

## ART IN PUBLIC SPACES STRATEGY [Prescot Town Centre]

Knowsley Council would like to commission an arts/public arts consultant to develop a 1-5 year strategy for the animation of Prescot Town Centre, through public art, which creatively captures the essence of place and helps to attract local people and visitors into the Town Centre.

### **Aim**

The aim of this piece of work is to complement the other town centre regeneration projects by identifying the key 'art in public space' steps and interventions needed, over a 5 year period, to maximise the impact of art on the success of the Prescot Town Centre, including attracting visitors through public art.

### **Artistic Vision**

As a result of collaboration between artists and communities, to create a high quality, stimulating and exciting 'Arts in Public Spaces' Strategy that creates the conditions for the delivery of a programme of high quality and unique permanent and temporary public artworks in Prescot Town Centre, and sets out a strong and costed concept and plan to achieve this.

### **Strategy Considerations**

In developing and completing this strategy, we would want the artist/public arts consultant to factor in the following (in no particular order):

1. Cover a 5 year period with potential to expand should the opportunities arise
2. Include robust creative consultation and engagement with the local community, elected members and other key stakeholders
3. Take account of the opportunities and synergies with other Prescot regeneration projects
4. Support the important linkages between key locations in the town centre
5. Reflect and celebrate the history and heritage of the local area
6. Link, where appropriate, to the wider Knowsley public arts concept
7. Link to the vision and priorities of the Prescot Town Centre Masterplan and Supplementary Planning Document
8. Reflect the priorities and vision of the Arts Council's Strategy 'Great Art and Culture for Everyone'
9. Take account of the public artists who are able to deliver the types of artworks identified for Prescot (*though the consultation and engagement process*) and in line with project aim.

## Outputs

1. A 5 year 'Arts in Public Place' Strategy for Prescot Town Centre which includes:
  - a. Consultation and engagement that has taken place and how this has informed the Strategy
  - b. Vision and concept for Prescot's public art/art in public places
  - c. Strong idea of the programme of public art needed in Prescot Town Centre (individual and as a whole)
  - d. Key locations for public art, to maximize impact
  - e. Indication of the costs to deliver a 5 year programme of public art
  - f. Indication of funding sources and opportunities to assist in the creation of the artworks over the following years
  - g. Consideration of the wider Town Centre and the potential to expand concept where opportunities arise
2. A realistic Plan to achieve the Strategy and delivery the artworks
3. Recommendations on the key considerations for future Project Briefs to commission the public artworks themselves (permanent and temporary).

## Engagement and Consultation

This is an essential part of the Strategy development to ensure:

- The values, ideas and visions of local people and their local heritage and history are embedded throughout
- There is a real ownership of the strategy at a local level
- Local stakeholders enjoy a journey of discovery which explores the different ways that high quality arts can enhance the lives of people and the vitality of the place
- There is a strong appetite for a wide range of stakeholders to support the implementation of the final strategy, over the following 5 years

We already have a number of routes in to engage local stakeholders and will work closely with the successful artist/consultant to reach a wide and varied audience. We would expect the artists/consultant to use high quality creative techniques to engage people in the process.

## Funding

The maximum amount for this commission to produce a Strategy and Plan is £8,000. This includes expenses, research and community consultation.

## Timetable

Issue request for expressions of interest	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2015
Closing date for applications	23 <sup>rd</sup> November 2015
Evaluation period	24 <sup>th</sup> – 27 <sup>th</sup> November 2015
Commission award	30 <sup>th</sup> November 2015
Strategy deadline	25 <sup>th</sup> March 2016

## Notes

If it is necessary for the Council to make amendments or additions to this commission, all artists and consultants who have expressed an interest will be notified in writing and, if appropriate, the deadline for receipt of applications will be extended to reflect the amendments.

The Council reserves the right to cancel this process at any time or not to progress with any scheme ideas submitted. The Council is not liable for any costs resulting from any cancellation of the process or for any other costs incurred by those expressing an interest in the commission.

## How to apply

### Expression of interest

Please contact us to express your interest in this commission, as soon as possible, to enable us to contact you in the event that there are any amendments or additions prior to the application deadline. Please email [jo.dry@knowsley.gov.uk](mailto:jo.dry@knowsley.gov.uk)

## Application

Please send your application to [jo.dry@knowsley.gov.uk](mailto:jo.dry@knowsley.gov.uk) by close of business on **Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2015**. Please include:

### Quality and Experience

1. Experience of leading on successful public art strategies (including a case study with detail of budget, impact, stakeholder engagement, positive outcomes and analysis of why it was successful). Please include the strengths that you brought to this particular strategy.
2. Include an example of a successful public art project/strategy that has taken place in another town that faced similar challenges to Prescot (eg. losing visitors to the town centre). This example will need to include budgets (for that particular model) and demonstrate the positive impact the project had on that particular town.
3. Current C.V. and information about those personnel who will lead and be involved in this commission.
4. Contacts details for 2 references (from past clients).
5. Your methodology for undertaking this work in the timescale.
6. Evidence of Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance.

### Finance

7. Total Cost (including detail of days, daily rates, other costs).

**In the event that there is the same score between two or more applicants, short interviews will take place w/c 30<sup>th</sup> November.**

## For further information

Please see background information below and also please contact Jo Dry on 0151 443 5349 if you have any questions.

## Background information

### **Overarching Draft Masterplan and Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) aims and objectives:**

The Prescott Town Centre Masterplan SPD is currently in development and will be going out to public consultation at the end of 2015. Following this the masterplan will be adopted alongside the Local Plan Core Strategy in 2016.

### **Vision:**

*By 2030 Prescott Town Centre will be a thriving place that is an attractive destination for local residents and visitors. It will offer a distinctive mix of uses including new cultural and leisure facilities, a consolidated and reinvigorated retail offer, and excellent local services, supported by new residential development that will enable more people to live in the heart of the town. The regenerated town centre will be easy to access and provide a high quality environment that showcases Prescott's heritage and creates a strong sense of place.*

### **Strategic Objectives:**

1. Growing the leisure sector to provide an improved visitor offer, develop a more diverse evening economy and change perceptions of Prescott;
2. Consolidating the Town Centre's retail offer by focusing activity and footfall in key locations, supporting independent retailers and exploiting the opportunities provided by new leisure development;
3. Restoring and enhancing the Town Centre environment to showcase Prescott's heritage assets, create a stronger sense of place and support further investment;
4. Encouraging residential development in the town centre as a means to regenerate key sites and support local shops and services;
5. Increase the prominence and accessibility of the town centre so that it provides an attractive and coherent destination for visitors.

### **Four key elements:**

1. Re-orientating the Town Centre Offer
2. Restoring and Enhancing the Environment
3. Improving the Profile and Accessibility
4. Town Centre Management

## **A little about Prescott's history:**

Prescot is believed to be Anglo-Saxon in origin, with the name 'Prescota-cot' meaning a 'priest cottage'. It was the centre of an extensive parish, within the West Derby Hundred which included fourteen other townships including St Helens. In 1333 the Lord of the Manor, William D'Acre, was granted the right to hold a weekly market and the town's importance is reflected in its inclusion on the Bodleian Map of Britain drawn by Gough in 1350. The manor was sold in 1391 to John of Gaunt and on his death passed to his son, who subsequently became Henry IV. In 1447 Henry VI included both the Manor and Rectory of Prescot as gifts to establish a college at Cambridge University [subsequently King's College]. The Royal Charter gave the people of Prescot exemption from paying certain tolls, it also gave them a degree of self-government and the town adopted the College Crest as its own

In 1593, Prescot became home to the first and most important free-standing theatre outside London and existed as a working theatre during the same period as Shakespeare's theatrical career. The theatre stood on what is now a car park, adjacent to the Old Mill public house. Academic research suggests that Shakespeare himself lived and worked in the region early in his career. His location here was no coincidence. The theatre was built by the new tenant of the manor house (Richard Harrington) connected to William Stanley (6th Earl of Derby), the steward of the town and manor. The Derby family, apart from being one of the most influential families in the land, was also one of the leading sponsors of Elizabethan theatre and sponsored major London actors' troupes such as Derby's men and Lord Strange's men. The 5th Earl (Ferdinando) was Shakespeare's patron and performances by troupes were common in the Stanley residences. It is highly likely that plays like Richard III and Love's Labour's Lost (which highlight the Stanley's) had their premier performances in Prescot. The Shakespeare North Trust was founded in 2007 to promote Shakespeare's historic connection with the town. They have a vision to rebuild the Prescot Playhouse to once again bring Elizabethan drama back to the area and create a centre for post graduate Shakespearian study. To commemorate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death in 2016 there is an aspiration to celebrate the occasion by hosting a number of events in the town.

The most important building in the town is St Mary's Church, which is Grade I listed and dominates the town. The tower and spire which were added in the late 1720s are thought to be the work of a pupil of Sir Christopher Wren. The wall separating the Vicarage grounds from the new cemetery and which continues northward to West Street is part of the medieval town wall of Prescot. Another section of the town wall survives between Park Road and Eton Street. With the Church, these are the most significant survivals of Tudor Prescot. The former Prescot Museum is a Grade II listed Georgian building located within the conservation area. Completed in 1774, it stands out as the finest example of Georgian architecture in Prescot. Since the museum's permanent collection largely about the history of clock and watch making in the town has been relocated to the modern Prescot Centre the Georgian building has been leased by the Shakespeare North Trust to use as their base within the town and a venue for a local theatre company to deliver community events.

With the establishment of a number of potteries in the fourteenth century, the earliest recorded in the region, a survey conducted in 1592, by King's College Cambridge, details the existence of seven kilns in the town. These kilns dominated the landscape, and were centered around the Eccleston Street area. The town developed a reputation for producing fine pottery, using a mixture of the local white and red clays, numerous examples of which can be found in the Prescott Museum's collection. Rich seams of coal close to the surface were mined from the early sixteenth century.

The eighteenth century was to bring considerable changes to the town, with the continued growth of craft industries, especially watchmaking, which was introduced into Prescott by a Huguenot refugee from France, called Woolrich. Watch making skills were easily picked-up by the town's blacksmiths. In 1795 John Aiken said of Prescott that 'the town produces the best in the world.' The town had hundreds of small workshops where either watch parts were made, or where watches were constructed. Other industries, included tool making, resulted in increased prosperity and a rapid rise in population from an estimated 700 in the 1690's to 3645 in 1801. The town was practically rebuilt from the 1750's. A further indication of its growth was the revival of the Court Leet, which was based in the new Town Hall built in 1755. The Town Hall (now demolished) bore the statue of Our Lady Bountiful on its roof as a testimony to the town's new found wealth. The door lintel from the town goal (now demolished), built adjacent to the Town Hall, was used as a test of literacy for those wishing to hold office. This Alphabet Stone, an 18th Century sandstone block contains all the letters of the alphabet (minus the "J", which was not in use at the time).

The BICC was founded as the British Insulated Wire Company in 1891 and until the 1980s was a major employer in the town.

### **A little about Prescott now:**

In recent years, a number of cultural and arts events have been established in the town, including the annual 10-day Prescott Festival of Music and the Arts and an annual Elizabethan Fayre. In 2012 Knowsley Council were successful in their bid for Heritage Lottery Funding to improve 33 historic buildings in disrepair within the conservation area and three areas of public realm.

Prescot is an historical market town and one of the three key towns in the borough of Knowsley. It has a rich cultural and industrial heritage including, in the past, world class reputations for watch making, file making and the manufacture of insulated cables. A large successful retail park on the edge of the town now attracts around 2 million visitors each year. Other attractions include the popular Knowsley Safari Park, located on the outskirts of the town which attracts almost half a million visitors per year.

However, it is possible that many of the visitors to these attractions are unaware of the nearby town centre. Linkages between the retail park and the town centre are limited and linked trips are further exacerbated by the topography of the town as the pedestrian routes up to the town from the retail park has quite a steep incline.

Research shows that the town has an extremely large potential catchment area, with an ability to draw visitors from the wider Knowsley, St Helens, Halton, Wigan, Sefton, West Lancashire and outer Liverpool areas if the right offer can be developed.

The council has commenced a programme of town centre regeneration and is working hard to support businesses, attract investment, increase the number of homes in the centre, promote the heritage of Prescott and promote improved leisure and cultural facilities for families, including the night time economy. A significant element of the regeneration programme is the 5 year Townscape Heritage Initiative funded by The Heritage Lottery Fund, the Council and other local partners. The funding will be used to restore shop fronts and historic architectural features in pre 1919 buildings and improve open spaces.

A map of the area is attached at **Appendix 1**. The map shows the retail park in yellow and the historic town centre in green. The connecting routes are

- along Station Road and Aspinall Street
- along Sewell Street - this is accepted as the key visual and pedestrian link capable of connecting the town centre and retail park

A map of the Townscape Heritage Initiative sites is attached at **Appendix 2**. The map shows three areas of public realm (highlighted in green) that will be improved as part of the initiative. The Leyland Street scheme was completed in 2013. The other two areas, Atherton Street and Market Place border on the two connecting routes between the retail park and the town.

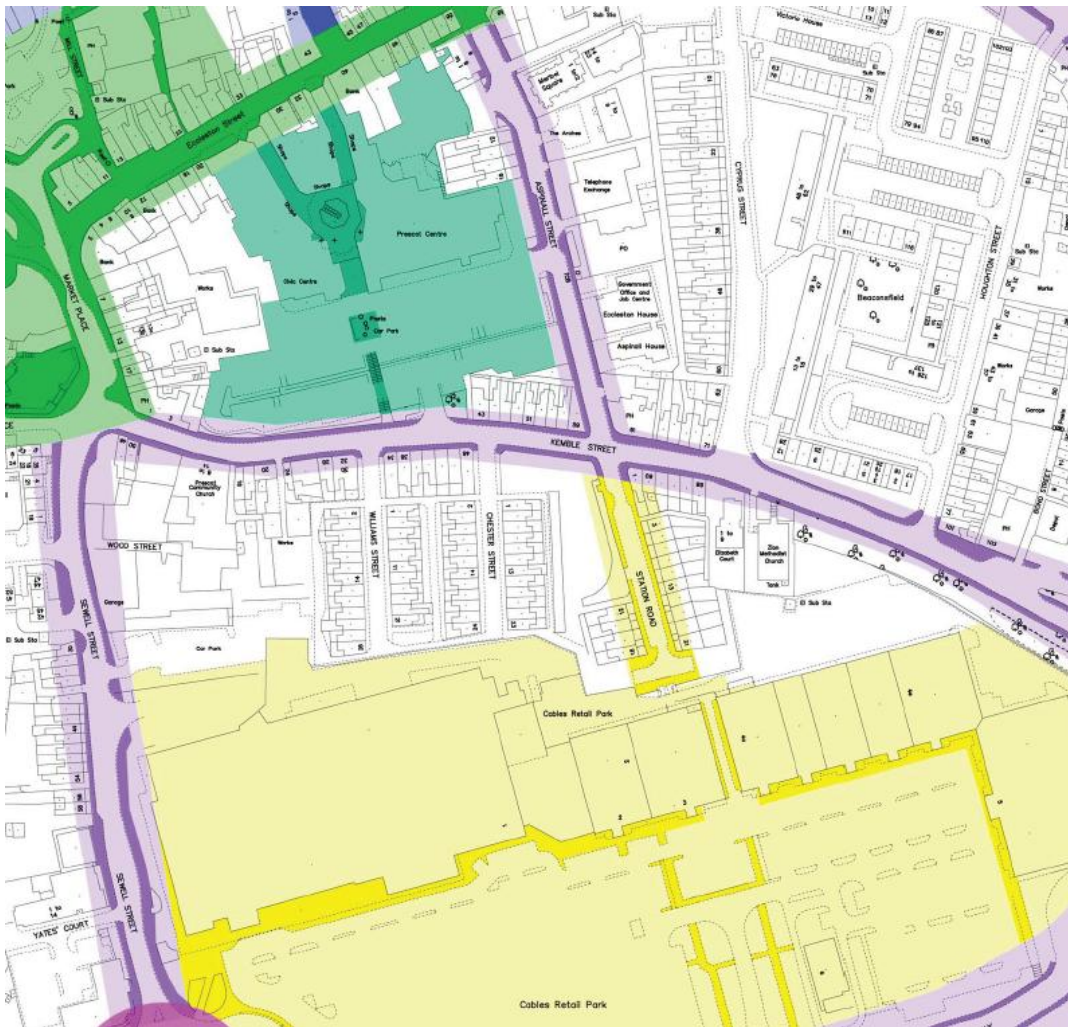
Atherton Street is due for carriageway and footway replacement in 2015 in a scheme that will extend into a portion of Eccleston Street to adjoin Aspinall Street. In this adjoining space between Atherton Street and Aspinall Street there is a large ancient tree which may be enhanced to create a central focal point within a seated area for shoppers/visitors to meet and relax. An outline drawing of the Atherton Street scheme is attached at **Appendix 3**.

Market Place sits at the top of Sewell Street and will be retained as an open space. Plans for the area have yet to be drawn up. It is the intention that potential end users of the space will be consulted about their needs and the scheme will be the subject of a design competition. This improvement scheme is currently scheduled to commence in 2016.



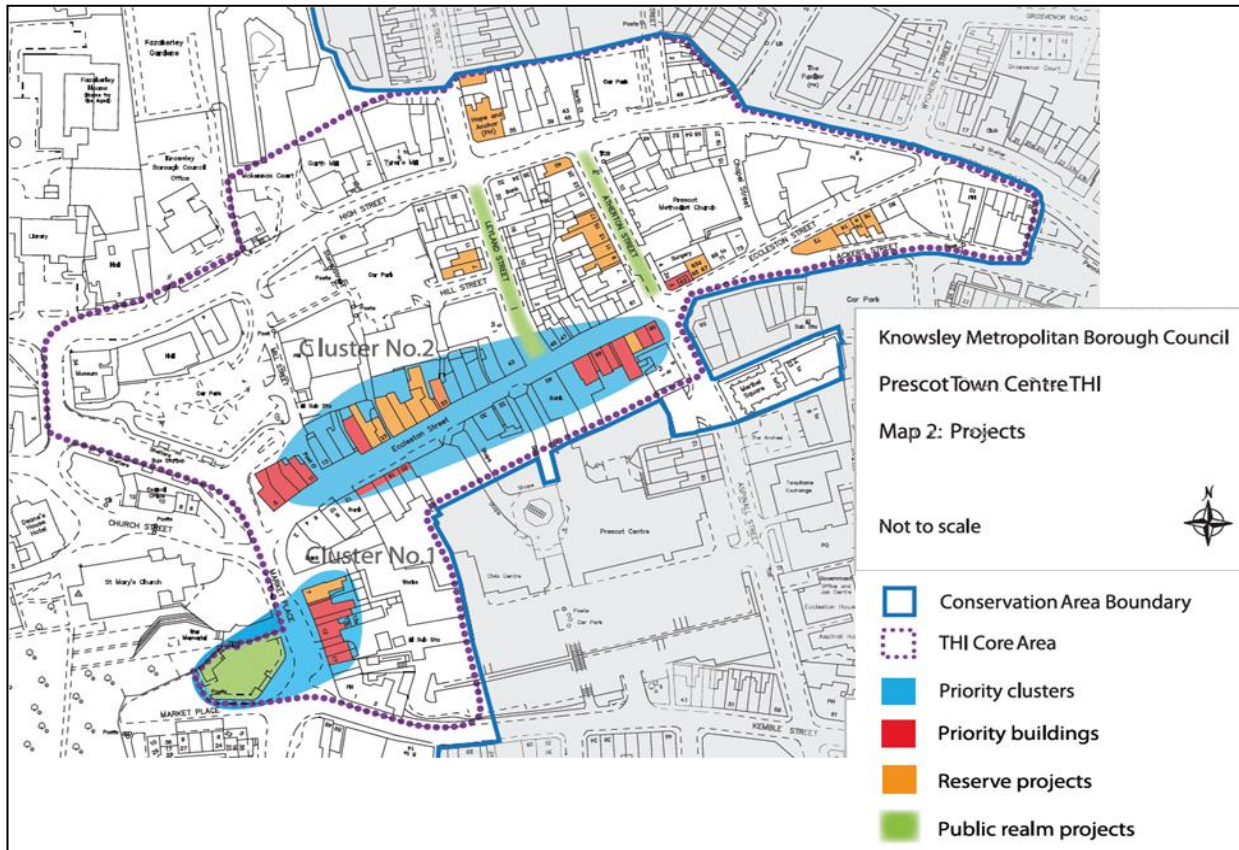
## Appendix 1

Prescot showing connecting streets, Aspinall and Sewell Street (shaded purple) from the retail park (shaded yellow) to the historic town centre (shaded dark green)



## Appendix 2

Prescot Townscape Heritage Initiative area showing the public realm improvement areas (shaded green) of Leyland Street, Atherton Street and Market Place.



### Appendix 3

Outline improvement plan for Atherton Street showing the extended area that will adjoin Aspinall Street. Ancient tree represented as grey circle.

