



4.0: The Town Centre Detailed Proposals

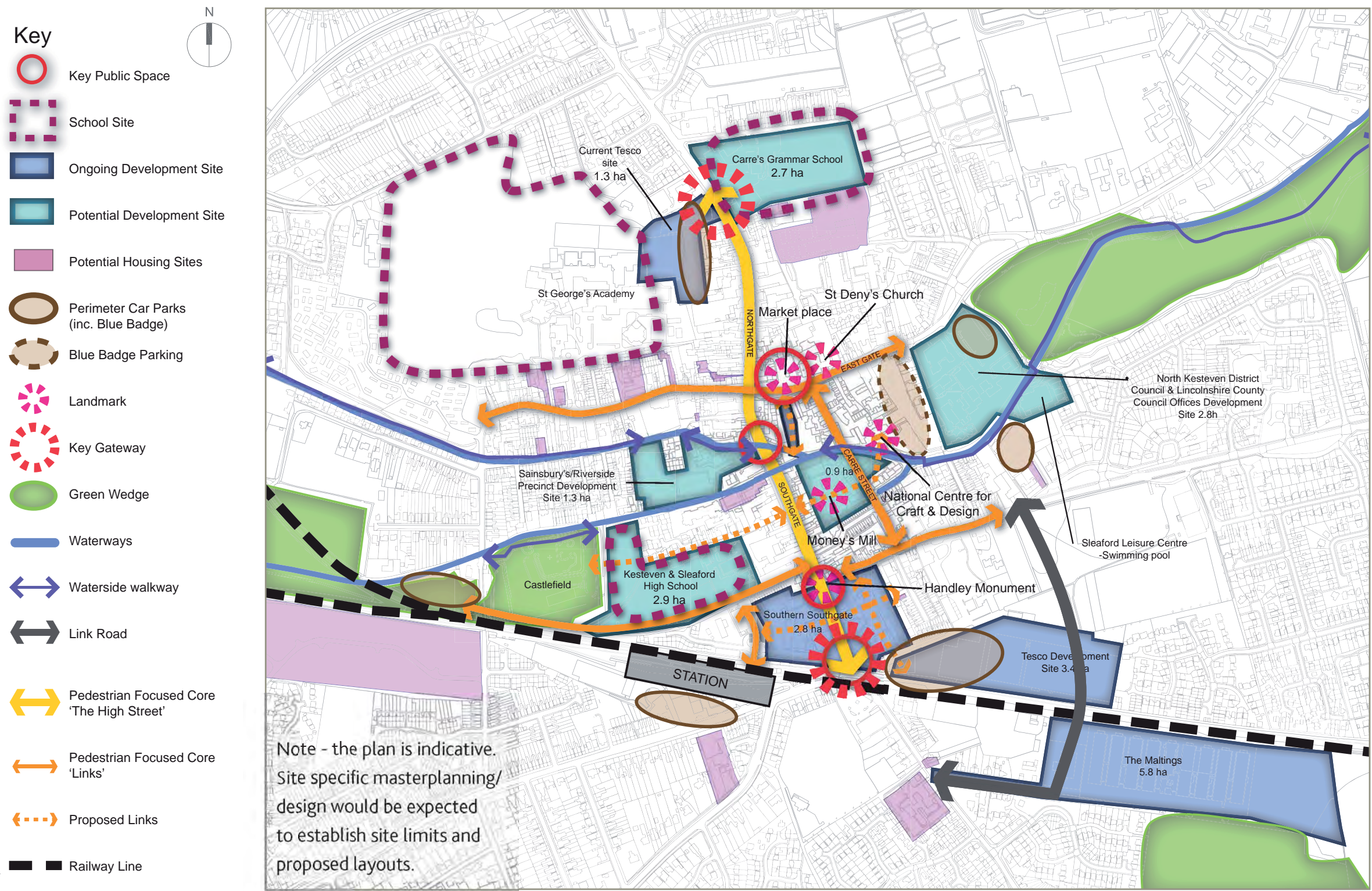
The masterplan team have developed a series of Detailed Proposals in tandem with community and stakeholder consultation

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4.1 Strategy

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

➤ 2. Fulfil the town centre’s potential by creating a high quality environment and opportunities for new retail and attractions



The Proposals have been grouped under three themes to support the town centre strategy:

▲ Figure 14 Town Centre Proposals

1. Unlocking the town centre’s potential

2. Creating a pedestrian focused environment

3. Delivering a series of destinations

4.2 Unlocking the Town Centre's Potential

The movement and parking strategy is the key to unlocking the town centre's true potential. It releases prime sites within the centre of the town to be considered for development and better public spaces. It reduces the need for private cars to enter the town centre and retail core so that the space can be enjoyed by pedestrians rather than it being dominated by traffic. This allows the focus within the centre to be placed around people and not vehicles. The following provides further detail to the strategic approach described in Section 3

1. A circle of perimeter car parks with improved pedestrian links to the town centre core

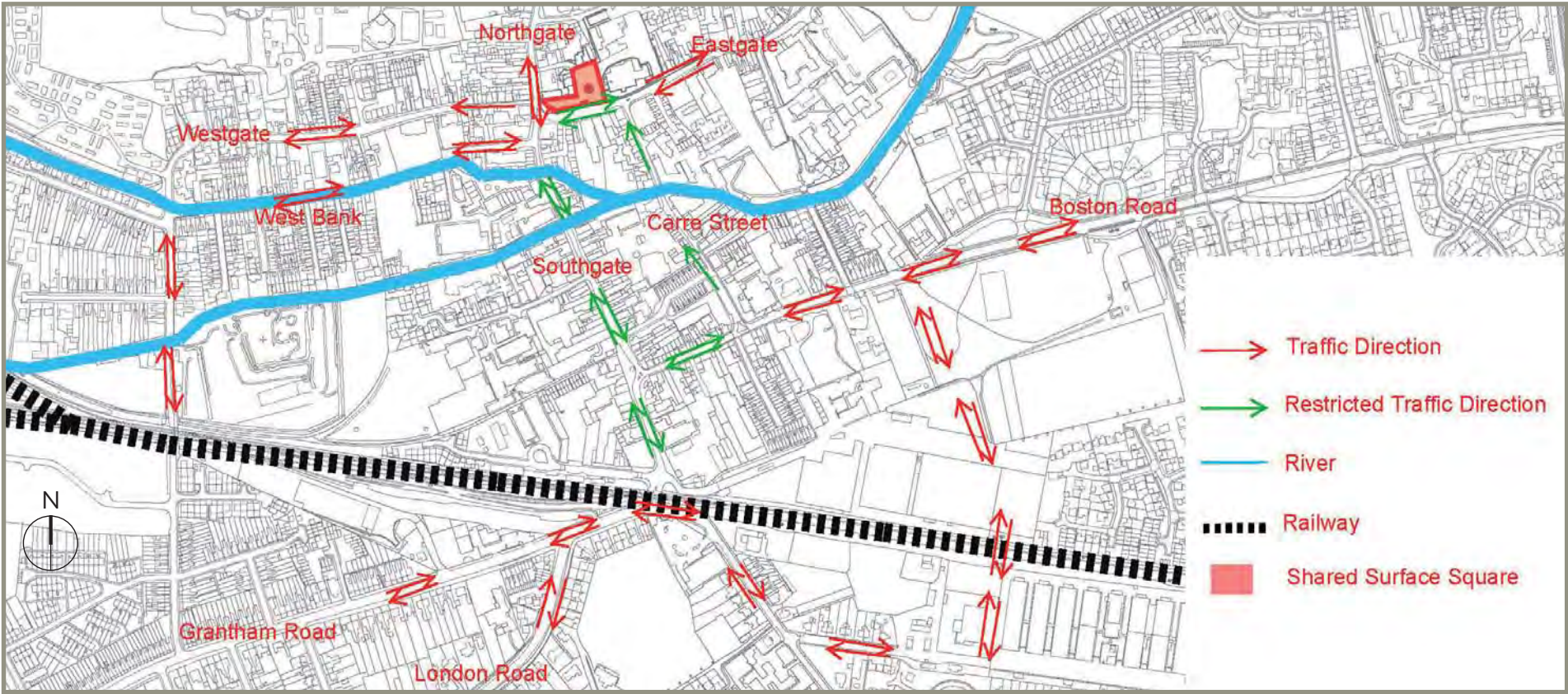
Existing town centre car parks, such as Money's Yard, encourage unnecessary traffic movement through the town centre. By relocating parking capacity to the edge of the centre, a 3 - 6 minute walk, the town will benefit from reduced town centre traffic levels and congestion. This should be supported by the provision of improved public realm to create an environment that is supportive of pedestrians.

In order to ensure access for all, the perimeter car parks would include blue badge parking, with provision particularly focused in the most central locations (such as Eastgate car park).

The perimeter car parks will be positioned so that they are accessed from the radial routes that enter the town centre. Being positioned on each of these routes will provide direct access for those visiting by private vehicle and reduce unnecessary journey lengths by allowing the journey to be terminated on the edge of town centre from the direction of entry. By doing this, it will enable the number and distance of vehicle journeys within the town to be reduced.

2. Reconfigure the one-way system to two-way where possible

Two-way traffic flow will be introduced where possible (Refer to Figure 15). This is achievable on Eastgate, Boston Road and Southgate. These arrangements have been considered and the tested using traffic movement software AutoCAD, which has allowed the geometry to be considered to check that vehicles of various sizes can physically manouvre past each other in the proposed arrangement. Extracts from this exercise can be found in Appendix 2 of this report



▲ Figure 15 Potential Town Centre Traffic Movement

This approach will allow more efficient movements through the town:

- Carre Street is not supportive of two-way movement because of its restricted width therefore it is proposed that this street remains one-way, with the direction of flow altering following the introduction of the link road. Prior to the introduction of the link road, the direction of flow should remain as at present, from north to south, but on the introduction of the bridge it should change to a south to north movement to allow a more direct route for those entering the town from the bridge, removing the need to pass through Southgate, enabling Southgate to be reclaimed as the 'High Street'.
- 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.
- Passing points are proposed on sections of Southgate where there is insufficient space for two vehicles to pass without compromising the pavement space. Priority will not be given as this encourages people to drive faster at the passing point by indicating they have right of way and that is clearly more hazardous than both parties approaching cautiously.
- It also creates what is a safer network, if designed correctly. One-way networks create environments where drivers are aware that there are no vehicles approaching and this therefore encourages increased speeds. The introduction of movement in both directions, when the lanes are restricted to certain widths, maintains slow speeds while allowing more direct movement.
- Reduces Castle Causeway, Westgate and Watergate from being used as a rat-runs, relieving them of a large volume of traffic to allow them to be civilised residential areas.
- Traditional highway traffic calming measures should be avoided, such as speed bumps, traffic lights etc, which bring with them clutter in the form of line markings, signage and more. All such measures simply clutter the public realm, making it less flexible and less attractive to pedestrians.
- Changing the one-way system will also enable the removal of a lot of signage from the streets. Once streets are two-way there is no longer a need to inform people of that at every junction.

3. A flexible public realm which allows the potential for vehicle access restrictions to the centre of Sleaford

The strategic positioning of the car parks, and introduction of a management strategy for deliveries, would mean that there could be an option in the future for the retail core of Sleaford, which could include Southgate, Boston Road, Carre Street and Eastgate to consider periods where these streets become pedestrian only zones. This is not essential to the masterplan but could become an opportunity that could be tested in the future. The creation of high quality flexible public realm, that is designed around pedestrians but also permits vehicle access means that as and when Sleaford grows and the centre becomes more popular, the infrastructure is in place to allow the creation of pedestrian only periods and zones that may enhance the attractiveness of the town further.

Similar systems, albeit in larger cities, have had major success, for example in the City of York, where an option to extend the "footstreets" zone is being given consideration at the request of those positioned outside of the area. In this instance private vehicle access is permitted before 10am and after 4pm, so allows traffic the flexibility and opportunity to make cross town journeys when they most need to. It then allows the same infrastructure to be enjoyed by pedestrians, creating a highly sustainable town that has potential to grow and thrive within an environment that is supportive of all. By directing traffic to the strategic A17 and A15 network, a measure such as this could also be considered in Sleaford in the future, which should also relieve traffic from the other streets that surround the heart of Sleaford, and encourage a modal shift within its surrounding residential areas.

Access for emergency vehicles will still be provided to the central zone at all times. This will be possible through the detailed design of the new realm. Rationalisation of the public realm, through the application of measures set out in Manual for Streets 2 (Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, 2010) will allow the recovery of major areas of public space from the highway to revert to pedestrian surfaces throughout the whole town.

4. Improved bus services with more frequent journeys making it a viable alternative to the car

More buses with reliable and more frequent services are needed on the bus network.

Another proposed feature that will support the potential shift from private cars is in the reconfiguration of the local Into Town Bus service to make it more attractive to local residents within Sleaford. This will be achieved through improving routes so that they are:

- Quicker
- More efficient
- More reliable
- More direct
- Have greater turn-around times

In addition, there is scope to utilise future Section 106 contributions to support the introduction of a further Into Town route, which extends through existing residential zones and out to potential future housing sites.

Consideration should also be given to providing bus priority over private vehicles where possible on the town's network. This will be challenging within the centre of the town but should be explored on the surrounding road network.

Within the town centre it is also proposed that bus stops are repositioned to release the public realm within areas that may attract greatest pedestrian footfall. These include on Southgate, Market Place and Eastgate. Positioning the bus stops within close proximity to the town centre and with attractive and improved links to the centre will enable the whole space to act more effectively and efficiently.

5. Pedestrian/cycle routes that extend to the wider hinterland and connect to the town centre

Relieving the town centre of vehicles presents the opportunity to enhance the space and improve connections to it for both pedestrians and cyclists. This is so that desire lines are met and permeability and connectivity is increased. This is essential throughout, but more so to the south of the railway line where the current residents in this area believe they are isolated and disconnected from the town centre. It is essential that this is addressed. The railway line presents a physical barrier and it is evident that it also provides a psychological barrier. Harnessing those that reside to the south of the railway line is essential in the economic growth of the town centre, and to create an environment where the whole town can act as one community.

To enable this, it is proposed that additional connections are made across the railway line. There are currently two crossing points, Southgate level crossing and the level crossing and underpass on King Edward Street. Crossings at these locations should be maintained for pedestrians and cyclists. They should also be complemented by the new link road and a further foot/cycle bridge to the west of the town centre. It would be necessary to generate funding from developments to finance a bridge to the west of the town centre.

Expanding the existing cycle networks throughout the town is proposed. This enables continuous cycle routes from the surrounding communities such as Greylees and Leasingham to have sustainable connections via safe and efficient cycle routes into the heart of Sleaford. The cycle routes should not only extend into the centre, where possible running through the new green wedges that are to be created, but they should also connect and cross the town. A sustainable inner ring should also be pursued, enabling a network of sustainable infrastructure that supports cycling and walking, and could possibly support future Into Town bus services, to enable each residential area (both existing and proposed) to be connected to (i) a green wedge and (ii) a local employment area (Refer to Figure 5 Strategic Proposals).

The measures proposed above have been devised and recommended to enable a strategic approach to be considered and pursued that will allow Sleaford the opportunity to realise its true potential. This is done in a way that utilises existing infrastructure to complement the town's existing assets and character in a manner that will enable it to grow and expand sustainably. It will create an environment that is supportive of people and looks nationally to the likes of Kendal and Hebden Bridge, and more closer to home to the likes of Gainsborough. For inspiration and to see how similar measures have been introduced successfully refer to Section 3.5 for case studies relating to both strategic and detailed proposals.

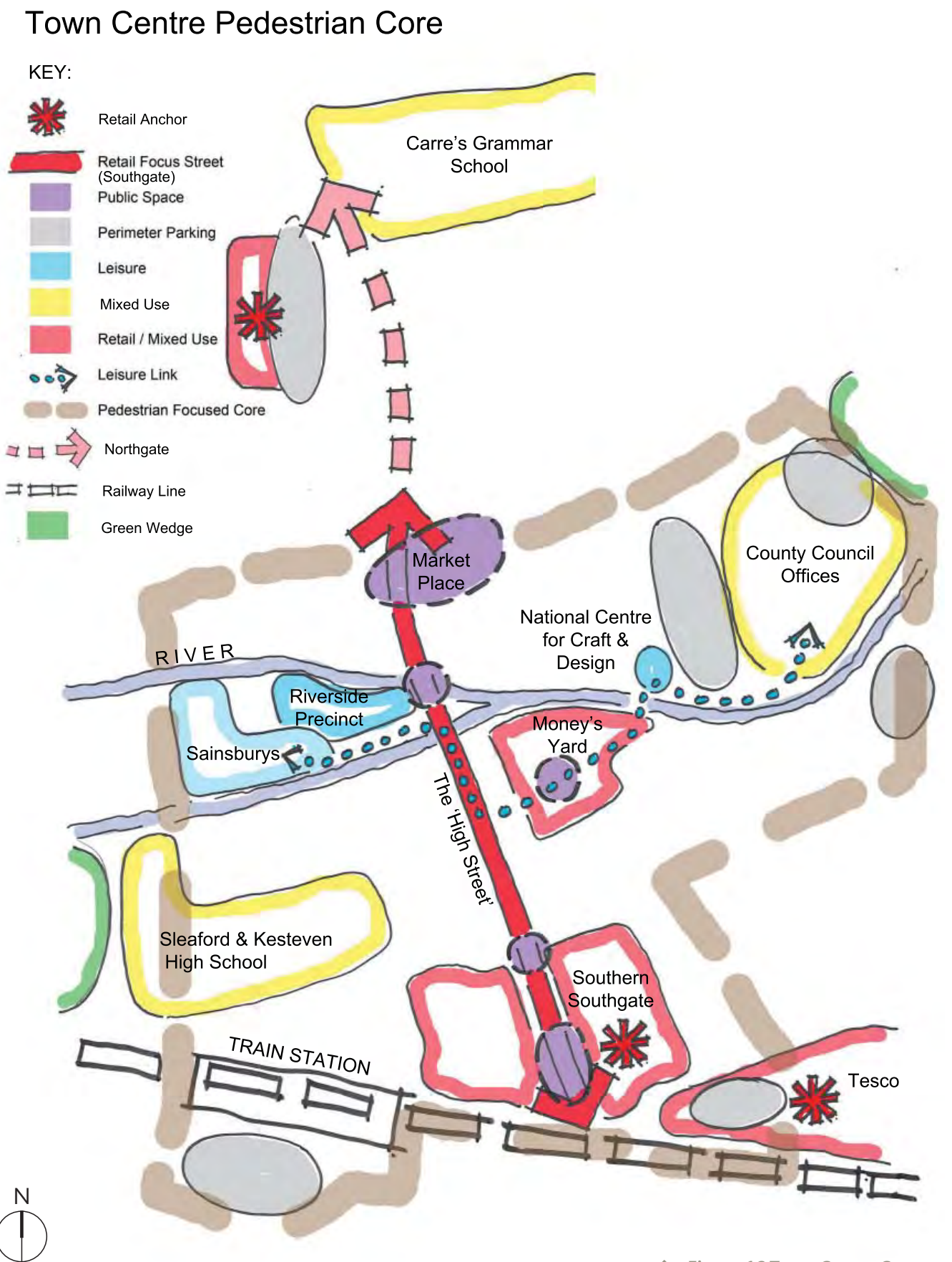
6. Coordinated signage strategy

The proposed movement interventions will permit a reduction in highway signage across the town. This is possible through the removal of the one-way system, which then permits

- Early highway signage and live parking notification should be provided on the approaches to Sleaford, at key junctions on the A15 and A17. This will assist in management of traffic within Sleaford and will enable efficient management of the traffic through the area.
- Signage to assist in the movement of pedestrians and cyclists should be provided in a standardised form across Sleaford. This will need to extend throughout the wider area to enable the new green wedges, cycle-ways, parking and movement to be clear and coordinated.
- Signage should be strategically coordinated but not excessive, as this creates clutter within the public realm. Places that should be sign posted, should include, but is not limited to:
 - Station
 - Market Place
 - Money's Yard
 - Maltings
 - Castlefield
 - River
 - Green Wedges
 - Perimeter Car Parks

4.3 Creating a Pedestrian Focused Environment

The transport and movement proposals provide the opportunity to transform the town centre environment and create a fundamental shift in priority to pedestrians. This move brings back more space into the public realm, increases the quality of streetscape and celebrates the town’s many assets, which are currently undersold by poor quality environments. It enhances the potential to enjoy the historic environment and buildings the town centre already possesses. Ultimately a pedestrian dominant town centre creates a place that will attract investment, improve the retail and leisure and cultural offer and attract residents and visitors to spend more time in Sleaford as opposed to going elsewhere.



▲ Figure 16 Town Centre Concept

1. Transform the street environment and appearance along Southgate and other key streets creating quality links between destinations

The approach does not propose a wholesale pedestrianisation or one size fits all solution. A series of complementary public realm treatments are suggested from fully pedestrianised spaces to shared surface solutions creating flexibility and unity. The removal of typical road geometry and an upgrade in quality allows perceptions to change and the type of traffic management proposed to succeed (such as the potential 'footstreets' approach during main shopping periods).

The proposals include a series of public spaces to act as gateways and stepping stones along Southgate forming a strong north-south spine. An 'east-west leisure link' is proposed to make better use of the river and green wedges beyond.

As part of this approach the routes into town from perimeter car parks and the station should be upgraded to encourage use. In addition the network of secondary links such as alleys and the Bristol Arcade should be celebrated enhancing the richness they bring to the town centre experience and the value they hold amongst residents.

A Public Realm & Movement Strategy should be commissioned to develop movement proposals and establish a cohesive palette of surface materials, furniture, signage, planting & lighting. A hierarchy of streets and spaces can be established to create a framework for investment. This should be supported by design guidelines for typical scenarios within the town centre, for example 'wide streets', 'narrow streets' 'pedestrian links' etc.

The following hierarchy is recommended for further development:

Premium quality palette:

- Natural stone for paving/kerbs/carriageways (flush, shared surface to be the typical approach)
- Cohesive family of street furniture, lighting and signage throughout the town centre to create continuity
- High investment in feature lighting and public art

High quality palette:

- Mix of natural stone and high quality man made products for paving/kerbs/carriageways
- Cohesive family of street furniture, lighting, and signage throughout the town centre to create continuity

In addition the public realm strategy should consider features to improve the visitor experience such as interpretive signage, public conveniences, tourist information points, conservation of historic buildings and features, street performance and the further development of cultural events throughout the year.

2. Improve public spaces and create high quality settings for the town centre's assets starting with Market Place and its' junction with Southgate to create a showpiece project

Market Place:

- A Town Square for Sleaford and a northern gateway into the town centre (refer to Section 4.6 Key Projects for further details)

Southgate Square

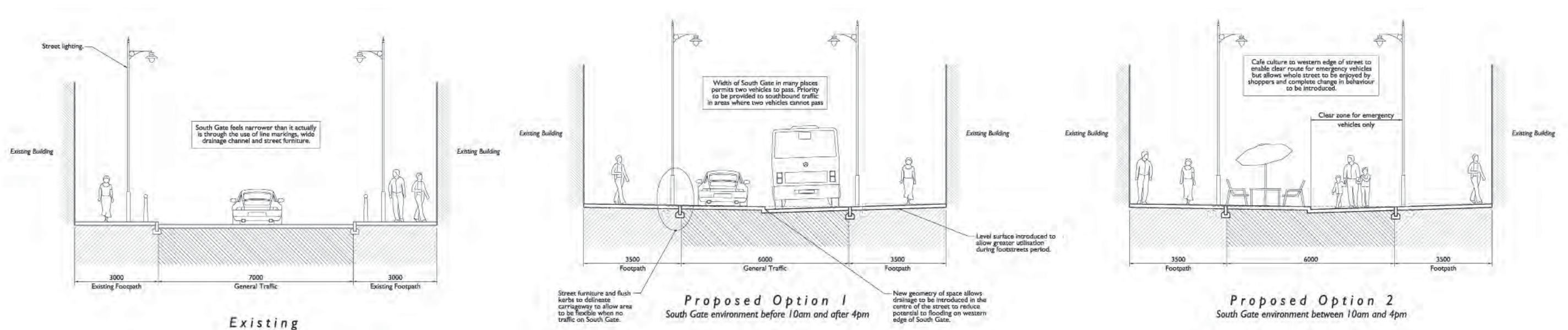
- A new southern gateway into the town centre (opportunity for shared surface/road table to mark this)

Money's Yard

- A new attraction creating a setting for Money's Mill (refer to Section 4.6 Key Projects for further details)

Focal Points:

- Highlight focal points along Southgate such as the River Slea and the Handley Monument (opportunity for lighting, seating, upgraded materials)



▲ Figure 17 Southgate Typical Cross Sections (existing & proposed)

New Road, Brighton, Civilised Street

The civilised environment created by Stockley at New Road, Brighton, shows how a traditional town centre road that was dominated by private vehicles can be completely transformed to enable a thriving pedestrian environment, which has seen an increase in retail activity of 175%. Simple alterations to the space enables it to appear to be a pavement, but vehicles are permitted, which allows the street to be navigated easily by pedestrians. Similar environments can potentially be created on Southgate to truly transform the town centre and draw people up through the town from the forthcoming developments to the south.



▲ Before



▲ After



▲ A flexible use of space



▲ Kendal High Street

Kendal

Restricting uses through the High Street in Kendal has enabled the space to be recovered from previous car dominance and returned to pedestrian use. Permitting access for public transport allows priority to be given to more sustainable modes of transport and encourages local residents to leave their cars at home, allowing the existing infrastructure within the centre of the town to be better utilised and enjoyed by pedestrians, enabling retail and economic growth.

4.4 Delivering a Series of Destinations

1. Deliver Tesco and Southern Southgate regeneration

The new Tesco and the Southern Southgate development (with the Maltings beyond) creates a strong retail anchor at the southern end of the town centre. These developments will provide footprints that can attract larger retailers (as demonstrated in Gainsborough's Marshall's Yard). This provides a significant catalyst for the town centre. However to gain maximum benefit there must be high quality links north along Southgate.

2. Reinforce the north of the town centre

Without proactive planning the above developments could potentially unbalance the town centre. Given this, the masterplan proposes a number of developments to reinforce the north and centre of the town. This cluster of projects takes advantage of the high quality townscape (at Market Place, the arcades, the river and Money's Yard) to create a leisure, cafe and independent retail focus. Market Place and its town market needs to be reinstated as a destination and can draw inspiration from Retford. In addition the existing Tesco site on Northgate has planning permission for retail units. This approach is reinforced by proposals to create a pedestrian focused Southgate linking north and south (refer to Section 4.6 Key Projects for further details)

3. Enhance Sleaford's waterside environment creating new leisure destinations

East-west movement is currently confused and should become a priority for improvement in response to hidden destinations, the river and proposed green wedges beyond. Money's Yard provides the opportunity to break through from the town centre to the east. The link west is potentially more challenging. However a number of opportunities are highlighted including improved links to the castle site and along the river. A new leisure anchor is suggested to the west of Southgate to provide a longer term opportunity (eg Cinema).

4. Transform Money's Yard into a new attraction that links the town centre to the National Centre for Craft & Design (the Hub)

By removing public parking this proposition aims to rediscover Money's Mill and create the opportunity for new retail and leisure activity, infill development and improved pedestrian links. (refer to Section 4.6 Key Projects for further details).

Case study



▲ Marshall's Yard

Gainsborough

Marshall's Yard has brought new retailers into the heart of the town. Getting the links right between the new attraction and the rest of the town centre has ensured that established retailers have also benefitted from the increased footfall.



▲ Retford Market Square (Gillespies Visualisation)

Retford Market Square

Retford is a busy market town in Nottinghamshire. Gillespies is currently implementing a scheme to upgrade the public realm in the market square. Like Sleaford the quality of the surrounding building is exceptional yet the paving, lighting and street furniture let it down. The Retford scheme focuses on creating a stage for the thriving weekly market, town events and encouraging a new café culture around the edge.

4.5 Sleaford Town Centre in 25 Years

Town Centre today

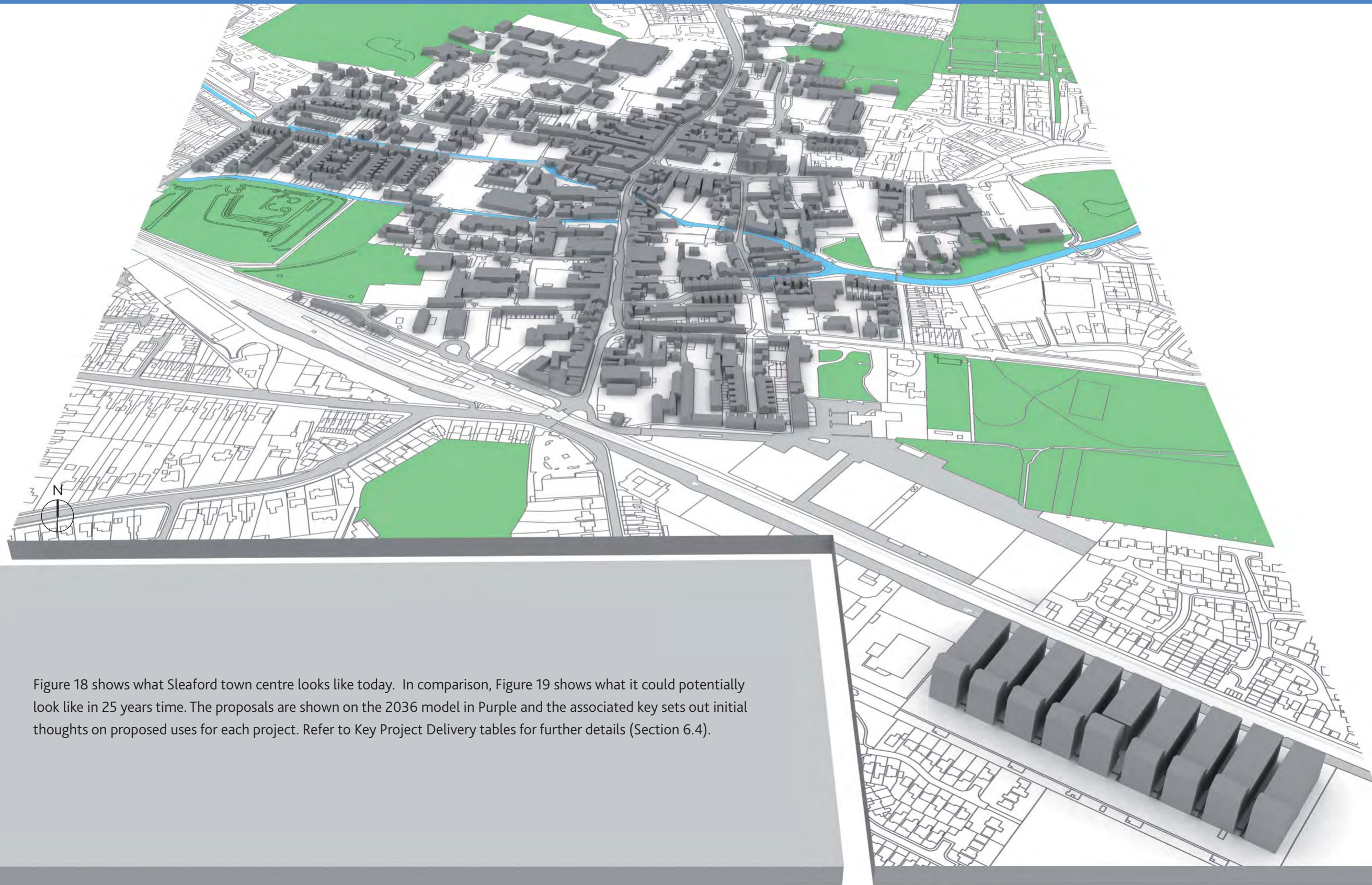


Figure 18 shows what Sleaford town centre looks like today. In comparison, Figure 19 shows what it could potentially look like in 25 years time. The proposals are shown on the 2036 model in Purple and the associated key sets out initial thoughts on proposed uses for each project. Refer to Key Project Delivery tables for further details (Section 6.4).

▲ Figure 18 Town Centre Today



▲ Figure 19 Town Centre 2036

4.6 Key Projects

The masterplan is proposing bringing together ongoing developments and new ideas into a comprehensive series of projects (refer to Section 6 Delivery for a detailed phasing timeline and Project Delivery Tables).

The following selection of key projects have been developed in more detail to establish design principles:

1. Town Centre streetscape

Town centre streets including Southgate are currently dominated by cars, which has been highlighted as a problem for visitors. The tarmac carriageway takes up a high proportion of available space, pushing pedestrians to the edges. By changing surface treatments and removing traditional highway geometry and clutter, the perception of the space and resulting behaviour by vehicles and pedestrians can change.

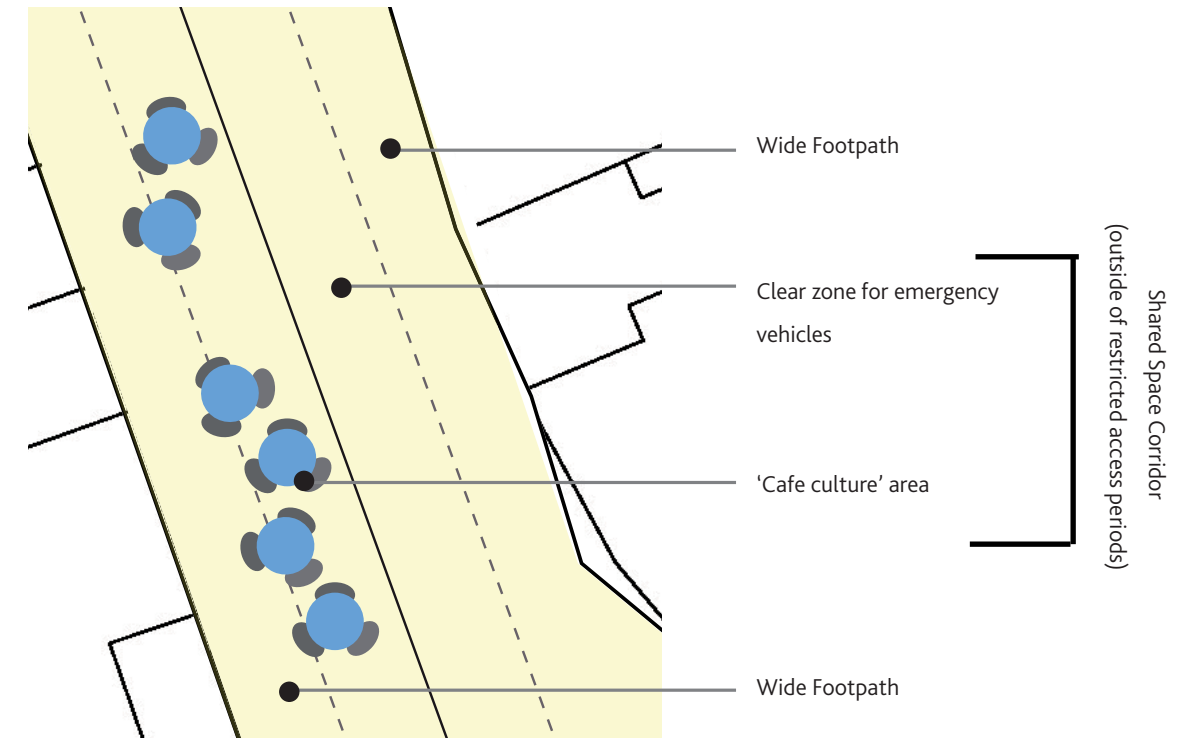
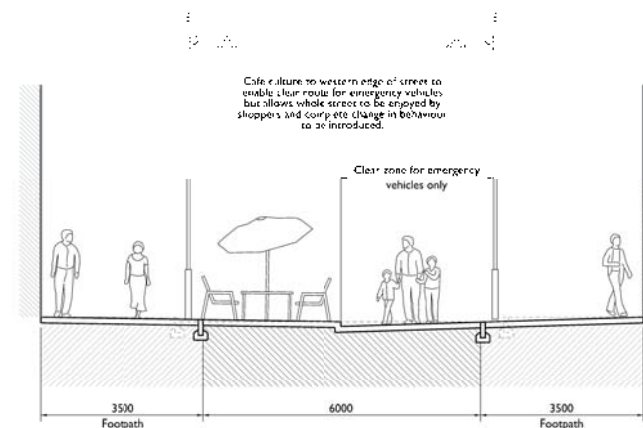
The vision:

- A transformed, pedestrian dominant environment focusing initially on Southgate and Market Place.
- Reclaim space from private vehicles but still allow access through the town centre
- Simplify the street design, improve paving and create a flexible setting for people to enjoy, spend time and money



Design principles

This typical plan/section shows how the street could function when applying a 'footstreets' approach with restricted access during peak shopping periods. The public realm treatment provides the flexibility to allow two way access at other times of the day by providing a 'shared space' central corridor



▲ Figure 20 Southgate Design Principles

What could Southgate be like?



▲ Figure 21 Southgate Visualisation

2. Market Place

Market Place is currently not functioning as Sleaford's town square or living up to the splendour of surrounding buildings. Vehicles block postcard views of the church and the public realm is poor with pedestrian routes to and from the square dominated by highway clutter and congestion. The once thriving town market has been in decline in recent years. The Grade II listed Corn Exchange building on Market Place is important to the vitality and appearance of the Market Place. A new use for this building will be essential in the overall success



▲ Market Place Today

of reinvigorating Market Place. By upgrading the environment and reorganising the use of space, Market Place can become a focus for the town.

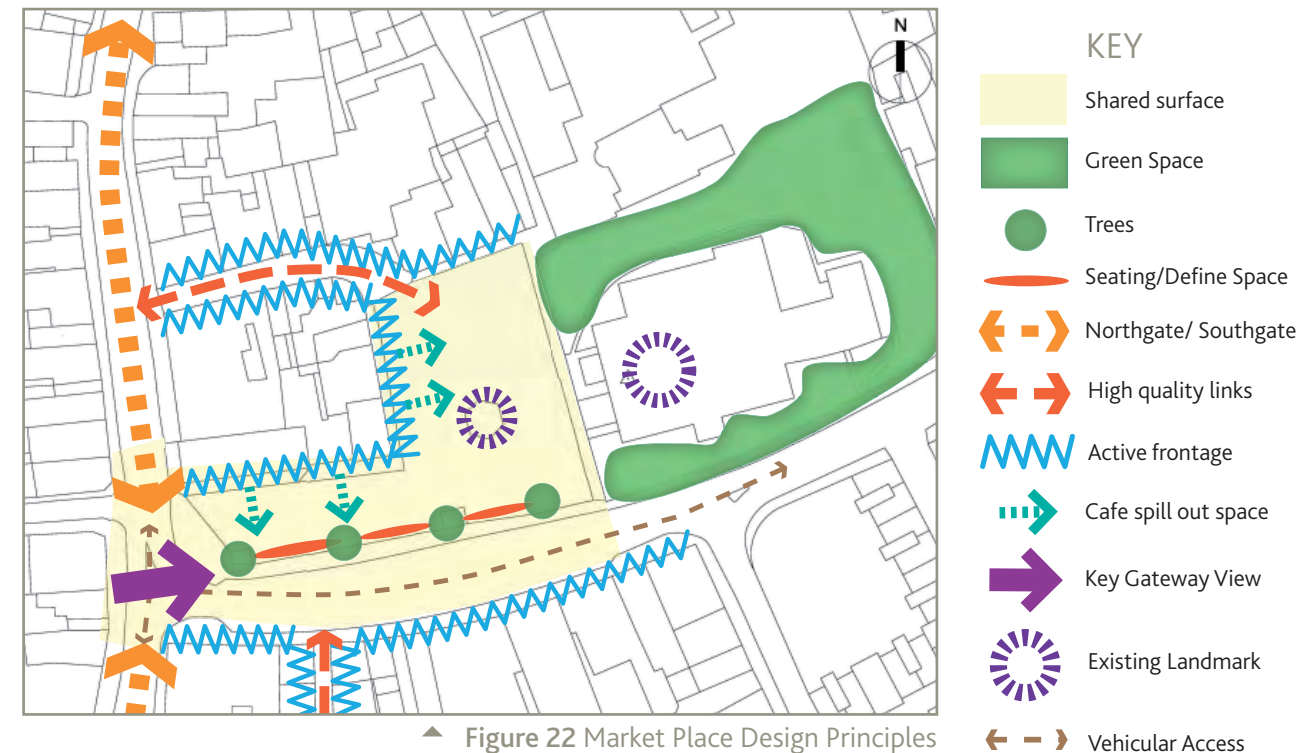
The vision:

- Reinstate Market Place as Sleaford's Town Square
- Bring the Corn Exchange back into use and improve the link to Bristol Arcade
- Create a great welcome into the town centre and mark the start of Sleaford's 'High Street'
- Improve Market Place's paving, lighting and furniture
- Encourage new or improved activity in and around the square (town market, events, cafes, independent shops).
- Reinvent the market to attract a wide audience
- Showcase, protect and conserve the surrounding buildings



▲ Inspiration

Design principles



▲ Figure 22 Market Place Design Principles

What could Market Place be like?



▲ Figure 23 Market Place Visualisation

3. Money's Yard

Money's Yard is currently utilized as a centrally located public car park, with a variety of uses arranged around the space in an ad-hoc manner (retail/food/public toilets). This setting undersells Money's Mill which is a landmark in the town and creates unnecessary congestion with drivers travelling round the one way loop to access the car park. Money's Yard can become a new attraction and unlock the opportunity to connect the town centre with the currently hidden National Centre for Craft & Design (the Hub) and riverside beyond.



▲ Money's Yard Today

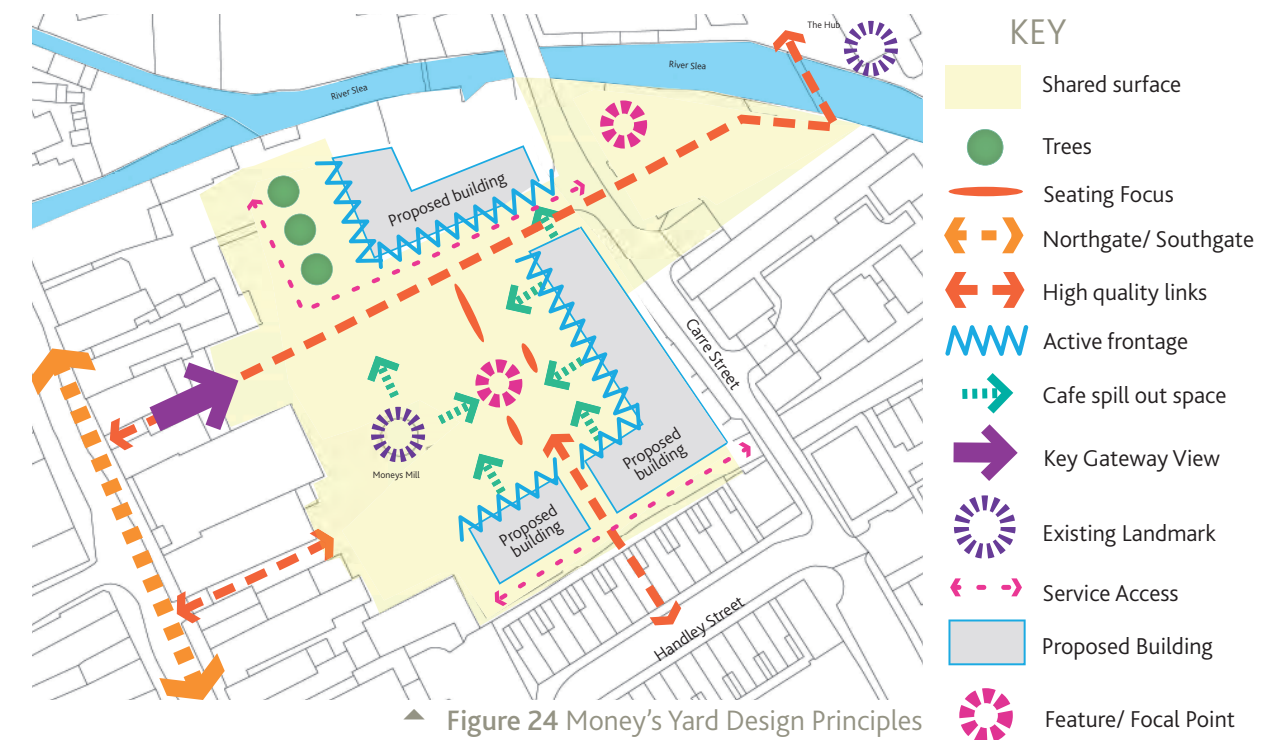
The vision:

- Remove car park to reduce traffic congestion in town centre and create a new high quality public space and setting appropriate for Money's Mill
- Create a new pedestrian link from the town centre to the National Centre for Craft & Design (The Hub) and riverside beyond (opportunity for a new riverside public space such as an amphitheatre for performances)
- Opportunity for redevelopment to frame Money's Yard (independent retailers/craft units).



▲ Inspiration

Design principles



▲ Figure 24 Money's Yard Design Principles

What could Money's Yard be like?



▲ Figure 25 Money's Yard Visualisation

4.7 Summary

The Town Centre detailed proposals:

Section 2.4 of this report states the following strategic aim:

- 2. Fulfil the town centre's potential by creating a high quality environment and opportunities for new retail and attractions

The masterplan proposes a comprehensive strategy including:

- A series of projects to 'Unlock the town centre's potential':
 - A circle of perimeter car parks with improved pedestrian links to the town centre core
 - Reconfigure the one-way system to two-way where possible
 - A flexible public realm which allows the potential for vehicle access restrictions to the centre of Sleaford
 - Improved bus services with more frequent service making public transport a viable and attractive alternative to the car
 - Pedestrian/Cycle routes that extend to surrounding communities and connect to the town centre
- A series of projects to 'Create a pedestrian focused environment':
 - Transform the street environment and appearance along Southgate and other key streets creating quality links between destinations
 - Improve public spaces and create high quality settings for the town centre's assets starting with Market Place and its' junction with Southgate to create a showpiece project
- Projects to 'Deliver a series of destinations' :
 - Deliver Tesco and Southern Southgate regeneration
 - Reinforce the north of the town centre (including Market Place, Money's Yard, the existing Tesco store)
 - Enhance Sleaford's waterside environment creating new leisure destinations
 - Transform Money's Yard into a new attraction that links the town centre to the National Centre for Craft & Design (the Hub)