

## **OPPORTUNITY SITES DEFINITION – INVESTIGATION STAGE**

Opportunity town centre sites are those judged to be in one or more of the following categories:

- underused or vacant, or neglected, or derelict,
- where existing uses are not entirely compatible with their surroundings,
- where a building appears to be ill-suited to its use,
- where the street-scene, heritage, and/or historic interest of the building is being compromised,
- where the owner is known to be keen to secure redevelopment.

Sites need not be considered individually; for example in some cases it may be more logical to consider a contiguous group of sites as a sensible ‘planning unit’.

### **Criteria:**

**Underused** – Where less than about 75% of the site/building is not in an obvious use. In such cases follow-up investigation of the owners intentions are appropriate as the land/building may be in reserve for forthcoming expansion.

**Vacant** – Where building or site has not in been in use (with or without ‘To Let’ or ‘For Sale’ notices) for a prolonged period (say 6 months?).

**Neglected** – Where the site or building shows obvious signs of being under-cared for and falling into further disrepair, needing substantial repair, or otherwise stressed beyond normal weathering. May include areas of otherwise active sites/buildings which the owner/user holds for long term storage of stocks or discarded materials, which could be put to a more productive/environmentally acceptable use.

**Derelict** – Where site or building is completely uncared for, falling into worsening disrepair, subject to vandalism, tipping, graffiti, etc. or recorded as being used for illicit purposes (substance abuse etc). Note that emergency repairs carried out by a landowner does rule it out of consideration as an opportunity site for redevelopment/reuse.

**Existing uses incompatible with surroundings** – Where an historic use no longer suits its surroundings, e.g. garage workshop on now busy road, noisy/smelly industrial activities surrounded by residential development. Could also include where the use harms the role of the town centre as an attractive service centre.

**Building ill-suited to use** – Where for example stock or materials spill out onto street, pedestrian and operational vehicular traffic conflicts, storage of waste creates nuisance or visual harm.

**Heritage/historic interest compromised** – Where current use has led to inappropriate openings being formed in a building frontage, or where advertising is inappropriate, etc.

**Owner keen to secure redevelopment** – Where local knowledge, Council consultations, planning history, stakeholder involvement etc. indicate.

### **Process:**

A ‘health-check’ approach to assessment may be appropriate, for example doing an initial photo-survey around the town and following this up with a sieve out of sites for further investigation. Then using the above criteria in a descriptive proforma that is completed for each site to enable a comparative assessment. This could include cross-reference to the emerging strategy for the town centre, and to controlling policy issues that might be included in the NP eventually. The proforma could then be used to inform a debate in the Group, with recommendations coming out of that to the NP Team.

Something like this.....

<b>Ref:</b>	<b>Address and Owner/Occupier:</b>	<b>Description and approx. area:</b>	<b>Accessibility:</b>	<b>Current Use:</b>	<b>Appearance :</b>	<b>Relationship to adjoining uses/ town centre role:</b>
Site 1	<p>Bloggs Garage Any building 2 Any Street Any Town</p> <p>Owner/Occupier:  Bert Smiff and Sons</p>	<p>Bloggs Garage site on corner of Any Street and Other Street, comprises Grade II LB used as office, former carriage works used as workshop, open yard. Yard alongside office building partly visible from Any Street. Within Any Town Conservation Area.</p>	<p>Access is from Any Street, via former carriage entrance, very narrow, crosses busy pavement.</p>	<p>Jobbing repair garage, business apparently in decline.</p>	<p>Office building clearly needs redecoration and condition of frontage plasterwork suggests possible structural problems. Open yard at rear partly visible from Any Street, currently contains several vehicle bodies kept for spares, and is partly overgrown. A number of modern internally illuminated signs have been introduced.</p>	<p>Office building is part of row of GII LBs, the rest of which have been renovated and now in use as craft shops, café, with offices above. Workshop noises have been source of complaints from adjoining occupiers, and decay of building and open yard storage detract from visual amenity of the TC and Conservation Area. Frequent vehicular access into narrow entrance across busy pavement poses pedestrian safety risks and is disruptive to footfall.</p>
<b>Suitability of use to site/building:</b>	<b>Heritage/historic interest impact:</b>	<b>Summary of issues:</b>	<b>Potential Strategic Link to TC Strategy:</b>	<b>Suitable to classify as opportunity site?</b>	<b>Potential Use or mix of uses:</b>	<b>Potential NP actions/policy needs:</b>
This is not an issue.	Use is compatible with the buildings but clearly they are not being adequately maintained, whilst open storage of vehicle bodies is detrimental to setting of the LBs and harms the street heritage street-scene	Appearance of neglect and open storage detracts from setting. Inappropriate noise disturbance. Pedestrian/vehicular conflict. Declining listed buildings. Internally illuminated box signs.	Site could make contribution to strategic aim to improve TC offer and heritage street scene as part of niche market initiative.	Potential for complete redevelopment as a corner development, or retention of LB and workshop in alternative uses more tuned to modern activity.	As redevelopment, could provide a modern and very marketable retail unit with offices above. Alternatively building could be retained and provide a retail unit with craft workshops to rear, with small parking area accessed from Other Street.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Allocate site as redevelopment opportunity</li> <li>2. NP policy providing for CoU of premises to retail use.</li> <li>3. Policy controlling advertisement format in Conservation Area.</li> </ol>

**Recommendations to WG: Contact be made with site owner to explore their intentions and possible interest in redevelopment, prior to formulating any recommendations to NP Team.**