



# PLANNING SWINDON TOGETHER

A MASTERPLAN  
FOR SWINDON

SEPTEMBER 2012

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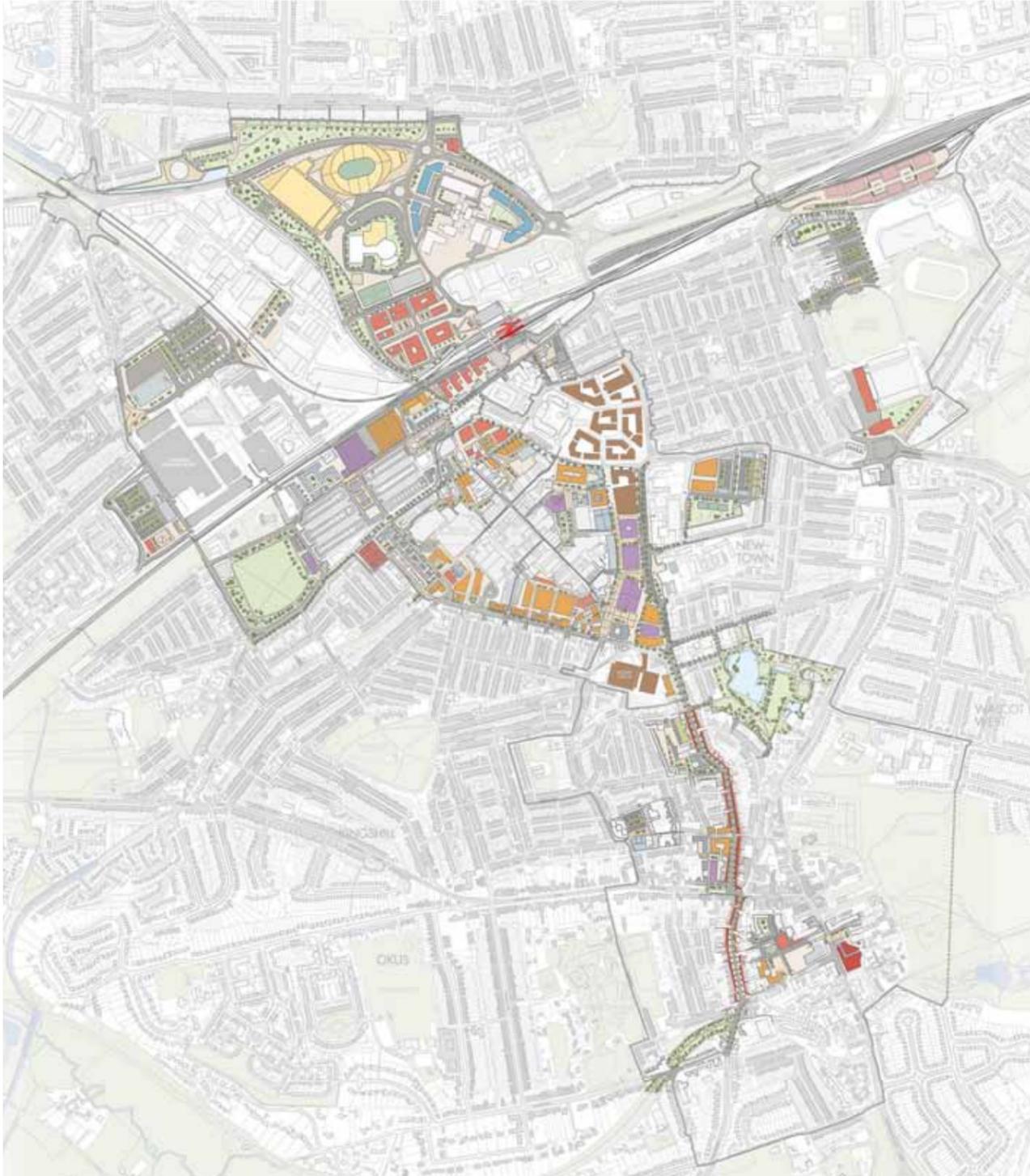
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE MASTERPLAN



The Swindon Town Centre Masterplan has been prepared in close collaboration with key business and community stakeholders in Swindon. It is a long term plan for the regeneration of the Swindon Town Centre and it will guide development over the next 10-15 years. The masterplan reflects the aspirations of local stakeholders for Swindon Town Centre to become:

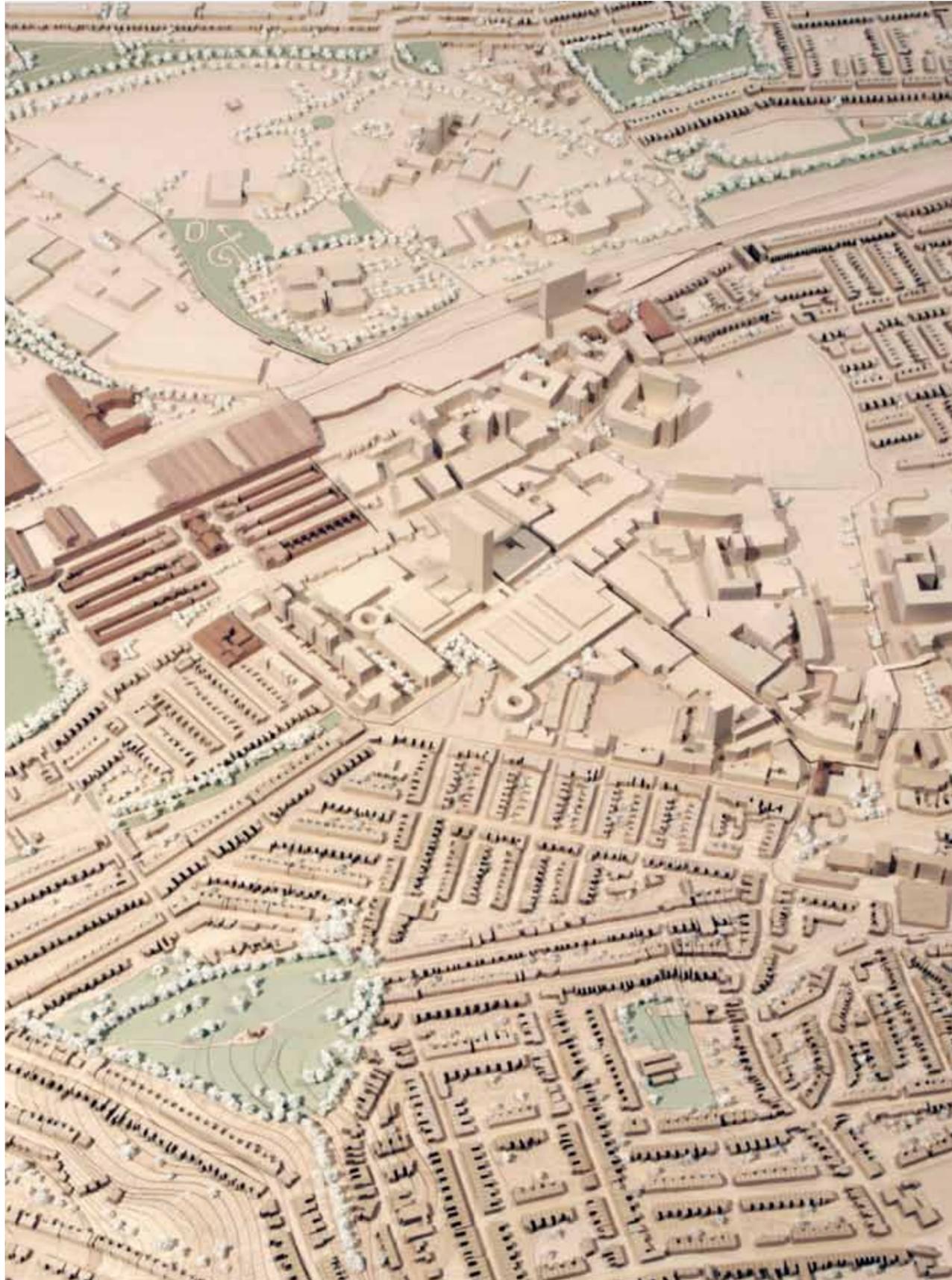
- A place which is a cultural destination for Wiltshire and the South West;
- An enjoyable place to shop and enjoy leisure time;
- A town which celebrates its unique industrial and railway heritage;
- A sustainable place to live;
- A thriving, diverse and family-friendly evening economy;
- A town centre characterised by beautiful streets, public spaces and parks; and
- A town which continues to be a location of choice for major, high quality employers.

The masterplan sets out a clear vision for Swindon Town Centre and articulates a programme of projects through which the vision will be realised. The projects include:

- A series of prestigious cultural venues, including a new art gallery to house the Council's prestigious collection, which will help to transform Swindon's image and identity and draw visitors back to the town centre as well as act as a catalyst for further investment;
- A series of key infrastructure projects to connect the northern and southern halves of Swindon Town Centre, which are currently severed by the railway;
- A framework for Swindon's streets, public spaces and parks to deliver the 'green spine' identified in Council policy for Swindon and to make the town centre more inviting for pedestrians and cyclists and more legible for motorists;
- A strategy for Swindon's built heritage, including the Mechanics' Institute, the Paragon Laundry, The Locarno and the former Swindon College building, which is designed to ensure a sustainable long term future for these buildings;
- A portfolio of key development sites, some of which are already in the pipeline and will be delivered soon, and some of which are longer term proposals. The identification of development sites will help to ensure that new development in Swindon comes forward in a co-ordinated way, and that it can be delivered to the highest possible design quality; and
- An action plan for delivery, which sets out clearly the next steps, key partners and timescales for the completion of major projects.

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## 1.2 CONTEXT FOR THE MASTERPLAN

The masterplan has been commissioned by Forward Swindon on behalf of all the stakeholders in the town to provide a clear programme of more detailed projects, to support the implementation of the Swindon Central Area Action Plan (2009) and update the previous Swindon Masterplan prepared by New Swindon in 2005. The plan period for the Swindon Central Area Action Plan runs until 2016, and it is able to be reviewed during this period. The masterplan will provide the basis for review of CAAP policy where updates are required and provides more detailed guidance on spatial and design principles for the CAAP area, serving to amplify the CAAP policy. The masterplan will be presented by Forward Swindon to Swindon Borough Council, for adoption. Once adopted, the masterplan will become a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications.

This document sets out projects which are capable of implementation in the short, medium and long term, identifying priority projects which will help to continue regeneration in the town centre, and act as a catalyst for further investment.

This masterplan has been prepared collaboratively with local community groups, Councillors, businesses and key landowners and stakeholders, including: Network Rail, Nationwide, Honda, Swindon College, Brunel Shopping Centre, the Mechanics' Institute Trust, Influence, English Heritage, Swindon Borough Council officers, Morai Capital and InSwindon.

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Workshop 1: Community Stakeholders at STEAM



Workshop 2: Business Stakeholders at Swindon Football Club

## 2 PLANNING SWINDON TOGETHER COMMUNITY & BUSINESS CONSULTATION

The masterplan has been developed with the help of local community groups, businesses and key local stakeholders to ensure it reflects local needs and aspirations. Stakeholder engagement has been secured through a series of workshop events individually tailored for a community audience and a business audience. These workshops were followed up with a test and review workshop, at which community and business participants were invited to review emerging ideas for the town centre masterplan. The outcomes of these events are summarised below. The events were supplemented by a series of one to one meetings with key stakeholders in the town. The findings from which are also summarised below for reference.

### Workshop 1: Community stakeholders

A workshop for community organisations was held on 2nd February 2012 between 5pm and 8pm at the STEAM Museum in Swindon. Invitations were sent to a wide range of community groups, neighbourhood representatives and local councillors in Swindon and over 60 people attended the event. The event was structured to include two interactive workshop sessions to provide the opportunity for participants to contribute their ideas and priorities for the masterplan. The first part of the workshop involved a presentation on the existing social, economic and physical context of Swindon and presented an overview of future socioeconomic trends and challenges in order to illustrate the context in which the masterplan is being prepared. Participants were asked to work in groups to provide feedback on the key issues facing Swindon and how Swindon should best respond to future trends and challenges.

### A summary of the key issues identified by the workshop groups is provided below:

- The night time economy is poor with little to attract people into the town centre in the evening and a vertical drinking culture around Fleet Street which has a negative image
- Higher-earning residents tend to shop outside of the town centre
- There is no cultural heart to the town
- Swindon has a negative image
- There are a significant number of out dated and vacant buildings in prominent locations around

the town centre

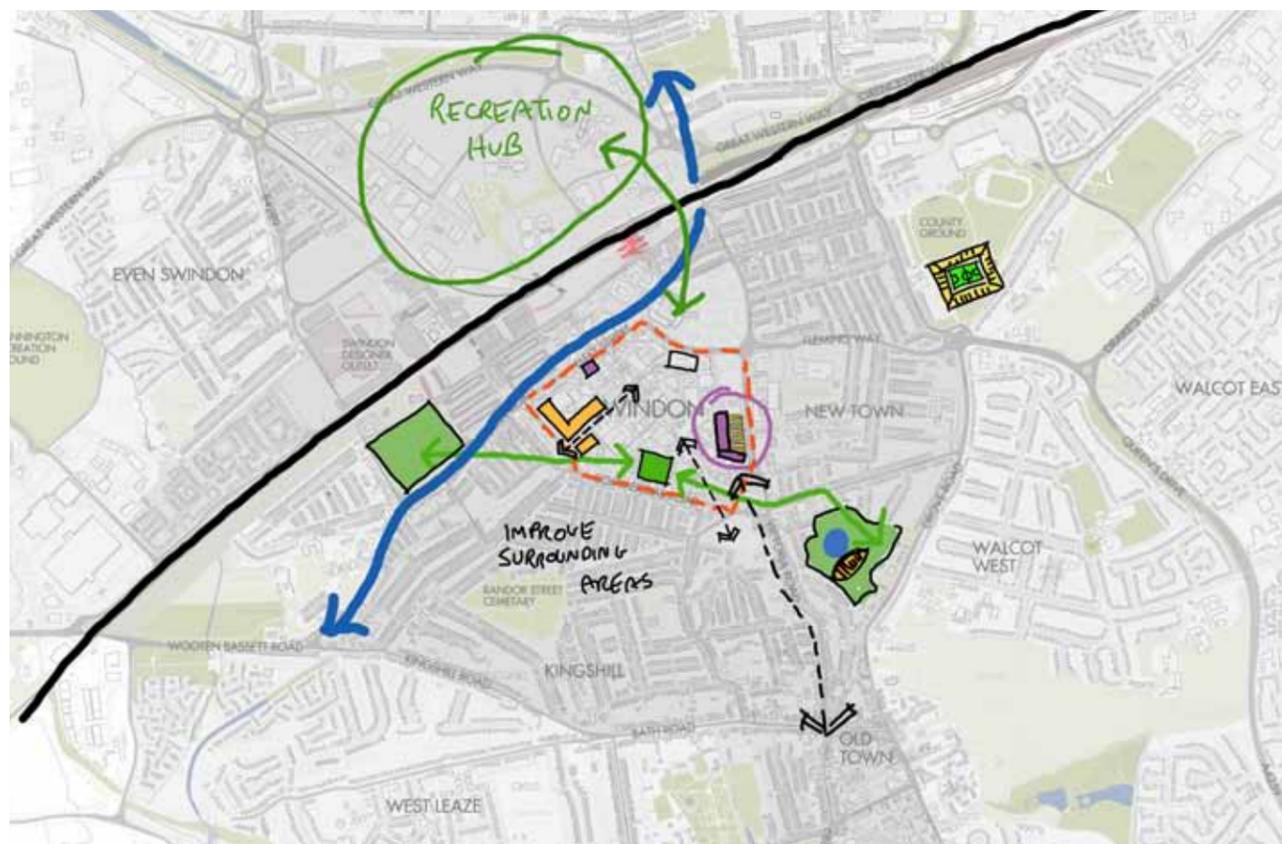
- There have been too many plans for the town centre and a lack of co-ordination
- There are poor public transport connections – particularly bus links around the town centre
- There is a perceived lack of affordable town centre business space
- High levels of youth unemployment
- Poor pedestrian and cycle connections around the town centre

### Opportunities for the future of the town were also discussed. A summary of the key opportunities is listed below:

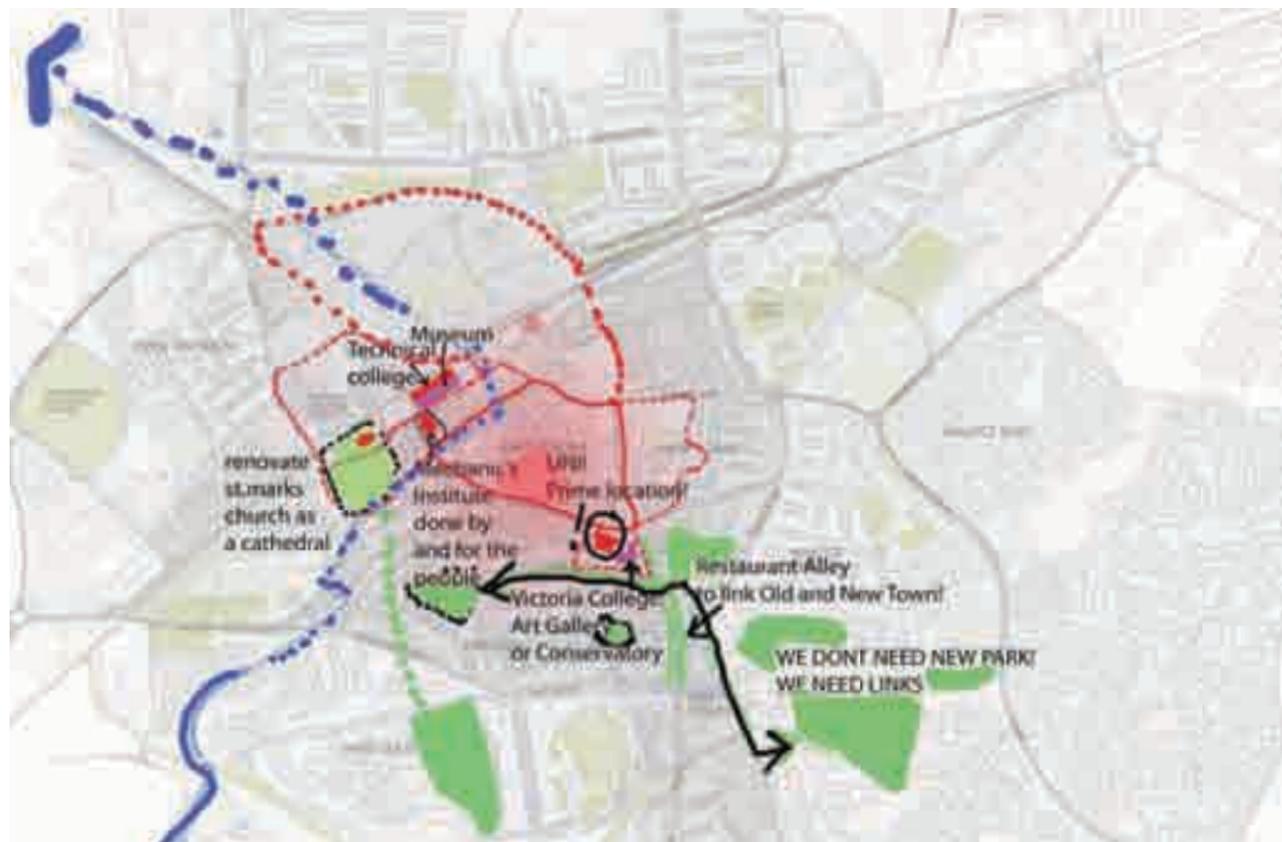
- The potential of young people in Swindon should be fully realised by working with Swindon College and local schools
- Swindon's diverse community is a key asset
- The existing civic pride in the town is a resource which can be harnessed
- The potential to attract green technology and high technology industries to Swindon is a significant opportunity
- Planned new development in the town centre is an opportunity to change the image of the town centre
- Swindon's market and railway heritage are assets and opportunities for the town in the future
- Securing additional cultural facilities to complement the existing facilities is a priority
- The tourism potential can be enhanced by promoting and investing Swindon's unique heritage and new cultural facilities
- There is an opportunity to celebrate the best of Swindon, by promoting the sale of locally made crafts, food and produce, building on the existing farmers markets
- There is an aspiration to re-establish the Wiltshire and Berks Canal through the town centre

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Workshop 1: Community Stakeholders drawing



Workshop 1: Community Stakeholders drawing

### Sketching masterplans

During the second half of the event, a presentation was made which explored Swindon's spatial, urban and architectural context. The groups were then asked to draw up their own plans for the town centre, guided by a series of questions which sought to ensure key areas for improvement were identified. The groups were joined by an urban designer who drew ideas directly onto a plan projected onto a screen using tablet technology. This enabled people to see how their ideas translated into a spatial masterplan for the town, and provided the opportunity for them to refine and shape the plan as it emerged.

A sample of the plans produced are presented on these pages and a summary of some of the common spatial features of the plans is set out below.

### Key masterplan actions:

- Improve the link between Old Town and the town centre – particularly along Victoria Road
- Improve pedestrian and cycle links across the railway and through the town centre
- Provide new and improved cultural facilities in the Promenade area and Heritage Quarter
- Link the proposed recreation hub at the Oasis to the town centre
- Create a more diverse town centre with cafés and markets selling local produce
- Establish the canal in the town centre
- Create better links to existing parks

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### Swindon jigsaw

Finally the town centre study area was split into seven areas and jigsaw pieces made to enable groups to draw their ideas directly onto each piece. The town was split as follows:

1. Old Town
2. The Promenade
3. County Ground
4. Retail Centre
5. Railway Station
6. North Star
7. Heritage area

The groups were asked to develop detailed proposals for these areas which were slotted together at the end of the day to create a composite plan for the town centre. A summary of the key proposals for each part of the town centre is set out on the following pages and a photograph of each piece is also provided.

#### 1. Old Town

- Infill development to utilise under-used pieces of land
- Retail frontage improvements (along Victoria Road in particular)
- Residential infill development
- Improved public realm at key junctions
- Potential for a new small food store
- New use for the Locarno



Jigsaw piece: Old Town

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## 2. The Promenade

- Redevelop car parks for mix of uses potentially including a new gallery and cultural facilities
- Remove footbridge and create shared surfaces along Princes Street
- Improve retail frontage around Regent Circus
- Redevelop or refurbish Wyvern Theatre
- Improve links to the south of Regent Street
- Redevelop and combine the courts to make more efficient use of the site
- Find new use for the former Swindon College building



Jigsaw piece: The Promenade

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## 3. County Ground

- New homes fronting onto County Ground
- Youth facilities
- Improved lighting, access and public realm around the grounds
- Better signage and arrival to County Ground at Magic Roundabout
- Rethink the layout of the Magic Roundabout?
- New development at Ocotol Way to create a gateway to the town centre
- Redevelopment of The Range/Halfords for new homes



Jigsaw piece: County Ground

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#### 4. Retail Centre

- Redevelop the Wyvern Theatre and re-provide new modern theatre or multifunctional cultural space in the area
- New uses around Regent Street/Canal Street junction – particularly cafés and restaurants
- Redevelop the Swindon Tented Market
- Permit restaurants and cafés along Regent Street through a planning and licensing regime
- Improve links between Princes Street and Regent Street
- Manage the evening economy around Fleet Street
- Redevelop Farnsby Street offices for new offices or residential
- Permit residential development on Commercial Road



Jigsaw piece: Retail Centre

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#### 5. Railway Station

- New connections across the railway at the station
- Link the North Star House with Swindon College and educational facilities
- Improve the pedestrian and cycle experience
- Maximise development opportunities along the railway
- Capitalise on Union Square development and bus station to improve pedestrian links



Jigsaw piece: Railway Station

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## 6. North Star

- Create an improved leisure hub
- Potential for a hotel
- Hawksworth Industrial Estate – is there a long term opportunity for redevelopment here for housing?
- Potential to improve and enhance the education offer
- Better link to the south of the railway



Jigsaw piece: North Star

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## 7. Heritage Area

- Refurbish terraced housing stock – sell some stock to private to fund this and improvements to Faringdon Park
- New sports and leisure facilities at Faringdon park
- Refurbish the Turkish Baths
- A new Gallery at The Works
- New cycle link along route of former canal
- Potential for new retail development in the western retail car park
- A new hopper bus to link the Swindon Designer Outlet to town



Jigsaw piece: Heritage Area

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### Test and review

The community and business workshops provided a wealth of information on the current issues for Swindon and perceived opportunities, and they were an excellent base from which to develop initial ideas for the town centre masterplan. A test and review workshop was held on 7th March 2012 between 5pm and 7pm at STEAM Museum, Kemble Drive, Swindon. The event was attended by participants from the two earlier events and provided an opportunity to review the emerging concept and ideas for the masterplan. The emerging ideas were presented, followed by group discussions of the proposals shown. Key issues raised are summarised below:

- Need to ensure there are more cafés and restaurants in the town centre
- The area around Fleet Street needs to be considered – to manage the evening economy effectively
- Make sure Swindon College and the university technical college are involved in planning the future
- Promoting and enhancing the GWR heritage is vital to the future of the town centre
- Need better accessibility to the town centre
- Evening uses should be concentrated in the town centre retail area to create more of a “buzz”
- Pedestrian circulation around the town centre should be improved
- The unattractive backs of buildings in the town centre need to be addressed
- Need to consider the canal connection through the town centre – great regeneration catalyst
- Improving linkages across the railway is essential – need to ensure new leisure proposals at the North Star are well integrated into the town centre
- Need to consider education provision for the new population arising from housing development in the town centre
- Sustainable forms of transport are very important and should be incorporated into the masterplan
- Further develop proposals to have new cultural uses in the Promenade area

The test and review workshop general support for the main thrust of the emerging masterplan, and provided a useful steer on ways in which indicative proposals needed to be refined.

### One-to-one meetings

A number of one to one meetings were held with key town centre stakeholders to supplement the information gained through the workshops. The information gathered in these meetings has helped to refine the masterplan proposals further, particularly where landowners and developers have been able to provide detailed information on the feasibility and constraints of specific sites and proposals. A list of the organisations which attended meetings is provided here:

- Network Rail
- Influence
- Greensquare Group
- Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal Trust
- Swindon Borough Council – Leisure, Parks and Planning
- Town centre ward Councillors
- Swindon College
- The Mechanics' Institution Trust
- Muse Developments Ltd

### Summary

This extensive engagement process has enabled the development of a masterplan that has been actively shaped by the local community. There is now an opportunity for the wider public to review the content of the masterplan and provide comments as part of a public consultation period. An exhibition will be held in a central town centre location and comments on the proposals will be sought. The results of the consultation will help to refine the masterplan further before publication of a final masterplan for Swindon Town Centre. The final masterplan will inform the review of the Swindon Central Area Action Plan and provide detailed guidance and principles for development for key sites within the town centre.

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### 3 SWINDON NOW

#### 3.1 PLACE

This section provides an overview of the initial research undertaken which has informed the development of this draft masterplan. The research is organised into five themes which reflect the key issues for Swindon town centre. These are:

**Place** – an analysis of Swindon's physical environment, including historic development

**People** – review of key socioeconomic characteristics in Swindon town centre and Swindon's Community Strategy

**Plans** – summary of the planning policy framework and currently planning applications/approvals

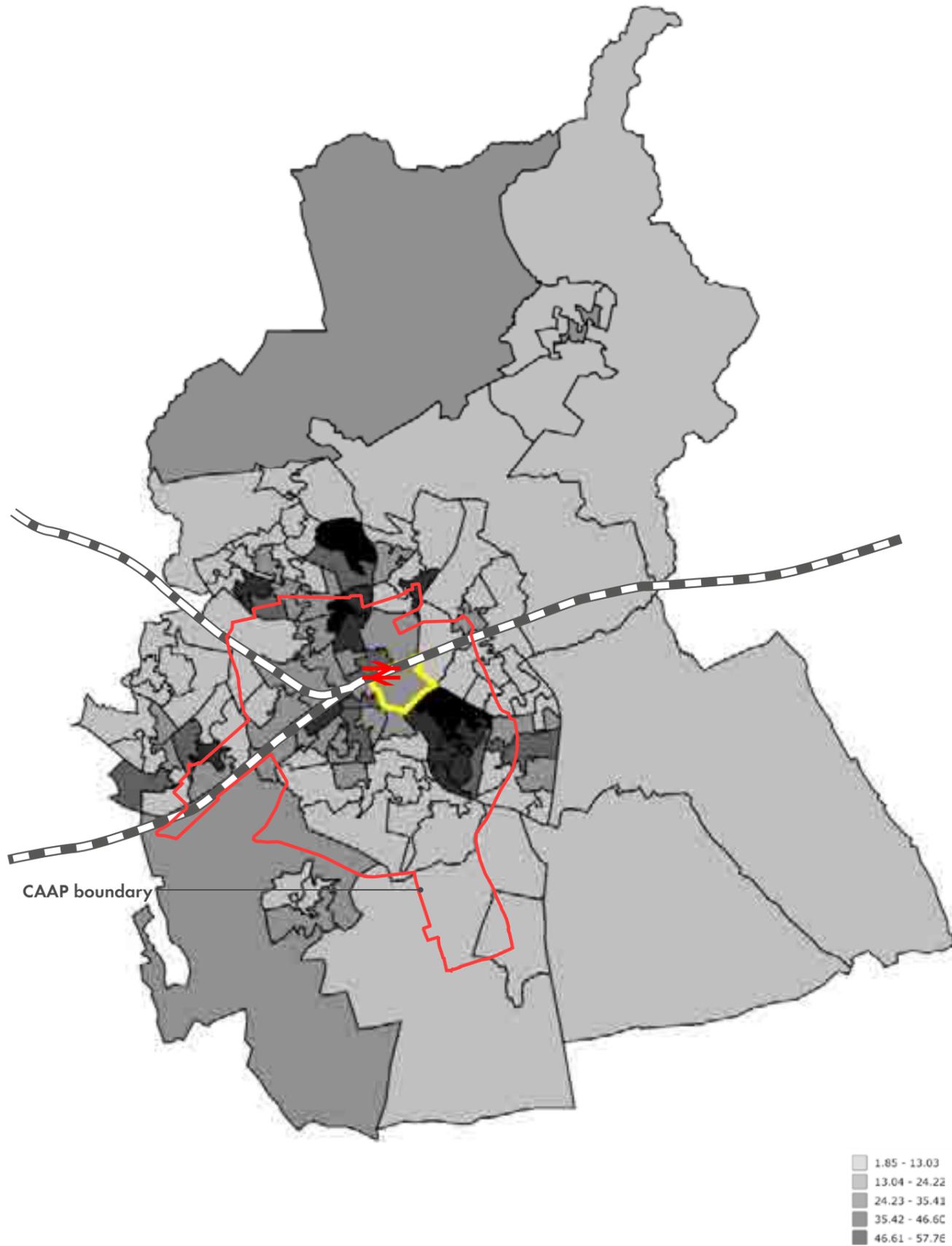
**Movement** – a review of traffic, pedestrian, cycle and public transport movement around the town

**Economy** – an overview of the local and national economic and property market context

This information is summarised from the Swindon Town Centre Masterplan Briefing Document, January 2012, which sets out the findings of our baseline research in more detail.

We have analysed Swindon's physical environment in order to understand how the town developed historically, how different uses are distributed across the town and how the network of streets and open spaces function.

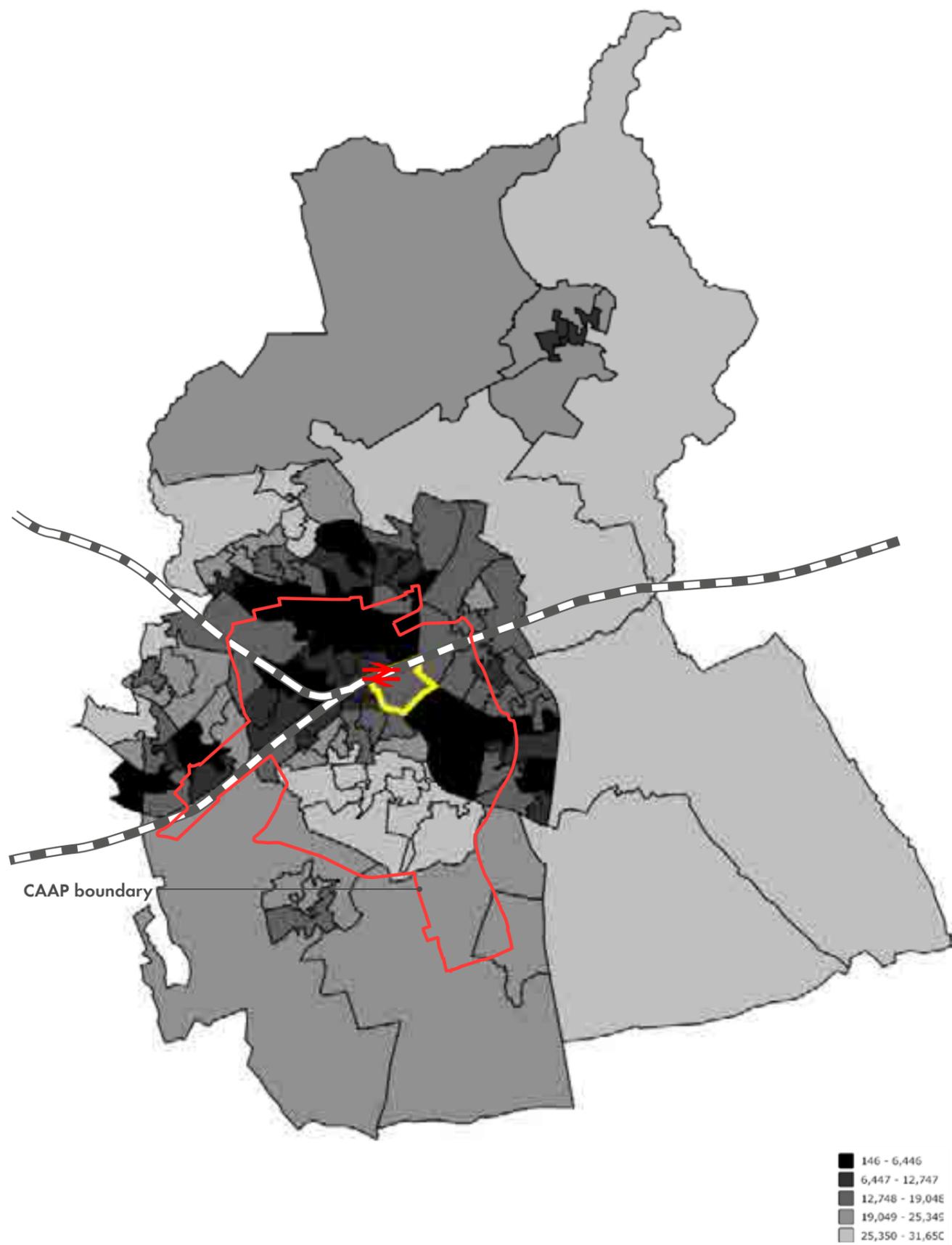
- There have been a number of significant public realm improvements in recent years in areas including Canal Walk and Regent Street.
- Swindon's transport network, railway and canal heritage make a very significant contribution to Swindon's character and identity.
- Improving the routes between key town centre attractions, open spaces, the station, business areas and the residential hinterland would help to promote Swindon's existing assets. A Green Spine which connects the Old Town and town centre is promoted in the current Swindon Central Area Action Plan.
- There is a lack of a central focal point in the heart of the town centre.
- The central area is dominated by blocks of single uses - introducing a greater diversity of uses would help to make the town centre more sustainable.
- Swindon is home to a significant number of large employers, many of which are located at the periphery of the town. Opportunities to explore how the town centre can better serve employees should be examined.



Indices of Multiple Deprivation - score, SOAs 2010

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Education and training - rank (IMD), SOAs, 2010

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### 3.2 PEOPLE

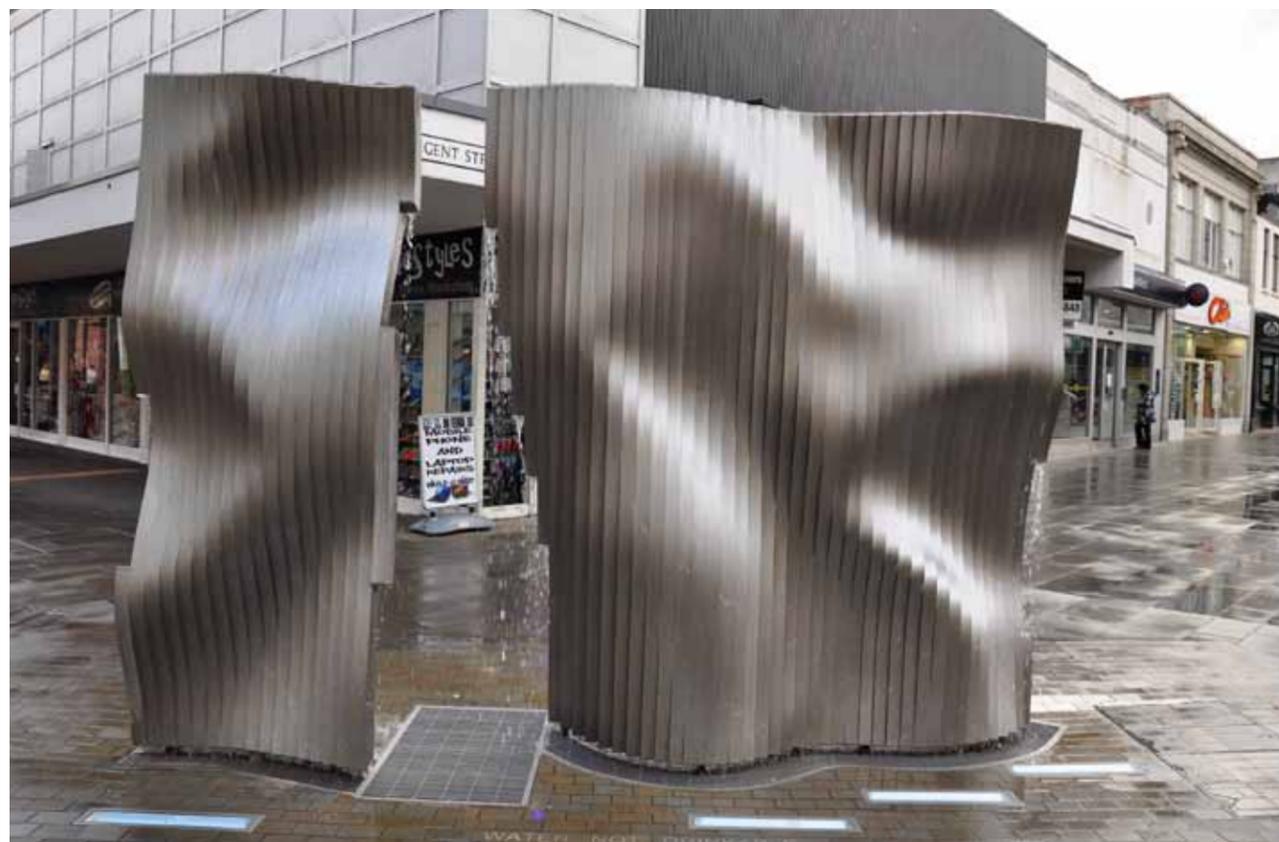
We have analysed key socioeconomic characteristics and trends in Swindon together with the aspirations set out in the Community Strategy to gain an understanding of the local population. A summary of the key messages is provided here.

- Swindon's population is expected to grow significantly in the next 20 years.
- The borough is on average not particularly deprived nor wealthy, and the population generally benefits from above average health and income (indices of Multiple Deprivation).
- The greatest proportion of residents in professional occupations is concentrated at the edges of the urban area particularly to the south and north east.
- Swindon has a lower proportion of people who are not economically active than the national average.
- The ACORN classification system indicates that there are pockets of those classed as "wealthy achievers" and "urban prosperity" at the southern periphery of the town, which reflects the higher numbers of professionals in these areas.
- There are pockets of "hard pressed" families at the northern edge of the town centre area and close to the railway.
- There is a strong commitment to sustainability in Swindon's Community Strategy.
- The key challenge for Swindon town centre is to develop an offer which is attractive to all sections of the local population, many of whom currently shop elsewhere.

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Swindon station forecourt improvements



Public art, Regent Street

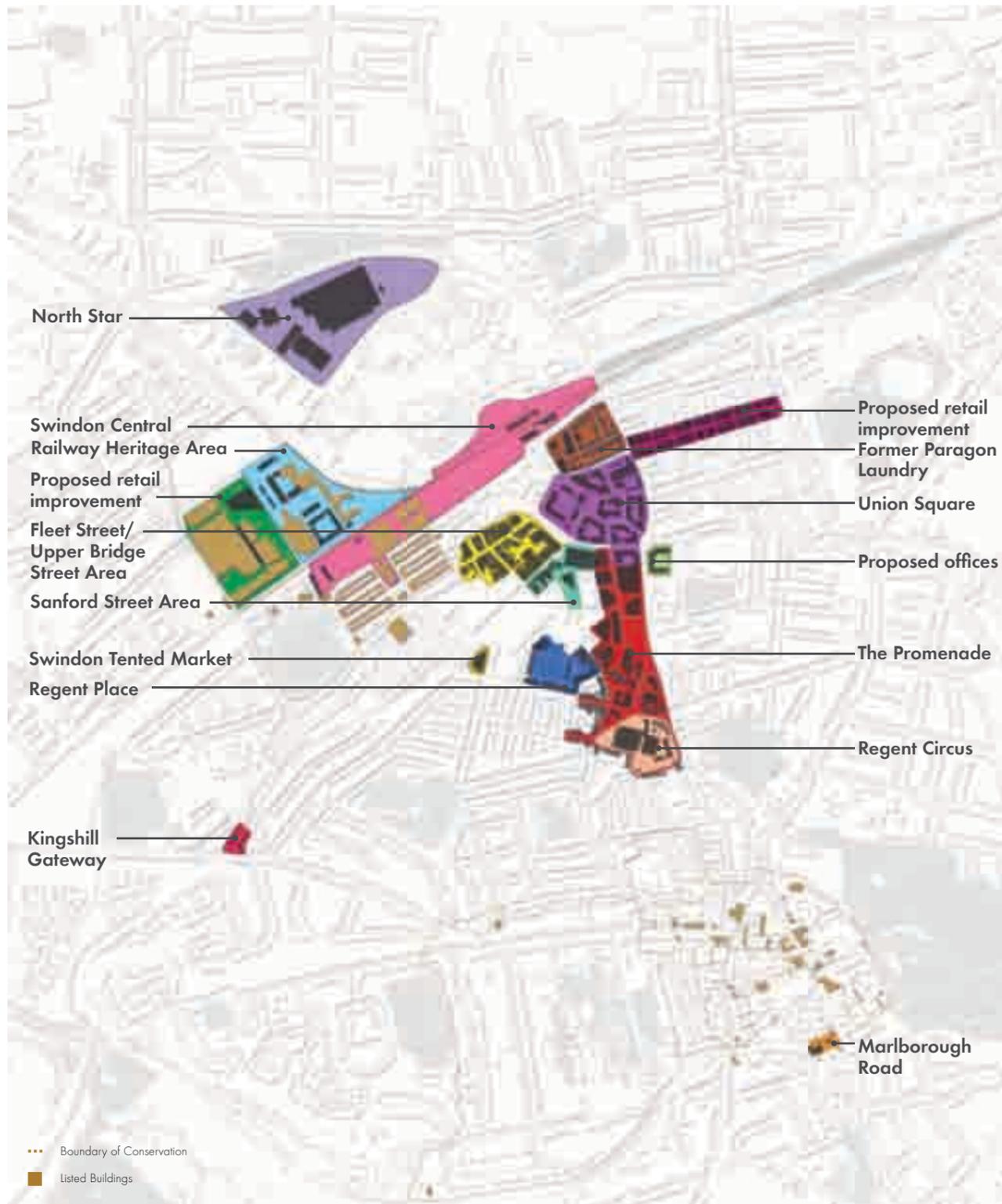
### 3.3 PLANS

Swindon is a dynamic place, and there are several development sites in the town centre which are likely to be built on in the short to medium term. We have mapped these sites on the page overleaf and they have been identified in Swindon Borough Council's adopted Swindon Central Area Action Plan (CAAP). The masterplan provides the opportunity to set out more detail on development principles for these sites, responding to the changing economic climate and will provide a basis to update parts of the CAAP in the future.

- Policies and principles for key sites and spaces in Swindon town centre have been set out in a number of policy documents. Many of these were prepared prior to the economic downturn, and therefore need to be reconsidered for the current economic climate.
- Schemes for a number of the town centre sites have secured planning permission and will make a significant contribution to improving the town centre offer although they are likely to be delivered in phases over a relatively long period of time.
- The masterplan must consider how best to link proposals for new development (particularly where these are north of the railway tracks) with the existing town centre offer, in order to maximise the economic benefits for the town centre.
- Proposals to reinstate a canal running through Swindon Town Centre would provide a significantly improved pedestrian environment, and create a key attraction. However, they are likely to prove prohibitively expensive to deliver, due to the presence of key infrastructure, including roads and sewers along the preferred route. The masterplan sets out a suggested route for a canal and canal basin, along a former canal route, which may be more deliverable, and allows for the safeguarding of the cross-town route for the long term.
- The Swindon Night Vision Pilot project recommended a number of measures to improve the appeal of the town centre to a wider section of the population by managing the vertical drinking establishments and associated issues of anti social behaviour around Fleet Street and Bridge Street. A key challenge for Swindon is providing a more balanced, family friendly evening offer within an attractive town centre environment.

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Swindon Town Centre: key regeneration sites

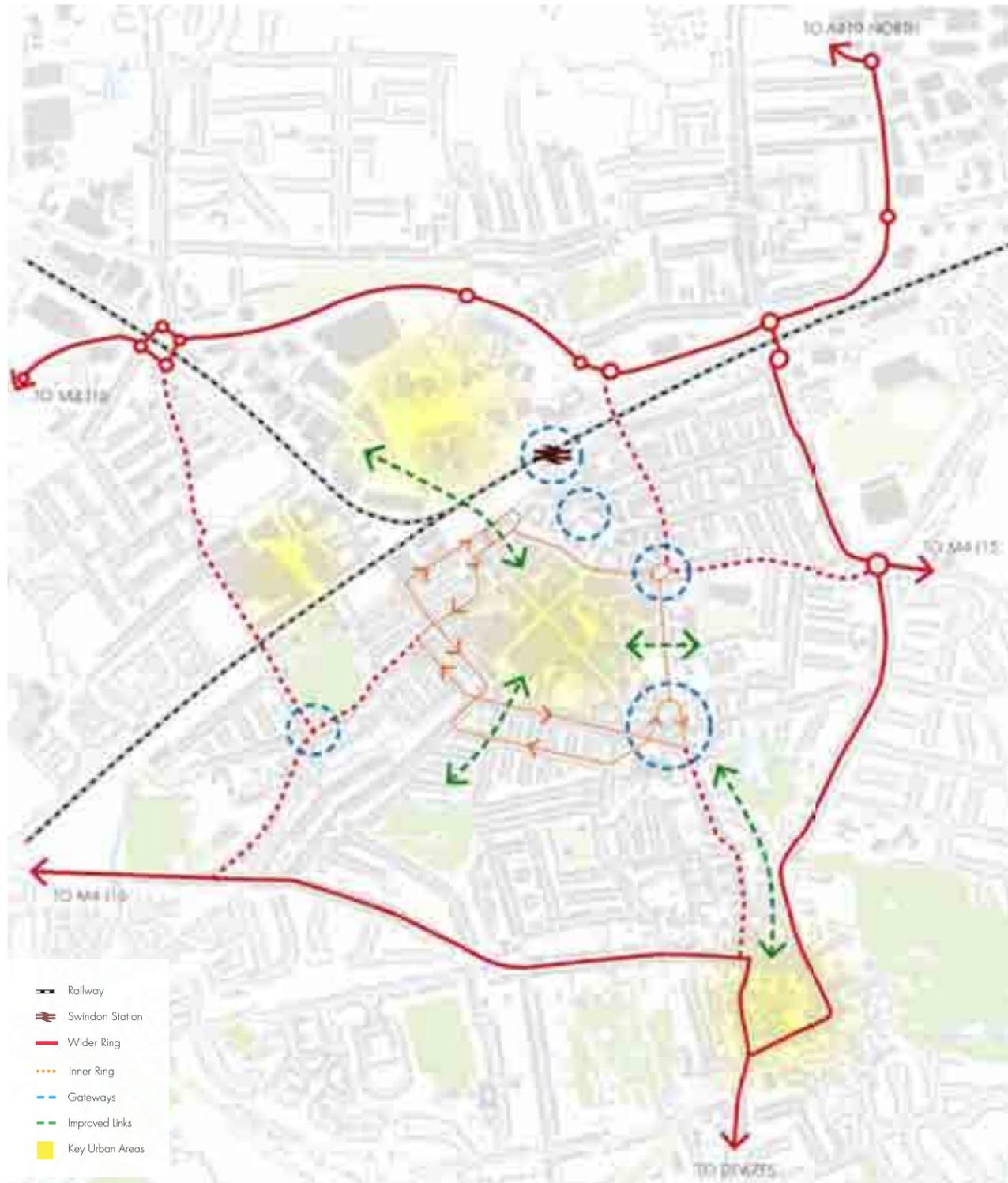
### Regeneration sites

We have listed known regeneration sites below. Some of these have approved plans and development is underway, while others, such as Granville Street have not yet come forward and present the opportunity to develop fresh proposals to reflect the changing role of town centres and the current economic climate.

1. North Star - Potential for new leisure development to replace the Oasis Centre and provide a new indoor ski slope and events arena. The area also has potential to provide the critical mass which is necessary to deliver a district heating network eventually linking with the town centre.
2. Swindon Central - A framework masterplan has been developed which proposes improved station facilities and bridges across the railway along with a mix of uses include retail, residential and light industrial uses along London Road.
3. Former Paragon Laundry - a Grade II listed building identified for reuse and refurbishment in the CAAP
4. Manchester Road - identified for retail improvements in the current CAAP
5. Union Square - a planning application has been approved in outline for a mixed-use redevelopment and bus interchange.
6. The Promenade - a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) proposes new cultural facilities.
7. Regent Circus - a planning application has been approved for a new food store, cinema, restaurants and office space.
8. Sanford Street area - this area is identified for new retail development in the CAAP
9. Granville Street (Regent Place) - the CAAP envisages new retail development in this area. There are no current plans to implement the approved plans for the site.
10. Fleet Street area - the CAAP envisages new retail and safeguards land for a potential canal route and basin along Fleet Street. The proposed canal route is unlikely to be delivered due to its prohibitive cost.
11. Swindon Tented Market- the redevelopment of the market hall is proposed in the CAAP.
12. Swindon Designer Outlet - Proposed retail improvement area in the CAAP.

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Transport context

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### 3.4 MOVEMENT

Ease of movement in and around a town centre can have a significant influence on whether shoppers and visitors will choose to come. Successful town centres have an attractive network of streets and public spaces which provide a pleasant environment for pedestrians. Sustainable places have safe and easy routes for walking and cycling, and competitive locations have accessible and legible parking. We have analysed Swindon's movement network for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists in order to provide a summary of the key issues and opportunities.

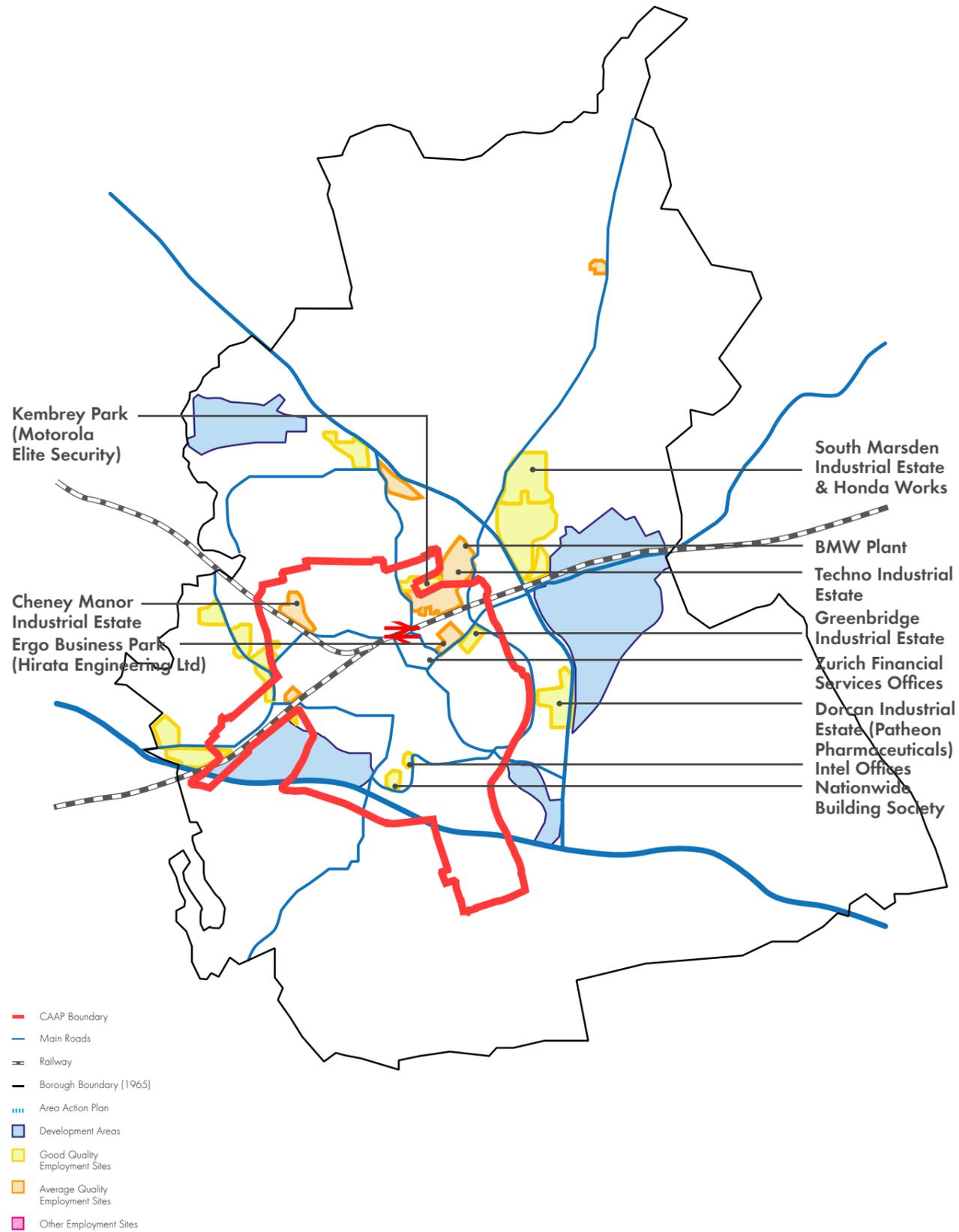
The following key issues are identified:

- The railway line forms a key barrier to movement by all modes of transport across the town, and in particular severs development opportunities and key town centre attractions (Great Western Designer Outlet Centre, STEAM museum, Oasis leisure centre) to the north from the core of the town centre.
- The road network is organised around a series of arrival routes and two rings. The inner ring encircles the retail core of the town and operates along a series of traffic dominated, wide, mainly one way streets. These streets sever the retail core from the residential areas which are immediately adjacent to it.
- The retail core is pedestrianised but does not accommodate cross town cycle movements forcing cyclists along the traffic dominated inner ring routes.
- The road network is not particularly legible for drivers wishing to visit the town centre. Car parks are well distributed around the town but do not necessarily relate well to the arrival corridors that they should serve. This leads to unnecessary additional traffic movements on the inner ring.
- The link between the Old Town and the town centre along Victoria Road is a traffic dominated route which does not encourage walking or cycling, although the distance is relatively short.
- Key gateways to Swindon town centre are traffic dominated environments where pedestrians and cyclists are often forced to use unattractive underpasses and footbridges.
- The railway station and bus station do not provide welcoming, accessible arrival points, and the walking routes into the town centre are unattractive and traffic dominated.

There are a number of opportunities that should be built upon:

- The town is served by an extensive bus network that will be further improved by a redevelopment of the bus station and Fleming Way and the identification of secondary interchange points generating footfall at strategic locations around the town centre.
- There is an opportunity to expand the concept of secondary bus interchanges at locations away from the retail core including the Old Town and the sites north of the railway.
- Further traffic management measures could be introduced to improve the accessibility of the main car parks in town.
- Measures would have the ability to reduce traffic circulation in the town centre as well as discouraging through-traffic movements.
- There is an opportunity to redesign the inner ring road to reduce its severance impact by considering traffic calming and more permeable design solutions for these corridors.
- The redevelopment of key sites around the station offers the opportunity to deliver additional crossing point across the railway;
- Improved routes north and south of the railway to the crossing points available; and more legible and direct routes into the retail core from the railway station, the bus station and the railway crossing points.

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Business and employment sites and key employers

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### 3.5 ECONOMY

We have analysed Swindon's economy in order to understand the challenges presented by the wider national and international economic climate, Swindon's underlying level of resilience, the key trends in all of the major economic sectors and the major opportunity sectors for the future.

- Swindon has a strong retail offer but a significant proportion of this is not in the town centre.
- A new food store is planned in Regent Circus which will meet the demand for additional food retailing.
- Temporary (meanwhile) uses could be explored for vacant shops and offices.
- There is a lack of restaurants and cafés in the town centre and there is strong competition from Oxford, Bath, Reading, Cheltenham and Bristol.
- Office rents in Swindon are very low. The business parks on the outskirts of town have traditionally drawn potential occupiers away from the town centre. However new working practices and an increasing desire for sustainable working patterns may make town centre office space more attractive in future.
- Changes in shopping habits, and particularly the ongoing increase in online shopping present a challenge for Swindon town centre. There is a need to provide a complementary offer which does not rely on traditional retailing, but provides a distinct experience.
- There is already a strong budget hotel presence in the town centre.
- Swindon benefits from a good supply of quality Victorian housing stock close to the town centre. There may be some demand for a small quantity of private rented accommodation in the town centre.
- It is likely that the housing market would respond positively to environmental improvements throughout the town centre, through the creation of new attractions and a strategy of proactive town centre management.

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## 4 MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

### Strategic framework

The strategic planning framework below sets out key objectives for delivering transformative changes in Swindon town centre, building on the policies and priorities identified to date in the Swindon Central Area Action Plan. These objectives underpin the more detailed plans, strategies and projects which form the masterplan for Swindon Town Centre, illustrated in chapter 6 of this document, which range from large scale physical projects to smaller community and public realm based initiatives.

The strategic framework has three broad themes as follows:

1. **Sustainable Swindon: a strategy to enable Swindon Town Centre to develop a more balanced and sustainable economy; and a greener, more resilient environment.**
2. **Cultural Swindon: an approach which prioritises supporting and enriching Swindon's existing cultural offer and built heritage together with securing a new transformational high quality cultural facility with regional gravitas.**
3. **Innovative Swindon: building on Swindon's reputation as a centre for innovation and business through a series of projects to ensure Swindon town centre capitalises and makes the best use of existing assets and positively plans for future social and economic trends.**

# 1

## SUSTAINABLE SWINDON

providing a series of robust interventions to support and promote the growth of Swindon town centre in a sustainable way.

# 2

## CULTURAL SWINDON

supporting and enriching Swindon's existing cultural offer combined with securing a new transformational high quality cultural facility with regional gravitas

# 3

## INNOVATIVE SWINDON

building on Swindon's reputation as a centre for innovation and business through a series of projects to ensure Swindon town centre capitalises and makes the best use of existing assets and positively plans for future changes to the economy and ways of working

## 4 MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

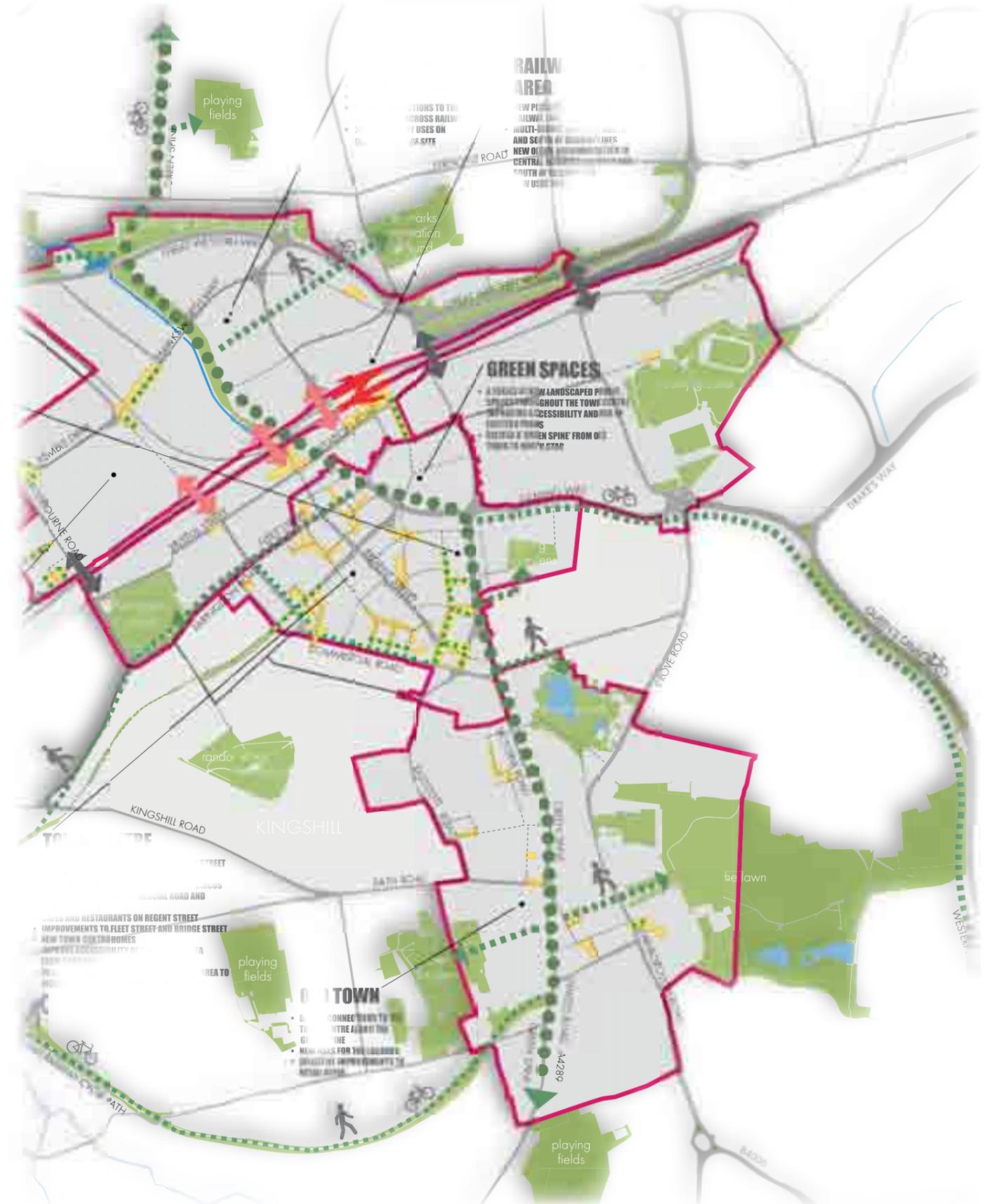
### Strategic diagram

The diagram opposite shows how the strategic themes for Swindon are captured in a series of key physical interventions in different areas of the town centre. These interventions deliver:

1. Key new uses, facilities and attractions to broaden and diversify Swindon's offer to residents and visitors,
2. A step-change in Swindon's cultural offer, providing regional appeal and a fresh new image,
3. A new standard of architectural quality for all new development in the town centre,
4. New links across the railway to reduce severance, and
5. Continued public realm improvements.



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## 4.1 SUSTAINABLE SWINDON

### SECURE NEW HOMES IN THE TOWN CENTRE TO PROVIDE A BALANCED AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY



Highbury Square, London



St Andrews, Bromley-by-Bow

#### ACTION POINTS

- High quality housing will be supported as part of mixed-use developments in the town centre. Opportunities to provide a mix of housing types, sizes and tenures should be explored on suitable sites within the masterplan area, as illustrated in the masterplan framework.
- The sensitive conversion of vacant office or commercial buildings, and space above shops to residential use will be supported and promoted.
- Maximising opportunities for new housing to be delivered through the redevelopment of selected office and industrial sites, as the market changes.

Swindon already has a network of established residential neighbourhoods living in close proximity to the town centre, but there are relatively few residents living in the town centre itself. The development of new housing units close to the core of the town centre will provide new customers for town centre businesses, help to animate the town centre outside of core retail hours and make a valuable contribution to meeting Swindon's housing needs. Housing is a vital part of a sustainable future for Swindon Town Centre. Swindon has a variety of opportunities to develop new homes, including on key sites in the town centre as part of a mix of other uses, by converting vacant office buildings and by making use of vacant spaces above retail and commercial units. This accords with the principles contained in the new National Planning Policy Framework, which recognises the important role of residential development in ensuring the vitality of centres.

The density of development within the masterplan area varies significantly. The northern part is characterised by low density industrial, leisure, educational and office developments, laid out in a campus style, set within extensive landscaping and car parking. There are opportunities to make better use of land in this area by redeveloping under-used sites and buildings for a mix of uses, including housing where appropriate. Securing a sustainable mix of housing, leisure, office, employment and local retail in this area will increase the number of people living and working within walking distance of the station and retail core and make a significant contribution to the long term vibrancy and sustainability of the town centre.

## 4.1 SUSTAINABLE SWINDON CREATE A BALANCED AND HIGH QUALITY EVENING ECONOMY



Day time activity in Swindon Town Centre



Activity in Swindon Town Centre at night

### ACTION POINTS

- To encourage the introduction of high quality family friendly evening uses within the designated primary shopping frontage within the town centre, particularly restaurants and cafés, to help to diversify and animate the town centre in the evenings.
- To investigate the potential to reintroduce traffic to appropriate parts of the town centre after 6pm to help to attract businesses and visitors to the core of the town centre in the evening.
- To work with Swindon Borough Council to investigate the potential to implement a Licensing Special Policy Area around Fleet Street, Bridge Street and Regent Street to work towards a reduction in the concentration of vertical drinking establishments in this part of the town centre. This would support existing CAAP policies to manage the accumulation of licensed premises through both licensing and planning policy.

### Broadening the evening offer

Swindon town centre currently has a limited offer in the evenings, with few shops, restaurants and cafés open beyond 6pm in the core of the town centre (Regent Street, Bridge Street and Canal Walk). The masterplan engagement process has highlighted a lack of high quality places to eat and drink in Swindon town centre, although it was noted that some popular local restaurants are located in the Old Town.

A key objective of the masterplan is therefore to encourage the development of new restaurants, cafés and bars to provide a high quality, balanced evening economy. This can be achieved through a pro-active town centre management approach, working with InSwindon to create a food and drink strategy for the town centre which would rebalance the offer of the town centre, focusing on more family friendly and quality restaurants. To aid the implementation of this strategy, the masterplan recommends a flexible approach to vacant A1 retail units within primary shopping frontage, together with the de-pedestrianisation of Fleet Street and Bridge Street and late night shopping.

### Increasing activity

Regent Street, Canal Walk and parts of Fleet Street and Bridge Street are pedestrianised and well-used during the daytime shopping hours. However, when the shops close there is limited footfall in the area. Reintroducing traffic along Fleet Street and Bridge Street outside of the core shopping hours would increase the accessibility of these areas in the evening, improve safety and help to attract more people into the town centre at night, creating a market for higher quality restaurants and bars.

Working with InSwindon, the independent management company for the Swindon town centre Business Improvement District (BID), opportunities to strengthen the evening offer should be explored through introducing late night shopping (once a week initially) and enhancing the programme and promotion of events in the town centre.

### Proactive management of the evening economy

There is a concentration of pubs and nightclubs around the junction of Fleet Street and Bridge Road. These are mainly 'vertical drinking' establishments and the concentration of these uses contributes to a series of

'hot spots' for anti-social behaviour and violent crime. The Civic Trust Night Vision report (2010) notes that this area is limited to a youth orientated audience and that it is largely shunned by others in the evening. Evidence was gathered during the engagement events to suggest that this area is becoming a barrier to the wider success of Swindon's evening economy, and in particular to the development of a family-oriented offer, because of the image it creates. There is potential to build on the work undertaken as part of the Night Vision Pilot Project for Swindon, which made the following recommendations:

- The use of additional enforcement action against badly managed premises;
- An increase in levels of policing and mobile CCTV surveillance;
- Improvements in street lighting;
- Encouraging landlords to invest in higher standards; and
- External seating areas to increase natural surveillance and promote a more relaxed image.

In addition, it may be possible to strengthen this approach further by implementing a Licensing Special Policy Area (as permitted by the Licensing Act 2003 in areas suffering from higher levels of crime, disorder and public nuisance) in the frontages around Fleet Street, Regent Street and Bridge Street to limit the allocation of further licenses and support the existing planning policy restrictions in the CAAP limiting the concentration of A4 (drinking establishments) and A5 (take away) uses. A Special Policy Area creates a presumption against the granting of additional premises licenses and enables additional measures to be introduced to manage the impacts of night time uses.

There is also the potential to work with InSwindon to set up an evening economy steering group to develop an action plan to improve the diversity of evening offer in the town centre and secure high quality restaurants and cafés. This steering group could consider the potential to introduce additional management measures such as: the co-ordination of opening hours, marshalled taxi provision, noise monitoring for evening uses, noise attenuation in new residential development, targeted policing and ensuring an effective cleansing and refuse regime in the area.

## 4.1 SUSTAINABLE SWINDON DELIVER THE GREEN SPINE, CREATE HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC SPACES AND IMPROVE ACCESS TO TOWN CENTRE PARKS

### Key elements of the Green Spine:



Opportunities for tree planting, soft landscaping and seating should be maximised in the town, particularly along the Green Spine



Improved pedestrian crossing and cycle facilities, removing barriers to movement.



Using a consistent palette of materials and lighting along the Green Spine to complement recent improvements to the public realm at Regents Place/ Canal Walk



Identify on-street parking bays with a change in surface material

Improved landscaping, paving and lighting - particularly at rail crossings

Improved pedestrian and cycle links and tree planting

Tree planting, improved paving, and lighting along Victoria Road and enhanced access to parks

### ACTION POINTS

- To continue the programme of tree planting and public realm improvements across the town centre.
- Ensure new development provides high quality public realm, improved pedestrian and cycle links and maximises opportunities for tree planting and landscaping.
- Support the implementation of the Green Spine to provide an attractive and sustainable link between the Old Town and North Star, including tree planting, improved pedestrian and cycle links and attractive landscaping/public realm.
- To deliver significant upgrades to key public spaces in the heart of the town centre and improve the connection between these and the parks and open spaces on the periphery.

Swindon town centre is surrounded by a significant number of parks and green spaces. The links between these spaces and the retail core, including signage, lighting and their visibility from the main streets is limited, particularly in the case of Queens Park.

The town centre benefits from tree planting in parts of the centre, however there are opportunities to introduce more street trees and to improve the quality of the public realm. The illustrative masterplan highlights key principles for the design of opportunity sites and the public realm which will help to stitch the public realm back together and significantly improve the pedestrian experience around Swindon. In addition to these detailed proposals for the opportunity sites, the green space strategy below identifies the opportunities for improvements to the public realm and key linkages.

Tree planting and the incorporation of soft landscaping around the town centre will improve the resilience of the town centre to climate change. The green infrastructure of a town, comprising its parks, gardens, street trees, verges, green roofs and water bodies, is an extremely valuable resource, providing:

- protection against flooding, through absorbing rainfall;
- water storage;
- cleaning and cooling of the air, water and soil;
- space for exercise and socialising;
- habitats, biodiversity and access to nature;
- an attractive environment which can help to improve the image of a place; and
- energy saving, through providing shade (trees) and insulation (green roofs).

Therefore improving access to Swindon's parks and gardens, securing new green infrastructure as part of new development and supporting the creation of the green spine linking the Old Town to North Star are key priorities for the masterplan.

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## 4.1 SUSTAINABLE SWINDON PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION AND SALE IN THE TOWN CENTRE



Vegetable garden



Residents in the shared kitchen garden at The Triangle, image by Richard Wintle of Calyx Multimedia

### ACTION POINTS

- Work with InSwindon and existing Farmers Markets to enhance and promote the existing network of Farmers Markets.
- Organise a local campaign to encourage town centre cafés and restaurants to source locally produced ingredients.
- Seek the provision of community growing space, such as kitchen gardens, within significant new housing developments in Swindon town centre.

Swindon is set within the heart of Wiltshire and is surrounded by farmland and countryside. The town centre currently hosts a number of markets, including a Farmers Market on Wharf Green twice a month, a weekly Sunday Farmers Market at Swindon Designer Outlet Village, a monthly Farmers Market in Old Town, and a monthly Country Market at St Aldhelms Hall, Edgeware Road. These markets provide an opportunity to buy locally grown produce and help to support the local farming and produce economy.

The wealth of produce grown and made in the local area, in farms such as Purton House Organic Farm and Helen Browning's Organic Farm, is a fantastic asset to Swindon, and there are significant opportunities to promote and strengthen the sale of local produce, including in town centre restaurants and cafés.

Awareness of the need for sustainable food sourcing continues to grow. A report by Defra in 2011 indicates that 67% of UK households surveyed believed that purchasing British Seasonal products was important, and 72% of respondents were classed as actively seeking to purchase British Seasonal goods. The Defra Food Statistics Pocket Book in 2008 stated that people are willing to pay more for food grown on farms in their own county with the proportion of people willing to pay a premium for local food rising from 14% in 2006 to 21% in 2008. The 2011 report notes that sales of ethical food and drink accounted for £5.5 billion in 2009 which is an increase of 52% since 2006.

Swindon is therefore well placed to capitalise on this trend. InSwindon, Forward Swindon and Swindon Borough Council could work with local farmers and suppliers to increase the regularity of farmers markets in the town centre and discuss ways to secure the use of local produce in town centre cafés and restaurants. A flagship high quality restaurant in the town centre using local produce and run by a talented chef has the potential draw visitors from across Wiltshire and further afield.

Opportunities to create space for local communities to grow their own produce, as demonstrated at the Triangle development, off Ferndale Road, should be maximised in new residential developments through the provision of community garden and allotment space. The Triangle is a sustainable 42 home scheme which includes the provision of edible landscaping and community growing space in the form of kitchen gardens. Residents are using the kitchen garden space to grow a variety of fruit and vegetables for their own use, and there is potential to sell surplus produce locally.

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## 4.1 SUSTAINABLE SWINDON IMPROVE THE PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE EXPERIENCE



New Islington, Manchester



Brighton

### ACTION POINTS

- To support the enhancement and extension of cycle routes in and around the town centre.
- To reduce the impact of traffic on pedestrian and cycle movement by reducing the width of carriageways at key junctions and roads, and introducing shared surfaces.
- To promote improvements to the pedestrian environment at key locations, particularly along Farnsby Street, Commercial Road, Princes Street and Victoria Road.
- To secure improvements to pedestrian and cycle links as part of new developments, both on site and in the wider area through S106 contributions.

Swindon town centre is dominated by its road network, with the inner ring encircling the core of the town centre. These large roads make pedestrian and cycle movement between the town centre and the surrounding residential areas difficult to navigate and unattractive. The core of the town centre, Regent Street, Canal Walk and the Parade are pedestrianised and during shopping hours this creates an attractive environment for shoppers. However cyclists are prohibited from cycling in this area, and are forced to circumnavigate the town centre using the traffic dominated inner ring routes.

Opportunities to extend and enhance existing cycle connections around the town centre should be strongly supported, particularly the proposed enhancements to access the town centre from the west using the enhanced Western Flyer route.

The illustrative masterplan indicates key locations for surface level pedestrian crossings at key desire lines, and reduced carriageway widths on selected roads in order to improve the pedestrian experience. Proposals also include the potential for the Magic Roundabout to be modified to release land for development and provide a safer, more attractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

There is also the potential to improve the quality of the public realm at key locations throughout the town centre by introducing tree planting, improved lighting and the use of a consistent palette of high quality materials, to complement the recent upgrades to public realm in the core of the town centre.

### Recent public realm improvements



New paving, lighting and seating along Regent Street/Canal Walk - improvements to public realm in surrounding streets should complement this palette of materials

## 4.1 SUSTAINABLE SWINDON IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH ACROSS THE RAILWAY



Pedestrian connection between the town centre and North Star



Road connection under the railway

### ACTION POINTS

- To secure improved pedestrian and cycle links across the railway by requiring financial contributions or the provision of infrastructure through S106 from new development where appropriate.
- To support the safeguarding of the canal and an additional pedestrian footbridge across the railway.
- To investigate the potential to introduce a new circular hopper bus to link North Star, Swindon Designer Outlet Centre, the retail core and Old Town, working with key businesses, landowners and stakeholders.

Swindon town centre is currently divided by the Great Western Railway which forms a barrier to pedestrian, cycle and vehicle movement as there are limited crossing points. This severance limits movement between key attractions such as the Swindon Designer Outlet Centre, Swindon College and the Oasis Leisure Centre to the north of the railway and the retail core and Old Town to the south of the railway.

Swindon College currently has 800-1,000 students on site every weekday, very few of whom walk from the campus into the town centre. Reducing the severance of the railway would encourage more of these students and visitors to attractions north of the railway line to shop in the town centre, and would help to ensure that the town centre benefits from the development of new leisure uses in the North Star area.

A new circular hopper bus or land train route linking these key attractions is proposed as part of the movement framework for the masterplan. It is considered that there is an opportunity to provide a business sponsored hopper bus through the town, which would encourage more people to choose public transport as a way of getting into the town centre.

Opportunities to secure new or improved links across the railway, including a new pedestrian bridge and reinstated canal should be sought through securing S106 funding from new developments within the masterplan area. A new pedestrian footbridge over the railway at the station will help unlock the site to the south of the railway line for development, as parking can be provided on the northern side. The new bridge provides an opportunity to secure a new landmark for Swindon of the highest architectural quality.

The reinstatement of a canal route through the centre of Swindon is a key objective of the Wilts and Berks Canal Partnership, the overall aim of which is to restore the canal to a navigable waterway which connects Wiltshire, Swindon and Oxfordshire. Halcrow carried out a feasibility study (2007) for the Kingshill to Station Road, Swindon section which estimated a cost of £52 million. However the partnership also highlight significant economic and regenerative benefits from the restoration of this section of canal, and the section between Mouldon Hill and Swindon town centre to the north.

A restored canal would also provide a safe and attractive corridor for cyclists to link to the Western Flyer Route/ National Cycle network route 45. The Western Flyer route will be a formal branded route and is expected to significantly improve cycle links between the western residential communities and the town centre.

A key part of encouraging sustainable travel patterns is reducing reliance on private car ownership. In addition to improvements to public transport, walking and cycle routes, car clubs provide a sustainable option when the use of a car is unavoidable. Securing car clubs as part of new developments will therefore be encouraged.

## 4.1 SUSTAINABLE SWINDON SECURE DESIGN QUALITY AND NOT PIECEMEAL DEVELOPMENT



Ericsson, Ansty Park, Coventry

### ACTION POINTS

- To re-establish the Swindon Design Panel to review significant development proposals and planning applications to ensure the highest possible quality of development.
- To promote high quality design and the creation of sustainable, usable and flexible spaces and buildings.



Bankside, Southwark

The design of buildings and the public realm has a major impact on the image and identity of a place and on its perceived value. High quality architecture, which responds positively to its setting and creates good public spaces will help to raise an area's profile and encourage investment.

A successful town or city is shaped and constantly reinvigorated by its buildings. Swindon has a significant number of buildings which do not make a positive contribution towards its townscape, some of which have been developed recently. In addition, the town centre has many office buildings which are now out-dated and no longer fit for purpose.

A key challenge for Swindon is to improve the quality of architecture and design, by ensuring that design quality is a top priority within the development control process. It is recommended that the Council supplements its in-house knowledge with external expertise through a Design Panel composed of architects, urban designers and planners who are nationally and internationally recognised. The South West Regional Design Panel currently provides design expertise for major projects. An offshoot of the Panel, concentrating on Swindon's built environment could potentially enable the use of pooled resources in administering the panel.

The role of the Design Panel would be to take a rigorous approach to assessing the design quality of proposed developments, making recommendations on how to improve proposals and to champion good design.

The illustrative masterplan establishes design principles and guidance for Swindon Town Centre which should be applied to all future development in the masterplan area.

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## 4.1 SUSTAINABLE SWINDON BRING RETAIL BACK TO THE TOWN CENTRE



Street markets bring activity back to town centres



Pop-up shop, Glasgow

### ACTION POINTS

- Working with InSwindon, Swindon College and Swindon Borough Council actively to support and promote the use of vacant retail units in primary and secondary frontage areas for temporary uses, particularly for local arts, educational uses and products and to provide a test bed for businesses that are starting out.
- To support the development of new retail accommodation and redevelopment/refurbishment of poor quality retail to improve the offer in the town centre. Improvements to the public realm, including tree planting, the use of consistent high quality public realm materials and improved pedestrian and cycle links will help to make Regent Street and the surrounding streets a more attractive shopping environment.

Swindon benefits from a strong retail offer, however many of the premium brands are located in out of centre retail parks which are accessible by car and convenient for customers. Swindon's Designer Outlet Centre, which is within the masterplan area, contains a number of quality high street retailers, such as John Lewis Home, Marks and Spencer and a large selection of fashion retailers. However, Swindon lacks an extended and successful retail circuit. Canal Walk and the Parade provide a linear retail experience with a route through the Brunel Centre onto Regent Street providing an additional dumb bell. The opportunity to create a more substantial and varied retail circuit is still to be realised through the development of the Granville Street car park. This would create a route from Havelock Square through to Temple Street and back along Regent Street.

Good retail design is concerned with creating retail circuits. Retailers look at towns from the perspective of forming part of an established circuit, unless they are a destination use, such as a food store or department store.

Away from comparison retailing, where shoppers are comparing goods available in a number of similar retail outlets, food and beverage businesses work in areas which might develop much more organically. Here, critical mass (creating choice and atmosphere) and environmental quality play an important part. We have discussed the challenges posed by allowing an area which is predominantly in leisure use becoming a victim of anti-social behaviour. Fleet Street and Bridge Street have developed this reputation.

In relation to its size Swindon has good representation of larger retail stores, notably Debenhams, M+S and Bhs. House of Fraser is also represented in the town, albeit in an outlet format. Swindon's fashion offer is less strong in the retail core, particularly high quality and aspirational retailers. The challenge here is the proximity of Swindon Designer Outlet and other out of town retail outlets.

The town certainly needs to put in place a strategy to re-embed the strength of its offer, having regard to out of town competition. Being distinctive, compelling and differentiated by range of goods and quality all form part of a strategy to improve performance. Retailers are experiencing tough trading conditions and will want to be convinced that a town centre first

policy stands up well to the strength of the established retail parks.

The Designer Outlet is a strong competitor to the nearby town centre retail core at the Parade and Regent Street, and pedestrian links between the two locations are so poor that it is unlikely that many visitors to the Designer Outlet will also shop in the town centre within the same visit. Enhancing the pedestrian links between the town centre and the Designer Outlet would be beneficial, however providing a more attractive leisure and retail offer in the core of the town centre would help to encourage movement between the two retail areas.

The Town Centre Healthcheck, GVA 2010, highlights that the amount of units and floor space occupied by comparison retail units has been decreasing since 2008. When compared with other local and comparable towns, Swindon has lower proportions of convenience and comparison uses and a higher service use function. Swindon Old Town has a more attractive environment and is used as a day to day top up shopping and service centre for both the local population and local businesses.

There are currently several vacant units within primary retail frontage of the town centre. Opportunities for meanwhile uses, for example by making vacant shop units available to emerging local businesses, or to showcase the work of local students, artists and designer-makers, should be actively sought. This could potentially be achieved through agreeing meanwhile uses with the landlords of vacant shop units, as piloted by the New Windows Project in Willesden, London. Vacant shop units were secured on a meanwhile lease by the Council and applications sought from aspiring local businesses for the use of the shop unit. This has generated significant interest and has helped to change perceptions of Willesden.

The masterplan also identifies locations where the development of new retail units and mixed-use development will be supported.

## 4.2 CULTURAL SWINDON PRESERVE AND ENHANCE SWINDON'S BUILT HERITAGE



The Mechanics' Institution

### ACTION POINTS

- Actively seek to preserve and enhance buildings of heritage value within the town centre
- Work with local community groups, stakeholders and developers to bring vacant and under-used heritage buildings back into use, through sensitive restoration and creative funding solutions.



Old Paragon Laundry

Swindon has a rich industrial and cultural heritage largely associated with the original settlement at Swindon Old Town and the Great Western Railway and works which was one of the largest in the world and covered more than 120 ha. Old Swindon's market town origins are still evident in the wealth of 18th and 19th Century buildings which indicate the town's prosperity at that time. The development of "New Swindon", the existing town centre core, was stimulated by the foundation of the railway works.

The railway transformed Swindon from a market town of 2,500 people to a significant town covering a large area. Old Town merged with the new town which had formed around the railway in 1900. The railway extended through to Swindon in 1840 and linked to Bristol the following year. The concerns of Isambard Brunel and Daniel Gooch on the quality of the locomotives led to the eventual decision to create a central repair depot in at Swindon, due to its location at the junction with the Cheltenham branch and the nearby canal which provided access to coal. Within two years the works employed 400 people and at its height in the first half of the 20th century the works was one of the biggest employers in the country, employing over 14,500 workers. Housing, medical facilities, baths and community facilities were all provided, notably the Mechanics' Institute, which facilitated self improvement, provided a library, events and other facilities to educate and enrich the lives of the workers. The ground breaking nature of this provision adds to the heritage value of this important building.

The value of Swindon's built heritage has been recognised in the designation of much of the Old Town as a Conservation Area, and also in the application of Listed Building status to a significant proportion of the buildings which remain. The railway village, which was built to accommodate railway workers, has also been recognised for its cultural and heritage value through designation as a Conservation Area and in the listing of many buildings in recognition of their historic or architectural interest.

However, over the past 60 years there has been extensive development in Swindon to provide space for modern retail, leisure and office formats in the town centre, and much of Swindon's historic fabric has been demolished to accommodate new development. Consequently, relatively few historic buildings remain

outside of the designated Conservation Areas. It is therefore essential to preserve and enhance buildings of heritage value around the town centre, and to seek proactively to bring these back into use wherever possible.

Notable buildings which fall into this category include the Mechanics' Institute building. The Institution was formed for the benefit and enlightenment of those employed by the Great Western Railway and a building was designed to house the Mechanics' Institute, which opened in 1855 and was extended over subsequent decades. The building is listed as Grade II\* in recognition of its unique heritage and cultural value, however in recent years it has gradually fallen into decline and is now in need of extensive repair and restoration. This building along with others, notably the Locarno (Old Town Hall), the former Paragon Laundry site and the former Swindon College building at Regent Circus are currently vacant and it is a key priority to bring these buildings back into beneficial economic and/or community use.

In particular, where local community groups exist who are actively seeking to take ownership of such buildings, such as the Mechanics' Institution Trust, opportunities to work with these groups to secure funding for the restoration of these buildings should be pursued.

## 4.2 CULTURAL SWINDON PRESERVE AND ENHANCE EXISTING CULTURAL AND LEISURE BUILDINGS



Swindon Art Gallery and Museum



Turkish Baths

### ACTION POINTS

- Build on the Cultural Strategy for Swindon to retain and enhance the existing cultural and leisure provision in the town centre.
- Seek to diversify and improve the offer, particularly by pursuing opportunities for the re-provision of cultural facilities linked to new development in the town centre, in bespoke buildings or multifunctional spaces which will enhance the appeal and offer of the facilities.
- Investigate opportunities to secure better accommodation for Swindon's existing community arts groups and emerging artists in new developments in the town centre, or negotiate to secure temporary use of vacant space for these groups to meet, rehearse and create.

Swindon is the home of a number of cultural and leisure facilities, however the quality of the offer is not as strong or diverse as that of neighbouring towns.

The Wyvern Theatre is a 650 seat facility which hosts touring comedians, small theatre productions, pantomimes and bands. The facility is dated and its format and size is not economic for larger touring productions (for example, the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury has recently been rebuilt in order to grow from 900 to 1200 seats, which is now considered to be the threshold for securing national touring productions). Therefore the offer provided is somewhat limited. The surrounding public realm and pedestrian access to the Wyvern is also poor. The entrance to the Wyvern is set above ground connected by high level pedestrian walkways. Access from the car park below is via concrete stairs. Opportunities to improve this through refurbishment or through the wider redevelopment of the area to provide a modern theatre facility/multifunctional performance space capable of hosting larger, high quality productions will be a priority, and the illustrative masterplan suggests how the redevelopment of this area and provision of a new theatre building could be achieved.

Located in the North Star area, the Oasis Leisure Centre has recently been taken over by a private management company and offers a multitude of leisure services ranging from swimming and fitness facilities to venue space for smaller bands and independent artists. There are currently plans to refurbish the dome of the existing structure and re-fit the changing rooms, reception and other public areas; there are also plans for a new gym. South of the railway, on Regent Circus, MECA also hosts smaller bands and independent artists. It is important that both of these locations retain and appropriately enhance their venue facilities in order to uphold Swindon's reputation as a location for live music.

Just south of the old GWR cottages, Swindon Borough Council operates the Health Hydro within a historic, Victorian Building, originally designed for the railway workers. In addition to two swimming pools, a gym, and other fitness facilities, this building also houses historic Turkish Baths. With two steam rooms, a spa pool, cold plunge pool and hot rooms, this building has the potential to be regenerated into a high-end spa that could boost revenue for the Council and draw in visitors from outside the town centre.

The STEAM Museum is an interactive facility showcasing Swindon's railway heritage housed in a refurbished railway building. This is a strong cultural asset to the town which could be further enhanced through improving connections to the town centre and introducing a live steam attraction. Swindon Art Gallery and Museum in the Old Town houses some of Swindon's impressive modern art collection. However there are many more paintings which are not on public display and there are significant opportunities to use the collection as a means of raising Swindon's profile in the region, particularly if a new gallery space could be developed.

Swindon is also home to the Museum of Computing, at Theatre Square, close to Wyvern Theatre. The museum is a popular place to visit and has exhibitions on emerging computer technologies and the history of computers and runs regular events. Ensuring the museum is retained or re-provided as part of any redevelopment of its current site is therefore essential.

The Council has identified that there is a shortage of space for dancing and also for small arts groups in Swindon town centre. Opportunities to utilise vacant spaces or provide new space for these groups as part of wider redevelopment should be maximised.

## 4.2 CULTURAL SWINDON PROMOTE NEW CULTURAL FACILITIES IN SWINDON TOWN CENTRE



Wyvern Theatre

### ACTION POINTS

- Undertake a feasibility study on the potential for the development of a new Art Gallery in the centre of Swindon, to house Swindon's modern art collection, to raise the profile of the collection and act as a transformational cultural anchor for the town centre. This should explore potential sites, fundraising and the opportunity to establish an early presence for the gallery in the town centre through a programme of public participation.
- Investigate the potential for the Wyvern Theatre to be redeveloped as a new centre for the performing arts, to provide a 1200 seat theatre/concert hall, home for Swindon Dance, The Arts Centre and the Town Hall Theatre
- Investigate the potential for a new Science and Engineering Museum to be located in Swindon town centre, associated with the National Science Museum, to showcase Swindon's innovation in this field.

### Art gallery

Swindon Borough Council has one of the best collections of modern art outside London. The collection was established in 1944 following a gift from a local benefactor and includes works by Henry Moore, Graham Sutherland, L S Lowry, Paul Nash and Ben Nicholson. The collection is currently housed in the Swindon Museum, it is not well-publicised and only a small proportion of the total collection is on public display.

There is a major opportunity to provide a new Art Gallery to display the collection. A modern art gallery in a new bespoke gallery building in the town centre would help to raise the profile of Swindon and change its image.

The capacity of new arts-based uses to contribute to economic regeneration is demonstrated in the example of the Turner Contemporary Gallery in Margate, which opened in April 2011. The gallery has attracted almost 500,000 visitors in its first year, contributing an estimated £13.8 million and supporting an estimated 130 full time equivalent jobs within the Kent economy.

### Science and engineering museum

Swindon is a progressive town, being at the heart of railway engineering advancement in the 19th and 20th century, and now at the forefront of car manufacturing, through the presence of BMW and Honda. This is reflected in the Technology Strategy Board's decision to locate within the North Star area. The Board, formerly part of the Department for Trade and Industry, promotes and supports technological innovation in the UK. Swindon enjoys an excellent reputation for its ability to innovate.

The Science Museum has its Large Objects Store and Library and Archive at Wroughton in Swindon, which further reinforces Swindon's identity as a centre for science and technology.

There is significant potential to build on this reputation and existing assets to develop a strategy to secure a new Science and Engineering Museum in the centre of Swindon, provided as part of the National Science Museum's portfolio of visitor attractions.

### Performing arts centre

Swindon has a thriving performing arts and live music scene, including the nationally renowned Swindon Dance, a number of active music groups and the Swindon Recital Series.

However, the Wyvern Theatre is small, inaccessible, and poorly equipped to enable this thriving artistic culture to realise its potential. There is, therefore, an aspiration to build a new performing arts centre to provide a 1200 seat theatre, designed to concert hall acoustic standards and incorporating studio theatre facilities.

## 4.3 INNOVATIVE SWINDON ENHANCING LOCAL SKILLS AND THE ECONOMY THROUGH INVESTING IN TRAINING AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Swindon College

### ACTION POINTS

- Work with Swindon College, to maximise the links to new development on the North Star site, in terms of construction jobs and apprenticeships, leisure training and the development of a new training restaurant and health and beauty facility which can capitalise on the footfall which will be generated by the new leisure facilities.
- Support the provision of new educational facilities, including a dedicated Higher Education Centre building on the College campus, and a new University Technical College.



Former GWR Carriage Works

Swindon's performance in terms of education is mixed. It is ranked as average in terms of deprivation, but closer analysis reveals that it lags behind the national average in terms of higher level qualifications. Only 34% have level 3 qualifications (A Levels/NVQs etc.), compared to 43% nationally and only 16% have level 4 or 5 qualifications (degree or higher) compared to 20% nationally.

However, the town is home to Swindon College, which provides a range of higher education courses in partnership with Oxford Brookes and Bath Universities, a wide range of level 3 qualifications and has extensive links to local employers, who provide approximately 800 apprenticeships each year and sponsor a range of courses.

Plans are underway to develop a new University Technical College for 14-19 year old students in the town centre which would provide a very significant addition to Swindon's education offer.

Further investment in the provision of courses and training for young people should be sought wherever possible.

### 4.3 INNOVATIVE SWINDON PROVIDE FLEXIBLE WORKSPACES THAT ARE ABLE TO RESPOND TO CHANGING WORKING PATTERNS



Bankside, Southwark

#### ACTION POINTS

- Forward Swindon and Swindon Borough Council, working with the owners of vacant office buildings, should investigate the potential for the temporary use of vacant office buildings at lower rents, to support local businesses and bring back empty buildings into beneficial use.
- Promote and support the redevelopment and refurbishment of poor quality office space to create flexible modern office space capable of adaptation to meet future economic needs.



Support meanwhile-uses for vacant office spaces

Swindon has a large amount of office accommodation of variable quality, particularly clustered around the railway station. A significant proportion of the office blocks around Fleming Way and Farnsby Street are dated, in need of refurbishment and currently vacant.

There is an opportunity to work with the owners of these buildings/spaces to bring them back into beneficial use in the short term and to explore opportunities to redevelop or convert to alternative uses in the longer term. Forward Swindon and Swindon Borough Council could work with owners to promote meanwhile use of vacant buildings by local students, artists, designer-makers and start-up businesses, providing incubator space at affordable rents.

There is also the opportunity to intensify the provision of office space at key sites around the town centre through redevelopment to provide modern, fit for purpose offices, subject to viability. The illustrative masterplan indicates a range of suitable locations for this approach, including Union Square and the North Star House.

New office space should be designed flexibly, to be capable of conversion to other uses in the future, and to allow for subdivision of facilities and spaces in response to changing work patterns. There is an increasing demand from small businesses for desk space within serviced offices, which office buildings should be capable of providing in the future.

## 4.3 INNOVATIVE SWINDON ENCOURAGE MEANWHILE USES



Green Lanes festival - making use of streets for events

### ACTION POINTS

- Forward Swindon, Swindon Borough Council and Swindon Influence could work together to develop a strategy to facilitate the meanwhile use of empty shop units, offices, streets and other spaces to reanimate the town centre and change perceptions.



Box Park - temporary retail use

Under-utilised spaces, empty shops, offices and other buildings in Swindon create a negative impression which undermines confidence in the town. The masterplan approach is to use these buildings to introduce new and diverse uses in the town centre, to reanimate and change perceptions of Swindon.

Key actions include:

1. Identify potential locations for meanwhile uses, including vacant shop units, office space, under-used open spaces around the town centre.
2. Develop a meanwhile use strategy identifying a pool of potential meanwhile uses.
3. Consider an appropriate strategy for securing the use of buildings and units, working with landowners, Swindon Borough Council and other stakeholders - particularly Swindon College.
4. Develop a strategy for securing occupants of the units - potential to hold competitions open to students or local businesses to pitch their concepts for the space.
5. Agree meanwhile use tenants, and the terms of their occupation - length of occupancy, terms and conditions.

It will be important to work in partnership with local organisations, landowners and town centre stakeholders to identify opportunities for meanwhile uses. This process will need to be led by Forward Swindon and Swindon Borough Council, informed by an agreed meanwhile use strategy. The following organisations will play a key role facilitating meanwhile uses:

Swindon College: Opportunities to work with the College to secure shop unit spaces to display student work, and develop a programme of events showcasing students' work.

InSwindon: The Swindon BID could help to identify, negotiate and secure vacant office space in the town centre and match these with potential meanwhile uses. InSwindon is also well placed to work to develop a programme of temporary exhibitions and events working with town centre management and Swindon Borough Council.

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## 4.3 INNOVATIVE SWINDON EXPLORE AND ATTRACT NEW SECTORS AND GREEN TECHNOLOGY



Build on Swindon's innovative heritage to attract new sectors

### ACTION POINTS

- Forward Swindon, Swindon Borough Council and Swindon Influence will work together to develop a strategy to explore potential new sectors and green technology businesses and an action plan to attract new businesses.
- Ensure the development of a district energy facility at North Star, with the potential to provide low cost energy and heat to existing homes.



Swindon has a history of taking a progressive approach to industry and innovation, and it is important that the town continues to look forward.

There is an opportunity to reassert Swindon's pioneering reputation through developing a strategy to attract new and emerging sectors into Swindon, particularly those involved in the development of green technology. The economic strategy will lead on this strand of work, but the masterplan plays a key role in identifying sites for investment.

The automotive industry is rapidly developing new technologies to deliver sustainable vehicles. Providing the skills and infrastructure to support these innovations will help to establish Swindon as a place for future investment in progressing the technology.

There is potential to provide incentives for new green businesses to locate within the town centre, particularly smaller office and research based companies. Providing support and infrastructure for these businesses, including good transport links, an attractive environment and good quality space will significantly increase the likelihood that companies will choose to locate in Swindon.

Securing conferences and events focused on emerging sectors and green technology will also help to promote Swindon as a location to invest.

There is a significant opportunity to develop a low carbon district energy scheme as part of the North Star development. The Swindon Energy Partnership is led by the Council and involves a broad range of local businesses. The aim of the partnership is to share best practise and expertise to ensure Swindon as a whole is well placed to benefit from more secure, sustainable energy supplies and the employment and research opportunities to support it. A district energy system in Swindon is a key opportunity for the town and feasibility studies show good potential at Wichelstowe to the south of Swindon and North Star in the town centre, focussed on the Oasis redevelopment. Detailed design work is currently being undertaken on how this could take shape to become a flagship green technology project.



One way system along Farnsby Street

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## 5 MOVEMENT FRAMEWORK

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The transport and movement network in Swindon has a significant impact on the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre in a number of ways. The inner ring road network creates a traffic-dominated collar around the town centre which is both confusing to motorists and unpleasant for pedestrians and cyclists. The road network also severs the retail core from its immediate residential hinterland. Strategic changes to the road network can therefore play a key role in delivering the masterplan vision for a sustainable town centre which is attractive to pedestrians and cyclists, a competitive town centre which is not dominated by congestion, and a cohesive town centre where the perception of distance between the different parts of the centre is reduced.

This section sets out a framework for strategic changes to the movement network in Swindon, which are designed to deliver the objectives of reducing traffic dominance and severance, relieving congestion, creating a more pedestrian and cycle-friendly environment and contributing to a more sustainable future for the town centre.

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## 5.2 TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

Two key areas have been identified which have the potential to deliver major improvements in the integration of the town centre with its hinterland by reducing the impact of vehicular traffic. These are: Farnsby Street/Commercial Road/Regent Circus/Princes Street to the south and east and Fleming Way to the north. A suggested approach to each of these areas is set out below.



Retail area with shared surface in Bath



Boulevard-type shared surface, Cheltenham High Street

### **Farnsby Street/Commercial Road/Regent Circus/Princes Street**

These streets form part of the southern section of the inner ring, which severs the pedestrianised town centre from its surrounding neighbourhoods. Farnsby Street and Commercial Road operate one-way eastbound, with Milton Road and Crombey Street operating one-way westbound as a return loop:

- Farnsby Street is a wide two lane carriageway road providing access to a number of car parks and office developments. The straight alignment of the road, wide carriageway and one way operation contribute to the dominance of traffic in the street and the severance effect of the road. Recent changes to the layout of Farnsby Street, with a reduction in the width of the road and the introduction of an at-grade pedestrian crossing address these issues to some extent, although the road remains traffic-dominated.
- Milton Road provides the one-way 'return loop' to Farnsby Street. It is also a wide, two-lane, one-way road leading to the same severance issues.
- Commercial Road is another wide, one-way transport corridor, with mainly retail frontage. Its 'return loop' in Crombey Street, a predominately residential street with significant traffic calming measures, probably aimed at mitigating the impact of the traffic carried through this area.

This current arrangement has a negative impact on the character, quality and commercial success of Farnsby Street and Commercial Road, and on the quality of Crombey Street as a residential street. It also severs the town centre from the residential areas to the south and south west.

Regent Circus operates as a gyratory at the eastern end of Commercial Road and is a key gateway into the town centre. This gyratory disconnects a central island from the town centre and creates a traffic dominated environment.

Finally, Princes Street is a two-lane dual carriageway road which runs from north to south alongside the Wyvern Theatre. The design of this route could be revised to deliver better permeability and enhance the adjacent green space.

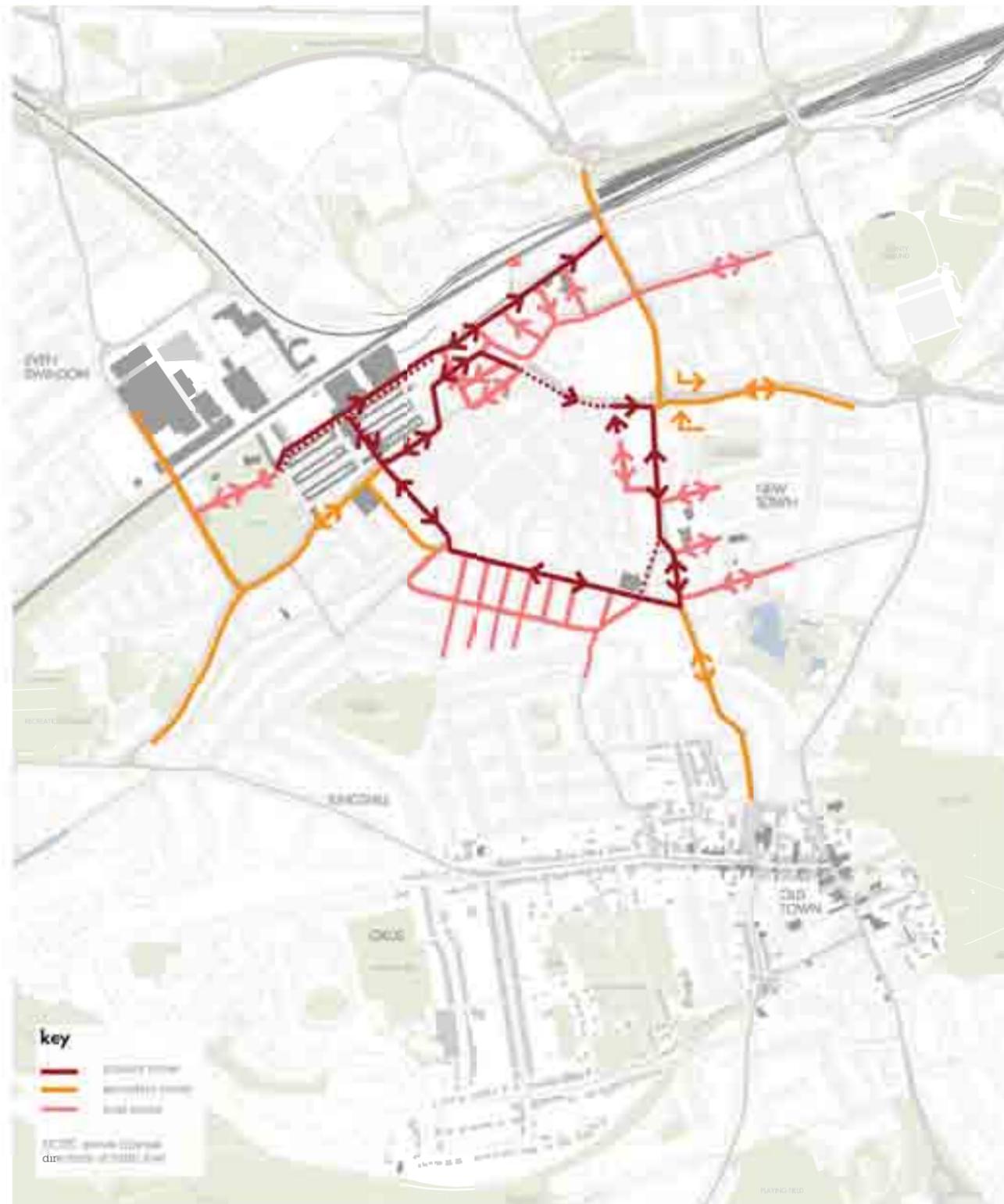


Figure 1: Proposed town centre road network

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### Proposed changes to the south of the town centre

It is suggested that Farnsby Street and Commercial Road are redesigned to provide an improved public realm and a more permeable and active environment for pedestrians, following examples such as Kensington High Street, Ashford, Exhibition Road or boulevard roads in European cities such as in Hennef in Germany. The greening of these roads and the boulevard concept would be based on the introduction of parking, tree planting and a slowing down of traffic by narrowing the available carriageway and/or introducing two-way operation. The introduction of two way operation is strongly suggested as it would bring additional benefit of allowing Crombey Street and Milton Road to be returned to a use more in keeping with their frontage. However, it is accepted that the width of available highway land, especially on Commercial Road will be a constraint on the design and it is likely that a choice will have to be made between two-way operation and providing other features such as parking on both sides of the road.

In conjunction with changes to Farnsby Street and Commercial Road, it is suggested that the Regent Circus gyratory should be improved by closing the western part of the gyratory to general traffic, allowing the incorporation of the island site into the town centre. The western section of the gyratory could remain open for bus access to maintain an important bus interchange at the southern end of Regent Street. These proposals would deliver improvements to the public realm at the southern end of the town centre and integrate the town centre with its fringe. Prior to implementation, they would need careful consideration in terms of traffic engineering and the operation of junctions along Farnsby Street and Commercial Road. The Regent Circus gyratory changes would also need to be considered in more detail.

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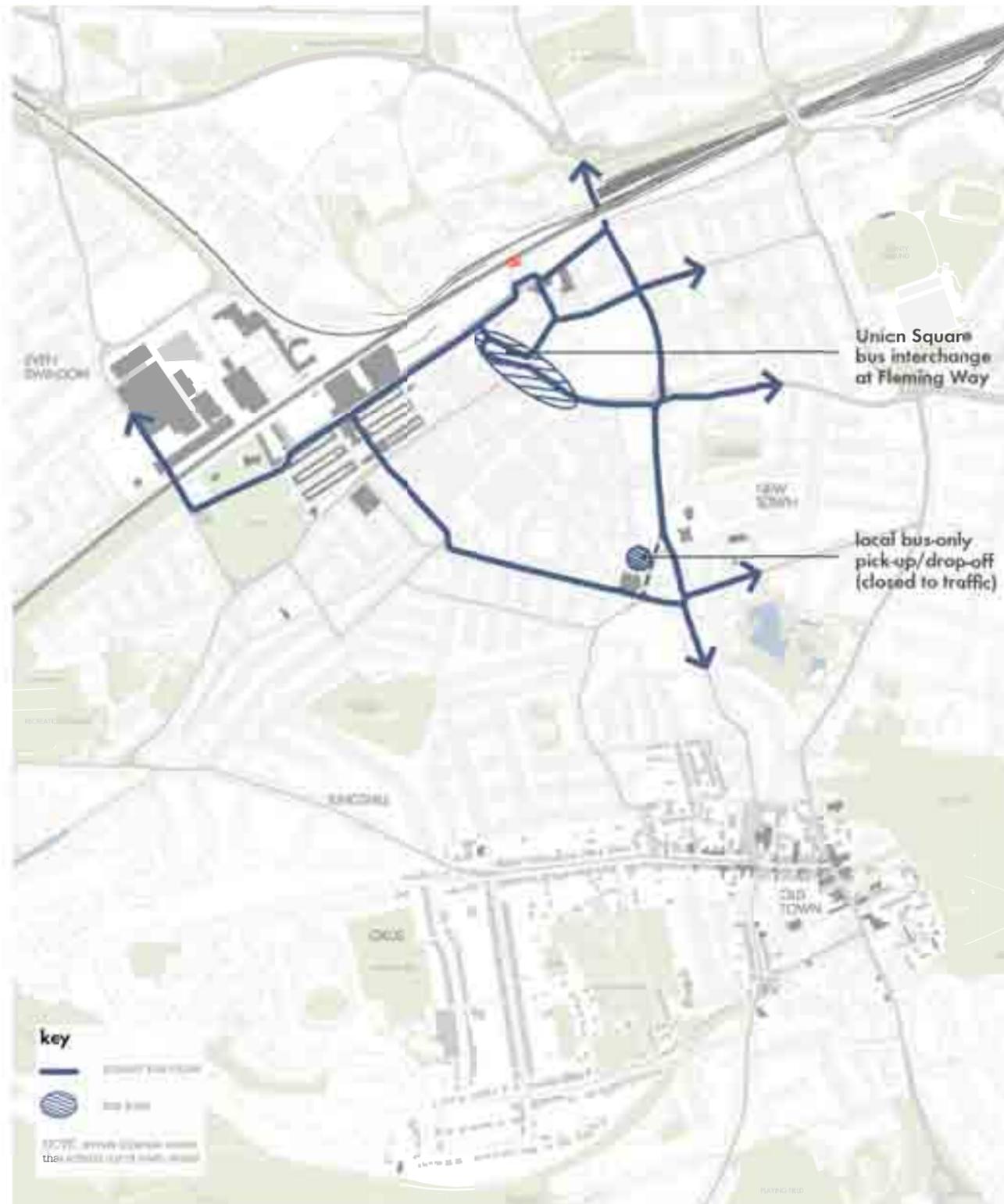


Figure 2: Proposed future bus operations

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### Fleming Way

The Union Square proposals at the northern end of the town centre have a key role to play in improving connectivity between the town centre and areas to the north as well as delivering a more legible route between the town centre and the railway station. The proposed scheme introduces some significant changes to Fleming Way which contribute to these transport objectives. It includes the regrading of Fleming Way to be level with the rest of the town centre.

The scheme also includes changes to the Fleming Way bus interchanges and the relocation of the bus station to the western end of Fleming Way. The current bus arrangement provides 19 bays at the bus station and there are 16 marked stops on Fleming Way, so a total of 35 bays/stops. The Union Square proposal provides 26 bays in a compact arrangement, which therefore maximises interchange potential. However, the proposed arrangement has an impact on the public realm. It may be possible to further review the number of bays through review of current timetables with the local transport operators. In the case of the MUSE scheme, the proposed arrangement is not only to accommodate picking up/dropping off passengers, but also dwelling, changing drivers, and catching up on timetable functions which are typically performed at a bus station.

These proposed changes to the location of the town's bus hub have an impact on the character of Fleming Way and to some extent, negate some of the benefits for Fleming Way. However careful planning of the public realm and the layout of the bus station can minimise the impact - more detail is provided in the Spatial Masterplan chapter.

The routing of buses through the town centre would be affected by the Union Square interchange; but the proposed introduction of two-way operation on most of the inner ring as illustrated in the movement framework means that all routes can be re-provided serving key locations such as:

- Fleming Way
- The Railway Station
- The bus hub
- Regent Circus

In particular, as part of the masterplan proposal, Regent Circus should become a key pick-up/drop-

off point for local bus routes. The stretch of Regent Circus between Commercial Road and Princes Street should be closed to public traffic and made a shared surface for pedestrians. This will improve the atmosphere of the area surrounding important town centre locations such as the Swindon Central Library, MECA, and the proposed new Cultural Quarter. (Please refer to the Princes Street proposal within the Spatial Masterplan section of this report).

The adjacent figure illustrates in schematic form the suggested changes to the bus interchange arrangements.

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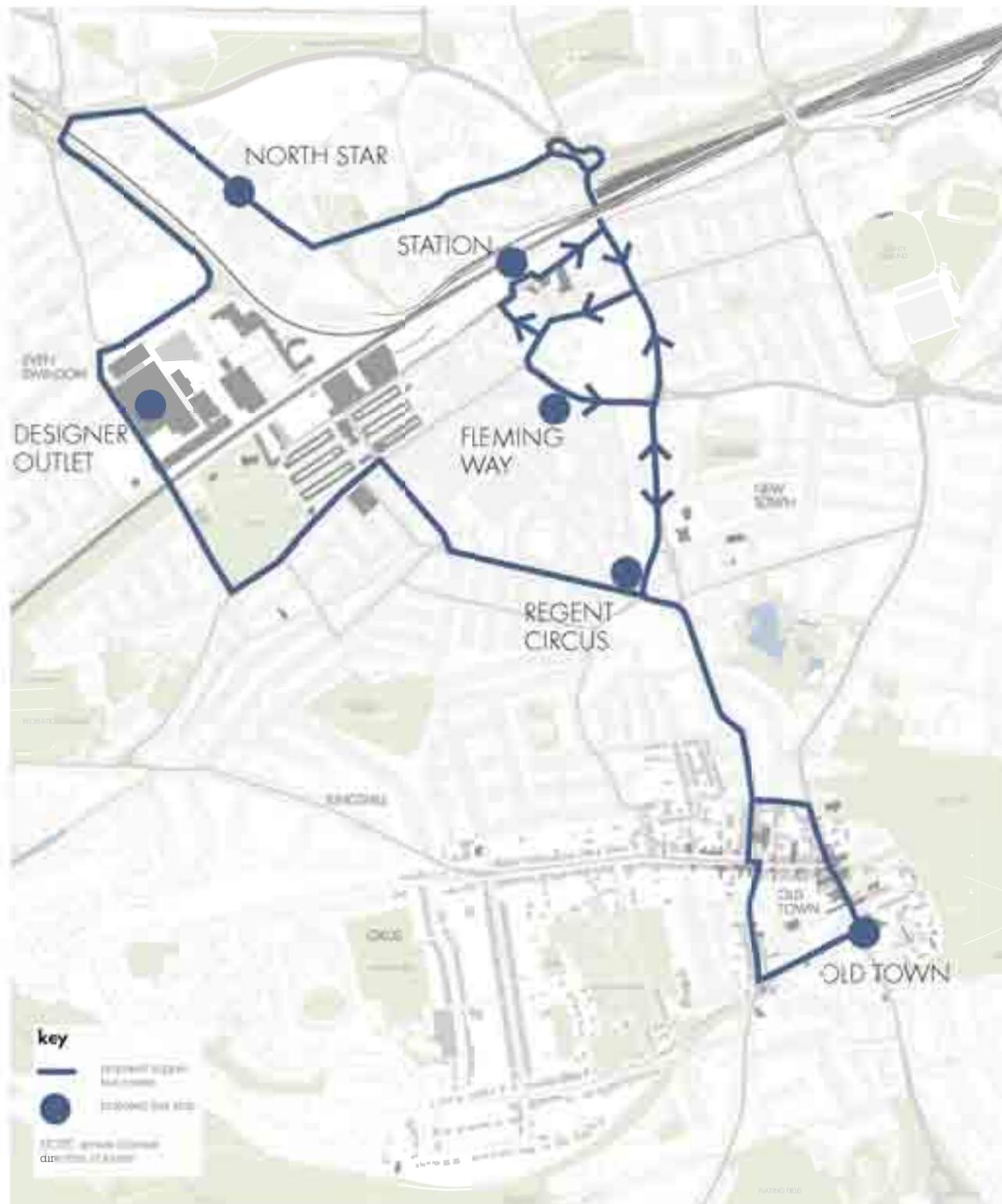


Figure 3: Potential hopper-bus / land train route

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### Hopper bus/land train from North Star

The masterplan identifies the North Star site as a key regeneration opportunity including leisure, employment and education facilities and potentially new residential development in the longer term. The North Star site is located on the northern side of the railway line and is therefore severed from the retail core of the town.

Considering the relatively short distance between the North Star site and the town centre (less than 1,000 metres), it is important that future designs for the site focus on improving walking and cycling connections across the railway line and on to the retail core. In particular, improvements to the route via Bridge Street will be essential. The proposed regeneration of the sites along the southern side of the railway line will also play an important role in delivering these connections.

In addition to pedestrian and cycle connections, the provision of a new hopper bus or land train service connecting North Star to the retail core, and potentially extending further to the Old Town, would connect these three quarters and make public transport a more attractive option to local residents and visitors to Swindon. The concept is to create a frequent hopper bus or land train service operating small, branded and potentially 'green' powered vehicles, free of charge if sponsored by local enterprise.

There are numerous examples of such services in the UK, including the Metroshuttle in Manchester, which is financed by Manchester City Council, Transport for Greater Manchester, NCP and Allied London. Another example is the Quaylink in Newcastle, however, this system ran into difficulties with the type of hybrid vehicles used and it became necessary to introduce a charge to customers.

The type of vehicles operated, the frequency of the service provided and the reliability of the route, will be essential criteria to consider when identifying the most beneficial and financially achievable system. In particular, it will be important to optimise the route to cover all the key destinations between North Star and Old Town while remaining relatively short. A shorter route allows the provision of higher frequencies while keeping the operating costs down and also helps maintain good punctuality.

In working out a route, the following criteria should be considered:

- The route should focus on serving new development on North Star that currently is not well served by existing bus services.
- The route should consider a basic catchment of 400m
- The key destinations to cover are: North Star, the Railway Station, Fleming Way, Regent Circus and Old Town.
- The route needs to take account of the various one way streets, especially around the Union Square development site. To keep the routing relatively simple, this implies that not all key destinations will be served in each direction.

A suggested route is illustrated in Figure 3

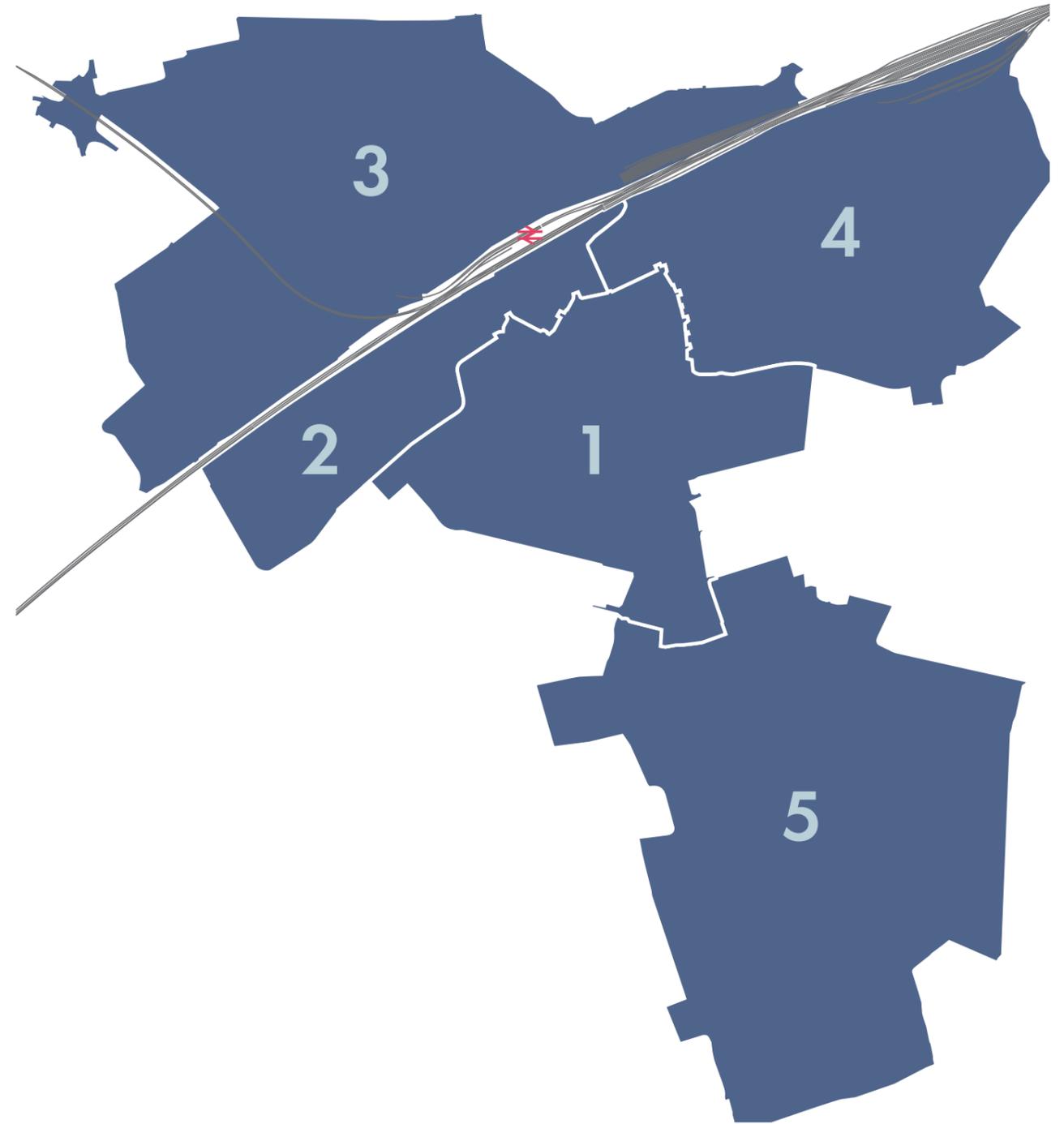
- North Star to Old town: Hawsworth industrial estate – North Star office (north side of station for commuters out) – Fleming Way (to retail) – Regent Circus (from retail) – Old Town
- Old Town to North Star: Old Town – Regent Circus (to/from retail) – Railway station ( from retail/commuters in/rail access to North Star) – North Star.

It is estimated that this route would be about 3.5km long one way, requiring 4 or 5 vehicles to operate at a frequency of 10 minutes. Assuming operation 6 days a week on small size vehicles, an estimated operating cost in the region of £500,000-£750,000 per annum is envisaged.

This route could be further extended to connect with the Swindon Designer Outlet Centre and STEAM, although this would add to the journey time of the proposed loop identified above and serve parts of the town that are already connected to the bus network. The preferred alternative would be to concentrate existing services on Rodbourne Way serving the Designer Outlet Centre (i.e. 13/14 plus a diverted 15 along this route).

The adjacent figure illustrates in schematic form the suggested bus routes.

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# SPATIAL MASTERPLAN

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## 6 SPATIAL MASTERPLAN

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In most towns the organic growth over time can be traced in the built fabric: through the types uses and scale of the buildings; through the establishment of a hierarchy of spaces, public or private, explicit or discrete; through the incorporation of wealthy institutions; and through the routes between these components, the surrounding countryside and other conurbations. Often habitation is established around crossings in trade routes and a water source, and the popularity and convenience have nurtured subsequent growth in the resident population.

In Swindon this somewhat generic and simplified model is different. It has no river, no cathedral, no university, but it did have a canal and does have a railway. The establishment of the GWR Works at a technically convenient equidistant point on the new railway line between London and Bristol in 1841 to change locomotives, like exhausted horses at a coaching inn, and in a location some distance north of the small hilltop market town in an area of flatland described in 1875 by Richard Jeffries, the naturalist, author and historian as 'the poorest in the neighbourhood: low-lying, shallow soil on top of an endless depth of stiff clay', set Swindon apart, both in the category of a new town and one literally built around a successful and burgeoning part of the industrial revolution.

As new Swindon developed and prospered it mapped out its own hybrid version of a town which exists now. Through more recent political interventions following the Second World War, a strong and diversified industrial base was established, served by an increasingly skilled population, many encouraged to relocate from London and provided with accommodation on new housing estates around the edges of the town. In the 1970s Swindon developed one of the first and largest single retail shopping centres and named it after the prolific Brunel, who had started the whole process, and topped it with one of the largest residential towers in the county named after the Town Clerk who had instigated the most significant changes to the town in the post-war period.

In its current state the town centre does have some physical imbalances: it is dominated by its highways, in the proliferation of roundabouts and dual carriageways that both consume large areas of land at their margins and act as separators between the districts that they pass through; it has suffered from piecemeal development with new buildings of low architectural quality; and it has a paucity of memorable historic buildings, other than the concentration around Old Town and the railway, which are so important in maintaining a historical continuity and town character. It also has some missing components: in the range of regional cultural institutions to enrich the souls and attract visitors; a lack of individual and branded high street restaurants to extend the activity and enjoyment after the shops have shut in the evenings; and symbolic civic spaces to mark the epicentre.

## 6.2 METHODOLOGY

### Study areas

The masterplan divides the town centre into a number of study areas. The outer boundaries of these are defined in part by those given in the Swindon Central Area Action Plan and in part by the capture of specific sites which either we have identified or that have been identified during the stakeholder engagement process. Arterial roads or changes in character define the conditions where the boundaries are shared with an adjoining study area.

### Site selection

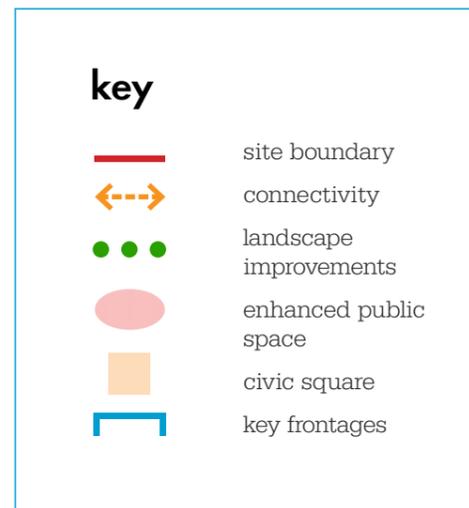
Each selected site is both an individual component that can be implemented as a standalone redevelopment, and also one that will contribute to the overall spatial improvement of the town centre over time. This ability to deliver individual sites incrementally is more likely to succeed in the current economic climate, and generates a size of land parcel that can be more easily constituted and delivered.

A number of sites include surface car parks or highway land. These are generally in the ownership of Swindon Borough Council and in these situations can both contribute to the overall land parcel identified for regeneration, and act as the catalyst. Some short term surface public car parking can be perceived as convenient, safe, and bring a casual vitality to the town centre; however, it is also one of the most inefficient uses of land in town centres, is unsightly and has a dissipating effect on the scale and character of the town fabric. A number of the sites we have identified suggest that the car parking use is relocated onto the streets, absorbed into the existing multistorey car parks or incorporated into new multistorey car parks. In the case of highway land, by reconsideration of the function and scale of the roads, and in particular at the junctions, valuable land can be released for redevelopment.

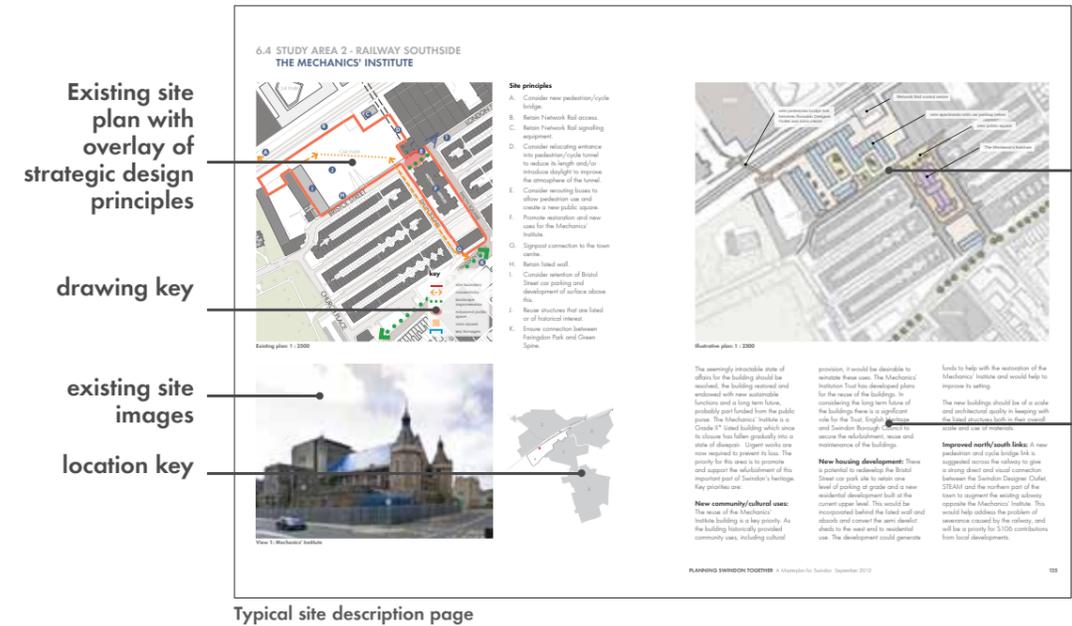
One of the more disappointing observations that has arisen from our analysis of the existing built fabric in the town is the mediocre architectural quality of some of the recently constructed buildings. New buildings have not always made a positive contribution to the townscape. In some of these situations we have suggested that the most difficult but bravest route would be to demolish and start again. While this is unlikely in the short term, the suggestion is that this should be considered in the future for some sites.

At other sites we have identified existing buildings, usually commercial offices, that were built between twenty and thirty years ago that are no longer attractive to occupiers and remain partly let or unlet. Some alternative uses could be considered for these buildings, either short term uses or conversion to another use, for example residential or student accommodation. In addition, some of the commercial buildings could be retrofitted to provide affordable, flexible accommodation for smaller or new start up businesses. However it is the aesthetic quality of the buildings that can have the most negative effect on the immediate surroundings, particularly if they are unoccupied. In these situations we have considered their demolition and replacement with better quality building stock.

With the exception of Old Town, The Railway Works and the Railway Village, Swindon has a paucity of buildings that can provide historic context and enrich the visitor experience. At some sites we have identified listed buildings or locally listed buildings that should better contribute to the character of the immediate area and whose setting should be enhanced through the proposed redevelopment around them.



Drawing key



### Strategic design principles

At all of our selected sites we have identified a number of consistent and universal strategic design principles. These are identified in the drawing key on each site page and illustrated on the existing plans to highlight opportunities for improvement.

- **Define the site boundary** The first strategic design principle is to identify the curtilage of land within which we are making the assessment and proposal for regeneration. This is often set within streets but is also defined by building frontages and boundary fences. While the line offers an edge it should not be taken as a literal one and the effects of the proposed enhancements can radiate beyond it;
- **Maximise connectivity** The second is the introduction of permeability and connectivity that links the selected site with the adjoining areas, principally for pedestrians and cyclists. In these situations an increase in the opportunity and options for routes will mean that the spaces benefit from more frequent casual use;
- **Improve landscape** The third is that trees and soft landscaping should be introduced where possible between buildings, in public spaces, and along the Green Spine. This will improve the appearance of the neighbourhood as well as resilience against climactic conditions by providing shade, reducing rainwater runoff and cleaning the air.
- **Enhance public space** The fourth is that public spaces between the buildings are enhanced through the selection of well considered high quality hard landscape elements in addition to soft landscape and trees. These interventions, while not overly formal, will begin to indicate that there is a more corporate care for the local environment, whose improvement reaches a consistently high level;
- **Create civic squares** At some sites the opportunity exists for the introduction of a new civic space. These more formal squares are often located next to listed structures or in areas where the footfall already suggests that such a space would succeed;
- **Establish key frontages** Finally, the introduction of buildings that re-establish building lines and streets and repair gaps in the built fabric of the town.

### **Design quality**

We have made reference in our analyses to the need for high quality architecture. This should be a given in any situation where new buildings are considered. Quite often we have suggested that sites could be improved by the removal of buildings of such low architectural quality that they are positively detrimental to the existing adjacent decent stock, and the character of the place or where they are coming to the end of their economic life. This is not only the case in Conservation Areas or those adjacent to Listed buildings, but also in other parts of Swindon where even relatively new buildings are underwhelming in their composition, use of material and scale.

We have suggested that a Design Review Panel for Swindon should be constituted to raise the quality bar for future building, and this could be in addition to the reference in the cases of larger developments to Design Council CABI or the South West Regional Design Review Panel.

### **Spatial efficiency**

Like many other towns and cities across the country Swindon has its fair share of office space that has reached the end of the road: the space is no longer attractive to tenants; its technical performance is below current standards; its external appearance does not represent the aspirations of modern businesses; and it is vacant. But the location of the building in the heart of the town is its best attribute.

While it may be an aspiration to demolish and replace it with a brand new building, ways in which it can become a benefit to the town also need to be explored. Conversion for other uses is one possibility, to residential, student accommodation or hotel. However this strategy can be risky: the aesthetics acceptable in one use may not be attractive in another, and a longer term change of use would remove the future commercial opportunities for the building or plot.

One of the ways to capitalise on the central location of the buildings would be to operate a "town-centre-first" policy on the construction of new offices in Swindon. A positive discrimination in favour of those commercial properties in the centre would encourage them to be redeveloped and retain the employment component of a balanced mixed-use economy.

### **High expectations**

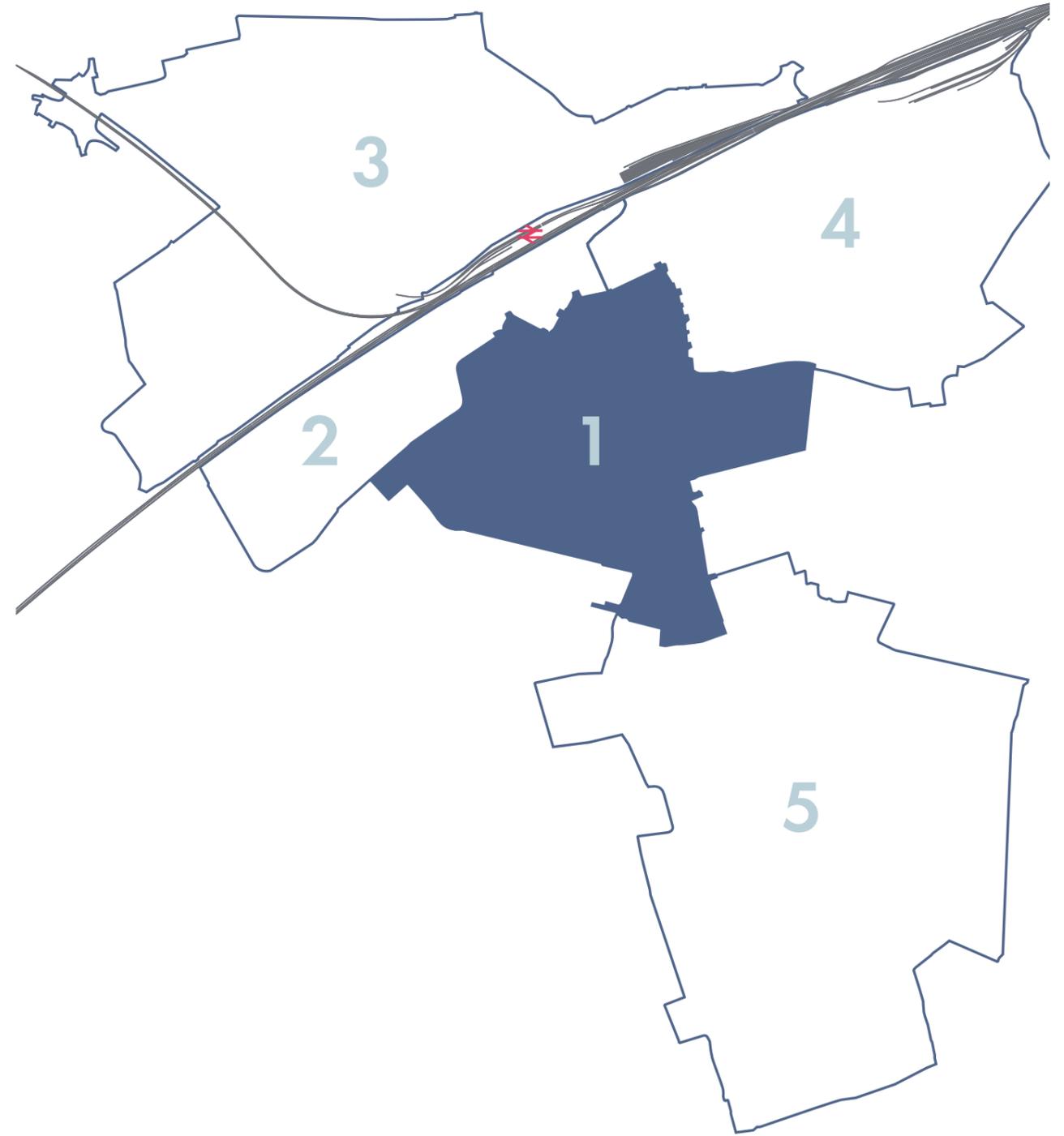
Within the spatial masterplan we have identified a number of sites, some discreet, and some more overt and significant. The intention in all cases is to apply a consistency in terms of the expected architectural quality of the buildings and the public spaces that surround them, to improve the immediate public realm in its hard and soft landscape, to encourage the retention and renewal of existing good quality and historic town fabric, and the replacement and renewal where the built environment is found wanting.

We are therefore encouraging a change in attitude and the general raising of the bar in terms of what, how and where development occurs. We have identified some sites but there will always be others, and it is this change in standards that will and should apply to whatever sites come forward.

We feel that there has been a lack of achievement in setting and demanding the best quality built environment for Swindon and we hope that this need to change gear is grasped, and that higher expectations and standards are applied in every single case. These new standards should be universally applied, but should not prevent redevelopment by introducing blight to any particular site. While the nature of some of the proposals are, in the present circumstances, an aspiration, or may come forward over a longer time period, this in itself should not blight any one site for a number of years.

### **A clear brief**

A development brief would be one way to establish the ambitions and aims for a particular site so that there is both a certainty about what can be developed and no doubt in the minds of a developer of what is required.



# TOWN CENTRE

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### 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE



The Parade



Debenhams from Fleming Way



Statue of Brunel in Havelock Square



Wyvern Theatre / Princes Street Car Park

The Town Centre study area is bounded by principal arterial roads that form a distinct boundary between it and the surrounding town. There is a mixture of smaller older buildings with ground floor shops and storage or residences above; and a range of more recent buildings of varying architectural quality. The former are, with exceptions, exhausted building stock; the latter, with exceptions, are functional if dull. Within the study area are smaller areas with different strengths. The southern end of Regent Street near the library and war memorial has a sense of a nascent civic square. Commercial Road and Havelock Street have a wide selection of individual traders which mediate the scale of the Brunel Centre and provide a different retail offer to the adjacent residential districts. However, the road circuit around the town centre creates a barrier between these spaces and their surroundings.

The success of the Brunel Centre is evident; however the exclusive pedestrianisation of Regent Street and Canal Street creates an inverted and polarised town centre core and necessitates all shop servicing from the rear of the units. This produces a ring of low quality spaces and detracts from the overall appearance and experience. It also creates a need for multistorey car parking and the accretion of surface car parking. This works on a day-to-day basis, but it lessens the overall quality and impression of the town centre. Few evening uses exist beyond the cluster of bars and nightclubs at Fleet Street and Bridge Street. The lack of activity in the town centre in the evening is also the result of the absence of town centre housing.

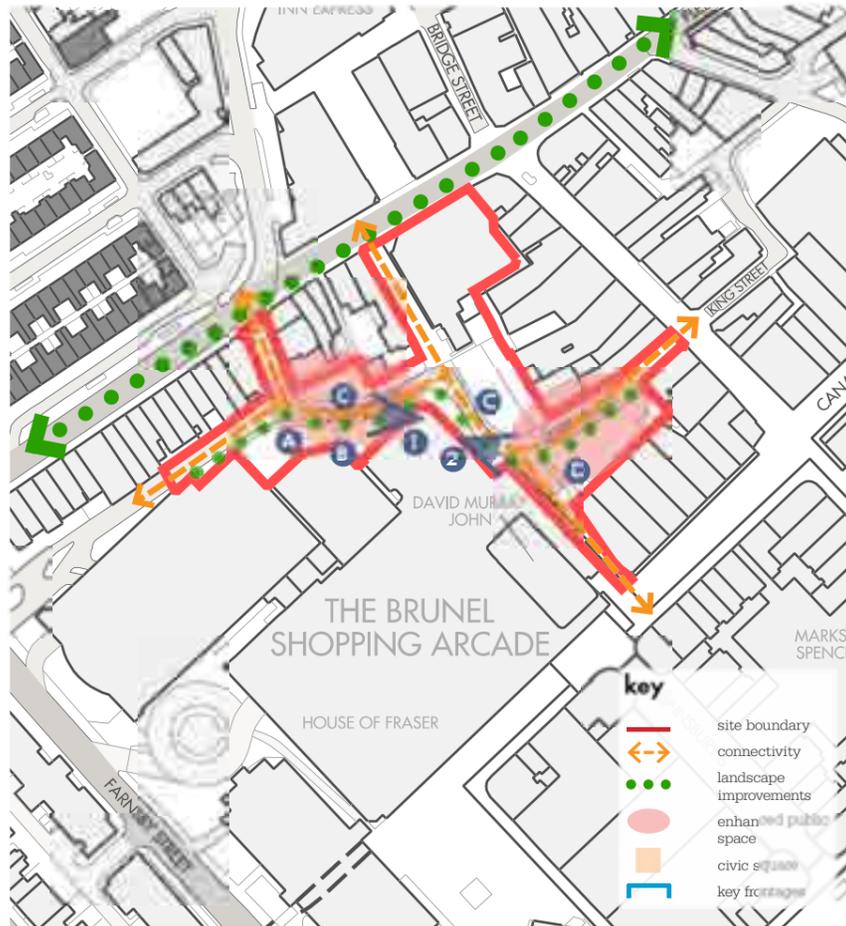
The Wyvern Theatre is currently one of the few cultural venues to host plays, pantomimes and musicals and enhance the evening offer of Swindon. However, it is currently at capacity and no longer fit for purpose. Swindon Borough Council has highlighted the opportunity to create a new cultural quarter around a redeveloped Wyvern Theatre in the Promenade Supplementary Planning Document. Enhancing the cultural offer of Swindon is an important step-change in improving the town's identity and encouraging more people to use the town centre in the evening is a key objective. The opportunity to create a cultural hub is therefore reflected in the masterplan for the area around the Wyvern Theatre.

The over-arching aim for the proposals is to facilitate the creation of a balanced town centre that is a good place to live and spend time in throughout the day and evening with a cultural hub serving the region.

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## 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE QUEEN STREET



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- Establish stronger secondary routes for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Relocate cars to multistorey car park.
- Improve leaking space with new buildings to complete land parcels.
- Improve environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Provide a green link to the north of the site between Faringdon Park and the Green Spine



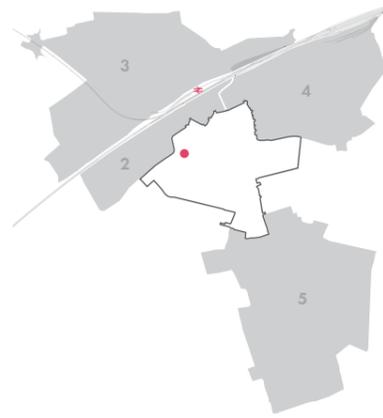
Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Carr Street surface car parking



View 2: Queen Street junction



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This site is the result of the reorganisation of Canal Street and Regent Street into exclusively pedestrian only retail streets that must have all servicing access to the rear. As a result none of the spaces have any ownership or civic quality. While they could remain in this state, there is an opportunity to re-gear them, improve the environment for the users and incorporate additional town centre uses into the area. Priorities and principles for the site include:

**New retail with housing above:**  
The development of new buildings on Fleet Street to complete the building line and give a better definition to the spaces and routes is encouraged.

Retail at ground floor should provide active frontage onto Fleet Street, with residential uses or commercial uses on upper floors.

**Improved connections and new public space:** Improvements to the connections through the space at the rear of the shop units reinforce the north/south connections. Combined with the introduction of trees, cycle parking and benches along the shared surfaces needed for vehicular access to the surrounding retail and commercial properties would significantly improve the character of this area and provide greater amenity space for shoppers.

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## 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE JOHN STREET



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- Review quality of existing building stock.
- Enhance the public space between buildings.
- Rationalise access into multistorey car park and retail service yards.
- Deliver a continuous Green Spine along Fleming Way.
- Provide a green link to the north of the site between Faringdon Park and the Green Spine



Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Approach to car park from King Street



View 2: Existing multistorey car park



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This site, which is bordered by John Street, Fleet Street and Fleming Way, suffers from a lack of investment in the public realm that is common throughout the area. Priorities and principles for the site include:

### Mixed-uses:

A new mixed-use building on Fleet Street, replacing the existing poor quality building would help to strengthen the retail offer and introduce residential occupation to the upper floors to extend the activity and use of the spaces and balance the evening economy.

There is also the opportunity to refurbish Alexander House and John Street multistorey car park to improve the character of the area and

potentially provide active uses to the ground floor frontage along Fleming Way.

**New connections:** New links across the site linking Regent Street, Fleming Way and Fleet Street should be created. These should be clearly signed and help to facilitate movement around the town centre.

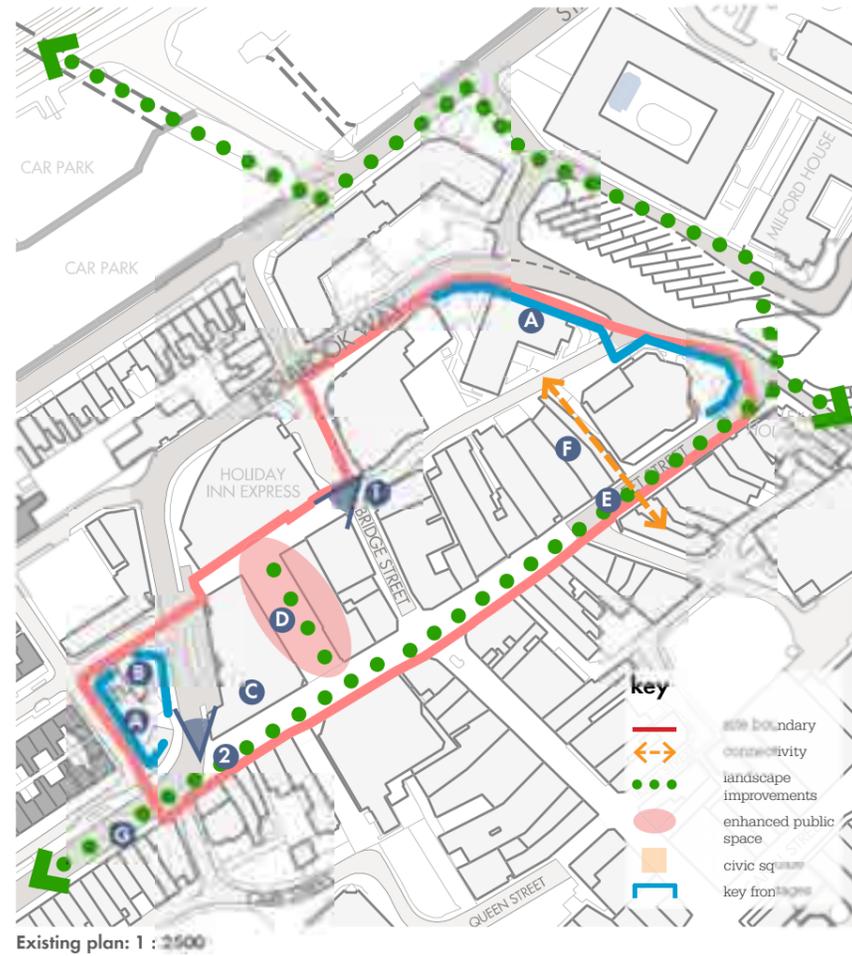
**Enhance public space:** The public space behind the smaller units facing onto Regent Street and Fleet Street should be enhanced with a high quality hard material palette and trees. This would make the area more inviting to pedestrians connecting from the transport links to the northeast of the site, to the Brunel Centre and shops along Regent Street to the southwest of the site.

### Meanwhile opportunities:

Alexander House is a large commercial building which could provide affordable space for potential for start-up businesses or arts studios, on a meanwhile basis.

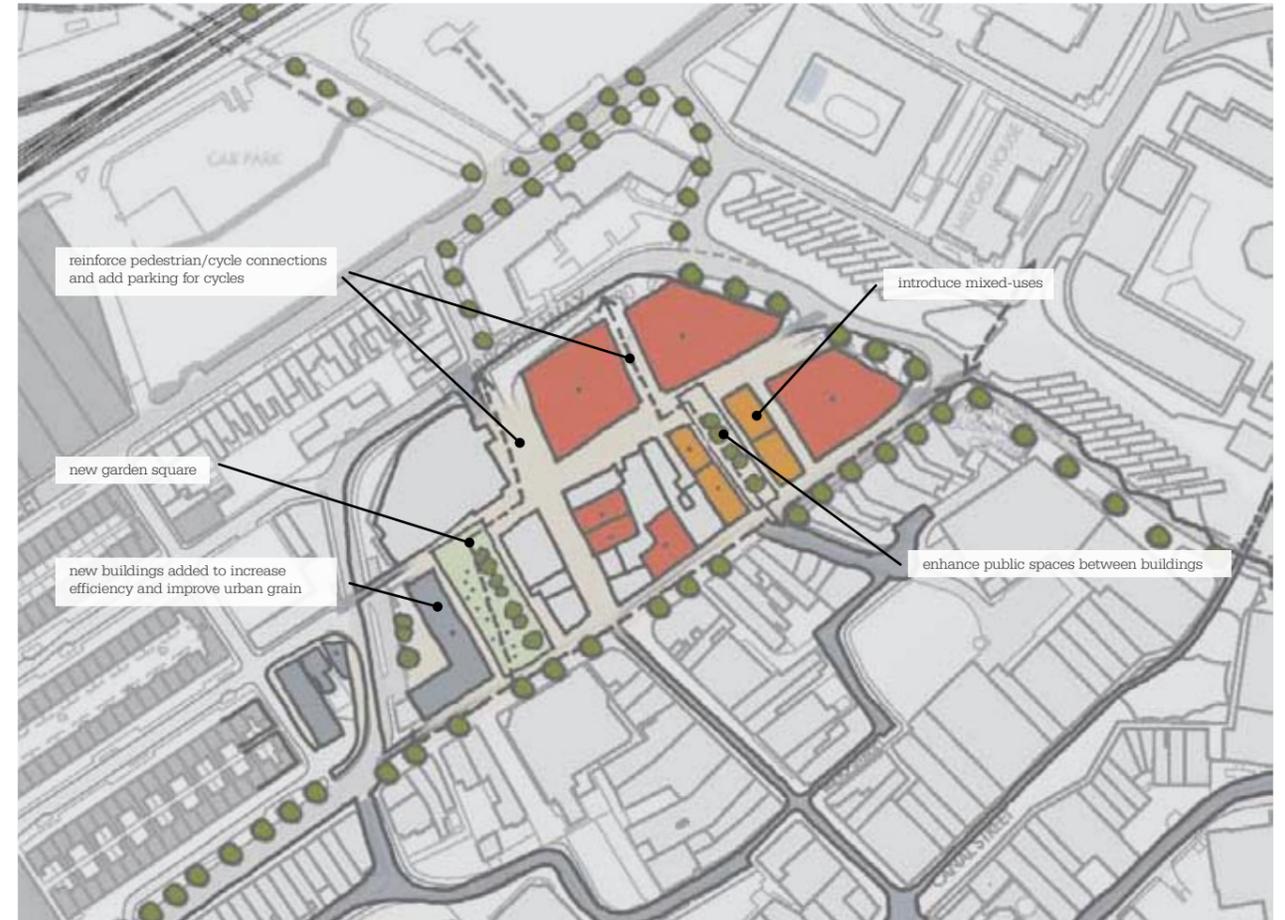
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## 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE FLEET STREET



### Site principles

- A. Re-establish building lines to streets.
- B. Encourage sensitive redevelopment adjacent to the GWR Workers village.
- C. Promote better quality architecture.
- D. Enhance public space between buildings.
- E. Open up Fleet Street to vehicles and cycles.
- F. Create new pedestrian/cycle links and improve permeability.
- G. Provide a green link to the south of the site between Faringdon Park and the Green Spine



View 1: Henry Street looking southwest



View 2: Holbrook Way looking north



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The Fleet Street area is a key gateway to the town centre for pedestrians who have arrived by rail. The area currently suffers from a number of issues including: empty shop units, inactive ground floors, a concentration of vertical drinking establishments and fast-food outlets, poor quality architecture and street-scape. The proposals seek to improve these conditions through a number of interventions including:

**Improved movement:** The opening up of Fleet Street to traffic will bring more activity and natural surveillance to the street.

**New retail:** The redevelopment of buildings which are exhausted or not fit-for-purpose with new buildings of excellent architectural quality. These

should be predominantly retail in use, and provide the opportunity for large sized retail units. Frontages should address the streets and public spaces created. In some cases this will involve stitching in new buildings into the existing frontage, or wholesale replacement of poor architecture.

**High quality public space:** The introduction of well-detailed high quality public spaces in the area will help to transform its attractiveness. Spaces would benefit from improved street lighting, hard landscaping, street furniture and tree planting.

**Step-change in evening economy management:** A strategy will be developed for the proactive management and regeneration of

the evening economy in Fleet Street and Bridge Street. This will mitigate the effects of anti-social behaviour, tighten the planning and licensing regime to address issues of saturation, reintroduce traffic to Fleet Street to provide passive surveillance and encourage investment in the public realm. This strategy will be delivered in partnership with InSwindon, the police and the operators of licenced premises in the area.

**Meanwhile opportunities:** The large vacant commercial buildings in this area provide meanwhile potential for start-up business space or arts studios, to encourage a creative economy.

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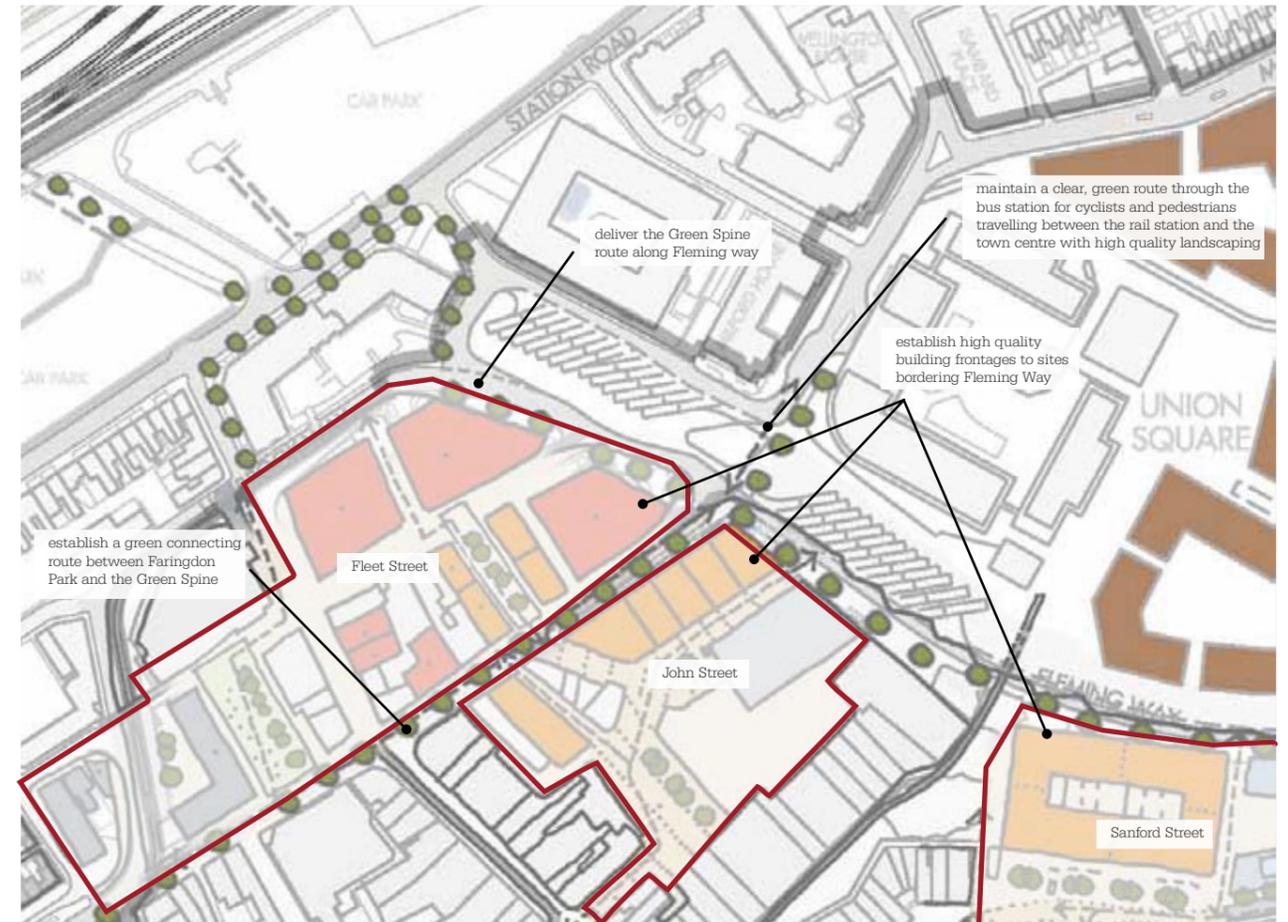
## 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE FLEMING WAY



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- A. Establish consistent building lines facing onto Fleming Way.
- B. Deliver a continuous Green Spine with a green link to Faringdon Park along Fleet Street.
- C. Encourage pedestrian and cycle connections through the approved bus station scheme to link the rail station with the town retail centre.



Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Fleming Way looking north



View 2: Holbrook Way looking south



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The masterplan reflects the Union Square and bus station proposals which have received planning consent. The proposals encompass a large amount of area and therefore will have a significant impact on the town centre. In particular, the area will be one of the first new developments through which new visitors arriving by rail will view Swindon. The masterplan seeks to highlight key opportunities within the public realm to facilitate integration of the proposals with the urban fabric in keeping with the strategic design principles. Key priorities include:

**High quality public realm:** Fleming Way should provide a high quality public realm experience which meets the aspirations of the Green Spine project. Tree planting, high quality

paving, lighting and street furniture which are specified from an agreed town centre palette would help to encourage pedestrians and cyclists to use this route more frequently.

**Bus station integration:** If the bus station is to be relocated onto Fleming Way, every effort should be made to ensure that its architectural design and integration with the town centre does contribute to the better integration of the parts of the town centre which border it.

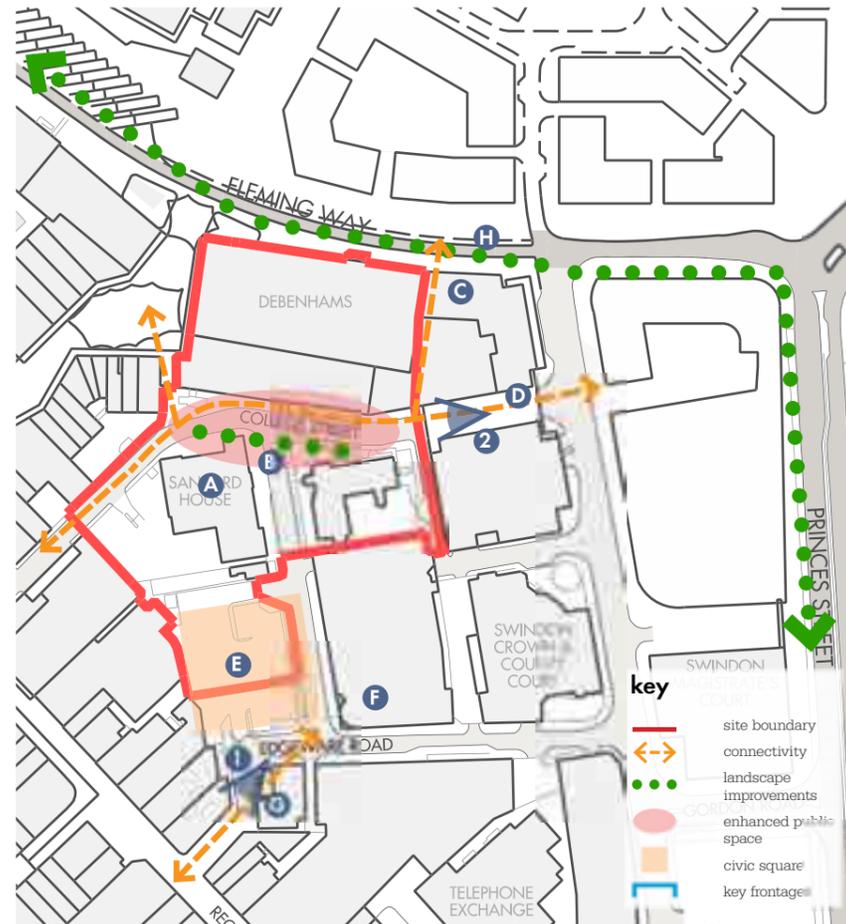
The arrangement of the bus bays should allow for pedestrian and cycle circulation through to the main retail streets. The design should protect those moving around the site from the noise and fumes associated with bus stations as much as possible. The quality of the hard landscape materials and

the integration with tree planting, soft landscape and street furniture must be a high priority for this development.

**Meanwhile opportunities:** The Union Square development is planned over a number of years and in the meantime some of the land could be made into temporary gardens or be used for summer festivals or winter fairs for the benefit of the town.

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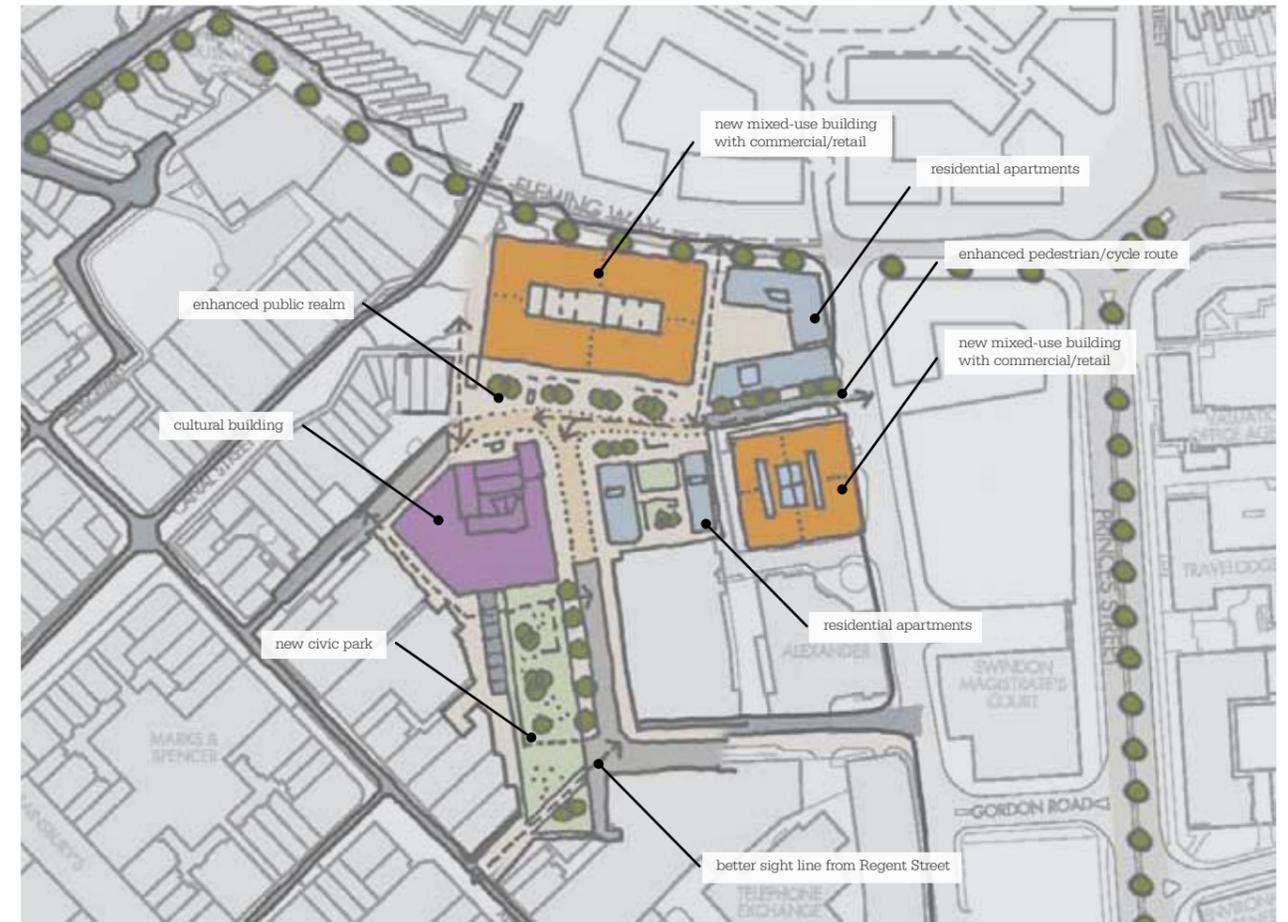
## 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE SANFORD STREET



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- A. Protect and reuse Sanford House for cultural uses.
- B. Improve public realm.
- C. Improve pedestrian connections between College Street and Union Square.
- D. Open up views and improve quality of route between New Islington Street multistorey car park and the town centre.
- E. Enhance existing surface car parking.
- F. Encourage new retail tenant.
- G. Improve sight lines between Regent Street and Sanford Street.
- H. Deliver the Green Spine where it passes along the northern boundary of the site.



Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Low visibility toward Regent Street



View 2: College Street west to Sanford House



This area is characterised by under-used and residual sites, many of which have been formed as a result of the pedestrianisation of Regent Street and Canal Street. It includes the historic former boys board school, Sanford House, which faces onto College Street. Regeneration and investment in mixed-use development could revitalise the area by creating a stronger secondary retail loop connecting the Parade with the southern end of Regent Street. Key priorities and principles are:

**New cultural facilities:** Sanford House offers a potential site for a new gallery building for the Swindon Borough Council's prestigious art collection. The building could extend into the adjacent site to provide facilities for exhibitions, education space and a café/restaurant. This would be augmented to the south by

the removal of the existing surface car park and its replacement with a new civic park. Further adjustments to the sight lines between the A3 retail units on Sanford Street and Regent Street would encourage visitors towards the shops and gallery.

**New town centre homes, retail and commercial uses:** There is a long term opportunity to redevelop the Debenhams building and the adjacent Menzies Hotel into a series of new retail, leisure, residential, and commercial properties on the plots which better address the surrounding streets, with active frontage facing onto Fleming Way, Canal Street, Islington Street and College Street/Sanford Street and improved pedestrian links. New buildings here would attract new retailers to the town centre and provide the opportunity to enhance the town

centre public realm. Existing retail units on the Parade could be reconfigured to strengthen a secondary retail loop.

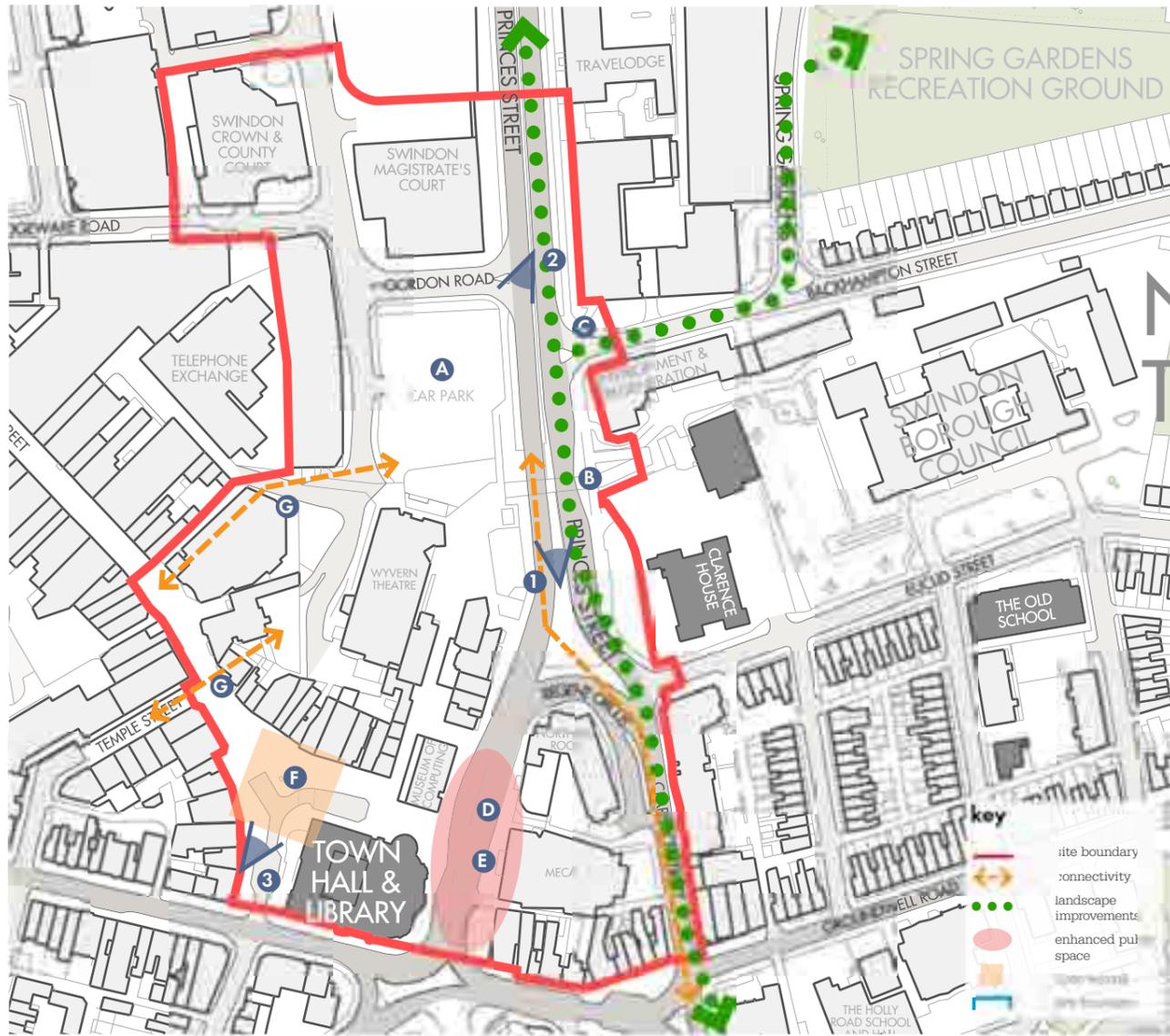
**Improved permeability and public realm:** The redevelopment of this area should considerably improve pedestrian permeability, hard and soft landscaping and create new open spaces for new residents, shoppers and workers to enjoy.

**Meanwhile opportunities:** There is potential to reuse empty office space above Debenhams for start up business space at low/affordable rent. There is also potential to use vacant retail space as temporary display space for local artists and students. In the short term, vacant space can also be used to establish a public presence for the art gallery, whilst feasibility, design and fundraising work is undertaken.

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### 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE PRINCES STREET



Existing plan: 1 : 2500



- A. Redevelop Gordon Road surface car park.
- B. Remove existing pedestrian/cycle bridge.
- C. Deliver the Green Spine along Princes Street and create a green connection to Spring Gardens Recreation Ground.
- D. Rationalise road layout to improve the public realm.
- E. Establish better pedestrian crossing facilities between the library and MECA.
- F. Improve the setting of the listed building.
- G. Improve linkages between Regent Street and Islington Street.

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View 1: Princes Street pedestrian bridge



View 2: Princes Street surface car park



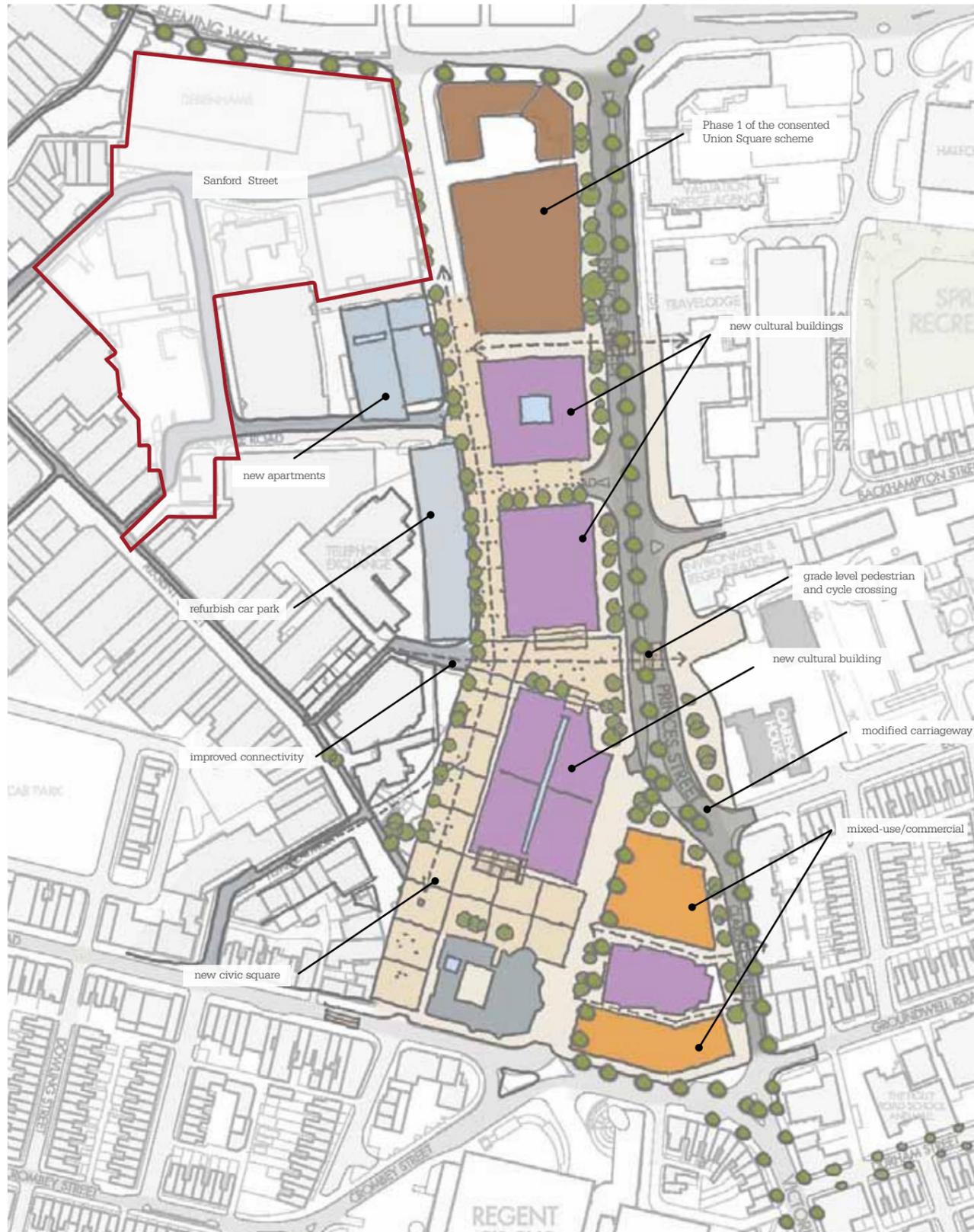
View 3: Public realm behind listed library

This is one of the largest redevelopment sites in the town centre for which proposals have previously been developed through the Promenade Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which has been adopted by Swindon Borough Council. Much of the site is occupied by a large surface car park. Other buildings include the Magistrates Courts, the Wyvern Theatre, two multistorey car parks, commercial and retail buildings.

The proposal broadly reflects those contained in the adopted Promenade SPD, including the alterations to the roads. The area has the potential to become the cultural heart of Swindon as well as providing much needed north/south green pedestrian and cycle links. As the majority of the land here is within Swindon Borough Council ownership, there is a real opportunity to deliver a catalytic change for Swindon. Key priorities and principles for the area are set out on the following page.

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## 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE PRINCES STREET



Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500

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**A new cultural hub:** The development of surface car parks and redevelopment of the Magistrates Court, Wyvern Theatre complex and adjacent units into a mix of bespoke buildings to provide Swindon with a cultural offer of regional significance. The Wyvern Theatre should be re-provided in a high quality modern building which can accommodate a larger audience, attract touring productions of national quality, with appropriate acoustics to allow for music recitals and opera. The building should also include a studio theatre for use by Swindon's theatre and dance groups along with appropriate supporting facilities including rehearsal space. There is also potential to provide a new Art Gallery within this area in a new building - as an alternative to refurbishing and extending Sanford House.

The new performing arts centre should front onto a new civic square around the Town Hall and library. Complementary retail and restaurant uses at ground floor level should be encouraged. These will help to animate the new public spaces and shared surfaces around the library and complement the evening restaurant and leisure offer at the consented Regent Circus development to the south of the site.

**New retail, restaurants/cafés and residential uses:** The development of new retail, restaurants and cafés should be encouraged facing onto the new civic square and Princes Street with a positive relationship to the consented Regent Circus development.

**New public spaces and improved pedestrian and cycle links:** This requires the changing of Islington Street to create a part - pedestrianised and part - shared surface, as well as the redirection of all traffic along Princes Street to the east. The top end of Princes Street is proposed to revert to bus and taxi use only. These measures are longer term aspirations, but would significantly reduce the impact of traffic and improve the setting of both the town hall and library, and the MECA venue and give an opportunity to enhance the public space with the introduction of a new civic square centred around the town hall which could be used for events. In the short term there is an aspiration to improve the pedestrian and cycle environment in the area through the introduction of the Green Spine.

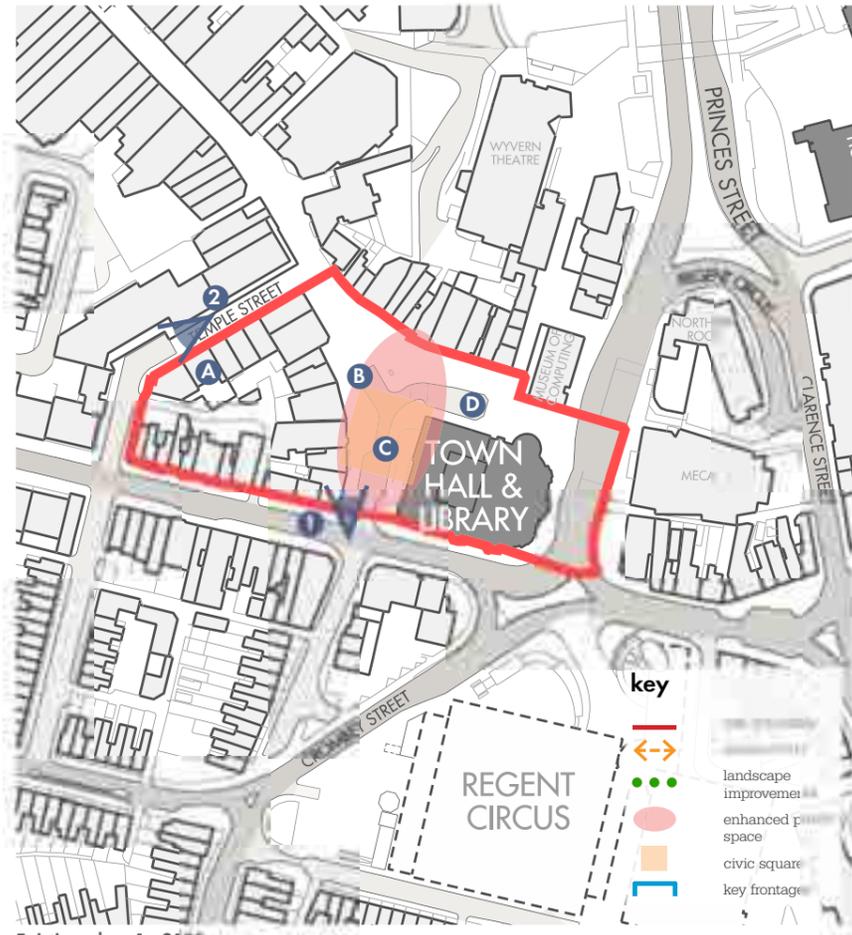
Redevelopment provides the opportunity to improve pedestrian links and public realm through to the Sanford Street area, using a complementary palette of materials. Opportunities to improve the backs of properties along Regent Street should also be considered. There is also potential to widen the pedestrian route through to Regent Street (36-37 Regent Street) to improve permeability.

**Enhanced green links - The Green Spine:** Princes Street itself would be further reinforced with new planting as part of the delivery of the Green Spine [Policy CAAP 3]. Ramps and the pedestrian and cycle bridge should be removed and replaced by surface crossings.

Adjustments would be made to the buildings facing onto Regent Street to improve the east/west permeability through the cultural quarter.

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## 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE SWINDON CENTRAL LIBRARY



### Site principles

- A. Improve building stock through redevelopment.
- B. Enhance civic quality of the southern end of Regent Street.
- C. Improve setting of town hall and war memorial.
- D. Reduce traffic impact around buildings.



View 1: View north up Regent Street



View 2: Temple Street looking west



This proposal seeks to enhance the setting of the Locarno with the introduction of a new civic square and better pedestrian and cycle connections across Commercial Road and Princes Street. Key principles and priorities include:

#### **New high quality buildings facing onto an enhanced civic space:**

The buildings of low architectural value, notably Aspen House, at the western side of the civic square would be replaced by new buildings which make a better contribution to the character of the area and support the enhancement of the public realm.

#### **New town centre shops, commercial spaces and homes:**

The new buildings proposed should include retail uses at ground floor with commercial or residential accommodation on the upper levels. This will be important in achieving a vibrant mix of uses which create activity and interest throughout the day and evening.

**Meanwhile opportunities:** In the short term there is an opportunity to reuse vacant commercial or retail units for temporary exhibitions and studio space, display of student projects (in association with Swindon College) or as low cost units for start-up businesses.

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## 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE GRANVILLE STREET



### Site principles

- A. Improve link/visibility between Havelock Square and car park.
- B. Resolve rear servicing of retail properties on Regent Street.
- C. Better define the connection to Regent Street.
- D. Improve building stock on Commercial Road through redevelopment.
- E. Extend existing road network into the heart of the site.
- F. Enhance setting of Havelock Street.
- G. Provide better treatment to the backs of existing properties.



View 1: Surface car park



View 2: Backs of buildings that face Regent St



Granville Street is an existing surface car park which has the potential to become a new development site upon completion of the new multistorey car park within the consented Union Square Phase 1 scheme. The car park is lined on all sides by the backs of buildings, all of which have their fronts to Regent Street, save for a small terrace towards the east side. It is well-used as a car park and by pedestrians cutting in and out of the Brunel Shopping Centre. The site has potential for development in the medium to long term and potential to create a secondary retail loop. Key priorities and principles for this area is set out below, however a Design Brief for the area would be beneficial:

**Improved permeability:** There is potential to extend the street pattern from the south side of Commercial Road through the site to form city blocks and produce a legible grid of routes.

Along the northern edge of the site, this would create a widened street that links to Havelock Square at one end through the remodelling of an existing building to improve the sight lines, and connects to the lower end of Regent Street at the other.

**New retail and housing:** New retail units should be provided at the rear of those facing onto Regent Street to make a new route from the town hall

civic space to Havelock Square. The design of the development should allow for servicing requirements of the Regent Street retail uses.

The buildings facing onto Commercial Road should be redeveloped to provide dual aspect retail uses at the ground floor with both northern and southern frontage and residential uses above. There is a suggestion to make Commercial road a two-way street, with pavements wide enough to accommodate cafés with outdoor seating.

A single basement of car parking could also be considered to replace the short stay public surface parking, if required.

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## 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE WHARF GREEN



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- A. Encourage restaurant uses.
- B. Establish new headquarters for BBC Wiltshire overlooking a fit-for-purpose outdoor events space such as an amphitheatre.
- C. Redevelop Swindon Tented Market building.
- D. Consider whether land can be gained from the highways.
- E. Review highway junction.
- F. Improve pedestrian/cycle connections and visibility through the site.
- G. Introduce a public square of civic quality facing Farnsby Street.
- H. Improve public realm throughout the site with soft and hard landscape improvements.
- I. Introduce a controlled pedestrian crossing along Commercial Road.



Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Road dominance near tented market



View 2: Farnsby Street



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Despite recent remodelling of Wharf Green and the installation of a large public TV screen the public space feels incomplete and could be improved. Key priorities and principles for the future development of this area are set out below:

**Outdoor events space:** BBC Wiltshire is currently located along the route to Old Town and is housed in an old office building that is no longer fit-for purpose. Relocating the media organisation closer to the town centre offers an opportunity to enliven the area with a new outdoor events space, such as an amphitheatre, and contribute to the greater aims of improving the evening economy and supporting a cultural agenda.

**New civic square:** There should be a new public square of civic quality bordering on Farnsby street and facing the public pedestrian/cycle route through to the retail heart of the town centre. A mixed-use building is proposed to face the square from the north and east. This provides structure to the space as well as a buffer against the large, multi-storey car park behind.

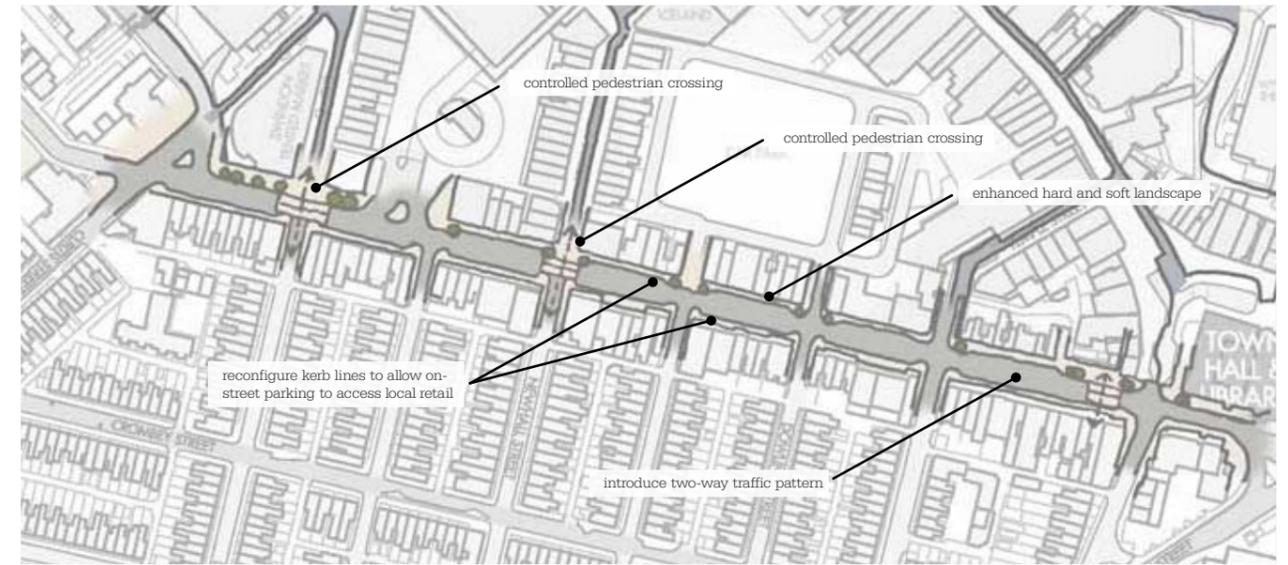
**Redevelop the market:** This proposal considers a more radical solution which includes the removal of the Swindon Tented Market to develop mixed-use buildings with active frontage along Commercial Road and along the enhanced public pedestrian route through the site.

**Improve the public realm:** Pedestrian and cycle connections across Farnsby Street and Commercial Road are enhanced with controlled crossings to strengthen existing movements, and the junction between the two roads adjusted to gain some land back for other uses. High quality hard and soft landscaping should be used throughout the area to encourage pedestrian use and improve the character of the space.

**New retail and residential uses:** The new mixed-use buildings should have retail at the ground floor with residential or commercial uses above. These should be developed to complement the scale and massing of the surrounding town centre buildings.

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## 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE COMMERCIAL ROAD



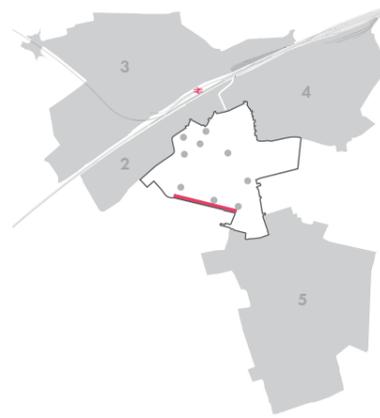
View 1: View looking south east along Commercial Road



View 2: View looking north west along Commercial Road

### Site principles

- Reestablish two-way traffic with on-street parking to improve access to shops.
- Improve permeability between adjacent retail and residential areas.
- Improve pedestrian crossings.



Commercial Road is currently a one-way street acting as a gyratory carrying vehicles around the town centre and is therefore an important part of the town centre road network.

The proposal for this road is to consider a number of adjustments to the way it is used which make the road network more legible for vehicles, improve the environment for pedestrians and support Commercial Road as a thriving retail street which provides a convenience for offer adjacent to the residential district. The key priorities and principles for this street are:

### Enhanced activity, two-way traffic and additional on street parking:

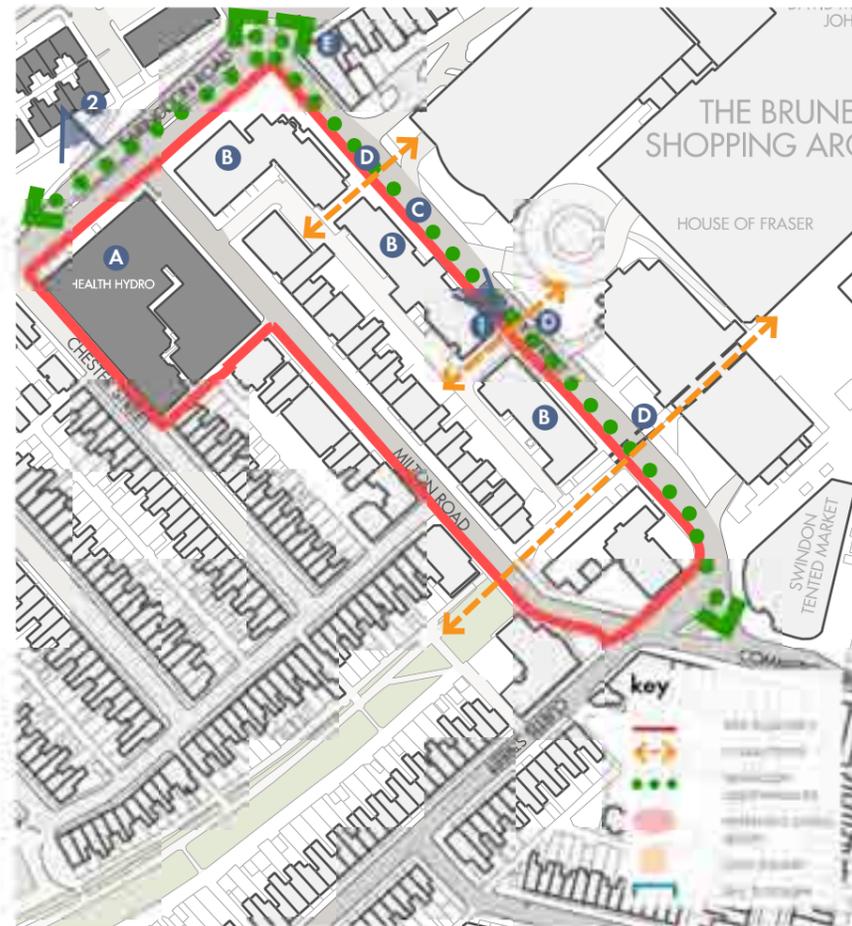
The distance between the existing buildings is sufficient to allow a series of lay-bys to allow short stay parking to enable casual access to the shops along its length. The introduction of two-way traffic onto this street would create additional passing trade and allow for more legible movement around the town.

**Enhanced public realm:** A number of pedestrian and cycle crossings will control the speed of vehicle movements as well as allowing better access. The hard landscape should be improved and the introduction of a line of trees would give this particular street a pleasant character.

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## 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE FARNSBY STREET



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- Generate secure future for the listed Turkish Baths buildings.
- Review uses for semi-redundant commercial buildings.
- Improve Farnsby Street for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Improve pedestrian/cycle connections across Farnsby Street.
- Ensure connection between Faringdon Park and Green Spine.



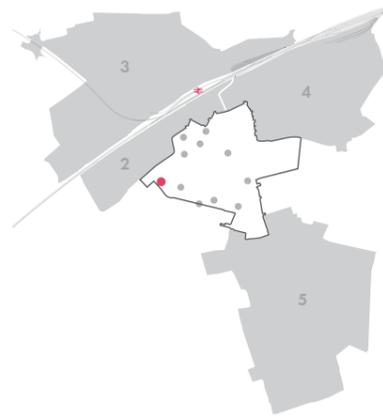
Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Farnsby Street



View 2: Entrance to Turkish Baths



Farnsby Street is a three lane one-way street forming part of the gyratory around the pedestrianised town centre. It is lined on one side by two multistorey car parks and on the other by a series of commercial buildings that have reached the end of their useful life and are either partially let or vacant. There are significant opportunities to improve the pedestrian and cycle environment along this street. The priorities and principles for this street are:

**Increased pedestrian and cycle priority:** The status of the road could be changed through the introduction of more space for cycles, pedestrians and soft landscape, continuing the line of trees suggested for Commercial Road. This would considerably improve the

attractiveness of walking and cycling around this part of the town centre. Additional crossing points would also be introduced to ensure better links between the two parts of the town.

**New town centre homes:** There is a long term opportunity, as buildings become vacant, to redevelop the existing commercial buildings along Farnsby Street to create a series of residential villas. These should be lower in height than the existing commercial stock and provide an intermediate scale between the low rise housing to the west and Milton Road and the high density of the car parks and shopping centre in the town centre to the east. This development would form the transition between the town centre and the residential periphery.

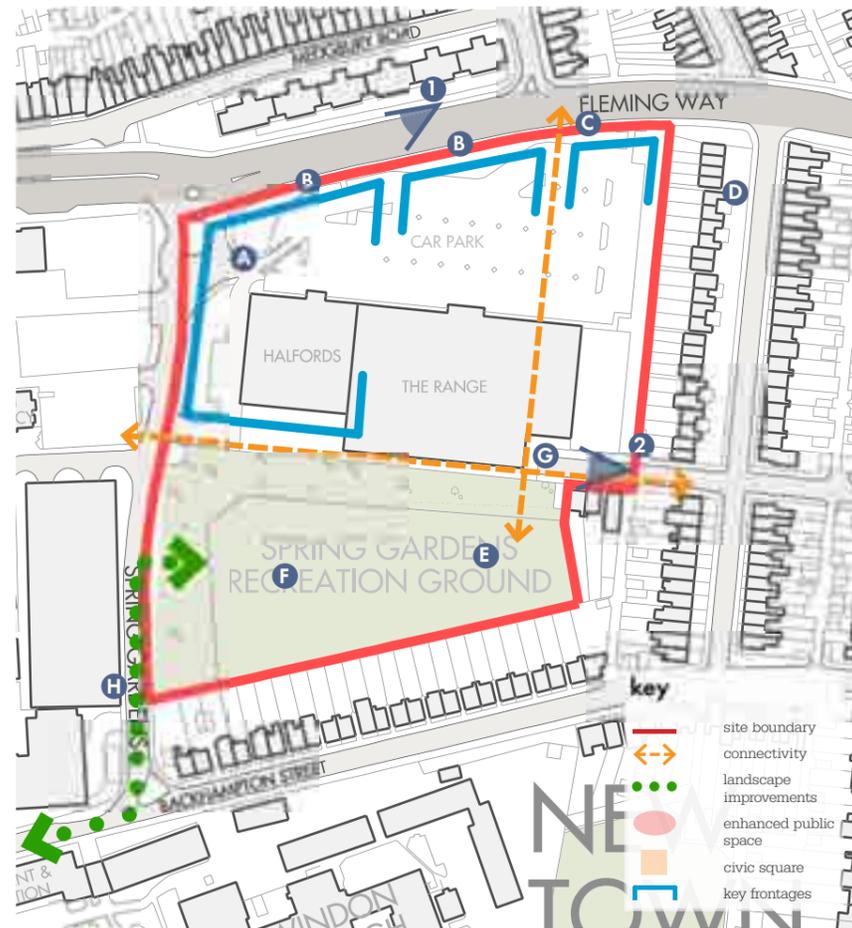
**Refurbished Turkish Baths:** The existing listed public baths should be enhanced and reinvigorated with new adjacent buildings and spaces developed to enhance its setting. The masterplan highlights the opportunity to create a new public space to the east of the baths, and high quality residential apartments to the north east which would significantly enhance its setting. The baths could become a key visitor attraction for Swindon.

**Meanwhile opportunities:** As the commercial buildings along Farnsby Street become vacant the potential for meanwhile uses such as start-up business space or student gallery space should be explored.

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## 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE HALFORDS



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- Consider whether land can be gained from the highway.
- Establish building lines on Fleming Way.
- Make better connections between north and south residential districts and communities.
- Improve landscape environment on Newcastle Street.
- Introduce organised leisure activity to Spring Gardens Recreation Ground.
- Enhance existing recreation ground landscape.
- Improve visibility of recreation ground entrances
- Create a green connection between Spring Gardens and the Green Spine.



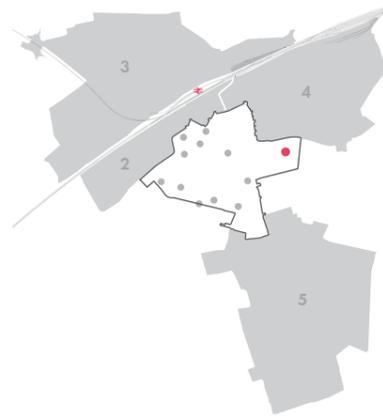
Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Fleming Way



View 2: Entrance to park at Plymouth Street



This site is currently occupied by a single large retail shed set behind a large surface car park, but its location is within the town centre, adjacent to residential districts to the east and the civic offices to the south. There is an opportunity to intensify uses on this site, to improve the appearance and amenity for the local residents. Key principles and priorities are as follows:

**New high quality housing:** The development of new town houses on the site of Halfords as an extension to Medgbury Place to the north across Fleming Way would provide additional family homes in a central location. This should be linked to Medgbury Place via a new controlled crossing.

There is also potential to develop new higher density apartment buildings at each of the terrace ends and to enhance the landscape to the properties on Newcastle Street.

**Enhanced connections and public realm:** The development of new homes enhances the north/south connections, currently severed by Halfords. At the southern end, a small park would remain, along with improvements to the soft landscape and the introduction of some all weather courts and café. This space could become a useful and enjoyable amenity for a larger catchment of the resident population of the town. Entrances to the park should be visible and uncluttered, to encourage visitors and discourage anti-social behaviour.

**New commercial space:** Two commercial buildings are proposed, one facing onto Fleming Way and the other onto the newly extended Plymouth Street facing south onto the enhanced park.

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## 6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE FORMER SWINDON COLLEGE



### Site principles

- Refurbish existing college building by giving it a new use such as residential, hotel or other commercial use.
- Introduce high quality landscaping to enhance the appearance of the site and deliver the Green Spine along Victoria Road.



Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Victoria Road, looking south



This site is currently vacant, with hoarding along its historical frontage on Victoria Road. The building was formerly used by Swindon College, yet has been empty for several years. The back of the building, along the eastern boundary of the site, faces the consented, Regent Circus development, which is due for completion in 2014. Key principles and priorities are as follows:

**Refurbish and revitalise heritage building stock with new uses:** The old college building is a valuable part of Swindon's built heritage that requires careful and sensitive refurbishment. The building could be made suitable for a variety of uses including housing, commercial office space, or a

combination of housing above with retail below.

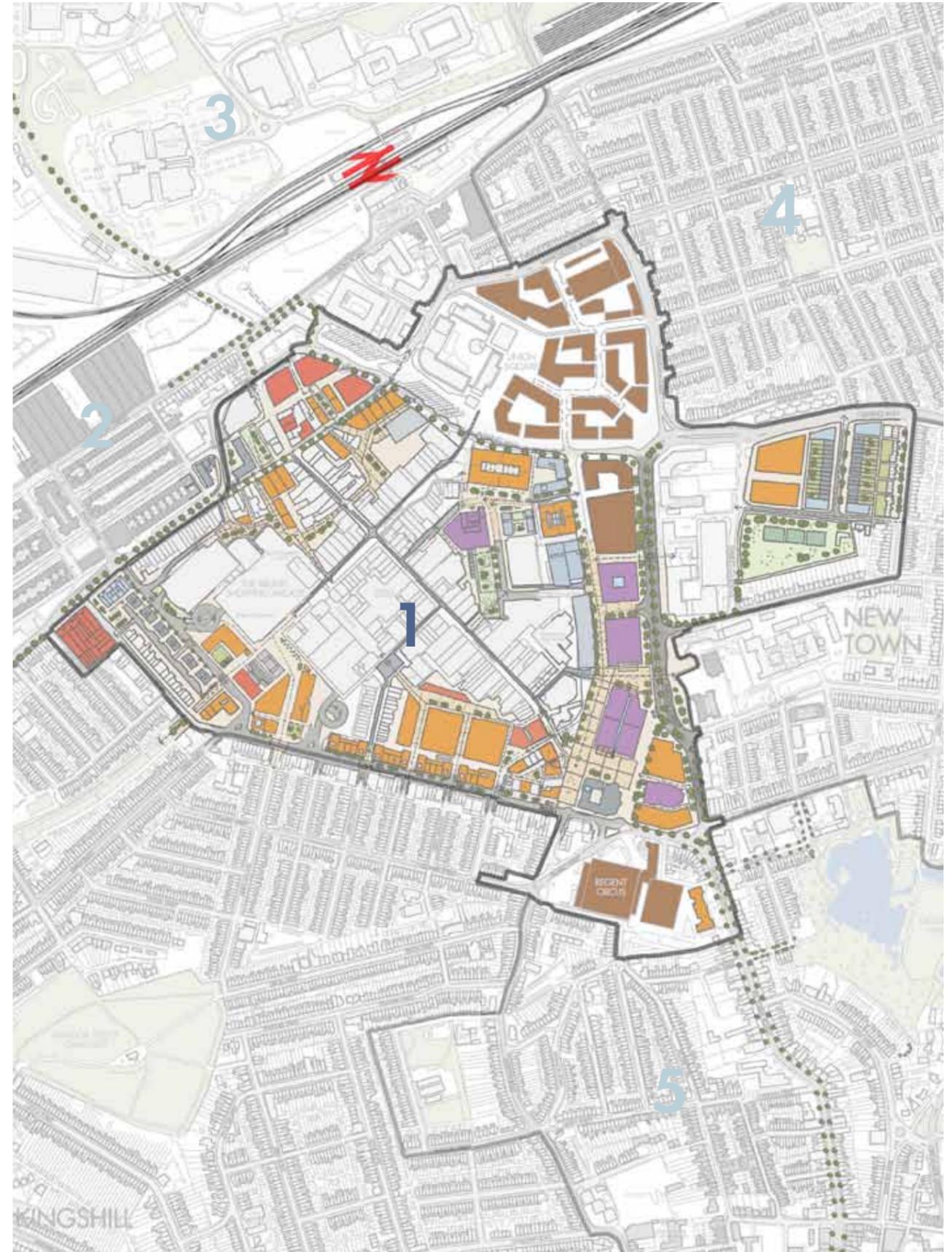
**Improve front landscape and deliver the Green Spine:** The front of the building lines an important stretch of Victoria Road where, when travelling south, one leaves the newer town centre to travel toward the more established neighbourhood, Old Town.

With refurbishment, this heritage building facade has the potential to greatly improve the character of the street. Landscaping should be of the highest quality and the delivery of the Green Spine is essential.

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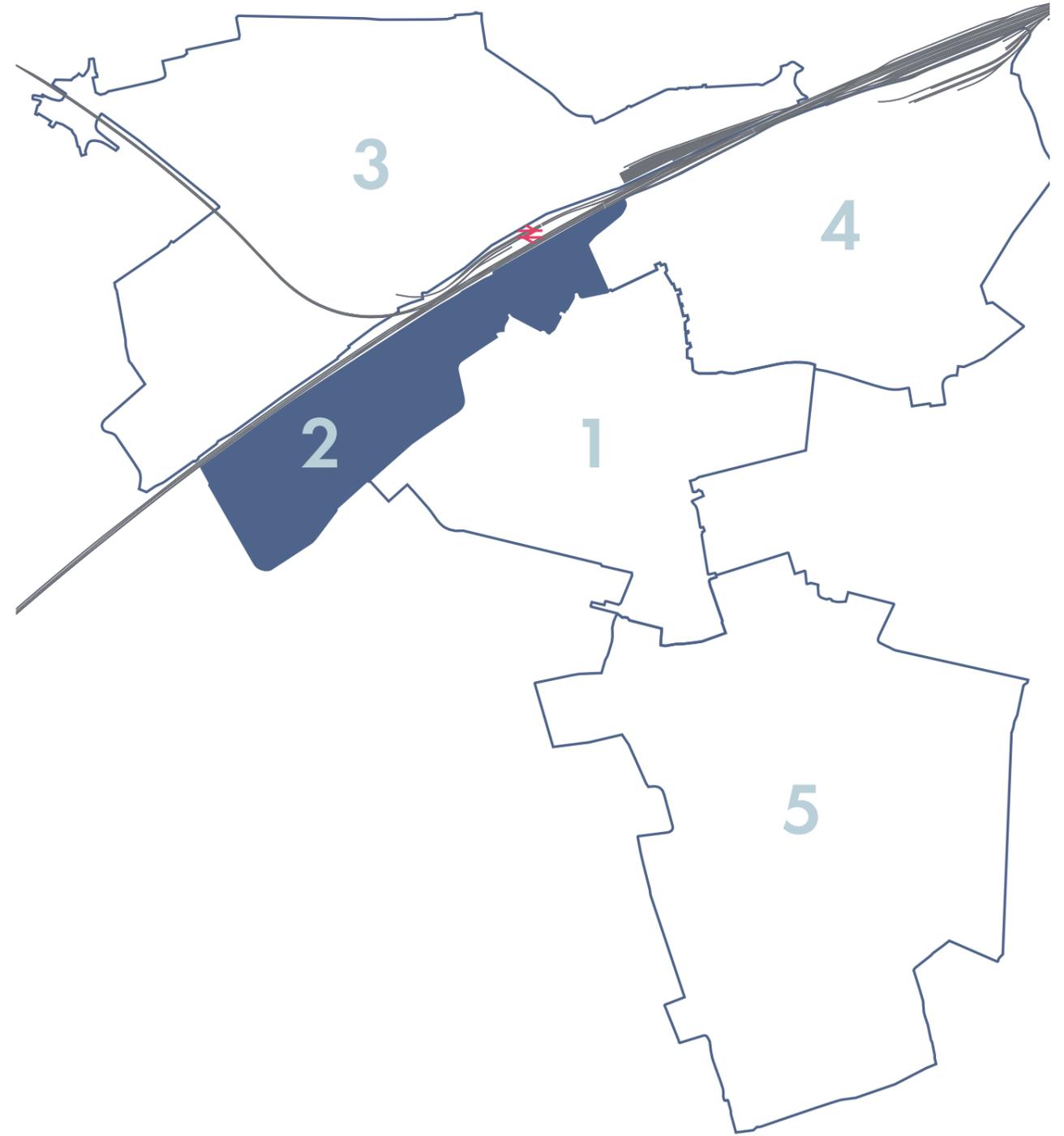
6.3 STUDY AREA 1 - TOWN CENTRE  
SPATIAL MASTERPLAN



Study area 1 illustrative plan: NOT TO SCALE

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# RAILWAY SOUTHSIDE

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## 6.4 STUDY AREA 2 - RAILWAY SOUTHSIDE



Swindon Station



GWR Works cottages



The Mechanics' Institute



Former GWR Carriage Works

A significant proportion of this study area includes the listed workers cottages to the south of the railway forming the GWR railway village. It also includes Faringdon Park, the former Carriage Works, the Mechanics' Institute and the Turkish Baths to the south of Faringdon Street. The significance and value of this unique built heritage is to be protected; and where any new development is considered that bounds it, the architectural quality should be of the highest standard and the setting of the listed buildings enhanced.

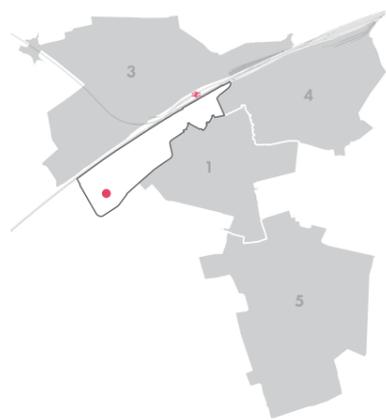
The overall aspiration for this part of town is to preserve and enhance the heritage buildings and secure the reuse of vacant buildings. The aesthetic qualities of the fabric with rustic coursed stone and cast iron details impose a strength of character that is hard to rival. While this is impressive, the failure to reuse these magnificent buildings is a situation that should, if at all possible, be changed. In particular there is a pressing need to secure the future of the Grade II\* Listed Mechanics' Institute, which is vacant and in need of significant repair and restoration. The entire length of the listed buildings lining Bristol Street and London Street are vacant with barricaded windows. A change in the fortunes and sensitive reuse of these properties would in itself radically alter the feel of the area.

The remainder of the Area includes former goods yards now levelled as open land adjacent to the railway and currently used for surface car parking by the Train Operating Company serving the station, and public and private car parking serving the town and adjacent commercial premises. The abiding first impression of Swindon from a train carriage is of a sea of tarmac and cars bounded by a number of tired commercial buildings. The area also includes, at each end, the two road tunnels under the railway which are 1.2 kilometres apart, and between these, the two pedestrian and cycle tunnels providing the only physical links between the northern and southern parts of the town. The land to the north of Fleet Street has also been considered. In its present state this area has been largely occupied by vertical drinking establishments and fast food outlets to the detriment of the environment and quality of the townscape; but it is central to restoring a strong connection between the retail core and the land to the north of the railway. There is potential here as well, to improve Faringdon Park and the public realm, particularly along London Road to enhance the pedestrian and cycle experience.

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## 6.4 STUDY AREA 2 - RAILWAY SOUTHSIDE FARINGDON PARK



### Site principles

- A. Remove bus route(s) from Church Place.
- B. Consider structured leisure uses in the park.
- C. Consider potential for culture or leisure uses to enhance park functions.
- D. Ensure a strong connection to the Green Spine.
- E. Consider redeveloping the existing garages to improve the entrance to the park and provide a permanent structure to house leisure facilities.

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View 1: View from Church Street



View 2: Garages near east entrance

This park forms one of the first impressions of the town centre on the approach from the west along Westcott Place or north along Rodbourne Road. While its status as part of the overall composition of the GWR Workers Village is assured, Faringdon Park has a neglected air. Key priorities and principles for this area are as follows:

**New leisure facilities:** A new leisure building/café kiosk could be introduced in place of the existing garage compound which would enhance the park setting and encourage more people to visit and use the park. The existing public convenience would be removed and the function integrated into the new buildings.

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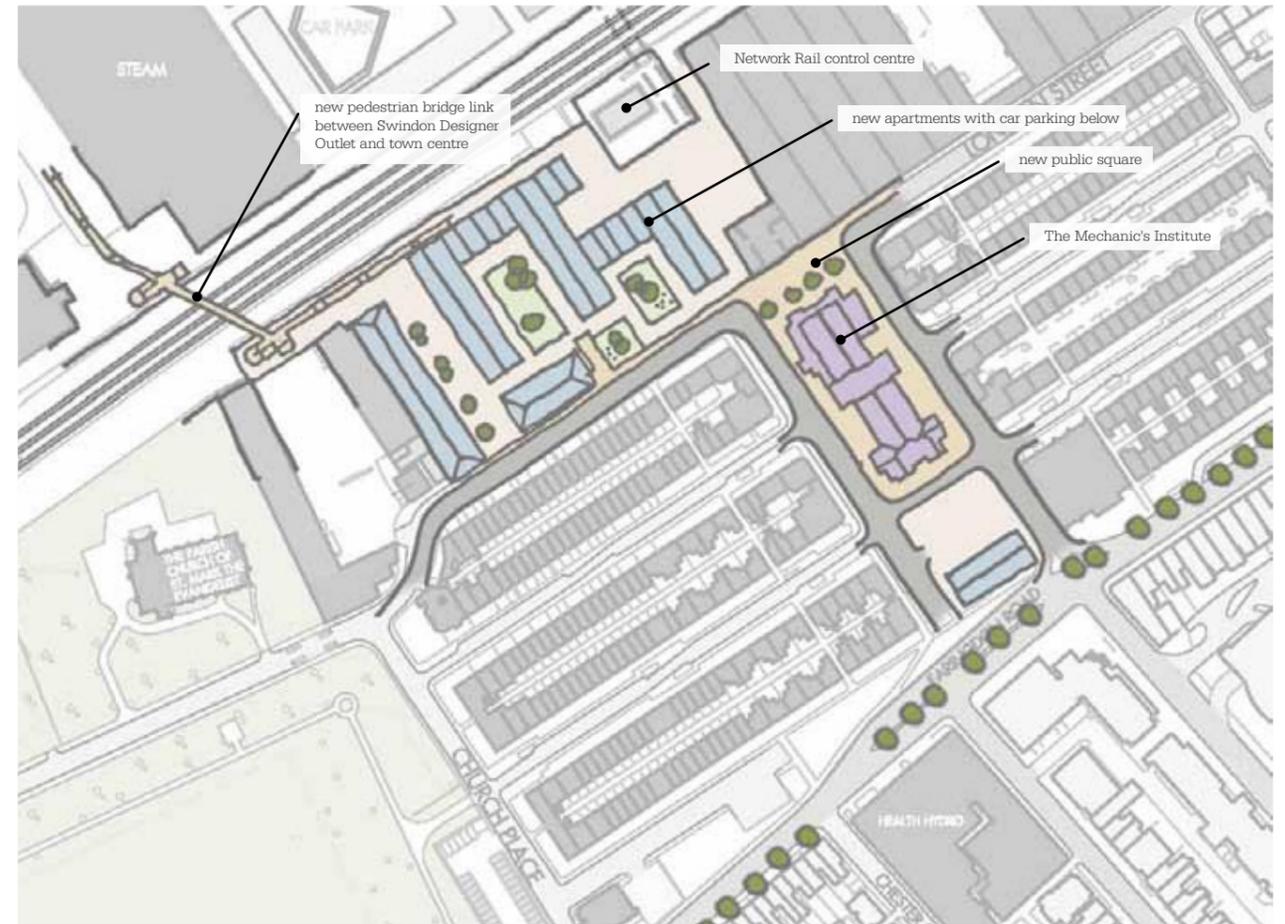
## 6.4 STUDY AREA 2 - RAILWAY SOUTHSIDE THE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

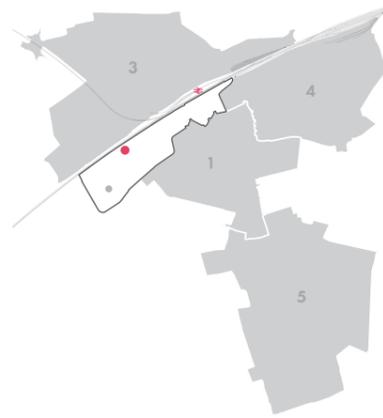
- A. Consider new pedestrian/cycle bridge.
- B. Retain Network Rail access.
- C. Retain Network Rail signalling equipment.
- D. Consider relocating entrance into pedestrian/cycle tunnel to reduce its length and/or introduce daylight to improve the atmosphere of the tunnel.
- E. Consider rerouting buses to allow pedestrian use and create a new public square.
- F. Promote restoration and new uses for the Mechanics' Institute.
- G. Signpost connection to the town centre.
- H. Retain listed wall.
- I. Consider retention of Bristol Street car parking and development of surface above this.
- J. Reuse structures that are listed or of historical interest.
- K. Ensure connection between Faringdon Park and Green Spine.



Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Mechanics' Institute



The seemingly intractable state of affairs for the building should be resolved, the building restored and endowed with new sustainable functions and a long term future, probably part funded from the public purse. The Mechanics' Institute is a Grade II\* listed building which since its closure has fallen gradually into a state of disrepair. Urgent works are now required to prevent its loss. The priority for this area is to promote and support the refurbishment of this important part of Swindon's heritage. Key priorities are:

**New community/cultural uses:** The reuse of the Mechanics' Institute building is a key priority. As the building historically provided community uses, including cultural

provision, it would be desirable to reinstate these uses. The Mechanics' Institution Trust has developed plans for the reuse of the buildings. In considering the long term future of the buildings there is a significant role for the Trust, English Heritage and Swindon Borough Council to secure the refurbishment, reuse and maintenance of the buildings.

**New housing development:** There is potential to redevelop the Bristol Street car park site to retain one level of parking at grade and a new residential development built at the current upper level. This would be incorporated behind the listed wall and absorb and convert the semi derelict sheds to the west end to residential use. The development could generate

funds to help with the restoration of the Mechanics' Institute and would help to improve its setting.

The new buildings should be of a scale and architectural quality in keeping with the listed structures both in their overall scale and use of materials.

**Improved north/south links:** A new pedestrian and cycle bridge link is suggested across the railway to give a strong direct and visual connection between the Swindon Designer Outlet, STEAM and the northern part of the town to augment the existing subway opposite the Mechanics' Institute. This would help address the problem of severance caused by the railway, and will be a priority for S106 contributions from local developments.

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## 6.4 STUDY AREA 2 - RAILWAY SOUTHSIDE FORMER CARRIAGE WORKS



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- Reuse existing listed structures.
- Maintain Network Rail track-side access.
- Retain existing listed wall and canal bridge.
- New cycle/pedestrian bridge over railway.
- Redevelop existing surface car park (Swindon Borough Council).
- Ensure new building aligns with existing listed structures.
- Activate street level frontage within the existing listed buildings.
- Deliver a continuous Green Spine.
- Allow space in front of new car park development for trees along Sheppard Street.



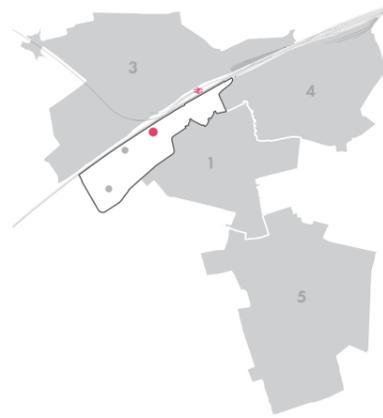
Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Former Carriage Works



View 2: Surface car parking



These two simple and elegant buildings form a significant part of the listed building portfolio and in their current form could be adapted for a number of new uses. They are linked by a continuous facade along London Street which is currently redundant and unused at street level.

This site also contains two surface car parks: one used by the Train Operating Company and the other owned by Swindon Borough Council but leased to a local commercial business.

Between these two sites is a listed wall which also forms a bridge head over the former canal.

Key priorities and principles for the area are:

### Reuse of former carriage works:

The opportunity exists to bring these buildings back into use to enliven the street and rejuvenate this part of the town centre. There is potential to use the buildings for cultural uses, such as a Museum of Swindon, or as artists' studios and workshops. Alternatively, the buildings could be suited to mixed retail or commercial schemes. Whatever uses are found, active frontage should be created facing onto London Road.

**New homes:** There is the potential to relocate the surface level car parking into a new multistorey car park on the north and south sides of the railway to allow this site to be developed for new homes. Space should be provided in front of the homes for street trees.

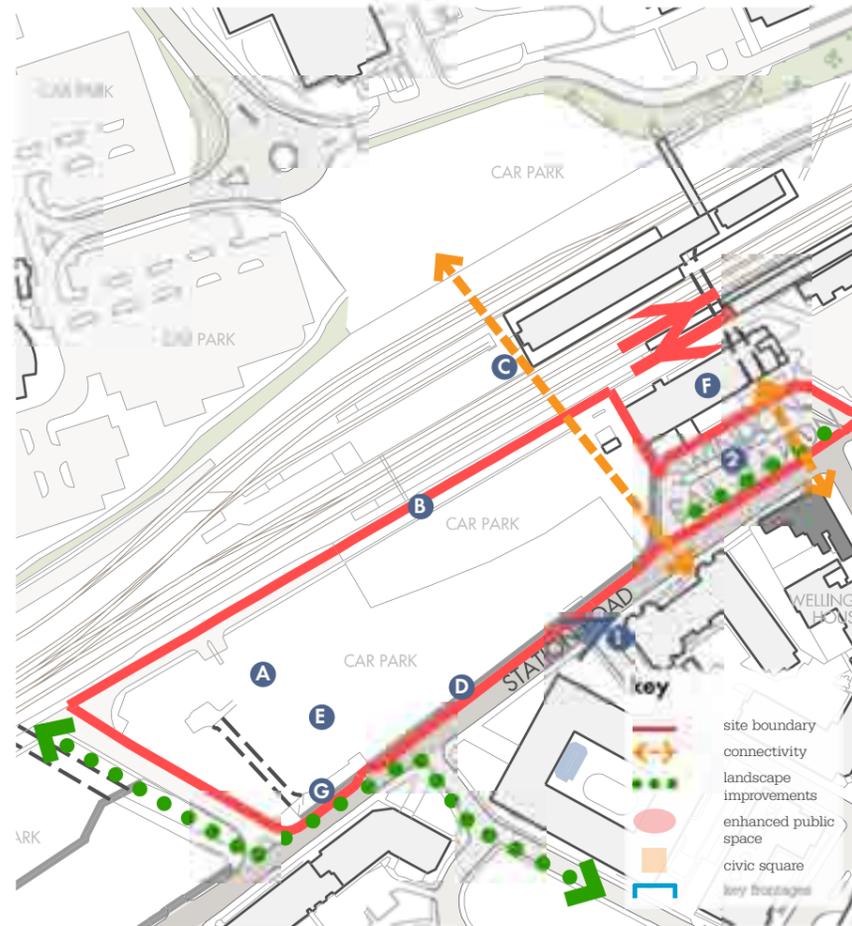
### Improved north/south links and new canal basin:

The reintroduction of the canal along this route would help to encourage north/south movement under the railway and create an attractive public environment. Complementary improvements to the existing railway underpass, including improved lighting, landscaping and public realm would help to encourage additional pedestrian and cycle users. There is also potential to create a possible turning basin forming the southern end of the reinstated section of the canal to create an attractive civic space. Regardless of whether the canal is reinstated, it is imperative that the Green Spine be delivered through this area in order to strengthen the north/south connection between the town centre and the North Star area.

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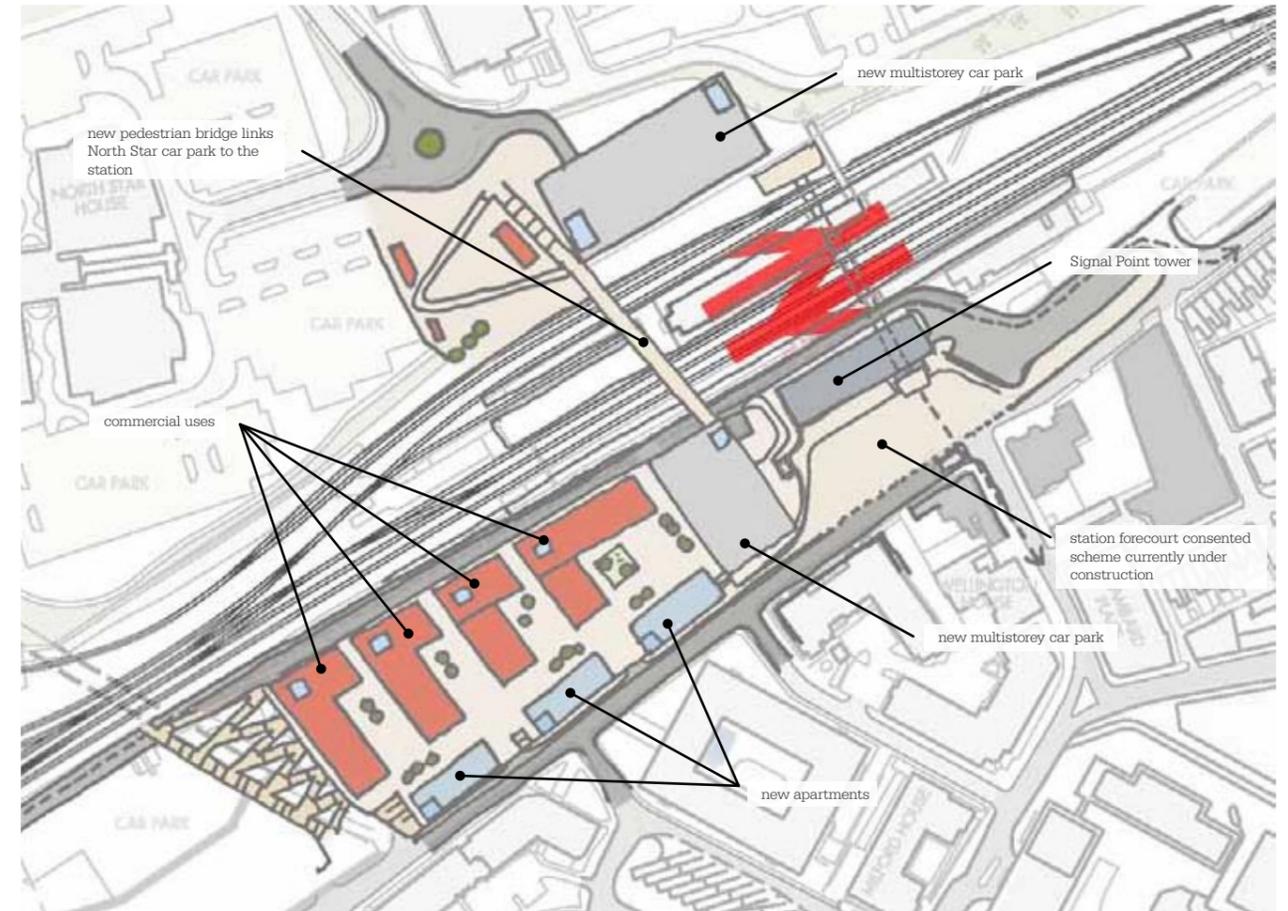
## 6.4 STUDY AREA 2 - RAILWAY SOUTHSIDE STATION ROAD



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- Consider redevelopment of existing surface car parking (Network Rail/ First Great Western).
- Maintain Network Rail track-side access.
- New pedestrian/cycle bridge connecting North Star and the town centre.
- Retail listed wall.
- Consolidate surface car parking into new multistorey car park.
- Refurbish office building above station to improve first impressions.
- Deliver a continuous Green Spine.



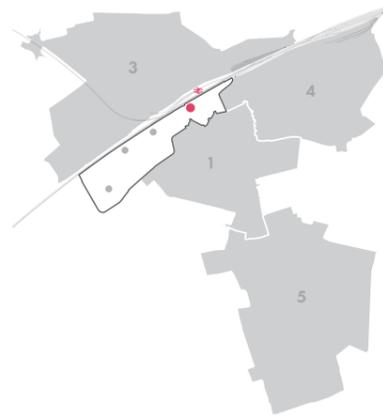
Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Listed wall



View 2: Station forecourt



This site is currently used as a surface car park for the Train Operating Company, with a smaller proportion used by the commercial office building at the station.

Parking adjacent to the station is an integral part of the transportation interchange and needs to be maintained. There is also the likelihood of increased usage of the rail network, following electrification, which will put further pressure on a need to increase the total number of spaces provided.

The site is the first and abiding impression of Swindon viewed from the trains that pass through it - making it an important indicator of town character. Key proposals and priorities for the area are as follows:

**Parking reorganisation:** A new multistorey car park located at the eastern end of the site is proposed. This, coupled with a similar capacity multistorey car park on the north side of the tracks, linked by a new bridge, would give an uplift in the total number of spaces to meet the predicted future demands from rising numbers of rail passengers.

**New mixed-use development:** The remainder of the site would be available for a mixed-use development comprising commercial offices and residential apartments. An additional layer of car parking could be incorporated into the development on level with Station Road, accessed either from here or from the perimeter road adjacent to

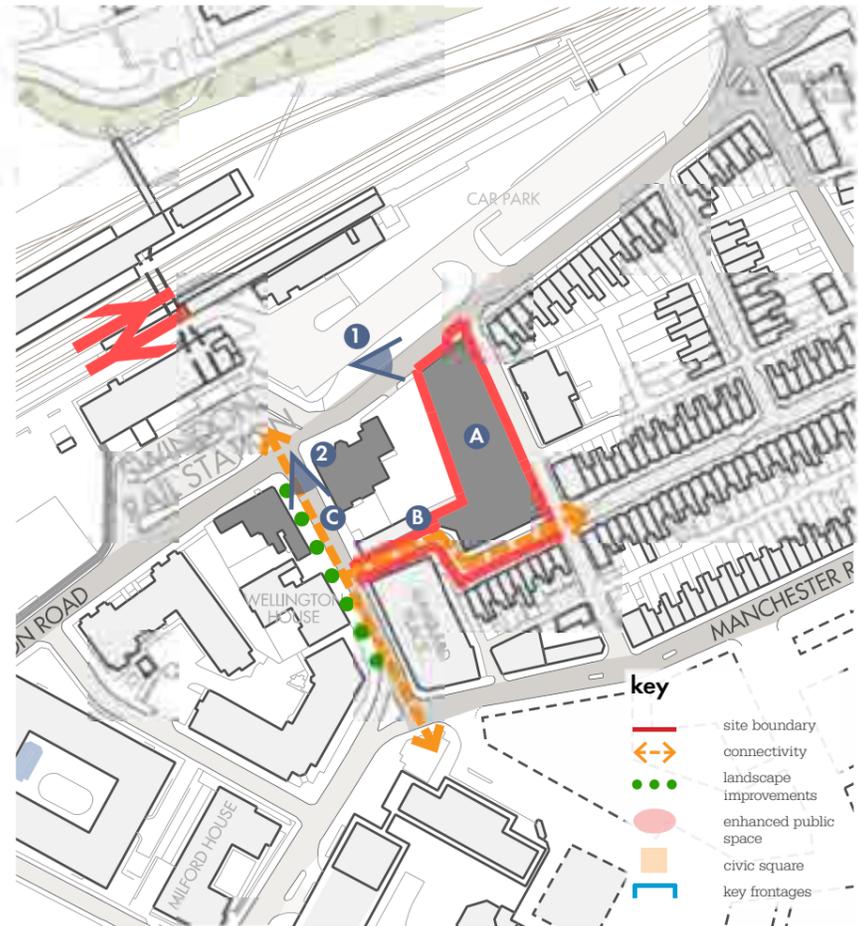
the railway. Commercial uses should be positioned adjacent to the railway and design should include appropriate noise attenuation. New residential apartments lining London Road would help to uplift the appearance of the area and provide natural surveillance.

**Improved station facilities:** At the station itself, provision could be made within the mixed-use development for improved café and retail outlets. Better cycle facilities at the station would help encourage more sustainable modes of commuting to and from the station. Signal Point, the existing office building, should be refurbished with new high quality cladding as one of the tallest buildings in the town and the one whose first impression needs to be the best.

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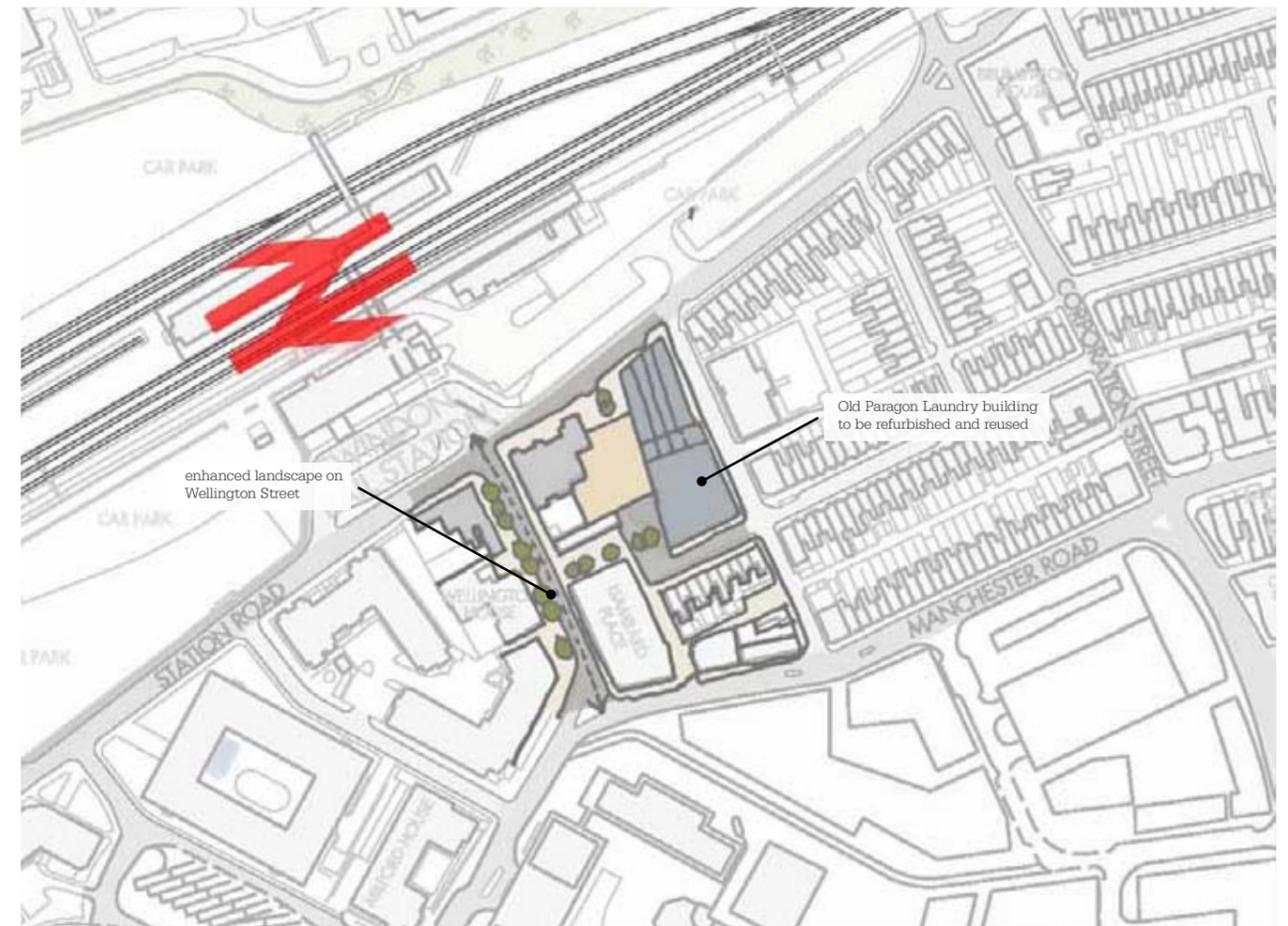
## 6.4 STUDY AREA 2 - RAILWAY SOUTHSIDE OLD PARAGON LAUNDRY



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- A. Restore and introduce new uses to the listed, former Paragon Laundry building.
- B. Enhance hard and soft landscape.
- C. Improve public realm between the Station and Union Square.



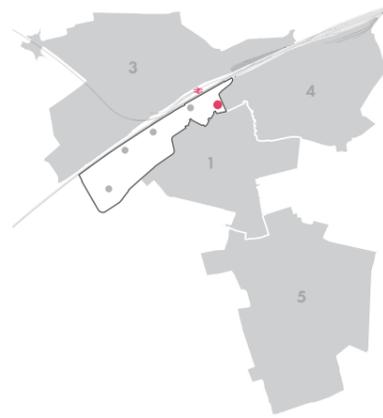
Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Old Paragon Laundry



View 2: Wellington Street facing south



The cluster of three listed buildings situated to the south-east side of the station on Station Road is the last reminder of the historic focal point that this area constituted in the nineteenth century.

The direct relationship to the Brunel station has been lost with the construction of the modern station and commercial development at its entrance. However the retention of these buildings and reuse of those vacant historic buildings to celebrate Swindon's heritage will help to contribute towards an enhanced town centre. Key priorities and principles for the area are set out below:

**Reuse and refurbishment of the Paragon Laundry:** The former Paragon Laundry should be refurbished and converted for use as a hotel or apartments: there is currently planning permission for the conversion of the buildings for hotel use. The conversion should enhance the setting of the adjoining listed property and the site in general.

**Enhanced landscaping:** Wellington Street is a key connector to the town centre and would therefore benefit significantly from enhancements to the public realm and landscaping. High quality paving, lighting and tree planting would create an attractive route into the town centre.

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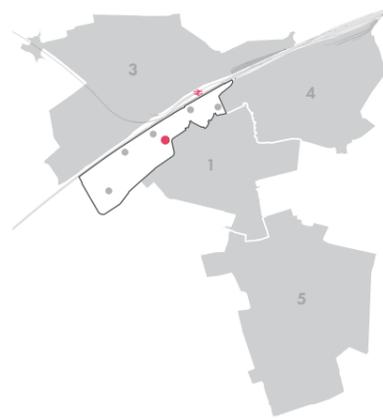
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## 6.4 STUDY AREA 2 - RAILWAY SOUTHSIDE SHEPPARD STREET



### Site principles

- Restore a continuous, residential facade line along Holbrook Way.
- Create a high-quality hard and soft landscape between properties facing Sheppard Street and Holbrook Way.
- Improve the atmosphere of Sheppard Street with tree planting.



The housing along Sheppard Street across from the surface car park has a tired appearance and would benefit greatly from a series of improvements to the surrounding streetscape as well as to the frontage facing Holbrook Way. Key priorities and principles for the area are set out below:

**Re-establish a residential frontage along Holbrook Way:** The view of the Sheppard Street site from Holbrook Way is disjointed. It is possible to see the back garden access to the properties facing Sheppard Street, and the area is littered with cars parked (and often, double-parked) in different directions.

The facade line along Holbrook Way should be restored with high-quality

residential housing that provides a continuous street frontage to block the view of the gardens behind. Access to the back gardens for Sheppard Street properties could be provided discretely, where necessary.

A new apartment building in the southeast corner of the site would provide a scaled transition from the nearby offices along Holbrook Way to the newly proposed housing.

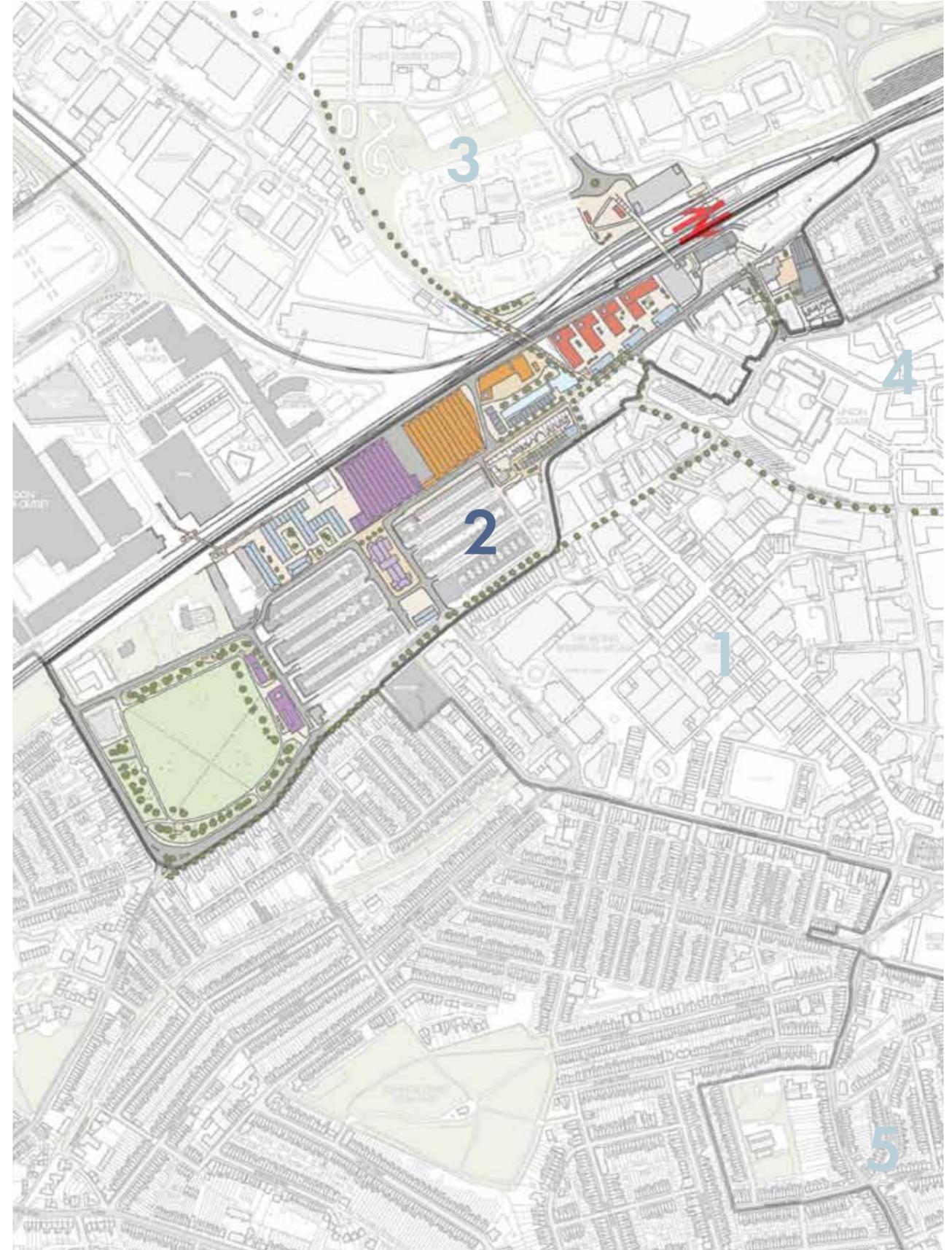
**Enhanced landscaping:** Sheppard Street lacks high-quality landscaping and efforts should be made to improve the quality of the paving and introduce street trees wherever possible. The access route through the centre of the site should also be improved with high quality hard and soft landscape.

**Improve residential frontage:** If funds become available, a match funding scheme for building frontage improvements could be considered. The Swindon Borough Council should encourage opportunities to improve the residential frontage along the street. This site could potentially be designated as a conservation area in order to manage the quality of any future building works.

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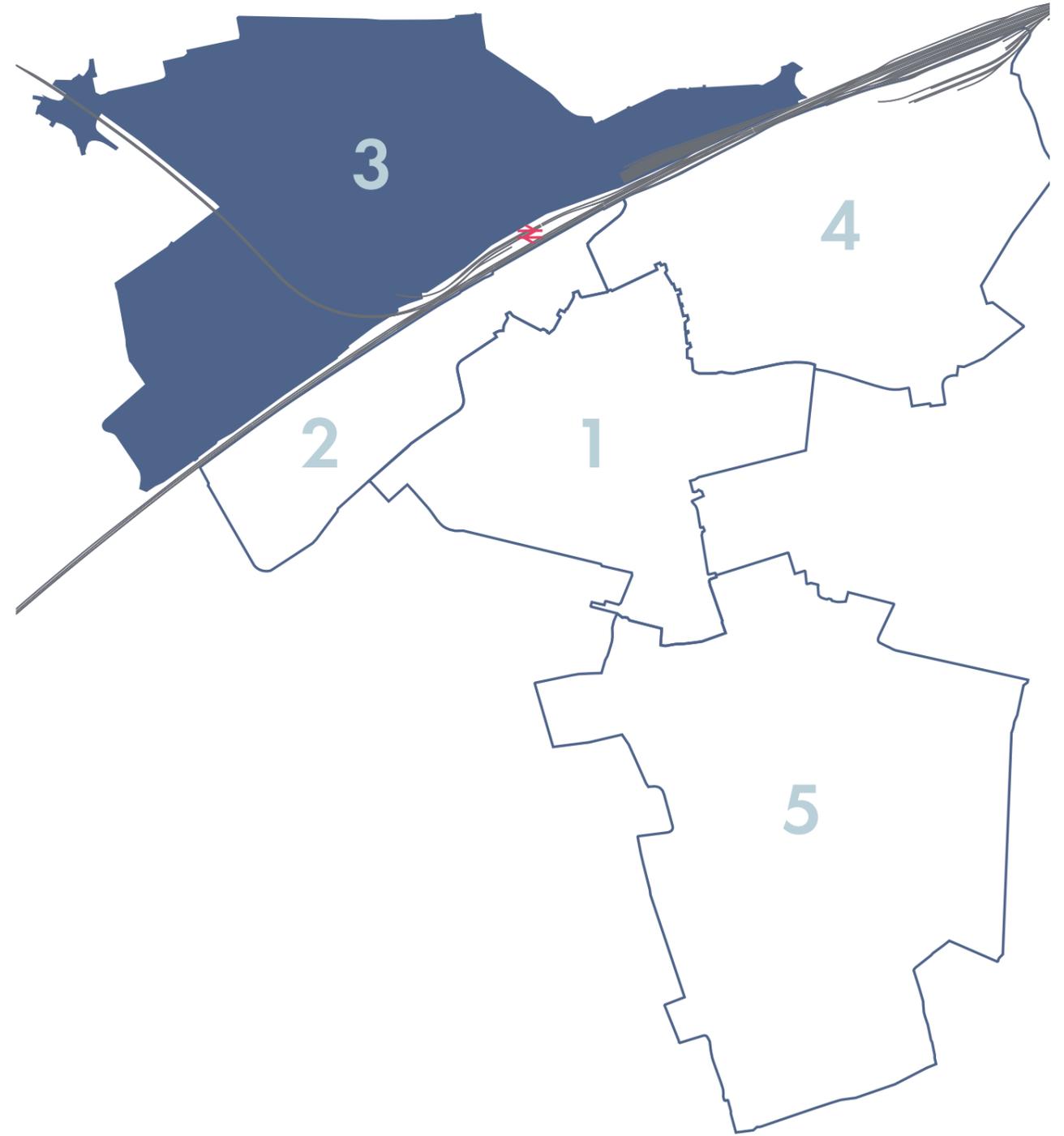
## 6.4 STUDY AREA 2 - RAILWAY SOUTHSIDE SPATIAL MASTERPLAN



Study area 1 illustrative plan: NOT TO SCALE

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# NORTH STAR

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## 6.5 STUDY AREA 3 - NORTH STAR



Land to be developed north of Oasis Leisure Centre



Hawksworth Industrial Estate



Oasis Leisure Centre



Rodbourne Road underpass

Much of the North Star study area was originally set out as a large marshalling yard which was part of the GWR Works. As the railway industry declined, so these sidings have gradually withered and eventually been extinguished. In its place there have sprung a relatively small number of specific use buildings and amenity spaces. These range from the Swindon Designer Outlet, the former GWR Works, the Hawksworth Industrial Estate, Swindon College, and a couple of standalone commercial buildings set in a landscape of surface car parks. Its comparative separation from the town to the south of the railway has left an impression of North Star as open land with very little evidence of the infrastructure that is usually associated with a town centre, despite its location. While this might lead to the development of a strategy that repeats the scale and functions that are currently being entertained, the need to provide good amenity space, scale of buildings and uses expected in a town centre should not be ignored. These could include residential components to help link the districts to the north with the town centre to the south

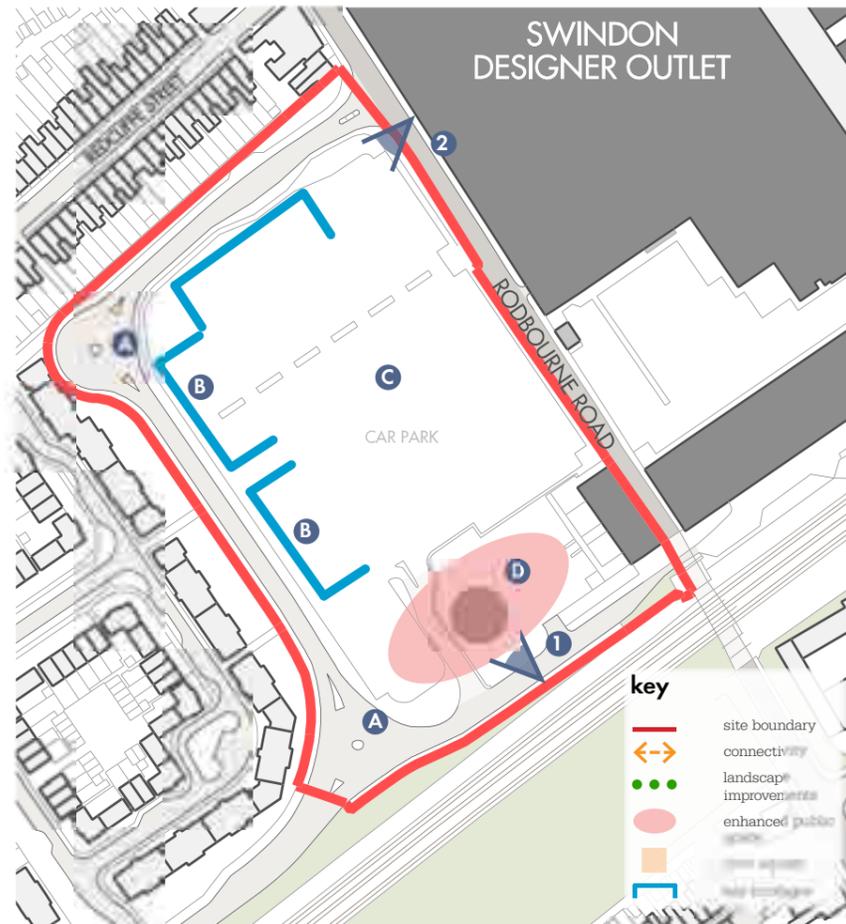
North Star is acting as a satellite retail hub and casual recreation ground centred on the existing Oasis Leisure Centre and is a popular destination without the need to go any further into or engage with the town centre. It is also the largest area with the greatest potential for significant strategic development that would change the balance of the town, moving some of its core functions northwards and making better considered edges with the surrounding residential districts. The risk of failing to grasp this opportunity or considering only piecemeal redevelopment for short term gain would miss the chance to reinvigorate the town as a whole. Coupled to this is the need to improve the existing physical links under the railway and to consider augmenting these with new elegant and visually explicit bridge connections between the two parts of the town.

An operator has recently been found to undertake the refurbishment of the Oasis swimming pool, with the potential to expand this brief to provide an indoor ski slope and events arena. These buildings will be both very large and attract large numbers of visitors. New transport links, including a new privately funded hopper bus and improvements to the pedestrian and cycle links with the town centre via a new bridge at the railway station would encourage visitors also to use the town centre as part of their visit to these leisure facilities. There is potential as well, to support the development and growth of Swindon College and encourage new business floor space.

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## 6.5 STUDY AREA 3 - NORTH STAR RODBOURNE ROAD



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- A. Consider whether land can be gained from highways.
- B. Introduce residential uses to complete the edge to the former GWR Works.
- C. Redevelop existing surface car parking.
- D. Enhance setting of listed buildings and listed GWR turntable with high quality, public space.



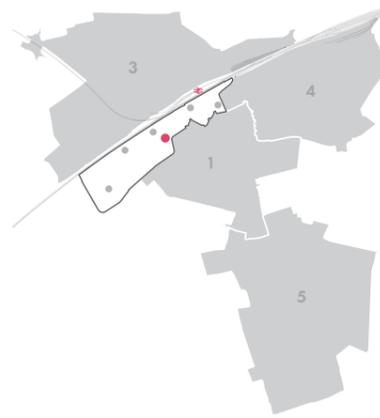
Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Listed GWR turntable



View 2: large surface car park



The site is currently used as a large surface car park and serves the Swindon Designer Outlet on the opposite side of the road. Key priorities for this area are:

**New terraced homes and consolidated car parking:** There is potential to consolidate the existing surface parking into a pair of multistorey car parks with the remainder of the site redeveloped with terraces of family town houses. The new buildings should also be constructed in an aesthetic and architectural quality which is sympathetic to the setting of the listed buildings. The scale and use of these buildings provide an intermediate function between the residential district to the west and the large sheds to the east.

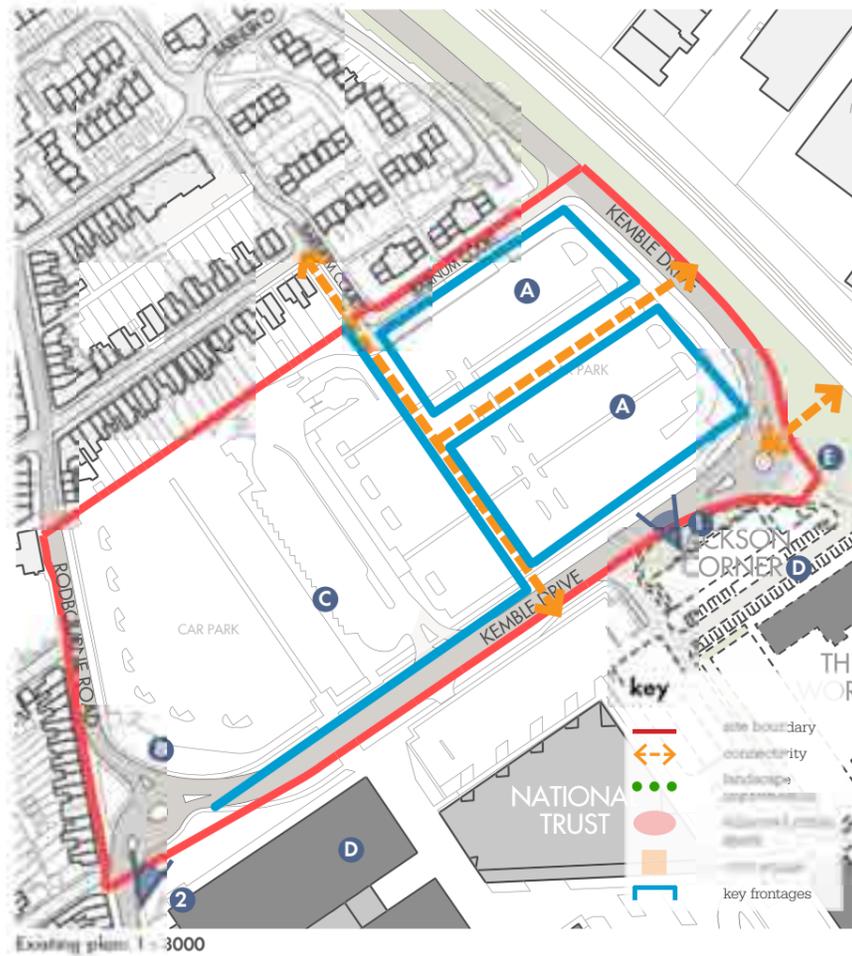
### Restore and enhance the setting of the listed GWR turntable:

The old GWR turntable would be restored and incorporated into a new amenity space to the southern end. There is an opportunity to activate this public space by providing new commercial accommodation to the west of the turntable.

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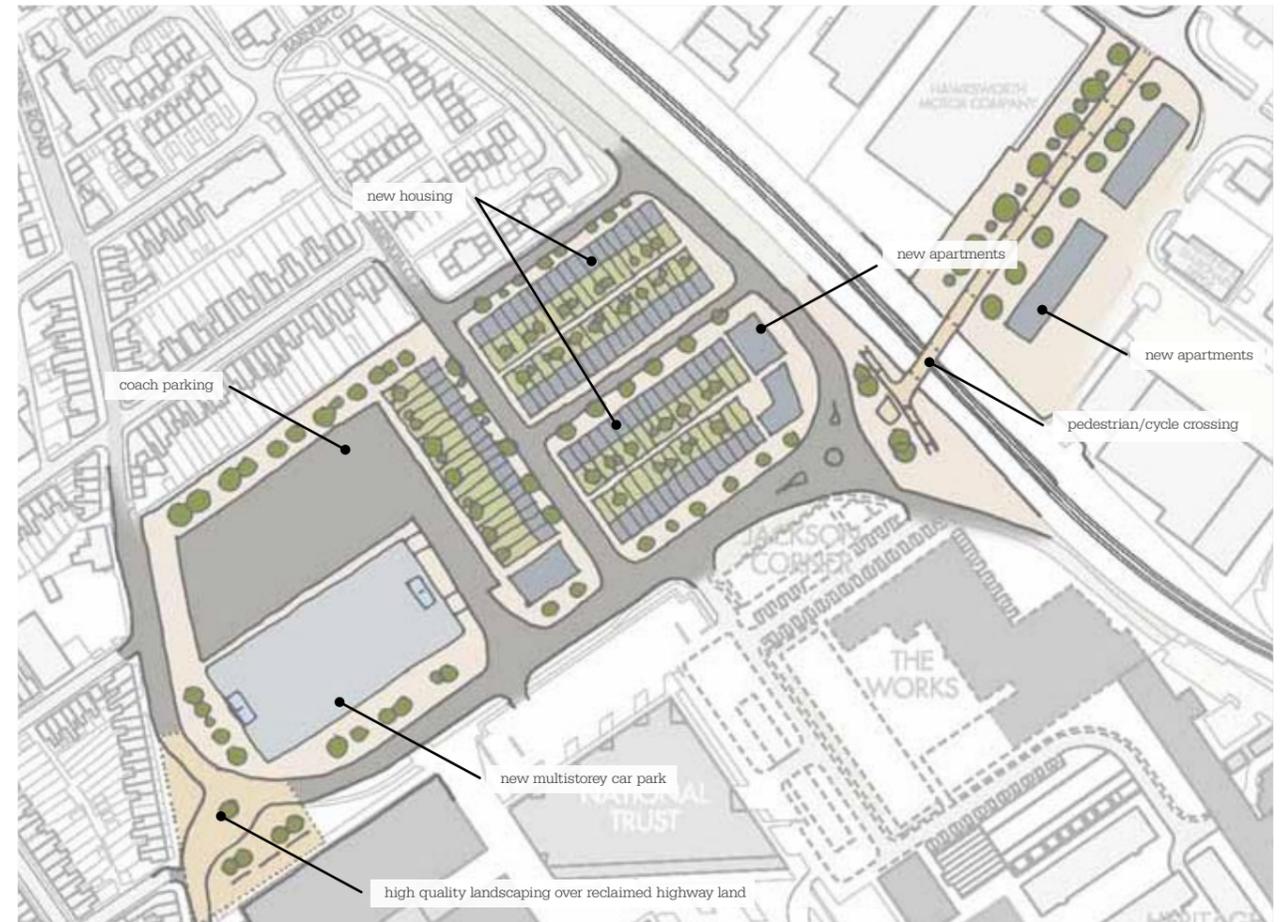
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## 6.5 STUDY AREA 3 - NORTH STAR KEMBLE DRIVE



### Site principles

- Consider reintroduction of streets and houses.
- Consider whether land can be reclaimed from highways.
- Redevelop and consolidate existing surface car parking.
- Consider setting of listed structures.
- Introduce east/west crossing over/under Cheltenham and Gloucester railway.



Illustrative plan: 1 : 3000



View 1: Kemble Drive looking north



View 2: Rodbourne Road junction



Like Rodbourne Road this site is currently used as a large surface car park and serves Swindon Designer Outlet on the opposite side of the road. Development opportunities are summarised below:

**New terraced homes and consolidated car parking:** There is the potential to consolidate the parking into a multistorey car park, with a dedicated coach drop off and parking area. The new buildings should also be constructed in an aesthetic and architectural quality which is sympathetic to the setting of the listed buildings. The street pattern should be extended to produce a series of perimeter blocks of terraces of family town houses.

The scale and use of these buildings provide an intermediate function between the residential district to the north and west and the large sheds to the south.

**Improved connections:** The highway should be modified at the junction with Rodbourne Road to create a more modest public space containing hard and soft landscape.

A new east/west connection over or under the Cheltenham and Gloucester railway is also suggested and the western end of Kemble Drive linking through to Hawksworth Road.

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## 6.5 STUDY AREA 3 - NORTH STAR FERNDALE ROAD SOUTH



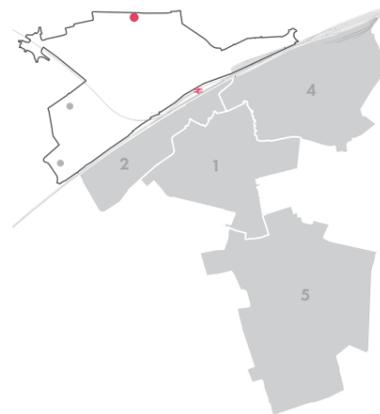
View 1: View east onto Osborne Street



View 2: Backs of houses facing Ferndale Park

### Site principles

- Improve quality of recreation area with high quality landscaping.
- Create a clearly defined east-west route for pedestrians and cyclists between North Star Avenue with Harcourt Road.
- Consider use for residual land along Osborne Street.
- Deliver a continuous Green Spine.



The current use of Ferndale Road South Recreation Area as an open, public green space is a valuable amenity for the residential district to the north. Key priorities and principles for the area are:

**Improved connections:** Additional pedestrian and cycle crossings are indicated to better link across the Great Western Way. The revitalisation of the amenity space would also be aligned to the current Great Western Way corridor improvements.

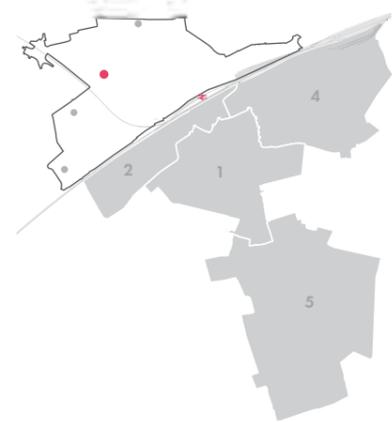
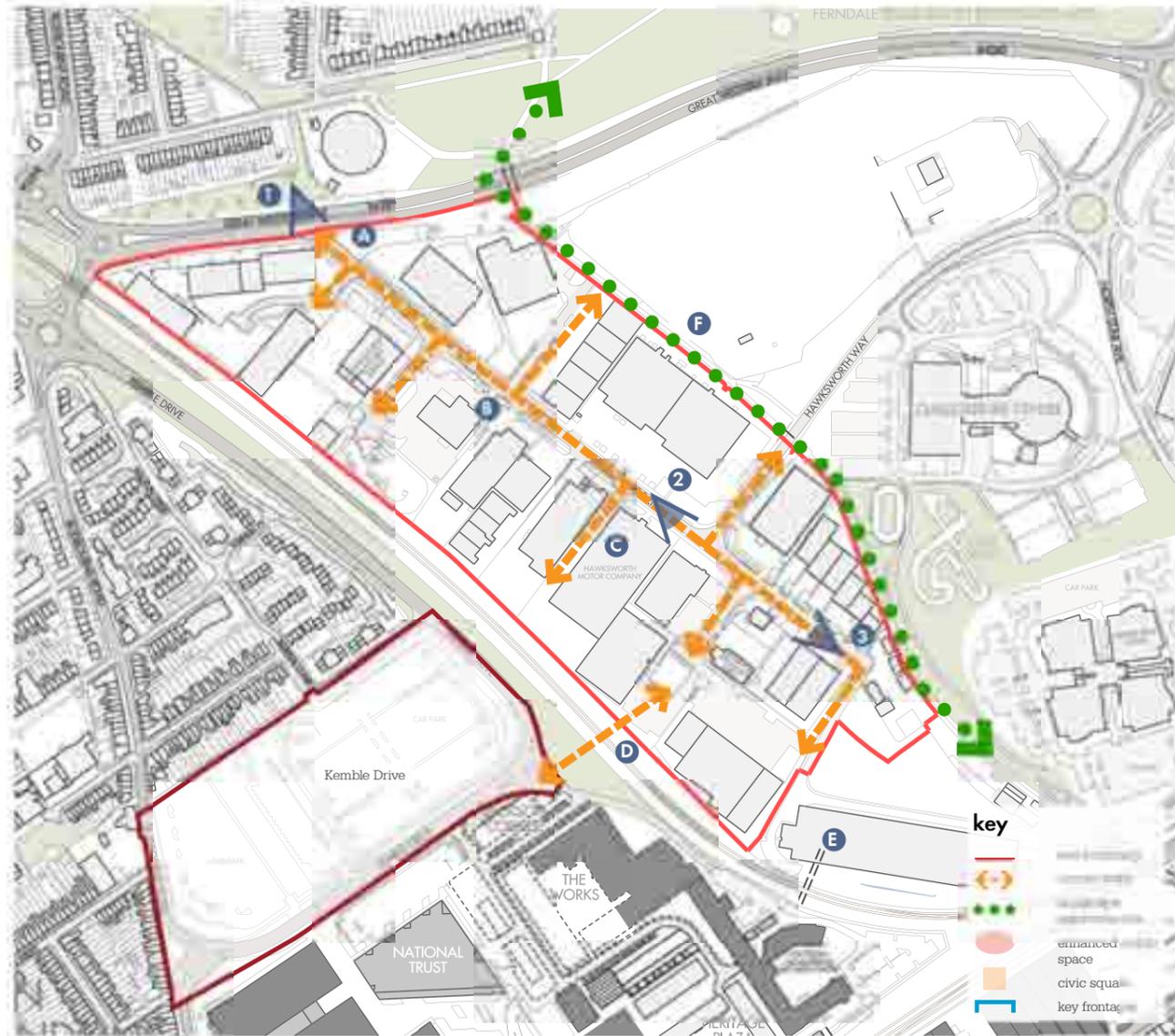
A strong, well-lit cycle/pedestrian route should be extended through the park from east to west between North Star Avenue and Harcourt Road.

The southern portion of green space to the east of North Star Avenue and south of Osborne Street could be considered for commercial development with frontage facing Great Western Way.

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## 6.5 STUDY AREA 3 - NORTH STAR HAWKSWORTH INDUSTRIAL ESTATE



### Site principles

- A. Provide principal access from Great Western Way.
- B. Retain the existing road distribution where possible.
- C. Amass for redevelopment in phases which can be market driven.
- D. Consider new east/west crossing over/under Cheltenham and Gloucester railway linking to Kemble Drive (refer to Kemble Drive site description).
- E. Retain railhead distribution point.
- F. Deliver a continuous Green Spine along the old canal route.

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View 1: Existing junction with Great Western Way



View 2: Looking south along Newcombe Drive



View 3: View north along Newcombe Drive

The Hawksworth Industrial Estate is currently home to a variety of industrial and light industrial businesses predominantly in low rise and low density buildings. These uses are better suited to more peripheral locations, and if it was possible within the long term to relocate these businesses within Swindon, there is potential to create a new residential neighbourhood, which would add density and human scale to the North Star area, provide much-needed family housing, helping to link this area with the town centre across the railway tracks.

This could remain a longer term aspiration and be subject to market forces. Once the other parts of North Star are developed out there will be a likely increase in the value of this estate land which can then more easily sustain the redevelopment costs of introducing residential and other uses onto it.

In the short term there is potential to improve the links across the railway to the south and west and to create a new linear park along the boundary of the estate with the North Star area.

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## 6.5 STUDY AREA 3 - NORTH STAR HAWKSWORTH INDUSTRIAL ESTATE



Illustrative plan: 1 : 2000

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Swindon Employment Land Review, 2007, indicates that Swindon requires between 170 and 200ha of industrial and office space in the period to 2026, at an average of 10ha annually. Most of this space, 160ha, is required for industrial uses. Much of this employment land is already developed or permitted, therefore there is a residual requirement for 52.5 ha of land which is allocated at the new mixed-use communities around the edge of the borough.

A number of Swindon's existing industrial parks are identified in Swindon's Submission Version Core Strategy (2011) as having the potential for improvement and intensification.

The relocation of businesses from the Hawksworth Industrial Estate may therefore form part of the strategy of upgrading poor quality industrial parks on the edge of Swindon in the longer term. If this is possible there is the potential to create a new residential quarter close to the town centre and the redeveloped North Star area. This will help to rebalance the town centre and remove unneighbourly uses to the periphery of the town centre closer to transport links.

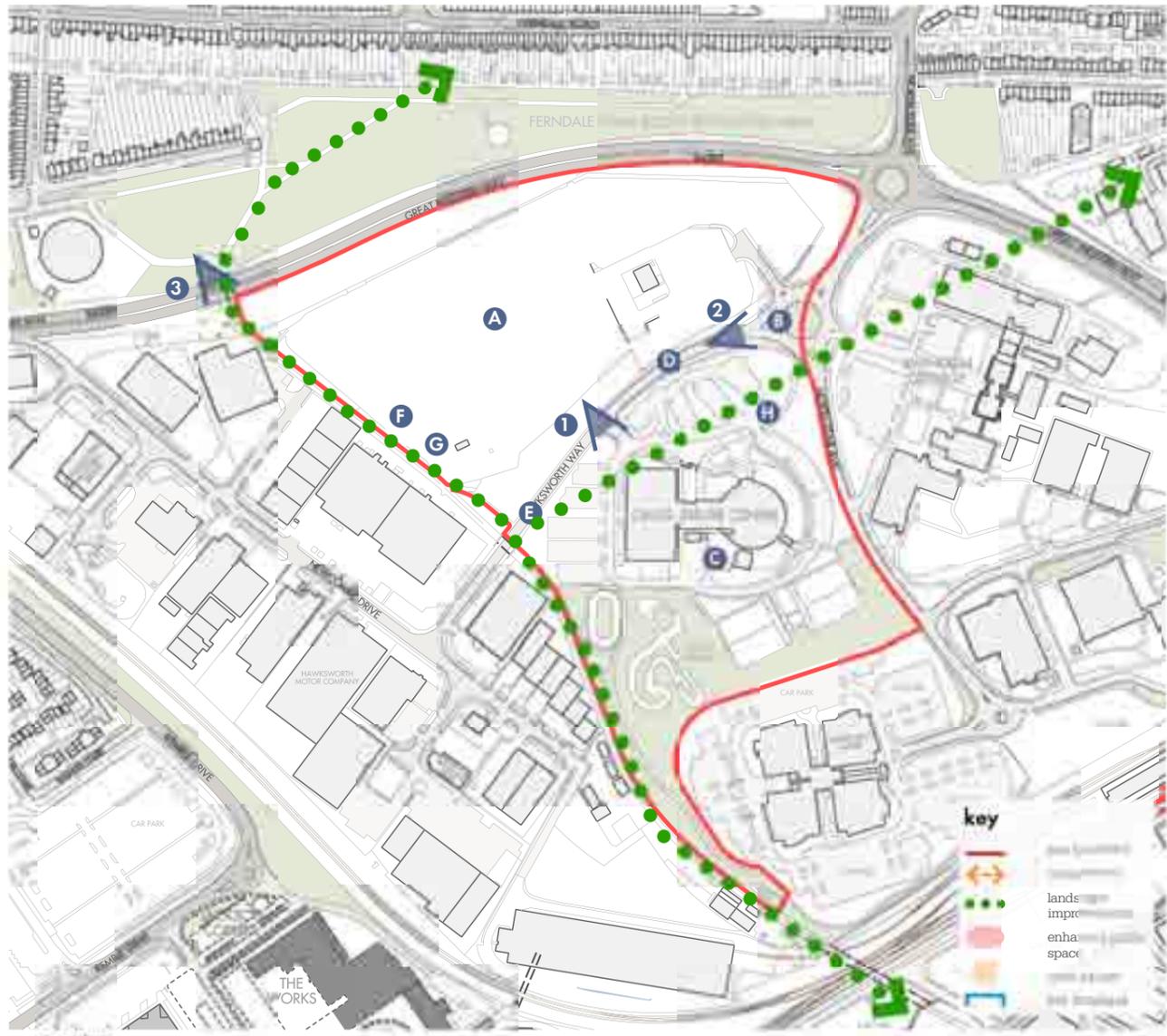
In the short term there is potential to improve pedestrian and cycle connections to the south, west and east and to create a new linear park along the boundary with the Oasis site.



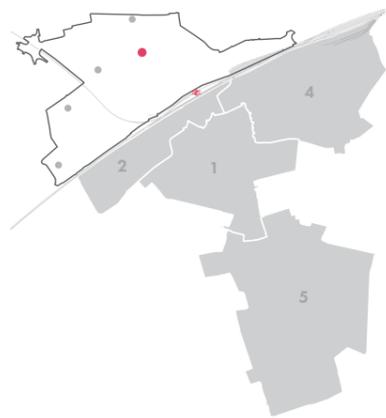
Potential for a new residential quarter

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## 6.5 STUDY AREA 3 - NORTH STAR OASIS



Existing plan. 1 : 5000



- A. Commission a detailed masterplan for the large, under-used area of land north of the Oasis.
- B. Maintain access from Great Western Way.
- C. Refurbish the Oasis Leisure Centre.
- D. Reallocate Hawksworth Way as a dedicated distributor to provide access to leisure facilities.
- E. Consider re-routing access to Hawksworth Industrial Estate from Great Western Way.
- F. Safeguard Section of old canal route for future consideration.
- G. Create a wide, green swathe of park along the canal route, connecting the town centre with Ferndale Road South Recreation Area as part of the Green Spine.
- H. Establish a connection between the Green Spine and St. Mark's Recreation Ground.

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View 1: Oasis Leisure entrance



View 2: Hawksworth Way roundabout



View 3: Existing bridge over former canal route

This site is one of the largest land parcels in any of the study areas, and one which, through its redevelopment, will have a major and lasting effect on the future of Swindon.

Plans for this site should be carefully considered and tested before conclusions are reached. A preferred operator has been selected to deliver a rejuvenated Oasis Leisure Centre as part of a first phase of work.

This masterplan indicates a schematic layout for the provision of the new leisure facilities, identifying a preferred approach to layout, key links and spaces which should be incorporated into the design of the future proposals for the site.

A detailed masterplan should be commissioned for this site to test proposals and ensure their designs are in line with the strategic aims of the strategic, illustrative masterplan.

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## 6.5 STUDY AREA 3 - NORTH STAR OASIS



Illustrative plan: 1 : 3000

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**A new leisure destination:** The illustrative masterplan sets out a potential layout for the site, indicating suitable locations for an indoor ski slope and events arena, refurbished Oasis leisure centre, along with car and coach parking and limited ancillary retail to support the leisure offer.

At the southern end we have indicated a number of all weather pitches and sports courts which provide some communal amenity space between this and the new road and development to the south.

**A new strategic Green Spine:** There is an exciting opportunity to create a major new linear park through the site. The park will act as a spine for the North Star area, complement the new leisure uses, provide a buffer to the Hawksworth Industrial Estate, create a new leisure attraction for residents and increase environmental sustainability. The proposal is for the canal to be reinstated along the length of the park.

**New connections to the town centre:** It is very important that new pedestrian connections are made between the North Star area and the town centre and core, in order to ensure that the town centre is able to benefit from the footfall which will be generated by the leisure uses. New bridge links across the railway are proposed to facilitate this.

The principle vehicular access would be from an existing junction on the Great Western Way. Pedestrian and cycle access is from North Star Avenue to the north, under the railway to the south, and from the linear park from the west. The reinstatement of the canal along its original route would significantly improve connections to the town centre, creating a pleasant route for pedestrians and cyclists. The Western Flyer cycle route will be implemented alongside the original canal route.

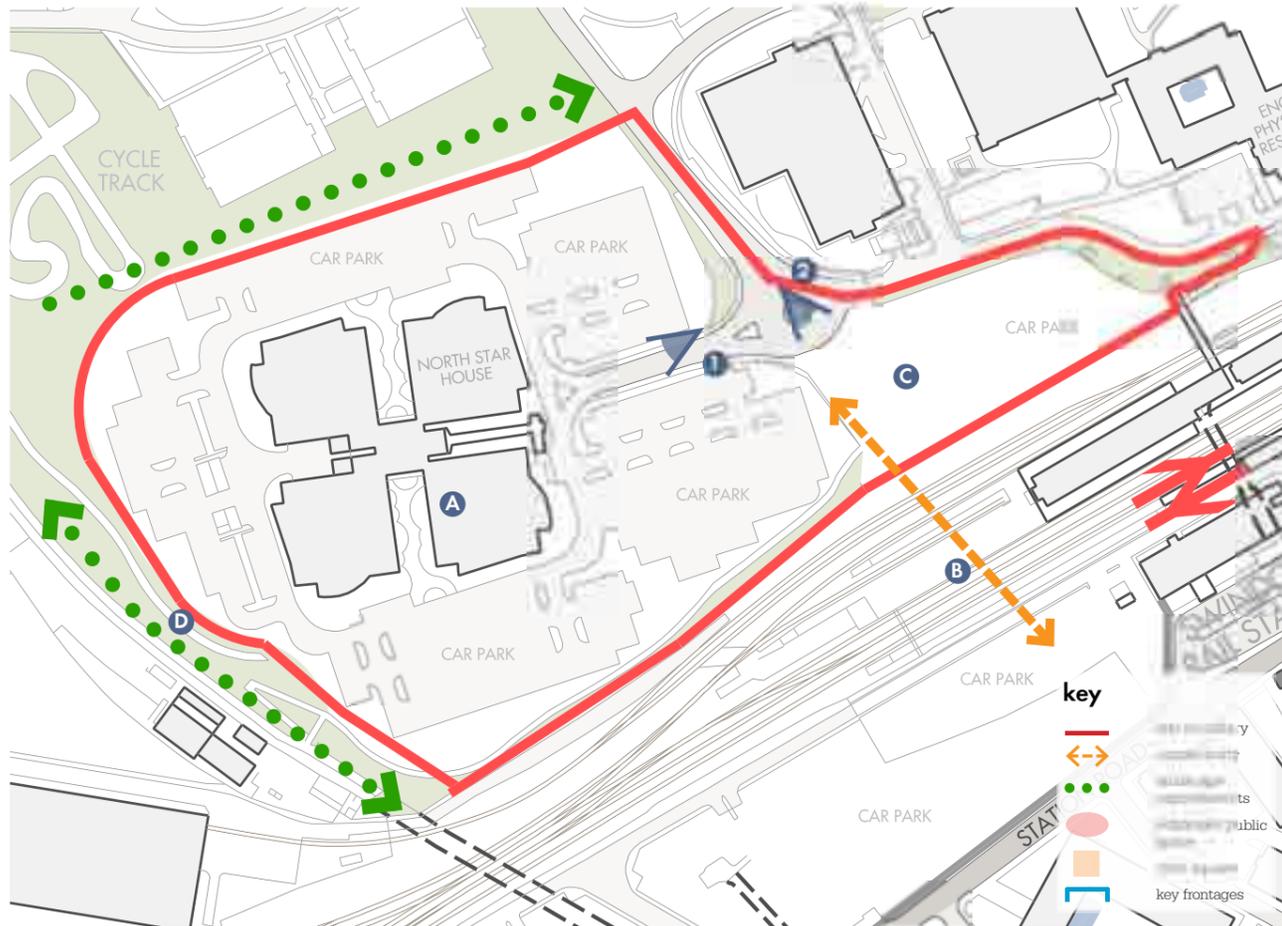
**A new hopper bus service:** The provision of a new privately funded hopper bus route to link the North Star area with the retail centre and Old Town will improve accessibility and spread the economic benefits of the new leisure attractions throughout Swindon.

**A green exemplar:** The development of the Oasis area offers the opportunity to achieve a sustainable exemplar for Swindon town centre. In particular, there is potential for the area to accommodate a district energy system that provides energy for the leisure occupiers, and links to existing businesses and residential areas in the longer term.

New businesses should also be designed to be highly energy efficient and the public realm should incorporate tree planting, soft landscaping and sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) to improve environmental resilience to future climate change. The canal and new linear park can contribute towards this through providing surface water run-off, flooding storage, and reduction. The large roofs required for the leisure buildings provide an opportunity for green roofs, which will also help to make the area attractive, encourage biodiversity and reduce surface water run-off.

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## 6.5 STUDY AREA 3 - NORTH STAR NORTH STAR HOUSE



Existing plan: 1 : 2500



Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Entrance to North Star House



View 2: Surface car park

### Site principles

- A. Consider higher density commercial development.
- B. Provide a new pedestrian/cycle bridge to station.
- C. Consider multistorey car park.
- D. Deliver the Green Spine along the old canal route and create a connection to St. Marks Recreation Ground.



This site currently consists of a commercial office building surrounded by surface car parking. The site occupies a strategic location immediately north of the railway line, which will benefit from new connections across the railway and additional footfall resulting from the development of new leisure uses on the adjacent, Oasis site. The new leisure offer will change the market context for this site, and therefore influence future development.

**New business space:** There is longer term potential to redevelop the existing site to provide additional commercial space, potentially three or four times more than currently exists on the site. The new buildings should be

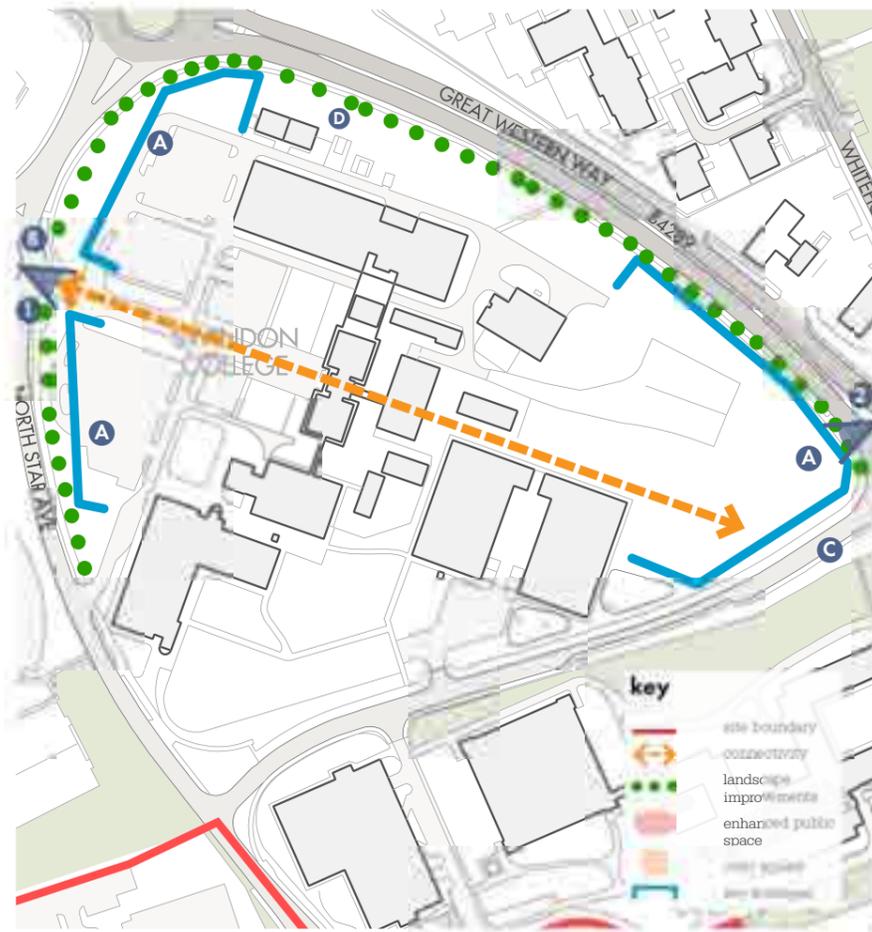
structured around an attractive public space. Redevelopment should also create a more permeable area, which pedestrians and cyclists can use to access areas to the north.

**New station parking:** There is potential to locate a new multistorey car park to serve the station and the north side of the railway line. This would complement the car park on the south side, and the two car parks would be linked together by a new bridge. The cores of each of the car parks could be used to accommodate lifts and be managed by the operators.

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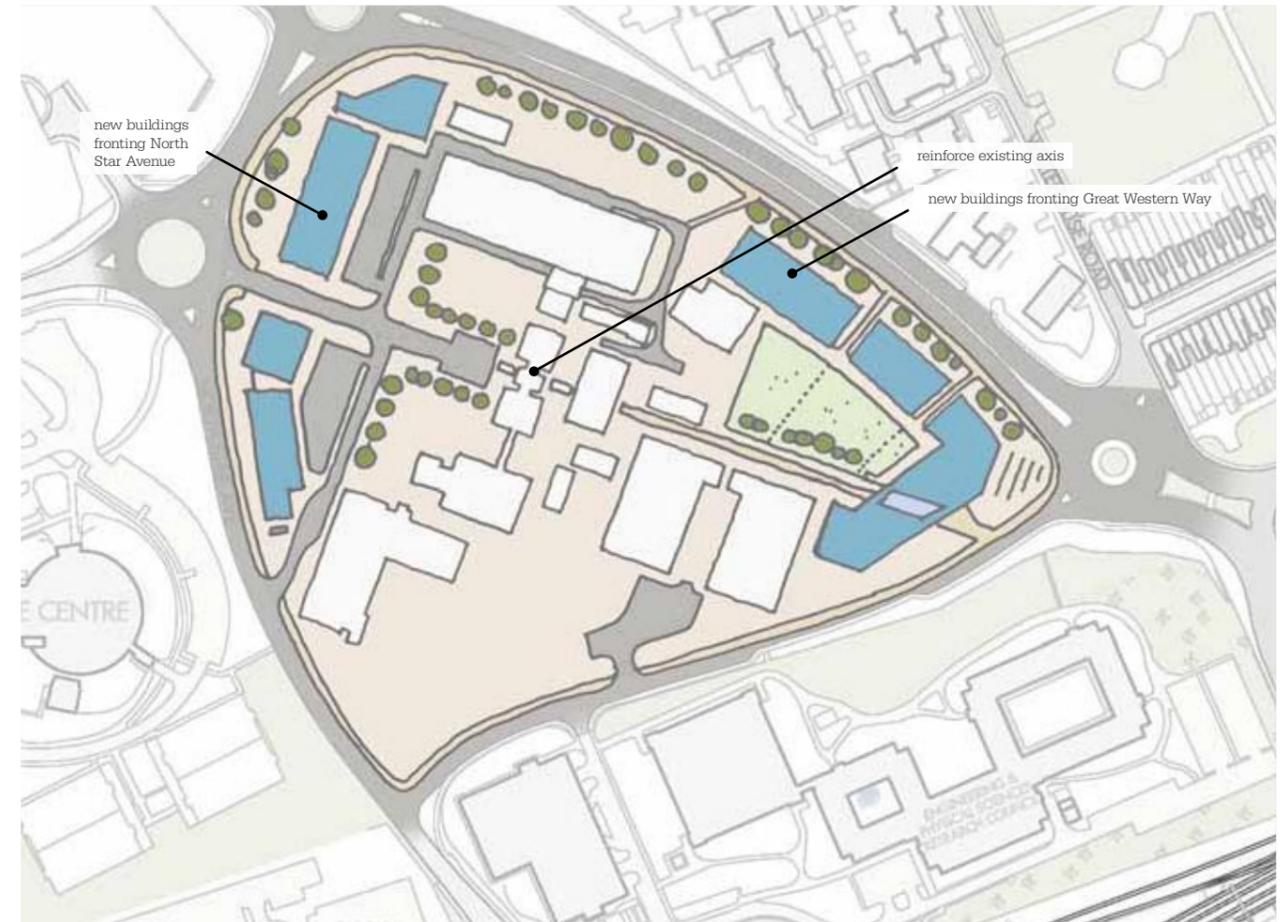
## 6.5 STUDY AREA 3 - NORTH STAR SWINDON COLLEGE



Existing plan: 1 : 3000

### Site principles

- A. Introduce buildings facing onto Great Western Way and North Star Avenue
- B. Reinforce axis across site through the existing buildings
- C. Introduce Entrance Building
- D. Introduce landscape to border highway land



Illustrative plan: 1 : 3000



View 1: entrance from North Star Avenue



View 2: view of campus from roundabout



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Swindon College occupies a significant site bounded by an arterial road network and occupied by a number of different kinds of buildings. These include light industrial workshops, farm sheds and more conventional collegiate buildings, all reflecting the diverse range of courses offered by the College. The buildings are surrounded by open landscape and surface car parks. The college has aspirations to increase its offer and in particular, to develop its higher education offer, to consolidate its stock and redevelop parts of the site. Key priorities include:

**Consolidation of buildings:** A masterplan for the College should be undertaken to review and consolidate the stock and enable new components

to be added in a coherent phased way that accords with the desired growth. New interventions can then be planned to strengthen the existing axes to produce a legible campus.

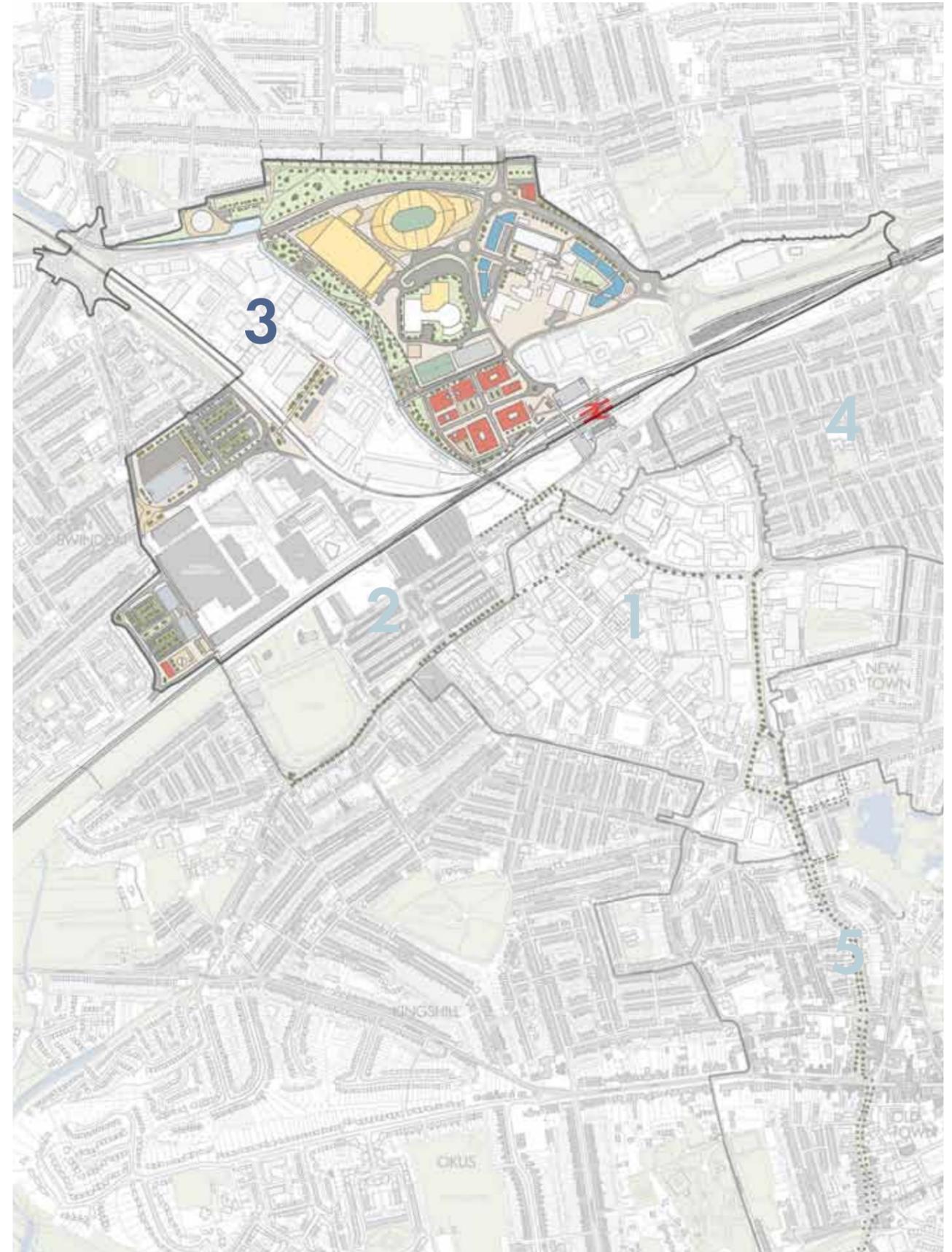
**Greening the perimeter:** A proposal for the tree planting and landscape enhancement of the land adjacent to the surrounding roads would soften the edge, act as a green filter between the traffic and the College activities, and enhance the campus environment of the college.

**Establish a strong perimeter:** We have proposed that, as a principle, new buildings should be designed to create a formal building line facing the surrounding roads. The nature of the new buildings will be determined

according to the requirements of the college, but might included student accommodation, a new higher education building, and start-up business space.

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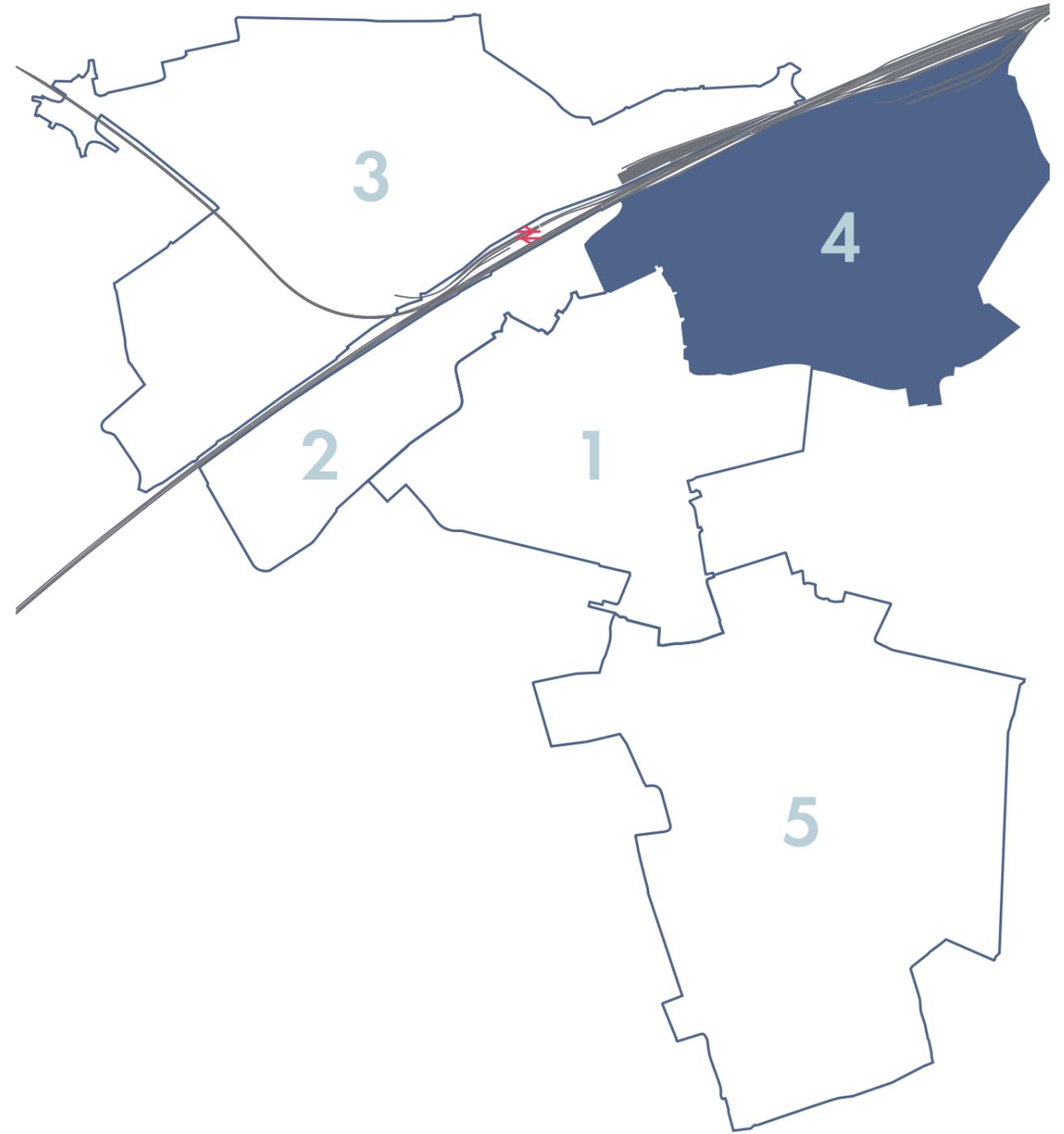
6.5 STUDY AREA 3 - NORTH STAR  
SPATIAL MASTERPLAN



Study area 1 illustrative plan: NOT TO SCALE

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# COUNTY GROUND

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## 6.6 STUDY AREA 4 - COUNTY GROUND



Magic Roundabout



Swindon Football Club



Swindon Cricket Club



Disused railway sidings along Ocotol Way

The County Ground, Swindon Town Football Club, bowls green and the running track form a significant part of this study area. These are popular recreational and public spaces which should be retained but refreshed with additional landscape features and sports facilities so that they become more popular, particularly to the adjacent residential areas.

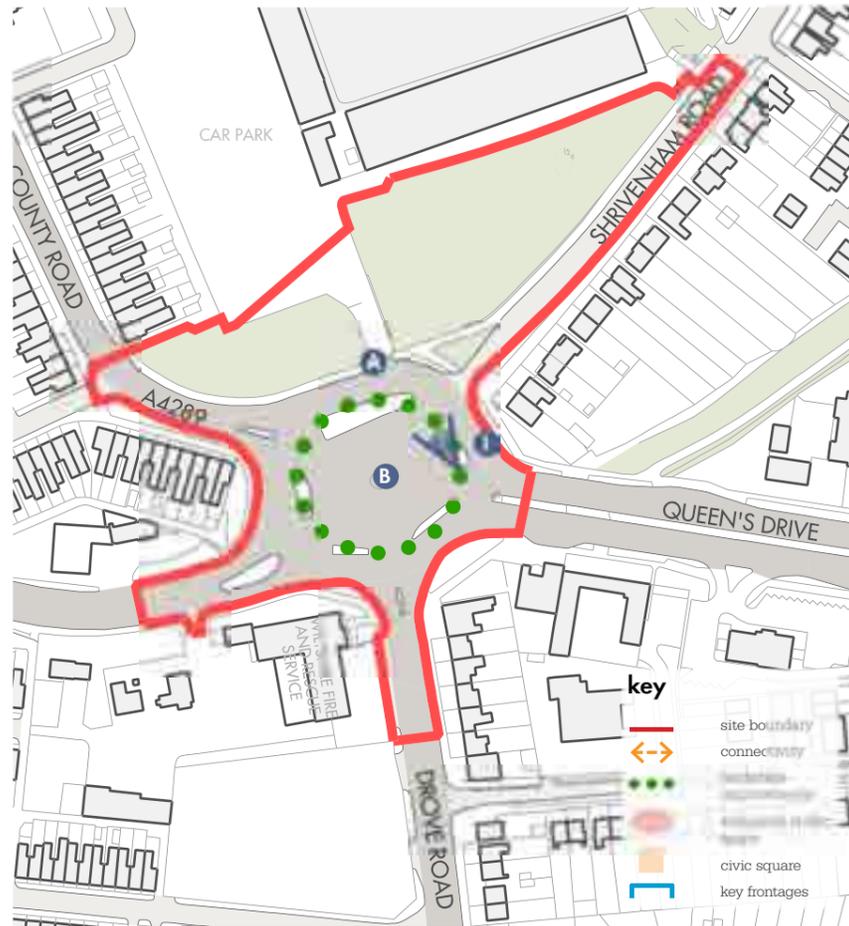
At the abutment with the railway there are large plots of land which are in residual retail use or abandoned shunting heads and sidings where the original Rushey Platt station on the M&SWJ railway set off to connect to Swindon Town. This is now used for car parking.

The Magic Roundabout dominates the vehicular gateway to the town centre and there are opportunities to improve this the environment at this junction.

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## 6.6 STUDY AREA 4 THE MAGIC ROUNDABOUT



Existing plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: view north toward County Ground

### Site principles

- Consider whether land can be gained from the highway on the north side of the junction.
- Improve the landscaping at the junction by simplifying signage and street furniture wherever possible and introducing soft planting with native species.



Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500

This road junction is one of the most well known features in Swindon. It is held in some affection by local people and it is considered to work well in traffic terms.

It may, however, be possible to reclaim some land for development to the north of the junction and to improve the environment with new landscaping.

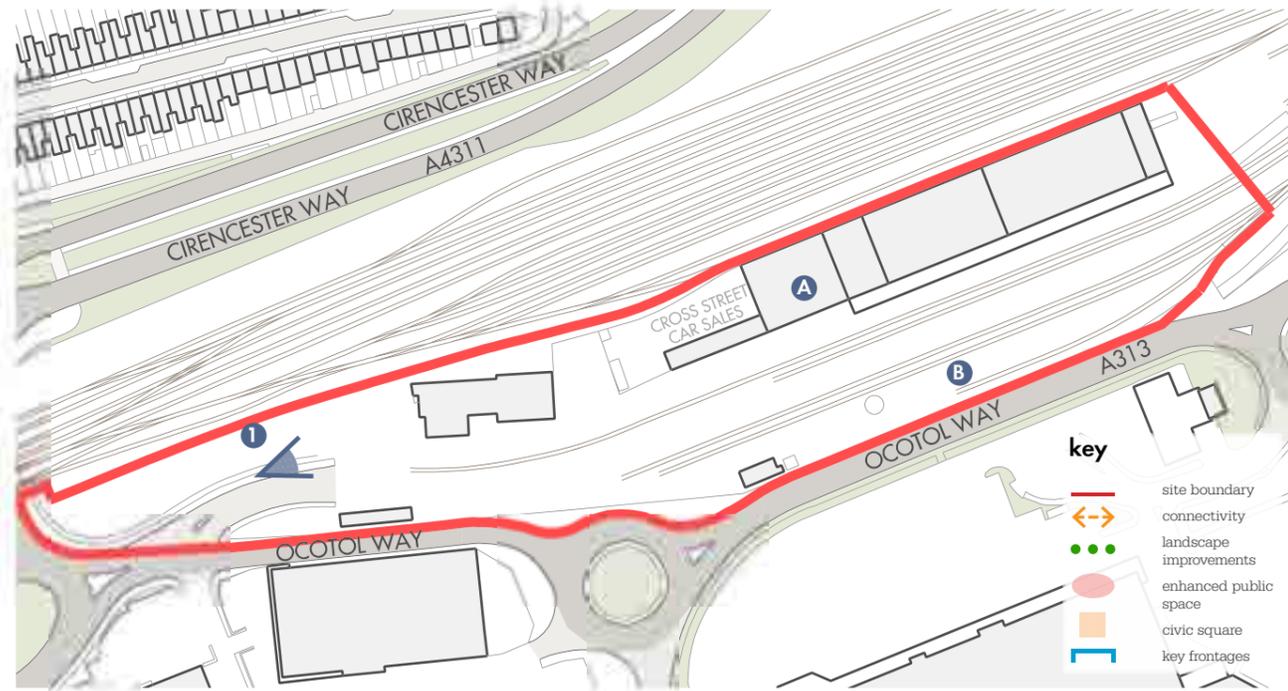
There is also an opportunity to construct a new conference centre to the north of the magic roundabout.



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## 6.6 STUDY AREA 4 OCOTOL WAY



Existing plan: 1 : 2500



Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: entrance to site from Ocotol Way

### Site principles

- A. Redevelop existing sheds to increase light industrial business accommodation on the site.
- B. Remove unused railway tracks to allow space for additional light industrial business accommodation along Ocotol Way.



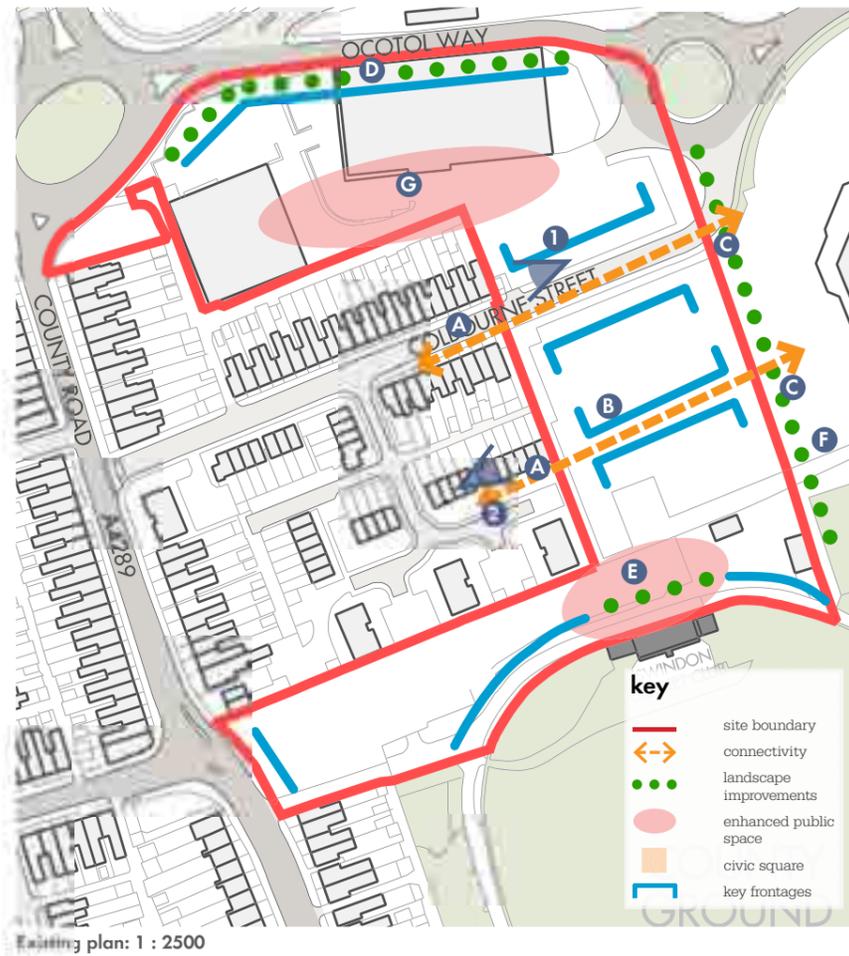
This site is currently occupied by an automobile repair garage with large areas of surface car parking nestled within the interstitial spaces of the disused railway tracks that traverse the site. Access to the site is via a small roundabout junction between Ocotol Way and the north-south access road that serves Buyology and Charlie Browns Autocentres to the south.

There is an opportunity here to increase employment accommodation within the town centre by providing a series of more efficient sheds for light industrial business use.

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## 6.6 STUDY AREA 4 COLBOURNE STREET



### Site principles

- Complete the residential terraces along Colbourne Street and Amber Court.
- Consolidate surface car parking to make room for development.
- Improve permeability of the site by continuing existing routes through to a new road along the eastern boundary of the site.
- Create a landscape buffer between Ocotol way and the new residential apartments.
- Create a high-quality landscape to the north of the existing cricket pavilion.
- Create a landscape buffer between the new residential area and the existing retail shed to the east.
- Provide sufficient amenity space for the apartments facing Ocotol Way.



View 1: End of terrace housing on Colbourne St



View 2: Dead-end of Amber Court



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The site includes the land adjacent to Ocotol Way currently occupied by two retail sheds surrounded by surface car parking.

The masterplan proposes a readjustment to the western edge of the land parcel occupied by a large food store to release this for new residential development. Key priorities for this proposal are:

#### Complete the existing street fabric:

The existing arrangement of streets and back alleys are extended with new contemporary family town houses arranged in terraces to complete a coherent residential quarter.

#### Establish a strong frontage along Ocotol Way:

At the northern end of the site we have indicated residential apartments facing south onto a large amenity space and completing a more regular building line to Ocotol Way, which is improved by the introduction of high quality hard landscaping and a line of trees.

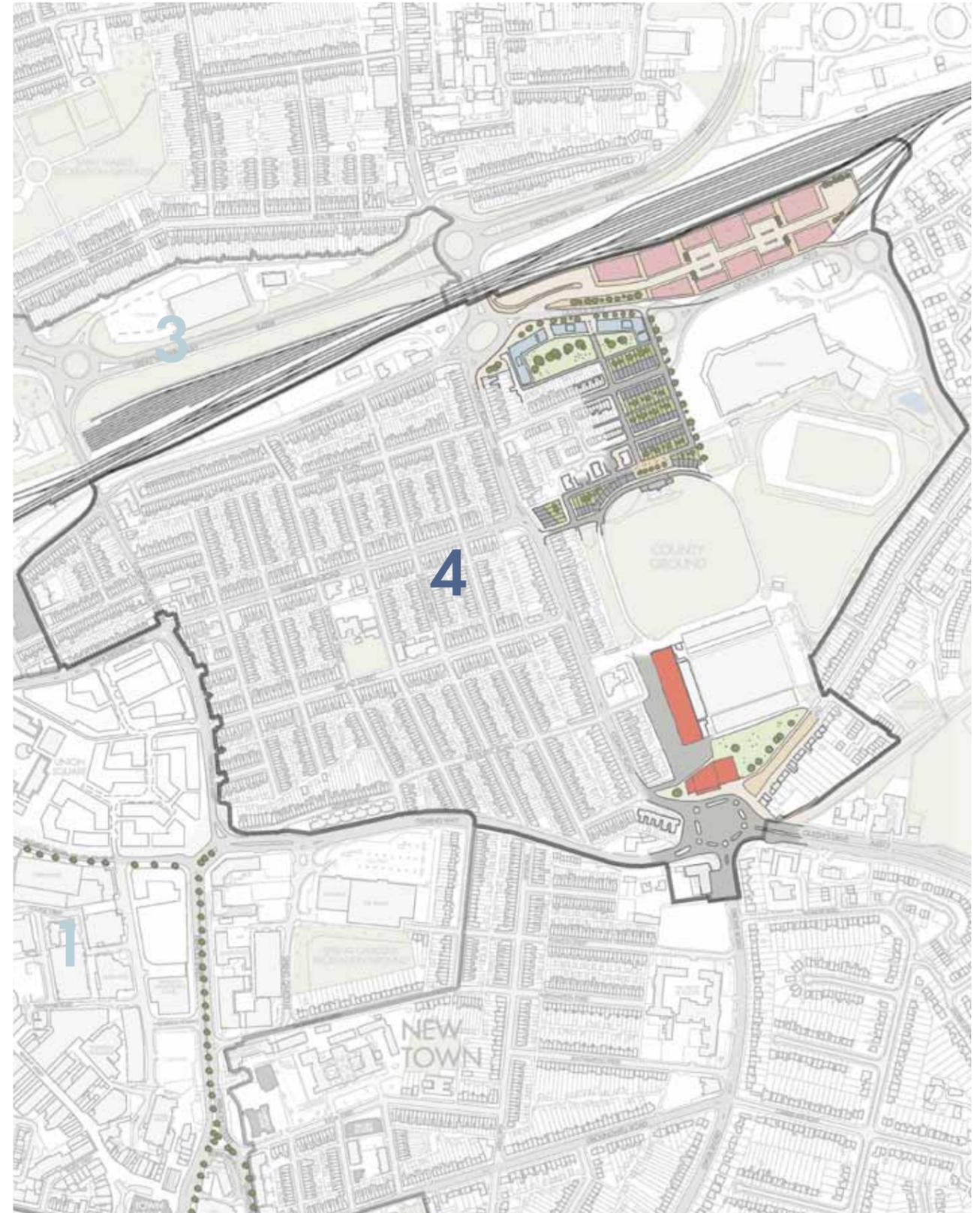
At the southern end of the site we have suggested a crescent of residential apartments and town houses facing onto the County Ground to either side of the listed cricket pavilion. These would be designed to a high quality to enhance the setting of the listed building.

**Greening the perimeter:** The residential apartments and houses will require a landscaped buffer between the busy Ocotol Way and the retail sheds to the east.

There should be a high-quality public amenity space to the north of the existing cricket pavilion.

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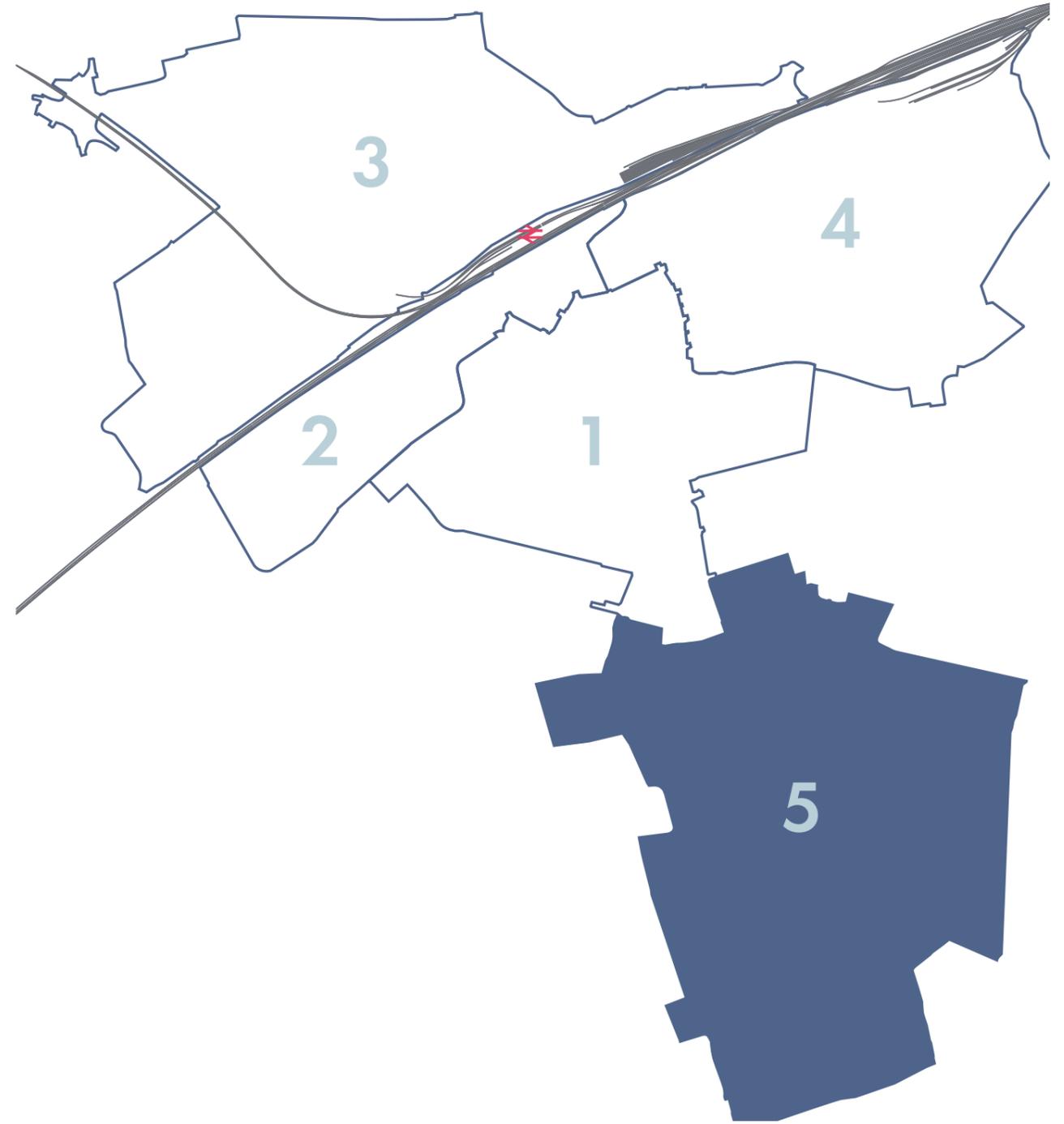
6.6 STUDY AREA 4  
SPATIAL MASTERPLAN



Study area 1 illustrative plan: NOT TO SCALE

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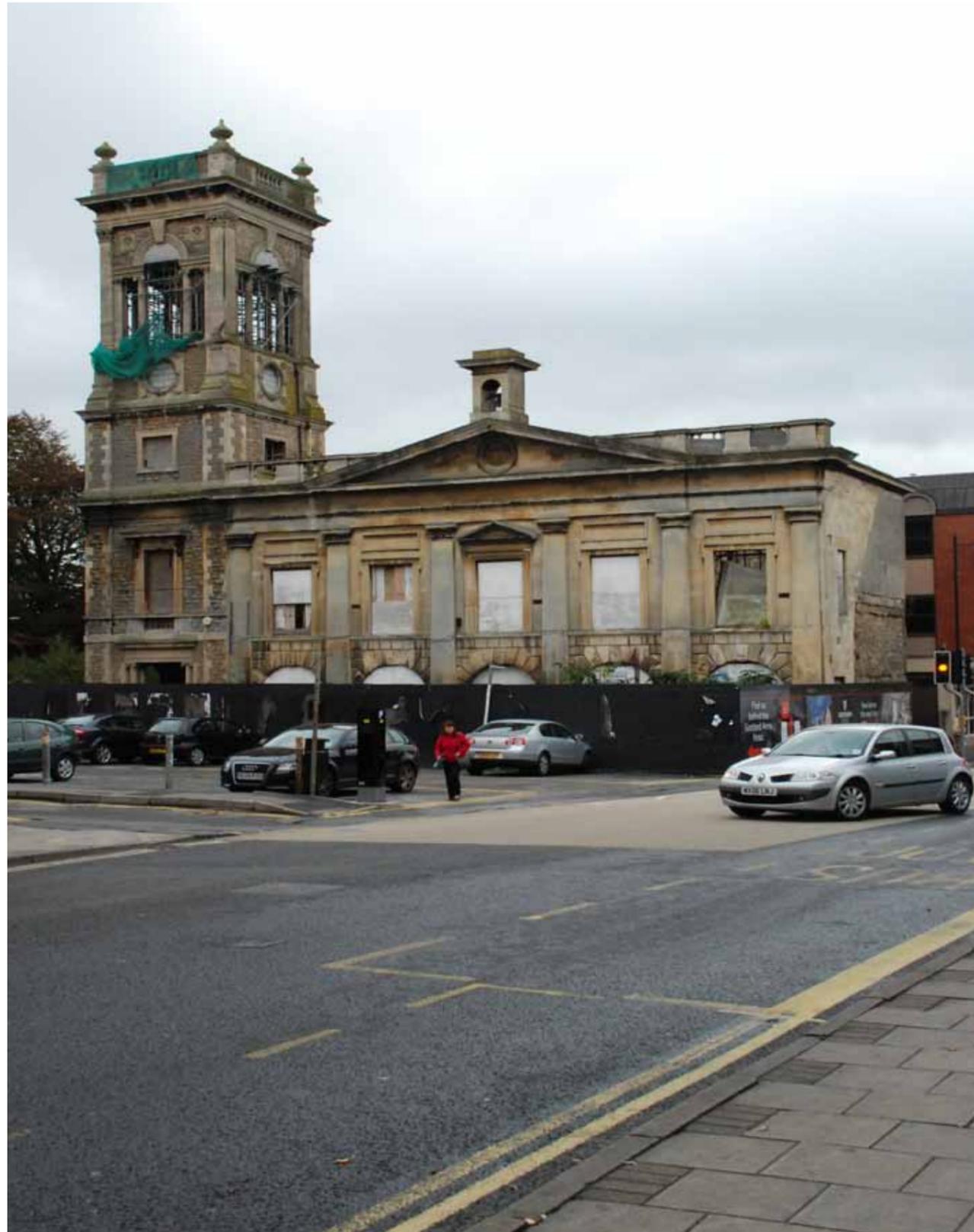


# OLD TOWN

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## 6.7 STUDY AREA 5 - OLD TOWN



The Locarno



The Co-operative Food store



Victoria Road



Bath Road

The relocation of the town centre to the area immediately south of the railway in the nineteenth century, fuelled by the sequential growth of first the canal trade and then the railway industry has introduced a permanent split in the perception of the town centre and a dislocation of the Old Town from the retail and commercial centre of Swindon. This is physically reflected both in the age and scale of the building stock, as well as from the resultant scale of shops, pubs and coaching inns, and former civic buildings, the functions of which have been relocated with the shift of population and political epicentre northwards.

With this schism has come the perceived need to reinforce the connections with the new centre principally via Victoria Road and Eastcott Road. These routes, once developed as peripheral to the town, need to be reinvented to serve this desire for a stronger physical and legible linkage between the two parts. Improvements to the public realm, including tree planting, new paving and lighting as part of the Green Spine project, will help to encourage pedestrians to use these roads. The encouragement of cycling as a healthy and sustainable travel choice will also be encouraged as the routes become more pleasant.

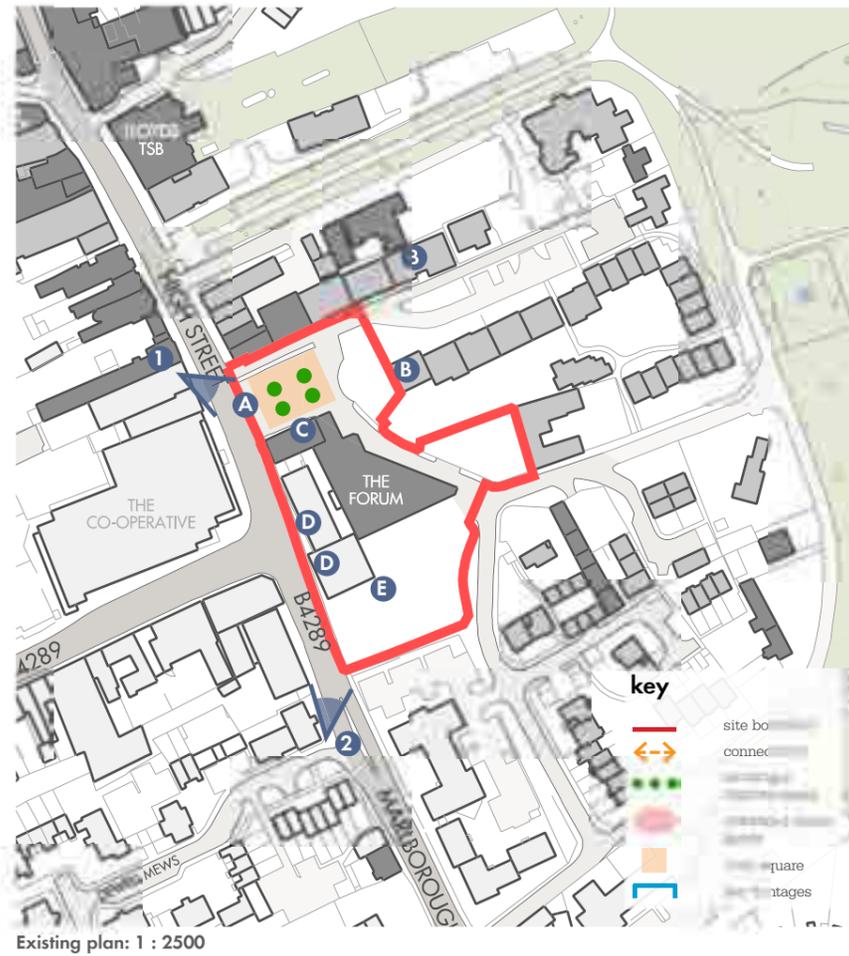
Notwithstanding the need to improve connections, the Old Town has a distinct role. The scale and rhythm of the buildings, with single building width shop fronts incorporating traditional details, bay and sash windows and flat fronted stone or facing brick facades, all contribute in detail to a received perception for occupiers and visitors alike of a complete historic grounding for the town, which is directly comparable to that of other market towns in Wiltshire. It is also a local service centre for residents and a place to spend time in the evenings. The character of the Old Town has proved a draw to family friendly restaurants including national chain Pizza Express, who have chosen to locate here rather than in the town centre. The unique character of the Old Town is an asset, and the proposals seek to enhance its character by highlighting opportunities for new development on under-used sites in the area.

The combined effect of incremental alterations through the redevelopment of identified sites will enhance the overall look and feel of Old Town. New retail and residential space will help to underpin the vitality of the area by providing comparative or additional floor space, restaurants, cafés and new homes provide natural surveillance and activity throughout the day and evening.

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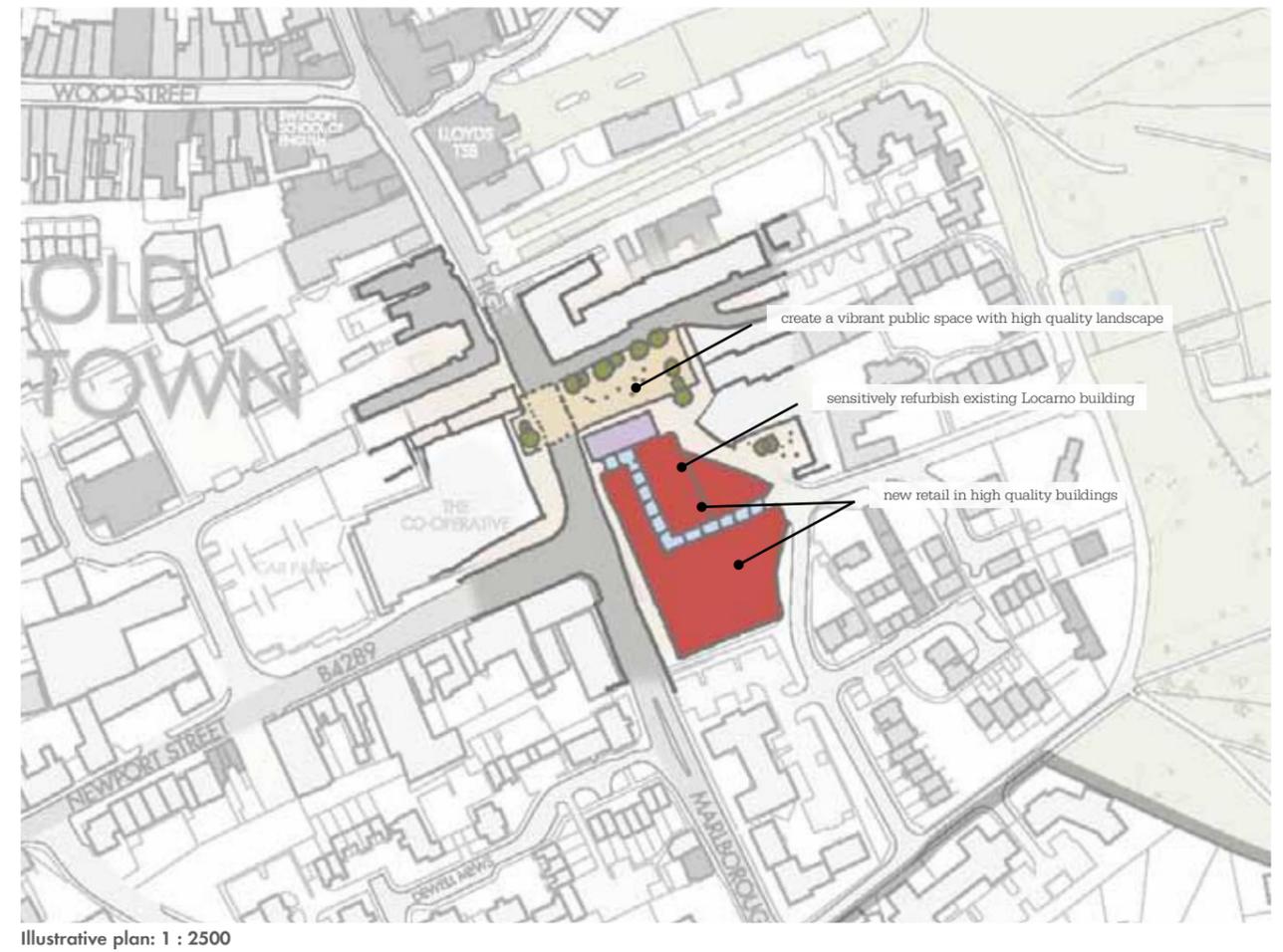
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## 6.7 STUDY AREA 5 - OLD TOWN LOCARNO



### Site principles

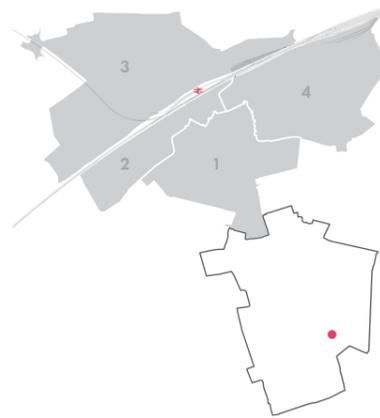
- Improve the quality of the under-used public space.
- Improve the setting of the sheltered housing.
- Protect, stabilise and reuse the listed Locarno building.
- Consider replacement of the low-quality architecture adjacent to the listed building.
- Replace surface car parking with new building.



View 1: Old Town Hall



View 2: Marlborough Road - east elevation



This site lies just to the west of the Swindon Central Area Action Plan Boundary and contains the Locarno building. The Locarno is one of Swindon's finest listed buildings but it has fallen into a state of disrepair in recent years. The most urgent action is to stabilise the existing fabric to prevent further deterioration.

Working with English Heritage, the owner, and Swindon Borough Council's Conservation Team, a strategy and implementation plan should be developed to secure the future of this site. Priorities and principles for the site are as follows:

### Securing the reuse of heritage buildings for vibrant town centre uses:

A mixed-use refurbishment of the listed buildings which restores them to their original grandeur for residential or hotel use with ground floor retail/restaurant/café uses, if it can be demonstrated this will not compromise the historic integrity of the building. Active ground floor frontage facing onto an improved public space in front of the Locarno would help to enliven the area.

### New high quality buildings:

Improvements to the setting of the listed buildings through the redevelopment of the surface car park to the south, and the existing low quality modern buildings that face onto the High

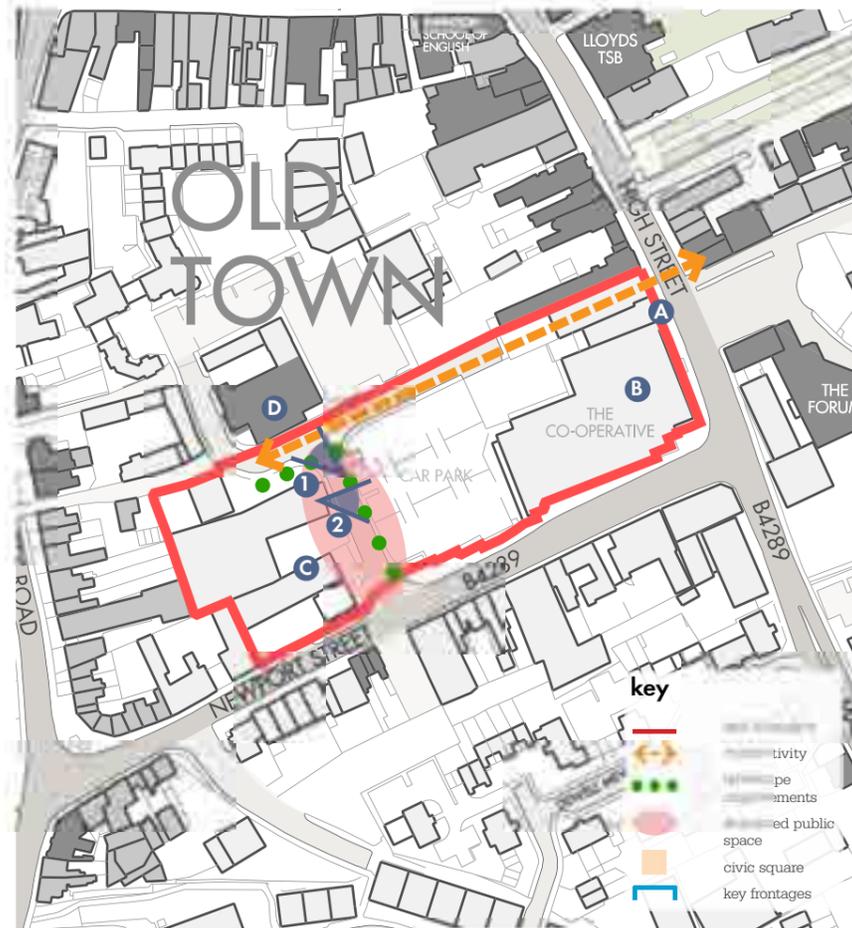
Street. Proposals should provide a strong focal point viewed from Newport Street and produce a fitting landmark for Old Town.

**Enhanced public spaces:** The new landscape proposals for the area to the north of the listed building should include a combination of tree planting, soft landscape, high quality paving and seating to enhance the setting and produce an enjoyable public space leading to the sheltered housing beyond it. The use of the same surface materials across the High Street would help to further enhance the setting of this important asset. The length of Victoria Road should also include tree planting and landscape improvements as part of the Green Spine project.

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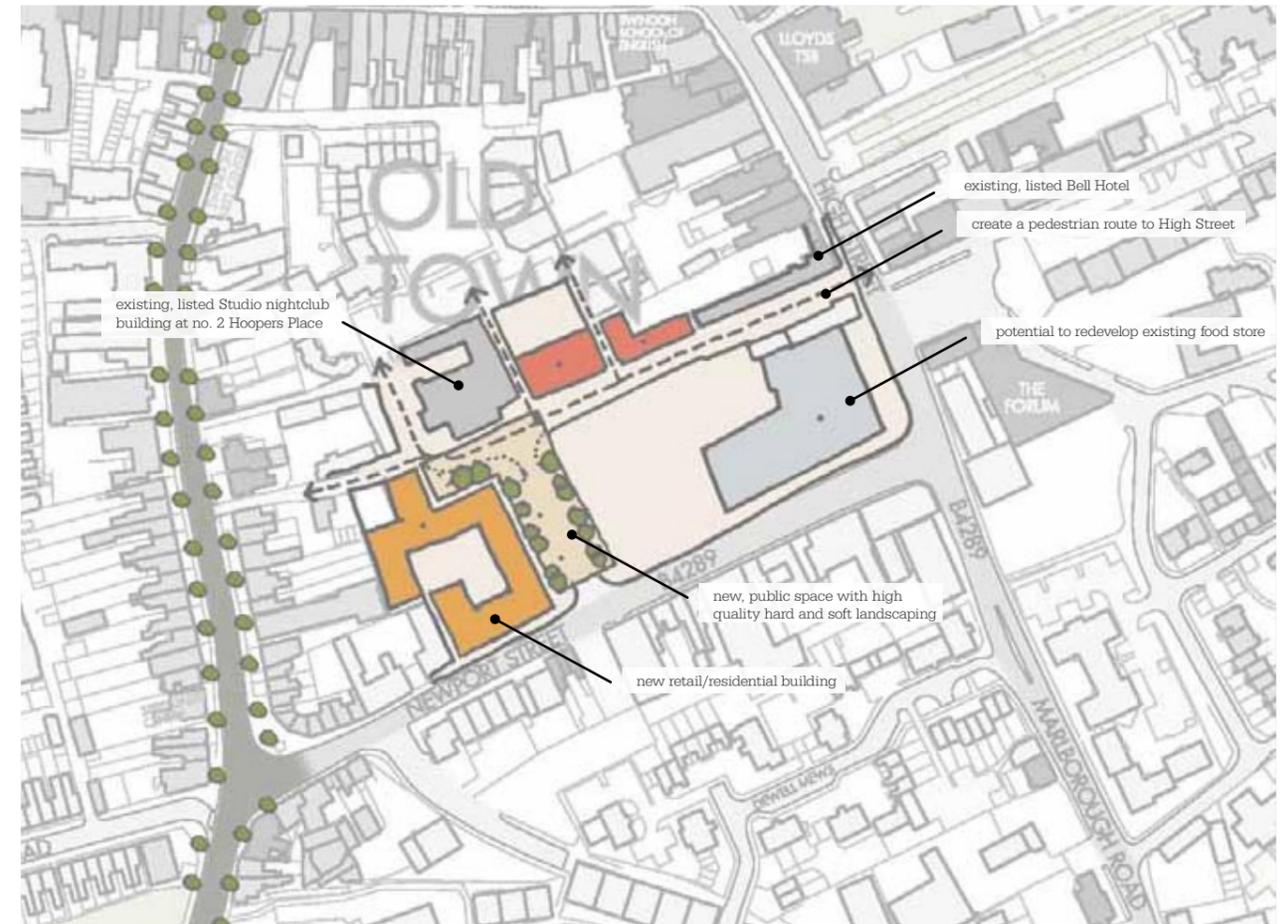
## 6.7 STUDY AREA 5 - OLD TOWN HOOPERS PLACE



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- Make a pedestrian/ cycle connection to the High Street.
- Potential to replace large, insensitive existing building of low architectural quality.
- Opportunity to redevelop existing garages.
- Improve setting of the listed Studio nightclub building at 2 Hoopers Place.



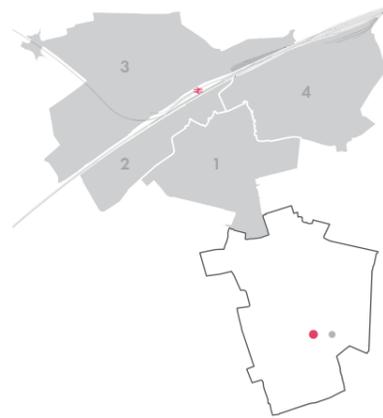
Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Listed building at 2 Hoopers Place



View 2: Surface car parking



This site contains a number of buildings of low architectural quality including a petrol filling station, garages, surface car parking and food store. The façade of the existing listed building at no. 2 Hoopers Place is buried behind these components, and the site as a whole is unremarkable, failing to contribute positively to the character of Old Town.

Priorities and principles for the site are as follows:

**Improving the setting of the Listed Building:** A new square in front of the listed Studio nightclub building and development of the petrol filling station and garages would help to significantly improve the setting of the listed Studio building. The repositioning

of some building lines would open up a stronger vista and landscape in front of the listed building.

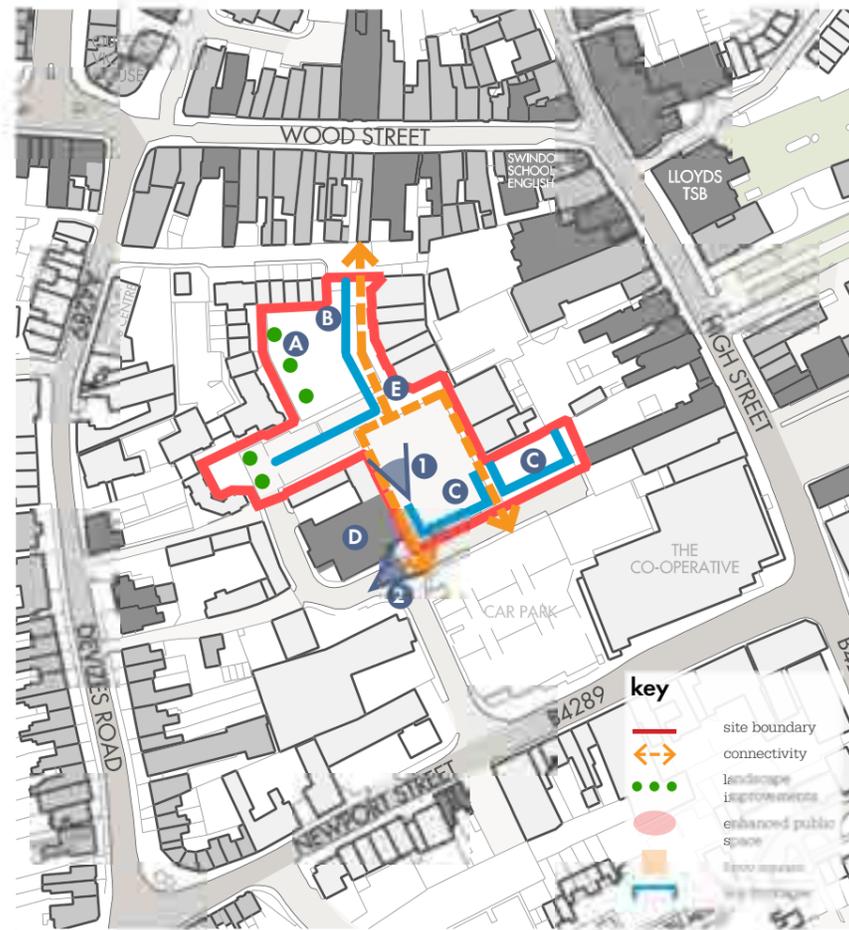
**New retail and residential uses:** New development on the site of the garages and petrol filling should be for a mix of uses, including ground floor retail with residential units above. In the longer term there is an opportunity to redevelop the food supermarket to produce a building of a much higher architectural quality with a better relationship with the High Street and Newport Street.

**Improved routes and public realm:** We have suggested that there may be an opportunity to form a direct pedestrian and cycle link from the High Street to Hoopers Place by the removal of the vacant low quality building adjacent to the listed Bell hotel.

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## 6.7 STUDY AREA 5 - OLD TOWN JOINER LANE



Existing plan 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- Improve the landscaping adjacent to the residential uses.
- Consider redevelopment of the surface car parking for residential use.
- Complete building line to Hoopers Place.
- Enhance setting of the listed building.
- Improve permeability through the site with clearly defined routes.



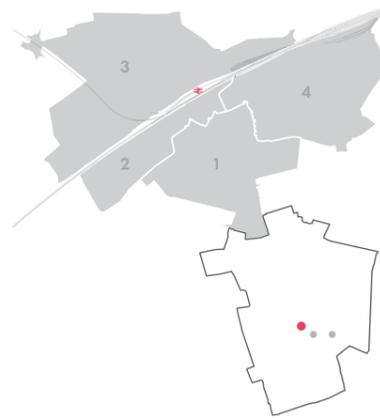
Illustrative plan 1 : 2500



View 1: Surface car parking behind residences



View 2: View along Hoopers Place



The Joiner Lane area is currently dominated by surface car parks which create a poor setting for the surrounding shops, cafés and houses. While accessible car parking is very important to the economic health of Old Town, there is an opportunity to use the space much more efficiently, creating an attractive environment with high quality landscaping including trees. Priorities and principles for the site are as follows:

**Securing high architectural quality buildings:** There is an opportunity for new buildings of high architectural quality to be developed on this site, introducing a frontage to Hoopers Place and new homes to the north of the site, situated around a landscaped private courtyard.

**New retail and residential uses:** The introduction of active ground floor uses within the buildings facing onto Hoopers Place would provide activity and interest and improve perceptions of safety and security.

New residential uses would help to increase the level of activity in the area throughout the day and evening, and support town centre vitality.

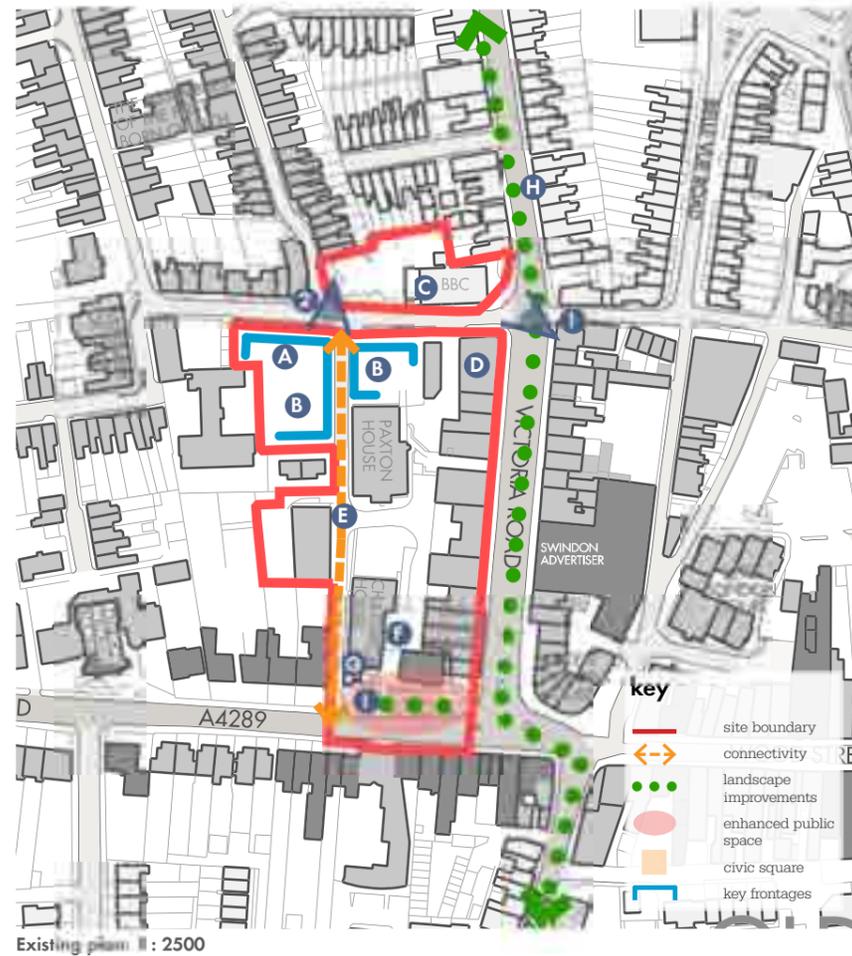
**High quality, permeable public realm:** Development should facilitate movement through the site and connect to surrounding roads. A consistent palette of high quality materials should be used, which compliments the character of Old Town.

A proportion of surface car parking should be retained to provide casual short term spaces for shoppers in Old Town.

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## 6.7 STUDY AREA 5 - OLD TOWN PROSPECT PLACE



### Site principles

- Introduce building line to street.
- Redevelop surface car parking.
- Relocate BBC into the town centre to invigorate cultural offer.
- Improve quality of buildings on Victoria Road through refurbishment and selective redevelopment.
- Improve the quality of Prospect Place and maintain a through-route between Prospect Place and Bath Road
- Identify land for an extension to the existing museum.
- Replace Chatsworth House with buildings that are sympathetic to the adjacent listed properties.
- Deliver Green Spine along Victoria Road
- Create a high quality public space in front of the museum.



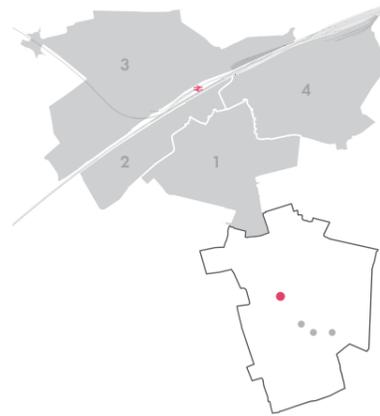
Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: Existing BBC Wiltshire headquarters



View 2: Surface car park



In common with other sites, part of the land around Prospect Place is being used for surface car parking, and the remainder by commercial office buildings. There are opportunities to significantly improve the use and appearance of the area through new high quality development. This would help to improve the setting of the listed Swindon Museum and the quality of the buildings on Victoria Road and at the junction of Bath Road and Wood Street. Priorities and principles for the site are as follows:

**Improved cultural offer:** An extension to the Museum would help to consolidate its contribution to the cultural life of Swindon. The new extension should front onto a new, high

quality public space to the north, along Bath Road.

**New retail and residential development:** New residential and retail uses are encouraged on the northern half of the site. New residential town houses would be appropriate at Prospect Place, whilst new ground floor retail with residential or commercial uses above would be supported as part of the redevelopment on the corner of Victoria Road. The development includes the site of BBC Wiltshire, which is encouraged to relocate to Wharf Green, in the town centre where they can contribute to the vibrancy of the town centre by hosting road-shows and events.

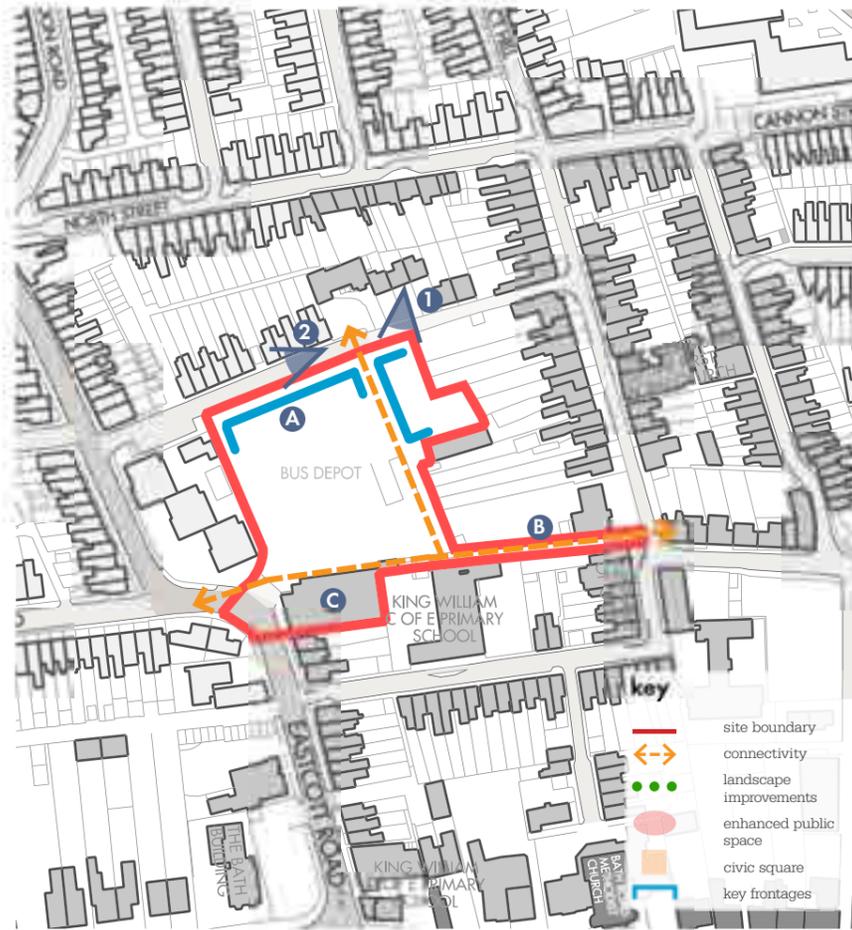
**Active street frontages:** New buildings to the north of the site should complete the building line onto Prospect Place with residential mews homes facing onto the street. New ground floor retail uses will be expected to be provided as part of new development on the corner of Victoria Road, to reflect its more central location.

**Enhanced green links:** Enhancements to the public realm along Victoria Road to reinforce the Green Spine [Policy CAAP 3] will be encouraged. This should include tree planting and improved hard landscape to an agreed palette.

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## 6.7 STUDY AREA 5 - OLD TOWN EASTCOTT ROAD



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- Re-establish residential terrace facing South Street.
- Improve connectivity between Eastcott Road and Prospect Place with a pedestrian/cycle route.
- Convert existing warehouse buildings to other uses.



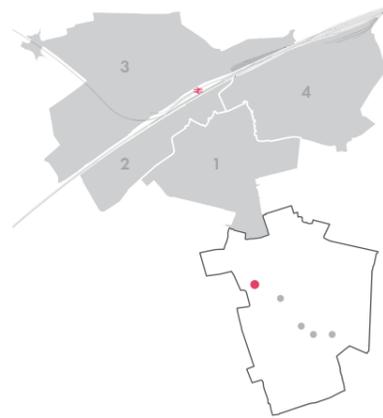
Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: View of bus depot from South Street



View 2: Existing residences along South Street



The site, close to Eastcott Road, is currently in use as a bus station. Should the site become vacant, there is a long term opportunity to redevelop the site for residential uses to complement the predominantly residential character of the surrounding area. Priorities and principles for the site are as follows:

**New homes:** The development of new terraced town houses and apartments is appropriate in this location.

**Active frontages:** The new terraced town houses should face onto South Street and onto a new communal open space to the south. Residential apartment buildings should be arranged to form a new edge to

the backs of the rear gardens to the properties on Prospect Place. The terraced properties and apartment buildings should overlook and provide enclosure for the new central open space.

**Sustainable working opportunities:** Opportunities to convert the bus depot offices into live/work units to provide more variety and re-use the existing building stock adjacent to the King William Primary School should be sought.

**Improved pedestrian and cycle links:** A new pedestrian and cycle link between Eastcott Road and Prospect Place in an east/west direction will be sought as part of any redevelopment.

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## 6.7 STUDY AREA 5 - OLD TOWN VICTORIA ROAD



Existing plan: 1 : 2500

### Site principles

- A. Improve efficiency of the interlinked surface car parking.
- B. Enhance public realm with tree planting.
- C. Consider replacement of the large commercial buildings out of scale with Victoria Road.
- D. Deliver the Green Spine.
- E. Consolidate Cannon Street as a quiet cul-de-sac.
- F. Retain existing large pine trees.
- G. No access between Cannon Street and North Street.
- H. Bring unused back-lands into use.



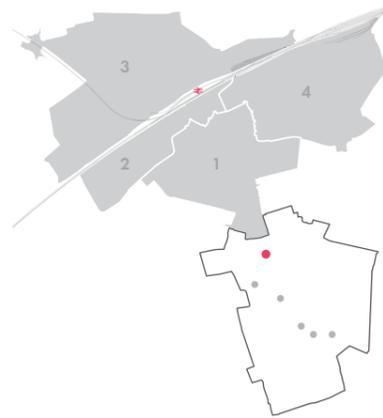
Illustrative plan: 1 : 2500



View 1: No access from North St to Cannon St



View 2: Victoria Road



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At the mid-point between the Old Town and the town centre there is a bend in Victoria Road where a new intervention could be made to improve the attractiveness of the route and the character of the area. This would involve the replacement of the existing large commercial buildings on the corner with Cannon Street and replacement with smaller scale buildings behind the group of magnificent pine trees to enhance this small cul-de-sac as an attractive residential enclave.

A new pedestrian and cycle route between this part and the rest of Cannon Street could also be made. A new line of trees on Victoria Road would act as a landmark and reinforce

the Green Spine [Policy CAAP 3]. To the north of this the proposal suggests a rationalisation of the existing surface car parking, currently laid out in a number of walled spaces, and the introduction of a number of mews houses.

This strategy could also be applied to a number of back lots to the rear of the properties on Prospect Place, providing a new residential mews development accessed from Cannon Street. Priorities and principles for the site:

**New homes:** The development of new mews houses is appropriate in this location.

**Enhancement of the streetscape:** The new development on the corner of Victoria Street and Cannon Street would improve both components of the public realm.

**Delivery of the Green Spine:** Streetscape improvements on Victoria Road will improve the character and quality of the route between Old Town and the town centre.

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## 6.7 STUDY AREA 5 - OLD TOWN QUEEN'S PARK



Existing plan: 1 : 3000

### Site principles

- Improve the existing park entrances with new signage and better landscaping.
- Create new park entrances to the west and south of the park.
- Create a strong visible connection between the park and the Green Spine.
- Introduce a new path to the south of the lake to increase permeability through the site.
- Allow cyclists to use the park (introduce a cycle lane if necessary).
- Allow people to walk their dogs in the park (on leads).
- Designate some area within the park for playing ball games.



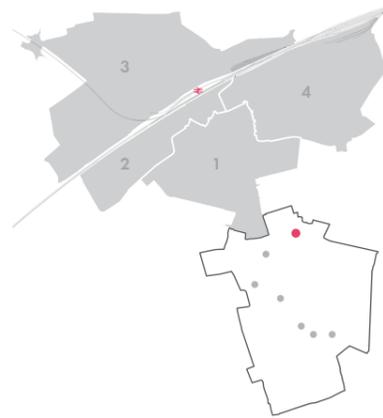
Illustrative plan: 1 : 3000



View 1: New entrance proposed at Belgrave St



View 2: Existing entrance at York Road



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Queen's Park covers approximately 12 acres of land between Old Town and the new town centre of Swindon. It is an enormous asset to the community with an approximately 2 acre lake in the centre of the park and large swathes of both grassland, forested land, and both formal and informal gardens.

In 2001, the park was placed on the "Register of Parks & Gardens" by English Heritage as a Grade II site and is recognised for its historic value as a modern, informal, post-war park.

Despite the obvious ecological and historical value of the park, it suffers from a range of issues including anti-social behaviour, a lack of permeability with and visibility from the surrounding

residential neighbourhoods. Key priorities for this site include:

**Improve existing entrances and create new entrances:** The park suffers from a low-profile street presence that should be boosted with better landscaping and improved signage at existing entrances. The masterplan proposes an additional three entrances along the western boundary of the park where local streets currently dead-end into the site. Increasing the number of entrances will not only improve accessibility to the park, it will also increase natural surveillance to the area, which should help to inhibit anti-social behaviour.

**Increase permeability:** Extend wide footpaths around the lake and connect new entrances to the centre of the park to encourage use of the route by commuters on foot or bicycle and increase natural surveillance to the area. This will also create a walking/cycling circuit around the lake for visitors to the park.

**Permit more activities:** Current park rules are so restrictive that they limit the number of visitors to the park. Cyclists should be permitted along designated routes; dogs should be permitted on leads; and areas of grass should be designated for playing ball games. This will make the park more inviting for families, increase natural surveillance, and encourage Swindon residents to make healthy lifestyle choices.

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## 6.7 STUDY AREA 5 - OLD TOWN M&SWJ RAILWAY CYCLE PATH



Existing plan: 1 : 3000

### Site principles

- Introduce a new entrance at the junction with Devizes Road with signage and a gently sloping path to raise the profile of the green space and improve accessibility.
- Improve visibility and accessibility of park entrance at Bowling Green Lane with new signage and an improved path.
- Improve the appearance of the path that connects Signal Way to Newport Street with new signage, fresh paint and refreshed hard-landscaping.
- Introduce signage along the length of the path at regular intervals to highlight the heritage of the route and note distances between landmarks.



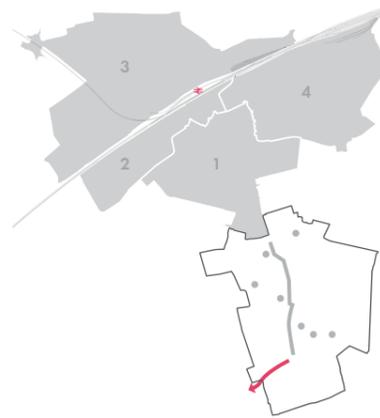
Illustrative plan: 1 : 3000



View 1: Existing Bowling Green Lane entrance



View 2: Proposed entrance from Devizes Road



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The Midland & South Western Junction Railway was completed in 1892 and offered passenger services between Southampton and Cheltenham. Stops were at Marlborough, Swindon, Cricklade and Cirencester.

This minor route of approximately 60 miles was heavily used during the 1st and 2nd World Wars; however it was closed in 1961 due to the low passenger numbers.

The path has been in use in recent years by ramblers and cyclists. It offers a long, quiet, green route around the Swindon town centre, with access points in Old Town to the south, and Kingshill Road, to the west, where it joins the route of the

old canal, just south of Faringdon Park. Key priorities for this site include:

**Improve existing entrances and create new entrances:** This greenway is an asset for the Swindon community and should be celebrated and publicised wherever possible. The existing entrance path along Signal Way should be improved with better signage, a fresh coat of paint along boundary fences and new, high quality hard landscaping.

A new entrance should be constructed near the existing pedestrian crossing on Devizes Road. The entrance path should be made as accessible as possible, with high-quality surfacing to encourage use of the path.

The entrance at Bowling Green Lane should be improved with a more accessible entrance ramp and better signage.

**Improve signage:** Entrances should be highlighted with signage that provides information about the route's heritage as well as locations of landmarks and travel distances.

This signage should be repeated along the length of the path to reassure users of their location and make the path feel more welcoming to new users.

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## 6.7 STUDY AREA 5 - OLD TOWN VICTORIA ROAD FRONTAGE



View 1: Swindon postcard c1905 © Hooper Collection, Swindon Central Library



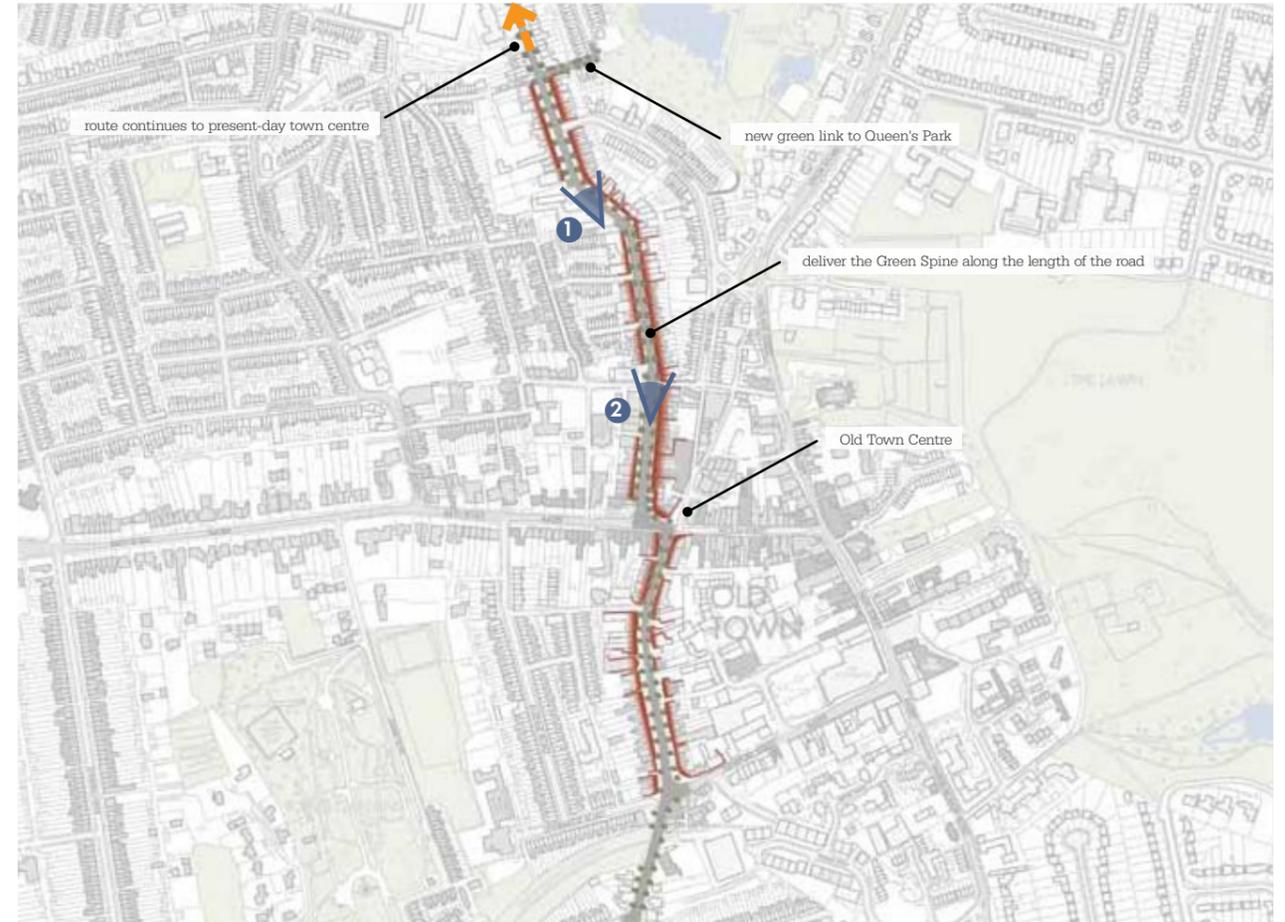
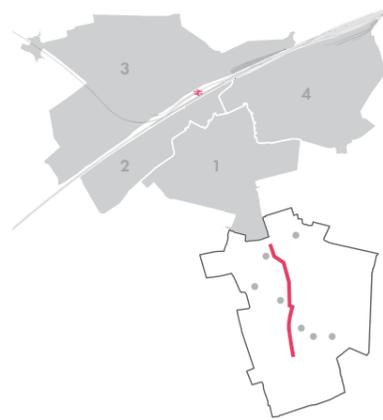
View 1: Swindon postcard view today just north of Cannon Street junction



View 2: Victoria Road near the junction with Union Row

### Site principles

- A. Deliver the Green Spine by improving hard and soft landscaping (including trees) in line with CAAP policy 3.
- B. Restore the high-quality residential character of the linking road between Old Town and the present-day town centre.



Illustrative plan: 1 : 5000

Victoria Road is the most prominent route between Old Town and the present-day retail and commercial centre of Swindon.

Once a picture-perfect residential street, the appearance of the route has declined in recent years and the latter half of the 20th century. Street trees have died and not been replaced. Paving is inconsistent and of low quality, as is the street furniture. Several of the residences, especially further to the south of the route, closer to Old Town, have converted their ground floors into retail units with inconsistent, low quality signage. If funds become available, a match funding scheme for building frontage improvements could be considered.

Key priorities for this route are:

#### Delivery of the Green Spine:

Streetscape improvements should include high-quality materials from a designated palette. The route would benefit from improved lighting, new hard-landscaping and soft-landscaping including tree planting.

#### Encourage high-quality residential improvements:

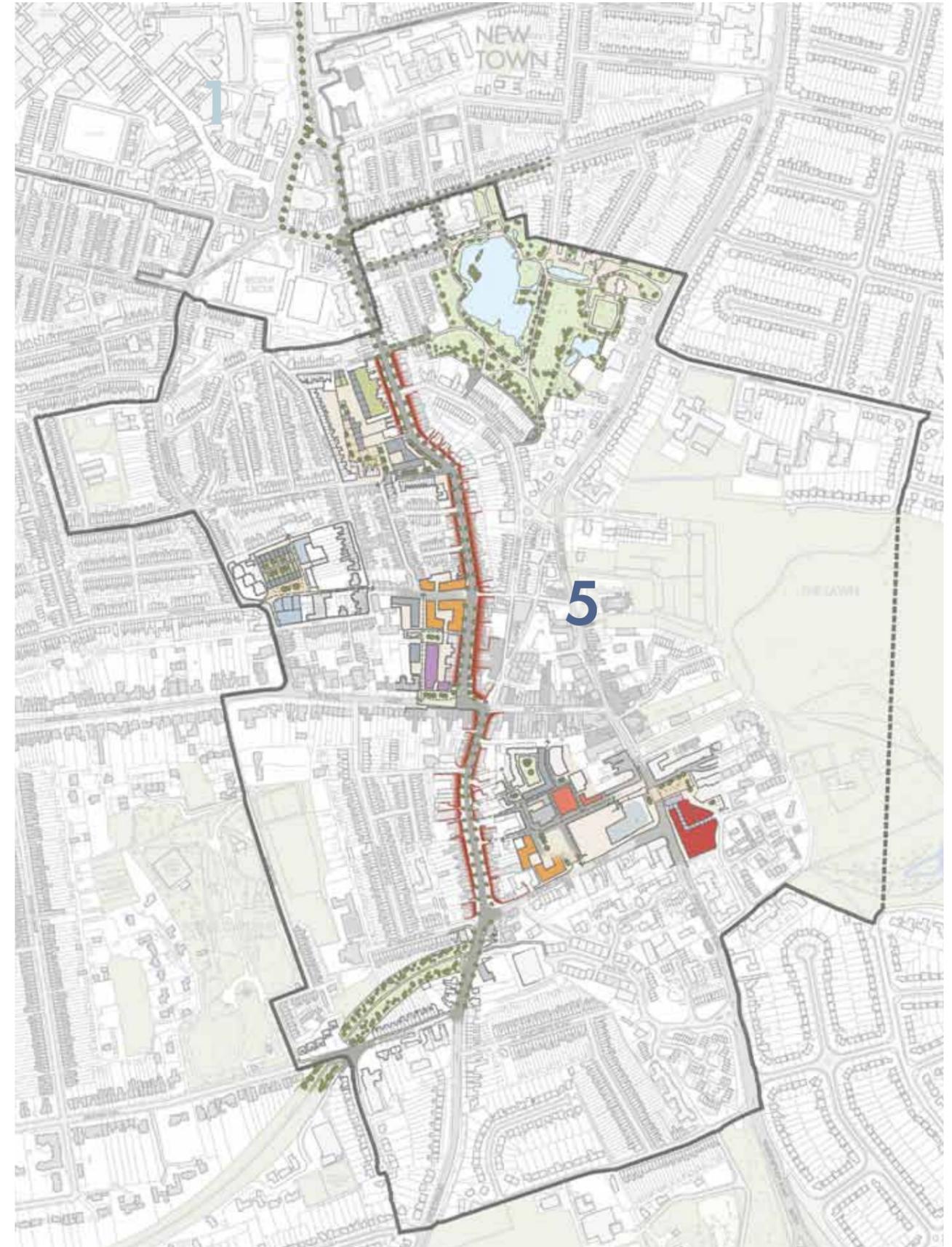
The nature of Victoria Road should remain primarily residential. Planning applications for non-residential developments should be discouraged, particularly between the junction with Union Row and Durham Street. Planning applications for residential refurbishments or redevelopments should be carefully scrutinised by a design review panel to

ensure they are of high quality and will contribute positively to the character of the street. This site could potentially be designated as a conservation area in order to manage the quality of any future building works. Furthermore, if funds become available, a match funding scheme for building frontage improvements could be considered.

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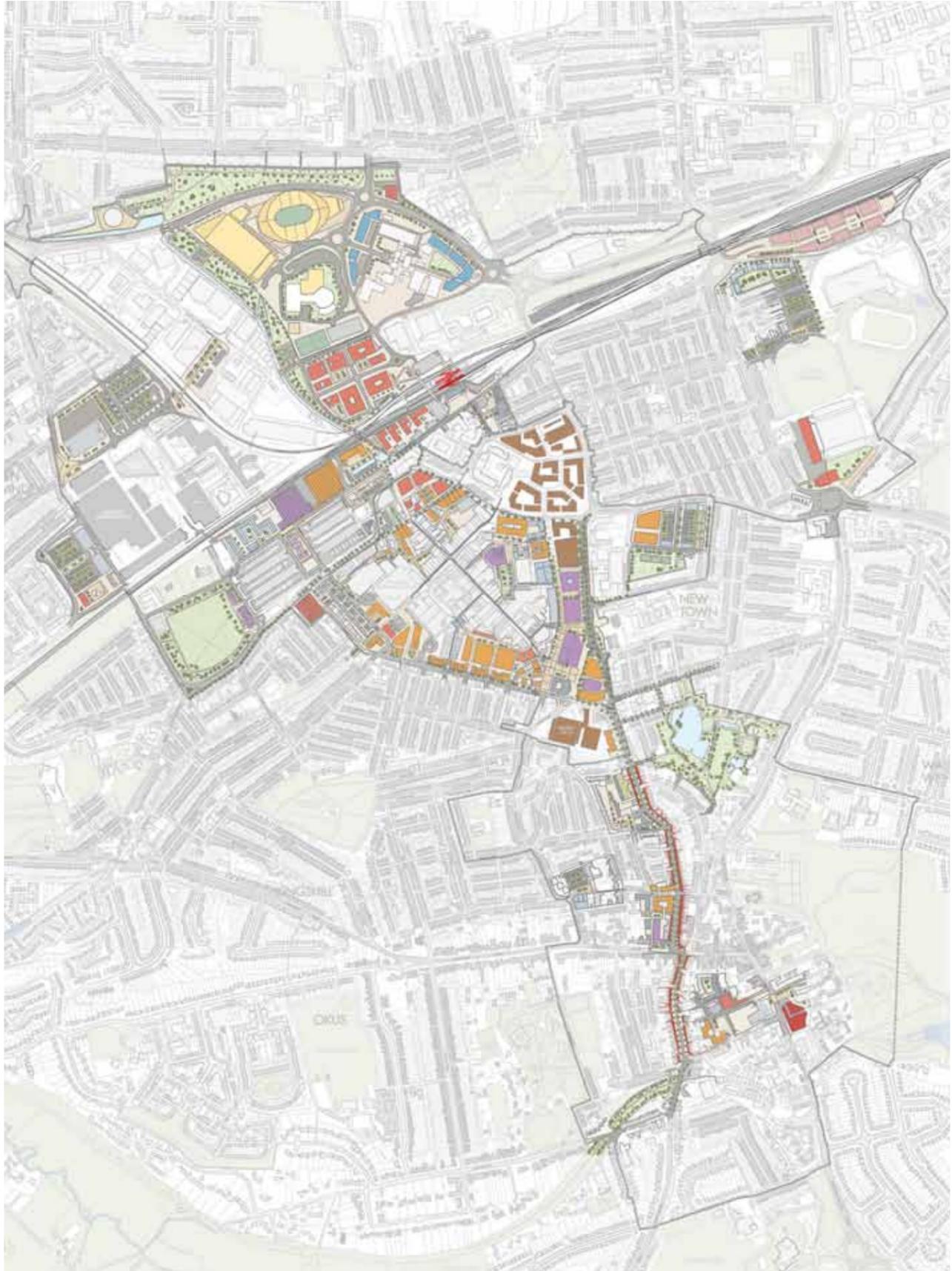
6.7 STUDY AREA 5 - OLD TOWN  
SPATIAL MASTERPLAN



Study area 1 illustrative plan: NOT TO SCALE

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## 7 IMPLEMENTATION

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

This section sets out a framework for delivering the Swindon Town Centre Masterplan. The masterplan sets out a vision for Swindon's development over the next 10-15 years. It is being prepared with the backdrop of a challenging economic climate, and proposes a complex series of interventions to ensure that the regeneration of Swindon Town Centre delivers benefits for local people, for the local economy and for the quality of the environment. It is therefore important to consider the key actions which are required in the short term to lay the foundations for longer term change, as well as the role that the public sector can play in showing leadership and in using its own land and other assets to deliver projects which can act as a catalyst for further investment.

### 7.2 A FRAMEWORK FOR PARTNERSHIP WORKING

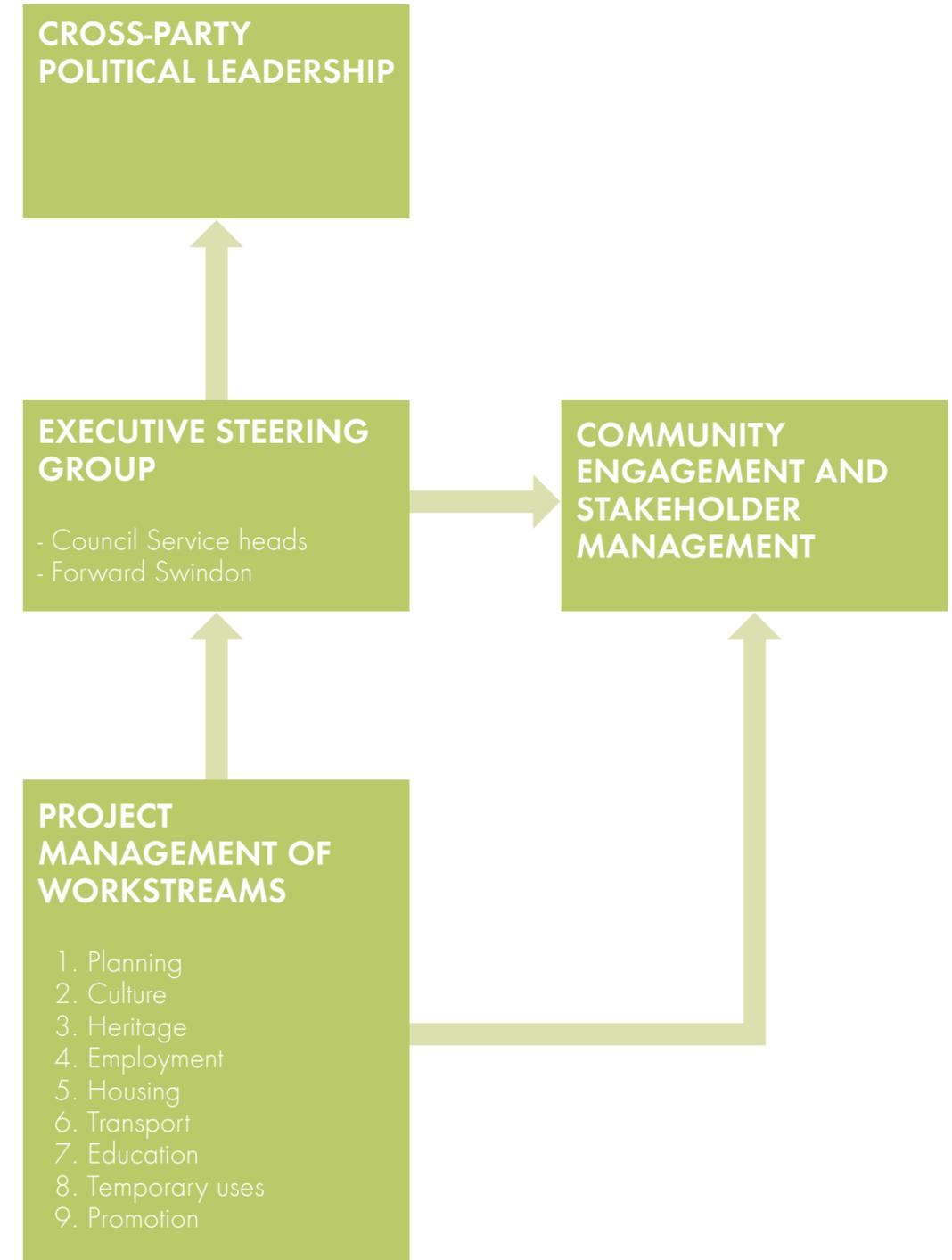
The Swindon Town Centre Masterplan has been prepared by Forward Swindon on behalf of Swindon Borough Council. The production of the masterplan has involved many different stakeholders, including Council members, a range of Council departments, landowners and businesses, voluntary and community sector organisations and local residents. As the masterplan will be implemented over a long time period, cross-party support is particularly important to enable the masterplan to withstand any future changes in political leadership.

In the current economic climate, the role of Swindon Borough Council working with Forward Swindon is to create the context required to exploit opportunities as they arise. This may be through investment made possible by changes to the Local Government Finance regulations, by building effective relationships with a wide range of partners, by providing leadership and clarity through the planning process, and through effective branding and marketing. Swindon Borough Council should also consider its willingness to realise key town centre projects by judicious use of its land and assets through mechanisms such as Local Asset Backed Vehicles. In addition, the forthcoming introduction of Tax Increment Finance may provide a new means of raising funding for a key

town centre scheme. Finally, the Council can play a key role in delivering the cultural projects which have a central importance within the masterplan as a whole, through the use of Council-owned sites, and by resourcing the preparation of feasibility studies and funding bids. The projects within the masterplan will be implemented by a wide variety of individuals and organisations, including public sector organisations such as the Council, Forward Swindon and Swindon College, private sector developers and voluntary and community sector organisations. It is therefore important that a clear leadership, governance and management structure is established to ensure clarity and consistency throughout the implementation process and to ensure that key stakeholders remain engaged and involved.

### 7.3 PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

We have set out below a list of key actions which should be undertaken in the short term to begin the process of delivering the masterplan and to build the confidence and momentum which will be necessary to kick start some of the longer term, more complex projects. The actions have been organised under nine themes.



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## 7 IMPLEMENTATION

### 7.4 9 PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

1. PLANNING
2. CULTURE
3. HERITAGE
4. EMPLOYMENT
5. HOUSING
6. TRANSPORT
7. EDUCATION
8. TEMPORARY USES
9. PROMOTION

#### 1. PLANNING

1. Establish design review panel with architects of national standing to advise on all town centre planning applications.
2. Prepare a night-time economy strategy to stimulate new A3 uses in the centre and manage these.
3. Develop the Green Spine strategy as a series of projects within an overall framework, with a consistent palette of materials and plant species.
4. Identify key sites that require development briefs.
5. Provide training on urban design for key portfolio holders and planning committee members.
6. Negotiate with Network Rail to ensure that an improved railway crossing at the station is a key component of the new franchise agreement.
7. Develop a strategy for the Community Infrastructure Levy which includes contributions to the public realm in the town centre, permitting the delivery of the Green Spine.

#### 2. CULTURE

1. Appoint a curator for the art collection
2. Develop a website base for the art collection.
3. Establish an art gallery project space in a vacant building in the heart of the town centre.
4. Produce a development brief for the performing arts buildings in consultation with key stakeholders including Swindon Dance.
5. Undertake a feasibility study for the art gallery to explore potential sites, the requirements of a building and a funding strategy.
6. Explore the potential for the temporary re-use of vacant buildings for artists studios and art gallery education and outreach.
7. Meet with BBC Wiltshire to discuss the potential to relocate to the town centre.
8. Meet with the Science Museum to explore the potential for a Swindon satellite.

#### 3. HERITAGE

1. Produce a development brief for Bristol Street car park.
2. Arrange meeting with senior representatives from English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund to discuss the development of a strategy to secure the future of the Mechanics' Institute.
3. Produce a development brief for the Locarno building which ensures the retention of the existing building and presents a viable strategy for new uses.
4. Set up a local buildings at risk register.
5. Work with STEAM and the voluntary sector to promote live steam railway events.
6. Strengthen planning policies and guidance concerning historic buildings and development adjacent to listed buildings.
7. Develop a strategy for an improved Museum of Swindon, potentially within the former GWR carriageworks complex.

## 7 IMPLEMENTATION

### 4. EMPLOYMENT

1. Develop a range of incentives to encourage the renewal or renovation of outdated commercial buildings.
2. Instigate a developer framework agreement.
3. Explore whatever business rates from empty properties can be ring-fenced to contribute to a fund to support the redevelopment of key commercial sites.
4. Explore the feasibility of selective compulsory purchase to unlock viable land parcels.
5. Develop detailed policies on selective change of use from office to residential accommodation.

### 5. HOUSING

1. Develop design codes for housing typologies, particularly family housing in town centre locations.
2. Quantify future housing needs and work with landowners to develop a portfolio of town centre sites which are suitable for residential development.

### 6. TRANSPORT

1. Establish a clear position on forecast rail passenger growth at Swindon.
2. Develop a clear strategy for SBC inputs into NR franchise renewal, which responds to passenger growth and secures key public benefits.
3. Prepare a detailed strategy for reducing the impact of the inner ring road by re-introducing two-way working, improved pedestrian crossings, cycle routes and on-street parking where possible.
4. Hold discussions with key members of the private sector to discuss the possibility of a sponsored hopper bus route in the town centre.
5. Develop a clear car parking strategy for the town centre.
6. Explore opportunities for commercial rail/road interface
7. Lobby for Growing Places funding from CLG.

### 7. EDUCATION

1. Identify education demand which will be generated by new family housing in the town centre and plan ahead.
2. Support Swindon College to develop an extended programme of higher education courses delivered in partnership with other universities in the region, and ultimately work towards securing a University of Swindon.
3. Support Swindon College in developing new facilities to complement North Star developments.
4. Deliver the University Technical College on a town centre site.
5. Work with Swindon College to facilitate temporary use of vacant town centre shop fronts to showcase students' work.

### 8. TEMPORARY USES

1. Identify landlords who are open to the idea of temporary uses for their vacant buildings
2. Develop a strategy for facilitating the use of vacant buildings to provide artists' studio spaces.
3. Curate a programme of town centre events and interventions including specialist markets, pop-up cafés and restaurants, as well as arts-based festivals.

### 9. PROMOTION

1. Develop a marketing strategy for Swindon which responds to the evidence provided by the recent research on perceptions of Swindon.
2. Visit and present at international shows such as MIPIM.
3. Prepare regular briefings for local MPs to ensure that they are able to be effective advocate for Swindon within national government.
4. Set up a tourist information shop in an accessible, high profile location.
5. Work with Swindon Town Football Club to capitalise on the benefits of its current league success.

