



# A VISION FOR RUGBY TOWN CENTRE



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Town centres across the country have faced a number of challenges in recent years and the role of town centres has changed.

Rugby town centre, like other centres, needs to change and adapt to meet these challenges, and the council has started work on refreshing its strategies to support the creation of a town centre fit for the future.

However, we're just one of a number of key stakeholders who have an important role to play in reinvigorating the town centre.

We all want a vibrant and thriving town centre, and the council has carried out research into national retail trends and the needs of the borough's growing population as part its work in preparing a new Local Plan for the borough.

The research has helped the council take the first steps towards creating a new vision for our town centre, a vision which defines the Rugby town centre of future, supports the economic prosperity of the borough and reflects the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

We have discussed the vision with a number of partners, including Rugby First, Rugby School and Warwickshire County Council, and now we want to hear from you.

By taking part in this consultation on the Town Centre Vision, you can help us shape our plans.



**Cllr Heather Timms,**  
Rugby Borough Council  
portfolio holder for economy,  
development and culture



## THE VISION

A prosperous and attractive town centre which complements and connects to the retail parks on Leicester Road, offering a wide range of shops, leisure and entertainment opportunities to those who visit alongside the businesses, public services and new homes that serve local residents.

### DELIVERING THE VISION

We have identified four key areas to focus on in order to deliver the vision for the town centre.

- Physical environment
- Town centre uses
- Marketing
- Investment





# PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Rugby town centre offers a generally attractive shopping environment. Conservation areas cover the majority of the town centre, while the main shopping streets feature a number of historic retail buildings.

Rugby World Cup 2015 and Rugby's official status as the 'Proud Home' of the game has led to a number of enhancements to the town centre this year, including new litter bins, public art works and the introduction of wi-fi in September.

The new vision for the town centre presents an opportunity to build on this work. The town centre has a number of potential sites which, if regenerated and redeveloped, could deliver significant improvements.

However, pedestrian and cycle routes from the railway station and Leicester Road retail parks need to be improved in order to encourage shoppers and visitors into the town centre. Options to improve transport links could include measures to reduce traffic congestion in the town centre.

## ACTIONS

- develop a programme of improvements to further enhance the town centre's historic buildings and locations
- identify key regeneration sites and work with partners to enable redevelopment
- enhance the visitor experience through improved signage and maps
- improve connections to the town centre from the railway station and Leicester Road/ Technology Drive retail parks and explore options to improve traffic flow through the centre





# TOWN CENTRE USES

While having an affluent catchment area, the town centre's retail offer has become mainly tailored to the value/discount market.

As a result, a number of the borough's residents travel to neighbouring shopping centres such as Coventry, Leamington and Leicester.

Since 2007 the town centre has seen a decline in traditional high street brand shops and the number of empty shops has increased (though the figure remains in line with the national average).

Rugby has seen a rise in independent retail and café/restaurant occupiers, reflecting the changing role of the town centre as larger neighbouring centres compete to attract national chain stores.

The Government has recently introduced policy changes which aim to increase the number of residential dwellings in town centres. This has the potential to make Rugby town centre more active beyond traditional retail hours.

Rugby town centre's current retail offer and circumstance is far from unique. Research by PwC and Local Data Company highlights the fact fashion shops, mobile phone shops and building societies now have a reduced presence in town centres, while the number of charity shops, pound shops, bookmakers and coffee shops has increased.

The reduction in comparison shops further reflects the economic downturn with retailers such as Marks and Spencer relocating from smaller town centres, a number of high profile high street retailers going into administration and other retailers reducing the number of stores in the same centre.

However, Rugby town centre retains a unique independent shopping experience, a strong food and drink sector and a cultural offer which includes Rugby Art Gallery and Museum and Rugby Theatre.

These strengths should be supported and encouraged to grow in order to create a town centre which complements nearby retail and leisure destinations.

## ACTIONS

- encourage an increase in residential dwellings in the town centre with particular emphasis on higher value properties
- encourage and enhance the unique independent retail offer in the town centre
- promote the strong food and drink sector in the town centre and improve the range and quality
- support and promote the town centre's cultural offer
- allow flexibility of uses for town centre units to ensure market needs can be met rather than restricted





# MARKETING

The redevelopment of Elliots Field retail park and expansion of Junction One – which have both secured a number of high profile national chains - presents an opportunity to market Rugby's retail offer as a whole, encouraging residents to shop in Rugby rather than travelling elsewhere and attracting visitors to the town.

The town centre's independent offer of retail, food and drink and culture complements the offer at the out of town retail parks, and should be promoted as such.

The Rugby World Cup 2015 also presents an opportunity to further develop Rugby's unique position as the birthplace of the game, developing a distinctive brand to attract visitors to the town centre.

Work needs to be carried out to define the changing needs of retailers and businesses in town centres – from size of shop units to rents. While the council has no control over factors such as setting business rates and rental prices, we can influence and lobby for change in partnership with town centre stakeholders.

## ACTIONS

- in partnership with key stakeholders, produce a marketing strategy for the town centre which identifies both its strengths and the markets it should be promoted to
- maximise the opportunities offered by the introduction of wi-fi in the town centre





# INVESTMENT

The council and key stakeholders have organised and supported a number of initiatives to help boost the prosperity, including free parking during the Christmas period, 'moving in' grants for new independent retailers and events such as the Rugby Festival of Culture and Love Rugby Town's First Thursdays.

The consultation on the Town Centre Vision can help the council and key stakeholders target future investment and identify new funding opportunities to help achieve the vision's objectives.

## ACTIONS

- The Physical Environment, Marketing and Town Centre Uses elements of the town centre vision shall identify the appropriate targets for investment.



# CONSULTATION

We want to know what you think about the Town Centre Vision. Do you agree with the four elements of the vision and the actions outlined?

Do you think the vision should encompass other elements?

**You can send your comments to: [localplan@rugby.gov.uk](mailto:localplan@rugby.gov.uk)  
Comments should be sent no later than 5pm on Monday 14th  
September 2015.**

Following the consultation, the agreed actions from all four elements of the Town Centre Vision will be incorporated in a detailed strategy.