3.0: Strategic Proposals

The masterplan team have developed a series of Strategic Proposals in tandem with community and stakeholder consultation.

3.1 Strategy
3.2 Housing Growth
3.3 Employment, Retail & Commercial
3.4 Schools and Leisure
3.5 Movement and Environment
3.6 Wider Links
3.7 Summary
3.1 Strategy

Section 2.4 of this report states the following strategic aim and the team have developed a comprehensive set of proposals to achieve this:

- Plan positively for future growth by investing in infrastructure and creating well connected communities

Note - The above plan is indicative. Site specific masterplanning would be expected, especially for the growth areas, to ensure comprehensive development.

Existing and proposed housing areas will require further detailed analysis during the masterplan period to establish local requirements (including community infrastructure).
3.2 Housing Growth

The Sleaford Masterplan Scoping Study highlighted that there may be a need to accommodate in the region of 4,000 new residential dwellings, which would represent a further major expansion over the next 25 years. It identified that this scale of growth was in line with current policy, sustainable and spatially achievable. It highlighted that supporting community infrastructure would need to be brought forward such as employment, transport and roads, leisure, open space, schools and town centre services. Within this context growth must be carefully planned to retain the characteristics which add to Sleaford’s popularity as a place to live, such as its rural character and compact form with its town centre within approximately 20 minutes walk of all residential areas.

The Central Lincolnshire Joint Core Strategy will establish the level of growth to be planned for. It will set out what proportion of the overall total growth shall be delivered in major settlements such as Lincoln, Gainsborough and Sleaford and other rural communities.

The following sets out the methodology undertaken as part of the masterplan process to plan for future residential growth and guide the developing Core Strategy.

STEP 1:

The masterplan team mapped the potential housing sites identified in the Central Lincolnshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, March 2010 (SHLAA).
STEP 2:
Using the Sleaford Masterplan Scoping Study and further analysis, some sites were discounted due to their location beyond the bypass or outer railway line. The remaining sites were then assessed and selected using the following criteria:

- Available infrastructure (is there infrastructure already available to support new residential development?)
- Location (in terms of proximity to town centre, railway line, bypass, proposed ‘green wedge’. Does the site fit in with Walking/Cycling Strategies set out by the Scoping Study and Baseline Transport Study - Keeping a ‘Compact Town’)
- Flood data (does the site lie within a flood zone?)
- Market view (is the site attractive to private sector developers?)
- Residential Dwellings Targets (does the site contribute toward the required residential dwelling target set out by the Scoping Study?)
- SHLAA category (refer to Appendix 6 for extract from Central Lincolnshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment)
- SHLAA category justification (refer to Appendix 6 for extract from Central Lincolnshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment)
- Environmental/heritage considerations (including the opportunity to support the improvement of the existing and proposed green wedges)

STEP 3:
Based on the process of evaluation undertaken in Step 2, a series of supporting tables were produced (refer to Appendix 3). These selected sites were mapped and the maximum housing capacity was calculated for each of the sites using a guide of 40 dwellings per hectare in town centre and 30 dwellings per hectare in all other areas (density based on current local authority guidance). Based on the above, a long list of sites was established which indicated capacity for approximately 6,500 dwellings. This was refined further, to identify specific areas/quadrants of the town where development is most appropriate – the short list. This short list included sites with a capacity for circa 3,500 - 4,000 dwellings.

STEP 4:
Figure 7 shows where the Masterplan is proposing that future housing development should be located based on the analysis set out above and the current market view. The short term developments, in dark purple have been chosen to avoid ‘urban sprawl’ by keeping development within the boundaries created by the bypasses and the railway line. This process has identified two main growth areas, the Northwest and the Southern. Supporting community infrastructure will require detailed consideration as each area is brought forward based on the principles described in the following development brief.

Case Study
Gainsborough
The people of Gainsborough supported significant urban extensions (growing the population from 19,000 to 36,000) in their recent Masterplan in order to create the critical mass necessary to attract and support new services and investment to the town.
Development Brief for Proposed Growth Areas

In addition to various infill sites, two key areas of housing growth are proposed, the Northwest Growth Area and the Southern Growth Area (refer to Figure 7 Strategic Housing Sites plan). The following sets out the overarching principles for these areas to guide future development:

Design Principles:

Develop exemplary residential growth areas for Sleaford that provides the highest quality design, environment, facilities and links.

Growth Area development should:

- Provide distinctive new places within Sleaford with excellent connections to the town centre
- Deliver community infrastructure of local significance for both new residents and adjacent existing communities (for example a local centre, school, park)
- Knit into existing housing and surrounding destinations such as employment areas
- Promote Sleaford and create gateway views from the strategic road network.
- Protect views towards the town centre and its heritage assets to maintain Sleaford’s green, open character
- Enhance the settings of buildings of heritage importance
- Promote design, placemaking and sustainable good practice in line with the latest national guidance
- Demonstrate consideration of environmental/heritage baseline information (such as the North Kesteven Landscape Character Assessment, 2007)
- Engage with the proposed green wedge strategy. In particular the Northwest Growth Area should be strongly linked with the river corridor and deliver a western town pedestrian/cycle bridge over the railway to link green space and community infrastructure with communities to the south of the railway. The Southern Growth Area should connect to the green wedges through improved sustainable connections.

The following images provide inspiration for residential development:
**Housing**

To comply with the following guidance:

- Delivery would therefore be reliant upon a mix of developers to bring forward individual phases. The number of dwellings per annum will, amongst other considerations, be dependant upon prevailing market conditions.
- The phasing will be interrelated to an increase in the town centre service provision and an increase in employment activity.

**Movement**

Sustainable modes of transport should be central to the development. Spaces should be designed to encourage movement on foot first and foremost, enabling the creation of active spaces and efficient use of the public realm. Spaces should be created to encourage interaction, upon which a community can thrive. Streets should be introduced, not roads, with squares and play spaces, activating the realm.

All areas should be designed in line with Manual for Streets, with design following the hierarchy of importance that is:

- Consider first - Pedestrians
- Consider Last - Other motor traffic

**Scale & Massing**

A relatively low density of 30 dwellings per hectare provides the opportunity to create a significant green framework (community open space, sports and play areas, habitat creation, cycle/footpaths) as a setting and ‘selling point’ for new development and to link with the wider green wedge strategy. In addition the density acknowledges the potential for local centre facilities/employment within the residential growth areas.

Housing should predominantly be a mix of two and three storey with the majority providing private gardens and off-street parking spaces. Buildings should be arranged to frame key routes and views and to engage with surroundings.

The development areas should be readily accessible and serviced by good quality linkage and access to the town centre and surrounding road network.

**Development Areas**

- Northwest Growth Area - Approx. 70 hectares = 2100 dwellings
- Southern Growth Area - Approx. 60 hectares = 1800 dwellings

**Community Infrastructure**

- New local centres would be required to serve the development areas (typically recommended for developments over 800 to 1,000 dwellings). These would be small scale and provide services required to meet the day to day needs of local residents such as medical, education, local shops and ancillary uses. They are not intended to be out of town shopping centres or to compete with town centre services.
- Local parks and play areas would be required to provide a variety of provision (within the framework of links to the strategic green wedges).
- Both growth areas have been highlighted as potential opportunities for a new school site (refer to Section 3.4).

**Utilities**

Anglian Water prepared a feasibility study on behalf of the Central Lincolnshire Policy Unit. It concluded that sewerage, sewage treatment and flood risk are the three parameters of the water cycle that present the most significant constraints to future development in the Central Lincolnshire area. In relation to Sleaford it highlighted sewerage as a potential barrier to growth, stating that the SHLAA sites to the south west of Sleaford have been classified as Red and unable to accommodate additional flow (the implications of this on the Southern Growth Area would require further investigation at the detailed stage). In terms of sewage treatment works in Sleaford, there is spare capacity to accommodate approximately 3,500-4,000 additional houses.

Other strategic infrastructure capacity is unknown at this stage and will require further feasibility testing as plans are developed.
3.3 Employment, Retail & Commercial

Sleaford’s employment opportunities

The masterplan needs to accommodate employment growth in the town, as part of a sustainable long term strategy. Predicting sectoral economic growth is not an exact science but can be informed by available econometric forecast data and also consideration of government and economic policy, to support the identification of appropriate interventions that will facilitate growth. Using these sources of information suggests the following are key considerations for the town.

Forecast Sectoral Changes

Available econometric information for North Kesteven District (2009 Updated LEFM model, Lincolnshire County Council) has been used to establish the change in employment numbers by sector from 1990-2010 and the forecast change from 2010-2021, reflecting the first ten year period of the masterplan (refer to Appendix 4 for supporting table).

- Agriculture and the manufacturing of food and drink has seen decline in employment over the last 20 years and that decline is forecast to continue, with a potential loss of approximately 1,800 further jobs to 2021.
- The education and health sectors are also forecast to decrease by approximately 2,000 jobs, although a significant increase at the Lincolnshire level suggests this may be a relocation of activity around the County.
- The growth sectors at the district level are similar to the County and suggest significant increase in professional and business services, construction, hotels/catering and transport/distribution.
- Retail is a sector forecast to decline at the district level. This is a key challenge given our knowledge of an already significant out-migration of catchment spend and a declining retail offer in the town. The Masterplan proposals would seek to address this issue.

Government Policy Considerations

The impact of the recent recession and the current public spending cuts place emphasis on the creation of employment within the private sector, with policy measures such as the Regional Growth Fund aimed specifically at supporting private enterprise. The forecast of employment loss within the education and health sectors in North Kesteven is indicative of a programme of expected public sector cuts. The district will also have a significant proportion of employment within the defence sector, given the presence of the MoD bases and this may also change over the next 10 years as a result of differing locational and investment priorities within the defence sector. However, a continued focus on small business creation and an expected growth within outsourced services to the private or social enterprise sector will drive employment creation.

Implications for the Masterplan

Sleaford therefore faces challenges in terms of changing employment sector patterns but it also has opportunities. It is relatively well connected by train and road to major economic centres of activity and offers a good environment and well performing schools. It would be unrealistic to base our plan on a raft of large single employers choosing Sleaford as a location, but it does exhibit the conditions that will attract private enterprise. For example current planned investment include, but is not limited to, a new straw burning power station, redevelopment of The Maltings and provision of a new swimming pool. In addition, Tesco is about to embark on a multi-million pound investment in the town, which has the potential to underpin growth in retail and the service sector. Whilst econometric data provides a helpful context, it is the local conditions on the ground that will be important to provide the framework for attracting investment. On this basis, the analysis above points to the following as key considerations for supporting employment growth through the masterplan:

- The need to enhance the town’s attractiveness to visitors – at present the town centre is congested and its quality assets are hidden or undervalued. Improving this will enable the town to capitalise on the Tesco and Southern Regeneration investments, retaining catchment spend and increasing investment in the town centre retail and hospitality sectors, thereby creating private sector employment
- Providing flexible opportunities for investment by the private sector in new professional and business enterprises, such as identifying new areas for high quality employment premises, as part of mixed-use developments and in restored historic buildings in the town centre.
- Investing capital resources wisely to address constraints and provide the conditions that will attract private sector investment. Through the use of developer contributions to match available public sector resources.
- Promoting Sleaford as a quality market town location for business – focusing on the assets in the town, its connectivity, well performing schools and a planning strategy that addresses the constraints and supports economic growth.
- The provision of a balanced portfolio of employment land, to enable high quality office development attracted by the local conditions, as well as traditional manufacturing employment and industrial provision.
Introduction

The retail offer in Sleaford appears to be under-represented in comparison to competing centres. If Sleaford is to accommodate future growth and increase its attraction to visitors then the town centre and retail offer will need to be improved and enhanced otherwise growth will not be sustainable.

There are currently three significant development sites in and around the town centre. The most significant is the proposed Tesco store to the south east of the town centre on a former industrial site. This will result in the relocation of the existing Tesco store on Northgate, which lies to the north of the town centre. A substantial mixed-use scheme is proposed through the refurbishment and redevelopment of the former Bass Maltings, which is located on the southern edge of Sleaford Town Centre. The Corn Exchange adjacent to the Market Place also offers a potential redevelopment opportunity. However, there are uncertainties over viability.

The key issue relates to the provision of town centre services. These have not expanded in line with the towns growth, which between 1991 and 2001 grew by 39%. This was the fastest of all the settlements in Lincolnshire. It must be noted that the population of North Kesteven is projected to increase by 24% to 129,800 between 2008 - 2033 compared to an 18% increase nationally. (Office for National Statistics, 2006 based population projections).

Roger Tym Findings

The Retail Capacity Study undertaken by Roger Tym and Partners identified, for the period 2007 to 2021, the potential for an additional comparison goods (non-food) floor space of between 4,000 to 10,000 sq m whereas there is the potential for an additional requirement for convenience goods (food) floor space of between 1,403 to 1,817 sq m. The report highlights convenience goods retailing is strong within the town however there is the need to reconfigure the existing units to reflect the presence of smaller and independent occupiers. Whilst national multiples are present in the town centre there is also a notable absence of other multiples that might be expected to have a presence in the town.

Overall Conclusions

When combined with the projections for additional growth, suggested by the Retail Capacity Study for the period up to 2021, we consider there is capacity for growth and expansion of the retail offer in Sleaford.

Whilst it is recognised that the proposed Tesco store is likely to absorb the majority of additional convenience space there is merit in exploring the options to accommodate additional retail space either within a stand alone scheme or within individual developments. It is recommended that both options are taken into full consideration when deciding upon the whereabouts of new retail floor space. Through an analysis of the figures it is noted that the existing units are small and reflect the presence of smaller and independent occupiers.

Finally, the provision of a range of stores of below 464 sq m (5,000 sq ft). The number of units will be subject to constraints associated with the development opportunity. However, if flexibility permits this may be anywhere between 10 - 15 units. The majority of the demand is likely to be for units of between 93 to 186 sq m (1,000 to 2,000 sq ft) to accommodate niche and standard retailers such as the Body Shop, Lakeland, Vision Express, Yeomans, Julian Graves, Costa Coffee. These figures are based upon comparable schemes that have been successfully delivered in similar locations. The preference would be a retail development accommodated on a single site within the town centre comprising a mix of units as opposed to development being accommodated over a series of fragmented small sites. This is because a single site that has the ability to become a 'destination' and visitor attraction will be far more attractive to occupiers and developers alike and would have greater impact upon the town centre. The developments proposed are not based upon a detailed retail capacity study but are based upon the identified need for additional retail space and the general view as to what the market is likely to require/need/want.

However, it is recognised that accommodating growth may prove difficult, particularly a provision of larger units due to constraints arising from the Conservation Areas Status and presence of Listed Buildings. The Retail Capacity Study undertaken by Roger Tym and Partners identified that the available units in the town centre are unsuited to the operational requirements of modern retailers, in terms of size and configuration. Therefore if the retail capacity and offer is to be expanded to meet the needs of a growing population it will be important to identify further development opportunities to accommodate potential growth.

Refer to Appendix 4 for further background analysis and the full Experian Goad Report.

GOAD Findings

A series of Experian Goad reports have been commissioned to reflect upon the current retail position (Goad statistics provide an up to date picture of retail supply and consumer demand in over 3,000 Goad surveyed town centres in the UK and Ireland). The purpose of undertaking this high level analysis of the retail market was to understand how it related to competing centres. The analysis was to outline the differences and to confirm the findings of the Retail Capacity Study that there was capacity and growth for expansion of the retail offer in Sleaford. The analysis of the Goad statistics suggests that the national averages, neighbouring centres and population figures. The latest figures reflect the presence of 174 outlets with a total floorspace of 30,545 sq m (328,800 sq ft). The report suggests that the number of vacant units has fallen to 23. If the under represented areas were to equate to the national average it would require an additional 3,670 sq m (39,500 sq ft) of retail floorspace. Through an analysis of the figures it is noted that the existing units are small and reflect the presence of smaller and independent occupiers. Whist national multiples are present in the town centre there is also a notable absence of other multiples that might be expected to have a presence in the town.

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Overall Conclusions

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 Whilst it is recognised that the proposed Tesco store is likely to absorb the majority of additional convenience space there is merit in exploring the options to accommodate additional retail space either within a stand alone scheme or within individual developments. It is recommended that both options are taken into full consideration when deciding upon the whereabouts of new retail floorspace as both options can provide solutions to the underrepresentation of retail space within Sleaford. However the provision of adequate sized and modern high quality units is a must to attract modern retailers.

The masterplan suggests the the provision of an anchor store (in addition to Tesco) of between 1,858 to 2,787 sq m (20,000 to 30,000 sq ft) to accommodate formats such as Marks & Spencer or Wilkinsons, or a similar type of occupier. In addition the provision of between 2-3 retail units of between 464 to 929 sq m (5,000 to 10,000 sq ft) to accommodate a range of mid-size occupiers such as New Look, Next, Laura Ashley, Brantano, Halfords.

Finally, the provision of a range of stores of below 464 sq m (5,000 sq ft). The number of units will be subject to constraints associated with the development opportunity. However if flexibility permits this may be anywhere between 10 – 15 units. The majority of the demand is likely to be for units of between 93 to 186 sq m (1,000 to 2,000 sq ft) to accommodate niche and standard retailers such as the Body Shop, Lakeland, Vision Express, Yeomans, Julian Graves, Costa Coffee. These figures are based upon comparable schemes that have been successfully delivered in similar locations. The preference would be a retail development accommodated on a single site within the town centre comprising a mix of units as opposed to development being accommodated over a series of fragmented small sites. This is because a single site that has the ability to become a ‘destination’ and visitor attraction will be far more attractive to occupiers and developers alike and would have greater impact upon the town centre. The developments proposed are not based upon a detailed retail capacity study but are based upon the identified need for additional retail space and the general view as to what the market is likely to require/need/want.

However, it is recognised that accommodating growth may prove difficult, particularly a provision of larger units due to constraints arising from the Conservation Areas Status and presence of Listed Buildings. The Retail Capacity Study undertaken by Roger Tym and Partners identified that the available units in the town centre are unsuited to the operational requirements of modern retailers, in terms of size and configuration. Therefore if the retail capacity and offer is to be expanded to meet the needs of a growing population it will be important to identify further development opportunities to accommodate potential growth.

Refer to Appendix 4 for further background analysis and the full Experian Goad Report.

Commercial

Generally the property market within Sleaford appears to be performing well and is relatively robust (Refer to Appendix 4 for further background analysis).

North Kesteven is predominantly made up of small businesses, but the District also relies on a number of large employers. Over a third of employment in the District is in the public sector, particularly in local authorities, the National Health Service and the MoD/RAF. The District has three active RAF stations.

Sleaford is a localised market which is mainly industrial and popular with local
rather than national businesses. The main areas of employment within Sleaford comprise Sleaford Enterprise Park, Woodbridge Road, East Road and the town centre. On the whole the town’s property market is healthy. Sleaford Enterprise Park, which is a relatively new development area, is located on the northern edge of Sleaford adjacent to the A17. It has been very successful in providing a range of industrial accommodation and satisfying market demand.

Further opportunities within and outside of the existing employment allocation were considered as part of the Employment Land Review (NKDC, 2010) to underpin the current Local Development Framework process. This process has identified a particular need for centrally located small business space.

Based on historic take up rates of approximately 1.8 hectares per year, a basic assumption can be made that 45 hectares of strategic employment land could be delivered over the 25 year masterplan period (a detailed land employment review would be required to develop this further). Therefore the existing supply of development land for industrial and office use appears sufficient to meet the majority of demand in the short to medium term (approximately 35 hectares of existing allocation is currently available). As part of the masterplan process a further 40 hectares of new strategic employment opportunities have been identified for further consideration (both to supplement the existing allocation and to support the proposed residential growth areas). The evaluation of each site is set out in a supporting table (refer to Appendix 3).

In the town centre a number of key employment opportunities are ongoing:

A. The Bass Maltings

This complex is located to the southeast of Sleaford town centre. The buildings are both Grade II and Grade II* listed, which in total comprise an area in excess of 44,464 sq m (500,000 sq ft). The site upon which the Bass Maltings complex stands extends to approximately 6.25 hectares (15.4 acres).

The site is the subject of a planning application to provide:

- 228 residential dwellings comprising both apartments and houses
- 5,763 sq m (62,000 sq ft) for healthcare facilities
- 5,207 sq m (56,032 sq ft) of office floor space
- 1,392 sq m (14,968 sq ft) of retail and café/ restaurant/ bar uses (Use Class A1 – A5)
- 37 sq m (398 sq ft) of community facilities

B. Tesco Store

The local planning authority is minded to grant planning permission, subject to signing a S106 agreement to redevelop the former Advanta Seeds site to accommodate a new Tesco store within the Sleaford Town Centre. The proposed development comprises:

- A Tesco Extra store occupying gross floor area of 8,962 sq m (net sales area that equates to 5,621 sq m of which no more than 2,511 sq m can be used for non food retailing)
- 615 car parking spaces
- A petrol filling station

The existing Tesco store on Northgate has received planning permission for approximately 3,716 sq metres of retail floorspace.

C. The Corn Exchange

This locally important listed building is situated on the south side of Market Place, a short distance from the junction with Southgate, which forms the prime shopping area in Sleaford. The site is 0.13 hectares with an approximate net internal area of 939 sq m. A range of uses have been previously considered including retail, restaurant/cafe or art gallery with office/residential above. An appraisal of the building undertaken by Banks Long & Co in 2009 suggested that, whilst it has potential for redevelopment, there were issues relating to viability.

D. Southern Southgate

The area surrounding Southgate and Station Road has been the subject of a detailed urban design exercise and is accompanied by a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which was adopted in 2010. The SPD seeks to guide the future regeneration of this key area located on the southern fringe of the town centre. This SPD also aims to respond to and manage change arising from development proposals such as the relocation of Tesco, re-development of the Bass Maltings, and the proposed South East Sleaford Regeneration Route (SESRR). The preferred option proposes a mixed use development, including 6,700 sq m of retail, 7,871 sq m of office use, 1,938 sq m of hotel use, 2,211 of mixed use retail/leisure, and 6,520 sq m of mixed use retail/community use.

In addition, the masterplan proposes a series of new development opportunities within the town centre such as Money’s Yard, the County Council Offices site and existing school sites, which have the potential to provide small business space in the longer term.

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Masterplan proposals summary

Figure 8 shows the existing employment sites clustered to the northeast of Sleaford. In addition, indicative new employment opportunities are shown in the north close to existing employment (1) and in the northwest (2) and southwest (3) to tie in with housing growth areas. The relationship between employment zones and new residential growth areas is key in creating a sustainable solution for Sleaford, in terms of integration of clean industries, demonstrating quality design and incorporation of sustainable links. In addition the Masterplan envisages increased employment in the town centre reflecting new retail and service developments also incorporating small business space/ managed workspace (4).

Refer to Section 4 for detailed proposals within the town centre developed in response to this strategic approach.
A new school campus

Sleaford is fortunate to have three well respected, popular senior schools within the town centre, but the school run does increase congestion at the start and end of the day. In the short term opportunities for creating town centre perimeter drop off points for schools should continue to be explored in partnership with the schools to help release pressure on the road network. Refer to Section 3.5 for further details.

With Sleaford’s population set to increase, the approach to schools becomes a fundamental issue to be explored in the masterplan. Within this context Carre’s Grammar School and Kesteven & Sleaford High School have highlighted that their current sites lack room for future expansion. A series of school site options have therefore been explored to allow for either an additional school site, the relocation of one existing school or instead a combined site which would bring together and relocate two of the existing schools. Initial discussions have established that Carre’s Grammar School and Kesteven & Sleaford High School will continue to consider such possibilities as part of future strategic planning. In the scenario of a combined site, approximately 13 hectares would be required (based on initial discussions with the schools).

The following considerations have been explored in the selection of potential school site options:

- To support likely housing growth areas
- To maintain close connections between the schools and the town centre
- To provide connections with existing and new housing and links with the proposed green wedges (opportunity for shared community facilities/playing fields)
- To support regeneration aims within the town centre area either by creating anchors for new developments or by releasing new development opportunities on the vacated sites
- To reduce traffic congestion in the town centre and unnecessary movements across town
- To provide the potential for the relocation of landlocked town centre schools

Option 1 – Northwest Growth Area

This becomes activated by the masterplan proposals to provide significant new housing development to the north west of Sleaford. As part of further feasibility testing, access to this growth area is likely to require significant infrastructure investment in the road network in particular to achieve an access off the A15 bypass. This site provides the opportunity to link in with the proposed green wedge, new housing and to be accessed from south of the railway by residents via the masterplan proposal to install a western town pedestrian/cycle bridge. When compared to the other sites, this option clearly benefits from space to provide a custom designed new build campus and it’s out of town centre location will ease some pressure on the road network.

Option 2 – Southern Growth Area

The southern residential growth area provides an alternative to Option 1 for consideration if the preferred approach is to provide a new school site within an urban extension development. As with the Northwest Growth Area, location will require significant infrastructure development. The proposition of a new school being south of the railway line recognises the significant recent population growth in this part of Sleaford but would represent a site that is quite removed from the town centre.

Option 3 – The Maltings

The Maltings is an ongoing development and the opportunity to include public/community based uses as an anchor has been debated over the years, including council offices, leisure facilities and health facilities. The option to house a new school campus within the Maltings is an exciting proposition, both in terms of regeneration outcomes and creating national profile for the already notable schooling in Sleaford. This site brings challenges relating to conversion of such a building to the demands of modern education, but arguably the benefits would outweigh this. The site provides a ‘south of the railway’ but near the town centre opportunity with links into the adjacent proposed green wedge. The schools could act as an anchor tenant to bring forward the regeneration of this important Grade II* listed building within the town.
**Town Centre leisure - an east-west leisure link**

The Retail Capacity study undertaken by Roger Tym and Partners considered national and local trends in relation to retail and leisure provision. The study identifies that Sleaford’s retail and leisure offer is too limited for a centre of its status. Given this and future anticipated population and expenditure growth there is a need for an enhanced town centre offer. Specifically, the report suggested that a sizeable proportion of this growth in expenditure could be retained in Sleaford through the provision of a better and more appealing choice of restaurants, cafes, bars/pubs and leisure facilities. The study suggested that there appears to be scope for some additional entertainment type leisure including a multi-screen cinema. The report concluded that some of these facilities would fulfil a dual retail-tourism role.

Tourism is also important to the local economy and presents an opportunity for future development. The District already receives an estimated two million visitors each year. The masterplan proposals aim to enhance the existing offer within Sleaford, to bring in a wider audience and importantly lengthen the time spent. Of particular note, Sleaford Maltings has been highlighted as a potential destination of exceptional quality in a study commissioned by Lincolnshire Tourism that also stated its potential to accommodate an additional hotel for the town (an idea also considered as part of other town centre sites).

A number of sites have been identified to improve and refresh leisure facilities in the town centre. To complement a north-south focus on retail along Southgate, an east-west leisure link across the town is proposed to join the town centre to green wedges and break existing barriers to movement.

Sites including the Riverside Shopping Precinct and Sainsbury’s, the Lincolnshire County Council offices and Money’s Yard amongst others provide a variety of opportunities to strengthen the town’s leisure offer. For example a new swimming pool, community hall, children’s centre or cinema. In addition these opportunities will help strengthen the riverside setting.

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**Local leisure & services**

The green wedges in tandem with sustainable links aim to provide an accessible green space resource to all.

In addition requirements for improved green space and leisure facilities should be developed at a local level for both existing residential areas and proposed growth areas. Refer to Section 3.2 for development principles relating to the Northwest and Southern Growth Areas.
The aim of the masterplan is to consider growth potential and how to utilise Sleaford’s existing infrastructure to enable the town to capture and capitalise on its assets. Addressing ways of creating an environment that will encourage further retail, commercial and civic activity within the town and prevent loss of activity to out of town and other areas are the strategic aims.

Central to releasing the potential of the town is unlocking the congestion, partly caused by unnecessary vehicle journeys, that currently dominate the centre. This needs to be done in a way that will still permit movement and servicing to enable current operations to continue and to support future expansion. To do this there is a need to consider how the existing congestion can be resolved.

A combination of measures will be necessary to achieve this which include encouraging a shift from the private car to more sustainable options, adoption of a strategic approach to movement and rationalisation of public car parking to release the town centre of unnecessary vehicle journeys, whilst maintaining pedestrian footfall in the centre. To achieve this there are a number of strategic steps, which are:

**Improve and promote better alternatives to using the private car**

This includes the enhancement of all modes of sustainable travel:

**Improved public bus services:**

- Buses to better connect the hinterland and suburbs of Sleaford to its town centre.
- Reconfiguration of the local Into Town bus service to make it regular and efficient. This in turn will make it more attractive to residents within Sleaford.

**More frequent and diverse train services:**

- Services on a more regular basis that commence earlier and run later to enable those that commute to other towns to consider train as an alternative mode of transport to private vehicles.

**Improved cycle routes:**

- Cycle routes that extend through to the town centre and out to the villages within the hinterland. Routes that are managed and not cluttered by parked cars or street furniture, are of increased width and high quality. Routes that have capacity to support mobility scooters to support our aging population are essential.

**Reposition and rationalise parking to strategically locate car parks on the radial approaches to the town so that they are within walking distance of the centre and its retail offer**

This will reduce unnecessary vehicle movement through the centre of town that would previously have been trying to reach the town centre car parks. It will also allow those driving and parking in Sleaford to reach their car park direct from the radial routes into the town, making the experience more efficient and effective. It will also reduce pollution and noise within the centre of town allowing an improved environment to be created, which is more welcoming and pedestrian friendly.

**Promote use of the A15 and A17 as the primary routes when moving around Sleaford**

This will reduce through town movement releasing the town of unnecessary vehicular movement and allow the central space to be enjoyed by pedestrians, cyclists and those on public transport and mobility scooters.

**Improved Walking Routes:**

- Wider level pavements and paths that reflect pedestrian desire lines which are secure, high quality and free of level changes/steps and clutter.
Introduce a parking strategy that prevents parking in inappropriate locations around the town centre

This would avoid the surrounding streets from being congested with private vehicles and as a result encourage a shift from private car to more sustainable alternatives. The introduction of resident’s parking permit zones, as is used in cities and towns throughout the UK, would help prevent congestion within the residential areas of the town which is critical.

It is proposed that the centre of the town, which includes Southgate, Carre Street and sections of Eastgate and Boston Road are classified as a “Restricted Parking Zone”. This permits parking in allocated bays only in this zone, and avoids the introduction of double yellow lines and signage clutter. This allows the area to be clear of obstacles, flexible and welcoming.

There will also be a need to provide some short term on-street parking facilities (including blue badge) that can be utilised by those wanting to visit local retailers, such as the newsagents and convenience shops. It is recommended that the position of these bays be considered within the central core, so that they can be used prior to the introduction of any access restrictions without cluttering Southgate and Carre Street. It is important when introducing on-street parking not to build expensive infrastructure for parking bays, instead bays should be created by building the footways out, in a way that allows it to revert to pedestrian area later when things change and more footfall is generated.
Introduce vehicular access restrictions to the centre of Sleaford

This would avoid the town centre streets being congested with private vehicles and allow all of the streets to be utilised by pedestrians. Creating a more civilised centre to the town brings opportunities for café culture and activity within the whole of the public realm that will completely transform the town centre to one which places people at its core. This approach is not one of wholesale pedestrianisation, but instead promotes the creation of a flexible public realm that can function with and without traffic.

Similar approaches have been introduced with major success in many of the UK’s towns and cities and these principles could benefit Sleaford.

Refer to Section 4.2 for further details of these proposals.

Introduce a delivery/servicing strategy for the centre of Sleaford

This will permit deliveries to the retail core at times when there are less pedestrians within the space, reducing the potential conflict between pedestrians and delivery/servicing vehicles. This approach has successfully been adopted in towns and cities with historic cores, including Durham and York.

The implementation of these steps will then permit the recovery of valuable public realm that can then be transformed into high quality public squares and spaces or development opportunities. These spaces then create stepping stones through the town, which would be connected by high quality finishes to ensure the whole town has an opportunity to grow and prosper.

Effective the environment proposed for the heart of the town will be people friendly, of a high quality and easily accessible. It will also provide the opportunity for those using the space to enjoy the history, culture and external atmosphere of Sleaford’s character. This will transform the centre of the town into a truly civilised environment, where streets are designed for pedestrian activity while still permitting vehicles access. This retains flexibility and permeability and allows the heart of the town to breathe and thrive.

Reducing the need for signalised junctions

When introducing these proposals it is important to avoid the expense of introducing complicated traffic signal systems. Signals generally do not give you the most efficient movement of vehicles when vehicle numbers are low.

In very heavy traffic conditions it makes sense to co-ordinate signalling to allow the favoured movement, but the approach at Sleaford is to reduce vehicle numbers which will not therefore require control in the traditional highway sense. Traditionally this is used to favour peak vehicle flow but in Copenhagen for instance it is used to set up a Green Wave for cyclists so that once you hit a green signal on particular routes you will get green all the way to the centre (cycling at around 20kph).

The most important form of movement in a small market town such as Sleaford is the movement of pedestrians. To therefore manage movement through the use of traffic lights is counter intuitive. Using lights to create more capacity on the highway network will only encourage and attract more cars. This should be avoided. Creating a civilised area, where natural behaviour enables the network to function encourages interaction between all users of the public realm. Using traffic lights focuses on the movement of one mode at the detriment of another. A network where equal focus is given to the movement of people and traffic manoeuvres around this is the ideal aspiration for the masterplan. The steps being proposed within the masterplan to reduce vehicle numbers within the town will reduce the pressure on the network and reduce the need to rely on signalised junctions to manage the flow of traffic.

This approach is demonstrated in areas of Manchester, such as New Islington and Ancoats, where line markings, priority signage and traffic lights have been removed to provide a clutter free environment that is welcoming to pedestrians while supporting traffic movement. This approach avoids priority junctions but works on the basis that drivers agree between themselves, through eye contact, who has priority. This reduces speeds and creates a safer and more natural network within which all can move. Central to this approach is to alter the language of the junction so that it does not appear to be a traditional highway arrangement. This means priority is ambiguous and as a result encourages a change in behaviour to be adopted on approach.

This approach could be trialed in Sleaford by turning the signals off and monitoring the situation prior to investing in major re-signalling traffic management works. The outcomes can then influence the final proposals.

The suite of measures suggested will support all proposed developments, be these town centre retail offers or housing projects on the edges of the town. Developing the radial routes together with sustainable corridors, referred to as green wedges in this study, will present direct links from the surrounding areas into the town centre. Emphasising and encouraging the use of the bypasses is essential and directing potential through traffic around the town through the use of early highway signs on the A15 and A17 will be paramount to achieving this.

Reconfighre the one way system to two way where possible

This will allow more efficient movements through the town, avoiding unnecessary increased journeys, for example from Grantham Road to Boston Road and Eastgate to Northgate. These journeys would become possible without the need for traffic to travel on Southgate or Carre Street, reducing the number of vehicles in these key central streets.

Refer to Section 4.2 for further details of the town centre proposals.
Secondary school transport policy

The position of the possible new schools sites have been strategically selected to enable close proximity to:

- New green wedges
- New and existing cycle routes
- Train Station
- Radial routes into the town, which should be identified as the primary routes from the hinterland to the school sites, avoiding the town centre

The schools sites are positioned so that they can support both existing and potential future residential areas. These are also sites within close proximity to the green wedges, permitting the schools to use these spaces for their sports and recreation grounds, which could then be common facilities for community use outside of school hours.

The sites are located to permit immediate access to the new cycle and pedestrian routes into town and out to the hinterland via the new green wedges. This provides an opportunity for students to travel to school via a safe and sustainable route, possibly reducing pressure on the road network.

Whilst existing school sites remain in use, there is a need to rationalise the school bus stop locations, to avoid the pressure and impact they have on the current town centre road network. While the one-way system is in operation, consideration should be given to relocating the bus drop-off/pick-up points to:

**Carre’s Grammar School:**
Utilise Church Lane as a loop and drop off point, to reduce pressure on the centres network

**St George’s Academy:**
Introduce a route from the Drove, to provide a dedicated pick-up/drop-off point on the school grounds to the north of the site

**Kesteven & Sleaford High School:**
Whilst the level crossing is open to vehicles, consideration should be given to introducing a drop off/pick up point on Station Road. If the level crossing is closed to vehicles then consideration should be given to introducing a drop-off/ pick-up point in a dedicated stop on Grantham Road/London Road enabling the children to walk to this town centre site without adding to the congestion that currently occurs in the town.

Alternatively, consideration could be given to creating walking buses for the school children, an approach that is used in other towns and cities, albeit for younger school children. This involves school buses pick-up and drop-off points being positioned in strategic locations on main vehicular routes that are within walking distance from the schools. In Sleaford, consideration should be given to the introduction of dedicated school pick-up/drop-off bays in each of the perimeter car parks, so that the buses have direct access to the radial roads that enter the town. They are also positioned within close proximity to the current and potential future school sites, enabling walking routes to and from them for the school children.

Smarter transport initiatives

The whole movement strategy is based on smarter travel, reducing reliance on private car use through the provision of more attractive sustainable alternatives that include walking, cycling and improved public transport.

In addition, other measures that could be considered across Sleaford and the hinterland include, but are not limited to:

- Work from home initiatives
- Improved broadband to the wider hinterland area
- Car sharing
- Car club schemes
- Cycle hire schemes
South East Sleaford Regeneration Route (SESRR)

Strategic options

The masterplan has considered the four strategic options that were set out in the brief. These included:

i. As present (no link road/bridge and level crossing remains open)

ii. With SESRR bridge and level crossing open (to pedestrians/cyclists)

iii. With SESRR bridge and level crossing closed (to all users)

iv. With SESRR bridge and road extension to Eastgate

The movement strategy behind this masterplan has been created to complement and work with all of the options set out above. The main problem Sleaford faces is congestion, which is caused by the number of vehicles on the network, not so much the network itself. Solving this problem needs to remove the cause, not address the consequences. That is what the masterplan aims to do; it aims to create an environment that reduces private vehicle use.

Each street or space has been considered based on its movement function, place function and physical context. The design for each space follows the user hierarchy as set out in Manual for Streets:

Consider first: Pedestrians

Cyclists

Public Transport Users

Specialist Service Vehicles (eg. emergency services, waste, etc.)

Consider Last: Other motor traffic

The measures that have been introduced to do this include:

- Improved facilities for pedestrians to encourage more walking on routes that relate to desire lines, which are safe, secure, robust and of high quality.
- Restricting access during main shopping periods to create a pedestrian only area for set periods each day.
- Enhance, extend and improve existing cycle routes throughout the town and hinterland.
- Increase, improve and create priority for public transport services, enhancing connectivity to them.
- Creating strategies for deliveries that allow the centre of the town to be pedestrian focused during busy retail times, by doing so enhancing security through extending the periods of activity in these spaces.
- Designing spaces that maintain a safe route for emergency vehicles ensuring improved connectivity at all times.
- Providing perimeter parking, with early warning signage presenting live car park capacity updates, on radial routes. The combination avoids the need to enter the centre that is currently a one-way system and provides an efficient direct route for drivers.

All of the above interventions will reduce the congestion in the current network, and will also be as equally effective with each of the other scenarios set out above. Specifically:

i. As present (no link road/bridge and level crossing remains open)

In this scenario it is proposed that the road network be altered, introducing two-way traffic flow to Eastgate, Boston Road and Southgate, with Carre Street being a north to south movement as at present.

ii. With SESRR bridge and level crossing open (to pedestrians/cyclists)

As with (i) above it is proposed that two-way movement is proposed on all streets where physically possible. On the introduction of the SESRR it is proposed that movement on Carre Street should be reversed and flow from south to north. This enables those crossing the bridge from the south, who are travelling to the north of the town, to do so without needing to travel through Southgate.

It is highly recommended that the level crossing that is currently required to be closed, remains open at least for pedestrians and cyclists as this is the most comfortable means of movement and will encourage these modes of transport over private vehicles.

There is an opportunity on opening the SESRR to extend the restricted access zone to also include Carre Street, which will improve the pedestrian experience along the proposed east-west leisure link.

iii. With SESRR bridge and level crossing closed to all

This scenario sees the measures set out under (i) above with the exception that the level crossing is closed to all users as currently planned. The introduction of a pedestrian bridge is a less efficient crossing means and could discourage movement into the town by people on foot or cycle.

In this scenario it is recommended the level crossing should remain open to pedestrians and cyclists and that the introduction of a foot bridge should be delayed for a period of up to two years following closure of the junction to vehicles, to allow the situation to be observed. If when this situation is observed, it is seen that a level crossing for pedestrians is successful, then consideration can be given to using the funding that was proposed for the new footbridge on London Road to provide a new crossing to the west of the town.

iv. With SESRR bridge road extension to Eastgate

This scenario has been considered, and also one which extends the SESRR to the southwest of the town, effectively creating an inner ring road for Sleaford. It is recommended that this scenario should not be implemented. Building more roads will only attract more cars. It may relieve the centre of traffic today but such a measure would only defer the existing problem for the future. This is unsustainable.

The inner ring road approach is something that other towns and cities have, but they are now finding that they are restricting their towns and also becoming congested. These mistakes have and are being experienced elsewhere, for example in York, where there are studies being undertaken to establish how the ring road can be removed to relieve the city of congestion that the ring road brings, and also to allow the city to grow.
Create a circle of car parks close to the town centre to ease congestion and release public space.

- Improved Pedestrian/Cycle Links
- Improved ‘Into Town’ Bus routes
- Increase use of the bypasses to reduce vehicular movements through town
- Green Wedges, provide green corridors and open space with access for all
- Sleaford Wood
- Waterways
- Railway Lines
- Potential new Access

Figure 12 Strategic Movement & Environment
Case study

Peterborough’s ‘Green Wheel’

The Peterborough Green Wheel is an 80 kilometres network of footpaths, cycleways and bridleways. It was designed as part of a sustainable transport system for the city. In addition the project encourages recreational use through the creation of ‘living landmark’ sculpture trails, working with the local community in the creation of local landscape features such as mini woodlands, ponds and hedgerows.

York Perimeter Parking and Pedestrian Focused Core

York, albeit of different size and scale to Sleaford, manages its infrastructure to allow it to be flexible and utilized in different ways at different times. Placing parking on its edges and restricting vehicular access during shopping periods of 10am – 4pm, the city becomes a haven for pedestrians to enjoy shopping, leisure and culture. It utilizes its radial routes into the centre as its main movement arms for vehicles and is currently exploring the potential to sever its inner ring road to reduce the hindrance this currently causes to growth. Sleaford can not only learn from the good points at York but also avoid introducing measures that could cause future problems, i.e. an inner ring road. York, like Sleaford, is looking to the future and is also striving towards the creation of sustainable links into and out of the centre via protected green wedges.

Durham, Public Bus Services

Retaining ownership of the local park and ride bus service, Durham is able to manage and improve this vital public transport system so that it meets the needs of its residents, retailers and workforce. This includes the creation of a personal service that is welcoming and efficient, extending into the evening to ensure there is less reliance on private car use in the centre of the town.

Shopping Malls, Civilised Street

Using the analogy of a shopping mall shows how successful spaces can be when they are free of traffic. With clutter free, generous and level surfaces, shopping malls show that people are prepared to walk, and use mobility scooters, if the right environment is created that is free of traffic, high quality and safe. These principles and priorities can be applied to a town centre environment to improve their user friendliness to visitors.
3.6 Wider Links

Sleaford provides an important service centre for neighbouring communities, new developments (such as the Rauceby Hospital site), significant employment locations (such as RAF Cranwell) and future opportunities (such as the planned Biomass Power Station). Sleaford is also a link town in the transportation network between the East Midlands and the Lincolnshire coastal areas.

The town is one of several locations, including Grantham, Boston and Gainsborough situated within the East Midlands/Lincolnshire area that provide essential ‘market town’ service centre functions for their surrounding communities. In Sleaford’s case, its ability to perform this role is constrained by a number of physical factors that inhibit the free flow of traffic and pedestrians and compromise the attractiveness of its town centre. This encourages residents to travel further afield, resulting in a loss of retail expenditure and therefore local employment. The standard of its secondary schools and the availability of easily accessible employment land adjacent to the strategic bypass routes retains activity within the town and provides an anchor for future economic growth. The future development of a Tesco superstore in the town centre will also start to retain retail expenditure and provides the catalyst for wider investment across the town centre to improve its retail and leisure performance.

A key link between the town and its hinterland is its role as a residential location. The town is important to provide choice and affordability for local people to enter the housing market but also to retain people within the local area and keep them available as part of the local labour market. Extensive proposals for residential growth in Central Lincolnshire focus on Sleaford, with the alternative being unsustainable growth across the villages and smaller settlements in the local area. Sleaford has the environmental capacity to provide that growth and the masterplan proposes a series of measures to improve sustainable transport connections across the town and to its hinterland.

Towards a Sustainable Solution

There is a need for a change in approach. Simply adding roads will not solve any congestion problems, but transfer the cause of the problem elsewhere on the network. “If you build it they will come” is a quote that can be applied to many of our country’s roads. The more efficient and effective means of addressing this problem is to tackle the cause, which means reducing the number of vehicles on our roads, and better utilise the infrastructure we already have. To do this a better alternative is needed to private cars, which requires Sleaford to:

- Extend cycle and walking links via the new proposed green wedges to the surrounding hinterland, offering a healthy route into Sleaford.
- Improve and enhance the public transport links to and from Sleaford. Links and coordination with the regional bus services is required to allow Sleaford to be better connected to the wider region.
- Providing a service that extends into the evenings and is more regular and consistent is essential to encourage those travelling into Sleaford to do so in a sustainable manner.
Figure 13 shows Sleaford's immediate hinterland including neighbouring communities, new developments, significant employment locations and future opportunities within approximately a 5 mile radius of the town centre.
3.7 Summary

Strategic proposals:

Section 2.4 of this report states the following strategic aim:

Plan positively for future growth by investing in infrastructure and creating well connected communities

The masterplan proposes a comprehensive strategy to meet this aim including:

- A short list of housing sites providing a capacity for circa 3,500 - 4,000 dwellings during the 25 year masterplan period. Developments aim to retain the compact nature of Sleaford and bring forward supporting infrastructure for both new and existing communities.
- A series of strategic employment sites have been identified to supplement the existing allocations and to support the proposed residential growth areas. In addition, the Masterplan envisages increased employment in the town centre reflecting new retail and service developments also incorporating small business space/managed workspace.
- Improve and promote alternatives to private car usage.
- Reposition and rationalise parking to strategically locate car parks on the radial approaches to the town so that they are within walking distance of the centre and its retail offer.
- Promote the use of the A15 and A17 bypasses as the primary routes when moving around Sleaford.
- Introduce a Parking Strategy that prevents parking in inappropriate locations around the town.
- Reconfigure the town centre one-way system to two-way where possible.
- Introduce access restrictions to the centre of Sleaford.
- Introduce a Delivery/Servicing Strategy for the centre of Sleaford.
- A school strategy to accommodate future population growth.
- An east-west link across the town to overcome current congestion and to refresh town centre leisure and tourism provision, join the town centre to green wedges and break existing barriers to movement.
- A series of measures to improve connections and town centre services with a view to providing a service centre for surrounding villages and communities.
- Provision of a range of retail units within the town centre to attract a wider offer.