SOUTHSEA TOWN CENTRE
AREA ACTION PLAN

DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

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SOUTHSEA TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Southsea Town Centre is one of the city’s designated town centres. This Area Action Plan has been prepared to address the decrease in footfall that the centre has experienced in recent years and the likely impact that significant retail proposals in the city centre will have on Southsea Town Centre. In response to the changes the town centre will be facing, Southsea will need to redefine itself, creating a clear identity for the centre so as to protect and develop the businesses located there. Southsea must deliver an offer that drives footfall and delivers customer loyalty. This Area Action Plan sets a vision for the town centre’s future role and sets policies to guide its development. It covers a period of ten years from its date of adoption. The Action Plan covers the whole town centre extending from Osborne Road to Marmion Road including Palmerston Road, Clarendon Road & Kent Road. Map 1 shows the boundary for the Area Action Plan.
1.2 Southsea Town Centre forms part of the Council’s three-centre retail strategy, which is separate from and has a different purpose from the retail hierarchy defined in the Portsmouth City Local Plan, and which focuses on the city centre and Gunwharf Quays as well as Southsea. The aim is to promote the city as a retail destination with three different shopping centres, highlighting their individual roles and what they each offer. The different role of each centre is as follows:

- City Centre – mainstream shopping, entertainment and leisure, restaurants and bars, employment and living. Caters for local residents and also people within the sub region.
- Southsea – specialist shops / boutiques, restaurants, leisure events and the seafront. Caters mainly for local residents, tourists and also the sub region.
- Gunwharf Quays – shopping (factory outlets), heritage, leisure, restaurants and bars. Caters for local residents and tourists.

1.3 There have been several stages of preparation for this Area Action Plan. Initial consultation was carried out in July – October 2005 to set out the issues facing the town centre and to define broad options for its future. Further consultation was carried out during February – March 2006 on a set of preferred policy options for the area. The document was then revised to contain draft policies for Southsea Town Centre and was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in September-October 2006 and a further stage of consultation occurred at the same time. This was followed by consultation on an omission site, which was proposed through the representations received. All of the representations received at this stage were considered by a Planning Inspector, who was appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the draft plan. The changes recommended by the Inspector were produced in the form of a binding report and have since been incorporated into this final version of the Area Action Plan. This Area Action Plan is therefore partly the result of the previous consultations.

1.4 Southsea Town Centre Area Action Plan is one of the new policy documents produced under the new planning system (known as development plan documents) and forms part of the Portsmouth Local Development Framework, which will over time replace the Portsmouth City Local Plan 2001-2011. An Area Action Plan is used to provide a planning framework for areas where change is expected or needed. One of the main purposes of such plans is to stimulate and help deliver regeneration. This Area Action Plan forms the statutory planning framework for Southsea Town Centre and will be used to guide future development of the centre and to determine any planning applications in the town centre. The Area Action Plan specifically replaces polices SJ5 (Southsea Principal Retail Area) and SJ6 (Southsea Secondary Retail Area) within the Portsmouth City Local Plan. Appendix 1 sets out the relationship between this plan and other development plan documents or “saved policies”. Map 2a is an extract from the adopted Portsmouth City Local Plan proposals map and Map 2b is the new proposals map which shows how the Area Action Plan changes the adopted proposals map.
2. CONTEXTUAL / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Town Centre

2.1 Southsea is one of many designated centres within Portsmouth and sits second in the hierarchy of town centres for the city as a whole. The current hierarchy is as follows:
   - City Centre – sub-regional centre
   - Southsea – town centre
   - Fratton, North End, Cosham – district centres
   - Numerous local centres throughout the city

2.2 The city centre has the largest concentration of retailing in Portsmouth and extends its influence beyond the city boundaries to act as a sub-regional centre. Southsea Town Centre offers retail on a smaller scale, although still attracting people from outside the city, and is physically constrained in terms of its potential for future growth. The district centres provide more localised retail and community services complementing the city centre and Southsea, which provide for more than day to day needs.

2.3 The Area Action Plan boundary is fairly tightly drawn around the town centre and therefore the principal land use in the area is retail (60% of uses in the centre are shops A1\(^1\)). Map 3 shows the current proportion of different uses in the town centre.

2.4 Southsea Town Centre provides shopping and leisure facilities for the local population. Many small one off boutique / gift type shops have emerged over the years and these are mainly concentrated along Marmion Road. The pedestrianised part of Palmerston Road offers more conventional high street shops such as Woolworth’s, WHSmith and the two department stores (Debenhams and John Lewis’ Knight & Lee). The centre also contains one main supermarket (Waitrose) and a variety of bars and restaurants, which are concentrated along Palmerston Road South and Osborne Road. There appears to be an overall trend of increasing levels of A3 (restaurants / cafés), A4 (drinking establishments) & A5\(^2\) (hot food takeaway) uses in Southsea Town Centre. Map 3 shows the distributions of uses within the centre in 2005.

Southsea Town Centre Surveys

2.5 A shopping study for Portsmouth was carried out in 2004 to assess the need for additional retail floorspace in Portsmouth up to 2016. All town centres in Portsmouth were assessed and the following conclusions were made for Southsea Town Centre. Southsea has been losing its retail attractiveness and status relative to other centres in the UK. With no major retail developments in the pipeline and the fact that Knight & Lee will be re-locating, the centre is likely to decline even further. Southsea has progressively slipped down in the

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\(^1\) A1 (shops), A2 (financial & professional services), A3 (restaurants & cafés), A4 (drinking establishments) and A5 (hot food take-aways) – these are the main retail use classes as set out in the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order 2005.

\(^2\) See 1.
centre rankings\(^3\) losing more than 100 places in the last 5 years, slipping from number 300 down to 404. This compares to the city centre, which is ranked as 73, although it is likely to rise up the rankings as a result of the Northern Quarter development. This development will provide additional retailing (approx. 96,200m\(^2\) gross external floorspace) including a new John Lewis store to replace the Knight and Lee store in Southsea.

2.6 Over the last 5-6 years (2001-2006) Southsea has seen a decline in the total number of people using the centre. This is demonstrated by the results of pedestrian counts (see figure 1 below).

\(^3\) Annual centre rankings, of the top 1,500 town centres, are published by Management Horizon Europe.
2.7 A qualitative environmental assessment of Southsea town centre was carried out in May 2005. The centre benefits from a variety of shop frontages, most of a high quality, including a number of traditional frontages with stall-risers, which are befitting of the centre’s setting within a conservation area. The Palmerston Road precinct offers a very pleasant shopping experience, due to the large pedestrianised area in front of the shops and outdoor seating associated with the individual refreshment establishments. The seating and planting in the vicinity of the shopping precinct is not currently in character with the standard of shop fronts and general appearance of the area.

2.8 A shopper survey was carried out for Portsmouth in 2004 to gauge an idea of people’s opinions on the town centres in Portsmouth. The outcome of the survey indicated that 85% of people asked were happy with the quality of shops in Southsea, and the atmosphere in Southsea was more pleasant than that in Commercial Road in the city centre. The Farmers’ Market was rated highly as was the overall shopping experience. On the whole, most people felt that cleanliness of the centre, safety, entertainment, seating and public transport were adequate.

Heritage

2.9 Southsea Town Centre is surrounded by a rich heritage characterised by Thomas Ellis Owen designs. The Area Action Plan is covered by and adjoins two conservation areas – Stanley Street, and Owen’s Southsea. Owen’s Southsea is an example of what has been called a “villa suburb” (D Lloyd 1904). Thomas Owen’s development is of particular interest due to the skilful way in which it is laid out to combine high density and picturesque effect. Villas and terraces are laid out in a townscape of winding roads of varying widths creating a scenic and spacious effect. In some cases properties are grouped together or laid out at the rear of their plots to maximise the visual input of garden land. Buildings are glimpsed behind boundary walls and through tree and shrub planting. The area was developed from the 1830’s onwards. Much of Osborne Road is in the Owen’s Southsea conservation
area and is characterised by terraced building with shops in front. St Jude’s church was built by Thomas Ellis Owen as a focal point for Southsea developments. The church is very visible and dominates the northern end of Palmerston Road.

2.10 Stanley Street Conservation Area includes mid 19th Century terraces adjoining the town centre. There is a long stucco terrace on one side and a more varied terrace opposite. The contrasting style and appearance down the street as a whole is one of the most attractive features of the conservation
area; it constitutes a panorama of the Victorian scene and exemplifies a
widening gulf in taste.

2.11 Southsea Town Centre has one listed building within the area The Friary 1-24
Marmion Road. The Friary is a Grade II listed building built in 1851 in gothic
style by Thomas Ellis Owen. Map 4 shows the location of the conservation
areas in relation to Southsea Town Centre.

Access

2.12 Southsea Town Centre falls within a medium accessibility area being about
1½ miles from Portsmouth & Southsea train station and is served by about 7
bus routes of varying frequency. The majority of people visiting Southsea
travel by car (41%) with a high percentage travelling by foot (30%).

2.13 The retail area within Southsea is less accessible than the city centre to those
from outside of Portsmouth, as it is not close to any of the principal routes into
the city. The minor roads in Southsea have a limited capacity and so this
constrains the numbers who can access the centre by private vehicle.

2.14 There are two car parks in Southsea (Waitrose and Ashby Place (58 spaces))
and there is also a large amount of metered and free parking along Southsea
Common and the seafront. However, this is some distance from the principal
retail area, and so it is difficult to estimate how much of the on-street parking
is used by those visiting the centre.

2.15 There are proposals in the Second Local Transport Plan (LTP2) that should
improve accessibility to the city including Southsea. One of the visions of the
LTP2 is to implement a bus based rapid transport system with a high quality
frequent service between Southsea – City Centre – Gunwharf Quays.

Flooding

2.16 The majority of the Area Action Plan falls within flood zone 2, a low-medium
risk area (1 in 1000 year flood event), and flood zone 3, a high-risk area (1 in
200 year flood event), as shown on maps published by the Environment
Agency. Government policy aims to achieve no net increase in flood risk. A
strategic flood risk assessment, which could identify areas of greater or lesser
flood risk in the town centre and help identify appropriate uses to minimise
flood risk, is due to be undertaken. The policies in the AAP are sufficiently
flexible to accommodate the most appropriate uses. Development proposals
will be subject to flood risk assessment to ensure that any risk is properly
considered.

Southsea Attractions

2.17 Southsea Town Centre is in an ideal location for attracting visitors and there
are many attractions in the vicinity. A Farmers’ Market is held once a month
in the town centre itself (Palmerston Road), which attracts a large number of
people to the centre on a regular basis. The town centre is a short walk from
Southsea Common and the beach, where many events / activities are held
throughout the year, such as events to celebrate famous historical figures
(Nelson, Brunel and Dickens), funfairs and circuses, international yacht races,
the Great South Run and music & film events throughout the summer at the bandstand on the Common. There are museums and other places of interest close to the town centre which include:

• Southsea Castle
• D-Day Museum
• Blue Reef Aquarium
• Clarence Pier Funfair
• Pyramids Centre
• Kings Theatre

2.18 The Kings Theatre, although outside the Area Action Plan boundary, is an important attraction for Southsea. The theatre offers economic and social benefits to Southsea Town Centre by increasing the number of visitors to the centre in the day and evening. To maximise these benefits better links are needed between the theatre and Southsea town centre through signage and an improved pedestrian route between the two locations.

2.19 In addition, the Hovercraft terminal to the Isle of Wight, which is only a short distance from the town centre, provides a 10-minute crossing to the Island.

2.20 These are all existing attractions of the area that should be built on and used to Southsea’s advantage. Southsea should benefit from tourism through an increase in visitors to the centre especially when large events are staged. Any increase in visitors will improve the vibrancy of the town centre. To ensure this happens, better signage is needed to indicate how close the town centre is to the seafront and information should be available on what the centre has to offer.

Conclusion

2.21 The situation in Portsmouth is changing, due to the opening of Gunwharf Quays and the recent permission for large-scale redevelopment of the city centre, and this will impact on the role and function of Southsea. Therefore Southsea Town Centre now faces challenges as to its future retail role. Its primary function will remain shopping, however its content will need to deliver an identity different, but complementary, to that of both the city centre and Gunwharf Quays. To help change its role, Southsea Town Centre will need to build on and promote its assets such as small independent shops, tourism and heritage.
3. VISION & OBJECTIVES

3.1 The aim of this plan is to build on Southsea’s existing strengths, which are independent shops, the heritage of “Owen’s Southsea” and the proximity of the town centre to the seafront and other attractions.

3.2 The vision for Southsea Town Centre is:
“To create a safe, thriving and attractive town centre where people want to come to visit, shop, live and work. To create a town centre that has a unique character and lively atmosphere”.

3.3 The objectives of the Area Action Plan are to ensure the viability and vitality of Southsea Town Centre by:

- Improving the attractiveness of the town centre by encouraging good quality design of both contemporary and traditional styles, protecting the built heritage of the area and improving and greening the public realm.
- Encouraging a good range of shops to provide choice to those who visit the centre.
- Encouraging other uses in the town centre such as offices, cultural facilities, restaurants/cafes, community uses so that there is an adequate level of local services.
- Creating a lively centre through the promotion of markets and events.
- Improving the cleanliness and appearance of the area.
- Ensuring good access for all to and within the town centre.
4. POLICY CONTEXT, KEY ISSUES & STRATEGY

4.1 There is a variety of national and regional guidance that the Council must take into account and comply with when producing policies and proposals for its own local area. This Area Action Plan needs to reflect the aims and priorities of national / regional guidance and other relevant Council strategies including the Community Strategy. Details of this policy context appear at Appendix 2.

Key Issues

4.2 The key issues facing Southsea were identified through consultation with the local community. The key issues that arose can be summarised as follows:

- Southsea Town Centre – what type of centre should Southsea be? Southsea will be facing challenges as research shows it is losing its retail attractiveness, there is a decrease in footfall, Knight & Lee will be moving and there will be competition from the new Northern Quarter development. There is a feeling that there is not enough choice of shops and that there are too many bars and cheap restaurants. Therefore the town centre will need to change and make sure that there is a good mix of uses of the right type to still attract visitors / shoppers to the centre at all times of the day and night.

- New developments / redevelopment of sites – Knight & Lee will be moving and there are some vacant buildings within the area which present opportunities for redevelopment. Parameters need to be set out to guide the redevelopment of these sites and ensure that they contribute towards the viability of the town centre.

- Transport and access – Southsea is a busy town centre and the volume of traffic at times can be intrusive making moving around the centre for pedestrians difficult and unsafe, in particular for those with mobility problems. Some busy / dangerous hotspots have been identified such as the junction of Marmion Road / Kent Road and Osborne Road / Portland Road. Insufficient car parking is also an issue for people visiting Southsea. Alternatives to the car should be promoted to help cut congestion and make the centre more attractive and accessible.

- Design – the Action Plan area is covered by and adjoins conservation areas therefore the design of any new development / shop fronts will be important to ensure that the conservation areas are enhanced. The existing design, of the precinct in particular, is felt to be tired and out dated and therefore refurbishment should be encouraged.

- Public areas – the layout and design of public areas is important since badly designed public areas can make an area look unattractive and create obstacles and barriers, as well as increase the fear of crime.

- Safety and security – there is a perception that in the evening / nighttime the centre is not safe and suffers from anti-social behaviour. Action should
be taken to reduce the fear of crime and ensure that the centre feels safe after shops / businesses have closed.\(^4\)

Other issues raised in consultation were:
- Cleanliness and litter
- Cyclists and skateboarders in the precinct
- Appropriate signage – some visitors to the seafront are unaware that the town centre exists.

4.3 This Area Action Plan deals with spatial issues (those issues that involve the use of land, buildings and the spaces in between). The main spatial issues that address the key issues set out are:
- Retailing & town centre uses
- Traffic, parking and access
- Design
- Public Realm
- Opportunity sites

**Strategy**

4.4 The main purpose for producing the AAP is to ensure that Southsea Town Centre remains a thriving town centre after Knight and Lee (one of the main anchor stores) moves out of the centre and into a new retail development at the city centre Northern Quarter. The strategy for Southsea Town Centre is not to propose any large-scale redevelopment, as it would not be able to compete with the Northern Quarter development, but to retain the centre’s existing character, sustain its viability and vitality, ensure that people continue to visit and prevent any decline. New proposals in the AAP area mainly involve replacement of existing retail and re-use of vacant shop units in order to maintain the existing retail nature of the centre.

4.5 Since the AAP is not aiming to grow the town centre but rather to replace and re-use existing floorspace, it is not considered necessary to set out a quantum of floorspace. The plan identifies opportunity sites for development and on all of these residential would be an appropriate use on the upper floors. Housing figures have not been given for these sites as the upper floors may equally be used for offices. The council is not relying on these sites to contribute significantly towards housing targets for Portsmouth.

\(^4\) The fear of crime in the Southsea Town Centre area has decreased for the second year in a row (Portsmouth Community Safety Strategy 2005/08)
5. SOUTHSEA TOWN CENTRE POLICIES

5.1 This section sets out the policies for the Southsea Town Centre Area. These policies provide the statutory framework for the development of the area and will be used to assess development proposals and determine planning applications.

5.2 The policies in this Area Action Plan generally conform to national government planning policy statements and to policies in the draft South East Plan.

5.3 The majority of the Portsmouth City Local Plan has been saved and the saved policies will continue to apply to development proposals in the city until they are replaced by other Development Plan Documents. This action plan conforms to the following saved policies in the Portsmouth City Local Plan: Policy SP1 “Urban Renaissance”; and Policy SP6 “Retail & Town Centre Development”. These policies set the strategic context for the plan and provide an overarching direction for development.

5.4 The policies set out below replace policies SJ5 and SJ6 from the Portsmouth City Local Plan and therefore these policies no longer apply.

5.5 Development proposals must take into account the overarching policies in the saved Portsmouth City Local Plan (SP1 and SP6), other relevant strategic and development control policies from the saved Portsmouth City Local Plan and planning guidance set out in Supplementary Planning Documents, as well as the policies set out below. No policy will be applied in isolation and consideration will be given to all relevant policies. Relevant saved policies from the Portsmouth City Local Plan are listed in Appendix 1.

GENERAL

Policy STC1 Sustainable Construction and Design

Development proposals will be expected to incorporate the principles of sustainable design, which include renewable energy, energy efficiency, efficient use of materials and use of recycled materials, recycling and water conservation techniques.

New developments should meet Ecohomes or BREEAM\(^5\) very good standards as a minimum.

5.6 The above policy applies to any new developments, redevelopments and conversions in the area. Proposals for changes of use should incorporate the above principles wherever possible.

5.7 Developments should incorporate renewable energy techniques into the building or be able to source energy from renewable sources, be designed to

\(^5\) Building Research Establishment’s Environmental Assessment Method: [www.breeam.org](http://www.breeam.org)
make use of passive solar design, use recycled construction material and include water conservation techniques.

5.8 PPS1 advocates such an approach by stating that the planning system should facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban development. Sustainable design and construction techniques should be used in order to reduce pollution, contribute towards managing climate change and create better environments to live in. Guidance on appropriate design and construction methods will be set out in a future SPD.

RETAILING AND TOWN CENTRE USES

5.9 Southsea Town Centre is divided into primary and secondary frontages (shown on Map 2b). The primary frontage is where there should be a high proportion of shops (A1 uses) while the secondary frontage provides more opportunities for flexibility and diversity of uses (see Map 5). Within the town centre there are areas where concentrations of particular uses have evolved. The strategy of the Area Action Plan is to build on these to create specific quarters to focus development within the centre. The different areas in the centre are categorised as follows:

- Palmerston Road Precinct - the main retail core
- Marmion Road - area of specialist / independent shops
- Osborne Road and Palmerston Road South - a restaurant quarter
- Osborne Road - area of local shops (butchers etc)

Development proposals for the different uses will be encouraged to locate in the specific areas listed above and shown in Map 5.

Policy STC2 Southsea Town Centre

Within the Town Centre as a whole planning permission will be granted for:

- A1-A5 uses (subject to restrictions set out in policies below);
- offices B1a (upper floor only on the primary frontage);
- leisure uses (D2);
- community uses, including arts, tourism and cultural facilities (D1 & D2) and theatres; and
- residential uses (upper floors only).

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6 Passive solar designs can be achieved through careful layout, design and landscaping to maximise the use of natural sunlight and ventilation. This may include south facing aspects and small windows on north facing walls.
5.10 Town centres should be the focus for new retail development along with other town centre uses in order to help centres survive and to enable people to only have to make one trip to satisfy many purposes. If shops and services are located in town centres then this should help to ensure that they are easily accessible, since such locations can be accessed by public transport, walking and cycling. Southsea Town Centre is one of Portsmouth’s more important town centres and forms part of the Council’s three-centre retail strategy. The aim is to ensure that Southsea Town Centre flourishes and continues to attract people to the area for shopping, leisure pursuits and business. A variety of uses should be encouraged in Southsea Town Centre, especially small independent businesses, to ensure that the centre is in use throughout the day and evenings thus helping to create a lively and safe centre. This means allowing for uses such as bars, cafés and restaurants, which are open in the evenings. Offices should also be encouraged to locate in the town centre as they can lead to an increase in the number of people in the centre and therefore an increase in customers for local shops and cafés.

Policy STC3 Southsea Primary Frontage
On the Southsea Primary Frontage planning proposals for town centre uses (listed above in STC2), other than A1 Shops, will only be granted permission if at least 75% of the primary frontage would be in A1 use after the development is completed.
5.11 The Palmerston Road precinct provides a town centre shopping environment containing a range of 'High Street' shops, which complements those within the city centre. In recent years, the area has successfully attracted a number of specialist retailers. Marmion Road contains a higher proportion of non-shopping uses, along with a number of specialist, independent shops.

5.12 It is essential to retain a retail shopping core in order to ensure there is sufficient variety and choice to attract people to the area. The requirement to retain at least 75% of the primary frontage in shop use will help to promote the main retail core area of Palmerston Road Precinct while still allowing other uses to locate in the precinct.

5.13 The balance of uses will be assessed by calculating proposed changes to overall ground floor retail frontage on the primary frontage as a whole, when applications are submitted. Regular surveys will also be undertaken. At summer 2005 the balance of retail frontage on the defined primary frontage was approximately:

- A1 - 85%
- A2 – 11%
- A3 – 3%
- A4 – 1%
- and the remainder non-retail / unclassified uses (City Council survey).

In the case of vacant units, the last permitted use or, where applicable, any unimplemented consent, has been included in those figures. The figure of 75% has been chosen to allow some flexibility in terms of change of use within this area while maintaining a robust level of shopping uses.

**Policy STC4 Restaurants and Cafés**

New restaurants and cafés will be encouraged to locate in Osborne Road and Palmerston Road South.

5.14 Restaurants and cafés are essential to town centres to improve their vitality and ensure that the centre is open in the evenings creating a safer feel to the centre’s environment. Building on the existing concentration of restaurants and cafés in this area can help to create a restaurant quarter for Southsea, which can be used to attract visitors to the centre and help to develop Southsea as the place to come and eat in the evenings.

**Policy STC5 Drinking Establishments and Hot Food Take-Aways**

Proposals for new A4 (drinking establishments) and A5 (hot food take-away) uses will only be permitted in the secondary frontage provided that:

- the proposal does not result in more than 8% of the secondary frontage in an A4/A5 use; and
- there is no significant adverse impact on residential amenity.

5.15 Although bars and take-aways can add to the enjoyment of a centre it is recognised that too many within one area can begin to have an adverse impact on residential amenity by creating noise and disturbance late at night and anti-social behaviour. It is therefore considered appropriate to restrict the
growth of such uses. A limit of 8% of the secondary frontage being in bar/ take-away use has been set as it broadly corresponds with the existing level of bar / take-away use which is 7%.

Policy STC6 Markets and Events
The Council will promote the existing Farmers’ Market and encourage proposals for additional markets / events in Palmerston Road Precinct.

5.16 Markets can help to make a town centre more lively and attract more people to a centre. The Farmers’ Market in Southsea is very popular and should therefore be retained and additional markets / events in the precinct area should be encouraged.

TRAFFIC AND ACCESS

5.17 The Government’s overall objectives for transport are to decrease the need to travel and promote sustainable methods of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport, to facilitate multi purpose journeys and to ensure access to a range of facilities.

5.18 Carefully planned town centres can help achieve these objectives by providing a variety of uses and services in one area, ensuring that there is good access to the town centre by public transport, cycling and walking and discouraging people travelling to the centre by car by reducing the amount of car parking available. However, reducing car parking should be carefully balanced against ensuring town centres remain viable and vital and preventing congestion through too many cars searching for too few parking spaces and exacerbating problems associated with on street parking. Therefore the Council is seeking to safeguard the existing car park at Ashby Place. Reducing congestion can help to boost the attractiveness of a town centre.

Policy STC7 Access
The Council aims to improve access to Southsea Town Centre focusing on enhancing bus, cycle and pedestrian networks to secure an improved environment and reduced congestion.

5.19 As noted earlier the majority of people who visit Southsea drive there (41%) which can create problems for parking and result in busy roads making it difficult for people to get around the centre. The main options for Southsea are to make it more attractive to journey to and from by bus and to improve the pedestrian and cycle environment. Most of the Councils’ proposals for transport are set out in the Second Local Transport Plan for Portsmouth. The relevant proposals for this Area Action Plan are:

- To promote a high quality frequent bus service between Southsea – City Centre – Gunwharf Quays.
- To implement bus based rapid transit routes throughout the city, which will benefit Southsea.
- To implement a citywide 20 miles per hour zone for all residential areas.
- Improved and additional cycle routes.
- More and better walking routes.
The above measures set out in the Second Local Transport Plan will be supported, as will other measures that come forward to improve pedestrian safety within the town centre.

5.20 The measures in the Second Local Transport Plan will all help to improve access to Southsea Town Centre. Another initiative to improve access to the town centre is the Park and Ride proposal at Tipner whereby people can drive to the edge of the city and park and then take a bus direct to Southsea Town Centre.

5.21 Improved signage is another aspect of improving accessibility to Southsea Town Centre. As part of the city’s three centre retail strategy there will be signs on the main trunk roads into the city directing people to the main shopping centres which will help to identify Southsea as a key destination. Existing signs will be changed from their current wording of “Central Southsea” to say “Southsea Town Centre”. In addition to this there will be signage at the seafront and Southsea Common signposting the town centre, this will increase awareness that the town centre is nearby and where it is.

Policy STC8 Taxi Ranks
The Council will ensure the provision of adequate taxi ranks.

5.22 Taxis provide an essential service to those using the centre through providing safe and convenient transport home at all times of the day, but particularly in the evening and also through providing alternative means of travel to the car.

Policy STC9 Ashby Place Car Park
The Council will safeguard this site for continued use as a car park.

5.23 The car park is situated off Osborne Road, close to Palmerston Road and provides an essential facility for the town centre.

DESIGN AND HERITAGE

5.24 Design is an important issue as an attractive and safe town centre will attract more people to the area to visit and shop. Southsea, as a whole, has a rich heritage therefore good design will be important to preserve its heritage and ensure that the town centre complements its surrounding heritage.

Policy STC10 Design
To ensure good co-ordinated design, the City Council will refuse applications that are not of an appropriate or sufficiently high quality of design. New developments should incorporate the following design principles:

- the building should front the street
- the development should respect building lines of the existing urban environment and where appropriate build up to the edge of the curtilage
- the development should maximise the amount of active street frontage and avoid blank frontages
- the building should have level access from the street
Design principles, as set out in policy DC1 of the Portsmouth City Local Plan should also be incorporated into new developments.

5.25 Good design is an important aspect of any development in Portsmouth. Good design can help promote sustainable development, improve the quality of the environment, reinforce civic pride and attract businesses to the area.

5.26 The Government promotes high quality and inclusive design in town centres (paying attention to public spaces and buildings) as it can improve the vitality and viability of that centre. Therefore achieving good design in Southsea Town Centre is particularly important to ensure the centre continues to attract people and businesses and its existing heritage is respected. Part of the town centre is in need of modernisation (i.e. the precinct and Osborne Road) and any refurbishment or redevelopment will need to be of a high quality design and well co-ordinated.

**Policy STC11 Shop Fronts**
Original shop fronts should be retained and applications for new shop fronts will only be permitted if they are a like for like replacement of the original or if they complement the area and have visual interest.

5.27 Shop front design does much to add character to a place and improve its attractiveness. There are some good examples of shop front design particularly in Marmion Road but also in Osborne Road. Conversely, there are also some new shop fronts that do not relate to the character of the area. This policy applies to those areas of the town centre with traditional shop fronts (Osborne Road, Marmion Road, Clarendon Road and Palmerston Road South) and does not apply to units with modern shop fronts.

5.28 Guidance on shop front designs is set out in ‘Southsea Shopping Centre: Guidelines for the Improvement of Buildings’ (Supplementary Planning Guidance note 6). This is a guidance note providing technical advice on design issues and does not form part of the Local Development Framework.

**PUBLIC REALM**

5.29 The impressions created by a place are formed by the buildings and spaces that make up the public realm. A good quality public realm can encourage visitors and businesses to invest in an area. To help overcome some of the future challenges for the Southsea Town Centre it is important that the public realm in the town centre is respected and enhanced.

**Policy STC12 Environmental Improvements**
Development proposals in Southsea Town Centre will be required to make a positive contribution to both the vitality of the area as a whole and to the quality of the public realm.

**Policy STC13 Palmerston Road Precinct**
The Council will support proposals for improvements to Palmerston Road precinct.
5.30 Improved pedestrian / cycle facilities, crime prevention measures, landscaping, greening, street furniture, CCTV and public art are all features which would enhance the public realm and could be secured through planning obligations. Improvements to the image of Osborne Road will be particularly encouraged because the condition of some shop fronts is poor. Features, such as sculpture, art or signage could be designed for the four main entrances to the town centre (the western end of Osborne Road, the bottom of Palmerston Road South, Marmion Road and Grove Road South) in order to draw attention to the location of the centre.

5.31 There is an initiative to improve Palmerston Road precinct and create a precinct that is distinct in its design. The improvements include creating a safer pedestrian link between the precinct and St Jude’s Church, lighting improvements, planting, artwork and entrance features at either end of the precinct. The Council may enter into legal agreements with the developers of sites in Southsea Town Centre in order to secure some of the above improvements where appropriate and necessary, as set out in the Environmental Improvements section of the Planning Obligations SPD (2006).

**Policy STC14 Links**
The Council will promote improved links from the town centre to the seafront, Southsea Common, Albert Road, the City Centre, Gunwharf Quays and other places of interest.

5.32 Clear and logical signage is needed to direct people from the town centre to other places of interest and vice versa. Links can be improved by providing good quality pedestrian crossings and enhancing poor ones and through the provision of safe landscaped routes.
OPPORTUNITY SITES

5.33 There are some sites in Southsea Town Centre that may offer opportunities for redevelopment namely the Knight & Lee store on Palmerston Road but also the Grosvenor Casino Osborne Road and the vacant units towards the western end of Osborne Road. See Map 6.

Policy STC15 Site 1: Knight & Lee, Palmerston Road
The Knight & Lee building is allocated for a mixed-use development incorporating some or all of the following:
- retail (A1)
- community uses (e.g. library)
- offices
- restaurant
- residential (on 2nd and 3rd floors only)
Any development proposal for the site must retain the ground and first floor in retail (A1) use.

5.34 John Lewis will be moving to new premises within the Northern Quarter development and the store will become vacant. It will be important to ensure that the right use/s occupy the building to retain the attractiveness of Southsea and improve its vitality and viability.

5.35 The building, because of its size, could take a mix of uses with active uses on the ground floor. The ground and first floors should be retained for retailing (A1) given the building’s location in the principal shopping frontage and the detrimental impact a loss of such an amount of retailing would have on the centre. Appropriate uses for the other floors would be retailing, community uses (i.e. library), offices, restaurant or residential.

5.36 Redevelopment of this site would be expected to make a contribution towards the public realm and comply with other policies on open space and affordable housing if a residential element was included. More detailed guidance on planning obligations and the methods used for calculating commuted sums is contained within the Supplementary Planning Document: Planning Obligations. Any new development needs to be very well designed given the prominence of the site and should comply with other policies in this Area Action Plan.

5.37 The Debenhams building lies on the other anchor site within the town centre. Although Debenhams is not identified as an opportunity site, it is a prominent site within Southsea Town Centre and therefore should the building ever become available for redevelopment then the Council will apply the same policy as for the Knight and Lee Building (STC15).

**Policy STC16 Site 2: Grosvenor Casino, Osborne Road**
The preferred use for this site is as a community / arts centre. Alternative appropriate uses would be A1 shops, offices, restaurant / café, leisure / tourism on the ground floor with offices or residential on the upper floors.

5.38 The site is currently in use as a casino, however the casino may be relocating and if this happens, then there is an opportunity to reuse the building.

5.39 The site has been allocated for use as a community / arts centre, however if proposals for such a use do not come forward, then alternative appropriate uses would be A1 shops, offices, restaurant / café or leisure / tourism on the ground floor with offices or residential on the upper floors.

**Policy STC17 Site 3: 14-18 Osborne Road**
This site is allocated for appropriate town centre uses.

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7 Debenhams is not identified as an opportunity site because at present there are no proposals for Debenhams to leave the town centre.
5.40 14-18 Osborne Road is a row of vacant units situated towards the end of Osborne Road adjacent to the Queens Hotel. The reuse of these units is important as they are located at one of the entrances to the town centre and currently do not present an attractive image for the centre.

5.41 Appropriate uses would include retail uses A1, A2, or A3, or community/leisure/tourism uses on the ground floor with offices or residential on the upper floors.
6. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING & REVIEW

Implementation

6.1 The implementation of much of this plan will be mainly through private sector investment. This plan will be used as a basis to guide investment decisions of the public and private sectors. Planning conditions and section 106 agreements will be used to achieve some of the plan's objectives relating to sustainable transport, the public realm and safety.

6.2 Policies STC1 to STC5 and STC10 to STC12 are intended for use in determining planning applications in the area. The council will also use its enforcement powers to ensure that development is carried out as permitted, planning conditions and obligations are complied with and to improve the appearance of the street frontages.

6.3 In respect of policy STC6, the council owns the Palmerston Road Precinct and so controls what markets and events take place in the area. The council’s town centre manager works to promote the existing offer and to develop further markets and events. A programme of improvements to the public realm within the precinct is in progress to secure the implementation of policy STC13. Phase One of this programme is due for completion in June 2007.

6.4 Most of the transport improvements in and around the area, to which policies STC7, STC8 and STC14 refer, will be delivered through the council’s Second Local Transport Plan (LTP2). The LTP2 strategy is based on an improved bus network and measures to improve conditions for cycling and walking. The council’s public realm improvement programme also contributes to the implementation of policy STC14. Through its ownership of the Ashby Place Car Park, the council is able to ensure that it remains in use as a public car park, as policy STC9 requires.

6.5 The Knight & Lee site in Palmerston Road is the subject of a development agreement between the Council and the developers of the city centre Northern Quarter scheme, Centros Miller. The agreement provides that Centros Miller will use all reasonable endeavours to agree with the Council a redevelopment scheme and associated delivery programme for the Knight & Lee store. This provides a means of implementing policy STC15.

6.6 The redevelopment of the opportunity sites at the Grosvenor Casino and at 14-18 Osborne Road (the subjects of policies STC16 and STC17 respectively) will be achieved through private sector investment. The policies are a mechanism to generate developer interest and provide information as to acceptable uses on these sites.

Monitoring

6.7 Monitoring of the action plan will form part of the Annual Monitoring Report that the Council is required to produce. Therefore the policies and proposals contained in this Area Action Plan will be monitored every year to check the progress of the plan and ensure policies are working as intended.
6.8 The implementation of the AAP policies will be monitored using the following indicators:

**Overall**
- Visitor numbers to the town centre

**Policies STC2 to STC5**
- The percentage of A1 frontage in the centre;
- The percentage of A4/A5 frontage in the centre;
- The percentage of vacant units in the centre; and
- The number of A3 units in Osborne Road and Palmerston Road South.

**Policy STC6**
- The number of markets, festivals and similar events held in the precinct each year.

**Policies STC7, STC8 and STC14**
- Indicators are set as part of the LTP monitoring process.

**Policies STC10 and STC11**
- The number of planning applications refused on design grounds

**Policy STC12**
- The number of new developments contributing towards environmental improvements in the AAP area.

**Policy STC13**
- Implementation of improvements to the precinct in accordance with the adopted programme.

**Policy STC15 to STC17**
- Progress towards the development of the opportunity sites

**Review**

6.9 The document will be reviewed at least every five years, unless the monitoring report indicates otherwise.