

LEEK TOWN CENTRE

Final Masterplan Report // June 2013





1882

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The aim of the Masterplan is to address the need to reinforce Leek within the sub-region, in defining it as an interesting and distinctive place to visit, shop, live and work.

The principal objectives supporting this aim are:

- To identify employment opportunities through the redevelopment of vacant and underutilised land and property
- To identify the potential to increase resident and visitor expenditure
- To strengthen the town's role as a service and retail hub.

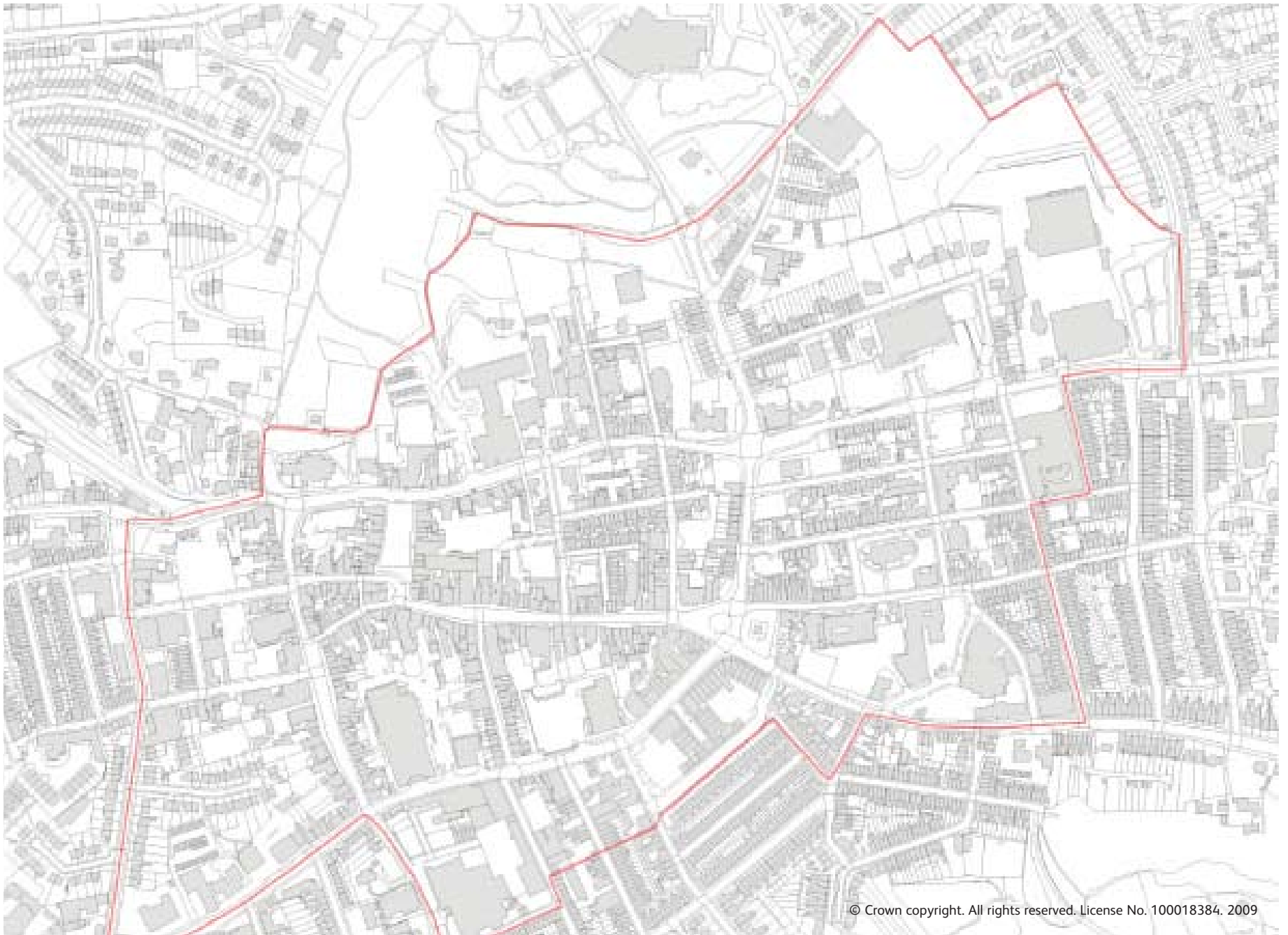
Additional objectives specific to Leek are:

- Preparing clear proposals for ensuring that pedestrian movement is improved between those areas that are performing significantly below their economic potential (e.g., St Edward Street) and those currently receiving the highest levels of footfall (e.g Derby Street)

- Identifying the existing geographical cluster of antiques and reproduction furniture retailers/workshops in Leek (centred around the junction of St. Edward Street and Brook Street/Broad Street) and suggesting how the economic impact of this area could be improved
- Identifying ways to physically link Leek Town Centre more strongly with Brough Park
- Recommend improvements aimed at increasing the connectivity and economic impact of Leek bus station
- Identifying suitable uses or enhancements for the identified Opportunity Sites.

The Masterplan will also inform the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF). The multi-disciplinary consultancy team appointed to assist this work is led by BE Group, regeneration, property and planning consultants.

BE Group has been supported by Taylor Young, regeneration, planners, urban designers, landscape architects and architects; and transportation and movement experts, Aecom.



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Study Area Plan

Process

The process of developing the Masterplan has encompassed a wide range of activities aimed at:

- Understanding the national, regional, sub-regional and local perspective
- Appreciating the trends and forces at work, both locally and in the global economy
- Identifying the needs and aspirations for the future
- Setting the direction and mechanism for meeting the requirements. Key elements of the process have included:
- Technical research of local, regional and national material on a wide range of subjects including sustainable urban growth, design and built form, and future transport systems
- Local area analysis of the built form, urban design, public realm, transport, landscape and property
- Consultation with local stakeholder
- Regard to other proposals and projects.

Each of these elements has been considered in the context of the Masterplan's aim – the need to reinforce Leek within the sub-region in defining it as an interesting and distinctive place to visit, shop, live and work.

The Masterplan report represents the conclusion of a series of stages. The other stages act as appendices to this report:

- Baseline Report (September 2009)
- Draft Masterplan Summary Report (February 2010)
- Consultation Report (May 2010)
- Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (May 2010).

It is important to note that the Masterplan is a visioning exercise that defines overall strategic principles. Whilst it does not provide specific fixed proposals for all the Opportunities Sites set out in the commissioning brief, the Masterplan does promote preferred land uses. It also defines the context and overall parameters to take forward ideas for the future benefit of the Town Centre as a whole.

Challenges and Opportunities

A number of challenges and opportunities were identified as part of the baseline studies. These are summarised in the following pages and on the 'Opportunities and Constraints' drawing opposite.

Key baseline findings regarding the context concluded:

- The emerging LDF Core Strategy sees Leek as a market town with growth maintained to strengthen its role as a principal service centre
- Leek is considered a highly sustainable settlement with a capacity for further growth at a scale as not to undermine its distinct character
- The Masterplan process should highlight and identify the scope for retail growth and other related change in the Town Centre
- The unique character of Leek, with its medieval street pattern, historic buildings and nineteenth century mills, needs to be preserved and used as a selling point for the Town Centre.



Opportunities and Constraints

Key baseline findings regarding the Retail Property Market concluded:

- The high percentage of independent traders means the Town Centre has a notably below average share of national multiples. It is not at risk of being characterised as part of 'Clone Town Britain'
- Leek Town Centre is Staffordshire Moorlands' primary retail destination with an administrative, service and visitor centre function as well as having a market town role. Yet the retail offer is restricted at weekends with few retailers opening on a Sunday
- Vacancy levels are half the UK's Town Centre average suggesting Leek is withstanding the challenges of the economic recession
- Retail proposals at Churnet Works are generally seen by existing retailers as a threat to the Town Centre with the topography of the location likely to militate against linked trips.

Key baseline findings regarding Townscape Analysis concluded:

- Leek has a strong historic core, with a number of outstanding buildings - this is reflected by the Town Centre's Conservation Area status
- The diversity of townscape within Leek will require a range of interventions, different types of improvements and more comprehensive re-structuring

- Public realm improvements are needed to improve linkages (including pedestrian and cycle connections) between neighbourhoods (including Brough Park) and the Town Centre
- There is a need for gateway improvements at each of the four major junctions
- There is need for extended/enhanced pedestrianised areas focused around Market Place and Derby Street (west).

Key baseline findings regarding Access and Movement concluded:

- Four busy junctions around the retail core are in need of improvement or possible redesign
- There is pedestrian severance between the retail core and outer residential areas due to the busy 'inner ring-road' and lack of controlled pedestrian crossing facilities, particularly at the four busy junctions
- Public transport services and infrastructure is generally poor
- There is a large number of 'competing' road users including HGV traffic from local industrial areas
- The small dispersed car parking facilities around the Town Centre are adding to congestion. Therefore an improved parking strategy is needed.

These baseline findings were informed by research undertaken by the consultants and also by the various consultations that took place. These consultations are discussed in more detail within the main body of the document, but are summarised as follows.

Consultation

Consultation has formed a key part of this Masterplan process. National guidance and the District Council's Statement of Community Involvement promotes community involvement at every stage, encouraging all sections of the community to seize the opportunity to become actively involved in shaping Leek Town Centre.

Consultation from the outset of the baseline assessment has allowed the community to identify issues and options for the Masterplan. There has been ongoing engagement of a range of interested parties and this informed the draft strategic objectives and emerging options, and has contributed to the option selection.

The consultation events arranged as part of the Masterplan process were as follows:

Baseline Assessment

- Business Survey – 4th August 2009
- Public Launch, Market Place and Moorlands House – 5th August 2009
- Stakeholders Workshop – 2nd September 2009
- Councillors Workshop – 2nd September 2009
- Leek Chamber of Trade Workshop – 8th September 2009.

Design Options

- Councillors Workshop – 29th September 2009
- Stakeholders Workshop – 29th September 2009
- Public Consultation, Market Place and Moorlands House – 14th October 2009.

Draft Masterplan

- Leek Chamber of Trade Workshop – 19th November 2009
- Councillors Workshop – 2nd December 2009
- Stakeholders Workshop – 2nd December 2009
- Public Consultation, Getliffe's Yard – 9th December 2009
- Councillors Discussion – 8th September 2011
- Leek Chamber of Trade Discussion – 26th October 2011
- Councillors and Stakeholders Visioning Workshop – 16th May 2012

The feedback from these events has been recorded in a consultation report that also incorporates the analysis of questionnaires completed, and comments recorded, at each of the public consultations.

This report is included at Appendix 1. The results of the consultations also informed the preparation of the Strategic Vision for the Town Centre.



The Strategic Vision

The Masterplan sets out a clear strategy for change through development activity, environmental improvements and enhancements to accessibility. It seeks to reinforce the role of the Town Centre in the economic, social and cultural life of Leek.

Leek is an ancient market town with a proud silk and Arts and Crafts heritage. The town centre will be the first choice for local people for shopping, working, services and leisure, and an obvious place to stop for visitors to the Peak District

To deliver growth, investment and progressive change, the town will have to find its unique role and develop a sense of place that encourages individuals and business to invest. The vision is intended to provide an overarching aspiration against which to assess the merits of development and new investment within the context of the Masterplan.

Options Assessment

In response to the challenges and opportunities described previously, and as a reaction to analysis of the key consultation feedback, minimum and maximum intervention options were produced for the Town Centre. This included options for each of the fifteen Opportunity Sites (the thirteen in the commissioning brief plus two further introduced at the baseline assessment stage). Capacity assessments for these sites are set out in Appendix 3.

These options were specifically designed to deliver the Vision, achieve the desired role for the Town Centre, and ensure that the overall regeneration themes are realised. Assessment involved analysis against the agreed principles in the brief and performance in respect of meeting the strategic objectives. Other strands of assessment considered the deliverability of the project, involving broad financial, property demand, land ownership and policy considerations.

The Masterplan encompasses all of the individual Opportunity Site options but also assumes a flexibility that the overarching strategic vision and regeneration themes are more important. Individual projects will emerge at different times, but this should not detract from understanding how they fit into this Masterplan.

The Masterplan seeks to address sustainability issues in a balanced and coherent manner, in order to deliver sustainable development. A Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out and is included at Appendix 5.

Strategic Objectives

- To clarify and strengthen the car park offer
- To redefine the four key gateway junctions
- To address public transport infrastructure improvements
- To consider wider area road and/or rail network improvements
- To improve pedestrian and cycle connections
- To consider extending/enhancing pedestrian areas
- To create enhanced and new circuits
- To introduce a greater diversity of uses
- To create green infrastructure in the Town Centre
- To produce a comprehensive strategy that provides coherence to intervention areas
- To focus change that recognises the existing built form and character of the Town Centre.

The Masterplan

At the heart of the Masterplan are a number of key interlinked projects which have the potential to significantly enhance the Town Centre; to regenerate vacant and underutilised land and property; to strengthen Leek's role as a retail and service hub, and provide opportunities to increase resident and visitor expenditure.

The Masterplan incorporates the following design components:

- **Town Centre Core** – This will incorporate a series of interlinked routes focusing on Market Place, Derby Street and Russell Street. Areas of major change proposed include redevelopment of Pickwood Road and redevelopment/regeneration of the Compton Mill area to the south of Brook Street
- **Town Centre Links** – An improved retail destination will be created at the eastern end of Derby Street, around the Nicholson War Memorial. This is to be achieved through a redesigned junction. It includes regeneration of the Smithfield Centre and Talbot/White Lion areas, together with enhancement of the Ashbourne Road gateway
- **Town Centre East** – Redevelopment of the Eaton House and British Trimmings sites for mixed use residential and employment areas

- **Town Centre North** – Extended and enhanced education uses together with gateway parking on the California Mill site. Leisure, employment and residential re-use of the Foxlowe site, together with enhanced connections to and from Brough Park
- **Town Centre West** – Gateway parking, residential, employment and retail uses on High Street, Rear of St Edward Street, Broad Street and Premier Garage sites.

The above development and enhancement aspirations are also supported by coherent transport and access and public realm intervention strategies.

These incorporate an enlarged circuit and visitor route; a series of new and upgraded squares and interconnecting streets; a higher profile bus station, coach parking and gateway car parks; enhanced and improved environments on Derby Street, Russell Street and St Edward Street, and improved linkages on Stockwell Street, at the Nicholson War Memorial and St Edward Street.

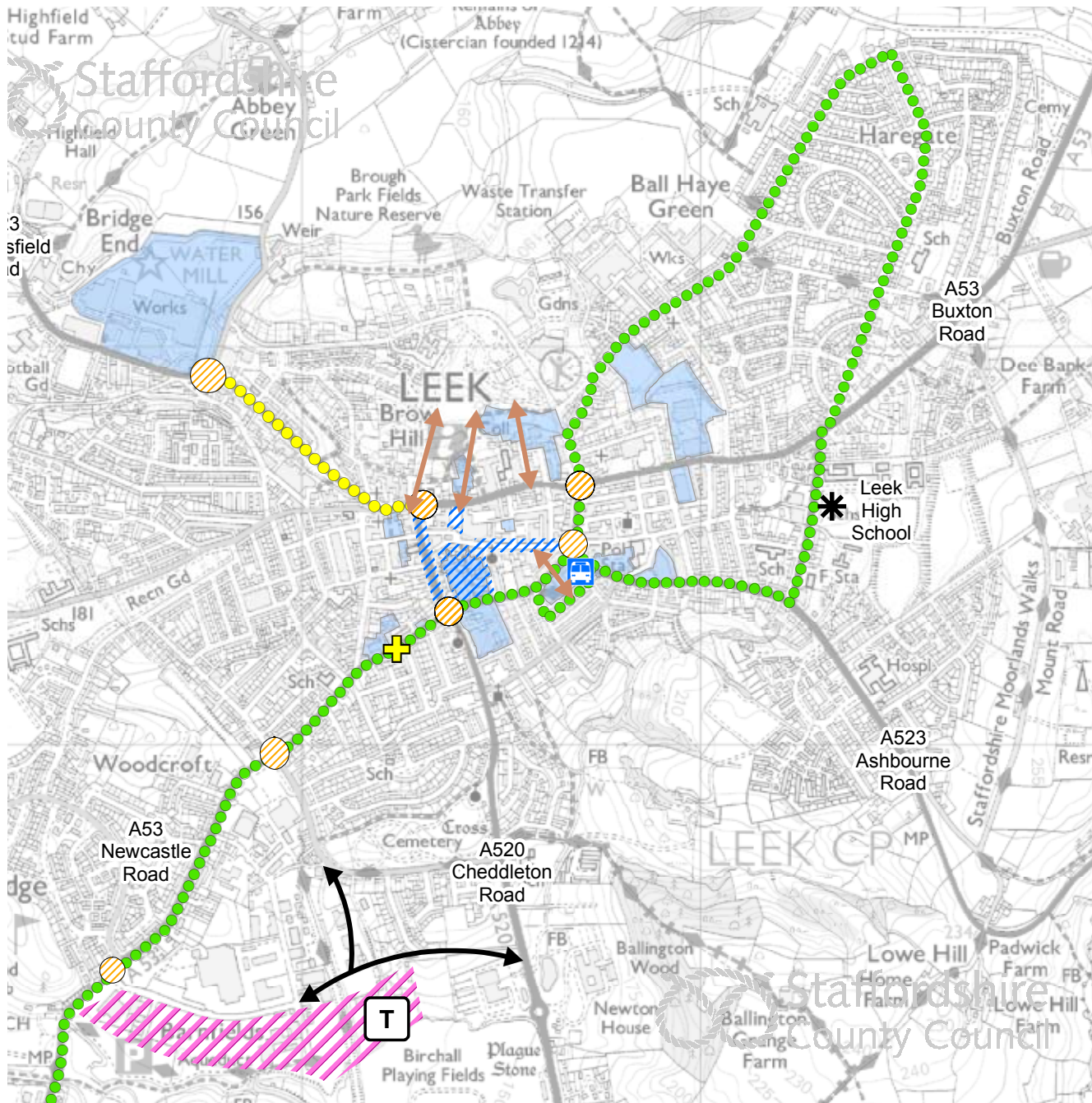
Transport Framework

A Transport Framework has been developed to guide the future direction of access and movement policy within the Town Centre. This seeks to rectify the issue of pedestrian severance between the retail core and the outer residential areas caused by the busy 'inner ring-road' system. It also seeks to address traffic congestion and improve the publicly owned car parking offer.

A number of key messages have emerged in the Framework and these are summarised below:

- Improvement to three key junctions to address traffic congestion and pedestrian severance. These could include possible redesigns to provide signalised junctions at the north end of St Edward Street and at the eastern end of Derby Street and the addition of pedestrian phases to the signal junction at the south end of St Edward Street
- Consolidation of the current number of dispersed, relatively small car parking facilities within the Town Centre by creating strategically placed car parks at four gateways to the Town Centre. This would include the opportunity to remove car parking from Market Place and improved directional signage
- Pedestrian severance addressed through a series of measures including enhanced pedestrian crossings at key junctions; improved and new crossing facilities on Stockwell Street, Brook Street and St Edward Street; relocating car parking at Pickwood Road to be underneath the development and allow a better pedestrian flow above ground
- Upgrade of public transport infrastructure, designating Brook Street/Haywood Street as a quality bus corridor with investment in associated bus stop facilities; replacing the existing bus station with a new build facility integrated with the enhanced Smithfield Centre.













This broad framework has fed into Staffordshire County Council's Draft Staffordshire Moorlands Transport Strategy 2011-2026 which is illustrated in the Leek Local Transport Package diagram overleaf.



DRAFT

Leek

Local Transport Package

-  Junction Improvements
-  Reconfigured Bus Station
-  Pedestrian Crossing Facility
-  Potential Tourist Hub with Improved Public Transport Links
-  School Time 20mph Zone
-  Potential Options for New Highway Access
-  Bus Access Improvements (Leek to Hanley)
-  Bus Access Improvements Linked to Proposed Development Site
-  Improved Pedestrian Links
-  Cornhill & Barnfields Regeneration Areas
-  Potential Development Sites
-  Public Realm Enhancements / Traffic Calming Improvements

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NOT TO SCALE



Draft Local Transport Package (SCC)

Planning Policy

The Masterplan will help inform the Core Strategy for Staffordshire Moorlands which sets out a vision for the District to 2026. Once adopted as an Interim Policy Statement (IPS), the Masterplan will be used by the District Council as material consideration in development negotiations. It will also provide a useful tool for procuring funding or negotiating developers contributions, as well as negotiating improved design outcomes on planning applications.

The Masterplan proposals will, where appropriate, be adopted through the Site Specific Allocations Development Plan Document, which will ensure they are embedded within the District Council's LDF.

Making It Happen

The Masterplan proposes development for fifteen Opportunity Sites, as well as new Public Realm and Transport Infrastructure interventions for Leek Town Centre. This would see 17,698 sqm of new retail and office space; circa 204 new dwellings; a new hotel, education and leisure facilities, together with refurbished residential and office properties. Around 928 car parking spaces would be retained or provided.

The developments could generate some 1200 new jobs, one third associated with retail activity. The overall indicative development costs total approximately £80 million. Of these, the Public Realm and Transport Infrastructure proposals represent around £7 million.

Successful implementation of the Masterplan will require sustained and co-ordinated commitment. This will be needed from not just the District Council, but also partner agencies, key stakeholders and others with interest in Leek.

Adoption of the Masterplan as an IPS will ensure it forms part of the District Council's LDF. The development principles should also be set out as policies within any Development Plan Document to ensure that Leek becomes a well-designed, attractive and vibrant Town Centre.

Control over the key development areas, through land ownership, is important to the successful delivery of the priority projects and the regeneration of Leek Town Centre. For some of the Opportunity Sites the landowners' aspirations accord with the Masterplan's objectives. For these there is therefore no need for intervention through land assembly activity. For sites where land is already mostly in public sector control, the acquisition and assembly of additional land ought to be relatively straightforward. However, any negotiated approach must be backed by the District Council's commitment that Compulsory Purchase Order powers will be used if necessary.

Next Steps – Key Actions for the Immediate Future

Progress on regeneration must continue to be driven by the ongoing engagement of the Masterplan Steering Group – but with a changed emphasis away from policy towards programme delivery.

A 'Town Centre Champion' will need to be secured from the local business community, to be supported by Key Senior Officers with the resources, skills and political support necessary to focus on driving the programme forward. The 'Champion' could be an individual or groups of individuals committed to the well-being of Leek Town Centre.

The role of the Town Centre Champion will be to oversee project management, dealing with implementation, co-ordination and funding issues. The Town Centre Champion will also address ongoing publicity and consultation, ensuring that the overall strategic aims of the Masterplan are maintained through the quality of completed projects.

Membership of the existing Steering Group needs to ensure inclusion of delivery skills – notably in property, design and project management. This may involve public sector officers or external consultancy involvement. Engagement with stakeholders outside of the Steering Group will need to be further developed, including key landowners, developers and local businesses.

The Masterplan, once adopted by the District Council, will be used as material consideration in development negotiations. The District Council will need to challenge existing policy in order to deliver the vision for Leek Town Centre prior to the IPS being adopted.

This Masterplan will therefore prioritise over existing policy, internal procedures and practice, where they are in conflict with aspirations for the Town Centre.

Key projects for the immediate future will include:

- Preparing development briefs for key sites
- A review of the District and County Councils' land and property ownerships and legal interests associated with the Opportunity Sites and establish policy/approach to their contribution to future development
- Preparing design guidance for individual areas
- Consultations with SCC and Leek Town Council on possible future roles and contributions to implementation and management
- Developing and designing further measures to mitigate traffic impact around the Town Centre.



Opportunity Site	Proposed Use	Economic Outputs				Development cost Estimate (£)	Timescale	Delivery Risk
		New Floorspace, sqm	Refurbished Floorspace, sqm	No. of New Dwellings	New Jobs			
California Mill Area	Offices	232	836	-	67	1,100,000	Medium Term	High
	Education	3716	-	-	-	6,700,000	Long Term	Medium
Former British Trimmings Area	Residential (Extra Care)	3900	-	50 (Extra Care)	n/k	7,000,000	Short Term	Low
Easton House and Surrounding Area	Offices	4400	-	-	275	7,500,000	Long Term	High
	Industrial	1174	-	-	37		Long Term	High
	Residential	5110	-	50	-	6,000,000	Short Term	Low
Portland Road Mill Area	Industrial	2200	2973	-	69	5,700,000	Medium Term	High
London Mill/York Mill Area	Hotel	-	2090	-	25	3,200,000	Long Term	High
	Residential	-	1765	25	-	2,100,000	Long Term	High
War Memorial Area	Leisure	-	696	-	54	500,000	Medium Term	Medium
	Offices	464	-	-	29	600,000	Medium Term	Medium
	Residential	-	1207	18	-	1,500,000	Medium Term	Medium
	Car Park	-	-	-	-	600,000	Medium Term	Medium
Smithfield Centre and Bus Station	Retail	1579	575	-	79	1,700,000	Medium Term	High
	Car Park	-	-	-	-	500,000	Medium Term	High
Compton Mill Area	Offices	-	4645	-	-	4,200,000	Long Term	High
	Retail	-	1207	-	60	500,000	Long Term	High
	Residential	2046	3576	70	-	6,500,000	Medium Term	Low

Opportunity Site	Proposed Use	Economic Outputs				Development cost Estimate (£)	Timescale	Delivery Risk
		New Floorspace, sqm	Refurbished Floorspace, sqm	No. of New Dwellings	New Jobs			
Pickwood Road Area	Retail	4737	-	-	237	4,900,000	Long Term	High
	Offices	1254	-	-	78	1,700,000	Long Term	High
	Car Park	-	-	-	-	1,200,000	Long Term	High
Former Broad Street Garage	Offices	929	-	-	58	1,300,000	Short Term	Low
Land to rear of St Edward Street	Residential	1161	-	16	-	1,700,000	Short Term	Medium
High Street Car Park Area	Car Park	-	-	-	-	800,000	Medium Term	Medium
Market Street West Car Park Area (now Market Street East Car Park)	Leisure	205	-	-	16	200,000	Medium Term	Medium
Foxlowe Site	Office	-	557	-	35	50,000	Short Term	Low
	Leisure	-	603	-	16		Short Term	Low
	Residential	371	-	4	-	400,000	Short Term	Low
Premier Garage	Retail	464	-	-	23	400,000	Long Term	Medium
	Office	464	-	-	29	700,000	Long Term	Medium
	Residential	1690	-	21	-	2,300,000	Long Term	Low

INTRODUCTION

1



Context

Leek is the administrative centre for the District of Staffordshire Moorlands. It is the largest population centre (19,915 population). It is situated in the north east of Staffordshire close to the south west boundary of the Peak District National Park. Although a market town sitting in a rural hinterland, during the industrial revolution Leek became a textiles manufacturing centre. The mills from the town's textiles era still influence the Town Centre landscape.

Leek lies approximately 10 miles north east of Stoke-on-Trent, the closest major conurbation. The nearest connection to the national motorway network is 15 miles south west, Junction 15, M6 at Clayton. Despite this Leek is just over 10 miles from the A50(T) Stoke to Derby road, which provides a link between the M6 and M1 motorways. It is well connected by A road routes to Macclesfield (and Manchester); Buxton; Ashbourne (and Derby); Stoke-on-Trent and Stone.

Aims and Objectives

In June 2009 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (the District Council), Advantage West Midlands (AWM) and Staffordshire County Council (SCC) commissioned Masterplans for the Town Centres of Cheadle and Leek.

The overall aim of the commission is to identify a complementary set of development opportunities that will stimulate economic growth through private and public sector intervention. The Masterplans will direct the District Council and other partners' approaches to improving the two Town Centres. The Masterplans will also inform the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF).

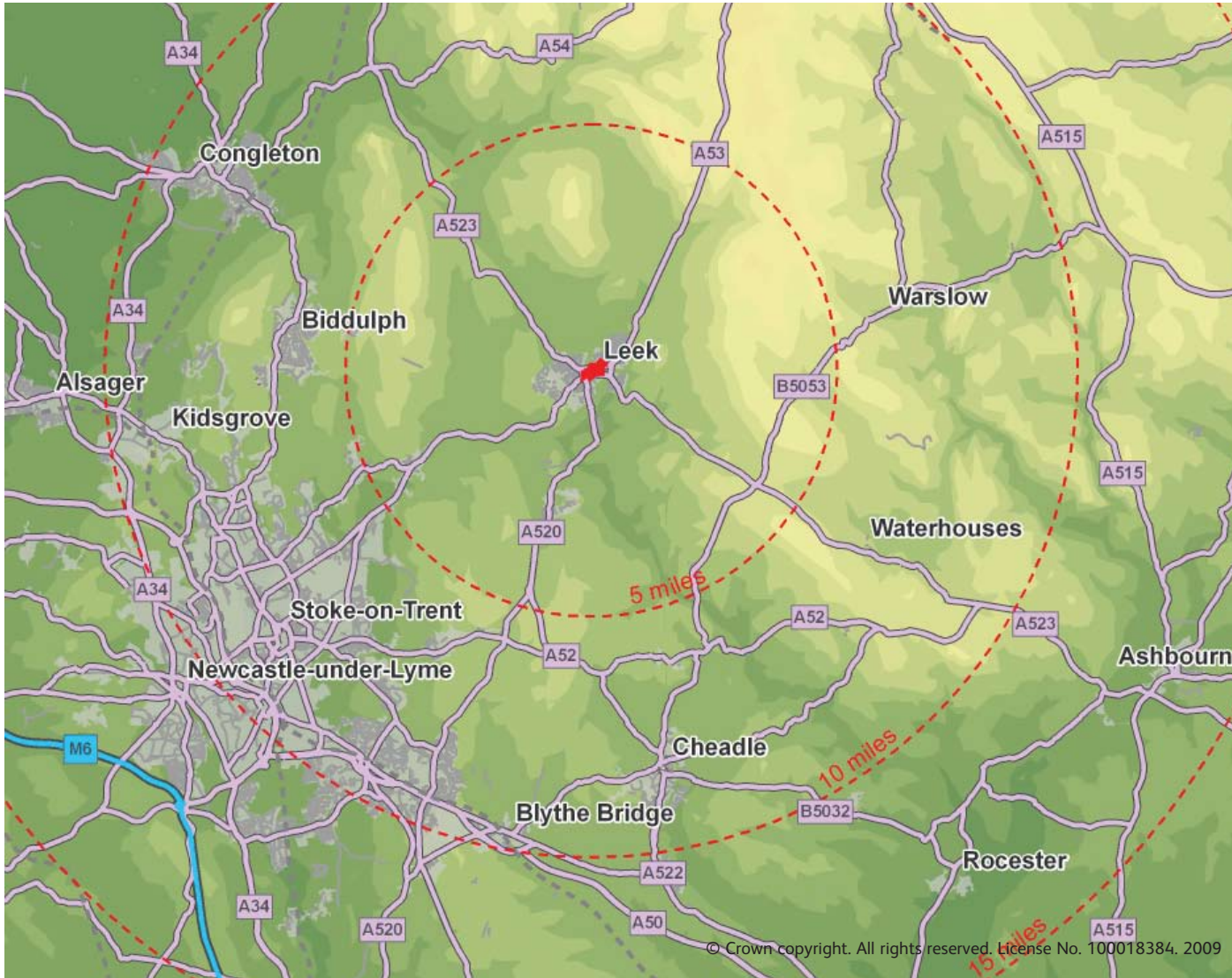
Three key objectives are set for both Masterplans:

- Strengthen the retail and service hubs of Cheadle and Leek
- Identify the potential for increasing resident and visitor expenditure and reduce the leakage of expenditure to other centres
- Identify employment opportunities through the redevelopment of vacant and underutilised land, properties and mills and enhancement of existing property.

Additional objectives specific to Leek are:

- Prepare clear proposals for ensuring that pedestrian movement is improved between those areas that are performing significantly below their economic potential (e.g., St Edward Street) and those currently receiving the highest levels of footfall (e.g., Derby Street)
- Identify the existing geographical cluster of antiques and reproduction furniture retailers/workshops (centred around the junction of St. Edward Street and Brook Street/Broad Street) and suggesting how the economic impact of this area could be improved
- Identify ways to physically link the Town Centre more strongly with Brough Park
- Recommend improvements aimed at increasing the connectivity and economic impact of Leek bus station
- Identify suitable uses or enhancements for the defined Opportunity Sites.

The consultants appointed to undertake the work are a multi-disciplinary team led by BE Group, planning, property and regeneration consultants; Taylor Young, a company of regeneration practitioners, planners, urban designers, landscape architects and architects, and transportation and movement experts Aecom.



Leek Local Context Plan

This Masterplan document relates to Leek Town Centre. A separate document addresses Cheadle Town Centre.

Process

The process of developing the Masterplan has been intense, encompassing a wide range of activities aimed at:

- Understanding the national, regional, sub-regional and local perspective
- Appreciating the trends and forces at work, both locally and in the global economy
- Identifying the needs and aspirations for the future
- Setting the direction and mechanism for meeting the requirements of the brief.

Key elements of the process have included:

- Technical research of local, regional and national material on a wide range of subjects including sustainable urban growth, design and built form, future transport systems and new approaches to providing civic amenities and facilities
- Local area analysis of the built form, urban design, public realm, transport, landscape and property
- Consultation with local stakeholders
- Regard to other existing or emerging proposals and projects.

Each of these elements has been considered in the context of the need to reinforce Leek within the sub-region in defining it as an interesting and distinctive place to live, work, shop and visit.

The Masterplan report represents the final stage of a progression of documents. The following supporting documents have been produced as part of this process, and should be read in conjunction with the Masterplan report:

- Appendix 1 - Consultation Report
- Appendix 2 - Baseline Report
- Appendix 3 - Capacity assessments
- Appendix 4 - The Options
- Appendix 5 - Sustainability appraisal

Feedback has been recorded from the Councillors and Stakeholders Workshops and public consultation events held at the baseline collation, options and draft Masterplan stages of the process, and is included in the Consultation Report.

All of the feedback and documents have played a key role in establishing the overall vision, direction, identifying and testing specific projects and proposals throughout the Masterplan preparation period.

The Masterplan's preparation has been informed by the comprehensive baseline and evidence review, followed by the development of options in consultation with a wide range of local stakeholders, including residents. The consultation process is outlined in the Consultation Report (Appendix 1) and follows the principles of the District Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

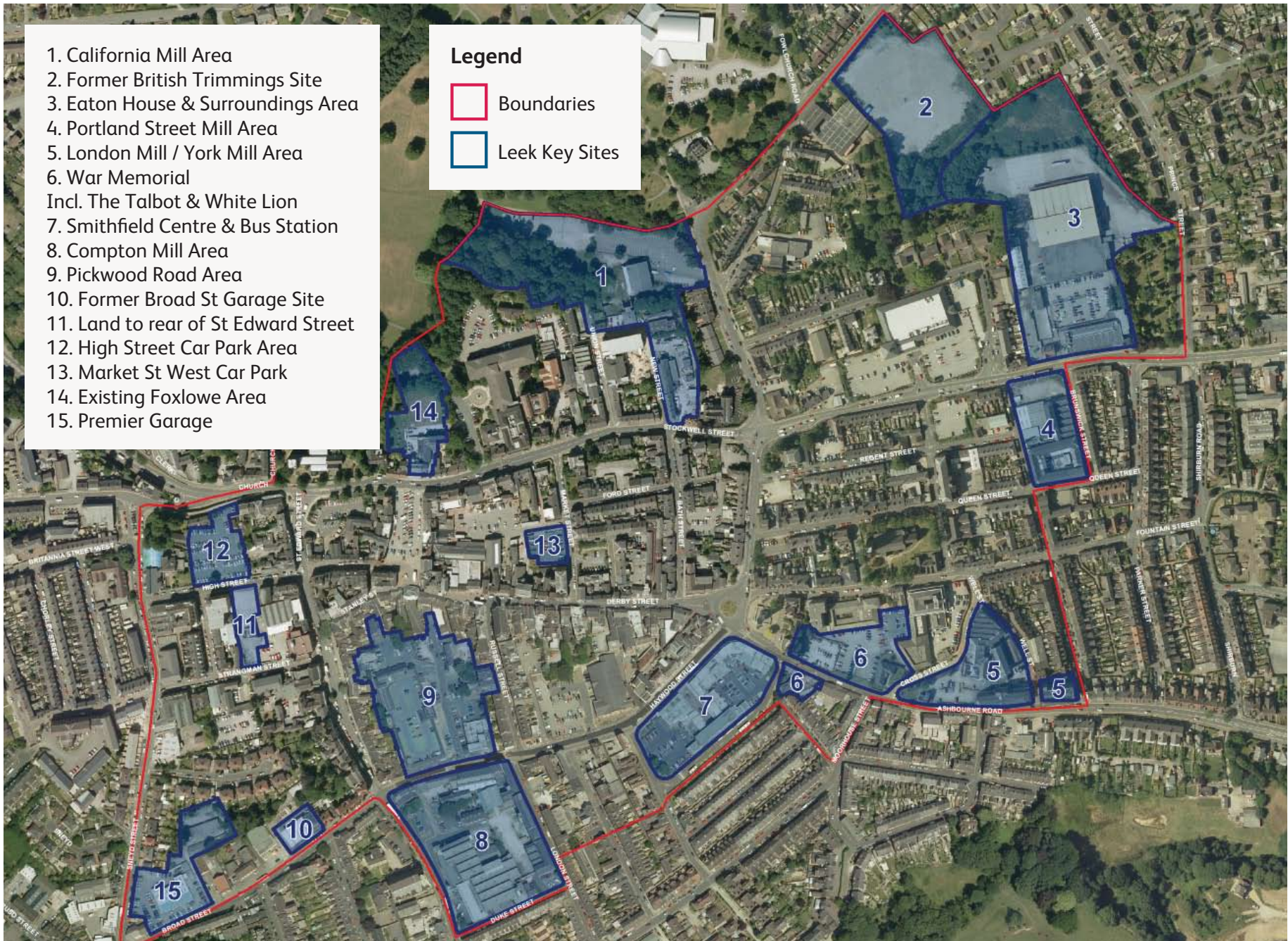
Local communities, users of Leek Town Centre, the District Council and SCC, officers and councillor groups, businesses, land and property owners and developers have all played a vital role in the development of this Masterplan. They have all taken part in events to establish the overall vision and direction. The events formed part of the consultation process that identified and tested specific projects, options and ideas.

The consultation process included the following key events:

- Public Launch Consultation - 4 August 2009
- Stakeholders Workshop - 2 September 2009
- Councillors Workshop - 2 September 2009
- Leek Chamber of Trade Workshop - 8 September 2009
- Stakeholders Workshop - 29 September 2009
- Councillors Workshop - 29 September 2009
- Public Consultation (Design Options) - 14 October 2009
- Leek Chamber of Trade Workshop - 19 November 2009
- Councillors Workshop - 2 December 2009
- Leek Chamber of Trade Workshop - 2 December 2009
- Public Consultation (Draft Masterplan) - 9 December 2009

- Councillors Discussion – 8 September 2011
- Leek Chamber of Trade Discussion – 26 October 2011
- Councillors and Stakeholders Visioning Workshop – 16 May 2012

At these consultation events a list of different options/projects were generated, informed by the baseline research, discussions, best practice and professional knowledge and experience. The options considered each of the thirteen Opportunity Sites identified in the Masterplan brief, plus two additional sites that emerged during the baseline evaluation stage (see Agreed Opportunity Sites and Amended Boundaries plan opposite).



Agreed Opportunity Sites and Ammended Boundaries

Assessment involved analysis against the agreed objectives, reviewing how well each of the options performed with respect to meeting the objectives. Other strands of the assessment considered the deliverability of the options, involving broad financial, property demand, land ownership and policy considerations.

This process enabled the emerging Masterplan proposals to develop.

The Options and Masterplan proposals were put on display at the public consultation events in October and December. They were also displayed at unmanned exhibitions at Moorlands House, and on BE Group's website. A questionnaire was available at each of these events to enable the public to voice their views and opinions.

The Masterplan provides the basis for taking forward a shared vision for the future of Leek's Town Centre. It is this independent ownership that gives the Masterplan its greatest chance of success and establishes the basis for implementation.

The Purpose

The purpose of the Masterplan is to:

- Provide a clear and robust urban design framework to guide future development and redevelopment
- Identify the potential to increase resident and visitor expenditure, and reduce expenditure leakage to other centres
- Define appropriate land uses for fifteen identified Opportunity Sites in the Town Centre
- Improve Town Centre linkages

- Address sustainable transport issues, including the role of Leek bus station
- Inform development of an implementation strategy to facilitate the delivery
- Identify potential sources of funding.

The process in developing this Masterplan has been substantial. It has encompassed a wide range of activities so that the new vision for Leek's Town Centre can be delivered.

Report Structure

The rest of this Masterplan report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 **Challenges and Opportunities** presents the pertinent issues as set out in the baseline evidence included within the Baseline Report
- Section 3 **Consultation** sets out an outline of the consultation process and identifies how this can be taken forward into the future
- Section 4 **Vision and Strategy** sets out the key principles behind the proposals, as agreed during the course of the process
- Section 5 **The Masterplan**
- Section 6 **Development Principles** provides design guidance for future development, sets out the broad concepts underlying the Masterplan and public realm framework, as well as the overarching urban design principles
- Section 7 **Transport Framework** provides a transport strategy for Leek Town Centre

- Section 8 **Making it Happen** draws together key findings of the Masterplan (including land ownership, viability, phasing and investment partners) and summarises the key next steps.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

2



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Street, Stockwell Street, St Edward Street and Brook Street. This provided the base for the analysis in terms of uses and occupancy levels. An associated survey of businesses and research into demand has added qualitative information.

The Town Centre is seen as the principal shopping and service centre providing services to the whole of Staffordshire Moorlands. Retailing patterns are influenced by the draw of Stoke-on-Trent and Macclesfield, as well as Buxton and Ashbourne. Leek's retail catchment area extends predominantly north and east including Meerbrook, Upper Hulme, Rudyard, Warslow and Wetton.

The primary retail area comprises the north end of St Edward Street, Stanley Street, Sheep Market, Market Place, Derby Street, the Smithfield Centre and the southern ends of Haywood Street and Ball Haye Street.

The secondary retail area comprises High Street, Strangman Street and the rest of St Edward Street to the west; Brook Street to the south; Market Street, Bath Street, Stockwell Street to the north; and finally, the start of Fountain Street and Ashbourne Road to the east.

These streets are dominated by local independents, some of which are good quality businesses aimed at the visitor/tourist sector e.g. antique stores. The larger format food supermarkets are sited off Buxton Road. The Co-op and Aldi particularly stand out as independent destinations detached from the principal shopping area of Derby Street. Morrisons is excluded as it is located outside the study area.

Leek continues to be a market town, with a strong indoor and outdoor market function. The District's 2006 Retail Study identified that in terms of captured spend Leek performs best for convenience goods. Its primary catchment area retains 85 percent of available spend. In the outer zones this falls to around 25 to 33 percent, still a respectable proportion considering the draw of other locations. It does less well for comparison goods, capturing from the primary catchment area only one third of non-bulky and bulky goods spend. In part this may be because of a lack of modern units which are capable of satisfying retailer requirements i.e. regular, good size units of circa 150-250 sqm.

Leek has a high percentage of independent traders (around 80 percent) and a notably below average share of national multiples. This gives the town a more distinctive branding offer. It is not at risk of being characterised as part of 'Clone Town Britain'. The Town Centre appears to be faring better in the economic recession than many others. The vacancy rate for retail properties, at 6.5 percent was half the national average at the time of the baseline audit (August 2009).

Reflecting its role as the primary service centre for the District, Leek has a good mix of banks, financial advisers, solicitors and estate agents. These are strongly represented on Derby Street, although they do not necessarily contribute to the vibrancy of the shopping experience.

Context

The Leek Town Centre study boundary identified in the Masterplan brief (for plan see Page 7) is roughly defined as the area within the four major road junctions and just beyond, including all public/private town centre services and amenities. Whilst there is no Town Centre boundary defined in local policy documents the Masterplan study area includes designated Town Centre shopping streets (a saved policy from the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan) as well as areas of residential and, to a lesser extent, employment uses. Much also lies within the Leek Conservation Area, the character of this being a key asset, based on a historic street pattern, historic buildings, nineteenth century mills and Market Place.

Property Analysis

The Baseline Report (Appendix 2) produced an up to date picture of ground floor uses within the core of the Masterplan study area i.e. Derby

Much of the Town Centre's property is either owner occupied or owned by private investors/ individuals. Also, due to the size of properties and their relative small lot size (in terms of investment value), vendors are likely to place their properties in an auction, where they can expect a quick transaction and perhaps realise a better price from an uneducated purchaser. Indeed, over 80 percent of the sale transactions recorded during the last five years has been at auction.

There is limited recent investment transaction evidence. Details of three investment sales for properties in Derby Street, Haywood Street and Fountain Street (sold at auction during 2006 and 2007) show strong yields of between 4.3 and 5.3 percent. These compare well with the general investment market for well let, high street retail investments in similar towns. The most recent transaction, recorded in mid 2008, reflects the onset of the recession in that the yield had weakened to 7.9 percent.

The Town Centre retail offer faces a number of challenges. Although the indoor Butter and Trestle Markets continue to perform well, the outdoor market is struggling. Around half the businesses surveyed during the baseline stage consider both trade and footfall has declined over the last five years. This is twice as many as those who believe there has been an increase. The more peripheral areas of the Town Centre appear to be worse affected, highlighting the need for the Masterplan to address how better retail circuits might be created. There is need to improve the comparison goods offer i.e. non-food goods. This is particularly so for clothing, with only one national clothing outlet in the Town Centre at the time of the research.

Local Property Market

Despite Leek's administrative centre status, office market demand for the Town Centre is limited. It relates to public sector and private sector financial and professional services provision. Supply is dominated by converted industrial mills accommodation. There is a lack of modern, speculatively constructed space.

There are some industrial/workshop premises within the Masterplan area. One of the largest, Eaton House forms an identified Opportunity Site considered for alternative land uses.

Whilst there are some leisure facilities within or adjacent to the Town Centre, there is widespread recognition of the need to connect Leek's visitor attraction appeal to an improved evening economy offer. Existing attractions are primarily daytime ones, with the evening economy largely limited to local pubs and takeaways. There is strong public demand for the provision of a new community arts facility to be located in the Town Centre.

Despite being the principal town in Staffordshire Moorlands there is very limited hotel provision within or adjacent to the Town Centre. There are only 30 rooms spread across five establishments.

Town Centre living is a strong element of Leek Town Centre. There are areas of residential accommodation on all streets except Church Street and Silk Street. Much of the provision consists of terraced housing, although there are clusters of semi-detached and detached properties. Although there are no new residential developments within the Town Centre, planning consents have been granted for the conversion of two properties, to create apartments and town houses.

The LDF Core Strategy proposes that almost one third of the District's total housing allocations to 2026 should be located in Leek. This represents around a 25 percent increase in the local population. The opportunity, and challenge, will be to attract these new residents to use the Town Centre facilities during both the day and night time.

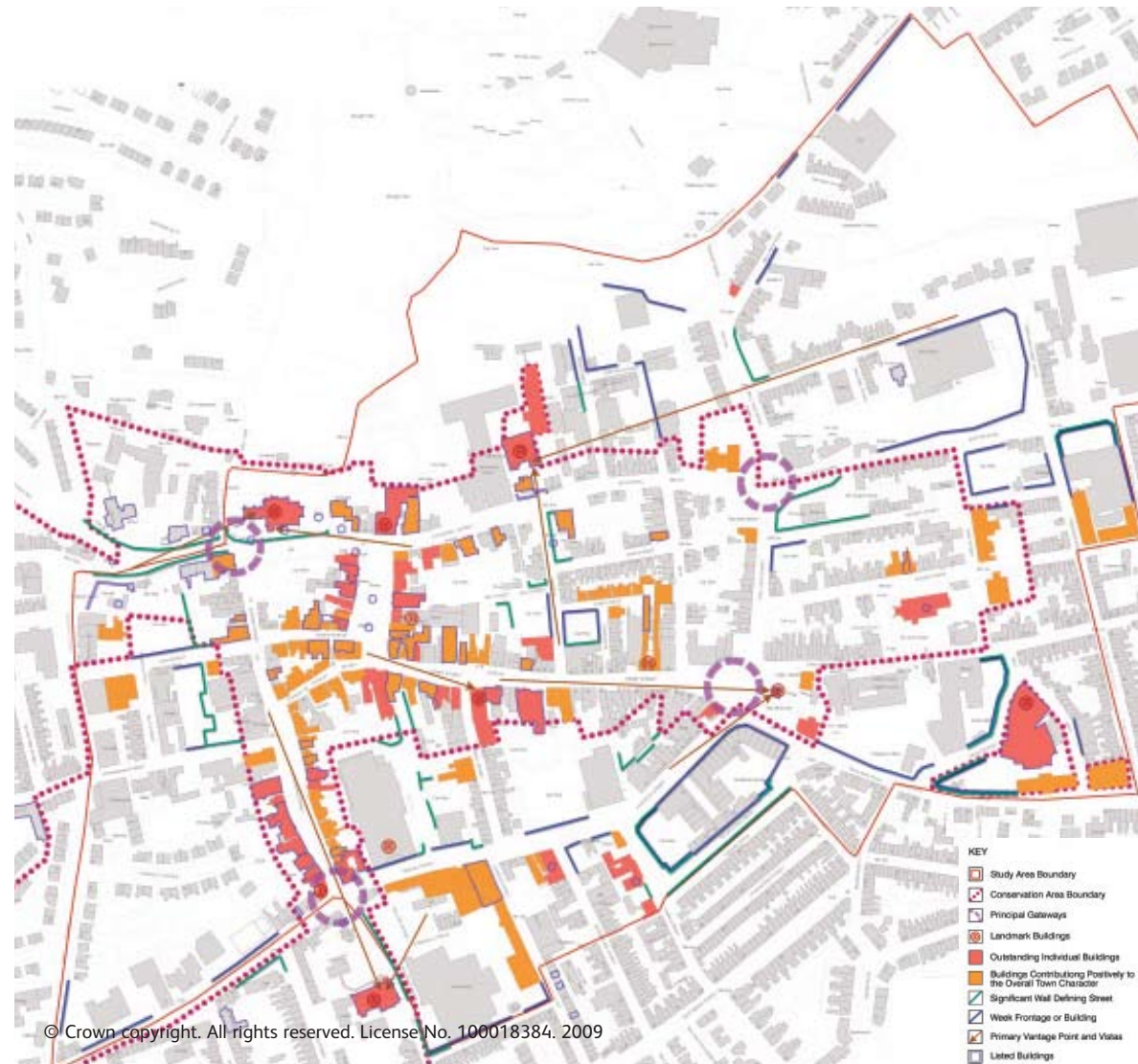
Townscape Analysis

Leek has a strong historic core with a number of outstanding buildings contributing to the overall character. The historic core is focused around Market Place and St Edward Street. Reflecting the number of high quality listed, and significant, buildings that are distributed throughout the Town Centre, most of the Town Centre comprises a Conservation Area.

The Town Centre's rectangular form has created a principal movement network which constrains and influences use and perception of the Town Centre. There are major gateways at street intersections, but these are traffic dominated, creating poor pedestrian environments, severance and a poor sense of arrival.

The main shopping focus is Derby Street, with several small alleys and side streets connecting to large format retailing. Associated with Derby Street is Market Place, a focal point and key destination because of its continuing use as an outdoor market. A second focal point is formed by the Derby Street/Fountain Street roundabout. This area includes the iconic Nicholson War Memorial.

Topography is a major factor for the study area. It determines the local character, street form and views, and dominates sites. Most of the Town Centre core sits on a plateau, with surrounding areas falling away from this point. The large changes in level can be most clearly seen along Brook Street. A further 'valley' exists to the north of the Town Centre beyond the Stockwell Street corridor. This 'valley' defines the southern edge of Brough Park and has a tendency to discourage connection with the Town Centre.



Townscape Plan

Topography influences the lack of connection between Leek's townscape assets and its strong historic core. The lack of coherent signage and orientation also contribute to this.

The summary of the Town Centre's public realm is:

- The important public spaces, such as Market Place and Nicholson War Memorial, are affected by roads, creating severance issues and diminishing the quality of these spaces
- Derby Street requires some upgrading, but is a relatively comfortable area for shoppers. However, connections to the large retail format area at Pickwood Road are poor
- The main roads through the Town Centre, including Brook Street/Haywood Street, St Edward Street and Stockwell Street are heavily dominated by traffic. Poor overlooking, relatively narrow pavements and high degrees of enclosure created by tall buildings, can make an unpleasant place for pedestrians
- Street trees and other green infrastructure are lacking. These could help to enhance, soften and define certain public spaces
- The topography creates changes in level, which may deter local people from walking to and from the Town Centre
- Connections to the public car parking areas are poor and may feel unsafe in the evening.

Specific key features, illustrated on the plan overleaf, are:

1. Nicholson War Memorial and gateway

The Nicholson War Memorial is a prominent landmark in the Town Centre and a good aid to orientation. Roads wrapping around the War Memorial create separation and segregate this civic area from the shopping area and other prominent public space.

2. Bus station and station square

The transport hub is located to the rear of a small shopping square which has both benefits and drawbacks. The visual and noise issues associated with the bus station are masked by the buildings, however it gives a poor first impression of the town to visitors arriving by bus and maybe difficult to find to those unfamiliar with the town. The present concourse could also be perceived as an uncomfortable environment for people waiting, particularly in the evening. The pedestrianised area at the centre of the shopping square is fairly cluttered, the design of the space accommodates a large amount of seating and additional street furniture. The large number of items may have been included to discourage skateboarding or vehicular access.

3. Aldi car park

This car park is free for two hours to customers. The frontage onto Haywood Street is weak and adds to the fragmented nature of the street with larger units set in open areas of car parking. Although there is a connection through to Derby Street, this is not well overlooked and may feel unsafe in the evenings.

4. Brook Street/Haywood Street

This is a fairly unattractive traffic dominated environment. Waiting traffic, narrow pavements, poor overlooking and large buildings fronting the street creates a particularly uncomfortable environment for pedestrians, discouraging movement on foot along the street. There are well used connections north from Wilkinsons and Aldi to Derby Street, however these are not overlooked and are poorly lit and may feel unsafe in the evening.

5. Pickwood Road area and large format shopping experience

There is a considerable change in level across the Wilkinson site. This is taken up with a series of steep steps and ramps which create a constrained access point. The retail frontages face into the car park and not the street, which is fronted by a service entrance.



6. Market Place

Market Place is a small formal space well connected to the shopping area. There is a general market on Wednesdays and an Antiques market on Saturdays, on other days the space is well used for public parking. There are many attractive buildings fronting the space, the scale and proportion of these relate well.

The space is well connected to the wider areas; routes past the historic Butter Market and through the Trestle Market connect back to the Silk Street car parks. A pedestrianised section of Derby Street forms one end of Market Place and brings some additional vitality, acting as overspill for the market. Stockwell Street forms as the opposing edge; this is a busy main road and acts as a barrier to pedestrian movement beyond.

7. Silk Street car parks and connections to the Town Centre

These are the largest public car parks in the town. Though the car parks are well located for Derby Street, the quickest routes are through the historic markets surrounding Market Place; and these routes may not feel safe in the evenings. There are good views across the town and the surrounding areas from these spaces, providing good orientation points.

8. Getliffes Yard

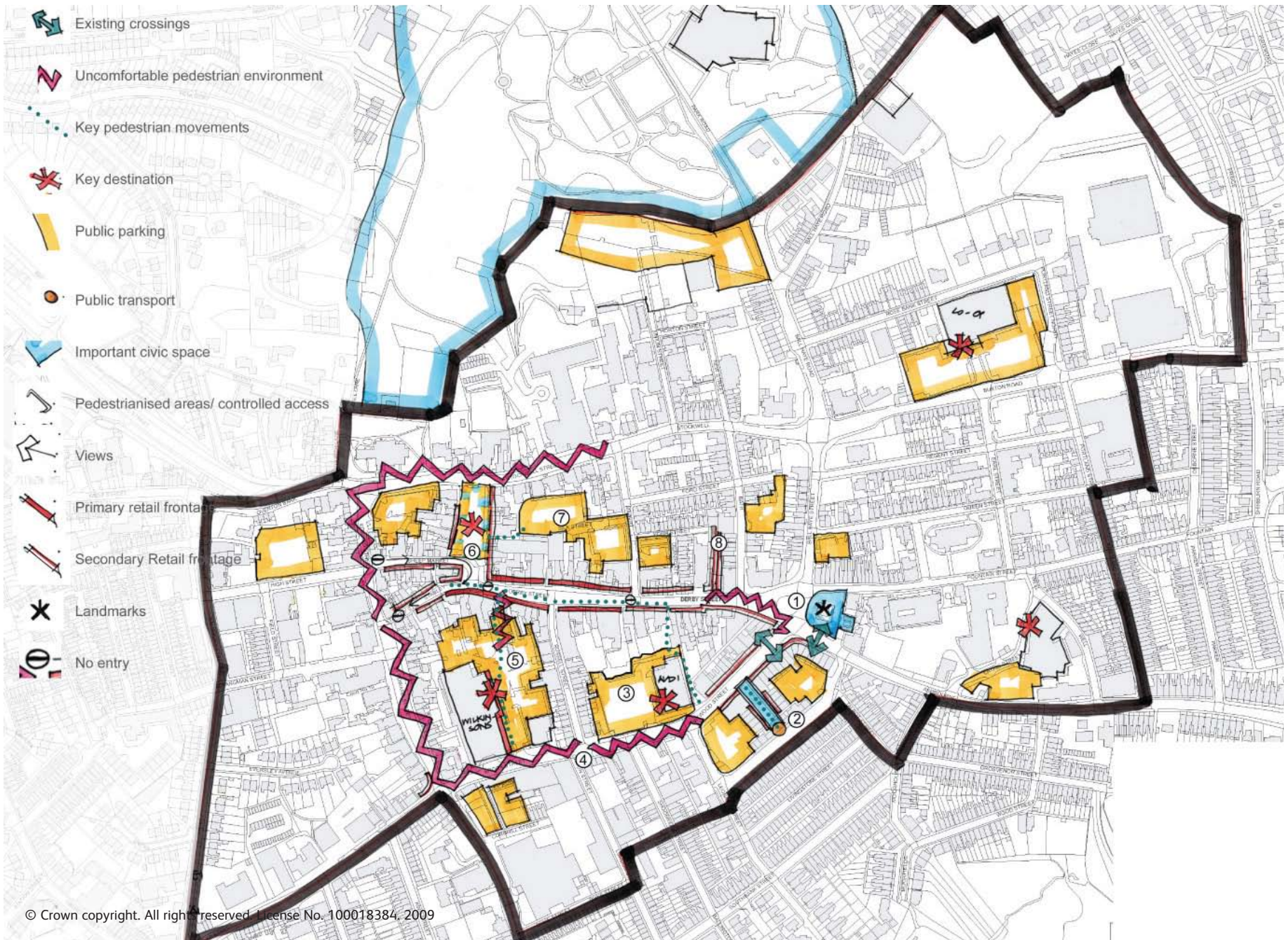
This is an attractive arcade space just off Derby Street offering a good environment for the small boutique shops.

9. Derby Street

This is the main shopping street. Controlled access creates a semi-pedestrianised zone for shoppers. It has good connections to the surrounding car parks and to the other large format shopping in the Pickwood Road area.

10. Brough Park

This large park is close to the Town Centre but separated from the shopping areas by busy main roads and poorly located access points.



Public Realm Analysis Plan

Access and Movement

Leek is located at the confluence of five primary routes. The A523 connects north westwards to Macclesfield (and ultimately Stockport and Manchester). It also continues through the Town Centre to the south east towards Ashbourne, where it joins the A52 towards Derby. The A53 passes through the Town Centre, to Buxton to the north east and south west to Stoke-on-Trent. This provides the most direct connection with the motorway network, joining the M6 at Junction 15, via the A519. The fifth primary route is the A520, which heads due south to intersect with the A50, Stoke to Derby and M6 to M1 link road.

Within the central area of the Town Centre a simple one-way system operates on Russell Street, Derby Street, Market Street, Ford Street and Bath Street. There is partial pedestrianisation on Sheep Market, Stanley Street and Derby Street. Facilities for pedestrians and cyclists are relatively sparse, particularly at some of the major road junctions. This creates pedestrian severance between the Town Centre and surrounding residential areas.

Leek does not have a rail station. There are aspirational proposals to reconnect the town to the rail network via a potential new station at Barnfields, south of the Town Centre, but this is at best some years off. As such all public transport journeys are currently bus related.

All bus services within the town serve Leek bus station which is located to the rear of the Smithfield Centre. There are a large number of routes, but most have low and irregular frequencies. There is a lack of evening services, with many services stopping after the evening peak period.

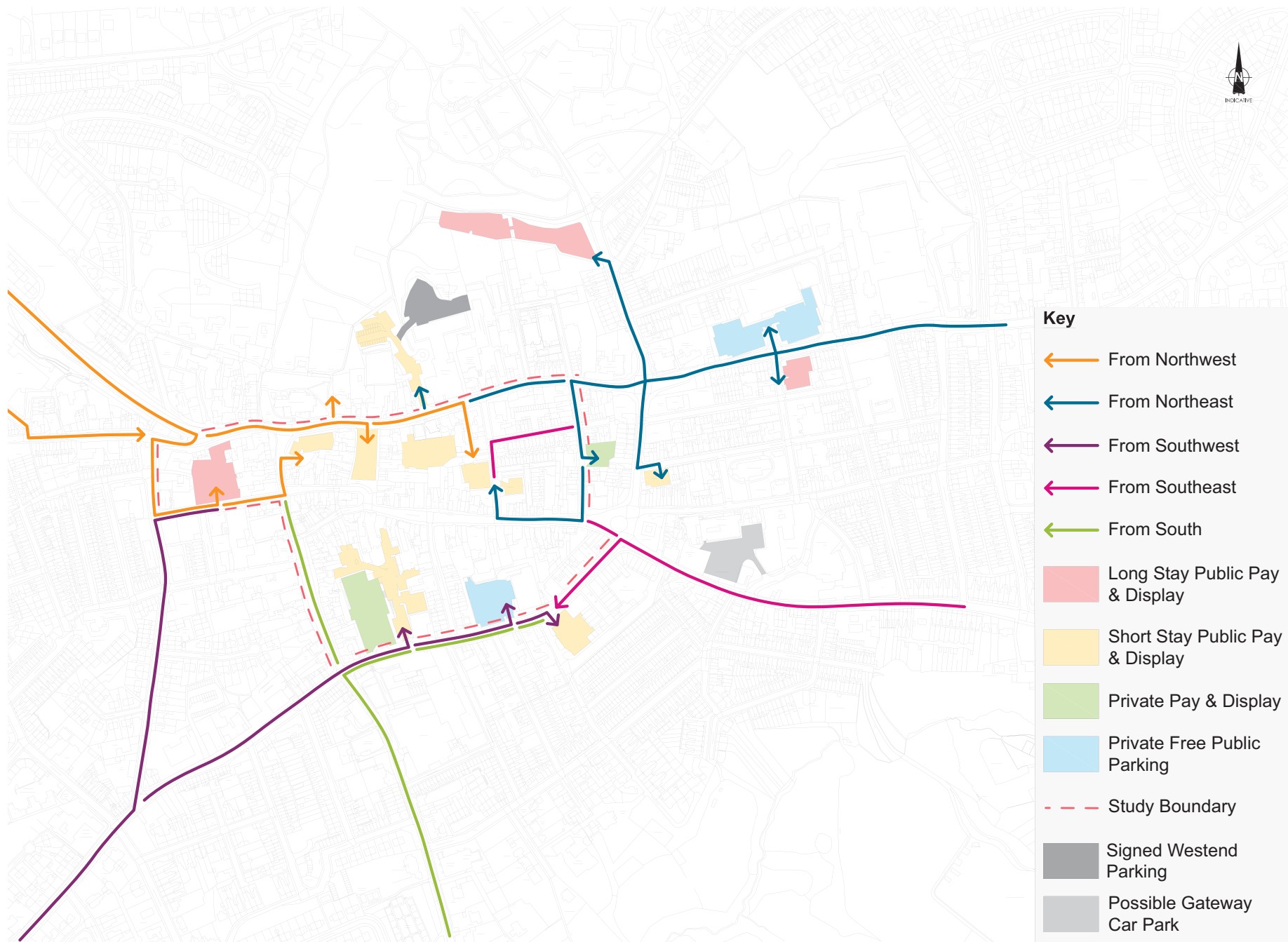
There are a number of Council-owned off-street car parks, although they are generally small and dispersed. Some are short stay only. Charges are fairly nominal (they apply only between 0930 and 1530 hours) and do not act as a particular deterrent to accessing the Town Centre by car. The central short stay facilities are generally well used, the more peripheral long stay provision less so.

Privately owned car parks are mainly larger facilities associated with specific developments. Those linked to large format retailing are well used. The private pay and display facilities provide a contrasting experience. In the case of the Pickwood Road multi-storey this is likely to be because of the more accessible surface car parking nearby.

There is short stay on-street parking within the retail core. This experiences high demand. Away from the retail core on-street parking is generally unrestricted and is used for a variety of purposes – local residents; Town Centre employees not wishing to pay; shoppers and other shorter stay Town Centre users. A car parking plan is shown overleaf.



Road Hierarchy Drawing



Car Parking

Summary SWOT Analysis

The following SWOT analysis presents a summary of the pertinent issues found in the baseline stage of this Masterplan.

Strengths

Retail Property Market

- A market town with a strong indoor market provision
- The primary retail destination for Staffordshire Moorlands
- Strong representation by independent retailers (80 percent)
- Vacancy rate half that of the national average
- Well represented with local services (banks, solicitors, estate agents, etc).

Local Property Market

- Key service centre for the whole of Staffordshire Moorlands
- Established market for town centre living
- Good range of community facilities within and adjacent to the Town Centre.

Townscape

- Significant number of townscape assets and a strong historic core
- Diverse skyline with strong character and sense of place

- High quality listed and significant buildings contribute to Leek's character, including Nicholson Institute and War Memorial
- Inclusion in 'Better Welcome' Programme, which has delivered new directional signage and tourist information boards
- Market Place is key focal point.

Access and Movement

- Established bus station facility
- Good road connections in all directions.

Weaknesses

Retail Property Market

- Declining outdoor market
- Low representation of multiple retailers
- Small floorplates of existing units constraints opportunities to attract national multiples
- Limited evening economy sector
- Town Centre sees high level of leakage to elsewhere, for comparison goods (especially clothes and footwear)
- Limited Sunday trading weakens attraction as visitor destination
- Perceived decline in both trade and footfall levels over the last 5 years
- Large format retail uses and associated surface car parking have tended to shift some retail focus away from the historic core areas of Market Place and Derby Street.

Local Property Market

- Few good quality offices.
- Limited office demand despite Leek being the administrative centre for the District
- No modern hotel provision and only 30 bedrooms (spread across a number of providers) within the Town Centre. Previous market review of the sector indicated little additional demand, despite proximity to the Peak District and Alton Towers
- No existing volume leisure facilities such as cinemas, bowling alley, theatre
- Fragmented property ownerships
- Limited capitalisation on the Town Centre's heritage and environment attractions
- No new residential developments in the Town Centre
- Lack of a community arts facilities.

Townscape

- Necessity to accommodate modern transport on historic street form has negatively impacted on the environment
- Poor sense of arrival at Town Centre gateways exacerbated by traffic domination, creating poor pedestrian environments and severance
- Pavements are narrow or non-existent in places Number and disposition of car parks has a negative impact on the spatial character of the Town Centre
- Poor linkage with Brough Park, even though parts are close to the Town Centre.

Access and Movement

- No rail station connection
- Pedestrian and cycle facilities are sparse and low in number for a town of Leek's size. There are no on or off-street cycle lanes or paths around the Town Centre.
- HGV traffic passing through the Town Centre creates congestion, and a perceived threat to pedestrians
- 'Inner ring road', topography and lack of controlled crossing facilities create pedestrian severance between the Town Centre and surrounding residential areas
- Infrequent, irregular bus services with little post-evening peak provision
- Existing car parking offer is poorly signed and contributes to additional movements on the road network. Some of the larger facilities have poor access, resulting in limited use
- Public transport infrastructure is generally poor. The bus station needs rejuvenation and most bus stops lack seating or shelters.

Opportunities

Retail Property Market

- High percentage of independents provides potential for a distinctive branding offer
- Development of the night time economy
- LDF Core Strategy proposes a significant quantum of housing and employment growth for Leek by 2026 that the Town Centre can respond to
- District Retail Study indicates additional capacity of over 19,000 sqm gross retail floorspace by 2016, based on an increased market share. At the current market share the need is for around 3400 sqm. The Core Strategy concludes 15,000 sqm is needed by 2026, with 80 percent being comparison goods.

Local Property Market

- Connect the Town Centre's visitor attraction appeal to an improved evening economy offer. Existing tourism assets are underplayed
- Strong public demand for provision of a new community arts facility to be located in the Town Centre, as an additional driver for the evening economy
- Socio-economic analysis identifies need to address how the Town Centre offer can attract and retain loyalty from a large younger population
- Opportunity Sites present scope for comprehensive redevelopment that could deliver appropriate Town Centre uses

Townscape

- Diversity of the existing townscape requires a range of different interventions from 'keyhole surgery' type improvements to more comprehensive facelifts and re-structuring
- Historic core, though working well, will benefit from focused interventions, especially public realm improvements to enhance linkages within the Town Centre and with existing neighbourhoods
- Gateway improvements at four major junctions to include, as a minimum, improved signage and orientation, but also fundamental improvements to the Nicholson War Memorial area
- Extend and enhance pedestrian areas (Market Place/Derby Street/Russell Street)
- Enhance existing and create new pedestrian circuits to encourage greater exploration of the Town Centre
- Introduction of a greater diversity of uses which could contribute to an increased stay and linked trips to the town
- Creation of green infrastructure that includes linking the underutilised asset of Brough Park back into the Town Centre.

Access and Movement

- Consolidate and simplify existing public transport into a smaller number of higher frequency bus services connecting to the various important hinterland destinations
- Long term aspiration to reconnect Leek to the rail network, bringing the former Stoke-Leek line back into use
- Create new signage strategy to redirect HGV traffic from the local industrial estates away from the Town Centre
- Comprehensive upgrade in the quality of public transport infrastructure
- Rationalise parking provision and introduce a comprehensive signage strategy.

Threats

Retail Property Market

- High independent representation does not necessarily equate to strong, viable businesses
- Free parking at out of town supermarkets, compared to charged spaces in the Town Centre, reinforces single destination trips at the expense of the Town Centre
- Existing traders who want to expand may relocate out of the Town Centre because of the lack of suitable, larger modern units
- Issue about the long term viability of the outdoor market may lead to its demise and reduce the strength of the 'market in the market town' offer.

Local Property Market

- Limited evidence of demand for offices in the Town Centre mitigates against additional footfall generated by Town Centre based employees
- Out of town office provision may be vulnerable to changes in the Financial Services sector. This could impact on jobs and investment in the Town Centre economy
- Failure to develop visitor/tourist sector facilities beyond the current, primarily daytime attractions. The Town Centre therefore lacks night time economy offer
- Brownfield site development opportunities for housing are constrained. There is mismatch between redundant mills and type of housing required.

Townscape

- Connections to some public parking areas are poor and may feel unsafe in the evening
- Lack of cohesion with public realm and management
- Lack of sustainability to main key assets, public art, etc
- Non-intervention results in decline in fabric of the Town Centre and contributes to downgraded attraction, investment and functionality.

Access and Movement

- Three key junctions need improvement and possible redesign
- Traffic around the Town Centre acts as major severance for pedestrians, and deters footfall, especially in the future from new housing developments
- Continued domination of private car threatens sustainable public transport provision. But continued lack of attractive, quality public transport offer leads to more car-borne journeys
- High levels of HGV and other through traffic add to Town Centre congestion and do not contribute to the economy
- Conflicting uses vying for limited road space around the Town Centre reduces the attractiveness for more vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists.

The SWOT analysis relates to the Retail Property Market, Local Property Market, Townscape and Access and Movement assessments contained in the Baseline Report. The assessment of opportunities and constraints is illustrated overleaf.

The following bullet points summarise the problems Leek Town Centre will experience should the option of 'doing nothing' be taken.

'Do Nothing' Option

Retail Property Market

- Retailer demand for modern units will continue not to be met
- Outdoor market continues to decline and then closes altogether
- Town Centre offer declines as out of town offer grows
- Town Centre and local economy continues to see high level of spend leaking to other locations
- Shopping circuits remain restricted and disjointed.

Local Property Market

- The Town Centre office market will remain focused on low quality stock with no opportunities for investment by larger employers
- The leisure provision will remain limited, and property that could serve in the development of the evening economy will not be available. This would include the continuing lack of a community arts facility
- Leek will continue not maximising the visitor/tourist potential of its heritage and environmental capital. This will include the continuing lack of modern hotel facilities

- The spend from Leek's expanded population (arising from planned housing growth) will be directed to other locations
- Although Town Centre living is a strength of Leek, and is likely to continue even if nothing is done, with no additional facilities provided there will be no reason for residents to invest in the local economy.

Townscape

- Lack of investment to the public realm will impact on the overall attraction of the Town Centre
- Lack of maintenance throughout the Town Centre will detract from its overall appeal
- Key assets such as the Nicholson War Memorial and Market Place will fail to achieve their full potential
- The existing pedestrianised areas will continue to be largely pedestrian-unfriendly, failing to fulfil their planned function
- If pedestrian links and circuits are not enhanced, some may continue to feel unsafe in the evening.

Access and Movement

- Through-traffic, especially HGVs, will continue to contribute congestion at key points around the Town Centre's 'inner ring road' system. It will particularly add to congestion at key street intersections and gateways, discouraging visitors from stopping in the Town Centre
- Public transport provision will continue to comprise poor quality infrastructure, information and services. This will challenge and discourage usage, further pushing people into their cars and increase congestion within the Town Centre, a problem that will worsen with increasing car ownership as is predicted by the National Traffic Forecasts
- Pedestrians and cyclists will continue to experience difficulties at the main gateways/street intersections, causing a reduction in the number of users able to access the Town Centre offer
- The Town Centre parking offer will remain poor and disconnected with the number of small car parks continuing to generate additional vehicular movements within the Town Centre as drivers hunt for vacant spaces.

This analysis formed the basis of the consultation events, allowing the public, key stakeholders and the District Council's Councillors and officers to begin to develop the options. The next section provides more details on the consultation events.

CONSULTATION

3



CONSULTATION



Consultation has formed a key part of this Masterplan process. National guidance and the District Council's Statement of Community Involvement (adopted in 2006) promotes community involvement at every stage and area of planning, encouraging all sections of the community to seize the opportunity to become actively involved in shaping Leek Town Centre.

Engagement from the outset of the Masterplan process has allowed the community to identify key issues and options. This section is a summary of the Consultation Report which is included in full in Appendix 1 of this report.

Consultation Events

The ongoing engagement of a range of interested parties has influenced the Masterplan. It has aided the baseline assessment, informed the draft strategic objectives and emerging options, and has contributed to the final option selection. It has also helped the understanding of the key issues, which the Masterplan has to address.

Engagement has been through a number of organised consultation and workshop events. These are listed opposite:

Baseline Assessment

- Business Survey - 4th August 2009
- Public Launch, Market Place and Moorlands House - 5th August 2009
- Stakeholders Workshop - 2nd September 2009
- Councillors Workshop - 2nd September 2009
- Leek Chamber of Trade Workshop - 8th September 2009.

Design Options

- Councillors Workshop - 29th September 2009
- Stakeholders Workshop - 29th September 2009

- Public Consultation, Market Place and Moorlands House - 14th October 2009.

Draft Masterplan

- Leek Chamber of Trade Workshop - 19th November 2009
- Councillors Workshop - 2nd December 2009
- Stakeholders Workshop - 2nd December 2009
- Public Consultation, Getliffe's Yard - 9th December 2009
- Councillors Discussion – 8th September 2011
- Leek Chamber of Trade Discussion – 26th October 2011
- Councillors and Stakeholders Visioning Workshop – 16th May 2012

At each stage details of the public consultation exhibition material and comments sheets/questionnaires were put onto BE Group's website to enable them to be downloaded and feedback to be emailed or posted. Exhibition boards were also left as unmanned displays in Moorlands House for two weeks at the baseline assessment and Design Options stages, and a month at Draft Masterplan stage. The Draft Masterplan was also exhibited at a vacant unit in the Smithfield Centre.

The feedback from these events is recorded in the Consultation Report, which incorporates analysis of the questionnaires completed by businesses (at the outset of the baseline assessment) and by respondents to the various public consultation events.

The main comments from the baseline testing stage were as follows:

Enhancing the Retail Offer

A variety of observations were made about the current and possible future retail offer of the Town Centre. For example, "The independent retailers help make Leek a distinctive place to visit" and "Leeks range of local, independent shops is what makes it different from the average Town Centre, and what attracts visitors to the town. This should be protected – we do not need lots of big national chain stores here."

Linked to the proposals for Churnet Works there is concern about further out-of-town retail development and the potential impact on the Town Centre. "I believe Leek and the surrounding areas have enough supermarkets.

The Sainsbury's development would perhaps take people away from the town, rather than support local small trading" and "No more supermarkets outside the centre of town or the town will be dead in the centre" were some comments received. Improvements to the Town Centre retail offer relate generally to attracting more shops and specifically to more outlets for young people, ladies clothing and children. Comments made included, "More shops for young people, e.g. Next, Topshop," "I go out of town to do my shopping because there is nothing for mature ladies and no children's shops either" and "More national chains balanced with independent retailers in the Town Centre." There is also a desire to see more specialist independent retailers.

A common theme amongst the community, stakeholders and business community is the need to expand trading hours during the weekend, in order to capitalise on the visitor market. As one consultee stated '75 percent of the shops close on Sunday, yet tourists come at the weekend'.

Managing Traffic and Parking

Traffic movement through and around the Town Centre was a universally highlighted issue. There is particular issue with congestion generated by through-traffic (especially HGVs). Typical comments were 'Leek needs a bypass to take through-traffic out' ... 'too much traffic in the Town Centre' ... 'Improve public transport in Leek to reduce the reliance on the private car'.

Businesses in particular expressed concern that the Masterplan does not reduce the current parking offer.

Rather there is a need for more parking or at least improvement to the current car park facilities, especially as there are only two long stay car parks and most car parks are small.

Improving Links and Movement in and around Leek

Comments from the community and businesses alike suggest action is necessary to deliver improved links to and within the Town Centre. Alleys connecting streets and the retail areas need improvement and it is important to encourage pedestrian flows between St Edward Street, Derby Street, Silk Street and Market Place to create a better retail circuit. Solutions suggested including pedestrian crossings at Broad Street/St Edward Street, Russell Street/Brook Street, and new crossings on Stockwell Street to connect with the Market Place and the College. Better signage is required.

There was universal agreement that links between the Town Centre and Brough Park should be addressed by the Masterplan... 'Brough Park is a missed opportunity. It should be made more accessible, the band stand refurbished, introduce night time lighting'.

Enhancing the Townscape of Leek

Leek's built heritage and its continuing protection through the Conservation Area status of most of the Town Centre is important. Comments received range from the need for stronger enforcement of planning within the Conservation Area to preserving the former mills - and finding new or better uses for them.

This extends to a resistance to change in the Town Centre and the belief ‘new things will spoil it’. Other comments included, “As a visitor to Leek we think the buildings’ character needs preserving above any other consideration” and “Retain beautiful buildings to retain the character.”

The consultations indicate that further public realm investment is required, especially around the Nicholson War Memorial, Derby Street, Market Place and Pickwood Road. This relates to surface treatments, more public seating, and greening in terms of street trees and flowerbeds. More public toilets are wanted beyond those at Silk Street and the bus station. Improvements are considered necessary to the existing pedestrianised areas of the Town Centre. Comments made include ‘historic buildings are beautiful but the street scene is detracting from their setting’... ‘The War Memorial is isolated by traffic and unattractive shops’... ‘Pedestrian areas are not pedestrian friendly’.

Broaden the Visitor and Cultural Offer

A common theme was the need to generate more supporting infrastructure in order to attract and keep visitors in Leek and provide cultural facilities for local residents. More accommodation, cafes, restaurants are required. A purpose built hotel could draw further spend into the local economy.

There is a desire for a community arts facility to be delivered, which could include a theatre, exhibition space and heritage facilities. In part because of its setting at the head of Market Place and in part because the property was available at the commencement of the baseline assessment, there was strong support for the Foxlowe being the location.

Opportunity Sites

The baseline consultations generated views and additional information about the thirteen Opportunity Sites detailed in the Masterplan brief. As a consequence two additional sites were introduced – Foxlowe because of its availability and strategic relationship with both the Market Place and Brough Park, and the Premier Garage site at the junction of Broad Street and Sneyd Street. The latter was included, although it remains in operational use, because of long term importance as a gateway site to the Town Centre. The boundaries of all sites were clarified to reflect ownerships or the inclusion of adjoining land or property.

These summary findings were then taken forward into the Design Options, consulted upon and then incorporated into the Draft Masterplan. This was also tested through workshops and a public consultation programme.

Comments received at these events are included in the full Consultation Report.

Skillsmart Location Model

Leek is one of fifteen West Midlands market towns included in a Location Model retail research programme conducted by Skillsmart Retail (the Sector Skills Council for Retail). This has been funded by AWM. The Model particularly addresses towns with a high proportion of independent retailers and where positive intervention could secure benefits.

The research was conducted during October and November 2009 with the objective of enhancing knowledge about retail skills and future challenges facing the independent retailer community in Leek.

The findings of the research programme reinforce messages gathered from the Masterplan baseline assessment:

- Greater emphasis on convenience and personalised customer service, with few comparison retail outlets
- A retail offer that is geared towards the value market which accounts for over 30 percent of Leek’s offer
- A good range of small independent retailers but few national multiples or specialist shops
- Poor directional signage to facilities within the Town Centre
- Low level of Sunday opening
- Stoke-on-Trent, Macclesfield, Ashbourne and Buxton capture shopping spend from Leek
- Limited tourism attractions and associated promotion within the town is lacking.

The highlighted findings from the baseline assessment have formed the Vision and the Strategic Objectives in the next section – Vision and Strategy.

VISION & STRATEGY

4





A Unique Place

Leek has qualities that make it a unique place and a classic English market town. It has the capacity to attract visitors and new residents from afar, in addition to having a considerable appeal as an independent shopping destination to people living in its vicinity. What makes Leek unique as a classic market town, is its industrial and architectural heritage, its topography and skyline, its location at the edge of a national park, a large number of independent shops and businesses and its offer of a potentially high quality of life.

When the opportunities identified within the masterplan, along with other development opportunities that may arise separately are realised, they will help reaffirm Leek as a local business, shopping and leisure destination and potentially increase the number of residents and others visiting the town centre. Additional visitors will provide Leek with the opportunity to extend the quality, quantity and diversity of shopping and leisure on offer and encourage further

investment in its historic buildings and spaces that will again make Leek an increasingly attractive place to live and work in. Making the most of these opportunities requires an understanding and recognition that Leek is a unique place with a proud Arts and Crafts heritage and that things that take place there should, as far as possible, also be unique and special in that tradition.

Successful market towns generally share common elements, many of which are already present in Leek and others will be developed and or rediscovered over time. These elements include a respect for heritage combined with modern standards, a thriving market(s) and niche or specialist shopping, a good selection of restaurants and bars, a vibrant cultural and leisure offer, including in the evening, links with the surrounding countryside and rural economy and the opportunity for residents to choose to do most of their daily business locally.

Aims

The outcomes from the previous two sections, **Challenges and Opportunities** and **Consultation**, have informed the preparation of the **Vision and Strategy**.

For these public aspirations to be implemented Leek Town Centre requires a vision to ensure that the District Council and its partners can realise the Centre's full potential as an attractive location for local people that contributes fully to the future prosperity of the sub-region.

The Masterplan sets out a clear strategy for change through development activity, environmental improvements and enhancements to accessibility. It seeks to reinforce the role of the Town Centre in the economic, social and cultural life of Leek.

The vision is intended to provide an overarching aspiration against which to assess the merits of development and new investment proposals, which emerge within the context of the Masterplan.

Leek is an ancient market town with a proud silk and Arts and Crafts heritage. The town centre will be the first choice for local people for shopping, working, services and leisure, and an obvious place to stop for visitors to the Peak District





Supporting Themes

There are eight supporting values or themes that underpin the vision:

1. A vibrant and friendly community providing an excellent quality of life.

Leek retains a strong sense of community and this should be supported. People choose to live in Leek because of the blend of urban/rural life and this should be protected and enhanced whilst recognising that there must be change if the town is to be regenerated. However, change must have respect for the unique character of the town centre to ensure the long term prosperity of current and future residents of Leek.

2. Protect, maintain and enhance the heritage of the town centre.

The heritage of Leek gives it an appeal to locals and visitors that is difficult for modern places to match. The market, silk and Arts and Crafts heritage means much to the local community and therefore should always be the cornerstone of its future development. Finding new uses for disused historic buildings should be a priority.

3. Attract and serve people from the local community and further away.

As a thriving market town, Leek needs to be the destination of first choice for those who live in the town and surrounding area for shopping, working, services and leisure. It must therefore provide an appropriate offer and range, including in the evening, that is valued by the local community and others so they choose to visit.



4. Maintain the ancient Market Place as the focus of the town centre.

At the heart of Leek town centre are the traditional and specialist indoor and outdoor markets. Valued by the local community and visitors, these should be supported to ensure that Leek maintains its reputation as a true market town.



5. Recognise Leek as a place for independent business.

Leek is unique with its emphasis on local and specialist independent shops and businesses offering high quality customer service and care, expertise and convenience. These shops and businesses, including the buildings they occupy, should be supported. New local start up businesses should also be encouraged to strengthen and diversify Leek's economy.



6. Be an obvious place to stop for visitors to the Peak District and other attractions.

Leek is more than a gateway to the Peak District and other destinations such as Stoke-on-Trent and Alton Towers, and should add to the quality of the experience offered by them. The town must therefore be easy to get to, attractive and welcoming on arrival, well maintained and clean and reflect the values of the Peak District National Park in particular.



The Role of Leek's Town Centre

Ultimately the purpose of the Masterplan is to help ensure that the vision is achieved and that Leek Town Centre fulfils its role as a distinctive, attractive and welcoming centre. Integral to this role are the requirements for the Town Centre to play a full part in the economic and social performance of the local and the wider environment.

This section of the Masterplan sets the overall agenda for Leek Town Centre. The following section defines a series of specific options for individual areas.

7. Provide a pleasant environment to spend time in.

Market towns must be attractive places to spend time in, particularly for recreational shopping to be successful. This will make the town centre attractive for people who live, work and study there, and to visitors. The town centre must also be easily accessible by those on foot, cycle, public transport and private car to be an attractive destination.

8. Nurture a 'mosaic' of attractive experiences around the town centre.

Different areas of Leek town centre have different characteristics and origin, and serve different purposes. A mosaic of well connected areas of the town centre, each with different experiences, will be developed in line with the overall vision. This will reinforce the diversity of the town centre and make it more interesting and attractive to those who visit it from locally and further away.

THE MASTERPLAN

5



At the heart of the Leek Town Centre Masterplan are a number of key interlinked projects, which have the potential to significantly enhance the Town Centre; to regenerate vacant and underutilised land and property; to strengthen the role as a retail and service hub; and provide opportunities to increase resident and visitor expenditure.

The Masterplan provides a holistic solution to the issues, challenges and opportunities identified through the various stages of the masterplanning process. These are summarised under the headings of 'Access and Movement', 'The Place' and 'Property'.

Delivery of this vision is guided by the following **strategic objectives**:

- To clarify and strengthen the car park offer. Longer term car parks to be associated with the four main gateways into the Town Centre. Retention of key short term facilities within the Town Centre. Improved signage and information to reduce 'space hunting' vehicular movements
- To redefine the four key gateway junctions, through the creation of more attractive entry points, with better signage and connections; new highway or junction modifications
- To address public transport infrastructure improvements. Refurbish the Town Centre bus station and provide seating and shelters as a minimum for bus stops
- To consider wider area road and/or rail network improvements. Plans to re-connect Leek to the rail network via a new station at Barnfields are supported
- To improve pedestrian and cycle connections. The enhancement of pedestrian crossings at key junctions, and creation of new crossings at Stockwell Street, Brook Street and St Edward Street will reduce severance between the Town Centre and residential areas
- To consider extending/enhancing pedestrian areas. Opening up the Town Centre to allow greater ease of pedestrian movement, and the development of new town squares responds to this
- To create enhanced and new circuits. Reduced conflict between road user groups, achieved through traffic calming measures and public realm improvements, and new pedestrian links facilitate better retail circuits
- To introduce a greater diversity of uses. Development of the Opportunity Sites will create new retail, residential, employment development and new and enhanced leisure and visitor attractions
- To create green infrastructure in the Town Centre. This is to be delivered through new street trees and planted areas, and improved connections to Brough Park
- To produce a comprehensive strategy that provides coherence to intervention areas, ranging from 'keyhole surgery' type improvements to more comprehensive restructuring
- To focus change that recognises the existing built form and character of the Town Centre – public realm improvements to enhance linkages and create a smooth transition between residential and Town Centre area.

The Masterplan has been formulated through careful consideration of the vision for the Town Centre, and the objectives and principles which formed the options, as seen in the previous section. They should be seen as a carefully considered range of proposals which collectively will enhance Leek Town Centre. They are not simply a series of land proposals for individual sites.



The fifteen identified Opportunity Sites have been tested against the following factors:

- Regeneration benefits for the Town Centre
- Financial feasibility costs and values
- Benefits to leisure and culture provision
- Benefits to the night time economy
- Likely access and movement impact
- Contribution to the Town Centre environment
- Timescale (e.g. will it be an easy win).

These projects build upon existing uses and enhance the range and scale of facilities, which the Town Centre offers to the people of Leek and the wider area.

Design Components

The Masterplan incorporates the following design components:

- Town Centre Core – This will incorporate a series of interlinked routes focusing on Market Place, Derby Street and Russell Street. Areas of major change proposed include redevelopment of Pickwood Road and redevelopment/regeneration of the Compton Mill area to the south of Brook Street
- Town Centre Links – An improved retail destination will be created at the eastern end of Derby Street, around the Nicholson War Memorial. This is to be achieved through a redesigned junction. It includes regeneration of the Smithfield Centre and Talbot/White Lion areas, together with enhancement of the Ashbourne Road gateway

- Town Centre East – Redevelopment of the Eaton House and British Trimmings sites for mixed use residential and employment areas
- Town Centre North – Extended and enhanced education uses together with gateway parking on the California Mill site. Leisure, employment and residential re-use of the Foxlowe site, together with enhanced connections to and from Brough Park
- Town Centre West – Gateway parking, residential, employment and retail uses on High Street, Rear of St Edward Street, Broad Street and Premier Garage sites.

The development and enhancement aspirations described above are also supported by a coherent strategy for pedestrian, cycle, public transport, servicing and general vehicular access. This in turn impacts upon the quality of environment created in enhanced streets and squares. The strategy incorporates a number of components.

Enhanced Streets & New Squares

The intervention proposed for existing and new streets and squares in Leek Town Centre can be summarised in the following categories:

- **Movement** - An enlarged shopping circuit and visitor route supported through new signage and its relationship with a range of new and existing destinations
- **Linkages** - Improved linkages on Stockwell Street, at the Nicholson War Memorial and St Edward Street, through a combination of raised pedestrian crossing points and new traffic light controlled junctions
- **Gateways** - A higher profile bus station, coach parking and gateway car parks positioned at strategic points to pick up all of the major arterial roads into the Town Centre
- **Streets** - Enhanced and improved environments on Derby Street, Russell Street and St Edward Street through new shared surfaces, quality new materials, control of parking and loading, and a new 20mph speed limit (Derby Street and Russell Street)
- **Squares** - A series of new and upgraded squares and interconnecting streets running north south between Market Place, Pickwood Road and Compton Mill and west/east between Market Place and Market Street East. There is potential to remove car parking from Market Place and Market Street East to create new public spaces for markets and other community activities.



The concept of the new streets and squares has regard to the work of the Leek Embroidery Society. The society was well known for the careful over stitching and embellishment of printed material to create beautifully opulent fabric. The focus was often the natural environment and artisans used not only pictorial references of nature but developed a range of organic dyes which directed the colours and character of their work. There is a strong analogy between the work of the society and opportunities to improve the public realm in the Town Centre. There is already a rich pattern of streets and spaces in Leek. With some sensitive additions the overall quality of the Town Centre could be lifted.

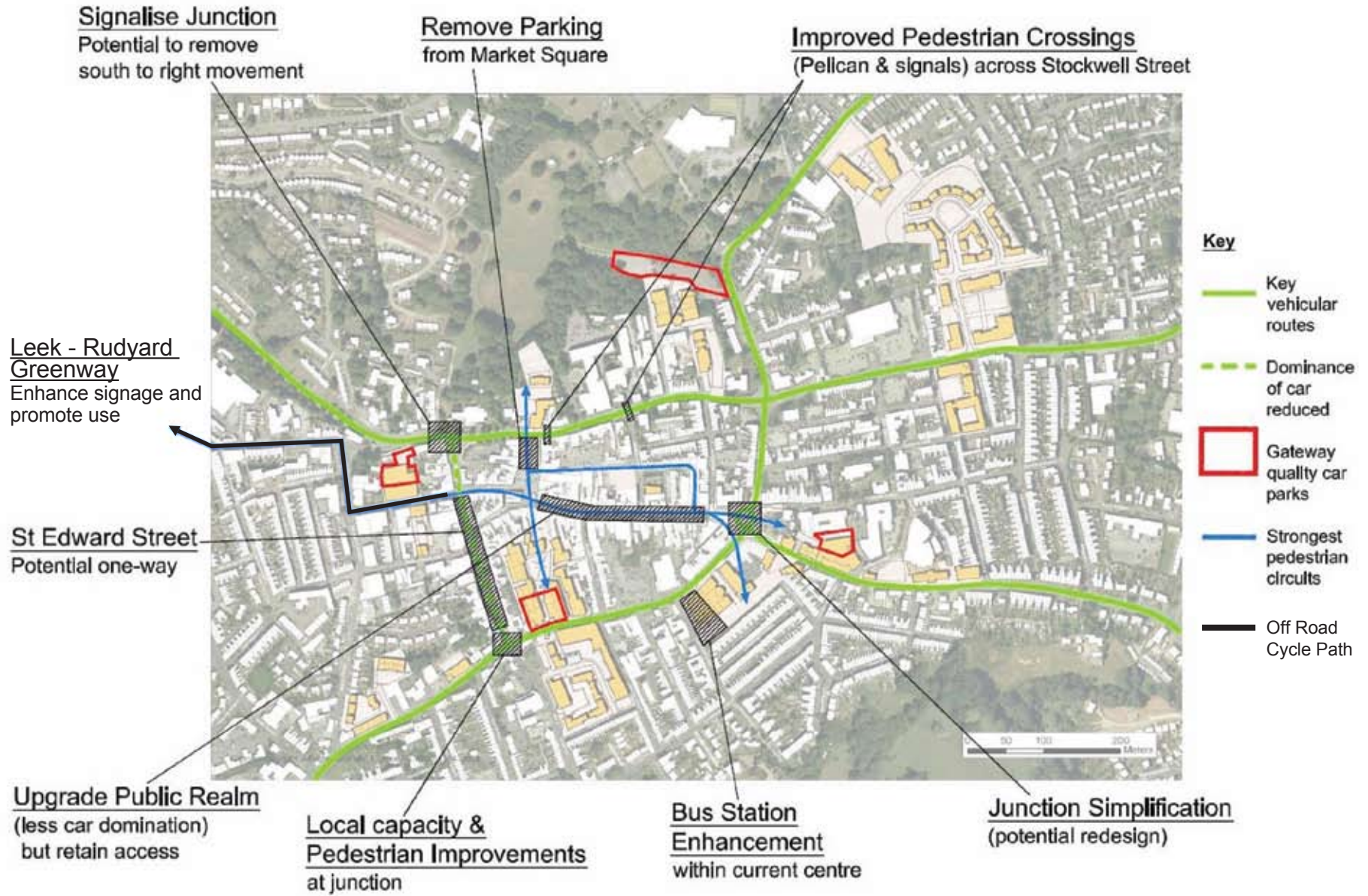
Interventions focus on four areas in Leek which it is suggested could be improved, namely:



1. Eastern end of Derby Street and Nicholson War Memorial
2. New square – introduced as part of the redeveloped Pickwood Road site
3. Market Place and crossing at Stockwell Street
4. St Edward Street.

Access and Movement

- Upgraded public realm on Derby Street and Russell Street
- Enhanced connections between the retail core and the Nicholson War Memorial Area
- Junction improvements at Brook Street/St Edward Street to remove severance for pedestrians
- Enhancements to bus station and surrounding area
- Improved pedestrian crossings on Stockwell Street to better integrate Brough Park
- Creation of four main gateway car parking areas.



Potential Transport Improvements

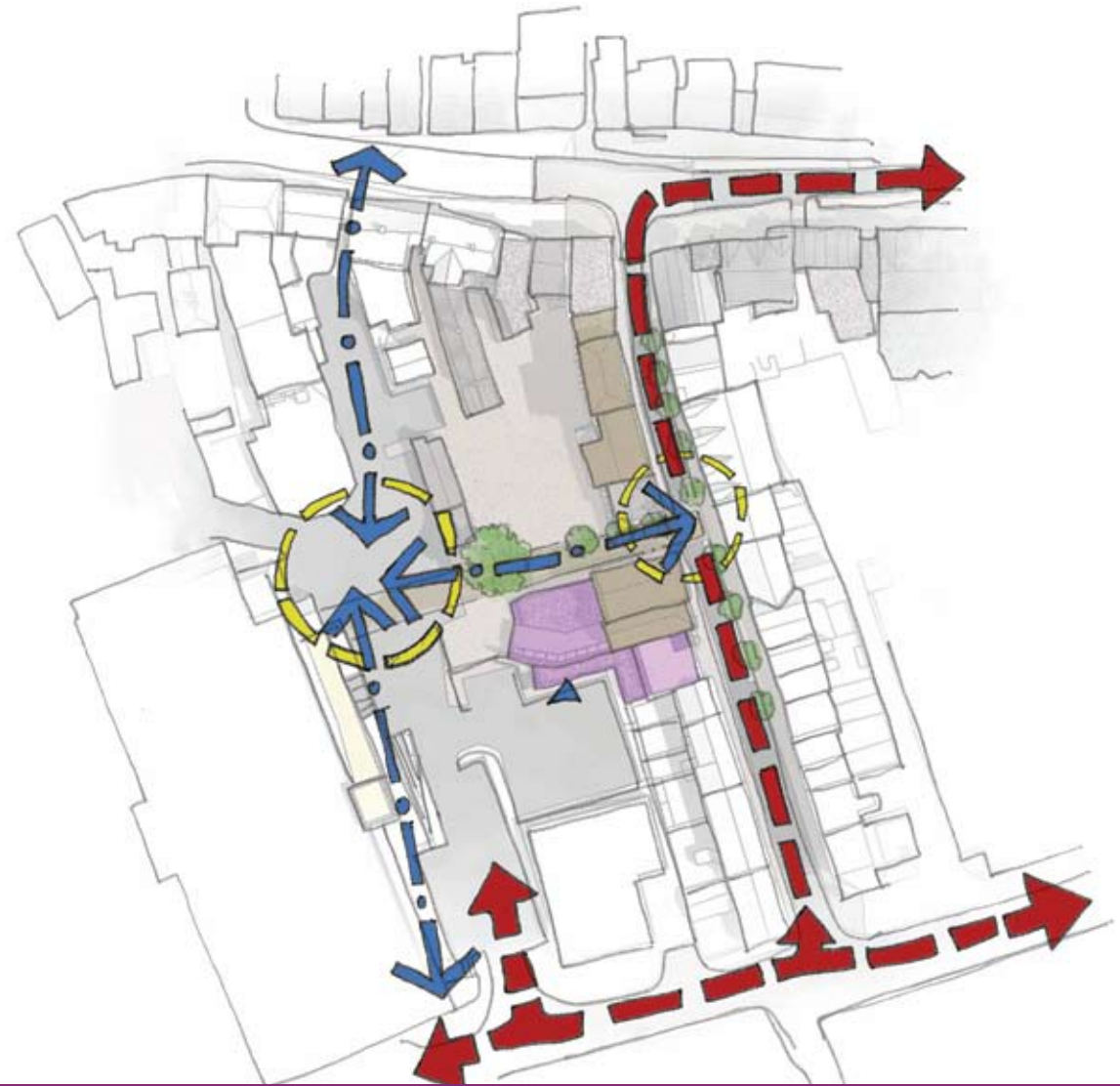
Town Centre Core (Market Place) and Town Centre West

The existing Town Centre core areas around Market Place will be greatly enhanced through development of the underutilised areas to the south. Parking will be removed from the Market Place. An increase in associated activities and availability of new commercial floorspace will further support a diversity of independent retailers in the Town Centre. New streets and squares will provide outdoor seating and meeting places alongside new buildings. The redevelopment of unused and potential future sites for new retail, housing, car parking and offices along the Broad Street and High Street frontages will be the principal change adopted in the Town Centre West areas.

The masterplan is advocating maximum intervention, which would see the comprehensive redevelopment of Pickwood Road area, the illustrations on the opposite page highlight how new retail and commercial space could be integrated into the existing fabric, strengthening links with Russell Street and developing improved retail circuits.



Town Centre Core (Market Place) and Town Centre West Plan



Russell Street Plan

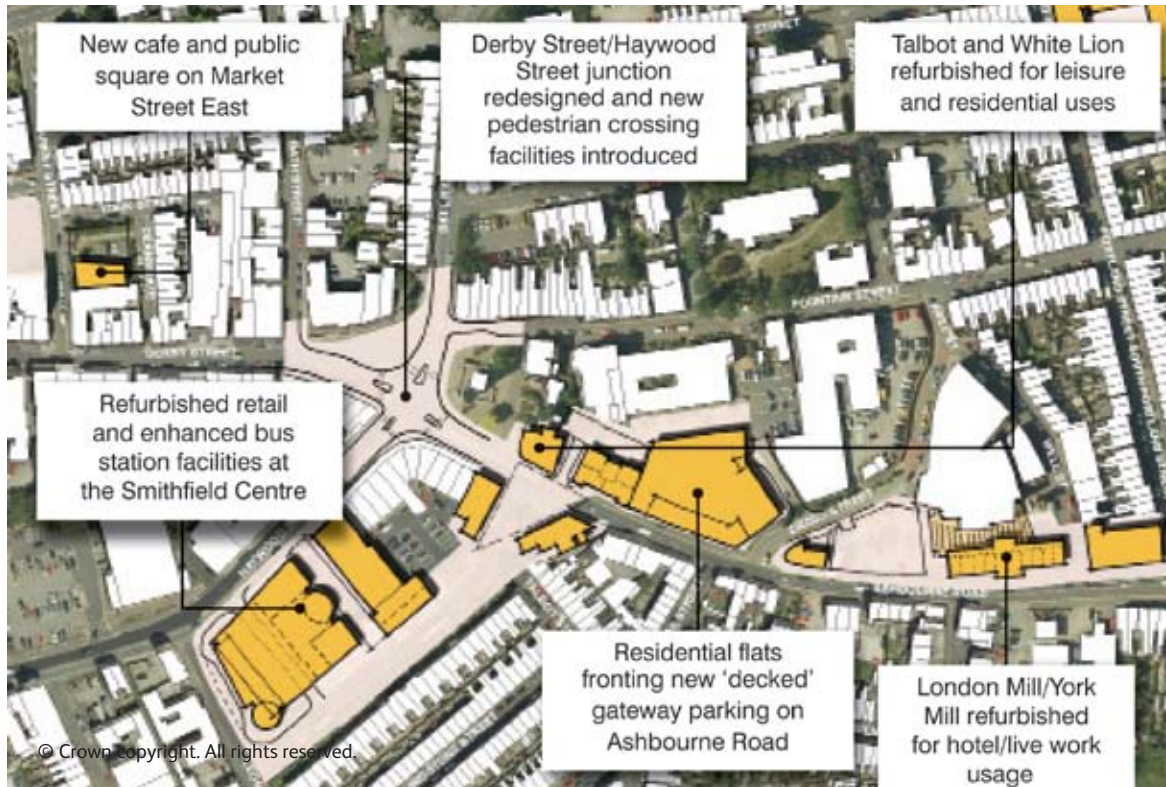
The potential re-use of key buildings on Russell Street could allow new retail users to come into Leek, this combined with improved connections would help integrate the top half of Russell Street with the main shopping circuit of Derby Street.

Town Centre North

A principal feature of changes proposed in the Town Centre North areas focuses around the enhancement of routes to and from Brough Park. This will be achieved through increasing the profile of existing assets such as Leek College, through increased education and business incubators development, and Foxlowe with leisure and office uses in this important local landmark. New residential development is proposed on the northern part of the Foxlowe site.



Town Centre North Plan



Town Centre Core (War Memorial) Plan

Town Centre Core (War Memorial)

Activities around the Nicholson War Memorial are presently affected by the impact of the existing road network. The Masterplan proposes radical changes to these areas together with extended pedestrian areas from Derby Street in order to achieve enhanced retail circuits and a consequent increase in activity. A redesigned junction will release land for additional pedestrian space and enable Fountain Street to be re-connected with Derby Street.

These issues will be further supported through a refurbished and extended Smithfield Centre, enlarged and improved bus facilities together with new leisure, hotel and retail uses.

Refurbishment, regeneration and redevelopment of a series of frontage properties along Ashbourne Road will enhance this eastern gateway to the Town Centre.

Town Centre East

The Former British Trimmings, Eaton House and Portland Mill sites provide opportunity to increase development that will contribute to the overall Town Centre activities. This will be in the form of improved office space and new housing within easy walking distance of other shops and services.



Town Centre East Plan

Following the public consultation, and in the lead up to determining the final Masterplan a number of events and changes have occurred.

These are summarised below.

- A planning application has been approved for 87 extra care flats with 52 car parking spaces on the former British Trimmings Site. This has been made by the site owners, Moorlands Housing. The development is due to come to site during the summer of 2012
- Hotel and residential uses rather than hotel and office use is now proposed for the London Mill/York Mill Area
- A private developer has submitted and secured consent for the conversion of Compton Mill, to create private residential apartments with supporting private extra care facilities. Five year consent granted from May 2010
- A joint agreement between Leek College and Derby University to expand the campus in Leek had been signed
- The Nicholson War Memorial was restored via a successful funding bid from the Heritage Lottery Fund during 2010/11
- The White Lion has secured planning consent for residential accommodation and one retail unit on the ground floor
- Sainsbury's successfully secured planning permission for a large scale mixed use development on the Churnet Works site on the edge of town during December 2010. The 278 and 106 agreements attached to the application have brought about significant changes to the public realm and traffic management issues at the main junction in the town centre core adjacent to the Nicholas War Memorial. Work began on these improvements in the town centre in June 2012
- Staffordshire County Council as a key landowner within the War Memorial area opportunity site, is engaged in discussions regarding options to maximize the potential and opportunities of the key gateway site
- A new charity has taken on the lease for the Foxlowe Building, opening the Fowlowe Arts Centre, which includes a gallery and café
- Outline planning permission granted for retail units on the Former Broad Street Garage site including A1 (non food retail) A2 (financial and professional services) and A5 (hot food takeaway) with access, car parking, servicing and landscaping.

The Final Masterplan shown opposite is supported through the 3D model image that follows it. This illustrates the potential quality of buildings, public open space and mix of uses in the proposed Town Centre Masterplan.

The Masterplan will eventually become a Supplementary Planning Document. The development principles in the following section should also be set out as policies within any Development Plan Document to ensure Leek is seen as housing a well-designed, attractive and vibrant Town Centre that reflects its function as the primary retail and service centre for Staffordshire Moorlands.



Leek 3D Overview

DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

6





The Leek Mosaic

The Mosaic Approach to Place Making

The idea underpinning the mosaic approach is that all town and cities, Leek included, separate into areas where businesses or uses of different types tend to cluster. Businesses do this to benefit from critical mass, as by locating close to each other, they are able to attract like-minded customers.

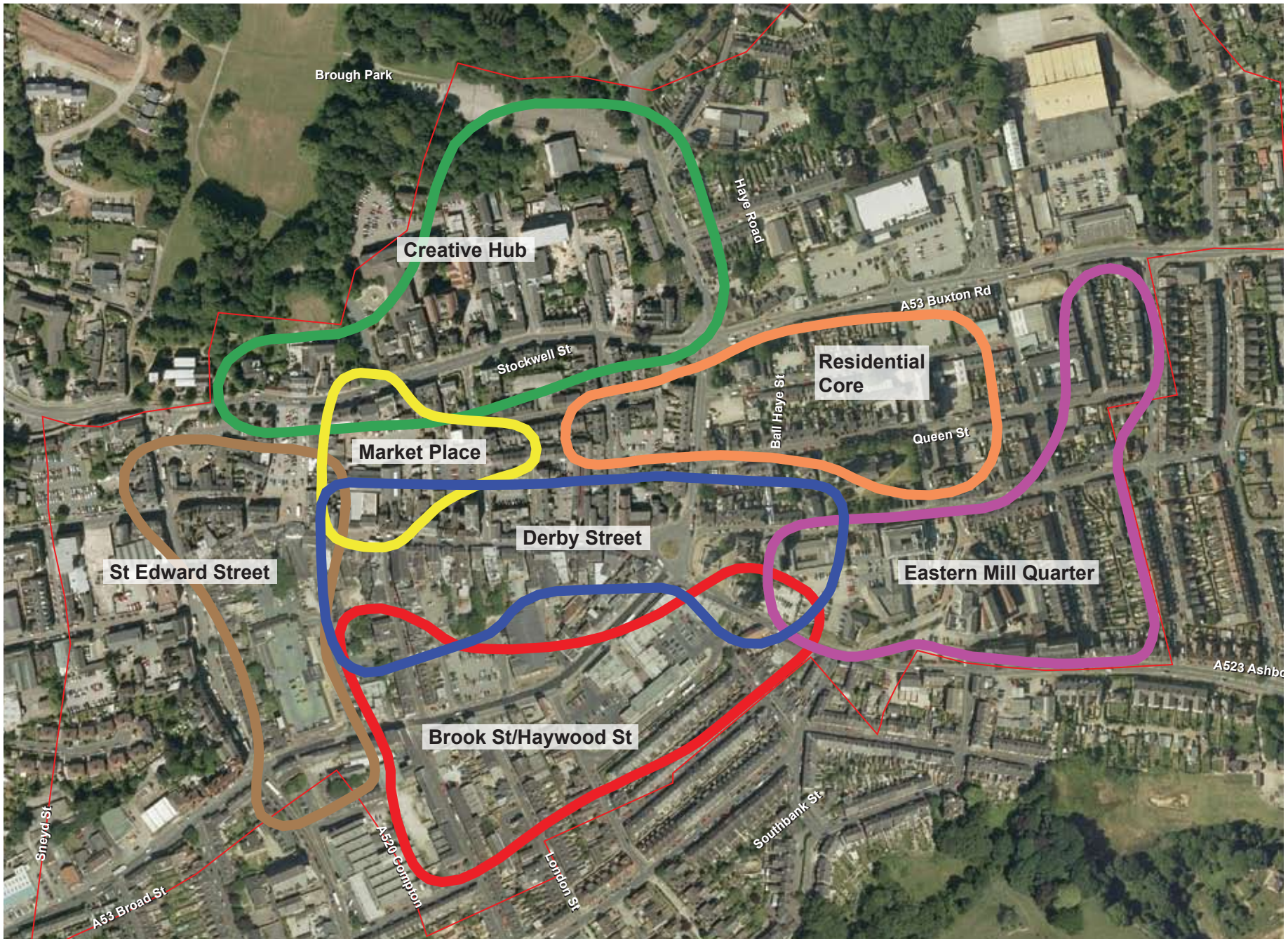
The clustering of like-minded businesses that have a common customer base can often simply be found by mapping them on a plan. Towns that want to develop a truly distinctive and attractive sense of place need to encourage interesting and attractive clusters to develop – they need to nurture a ‘mosaic’ of areas where like-minded businesses or activities will thrive. In some cases these areas may be relatively large, such as a neighbourhood, but typically they are smaller – sometimes a single street or even a block on a street.

Towns that are most attractive to live, work and spend leisure time in, often are those that have a mosaic of attractive clusters of distinctive character. One reason these clusters tend to develop is in response to differing consumer preferences and therefore certain types of person are attracted by certain types of destination. Businesses that seek to attract like-minded customers cluster so that these people can find them more easily and have a reason to go to where they are. The characteristics of people who might like a certain part of town can be categorised in a number of different ways, including age and background. In addition, a business cluster can only really develop if there is a market and physical environment to support it. For example, a cluster attractive to students needs a college or university to support it and upmarket or boutique shops are often associated with conservation areas.

In most towns, areas will have developed separately over time and will reflect both different periods of development and degrees of change. Often there is a strong connection between the physical environment of an area and the types of businesses and customers that are attracted to it. For example, antique businesses are often found in older buildings.

Leek like many other market towns has a number of distinctive character areas, reflected in the townscape, land use and types of businesses and activities that are present. Some of these are more established than others, such as St Edward Street, but they are all distinctive in their own way and this needs to be reinforced and nurtured in order to support the overall vision for Leek.

Securing future funding to support the repair and reinstatement of historic buildings will be important to maintain the distinctiveness of the town and support its ongoing regeneration.



Leek Mosaic



Leek's mosaic is composed of the following areas:

Brook Street/Haywood Street

The southern entrance to the town centre where change, including new development and refurbishment, has the potential to create a high quality townscape, with a mix of independent and national businesses.

Creative Hub

Leek's creative quarter, with a focus on the arts, learning and community, supported by a range of businesses including shops, galleries, cafes, bars and restaurants.

Eastern Mill Quarter

The eastern entrance to the town centre where change, including new development and refurbishment, has the potential to create a good first impression for visitors.

Residential Core

Primarily a place to live in the heart of the town centre, this area's commercial offer will focus on Ball Haye Street whilst protecting residential amenity.

The key issues and design principles for the areas in detail:

Market Place

The traditional heart of the town centre focused on the outdoor and indoor markets, with quality shops, cafes, bars and restaurants.

Derby Street

The main high street containing a number of national brands, as well as local independent retailers and businesses, to serve Leek and the surrounding area.

St Edward Street

A cosmopolitan area with an interesting high quality mix of businesses, including independent and branded shops with a focus on antiques and homewares.

Market Place

Key Issues

The Market Place is an inward looking space dominated by car parking on nonmarket days. The quality of the architecture is high, but the quality of the public realm is in need of further improvements in parts. The car park area behind the markets is let down by poor views of the backs of buildings, servicing and vehicles.

Vision

The traditional heart of the town centre and focused on the thriving outdoor and indoor markets, complemented by quality shops, cafes, bars and restaurants, set in a high quality environment.

Design Principles

A low level of intervention to the physical fabric of the area is appropriate to support the vision with an emphasis on conservation and public realm improvements. Market Place is an area of reasonably intact and robust urban form which must retain its overall historic feel. Innovative and creative interventions are possible, but all new buildings must be appropriate and respect the historic context.

Although the Market Place does not contain any opportunity sites, the Market St East Car Park Area (13), Pickwood Road Area (9) and Existing Foxlowe Area (14) are adjacent and connections to these three areas, as well as Derby Street and St Edward Street, should be clear and improved where necessary.

The innovative reuse and refurbishment of existing historic buildings is a priority to preserve architectural character of the Market Place. General improvements to shop frontages in keeping with the style and character of the buildings is encouraged. The Market Place must be fronted by mixed use buildings that provide active edges and natural surveillance to ensure both continuity and enclosure.

Any public realm improvements to the Market Place should reinforce its character as both an arrival point and destination within the town centre. The space must remain highly adaptable to allow for a range of activities and events such as the vital outdoor market. The market cross is obviously historically important and should remain a focus of the square.

Reinvigorated, vibrant uses will help create diversity and a square full of character and activity. Mixed uses will ensure there are both daytime and evening activities to create a vibrant and exciting area.

Links to adjacent areas should be clear and of a high quality, including Derby Street and St Edward Street. The legibility of the route from Market Place to the car parks off Silk Street behind the markets should be improved to encourage exploration of the whole area, particularly by visitors.



Derby Street

Key Issues

Partial pedestrianisation has helped reinforce Derby Street's role as Leek's 'high street', and although passing trade and vehicular access is vital to business, through traffic in sections can make pedestrian crossing difficult, particularly around the war memorial and across to the Smithfield Centre. In addition, although there are many high quality businesses and shop fronts, a small number still detract from the overall appearance and quality of the street.

Vision

The main high street containing a diverse and interesting range of national brands, as well as local independent retailers and businesses, to serve Leek and the surrounding area, set in an attractive and convenient environment.

Design Principles

A low level of intervention to the physical fabric of the area is appropriate to support the vision with an emphasis on conservation and public realm improvements. Derby Street is an area of reasonably intact and robust urban form which must retain its overall historic feel. Innovative and creative interventions are possible, but all new buildings must be appropriate and respect the historic context.

Although no opportunity sites have been identified on Derby Street itself, a number are directly adjacent and connections to Leek's 'high street' should be an important consideration with their development. The sites include the Market St East Car Park Area (13), the Smithfield Centre (7) and the Pickwood Road Area (9), where there is an opportunity to extend Leek's 'high street' offer and improve the retail circuit.

Historic buildings must be conserved and enhanced in order to protect the character of this main shopping street. Beyond the opportunity sites, new interventions will be limited and likely involve upgrading shopfronts and building elevations. Depending on the context, unique and distinctive shopfronts are encouraged to resist 'clone town' pressures. If new infill buildings are required, these must be sensitive to the historic context and be of appropriate scale and massing and make use of local materials where possible.

The public realm should reinforce Derby Street's role as the town centre's prime shopping street. The exploration of adjacent areas, and in particular Market Place, should be encouraged. Links to St Edward St, Russell Street, Market Street and Fountain Street are also critical and public realm and traffic management improvements should seek to enhance these. The Memorial should remain the focus of the street.

Where traffic is still allowed access on Derby Street, this should be calmed to protect pedestrian amenity and encourage easy crossing of the street.



St Edward Street

Key Issues

St Edward Street sits between the churches of St Edward's and St Mary's and gently falls to the south to create interesting views. The area already contains a cluster of smart and interesting shops and businesses, but the standard quality of the public realm does not reflect the high quality architecture which dominates the street. In addition, the urban fabric is weakened by both the surface car park and vacant site on High Street.

Vision

A cosmopolitan area with an interesting high quality mix of businesses, including independent and branded shops, with a focus on antiques and homewares set in an appropriate environment.

Design Principles

A low level of intervention to the physical fabric of the area is appropriate to support the vision with an emphasis on conservation and public realm improvements. St Edward Street is an area of reasonably intact and robust urban form which must retain its overall historic feel. Innovative and creative interventions are possible, but all new buildings must be appropriate and respect the historic context.

Although no opportunity sites have been identified on St Edward Street itself, the area contains two significant sites on High Street, namely Land to the Rear of St Edward Street

(11) and High Street Car Park Area (12), and also the Former Broad Street Garage Site (10) on Broad Street to the west and the Compton Mill Area (8) to the south. Connections to St Edward Street itself should be an important consideration with the development of these opportunity sites and should help reinforce the character of the area where possible.

The existing historic buildings must be conserved and enhanced to protect the character of the area. Boutique retail, cafes, restaurants and upper floor residential accommodation is encouraged to complement the existing businesses. Historic shop fronts should be preserved and promoted, but contemporary design encouraged where appropriate and in context.

Active ground floor uses area encouraged to ensure continuity and interest is maintained along the street. This is particularly important with any new development along High Street.

Where possible traffic should at least be slowed if not reduced along St Edward Street to create a more pleasant environment and ensure the ease of movement of pedestrians. Crossings at Church Street and Broad Street should be addressed with any traffic management proposals to encourage pedestrian movement between adjacent areas of the town centre including Church St/Stockwell St, Brook St/Haywood Street, along Compton to St Mary's Church and All Saints' Church and also the historic mill and residential area known as the 'Silk Quarter' along Broad Street.

Innovative new uses must be found for vacant premises and changes should ensure adaptability to allow for future change of use. For example, separate entrances may need to be provided to upper floors to bring them back into use. A mix of uses creates vibrant streets.

The reuse and refurbishment of existing historic buildings will ensure the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the St Edward Street area.

New development must respect the existing urban form and context in terms of the building line, massing, roofscape and materials.



Brook Street/Haywood Street

Key Issues

The Brook Street and Haywood Street corridor forms a significant proportion of the town centre, but requires reinvention since the closure of the mills some time ago and poor quality 'modern' interventions. Although located adjacent to the heart of the town centre, the area has little distinctive character, feels separated and isolated, is dominated by through traffic, creates a poor sense of arrival and a number of the remaining historic buildings are now in decline.

Vision

The southern entrance to the town centre where change, including new development and refurbishment, has the potential to create a high quality townscape, with a mix of independent and national businesses and uses including residential.

Design Principles

A high level of intervention to the physical fabric of the area is appropriate to support the vision with an emphasis on reinvention and reconfiguration. This damaged area of town has fundamental issues in terms of building layout and form with a number of 'modern' developments. Innovative and creative interventions are encouraged to create a new identity for the area whilst respecting the remaining historic urban fabric. Past inappropriate and insensitive development must not be used as precedent.

The area contains a number of the largest opportunities sites in the town centre, including the Pickwood Road Area (9), Compton Mill Area (8) and the Smithfield Centre & Bus Station (7). Connections to Derby Street in particular should be an important consideration with the development of these opportunity sites and they represent a significant opportunity to reinvent the character of the area.

Through their elevations, new buildings should provide good continuity and enclosure. Where appropriate, new buildings should reflect historic building footprints and street layouts where these have been lost. New buildings should be organised to encourage street activity at key junctions and focal points with new public spaces.

Links into and through the area should be improved and developed where they do not exist to integrate the area better into the town centre, particularly with Derby Street. These links or routes should be clear and safe and key views of landmarks preserved or developed to aid legibility.

Where possible, development should reflect the topography of the area and step down slopes to avoid the creation of large monolithic buildings.

Strong street frontages with active ground floor uses should be provided where possible throughout the area and are essential along the main routes and connections. A mixture of uses will also help create a vibrant townscape. New development should also have visual diversity to enrich new and existing streets and spaces.

A new high quality public realm will also help create a new identity for the area and tree planting should be considered where appropriate to help soften the streetscape.



Creative Hub

Key Issues

The Church Street and Stockwell Street corridor is already at the heart of Leek's culture and learning offer. The area contains a number of Leek's most important buildings, including St Edward's Church, Greystones and the Nicholson Institute, but the standard quality of the public realm does not reflect this high quality architecture. In addition, Brough Park which should be an important asset, is hidden and heavy through traffic separates the important northern half of the area from the core of the town centre.

Vision

Leek's creative quarter, with a focus on the arts, learning and community, supported by a range of businesses including shops, galleries, cafes, bars and restaurants set in a high quality environment and embracing Brough Park.

Design Principles

A low level of intervention to the physical fabric of the area is appropriate to support the vision with an emphasis on conservation and public realm improvements. This creative quarter is of reasonably intact and robust urban form which must retain its overall historic feel. Innovative and creative interventions are possible and encouraged, but all new buildings must be appropriate and respect the historic context.

The area contains two significant opportunity sites, including the Existing Foxlowe Area (14) and the California Mill Area (1). They represent a significant opportunity to reinforce the character of the area as Leek's creative quarter, bringing in new complementary uses such as an arts centre and higher education facilities. Improved connections to Brough Park should also be an important consideration with their development where possible.

The conservation and enhancement of existing historic buildings must be a priority to protect the character of the area. New education, boutique retail, galleries, cafes, restaurants and upper floor residential accommodation is encouraged to complement the existing uses. Existing historic features should be preserved and promoted, but contemporary design encouraged where appropriate and in context.

Active ground floor uses are encouraged to ensure continuity and interest is maintained along Church Street and Stockwell Street. Where possible traffic should at least be slowed along Church Street and Stockwell Street to create a more pleasant environment and ensure the ease of movement of pedestrians. Crossings should be appropriately located at key points such as at Market Place, St Edward Street, Market Street, Bath Street and Ball Haye Street to encourage pedestrian movement between adjacent areas of the town centre, particularly with the Market Place.

Innovative new uses must be found for vacant premises and changes should ensure adaptability to allow for future change of use. For example, separate entrances may need to be provided to upper floors to bring them back into use. A mix of uses creates vibrant streets.

New development must respect the existing urban form and context in terms of the building line, massing, roofscape and materials.

Brough Park is a green oasis adjacent to the town centre and connections from the area should be improved where possible to make the most of this town centre asset for both local people and visitors. In addition, future landscape works and maintenance should seek to further biodiversity within the park where appropriate.



Eastern Mill Quarter

Key Issues

This area encompasses two key approaches from the east and the first view of Leek town centre for many visitors. Unfortunately, it does not currently create a good first impression. A number of vacant plots and disused and deteriorating vacant historic buildings detract from the area's potential as a gateway or entrance to the town centre.

Vision

The reinvigorated eastern entrance to the town centre where positive change, including new development and refurbishment, and a mix of commercial and residential uses, has the potential to create a good first impression for visitors.

Design Principles

A medium level of intervention to the physical fabric of the area is appropriate to support the vision with an emphasis on conservation, repair and public realm improvements. The Eastern Mill Quarter area is of reasonably intact urban form with elements of distinct character and quality, but requires 'repair'. Innovative and creative interventions are possible to reinforce the area's character, but new buildings should respect and repair the historic urban fabric. Past inappropriate and insensitive development must not be used as precedent.

The Eastern Mill Quarter area contains a number of significant sites, including the London Mill/York Mill Area (5), the Talbot and White Lion Area (6), and the Portland Street Mill Area (4). These sites are particularly significant as they are highly visible on the main approaches into the town centre from the east and this will be an important consideration in their development or refurbishment.

The re-use and conversion of historic buildings and new development should preserve the physical character of the area whilst creating the opportunity for new uses and provide a more suitable approach into the town centre.

A mixture of uses will help regenerate this historic area and create a vibrant piece of town. However, new uses should also be mindful of the need to protect residential amenity. New development should also have visual diversity to enrich new and existing streets and spaces. The area around the War Memorial of the Eastern Mill Quarter is located between two adjacent areas, namely Derby Street and Brook Street/Haywood Street, and should provide a suitable seamless link to encourage movement from one area to another.

The historic character of the area should be reinstated using traditional materials and techniques to create a high quality public realm and suitable backdrop for converted mills and other buildings, as well as new architecture.



Residential Core

Key Issues

Although much of the town centre is surrounded by residential neighbourhoods, this residential area focused on Regent Street, Queen Street and Ford Street is in the heart of the town centre. The quality of the public realm does not reflect the high quality domestic architecture and the area is bisected by the heavily trafficked Ball Haye Street.

Vision

Primarily a place to live in the heart of the centre of town centre, this area's commercial offer will focus on Ball Haye Street whilst protecting residential amenity in a high quality environment.

Design Principles

A low level of intervention to the physical fabric of the area is appropriate to support the vision with an emphasis on conservation and public realm improvements. This primarily residential area is of reasonably intact and robust urban form which must retain its overall historic feel. Innovative and creative interventions are possible, but all new buildings must be appropriate and respect the historic context.

Although the area does not contain any opportunity sites, the Market St East Car Park Area (13) and the War Memorial Area (6) are adjacent and protecting the character of the area should be a consideration in their development.

The conservation and enhancement of existing historic buildings must be a priority to protect the character of the area. Existing historic features should be preserved and promoted, but contemporary design encouraged where appropriate and in context. The area is primarily residential and should remain so to preserve its character. A mix of active ground floor commercial uses will be encouraged along Ball Haye Street to enhance the character of this main street and create vibrancy, in addition to existing commercial premises on Bath Street towards Derby Street. On both these streets however, upper floor residential accommodation is encouraged to reinforce the overall residential character of the area. The protection of residential amenity in the area should be considered with any development opportunity.

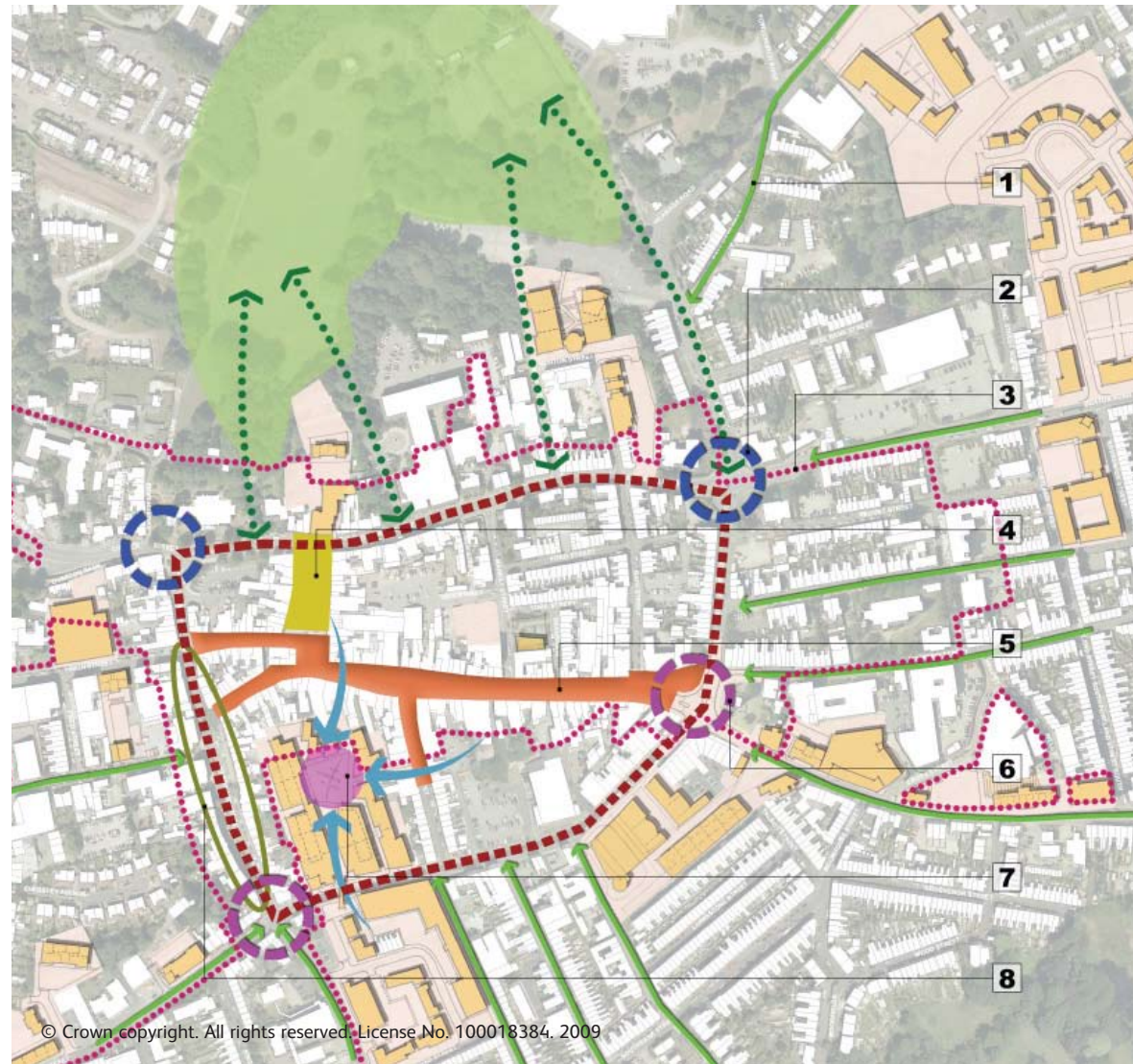
Traffic management in the area should seek to create a more pleasant environment and ensure the ease of movement of pedestrians, particularly along links into the heart of the town centre.

The historic streetscape of the area should be reinstated using traditional materials and techniques where possible in order to create a high quality public realm and suitable backdrop for the architecture.



Design Principles

The Masterplan incorporates a number of key design principles that have been developed in response to specific challenges identified in the baseline stage of the work. The eight principal areas of focus are illustrated in the diagram below and summarised overleaf.



Opportunities and Constraints Overlay Diagram



1. Improved connections with surrounding areas.

A major driver in the approach taken to produce the Masterplan is a desire to provide more attractive routes into the heart of the town from surrounding residential areas. This will take the form of improved signage and footway and cycle route enhancements. Improvements to the connections to and from Brough Park will also form part of this strategy with the addition of promotional signage in the Town Centre to demonstrate the range of activities taking place in the park. All of these interventions are seen as important components in the wider sustainability objectives of Leek Town Centre Masterplan to encourage local people to access the Town Centre by foot and cycle rather than car.



2. Public realm improvements to selected gateways.

The baseline research undertaken as part of the Masterplan have demonstrated that radical changes to all gateways into the Town Centre will not be possible due to existing building and highway network constraints. However, there is still a desire to recognise these important locations through a combination of material change and new signage. These changes will focus upon the junctions of Stockwell Street/St. Edward Street, Buxton Road/Ball Haye Street and St. Edward Street/Brook Street.



3. Improve the historic core.

The Leek Conservation Area has a diverse character incorporating buildings of different eras and architectural styles, with a subsequent broad palette of materials and scale. The Masterplan seeks to support and enhance this diversity through selective infilling of sites where the original frontages have been removed, and the preservation of important buildings and spaces through refurbishment and re-use as part of the overall strategy. Eaton House, Portland Street Mill, London Mill/York Mill, Smithfield Centre, Pickwood Road, Broad Street Garage, Foxlowe and Premier Garage are all areas where this approach has been adopted.



4. Improving and enhancing Market Place.

Market Place has been a hub of the town for many centuries. The importance of the space as a focal point for economic, visitor and cultural activities must be recognised. This will be achieved in the first instance through ongoing support of the market. There is also potential to remove car parking on the space on non-market days. This will enable visitors to appreciate the scale and quality of the space and associated Market Cross but also the contribution of the numerous historic buildings that surround it. The 'missing' side of the four faces that make up Market Place is the northern elevation of Stockwell Street that is formed through the Foxlowe and adjacent buildings. Although it will not be possible to completely remove Stockwell Street as a through route it will be possible to raise the road surface where it corresponds with Market Place and introduce materials that are complementary to those within the square. This approach will visually link the north elevation to the rest of the space.

5. Complement and improve the environment along Derby Street and Russell Street.

Derby Street and Russell Street presently perform a number of functions in their role as the primary Town Centre shopping streets. Past attempts to balance all of the various challenges have resulted in a confused and cluttered environment with little in the way of relief for the pedestrian users. The Town Centre Masterplan seeks to address these issues firstly through creation of new shared surfaces in the existing part pedestrianised areas, extending through to the eastern end of Derby Street and part of Russell Street.

These areas will still include car parking spaces for shoppers and loading bays for businesses but the priorities will be changed with an enforced 20mph speed limit and a narrowing of the delineated highway through the introduction of build outs and street trees. In this way the streets will become much more pedestrian and cyclist dominant thereby encouraging use of the streets with consequential benefits for existing and new businesses.



6. Significant improvements to the Ashbourne Road gateway.

The most radical changes to gateways proposed as part of the Leek Town Centre Masterplan will take place at the existing Nicholson War Memorial roundabout. In conjunction with the overall highway strategy improvements it is proposed to redesign the existing large roundabout and introduce a series of signalised pedestrian crossing points. The shared surface proposed for Derby Street will also extend through to Fountain Street thereby providing an environment that is less detached from the primary shopping streets. Furthermore, the redesigned junction removal of the roundabout will create pedestrian space, providing areas for seating and spill out from adjacent buildings. All of these changes will significantly improve the War Memorial setting and achieve a positive gateway into Derby Street and the heart of the Town Centre.



7. Creation of an additional focal point.

With Market Place acting as the primary focal point in the Town Centre the baseline studies also identified a need to create a further area of activity that could draw circulation through the town as part of a wider retail circuit. The Pickwood Road area with its relationship to the rear of Derby Street and Russell Street is seen as the ideal area to create this focal point. Not only will it re-invigorate a presently uninspiring area it will also act as a 'stepping stone' to the Compton Mill area and residential communities to the south of the Town Centre. The focal point will take the form of a south facing square defined through new commercial frontages with the potential to upgrade the existing alleyways that connect to Derby Street, together with upgraded linkages to Russell Street and Compton Mill.



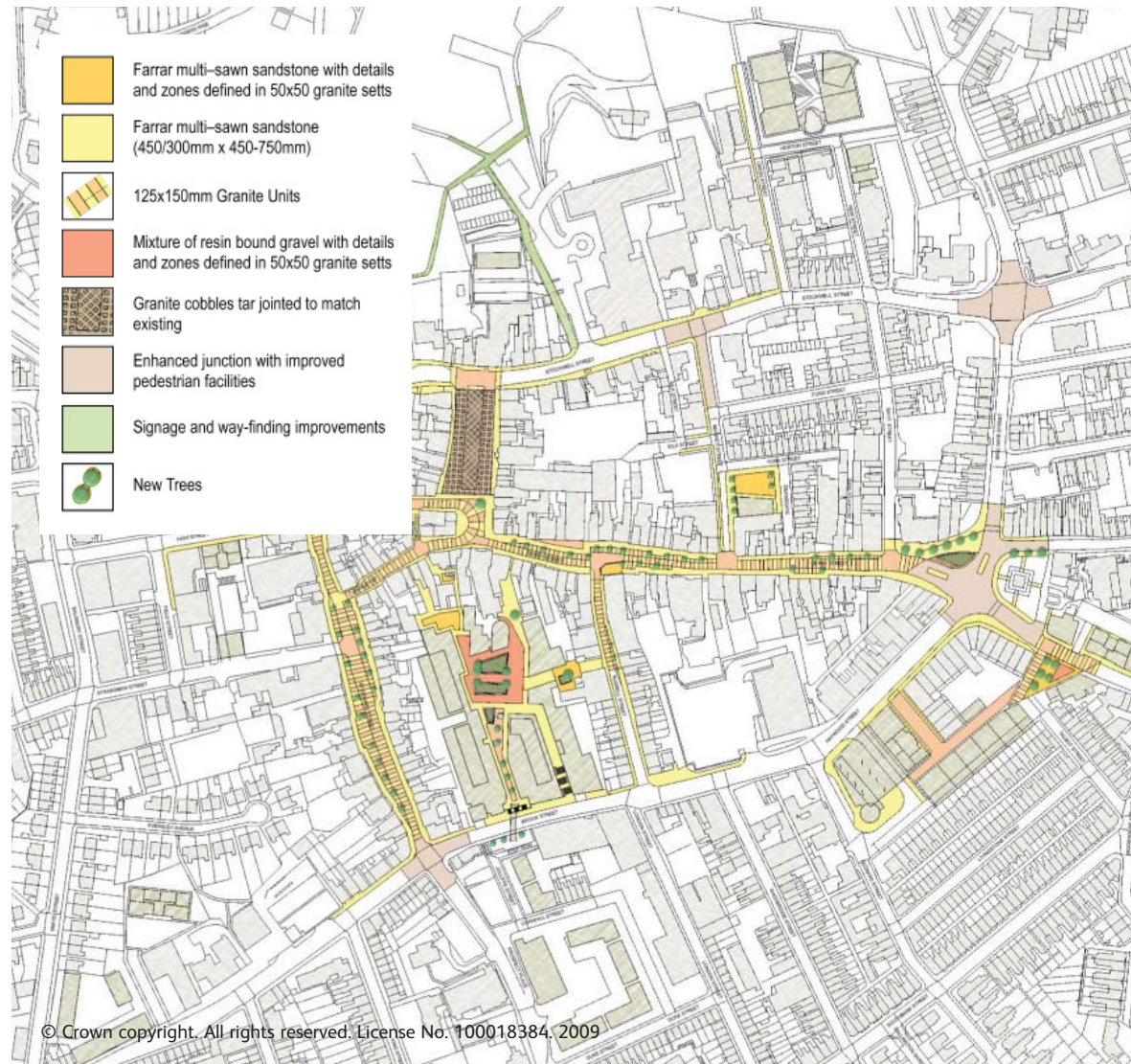
8. Improvements to St. Edward Street.

St. Edward Street is one of the most important streets in Leek Town Centre in terms of the quality of the built setting and its relationship to the wider environment (including St. Edward's and St. Mary's Churches). Despite this importance traffic movement once again dominates the experience and generally detracts from the potential for the street to be a significant part of the shopper and visitor circuits. The approach to changes on St. Edward Street will be similar to that adopted for Derby Street.

Public Realm Framework

The overarching design principles are;

- Leek's public realm will respect and enhance the Town Centre conservation area setting and contribute to the creation of a unique sense of place
- A variety of interesting streets and spaces will be developed within the public realm offering diverse provision for a range of Town Centre user groups
- The public realm will be designed to the highest quality, fulfilling functional needs as well as creating appealing environments
- Leek's public realm will be designed to be welcoming, safe and accessible for all
- A strong and legible public realm movement and framework will be developed
- Leek's public realm will be designed to be highly durable with consideration given to long-term maintenance from the outset
- Leek's public realm will be designed to be adaptable, allowing for flexible change of use
- A holistic approach to sustainability will be taken in the design and construction of Leek's public realm.



Proposed Public Realm

Specific public realm intervention in the five key areas is summarised opposite:

Derby Street and Russell Street

Derby Street is already a busy part of the Town Centre being the primary shopping street, the location for some informal market stalls and a vehicular route for many people accessing car parking areas. The present semi-pedestrianised nature of the street provides a confused and cluttered environment for many users. This detracts from its important role in the future of the Town Centre.

The Masterplan proposals aim to provide a much more coherent environment on Derby Street, through the consistent use of materials and a greater level of control in relation to different modes of transport.

The approach starts with an understanding of how Derby Street should function in the future Town Centre. It is very clear that the commercial function of Derby Street cannot be compromised as a consequence of the Masterplan. On-street car parking and loading will therefore be retained in an integrated 'shared surface' approach. This approach also introduces street trees, delineated bays and street furniture in order to control how the different functions co-exist.

The streets will become less attractive as a through route for vehicles, a situation that could be reinforced through the introduction of a 20mph speed limit.

The improvement of public realm also needs to address the small cleared site at the bottom of Russell Street. The small site is highly visible and needs suitable landscaping on the gateway to the town.



Derby Street & Russel Street

Public Realm Design Pallet

This section of the Masterplan has set out the Public Realm Framework and established the principles to aid the structure, identity and legibility of key areas within the town centre. With the design and delivery of enhancement to the area around the War Memorial and entrance to Derby Street, a series of detailed design principles have been realised through the adopted scheme, with specified materials and detailing providing a blueprint for the use of natural materials and setting standards the town should seek to achieve where affordable in the future.



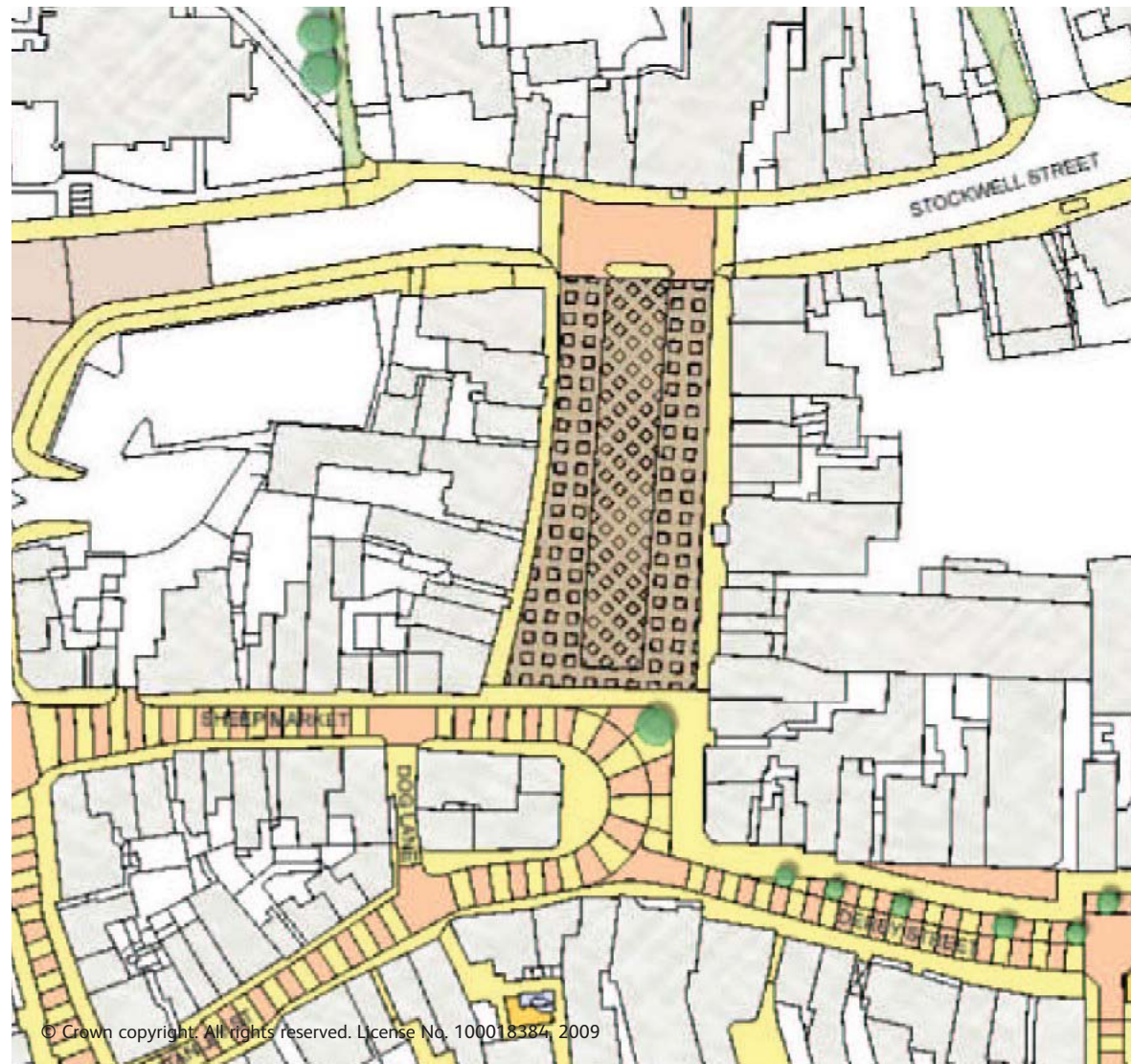


Market Place

Market Place is without doubt one of the most high profile destinations in Leek Town Centre. It is vital as a location for the popular market days and significant as a setting for some of the most important listed buildings in the Town Centre. Market Place has both local and visitor functions that must remain centre stage as the town develops. Nevertheless, the vibrant role that the space performs on market days is undermined by the car park function on non-market days.

Removing all of the parking on Market Place and relocating these spaces to new gateway car parks identified within the overall Masterplan movement strategy should therefore be considered. This will allow the whole space to be appreciated on non-market days, free up the space for Town Centre events and allow the adjacent businesses to open out onto the square.

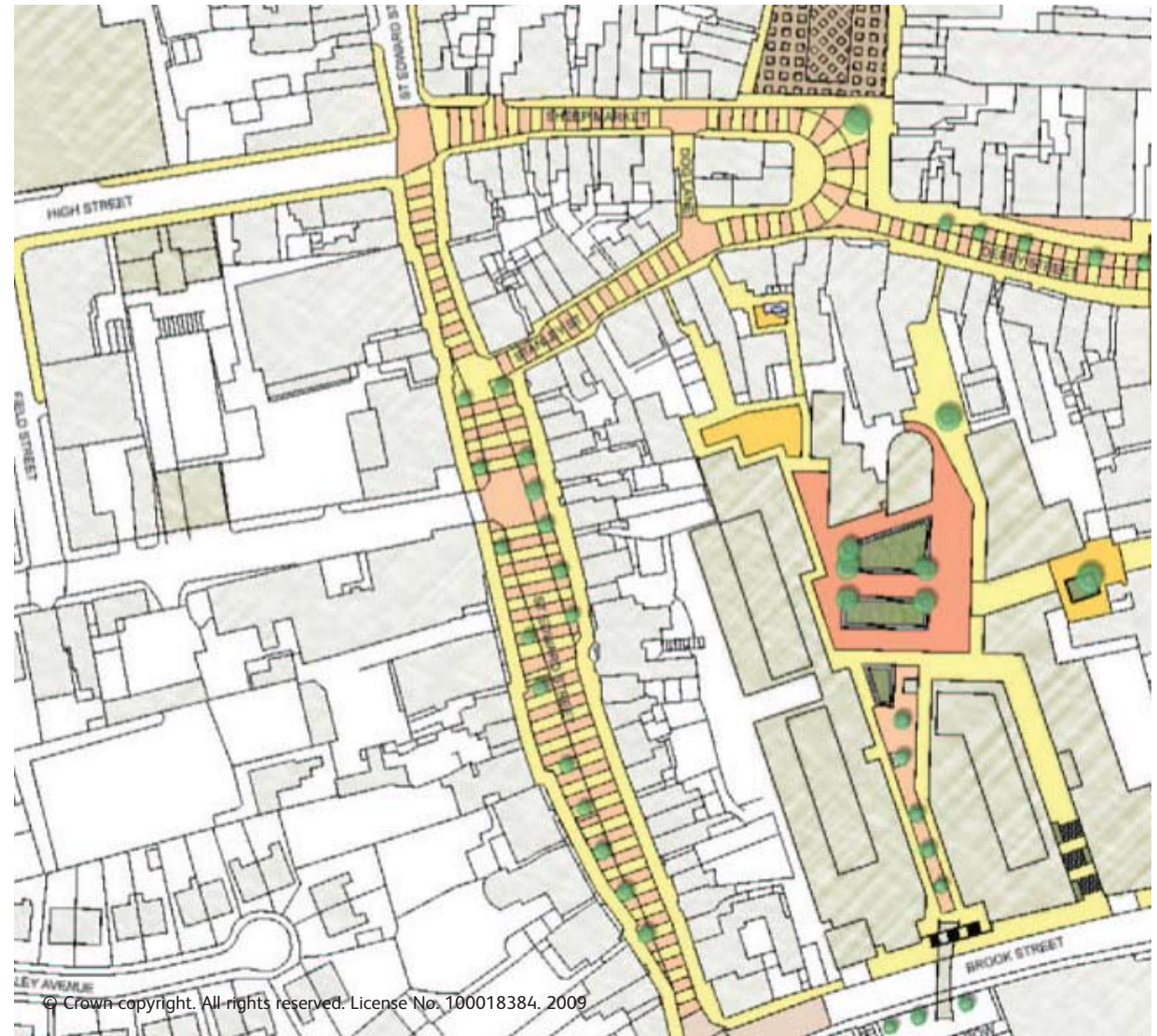
This new approach could be controlled through the introduction of demountable bollards on the Stockwell Street and Sheep Market frontages. These would provide the flexibility for servicing and loading as and when required. Materials within Market Place will respect the historic character and reflect the heritage characteristics. This will be supplemented by further information and orientation boards describing the importance of the Market Place for the whole of Leek Town Centre.



Market Place

St. Edward Street

It is anticipated that a public realm upgrade of St Edward Street, maintaining two-way traffic, is undertaken. Such changes could be combined with a consistent public realm treatment comprising new finishes, street furniture and signage, lighting and street trees. Similar to Derby Street, the new treatment will be used to control loading and parking, and reduce clutter, thereby providing an enhanced backdrop for the buildings and improved environment for existing and new businesses.



St. Edward Street

Pickwood Square

Some businesses in the Pickwood Road area have already recognised the potential of the southerly aspect and relationship with adjacent shopping areas through the introduction of a small selection of cafes and outdoor seating areas. The proposals for 'Pickwood Square' look to formalise this arrangement through the creation of a new public open space that will also provide ability to link existing connections from Derby Street through to Russell Street and areas further to the south, beyond Brook Street.

The present environment within Pickwood Road suffers from a confused arrangement of car parking and semi-pedestrian areas, together with a large change in level that tends to discourage pedestrian movement. The proposals for the new square seek to address these issues, firstly by removing car parking and placing it in a decked area below the square and secondly by manipulating the levels so that a much more extensive, relatively flat, open space is created. Cars and other vehicles will be removed from the space that will be defined by new and existing enhanced frontages, with connections to Russell Street and Derby Street.

The square will provide an opportunity for businesses to spill out onto the space with formal and informal seating created together with new trees, street furniture, lighting and the potential to place a Town Centre 'directory' sign at the heart.

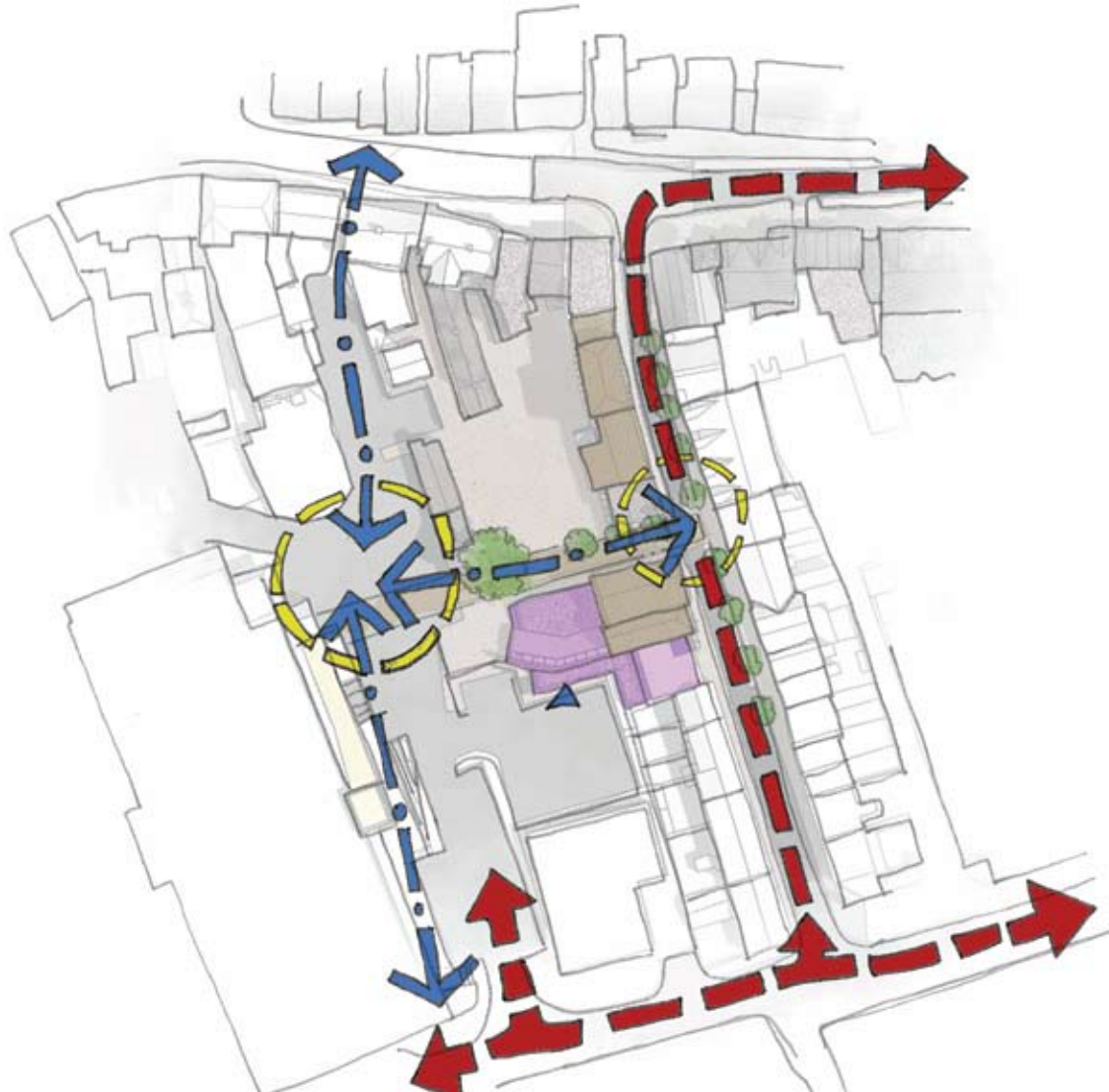
Provision of signage to other areas of the Town Centre is a crucial part of the overall movement strategy. Pickwood Road is seen as an opportunity to extend existing retail circuits



Pickwood Square

off Derby Street and provide a recognisable destination for local people and visitors. Longer term 'Pickwood Square' provides the opportunity to connect to the Compton Mill area through a new pedestrian bridge crossing Brook Street.

This would further enhance the attractiveness of the square to pick up passing trade, which will also animate the space and achieve the desired natural surveillance.



Pickwood Square Concept



Improvement to routes to and from Brough Park

Brough Park is very much an under-realised asset for Leek Town Centre that many visitors presently by-pass when coming to the town for other attractions. The Masterplan public realm response to this issue will primarily focus upon promotion of the Park assets and activities in the more populated parts of the Town Centre, including Market Place, Derby Street and the new 'Pickwood Square'. This will be in the form of maps and information boards.

The Masterplan does not envisage radical changes to the existing Park connections, therefore aspects such as significant level changes along certain routes are accepted. Within these areas new directional signage and, where possible, new lighting will be introduced in order to achieve more attractive linkages to the Town Centre core.



TRANSPORT FRAMEWORK

7



Introduction

The baseline and option appraisal stages of the Masterplan process have identified specific locations in need of improvement and have noted potential remedial measures.

Key access and movement issues identified that have influenced the Transport Framework are:

- Pedestrian severance between the retail core and the outer residential areas due to the busy 'inner ring-road' system and the lack of available controlled pedestrian crossing facilities. This is particularly severe at the four busy junctions surrounding the Town Centre
- Bus public transport is in most cases infrequent, irregular and follows a non-clock face timetable leading to a large number of highly infrequent bus routes. These are in need of consolidation and simplification into a smaller number of higher frequency services serving the various important local destinations dependant on the town

- Leek is not connected to the rail network. It suffers from inaccessibility and long journey times by public transport from destinations further afield. There are proposals to establish a new station and bring the old Stoke – Leek rail line back into use, but these plans are currently unfunded and some years from realisation
- The 'inner ring road' system has a high proportion of HGV traffic from the local industrial areas. These can add to congestion issues and cause increased damage to the road network
- Pedestrian and cycle facilities are sparse and low in number for a town of Leek's size. Cycle parking is available but it is difficult to find, often unsheltered, and small in size and scope. There are also no on or off-street cycle lanes or paths around the Town Centre despite the existence of several signed cycle and walking routes
- Public transport provision is extremely poor after 18:00 with most services finishing either prior to or during the evening peak hour. As such, the evening economy in Leek is almost entirely reliant on the private car
- Public transport infrastructure is generally poor. The bus station is run-down and in need of rejuvenation and the majority of bus stops on the main routes do not have seating or shelters
- The publicly owned parking offer is composed largely of smaller and more dispersed facilities spread around the Town Centre. This can lead to additional vehicle movements as people search for the most appropriate parking location.

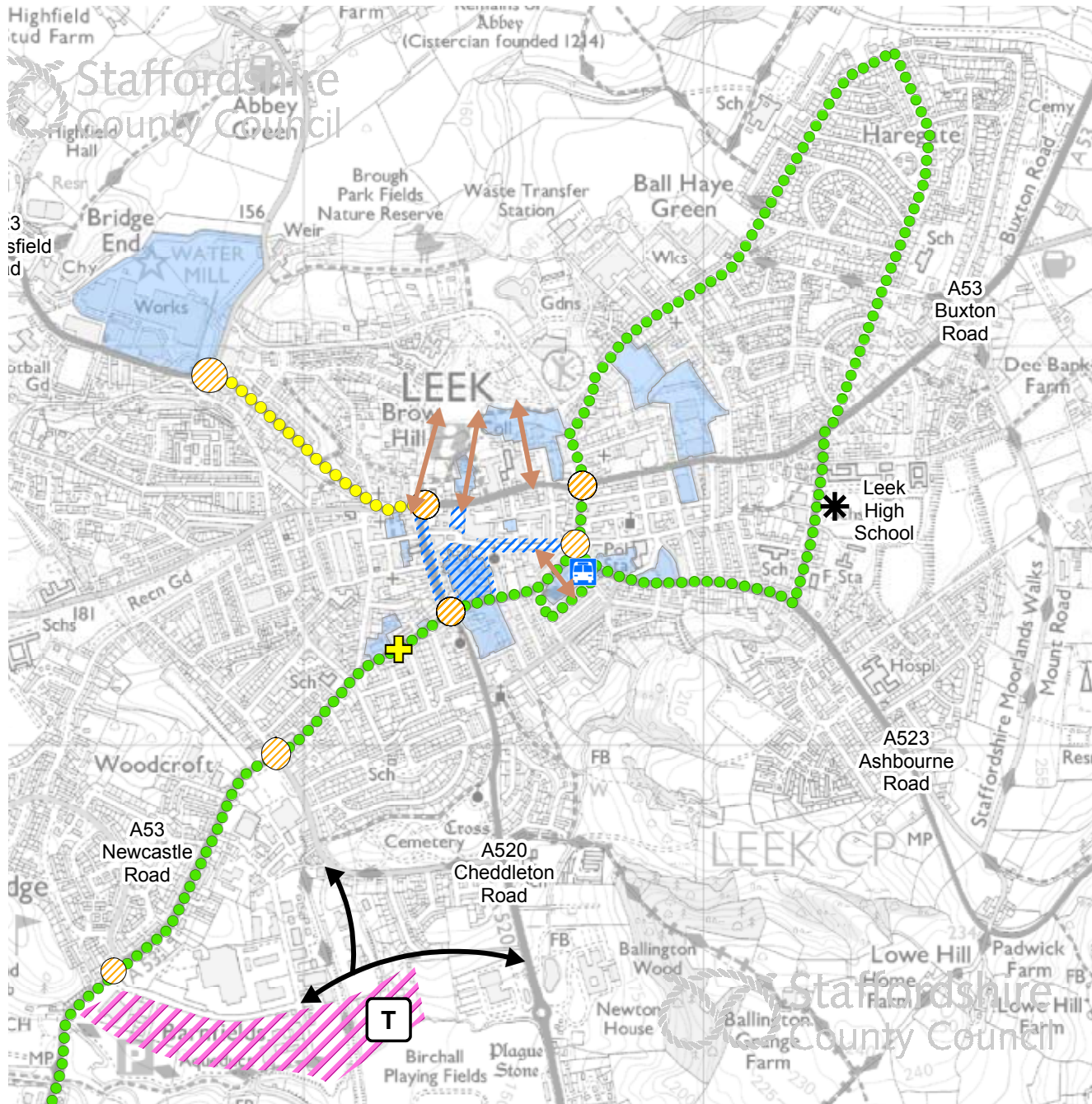
Some of the larger facilities such as Village Way and the Wilkinson's multi-storey car park are inaccessible and poorly used as a result.

In order to address these key issues, a Transport Framework has been developed to guide the future direction of access and movement policy within the Town Centre. This seeks to rectify the issues noted above, and promote sustainable travel wherever possible alongside schemes to enhance public realm and improve connectivity throughout the Town Centre.

Junction improvements are proposed for three key junctions. In addition, the implementation of lower level parking underneath the Pickwood Road site, to be accessed from Brook Street, could facilitate the creation of an enhanced retail offer and public square at ground level, with no loss of parking accessibility. Public transport and public realm infrastructure improvements are also proposed for Brook Street and the bus station area in particular.

The specific transport and access measures proposed as part of the Transport Framework have been tested using the VISSIM microsimulation modelling tool. The modelling tested a combined network incorporating proposed junction improvements with additional traffic that the redeveloped and regenerated Town Centre might produce.

The Masterplan Transport Framework is summarised by the Staffordshire County Council plan on the opposite page.



DRAFT

Leek
Local Transport Package

- Junction Improvements
- Reconfigured Bus Station
- Pedestrian Crossing Facility
- Potential Tourist Hub with Improved Public Transport Links
- School Time 20mph Zone
- Potential Options for New Highway Access
- Bus Access Improvements (Leek to Hanley)
- Bus Access Improvements Linked to Proposed Development Site
- Improved Pedestrian Links
- Cornhill & Barnfields Regeneration Areas
- Potential Development Sites
- Public Realm Enhancements / Traffic Calming Improvements

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NOT TO SCALE



Strategy

Notwithstanding the current County Transport Plan illustrated on the previous page, the enhancement of the town centre and delivery of the Masterplan would need to consider the following challenges.

Traffic Access

Leek Town Centre's highway network resembles a bow-tie structure with five primary radial routes, and two lesser routes, converging on a central rectangular ring-road system containing the four primary junctions. The interior of this 'inner ring road' system also exists as a series of potential through-routes. This creates the risk of rat-running, although traffic using these is mixed with vehicles bound for Town Centre car parks.

The number and dispersion of relatively small car parking facilities is a significant issue. The primary car parks are located on High Street, within the Pickwood Road area, and behind Leek College off Ball Haye Road, but there are also a large number of smaller and well used facilities located around the Market Street area. In addition, on non-market days Market Place is a well-used, centrally located car parking facility. It is proposed to consolidate this car parking into a smaller number of large car parking areas. This should reduce the number of vehicle movements by removing the need for circulation whilst hunting for a parking space. To achieve this, it is proposed Market Place should no longer be used as a car park on non-market days.

Instead, parking demand should be focussed towards three primary gateway car parks using a comprehensive signage strategy. High Street Car Park will serve traffic from the north west arriving on the A523 Macclesfield Road/Mill Street, and West Street. Traffic arriving from the south on the A53 Broad Street, the A520 Compton, and the A523 Ashbourne Road will be directed towards the improved Pickwood Road area, which will include a substantial lower level decked car park, accessed from Brook Street. Finally, traffic bound for attractions north of Stockwell Street including Brough Park, Leek College and Britannia Mill, will be directed towards Vicarage Road Car Park.

The timing of car parking related changes is extremely important. A phased approach will be needed to ensure that development of sites close to the Town Centre does not take place without due consideration of both essential and alternative parking arrangements being agreed and accepted.

Car parking is an emotive issue, seen by many as a right – therefore change has to be handled sensitively and effectively. It is also important in terms of revenue and trade. It is likely that further work on car parking phasing will be needed beyond this Masterplan.

There is conflict between competing road user groups on certain Town Centre routes.

In particular, the main shopping route of Derby Street, though pedestrianised west of its junction with Russell Street, is heavily trafficked to the east with through-movements and Town Centre bound vehicles.

Whilst the car parking rationalisation and signage strategy should reduce through-traffic levels, it is likely that some competition will still be observed between vehicles and pedestrians.

It is proposed to use a combination of traffic calming and public realm enhancements to reduce this conflict. This might include widening footways in places, or using buildouts to create sections of single file traffic. This will have the effect of discouraging use of Russell Street and Derby Street as a through-route and improving the environment for pedestrians, connecting the area better with the pedestrian zone west of the Russell Street junction.

Additional traffic management improvements are proposed for St Edward Street to help to promote this area as a secondary retail route. As a minimum, these should include public realm improvements with enhanced crossing areas and traffic calming to slow vehicle speeds.



Pedestrian and Cycle Movements

A major issue, inherent in the design of Leek Town Centre, is the problem of severance caused by the lack of adequate crossing locations on the main routes, and poor facilities at key junctions. In addition to the enhanced pedestrian crossings at key junctions, it is proposed to improve and, in some cases create, new crossing facilities on Stockwell Street, Brook Street and St Edward Street. These will tie in with new attractions on these links.

The general strategy for pedestrians should be to open up the Town Centre to allow greater ease of pedestrian movement and to remove the barriers, both physical and psychological, caused by the surrounding highways.

The proposed mixed use development at Pickwood Road has been designed to facilitate this pedestrian permeability by relocating car parking underneath the development to allow a better flow of pedestrians above-ground.

A new town square ('Pickwood Square') will be open, visible, and accessible from Derby Street and Russell Street. In addition, a landmark pedestrian bridge is proposed to connect the new retail development and 'Pickwood Square' with the mixed use development south of Brook Street at Compton Mill.

The diagram opposite illustrates some strong pedestrian desire lines linking the central Pickwood Road Opportunity Site with other areas of the Town Centre.

Improvements to Derby Street and Russell Street could include the introduction of a cycle

lane facility. Further investigation is required before this could be supported. There may also be the potential to provide cycle lane facilities on Brook Street and Haywood Street as part of wider public transport corridor improvements. As a minimum, cycle parking facilities should be provided throughout the town. In addition, controlled crossings could be upgraded to Toucan standard, to allow cycles to better access the Town Centre and associated amenities.

There is an established greenway/cycle route to/from Rudyard Lake to Leek town centre, this is signed, but needs further reinforcement in the town centre and better promotion.

The implementation of/or improvement of cycle routes into Leek need to give consideration to lighting and safety at gateways to the town.

Public Transport Provision

There is no rail station, so all public transport journeys in Leek are undertaken by bus. All services pass through the bus station, and many begin or end their journeys there. They comprise a large number of infrequent and irregular services which can create confusion and a perception of a limited service due to the lack of a clockface timetable.

Whilst the deregulated public transport environment provides little opportunity for local authorities to set service timetables, frequencies, or route numbers, it is recommended that SCC pursue a number of partnerships with local bus operators, to create a more uniform and regulated timetable of

services. This would offer a smaller number of higher frequency routes, operating at the same times each hour throughout the day. In addition, it is considered essential that bus services run later to serve the evening economy. Consideration should be given to supporting more evening services in light of the proposed Masterplan interventions.

Measures should also be undertaken to create a quality bus corridor within the Town Centre. The most appropriate route for this is Brook Street/Haywood Street. Quality corridor improvements would include the upgrading of stops with improved shelters and 'Real Time Passenger Information' (RTPI) displays, and bus boarder kerb work. Road space could also be reallocated to create a dedicated bus lane in one direction which could also be used by bicycles and taxis. This could help to improve reliability and punctuality of services during periods of heavy traffic.

The Masterplan proposes the replacement of the existing bus station with a new facility integrated with the enhanced Smithfield Centre. Whilst the facility would remain located in the same place, and retain existing traffic management systems, the interchange facilities and information would be much improved. Adequate all weather waiting facilities and bus boarder kerbs would be provided.



Servicing

The high proportion of HGV traffic on the network, particularly on Macclesfield Road, Mill Street, Brook Street, and Compton is a key issue for the Town Centre. Whilst some HGV traffic is inevitable, due to the necessity for servicing of shops and businesses, it is probable that some of the traffic on the network could be diverted to alternative more appropriate routes. The wider signage strategy will go some way to resolving this by directing traffic away from particularly sensitive Town Centre routes. Consideration should also be given to additional weight limits on certain routes to prohibit delay causing movements.

In terms of servicing arrangements, the proposed new retail units within the Pickwood Road area are envisaged to have bespoke off-street servicing bays, perhaps with underground access from Brook Street. It may be possible for a proportion of servicing vehicles to carry out their loading activities to the rear of the properties, particularly in the case of businesses on St Edward Street and Derby Street. Wherever possible, local businesses should be encouraged to conduct some of their servicing outside of normal working hours to minimise overall impact at the busiest times of the day. However, there will still be a need to manage on-street loading during periods of high activity.

Given that the Town Centre must be able to remain competitive, it is critical that enhancements to St Edward Street, Russell Street and Derby Street be designed with servicing in mind. For example, the construction of traffic calming buildouts or chicanes with built-in loading bays, etc.

Signing

The general signage strategy will aim to separate the various strands of traffic, to minimise throughput on particularly sensitive streets in the Town Centre such as Derby Street. Town Centre traffic should be directed to the nearest and most appropriate parking facility for their Town Centre entry point. Through trips should be kept to the periphery, and discouraged from straying off the main 'inner ring road' system. The main access for the Pickwood Road area is expected to remain on Brook Street, and the signage strategy must reflect this.

Variable message signs at strategic locations could be used to indicate parking availability in the various parking facilities. This will minimise the need for fruitless journeys around the Town Centre network to find a free parking space.



Summary

The Transport Framework includes potential transport and access improvements to complement other of the Masterplan proposals. This is a reflection of the high level of interrelation between transport, property regeneration and urban design.

The Framework provides a blueprint for how these strands of regeneration can be implemented alongside each other, in order to develop and improve Leek Town Centre. It encompasses proposals to change traffic movements; junction amendments; public realm improvements; improved pedestrian circuit and visual linkage to car parking; improved bus station, bus services and bus infrastructure and enhanced signage.



MAKING IT HAPPEN

8



Successful implementation of this Masterplan will require sustained and coordinated commitment. This will be needed from not just the District Council but also all partner agencies, key stakeholders and others with interest in Leek.

The District Council is in the process of establishing the LDF and Core Strategy. The Leek Town Centre Masterplan, once adopted, will be an Interim Policy Statement.

This section outlines guidance on land ownership and assembly, as well as priorities and phasing, costs and funding, delivery mechanisms and management. The delivery mechanisms include development and planning briefs, and developing the role for a Town Centre Champion.

Introduction

Previous sections of this document have outlined the potential for the Town Centre's regeneration to 2026. As stated above the Masterplan's successful implementation will require sustained and coordinated commitment. The makings of an effective partnership with land holdings and initial pump priming resources are already in place due to the District Council's ownerships associated with a number of the Opportunity Sites. However it should be recognised that more detailed work will be required to take interventions forward beyond the scope of this commission.

Development Outputs

The overall indicative costs for implementation of the Masterplan total approximately £80 million. These costs relate to the development proposals associated with each of the fifteen Opportunity Sites, as well as the new Public Realm and Transport Infrastructure proposals for the Town Centre.

Collectively the Opportunity Sites could deliver 9116 sqm of new retail floorspace, 8227 sqm of new offices and circa 204 new dwellings (plus 50 extra care units). In addition there would be refurbished residential and office properties, a new hotel, education and leisure facilities. Around 928 car parking spaces would be retained or provided.

Based on job:floorpace densities defined in 'English Partnerships & the Regional Development Agencies Employment Densities: A Full Guide 2001' the Masterplan could generate some 1200 new jobs (33 percent would be associated with retail activity). The provision of new and refurbished accommodation will safeguard further existing Town Centre based employment.

The development outputs and indicative costs for each Opportunity Site, together with those for the Public Realm and Transport Infrastructure interventions are set out in the following tables. Commentary is also provided on the rationale for each project; on constraints and required actions; on the considered implementation timescales and associated risks, and recommended Project Champions.

Please be aware that some amendments and additions to the final proposed use of the opportunity sites have come about due to further consultation made after the completion of the following tables. The assessments are indicative and by no means exhaustive.

Opportunity Site	California Mill
Project Description	Planned modernisation of Leek College's existing accommodation, to include expanded education facilities. This would see the development at the former California Mill and other land owned by the College off Horton Street. The College also proposes to provide new business incubation space, which it would operate and manage. This will require the acquisition of two privately owned premises in Horton Street/New Street. The existing District Council owned car park accessed from Vicarage Road would be retained, as would existing woodland between the College site and Brough Park. A joint agreement has been signed between Leek College and Derby University which could mean that the planned expansion of the Leek campus is now more likely to come forward. Entertainment facilities within the site have also been proposed as a use for the site - These could be integrated with the college campus / incubation units.
The Rationale	Delivers modernisation of Leek College's facilities and provides expansion to cope with an expanding number of students. The College is keen to work with local business start ups, to help them survive and grow. The business incubator facility would provide the means to meet his aim. Development of the site would significantly enhance opportunity for improved, safer pedestrian links between a large long stay car park (currently underused) and the Town Centre. Potential to improve vehicular movements around Union Street/Horton Street/New Street from reduced number of uses.
Constraints	Existing street form constrains vehicular movements Significant change in levels across the site may impact on the form of development Private property ownerships will need to be acquired in order to deliver the full development Demolitions required.
Key Actions	Leek College to acquire additional landholdings. Determine appropriate planning framework for development of the site. Leek College and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to determine arrangements for improved pedestrian links from Vicarage Road car park through the site.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	67 (does not include any new jobs created at the College) 4784 sqm (offices – 1068 sqm; education – 3716 sqm) 0
Cost Estimates	£7.8 million
Implementation Timescales	New education facilities – long term i.e. 5 years or more Business incubator – medium term i.e. 3-5 years
Risks	New education facilities seen as medium risk – depends on public sector finances. Business incubator – high risk because of property acquisitions and business relocation.
Project Champion	Leek College / Derby University

Opportunity Site	Former British Trimmings Site
Project Description	Cleared site fronting Ball Hays Road, owned by Moorlands Housing. A planning application has been approved for 87 extra care flats with 52 car parking spaces, due to come on site during the summer of 2012.
The Rationale	Identified demand for extra care accommodation.
Constraints	None
Key Actions	Implement planning permission.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	Not known 0 50 extra care units
Cost Estimates	£7 million
Implementation Timescales	Short term i.e. 1-3 years
Risks	Low risk as site already owned and cleared.
Project Champion	Moorlands Housing



Opportunity Site	Eaton House and Surrounding Areas
Project Description	Site comprises two separate facilities – Kerrygold own Adams Food Ingredients Ltd, who have a production facility on the northern part of the site, accessed from Prince Street; and Eaton House (an investor owned and let office and industrial property) which fronts Buxton Road. The Adams Food site has recently been purchased by a private developer (Adams Food will be relocating to another Kerrygold site in Leek). The developer has submitted a planning application for up to 50 traditional homes. The Eaton House site remains in occupation with scope for further floorspace provision.
The Rationale	The Adams Food site is located adjacent to residential areas, being accessed via a residential road. Redevelopment for housing is therefore compatible with its environment. As a brownfield site, residential development will bring additional activity to the Town Centre. Eaton House regeneration would sustain office based employment within the Town Centre and create additional footfall.
Constraints	Impact upon adjacent highways Potential of contamination from industrial use. Requires planning consent.
Key Actions	Determine planning application.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	312 (in addition existing jobs will be safeguarded by relocations within Leek) 5574 sqm (offices – 4400 sqm; industrial – 1174 sqm) 50
Cost Estimates	£13.5 million
Implementation Timescales	Residential – short term i.e. 1-3 years Employment – long term i.e. 5 years or more
Risks	Residential – low risk as developer owned and planning application in preparation.. Employment – high risk as market demand dependent.
Project Champion	Private sector



Opportunity Site	Portland Street Mill Area
Opportunity Site	Site is a long established employment location. Formerly a textile mill, the buildings and land are owned by a local property developer. Site seen as appropriate for continuing employment use on the edge of the Town Centre, with scope for refurbishment and some new additional space. Could be a mix of industrial and office space. Hotel use is now also proposed for the site.
The Rationale	Established employment site on edge of Town Centre, which provides sustainable employment location. Introduces more employment into the Town Centre and generates footfall. Owner has unsuccessfully tried to attract small format food retail use and now intends to retain and refurbish for offices and other employment uses.
Constraints	Although not listed the former mill building has some architectural merit, in part compromised by more recent development Currently part occupied Adjacent to residential uses, including converted mill accommodation Vehicular access arrangements.
Key Actions	Determine appropriate planning framework for regeneration of the land and premises.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	69 (only takes into account new space and does not include new jobs in refurbished space as this building is already in business use). 5172 sqm (industrial) – (220 sqm of new space and 2973 sqm of refurbished space) 0
Cost Estimate	£5.7 million
Implementation Timescales	Medium term i.e. 3-5 years
Risks	High risk as market dependent, though will be driven by the owner's own aspirations and timescale
Project Champion	Private Sector



Opportunity Site	London Mill/York Mill Area
Project Description	Three related large mill buildings on the Ashbourne Road gateway to the Town Centre. Proposals would see the introduction of a 3 star standard hotel function within part of the mills complex, together with residential apartments. Live / work also proposed as a use for the site.
The Rationale	This is a key frontage site associated with gateway approach to Leek Town Centre. Buildings are vacant but their historic significance and location are influences upon the wider Town Centre Masterplan. Leek does not have any modern hotel accommodation. There are precedents elsewhere of national 3 star hotel operators locating in converted mill buildings.
Constraints	Scale of buildings Heritage status – London Mill is Grade II listed Lack of external areas for parking impact on development proposals Site within Conservation Area Two separate property ownerships.
Key Actions	Determine appropriate planning framework for the regeneration of the buildings. Consider solutions for the delivery of related car parking. Research and produce promotional document setting out the case for a 3 star hotel in Leek Town Centre. Proactively target hotel developers/operators.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	25 2090 sqm 25
Cost Estimates	£5.3 million
Implementation Timescales	Long term i.e. 5 years or more.
Risks	High risk because market dependent and uncertainty of owners aspirations, cost of financial viability.
Project Champion	Private Sector Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (hotel promotion)



Opportunity Site	War Memorial Area
Project Description	Site comprises two vacant public houses either side of Ashbourne Road, adjacent to the Nicholson War Memorial. Site area has been extended eastwards from the Talbot (on the north side of Ashbourne Road) to include car parking located to the rear of the Health Centre and Job Centre buildings on Fountain Street. The proposal is for a mixed use development that would see leisure, office, residential (refurbished and new build) together with decked car parking.
The Rationale	The public house market has moved westwards within the Town Centre. Hence there is no interest in the vacant public houses. The Talbot has a valid planning consent, not implemented, for retail use on the ground floor with apartments above. This is a key gateway to the Town Centre and high quality development/refurbishment is needed to improve its definition, and enhance the setting of the War Memorial as an important piece of public open space. Decked parking would expand car parking provision at the gateway, and would intercept some traffic before it enters the Town Centre. The White Lion has secured planning consent for residential accommodation with the retail unit on the ground floor.
Constraints	Ownerships – The Talbot Hotel is in administration; car parking areas are associated with other legal interests Leisure, office and residential elements are market dependent upon attracting private developers to a considered non-prime investment location Existing unimplemented planning consent for the Talbot site Existing buildings dictate the form of layout.
Key Actions	Define all property interests, i.e. ownerships, leases, rights of way, easements etc for the Talbot and adjoining car parking areas. Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to initiate discussions with property owners, with view to producing a development brief. Determine appropriate planning framework for the development of this area.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	83 (office – 29; leisure – 54) 1160 sqm (offices – 464 sqm; leisure – 696 sqm) 18
Cost Estimates	£3.2 million
Implementation Timescales	Medium term i.e. 3-5 years
Risks	Medium risk, market dependent and for part of the Opportunity Site there are land assembly and viability issues.
Project Champion	Private Sector Staffordshire Moorlands District Council



Opportunity Site	Smithfield Centre & Bus Station
Project Description	Smithfield Centre comprises a 1960s secondary retail shopping complex fronting onto Haywood Street and Ashbourne Road. To the rear is Leek bus station, which has pedestrian access through the open piazza in the middle of the Smithfield Centre. There is also a public car park to the south east of the Smithfield Centre. The Masterplan proposes substantial change through a mix of refurbishment and new development to create an improved bus station, better retail offer and associated leisure facilities.
The Rationale	The Smithfield Centre needs redeveloping or revamping to improve its appearance, which will be accentuated by the proposed changes to the gateway junction it abuts. Upgrading the bus station is a fundamental element of seeking to achieve a modal shift in travel patterns. The Masterplan proposals would deliver enhanced pedestrian links with Derby Street and the Town Centre core. The District Council has leasehold interest.
Constraints	<p>Ownerships and property leases</p> <p>Demolitions required</p> <p>Market dependent on attracting a developer and ability to deliver an appropriate phased development</p> <p>Planning, cost and viability.</p>
Key Actions	<p>Determine appropriate planning framework for the redevelopment of the area.</p> <p>Confirm all ownership and leasehold interests.</p> <p>Explore development opportunities and the potential for partnership development.</p>
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	<p>97 jobs (retail – 79; leisure – 18) – this figure only includes jobs created at new retail space</p> <p>3779 sqm (retail – 2154 sqm; leisure – 1625 sqm)</p> <p>0</p>
Cost Estimates	£4 million
Implementation Timescales	Medium term i.e.3-5 years
Risks	High risk due to property acquisitions (leasehold and freehold), market demand and viability.
Project Champion	<p>Private Sector</p> <p>Staffordshire Moorlands District Council</p>



Opportunity Site	Compton Mill Area
Project Description	Site includes two large mills. London Mill is a large 3 storey vacant property with no special architectural or heritage interest. Compton Mill is part Grade II listed currently occupied by a variety of antique businesses. Site also includes commercial/leisure uses on Brook Street frontage, and a small number of terraced properties. The Masterplan proposals see a mix of residential, retail and employment uses.
The Rationale	This is a significant site in terms of both scale and location. It is opposite the Pickwood Road site, with scope for a high level pedestrian link over Brook Street due to topography. It is adjacent to the gateway to the Town Centre created by Compton/St Edward Street/ Brook Street junction. There are planning consents for both mills, for refurbishment/redevelopment for residential use, which would generate additional Town Centre footfall. Retention of commercial/leisure uses will continue to activate the Brook Street frontage. Contributes to the objective of attracting more people to live and work in the heart of the town.
Constraints	Multiple ownerships Compton Mill part listed, which influences redevelopment proposals Topography of the site may impact on the form of the development Vehicular access is poor Residential development is market dependent.
Key Actions	A private developer has secured planning consent for the conversion of the mill to create private residential apartments with supporting private extra care facilities 5 year consent from May 2012.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	60 (only includes new retail jobs and building already occupied with office uses) 5852 sqm (office – 4645 sqm; retail – 1207 sqm) 70 (houses – 20; apartments – 50)
Cost Estimates	£11.2 million
Implementation Timescales	Compton Mill residential – medium term i.e. 3-5 years (reflects applicant's requests for a 5 year consent). Remainder of site – long term i.e. 5 years plus
Risks	Compton Mill residential – low risk, planning approval granted and developer and operator in place. Remainder of site – high risk, due to complex ownerships, owner aspirations, costs and viability.
Project Champion	Private Sector Staffordshire Moorlands District Council



Opportunity Site	Pickwood Road Area
Project Description	This is the most significant retail redevelopment site within the Town Centre. Currently an infill site with large format retail that includes public and private car parking. The Masterplan proposals see major change through redevelopment of the building occupied by Argos and Wilkinsons and the underused decked car parking above this retail space. It proposes inclusion of the District Council own car parking areas adjacent, as well as other buildings fronting Brook Street and Russell Street as well as underused yard areas at the rear of Derby Street. It would create new retail units, a south facing public square with associated leisure uses, improved car parking and pedestrian links to Derby Street and Russell Street.
The Rationale	Poorly configured site at present, with no retail street frontage. Poor existing linkages to Derby Street, though potential to deliver improved ones. Most logical site to create new modern retail units that might expand Town Centre offer by attracting retailers not present in Leek, and some potential interest already identified. Better parking provision would help to intercept shopper's cars at gateway to the Town Centre. Includes the creation of an important piece of public open space.
Constraints	Multiple ownerships and legal interests – existing leases; privately controlled alley links; release of land from public sector ownership Business relocations required Demolitions Significant change in levels within the site impacts on the form of the development Market dependent and ability to deliver appropriate phased development Planning, cost and viability.
Key Actions	Produce development brief. Define all property interests i.e. ownerships, leases, easements, rights of way etc, and current owners response to Masterplan. Determine development partnerships approach, including the degree of control/ownership retained. Pursue possible development partners identified during soft market testing.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	315 (retail – 237; office – 78). Redevelopment of site may lead to some existing businesses relocating and so actual new job figure may be less. 5991 sqm (retail – 4737 sqm; offices – 1254 sqm) 0
Cost Estimates	£7.8 million
Implementation Timescales	Long term i.e. 5 years or more
Risks	High risk due to ownerships, existing businesses and relocations, financial and operational issues.
Project Champion	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council



Opportunity Site	Former Broad Street Garage Site
Project Description	Vacant, cleared site on Broad Street frontage at the edge of the retail core. Located outside the Town Centre Conservation Area. Site faces residential use on appropriate side of Broad Street which is within the Conservation Area. The Masterplan proposes retail on this site
The Rationale	Planning permission granted for new retail unit, which will see the redevelopment of an underutilised site within the Town Centre.
Constraints	Access from Broad Street Size of site Market dependent in terms of attracting private developer/investor to a considered non-prime investment location
Key Actions	Implement planning permission.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	27 554 sqm 0
Cost Estimates	£0.5 million
Implementation Timescales	Short term i.e. 1-3 years
Risks	Low risk – vacant site, market dependent.
Project Champion	Private Sector



Opportunity Site	Land to Rear of St Edward Street
Project Description	Cleared site currently in use as low grade temporary car parking. Site is surrounded by residential (including new affordable apartment scheme), retail and commercial uses. Located within Conservation Area but not adjacent to any buildings of interest. Masterplan proposes residential use to both northern and southern frontages.
The Rationale	The site provides opportunity for frontages on both High Street and Strangman Street and would see redevelopment of underutilised land within Town Centre. The owner's aspirations are the development of residential accommodation, possibly for people with learning difficulties. The proposed use is compatible with the setting of the site.
Constraints	Site levels – site slopes from north to south, with retaining wall half way down. Loss of some temporary car park space.
Key Actions	Determine appropriate planning framework for the development of the site.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	0 0 16
Cost Estimates	£1.7 million
Implementation Timescales	Short term i.e. 1-3 years
Risks	Medium risk – market dependent
Project Champion	Moorlands Housing



Opportunity Site	High Street Car Park
Project Description	Currently surface public car park, surrounded by a mix of Town Centre uses. Northern half of the site (and all the surrounding properties that back onto the site) is within Conservation Area. Masterplan proposals are for retention as a car park, but with increased provision through an additional level of decking. However, as the Masterplan was being completed, the District Council was considering an approach from a private developer to build a commercial leisure facility.
The Rationale	Car parking rationale is that the location provides scope for being Town Centre gateway car park, intercepting shopper's cars arriving from north west direction. Additional decked level could be accommodated without detriment to the location and the Conservation Area status. Commercial leisure facility would provide a cinema and bowling alley. Cinema (2 screens) and bowling alley would be important addition to the night time economy. Development would provide recognition/definition of a major gateway location to the Town Centre.
Constraints	Conservation Area status for part of the site. Commercial leisure development would see possible loss/reduced provision of public car park space.
Key Actions	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to take decision to release car park land for commercial leisure use. Produce development brief for the site. Secure change of use consent from car park to commercial leisure facility including car park.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	0 – based on site being retained for car parking 0 – based on site being retained for car parking 0
Cost Estimates	£0.8 million (2 deck car park)
Implementation Timescales	Short term i.e. 1-3 years
Risks	Medium risk – potential alternative use proposal
Project Champion	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council



Opportunity Site	Market Street West Car Park Area (now Market Street East Car Park)
Project Description	Market Street West car park was the original Opportunity Site – included because it was identified as the location for a new Arts/Community Centre in a previous District Council commissioned study. The site was formerly occupied by the Town Hall. The Masterplan proposes its retention for car parking use and instead sees the adjacent Market Street East car park taken out of car parking use to create green space in the Town Centre. It also provides the opportunity to also introduce a commercial building for café /restaurant use.
The Rationale	The business survey indicated concern about the impact from loss of strategically located Town Centre car park, as it links to larger Silk Street car park to the west. Market Street East Car Park is smaller win size, already has some associated green space and has potential to be incorporated into the potential new pedestrian circuit from Getliffe’s Yard to Market Place. The Town Centre has very limited existing green infrastructure. This project would be dependent on additional alternative parking spaces being identified/created elsewhere before it is implemented.
Constraints	Conservation Area status Small site
Key Actions	Produce development brief Determine development partnership approach, including the degree of control/ownership retained Market the development opportunity.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	16 205 sqm 0
Cost Estimates	£0.2 million
Implementation Timescales	Medium term i.e. 3-5 years
Risks	Medium risk – market dependent
Project Champion	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council



Opportunity Site	Foxlowe Site
Project Description	Site encompasses a Grade II listed building fronting Stockwell Street, with a number of unused outbuildings to the rear. Masterplan proposals would see the Georgian mansion used for ground floor leisure, with offices above, and the development of a small number of houses on the northern edge of the site, overlooking Brough Park. These would be accessed via the existing vehicular right of way from Stockwell Street, along the eastern boundary of the site.
The Rationale	Foxlowe is a historically important listed building, previously used as licensed premises. The site is directly opposite Market Place and contributes strongly to its setting. There is potential to provide new linkages and improve natural surveillance for key linkage between Town Centre and Brough Park. Although the site has previously had residential planning application refused, the refusal related to the form and location within the site, not the principle of housing use. Regeneration of the site will redevelop underutilised land within the site and contribute to the objective of attracting more people to live in the heart of the town.
Constraints	Grade II listed building Significant change in level within site Access to northern part of site is through car park area in front of District Council offices Demolitions.
Key Actions	A new charity has taken on the lease for the Foxlowe Building, opening the 'Foxlowe Arts Centre.' The facility includes a gallery and cafe with meeting rooms. A year's lease was taken on by the charity - due to stop in the Autumn of 2012.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	51 (office – 35; leisure – 16) 1160 (offices – 557 sqm; leisure – 603 sqm) 4
Cost Estimates	£0.5 million
Implementation Timescales	Short-term i.e. 1-3 years
Risks	Low risk – uses are market dependent
Project Champion	Private Sector



Opportunity Site	Premier Garage
Project Description	Masterplan proposes a mixed-use redevelopment of the site to create residential (apartments and houses), small retail and offices.
The Rationale	It is an important gateway site at the corner of Broad Street. It is seen as future redevelopment site, should current car dealership function choose to relocate. There is no intention or desire to relocate the car dealership.
Constraints	Business relocation required as currently occupied by a car dealership Demolitions Planning, cost and viability.
Key Actions	Determine appropriate planning framework for the future redevelopment of the site.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	52 (retail – 23; office – 29) 928 sqm (retail – 464 sqm; offices – 464 sqm) 21 (houses – 7; apartments – 14)
Cost Estimates	£3.4 million
Implementation Timescales	Long term i.e. 5 years or more
Risks	Low risk for residential use, medium risk for retail and employment – but depends on relocation of existing car dealership.
Project Champion	Private Sector



Public Realm Intervention

Project Description	Public realm improvements are proposed around five key themes, namely: movement (enlarged shopping circuit and visitor route); squares (new and upgraded squares, north/south between Market Place, Pickwood Road and Compton Mill, and west/east Market Place and Market Street East); gateways (higher profile bus station, coach parking, gateway car parks); streets (enhanced environments on Derby Street/Russell Street/St Edward Street) ; and linkages (on Stockwell Street, Nicholson War Memorial and St Edward Street). Interventions focus on four areas – eastern end of Derby Street and the War Memorial; a new square within redeveloped Pickwood Road site; St Edward Street; Market Place and crossing at Stockwell Street.
The Rationale	Existing public realm upgrade and enhancement is the most significant first step to changing the perception of the Town Centre environment. It is also an area where the public sector can bring the greatest level of change, and within a relatively short timescale, thereby ensuring support for the following principles: improved connections with surrounding areas; public realm improvements to selected gateways; an improved historic core; an enhanced Market Place; complementing and improving the Derby Street, Russell Street and St Edward Street environment; significant change to the Ashbourne Road gateway; and creation of a new public square focal point at Pickwood Road. It will be the most immediate demonstration of these principles to both local people and visitors.
Constraints	Cost Highways and detailed implementation of shared services Utilities Potential opposition to detailed design approach.
Key Actions	Produced detailed public realm designs (including budget and funding costs) Consultations with utilities and bus operators Phased implementation commencing with Market Place/Derby Street Ensuring continuity of development between all public and private sector investors.
Economic Output: New Jobs Floorspace No. of Dwellings	0 0 0
Cost Estimates	£6.7 million (although approximately £1.2 million relates to works associated with Pickwood Road, and would therefore form part of that site's redevelopment proposals)
Implementation Timescales	Short-term i.e. 1-3 years
Risks	High risk. Funding availability for capital works. Impact of consultations could lead to aspirations being reduced. Inadequate ongoing funding for maintenance.
Project Champion	Private Sector

Transport and Access Interventions

Project Description	Junction improvements have been proposed for three key junctions. Public transport and public realm infrastructure improvements linked to public transport are proposed for Brook Street and the bus station in particular. Consolidation of existing car park provision into a smaller number of large parking areas allied to gateways into the Town Centre. Car parking will be removed from Market Place, and new pedestrian crossing facilities will be created at Stockwell Street, Brook Street and St Edward Street.
The Rationale	To complement other of the Masterplan proposals, reflecting the high level of interrelationship between transport; property regeneration and urban design. The proposals respond to current traffic congestion issues to reduce conflict between the different numbers and types of road users competing for space, and the need to deliver gateway improvements at key locations. Public transport provision comprises only buses so the provision of better quality bus services and associated infrastructure is considered an essential aspect of the Masterplan.
Constraints	Existing movement patterns and congestion Setting of some gateway junctions – limited scope for improvement Cost Bus service operators Additional vehicular trips generated onto the road network from out-of-town retail development.
Key Actions	Design, cost and consult on proposals Undertake safety audit Phased implementation.
Economic Output:	
New Jobs	0
Floorspace	0
No. of Dwellings	0
Cost Estimates	TBC
Implementation Timescales	Short-medium term i.e. 1-5 years
Risks	Risk in terms of securing funding.
Project Champion	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Staffordshire County Council Highways Private Sector

Planning Policy

The Masterplan will help inform the Core Strategy for Staffordshire Moorlands which sets out a vision for the District to 2026. The Masterplan reinforces Leek Town Centre as the District's primary retail and service centre. It generates new employment and residential opportunities, and an enhanced range of shopping, leisure and tourism, and education focused facilities for those that live, work and visit the town.

The Masterplan, once adopted by the District Council as an Interim Policy Statement, will be used as material consideration in development negotiations. It will also provide a useful tool for procuring funding or negotiating developer contributions, as well as negotiating improved design outcomes on planning applications.

Land Ownership and Assembly

Control over the key development areas is important to the successful delivery of the priority projects. Often land assembly is the most important aspect to the development of regeneration projects. The approach and complexity of the land assembly process will depend to a large extent on the existing pattern of ownerships.

For sites where land is already mostly in public sector control, the acquisition and assembly of additional land ought to be relatively straightforward. If this cannot be achieved through negotiations then the eventual scheme may need to be varied to accommodate ownership constraints. Alternatively, if a third party ownership is essential, use of the District Council's Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers may be required.

For other of the Opportunity Sites, the landowners' aspirations accord with the objectives of the Masterplan. For these there is therefore no need for intervention through land assembly activity.

Priorities and Phasing

The Masterplan clearly defines priority interventions – fundamental projects that are essential for the successful long term sustainability of the Town Centre. These projects are:

- Town Centre Core (Market Place Area)
- Town Centre Core (War Memorial Area)
- Town Centre Core (Pickwood Road)
- High quality public realm improvements to Derby Street, Russell Street and St Edward Street
- Gateway improvements at three key junctions – St Edward Street/Compton; St Edward Street/Mill Street/Stockwell Street, and Ashbourne Road/Haywood Street/Ball Haye Street/Derby Street
- Development of a comprehensive initiative that engages key stakeholders in promotional and management activities.

There are, through existing or emerging planning applications, the potential for some short term 'quick wins' which can demonstrate early action to Town Centre users and businesses. These include:

- Moorlands Housing's new extra care residential accommodation on the Former British Trimmings site
- Private residential development on the Eaton House site
- Refurbished employment premises at Portland Street Mill
- Private residential apartments, incorporating residential care, at Compton Mill
- High Street Car Park.

Many of the more medium to long term interventions will require actions in the short term, including the preparation of development briefs, costed sketch designs and feasibility studies.

Delivery Mechanisms and Management

The delivery of the Masterplan strategy will require targeted action and effective management of the implementation process, in order to achieve and sustain the improvement proposed within the Town Centre.

The following key steps are required for establishing an appropriate delivery structure:

- Maximising use of public land ownerships
- Targeting public and private investment
- Co-ordinating actions to ensure management and delivery.

Establishing an Appropriate Delivery Structure

An important first step following endorsement of the Masterplan is to establish appropriate delivery structures to drive and manage the delivery of the regeneration strategy for Leek Town Centre.

It is envisaged that the District Council will take a lead in the delivery of the Masterplan strategy through its planning, property and regeneration departments, supported by external property and urban design, planning, highways and other consultants when required, as well as external organisations as and when appropriate.

The District Council can help to drive projects through development on its own land, or can use its land acquisition powers to assemble sites and enter into development partnerships with the private sector to help deliver projects. In the latter case public sector costs can be recovered from the private developer partners and this should be recognised in any development brief.

The statutory planning process will be one key way in which the proposals are implemented. In particular the Local Plan and emerging LDF are key mechanisms to ensure the delivery of many of the projects and proposals contained in the Masterplan, since planning applications which accord with the plan will be considered favourably.

The Masterplan should be proactively used by the District Council to generate investor and developer interest.

This has already begun as a result of the soft market testing during the drafting of the Masterplan. An important element of generating this interest is to provide the confidence that the Council will support proposals that come forward in accordance with future planning documents.

It is suggested that a dedicated delivery team is established, possibly as an extension of the existing project steering group to include key officers from the District Council, SCC and the Town Centre Champion, with a chair and lead officer appointed to lead and manage the delivery of the strategy and key projects. Aside from reporting directly to the relevant committee structures within the District Council, this group would also report to other stakeholders, who would ensure the involvement of the private sector and other interested parties in the overall approach to the proposals and delivery programme.

All further feasibility work, public consultation, funding applications, etc could then be formulated through this group, which would ensure an integrated and coordinated approach.

Maximising the Use of Public Land Ownerships

It is important to maximise the use of publicly owned land to help drive and deliver the key proposals. Land in public ownership (or acquired through CPO) is a major asset for regeneration because it gives the public sector greater control of the development beyond the normal planning controls.

With high quality design and an integrated approach, value derived from more efficient use of public land can potentially help to fund wider improvements within the Town Centre.

Development of publicly owned land, however, offers the potential for absolute control over the form and quality of new development, provided sufficient interest from developers can be generated. A process of issuing a development (rather than planning) brief, marketing as required to generate competition, and control over work by a development agreement is therefore advocated.

Targeting Public and Private Sector Investment

Public sector funding is limited and this is expected to be the case for some time.

Investment in both capital projects, and in the tools and skills to deliver projects, will be important. The public sector has an important enabling role to play in development and it will require time and resources to lead the process. In terms of development proposals, the aim will be to ensure that development is self-funding and will not require public sector gap funding. The public sector can help to create value through the land use planning process and targeted improvement to the public realm. The procurement route must seek to capture this value for the benefit of the regeneration proposals. Private developers will be encouraged to invest by the wider regeneration context being set by direct public sector improvements. In this way a gearing up will be achieved – public sector pump priming private sector interest and investment.

The Town Centre is already benefitting from public sector investment being delivered through the 'Better Welcome' Programme. Edge and out-of-town developments may provide scope to secure financial contributions through developer contributions that can be invested to aid delivery of the Town Centre Masterplan. Access to future public sector funding and developer contribution remains a risk to the deliver of the plan.

Management and Maintenance

The long-term management of the public realm, car parks and markets is essential to the successful improvement of the Town Centre. A management and maintenance strategy should be prepared to support the objectives, to include guidance on the management and maintenance structures, operational regime and design specification of materials for ease of maintenance.

The operational regime for maintaining the public realm and street scene should be formalised, with details of the cleansing regime indicating tasks on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis. Provision should be made for the repair and replacement of items within the public realm to ensure a consistent quality is maintained. In addition, measures for the emergency cleansing and repair of the public realm should be established with a helpline set up to ensure a speedy response.

The desire to encourage outdoor facilities associated with the new streets and squares is an important part of this Masterplan. The District Council should produce a guide to encourage outdoor facilities and to put the onus on proprietors to keep areas free of litter and work

with the District Council's cleansing operations.

The suitability of designating the Town Centre as a litter free area might also be investigated. This would make owners responsible for keeping the front of their premises, plus reasonable distances either side, clear of litter. Similarly ENCAMS (environmental campaigns) operate a Tidy Business Award Scheme which could also be introduced to encourage businesses to sign up to certain codes of practice. These are aspects which should be considered with organisations such as Leek Chamber of Trade. Such approaches can only improve the image and presentation of the Town Centre.

The design and specification of the public realm and street scene is crucial to maintaining a quality public realm and environment. Good quality materials and functional, robust design can create places that stand the test of time. Reference should be made to the established streets for All Guidance to ensure streetscape improvements should not impose an excessive management burden on the public or private sector. Investment in furnishings and materials that are resistant to vandalism and abuse provides good value for money in the longer term. Keeping streets clean and well maintained is essential in establishing an enduring sense of quality. Litter and graffiti should be cleared and cleaned frequently with bins well located (without them causing clutter).

Marketing Leek Town Centre

Marketing is an important tool to help promote the use and attractiveness of the

town as a place to shop, work, live and visit. A co-ordinated marketing strategy should be prepared that utilises the full range of media to help promote the qualities of the town; it should encourage investment and increased use and activity, including events, specialist markets and themed initiatives.

The marketing activity needs to be linked closely to the management of the Town Centre, as detailed in the following paragraphs.

Tourism Potential

The 2010 Tourism Study suggested that Leek had a key role to play in the visitor economy of the Staffordshire Moorlands, as its primary town and consequently a potential attraction and spending opportunity for visitors.

The study highlighted that Leek was under performing as a visitor destination but had long term potential. Opportunities include:

- Support and improve the retail and catering offer in the town – these are key areas for the visitors.
- Encourage the development of a hotel in Leek – a budget hotel is the most realistic proposition.
- Improve the appearance of the main Ashbourne Road route into the town and general public realm improvement.
- The addition of a new theatre/arts centre
- More events
- Making more of the Nicholson with prominent signage and entrance
- Stressing the arts and craft connections of Leek in its promotion of events

Town Centre Champion

The Town Centre Champion's role is an important part of this regeneration programme. The Champion forms part of the organisational and promotional 'glue' that will hold the Masterplan strategy together, and importantly it will engage the private sector.

The Champion could be an individual, or a grouping of individuals committed to the well-being of Leek Town Centre. Another possibility could be to promote a Business Improvement District (BID) for the Town Centre, with the BID Board then assuming the Champion role. A BID would also provide the added benefit of generating additional revenue ring fenced for re-investment in the Town Centre for activities and action on the ground, such as:

- Further development of branding that stresses distinctiveness and changes perceptions
- Celebrating local heritage through tourism and destination management
- Increasing choice and diversity by promoting and integrating new amenities, residential development and the evening economy
- Enhancing the quality through major infrastructure improvements to the public realm
- Ensuring that the Town Centre is welcoming to all and an experience worth having
- Marketing and events coordination.

Management of the markets is a District-wide issue that needs to be considered strategically. It is important to Leek because of the scale of the indoor market offer and concerns about the decline in interest in the outdoor facility.

The above mentioned activities would require resourcing, as part of a comprehensive business plan. Local business contributions will be required, but as suggested these could be generated through a BID.

Retail Potential

The town continues to prosper with few retail vacancies and a mix of national multiple retailers and quality independent shops. Leek retains the look and feel of a market town, and in doing so has a unique offer and position in North Staffordshire and the wider Peak District.

Leek has weathered the economic downturn well so far and has seen modest investment in new retail ventures which generally have survived and even thrived, notably the cluster around Sheep Market and Stanley Street. This has further enhanced Leek's reputation as a place to shop for antiques, reproductions, home accessories and gifts.



Potential new retail in Russell Street

Whilst supporting new local enterprise, the town needs to find space to accommodate new national multiple retailers to ensure the centre retains a broad appeal. However, the town needs to position itself carefully attracting suitable national retailers that would be at home in a market town and not trying to compete for small outlets of stores that would be found in larger neighbouring centres.

The Masterplan does identify potential for new retail investment on several opportunity sites, and whilst this remains a long-term desire, the economic climate now and in the immediate future is likely to be a barrier to major redevelopment. There remains an opportunity for incremental investment and improvement making use of vacant or underused buildings, for example in Russell Street thus developing a stronger retail circuit between Derby Street and Pickwood Road retail area.

Delivering the Opportunity Sites

For a number of the Opportunity Sites landowners or developer/end user intentions have, already manifested, or are emerging, in planning applications. The delivery strategy is known. For the remainder this is not the case, and particularly so for two of the exemplar projects. For these sites careful consideration has to be given to the best form of delivery.

The criteria for assessing this include financial viability, how to procure detailed design of a scheme and how to ensure good quality design, vital for a successful urban regeneration solution.

There is ready evidence within Leek Town Centre of past built form that has failed to do this. It is also necessary to consider how public costs can be controlled without prejudging quality.

Within realistic budgets the consultants would usually advocate a strong approach to guiding delivery partners, ensuring that the vision is not undermined by poor delivery. Public sector land ownership and/or assembly, and control over developers by the use of development agreements, can ensure this is achieved. It is especially important to ensure that current best practice design is actually delivered. Design guidance and planning powers are often insufficient to control this (due to statutory limitations) and the tough current economic climate, and its impact on the property development market, exacerbates the challenge.

However, where the District Council is not only the local planning authority but is also the landowner, there is opportunity for greater influence in securing better design.

The recommended approach is to start with a relatively ambitious stance and to use strong marketing to create a choice of partners.

The delivery of key opportunity sites will be reinforced with the promotion of the Council's Employment and Skills Charter, a voluntary agreement seeking to maximise local jobs and contracts from major developments.

Development Procurement Process

The end quality of development is vitally important to the wider regeneration objectives for Leek Town Centre. In the consultants' view this will only be delivered to a high standard with control exercised as landowner, and not simply through planning controls. In a difficult market, such as at the present time, developers will work hard to cut back quality if the site is secured prior to planning applications. The sites which are more difficult to control through ownership must be controlled as well as possible using planning powers. The planning framework for this requires careful thought and preparation.

As the landowner, or where a CPO route is advocated, the client is recommended to produce development briefs (not planning briefs) for appropriate development projects. These should set out the criteria for competitive bids for the sites based on clearly set out objectives for uses, scale, form, quality, etc. Bids would probably be invited based on design and price, although more detailed advice should be sought at the appropriate time. The disposal should be carried out by a development agreement, with title to the land passing when the quality of the scheme is ascertained, and not before.

Development briefs can strongly guide the form of the finished scheme whilst getting the best creative contribution from bidders. This can be achieved by preparing briefs of real quality that can be adopted as SPDs to set aspirations high.

Following the bidding process, development agreements with the selected bidders must be drafted to control the developer partners and guarantee the scheme selected is the one ultimately delivered on site. Public sector professional costs beyond the selection stage can often be recovered from the developer.

Content of Development Briefs

Once the required concept for the project is fixed, a clear and simple brief should be created to use as a marketing document and guide for potential partners to bid against. The brief should demonstrate clearly the broad expectations of Leek and be ambitious to 'raise the game' in terms of quality of responses. Some of the key areas it should cover are:

- Development context/contribution to the overall Masterplan
- Site ownerships and land assembly strategy
- Design brief, architectural quality, sustainability and approach
- Programme for implementation
- Requirements of a preferred developer
- Financial matters
- Development agreement process
- Joint working relationship with the public sector
- Public consultation requirements
- Selection criteria (probably two stage – initial CVs of developers and professional teams as a basis to select a short-list, then a detailed response from those short-listed).

Market Testing

BE Group has extensive experience of development working for, and with, private development companies and its experience has been used in identifying projects which will appeal to the development market. To further ensure the development proposals suggested in the Masterplan are realistic and deliverable initial discussions have been conducted with developers, owners and agents for a number of the key Opportunity Sites, especially the Town Centre Core (Pickwood Road Area).

Market testing has also involved the hotel development sector.

Financial Implications for the District Council

The financial aspects of delivering the proposals will require detailed development. The indicative costings suggest public realm and transport infrastructure improvements could total around £7 million. However approximately one sixth of this figure relates to the Pickwood Road Area and could therefore be incorporated into the overall development costs for that scheme.

Public sector funding constraints dictate that self-funding approaches should therefore be sought. Providing sufficient effort is put into creating attractive opportunities and effective marketing, negotiation and documentation, there is scope to minimise public sector costs.

Whilst the public sector must expect to incur costs in the short term, certainly after development partner selection and exchange of partnership agreements, most reasonable public sector costs can become development costs covered by the developer(s). This is an important aspect of project financing as focussing on up-front cost cutting can be counter-productive if available resources and skills are insufficient, compared to achieving a high quality procurement process which can generate funds to work with. In addition the selected developer(s) can be expected to cover the costs of detailed design and financial feasibility work.

Next Steps for the Immediate Future

The Masterplan process and content has been supported by a committed Steering Group. This has developed considerable momentum which needs to be maintained if successful Town Centre regeneration is to be achieved. Progress needs to be made on two fronts – policy and delivery.

Progress on regeneration should continue to be driven by the continued regular meeting of the Steering Group, with a change of emphasis away from policy towards programme delivery – without losing sight of the co-ordinated approach.

The ‘Town Centre Champion’ will need to be put in place and supported by a key senior officer with the resources, skills and political support necessary to focus on driving the programme forward.

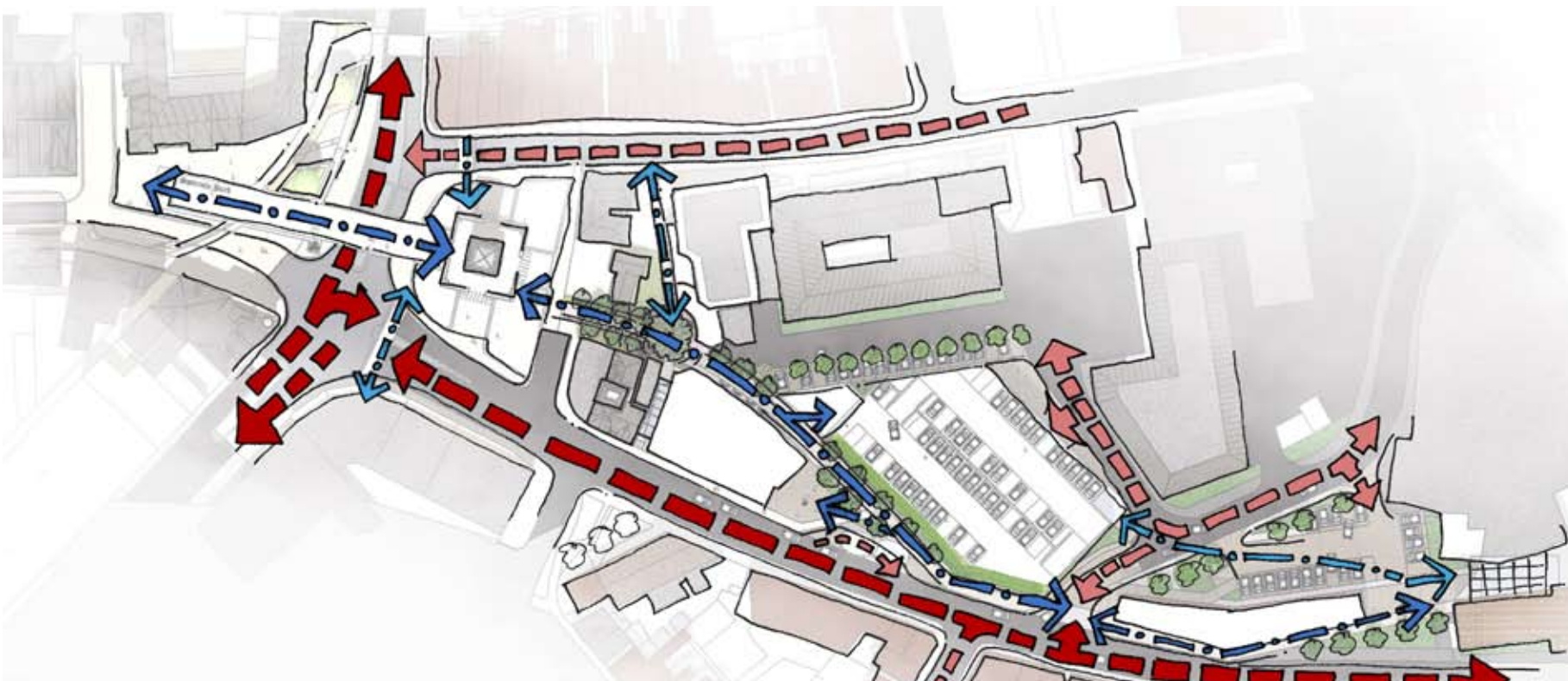
Membership of the Steering Group needs to ensure inclusion of delivery skills – notably in property, design and project management. This may involve public sector officers or continuing consultancy involvement. Engagement with stakeholders outside of the core Steering Group will need to be further developed. This will include key landowners, developers and local businesses.

Specific next steps include:

- Masterplan to be endorsed by the District Council and fed into the LDF, with recommended land use changes adopted as Council policy
- Masterplan to be used as a negotiating tool for Development Control, to encourage higher quality design in the Town Centre. This should include current planning applications, especially those linked to identified Opportunity Sites
- Preparation of development briefs for key sites
- The District Council to review land and property ownerships and legal interests associated with the Opportunity Sites and establish policy/approach to their contribution to future development (e.g. freehold or long leasehold disposals; capital or revenue receipts; joint venture shares)
- Preparation of Design Guides, including a Servicing Management Plan to ensure an integrated and comprehensive approach to servicing provision is followed
- Develop and design further measures to mitigate traffic impact around Leek Town Centre, and promote modal shift away from the private car towards more sustainable transport modes
- Consultations with SCC and Leek Town Council on their possible future roles and contributions to implementation and management.

Drawing on the objectives set out in the Masterplan, SMDC in partnership with SCC have commissioned work to develop a concept for Ashbourne Road gateway, looking to build on the planned investment in public realm around the Ashbourne Road and Derby Street junction. The overall concept explores the potential for a new development incorporating the reuse of the former Talbot public house; bringing forward a concept for a decked car park offering around 168 parking spaces over three levels and creating a new pedestrian link into the heart of the town centre connection Ashbourne Road to the War Memorial.

The Concept is an example of the approach the Council will take to bring forward ideas to stimulate, shape and encourage appropriate development in line with the principles established in the Masterplan.



Ashbourne Road Gateway Concept

