THE ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP













Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan

June 2022

FINAL DRAFT V3

DISTRICT OF HARBOROUGH

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DISTRICT OF HARBOROUGH

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Executive Summary

Our Vision for Market Harborough – A Very Special Market Town is that by 2032 the Town Centre will be an exemplar for high street regeneration providing a welcome to residents and visitors, prioritising walking and cycling, ensuring the Town Centre is vibrant, encouraging enterprise and planning sustainably for future growth. The Vision will be achieved by delivering against the five cross-cutting themes listed below. These will be supported by our proposed 'pipeline of projects' all identified by a symbol on the plan opposite. It includes some major projects along with many other smaller changes. Each project relates to one of the five themes, the relevant symbol representing Welcoming (W), Healthy (H), Vibrant (V), Enterprising (E) or Sustainable (S). However, it should also be recognised that this is a long-term masterplan for Market Harborough town centre, so additional projects will evolve and develop over the timescale, responding to changing circumstances. The masterplan should therefore be seen as an overall framework for action.

1. Welcoming (W) Market Harborough will create a more pedestrian friendly Town Centre that provides a strong sense of arrival and opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the many spaces and activities available.

2. Healthy (H) Market Harborough will prioritise walking and cycling across the Town Centre with the promotion of active travel to reduce car journeys and the impact of vehicle emissions and their effects on people's health and climate change.

3. Vibrant (V) Market Harborough will diversify the mix of uses, activities and events in the Town Centre to maximise vibrancy that extends into the evening and over the weekend.

4. Enterprising (E) Market Harborough will encourage the tradition of enterprise in the town with more support and space for independents, co-workspace and creative workspaces for smaller businesses and ongoing support for our business centres and Harborough Market.

5. Sustainable (S) Market Harborough will plan sustainably for future growth, meeting the need for additional retail, food and drink, leisure and residential in the town centre and the long-term management of the River Welland river corridor.

Call to Action

Many of the pipeline of projects cross boundaries of ownership and responsibility and delivery of the Town Centre Masterplan can only be achieved by Harborough District Council in partnership with landowners, businesses, funders, specialist advisers, interest groups and residents. The Council will invest on its own estate and will encourage partners to collaborate in the delivery of other Town Centre projects.



The Old Grammar School



St Mary's Place

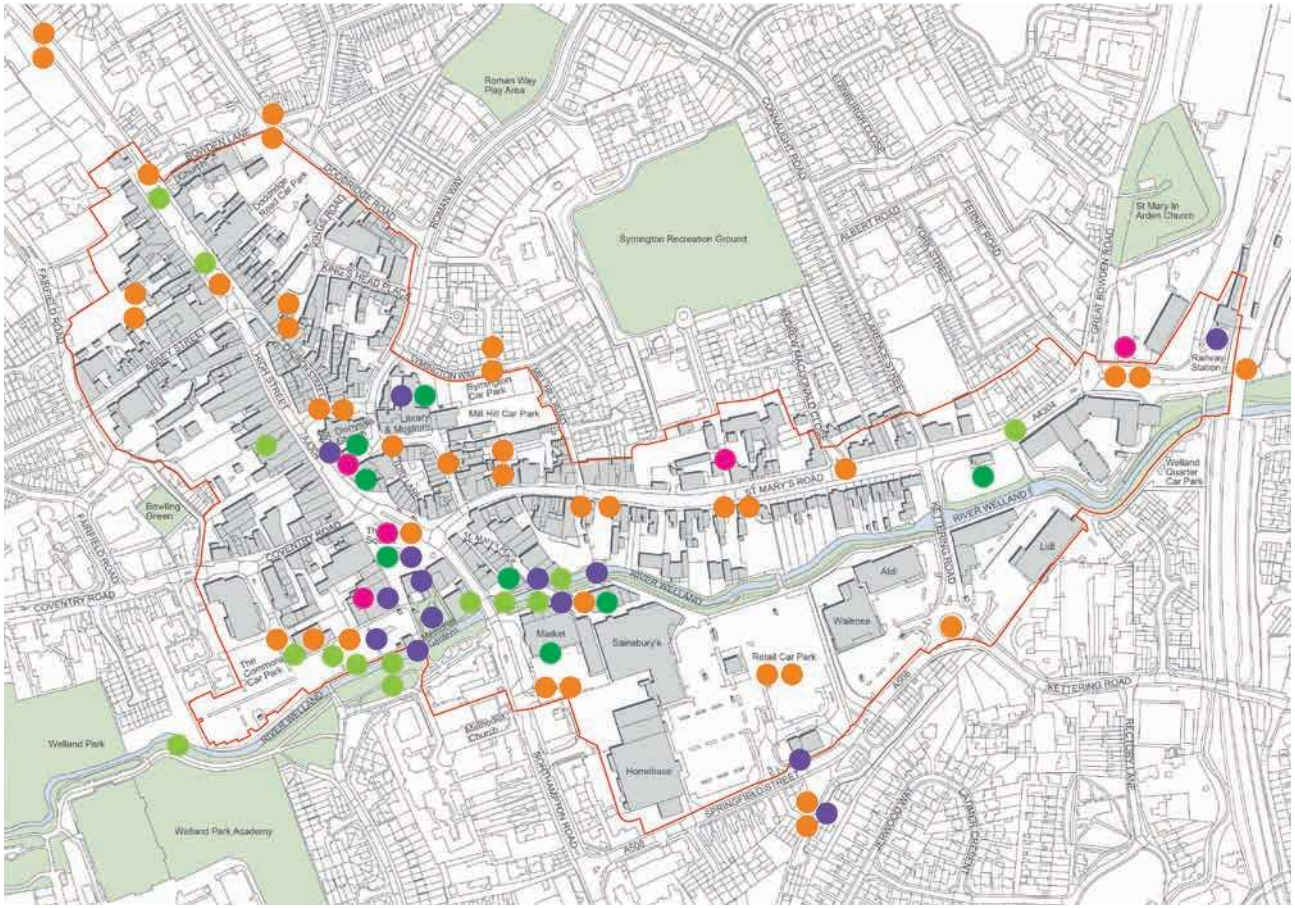


Christmas Lights Switch On

Executive Summary

KEY

- Study Area Boundary
- Welcoming Market Harborough
- Healthy Market Harborough
- Vibrant Market Harborough
- Enterprising Market Harborough
- Sustainable Market Harborough



Pipeline of Projects

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The Environment Partnership (TEP) Ltd, Mott MacDonald and BE Group were commissioned by Harborough District Council (HDC) to prepare a Vision and Masterplan for Market Harborough Town Centre from summer 2019 (to be referred to as the Masterplan). The remit of the Masterplan is to ensure the future viability and vitality of the town centre and secure its role as a local destination for retail, leisure and hosting community networks and events. The Masterplan will also form part of the evidence base that will inform the implementation of relevant policies for the Harborough Local Plan 2011-2031, (adopted in April 2019), and future Local Plans. The Masterplan process was paused during 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic but was restarted during late 2021.

1.2 The Purpose of the Vision and Masterplan

The Vision and Masterplan sets a clear framework to ensure the future viability and vitality of the Town Centre over the next 10-15 years. There are a number of aims:

- Set out a clear strategy and vision for the future of the Town Centre in accordance with current local, regional and national strategic priorities
- Improve the physical appearance of the Town Centre making them a more welcoming and attractive environment for all users
- Improve access to the Town Centre whilst addressing existing transport issues including its relationship with parking
- Increase the number of people visiting the Town Centre for shopping and other purposes and improve the retail experience for visitors
- Encourage a vibrant and safe economy at all times of the day
- Maximise new development opportunities, including a mix of uses to maximise the sustainable offer
- Support the assembly of funding for implementation and resources

1.3 Masterplan Process

The consultant team has developed the Masterplan through an iterative process working closely with the Council, stakeholders and local people. The Masterplan evolved through a series of workshops and interviews that were held to stimulate discussion and debate key points during the design process. These included:

- Initial briefing by the Council;
- Stakeholder interviews (2019);
- September Roadshow Consultation (2019);
- Visioning Workshops (2019);
- November Roadshow Consultation (2019);
- Stakeholder Engagement (March/April 2022); and
- Public Drop-in Engagement (May 2022).



Roadshow Consultation

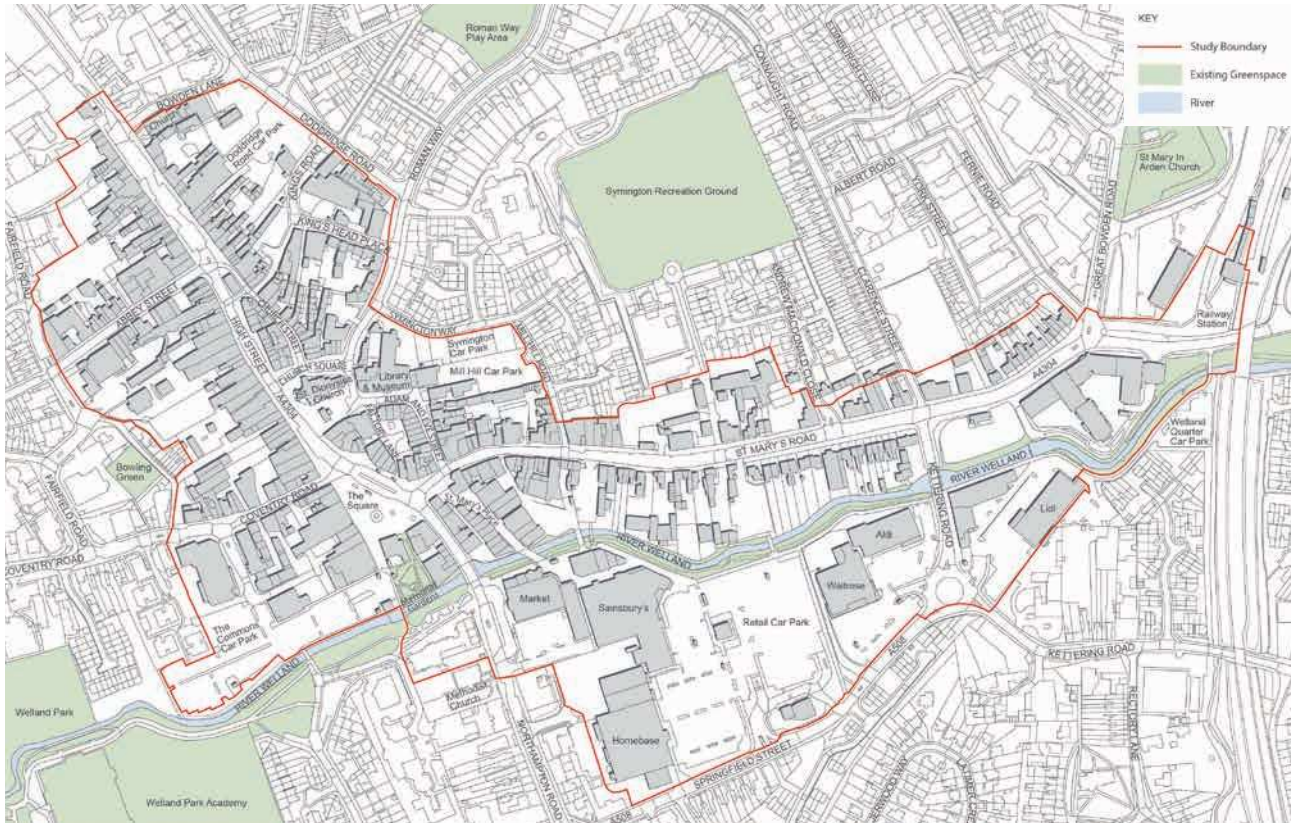


St. Dionysius' Church and the Old Grammar School



Gateway to St Mary's Place

1.0 Introduction



Study Area

1.4 Market Harborough in 2021

Market Harborough is a market town located in south east Leicestershire within the District of Harborough. It is situated approximately 23km south east of Leicester and 26km north of Northampton. Market Harborough has good transport connections by road and rail with direct trains to London and Leicester, and the A14 and M1 motorway nearby. In 2020, Market Harborough had an estimated population of 25,143 , an increase of approximately 30% since 2001. Market Harborough is designated as a Sub-Regional Centre which reflects the fact that it has the highest concentration of public transport and local services and facilities within the District. The town is focus of future development in Harborough Disrict with an expectation for at least 1,078 dwellings to be delivered alongside 24 hectares of employment land. Since 2011, there have been approximately 1,000 housing completions in Market Harborough with an additional 2,000 outstanding housing commitments[1].

1.5 Study Area

The study area follows the Town Centre boundary as defined in the Harborough Local Plan (2019) and then extends east to include the railway station, to reflect its role as a key gateway to the town centre.

[1]Harborough Local Plan (2019)

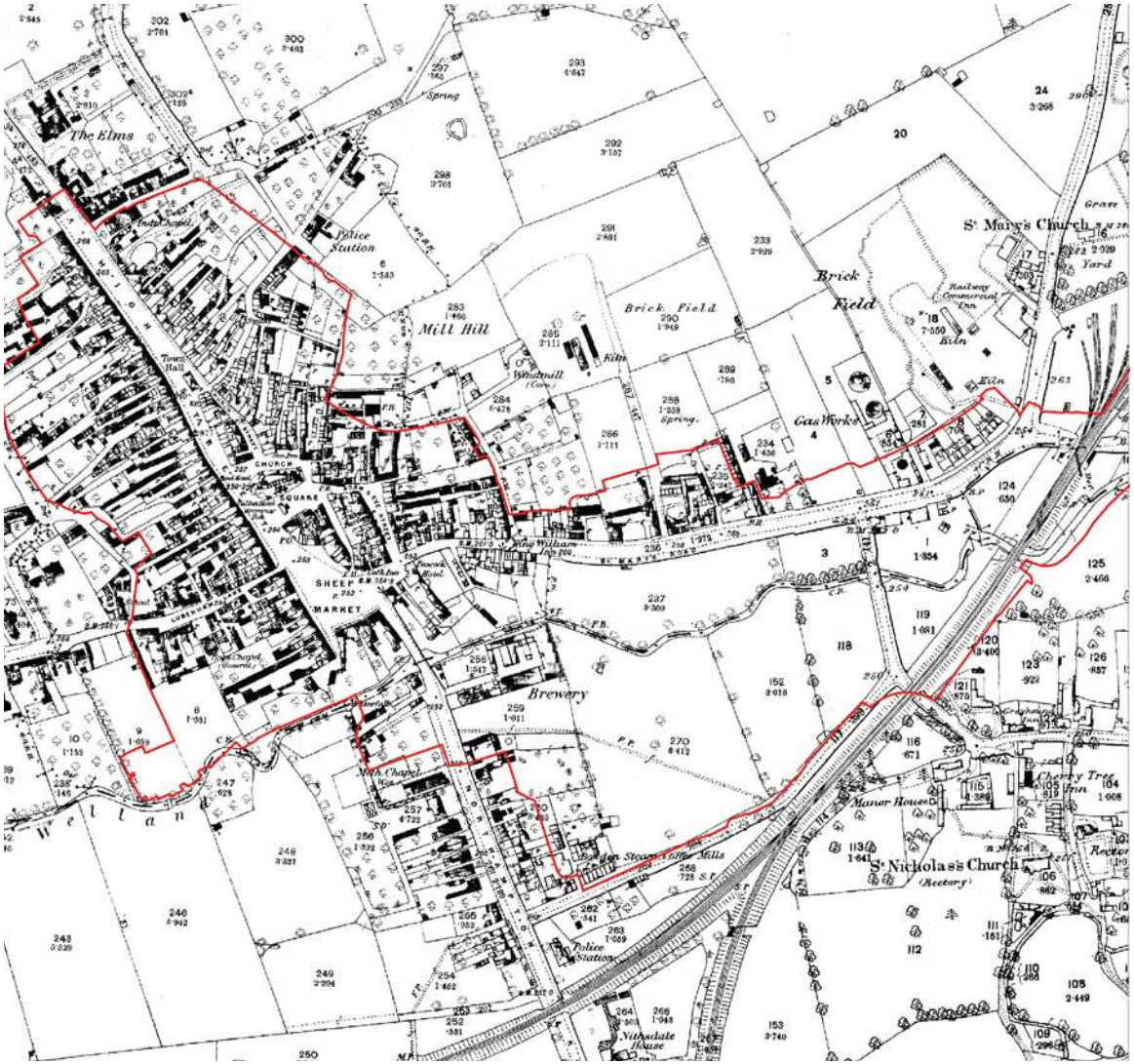
2.0 Market Harborough Timeline

2.1 Historic Development

Market Harborough dates back to the Anglo-Saxon period between 410 and 1066 when it was named hæfera-beorg meaning 'the hill where oats grew' (Hoskins, 1963). In 1086, at the time of the Doomsday Book, Market Harborough was a small village. The town of Harborough was initially established with the intention to make it a hotspot for tradesman with a highway constructed between Oxendon and Kibworth generating greater connectivity to Leicester and Northampton.

In 1204, a weekly market was began in the town leading to its current name of Market Harborough. Initially a long market place was established which tapered to the north. The middle of this space was eventually infilled by market booths which were then replaced by permanent buildings. From the mid-18th century, manufacturing of fine worsted or 'tammy' began to flourish creating a more prosperous town. Construction of significant buildings included St. Dionysius' Church, the Old Grammar School and the Town Hall. These developments resulted in an increased in the number of residents with households rising from 159 in 1670 to 300 in 1780. The infilling of the middle of the market space has left an area of narrow streets and lanes such as Church Street. The narrowing of High Street north took place during the Regency era as a result of earlier buildings being pushed out into the street. The Old Town Hall forms the southern visual stop of the upper High Street when approaching from the north.

Development within Market Harborough was initially centralised along High Street and the main square. Behind the street building frontage long narrow burgage plots were built on to form passageways and carriageways for a distance of up to 180 metres. Burgage plots provided access to buildings on one or both sides and used for dwellings and workshops.



Plan of Market HarboroughTown Centre (1886)

2.0 Market Harborough Timeline



Old Grammar School



View along upper High Street towards Old Town Hall



Regency building on upper High Street



Pedestrian Street' – St Mary's Place

By 1801 the population had grown to approximately 1,700 people. Development began to expand out with new residential districts constructed and new industries rising including a brewery, gas factory, silk factory and worsted mill which closed and reopened in 1866 as a shoe and boot manufacturer.

In the early 1900's, an Urban District Council was formed with the aim to bring about improvements for the town. Cattle were removed from the streets after the construction of a new livestock market and recreation grounds were put in place. By 1928, an additional 400 homes had been built. St. Mary's Place was established in 1993 with the redevelopment of the cattle market, bus station and indoor markets to create a 'pedestrian street' linking High Street to the large supermarkets south of the River Welland.

Recent development in Market Harborough includes the addition of footpath and cycle way alongside the canal to the National Cycle Network and redevelopment of Union Wharf at the end of the Grand Union Canal (Market Harborough Arm) with workshops, restaurants and shops (outside the study area).

3.0 Today's Market Harborough Town Centre

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets outs the various aspects that affect Market Harborough Town Centre today. It begins with a summary of the latest advice from the government sponsored High Street Task Force and guidance on the 20 Minute Neighbourhood from the Town and Country Planning Association. The chapter then sets out the Council's corporate plan, planning context, an assessment of the property market and an appraisal of the Town Centre's urban fabric and how it is served by access and movement.

3.2 Future of the High Street

In 2020, the High Street Task Force (HSTF) published a framework of strategic approaches to high street renewal for place leaders and partnerships that want to take a more strategic and longer term approach to transformation. HSTF sets out the following 4 Rs Framework to support transformation and some or all four approaches may be appropriate to a place or high street.

- Reposition: knowing your town, using relevant data and information to develop a collaborative, inspiring vision that achieves change.
- Reinvent: activate and animate the town, diversify its attractions. Multifunctional places offer different things to draw footfall and spend.
- Rebrand: establishing an identity and sense of place that can engender pride, commitment and attachment and community.
- Restructure: putting in place the capacity, leadership and partnerships to deliver change. Considering large scale spatial change to transform the Town Centre.

This Masterplan has used aspects from the 4 Rs Framework:

Reposition: a planning policy review, market appraisal of the Town Centre and access and movement review have been undertaken to establish the liveability, town centre activity, connectivity and demographic change of Market Harborough (see summaries on later pages for Section 3.0). This has been validated by stakeholder consultation and to set a vision to achieve change.

Reinvent: it is an imperative post COVID-19 to activate and animate the town, diversify the Town Centre's attractions and this is an ambition of the Masterplan.

Rebranding and restructuring: the Masterplan recommends a rebranding strategy around the idea of Market Harborough being a 'thriving market town' and putting in place the capacity, leadership and partnerships to deliver change in the coming 10 years.

3.3 The 20 Minute Neighbourhood (2021)

The idea of the '20-minute neighbourhood' (also known as 15-minute cities) has grown with interest around the world, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic put a spotlight on the importance of the liveability of where we live and is very applicable to a town such as Market Harborough.

Another way of describing a complete, compact and connected neighbourhood, where people can meet their everyday needs within a short walk or cycle, the idea of the 20-minute neighbourhood presents multiple benefits including boosting local economies, improving people's health and wellbeing, increasing social connections in communities, and tackling climate change.

The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) with Sport England have been working with partners including Sustrans, Design Council, Fields in Trust, CLES[2] and others to look at how the idea could be introduced in the context of the English planning system.

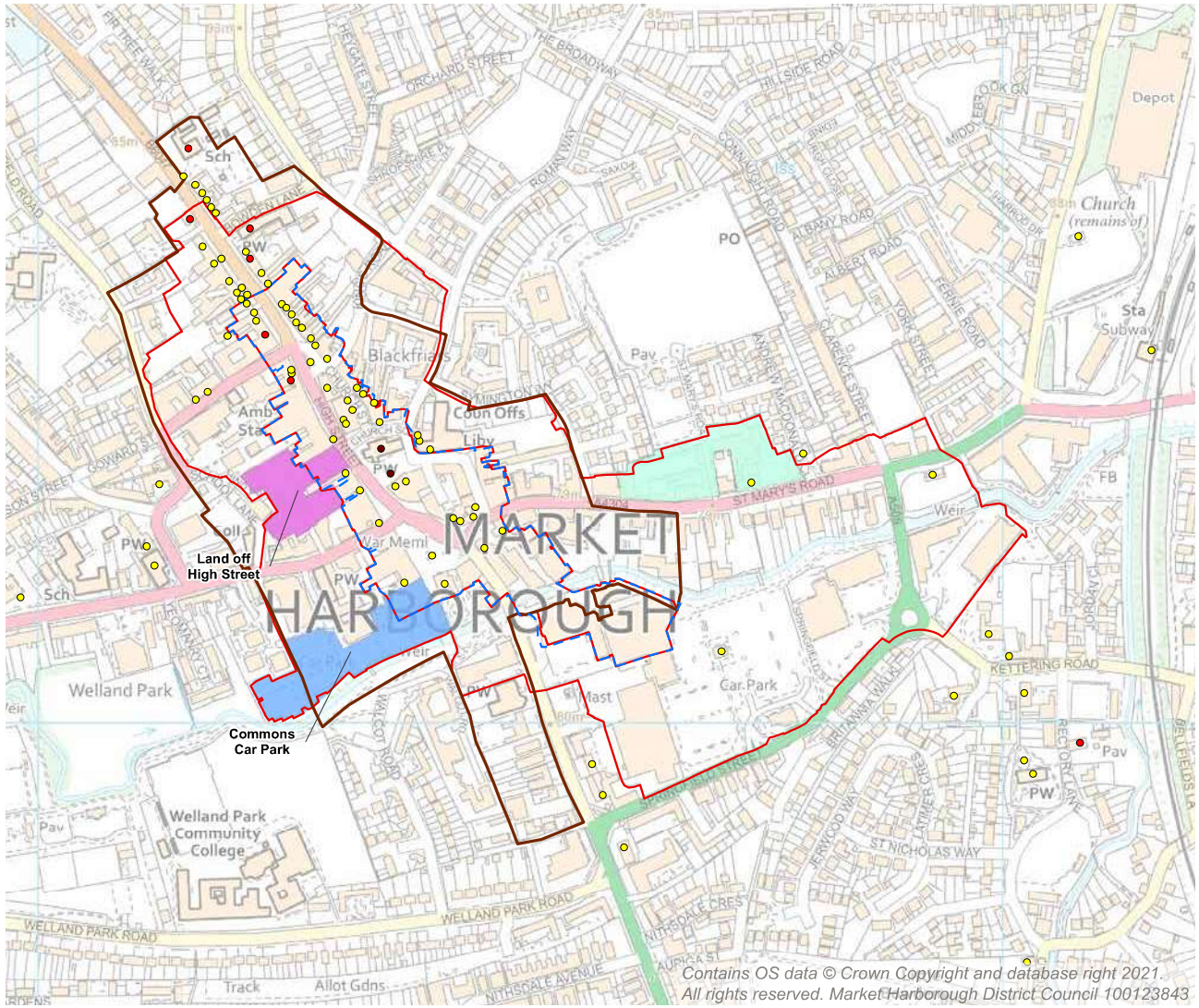
3.4 Harborough District Corporate Plan 2022-2031

Through the Corporate Plan the Council's vision is "Working with our communities, we will build a future for the people of Harborough district that gives them the best life chances and opportunities through:

- Community leadership to create a sense of pride in our place
- Promoting health and wellbeing and encouraging healthy life choices
- Creating a sustainable environment to protect future generations
- Supporting businesses and residents to deliver a prosperous local economy

The Corporate Plan priorities will contribute to the vision and themes for the Town Centre Masterplan.

[2]Centre For Local Economic Strategies Limited



Relevant Planning Policies

3.5 Planning Context

Harborough Local Plan 2011-2031 sets out the strategy for the future development of Harborough District up to 2031 and replaces policies in the Core Strategy and 2001 Local Plan. It sets out the overall vision and objectives, spatial strategy and planning policies for the District. The Local Plan was adopted on the 30th April 2019.

The policies relevant for Market Harborough Town Centre include:

- Policy SS1 – The Spatial Strategy
- Policy GD1 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Policy GD8 – Good Design in Development
- Policy RT1 – Provision of New Retail Uses (including the Commons Car Park and Land off High Street)
- Policy RT2 – Town and Local Centres
- Policy RT3 – Shop Fronts and Advertisements
- Policy RT4 – Tourism and Leisure (including land off St Mary's Road)

Policy SS1 The Spatial Strategy

The spatial strategy for Harborough District to 2031 is to manage planned growth to direct development to appropriate locations, in accordance with the settlement hierarchy. Market Harborough is a sub-regional centre in the hierarchy.

KEY

Local Plan Policies

- RT2 - Town centre boundary
- RT2 - Local shopping centre
- HC1 - Conservation areas
- RT1 - Retail and town centre uses
- RT1 - Retail and town centre uses
- RT4 - Tourism and leisure

Listed Buildings

- Grade I listed building
- Grade II* listed building
- Grade II listed building

3.6 Changes to Use Class Orders

The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) came into force from 1st September 2020. Subject to certain transitional provisions, the core changes include the recalibration of the classification of uses of property. Classes A, B1 and D1, applicable to retail (and financial and professional services, food and drink), office and non-residential institutions and assembly and leisure uses respectively, are removed and new use classes introduced in their place. The new Class E encompasses commercial, business and service, while the new F1 and F2 apply to learning and non-residential institutions and local community use respectively.

The main driver of change has been the need to enable a repurposing of buildings on high streets and in town centres. The new Class E allows for a mix of uses to reflect changing retail requirements. It will allow a building to be used flexibly by having a number of uses taking place concurrently or by allowing different uses to take place at different times of the day (e.g. Retail and food and drink). Changes to another use, or mix of uses, within this class will not require planning permission.

Class MA

From August 2021 Class MA will allow commercial, business and service uses under Class E to be converted to residential use (Class C3). This goes significantly beyond existing Permitted Development Rights, which permit offices and retail to change to residential use, allowing other uses such as restaurants, gyms, health and nurseries to benefit for the first time.

3.7 Market Appraisal

During the early months of 2020 (pre COVID-19 pandemic), BE Group undertook an appraisal of the commercial and residential property markets in the Town Centre[3]. It considered the demand for, and supply of, uses appropriate in the Town Centre – retail, hot food, larger leisure uses, hotels, offices and residential, primarily flats and townhouses, along with specialist housing such as extra care. It provides a picture of Town Centre demand which will help to identify and refine future projects for the Town Centre Masterplan. A summary of the market appraisal is provided below.

Retail

There is good demand for small or mid-sized retail units of up to 160 sqm which would broaden the already strong retail offer of the Town and could particularly attract more national multiples in the comparison sector. Based on the latest capacity testing, up to 8,000 sqm of additional comparison floorspace could be supported over the next decade. The preference of retailers for older 'character' buildings is noted, although this would not necessarily apply to national multiples who may want modern units to meet their standard needs.

Food and Drink

Market Harborough has a reasonable daytime and evening economy food offer, albeit with only modest representation from national multiples. Forecasting suggests capacity for a further 2,232 sqm of hot food floorspace to 2031, sufficient for a new scheme of restaurant and pub/ restaurant units. Even in the constrained market of the COVID-19 crisis, interest was recorded from one pub/ restaurant chain.

Other Leisure

Past reports suggest capacity for a small cinema in Market Harborough. However, the national cinema chains which might provide such a facility have not responded with any interest while one indicates that Market Harborough may still be too small for even a modest nationally operated facility. Thus, prior to the pandemic a cinema in Market Harborough may have been aspirational and it is not possible to further confirm demand beyond the research which has previously taken place. The Council has, however, recently received enquiries from small boutique cinema operators with an interest in setting up in the Town Centre. Both capacity and demand exist for private gym facilities in Market Harborough, with confirmed interest from one national gym operator.

Hotel

Despite mixed views on the nature of demand, past research ultimately agrees that demand exists for further hotel facilities, equivalent to 80 extra rooms. Market testing suggests good interest from hotel operators in another facility locally.

Office

Office demand exists albeit for grow on suites of 100-400 sqm which are quite large in a town centre context. The Harborough Grow-on Centre at Compass Point Business Park will meet some short and mid-term needs, but with only 17 suites is unlikely to satisfy demand indefinitely, particularly given forecast growth for a further 4,500 jobs in office-based sectors, in the District, to 2031. One issue is the fact that the existing critical mass of B1(a) occupiers are in edge of settlement schemes, well outside of Market Harborough Town Centre. Any new scheme, in the centre, would need to link well to those existing facilities. At up to £19/sq ft (£205/sqm) achievable rents are also below the £20/sq ft (£215/sqm) threshold developers would normally be looking for to secure viable speculative schemes, subject to an absence of other site constraints.

[3]BE Group, (2020) Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan – Market Appraisal Report

3.0 Today's Market Harborough Town Centre



F2/E – Retail		B8 – Storage	
E – Financial & Professional Services		E/Sui Generis – Leisure	
E – Food & Drink		C1 – Hotel	
Sui Generis – Drinking Establishments		Vacant	
Sui Generis - Takeaway		Other	
E - Office			

Market Harborough Town Centre Uses (Source: BE Group, 2020)

Co-Working Spaces

Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic co-working in parts of the UK was becoming increasingly popular with small businesses and start-ups (including sole traders) looking for the conviviality and cost saving in using a shared facility. Co-working is an arrangement in which workers of different businesses share a workspace, allowing for cost savings and convenience using common infrastructures such as equipment, utilities, meeting rooms, receptionist and refreshments. Co-working spaces can also accommodate business launches and networking events. Co-working providers from other towns and cities offer day, one week or one month passes for single desk use and hourly rates for meeting rooms. There is potential for co-working space in Market Harborough town centre given data on home working in the town from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), although it should be noted that the Council-operated Harborough Innovation Centre, (which is outside the study area), is already providing these services.

Residential

There is reasonable market demand for flats within the Town Centre from first time buyers and young professionals. As with previous developments, sites near the Station would be most desirable, tapping into the commuter market. Conversely though, flats further from the Station would be more likely to serve local workers and could be more affordable. Townhouses would also be popular with first time buyers and young families, and property agents felt these would be easier to market as townhouses are a more established product in Market Harborough. Despite the existing supply developers/ operators expressed a strong desire to deliver older persons housing in Market Harborough. This is consistent with trends for an ageing population in Harborough District.

3.8 Urban Fabric

Land Use

There are a number of land uses evident on the High Street including retail, food and drink, financial services alongside a number of civic, community and religious buildings and residential properties.

The primary shopping area is formed by the High Street, Church Street, Adam and Eve Street, the Square and St. Mary's Place. Here there are a large number of retail stores complemented by food and drink outlets and financial services.

In the southern extent of the Town Centre, south of the River Welland are several supermarkets and retail stores with a large area of surface level car parking.

Civic and community buildings include Market Harborough Library and Museum and the Old Grammar School. Harborough District Council offices are also located in the Town Centre in the Symington Building. There are a number of places of worship including St. Dionysius' Church on Church Square, Congregational Church at the northern end of High Street and Market Harborough Baptist Church on Coventry Road.

St. Mary's Road comprises a mix of uses included residential houses and apartments, food and drink outlets and retail units with residential uses on the upper storeys.

There is surface level car parking, the majority of which is associated with the supermarkets south of the River Welland. Additional car parking can be found at the Commons Car Park accessed from Coventry Road in the western extent of the Town Centre, Symington Car Park and Mill Hill Road car park to the east and Doddridge Road Car Park in the northern extent.

3.9 Townscape Quality

Much of the historic core of the Town Centre is designated as a Conservation Area. It covers the length of the High Street and extends south to cover part of the River Welland corridor and the buildings along the western side of Northampton Road. Abbey Street and Coventry Road are incorporated into the western side of the Conservation Area whilst Church Street, Adam and Eve Street and the western end of St. Mary's Road form the eastern extent of the Conservation Area.

Behind the street frontage buildings there are the few remaining burgage plots, where long passageways provide access to buildings either side. Some of the passageways and buildings have been refurbished for commercial, retail or residential use, such as Bennett's Place on the west side of High Street.

The majority of listed buildings within the Town Centre are Grade II Listed with a small number of Grade II* and two Grade I Listed buildings comprising the Old Grammar School and St. Dionysius' Church. The spire of St. Dionysius' Church forms a major feature that dominates the streets in the Town Centre and closes the view down the High Street from Leicester Road.

Building form is continuous along the majority of the western side of High Street with the exception of Abbey Street and Coventry Road. On the eastern side of High Street, built form is continuous along the northern extent, however Church Square gives a more open feel. The height of buildings along the High Street varies between two and three storeys, creating interest in the roofscape. The Conservation Area is characterised by buildings mostly from the 18th and 19th centuries.



Access to Bennett's Place from High Street



Bennett's Place – refurbished burgage plot

3.0 Today's Market Harborough Town Centre



Church Street



Traditional shop front approach

The original medieval market space is defined by the three parts:

- The Square in the south – formerly the Sheep Market that is bound by close-standing buildings (now the Square).
- The middle section including the space around the Church – incorporates the lower High Street, Church Street, Church Square and Adam and Eve Street. Traditionally the retail hub of the town with small scale buildings of varying ages.
- The upper High Street from the Old Town Hall – an area with an open character and many elegant buildings fronting the street, the majority of which are Grade II listed.

The River Welland which runs east – west through the Town Centre extends beyond the boundaries of the Conservation Area and has an open walkway alongside.

The part of the Town Centre not included in the Conservation Area is the eastern extent of St. Mary's Road and the retail park in the south which comprises larger retail units, supermarkets and associated car parking.

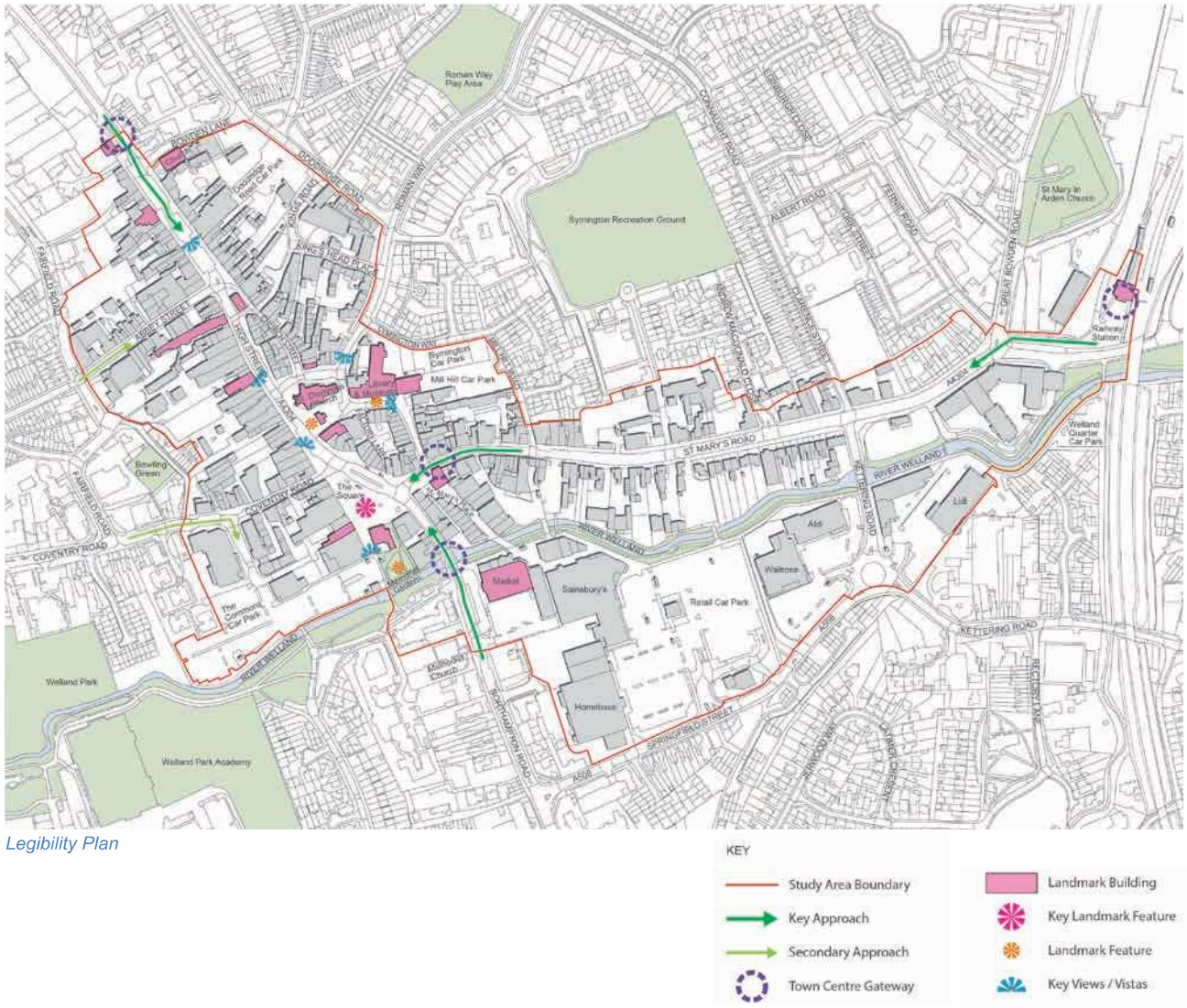
Ground Floor Frontages

Another aspect of townscape quality and streetscene are the frontages to ground floor units in the Town Centre. There are a range of treatments to ground floor frontages, including traditional shop fronts with shop signs (timber fascia signboard), well-articulated window details with mullions and pilasters and recessed doors and these features are in keeping with the proportions of the upper floors. Also present are more recent standard shop fronts with modern lettering on a white or brightly coloured perspex background fascias and large units of uninterrupted glass. This conflicts with the vertical proportions and detailing of individual buildings. Some principles for the positive treatment of ground floor frontages is included at 6.8 Ground Floor Frontages.

3.10 Legibility

Legibility is important in defining the image and perception of the Town Centre, along with the ability of people to find their way around. Market Harborough has good legibility due to it varied architecture, street pattern and clear approaches. Legibility is usually defined in terms of gateways and approaches, landmarks and views and involved the interaction of building form, streetscape and open space.

Gateways and approaches into Market Harborough define entrances into the Town Centre and points of arrival and they also influence first impressions of the Town. Market Harborough's key approaches are formed by St Mary's Road, Northampton Road and Leicester Road and they enter the edge of the Town Centre at 'perceived' gateways. The respective gateways are at: St. Mary's Road and St. Mary's Place, Northampton Road and the River Welland, Leicester Road and the Railway Station.



Legibility Plan

3.0 Today's Market Harborough Town Centre



Congregational Church



Sign for Three Swans Hotel



Old Town Hall

In addition, Market Harborough has a number of landmark buildings and features that 'stand out' from the neighbouring area:

- The headquarters of the Harborough District Council, together with the Market Harborough Library and Museum situated in the old Symington Corset Factory, a Grade II Listed Building.
- St. Dionysius' Church forms a distinctive structure with a highly visible spire.
- The Old Grammar School, an iconic heritage building occupies a prominent position in the Town Centre. The Old Grammar School is a timber framed building with an open ground floor.
- The Square, a large pedestrianised area at the south of High Street with a large war memorial in the centre.
- The Congregational Church on High Street to the south of Bowden Lane which forms a landmark building when approaching the Town Centre from the north.
- The Old Town Hall on a small narrow island on High Street which served as an Assembly Room with a covered market and shambles below.
- The Three Swans Hotel, a Grade II* Listed Building with coach arch and notable iron sign.

3.11 Views

There are several important views that convey the character and sense of place of Market Harborough. This includes the view from the Square looking north towards the prominent spire of St. Dionysius' Church and the tower of the former Symington Factory. Another important view west along Adam and Eve Street towards St. Dionysius' Church and the Old Grammar School. Views along lower High Street are channelled and often framed by the continuous built form, especially along the western side.

3.12 Public Realm

Public realm is defined as areas available for public use including; streets, pavements, parking areas, squares, parks and gardens. The elements that form the public realm are surfacing materials, street furniture, signs, lighting, public art, soft landscape and building frontages. A successful public realm enables people to move easily through an area. It contributes to a high quality environment and there is evidence that it is effective in attracting people and increasing 'dwell time'.

Much of Market Harborough's public realm is experienced from its streets and pavements as people walk from their arrival point to their destination. Open space within the Town Centre is limited to the Memorial Gardens, which is accessed from the southern edge of the Square and footpaths associated with the River Welland. Street trees and planters are present around the Square and High Street, although this decreases when travelling north along High Street.

3.13 Public Realm Elements

The quality of the detailing of the public realm is varied. The use of traditional details and material is evident along High Street and around the remainder of the conservation area but tends to be more utilitarian along St. Mary's Road and towards the retail park in the south of the Town Centre.

Surfacing Materials

The majority of footways within the Town Centre are concrete paved with either concrete sett or granite sett kerbs. Asphalt footways are present along Abbey Street. Brick paving is evident at Church Square surrounding St. Dionysius' Church and under the Old Grammar School. Yorkstone paving can be found at Church Street and Church Square. Surfacing materials along passageways varies although concrete is the most predominant material. Other materials include granite setts and Yorkstone. Concrete tactile paving highlights pedestrian crossings.

The majority of roads throughout the Town Centre are surfaced with asphalt with the exception of Church Street and Church Square which are surfaced with concrete setts. On-street parking bays are defined by concrete block or granite setts.

Along High Street, cycle lanes comprise red concrete blocks however this changes to green asphalt along Northampton Road.



View towards Memorial Gardens



Brick paving under the Old Grammar School



Street parking bays – mix of natural stone and concrete based materials

3.0 Today's Market Harborough Town Centre



Bus shelter opposite the Square



Street furniture in the Square

Street Furniture

Existing street furniture in the town includes: seating, bins, bollards, planters, tree guards, cycle stands, railings, bus shelters and signs.

Within the Conservation Area, there is some consistency between the style, materials and colours used on street furniture. Planters, tree guards, bins, bollards, cycle stands and railing are painted in the same shade of blue. The majority of benches are wooden with the exception of a decorative metal bench in the Memorial Gardens which is green with red detailing. The wooden material extends to the bus stops at the Square. There are also a number of wooden bollards at the Square, Church Square and along the High Street.

The traditional blue paint and wooden street furniture does not extend to St. Mary's Place where the street furniture including bollards, bins, benches, railing and tree guards are painted black.

Lighting

Street lighting throughout the Town Centre varies and there is no consistent use of style.

Along St. Mary's Road and at Market Harborough Railway Station street lighting units are more utilitarian in appearance which detract from the quality of the public realm. However, the street lighting units in the Commons Car Park are more traditional in design and reflect the colour used on the majority of street furniture.

Street lighting in the historic core of the Town Centre along High Street, Church Street and the surrounding roads is typically fixed to the facades of buildings. The use of lighting columns is limited in these areas and this reduces clutter.

Signage

Signage in the Town Centre comprises directional signs and information and display boards.

Fingerpost signs on Northampton Road display the traditional blue painted metal and wooden materials evident throughout the Town Centre, whilst the fingerpost sign at St. Mary's Place is consistent with the black painted street furniture.

Traditional information and display boards are used to display maps of the town centre such as at the Commons Car Park and also used for tourism to display information regarding buildings of interest. The blue painting extends to some of the boards in the Commons Car Park and along the High Street. Modern, digital display boards are used at Adam and Eve Street which contrast the traditional red brick of the Symington building behind.

Notable signage along High Street includes the wrought iron sign at the Three Swans hotel on High Street with a detailed design.

Public Art

There are few public art features currently in the Town Centre, however opportunities for public art will be considered in Chapter 6.0 Proposals.

Soft Landscape

Soft landscape within the historic core of the Town Centre predominantly comprises street trees and planters along High Street and around the Square. Tree planting extends along St. Mary's Road, while mature trees and ornamental planting can be found in the Memorial Gardens. Many trees in the town centre are in poor condition or have been damaged by vehicles. Soft landscaping including mature trees and hedgerows are found adjacent to the footpaths that run alongside the River Welland.

3.14 Access and Movement

Strategic Road

Market Harborough benefits from strong road and rail links, with the A6 providing direct links north towards Leicester and south towards Kettering. To the west, the A4304 links Market Harborough to Lutterworth and Junction 20 of the M1 for connections to national destinations. The A14, accessed to the south of the Town provides links towards the M6 to the west and Cambridgeshire to the east. As a result of its strategic highway connections, Market Harborough town benefits from good road-based journey times to destinations across the East Midlands. A number of key regional centres across the region are all accessible within a typical 60-minute drive from the Town Centre. This includes journey times of less than 40 minutes to key travel to work destinations for the residents of Market Harborough including to Leicester, Corby, Kettering and Northampton. In terms of jobs within Market Harborough, the most significant flows of workers to jobs into the Town are from within Harborough District itself. This is indicative of the importance of the need for excellent local connectivity for Market Harborough.

Data from the Office for National Statistics and the most recent census also demonstrates that a significant proportion of the workforce in Harborough (approximately 15%) are classed as working from home, the highest proportion of home workers from across Leicestershire. This is reflective of the number of skilled jobs that the residents of Market Harborough have and the growing trend for workers to be based at home for the majority of the week and only travel to meetings or an office as required.

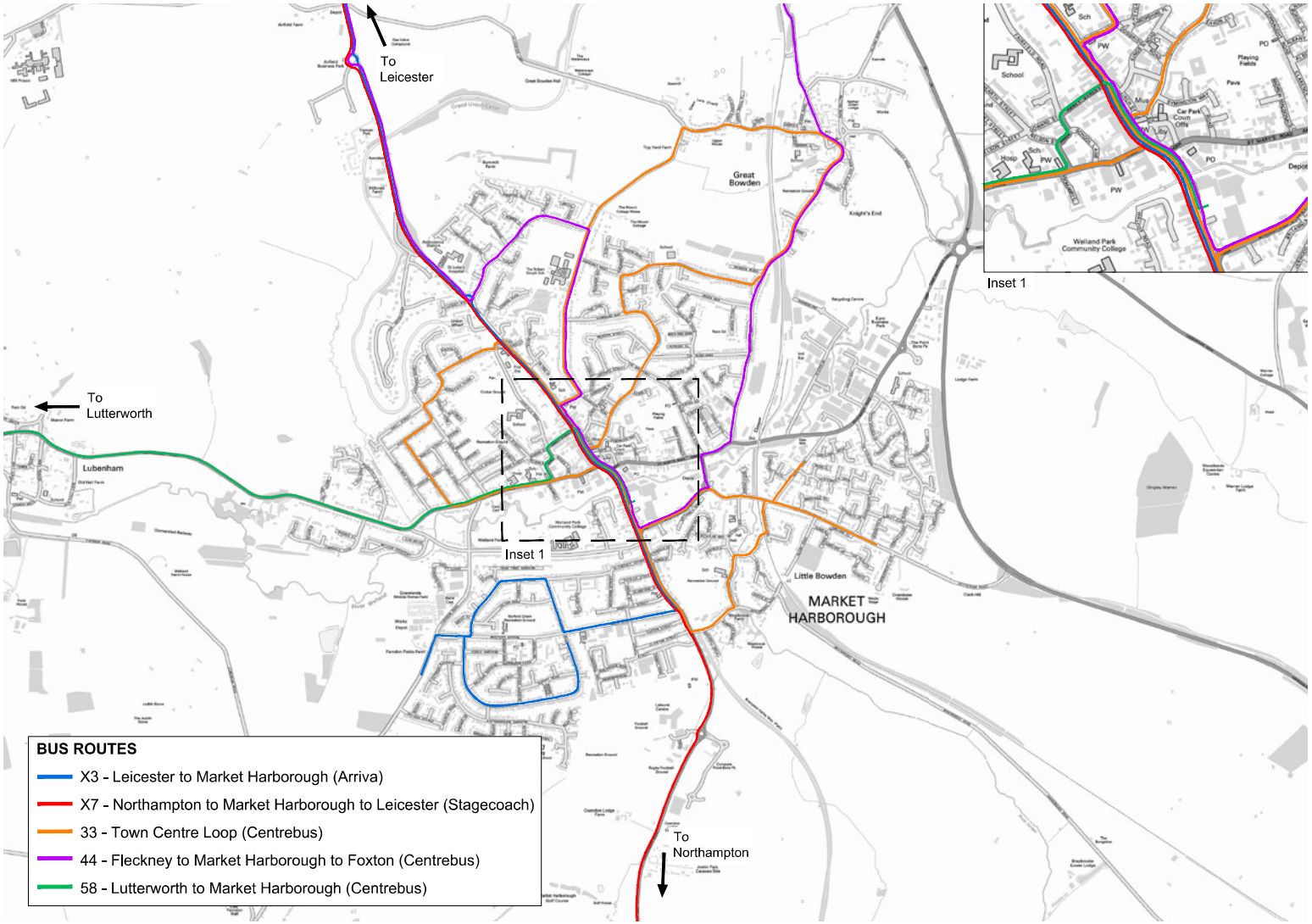
Public Transport

Market Harborough is served by frequent rail connections providing access to London, Leicester and Nottingham. With rail journeys to Leicester and London taking less than 15 and 90 minutes respectively, Market Harborough is an attractive town for commuters. Market Harborough has benefitted from the £54m Market Harborough Line Speed and Station Improvement project. The project includes improvement to the facilities, safety and access of the station which includes a new carpark with 500 spaces. Passenger numbers at Market Harborough station have increased year-on-year from 0.72 million in 2010-11 to 0.89 million in 2017-18.

There are five principal bus routes within Market Harborough all of which serve the Town Centre and The Square. The routes are operated by three different companies and provide access to regionally important destinations including Northampton and Leicester, as well as local routes operating as a town centre loop.

None of the principal bus routes use St Mary's Road between Kettering Road and Northampton Road which increases the feasibility for delivering a high quality pedestrian and cycle route from the railway station to the Square (see below).

3.0 Today's Market Harborough Town Centre



Bus Routes

3.0 Today's Market Harborough Town Centre

Pedestrian and Cycling Movement

The key trip attractors in Market Harborough including Welland Park, the Hospital and the Railway Station are well connected to the surrounding suburbs by a mix of both on and off-road cycle routes. There are gaps within the local cycle network including at the southern end of the High Street into the Square and St. Mary's Road.

Pavements run along the length of the High Street towards the Square but there are a limited number of formal crossing pedestrian crossing points with a zebra crossing near the junction to Church Square and pelican crossings at The Square, resulting in vehicles having priority along the majority of the High Street.

Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans (LWCIP)

In 2017 the Government published its first Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (The Strategy). The Strategy sets out the Government's ambition to make walking and cycling the natural choices for shorter journeys or as part of a longer journey.

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), as set out in the Government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, are a new, strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements required at the local level. They enable a long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks, ideally over a 10 year period, and form a vital part of the Government's strategy to increase the number of trips made on foot or by cycle.

Chapter 5.0 sets out the vision for the Town Centre which is set around Market Harborough – A Very Special Market Town. The aspirations for a pedestrian and cycle friendly town centre set out in the vision and the subsequent chapter 6.0 Proposals, underpin the Government's ambition to make walking and cycling the natural choices for shorter journeys or as part of a longer journey.

Leicestershire County Council is working on the LWCIP for Market Harborough and any more detailed proposals in the Town Centre will need to identify improvements for walking and cycling.

Leisure Cycling

Sustrans National Cycle Route (NCR) 6 links Market Harborough with Leicester in the north and Northampton to the south. The route from the south is off road and follows the Brampton Valley Way, former railway line, before crossing Springfield Road and the edge of the retail park before joining the shared route (with pedestrians) along the River Welland and through Welland Park. NCR 6 continues along Logan Street, then joins the Grand Union Canal (Market Harborough Arm) towpath heading west towards Leicester. There is a significant opportunity to encourage more leisure cyclists using this route to visit Market Harborough for its attractions and for refreshment.

Parking

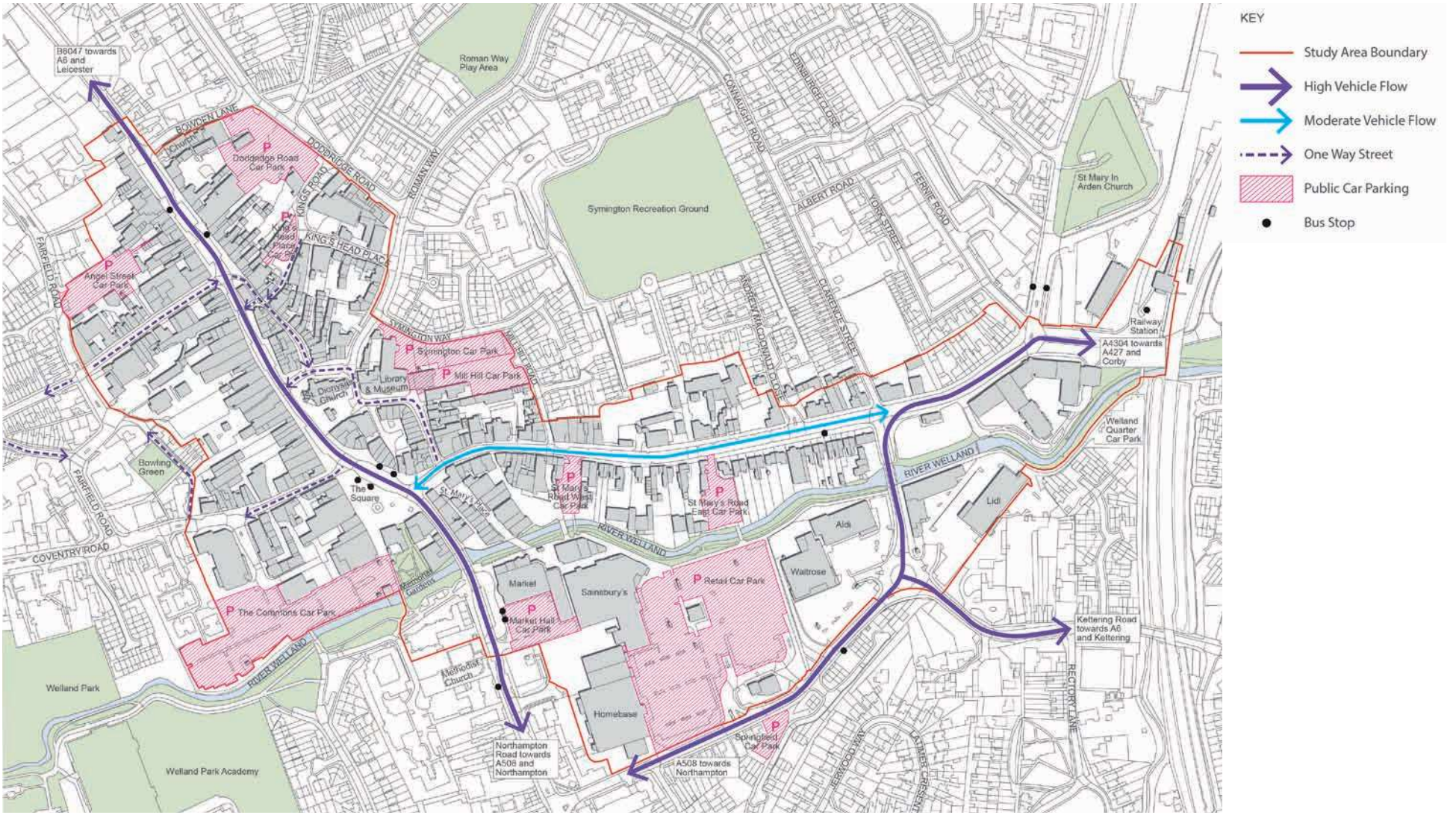
A review of the Harborough Parking Strategy (2016) shows that free on-street parking is available at 10 sites across the Town Centre, eight of which have a maximum stay of 40 minutes with the remaining two having a maximum stay of 2 hours or are uncontrolled. There is a total of 191 spaces across these 10 sites. Spot count data shows that on a weekday, nearly all of the sites are fully occupied at peak period likely to be reflective of shopper and commuter parking. Short stay off-street car parking occupancy rates are higher on Saturdays than weekdays which is indicative of the high number of shopping trips. There is a small number of free 30 minute 'pop in' spaces available at the Commons and Springfield Retail Park. The majority of off-street parking in the Town Centre comprises short stay spaces. These short stay spaces have capacity of 1,260, representing 83% of the total number of off-street spaces. Just 12% of the off-street spaces are long stay with the remaining 5% comprising resident parking or free parking.

The availability of on-street loading bays is mainly limited to short sections of single yellow lines along Church Street and Coventry Road to accommodate servicing before 08:00 and after 18:00. It has been observed during the Parking Strategy that servicing during the day often takes place on double yellow lines, adding to congestion in the local area.

Leicestershire County Council

Leicestershire County Council (LCC) is the highway authority and proposed changes to the highway, which includes carriageway and footways, requires consultation and approval by LCC.

3.0 Today's Market Harborough Town Centre



Vehicle Movement Plan

4.0 Engaging with Local People

4.1 Introduction

Engaging with stakeholders and local people formed an important component of the Masterplan process as they brought their experience and excellent knowledge of Market Harborough, put forward recommendations and were able to test the emerging proposals.

Three types of engagement were used in the consultation: interview, workshop and roadshow exhibition. The timings of the various types of engagement are listed below:

- Stakeholder interviews – September 2019
- Roadshow Exhibition – September 2019
- Visioning Workshop – November 2019
- Roadshow Exhibition – November 2019
- Stakeholder Engagement – March/April 2022
- Public Drop-in Engagement – May 2022

A summary of the findings of the engagement are outlined below.

4.2 Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were undertaken with a number of different contacts between August 2019 and February 2020 as follows:

- Harborough Market
- Market Harborough Civic Society
- Taste Harborough
- Harbs Collective
- St Dionysius' Church
- Welland Rivers Trust

Their comments have been arranged below by theme or topic.

Unique Market Harborough

The Masterplan should promote the unique history and development of the town including the market, St. Dionysius' Church, the Old Grammar School and the Town Hall and the Market Harborough Civil War Trail (The Campaign and Battle of Naseby – 1645) which has several interpretation boards around the Square and Welland Park. The Harborough Museum in the Symington Building was refurbished in 2014 and should also be promoted to visitors.

Events

Monthly events (pre-COVID 19) are hosted on the Square including: street food, arts and crafts, farmers markets and Christmas lights switch on. Other events requiring temporary road closures include the classic car show and Good Friday town square parade led by Market Harborough Churches Together.

Independent Retail

There is pattern of independent retail businesses preferring and sharing 'period' property for cost saving. The same businesses also use courtyards and alleyways, including in and around Church Square and the burgage plots behind High Street. There is also an aspiration for an independent department store such the Bean Hive in Kettering.

Co-working Space

It is considered that there could be demand for co-working space in the Town Centre for sole traders and small enterprises.

Community Facilities

There are a lack of venues for community groups to meet in the Town Centre. Stakeholders also mentioned the opportunity for a recycling and repair space as a service to the community.



View towards Harborough Theatre



Events on the Square

4.0 Engaging with Local People



Cycle parking



River Welland corridor

Active Travel

Active travel as a means of accessing the Town Centre should be promoted to reduce the amount of cars and traffic. This should include improved cycle routes and cycle parking. Stakeholders also suggested the implementation of car free days to demonstrate the benefits for pedestrian and cycle movement.

Car Parking

The current parking provision within the Town Centre was raised as an issue by many of the stakeholders. Others suggested that a lack of parking may be a perceptions and a better signing strategy or digital application could direct users to less popular areas of parking.

There was a positive response by retailers to 'pop and shop' bays and suggestion to extend from 40 minutes to one hour.

Road Network

Congestion along Northampton Road and High Street and around the Town Centre was raised as an issue at certain times of the day. 'Rat running' is occurring along Church Street and Adam and Eve Street as vehicles try to avoid the zebra crossing and traffic lights respectively.

Empty Shops Strategy

There are several vacant shops around the Town Centre with some along St. Mary's Road. An 'open doors project', such as that in Kettering, could be implemented which involves landlords turning empty shops into community hubs that are open to the public. This would remove the perception of neglect and decline.

St Dionysius' Church

The Church is proposing to remodel the internal space so that it becomes multifunctional and usable for the local community and visitors throughout the week. The proposals would see the removal of the pews, with improved accessibility, sound, heating and lighting. It is hoped that up to 150 people could be accommodated for conferences and other functions, while existing events would continue to operate. The remodelling proposals still require the necessary permissions and funding needs to be finalised. It is hoped that work will start during 2021.

River Welland

Since 2012, the goal of the has been to create a 'living' river, although this can be a challenge, particularly where the river flows through the Town Centre. Riparian owners have management responsibilities as they own land on the riverbank and the ownership extends to the middle of the watercourse (unless Land Registry advises otherwise). The WRP tries to co-ordinate the maintenance of the watercourse through the Town Centre (see Maintenance Schedule).

Issues identified:

- Build-up of vegetation during summer months
- Lack of engagement by riparian owners in take up of riverbank management responsibilities
- Limited visual presence of the watercourse and unkempt appearance of the river corridor

Biodiversity

The presence of kingfishers and otters has been recorded in the River Welland by local interest groups. This along with the presence of fish in the watercourse.

4.3 Roadshow Exhibition (September 2019)

The September 2019 Roadshow Exhibition event was held on Saturday 14th September 2019 between 11am and 4pm at the Harborough Indoor Market. Several exhibition boards were presented and four key questions were posed to elicit discussion.

How does the Town Centre currently work for shoppers, workers, businesses and visitors?

- A good mix of independent shops, national retailers and services
- A wide selection of venues for food and drink
- Some convenient public transport services (bus and rail)
- Family friendly and evening events (Comedy Night, Classic Car Show, Community Day)
- Proximity of Welland Park for recreation and easy access to green space
- Good business, voluntary and community networks

How could it work better?

- Shops more tailored to encourage 'retail' experiences for unique selling point compared with online retail
- Extend opening hours for food and drink venues
- Indoor market - there should be more signage to the market to make visitors aware that it is there. The indoor market could provide a space for hosting different events
- Provide more offices and workspaces, to include 'shared' facilities for smaller businesses
- Improved pedestrian links from railway station to Town Centre
- Better provision for cyclists – improve routes, signs and bike parking facilities
- Increased provision of entertainment, events and activities for all ages
- Provision of meeting spaces for business, voluntary and community groups

What improvements are needed?

- Revitalise empty or vacant shops with temporary or other uses
- Some modern buildings not in keeping with the traditional and historic buildings
- More pedestrian friendly environment and investment in public spaces
- More activity and 'pedestrian only' spaces
- More pedestrian priority from the railway station gateway to St Mary's Road
- Better management of traffic and deliveries
- Enhancements to River Welland corridor from Welland Park Road to Rockingham Road
- Promotion of the town's heritage to residents and visitors
- Facilities to accommodate entertainment, events and activities for all age groups

What kind of Town Centre should we aim for in ten to fifteen years' time?

- Diverse range of shops, facilities and an environment to attract people into the Town Centre throughout the day and evening
- Less traffic congestion in the Town Centre and a more pedestrian friendly environment
- Recreational route and green spaces along River Welland
- High quality development and spaces overlooking the River Welland corridor
- Reputation as a good place for small businesses and enterprise start ups
- Town centre of choice for shopping, working, leisure and residential



Roadshow Exhibition (September 2019)

4.4 Visioning Workshops (November 2019)

Two visioning workshops were held on the 14th and 15th November 2019, the first with Taste Harborough and Harbs Collective, and the second with the client group.

Comments from the visioning workshop covered a range of different themes and topics.

Learning from other town centres

- Stamford - Thriving shops, clean town, architecture, cafes, pleasant to walk around, connection with River Welland
- Loughborough – pedestrian friendly
- Leicester – Jubilee Square & New Market Square
- Chester – historic town, links to the River Dee, good mix of uses including the Story House (cinema, theatre, library, food & drink)
- Shrewsbury – historic market, interesting geography, vistas and skylines

What do we value?

- Community spirit
- Good size of town
- Diversity
- Family friendly
- Good schools
- Safe
- Green spaces
- Good links to London

What works well?

- St Mary's Place diverse mix of uses
- Zebra crossing on High Street
- Welland Park (west of Northampton Rd) is an asset

What could work better?

- Approach along St Mary's Road is disappointing, with low footfall.
- Pockets of town centre performing well (eg. High Street, north of the former town hall) but uplift required for areas performing less well.

What opportunities are there?

- Opportunity for active uses on St Mary's Road using footfall from train station.
- Potential for 'demand responsive' Park and Ride near the Airfield Business Park, consider other potential P&R locations to the perimeter of the town.
- Utilise River Welland more as an asset. Sites on southern side of St Mary's Road could make better use of the riverside aspect.
- Increase 'dwell time' and encourage linked visits.

4.5 Roadshow Exhibition (November 2019)

A second Roadshow Exhibition events was held on Saturday 30th November 2019 at Harborough Indoor Market, also running from 11am–4pm.

Additional comments not previously raised:

Events venue

- Need for a venue for concerts and events to replace former assembly rooms on Abbey Street.
- Need for local artists gallery and community activities space.

Railway station

- Lack of wayfinding and signs from Railway Station to Town Centre.

Independents

- Independent shops – making the town more unique and attracts visitors.

Food and drink

- Town has below national average provision of food and drink outlets. A food hall would be desirable, with different food outlets to the perimeter of the main food hall space.

Green infrastructure

- More trees and natural spaces need for relaxing around the centre gives character and keeps people I town for longer.
- More trees needed in the Town Centre.
- Proximity of Welland Park is a bonus as it can provide a break from the bustle of the Town Centre.

4.6 Online Roadshow Exhibition (November 2019)

Additional comments not previously raised:

- More retail 'evenings' outside of Christmas periods
- Local digital marketing or online support for local retail business
- A better tourist information centre
- Increased marketing of the town throughout the UK
- A programme of regular town walks by qualified tourist guides

Online participants were asked the following two questions:

- What should be the vision for Market Harborough going forward?
- Could you think of a strapline for Market Harborough that captures your vision?

Some of the responses included:

- Market Harborough … The People Friendly Town
- Market Harborough …. A Very Special Market Town
- Market Harborough …. Where tradition meets aspiration
- Market Harborough …. Middle England's Best Kept Secret

4.7 Climate Emergency Action Plan (2021) – Harborough District Council

During summer 2021, the Council consulted on a draft Climate Emergency Action Plan, with the aim of publishing an adopted plan in the autumn of 2021.

The Council is already committed to working with residents and communities to their actions in reducing emissions and help them increase their resilience to the impacts of climate change, this includes:

- Promote local a sustainable food through the Sustainable Food Cities initiative.
- Promote sustainable transport choices, including walking and cycling
- Continue to promote improved energy efficiency and renewable energy to residents
- Promote reduction in plastic waste and increase in recycling figures

The Council also works in partnerships to promote resilient natural systems that will help to reduce the impacts of climate change. Some of what the Council has done so far:

- Worked in partnership with Catchment Partnerships in conjunction with the Environment Agency to promote natural flood management
- Using Section 106 funds (a developer's financial contribution to projects related to a new development which invests in improvements to the local area) to promote greater planting of woodlands and biodiverse spaces
- Worked on Council owned land to promote increased tree planting and cultivation of wildflower meadows
- Worked in partnership to promote better river water quality and protection of wildlife, through Welland River restoration

4.8 Stakeholder Engagement (March 2022)

A stakeholder engagement event was held on 8th March with 10 representatives from: Market Harborough in Bloom, Harbs Collective Retail Forum and Market Harborough Chamber of Trade and Commerce. Attendees submitted their comments under the five themes presented in Chapter 5.0.

Welcoming Market Harborough

- Limited mention of issues for young people
- Improve disability access, ramps, drop kerbs, ramps going into shop, and improve signage to disabled parking and apply for funding to develop Changing Places facilities
- Try to tidy up, utilise and promote empty buildings

Healthy Market Harborough

- Need to give consideration for mental health
- Angel Car Park - no cycle racks
- Promote the Community Toilet Scheme
- Improve the exterior of the toilets at Commons Car Park

Enterprising Market Harborough

- Improve lighting and St Mary's Place and replace dead trees
- Improve street lighting from outside Market and on Northampton Road

Sustainable Market Harborough

- Try to select correct trees for the right area
- Town centre lighting not synchronised
- Put in a new weir – Northampton Road, one ft high, to bring back the fish and otters
- Right turn on Northampton Road would stop build-up of traffic
- Better lighting along Millennium Mile

4.9 Stakeholder Engagement (April 2022)

A stakeholder engagement event was held on 13th April with 20 representatives from: Market Harborough Civic Society, Harborough Rail Users, Harbs Collective Retail Forum, Market Harborough Chamber of Trade and Commerce, University of the Third Age, Harborough Sustainable Communities. In addition to roads, attendees submitted their comments under the five themes presented in Chapter 5.0.

Roads

- On High Street by exit from Church Square change Zebra crossing to Pelican/ Traffic light crossing.
- On Square, add Oxford Circus type crossing whereby all crossings are synchronised, plus raised paving.
- Possible counterflow for cyclists down Adam and Eve Street, whereby cyclists can travel both directions on one way street, (and possible others). Carlisle is good example.
- Enforce Cycle Lanes and stop people parking on these, especially on Coventry Road and Fairfield Road.
- Civic Society suggested considering possible town centre pedestrianisation.

Healthy Market Harborough

- Good precedent from Leicester where they have integrated town centre Cycle Shop & Cycle Storage & Cycle Repair Service.
- More efforts to try to monitor and reduce vehicle emissions on High Street.

Vibrant Market Harborough

- Try to hold more cultural events like the Comedy Festival at the Market Hall.
- Legitimise musicians in Church Square, (eg. Covent Gardens, Stratford-upon-Avon).
- Market Harborough is very short of meeting rooms in the town centre

Enterprising Market Harborough

- E8 - Tesco building is the worst building in the town, so try to improve look and impact.
- Better use of the Symington Building to support local businesses and communities, (eg. meeting space).

Sustainable Market Harborough

- For Levelling Up Funding try to make Market Harborough a model for the first Net Zero Market Town.
- Support Harborough in Bloom plans for Station Approach and improving the look of the new Station Car Park through planting.
- Try to introduce some planting on former Station Masters Garden/ triangle of waste ground near bottom of road to new Station Car Park.
- Very little space for drop-off and pick-ups in front of Station.
- New directional sign at the bottom of Great Bowden Road directs drivers the wrong way to the new Station Car Park.
- Add general principle to encourage Park & Ride. Could be offered during particular peak times

4.10 Public Engagement Drop-in Sessions (May 2022)

Over three sessions, which included daytime, early evening and a Saturday, approximately 100 people visited the Town Centre Masterplan display in the foyer of the Symington Building. Additional comments not previously raised are listed below.

Thursday 19th May 2022

- Wooden Millennium Bridge (near railway station) needs to better maintained
- Old Grammar School has limited use due to lack of accessibility to upper floor.
- Shopmobility needs be part of plans, with a more central and sustainable base in town centre.
- Review parking along St Mary's Road, including managing delivery vehicles causing congestion.

Friday 20th May 2022

- Hold more 'green', vegan and sustainable market type events.
- More crossing points on High Street, including Upper High Street by Joules and by Congregational Church.
- Give great emphasis to initiatives within the Sustainability and Health themes.
- Support pedestrianisation either side of the Cultural Quarter, possibly with temporary rising bollards for use at specific times.
- Do not have shared pedestrian and cycling lanes, as these can cause problems and cyclists won't use them. Ideally segregated like Granby Steet in Leicester.
- Not much for young people, but cinema would be great.

Saturday 21st May 2022

- Query need for traffic island opposite The Square but could have mature trees with metal guards.
- Make no right turns from Church Square into High Street to reduce congestion and stop 'rat runs'.
- Use empty shops for activities, exhibitions and meeting places for teenagers.
- Facilitate events like Leicester's monthly 'Open Streets'
- Try to limit large number of heavy goods vehicles in town centre and possibly add a weight limit, as paving has been damaged.
- Need Western Bypass to town centre, via Lubbenham.
- Re-open two-way traffic on Coventry Road to lessen congestion on High Street.
- Possibly make High Street one-way north to south, and Abbey Street one-way, westwards.
- Try to convert derelict town centre buildings into social housing.
- Improve town centre for walking and cycling, including narrowed roads and increased high quality secure cycle parking.
- Could old walled garden/ proposed coach park on Northampton Road be developed as a Jubilee Pocket Park/ Community Arboretum?
- Improve Christmas decorations and celebrations in Market Harborough, although new lights are good.

4.11 Summary of Findings

The following summarises the findings from chapters 1-4 and is presented under the sub headings: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.

Strengths

- Diverse and unique heritage
- Mix of uses
- High quality townscape
- Good legibility helps contribute to sense of place
- Broad choice of shops and other attractions
- Range of family friendly events
- Independent retail and other businesses
- Convenient access to bus services on the Square
- Fast rail journeys to Leicester and London
- Good access to Sustrans national cycle network

Weaknesses

- Declining quality of elements to the public realm
- Lack of priority for pedestrian and cyclists
- Congestion on road network
- Poor quality approach along St Mary's Road from the station to town centre
- Lack of community facilities
- Poor management of River Welland corridor
- Limited activities for young people
- Access and facilities for disabled people

Opportunities

- Town centre proposals to follow principles of '20-minute neighbourhood'
- Encourage walking and cycling from the wider town to the town centre
- Flexibility offered by changes to use class orders
- Extend open hours of retail, food and drink
- Broaden entertainment and leisure for all ages
- Better tourist information and marketing for the town
- Venue for music and concerts
- Projected high demand for future retail, food and drink, other leisure, hotel, office and residential requiring new development
- Potential for co-working space
- Remodelling of internal space to St Dionysius' could in addition to church related activities become a community resource
- Park and ride facility to fringe of town

Challenges

- Managing the River Welland corridor to meet the needs of ecology, flood risk management, open space, active travel and as a setting for food and drink venues and other development

5.0 The Vision: Market Harborough – A Very Special Market Town

5.1 The Vision

The previous chapters established the 'live' issues and views of local people and stakeholders about the Town Centre. Local people put forward several vision statements that try to capture the spirit of the Town Centre today and what type of place Market Harborough should aim to be in the future. Market Harborough – A Very Special Market Town was selected as the preferred vision statement and it is underpinned by five themes informed by stakeholder consultation, the Council's Corporate Plan, planning policy, evidence base, and summary analysis. The five themes will address the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges identified from the previous chapters and set out the priorities of the Town Centre over the coming 10 years. This includes recommendations from the High Street Task Force's (HSTF) 4 Rs Framework in terms of repositioning, reinventing, rebranding and restructuring. The themes are:

- Welcoming Market Harborough
- Healthy Market Harborough
- Vibrant Market Harborough
- Enterprising Market Harborough
- Sustainable Market Harborough

Under each theme there are several recommendations to improve the Town Centre's vitality which will be explored in more detail in Chapter 6.0 Proposals.

Welcoming Market Harborough

Create a more pedestrian friendly Town Centre that provides a strong sense of arrival and opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the many spaces and activities available.

Healthy Market Harborough

Prioritise walking and cycling from the wider town across the Town Centre to reduce the impact of motor vehicle emissions and their effects on people's health and contribution to climate change.

Vibrant Market Harborough

Diversify the mix of uses, activities and events in the Town Centre to maximise vibrancy that extends into the evening and over the weekend.

Enterprising Market Harborough

Encourage the tradition of enterprise in the Town with more support and space for independents and co-workspace facilities for smaller businesses and ongoing support for our business centres and Harborough Market.

Sustainable Market Harborough

Plan sustainably for future growth, meeting the need for additional retail, food and drink, leisure and residential in the town centre and the long term management of the River Welland river corridor.

5.0 The Vision: Market Harborough – A Very Special Market Town



Welcoming - Create a more pedestrian friendly environment



Healthy - Prioritise walking and cycling



Vibrant - Diversity mix of uses, activities and events



Enterprising - Support independent and smaller businesses

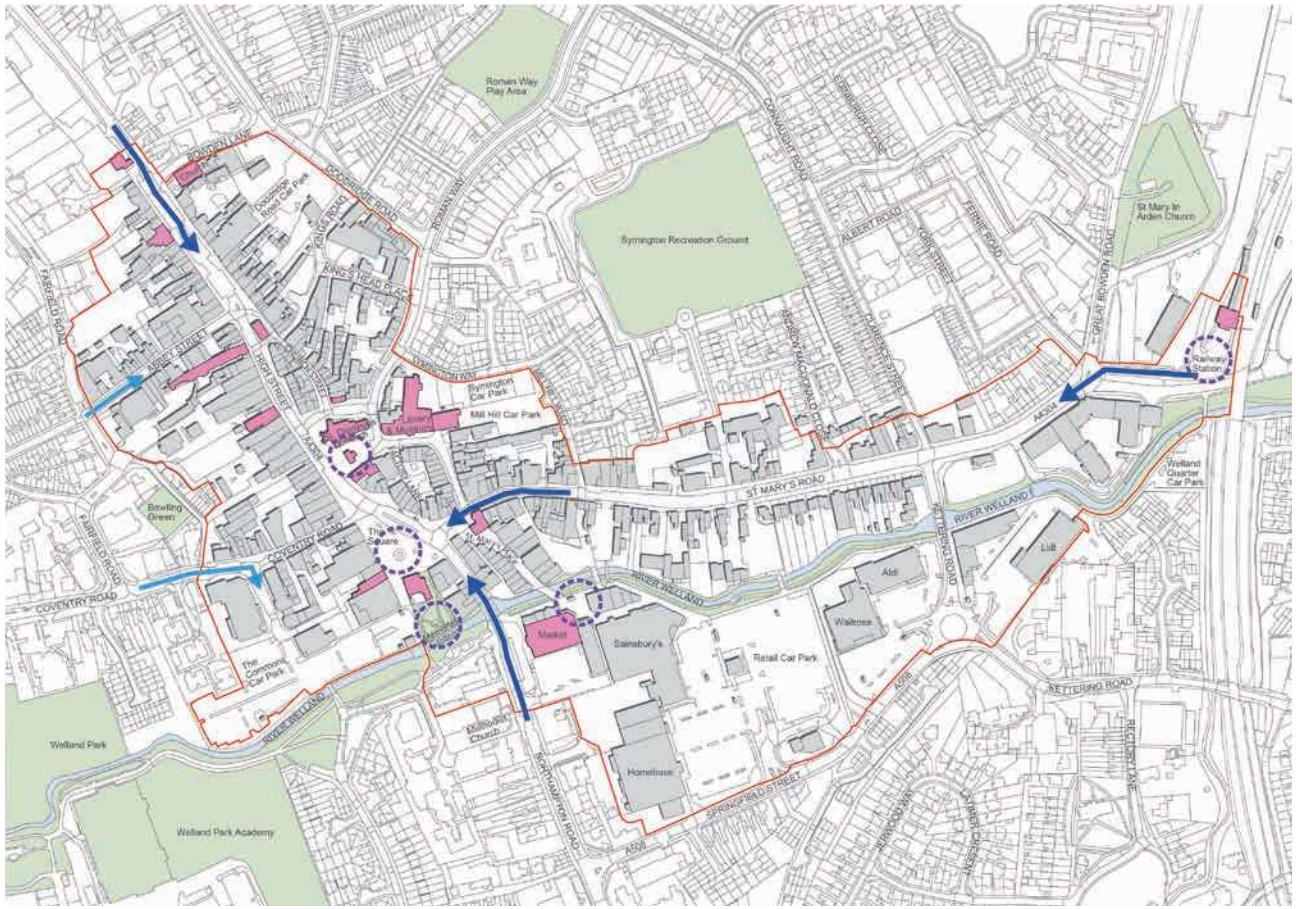


Sustainable - Plan for the long-term

5.2 Welcoming Market Harborough

Create a more pedestrian friendly town centre that provides a strong sense of arrival and opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the many spaces and activities available.

- Provide 'Welcome to Market Harborough' signs on main roads into the town.
- Enhance approaches to the Town Centre primarily for pedestrians but also for vehicles through public realm and shop front improvements.
- Better articulate arrival spaces that provide a strong sense of welcome with interpretation and signs.
- Improve pedestrian links from car parks and public transport hubs to gateway spaces.
- Encourage more outdoor seating areas to convey 'people presence'.



Town Centre – Key approaches, arrival Spaces and landmarks

5.0 The Vision: Market Harborough – A Very Special Market Town



St Mary's Place welcome sign and gateway



Welcome sign on entry to Town Centre



Active frontage café



Integrating signs with public realm improvements


SouthGate, Bath. © Macgregor Smith. Image from Landezine

Encourage outdoor seating and planting

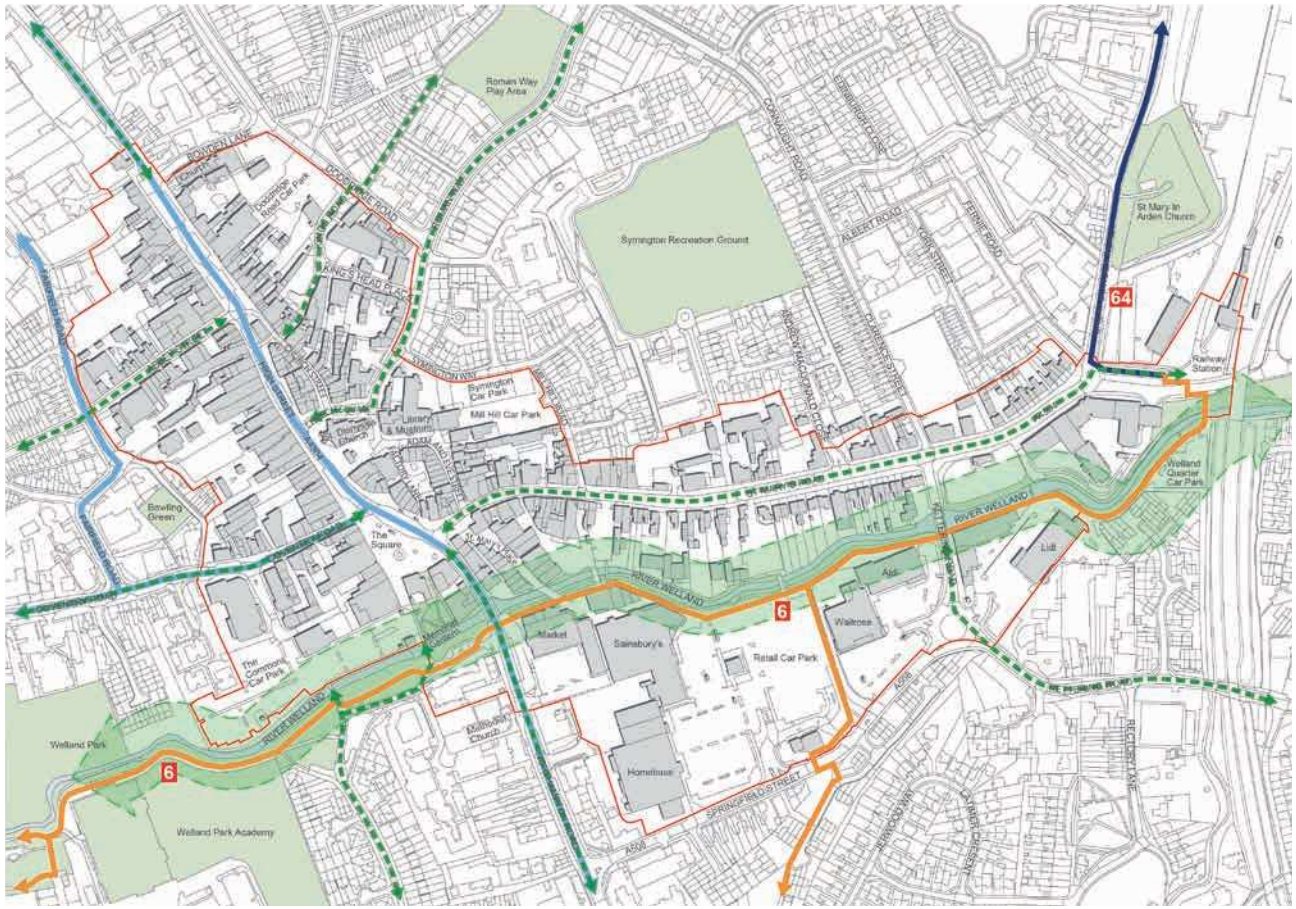


Animated outdoor space for eating

5.3 Healthy Market Harborough

Prioritise walking and cycling from the wider town across the Town Centre to reduce the impact of motor vehicle emissions and their effects on people's health and contribution to climate change.

- Promote the 20 minute neighbourhood[3], where people can meet their everyday needs within a short walk or cycle of the Town Centre.
- Enhance wayfinding for pedestrians and cyclists across the Town Centre.
- Improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists to enable active travel, including seating and cycle parking.
- Address vehicle dominance through footway widening and increasing the number of pedestrian crossings.
- Enhance public spaces for people to meet, socialise and relax.
- Promote the River Welland as a multi-functional corridor for open space, active travel, ecology, flood alleviation, open space and active travel (see specific recommendations under 5.6).



Town Centre – Pedestrian and cycle routes

[3]The diagram opposite maps 0.5 mile and 1 mile distance as a walkable catchment from the Square in the Town Centre. It assumes that a pedestrian could walk 0.5 mile in 10-15 minutes and 1 mile in 20-25 minutes.

5.0 The Vision: Market Harborough – A Very Special Market Town



Walkable catchment area



Raised crossing over street to improve facilities for pedestrians



Commill Gardens, Lewisham. Image from BDP

Enhance public spaces for people



Commill Gardens, Lewisham. Author Ewan Munro. Image From Wikimedia Commons

Promote multifunctional river corridor



Pedestrian bridge over the River Welland

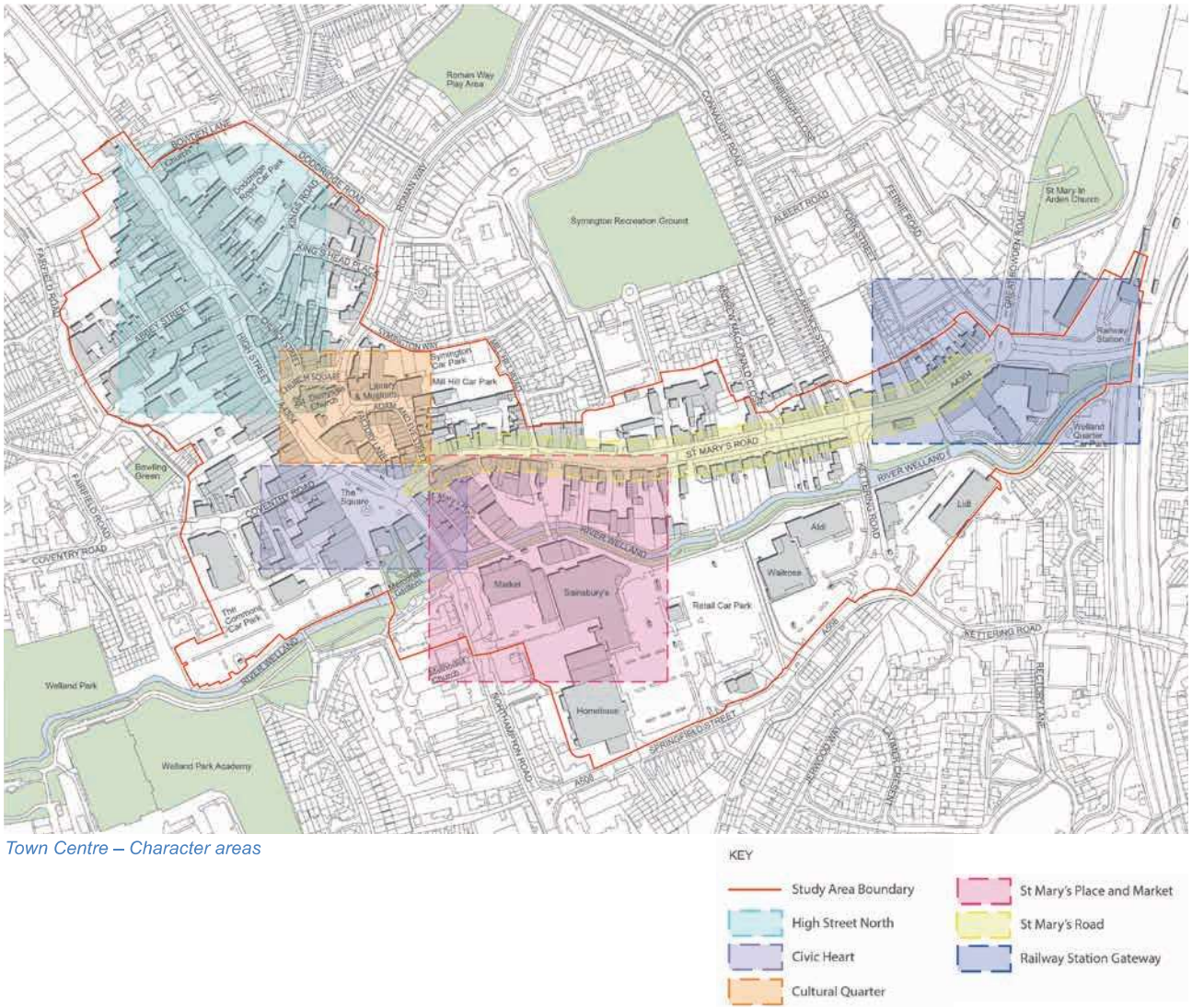


View from the River Welland corridor towards Memorial Gardens

5.4 Vibrant Market Harborough

The Town Centre has an established townscape quality and there are opportunities to further enhance through a number of character areas, each with a defined role and purpose that will contribute to a vibrant Market Harborough. The character areas are: High Street North, Cultural Quarter, Civic Heart, St Mary's Place and Market, St Mary's Road and Railway Station Gateway. Across all character areas diversify the mix of uses, activities and events in the Town Centre to maximise vibrancy that extends into the evening and over the weekend.

- Promote a multi-functional Town Centre, particularly where retail is more prominent
- Extend provision retail, food and drink, leisure, hotel, office and co-working and residential in accordance with projected demand up to 2031.
- Encourage the promotion of a cultural quarter around St Dionysius Church, Old Grammar School, Harborough Theatre and the Symington Building.
- Enhance existing event programme with additional music, arts, guided walks, food and sports focus.
- Extend retail, leisure and food and drink offer into the evening and over the weekend.
- Encourage interest and community groups to engage in Town Centre activity.

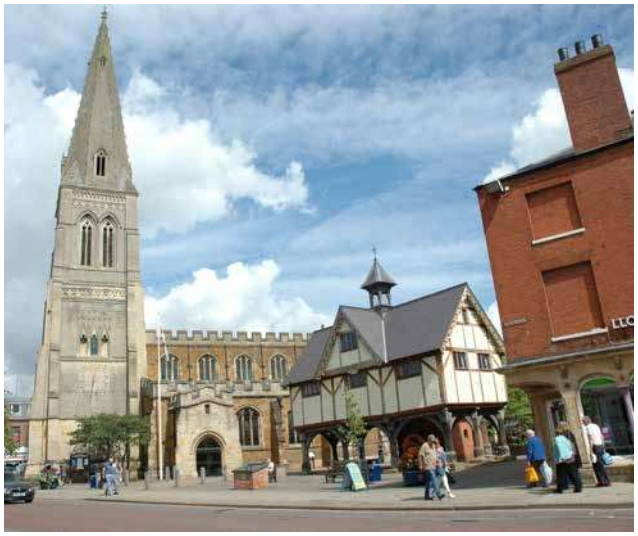


Town Centre – Character areas

5.0 The Vision: Market Harborough – A Very Special Market Town



Indoor market: retail, food & drink and events space



Setting for Market Harborough Cultural Quarter



Artwork integrated with seating



Temporary art installation

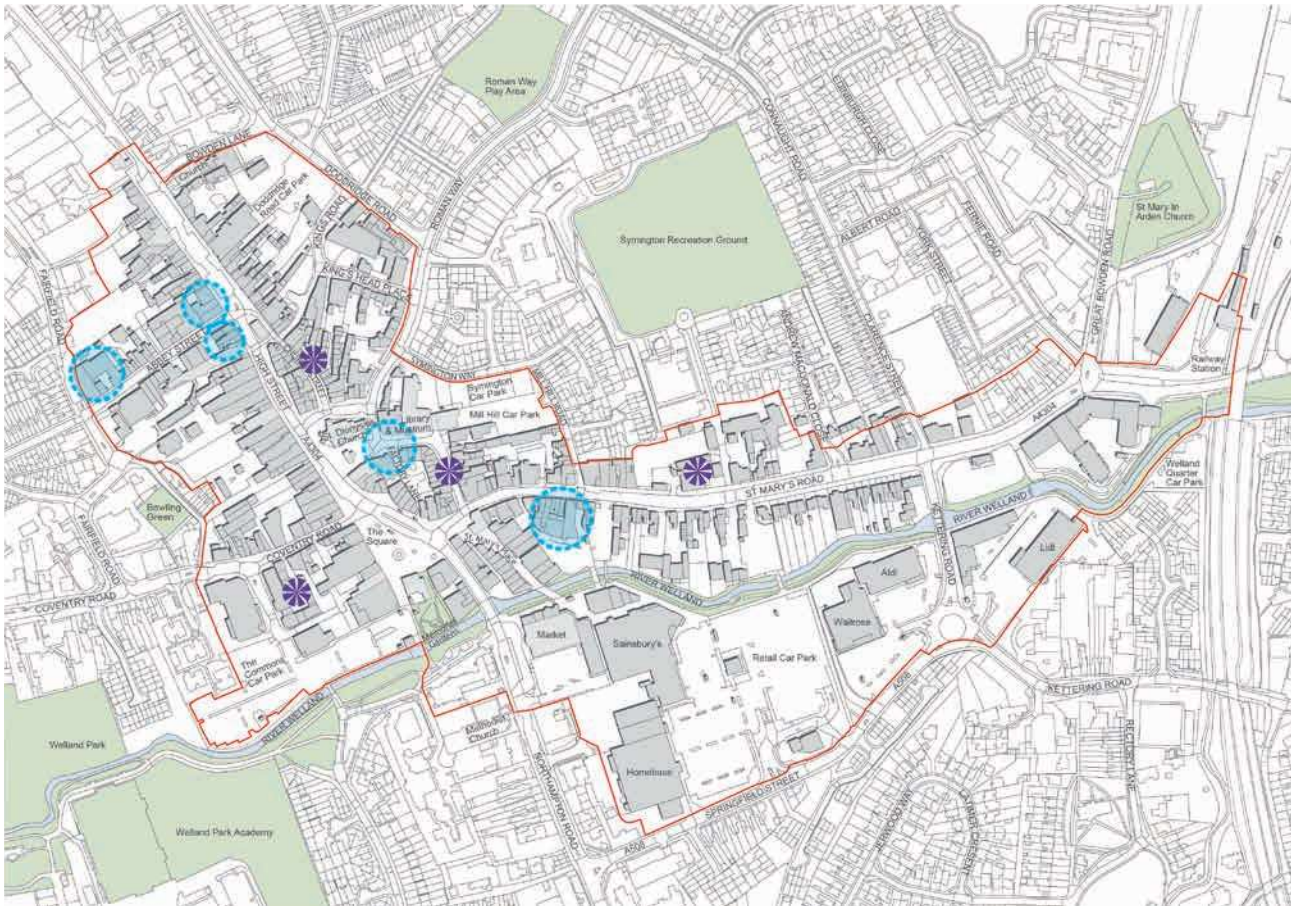


Indoor food court

5.5 Enterprising Market Harborough

Encourage the tradition of enterprise in the town with more support and space for independents, co-workspace and creative workspaces for smaller businesses and ongoing support for our business centres and Harborough Market

- Promote more diversity of uses in the Town Centre. The plan adjacent highlights existing areas of greater diversity of use.
- Attract independents into the Town Centre and encourage networking and support between businesses. The plan adjacent indicates existing clusters of independent businesses.
- Work with private sector partners to promote co-workspace facilities for sole traders and smaller businesses to encourage networking and to support the Town Centre economy and diversify uses in the high street.
- Widen marketing activity to attract more local people and visitors into the Town Centre.



Town Centre - Existing areas greater diversity of use and clusters of independent businesses



Café and co-workspace



Co-workspace



Independent business on Abbey Street

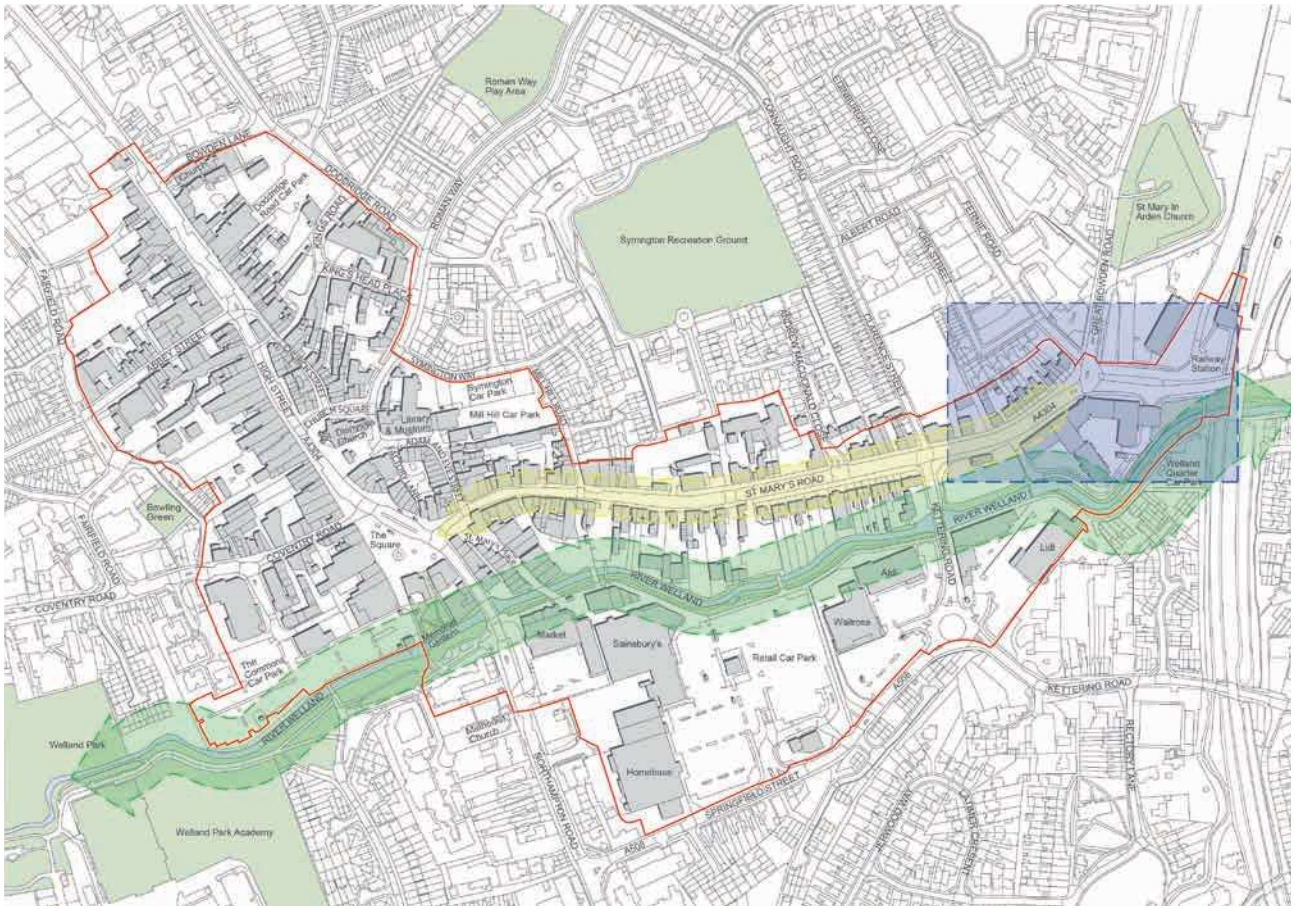


Independent business on Church Street

5.6 Sustainable Market Harborough

Plan sustainably for future growth, meeting the need for additional retail, food and drink, leisure and residential in the town centre and the long-term management of the River Welland river corridor.

- Identify parts of the Town Centre suitable for provision of different uses.
- Support community and interest groups in their promotion of sustainable living with residents and visitors.
- Support the Welland Valley Partnership and Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust with engagement events in the Town Centre.
- Integrate key actions from the Harborough District Climate Emergency Action Plan into the Town Centre Masterplan.
- Encourage reduction in emissions through electric vehicles use and charging points.



Town Centre – Key areas of longer term focus

5.0 The Vision: Market Harborough – A Very Special Market Town



Riverside corridor with recreation use



Interpretation sign in Lancaster



Interpretation sign on Marylebone High Street Rain Garden



Access to the watercourse

River Welland Corridor

Specific recommendations for the River Welland corridor through the Town Centre include:

- Provide interpretation to convey the need for flood risk management and to encourage biodiversity in the river corridor.
- Encourage riparian owners to comply with their responsibilities under the Welland for People and Wildlife Project.
- Support local interest groups such as Market Harborough Nature Group and Harborough Litter Pickers in the management of the river corridor.
- Make the watercourse more visible through the implementation of a two-stage ditch design.
- Undertake more intensive vegetation control in more visible sections of the river corridor such as the St Mary's Place pedestrian bridge.
- Reprofile short section of the riverbank south west of Commons car park to allow the river to meander and to provide access to the watercourse.

6.0 Proposals

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5.0 sets out the vision and themes for Market Harborough Town Centre and initial recommendations. Chapter 6.0 sets out more of the detail required to deliver the vision through an initial pipeline of projects, an integrated approach to public realm and access and movement, leadership and ongoing initiatives with residents and visitors. A basic principle of the pipeline of projects is '*a few major projects and many smaller changes*' to achieve the vision.

More specifically the chapter sets out:

- A pipeline of projects across the town centre presented under the vision and five themes
- Opportunities for shop front improvements
- Approach to public realm treatment
- Proposals for arrival spaces (railway station approach, the Square, Church Square)
- Proposals for Adam and Eve Street



St. Mary's Road street scene

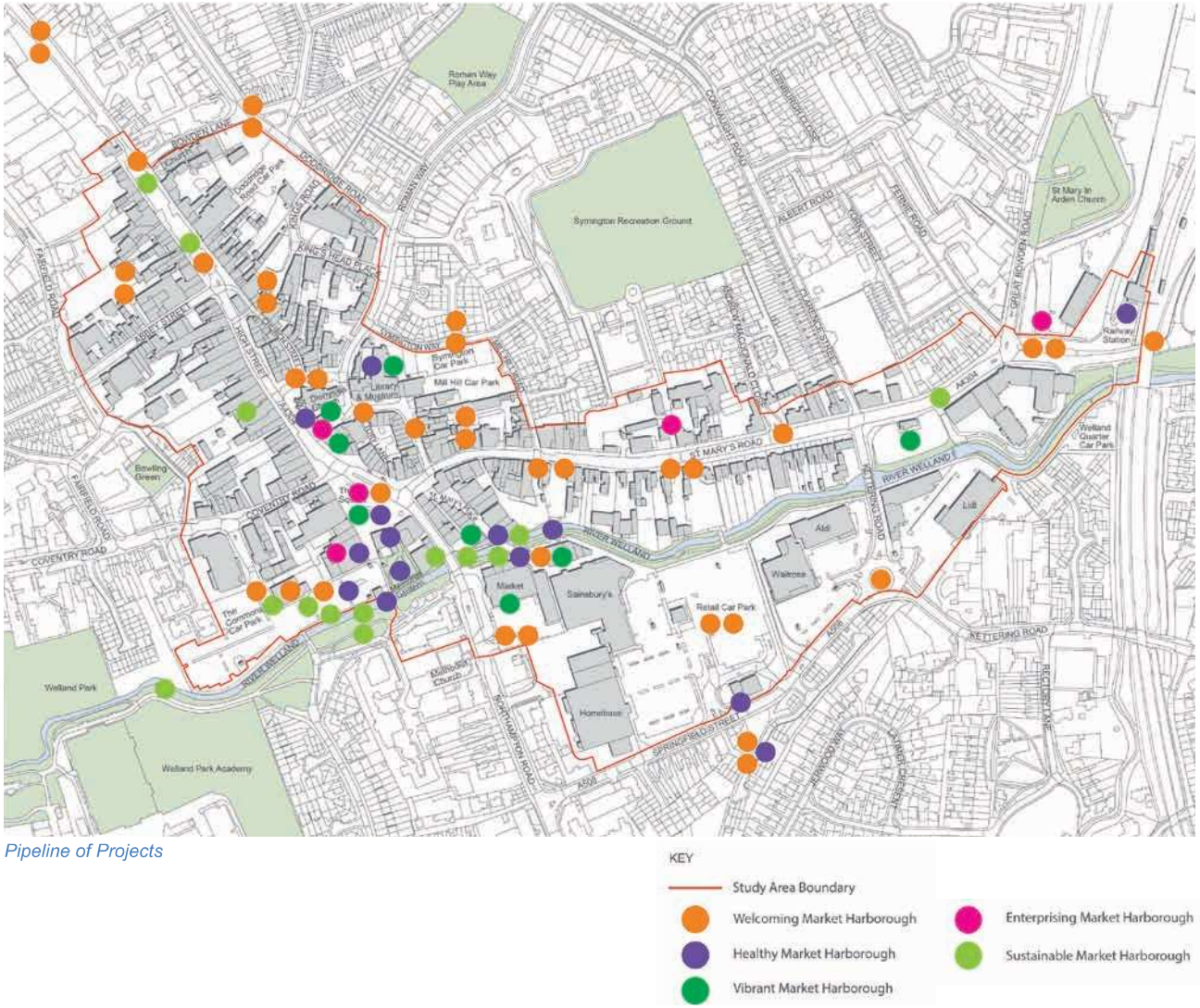
6.2 Pipeline of projects

The projects described demonstrate how the town centre Vision and themes can be achieved. Whilst projects vary in scale and impact on the regeneration of the Town Centre, all projects have been identified to highlight an element which would bring benefits to the immediate surroundings as well as to the overall impression and identity of Market Harborough. The success of these projects will rely on robust and well-considered details to ensure high quality and enduring results.

Each project relates to one of the five themes, the relevant symbol representing welcoming (W), healthy (H), vibrant (V), enterprising (E) or sustainable (S). The subsequent sections of the chapter provide more detail in respect of the pipeline of projects.

The plan opposite provides the location of all pipeline projects.

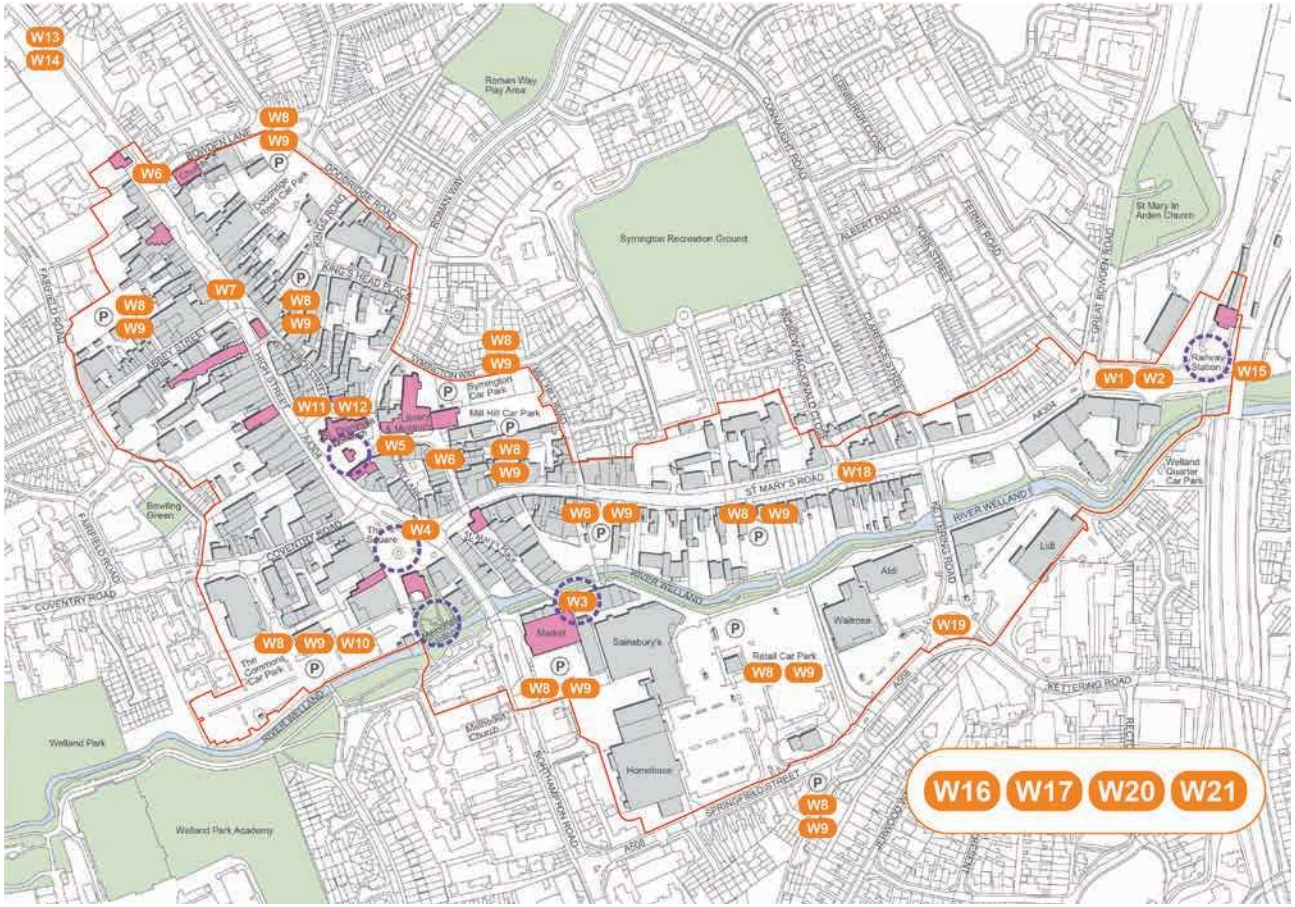
Chapter 7.0, Next Steps, sets out a framework for implementation of the pipeline of projects.



Pipeline of Projects

6.3 Welcoming Market Harborough

The pipeline of projects will provide visitors and residents with a welcome into the town centre and includes the remodelling of key arrival spaces, making some of the streets more pedestrian friendly, improving wayfinding for pedestrians from car parks and providing signposting to the town's key attractions.



Welcoming Market Harborough

- **W1** Remodel station approach to create pedestrian and cycle friendly space and routes to town centre
- **W2** Improve pedestrian and cycle links from station approach to Millenium Mile route along the River Welland
- **W3** Work with partners to enhance arrival space outside the Market and along St Mary's Place
- **W4** Remodel the Square as a multi-functional events and civic space with high quality lighting
- **W5** Enhance the public realm in the cultural quarter
- **W6** Work with partners to make Adam and Eve Street and other town centre streets more pedestrian and cycle friendly
- **W7** Provide wayfinding for access to courtyard spaces, burgage plots and passageways on High Street as part of the town's distinct offer
- **W8** Provide orientation points (QR codes and town centre map) in car parks & wayfinding to nearest arrival space
- **W9** Implement small garden spaces on land next to public car parks
- **W10** Enable the Commons car parks to better accommodate events linking with the Square
- **W11** Provide 'feature' banners and signs for cultural quarter and independent businesses on Church Street
- **W12** Provide signs fixed to wall to promote cultural quarter
- **W13** Provide 'Brown' signs to direct visitors to Union Wharf (Grand Union Canal network)
- **W14** Explore opportunities for 'Park and Ride' facilities
- **W15** Implement gateway feature to railway bridge on eastern approach along Rockingham Road
- **W16** Provide signs with parking information on main approach routes into town centre
- **W17** Provide 'Welcome' banners on main approach routes
- **W18** Enhance pedestrian's experience along St Mary's Road with new street trees, surfacing and public art features
- **W19** Greening, with trees, shrubs and hard landscape to roundabout at junction to Kettering Road and Springfield Street
- **W20** Improve facilities for people with disabilities, including Shopmobility and accessible toilets
- **W21** Review town centre parking to ensure it supports the principles of the Town Centre Masterplan



Street trees



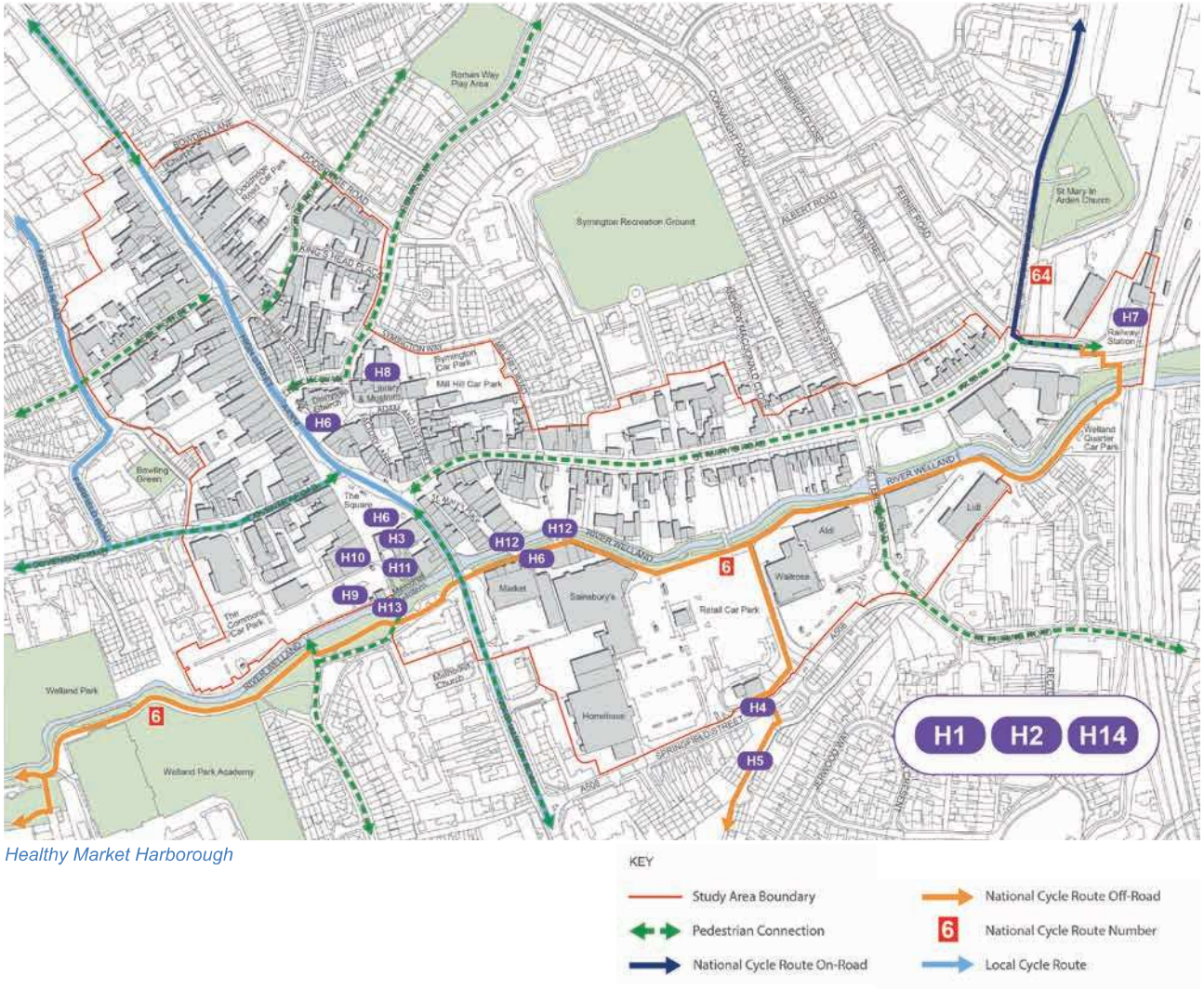
Wayfinding



Enhanced public realm

6.4 Healthy Market Harborough

In addition to the pipeline of projects, Healthy Market Harborough will promote policies such as the 20-minute neighbourhood and other longer term initiatives with partners like Sustrans to encourage more active travel. Projects to support active travel will include better crossings for pedestrians and cyclists and bicycle parking.



Healthy Market Harborough

6.0 Proposals

H1	Promote 20-minute neighbourhood with Council promotion events
H2	Engage Sustrans active travel officer to encourage walking and cycling in the town
H3	Provide signs to promote Memorial Gardens
H4	Provide cycle crossing on Springfield Street to accommodate NCN Route 6 to leisure centre and Brampton Valley Way
H5	Improve wayfinding for NCN Route 6 south of Springfield Road
H6	Install new cycle parking in arrival spaces
H7	Promote existing secure bike hub at Station Approach
H8	Install secure cycle parking at the Symington Building
H9	Extend covered motorcycle and cycle parking at Commons car park
H10	Enhance the visual appearance of post-war buildings with contemporary cladding or green wall (Tesco site on the Square)
H11	Promote green wall potential to buildings enclosing Memorial Gardens
H12	Enhance linkages from pedestrian route along River Welland to St Mary's Road
H13	Enhance linkages from the town centre to Welland Park with improved public realm and signs
H14	Explore opportunities to improve traffic movement and pedestrian priority



Link from Millenium Mile route to St Mary's Road



Link from Welland Park to town centre



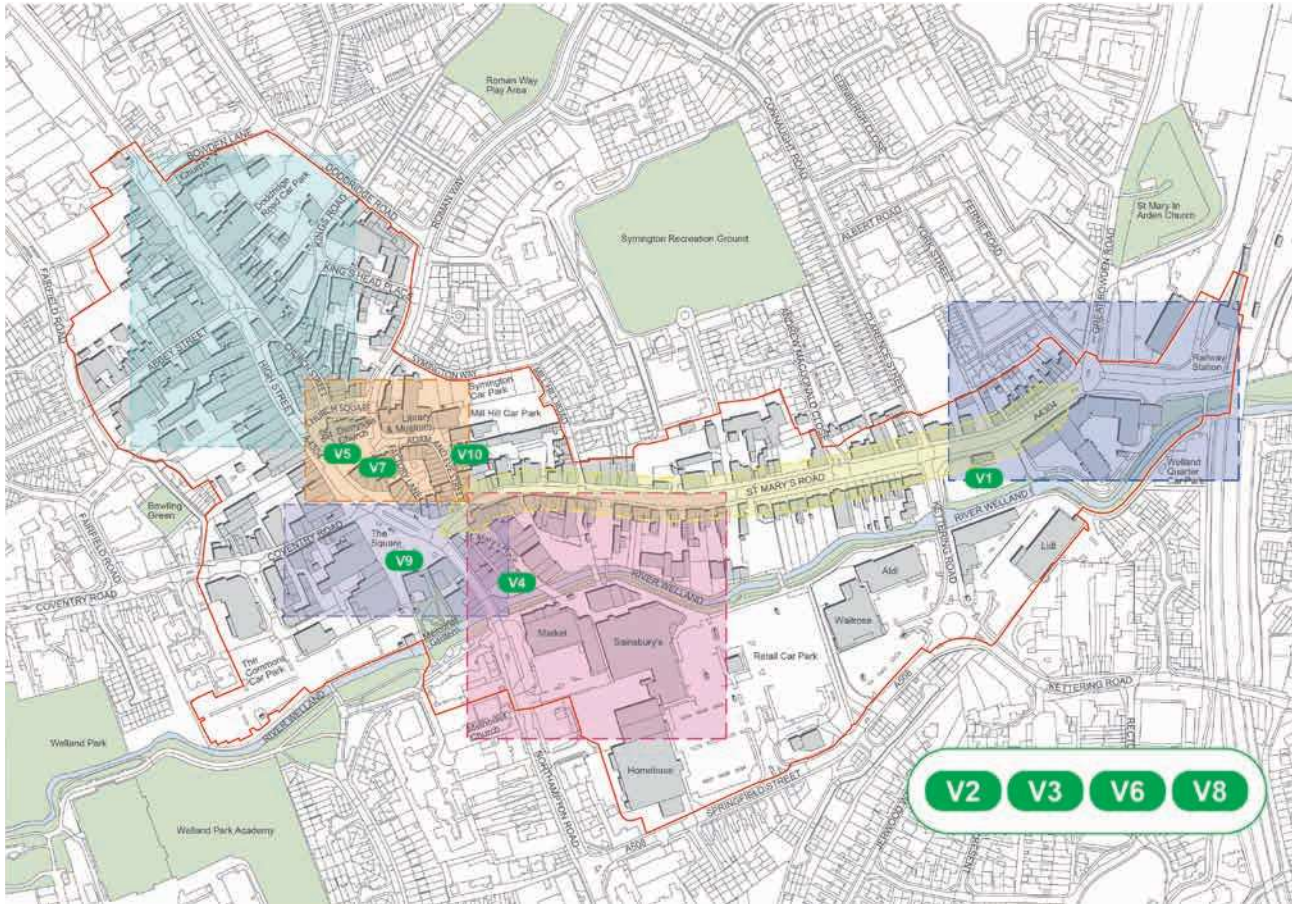
Precedent for bike parking



Precedent for green wall

6.5 Vibrant Market Harborough

The pipeline of projects will promote a more multi-functional town centre including the development of a cultural quarter with the internal remodelling of St Dionysius Church, a possible town centre cinema and support for a range of events in the Cultural Quarter . The Council will also work with partners in St Mary's Place and the Market to increase opportunities for food and drink and events.



Vibrant Market Harborough

6.0 Proposals

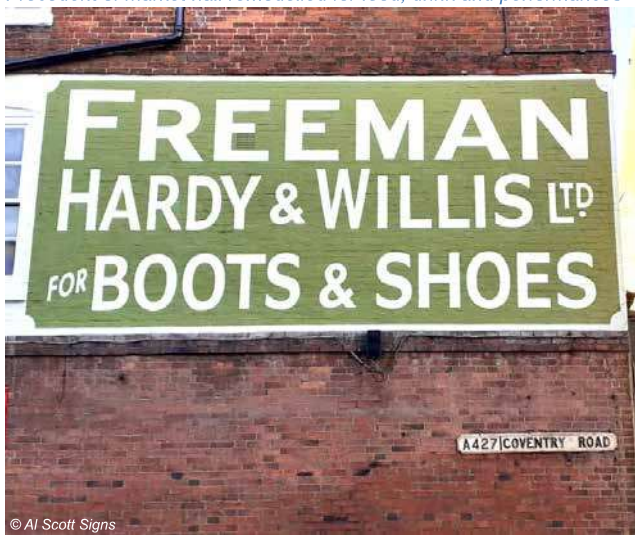
- **V1** Work with partners to redevelop the former Harborough Rubber Factory site including listed building
- **V2** Promote and enhance the range of cultural assets to support the development of a Cultural Quarter
- **V3** Explore opportunities to increase and promote high quality public art and heritage interpretation
- **V4** Encourage mix of uses in St Mary's Place to promote evening economy, including promoting food and drink opportunities
- **V5** Support St Dionysius Church with remodelling of internal space for multi-functional community use
- **V6** Explore opportunities to develop a town centre cinema to provide a new cultural and leisure offer
- **V7** Promote Church Square as outdoor performance space as part of the Cultural Quarter
- **V8** Recreate tradition of wall painting and advertising to gable walls
- **V9** Promote food and drink opportunities, including outdoor seating and tables on the Square and other suitable locations
- **V10** Support town centre living, especially converting under-utilised space above shops as apartments



Precedent of market hall remodelled for food, drink and performances



Precedent for outdoor performance space



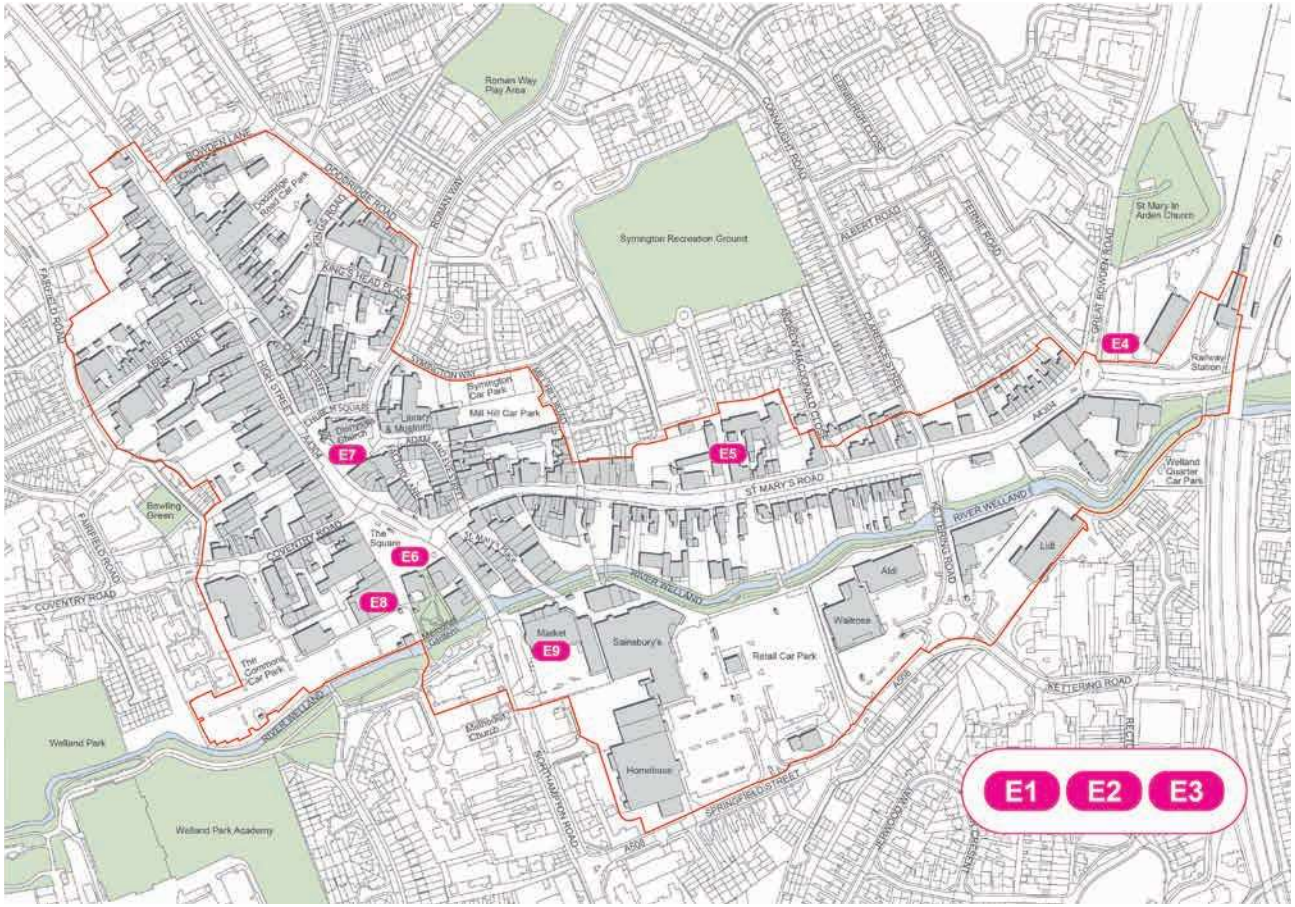
Freeman Hardy Willis sign to gable wall



Precedent for outdoor seating in the Square

6.6 Enterprising Market Harborough

The pipeline of projects will encourage the tradition of enterprise in the town with more support and space for independents, and co-workspace and creative workspaces for smaller businesses and ongoing support for our business centres and Harborough Market. The remodelling of the Square and the enhancement to the public realm in the cultural quarter will support businesses using those spaces for 'pop-up' events. The enterprising theme will also promote workforce development of skills and talent.



Enterprising Market Harborough

6.0 Proposals

- **E1** Support networking and ecosystem for independent businesses
- **E2** Work with partners to promote co-workspace and creative workspace
- **E3** Extend Council support for shop front improvements, including shop front canopies
- **E4** Promote mix of uses at railway station gateway
- **E5** Promote tourism and leisure site on St Mary's Road (Local Plan Policy RT4)
- **E6** Remodel the Square as a multi-functional events and civic space to support traders and local businesses
- **E7** Enhance the public realm in the cultural quarter to support events, traders and local businesses
- **E8** Remodel Tesco building with improved elevational treatment and construct additional storey if feasible
- **E9** Remodel Market Hall for increased retail, food, drink, entertainment and evening economy



Canopy to shopfront in Bennett's Place, High Street, Market Harborough



Precedent green wall for mixed use development



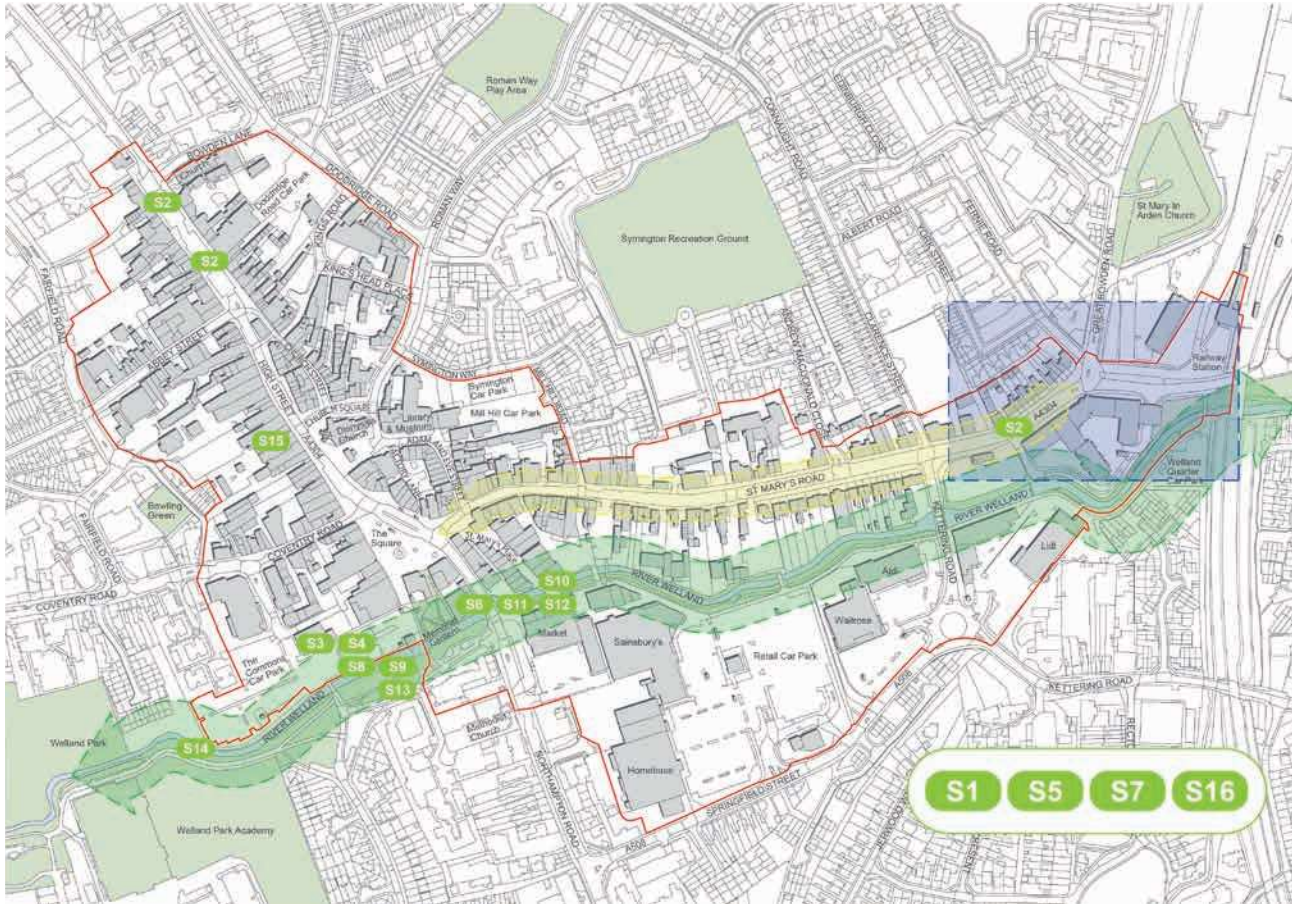
Precedent green wall for smaller scale development



Precedent green wall for mixed use development

6.7 Sustainable Market Harborough

The pipeline of projects focus on planning sustainably for future growth, meeting the need for additional retail, food and drink, leisure and residential in the town centre and the long-term management of the River Welland river corridor.



Sustainable Market Harborough

6.0 Proposals

S1	Establish core team of Council Officers and stakeholders to lead the delivery of the town centre masterplan
S2	Reconfigure streetscene on Upper High Street to enable street tree planting
S3	Provide charging points for electric vehicles in public car parks
S4	Install trees and rain gardens to perimeter of Commons Car Park
S5	Support Harborough in Bloom with sites for planting and planting material
S6	Provide interpretation boards to convey the need for flood risk management and to encourage biodiversity in the Welland river corridor
S7	Encourage riparian owners to comply with their responsibilities under the Welland for People and Wildlife Project
S8	Support Welland Rivers Trust and local interest groups such as Market Harborough Nature Group and Harborough Litter Pickers in the management of the river corridor
S9	Make the river more visible through the implementation improvements to the water channel
S10	Undertake more intensive vegetation control in more visible sections of the river corridor such as the St Mary's Place pedestrian bridge
S11	Extend tree planting adjacent pedestrian route between St Mary's Place bridge and Northampton Road
S12	Encourage seasonal wildflower meadows along upper slopes of river corridor next to St Mary's Place
S13	Provide 'avenue' tree planting along River Welland corridor pedestrian route (adjacent Brooklands Gardens)
S14	Reprofile short section of the riverbank south west of Commons car park to allow the river to 'meander' and to provide access to the watercourse
S15	Support building owners and occupiers with solar panel installation
S16	Promote recycling and waste separation across the town centre



Precedent for rain garden to car park



Welland east of Kettering Road bridge



Improving the water channel to the upper River Welland



Precedent of local interest group in the River Welland catchment

6.8 Ground Floor Frontages

Frontages to ground floor units are an outward expression of the quality of goods and services on offer and can create a positive business environment and the opportunity to enhance the character of the street. Good design and material quality should be encouraged to avoid the use of 'off the shelf' standard shop fronts that pay no regard to the existing character of the building for which they are intended, or for its setting within the streetscene. Many of the buildings in the town centre are pre-20th Century and retaining harmony between the shop front and the building within which it is set is an important aspect of creating a positive image for Market Harborough.

The images on this page show the range of treatments to ground floor frontages, including traditional shop fronts with shop signs (timber fascia signboard), well-articulated window details with mullions and pilasters and recessed doors and these features are in keeping with the proportions of the upper floors. Suitable canopies and blinds can also enhance a ground floor frontage.

The Council can also continue to support the town centre by installing high-quality window designs on temporarily vacant ground floor units to help maintain a positive business environment.



Example of well executed contemporary treatment on Manor Walk



Example of ground floor treatment at Church Square and Church Street



Vacant ground floor treatment on the Square



Example of well-articulated window details and recessed doors on Adam and Eve Street

6.9 Approach to Public Realm Treatment

A consistent and cohesive approach to surfacing materials, street furniture and signage will help to unify the Town Centre. The public realm will also be enhanced with the appropriate use of public art and soft landscape. The Town Centre Masterplan considers concept proposals for the railway station approach, the Square, Church Square and Adam and Eve Street. High quality Yorkstone and granite stone surfacing should be used to enhance the historic market town character and the Town Centre Conservation Area. Yorkstone and granite setts can also be used to help define pedestrian routes and the interface between spaces and vertical features such as buildings, street furniture and trees. Brick is also present in the Town Centre's public realm and there will be opportunity to propose brick trims and brick patterns in paving designs.

The table below provides an outline of public realm design elements and will be subject to further consideration in the detailed design phase. Consideration of public art, street furniture and street landscape is provided after the table.

Street/Space	Kerb and Channel	Footway	Crossing Point	Parking/Loading Bay	Roadway	Interface with Tree Planting
Railway Station Approach	Granite kerb	Yorkstone flags and brick trims	n/a	Granite setts	Asphalt	Trees set in grass verge
The Square	n/a	Yorkstone flags with Yorkstone setts and brick trims	n/a	Yorkstone setts and brick trims	n/a	Yorkstone setts
Church Square	Granite kerb, granite sett channel	Yorkstone flags with Yorkstone setts and brick trims	Granite setts. Tactile studs on adjacent Yorkstone flags	Granite setts	Retain concrete setts	Yorkstone setts
Adam and Eve Street	Granite kerb	Yorkstone flags	Granite setts. Tactile studs on adjacent Yorkstone flags	Granite setts	Asphalt	n/a

Public Art

Public art can play an important role in enhancing the sense of place of an area and it is usual practice to involve an artist with a high level of expertise in community engagement from the outset. Engaging local people can help establish relevant themes and encourages a sense of involvement.

The following principles should guide the production of public art.

- The physical form and interpretation of elements should create important gateways, connections and points of interest drawing users through the scheme.
- It should be an integral part of all design briefs for public realm schemes with artists being commissioned to work with the design team from concept stage.
- Public art should be site specific, appropriately located and bespoke to its location Where appropriate public art should be integrated with elements such as paving or seating
- Components of public art should be low maintenance and robust, and have readily available replacement parts, fixtures and fittings if required.

Street Furniture

Street furniture has an important role in contributing to sense of place and supporting a more pedestrian friendly town centre. Street furniture, including seats, litter bins, bollards, planters, guard rails, should be fit for purpose, sustainable through lifetime costing and should be of a scale appropriate to its location.

The following principles should be followed in the selection of street furniture:

- It should be robust, appropriate for a historic town centre, simple in design and utilise a limited materials palette of hardwood, galvanised and powder coated paint finishes and hard-wearing fixtures and fittings.
- Street furniture should be located as to not clutter the public realm.
- Lighting and signs should be attached to buildings or installed onto dual purpose columns to minimise clutter.
- Components should be low maintenance and have readily available replacement parts, fixtures and fittings.
- Street furniture should be sited where it can accommodate servicing and cleansing. Where vehicle access is required, the paving construction must be sufficiently load bearing.

Soft Landscape

Soft landscape elements, including trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals should be used to soften the built environment and enhance the experience of the town centre. Tree planting can soften views in streetscapes, contribuite to a sense of enclosure and provide shade on hot, sunny days.

The following principles should be followed in terms of soft landscape.

- Planting must be sustainable and be in a position where it will be able to survive in its environment and flourish.
- Planting should not be used where it would obscure important views or traffic sight line requirements.
- Tree species chosen should be appropriate for the location, with adequate space to accommodate the eventual mature state.
- Trees avenues should be planted as single species.
- Tree planting locations must consider availability of daylight and avoid underground services to promote successful establishment.
- Tree pits should follow industry guidance in terms of appropriate rooting volume, with underground anchorage systems and irrigation kits. Root barriers should be used when near services. Resin bonded surfacing dressing should be used to allow trees to mature without restriction around the main stem.
- On-going maintenance and management of street trees and ornamental planting such as pruning, access, watering, autumn leaves, all need to be accommodated to ensure sustainable soft landscaping elements.

6.0 Proposals



Typical bench example



Typical litter bin example



Typical timber planter example



Example of bespoke seating and planters with artwork that can be moved during events



Typical cycle stand example



Typical tree pit example

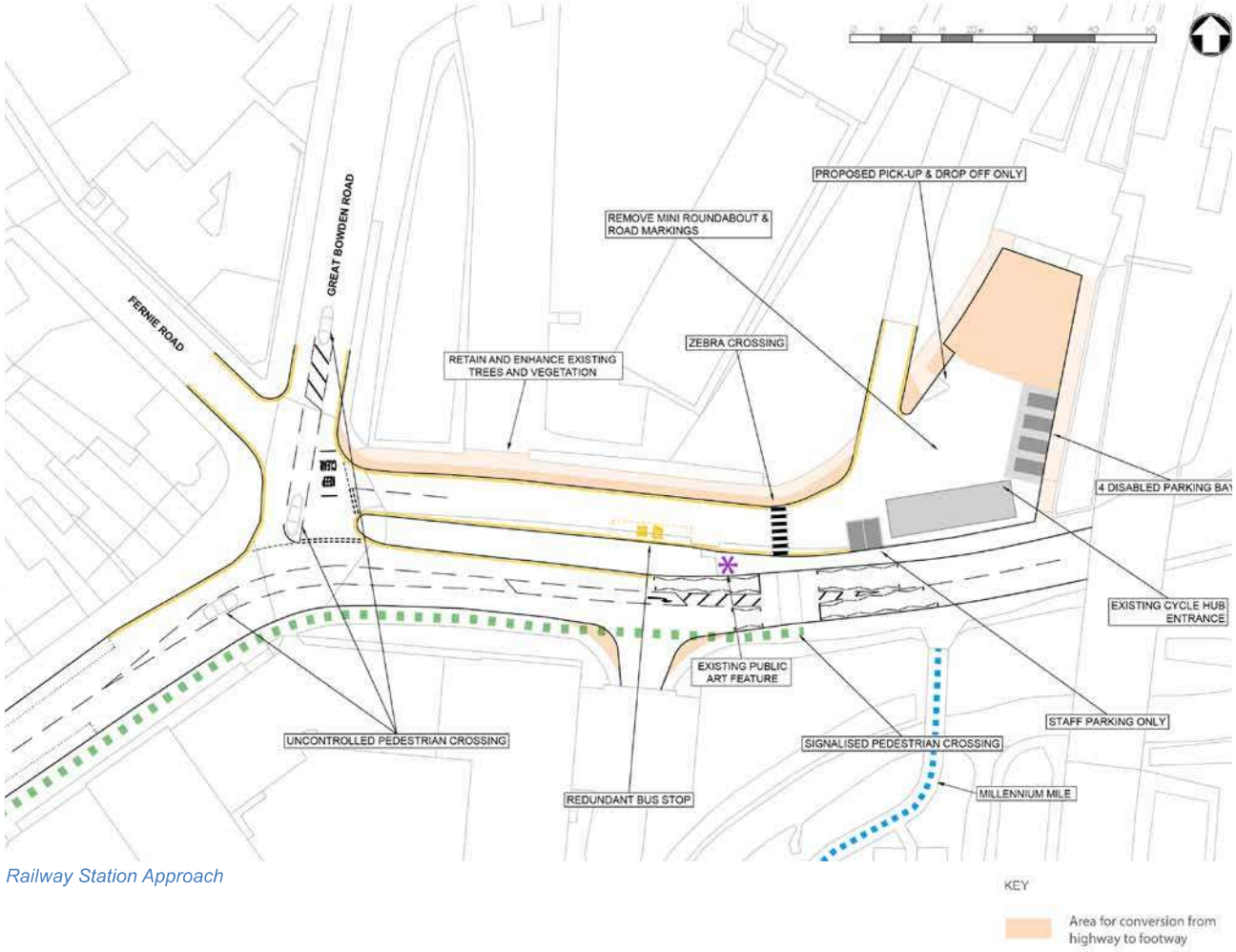
6.10 Railway Station Approach

The railway station is in the easternmost part of the study area with access for vehicles from Great Bowden Road. There is an area for private vehicles and taxis to drop off and pick up passengers, along with some disabled parking bays and a new cycle hub facility. There are pedestrian footways, although these are to the margins of the area for vehicles and are relatively narrow.

Earlier chapters of the town centre masterplan document established that the railway station and its approach provide visitors and potential investors with first impressions of Market Harborough. It identifies the need to provide a high quality arrival space, particularly for pedestrians so they can navigate their way to the town centre. Chapter 4.0, Engaging with Local People, reinforces the importance of pedestrian links from the railway station into the town centre, the lack of wayfinding and the need for better pedestrian priority on the approach to the station.

Concept Diagram

The proposed concept maintains access for vehicles along the approach with space for private vehicles and taxis to drop off and pick up passengers, several disabled staff parking bays and staff parking bays are also maintained. However, the vehicular area directly in front of the railway station building could become pedestrian space with opportunity for orientation boards, wayfinding facilities and seating for pedestrian wishing to visit the town centre. Access to the cycle hub would be made clearer for pedestrians and cyclists. The footway linking to Great Bowden Road would be widened and links to the Millenium Mile route along the River Welland would be made more legible for pedestrians and cyclists including potentially moving the existing public art feature to a more obvious location.



Railway Station Approach

The retaining wall along the approach route would be refurbished and the railway station sign and advertising boards maintained. The treescape above the retaining would be managed, with additional planting proposed to enhance this former element of railway infrastructure. Just outside the study area, the new large car parking facility for station users could be enhanced by increased tree and decorative planting, in conjunction with Harborough in Bloom.

Welland Quarter

The Council will work with developers involved with the site south of Rockingham Road and north of the River Welland (for location, see diagram opposite) to enhance the welcome to the town centre and to promote long term public access along the Millenium Way and the footbridge over the river.



Railway station elevation



Railway station approach



Opportunity to refurbish retaining wall and manage vegetation above



Precedent for railway station approach showing increased priority for pedestrians

6.11 The Square

The Square is centrally located in the town and is historically important as the space that hosted the sheep market. High Street passes on the Square's eastern edge and the arrangement of building form to the south and west creates a triangular shaped pedestrian space with a war memorial feature in the centre.

Every day the Square functions as popular space for people to sit, meet others and eat lunch. It also provides an important route for pedestrians accessing the wider town centre from the Commons car park and the southern part of the town. Pedestrians also use the space to access businesses fronting the Square and Memorial Gardens to the south.

The Square accommodates seasonal and market-type events on a regular basis, usually over weekends, with the central part of the space hosting market stalls. On special occasions a stage is installed to the north west of the memorial feature. Delivery access to shops on the Square is feasible from the junction of High Street with St Mary's Road. The arrangement includes a traffic signal for vehicles leaving the Square to re-join the road network.

Concept Diagrams

The concept diagrams (opposite) show the potential approach for the 'daily functioning' of the Square and then the differing arrangement for 'events'. There are also some common elements to both.



The Square during Christmas lights switch on

Common elements

A fixed zone is proposed along the eastern edge of the Square. It would accommodate bus shelters and new tree planting, seating and cycle parking. The fixed zone would provide some physical separation between the main part of the Square and traffic on High Street.

The central reservation on High Street would accommodate semi-mature tree planting that would bring multiple benefits including: visual amenity, reducing noise, moderating higher temperatures, reducing pressure on the drainage system and improving to air quality.

On the northern side of the High Street there are some wider areas of pavement (near to the bus stops), with a southerly aspect and that would be better defined to accommodate seating, planting, cycle parking and possible public art.

Links from the Square to Memorial Gardens would be improved with more defined routes for pedestrians, with signs to complement the gateway to the gardens.

Day to day mode

A flexible zone is proposed near to the western edge of the Square. It would accommodate flexible seating, outdoor eating and drinking and planters. Elements in the flexible zone could be moved to better accommodate events.

Event mode

The central space in the Square would be maximised and become a flexible area for setting up of market stalls and other equipment such as the temporary stage including extending this space slightly to the south and west. There would be opportunity for vehicles to deliver goods to the edge of the flexible area.



The Square Concept (Daily)



The Square Concept (Events)

6.12 Cultural Quarter - Church Square

Existing

In its description of the town's conservation area, the Council's Local Plan defines Church Square as being dominated by three buildings: the Church of St Dionysius, the Old Grammar School and the Symington Building. Church Square extends around the Church; to the north it includes the street and footways linking High Street with Adam and Eve Street and Roman Way. The Symington Building, notably its tall tower, encloses the space in the east. South of the church, Church Square includes the timber framed Old Grammar School with its open ground floor and pedestrian area beyond, while Harborough Theatre fronts onto part of the southern edge of the space. High Street forms the western edge of the square. Church Square includes the pedestrian only spaces around the Church of St Dionysius and the Old Grammar School and the highway linking Adam and Eve Street and High Street.



Church Square

North

Church Square is an important north-south and east-west route pedestrian route linking the southern part of the town with Church Street and Upper High Street and the Symington Building with High Street respectively. In terms of vehicular movement, it provides a westbound one-way route for users of Roman Way and Church Street. Church Square also accommodates short stay on street parking.

East

Church Square provides continuity to the pedestrian routes referred to above and it also connects the westbound one-way Adam and Eve Street with Roman Way and High Street. There is also some short stay on street parking, disabled parking bays and a loading bay for Harborough Theatre.

South

Along the southern edge of the church, a defined route provides occasional access for wedding and funeral vehicles from High Street to Church Square, with dropped kerbs onto the highway. The central part of the square is occupied by the Old Grammar School building, with street trees, seating and interpretation. The southern part of Church Square accommodates events on a regular basis, making particular use of the cover provided by the Old Grammar School.

The southern edge of the space provides a direct link between High Street with Adam and Eve Street and has a high level of pedestrian footfall.

West

The western edge of the space is defined by the north-south footway along High Street which has a high level of pedestrian footfall.



View towards Harborough Theatre



View from Adam and Eve Street towards St Dionysius' Church



Old Grammar School

Proposed

North

The concept proposes some reconfiguring of the highway, including a raised pedestrian crossing to allow priority for pedestrians using the north-south footway along High Street. There would be similar raised pedestrian crossings on Church Street (just north of its intersection with Church Square) and on Roman Way to also assist pedestrian movement. The existing Zebra crossing on High Street would be replaced with a pedestrian signalled crossing to assist pedestrians and help manage traffic build-up. The area of highway around the signalled crossing would be raised onto a plateau to assist with traffic calming. The existing setts on the westbound one-way route from Adam and Eve Street to High Street would be re-used and re-laid. The existing Yorkstone flags on the footway would be re-used and re-laid.

East

The corner radii close to the eastern end of St Dionysius Church would be reduced to widen the footway and to encourage slower traffic speeds along the highway section of Church Street. The disabled parking bays and loading bay for Harborough Theatre would be resurfaced in concrete setts to assist wheelchair users. The existing Yorkstone flags on the footway would be re-used and re-laid.

South

The defined route along the southern edge of the church for occasional vehicular access would be retained, although the stone setts would be re-laid. The Yorkstone flags across the remainder of Church Square would be retained and re-laid, allowing for the existing street trees and new street furniture to be installed.

West

The existing Yorkstone flags at the western edge of Church Square would be retained, cleaned and then re-laid, allowing for the existing street trees and new street furniture to be installed.



Church Square



Adam and Eve Street

6.13 Cultural Quarter – Adam and Eve Street

Existing

Adam and Eve Street is a northbound one-way street leading northward from St Mary's Road. It is addressed by a range of building types with predominantly retail ground floor uses and some food and drink. Some of the upper storeys include residential use. Before reaching the Symington Building it changes to a westerly direction, heading towards Church Square.

At its southern end, the street is relatively narrow, also with narrow footways. Moving north the street widens with extended highway space and on-street parking on the eastern side, however the footways remain relatively narrow.

Proposed

The proposed concept maintains the northbound one-way street; however, the highway would be reconfigured to become more pedestrian friendly with a raised pedestrian crossing at the edge of the intersection with St Mary's Road. The footway on the western side would be substantially widened, while a short section of on-street parking on the eastern side would be removed enabling the widening of the footway there. Some of the on-street parking and delivery bay on the eastern side of the street would be retained. Near to where the street curves towards a westerly direction the highway would be reconfigured to form a widened footway on both sides and offer an outdoor seating area on northern edge, adjacent to the Symington Building.

The footways would be surfaced with Yorkstone flags and the roadway resurfaced with asphalt.

7.0 Next Steps

7.1 Introduction

This chapter considers:

- Delivery agencies – the range of stakeholders and partners needed to deliver the masterplan
- Funding masterplan delivery – the variety of funds available
- Delivery mechanisms – delivery through planning policy
- Site specific delivery mechanisms – delivery through the public and private sector
- Budget costings for pipeline projects related to public realm improvements
- Next steps

The Market Harborough Town Centre Masterplan includes a series of physical (development) projects and non-physical initiatives. It sets out the projects that will shape the Town Centre over the next 10-15 years and beyond. It is ambitious, yet flexible to ensure that it can meet changes in circumstances, especially economic and property related. The Masterplan should be regarded as a 'live' document: periodically reviewing and updating it is an important and a necessary process.

7.2 Delivery Agencies

The delivery of the masterplan cannot be achieved by the Council acting alone. It will need to be supported by activity from a wide range of stakeholders, delivery partners and agencies – both public and private. While the Council is expected to perform a key role, other agencies that may be involved with enabling, funding and delivering the projects may include:

- Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP)
- Leicestershire County Council
- Landowners
- Developers
- Agents
- Businesses
- Utility suppliers

Other organisations may also be identified – or be founded during the lifetime of the masterplan – which may be able to assist in the delivery of projects.

7.3 Funding Masterplan Delivery

Project delivery is fully expected to be secured using a combination of public and private sector investment, with the balance of need for funding varying depending on the type, nature, cost and commercial viability of the project. These funds might include:

- LLEP administered grants and funding streams
- Section 106 agreements
- Community infrastructure levy (CIL)
- Developer contributions
- Harborough District Council's Capital Programme
- Lottery funding
- Future High Street fund
- Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (Historic England)
- Levelling Up Funding (LUF)
- UK Shared Prosperity Funding

7.4 Delivery Mechanisms

There is a need to consider what delivery mechanisms could underpin initiatives. There is unlikely to be a 'one size fits all' delivery mechanism for projects and the choice should reflect the size, scale and nature of the individual masterplan initiatives. The delivery of the masterplan will require support too through planning mechanisms, such as:

- Local Plan policies
- Supplementary Planning Documents

Site Specific Delivery Mechanisms

A number of delivery mechanisms could potentially be used to deliver site specific physical (development) schemes in the masterplan. Site specific developments can be delivered through three core approaches:

Private sector delivery - where a private sector company delivers a scheme without the need to enter into a property or development agreement with a Council. This typically occurs where the developer controls all the land needed, and the Council does not have land or property interest

Public sector delivery - where the Council (or other public sector body) owns the land, has fully specified the development and procures a construction firm to undertake the development to that specification

Public / private development partnerships the most common form of delivery mechanism used to procure more complex urban regeneration schemes by Councils. The key characteristic is some form of 'core' development agreement in place between a developer and Council (or other public sector body). The development agreement is a legal document which sets out what the scheme will comprise, the roles and responsibilities of the parties, preconditions which must be discharged to enable the development and the financial return to each party on completion of the scheme.

7.0 Next Steps

7.5 Budget Costings

Some of the public realm focussed pipeline of projects presented in Chapter 6.0 have been costed to assist with the design and implementation stages of the Town Centre Masterplan and funding applications. The first table (Table 1) covers the costed projects under the 'Welcoming' theme. The second table (Table 2) includes the costed projects under 'Healthy', 'Vibrant' and 'Sustainable' themes.

Figures include allowance for design fees, preliminaries and contingencies but exclude VAT.

Table 1

Project	Description	Budget Costing
W1	Remodel station approach to create pedestrian and cycle friendly space and routes to town centre	£765,375.00
W4	Remodel the Square as a multi-functional events and civic space with high quality lighting	£2,004,600.00
W5	Enhance the public realm in the Cultural Quarter (Adam & Eve Street and Church Square)	£1,524,250.00
W9	Implement small garden spaces on land next to public car parks	£48,750.00 (per garden space)
W11	Provide 'feature' banners and signs for Cultural Quarter	£5,000.00
W12	Provide signs fixed to wall to promote Cultural Quarter	£13,000.00
W13	Provide 'Brown' signs to direct visitors to Union Wharf (Grand Union Canal network)	£1,750.00
W16	Provide signs with parking information on main approach routes into town centre	£15,000.00 (per approach route)
W17	Provide 'Welcome' banners on main approach routes	£14,500.00 (per approach route)
W19	Greening, with trees, shrubs and hard landscape to roundabout at junction to Kettering Road and Springfield Street	£95,000.00

Table 2

Project	Description	Budget Costing
H6	Install new cycle parking in arrival spaces	£3,000.00 (Accommodating 20 cycles per arrival space)
H9	Extend covered motorcycle and cycle parking at Commons car park	£12,000.00
V8	Recreate tradition of wall painting and advertising to gable walls	£5,000.00
S2	Reconfigure streetscene on Upper High Street to enable street tree planting	£115,000.00
S4	Install trees and rain gardens to perimeter of Commons Car Park	£80,000.00
S6	River Welland Interpretation Board in St Mary's Place	£3,500.00
S11	Willow tree planting next to River Welland (between Sainsbury's and Northampton Road)	£17,500.00
S13	Avenue tree planting next to River Welland and Walcot Road	£25,000.00

7.6 Next Steps

Ongoing Stakeholder Engagement

Many of the pipeline of projects cross boundaries of ownership and responsibility and delivering the Town Centre Masterplan can only be delivered by Harborough District Council in partnership with landowners, businesses, funders, specialist advisers, interest groups and residents. Setting up a steering group with key partners, led by Council Officers, could ensure that the Vision and projects proposed in the Masterplan are further investigated, planned for and delivered. .

Healthy Market Harborough identified a number of projects including the promotion of the 20-minute neighbourhood and active travel by encouraging walking and cycling across the town. The Council will be able to draw on specialist advice for these projects the from Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), Sustrans and Active Travel England. In the medium to longer-term there could also be the opportunity to engage a Sustrans Active Travel Officer.

Analysing Footfall Data

There are resources available to the help the Council understand the performance of its high street and this includes the High Street Task Force's (HSTF's) Footfall Dashboard. The Dashboard combines data on local footfall and social media to give a picture of trends over days, weeks, months and a calendar year. This data is presented through a number of interactive charts which can be used by place analysts to look for local trends and understand performance.

Footfall Dashboards | High Streets Task Force

Ongoing Engagement with Local Interest Groups and Organisations

Harborough in Bloom and Harborough Theatre both have a stake in supporting the vitality and quality of life of the Town Centre and ongoing engagement with both parties will help the outworking of the masterplan. Harborough in Bloom manage the planters and floral displays across the Town Centre and should be consulted about planting proposals for public realm schemes. Harborough Theatre and other cultural groups facilitate many events and outreach to the community. Under the Vibrant theme, the Town Centre Masterplan is promoting a Cultural Quarter in the area around the Old Grammar School, St Dionysius Church and Symington Building and there would be a benefit in bringing together all relevant partners to help co-ordinate additional activities and events in this area.

The River Welland is an important natural feature that flows through the Town Centre and to enable suitable management of the watercourse, the Sustainable theme encourages the support of the Welland Rivers Trust and local interest groups such as the Market Harborough Nature Group and Harborough Litter Pickers. Providing support in this way will help reduce flood risk, encourage biodiversity and improve the visual amenity and public engagement with the river corridor.

Public Realm

This section sets out the next steps for projects such as Church Square and Adam and Eve Street. Leicestershire County Council Highways Guidance Note 1 (Promoting Public Realm Development) should be followed and next steps would include commissioning consultants to prepare design studies, engineering analysis and cost exercises initially to RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Stage 2 Concept Design and then to RIBA Stage 3 Spatial Coordination.

Design studies would require necessary consultation with locally based stakeholders, Harborough District Council and the highway authority. Sign off for RIBA Stage 3 would require a stage report, with an updated outline specification and cost plan. If required, a planning application would be submitted at the end of this stage. Later stages would include:

- RIBA Stage 4 Technical Design – the preparation of design information required to construct the project; Tender action, resulting in the appointment of a contactor to undertake the construction of the project.
- RIBA Stage 5 Construction – Monitor construction on site
- RIBA Stage 6 Handover – Handover the project to the client (Harborough District Council) and highway authority.

The highway authority would need to be consulted during all RIBA stages and the following items may be required:

- Traffic modelling assessment
- Road safety audit
- Negotiations on commuted sums
- Liaison for Section 278 agreement

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