

South Gloucestershire Council

Policies, Sites & Places Plan Draft Town Centre Profiles

Staple Hill Town Centre Draft Profile Updated to June 2014

Please send any further suggestions for change to
PlanningLDF@southglos.gov.uk

This is one of a series of draft town centre profiles which will be used to inform future planning policy. Initial comments were invited to arrive by 31st December 2013.

Comments were made by the Local Ward Members.

Staple Hill Town Centre

1. Location

Staple Hill Town Centre is located to the north of Kingswood. It borders the City of Bristol and is surrounded by primarily residential areas.



Staple Hill Town Centre

2. Origin

Staple Hill evolved as a local community alongside a very ancient track way running from Bristol to the Saxon Royal Hunting Lodge at Pucklechurch.

It was not until the nineteenth century that Staple Hill began to develop into the built-up area that it is now.

Its prosperity was based on 18th and 19th Century coal mining and associated industries – boot and shoe making, precision engineering.

More detail at Appendix 2.

3. Character

Staple Hill is a linear high street of generally late Victorian character.

There is a small 1960s precinct at Fountain Square north of Broad Street. The square has been remodelled recently.

High street shop units are generally small and mixed between independent and a few national retailers. Overall Staple Hill appears very busy.

The surrounding areas include Page Park (to the east) and the Bristol Bath Railway Path (to the south) which is in tunnel and deep cut here.

There are on street parking spaces and small car parks both north and south of the main shopping street.

4. Strategies and Research

A Health Check was undertaken as part of the Roger Tym's Study for the Council in

2008-2010

Staple Hill Chamber of Trade and its partners undertook a further Health Check in the context of the Portas Review recommendations. This was published in December 2012. (Extracts at Appendix 2. The full health check can be viewed at: <http://www.insouthglos.co.uk/invest/retail/>).

The health check is primarily geared towards management and promotional activities and suggests actions for developing the town centre and for the Chamber of Trade.

This profile reflects those actions but also suggests planning policy considerations including potential policy areas.

Staple Hill Regeneration Partnership is also coordinating activity within and around the town centre.

“Staple Hill is a Priority Neighbourhood. Its residents suffer from poorer health, lower educational attainment, poor employment opportunities, higher crime rates and poor housing. In partnership with the local authority we have been asked to be the lead community group addressing four main issues: health, crime, employment & education. We have established four sub-groups to address each of these issues. They have drawn up a 3 year action plan identified and prioritised by the local community.”

From Staple Hill Regeneration Partnership web site.

(<http://localgiving.com/charity/staplehillregenerationpartnership>)

5. Catchment Area and Competition

Staple Hill serves as a local service centre for the surrounding communities. The catchment has narrowed with competition from out of centre retail facilities at Longwell Green and Cribbs Causeway and the new town centre at Emersons Green. Fispmonds, within Bristol, also has a range of stores which tend to draw trade from Staple Hill.

Publicity on behalf of Staple Hill Chamber of Trade seeks to broaden the catchment area and promote the unique offer of the many independent shops in the centre. The Health Check seeks to promote links with businesses at the Bristol-Bath Science Park at Emersons Green.

There is limited new residential growth planned within the immediate town centre area but around 2,000 homes and new jobs are planned at Emersons Green and this could provide some opportunities to claw back some trade for specialist outlets.

6. Retail provision - from SGC Monitoring

Staple Hill has a total of 82 units with an A1 use class providing 6,949 square metres of retail floorspace. The centre currently accommodates two foodstores: a Tesco Metro Store, and an Iceland foodstore.

Although Staple Hill lacks the range of multiples found in other major town/district centres it has a large number of independent traders offering a range of comparison and convenience shopping serving the local community.

Comparison shopping forms the majority of retailing activity in the town centre with 50% of units and 3,705 square metres in comparison use.

Convenience functions account for 20% of all A1 units and totals 2,232 square metres, while service functions account for 28% of all A1 units or 14% of the available A1 floorspace.

At the time of the survey there were 2 vacant or empty A1 units representing 2% of all A1 retail units in the town/district centre.

(Source: SGC Town Centres and Retailing – Monitoring Report August 2013:

Retail Floorspace Summary

2013	Floorspace	%	Units	%
Total Town Centre	6,949.1		82	
Convenience	2231.7	32.1	16	19.5
Comparison	3704.9	53.3	41	50
Service Uses	942.6	13.6	23	28
Vacant floorspace	69.9	1	2	2.4
Edge of Centre				
Key – traders	While Tesco Metro and Iceland may ‘anchor’ the centre its strength comes from the number of independent local traders.			
Key community uses.	Page Park, Bristol/Bath Railway path			
Markets	None			

7. Retail Frontages

The South Gloucestershire Local Plan 2006 defines primary and secondary shopping frontages. The aim (of Policy RT9) is to maintain the vibrancy of shopping frontages by resisting changes of use at street level. In Staple Hill the defined frontages are:

- **Primary Frontages**
 - The Square 1-11
 - Broad Street – Odd Nos 1 - 39, Even Nos 2 - 60
 - High Street – Odd Nos 111 – 141, Even Nos 58 -130
- **Secondary Frontages**
 - High Street – Odd Nos 59 – 109, Even Nos 50 – 56.
 - Broad Street – Odd nos 41-75, Even Nos 60a -94

Monitoring

Monitoring shows the extent to which frontages retain their main retail function:

Retail Frontages	Total Mtrs	In A1 Use	% in A1 Use	Non A1 Use	% Non A1 Use
Primary	735	508	6.1	227.0	30.9
Secondary	497.6	90.6	19.4	377.0	80.6
Total	1202.6	598.6	49.8	604.0	50.2

Source: Drawn from SGC Annual Town Centre and Retail Audit August 2013.

8. Health check (from RTP Study 2010). Largely based on 2008 data.

“3.27 Overall Staple Hill (defined as a Town Centre) does not appear to be competing very well. This is not helped by its linear development, which is not conducive to more modern patterns of shopping.

3.28 However the High Street is generally busy and serves local needs adequately.

The town's catchment is mixed, with both high value housing and priority neighbourhoods due to deprivation. It is thought that there is too much leakage from the higher earning residents and that enhancement would be necessary to reverse this trend.

3.29 The high level of vacancy and declining environment causes concern and it may be that a managed decline, either naturally or through policy intervention may help to consolidate more of a quality retail offer, which should focus on being different from the modern retail warehouses.

3.30 Policy intervention could downgrade the centre, potentially reducing its primary and secondary frontages and concentrate on protecting the areas around the square and supermarkets. This may also allow a concentration of resources to improve the public realm and introduce a traffic calming scheme. The Regeneration Partnership is working to improve the town centre.

3.31 Opportunity for further expansion is limited and probably not appropriate given its current trading issues. Redevelopment of the central area may be possible and could realise benefits of a more concentrated centre as indicated above.”

9. Non-retail uses

Staple Hill is a traditional mixed-use town centre although most of the retail units are on the main high street and community uses in neighbouring areas.

- **Commercial floorspace** – a variety of banks, building societies and property agents, relatively limited office floorspace but Eclipse Office Park is nearby to the west. There is also manufacturing employment close to the centre (Bristol Uniforms). Until recently the Police District HQ was located to the east of the town centre but this has moved to Emersons Green.
- **Community Uses** – The Library is new and in a central location. Staple Hill Primary School (Page Road) and Christ Church C of E VC Junior School (Pendennis Road). The British Legion and Page Institute are both south of the Town Centre. Page Park is an important green space to the east of the centre Our Place - community flat on the Pendennis Estate.
- **Service uses** – a choice of opticians and pharmacies within the town centre.
- **Hotels and pubs and commercial leisure** – there are several pubs, cafes and restaurants. **Residential uses** – the main retail area is closely bordered by residential development on all sides.

Community Activity –

- Christmas on the Hill
- Armed Services day and other community events in Page Park.
- Substantial community effort to further improve Page Park.

10. Evening Economy

There are a number of pubs, restaurants and takeaways around the Town Centre.

There is perhaps a lack of family friendly leisure.

11. Governance

There is no town or parish council for Staple Hill.

The surrounding area is identified as a priority neighbourhood as it experiences some deprivation (see:

<http://www.southglos.gov.uk/Pages/Article%20Pages/Chief%20Executive%20-%20Corporate%20Resources/Priority-neighbourhood-profiles-11839.aspx>)

There is a safer and stronger community group for Staple Hill, Rodway and Mangotsfield which seeks to reduce crime and the perception of crime. (see: <https://groups.southglos.gov.uk/inovem/inovem.ti/StaplehillRandMssg/groupHome>)

Staple Hill Regeneration Partnership

This is a community umbrella organisation made up of voluntary groups, local businesses, public sector agencies, local councillors and local residents. Our aim is to improve the Staple Hill area after consultation with local people and to influence how local services and community activities are delivered. We have already achieved sustainable regeneration projects in the Staple Hill area and we are looking to foster larger scale regeneration initiatives through our role as the Reference Group for Staple Hill. (SHRP web site)

Staple Hill Chamber of Trade

Staple Hill Chamber of Trade has a web site: <http://www.staplehill.co.uk/aboutus.php> - The Chamber of Trade, Regeneration Partnership and Safer and Stronger Group help to coordinate activity.

“The Chamber of Trade was founded over 25 years ago by a small group of traders who noticed a steady decline in trade and the general appearance of the Staple Hill shopping centre, and not wishing to see the area go into deeper decline, decided to take action. It has helped make Staple Hill shopping centre a vibrant and enjoyable place to visit, and is the envy of other shopping areas.

The chamber is committed to all aspects of improving the quality of Staple Hill and regularly meets with local councilors, police, police community support officers, and South Gloucestershire Council highways department to ensure that the area is constantly improved and maintained,

The Chamber also arranges advertising to promote the area in the local press, with regular features in the Bristol Evening Post and Bristol Observer.” Staple Hill Regeneration Partnership web site. <http://www.staplehill.co.uk/index.php>

12. Safety and Security

There is an actively monitored CCTV system for the for the main high street and car parks.

13. Accessibility

Pedestrian and cycle routes - into the Centre are generally good but surrounding roads are busy with traffic and movement within the centre is hampered both by the volume of traffic and some difficult road crossings, Some pavement areas are partially in private ownership and have some level changes. Fountain Square is pedestrianised.

Public Transport - The centre is well served by bus routes and has central stops.

Car parks - are small but well distributed around the centre. Traffic congestion is perceived as both an environmental and safety issue.

Mobility issues While access issues have improved for the mobility impaired in and around the town centre they are still not good with some potentially difficult road crossings and narrow footways remaining.

14. Environmental Quality

Heritage

Staple Hill has historic links to Kingswood Forest however most buildings appear to be late Victorian or 20th Century.

Environment

The town centre is generally well maintained and busy. While the town centre is quite intensively built up there is access to green space at Page Park and along the corridor of the Bristol-Bath Old Railway Line Cycle Path to the south.

15. Tourism

The wider Kingswood/East Fringe area has significant visitor potential with the Steam Railway at Bitton, Heritage Museum and gardens at Warmley, the Old Railway Line Cycle Path. The history of Kingswood Forest, coal mining, industrial heritage are also of interest.

There is limited visitor accommodation and limited co-ordination of activity to support tourism at present.

16. Health Check Summary

Health Check Tests	Comments
○ Diversity of uses	Staple Hill appears to be a primarily retail centre but does have a range of community facilities and activities including local schools which help to encourage linked trips.
○ Proportion of vacant street level property	At the time of survey (August 2013) there were only 2 vacant retail units.
○ Commercial Yields on non-domestic property	Data not available
○ Customers' views and behaviour	Data not available
○ Retailer representation and intentions to change representation	The centre has many independent traders which help to give a unique character. Some traders are experiencing difficult trading conditions. It is not clear how much that is a temporary issue during a period of recession or how much a symptom of underlying viability issues associated with changing customer behaviour.
○ Commercial rents	Data not available
○ Pedestrian flows	Data not available but the centre generally appears bustling.
○ Accessibility	Generally good - although traffic pressures detract from the centre and hamper pedestrian movement.
○ Perception of safety and occurrence of crime	Position to be confirmed. The Community Safety Group is active.
○ State of town centre	Most of the town centre buildings and backland areas

environmental quality	behind shops appear reasonably well maintained
○ Health issues	The contribution that the town centre makes to health lifestyles is difficult to assess but Page Park and the Bristol-Bath Cycle Path are a major out-door recreational assets.
<p>17. Key Messages from Roger Tym Study</p> <p>There are variations between the district centres in terms of their scale, retail offer and overall role in South Gloucestershire. Of the district centres Staple Hill currently offers the most in terms of retail floorspace and service provision, but it has declined in recent years. It is recommended that Staple Hill be reclassified as a ‘District’ rather than ‘Town Centre’ to better meet its current and future role.</p> <p>The Council did not accept this recommendation and Staple Hill is defined as a town centre within the Core Strategy.</p>	
<p>18. Consultation and Feedback</p> <p>This profile was published in draft in December 2013. In preparing a revised profile account has been taken of both feedback from a questionnaire sent to town and parish councils and more general consultation on the draft profile. As Staple Hill is an ‘un-parished’ area the principal feedback has been from the elected ward Members. Points of detail have been raised and have been addressed in this revised profile.</p>	
<p>19. Policy: Role and Function</p> <p>Core Strategy Policy CS14 identifies Staple Hill as a town centre and high street shopping and service centre. “The Council will work with partner organisations and the local community to protect and enhance the vitality and viability of existing centres”.</p> <p>Policy CS29 seeks to ‘Improve the viability and vibrancy of Staple Hill [and other east fringe town centres] to enhance their role as service centres for the urban and surrounding rural areas and provide for additional comparison floorspace”</p>	
<p>20. Suggested Vision</p> <p>Staple Hill Town Centre will maintain its local retail and service function and capitalise on the strength of its independent traders. Vitality and vibrancy will be enhanced through promotional activity including seeking to attract additional customers from East Bristol and Emersons Green. The central role of the town centre within the local community will be consolidated.</p>	
<p>21. Land use and development issues</p> <p>There has been relatively recent development of former garage sites at either end of the high street. The eastern site now houses the Library. Further opportunities appear limited without complex land acquisition which does not currently appear viable.</p> <p>Issues raised include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ancillary space at the back and above shops is being lost to residential development, leaving only the shop fronts available for retail. ○ While the provision of units is generally considered adequate there is an issue of usage with a growing trend of non-retail use, with solicitors, estate agents, beauty parlours and takeaways diminishing the range of shops. ○ Charity shops selling new items, further damaging retailers. <p>Opportunities and actions</p>	
Strategy	There is little scope to expand retail floorspace in the High Street area itself. The need is to maintain and safeguard the vibrancy of the

	<p>existing offering.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate Staple Hill as a mixed-use town centre with a greater diversification of use and with independent traders serving the needs of the local area and attracting additional customers from outside the area. • Preserve and enhance the distinctive identity and heritage of the town centre and its vibrancy and vitality. • Encourage evening trade with retailers being more flexible in their opening hours and with better family leisure facilities. • Identify a primary retail area to be retained in mainly retail use and other areas where there can be a more general mix of office uses, beauty parlours, restaurants etc. • Encourage the active use of space behind and above shops where possible for retail, storage and business uses. Allow residential use only where that would not undermine the retail function.
Development needs/ sites:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider scope for provision of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Better public toilets – through enhancement or replacement of existing (Page Park and Page Road). ○ A permanent youth service base (need to identify a site) ○ Retail units in Victoria Street and Soundwell Road to be brought back into active retail use.
Retail growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The working assumption is of modest retail expansion with around 500 sq m (5,000 sq ft) of comparison floorspace to be created mainly through conversions and the re-use of existing unused floorspace.
Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is some concern that charity shops are now selling new, rather than recycled, items, damaging the trade of permanent retailers. • While there is physical space to hold markets there is concern that this could undermine the viability of existing permanent traders. • Market stalls are perhaps best provided as part of special promotional and charity events for example within Fountain Square and as part of 'Christmas on the Hill'.
Public Realm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the buildings around Fountain Square. • Provide for better seating. • Work to encourage and secure shop front maintenance and renovation with grant funding where available.
Public Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport links with other parts of South Gloucestershire are generally inadequate, especially non-linear bus routes. • Develop reliable, punctual and frequent public transport services with neighbouring suburbs, with the North Fringe of Bristol and with Hanham.
Walking, Cycling routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review routes into the centre to identify any specific barriers or opportunities for improvement.

Mobility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new projects should consider mobility and accessibility. • Access for disabled shoppers should be addressed where there are level changes difficult thresholds and poor circulation space within shops.
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking has been a huge issue for a long time. • Aim for a better balance between long-stay and short-stay parking bays. • Encourage a more flexible and common-sense approach to enforcement. Complaints that traders and residents have been fined in the past simply for stopping to unload a vehicle. • Consider scope for 'Residents' only' parking as an option where there is local support.
Traffic management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific proposals at present.
Centre Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider funding for and appointment of a Town Centre Manager.
Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better use of the stage at Fountain Square – more events to attract from a wider catchment area. • Retailers need to support an online operation tied in with their high street presence. • Produce a marketing and welcome pack for new and start up businesses.
Visitors/Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do more to promote the existing green facilities, e.g. Page Park and the cycle path.
Evening economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider scope to provide better family leisure facilities. • Consider scope to provide a better balance between restaurants providing a 'venue' with fewer takeaways.
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staple Hill contains the Super Output Area with the highest level of multiple deprivation in South Gloucestershire. • Funding in general is a huge issue.

22. Staple Hill Town Centre Summary

Staple Hill is linear suburban centre. Core Strategy Policy CS14 aims to consolidate it as a town centre with a high street shopping and service role.

The proposed town centre boundary includes both a primary retail area, based on the existing shops, and a wider area including the main car parks which tend to be in backland areas behind the shops. It also includes Page Park which helps to give Staple Hill a strong civic presence.

Primary and secondary retail frontages are shown. These are not proposed to be changed from those adopted in the SGLP of 2006.

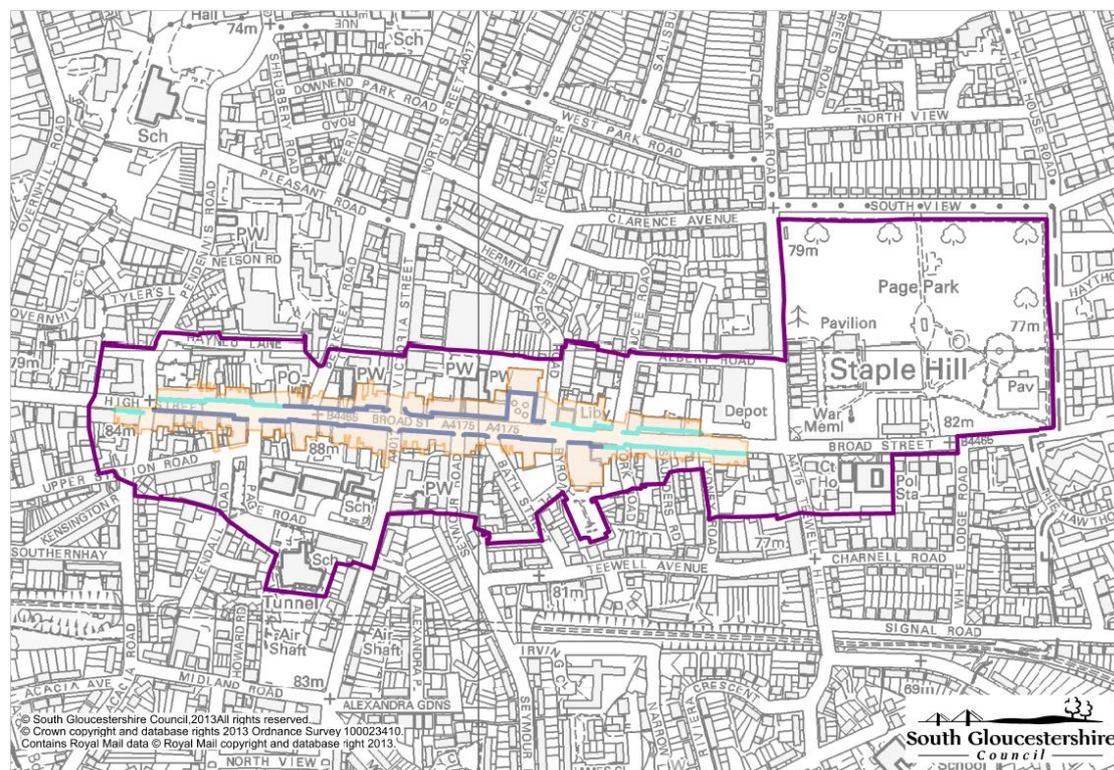
Staple Hill is a priority neighbourhood with an active regeneration partnership. Attention has been drawn to a number of potential actions including the need for:

- Better public toilets – through enhancement or replacement of existing facilities at Page Park and Page Road.

- A permanent youth service base.
- Retail units in Victoria Street and Soundwell Road to be brought back into active retail use.
- Encouragement of evening trade with retailers being more flexible in their opening hours and with better family leisure facilities.
- There is a range of promotional and management actions which can also be considered to enhance the vitality of the centre. More detail is set out in the town centre profile

While new retail investment would be welcomed in principle physical capacity appears limited unless redevelopment opportunities within or on the edge of the primary retail area arise. Ancillary space at the back and above shops is being lost to residential development, leaving only the shop fronts available for retail. On this basis the assumption is for capacity for about 500 sq m or new comparison floorspace.

Staple Hill Town Centre Proposed Policy Diagram



Legend

	Proposed Town Centre Boundary
	Proposed Primary Retail Area
	Proposed Primary Retail Frontage
	Proposed Secondary Retail Frontage

Appendix 1 - Staple Hill Town Centre Profile - detailed feedback from consultation

a. Town and Parish Council Questionnaire feedback

Q3. Please list any land use/building projects that your local community consider would benefit their area and where known your preferred location. Responses relevant to the Town Centre.		
Comment by	Project	Location
<p>Q4 (a). Please indicate any significant issues/problems your community feel are present in the town centres that they most frequently use. For example do the community have good access to shops, banks, cultural and community facilities etc? (b) Please also indicate if there are positive aspects of particular town centres that the community value.</p>		
Comment by	Issue/Problem with Centre	Positive Aspects of Centre
Downend and Bromley Heath PC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danger of shops closing due to high lease/rental costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of independent shops.

b) Feedback on the draft profile

<p>Staple Hill Town Centre - Discussion points</p> <p>The draft profile included a list of discussion points with feedback invited by 31st December 2013. The main feedback to these points set out below has been from the elected Councillors for the Staple Hill Ward.</p> <p>Please send suggestions for further change to PlanningLDF@southglos.gov.uk</p>	
Issues	Comments made Officer Response
i. Do you wish to make any comments on the draft profile?	Detailed comments were made by the Ward Members
ii. If you would like to meet Officers to discuss specific issues please indicate here.	A meeting was held with Officers (9 th January).
iii. Do you consider that retail units meet retailer needs? If not can they be remodelled?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancillary space at the back and above shops is being lost to residential development, leaving only the shop fronts available for retail. • The provision of units is generally OK, but we see a problem with their usage: there is a growing trend of non-retail use, with solicitors, estate agents, beauty parlours and takeaways diminishing the range of shops. • Charity shops are now selling new items, further damaging

	retailers.
iv. Can trade increase – if so how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing some of the problems raised above, supporting a greater diversification of use, encouraging independent traders to attract a custom base from outside the area. We see more scope for evening trade, with retailers more flexible in their opening hours. Retailers need to support an online operation tied in with their high street presence.
v. Should the retail area intensify, expand or contract in line with demand for units?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No, we need to maintain and safeguard the vibrancy of the existing offering.
vi. Is there space for the Town Centre to grow? If so where?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to bring back units to retail use in Victoria Street and Soundwell Road. There is little scope on the High Street itself.
vii. Should the Town centre diversify or specialise in any particular forms of retailing or services to have a unique selling point – if so what?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversify with a range of independent traders. Some retailers would benefit from support to improve customer service.
viii. Is there scope for additional indoor or outdoor market stalls?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is physical space but any initiative would need to be handled very sensitively with the existing traders.
ix. Should tourism/visitor facilities be improved – if so how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve public toilets. Engage a Town Centre Manager. Market the existing green facilities, e.g. Page Park and the cycle path.
x. Do service and community groups have any unmet needs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport links with other parts of South Gloucestershire are inadequate, especially non-linear bus routes. We have no permanent youth service base. Funding in general is a huge issue. Staple Hill contains the Super Output Area with the highest level of multiple deprivation in South Gloucestershire.
xi. Can access to and within the Town Centre be improved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access for disabled shoppers could be improved.
xii. Is car parking an issue? How could it be addressed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, it has been a huge issue and we have been working on solutions for a long time. Better balance between long-stay and short-stay parking bays is now being addressed. We need a more flexible and common-sense approach to enforcement: traders and residents have been fined in the past simply for stopping to unload a vehicle.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents' only parking should remain an option where supported.
xiii. Should the evening economy be further developed – if so in what way?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate family leisure facilities. Too many eateries are takeaways rather than restaurants acting as a venue.
xiv. How else could the town centre be enhanced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Centre Manager. Enhance the buildings around Fountain Square. Better use of the stage at Fountain Square – more events to attract from a wider catchment area. Better seating. Better public toilets.

Appendix 2 – Extracts From Staple Hill Town Centre Health Check December 2012

The full document can be viewed at: <http://www.insouthglos.co.uk/invest/retail/>

INTRODUCTION

The Staple Hill Town Centre Health Check, led by Staple Hill Chamber of Trade, (with support from local partners) aims to identify the work currently taking place in Staple Hill to improve the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre and highlight actions that will help it continue to improve.

BACKGROUND

The Staple Hill Regeneration Partnership was founded and has evolved in answer to the identified needs of the Staple Hill area. The group started working on local projects in 1998 long before it was formally constituted. Towards the end of 1998 concerns were raised by residents, community group leaders and traders about the general deterioration of the town centre and Page Park, an increase in anti-social behaviour and a lack of community spirit. Councillors representing the ward raised these concerns at council meetings and at meetings of the Policy & Resources Committee. Members were sympathetic but the then recently formed South Gloucestershire Council (1996) had limited resources to invest in the area.

With the help of council facilitators the needs of Staple Hill were identified through surveys and action plans were set up. In 2001, part of a Government grant was dedicated to improving the town centre. A group of traders and community activists were consulted about the project and were given the responsibility of overseeing the work. This resulted in the formal founding of the Staple Hill Regeneration Partnership, which is an umbrella organisation. It includes local residents, representatives of a wide range of voluntary and community organisations, traders and local businesses and representatives of the council and other agencies.

The purpose of the partnership is to identify and address some of the area's problems and thus improve the quality of life for people living and trading in Staple Hill. The Regeneration Partnership is working together with the Staple Hill Chamber of Trade to implement the town centre health check.

WHY A HEALTH CHECK?

Monitoring the health of a town centre was a common theme in the documents mentioned above and important to determine areas for improvement. As a result, these documents were used as the basis for designing this health check (the introductions highlighted in blue at the start of each section reflect this). The 'Key Messages' from these documents are also summarised on the following page.

In summer 2011, Staple Hill Chamber of Trade took the initiative and with support from South Gloucestershire Council, started the health check process. The draft document was circulated to local partners for comment (including Staple Hill Regeneration Partnership and Staple Hill Safer & Stronger Community Group) and made available online for the public to view before publishing.

FRAMEWORK

This health check has two primary areas of focus, which as already established, are both seen as crucial in helping to create a vibrant town centre. The first area of focus is developing the town centre and the second area of focus is chamber of trade activities. For the purpose of this health check, 'town centre' refers to the area between Page Park and the junction of High Street and Pendennis Road/Acacia Road.

This health check will help inform South Gloucestershire Council's future plans for Staple Hill Town Centre and will also act as guide for local partners engaged in developing the vitality and vibrancy of Staple Hill Town Centre.

STAPLE HILL HERITAGE

The name Staple derives from an old English word Steap or Steep. Staple Hill means 'on the steep hill'. Staple Hill was once part of Kingswood Forest, which covered an area of eighteen square miles and extended six miles north east from Bristol to Pucklechurch. Partly within this forest was the Manor of Barton Regis, which included the ancient Parishes of Clifton, St George, Stapleton and Mangotsfield.

The earliest known map of the area, which is from 1610, gives the name Staple Hill but no houses are shown, only an oak tree (The Staple Hill Oak) and the road leading from Bristol across Staple Hill (Mangotsfield Waye).

Staple Hill was never a village in the accepted sense, unlike Mangotsfield (which grew up around the church) and Downend (which expanded from a hamlet). Staple Hill evolved as a local community alongside a very ancient track way running from Bristol to the Saxon Royal Hunting Lodge at Pucklechurch. But it was not until the nineteenth century that Staple Hill began to develop into the built-up area that it is now.

The earliest copy of Matthews Trade Directory (dated 1801) held by the Central Library in Bristol, only covered Bristol. The 1853 edition covered Bristol and surrounding villages. Downend is first mentioned in 1859 and entries include traders located in Staple Hill.

It is well known that coal was mined in Staple Hill for several centuries. There was also quarrying for the local pennant stone, which was used for building houses and walls. With the development of machines driven by steam, the old system of cottage industries gradually died as factories were built to house the machines. This, with the enclosure of common and open fields, helped the migration of country people from the rural districts to the towns.

In the Gloucestershire Record Office there is a very large book containing plans of buildings submitted by various local builders who wished to build in the Staple Hill area between 1896 and 1898. In those two years there were applications for the building of over 240 houses in Cassell Road, North Street, High Street, Berkeley Road, Parnalls Lane, Soundwell Road and Hermitage Estate.

In 1895, Lloyds Bank acquired premises in the High Street. Though shops had existed in the high street prior to this, the bank drew more traders to the area and as a result, the town centre of Staple Hill was formed. It remains a vibrant high street today with remnants of its historic past still visible through primarily Victorian architecture.

Information from Staple Hill, A History By Reg. Howlett (1991)

STAPLE HILL TODAY

The new retail centre at Emersons Green has no doubt drawn shoppers from Staple Hill Town Centre over the last decade but the high street has done well to compete by offering an independent selection of retailers. The post office at one end of the high street and Tesco store at the other have created anchors at either end of the town centre which also help attract and retain foot fall in the high street.

The success of Staple Hill Town Centre can be attributed to the commitment the local chamber of trade has for supporting the high street and its independent retailers. Participation in regular community events reinforces the collective spirit of the area and this could be something that attracts loyal, seasonal shoppers to the high street.

1. DEVELOPING THE TOWN CENTRE

A. UNIQUE SENSE OF PLACE

Town centres are vital to the local community. Local people and groups should work together to maximise the advantages of a town centre's local heritage and natural surroundings, whilst providing facilities for modern retailing. A town centre's local identity should be complemented by an appropriate retail mix that is marketed effectively. This will encourage shoppers to appreciate the retail experience.

Current Status

The Chamber of Trade is a member of and works closely with Staple Hill Regeneration Partnership and Staple Hill Safer & Stronger Community Group (and partners).

- The high street has a high proportion of independent retailers that offer quality products with a personalised and expert service.
- Businesses in Staple Hill are marketed through the Chamber of Trade's Facebook page, the local press, local media and the Chamber website (www.staplehill.co.uk).

Future Actions

- Ensure close working continues between all local community groups including the Chamber of Trade, Friends of Page Park, Royal British Legion, Our Place and local library, on events and activities that can increase footfall to the high street. (Lead Partner – Chamber of Trade)
- Encourage more specialised retailers to move to the high street, to complement the existing retail mix and work closely with South Gloucestershire Council to ensure future planning contributes to this existing retail mix. (Lead Partner – Chamber of Trade)
- Promote virtues of the internet and create better integration between the Chamber of Trade website and local business websites. Further promote the Staple Hill brand through coordinated signs, flyers, leaflets etc. (Lead Partner – Chamber of Trade)

B. ATTRACTIVE PUBLIC REALM

A town centre should have an attractive trading environment with consistent styling, pedestrian signage and public spaces maintained to high standards. This should include effective deterrents against pollution. The local authority, public bodies and private interest groups need to work together to achieve such improvements.

Current Status

- The high street creates a pleasant shopping experience due to its wide pavements and attractive street furniture.
- High street cleanliness is maintained to a high standard. Open spaces and greenery are also maintained on a seasonal basis as required, by the local authority.
- The Chamber of Trade has a close working relationship with the Street Care department at South Gloucestershire Council to address prevailing issues.
- Page Park is maintained to high standard by the local authority and the Friends of Page Park. Other open spaces and greenery are also maintained, on a sporadic basis, by the local authority.

Future Actions

- Work with Staple Hill Regeneration Partnership to secure any available grant funding for shop front renovation. (Lead Partner – Chamber of Trade)
- Encourage all local retailers (through appropriate communications) to maintain their shop frontage, to be in keeping with Staple Hill's high standards of cleanliness and aesthetic, visual appeal. (Lead Partner – Chamber of Trade)

- Continue to work with South Gloucestershire Council to improve waste collection facilities in the town centre, as required and maintain open and green spaces, especially in Page Park. (Lead Partner – Chamber of Trade).

C. PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Monitoring the health of the town centre should underpin any effective town centre system. A clear strategy should be established to address the increasing rates of vacancy and the accompanying decline in fortunes of town centres.

Current Status

- For over 20 years, the Regeneration Partnership (as well as its partners) has been working towards achieving physical improvements in the town centre.
- Various local groups (such as the Regeneration Partnership) frequently work to monitor the health of the high street, to understand where improvements can be made (such as to Fountain Square).
- The Chamber of Trade, through its marketing of Staple Hill to outside businesses, works towards promoting the area as a place where independent retailers can flourish.

Future Actions

- Ensure a close working relationship continues to be maintained with the Regeneration Partnership, to promote the work of the Chamber of Trade and help achieve local ambitions. (Lead Partner – Regeneration Partnership)
- Circulate this Town Centre Health Check document to relevant partners in Staple Hill including the Friends of Page Park, Safer & Stronger Community Group, Police and Regeneration Partnership. (Lead Partner – Chamber of Trade)
- Produce a marketing pack for prospective businesses and new start-ups to highlight the benefits of moving to and trading in Staple Hill. (Lead Partner – Chamber of Trade)

D. ACCESSIBILITY

Parking and transport policy should reduce town centre congestion and parking demands without affecting footfall. Car parking and cycle locking facilities need to attract customers to the town centre and adequate public transport links should connect local communities to the town centre. Retail premises should be easily accessible to encourage visits from wheelchair users and buggy users.

Current Status

- The Chamber of Trade has been working closely with South Gloucestershire Council for a number of years to ensure there are adequate parking facilities in and around the high street. The number of free car parks currently serving the high street reflects this. The council has also committed to maintain free car parking in Staple Hill.
- Despite a number of bus routes serving Staple Hill, there are still some gaps in public transport links. For example, there is no direct bus route that connects Hanham to Staple Hill.
- The Chamber has worked with South Gloucestershire Council to educate and advise high street businesses about accessibility issues.

Future Actions

- Continue to work with South Gloucestershire Council to provide as many free car parking spaces as possible in and around the high street as well as to retain existing ones. (Lead Partner – Chamber of Trade)
- Lobby local transport providers and work with the Regeneration Partnership to look at increased bus service provision to connect Staple Hill to neighbouring suburbs. (Lead Partner – Regeneration Partnership)

- Ensure new town centre projects consider accessibility issues as appropriate (such as the regeneration of Fountain Square). (Lead Partner – Regeneration Partnership)

E. SAFETY & SECURITY

Retail crime and anti-social behaviour should be deterred, with damaged property and streetscape restored as quickly as possible. Meaningful deterrence can be achieved through a co-ordinated response by local retailers and businesses. Neighbourhood policing should meet the needs of the local community. The town centre should be a safe, inclusive and accessible place for people to live, work, shop and visit.

Current Status

- The police work closely with local partnerships and attend various forums in order to share information. Shoplifting in the high street was recently prioritised and the Neighbourhood Police Team works proactively to reduce the impact of anti-social behaviour on local trade.
- The Chamber of Trade has, for over a decade, operated the ShopWatch scheme successfully. Information is also shared between high street traders, creating a total link between them.
- Overall, policing does meet the needs of high street businesses. This is primarily due to the Chamber of Trade communicating regularly with the local police to maintain a strong working relationship.

Future Actions

- Continue to support the Safer & Stronger Community Group which is the most suitable forum for prioritising any relevant issues. (Lead Partner – Avon & Somerset Police)
- Support the Safer & Stronger Community Group to organise the Neighbourhood Watch scheme. (Lead Partner – Avon & Somerset Police)
- Monitor crime levels and update relevant partners as appropriate. Discuss business crime at Chamber of Trade meetings as required and action as appropriate. (Lead Partner – Chamber of Trade)

F. CORE STRATEGY

The Core Strategy sets the strategic planning policy framework to guide future development across South Gloucestershire. In the Core Strategy, Staple Hill is defined as a town centre and functions as a high street and shopping service centre. This Health Check therefore, complements the Core Strategy.

Under Policy CS14 (Town Centres and Retail), South Gloucestershire Council will work with partners and the local community to protect and enhance the vitality and viability of existing centres in South Gloucestershire, in recognition of their retail, service and social functions.

As a result of community engagement, the Core Strategy's vision for the future of the East Fringe of Bristol (which includes Staple Hill) aims to:

- Preserve and enhance the distinctive identity and heritage of the physical community
- Strengthen the vibrancy and vitality of the town centres
- Improve employment opportunities (by being in close proximity to the Bristol & Bath Science Park)
- Develop reliable, punctual and frequent public transport services with the North Fringe of Bristol
- Integrate well designed housing developments (which do not isolate the town centre).

Policy CS29 in the Core Strategy aims to deliver this draft vision through managing development and partnership working.

The viability and vibrancy of Staple Hill will be improved to enhance its role as a service centre for the urban and surrounding rural area including making provision for additional comparison floor space as appropriate

2. CHAMBER OF TRADE ACTIVITIES

Staple Hill Chamber of Trade has been established for over 40 years. The group encourages businesses in the Staple Hill area to meet regularly, gain access to business support, trade with each other and promote the local economy. The 'Key Messages' section of this health check identifies the need for a strong and active chamber of trade to be in place, to work with local partners and undertake activities that can improve the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre. Staple Hill Chamber of Trade has highlighted a set of ambitions and goals they believe will help contribute towards a vibrant and prosperous town centre.

A. Create and foster a spirit of goodwill, friendship and unity amongst local businesses and the local community.

The Chamber of Trade is regularly involved with community events that take place in and around the high street. One example is the Page Park Centenary Celebrations (2011).

- Communicate with more people to get them involved in supporting future local events, to spread workload and increase relationships between groups and individuals in the community.

B. Provide facilities for the exchange of views and interaction between local businesses.

Monthly meetings always allow for this. The Chamber of Trade intranet is another example of how local businesses communicate with each other and discuss issues affecting the high street.

- Continue to hold regular meetings and invite external speakers to serve local business demands.

C. Develop an informative website for the Chamber of Trade.

The Chamber of Trade website (www.staplehill.co.uk) has recently been improved and contains up-to-date information about facilities in the high street, including a comprehensive list of shops.

- Promote the Chamber of Trade website when and where appropriate and link it with all other Staple Hill community websites.

D. Improve communications between the Chamber of Trade and all sectors of the local community.

Email circulars and newsletters are sent out to businesses regularly. The Chamber intranet provides a good tool for communication between local businesses. This health check is an ideal way for the local community to see the work of the Chamber of Trade.

- Publish a Staple Hill Business Directory containing a list of all shops in the high street and place in each shop. Circulate to local community groups as well.

E. Be recognised as representing and promoting the view of businesses to the rest of the community.

The Chamber of Trade is regularly consulted on a variety of matters (e.g. parking by South Gloucestershire Council).

- Increase the Chamber of Trade's current level of public relations so it is recognised by local groups as well as the media.

F. Keep local businesses informed on important matters affecting trade, businesses and tourism.

This regularly takes place at Chamber of Trade meetings and through circulation of newsletters and emails as well as posts on the intranet site.

- Attend future South Gloucestershire Business Forum events to learn about new developments that can help the high street maintain its vibrancy and vitality and competitiveness.

G. Establish and maintain relations with bodies having similar objectives to promote the vibrancy of the high street.

The Chamber of Trade is a member of the Regeneration Partnership. The Chamber is represented at Regeneration Partnership meetings where relevant issues affecting the high street are addressed.

- Continue to work with the Royal British Legion, the Regeneration Partnership, the Friends of Page Park and the local library to communicate and address issues affecting the vibrancy and vitality of the high street.

H. Promote the high street as a vibrant and unified shopping district.

The Chamber of Trade has worked towards celebrating 150 years of trading in the high street. There was a creative programme of activities held during 2012.

- Collaborate with the Bristol and Bath Science Park and arrange meet and greet event where high street businesses can introduce themselves to Science Park tenants and visitors.

I. Support and have presence at local events for promotional purposes, as appropriate.

The Chamber of Trade has been participating in events such as Christmas on the Hill, Page Park Centenary Celebrations and Armed Forces Day.

- Participate and have active involvement in the Easter Egg Hunt and events at Page Park similar to the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, to promote and encourage more foot fall to the high street. Generate ideas for future events.

SUMMARY & CONTACTS

This health check provides a guide that will be used by local partners currently engaged in developing the vitality and vibrancy of Staple Hill Town Centre.

Coordinated by Staple Hill Chamber of Trade, these partners will review the health check regularly to ensure the future actions identified are being achieved. For information about the progress being made with each of the future actions or to offer your support to any of the lead partners, please contact:

- Staple Hill Chamber of Trade - staplehillchamberoftrade@hotmail.co.uk
- Staple Hill Regeneration Partnership - our.place@hotmail.co.uk
- Avon & Somerset Police - Dominic.Graham@avonandsomerset.police.uk
- Safer & Stronger Community Group - Terry.Johnson@southglos.gov.uk
- South Gloucestershire Council - business@southglos.gov.uk