens.

Frontages – frontages along the High Street should be strengthened and new frontage development provided adjoining Inhedge Gardens. Reconfiguring development around the Old Meeting House should provide new frontages around this key listed building.

Gateways – the gateways from the High Street to Inhedge Gardens should be re-enforced through tree planting and environmental enhancement.

Corners and landmarks – the south west corner of the proposed development, when viewed from the approach down the High Street, is prominent and forms a counterpoint to the former Cookes’ building on the opposite side. The corner should also be emphasised through built form, possibly using a tower or other design feature.

Built form – the priority will be to provide good quality containment to the High Street, Inhedge Gardens and define the area around the Old Meeting House. A mix of four storey apartments and three storey town houses would be appropriate.

Mix of uses – residential development will replace some of the existing retail along the south western part of the High Street and front Inhedge Gardens. Retained retail units in the Trident Centre should be reconfigured to provide a better mix of sizes and formats with improved frontages.

Accommodating the car – existing underground parking will be retained with an improved entrance point off Wolverhampton Street. New courtyard parking will be provided for the new residential development minimising the visual impact of the car and ensuring a clear distinction between public and private areas.

Servicing – servicing will be from the street or from yards to the rear of commercial and retail premises.

Public realm – the two key public realm elements will be the enhancement of Inhedge Gardens through improved access points and a high quality built edge, and the provision of a new courtyard setting and public space around the Old Meeting House.
South West Gateway

Area description

The South West Gateway area is an important approach into the town centre. It is focused on the junction of High Street and King Street. There are a mix of retail uses present including a small food store (Netto), and a motor repair centre and car showroom on King Street. Some of the buildings on High Street are vacant and in a state of disrepair, although potentially of historic interest, and the built fabric and street frontage is disrupted by areas of surface parking. The overall environmental quality is poor.

The area is designated as an Opportunity Site (site e) in the UDP (policy DTC2 (VIII)). A broad mix of uses are identified as being acceptable, with residential development targeted as being a required use. Design requirements include high quality frontage development along King Street and High Street, with listed or locally listed buildings retained, and the inclusion of a strong focal point to maximise the gateway potential of the area including a landmark building.

Vision

To enhance and strengthen the sense of arrival into the town centre the role and appearance of the South West Gateway, where High Street and King Street converge, should be improved.

In order to achieve a step change in the character of building frontages in the gateway area the area to the west of St Thomas’s Church needs to be substantially upgraded. This might be achieved through selective redevelopment and refurbishment or a more comprehensive solution.

Tree planting and public realm enhancements, including re-paving and the installation of public art, will also help to establish the quality and character of Dudley town centre from this important point of arrival.
Development components

**Access** – access points should be derived off the High Street or King Street.

**Frontages** – strong frontage development should address the High Street and King Street with development also addressing the junction between the two roads.

**Gateways** – the opportunity area is an important gateway into the town centre. Development must therefore set a high standard in order to establish the sense of arrival and identity of Dudley town centre as a whole.

**Corners and landmarks** – St Thomas’s Church spire (top church) is already an important landmark in the area. There is also a key opportunity to create another landmark building at the corner of the High Street and King Street.

**Viewpoints and vistas** – the vistas along the High Street and King Street should be re-enforced through good quality frontage development and in the case of King Street, through boulevard planting. The expansive views back to the south and west should be preserved.

**Built form** – a strong, high quality built form of up to four stories will be required to provide containment of the High Street and King Street, particularly at the junction. A mix of retention and refurbishment of existing buildings together with selective redevelopment opportunities will be explored.

**Mix of uses** – a mix of commercial and retail uses at ground floor level with residential above (a minimum of twenty units is required by the UDP) will be sought with retention of the existing food store use.

**Accommodating the car** – a mixture of short stay on-street parking and within block parking will be provided to minimise the amount of land given over to surface parking.

**Public realm** – existing tree planting will be retained and upgraded to include boulevard planting along King Street. Unified paving and co-ordinated, high quality street furniture including public transport infrastructure will be used. There is a significant opportunity for the installation of public art at the High Street and King Street junction.