

2: INTRODUCTION

Halifax town centre has retained more of its integrity and character than most, and none of the problems that it faces are exceptional or insurmountable.

But it is not just another post-industrial Yorkshire town. It is a jewel of West Yorkshire. It has an exceptional urban quality in a unique landscape setting, and it has committed leaders among its citizens who have recognised these qualities and who want to assert its status as a high quality place to live and to work and to spend leisure time.

This uniqueness means that workaday solutions to future development and change - more of the same - are simply not good enough. The community and their representatives aspire to the very best - the best landscape, the best public realm, best architecture and the best cultural venues. The best Halifax experience.

The beneficiaries of this focus on 'the best' will be, first and foremost, the citizens of Halifax. A place that is good for its citizens will be good for visitors - get the town right for its residents and the visitors will come anyway.

HALIFAX AT THREE SPATIAL LEVELS

If Halifax is to have the best landscape, best public realm, best architecture and best cultural venues the Town Team recognised that its future must be investigated at three spatial levels:

- 1 The town in its setting** - exploiting the beautiful landscape setting within which the town sits and, most importantly, improving access to open countryside
- 2 The town centre** - creating the best public realm in terms of quality and connectivity and making the most of its fine architecture and opportunities for new development
- 3 The Piece Hall** - making the most significant building in Halifax an integral component of the town centre both as an attraction in its own right - a leisure and cultural venue - as well as a place people pass through en-route to other destinations.

The interrelated themes at the core of this Strategic Development Framework investigate these three spatial levels in more detail.



1
THE TOWN IN ITS SETTING



2
THE TOWN CENTRE



3
THE PIECE HALL

SO WHY THE TITLE 'HALIFAX: STREETS AHEAD!'

If there is one characteristic that exemplifies the existing quality of the town and its past glories, it is the strength of the network of streets through the town centre. The retention, enhancement and extension of this street network will be the heart of the Renaissance Strategic Development Framework for the town centre, and its relationship with the rest of the town.



THE TOWN TEAM'S VISION FOR HALIFAX

The town team have a clear vision for Halifax town centre and the town surrounding it. It must be a good place for its citizens and for its visitors while recognising that places that put citizens first are also good places to visit. It must be memorable for the quality of its streets and other spaces that are accommodating of traffic but respectful of pedestrians who are the lifeblood of the town centre.

These streets and spaces must be enhanced to show off the wealth of fine buildings that hark back to its industrial heyday but have a critical role to play as a resource for the future of the town. The streets and spaces must be enhanced in respect of their quality as distinct places but also in terms of their integrity as a continuous network across the town centre linking all the important parts of the town centre, and its surroundings, together.

If the themes of this Renaissance Strategic Development Framework are realised, the town centre would be a very different place to what it is at present. The places and spaces that are important to the town, or near to but not yet part of the town centre, will be enveloped and properly connected by the street network. The Piece Hall, the Station, Eureka!, the Parish Church, Dean Clough and People's Park will all become integral and revitalised parts of the town centre and essential aspects of its attraction, and it will be possible to move between them as a pedestrian easily and comfortably. Within the town centre, the main streets should be improved to a similar standard to that set by Corn Market/Southgate, with a particular emphasis on Market Street, Westgate, Broad Street, Cow Green and George Street, and the Piece Hall, the Parish Church, the Town Hall and Somerset House will be rediscovered within this web as memorable symbols for the town.

THE PIECE HALL



TYPICAL CITY CENTRE STREET



TOWN CENTRE SHOPPING



The Piece Hall will live up to its perception as the crown jewel of Halifax, becoming a vibrant place of activity. The central space will be the entry point to a new range of attractions within the building and to new buildings that are connected to the outside of the Piece Hall and accessed from inside. A new eastern gate into the Piece Hall will make it more accessible as a through-route to other destinations in the town centre.

The town centre will be reinvented as a place to live. New residential buildings and conversions will be spread across the town centre; in particular the valley bottom will be re-populated by a new high quality neighbourhood with the Parish Church and its gardens at its heart. Hebble Brook will be rediscovered through this new neighbourhood as a recreational green link that connects Dean Clough in the North with Salterhebble in the south. This will be the threshold to the hills with much improved access.

The Broad Street Site will be redeveloped to extend the town centre and to provide a high quality gateway with an attractive pedestrian route connecting the town centre with Dean Clough. People working in Dean Clough or the town centre will be attracted to walk between the two.

The balance between buses, pedestrians and cars should be reassessed so that Market Street, Commercial Street and Westgate become high quality pedestrian environments, accommodating buses but not dominated by them. Westgate could become a covered street providing shelter in adverse weather and also serving as a much improved western gateway into the Piece Hall.

The combination of the refurbishment of Somerset House and the full pedestrianisation of George Street/Square would result in a high quality public square that also serves as a striking western gateway into the town centre. Beyond this gateway, King Cross Lane/Hopwood Lane and its adjacent development would be refurbished and improved to provide a high quality pedestrian link connecting People's Park and West Central Halifax to the Town Centre. In addition, other routes such as Gibbet Street and pedestrian crossings in Cow Green will be improved to better integrate West Central Halifax with the town centre.