



Sleaford Masterplan - Town Centre Refresh

Baseline Assessment & Proposed Strategy

May 2022

Team

AR Urbanism

steer



Part 1: Baseline Assessment

1. Introduction	05
2. Context	07
3. Town Centre Analysis	16
4. Development Sites Review	40
5. Summary & SWOT	56

Part 2: Proposed Strategy

6. Vision	59
7. Project Bank	62
8. Development Sites Proposed Concepts	89
9. Next Steps	105
Appendix A - Policy Context & National Trends	107
Appendix B - Engagement Feedback Report	121

Glossary

NKDC - North Kesteven District Council

LCC - Lincolnshire County Council

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework

PGG - Planning Practice Guidance

LPA - Local Planning Authority

CLLP - Central Lincolnshire Local Plan

PD - Permitted Development

SESRR - The South East Sleaford Regeneration Route

CWNP - Cycling and Walking Network Plan

CAA - Conservation Area Appraisal

Part 1 - Baseline Assessment

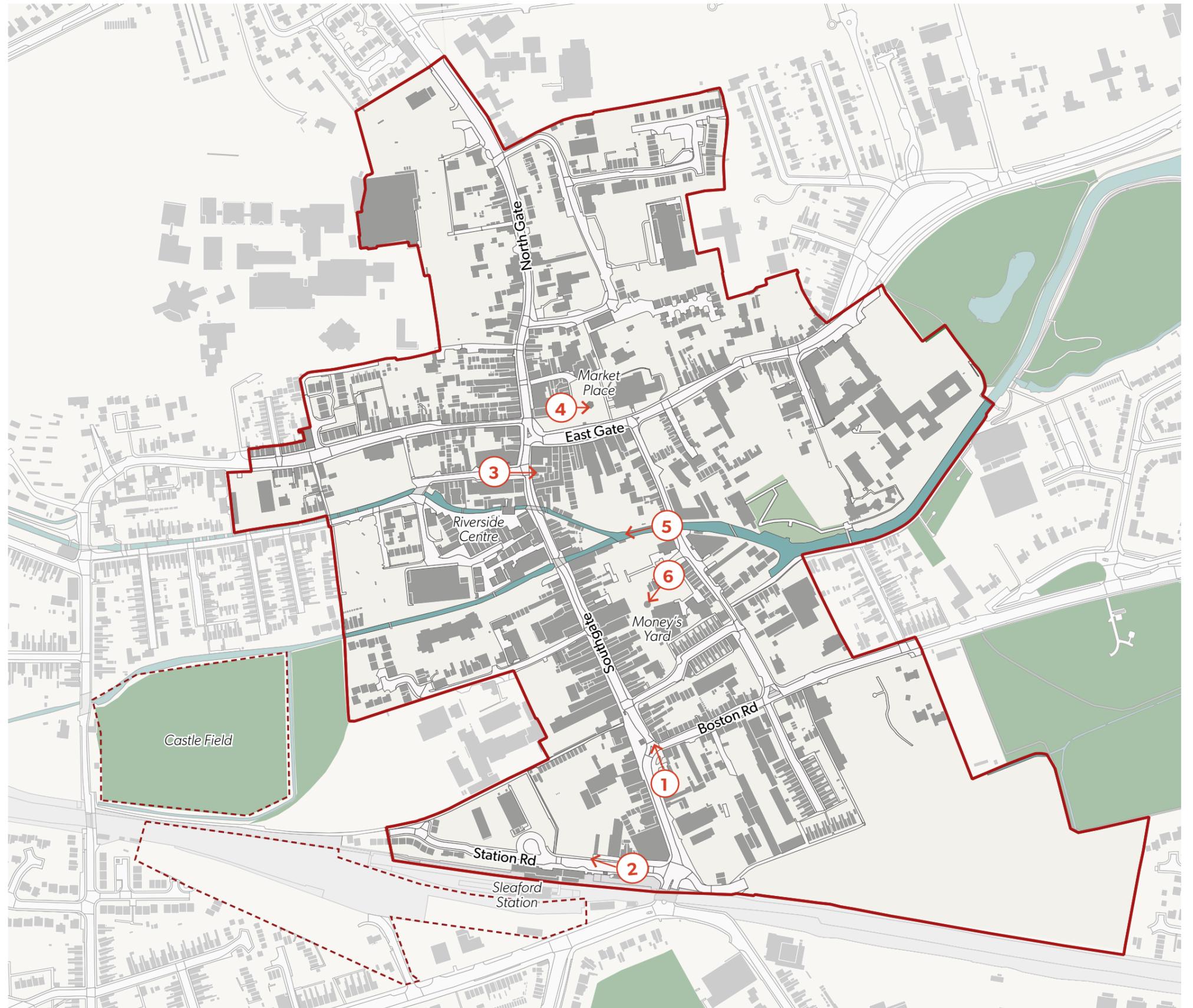
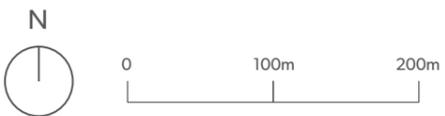
Sleaford Town Centre

1:4000

Key:-

-  Town Centre Boundary
-  Opportunity Sites outside of Town Centre

1. View of The Handley Monument and Southgate
2. Sleaford Station forecourt
3. Entrance to Bristol Arcade
4. Market Place and St Denys' Church
5. View along the river
6. Money's Yard and Mill



1. Introduction



Background

A strategic masterplan was developed in 2011 for Sleaford, North Kesteven. The masterplan set out important aspirations for change across Sleaford, encompassing significant development opportunities, public realm improvements, and a range of transport interventions. The masterplan included an in-depth look at the town centre with a range of specific proposals for regenerating it and encouraging footfall and vitality. The context within which the masterplan was developed has changed in the intervening ten years, with Sleaford, Lincolnshire, and nationally. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted town centres everywhere, and Sleaford is not an exception.

In light of this, North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) has commissioned the Sleaford Masterplan Refresh study, to look specifically at the town centre area. The aim of the study is to review current provisions in light of COVID-19 and the intervening ten years since the original masterplan, and consider how the original 2011 Sleaford Masterplan may need to be updated or amended. The outputs of the study are a new vision and objectives for the masterplan, plus high-level proposals for physical change in the town centre, including a number of potential development sites identified by NKDC. The intention is that the concept proposals in this document can form the basis for preparing subsequent funding bids, and as a high-level brief to guide future project development.

This work has been undertaken by a team led by AR Urbanism working in collaboration with Steer and Urban Shape.

Report Structure

Following this introduction the report is as follows:

Part 1: Baseline Assessment

- **Chapter 2 Contextualisation** - policy and national trends that should be considered as part of the masterplan refresh.
- **Chapter 3 Town Centre Analysis** - which considers key issues and opportunities. Relates to attributes of place, movement and functions.
- **Chapter 4 Development Sites Review** - an in-depth review of opportunities and constraints pertaining to twelve specific opportunity sites identified by NKDC within the town centre.
- **Chapter 5 Summary and SWOT**

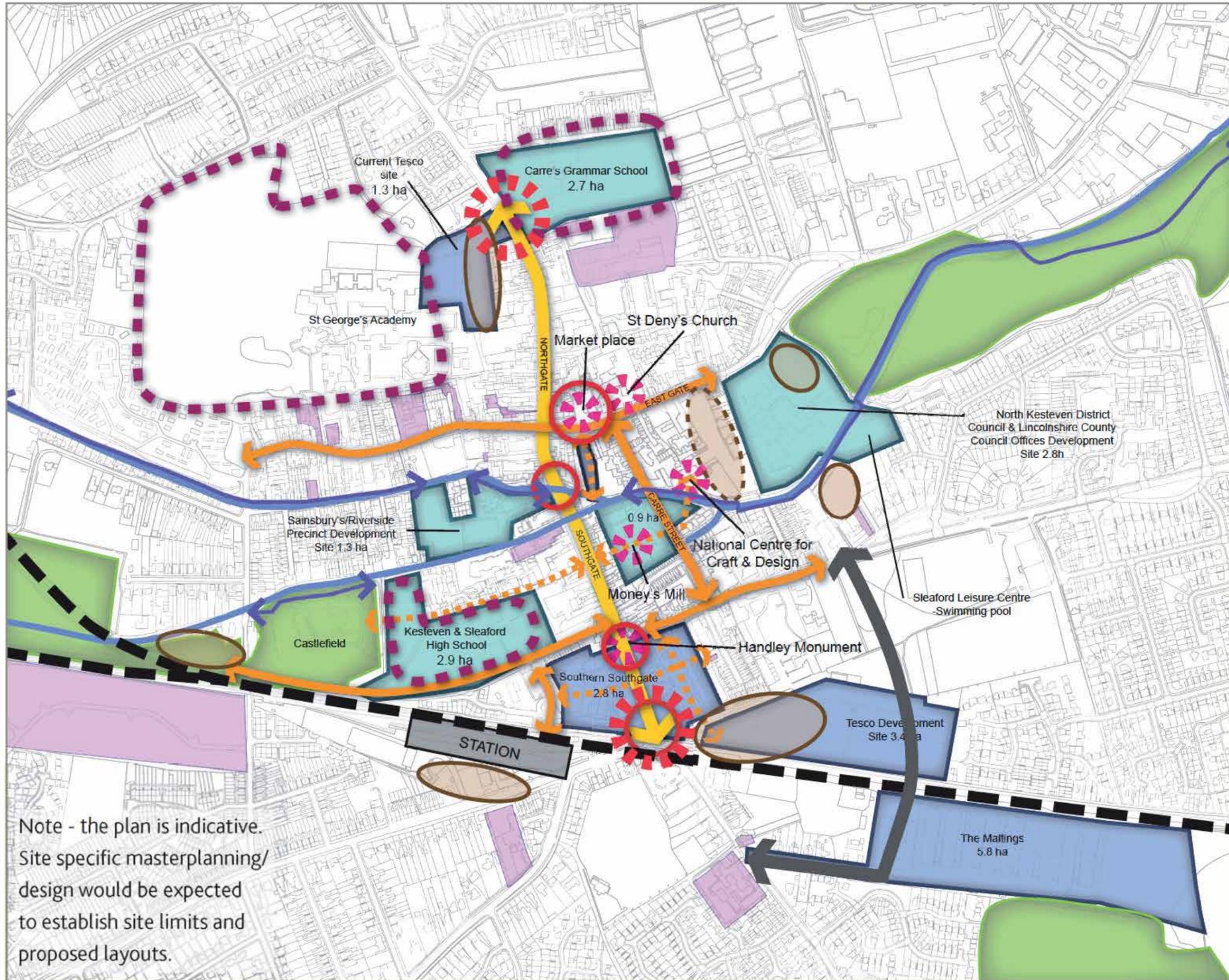
Part 2: Proposed Strategy

- **Chapter 6 Vision** - a statement expressing both the desired outcome for Sleaford and setting transformational initiatives by defining the direction for growth and change for the town to ensure its sustainable development and resilience.
- **Chapter 7 Project Bank** - a list of town centre short-term and long-term interventions and strategies to support the vision and give direction to town centre regeneration.
- **Chapter 8 Development Sites Proposed Concepts** - strategic proposals for the twelve key development sites, to be delivered incrementally in line with the Vision.
- **Chapter 9 Next Steps** - recommendations for the next steps to ensure delivery of the key projects and project bank interventions.

Town centre proposals (Sleaford Masterplan, 2011)

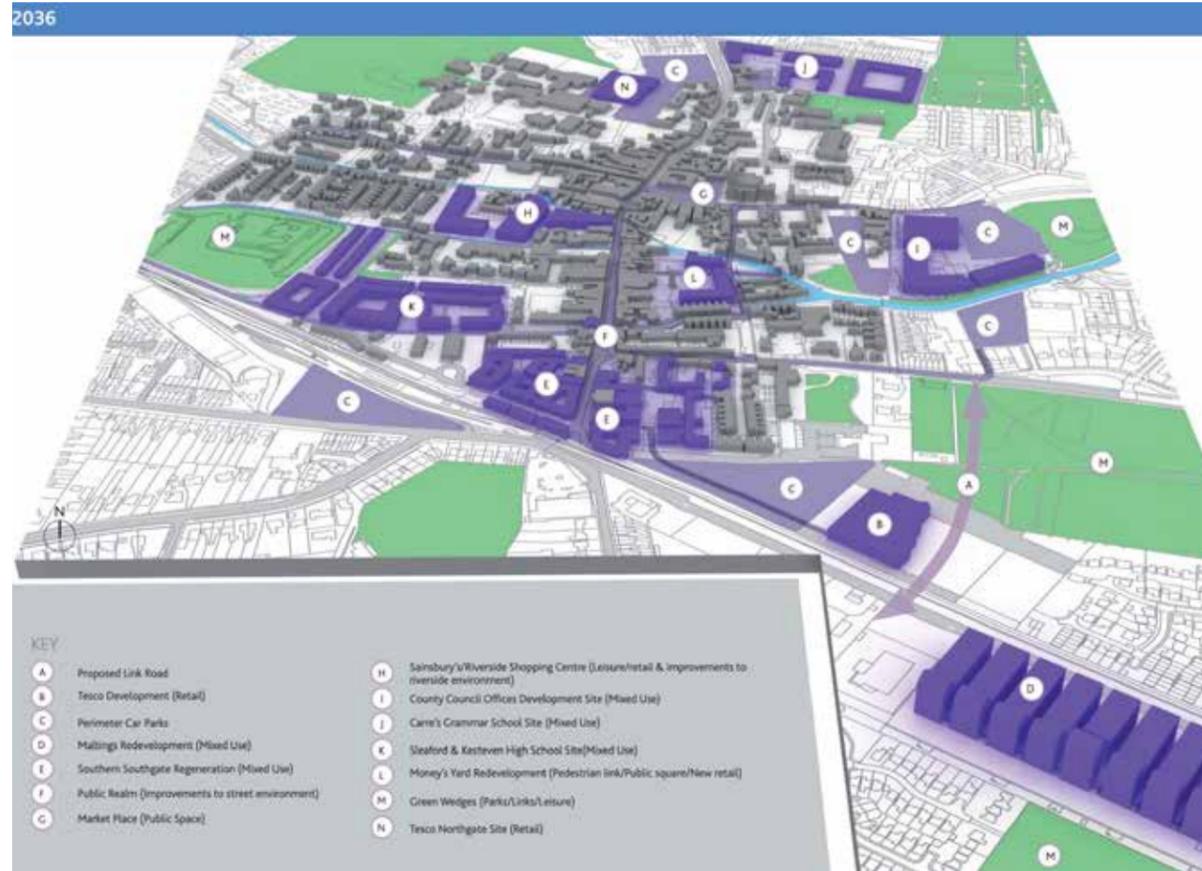
Key

-  Key Public Space
-  School Site
-  Ongoing Development Site
-  Potential Development Site
-  Potential Housing Sites
-  Perimeter Car Parks (inc. Blue Badge)
-  Blue Badge Parking
-  Landmark
-  Key Gateway
-  Green Wedge
-  Waterways
-  Waterside walkway
-  Link Road
-  Pedestrian Focused Core 'The High Street'
-  Pedestrian Focused Core 'Links'
-  Proposed Links
-  Railway Line



Note - the plan is indicative. Site specific masterplanning/design would be expected to establish site limits and proposed layouts.

Development proposals (Sleaford Masterplan, 2011)



Money's Yard proposals (Sleaford Masterplan, 2011)

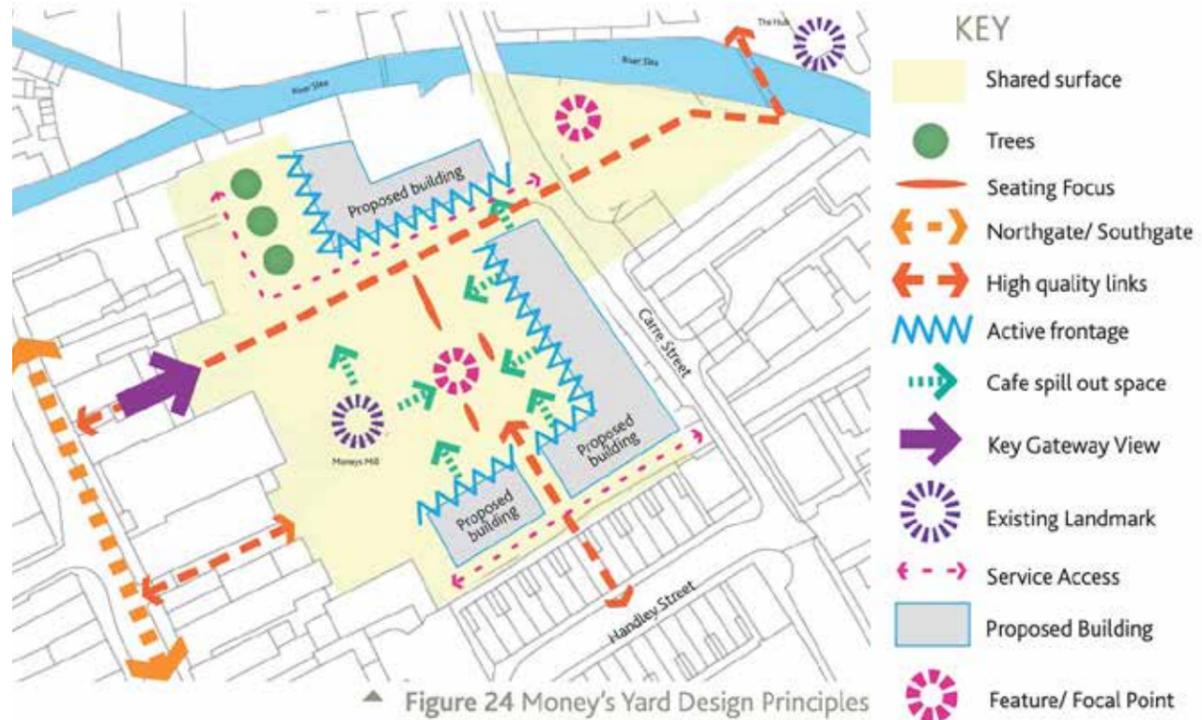


Figure 24 Money's Yard Design Principles

2. Context

2.1 Key Studies

This chapter reviews the Sleaford Masterplan from 2011, and other key studies of relevance including the Vision for Sleaford (2015) prepared by Kerching Ltd and Sleaford Town Centre Streetscape Manual by PWP Design and RVint Engineering. It then presents a summary of key local policy.

Sleaford Masterplan (2011)

The key proposals from the masterplan that relate to the town centre are listed in the table overleaf and key illustrations opposite. The text below captures the main issues and interventions that the masterplan addressed, summarised by topic.

Development

- Deliver a major redevelopment of the former Advanta Seeds site by Tesco, as a new superstore, with associated link road (see below), thereby creating a new retail anchor to help regenerate the southern part of Sleaford town centre.
- Further promote the regeneration of the southern town centre through the Southern Southgate redevelopment, with retail-led mixed use that brings more activity and also improves the appearance of the area as a gateway into the town centre.
- Redevelop the Riverside Precinct and the adjacent Sainsbury's site to create an anchor leisure use and improved riverside setting, with a high street frontage onto Southgate. Potential uses mentioned include cinema, sports leisure and hotel, and riverside public amenity space.
- Transform Money's Yard into a new attraction with infill development including cafés and retail that activates a new square around Money's Mill, and links to the National Centre for Craft & Design (the Hub).

- Carre's Grammar School and Kesteven and Sleaford High School to relocate to a single combined site on the edge of the town to help grow capacity for both schools, and release the land for residential development, in doing so removing two major sources of traffic generation and congestion in the town centre.
- Restore and bring back into use the Corn Exchange, the derelict appearance of which undermines the vibrancy of Market Place.

Public realm

- Reduce the traffic dominance along Southgate (see transport section below) and create a high quality pedestrian-focused street environment. This should allow flexibility to permit full closure to traffic at times, while also facilitating essential servicing and access.
- Improve public spaces and create high quality settings for the town centre's assets, starting with Market Place and its junction with Southgate to transform this from a car park to a plaza that celebrates adjacent heritage and provides a place for the market and sitting out space for businesses.
- In addition to Money's Yard and Market Place the Masterplan also proposes a new shared surface square as part of the Southern Southgate redevelopment, and improvements of focal points including the Handley Monument, and making more of the River Sleas.

Area of improvement	2011 Strategy	Detailed Proposal	Has it been delivered ?
A. Traffic Movement and Parking	1 A circle of perimeter car parks with improved pedestrian links to the town centre core.	Identified parameter parking includes the following sites: - NKDC Car Park on East Gate - East Gate Car Park - East Banks Car Park - Tesco Superstore Car Park, North Gate - Avanta Seeds Site (proposed at the time Tesco Car Park) - Station Car Park adjacent to the railway station	partial
	2 Reconfigure the one-way system to two-way where possible.	Two-way traffic along Southgate, Boston Rd, Carre St, Eastgate.	no
	3 Reduce the traffic dominance along Southgate.	Create a high quality pedestrian-focused street environment. Allow flexibility to permit full closure to traffic at times, while also facilitating essential servicing and access.	no
	4 Improved bus services.	Provide more frequent journeys making it a viable alternative to the car.	no
	5 Deliver a new link road over the railway.	Deliver a new link road over the railway as part of the Tesco redevelopment site, which would serve the site as well as address issues of congestion caused by the railway level crossing and help take traffic from the town centre.	no
	6 Coordinated signage strategy.	Improve wayfinding and signage in the town centre. Create a heritage trail in progress.	
B. Pedestrian Accessibility and Public Realm	7 A flexible public realm on Southgate.	Allow the potential for vehicle access restrictions to the centre of Sleaford.	no
	8 New and improved pedestrian and cycle routes.	New and improved town centre pedestrian and cycle routes that extend to and connect with the wider hinterland.	partial
	9 Transform the street environment and appearance along Southgate and other key streets.	Creation of high quality links between destinations.	no
	10 Improve public spaces and create high quality settings for the town centre's assets.	Improve public realm of Market Place and its surroundings including Eastgate (shared surface proposed) and the junction with Southgate to create a show-piece project. Transform this area from a car park to a plaza that celebrates adjacent heritage and provides a place for the market and sitting out space for businesses.	in progress
C. Delivery of Key Town Centre Destinations	11 Deliver redevelopment of the former Advanta Seeds site by Tesco.	Delivery of a new superstore, with associated link road. Creation of a new retail anchor to help regenerate the southern part of Sleaford town centre.	no
	12 Regeneration of Southern Southgate.	Further promote the regeneration of the southern town centre, with retail-led mixed use that brings more activity and also improves the appearance of the area as a gateway into the town centre.	no
	13 Reinforce the north of the town centre.	A potential cluster of projects that takes advantage of the high quality townscape (at Market Place, the arcades, the river and Money's Yard) to create a leisure, cafe and independent retail focus in the northern part of the town centre.	partial / in progress
	14 Enhance Sleaford's waterside environment creating new leisure destinations.	East-west movement should become a priority for improvement. Money's Yard provides the opportunity to break through from the town centre to the east. A new leisure anchor is suggested to the west of Southgate to provide a longer term opportunity (e.g. a cinema).	no
	15 Transform Money's Yard.	Create a new town centre attraction with infill development including cafés and retail that activates a new square around Money's Mill, and links to the National Centre for Craft & Design (the Hub).	no
	16 Redevelop the Riverside Precinct and the adjacent Sainsbury's site.	Create an anchor leisure use and improved riverside setting, with a high street frontage onto Southgate. Potential uses mentioned include cinema, sports leisure and hotel, and riverside public amenity space.	no
	17 Restore the Corn Exchange.	Restore and bring back into use the Corn Exchange, the derelict appearance of which undermines the vibrancy of Market Place.	in progress
D. Relevant Proposals Outside of the Town Centre	18 Relocate Carre's Grammar School and Kesteven and Sleaford High School.	Relocate to a single combined site on the edge of the town to help grow capacity for both schools, and release the land for residential development, in doing so removing two major sources of traffic generation and congestion in the town centre.	in progress

Transport

In regards to transport-related issues and interventions, the Masterplan strategic proposals aimed at relieving congestion in the town centre. These proposals were to:

- Deliver a new link road over the railway as part of the Tesco redevelopment site, which would serve the site as well as address issues of congestion caused by the railway level crossing and help take traffic from the town centre.
- Improve and promote alternatives to private car usage including new and improved cycling routes, and improving bus services with more reliable and frequent journeys.
- Introduce a series of measures to improve connections and town centre services with a view to providing a service centre for surrounding villages and communities.
- Reposition and rationalise car parking, strategically locating car parks on the radial approaches to the town so that they are within walking distance of the centre and its retail offer.
- Introduce a Parking Strategy that prevents parking in inappropriate locations around the town.
- Promote the use of the A15 and A17 bypasses as the primary routes when moving around Sleaford.
- Introduce access restrictions to Sleaford centre.
- Reconfigure the town centre's one-way system to two-way where possible
- Introduce an east-west link across the town to overcome current congestion and to refresh town centre leisure and tourism provision, join the town centre to green wedges and break existing barriers to movement.
- Introduce a Delivery/Service Strategy for the centre of Sleaford.
- Review and provide a coordinated signage strategy to promote use of the bypass routes, and also enhance pedestrian wayfinding.

Status of the Masterplan proposals

Within the wider Sleaford area, significant aspects of the Masterplan have been delivered in the ten years since it was finalised, including:

- Two major sustainable urban extensions to Sleaford providing much needed housing for the district.
- Supporting the release of new land for employment at Sleaford Moor Enterprise Park.
- Major highways infrastructure works including two junction improvement schemes to support access to these sites and use of the strategic road network as a town centre bypass.

Within the town centre itself, a significant amount of work has been done to develop a number of projects, various of which are in the process of being implemented:

- The Advanta Seeds site redevelopment with associated link road was well advanced in terms of design and planning, but was a victim of Tesco's nation-wide review of its development pipeline. The development will not take place as envisaged, and the link road will not be delivered.
- A concept design has been developed for the Market Place public realm improvement scheme, and is ready to be taken to the next design stage once funding is secured.
- The Corn Exchange frontage has been restored, and the site behind it is subject to ongoing discussions as part of the Heart of Sleaford project. A cinema operator has indicated they are interested in providing a cinema within town centre.
- Streetscape improvement ideas have been developed for key streets including Southgate and Carre Street (see separate section on the Sleaford Town Centre Design Manual).
- A signage strategy has been developed for highways traffic and pedestrian movement, and it is understood that this will be implemented in the near future.

A Vision for Sleaford (2015)

In 2015 Kerching Retail Limited was commissioned by NKDC to develop 'a new Vision for Sleaford Town Centre'. The key objective of the work was to come up with recommendations aimed at reducing retail and leisure spend leakage to neighbouring towns and reinvigorate the Town Centre.

Seven locations were reviewed - including Lincoln, Boston, Grantham, Newark-on-Trent, Spalding, Nottingham and Market Harborough - to identify potential reasons for spend leakage to these locations and ascertain 'best practice examples' determining attractiveness and competitiveness of these destinations. Work was supported by a range of surveys aimed at the identification of local needs and aspirations.

The study presented as several recommendations:

1. Publish a clear picture of what people want from Sleaford

Residents have indicated the following aspects that would change their shopping habits and encourage them to visit the town centre more often - free parking for minimum two hours, better retail mix of national and independent stores, better and larger local market, shopping area pedestrianised, daytime events, improved accessibility, better F&B offer, and a more compact town centre.

2. Clarify what Sleaford should "look like"

The local population would like Sleaford Town Centre to:

- Be attractive and compact, and a family-friendly space with a thriving market place, good public spaces and pedestrianised shopping area.
- Provide a rich entertainment offer (e.g. a new cinema) and a range of enhanced cultural sights (e.g. make the church more welcoming).
- Provide a better national retail offer as well as strong and unique independent businesses.
- Have improved F&B offer.
- Have a stronger evening economy.

3. Address local perceptions

Change the local perception of Sleaford being on the decline by: new initiatives aimed at celebrating local history, heritage and local assets. Promote regeneration and create a programme of events engaging residents and businesses. Aim to change the perception of Sleaford and promote it as 'a great place to work, rest or play'.

4. Reverse leakage from the town

Strive to challenge a resident's need to visit Newark, Boston and Grantham - create a better retail, leisure and F&B offer. Encourage new anchor tenants (New Look, Sports Direct, a cinema indicated), and encourage longer term private development projects in the following locations: Legionnaires Club, Post Office, Lower Southgate and Station Approach, Turnbull's and Advanta Seeds.

Improve Town Centre Experience (full pedestrianisation of Southgate recommended).

5. Improve the retail mix

Introduce more national retailers and discourage retail tenants such as Charity Shops, Pawnbrokers, Pay-day loan stores, betting shops, amusement, E-cigarette stores. Full pedestrianisation of Southgate and shared Northgate and Eastgate junction adjacent to Market Place recommended.

6. Support retail start-ups

Incorporate start-ups into the Retail Opportunities, consider help in finding premises, training and mentoring, financial and legal advice, business rate relief, sign posting.

7. Improve skills of retail businesses and evening trade

Support existing traders over bringing new businesses into Sleaford. Consider business support programme.

8. Improve retail and leisure performance

Attract supermarket customers to visit Sleaford Town Centre (consider free parking, special offers and sign-posting), keep employment and study in the town centre, promote existing facilities and retail and F&B offer.

9. Review opportunity and relevance of the market

Engage with local market development companies. Trials of road closures and market running down Southgate recommended.

10. Sleaford's leisure offer

Ongoing dialogue with restaurants encouraged. Explore opportunities to cluster restaurants including new operators around the Market Square.

11. Need to develop links between daytime and evening economies

Encourage town centre employees to extend their dwell time after work, especially on Fridays.

12. Address store vacancies

Swiftly approach new vacancies. Explore opportunities to host region-wide events in Sleaford.

Business NK projects

Various projects including some which are referenced in the Vision have been recently completed or are being further developed by Business NK. These include:

- Pop Up public realm project and strategy - implemented
- Made in Sleaford - implemented
- Heart of Sleaford - in progress
- Sleaford Brand - developed
- Shop front Regeneration Scheme - implemented
- Witham/Slea Blue Green Corridor Project - in progress

Sleaford South Sustainable Urban Extension

Sleaford will experience a significant level of growth in the coming years. The planned growth will enhance its attraction as a place to live, work and visit. A new sustainable neighbourhood to the South of Sleaford, (also known as Handley Chase) is planned to deliver 1,450 dwellings together with retail, education, community facilities and open space. The Sleaford South SUE is owned in its entirety by Sleaford Property Developments Ltd (SPD). As of May 2022 around 50 new homes have been delivered, and detailed planning consent has been approved or is pending for a total of 661 new homes. The scheme is expected to be completed in 2036.

Sleaford Town Centre Streetscape Design Manual (2020)

Sleaford Design Manual, 'a user friendly guide for current and future regeneration', was prepared by PWP Design and RVint Engineering on behalf of NKDC in 2020.

The document provides design guidelines for future projects in Sleaford and is informed by analysis of the existing streetscape. It includes design principles and a palette of surface materials, features and furniture. It provides a toolkit for the various types of streets and spaces, and aspirations for key destinations and attractions in Sleaford.

The manual was commissioned and developed before the COVID-19 pandemic. The analyses relating to Street Classification, Destinations/Barriers and Street Quality are of particular relevance to the current study. Streetscape analysis of the existing context contained in the document include:

- Street classification.
- Key town centre constraints such as physical barriers.
- Existing and potential future destinations.
- Street quality (analysed using PERS-Pedestrian Environment Review System).

Key town centre issues identified by the manual include:

- "The various streets and spaces in the town centre currently provide a poor experience for pedestrians and are typically dominated by vehicles.
- Southgate is the centrepiece to the town centre, but lacks a clear identity.
- Focal points, destinations and attractions are undersold by their public realm/landscape and are poorly connected to Southgate and other arrival points such as car parks/public transport.
- The River Slea is largely hidden in the town centre. Where the river is accessible the public realm is typically tired and lacks activity.
- Lack of consistency in the public realm palette and furniture within the town centre.
- Large scale public spaces are currently predominantly used for car parking (Market Place, Moneys Yard, etc.)."

While the key opportunities are:

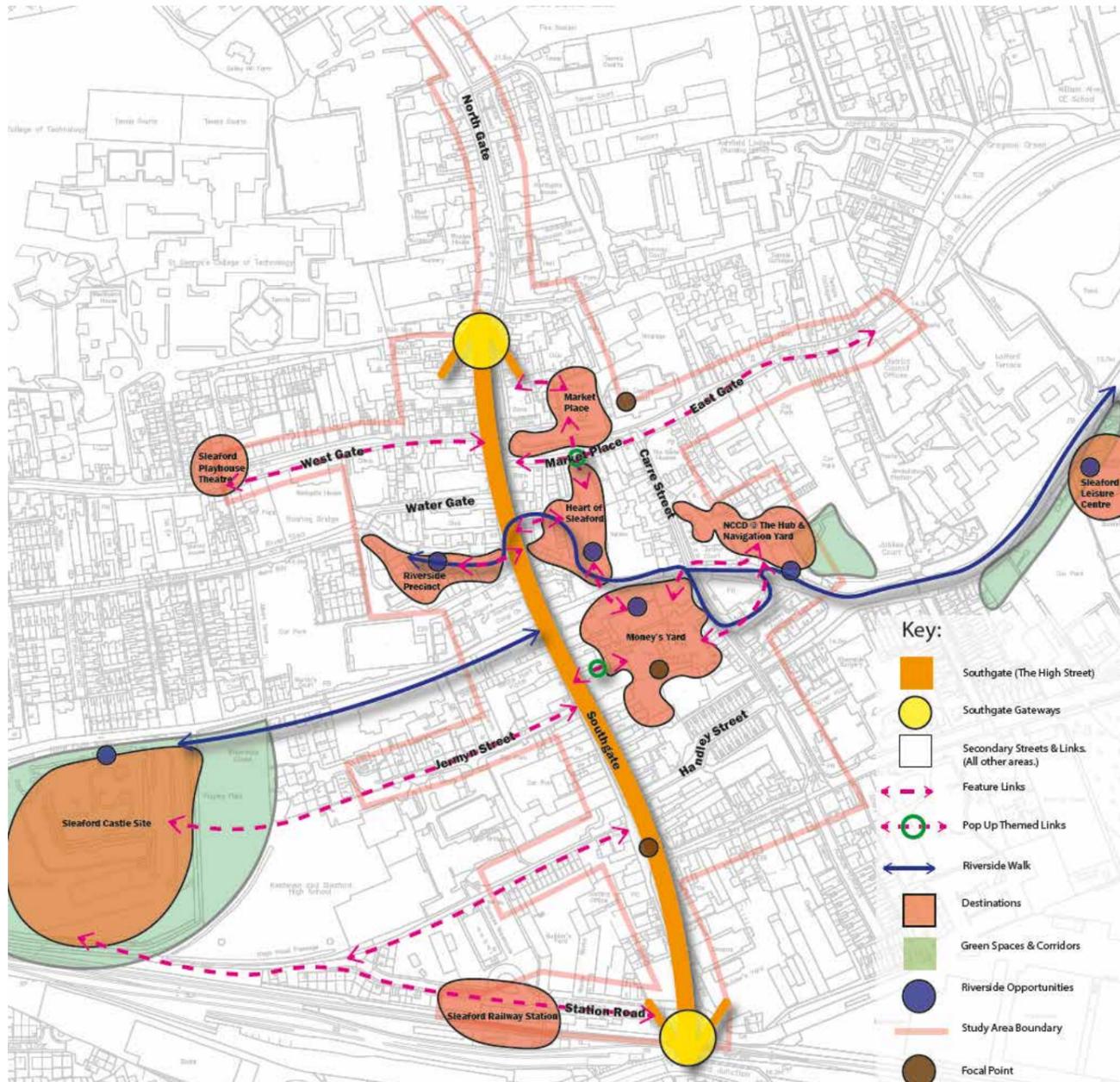
- An attractive historic market town character.
- A compact and walkable place.
- Sleaford is a popular place for people to live and should provide a captive audience, especially young families. Schools create additional footfall/visits.
- Strong vision and direction of travel for the town as a whole, being delivered through positive collaboration with council and local business groups.
- Current vehicular behaviour along Southgate is comparable to that experienced on shared surface streets; a change in the physical environment will further enhance this positive characteristic.
- The town centre already has a high percentage of independent businesses, e.g. in Millstream Square.
- There is a diverse range of streets and spaces of varying scale and character, creating interest and opportunity.
- Upcoming regeneration projects aim to improve the leisure offer.

- A potential for town centre improvements; opportunities to create new destinations linked with improved links and public spaces.

The Manual provides a strategic plan that focuses on improving the experience for residents and visitors, increasing town centre dwell time, footfall and spend. It defines themes for various streets and spaces. The key recommendations include:

- Southgate to become more pedestrian friendly with a strong visual identity and distinctive material palette.
- Secondary links to be treated with unified complementary public realm palette.
- Feature links should be created joining all the visitor destinations and arrival points to and from Southgate.
- Unified and bold wayfinding to improve legibility.
- Pop up themed links to provide further attraction.
- Riverside links to connect Sleaford Town Centre with the River Slea.
- The unique character of key destinations to be highlighted.
- Market Place to be transformed and car parking to be removed.
- Navigation Yard to provide a large venue of everyday activities and larger events.
- Heart of Sleaford to provide a town centre attraction (a garden adjacent to the cinema proposed).
- Riverside Precinct public space to be upgraded to create a new vibrant destination.
- Sleaford Castle site to provide a destination at the forefront of Sleaford's heritage and cultural offer.

Strategic plan showing potential for town centre improvements, Streetscape Design Manual



2.2 Policy Context & National Trends

Three tiers of local government apply to Sleaford:

- Lincolnshire County Council
- North Kesteven District Council
- Sleaford Town Council

Therefore, the masterplan refresh must be cognizant and respond to this local policy context as well as overarching national planning policy. In Appendix A, we set out a detailed assessment of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the relevant retail policies within the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (2017) and the Consultation Draft (2021), recent amendments to planning legislation in respect of the Use Classes Order and Permitted Development Rights and other key policy documents. This section summarises the key points of relevance from within these different layers of policy, providing the context and framework for this masterplan refresh.

Legislative Change 2020/2021

In force from 1st September 2020, new planning regulations revoked parts A and D of the existing use classes order and introduced a new ‘commercial, business and service’ Use Class E, incorporating former A1, A2 and A3 retail uses. Former A4 (drinking establishments, public houses/wine bars) and A5 (hot food takeaway) uses and D2 (cinemas, concert halls/live music venues, bingo halls and dance halls) are now defined as Sui Generis. This change has far reaching implications for emerging Local Plans, with relevant policies requiring – in most cases – a complete review from previous adopted development plans.

Following consultation in December 2020, the Government introduced a new permitted development (PD) right to allow the change of use from any use, or mix of uses, from the Commercial, Business and Service use class (Class E) to residential use (Class C3). Effective from 1st August 2021, the government considers that the announced package of measures “will help support the creation of much-needed homes while also giving high streets a new lease of life, enabling them to adapt and thrive”.

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021) provides national planning guidance and sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), the Proposed Development must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The NPPF advocates a ‘town centres first’ approach, and requires planning policies to positively promote competitive town centre environments and manage the growth of centres over the plan period. The NPPF encourages LPAs to recognise that town centres are the heart of their communities and to pursue policies which protect their health and vitality.

Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2017

Beyond Lincoln City, the main towns in the Central Lincolnshire area are identified as Gainsborough and Sleaford, serving the northern and southern parts respectively. Sleaford is described as a ‘thriving market town which has experienced rapid housing growth and an expanding population over the last two decades’. Policy LP2 seeks to enhance its role as a ‘main town’, being the focus for substantial housing development supported by employment growth, retail growth and wider service provision.

Policy LP6 confirms that Gainsborough and Sleaford are second tier town centres after Lincoln City, and highlights that they will accommodate identified retail need as published in the Local Plan evidence base. The level of floorspace is not referenced given the ‘inherent difficulties in predicting the performance of the economy and shopping habits over time’. Section 6 focuses on Sleaford town centre, highlighting the rapid population growth over the last 30 years, and noting that the quality of life Sleaford offers means that the town will continue to experience pressure for further growth.

Constrained by the town centre’s heritage, the Local Plan concluded that Sleaford town centre was not fulfilling its full potential, and needed to attract further national and independent retailers along with broadening its leisure uses. A number of sites within the 2011 Masterplan were identified as having the opportunity to introduce larger more varied shop premises to achieve this objective. Policy LP46 endorsed this approach, prioritising retail as the predominant town centre land use at ground floor level.

Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Review 2021

Consultation on the next stage of the Local Plan review, a Proposed Submission Local Plan, is taking place between 16th March and 9th May 2022. The Local Plan Review is proposed to replace the Local Plan adopted in 2017, containing planning policies and allocations for the growth and regeneration of Central Lincolnshire over the next 20 years. The ‘vision’ continues to focus planned growth in Lincoln City and the main towns of Gainsborough and Sleaford.

In response to continued challenges facing the retail sector, the Draft Local Plan concludes that Sleaford must now focus on developing as a destination and meeting place to continue to attract footfall with a greater reliance on food and drink, leisure uses and visitor attractions. The importance of active street frontages within the Primary Shopping Area is emphasised, and the Town Centre Boundary and Primary Shopping Area have been rationalised in order to define a tightly focused area for retail and leisure uses.

Policy S38 continues to promote retail as the dominant land use within the Primary Shopping Area, whilst acknowledging the value of residential and office uses in upper floors. Policy S38 emphasises that proposals for non-retail use on ground floors will only be supported if they are a recognised main town centre use under E Use Class, would not result in the over concentration of non-retail uses or ‘dead’ frontages that would undermine the Primary Shopping Area’s retail function, and would have no demonstrable impact on the vitality and viability of the centre as a whole.

The Proposed Submission Local Plan includes specific policies that relate to various opportunity sites, notably S38 and NS74.

National Trends

The role of town centres as a focus for retail remains relevant in today’s market to draw in shoppers and footfall. Current thinking and research consistently repeats, however, the need to look beyond the role of retail in order to reinvent the high street, emphasising that the town centre of the future must add an extra dimension to the retail experience. Covid-19 and new planning legislation have and will continue to accelerate these trends.

It is apparent that these ‘extra layers/diversity of uses’ are in addition to the core retail role, but should be closely connected to ensure a joined-up experience within a comprehensive town centre strategy. Investment in a wider mix of land-uses and public realm/public space improvements will benefit a consolidated retail offer, leading to improved town centre footfall activity. Short-term investment projects alongside longer term investment for major projects can have far-reaching positive benefits to the performance of a town centre.

2.3 Previous consultation

Appendix A includes further, more detailed, consideration of national trends relating to town centres.

To inform the masterplan refresh the project team has reviewed the outcomes of previous community and stakeholder engagement activities. This section briefly summarises key feedback received from people about town centre performance and opportunities for improvements.

The engagement events referenced here include:

- A stakeholder workshop facilitated by Institute of Place Management, from which a 'Promoting the Vitality and Viability of Sleaford Report' was prepared, in November 2021;
- A Sleaford Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire Analysis report, from May 2021, and;
- Consultation conducted to inform of the Sleaford Vision Study by Kerching Retail Limited 2015.

Promoting the Vitality and Viability of Sleaford, stakeholder workshop, November 2021

The workshop was facilitated by the Institute of Place Management. The main goal of this event was to examine changes and challenges facing high streets (including the impact of Covid-19) and explore potential opportunities for improvements in Sleaford town centre.

The participants included a diverse range of stakeholders and community representatives.

The session started with a discussion about changes facing town centres in general, followed by a group

workshop aimed at identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing Sleaford.

The SWOT analysis derived from the event is replicated in the table to the right. As a result of the exercise the IPM proposed four strategic approaches to drive regeneration at Sleaford as follows:

- **Repositioning** - understanding how the town centre operates and who it serves to strengthen its advantages and tailor current and new uses accordingly. Concentrate on one key 'big impact' project to draw attention and address any current gaps in the offer.
- **Reinventing** - recognise the changes that have and will happen to the town and take steps to respond to them. Build on the main strengths of Sleaford.
- **Rebranding** - improve the town's identity and a perception.
- **Restructuring** - provide both physical and governance change.

For the purposes of the masterplan refresh the following elements which relate to physical changes in the town centre are the most relevant:

- River Slea environmental improvements
- Heart of Sleaford project
- Riverside area
- Removing traffic / pedestrianisation
- Relocating / re-imagining the market

Summary of Institute of Place Management workshop findings

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Local economy Independent shops Diverse offer Good restaurants Market Good range of services Evening economy Attractive town centre Landscape and heritage Historic architecture Waterways Liveability Low Crime Appearance Compact centre Access to countryside Community/governance Schools / education Community /Relationships / Sense of community / Strong community spirit /People Good local governance Cultural</p>	<p>Offer and attractions Lack of 'destination attractions' (e.g. cinema) Lack of diversity in evening offer Lack of services (e.g. health) Limited leisure offer No major events Accessibility Traffic congestion Railway line causes severance Accessibility from the suburbs / hinterland Community/governance Identity / purpose / USP Disparate/disconnected governance Access to further education Stalled regeneration plans / lack of development Unkempt / scruffy</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Physical improvements Riverside precinct Park and ride River frontage / Slea corridor as leisure use Central community hub / destination management Heart of Sleaford redevelopment plans Traffic-free town centre / pedestrianisation Economic improvements Town wifi / social media for business promotion Capitalise on homeworking Anchors Encouraging start-ups / innovation 'Day out' offer for visitors Wellbeing One-off events Art and Design connections / The Hub Social improvements Biodiversity net gain Engaging young people in future of Sleaford Military connections Incoming and growing population / new communities Café culture</p>	<p>Social change Online retail and services Strain on social / health infrastructure (GPs etc) Automation 'Youth drain' to larger cities for college/employment Governance Lack of consistent buy-in Resistance to change from Town Council Poor perceptions of the town Lack of vision / competing visions Economic factors Pull factor of Boston / Lincoln / Newark etc Disinterested private landlords Physical factors Transport degradation Increasing lack of maintenance Schools – sites should be moved away from centre to create development sites Congestion / air quality Development of suburbs creates dormitory status</p>

Sleaford Neighbourhood Plan - Questionnaire, May 2021

Household and business questionnaires were undertaken in May 2021 to aid the formation of Neighbourhood Plan vision and objectives, underpin the plan policies and involve the community in the process.

Household Questionnaire received 519 responses and the key comments in response to a number of questions were as follows:

Safety

- Majority of respondents feel safe; there were mainly minor examples of anti-social behaviour
- Respondents felt unsafe in badly lit areas including alleyways and car parks

Environment and Heritage

- Consider visual improvements, reduce waste and enhance green spaces, and the River Sleas

Highways, Transport and Parking

- Congestion and car parking present a town centre challenge
- Low use of public transport
- Strong support for new or improved walking and cycling opportunities

Housing and Development

- High level of support for bungalows as well as houses and sustainable development
- Strong support for investment in new infrastructure
- Strong support for affordable housing

Leisure and Arts

- Need for more open spaces
- Continued support for a cinema

Local Economy

- Support for improvements to streetscape to make the town more attractive
- Support for more café culture
- Concern over empty units
- Need for affordable parking

Accessibility

- A need for improvements; uneven roads and pavements are a concern

The Business Questionnaire received 26 responses and the key comments were as follows:

Improvements

- A need for business space to support growth
- 40% would like to see affordable meeting rooms/ start up units
- Infrastructure improvements required
- Lack of skilled workforce a concern
- A need for networking

Concerns

- Parking not adequate (75% consider free parking to be the most important facility for their business)
- Lowering of business rates required
- Empty units are concerning

Key selling points

- Local growth
- Low crime
- Attractive town
- Good quality schools and quality of life

Sleaford Vision Report 2015

A survey was performed in Autumn 2014 and it was aimed at people who live, work or study in Sleaford and over 1000 people took part in the survey, 68% of which were women.

The key feedback received included the following:

Perception

Sleaford was perceived to be a friendly and safe town, that is easy to walk around, however participants weren't happy with the variety of stores and facilities available to them. Over 54% of respondents were happy to say that they are proud to be living in Sleaford.

The reasons for negative responses included e.g. 'It could be so much more and it needs regeneration', 'the town is dying and has little to offer', 'excessive traffic', and poor retail offer - no nationals, and too many take-aways, charity shops and hairdressers.

Facilities

60% of the respondents visit leisure facilities occasionally or never. There were also comments about the lack of attractive facilities.

Parking

It was considered that free parking for up to two hours would attract more town centre visitors.

Retail

Participants felt that more national retail chains were required and that the offer in general was limited and not attractive. Over 88% of responders would welcome increased independent retail.

Page left blank intentionally

Sleaford Town Centre - built environment

1:4000



Key:-

- Existing Town Centre Boundary
- Proposed New Town Centre Boundary*
- Opportunity Sites outside of Town Centre
- Key Landmarks

* Changes to Town Centre boundary proposed in the Regulation 19 draft of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan



3. Town Centre Analysis

3.1 Built Environment

Sleaford is an historic market town that developed around an ancient track fording the river Slea. The town gained its importance in the mid-12th century when the right to hold a market in front of Sleaford's main church, St. Denys', was granted. The town has an attractive and historic town centre environment. The medieval street pattern with narrow plots running parallel to the street can be observed along Southgate and Northgate – the two main streets running through the middle of the town centre area and forming the retail core.

Southgate and Northgate provide a busy vehicle traffic one-way route through the town that limits the potential of the town centre core. The main town centre routes include Northgate, Southgate, Eastgate, Westgate and Watergate.

The uniform building line and relatively coherent two and three storey building heights along Southgate and Northgate give a sense of enclosure and visual cohesiveness of the streetscape. The Handley Monument located at the junction of Southgate and Boston Road provides an attractive focal point visible from various locations along the main retail core.

The consistent line of ground floor units is punctuated with gates allowing access to rear yards and ginnels, connecting the retail core with ancillary buildings and the rest of the town centre.

Buildings west and east of Southgate are arranged more loosely around historic and more recent yards and alleyways. Some of the rear yards are interconnected resulting in an informal network of pedestrian routes throughout the town centre area. The largest of the yards is Money's Yard with its prominent Grade II listed Money's Mill.

The 12th century Grade I listed St. Denys' church, in the north-east part of the town centre, is the main historic landmark. It is visible from the junction of Southgate and

Eastgate and along Carre Street. The adjacent Market Place provides the key town centre civic open space used by Sleaford Market every Monday, Friday and Saturday. The site is also used as a town-centre car park.

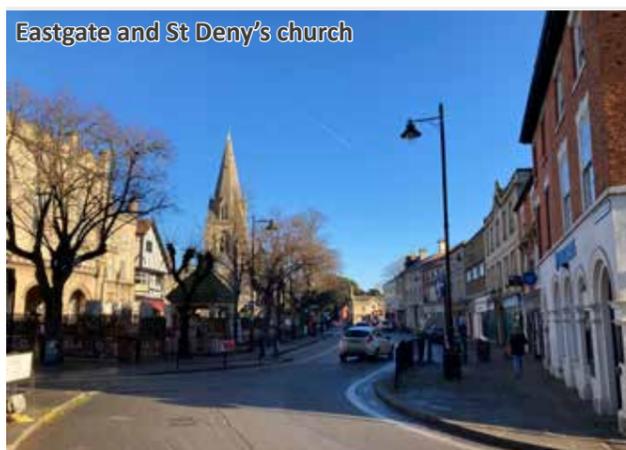
The spire of St Denys' Church, the Handley Monument on Southgate and Money's Mill are the key town centre landmarks that can be seen above the rooflines within the central area of Sleaford and beyond.

The River Slea was converted into use as a canal in the 19th century and currently is largely hidden in the town centre. It passes in two separate courses under Southgate merging around the Money's Yard and passing under Carre Street from the west in an easterly direction.

The area between the two watercourses west of Southgate is the location for The Riverside Retail Precinct. It comprises of a car park, a supermarket, Millstream Square and Riverside Shopping Centre with active Southgate-facing frontage.

North of the town centre there is a less dense building grain with larger plots including Tesco, and the two large school sites - St George's Academy and Carre's Grammar School.

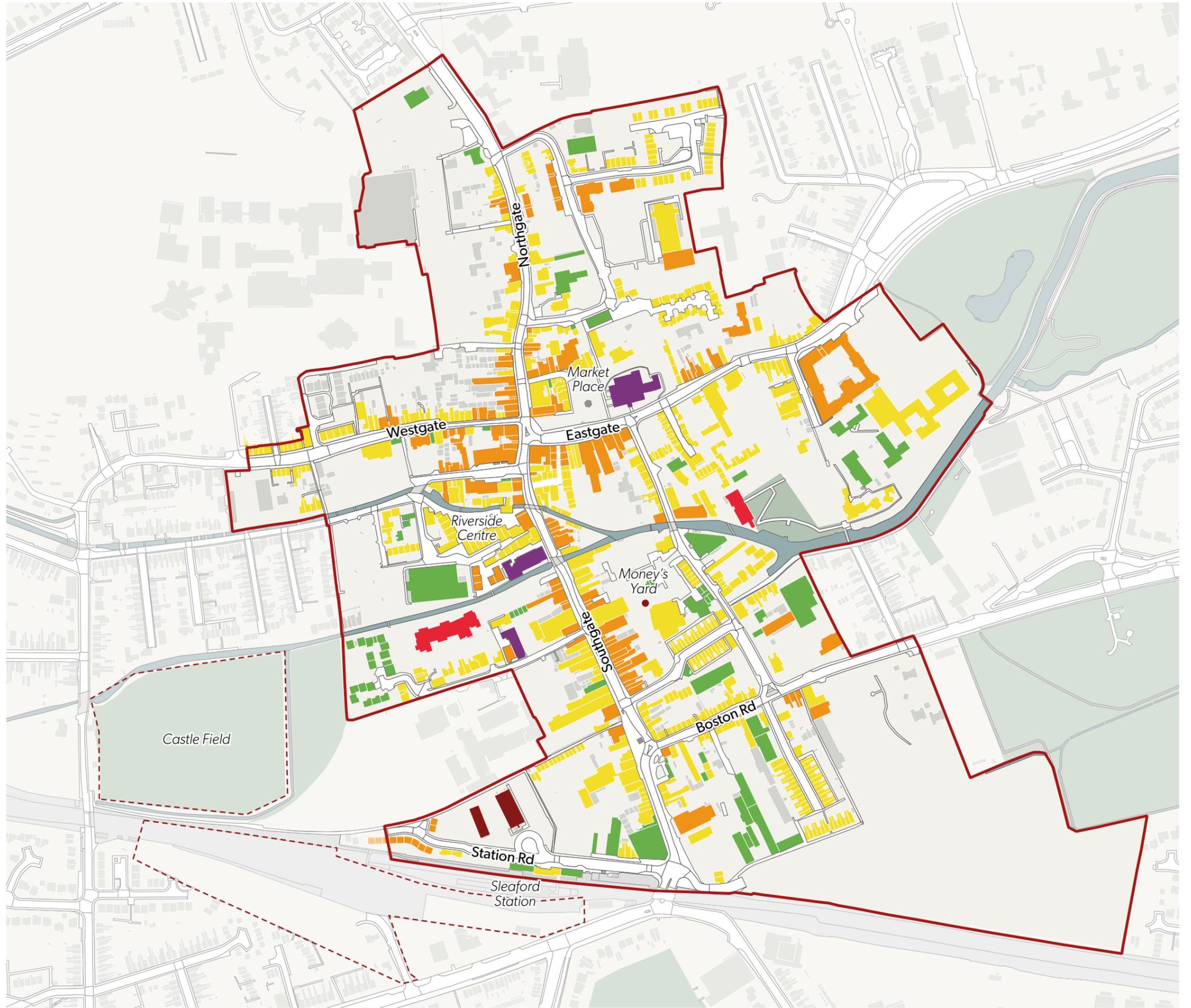
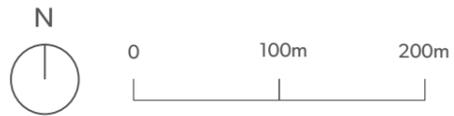
In the south, the town centre area is enclosed by the railway line. The listed Sleaford railway station is located south-west of the retail core on Station Road. The station area features some attractive former warehouses, one of which has been converted to housing, but otherwise presents a loose urban fabric, and an underwhelming gateway to the town.

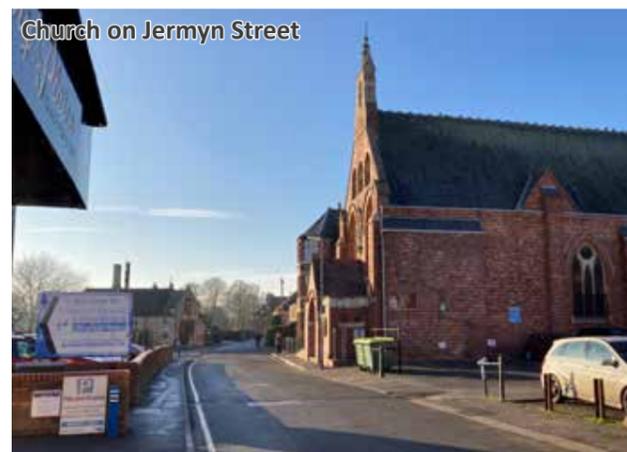


Sleaford Town Centre - building heights

1:4000

- Key:-**
-  Town Centre Boundary
 -  Opportunity Sites outside of Town Centre
 -  1 - storey
 -  2 - storey
 -  3 - storey
 -  4 - storey
 -  5 - storey





3.2 Building Heights

Sleaford is generally low-rise, with most buildings between one and three storeys high.

The town centre core along Southgate and Northgate is relatively uniform in terms of height with the majority of buildings being two and three storeys high. The narrowness of the historic plots and the overall uniform height of the majority of buildings, give an impression of vertical emphasis, and a strong sense of enclosure. The vast majority of town centre buildings are historic, however there is a small number of more recent infill developments, typically mid-late 20th century buildings. Some of these detract from the generally cohesive sense of historic character especially where lower rise or with a larger footprint and facade detailing which gives horizontal rather than vertical emphases. Examples include the Riverside Shopping Centre, 36 Southgate (Iceland) or 41 Southgate (Boots).

A couple of buildings located at the junction of Station Road and Southgate are one storey high. This site has been allocated as one of the development opportunities located at the strategic corner, at the entrance to the town centre.

The higher buildings that are more prominent from various locations within the town centre include:

- St Denys' Church, Sleaford
- Riverside Church, Sleaford URC on Southgate
- Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church on 27 Jermyn Street
- Money's Yard Mill
- 91 Southgate
- The Hub

There are two 19th century seed warehouses located opposite to Sleaford Station which are four+ storeys high and provide an interesting setting for the station and enhance the arrival experience. In the past, they were used by Charles Sharpe and Co. who exported seeds from Sleaford worldwide. Have been recently converted to residential use.

The Handley Monument on Southgate is about 20 metres tall, and provides a striking town centre feature that can be seen from various points along Southgate.

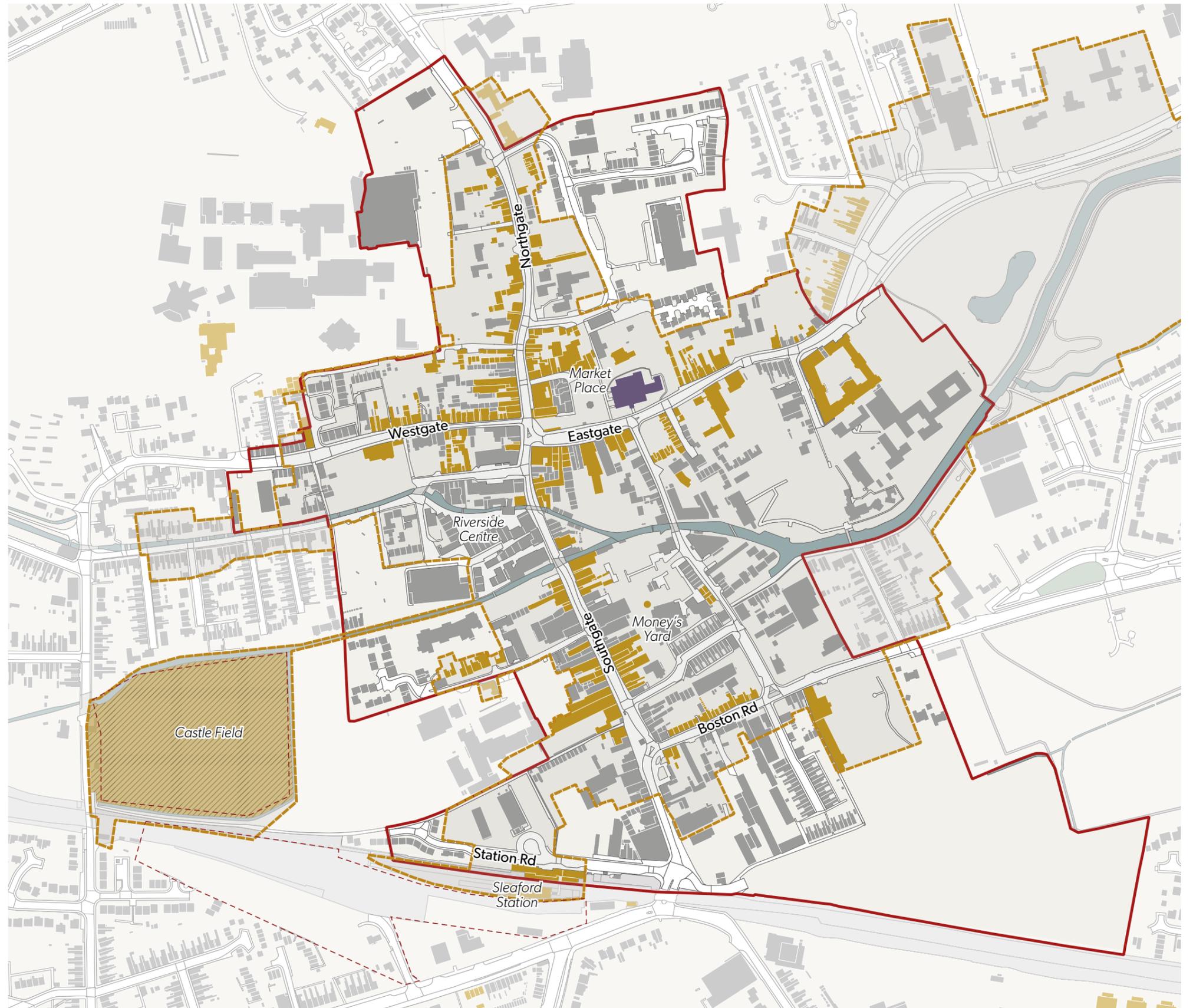
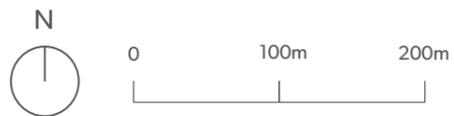
One of the most dominant views in the Sleaford area is of the Bass Maltings complex located off Mareham Lane, outside of the town centre area.

Sleaford Town Centre - heritage

1:4000

Key:-

-  Town Centre Boundary
-  Opportunity Sites outside of Town Centre
-  Conservation Area
-  Grade II and II* Listed Buildings
-  Grade I Listed Buildings
-  Scheduled Monument



3.3 Heritage

Historic development

Most of the town centre area of Sleaford is included within the Conservation Area.

The settlement was first recorded as ‘Eslaforde’ in the Domesday Book of the 11th century, which mentioned the location of a church and eight mills.

In the early 12th century the area gained recognition thanks to the Bishop of Lincoln who built his castle in Sleaford (today’s Castle Field). The main purpose of the castle was to store the produce from the Bishop’s land, administer his estates and provide accommodation.

Another significant event in the history of the town took place in the mid-12th century when Sleaford gained the right by Royal Decree to hold annual fairs and a weekly market in front of St. Denys’ Church.

Sleaford town centre encompasses the town’s historic core and is largely included within the Conservation Area. The area also includes the Sleaford Castle and open land alongside the River Slea, east of the central core.

Medieval burgage plots shown on the 18th and 19th century maps suggest that the medieval core of Sleaford comprised of Market Place and Southgate, with the adjoining parts of Eastgate, Westgate & Northgate. The area comprises a large number of Grade II listed buildings predominantly dated circa 18th and 19th century, Grade I listed St Denys’ church and the Sleaford Castle which is designated as a scheduled monument.

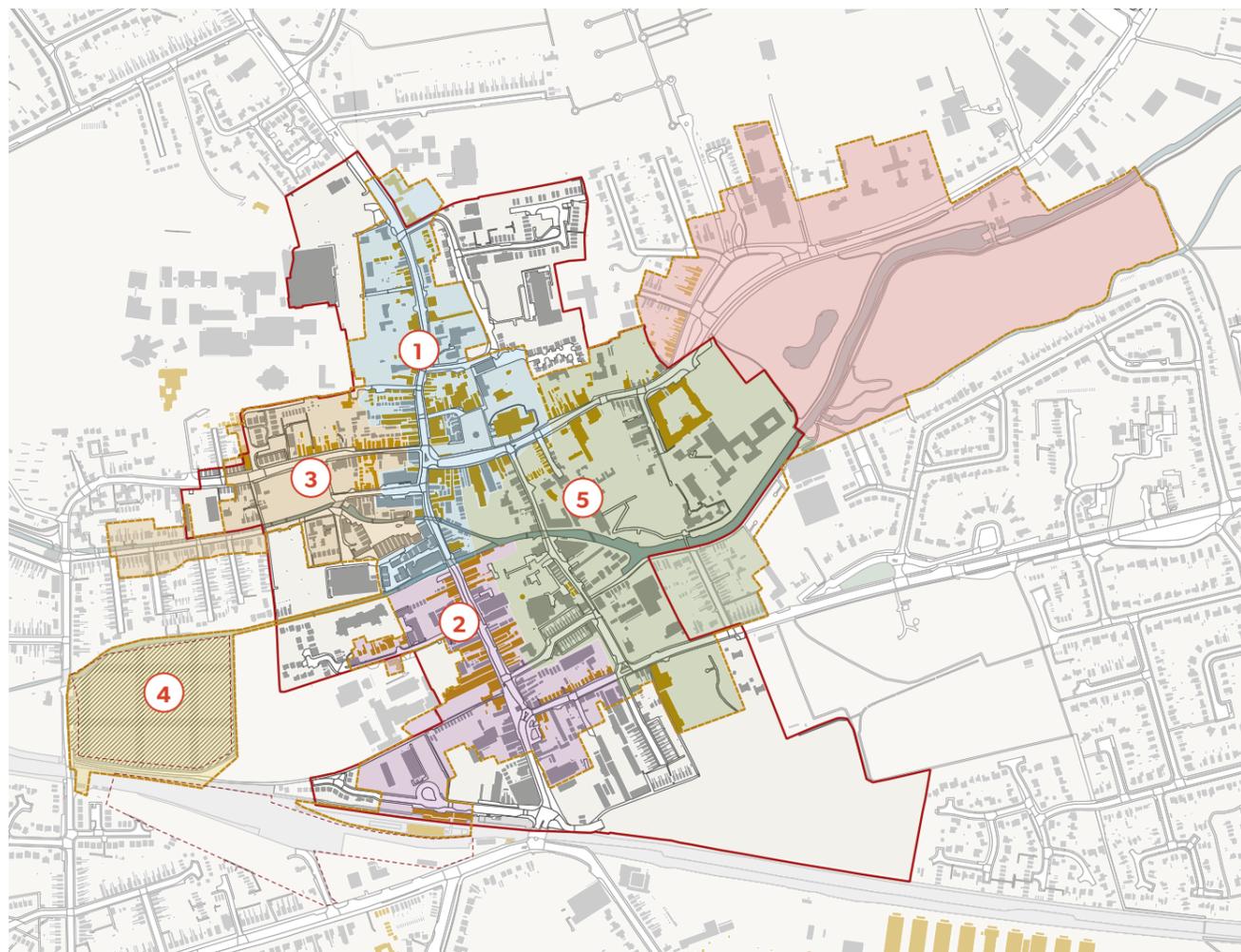
During the medieval period, several guilds were focussed in and around Sleaford, some of which were involved in trading, contributing to the expansion and commercial growth of the town that continued until the 19th century.

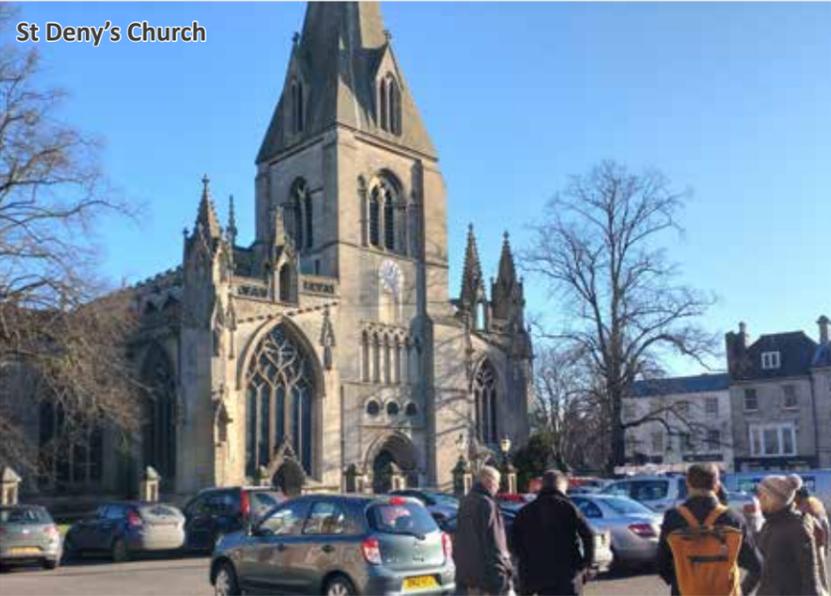
Character areas

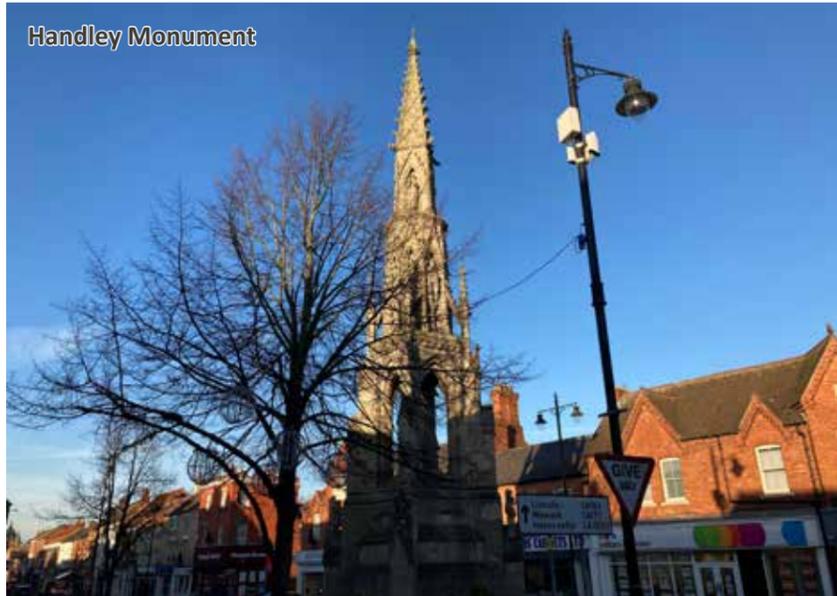
Sleaford Conservation Area Appraisal (2016) identifies five character areas within the town centre;

- 1.** Northgate Character Area comprises the northern and central core of the Conservation Area including Market Place characterised by consistent built form and buildings of two to three storeys many of which are Grade II listed. Northgate suffers from heavy traffic that has a harmful impact on the appearance and character at the street level.
- 2.** Southgate Character Area comprises the commercial core of Sleaford as well as the railway station and a few housing sites. Similarly to Northgate, the medieval burgage plots are still legible along Southgate. The 19th century Handley Monument provides an attractive backdrop for this part of the town. The area around Sleaford station suffers from poor activation and low-quality public realm however the station buildings themselves are Grade II listed. Grade II* listed Maltings Brewery Estate is located south of the character area.
- 3.** West Banks Character Area involves the western part of the town centre and comprises mainly residential buildings predominantly of a domestic scale arranged along Westgate and West Banks and around informal courtyards. Some commercial uses can be found on Westgate as the area is becoming more popular amongst the residents.
- 4.** Castle Character Area contains the site of Sleaford Castle which is designated as a Scheduled Monument and maintained as a public open space. The river runs along the top end of the site and the views of the castle are limited by the trees. The information about this heritage asset on site is poor and limited to a single sign.
- 5.** River-Eastgate Character Area – includes a broad mix of buildings of various scales and uses such as residential, commercial and civic buildings (e.g. District Council Offices and the Hub). The area is characterised by extensive surface parking sites. The River Slea provides a green pedestrian route through the area.

Sleaford Character Areas, from CAA (2016)







Heritage Assets

Some of the prominent historic structures include the following:

1. Sleaford Castle - A scheduled monument site and Grade II listed remains of the 12th century castle.

This medieval castle was built by the Bishop of Lincoln in the early 1120s. Sleaford Castle was not built as a defensive structure but served mainly as a place to store produce from the Bishop's land.

It was most likely habitable as late as 1555, however it fell into disrepair during the latter half of the 16th century. It is known that two English monarchs have stayed at the castle, King John and Henry VIII.

2. St Denys' Church and Market Place - Grade I Listed church erected circa 1180. It is located on the east side of the Market Place opposite the Carre Hospital almshouses. The front entrance faces onto the historic market place.

A church has been present on the site since circa 1086. The oldest parts of the present building include the tower and spire, which date to the late 12th and early 13th centuries.

The church was rebuilt when struck by lightning in 1884.

The church is a Grade I listed building. The stone broach spire is one of the earliest examples of its kind in England.

3. WWI and WWII memorial - Grade II Listed memorial erected in 1922.

4. 17 Market Place - Grade II Listed early 19th century 3 storey house.

5. Handley Memorial - Grade II Listed memorial on Southgate erected circa 1850.

6. Money's Mill - Grade II Listed tower mill, first mentioned in 1798.

7. The Bass Maltings complex - Grade II* Listed at Sleaford was completed in 1907. The planning of the development dates back to 1880.

8. Sleaford Station - Built in 1857 and extended in 1882.

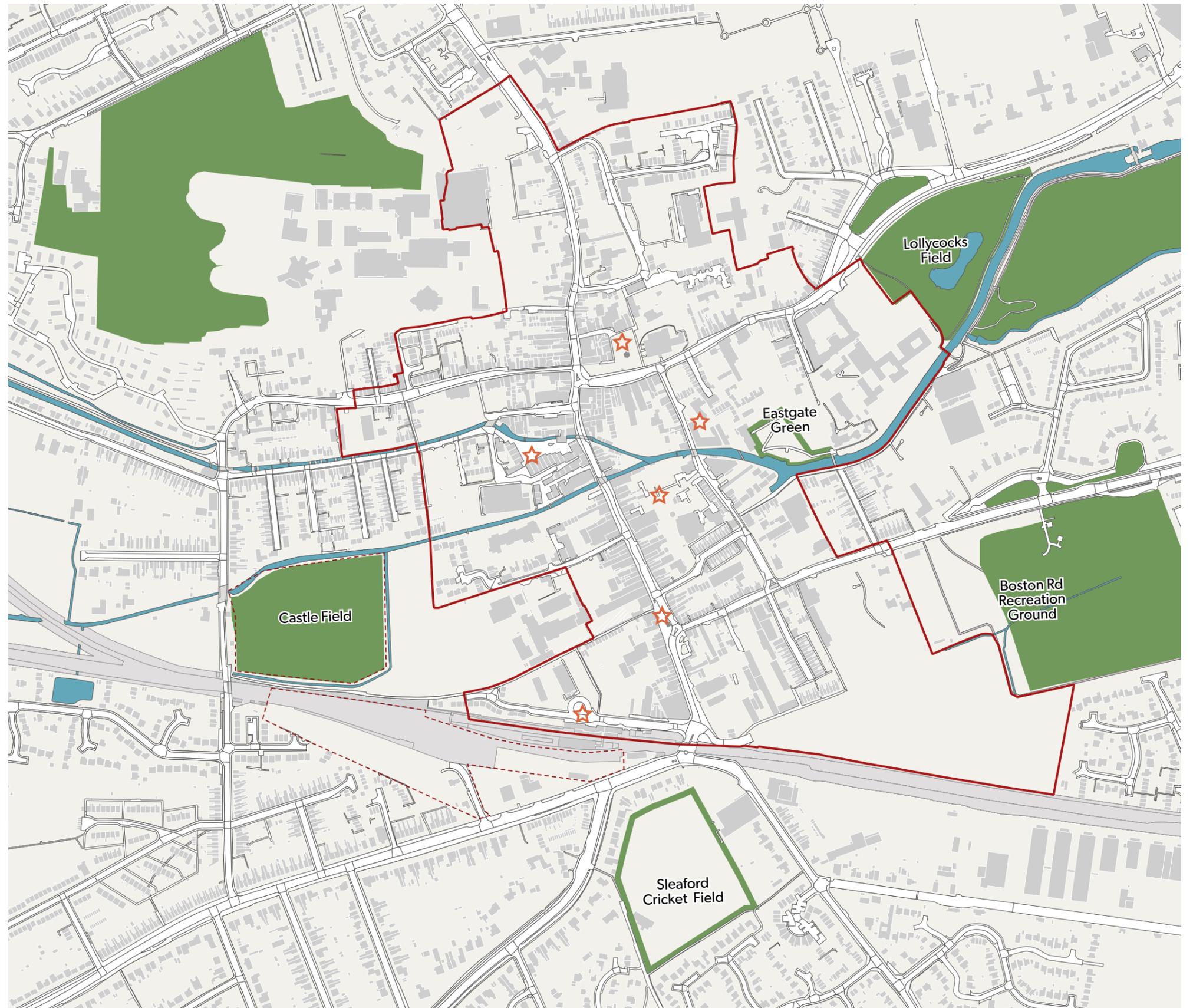
9. No 33 Northgate - Grade II* Listed Manor House, Rhodes House, wall and gate piers to the cobbled yard and garden wall to no 33. A group of buildings from the 16th century extended and redeveloped onwards.

10. Sleaford Navigation House (Visitor Centre) - Grade II Listed small mid 19th century Tudor style building of 2 storeys, on Carre St.

Sleaford's heritage assets including the above and other non-listed buildings make a significant contribution to the town's sense of place and contribute to quality of townscape.

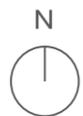
Sleaford Town Centre - open space provision

1:5000



Key:-

-  Town Centre Boundary
-  Opportunity Sites outside of Town Centre
-  Local Green Space / Important Open Space
-  Other Recreational Open Spaces
-  Public Spaces



0 100m 200m



3.4 Natural Environment and Green Open Space

The Central Lincolnshire Green Infrastructure Study identifies a deficiency in natural green space sites in the Sleaford area. Sleaford Town Centre is lacking in green open spaces especially.

Castle Field is a large green open space available within a short walking distance from the town centre and it serves as an informal recreational asset. It is connected with the town centre area via a well-used, although badly lit and unwelcoming, pedestrian route accessed from Southgate.

Eastgate Green, situated between Eastgate Car Park and the River Sleat, provides a small grassed area with many mature trees. It enhances the setting of the adjacent Hub building.

Lollycocks Field and Boston Road Recreation Ground provide green amenities in the eastern part of Sleaford.

The number of trees is limited within the town centre. The main mature trees can be found in Moneys Yard and Market Place. A few trees on Southgate enhance the setting of The Handley Monument.

The Sleaford Conservation Appraisal highlights that open, green spaces within the townscape are few, “so the ones that do exist make an important contribution to the character of the conservation area”.

The topography of the surrounding open landscape is generally flat which allows the prevailing south-westerly winds to blow unrestrictedly.

The main water feature within Sleaford is the River Sleat. It passes through Sleaford via two watercourses, the River Sleat and the Nine Foot River. The river provides an important natural town centre asset however currently the river isn’t well activated. Passing under Southgate and Carre Street the river is largely unnoticeable.

There are public footpaths running along the length of the River, forming a green corridor linking the town with

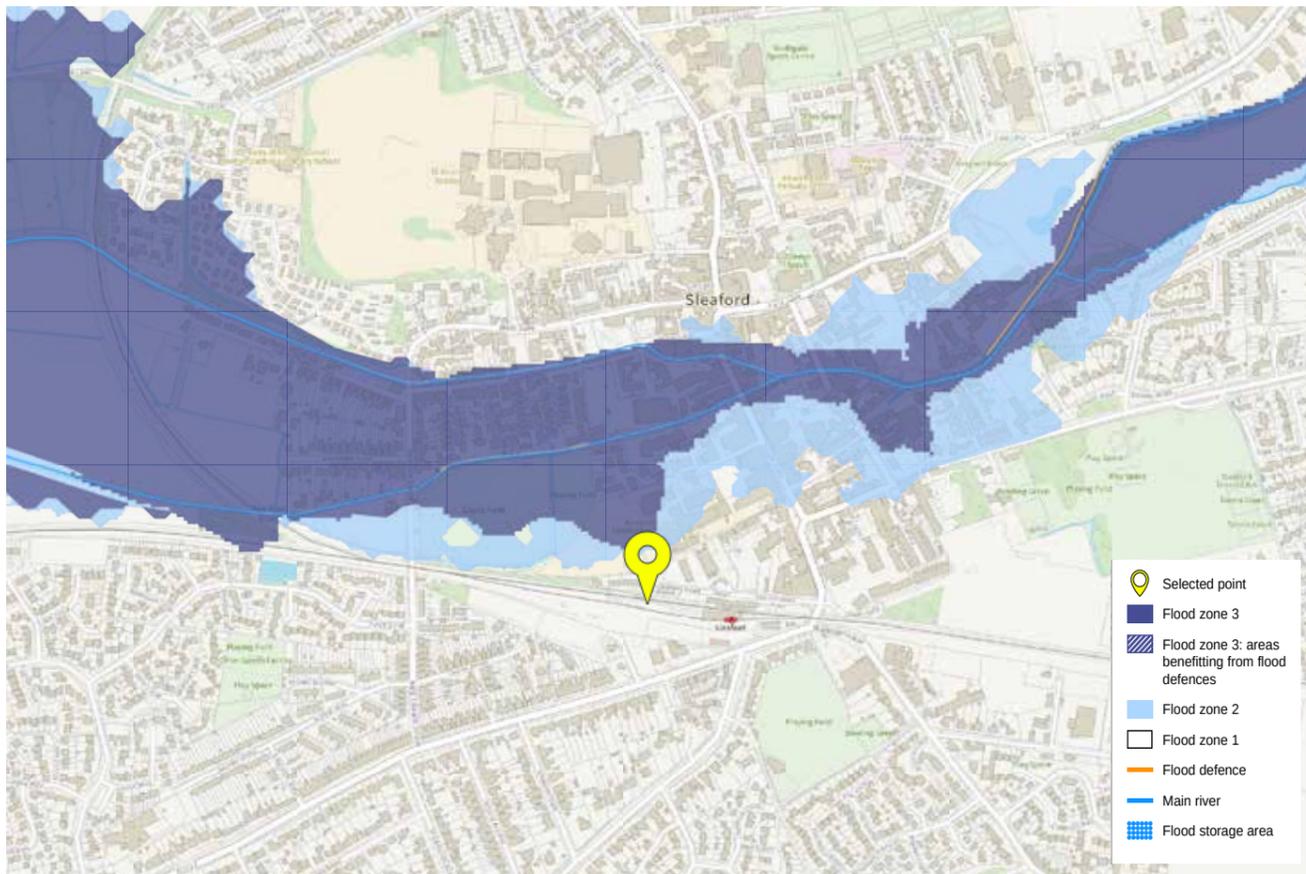
the surrounding countryside, however the footpaths do not continue through the town centre.

2011 Masterplan proposed an East-West Leisure Link along the River Sleat through the town centre and connecting the town to the countryside and the neighbouring villages.

Fluvial flood risk areas are largely limited to areas in close proximity to the River Sleat. The Environment Agency’s classified as Flood Zone 3 areas. Smaller areas within the town are at risk of surface water flooding and are included in Flood Zone 2 as shown on the map to the left.

Historically, the supply of both wind and water power had a great influence on the built environment and commercial activities in Sleaford.

Flood zone mapping, Environment Agency

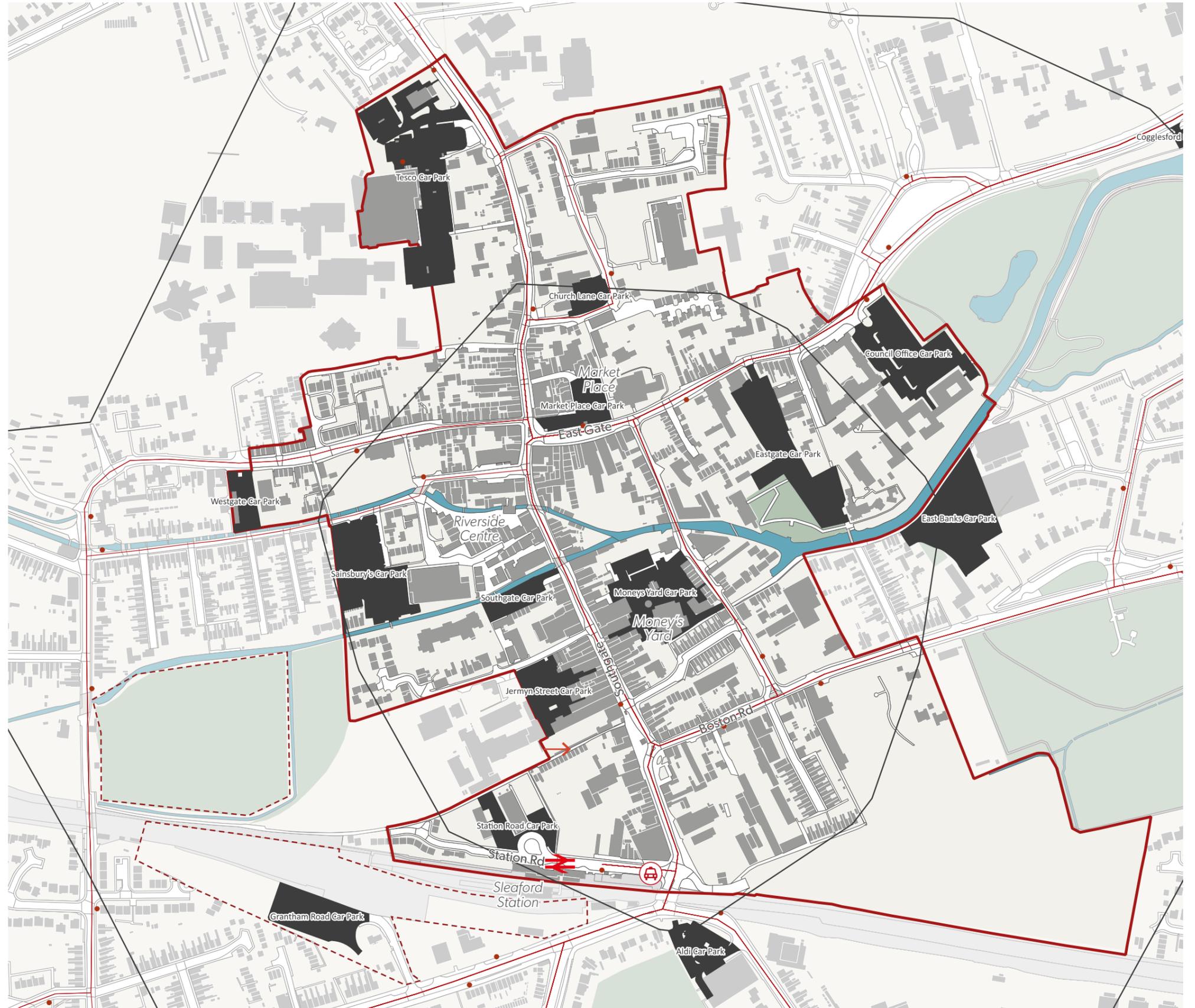


Sleaford Town Centre - movement and transport

1:4000

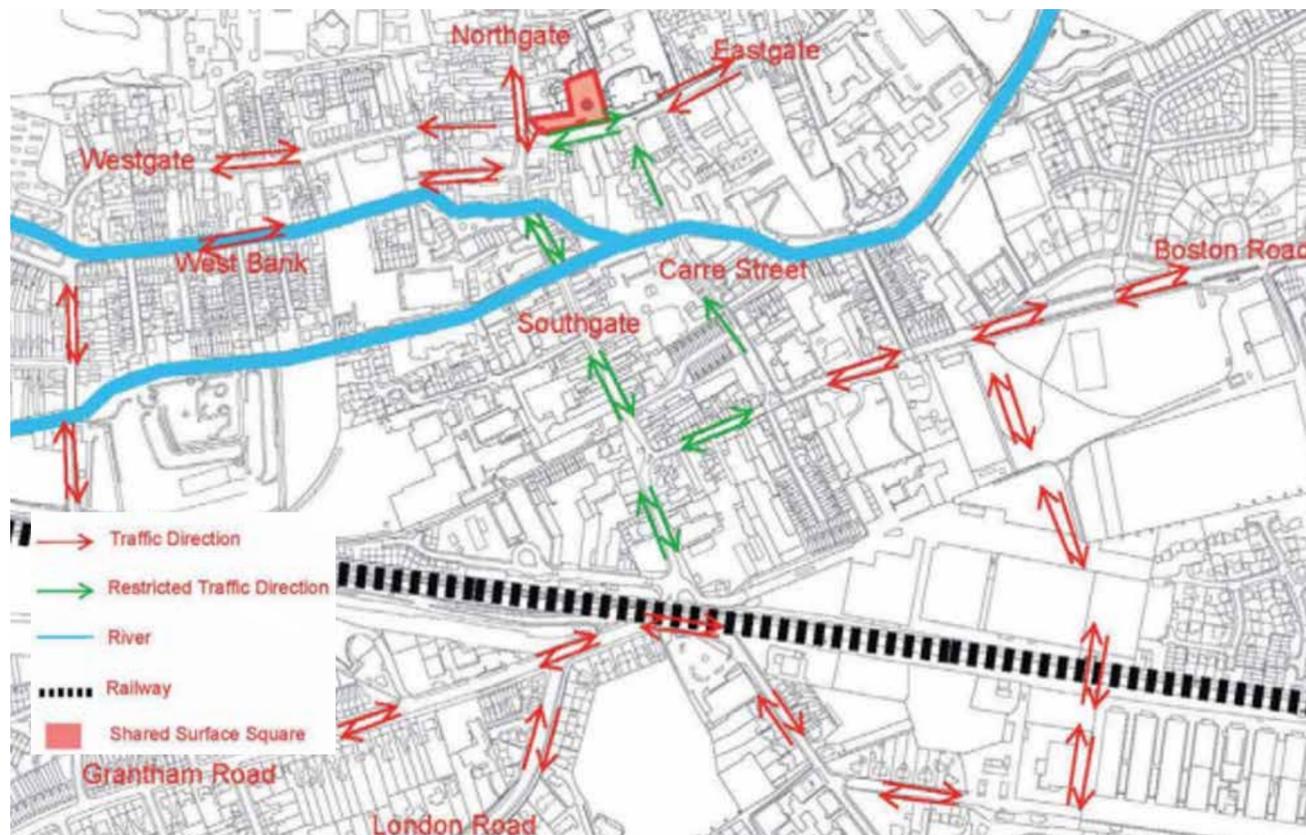
Key:-

-  Town Centre Boundary
-  Additional Sites Boundary
-  Car Parks
-  Bus Routes
-  Walking Catchment
-  Bus Stops





Highways circulation changes proposed in the 2011 Masterplan



3.5 Highways & Parking

Highways

Private cars remain the dominant mode of travel both in Sleaford and in the surrounding areas, with 74.9% of journeys to work made as either a driver or passenger. Albeit comparator towns and the wider region record higher car mode share (78.5% and 77.8% in Boston and Lincolnshire respectively), the car mode share has been steadily growing.

The current highway layout which sees traffic navigating in a clockwise gyratory system along East Gate, Carre Street, Boston Road and Southgate, is significantly restricted by the urban fabric of the town. As noted in the 2011 Masterplan and the Sleaford Transport Strategy, the town centre highway network, particularly the gyratory, is already congested and it will continue to be the focus of significant additional congestion in future years.

The Sleaford Transport Strategy Evidence Base notes that the factors contributing to congestion in the town centre are:

- School drop-off and pick-up locations within the town centre
- Southgate level crossing and its proximity to the monument junction
- Central location of car parks and abundance of car parking spaces
- Constrained route choice for traffic travelling north-south

Anecdotally, there has been a recognition of a number of journeys which could be otherwise routed via the Sleaford Bypass being made across the town centre, due to poor placement of road signs, which direct drivers across the town centre.

Further, the 2011 Masterplan highlights that the current transport network is geared towards drivers, with the

one-way system encouraging high speeds, especially at junctions. This, as noted in the preceding sections, has contributed to multiple fatal and severe collisions over the recent years (as referred to in the Preliminary Cycling Walking Network Plan). With the overarching objectives of improving road safety, multiple traffic calming measures have been proposed across the town centre, including proposals for a 20mph zone.

To deliver the overarching objective of reducing and rationalising car travel in Sleaford in favour of more sustainable options, the 2011 Masterplan proposed the removal of the one-way system (with the exception of Carre Street, shown to the left), creation and promotion of perimeter car parks to replace centrally located ones and creation of a link road - the South East Sleaford Regeneration Route (SESRR) - to replace the level crossing at the southern end of Southgate.

While the 2011 Masterplan proposals were echoed in the Sleaford Transport Strategy, alongside a package of measures aiming at improving traffic on the Sleaford Bypass (Holdingham roundabout and Sleaford Rugby Club junction between A17 and A153, both introduced), reviewing and optimising traffic signals and signage, rationalisation of parking and improvements to King Edward Street Crossing.

It is noted that LCC are currently preparing an updated transport strategy for Sleaford.

Engagement has been undertaken between Steer and Lincolnshire County Council to ensure alignment between this project and the updated transport strategy. LCC are in the process of carrying out further transport modelling to validate the proposed changes to traffic circulation.

Parking

There are over 1,400 publicly accessible car parking spaces within or near the town centre. Public parking usage was considered as part of the People, Places & Parking Review published in 2018, providing good overview of existing and future usage. Although the average weekday peak observed parking occupancy was 78%, the 2018 study identified a range of occupancies in individual car parks from 88% at Eastgate car park down to 14% at Grantham Road car park. On average, the observed parking usage was lower on Saturday, with average occupancy of 46%.

It is good practice to plan for an overall maximum occupancy of 85%, as this provides some flexibility for exceptional peaks of demand. Based upon Table 3, it would therefore be possible for Sleaford town centre to function effectively with fewer than 1,200 spaces (versus over 1,400 spaces currently provided, assuming that the Council Office car park remains closed to the public on weekdays).

Assuming that hybrid working remains, it is likely that there will be less need for long-stay parking in Sleaford town centre in the future. However, this is likely to be counterbalanced to some extent by an increase in short-stay parking as retail/leisure activity in the town centre picks up. It is recommended that periodic monitoring is undertaken as mode and frequency of travel stabilises post-pandemic.

The over-provision of car parking spaces alongside their central location is said to be a cause of congestion, as noted in both the 2011 Masterplan and the 2014 Sleaford Transport Strategy. Both documents proposed to create perimeter car parks, surrounding the town centre, as shown in the figure on the right.

The strategic need to rationalise car parking, both public and private, is found in the underlying strategic documents – the 2013 Central Lincolnshire Local Plan states that a balanced approach to parking provision, when used as part of a package of measures, can promote sustainable transport choices and provide attractive and safe environments whilst ensuring that sufficient parking is provided to meet local needs.

Sleaford Town Centre Car Park Occupancy (2018)

Name of car park	No. of spaces	Average weekday occupancy	Maximum weekday occupancy	Average Saturday occupancy	Maximum Saturday occupancy
Grantham Rd	100	14%	18%	5%	7%
Station Rd	36	46%	77%	113%	130%
East Banks	137	82%	100%	27%	36%
C'ford Mill	12	22%	60%	10%	30%
Eastgate	172	88%	100%	76%	93%
Westgate	27	84%	100%	44%	54%
Market Place	50	60%	82%	41%	56%
Church Lane	13	57%	100%	48%	92%
Moneys Yard	97	66%	91%	57%	79%
Southgate	40	55%	79%	66%	97%
Jermyn St	70	62%	100%	48%	69%
Sainsbury	143	44%	58%	64%	82%
Tesco	340	69%	86%	55%	65%
Lidl / Homebase	171	36%	45%	44%	61%
Council Office	162	N/A	N/A	11%	25%
Total/Average	1,408 (Weekdays) 1,570 (Weekends)	78%	-	46%	-

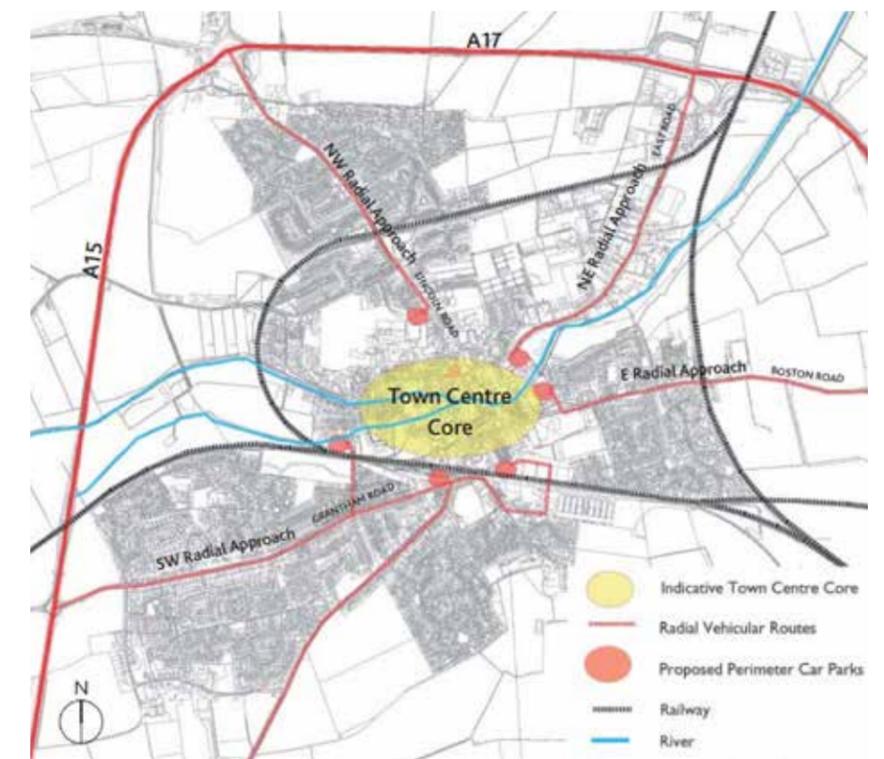
Residential Parking Standards

	Other Urban and Suburban Areas (including wider Lincoln urban area, main towns and market towns)	Villages and Rural Area
1 bed dwelling (C3)	1	1
2 bed dwelling (C3)	2	2
3 bed dwelling (C3)	2	3
4 bed dwelling (C3)	2	3
5+ bed dwelling (C3)	3	3
Flatted Development	1 plus visitor allowance	1 plus visitor allowance
C4 HMOs	1 per bedroom	1 per bedroom
Sheltered Housing Cat 1	1 space per unit plus 1 per warden plus 1 per 5 dwellings visitor spaces plus 1 per 10 disabled spaces. *	
Sheltered Housing Cat 2		
Extra Care		
Residential care homes for elderly	1 space per resident staff plus 1 space per 5 beds for visitors 1 per 20 disabled*	1 space per resident staff plus 1 space per 3 beds for visitors 1 per 20 disabled*
Residential institutions	1 space per FTE staff plus 1 per 5 beds visitor spaces*	1 space per resident staff plus 1 space per 3 beds for visitors *
Halls of Residence	To be agreed on a case by case basis, 1 space per 40 beds as a starting point	

Car Parking Requirements

The Adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan does not contain specific standards for vehicle and cycle parking in new developments. It has been highlighted that the current policy approach would be improved by the inclusion of specific parking standards to provide a more robust position for the Central Lincolnshire Authorities. The 2021 Local Plan Review Draft Residential Car Parking Standards Evidence Paper 'Preferred Option' residential parking standards for Central Lincolnshire are shown in the table to the right.

2011 Masterplan Proposed Perimeter Car Parks



3.6 Travel Behaviour

Travel Flows

An investigation of key employment origin-destination corridors provides an overview of the proportion of inter-city traffic. At the time of the 2011 Census, just half of those who lived in Sleaford worked in the town. Aside from Sleaford and North Kesteven as a whole, the top three work destinations for Sleaford’s residents were Lincoln, Boston and South Lindsey. Similarly, those working in Sleaford were most likely to commute from the town itself, followed by the wider North Kesteven district, Lincoln, Boston and South Lindsey.

Discussions with Highways officers indicate that the increase in the evening peak traffic flows corresponds to a decrease in the number of public transport users. The causes are likely:

- Ongoing Covid-19 pandemic resulting in lower confidence in public transport travel, especially in the winter months
- Limited number of public transport services, especially in the evening peak, resulting in captive car travel

Impact of Covid-19

Based on 2011 Census, 10.2% of the population predominantly worked from home, significantly higher than the national average (~4%). The Covid-19 pandemic has undoubtedly accelerated the long-term trend of increased working from home. Data from the Office for National Statistics indicates that almost one third of UK workers intend to work from home more often after the end of the pandemic than they did before. Therefore, it is likely that in the future, more residents will work more flexibly, travel to work less frequently, generate fewer trips and overall fewer vehicle-based journeys compared with historic trip generation and mode share trends.

Assuming a higher than before propensity to work from home for workers in office-based industries, such as professional scientific & technical activities, financial and insurance activities and information & communication industry, provides a further reduction in trips. If 40% of employees travel in the peak hour on a typical day, which takes into account holidays, part-time working or other flexible working arrangements and making an empirical assessment of what proportion of time could be spent home working shows a potential for a 10% reduction in peak hour vehicle trips which would be achieved on average in Sleaford through encouraging hybrid working.

Although anecdotal information shows that evening peak traffic has recovered to pre-pandemic levels, morning peak is slightly below the pre-pandemic average. However, this is only true on local roads, as traffic is said to be exceeding pre-pandemic levels on key roads. At the same time, while walking has recovered to a pre-Covid baseline, public transport ridership remains below historic levels, oscillating at ca. 70-80% of the historic average.

In this light, support towards work from home measures or introduction of more flexible start and end times may help reduce congestion and create space for town centres to be used more widely for leisure and recreation, rather than for commuting.

Top 10 Origins of People Employed in Sleaford and North Kesteven

Place of Residence	Works in Sleaford	Works in Sleaford	Works in North Kesteven	Works in North Kesteven
*Sleaford	2,780	45%	4,542	14%
North Kesteven	5,067	83%	19,805	62%
Lincoln	288	5%	6,795	21%
Boston	233	4%	807	3%
East Lindsey	183	3%	1,051	3%
South Holland	159	3%	375	1%
Newark and Sherwood	80	1%	917	3%
West Lindsey	99	2%	1,978	6%
Peterborough	19	0%	82	0%
Rutland	-	0%	39	0%

*Sleaford residents/employees are included in North Kesteven totals

Top 10 Work Destinations for Residents of Sleaford and North Kesteven

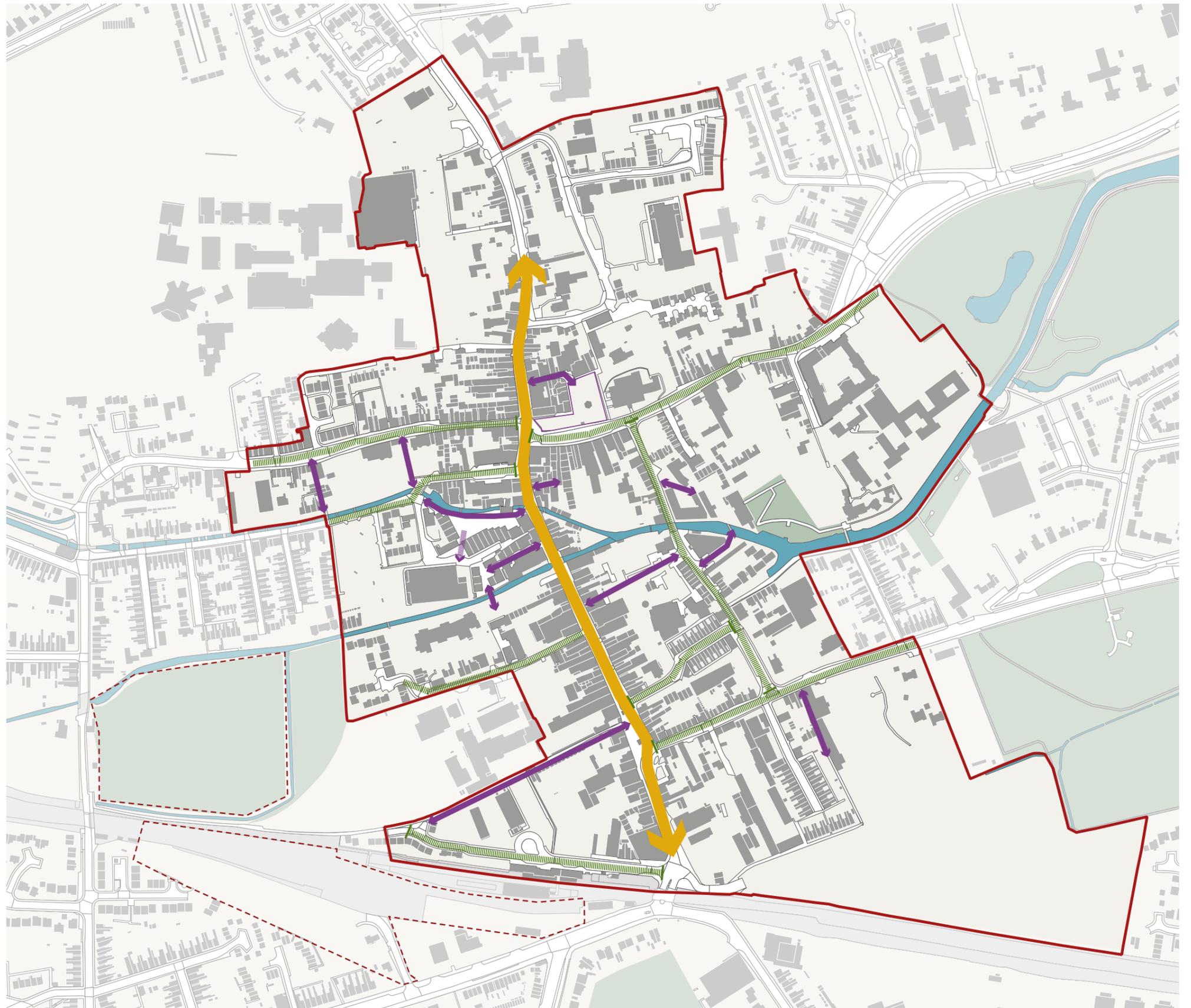
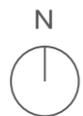
Place of Work	Lives in Sleaford	Lives in Sleaford	Lives in North Kesteven	Lives in North Kesteven
*Sleaford	2,780	46%	5,067	14%
North Kesteven	4,542	74%	19,805	54%
Lincoln	508	8%	11,050	30%
Boston	351	6%	1,121	3%
East Lindsey	225	4%	1,396	4%
South Holland (incl. Spalding)	167	3%	509	1%
Newark and Sherwood (incl. Newark on Trent)	100	2%	1,338	4%
West Lindsey	89	1%	1,291	4%
Peterborough	72	1%	238	1%
Rutland	48	1%	116	0%

Sleaford Town Centre - walking and cycling

1:4000

Key:-

-  Town Centre Boundary
-  Opportunity Sites outside of Town Centre
-  Primary Street / Retail Core
-  Secondary Streets
-  Pedestrian Links
-  Main Public Space





3.7 Pedestrian Environment & Cycling

Pedestrian Network

Due to its small size, relatively contained and traversable town centre and flat relief, Sleaford presents itself as a walkable town. These attributes contribute to the share of trips made on foot (15.6% in 2011) exceeding that of comparator towns in the area (e.g. Boston's 10%) and the wider region (12.2% and 11.2% for Lincolnshire and East Midlands respectively), albeit it should be noted that the walking mode share has decreased between 2001 and 2011.

Southgate, which serves as a high street, constitutes as the pedestrian spine, with further key links provided by East Gate, Boston Road and Carre Street. Footways along these streets are often narrow – insufficient for two users with reduced mobility to pass each other. While pedestrian crossings are provided at several points along the main roads, pedestrians are required to navigate traffic at key junctions – no dedicated crossing point is provided across all or certain arms of junctions between these roads. For example, no dedicated crossing point is provided at the busy junction of Southgate and Boston Road. A number of severe and fatal collisions involving pedestrians was noted at or near key junctions, highlighting the need for road safety improvements. As such, travel along these roads can seem intimidating to pedestrians, potentially discouraging them from walking. As noted in the Preliminary Sleaford Walking and Cycling Network Plan (WCNP), heavy traffic along these roads can be a deterrent to walking and cycling due to the actual and perceived risks.

While several smaller alleyways and passageways are available to those wishing to travel on the east-west axis, these are often poorly signposted, or require pedestrians to meander across car parks, instead of following formal paths/key desire lines. Several of these links, such as Nag's Head Passage connecting Southgate with Castle Field, are flanked by buildings or fences,

with long stretches between intermediate exits. As such, these links may be avoided by people travelling alone or at night.

Beyond the town centre, key issues arise at the level crossing at the southern end of Southgate. Pedestrians, along with other travellers, are held up at the level crossing up to four times per hour, hindering free flow of traffic between the town centre and the residential southern part.

A pedestrian and cycling underpass is provided at Castle Causeway/King Edward Street. The crossing lacks a good quality pedestrian connection to the town centre. In view of this deficiency, the WCNP proposed to improve the path, widening it where required and removing part of the fence to provide access to the end of Station Road. The desire to better connect Castle Field with Sleaford town centre is in line with the overarching CLLP, which highlights the need to enhance linkages between settlements and to areas of natural green space and to the surrounding countryside.

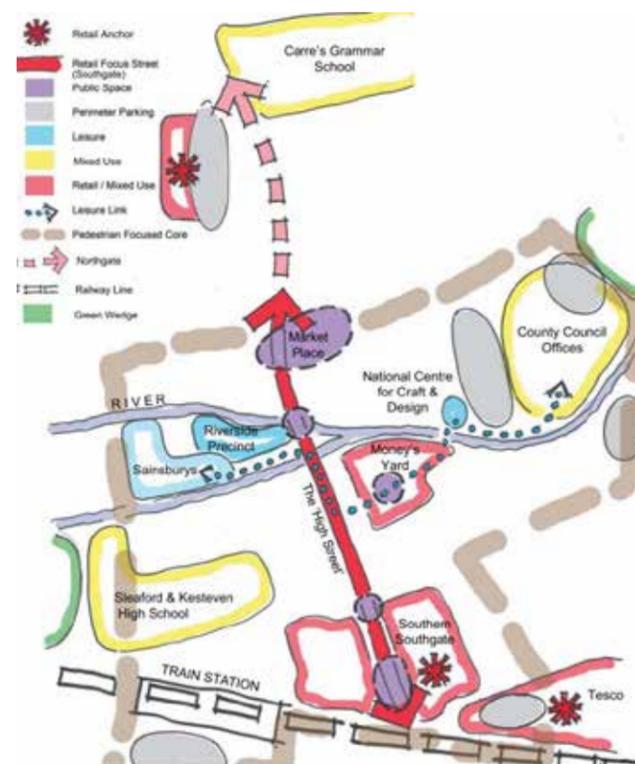
Further to existing crossings, while a pedestrian and cycle bridge over the railway line at Sleaford station was proposed to provide unconstrained movement into the town centre (including in the Sleaford Transport Strategy), these proposals were put on hold. In addition, the 2011 Masterplan and later strategic documents were put forward to introduce a link road connecting Mareham Lane and Boston Road across the Tesco development site – the South East Sleaford Regeneration Route (SESRR). The link road was shown as connecting to the potential strategic pedestrian/cycle link traversing southern Sleaford. The plans were ultimately rejected, and Tesco withdrew from developing the area in 2015. In 2018, fresh proposals were approved by North Kesteven District Council for Tesco to develop the site, but progress has since stalled.

In regard to pedestrian environment, the overarching objective of the 2011 Masterplan was to create a series of projects to ‘Create a pedestrian focused environment’, especially:

- Transforming the street environment and appearance along Southgate and other key streets creating quality links between destinations
- Improving public spaces and creating high quality settings for the town centre’s assets starting with Market Place and its junction with Southgate to create a showpiece project
- Creating pedestrian/cycle routes that extend to surrounding communities and connect to the town centre

The observations and objectives noted in the 2011 Masterplan, which called for improved network following key desire lines, across the railway crossings and along key roads, remain applicable to the current pedestrian network.

2011 Masterplan Pedestrian Core Proposals



Cycle Network

Due to the aforementioned small size and flat relief, Sleaford’s levels of cycling to work exceed the national average, with 4% of all trips to work made by bike, albeit a significant decrease from 6.2% in 2001. While Sleaford exceeds the national average of 3.3% it lags behind comparator towns in the area, (e.g. Boston with 7.1% cycling mode share) and wider Lincolnshire (4.4%).

The existing cycle infrastructure in Sleaford is highly fragmented, as shown in the existing cycle network map opposite. National Cycle Network 151 runs from central Sleaford, along North Gate, stopping short of Leasingham. Further, East Gate, Boston Road, Grantham Road and London Road are local cycle routes with designated cycle lanes (on street or along footways).

Similar to the constraints encountered by pedestrians, high traffic flows on key roads combined with limited segregated network (including conflict with motor vehicles at key junctions), constraints at the level crossings at the southern edge of town and limited cycle parking infrastructure can discourage residents from cycling.

The package of measures proposed in the 2011 Masterplan and in the 2014 Sleaford Transport Strategy focused on addressing these underlying challenges:

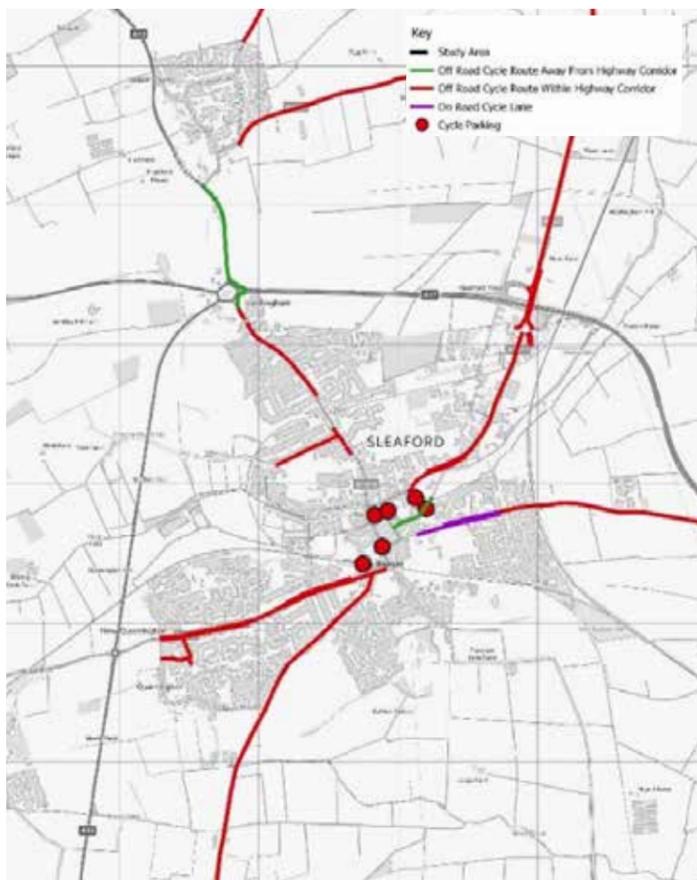
- Addressing poor existing cycle parking provision, including a review to place Cycle Hubs
- Improving wayfinding and resolving issues surrounding inconsistent signage
- Improving and increasing the dedicated crossing points, including at Carre Street/Boston Road

- junction and several locations on Grantham Road, East Gate, Boston Road and London Road,
- Supporting Bikeability and BikeAble + Bikelt schemes and cycle facilities funding for employment areas
- Considering the introduction of a cycle hire scheme

In relation to specific routes suggested in the aforementioned documents, 2011 Masterplan highlights the need for an ‘inner ring’ facilitating movements around the town, fed into by improved routes from the surrounding areas.

While the underlying issues highlighted in the 2011 Masterplan continue to exist, the preliminary CWNP updates and expands the proposals, as shown in the two plans opposite.

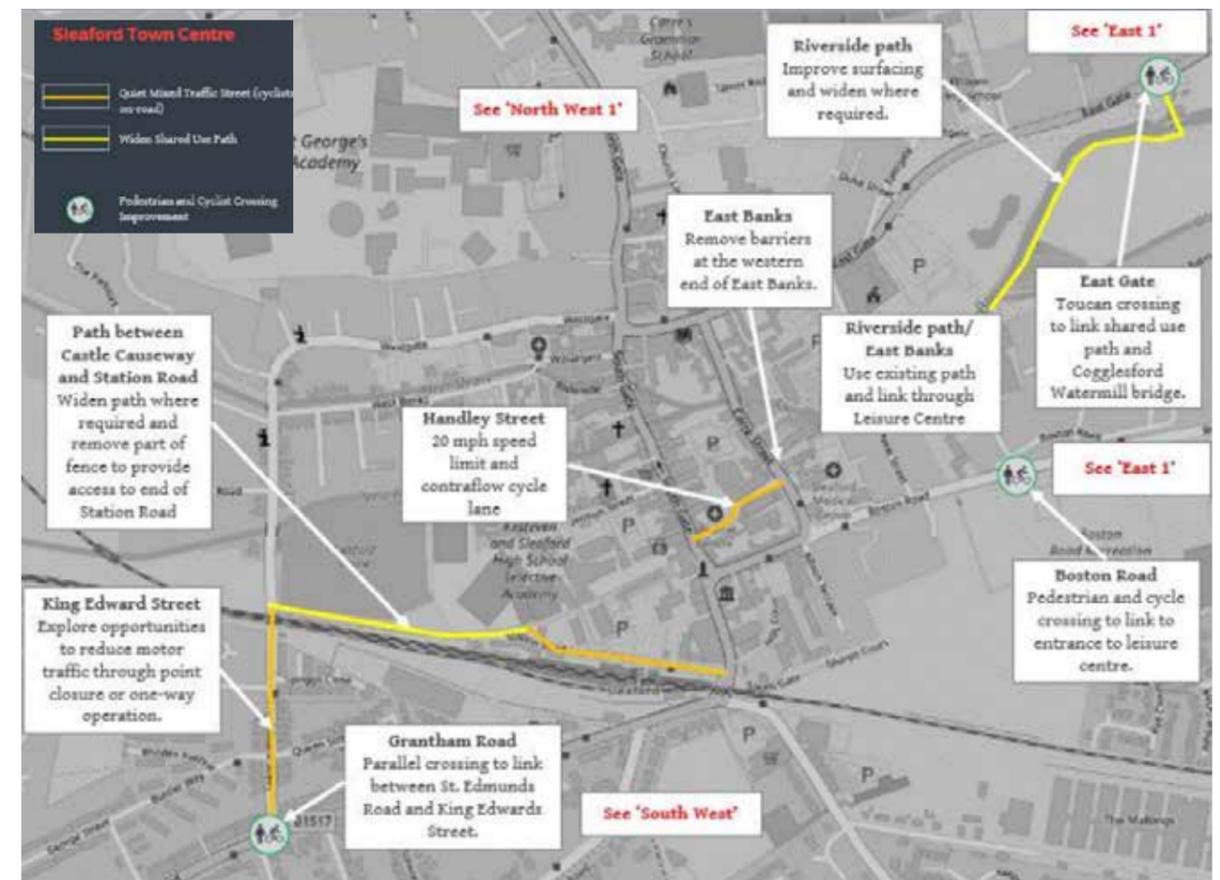
Existing Cycle Network (wsp)



Proposed Cycle Network (wsp)



Proposed Changes to the Pedestrian and Cycle Network (wsp)



3.8 Public Transport

Buses

Despite over 20 bus routes passing through Sleaford town centre, Sleaford’s bus mode share in 2011 represented only 2.2% of travels, slightly below Boston’s 2.3% and Lincolnshire’s 2.8%, although anecdotally over 70% of schoolchildren travel to school by bus.

As noted in the Sleaford Transport Strategy, this is partially a result of a spatially extensive network which operates with a low frequency. Most bus routes offer infrequent services, often limited to specific either morning or midday, with some offering only one daily service in each direction, catering to school or work start and end times. Travel outside of these times – in the evenings or on the weekends – is often impossible. There is a maximum of nine services per day (routes 31/31X/IT1), with no services running later than 18:15, and only route 27 running a semi-regular weekend service. A summary of available bus services is shown in the adjacent table.

There are additional bus services not listed in the table serving Sleaford. These either do not approach the town centre or do not operate on a daily basis, e.g.:

- 36: Boston to Sleaford – one service every first Wednesday of the month.
- 44: Lincoln to Swineshead – one service every second Wednesday of the month.
- 33: Lincoln to Bourne – one service every third Wednesday of the month.

While most routes pass in the vicinity of Sleaford station, at the cluster of bus stops along Station Road, there is no dedicated bus station serving the town, and there is little physical passenger information helping users identify the available services and points of departure.

Providing improved bus services with more frequent journeys making it a viable alternative to the car, was a key objective of both the 2011 Masterplan and the Sleaford Transport Strategy. Both documents proposed

reconfiguration and/or upgrade of the into town (IT) services, including the introduction of the third IT bus service, since completed. Further, the documents outlined the need for improved and more centrally located bus waiting facilities, prioritisation of buses at junctions and re-location of school pickup/drop-off. Despite the introduction of new IT services, calls for creation of an augmented, “more of a ‘turn up-and-go’ network” remain valid.

The relatively limited current bus service provision is a result of current usage and the limited scope to subsidise bus services. Nevertheless, as activity in the town centre increases and the new strategic residential developments are built out, it is likely that it will be possible for a more extensive bus network to be operated funded by a combination of increased passenger revenue and S106 contributions.

Rail

Sleaford station is located at the southern edge of Sleaford town centre. As noted in the Sleaford Transport Strategy, although the station is well placed on the rail network including hourly services to Nottingham, Lincoln, and links to East Coast Mainline (see adjacent table), with rail responsible for 2.3% travel to work, higher than comparator Boston’s 0.3% or Lincolnshire’s 1%.

Despite a relatively good service provision, the rail station environment is poor and uninviting. The station is not step free – although the eastbound platform can be accessed from street level, the existing footbridge linking Station Road with the central, westbound platform is not accessible. While a pedestrian and cycle bridge across the station has been previously proposed, as discussed in the pedestrian connectivity section, the proposals are currently on hold.

To better connect the station with the town centre, the 2011 Masterplan proposed a focused pedestrian core link joining station forecourt with Nag’s Head Passage, a link which was retained in the CWNP proposals, albeit following a more westward arrangement.

Bus Routes in Central Sleaford

Bus	Origin/Destination	Weekday Frequency (per day)	Weekday Hours of Operation	Weekend Frequency (per day)	Weekend Hours of Operation
27	Grantham / Sleaford	5	0730-1725	5	0740-1710
31/31X	Lincoln / Sleaford	9	0655-1815	-	-
37	Billingborough / Sleaford	2	0835-1157	-	-
55	Sleaford / Billinghway / Martin	1	0935-1500	1 (one-way)	0935
66	Martin Moor / Sleaford	3	0850-1735	3 (sat only)	0850-1230
508D*	Sleaford / Billingborough	1	0710-1713	-	-
S156S	Sleaford / Grantham	4	0735-1644	-	-
SL06	Billingborough / Sleaford	1	0735	-	-
SL07	Helpringham / Sleaford	1	0744	-	-
IT1	Sleaford Circular	9	0832-1700	3	0907-1230
IT2	Sleaford Circular	2	0930-1130	2	0926-1154
IT3	Sleaford Circular	4	1030-1716	2	1026-1256
S35S*	North Rauceby Primary School	2	0815-1607	-	-
S73S*	Kirkby La Thorpe Primary School	1	1520	-	-
S112S*	Dowsby / Carre Arms	2	0737-1644	-	-
S148S*	Osbourne / Sleaford	2	0727-1604	-	-
WM06*	William Robertson School	2	0733-1520	-	-
WM07*	St Botolph’s School	2	0733-1520	-	-
SLE4*	Fernwood - Sleaford	2	0717-1656	-	-

*Two services per day serving schoolchildren

Sleaford Rail Services

Destination	Journey Time	Weekday Frequency (per hour)	Weekday Hours of Operation	Weekend Frequency (per hour)	Weekend Hours of Operation
Lincoln Central	30	1	0715-2147	1	0719-2218
Peterborough	45	1	0642-2208	0.5	0640-2212
Nottingham	65	1	0635-2216	1	0637-2247
Skegness	65	1	0638-2158	1	0645-1957
Doncaster	80	*	0815-1906	*	0817-1912

3.9 Town Centre Offer

Sleaford is defined as a ‘Town Centre’ in the Adopted Local Plan (2017). It is located in the southern part of North Kesteven District, approximately 18 miles south of Lincoln City, 19 miles east of Newark-on-Trent, 15 miles north east of Grantham and 19 miles west of Boston. Sleaford Town Centre has 215 retail shop units, located predominantly on Southgate, Northgate, Market Place, and also including the Bristol Arcade and the Riverside Shopping Centre.

The Adopted Local Plan describes Sleaford as an historic market town situated on the River Slea in the heart of Lincolnshire. It is recognised as the main retail, service and employment centre for people living in the town and in the surrounding villages, and is a centre that has experienced rapid population growth over the past 30 years driven primarily by the quality of life, low crime rates, relatively low house prices, good-quality education and its central location with good road and rail links. The strong heritage, attractive market place and tight urban grain are also noted as important contributions to the character and composition of the town.

The Local Plan highlights the heritage and townscape assets and visitor attractions, but adds that in some cases these are hidden and difficult to access, including the River Slea which runs through the centre of the town. It also noted that parts of the town centre are in need of regeneration. The Local Plan emphasises that through investment and strategic direction, a full realisation of the benefits offered by Sleaford’s assets and location could unlock the town’s potential as an ‘exemplar living, working, shopping and recreational environment’ and enhance Sleaford’s role within Central Lincolnshire and beyond.

Diversity of Uses / Retailer Representation

The Adopted Local Plan was informed by the City and Town Centre Study Update (2015), including data collected by Experian in April 2011 and January 2015. This up-to-date town centre assessment is informed by Experian Goad data collected in November 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic, and our own on-site surveys and audits undertaken in January 2022 (focused on the Primary Shopping Area and excluded offices). The analysis set out in the remainder of this section discusses the current health of Sleaford town centre, and compares it to previous points in time over the period 2011-2022.

The two tables to the right set out the diversity of uses in Sleaford Town Centre compared to the national average in respect of town centre composition. Based on this latest survey by Experian Goad, the data highlights that Sleaford comprises 35,650 sq m gross of retail, leisure and service floorspace across 215 units.

The data demonstrates that the proportion of units occupied by convenience food and comparison non-food operators is broadly in line with the national average, whilst there is a below average level of leisure service operators and an above average proportion of retail and financial and business services. The number of vacant units at the time of the survey was in line with the national average. We discuss these figures further below, and provide a ‘post-pandemic’ analysis following a site visit and up-to-date audit undertaken in January 2022.

The proportion of convenience goods operators (7.9%) is marginally below the national average of 9.1%, representing 17 units in total. The town centre has a Sainsbury’s supermarket located within the Riverside Shopping Centre (1,700 sq m gross), west of Southgate with store dedicated car park. The previous evidence base concluded this store to be trading well (c.£12m turnover), in-line with company expectations, but was substantially less popular than the out-of-centre Tesco on Northgate (c.£36m turnover).

Sleaford Town Centre Composition of Uses (units) - 2021

	No. of units	% of Total	UK Average (%)	Variance
Convenience	17	7.9	9.1	-1.2
Comparison	57	26.5	27.5	-1.0
Leisure Service	44	20.5	24.6	-4.1
Retail Service	41	19.1	15.7	3.4
Financial & Business Service	25	11.6	9.2	2.4
Vacant	31	14.4	13.9	0.5
Total	215	100	100	-

Sleaford Composition of Uses (floorspace sq m gross) - 2021

	Floorspace	% of Total	UK Average (%)	Variance
Convenience	4,850	13.6	9.2	-2.0
Comparison	8,480	23.8	29.6	-7.8
Leisure Service	9,140	25.6	24.4	-0.1
Retail Service	2,790	7.8	15.0	0.6
Financial and Business Service	5,820	16.3	9.9	9.3
Vacant	4,570	12.8	11.7	-0.1
Total	35,650	100	100	-

Elsewhere in the town centre is an Iceland foodstore, located on Southgate in the prime pitch; five bakers including Greggs and a selection of local independent businesses; two newsagents; two tobacconist/vape shops; a health food shop and an off licence. There are fishmongers, but well-established family butcher – Wetherills – is accessed from Southgate, and a ‘Sleaford Sausage Shop’ has recently opened in the Bristol Arcade selling good quality local produce. On the edge of the town centre – outside the town centre boundary to the south – is an Aldi supermarket (1,220 sq m gross), and beyond the town centre to the north is the out-of-centre Tesco superstore and an out-of-centre Lidl foodstore.

Overall, Sleaford is served well with convenience goods operators. The 2015 evidence base concluded them to be ‘over-trading’, generating a demand for additional convenience goods floorspace to serve the growing population. Despite the growth in the proportion of food shopping undertaken on-line, consumer behaviour trends continue to support bricks and mortar foodstores. In the context of the previous evidence base (2015) and current market trends, there is likely to be some continued surplus expenditure to support additional convenience goods floorspace within Sleaford town centre; albeit each planning application should be considered on a case by case basis.

Convenience goods retailing is supplemented with ‘Sleaford Market’, operating on a Friday, Saturday and Monday in Market Place. For the remainder of the week, the Market Place is a car park operated by North Kesteven District Council. On the first Saturday of each month, the Farmers’ Market is held alongside the regular Market, offering a wide range of locally sourced produce.

The proportion of comparison goods operators (26.5%) is broadly in line with the national average (27.5%), representing 57 units in total. A closer and more in-depth analysis identifies a small number of national multiple retailers including Boots the Chemist, Superdrug, M&Co Clothing and WH Smith – all located on Southgate within the central prime pitch. Elsewhere in the centre, specialist retailers Riverside Cycles and Love & Lace Bridalwear, are located on Northgate; Card

Factory is in the Riverside Shopping Centre; Clarks Shoes is located at the entrance to Bristol Arcade; and the well-established Antiques Emporium has moved from its previous off pitch location on Carre Street to Market Street.

There is a small concentration of ‘household’ type operators on Wharveside Mews, including County Carpets and Curtains, The Sleep Shop beds and bedding, and Be Seated Furniture. These are off the main pitch, but close to the River Sleas and route through to ‘The Hub/ The National Centre for Craft & Design’. There is a small number of independent ladies clothing boutiques, hardware shops, jewellery shops, mobile phone shops, pet shops and charity shops. There is one menswear shop – ‘Five Guys’ on Market Place.

Since the 2020 Experian Goad survey, audits have identified that very little has changed in respect of comparison goods representation. Two new operators have recently opened in the Bristol Arcade, including a new bridal/wedding shop, and ‘Beautifully Handmade Gifts’ showcasing locally made and sourced products. Shoe Zone on Southgate has closed, but a new florist has opened on Westgate and a new sewing shop has opened at the far southern end of Southgate. All are good quality independent businesses with a strong product range, improving the overall offer/mix in the town centre.

At the time of the most recent Experian Goad survey (2020), Sleaford had a below average proportion of leisure service operators, comprising 44 units in total - this category includes, for example, cafés, bars, restaurants, hot food take-away, bars/wine bars. Despite a below average representation, there is a reasonably good balance amongst the type of leisure service businesses including bars, cafés, fast food, hotels, pubs, restaurants, a betting office and a night-club.

There are a good selection of pubs/bars spread across the town centre, including The Packhorse Inn on Northgate, the Bull & Dog and The Grapes on Southgate, The Barge & Bottle and Millers on Carre Street, Watergate Yard on Watergate and The Solo Bar &

Restaurant on Market Street. There are six independent cafés and tea rooms located on Southgate, Market Place, Market Street and the Bristol Arcade, and a large Costa Coffee Shop in the Riverside Shopping Centre fronting Southgate.

The largest concentration of leisure services comprise fast-food take-aways, with ten businesses represented throughout the town centre, including pizza, Chinese, fish & chips, chicken, sandwich shop and burgers. At the time of the 2020 Experian Survey there were just seven restaurants, again distributed throughout the town centre – all independent businesses, and predominantly located in and around the north eastern part of the town centre in Market Place, Eastgate and Carre Street.

Since the 2020 Experian Survey there have been a small number of new leisure service operators opening in Sleaford. These include The Ivy in the former vacant public house at the southern end of Southgate; Reloaded waffle and ice-cream shop; Wansabi Thai Spa and Massage on Carre Street; and Café Bistro has extended its premises into the adjoining unit. Following the Covid-19 pandemic North Kesteven District Council have supported the introduction of outdoor seating areas for restaurants on Market Place, and we understand it is the intention to retain these areas due to their popularity.

At the southern end of Southgate is ‘Heat’ Nightclub, located in the art deco cinema building, which had originally opened in 1920. After a new cinema screen was added during the 1980s, the cinema lost its popularity and closed in 1984, occupied since by various snooker clubs and nightclubs.

The number and proportion of retail services in the town centre (19.1%) is above the national average (15.7%), comprising 41 businesses; this category includes, for example, dry cleaners, opticians, Post Office, health and beauty and hairdressers. This category is dominated by beauty salons, hairdressers and – to a lesser extent – natural therapy treatments, comprising 32 shop units in total (78% of retail service businesses). Whilst hair and beauty businesses do occupy units on Southgate, most are located in peripheral areas to the north of the

town centre, including Carre Street, Riverside Shopping Centre, the Bristol Arcade, Westgate, Market Street and Northgate. There are also four opticians, three travel agents, and a dry cleaners and vehicle repair centre.

The proportion of financial and business services in Sleaford town centre (11.6%) is above the national average of 9.2%, comprising 25 units. There are eight estate agents distributed across the full extent of Southgate and Northgate, whilst ten legal and financial service businesses are scattered throughout the town centre including Market Place, Market Street and Carre Street. Despite trends towards bank closures, four main high street banks and one building society are represented, including HSBC, Barclays, Lloyds, Halifax and Nationwide. The three large banks – HSBC, Barclays and Lloyds – are all located centrally on the junction of Southgate and Market Place in traditional and historic bank buildings.

Other uses driving footfall in Sleaford Town Centre include the ‘All Aboard’ Indoor Softplay Centre on Station Road, the Citizens Advice Bureau, The Social Club and Royal British Legion, The Community Hub including the National Centre for Craft & Design, the Move Forward Fitness Centre located in the Courthouse on Market Place, the Library on Market Place, Kip Tutorial Education Centre in White Hart Mews, and Sleaford Museum at the southern end of Southgate. There are also three dental surgeries, one doctors surgery, two health centres, a veterinary surgery and two churches.

The Experian Goad data highlights that the vacancy rate in Sleaford was consistent with the national average in 2020, with 31 vacant units (14.4%) of total shop units. An up-to-date site audit was undertaken to inform this masterplan, which has demonstrated a substantial fall in the number of vacant units in Sleaford town centre from 31 to 21. More in-depth analysis highlights that since November 2020, 14 previously vacant units have been re-occupied; 4 units have become newly vacant; and 17 units remain vacant with no change recorded.

We understand that this vacant unit figure is set to fall still further following a raft of new lettings confirmed within the Riverside Shopping Centre, including a new community use facility occupying five vacant units to

Goad Plan, Experian



50 metres

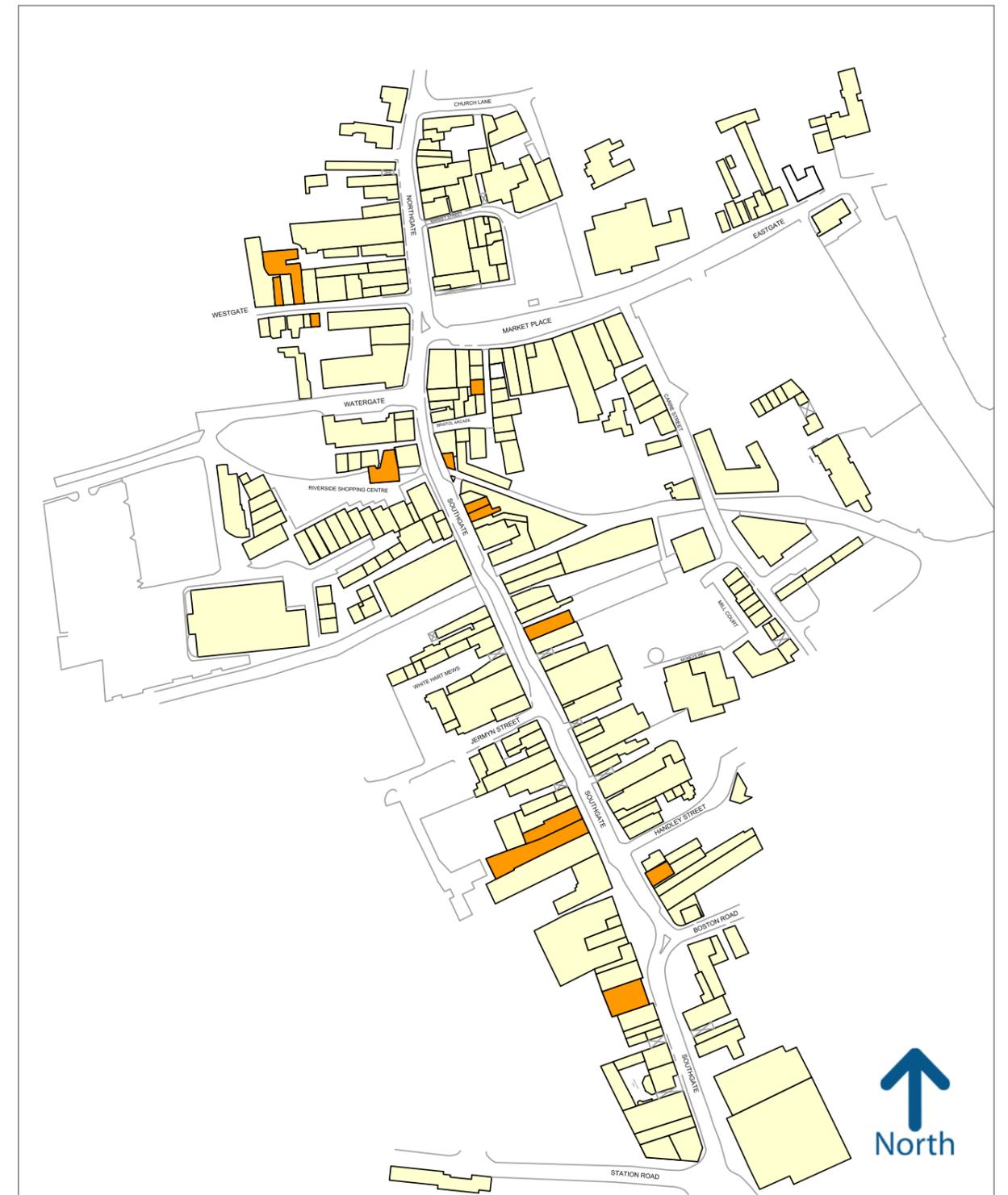
Experian Goad Plan Created: 17/01/2022
Created By: Urban Shape Limited

For more information on our products and services:
www.experian.co.uk/goad | goad.sales@uk.experian.com | 0845 601 6011

Copyright and confidentiality Experian, 2020. © Crown copyright and database rights 2020. OS 100019885



Vacant Unit Plan (January 2022)



125 metres

Experian Goad Plan Created: 18/03/2022
Created By: Urban Shape Limited

Copyright and confidentiality Experian, 2020. © Crown copyright and database rights 2020. OS 100019885

For more information on our products and services:
www.experian.co.uk/goad | goad.sales@uk.experian.com | 0845 601 6011



the rear of the shopping centre. Two vacant units have also been bought and are under refurbishment on Southgate. The vacant unit count of 21 includes three units on Westgate, which is proposed to be removed from the Primary Shopping Area in the draft Local Plan. Once adopted, the new Primary Shopping Area policy boundary would include just 18 vacant units.

New businesses to Sleaford in the last two years include the Waffle and ice-cream shop, Kip Maths/English education centre, a barbers, ladies clothing boutique, florist, sweet shop, sausage shop, locally handmade gifts, bridal wear, and a post office/newsagents. These figures suggest positive levels of investment, vitality and viability in recent months, as the town has perhaps benefited from the Covid-19 ‘shop local’ trends.

Diversity of Uses: Town Centre Change 2011-2021

The table opposite compares the town centre composition by number of units and proportion as a percentage between 2011 and 2021. The proportion of convenience goods operators has remained relatively static since 2011, but the proportion of comparison goods businesses has seen a significant drop, whilst the proportion of leisure service operators has grown in number and proportion. These changes are consistent with wider national town centre trends over recent years.

In other sectors, retail services have grown – driven primarily by new hair and beauty businesses – whilst financial and business services has experienced little change. The number of vacant units had risen substantially between 2011 and 2021, but more recent data has identified that this has now fallen again to 2011 levels, and is expected to fall still further in the near future.

Sleaford Town Centre Diversity of Uses by Number of Units 2011 - 2021

	No. of Units 2011	% of Total 2011	No. of Units 2015	% of Total 2015	No. of Units 2021	% of Total 2021
Convenience	17	8.7	18	8.8	17	7.9
Comparison	66	33.7	59	28.9	57	26.5
Leisure Service	36	18.4	36	17.6	44	20.5
Retail Service	34	17.3	37	18.1	41	19.1
Financial &	22	11.2	28	13.7	25	11.6
Vacant	21	10.7	26	12.7	31	14.4
Total	196	100	204	100	215	100

Convenience examples: bakers, butchers, supermarket, fishmongers, grocers, [newsagent](#);

Comparison examples: clothing, footwear, chemist, charity, cycle shop, DIY/electrical, florist, mobile [phone](#);

Leisure Service examples: café, bars, restaurants, hot food take-away, bars/wine [bars](#);

Financial & Business examples: banks, building societies, estate agents, employment and [careers](#);

Retail Service examples: dry cleaners, opticians, Post Office, health and beauty, hairdressers.

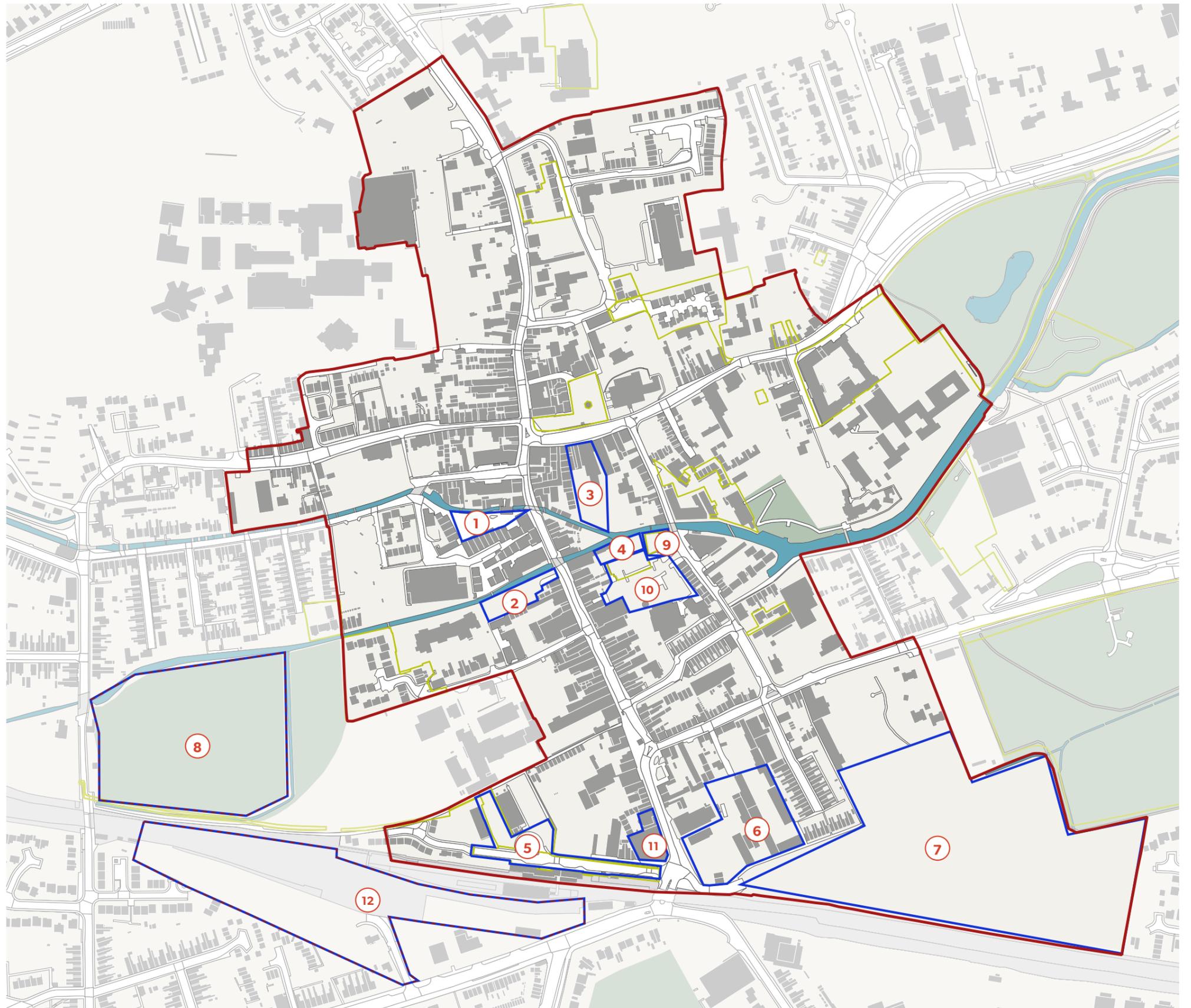
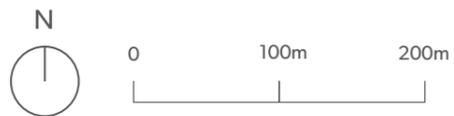
Sleaford Town Centre - land ownership and development opportunities

1:4000

1. Riverside
2. 26 Southgate
3. Heart of Sleaford
4. 25b Southgate
5. Station Approach
6. Turnbull's
7. Advanta Seeds site
8. Castle Field
9. Advice Services Building
10. Money's Yard
11. 82-88 Southgate
12. Station Car Park

Key:-

-  Town Centre Boundary
-  Opportunity Sites
-  Council Owned Sites



4. Development Sites Review



Turnbull's Site



82-88 Southgate



Southern Southgate Opportunity Area



26 Southgate



Riverside Shopping Centre



Money's Yard Car park

Sites in the masterplan refresh

A number of sites have been identified within Sleaford Town Centre area (and directly adjacent to town centre) for the masterplan refresh to explore:

1. Riverside
2. 26 Southgate
3. Heart of Sleaford
4. 25b Southgate
5. Station Approach
6. Turnbull's
7. Advanta Seeds site
8. Castle Field
9. Advice Services Building
10. Money's Yard
11. 82-88 Southgate
12. Station Car Park

The following pages explore the opportunities and constraints for each of these sites, considering complementarities and relationships between those that are physically proximate.

It should be noted that the Market Place is an additional important site for which concept designs for public realm proposals have been prepared separate to this study. It is therefore not specifically addressed as a stand-alone site in this section. It is however considered in terms of its relationship to other adjacent sites (notably the Heart of Sleaford), and as a public realm project in its own right in the Project Bank chapter of this document.

Local Plan considerations

The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Review - Proposed Submission Local Plan (regulation 19 submission) was published in March 2022. Consultation on this revised Local Plan was ongoing at the time this report was being prepared.

It is noted that there are various policies in both the extant Local Plan (2017) and the Proposed Submission that relate to some of the sites. These must be taken into consideration when developing proposals for these sites.

Key points from the Proposed Submission Local Plan to note include:

- Policy S38, page 87, denotes the primary shopping area in Sleaford.
- Policy S38, page 88, describes land uses for the key development sites, namely Heart of Sleaford (which includes Money's Yard), Riverside Retail Precinct, Southern Southgate and 26 Southgate.
- Policy NS74, page 163, covers 'Regeneration and Opportunity Areas' with reference to Advanta Seeds (along with Bass Maltings and former Hospital Buildings), for which it specifies uses appropriate in a town centre location, potentially including mixed use development and residential development.

	Name	Address	Current Use	Ownership	Area	Planning History		Heritage		
						Application Number	Decision Issue Date	Conservation Area	Character Area	Buildings of Interest
1	Riverside	Southgate, Sleaford, NG34 7PD	Public realm in front of Shopping Centre adjacent to the River Slea	Lincolnshire Cooperative	0.12 ha	various / minor	/	yes	West Banks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Station building (19 Water Gate)
2	26 Southgate	26 Southgate, Sleaford, NG34 7RG	Car Park	Private owner	0.15 ha	*see notes	/	yes	Southgate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riverside Church • Sleaford URC • 28 Southgate - listed?
3	Heart of Sleaford	17 Market Place, Exchange Lane, Sleaford, NG34 7ST, UK	Mainly vacant, with retail units on East Gate	Corn Exchange Limited / Hodgson Bros LLP	0.24 ha	*see notes	/	yes	North Gate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Denys' Church • World War I Memorial • 2-3 North Gate
4	25B Southgate	25B Southgate, Sleaford, NG34 7SY	vacant / former residential	NKDC	0.07 ha	*see notes	/	yes	Southgate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money's Mill
5	Station Approach	Station Road, Sleaford, NG34 7RG,	public realm in front of the station, building merchants' yard opposite, and area around The Old Clover Sharpes Warehouses	Various TBC	0.4 ha	* see notes	/	yes (partially)	Southgate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 Station Road • The Old Clover Warehouse and Sharpes Warehouse • Station Buildings • 5-7 Station Rd
6	Turnbull's	95 S Gate, Sleaford, NG34 7RQ,	Building suppliers / building yard	Turnbull's	0.11 ha	various / minor recent include 19/0651/FUL	21 Aug 2019 - Approved	/	/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 91 Southgate, Sleaford (club)

	Key Opportunities	Key Constraints	Policy Reference in Proposed Submission CLLP
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • site adjacent to Slea River - there is an opportunity to improve public realm along the River Slea and create a continuous Riverside walk; • improve permeability and create better links with Sainsbury's and Castle Field and the rest of Town Centre; • there is an opportunity to create a new 'place' on the high street and make the most of active frontage along Southgate and the Riverside Shopping Centre; • there is an opportunity to propose new uses e.g. specifically for young people or families; • make the most of existing public realm and create a town centre attraction / activation (NB formerly had a band stand); • improve access and visibility from Southgate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • site in conservation area; • low quality building (Riverside shopping centre) adjacent to the site; • access to site is restricted (narrow pavement); • even though adjacent to Southgate isn't visible from the high street. 	Policy S38: Sleaford Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area - Riverside Retail Precinct
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access from Southgate; • site adjacent to the River; • to create connection with the Riverside Shopping Centre; • improve town centre permeability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • site in conservation area; • site adjacent to the River Slea; • current use - town centre car park; • hard edges (blank walls). 	Policy S38: Sleaford Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area - 26 Southgate
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to create a pedestrian connection across River Slea and link site with the Money's Yard; • to enhance Sleaford's cultural offer by providing a new town centre venue (cinema?); • to create a high quality public realm and enhance greenery; • to improve connectivity - Town Centre (retail Core) - Money's Yard - Heart of Sleaford - St Denys' Church and Sleaford Market; • to better connect Sleaford Market Place with the retail core; • to create new access to site via Bristol Arcade; • site adjacent to the River Slea. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • site in conservation area; • restricted access; • ownership issues - land acquisition required to fulfill the site's potential. 	Policy S38: Sleaford Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area - Heart of Sleaford
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to connect with the Heart of Sleaford site; • to create a continuous Riverside walk; • to contribute to the creation of a new high-quality public space at the Money's Yard site; • to facilitate strategic pedestrian connections across the site linking Market Place with Town Centre and the retail core. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • site in conservation area; • site adjacent to the River Slea; • overgrown site; • existing buildings are in poor condition and require demolition or extensive refurbishment. 	Policy S38: Sleaford Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area - Heart of Sleaford, and Sleaford Town Centre
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to create a high quality public realm in front of the station; • to improve connectivity with key town centre destinations; • attractive heritage context; • development of builders merchants' yard?; • green infrastructure in the Town Centre? A pocket park? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • site in conservation area; • listed buildings. 	Policy S38: Sleaford Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area - Southern Southgate
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • synergies with 88 Southgate site and Advanta Seeds sites; • major development opportunities; • access from Southgate; • site at the southern gateway to town centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proximity of railway line / hard edge; • vehicular access via junction immediately adjacent to level crossing; • listed building and conservation area adjacent to the site; • potential land contamination? 	Policy S38: Sleaford Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area - Southern Southgate

	Name	Address	Current Use	Ownership	Area	Planning History		Heritage		
						Application Number	Decision Issue Date	Conservation Area	Character Area	Buildings of Interest
7	Advanta Seeds site	Southgate	vacant	Tesco	4.5 ha	application withdrawn, see notes		/	/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bass Maltings
8	Castle Field	Castle Causeway, Sleaford, NG34 7QN	open green space / recreational area	Sleaford Town Council	2.4 ha	/	/	yes	Castle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheduled Monument
9	Advice Services Building	The Advice Centre, Money's Yard, Carre St, Sleaford, NG34 7TW	office (Citizen's Advice Mid Lincolnshire: Sleaford Office)	NKDC	0.06 ha	/	/	yes	River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Money's Mill The Barge & Bottle The Hub (gallery) The Navigation House
10	Money's Yard	Carre St, Sleaford, NG34 7TW	Public car park, guest hours (Money's Mill) and public toilets	NKDC	0.32 ha	19/0371/LBC	30 Apr 2019 - approved	yes	River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Money's Mill
11	82-88 Southgate	88 Southgate, Sleaford, NG34 7RL owned by Melbourne Holdings	Retail ground floors, offices upper floors, residential at rear	TBC	0.11 ha	16/1424/FUL	Mon 16 Jan 2017 - approved	/	/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 91 Southgate, Sleaford (club)
12	Station Car Park	Grantham Rd, Sleaford, NG34 7NB	Network Rail depot, public car parking (temporary)	Network Rail	2.46 ha	conversion to temporary car park?		no, but immediately adjacent	no, but immediately adjacent (Southgate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sleaford Station Sleaford Station Signal Box

	Key Opportunities	Key Constraints	Policy Reference in Proposed Submission CLLP
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • synergies with 88 Southgate site and Turnbull's; • proximity of Bass Maltings site; • major development opportunity; • site visible from Sleaford Station; • access from Southgate; • site at the southern gateway to town centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proximity of railway line / hard edge; • vehicular access via junction immediately adjacent to level crossing would be difficult (hence former proposals for link road and bridge over railway line); • access likely to be via Boston Road; • ransom strip prevents link road; • relationship with Boston Road Recreation Ground. 	Policy NS74: Sleaford Regeneration and Opportunity Areas - ROA7 - Advanta Seeds Site
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • major opportunity to improve outdoor leisure and cultural offer of Sleaford Town Centre; • to better connect with the town centre; • to create a continuous Riverside walk; • to provide outdoor leisure facilities (potentially aimed at families and young people); • to showcase heritage; • visitor centre on site or nearby; • information and interpretation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • site in conservation area; • ancient monument (Historic England restrictions); • archaeological site; • flooding risk; • access arrangements. 	Policy S58: Protecting Lincoln, Gainsborough and Sleaford's Setting and Character - reference to Castle site
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to create a continuous Riverside walk; • strategic (corner) location on the river and at the entrance to Money's Yard from Carre Street; • view of the church from the site / long vistas; • opportunity to connect with The Hub; • enhancements to greenery (a pocket park?); • relationship to HoS (potential for cinema here); • opportunity to convert existing building and introduce new uses or opportunity to demolish the building and redevelop the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • site in conservation area; • heritage context; • CAB use may need to be relocated. 	Policy S38: Sleaford Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area - Heart of Sleaford
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to create new public space in Sleaford town centre; • to improve town centre connectivity; • to link retail core with Sleaford Town Market and The Hub; • to enhance setting of Money's Mill; • to enhance retail offer - opportunity for pop ups; • relationship with HoS (potential for cinema here). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • site in conservation area; • poor quality public realm - car dominated; • poor quality development surrounding local landmark; • hard edges / blank walls; • servicing requirements for Southgate retail. 	Policy S38: Sleaford Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area - Heart of Sleaford (note that includes references to Money's Yard)
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic corner at the entrance to the town centre / high street; • proximity to the train station; • view of The Handley Monument; • site visible from the station; • synergies with Turnbull's and Advanta Seeds sites; • active frontage along the high street. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proximity to the railway line; • existing buildings on site in mixed condition. 	Policy S38: Sleaford Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area - Southern Southgate
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • potential for new foot and cycle bridge within the site; • to deliver one of the proposed perimeter car parks in 2011 Masterplan; • to improve appearance of town centre gateway on southern approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proximity of the railway line; • relocation of National Rail depot; • reconfiguring access from Grantham Road. 	Policy S38: Sleaford Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area - Southern Southgate

Town Centre Sites - North Opportunities & Constraints

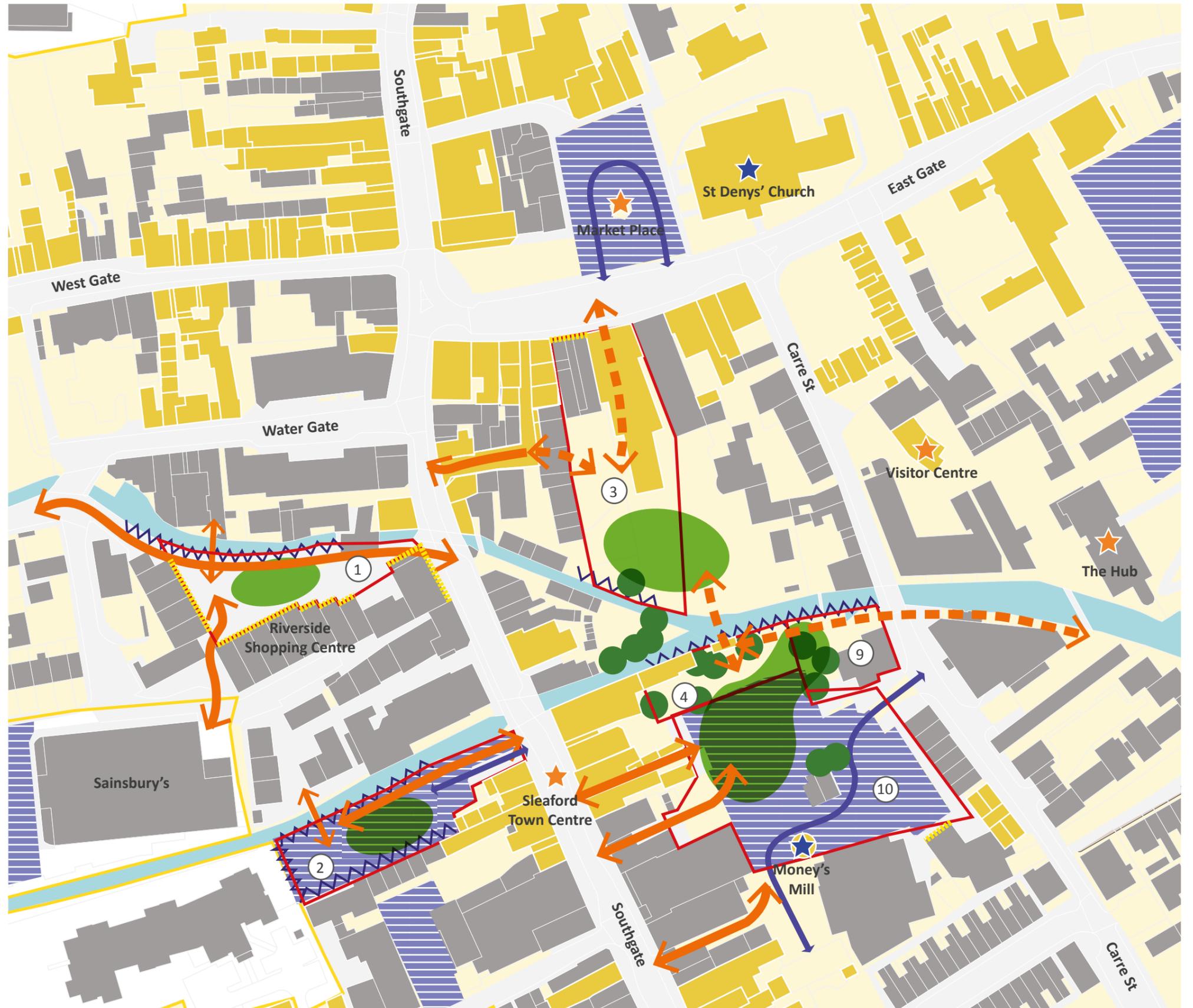
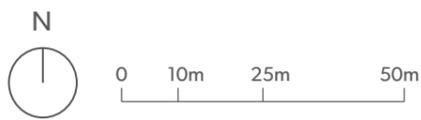
1:1250

Key:-

- Development Site Boundary

- 1. Riverside
- 2. 26 Southgate
- 3. Heart of Sleaford
- 4. 25b Southgate
- 9. Advice Services Building
- 10. Money's Yard

- ⇄ Potential new pedestrian connections
- ⇄ Potential improved pedestrian connections
- ⇄ Existing vehicle access
- Active frontages
- Potential new public space
- ★ Local attraction
- ★ Local landmark
- Listed Building
- Conservation Area
- Tree Protection Order
- Car Parking
- ⚡ Hard edge



Town Centre Sites - North



10



1



2



10

The following sites are included in the Town Centre Sites - North cluster:

1. Riverside
2. 26 Southgate
3. Heart of Sleaford
4. 25b Southgate
9. Advice Services Building
10. Money's Yard

Opportunities

- to improve access to waterside in the Town Centre along the Slea River and create a continuous Riverside walk;
- opportunity to improve permeability and create better links within the Town Centre to Castle Field, The Hub, Navigation House, Riverside Shopping Centre, Sainsbury's, and Mill Stream;
- this cluster of sites can provide a series of high quality public spaces and placemaking opportunities;
- new pedestrian connections can knit into destinations further afield east-west along the Slea e.g. Castle Field and Lollycocks Field;
- development within this cluster creates opportunity for significant new leisure uses such as cinema;
- this cluster of sites support the protection of and enhancement of existing greenery;
- the heritage context gives character and charm to the sites that can be capitalised on;

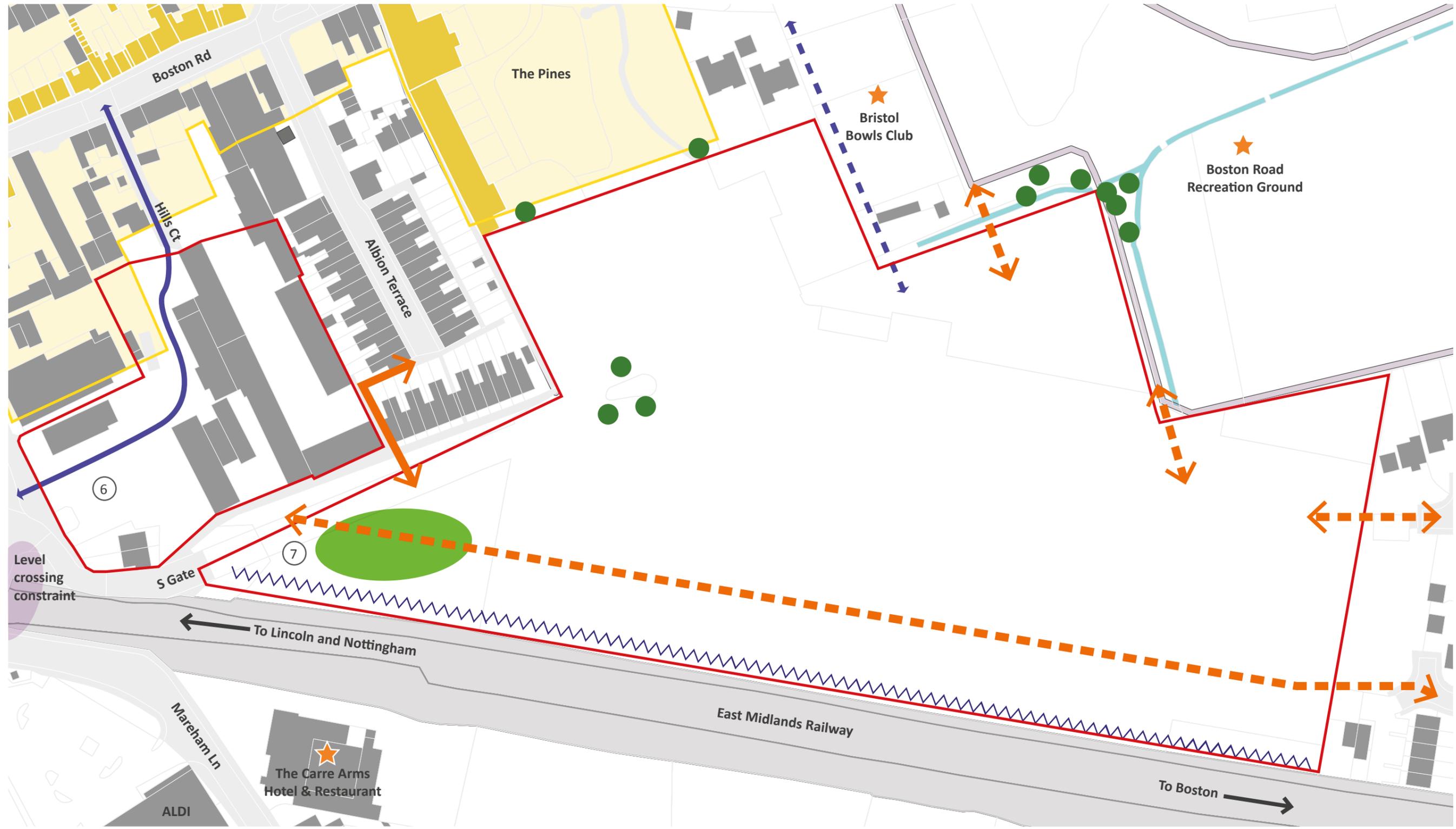
Constraints

- Conservation Area restricts the nature and extent of development possibilities;
- car parking requirements in the Town Centre are high and may limit the redevelopment of sites that are currently used as car parks;
- some building stock is low quality and occasionally forms unfavourable hard edges and blank walls;
- servicing requirements to the back of Southgate must be retained and vehicular access provided.

Town Centre Sites - South-East

Opportunities & Constraints

1:1250



Key:-

- Development Site boundary
- 6. Turnbull's
- 7. Advanta Seeds
- ◄ - - - ► Potential new pedestrian connections
- ↔ Potential improved pedestrian connections
- ↔ Existing vehicle access
- ◄ - - - ► Potential vehicle access
- ||||| Active frontages
- Potential new public space
- ★ Local attraction
- ★ Local landmark
- Listed Building
- Conservation Area
- Tree Protection Order
- Car Parking
- ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ Hard edge



Town Centre Sites - South-East

The Town Centre Sites South-East cluster comprises development sites south of Sleaford Town Centre and east of Southgate. These include:

- 6. Turnbull's
- 7. Advanta Seeds

Opportunities

- these sites are part of the southern gateway to the Town Centre;
- the development of these sites can connect the Boston Rd housing developments east of Boston Road Recreation Park to Southgate, Town Centre and the railway station;
- considering these sites together creates potential for a cohesive movement strategy in a part of Sleaford where movement networks are constrained and disjointed due to severance;
- there is a major development opportunity particularly on the Advanta Seeds site;
- views to attractive heritage context such as the Handley Monument and the Bass Maltings to the south can be incorporated.

Constraints

- the proximity of the railway line creates a hard boundary and severs the sites completely from the southern part of the town centre;
- ownership issues prevent the creation of previously mooted link road or pedestrian connection across the railway to the south;
- development on this site must buffer noise pollution from the railway line;
- potential for vehicular access from the west impacted by the level crossing.

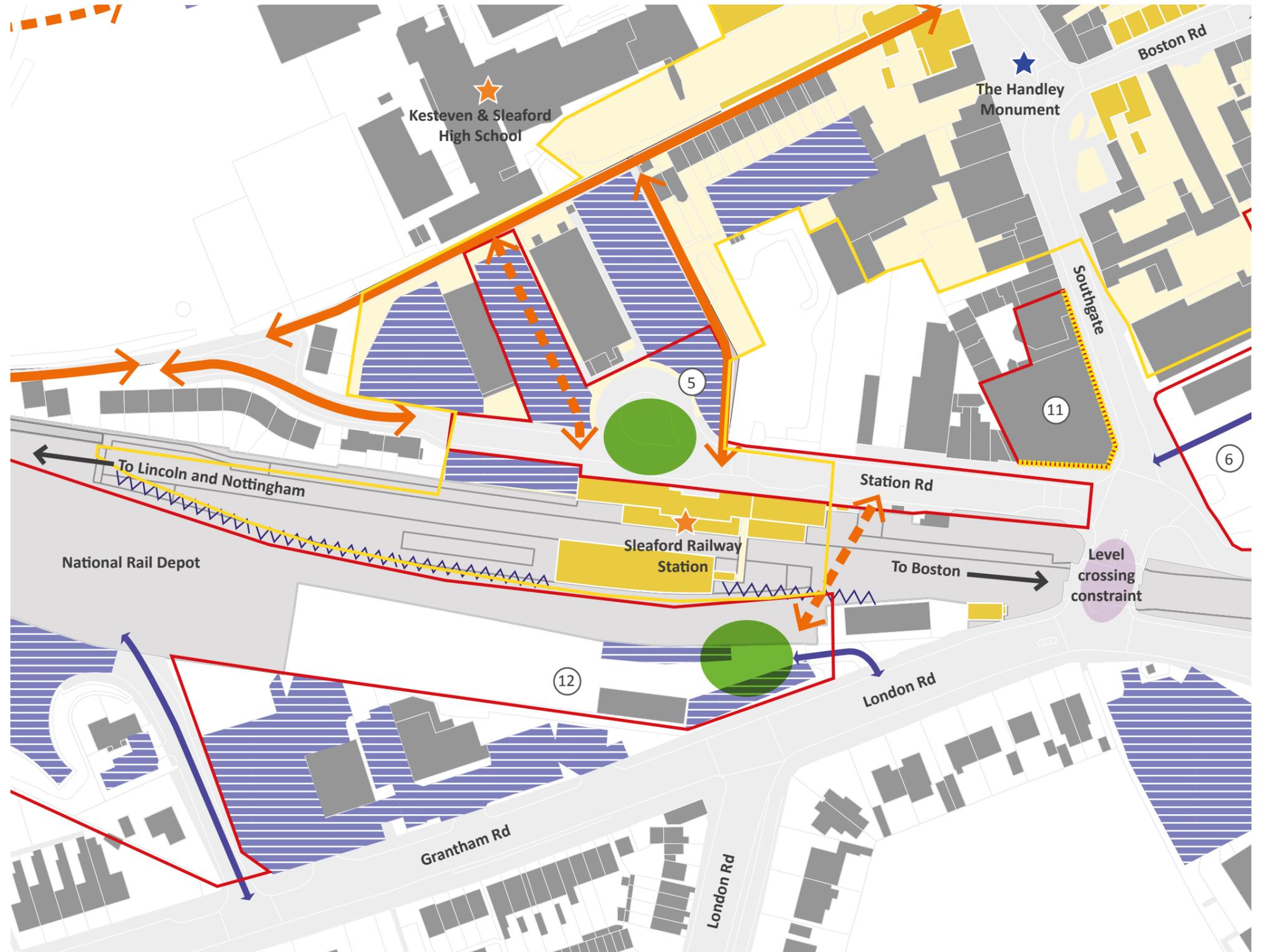
Town Centre Sites - South-West

Opportunities & Constraints

1:1250

Key:-

- Development Site boundary
- 5. Station Approach
- 11. 82-88 Southgate
- 12. Station Car Park
- ⇄ Potential new pedestrian connections
- ⇄ Potential improved pedestrian connections
- ⇄ Existing vehicle access
- Active frontages
- Potential new public space
- ★ Local attraction
- ★ Local landmark
- Listed Building
- Conservation Area
- Tree Protection Order
- Car Parking
- Hard edge



Town Centre Sites - South-West

The Town Centre Sites South-West cluster comprises development sites south of the Sleaford Town Centre and west of Southgate. These include:

- 5. Station Approach
- 11. 82-88 Southgate
- 12. Station Car Park

Opportunities

- these sites are part of the southern gateway to the Sleaford Town Centre;
- there is an opportunity for greatly improved public realm in the front of the station;
- opportunity to improve permeability and create better links to the Town Centre and Castle Field;
- there is a major development opportunity particularly on the Station Car Park site;
- scope for enhancing multi-modal interchange.

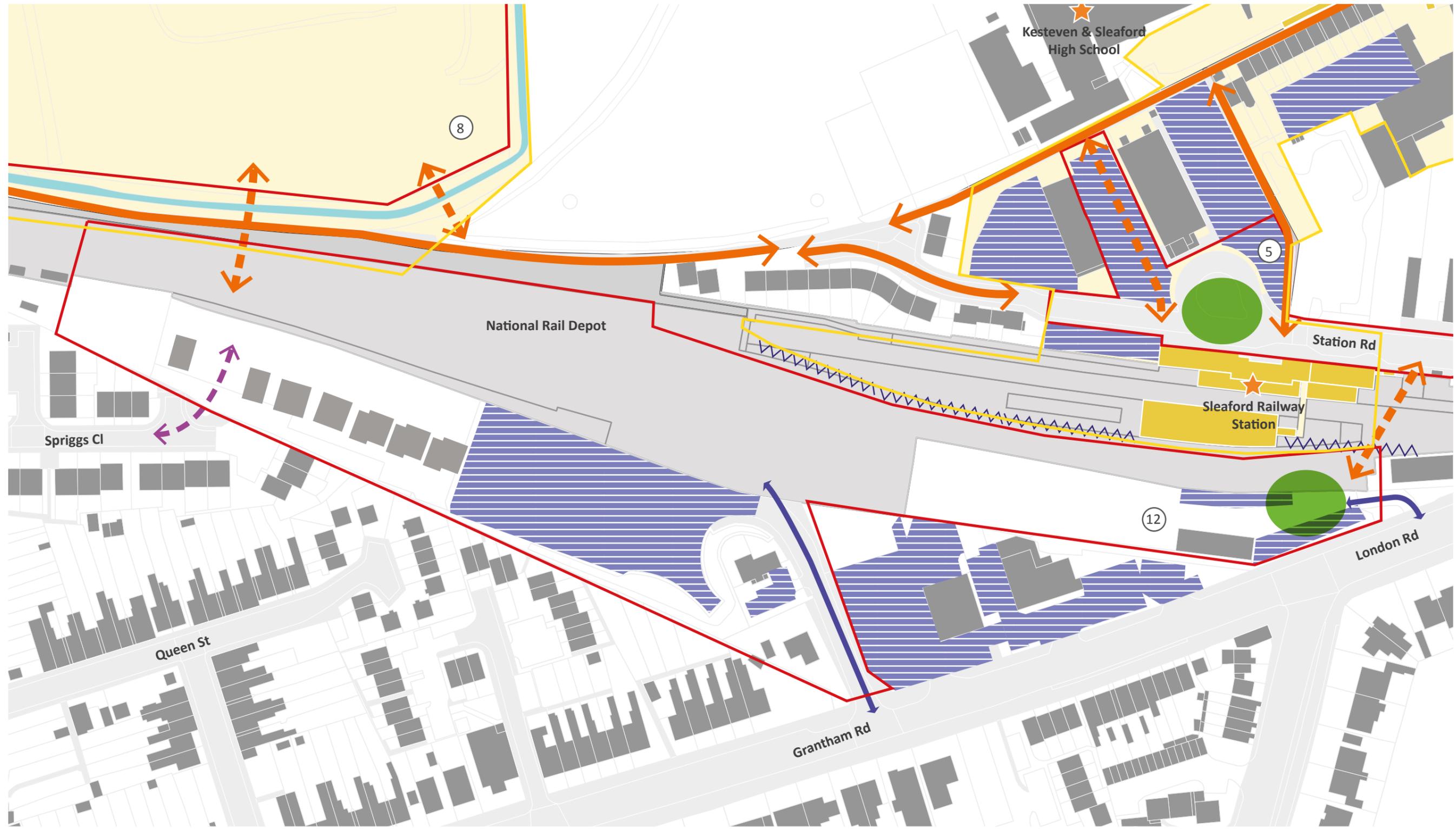
Constraints

- some existing building stock is low quality;
- the heritage context and listed buildings limit the extent of development possible.



Station Car Park Site Opportunities & Constraints

1:1250



Key:-

- Development Site boundary
- 5. Station Approach
- 8. Castle Field
- 12. Station Car Park
- ← - - - - - → Potential new pedestrian connections
- ← = = = = = → Potential improved pedestrian connections
- ← = = = = → Existing vehicle access
- ← - - - - - → Potential vehicle access
- ||||| Active frontages
- Potential new public space
- ★ Local attraction
- ★ Local landmark
- Listed Building
- Conservation Area
- Tree Protection Order
- ≡≡≡ Car Parking
- ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ Hard edge



Station Car Park Site

The Station Car Park Site is a large potential development site. Despite its size it should be considered and designed together with nearby sites 5 and 11, to create a coherent movement and access strategy and to ensure cohesive development.

Opportunities

- the site is part of the southern gateway to the Town Centre;
- potential for new vehicle connections to the south to link to Grantham Road.

Constraints

- National Rail Depot occupies part of the site and may need to be retained in some form;
- the railway line creates an urban severance and a hard edge;
- vehicular access to the site needs to be located away from level crossing to avoid adding to congestion;
- relationship with adjacent residential uses;
- station and signal box both listed.

Castle Field Site

Opportunities & Constraints

1:1250

Key:-

-  Development Site boundary
- 8.  Castle Field
- 12.  Station Car Park
-  Potential new pedestrian connections
-  Potential improved pedestrian connections
-  Existing vehicle access
-  Active frontages
-  Potential new public space
-  Local attraction
-  Local landmark
-  Listed Building
-  Conservation Area
-  Tree Protection Order
-  Car Parking
-  Hard edge



Castle Field Site

Castle Field is a scheduled monument and open green space, to the west of Sleaford Town Centre.

Opportunities

- opportunity for promoting as a major leisure and heritage offer in Sleaford;
- the site can improve waterside access to Slea River and extend the Town Centre's Riverside walk;
- there are opportunities to reconnect this historic site to the Town Centre;
- this heritage asset could be promoted through a dedicated visitor centre located either on site or within the Town Centre.

Constraints

- no development can take place on this site due to archaeological requirements and scheduled monument status;
- the site presents flooding risks which must be considered;
- the site is inside a Conservation Area.



5. Summary

5.1 SWOT analysis

Strengths

- Significant areas of land available for development;
- Council ownership of several opportunity sites enables a proactive approach to regenerating these as catalysts for further regeneration;
- The opportunity sites are well-located in terms of proximity to the town centre and are generally accessible from the wider street network and existing pedestrian connections;
- Substantial recent residential development completed in wider Sleaford area, presenting local catchment that can be drawn more into town centre;
- Vacancy rate consistent with the national average in 2020, and set to fall with some new occupiers in the near future;
- Proportion of convenience goods operators has remained relatively static since 2011 and overall Sleaford is served well with evidence of 'over-trading';
- The proportion of comparison goods operators is broadly in line with national average;
- Proportion of leisure service operators have grown in both number and proportion, and provides a good balance of types;
- The recent Hub improvements have turned it into more of a focal point and activity generator than it was previously;
- Sleaford is a chartered market town with a market present;
- The schools on the edge of the town centre provide activity and generate footfall to local businesses;
- There are significant heritage assets within and on the edges of the town centre (including the Castle site) which provide interest, contribute to local identity and could be reinforced and enhanced to generate a stronger sense of place;
- The relatively consistent building line and coherent building heights in the town centre (notably Southgate) provide a good sense of enclosure and visual cohesiveness to the townscape;
- There are a number of features which act as focal points or landmarks, including the Handley Monument, St Denys' church spire, Money's Mill, and Bass Maltings;
- The CAA identifies five clear character areas within the town centre which can inform masterplan proposals;
- The River Slea and the Nine Foot Drain provide visual interest and amenity as well as supporting local biodiversity;
- Various town centre sites are home to a number of mature trees, and may contribute to local biodiversity;
- Recent highways improvements to the Holdingham Roundabout and Rugby Club junctions have alleviated congestion and improved access from the north of the town;
- Compact, flat nature of Sleaford town centre, with key services and amenities located at the town core makes it highly suitable for walking and cycling;
- Ginnels or jitties provide access to various yards and spaces for pedestrians;
- Higher than average walking and cycling mode shares, showing propensity to active travel if made possible;
- Recent introduction of more and better cycle parking facilities;
- Proposed formalisation of residential parking standards in the 2021 Draft Local Plan, including emphasis placed on EV charging infrastructure.

Weaknesses

- Most recent residential development is on the edges of Sleaford, and new residents may tend to travel to other towns in preference to visiting Sleaford town centre;
- Proportion of comparison goods businesses has seen a significant drop;
- Sleaford has a below average proportion of leisure service operators;
- Surveys indicate that a high proportion of spend already goes to other towns in the wider area;
- Current market offer is very poor;
- There are few facilities or amenities for families and young people within the town centre;
- Town centre deficient in green spaces, and links to the wider landscape framework inadequate;
- Castle Field is inadequate both as a green space, and in terms of celebrating its presence as a key piece of history and heritage within the town;
- Few trees and/or other planting within the town centre;
- Heritage assets and attractions are not easy to find or access;
- Public realm quality is generally poor in terms of visual quality and provision of amenities;
- The railway and level crossing creates major severance from the south;
- The one-way system of Southgate, Eastgate, Carre Street, Boston Road results in longer trips for vehicles traversing the town centre, and the width of these streets makes it difficult to revert to two-way working;
- The quality of Southgate is poor in terms of place quality, with little well maintained landscaping, street trees, seating, and signage, and parking is often poorly accommodated;
- The sense of arrival at the railway station is underwhelming due to poor public realm and uses immediately opposite the station;
- Much of the town centre falls classed as Flood Zone 3 areas due to presence of River Slea;
- Poor pedestrian network and fragmented cycle network, with highway space dominated by the private car;
- Failure to complete the delivery of street and route improvements from previous studies means pedestrians and cyclists suffer from poor quality connections which undermines aspirations for behaviour change;
- Town centre congestion combined with a lack of a secondary north-south route and SESRR link road plans introduced in the 2011 Masterplan unlikely to happen;
- Centrally located car parks causing congestion in the town centre due to circulating traffic;
- Poor frequency of public transport services, combined with poor physical public transport infrastructure (no dedicated bus station, poor waiting facilities and physical passenger information, inaccessible railway station);
- Inadequate highway, pedestrian and cycle signage.

Opportunities

- Development opportunity sites offer strong potential to introduce more activity and bring vitality to the town centre if handled appropriately;
- National trends suggest the role of town centre retail is still relevant and important, but town centres also need to become areas in which people live, work and spend their leisure time;
- Customers using online retail are increasingly interested in click and collect, which can act as a footfall generator and research shows consumers often make additional purchases when collecting;
- Nationally, leisure spend is expected to grow more strongly than retail and remain strong. Leisure uses are therefore likely to remain a valued and relevant part of our town centres in the future;
- Although the future of the cinema industry remains uncertain, the provision of a cinema in Sleaford remains relevant and is a key opportunity to strengthen and diversify the town centre;
- The market presents an opportunity to be revitalised and reinvented;
- Covid-19 pandemic providing opportunities for more leisure and recreation users and uses in the town centre;
- Potential increase in homeworking and flexible working arrangements likely to reduce the number of car drivers;
- The long-term relocation of the two grammar schools will remove major source of traffic congestion;
- Car parking occupancy below requirements, allowing for reallocation of car parking space to other uses;
- Existing pedestrian connections, such as ginnels and river footpaths, could be improved and enhanced as a network of informal routes to encourage exploration of the town centre;
- Recent appointment of consultants to improve wayfinding;
- Ongoing discussions with cinema operator to bring cinema to the town centre;
- Making more of existing connections within the fine grained urban fabric to knit the commercial core west and east;
- Enhancements to heritage assets to improve appearance and attractiveness of town centre;
- The location of the Castle Field to be shifted in local consciousness, through connectivity improvements, and leisure and educational opportunities ensure it is seen as a key town centre asset;
- Reconnect the town centre core to the riverside, creating new areas of activity, continuous riverside walk and new and improved links with the River to make the most of this natural asset;
- Introduction of town centre greenery and pocket green spaces to enhance attractiveness and sustainability of town centre, responding to Climate change challenges and those caused by Covid 19;
- Redevelopment of LCC offices;
- Boston Road to Eastgate link road.

Threats

- Evolving role of town centres generally has been exacerbated by the pandemic, with more emphasis on leisure and experience rather than retail;
- Accelerated growth of online retail for home delivery may reduce footfall in town centres, despite interest in click and collect;
- Retailers face challenges of high costs and rents resulting in many high street closures in recent years across the country, and it is predicted that the fall-out of the pandemic will result in further closures;
- Economic trends suggest GDP growth to remain on slower trajectory for near future;
- The lack of delivery of previously proposed town centre projects has created inertia or scepticism around delivery;
- The long-term relocation of the two grammar schools will reduce activity in the town centre, and potentially make it less diverse in terms of age cohorts;
- Changes to operation of the level crossing resulting in longer down time of the barriers will cause more severance for all road users, and may add to congestion;
- Tesco ownership of Advanta Seeds site means that redevelopment of this major area of land is reliant on them bringing it forward or selling the land;
- Uncertainty about Heart of Sleaford project;
- Flexible working arrangements for large organisations (e.g. County Council and Interflora) may remain as we emerge from the Covid 19 pandemic, and workers continuing with more flexible modes of working, which impacts on town centre businesses;
- Climate change likely to mean watercourses more prone to future flooding in the local area;
- SESRR plans and related Advanta Seeds site car park proposal not going ahead which means proposed perimeter car park spaces will need to be redistributed;
- The non-delivery of alternative or improved level crossings (SESRR and the railway station pedestrian and cycle bridge) means that renewal of the town centre still threatened by the separation of the southern part of town and congestion caused by the level crossing;
- Reductions in public transport service frequencies resulting from Covid 19 likely to remain in place in the future given lower PT demand post-pandemic and difficulties with finding staff, negating the benefits of new services introduced as part of the 2011 Masterplan proposals;
- The relocation of the grammar schools could reduce footfall and vibrancy of town centre.

Part 2 - Proposed Strategy

6. Vision

6.1 Vision Statement

The baseline assessment presented in Part 1 of this report has informed the identification of an overarching vision statement for improving Sleaford town centre.

A vision statement is a road map, expressing both the desired outcome for a place, and setting transformational initiatives by defining a direction for growth or change.

The proposed vision for future Sleaford is to the right.

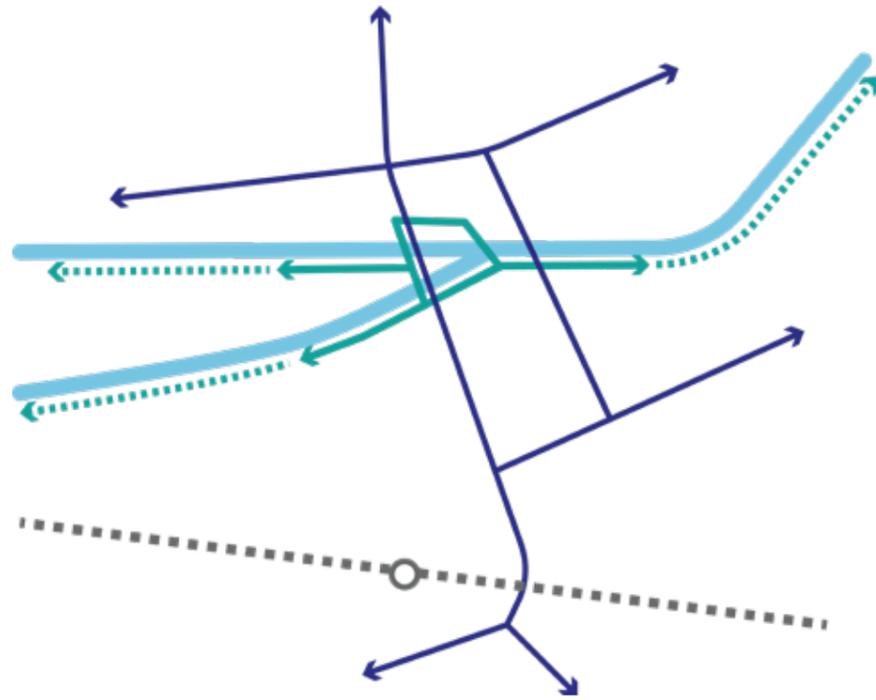
The following pages articulate the vision as a series of six design themes. These derive from and support the vision statement.

The themes have informed the subsequent development of the Project Bank and proposals for the various development sites.

Sleaford is a thriving and confident place, where transformational change in the town centre has delivered an attractive, well-loved, and bustling heart with a keen sense of history and identity

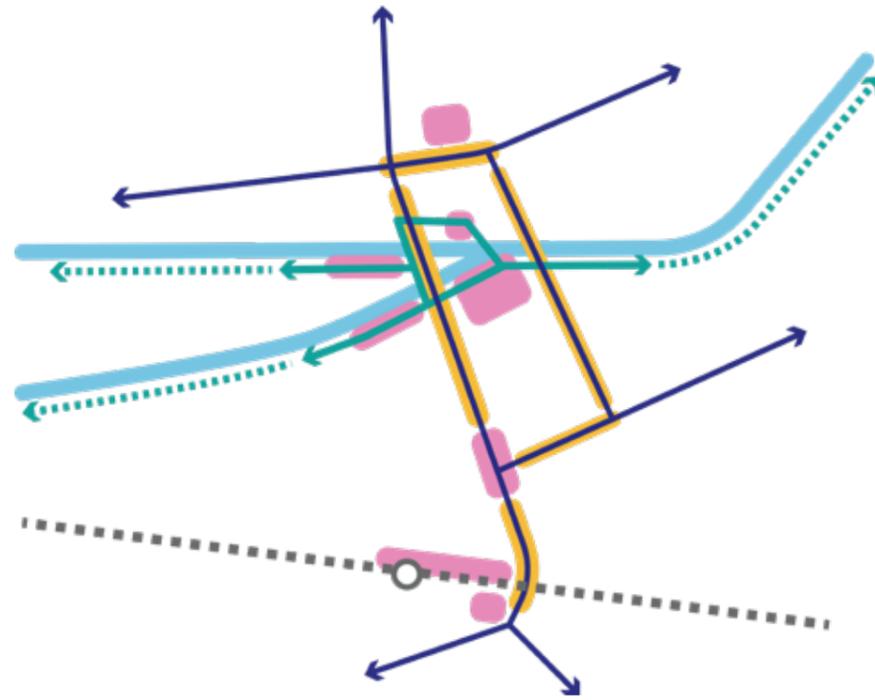


Design Themes



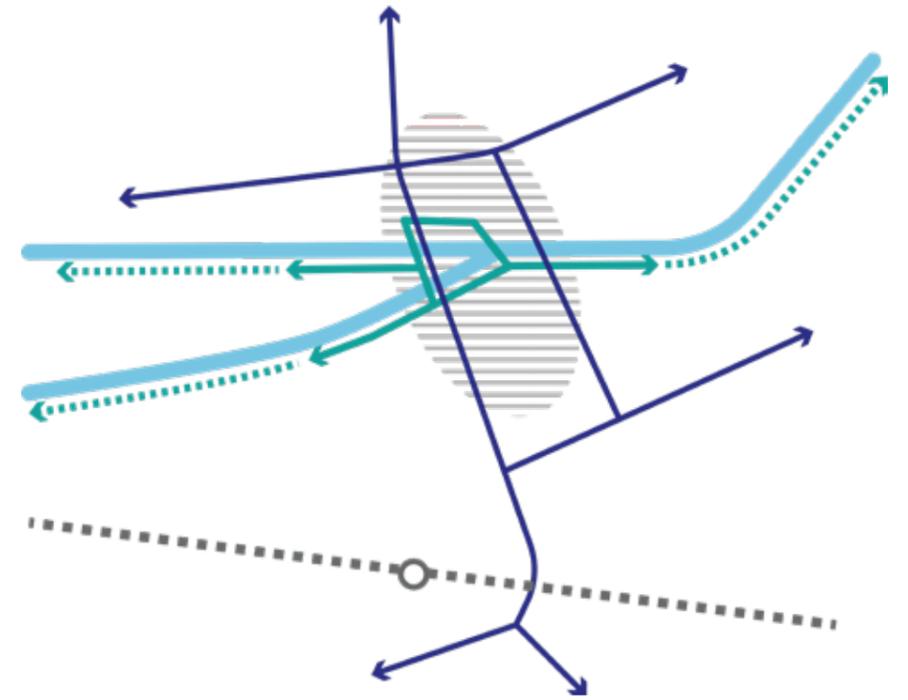
1. Revealing the River Slea

Transformed riverside areas reconnecting the town centre core to its riverine heritage, creating new areas of focus for activity, and reinforcing links along its blue/green arteries into the town's hinterland.



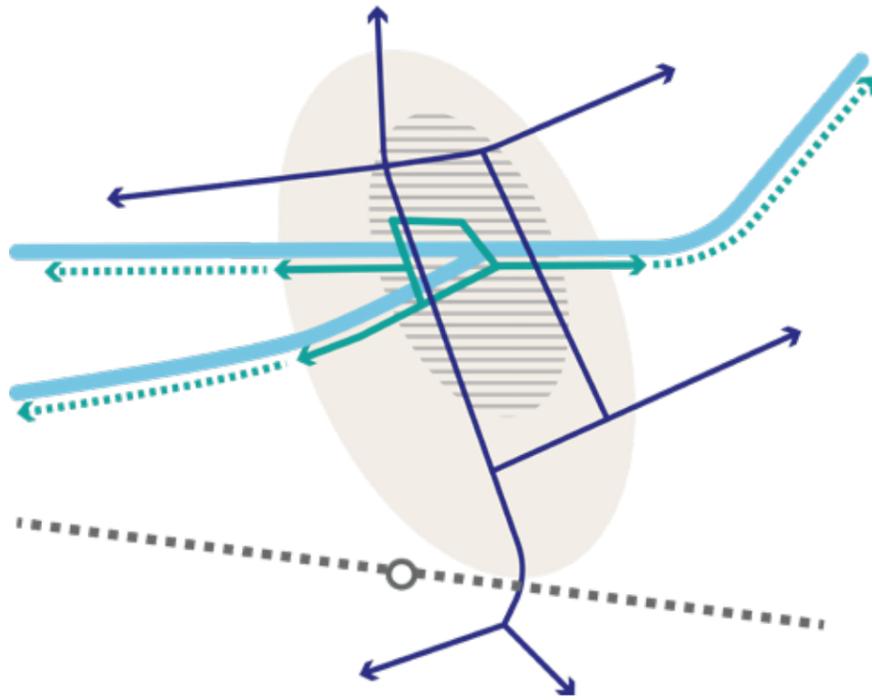
2. Creating public spaces

High quality streets and beautiful public spaces which people of all ages and abilities love visiting and spending time in, whether to frequent local businesses, enjoy programmed activities, or simply to pause and enjoy the place.



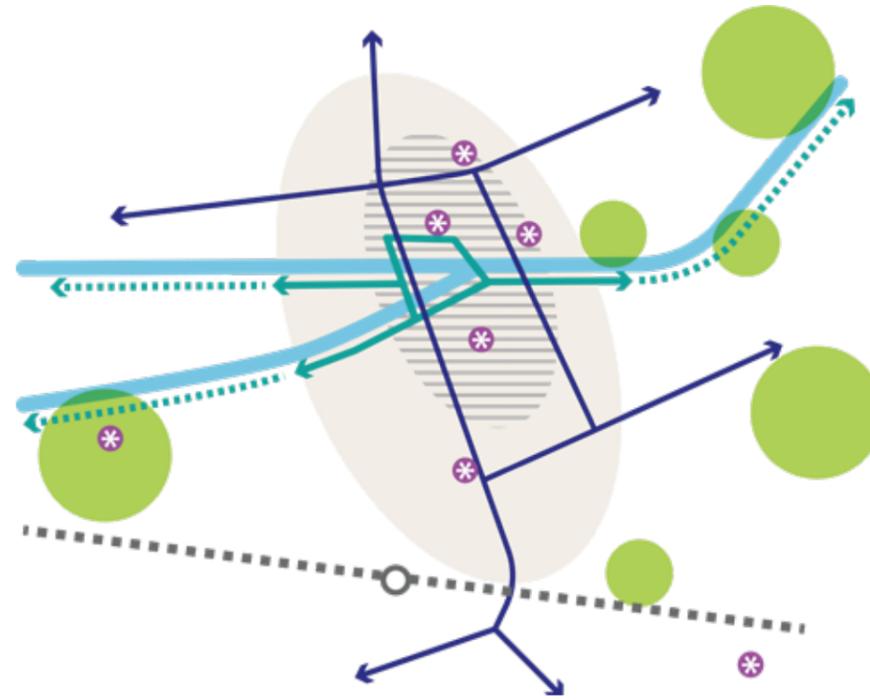
3. Diversifying town centre uses

A balanced mix of uses in the town centre with new leisure facilities that diversify the town centre offer and attract people from the town and beyond, plus services, amenities and retail provisions that are in keeping with Sleaford's size and importance.



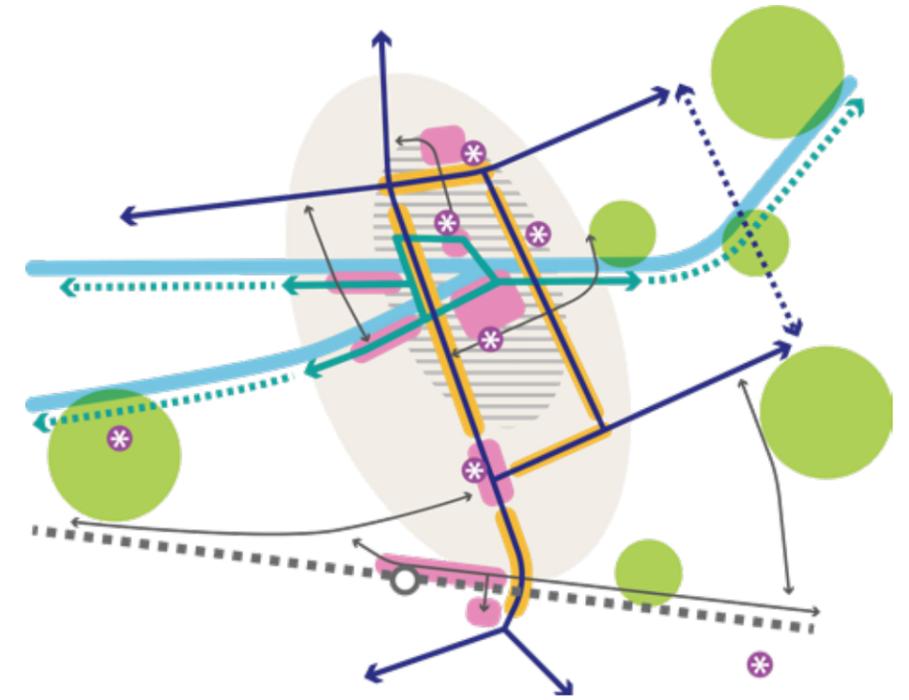
4. Supporting with sensitive development

Sensitively designed sustainable residential development bringing more people to live in the town centre who generate footfall that supports local businesses and strengthens the Sleaford economy.



5. Celebrating nature and heritage

Where natural and built heritage are celebrated via sensitive and high quality design approaches to architecture and infrastructure.



6. Connecting people with places

A well connected place that is easy to get around safely and comfortably on foot, by bike, or using bus services, and where streets allow for vehicle movements but are not dominated by them.

7. Project Bank

7.1 Introduction

The project bank is a portfolio of interventions that have been identified in support of the vision and design themes. They respond to issues and opportunities raised within the baseline assessment.

The projects complement and support concept proposals for specific development sites, as explained in the following Development Sites - Proposed Concepts chapter. As such they should be read in conjunction with that chapter, however the project bank proposals are presented as standalone projects that can be delivered separately to the development sites.

7.2 Project bank overview

Summary table

The table overleaf provides a full list of projects proposed, with details including:

- Name and brief description
- Indicative assessment of deliverability, e.g. likely complexity, contingencies, or difficulties that might affect delivery
- Suggested timescale for delivery (short, medium, long)
- Suggested priority for delivery

Strategies

Following the table, a series of plans locate projects with specific locations, categorising them against design themes outlined in the Vision chapter 6. In effect these become spatial strategies to be pursued. These spatial strategies would help deliver the vision and also provide a supporting framework for site specific development projects as described in the next chapter of this report.

Key for project bank table overleaf

Deliverability

How complex or straightforward is the project to deliver, considering land ownership, stakeholders, contingencies, traffic impacts etc.

○○○○○ Least complex/ most straightforward

●●●●● Most complex/ least straightforward

●○○○○

E.g. single land ownership, few stakeholders, standard planning process, no traffic changes, no listings etc.

●●○○○

E.g. multiple land ownership/ stakeholders, minor traffic changes, listed buildings/ other contingencies

●●●○○

E.g. more significant traffic or structural changes

●●●●○

E.g. requires wider architectural interventions, archaeological contingencies

●●●●●

E.g. affects strategic traffic movement, requires site acquisition/assembly, or complex planning or stakeholder negotiations

Timescale

Likely timescale within which project could be delivered, dependent on feasibility studies, availability of funding, other infrastructure works etc.

- **Short** - Potential to be defined and pursued immediately, and delivered within the next year or two
- **Medium** - Longer lead time, may be linked to other projects or require approvals from various parties
- **Long** - Require series of scoping, design and approval stages, and dependent on other projects or many stakeholders

7.3 Project bank proposals

Descriptions of each project are provided in the pages following the tables and spatial strategy diagrams. This provides:

- A brief description of each proposal
- Key design considerations or principles relating to the proposal
- A comment about the justification for the project and any sensitivities
- A photo of the existing situation
- A selection of precedent images relevant to the proposal

In addition each project is given a symbol to indicate what it relates to, e.g. in terms of:

- Public realm improvements 

- Improvements to walking and cycling network 

- Enhancing town centre greenery 

- Improving roads, easing traffic and upgrading parking 

- Enhancing heritage and identity 

- Supporting business and local economy 

- Placemaking and community 

Item No.	Project name	Overview	Type / Tags	Deliverability	Timescale (S/M/L)	Quick win (Y/N)	Priority (L/M/H)
1.	River Slea Promenade	Provide new pedestrian connections along the River Slea and Nine Foot River through opportunity sites and improve other sections of existing riverside paths.	Walking, public realm, place-making, natural environment	●○○○○	M	N	H
2.	Streetscape Enhancement Southgate	Implement design approach based on principles in streetscape design manual, with high quality approach to public realm supporting distinctive identity and heritage of the high street.	Public realm, heritage, place-making, walking, traffic	●●●○○	M	N	H
3.	Streetscape Enhancement Carre Street	Implement design approach based on principles in streetscape design manual, with high quality approach to public realm supporting distinctive identity and heritage of this important secondary street.	Public realm, heritage, place-making, walking, traffic	●●○○○	M	N	M
4.	Market Place Public Realm	Deliver the preferred public realm design concept as designed to turn this into a destination public space with improved setting for church and war memorial. This should include shared surface vehicular access for church requirements, and removing general car parking (excluding blue badge parking).	Walking, public realm, place-making	●●○○○	S	N	H
5A. 5B.	Sleaford Station Enhancements / Sleaford Station Environs	Redesign station forecourt to improve arrival experience at Sleaford and create a high-quality public realm that complements the Grade II listed station and provides e.g. seating, feature lighting and greenery. Introduction of new footbridge connecting all platforms and enhancement to bus stops on Station Road.	Public realm, heritage, traffic	●●●●○ ●●●○○	S-M M	N	H
6.	Enhancing Conditions for Pedestrians	Improve layout and quality of pedestrian routes in Sleaford town centre to encourage more travel on foot through widening narrow and crowded footways, removing unnecessary street furniture, improving pedestrian crossings, implementing measures to make pedestrians feel safer etc.	Public realm, walking	●●○○○	M	N	H
7.	Ginnel Enhancement Programme	Improvements to appearance. Varies by location but can include surfacing upgrades, feature lighting, artwork, and wayfinding.	Public realm, walking	●○○○○	S-M	Y (some)	M
8.	Nag's Head Passage Improvements	Improve the appearance of the Passage, considering personal security issues and promotion of the route as a direct connection for Sleaford Castle, the station and the town centre.	Walking, public realm, place-making	●○○○○	S-M	Y	M
9. (9.1-9.6)	Pocket Spaces & Places to Pause	Various town centre interventions to enhance network of public spaces and most of all introduce greenery in the town centre as well as to strengthen existing pedestrian connections, support diverse public life, improve attractiveness and extend dwell time.	Public realm, walking, natural environment, town centre greenery, heritage	●●○○○	M	Y (some)	M

Item No.	Project name	Overview	Type / Tags	Deliverability	Timescale (S/M/L)	Quick win (Y/N)	Priority (L/M/H)
10.	Eastgate Green Enhancements	Amenity improvements, considering families and young children, plus landscape enhancements in keeping with riverine setting.	Natural environment, town centre greenery, biodiversity, activity	●○○○○	S	Y	M
11.	River Biodiversity Support	Investigate potential for anchored reedbeds in watercourse.	Natural environment, place-making,	●○○○○	S	Y	M
12.	Monument Gardens and Highlighting Sleaford Museum	Enhance the Garden space outside Sleaford Museum to create stronger identity/sense of arrival at Museum, and better connect the space to the public realm around the monument Undertake in conjunction with Handley Monument and Southgate enhancements.	Public realm, place-making, heritage, greening, art	●●○○○	M	N	M
13.	Highlighting Handley Monument	Redesign public space to improve setting of monument, e.g. incorporating bespoke paving, feature lighting and seating. Undertake in conjunction with Monument Gardens and Southgate enhancements.	Public realm, place-making, heritage	●●○○○	M	N	H
14.	Sleaford Castle Exhibition Space	Provide a dedicated Castle exhibition space within a premises in the town centre that can include digital and physical exhibits and serve as the starting point for a visit to the Castle.	Heritage, place-making	●○○○○	M	N	M
15.	Highlighting Bass Maltings	Work with land owner to highlight the building and its role in the history of Sleaford, e.g. open days for public access, interpretation panel nearby, add as stop on Sleaford Heritage Trail.	Heritage, place-making	●●○○○	S	Y	L
16.	Shop Front and Building Improvements	Grant scheme to encourage improvements to façades and frontages, similar to previous PSiCA scheme.	Place-making, heritage	●●○○○	S-M	Y	M
17.	Sleaford Heritage Trail Additions	Expand existing heritage trail with additional places, trail markers, and interpretation panels at key destinations.	Heritage, place-making, walking	●○○○○	S	Y	M

Item No.	Project name	Overview	Type / Tags	Deliverability	Timescale (S/M/L)	Quick win (Y/N)	Priority (L/M/H)
18.	Meanwhile uses	Programme of meanwhile use pop-ups and interventions to accelerate regeneration; provide business support, extend offer and generate interest involving re-purposing of vacant unit(s) for temporary uses and public spaces for short term events and exhibitions. This can also include open air installations and 'pop-ups'.	Identity, place-making, business support	●○○○○	S	Y	H
19.	Art Activation	Programme of art interventions across town centre (e.g. using blank walls, floorscape, within vacant units, in public spaces etc.), involving local artists, temporary and permanent, combine to create a trail.	Identity, heritage, place-making	●○○○○	S	Y	M
20.	Enhancing Conditions for Cyclists	Improve number and quality of cycle routes and cycle parking infrastructure in Sleaford town centre to encourage more travel by cycle.	Public realm, cycling, traffic	●●○○○	M	Y	M
21.	Enhancing Bus Services	Improve frequency of bus services to encourage more travel by public transport.	Bus services, traffic	●○○○○	S	Y	H
22A 22B	Reducing Traffic in Town Centre / Eastgate to Boston Road - New Link Road	Reduce/remove through traffic from Southgate and Carre Street through traffic calming and footway widening measures, revision of signage to encourage longer-distance traffic to use bypasses. Consider new link road between Eastgate and Boston Road.	Public realm, walking and cycling, traffic	●●●○○ ●●●○○	S-M M-L	N	H
23.	Watergate Junction	Traffic calming measures to promote pedestrian priority, at the junction of Watergate and West Banks to improve town centre connectivity and address safety concerns relating to the location.	walking and cycling, traffic	●●○○○	M	Y	M
24.	Perimeter Parking	Encouragement of greater use of perimeter car parks to reduce need for parking in heart of own centre, including better signage and promotion of walking and cycling.	traffic	●●●○○	M	N	H
25.	Shared & Micro Mobility	Introduction of mobility hubs featuring shared bikes / e-bikes and/or scooters / e-scooters to encourage sustainable and active travel.	walking and cycling, traffic	●●○○○	M	Y	M
26.	Business & Community Hub	New town centre business and community hub to support existing and new businesses and entrepreneurs within flexible, affordable workspace and creative incubator space.	business support, town centre diversification, footfall generation	●●○○○	S-M	N	H
27.	Food, Culture & Social Hub	Indoor market hall bringing together food, drink, retail, entertainment and socialising under one roof. Supporting and promoting Sleaford as 'the' modern market town in Lincolnshire.	business support, town centre diversification, footfall generation	●●○○○	S-M	N	H
28.	Youth Project	Youth facility and/or attraction, such as youth zone, providing affordable access to high-quality sports, arts and leisure facilities and activities. Possible climbing wall or skate-park facility.	town centre diversification; footfall; youth facilities	●●○○○	S-M	N	H

A. Key Public Realm Improvements

KEY PROJECTS

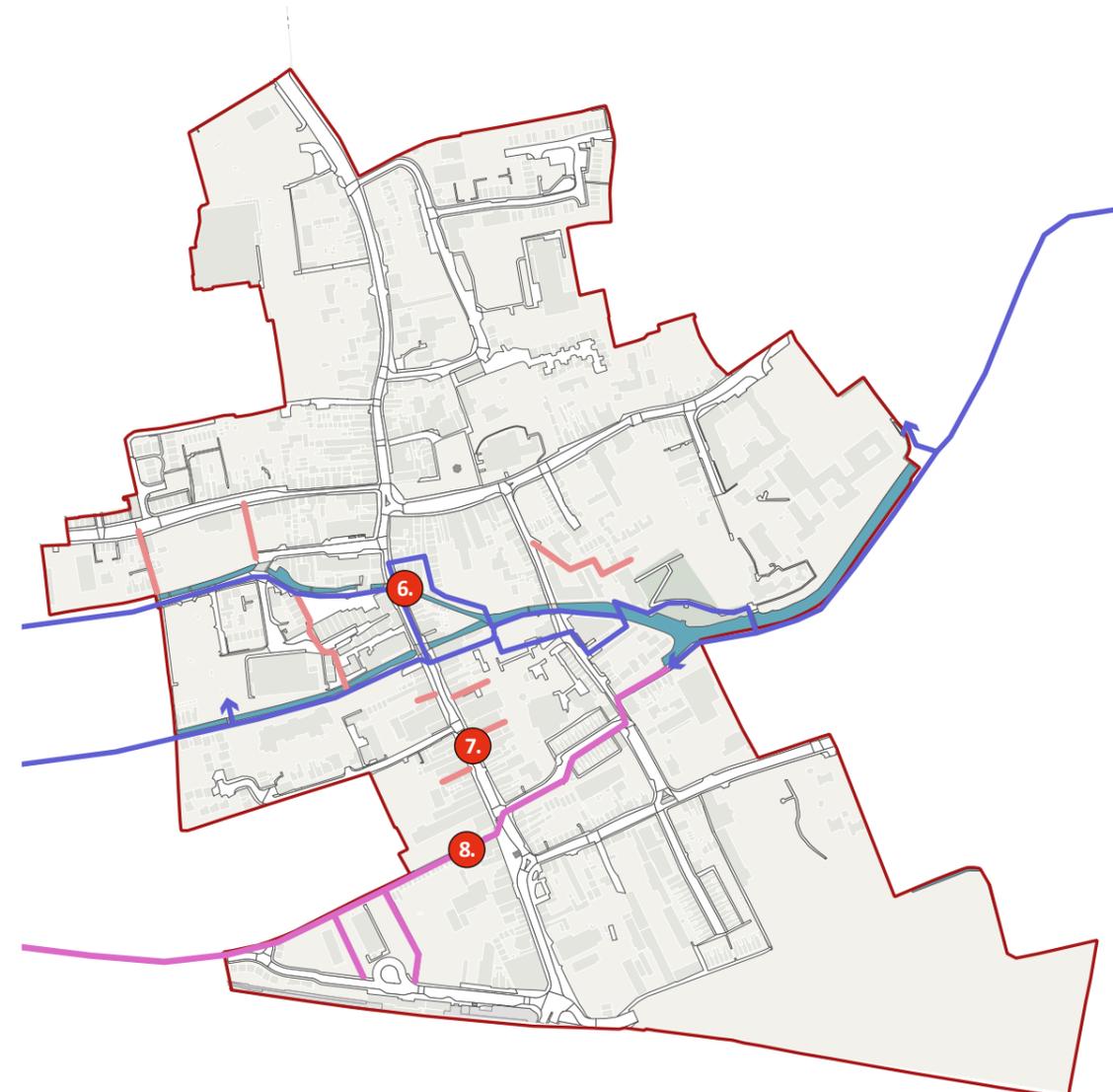
1. River Slea Promenade
2. Streetscape Enhancement Southgate
3. Streetscape Enhancement Carre Street
4. Market Place Public Realm
- 5A. Sleaford Station Enhancements
- 5B. Sleaford Station Environs



B. Walking and Cycling

KEY PROJECTS

6. Enhancing Conditions for Pedestrians
7. Ginnel Enhancement Programme
8. Nag's Head Passage Improvements
20. Enhancing Conditions for Cyclists



C. Green Spaces and Links

KEY PROJECTS

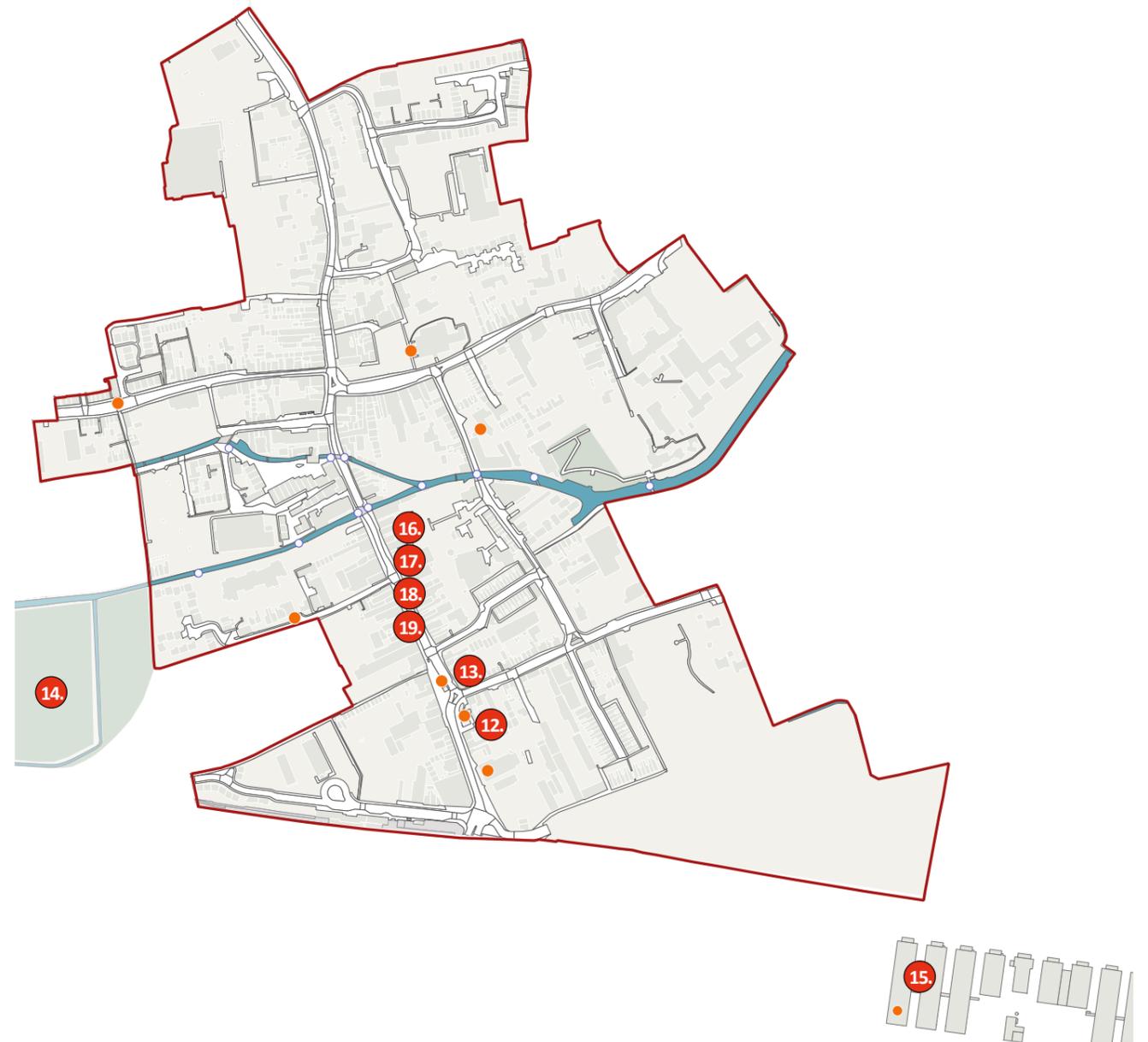
- 9.1 Jermyn Street pocket space
- 9.2 Playhouse Place
- 9.3 Watergate Wall and Sitting
- 9.4 Handley Street improvements
- 9.5 Carre Street paces
- 9.6 Navigation Yard improvements
- 10. Eastgate Green Enhancements
- 11. River Biodiversity Support



D. Heritage and Placemaking

KEY PROJECTS

- 12. Monument Gardens and Highlighting Sleaford Museum
- 13. Highlighting Handley Monument
- 14. Sleaford Castle Exhibition Space
- 15. Highlighting Bass Maltings
- 16. Shop Front and Building Improvements
- 17. Sleaford Heritage Trail Additions
- 18. Meanwhile uses
- 19. Art Activation



E. Highways and Parking

KEY PROJECTS

- 20. Enhancing Conditions for Cyclists
- 21. Enhancing Bus Services
- 22A. Reducing Traffic in Town Centre
- 22B. Eastgate to Boston Road - New Link Road
- 23. Watergate Junction
- 24. Perimeter Parking
- 25. Shared & Micro Mobility Interventions



Project Bank - Summary Plan



1. River Slea Promenade

- Location: Along the rivers within the town centre, plus connections to existing Riverside walk in wider area
- Deliverability: ●○○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type / themes: walking, public realm, place-making, natural environment

Description: Provide new pedestrian connections along the River Slea and Nine Foot River through opportunity sites and improve other sections of existing riverside paths. Key elements include:

- New pedestrian promenades on south side of River Slea in Money's Yard and adjacent sites and on south side of Nine Foot River via 26 Southgate (see separate chapter on Opportunity Sites for details).
- Work with developer of Heart of Sleaford site to provide new bridge across River Slea to connect from HoS development to promenade.
- Investigate potential for cantilevered boardwalk style route over river alongside the Barge and Bottle pub.
- Enhance public realm in Riverside Centre to create new promenade along south side of River Slea.
- Futureproof potential for onwards westward connection on south side of river from western end of 26 Southgate to Castle Field.
- Resurface other sections of existing riverside paths.
- Incorporate attractive and appropriate illumination for evening use, sensitive to local riverine ecology and adjacent occupiers.
- Introduce art elements at river crossings promoting presence of river and route (e.g. pavement markers, interpretation signs, parapet feature lighting).
- Establish low level locally appropriate riverine planting to soften hard edges and provide habitat for fauna (e.g. floating reed beds within river course).

Justification: opening up town centre and encouraging footfall, encouraging activity in public spaces, promoting healthy lifestyles and active travel generally, helping realise development.

Sensitivities: heritage, habitats, flood zone, relationship to adjacent properties



Existing situation



2. Streetscape Enhancement Southgate

- Location: Southgate between Station Road and Church Lane
- Deliverability: ●●●○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type / themes: public realm, place-making, walking, traffic

Description: Southgate is the spine of the town centre, its high street and also the main route south to north for vehicles and for pedestrians in both directions. However the public realm does not reflect its importance nor contribute to the overall place quality or identity. Moreover, its physical constraints put pedestrians in close proximity to high volumes of traffic and make it uncomfortable and even unpleasant at times.

The street should be redesigned to provide additional pedestrian space where possible while retaining vehicular access, but with the ability to close to traffic periodically and make pedestrian-only. The principles set out in the Sleaford Streetscape Design Manual provide the starting point for a redesign to address these issues. These should be used to develop a concept design and test how much the carriageway can be reduced to widen footways, while ensuring that still accessible for general traffic, buses, and servicing vehicles, and disabled parking spaces are retained or reprovided.

Key design elements include:

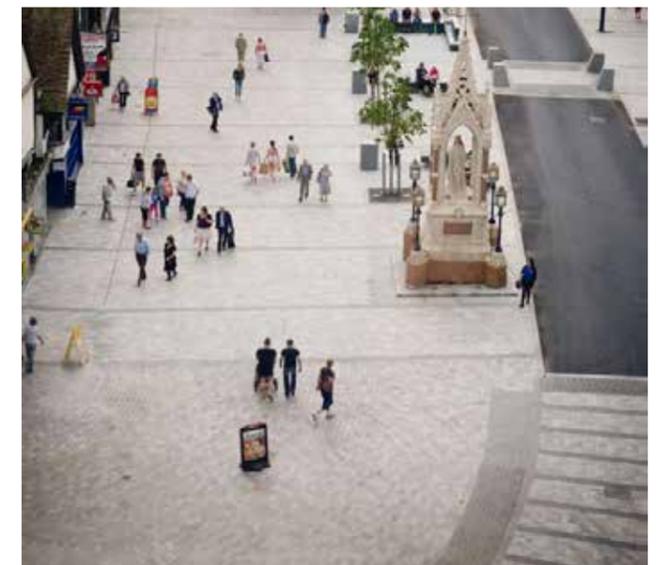
- Reproviding loading bays as loading pads integrated into the footway. If loading is restricted to outside of peak hours then these areas can effectively become pedestrian space when there are no vehicles parked.
- Resurfacing footways with high quality surfacing materials sympathetic to Conservation Area status that also reflect the identity as the main street.
- Junction redesign and repaving with special materials to prioritise pedestrian movement.
- Using bespoke paving treatments to designate special areas on the street (e.g. Handley Monument, and entrances to ginnels - see separate projects).
- Decluttering of excess signage, bollards, railings etc.
- Replacing street lighting with simple high quality contemporary lighting columns, with pedestrian-focused lighting as well as highways lighting.

Justification: supporting activity, encouraging footfall, supporting active travel, revealing heritage, road safety.

Sensitivities: heritage, servicing of businesses



Existing situation



3. Streetscape Enhancement Carre Street

- Location: Carre Street between Eastgate and Boston Road
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: Medium
- Project type / themes: public realm, place-making, walking, traffic

Description: Carre Street is the secondary north-south route for pedestrians, but the route southbound for all vehicles travelling through the town centre. It features important and attractive heritage buildings, and there are a number of attractions along or just off it including Navigation House, The Hub, art galleries, and pubs. However it is even narrower than Southgate and uncomfortable to walk along. Moreover the public realm is underwhelming in terms of quality.

The streetscape here should be upgraded, providing additional pedestrian space where possible. The principles set out in the Sleaford Streetscape Design Manual provide the starting point for redesign.

Key design elements include:

- Resurfacing footways with good quality surfacing materials sympathetic to Conservation Area status that also reflect the identity as a secondary street.
- Junction redesign and repaving with special materials to prioritise pedestrian movement. Using bespoke paving treatments to designate special areas on the street (e.g. crossing points along the River Slea Promenade - see separate projects).
- Decluttering of excess signage, bollards, railings etc.
- Replacing street lighting with simple high quality contemporary lighting columns.

Justification: supporting activity, encouraging footfall, supporting active travel, revealing heritage, road safety.

Sensitivities: heritage



Existing situation



4. Market Place Public Realm

- Location: Market Place
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Short to Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type / themes: public realm, place-making, heritage

Description: Deliver the preferred public realm design concept for Market Place to turn this into a destination public space fitting its historic role in the town, and improving the setting for St Denys' Church and the war memorial.

The concept design picks up on key elements. Additional considerations include:

- Allowing limited blue badge parking within the space or on Eastgate.
- Applying the design approach developed to the adjacent parts of Northgate and Eastgate, visually extending the space across these streets and creating more of a gateway area to the town centre core. This could be done as later phases of the Market Place scheme.
- Review crossing locations on Northgate and Eastgate to better connect to the space. E.g. new crossing over Eastgate where it meets Northgate, and relocated crossing on Northgate to align with entrance to Market Street.
- Declutter footways on Eastgate and Northgate.
- Introduce new interpretation panels to explain history of the buildings around the square including the Church and Sessions House.
- Install feature lighting to highlight Sessions House and complement existing feature lighting of St Denys' Church.
- Install new high quality market stalls.

Justification: opening up town centre and encouraging footfall, providing public amenity space, encouraging activity in public spaces, revealing heritage.

Sensitivities: heritage, parking, relationship to adjacent properties



Existing situation



5A. Sleaford Station Enhancements

- Location: Sleaford Station
- Deliverability: ●●●●○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type / themes: public transport

Description: Enhance Sleaford Station and car park

Key elements include:

- New footbridge with lifts connecting all platforms to Station Road and the new facility on the south side.
- Refurbishment of the station building and the facade as required.

Justification: encouraging use of public transport.

Sensitivities: visual impact of footbridge, heritage, listed station building and Conservation Area



Existing situation



5B. Sleaford Station Environs

- Location: Around Sleaford Station
- Deliverability: ●●●○○
- Timescale: Short to Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type / themes: public transport, walking and cycling

Description: Enhance environment around Sleaford Station to provide a more fitting gateway to the town centre.

Key elements include:

- New high quality station plaza.
- Enhanced bus stops, taxi rank and drop-off on Station Road with potential refreshment facility.
- New bus stops, drop-off facility and station-related parking on south side adjacent to London Road (subject to land purchase).

Justification: encouraging use of public transport, opening up town centre and encouraging footfall, reducing the need for traffic to use level crossings.

Sensitivities: heritage, listed station building and Conservation Area



Existing situation



6. Enhancing Conditions for Pedestrians

- Location: Sleaford Town Centre, plus connections to Castle Field
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Short to Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type / themes: walking, public realm

Description: Improve layout and quality of pedestrian routes in Sleaford town centre to encourage more travel on foot.

Key elements include:

- Widening narrow and crowded footways on the high street and roads with heavy traffic flow, with Southgate and Northgate as a priority pedestrian route, plus interventions on East Gate, Carre Street and Boston Road.
- Review potential for part-time pedestrianisation of Southgate in association with Eastgate-Boston Rd Link (project 22B).
- Removing unnecessary street furniture and obstacles from pathways, removing unnecessary fencing, relocating cycle parking off footways, rationalising number of retail clutter (e.g. A-frames).
- Creating or improving pedestrian crossings, with dropped kerbs, crossing waiting space and traffic signals if needed, allowing pedestrians to safely cross at key junctions.
- Key new crossings to be implemented at the junction of Southgate and Boston Road, Boston Road and Carre Street/Albion Street, improved crossing at the entrance to Money's Yard off Carre Street, path leading to the Navigation House off Carre Street, Jermyn Street and Southgate.
- Creating or improving east-west links, following key desire lines across existing car parks (Money's Yard, Market Square, Station Car Park to Nag's Head Passage).
- Implementing measures to make pedestrians feel safer in alleyways and passageways routes, with few intermediate exits or flanked by fences and buildings.
- Installing a new footbridge across the railway to better integrate town centre with south of Sleaford.
- Bus-friendly traffic calming to keep traffic speeds below 20mph.

Justification: encouraging mode shift to walking, opening up town centre and encouraging footfall, improving pedestrian safety.



Existing situation



7. Ginnel Enhancement Programme

- Location: Various
- Deliverability: ●○○○○
- Timescale: Short- Medium
- Priority: Medium
- Project type / themes: walking, public realm, place-making

Description: Improve the appearance of various ginnels which are a network of historic routes (variously unnamed and named paths, passages, mews and connecting yards). They are an integral part of Sleaford's place character yet are not well known, and some are in poor condition.

The different character and function of the various ginnels means the nature of design interventions would vary. Some could be improved in a relatively light touch and cost effective way and may be delivered in the short term as 'quick wins'. Any improvements will need to respond to heritage, and opportunities to reinforce local distinctiveness should balance an overall 'look' for the town centre with a diversity of individual circumstances.

Key design elements to be considered include:

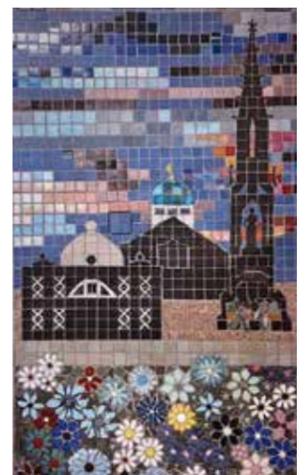
- Install place name marker at entrances (e.g. engraved or inset paving slab) to 'announce' ginnels and provide visual aid to navigation.
- Sensitively designed art elements along each to encourage exploration; e.g. insets within paving slabs, and artwork on blank walls where appropriate, in locations that are visible from adjoining streets. Designs could relate to the specific place or an overarching theme and be designed in collaboration with local artists. A good local example is the mosaics in Gladstones Yard.
- Feature lighting at entrances and/or along ginnels such as uplighting of soffits, floodlighting of walls, or catenary lighting.
- Upgrading surfacing materials, with materials appropriate to the Conservation Area.
- Ensuring routes are captured in new wayfinding.

Justification: improving legibility, supporting activity, encouraging footfall and exploration, revealing heritage, safety and security.

Sensitivities: heritage, land ownership, relationship to adjacent properties



Existing situation



8. Nag's Head Passage Improvements

- Location: Nag's Head Passage
- Deliverability: ●○○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: Medium
- Project type / themes: walking, public realm, place-making, natural environment

Description: Improve the appearance of the Passage, considering personal security issues and promotion of the route as a direct connection between Sleaford Castle and the town centre, and a route to/from Sleaford Station.

Key elements include:

- Install place name marker (e.g. engraved or inset paving slab) to 'announce' entrances to Passage where it meets Southgate, Castle Causeway, and where it connects to Station Road.
- Investigate potential for sensitively designed art elements on blank walls where Passage meets Southgate, along with feature lighting such as catenary lighting.
- Review lighting levels along the Passage, identifying improvements that are appropriate to enhance personal security while being mindful of proximity to residences, and ecological impacts of illumination.
- Install new footbridge connection from Passage into Castle Field at southeast corner (see following Opportunity Site chapter).
- Improve ramps at Castle Causeway end of Passage, e.g. with new surfacing and replacing timber fence with railings to complement those used along the Passage.
- Ensuring route is captured in new wayfinding.

Justification: improving legibility, supporting activity, encouraging footfall and exploration, revealing heritage, safety and security.

Sensitivities: heritage, land ownership, relationship to adjacent properties



Existing situation



9.1 Jermyn Street Pocket Space

- Location: Alongside Jermyn Street car park
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: Medium
- Project type / themes: walking and cycling, public spaces and public realm, green spaces and links

Description: Improve the streetscape of Jermyn Street and setting of heritage buildings through public realm enhancements, creation of a 'pocket' sitting area and introduction of greenery.

Key elements include:

- Create a pocket space with seating, new lighting and greenery e.g. trees and/or planters.
- Improve setting of important heritage assets (Grade II listed buildings on Jermyn Street) and Our Lady of Good Counsel Church.
- Highlight the view of Money's Mill from the location and promote this visual connection, use as natural wayfinding.
- Reduce the impact of traffic using the green space to provide additional traffic calming.
- Explore potential to integrate a rain-garden or other form of SUDs here.
- Consider shared mobility / micro mobility in this location (see separate project related to this topic).
- Potential to enhance existing pedestrian connection with Sainsbury's via the residential court.
- In the long term create a new connection with Millstream Sq along the river (subject to development of the Sainsbury's site).

Justification: improving streetscape of town centre locations and setting of listed buildings, creating pockets of activity and opportunities to extend dwell time, introducing town centre greenery, improving sustainability of town centre.

Sensitivities: heritage context, ownership issues,



Existing situation



9.2 Playhouse Place

- Location: Westgate, outside of Sleaford Playhouse
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: Medium
- Project type/themes: walking and cycling, public spaces and public realm, green spaces and links.

Description: Improve the streetscape of Westgate and setting of the heritage theatre building, create an attractive public space and/or shared space.

Key elements include:

- Improve the streetscape of Westgate through public realm enhancement and potential shared space improvements aimed at the creation of an attractive 'place' on Westgate at the termination of the pedestrian link connecting Westgate with West Banks.
- Provide seating, improved lighting and greenery e.g. new trees and planters.
- Improve the setting of important heritage assets (e.g. Grade II listed playhouse building).
- Support business environment by creation of a sitting area for playhouse visitors and local F&B customers.
- Explore potential to integrate a rain-garden or other form of SUDs here.
- Create a 'destination' on Westgate to activate the NW quarter of the town centre and support local businesses.
- Consider potential future connection with Castle Field along Albert Terrace
- Consider shared mobility/micro mobility in this location (see separate project related to this topic)

Justification: Improving streetscape of town centre locations and setting of heritage buildings, creating pockets of activity and opportunities to extend dwell time, enhance town centre greenery, supporting local businesses, improving sustainability of town centre.

Sensitivities: heritage context, road improvements, relationship to adjacent properties



Existing situation



9.3 Watergate Wall and Seating

- Location: Corner of Watergate and Southgate
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: Medium
- Project type/themes: public spaces and public realm, green spaces and links

Description: Improve the gable wall and provide a space to pause. A major town centre greening opportunity and creation of a place at the junction of Watergate and Southgate to generate interest in the environment and businesses on Watergate.

Key elements include:

- Create a space to pause at the termination of Watergate.
- Activate an entry route into Watergate.
- Improve streetscape and introduce town centre greenery.
- Support business environment on Watergate.
- Opportunity for seating (fixed to the gable wall).
- Promote sustainability through the creation of pockets of greenery (consider SUDs).
- Create interest and activation on the key corner and promote E-W connections.

Justification: Improving streetscape of town centre locations, creating pockets of activity, creating opportunities to extend dwell time in the town centre, introducing town centre greenery, improving the sustainability of town centre, addressing climate change and supporting local businesses.

Sensitivities: liaising with building owners required, road improvements, consider the narrow turning point



Existing situation



9.4 Handley Street improvements

- Location: Handley Street
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type/themes: walking and cycling, public realm, green spaces and links

Description: Improve the streetscape of Handley Street and introduce greenery.

Key elements include:

- Redesign street to reduce through-traffic and give priority to cyclists and pedestrians
- Introduce soft landscape elements to green the street e.g. street trees and/or planters
- Opportunity to improve street quality of Handley Street with street planting, improved materials and lighting aimed at creation of an attractive 'green link' connecting Castle Field and Lollycocks Field and the Nettles
- Promote the new link connecting town centre core with open green spaces of Sleaford
- Opportunity to integrate better wayfinding, between Southgate, River Sleas and the parks, which could include public art, fingerposts or integrated signage into the ground
- Promote sustainability through the creation of pockets of greenery (consider SUDs)

Justification: Improving streetscape, opportunities to extend dwell time in town centre, introducing town centre greenery, improving sustainability of town centre, addressing climate change, promoting active travel.

Sensitivities: residential context, relatively narrow street, one-way traffic system,



Existing situation



9.5 Carre Street Spaces

- Location: Carre Street, junctions with Boston Road and Handley Street
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type/themes: public spaces and public realm, green spaces and links

Description: Improve existing pocket park at the junction of Boston Road and Carre Street, improve streetscape of Carre Street at the junction with Handley Street to create a space to pause and provide continuity of the green link- a space connecting Handley Street with the riverside.

Key elements include:

- Create a space to pause at the termination of Handley Street and improve the environment of Carre Street.
- Activate an entry route into Handley Street to direct pedestrian and cycle traffic; enhance continuity of Handley Street 'link' across Carre Street to create a legible and high-quality E-W route between the parks,
- Greening opportunities (e.g. planters) along Carre Street to connect with the existing pocket park at the junction of Carre Street and Boston Rd
- Promote sustainability through the creation of pockets of greenery (consider SUDs),
- Wayfinding and signage opportunities

Justification: Creating a 'green' E-W connection, creating pockets of activity, introducing town centre greenery, improving sustainability of town centre, addressing climate change, promoting active travel,

Sensitivities: residential context, road and kerb line improvements required, to tie-in with longer term aspirations of reducing traffic in Carre Street and reverting western end of Boston Road to two-way working.



Existing situation



9.6 Navigation Yard Improvements

- Location: Navigation Yard
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: Medium
- Project type/themes: public realm, green spaces

Description: Improve the quality of Navigation Yard to create a 'spill out outdoor space' for neighbouring businesses and visitors providing seating area and enhanced greenery.

Key elements include:

- Opportunity for a green 'pocket space' providing outdoor seating, activating the yard, enhancing streetscape and supporting local businesses
- Introduce town centre greenery e.g. trees, and planters
- Improve lighting to help activate space
- Improve setting of Grade II listed Navigation House
- Opportunity to integrate wayfinding between Southgate, River Sleas and the parks, which could include public art, finger posts or integrated signage into the ground
- Promote sustainability through creation of pockets of greenery (consider SUDs)

Justification: Improving streetscape, opportunities to extend dwell time in town centre, introducing town centre greenery, improving sustainability of town centre, addressing climate change, supporting business, improving setting of high quality listed buildings.

Sensitivities: liaising with neighbouring businesses, sensitive heritage context



Existing situation



10. Eastgate Green Enhancements

- Location: Eastgate Green
- Deliverability: ●○○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: Medium
- Project type/themes: public spaces and public realm, green spaces and links

Description: Improve landscaping of the park and relationship with the river, including potential for new planting, seating, play equipment and a space for small festivities/activities;

Key elements include:

- Create attraction and enable the park to be used as a space for temporary events and activities
- Provide opportunities for activation e.g. informal play areas for children, coffee van, riverboat cafe etc.
- Promote as space for small scale events and local activities (e.g. arts & crafts exhibition), potentially in association with the Hub
- Facilitate engagement with numerous groups, including local youth, to design improvements
- Make the most of the river; enhance accessibility and connection to the water
- Feature lighting to provide interest at night, such as festoon lighting in trees
- Riverbank improvements to support local flora and fauna
- Wayfinding and signage opportunities

Justification: maximise the potential of existing town centre greenery, promote riverside as the key natural asset, creating pockets of activity, opportunities to extend town centre dwell time, addressing climate change, promoting outdoor leisure.

Sensitivities: consultation with residents to fulfil the potential



Existing situation



11. River Biodiversity Support

- Location: various town centre location
- Deliverability: ●○○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: Medium
- Project type / themes: natural environment, green spaces

Description: Consider measures aimed at supporting biodiversity of the Rivers to support town centre sustainability, address climate change and enhance importance of rivers for the town centre.

Key elements include:

- Investigate potential to install floating reed beds to improve water quality and improve habitat for birds, amphibians and invertebrates found in naturally occurring reed bed
- Where possible introduce complementary riverbank improvement schemes designed to support local flora and fauna
- Encourage creation of a river biodiversity volunteering group to help promote the river and its positive qualities for Sleaford

Justification: promotion of the rivers as the key natural town centre asset, addressing climate change, encourage environmental sustainability, promoting outdoor leisure.

Sensitivities: liaising with specialist consultants required.



Existing situation



12. Monument Gardens and Highlighting Sleaford Museum

- Location: Monument Gardens
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: Medium
- Project type/themes: Public realm, place-making, heritage, greening, art

Description: The Monument Gardens provides a small pocket of green in an area with few street trees or other planting. However, the space poorly relates to the Monument after which it is named, and to the Sleaford Museum which it fronts. The area should be redesigned to create a stronger sense of arrival at Museum, and also better respond and connect to the Handley Monument itself. Design work should be coordinated with separate projects to improve the public realm of the Handley Monument and of Southgate overall.

Key elements include:

- Install new pedestrian crossing to connect across Southgate from Gardens to the Handley Monument.
- Remove or reduce the length of the railing along the kerb adjacent to Southgate so that pedestrians can access the space more easily.
- Reshape areas of planting to accommodate pedestrian desire line to cross to/from Handley Monument area, and lift crown of tree at northern end of space to improve visibility for people walking through.
- Explore potential for additional planting, e.g. additional specimen tree and planting beds.
- Upgrade seating, making visually consistent with seating as part of the improved space around the Monument, ensuring a variety of seating options for different needs (e.g. single seats and seats with space for wheelchairs adjacent to them).
- Introduce feature lighting with vegetation, street furniture, and/or of adjacent walls to add visual interest and enhance personal security.
- Install art elements on blank walls adjacent to Museum entrance.

Justification: improving legibility, supporting activity, encouraging footfall and exploration, providing public amenity space, greening, revealing heritage, safety and security.

Sensitivities: heritage, land ownership, relationship to adjacent properties.



Existing situation



13. Highlighting Handley Monument

- Location: Handley Monument, Southgate
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type/themes: Public realm, place-making, heritage

Description: The Handley Monument is important historically as well as being a prominent landmark in the town centre, however its importance is not reflected in its setting. The space around it should be redesigned to improve the setting of the monument sensitively whilst retaining access to Nags Head Yard.

E.g. incorporating new bespoke paving, feature lighting and seating. Undertake design work to complement improvements to Monument Gardens outside Sleaford Museum and Southgate streetscape enhancements (see separate project bank items).

Key elements include:

- Clean stonework
- Sensitively design and install uplighting to highlight the monument promoting it as an important piece of heritage and as a local landmark
- Redesign public realm around monument to create a defined plaza area that relates to the monument. This should take into account potential changes to carriageway around it and relationship to Monument Gardens, in terms of visual coherency and physical connectivity
- Incorporate new contemporary seating and street furniture that provides amenity and is sensitive to the heritage context but supports a distinctive identity for the space
- Incorporate additional planting while retaining and supplementing existing tree

Justification: improving legibility, providing public amenity space, greening, revealing heritage.

Sensitivities: heritage



Existing situation



14. Sleaford Castle Exhibition Space

- Location: Building within the town centre, TBC
- Deliverability: ●○○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: Medium
- Project type/themes: Heritage, place-making

Description: Sleaford Castle is an important part of Sleaford's heritage, the remnants of which are largely hidden below ground within Castle Field. More needs to be done to bring this heritage asset to life. The Sleaford Castle Heritage Group has developed various ideas for improving access to and showcasing the Castle's history. Ideas for the Castle Field site itself are presented in the Opportunity Sites chapter. In addition to sensitive improvements to the Castle Field site itself, it would be beneficial to tell the story of the Castle and promote its presence at a location within the heart of the town centre. Therefore it is suggested that a dedicated Castle exhibition space is created within a premises in the town centre. The space could incorporate historical information, items uncovered from archaeological digs, digital (e.g. AR or VR) and/or physical recreations (e.g. models) of the Castle etc. It could also serve as the starting point for a visit to the Castle, being only a short walk away, and a place to host groups for talks or educational events.

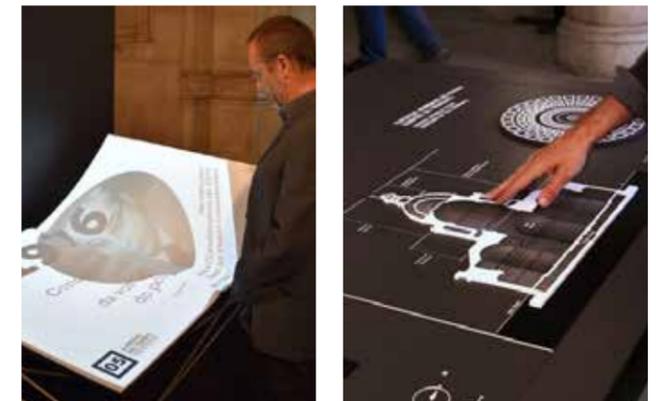
Further investigation of options for such an exhibition space would be required. Potential locations could include the Sleaford Museum, Navigation House, or a vacant unit elsewhere within the town centre.

Justification: revealing heritage, reinforcing place identity, encouraging exploration.

Sensitivities: heritage, visitor attraction



Existing Castle remnants



15. Highlighting Bass Maltings

- Location: Bass Maltings
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Short
- Priority: Low
- Project type/themes: Heritage, place-making.

Description: The Bass Maltings is a very significant part of Sleaford's heritage and identity. It is at risk and needs significant investment to save and bring back into use in some form. However in the meantime, it could be celebrated through small-scale and temporary interventions. Work should be done with the land owner and Historic England to identify ways of highlighting the building and its role in the history of Sleaford.

Key elements could include:

- Open days for public access and/or special events in the area around the buildings which promote awareness and understanding of the fascinating history of the buildings and their architecture. Careful consideration will be required in relation to site safety
- Add interpretation panel nearby (e.g. junction with Mareham Lane) to explain the building and its history
- Add as a stop on the Sleaford Heritage Trail.
- Consider occasional floodlighting to highlight structure at night, e.g. as part of wider festival of heritage or light

Justification: encouraging exploration, revealing heritage

Sensitivities: heritage, land ownership, relationship to adjacent properties.



Existing situation



16. Shop Front and Building Improvements

- Location: Various
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Short- Medium
- Priority: Medium
- Project type/themes: Place-making, heritage

Description: Sleaford Town Centre previously benefited Sleaford Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas (PSiCA). This was a joint venture between Historic England, NKDC and Sleaford Town Council, to enhance the frontages of historic properties along the main commercial streets of the Conservation Area and ameliorate signs of deterioration. Grants were available to part fund costs for reinstating architectural features (such as traditional shopfronts), and for repairs and essential maintenance (including to windows, roofs and rainwater infrastructure). A similar scheme could be reintroduced to improve additional buildings in the town centre.

Consideration should be given to an expanded scheme, including other properties within the town centre other than those on the main commercial streets. For instance, allowing grants to be given to buildings that front existing and proposed public spaces or routes as detailed elsewhere in this Project Bank.

Key considerations for improvement could include:

- Repairs, restoration, painting or cleaning up of frontages, including ground and upper floors
- New windows and doors
- Installation or restoration of shop awnings
- Design of new signage including hanging signs
- External lighting
- Advice on window dressing

Justification: improving appearance and attractiveness of town centre, supporting local businesses, revealing heritage.

Sensitivities: heritage



Existing situation



17. Sleaford Heritage Trail Additions

- Location: Various
- Deliverability: ●○○○○
- Timescale: Short
- Priority: Medium
- Project type/themes: Place-making, walking, heritage

Description: The Sleaford and District Heritage Trust has developed a heritage trail to highlight important heritage buildings and features in the town centre and the town more widely. The trail comprises both physical plaques and digital material accessed via a smartphone. The trail could be expanded to include other places of historical interest in the town centre.

Key considerations for the trail could include:

- Highlighting places where historical events occurred or buildings once stood, as well as buildings or structures physically present
- Designing and installing larger interpretation panels at selected places for people to read without relying on a smartphone
- Introducing small trail markers within the pavement or sensitively attached to walls, to guide people along routes between points of interest
- Commissioning artworks by local artists to be installed on temporary or permanent basis at key locations

Justification: revealing heritage, reinforcing place identity, encouraging exploration

Sensitivities: heritage, property ownership



Existing heritage trail plaque



18. Meanwhile uses

- Location: various town centre location
- Deliverability: ●○○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: Medium
- Project type/themes: placemaking, business support

Description: Programme of pop-up and short term town centre interventions developed with business stakeholders to accelerate regeneration; improve town centre attractiveness and local offer, support local businesses and provide town centre opportunities for various age groups.

Key considerations for the meanwhile strategy could include:

- Work with landlords of vacant units to make use of vacant retail units
- Could include short-term lets for fledgling businesses (incubator spaces), start up initiatives or business that need temporary accommodation
- Could consider other outdoor locations e.g. Museum's forecourt, Eastgate Park or Money's Yard
- Could also include installation of artworks within windows to promote local heritage (e.g. exhibition about Sleaford Castle or Sleaford Hub exhibition on Southgate)
- Potentially inform a wider art strategy relating to the whole town including for example in conjunction with a festival or other event

Justification: Improving town centre prosperity and physical appearance, foster sense of pride, create interest and contribute to marketing strategy, support new business and local economy.

Sensitivities: property ownership, consultation with local residents and businesses, involving local groups and politicians.



19. Art Activation

- Location: various town centre location
- Deliverability: ●○○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: Medium
- Project type/themes: art and wayfinding , heritage and placemaking

Description: Programme of art interventions across town centre (e.g. using blank walls, floorscape, within vacant units, in public spaces), involving local artists, temporary and permanent, could be combined to create a trail and contribute to Sleaford specific wayfinding.

Key elements include:

- Engage local artists in public art commissions to uplift the area and encourage economic growth
- Engage the local community in arts and culture
- Improve physical appearance of the town centre
- Consider heritage related art projects to foster a sense of pride and ownership within the area
- Provide activation through art projects to encourage footfall and extend dwell time within the town centre
- Create innovative wayfinding, unique to Sleaford
- Challenge the perception of Sleaford Town centre through sustainable PR and marketing campaigns
- Potentially inform a wider art strategy relating to the whole town; with potential input into wayfinding and street furniture design

Justification: Improving town centre prosperity and physical appearance, foster sense of pride, create interest and contribute to marketing strategy.

Sensitivities: consultation with local residents and businesses ,involving local groups and politicians.



20. Enhancing Conditions for Cyclists

- Location: Sleaford Town Centre, plus connections to wider Sleaford and surrounding suburbs
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Short to Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type/themes: Cycling, public realm

Description: Improve number and quality of cycle routes and cycle parking infrastructure in Sleaford Town Centre to encourage more travel by cycle, building upon draft local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan.

Key elements include:

- Providing dedicated, segregated (where possible) cycle routes leading towards and across Sleaford Town centre. Key cycle routes to run on Northgate, Southgate and Grantham Road (north to south) and along East Banks and East Gate (east to town centre)
- Improving quality of existing cycle routes – improved surface, widening where possible, removing unnecessary obstacles (fencing, street furniture)
- Providing high quality, safe and sheltered cycle parking, in proximity to key destinations
- Improving wayfinding dedicated for cyclists, indicating quieter routes
- Creating advanced stop lines for cyclists at key junctions
- Bus-friendly traffic calming to keep vehicle speeds below 20mph within town centre

Justification: encouraging mode shift to cycling, improving cycle safety.



Existing situation



21. Enhancing Bus Services

- Location: Sleaford
- Deliverability: ●○○○○
- Timescale: Short to Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type/themes: Public transport

Description: Improve frequency of bus services to encourage more travel by public transport.

Key elements include:

- Increasing frequency and days/hours of operation of bus services, particularly within existing and proposed urban areas. Bus services should be available on both weekdays and weekends; hours of operation should be extended from early morning until evening, to allow schoolchildren to attend after school activities or to allow people to enjoy leisure activities in the evening
- Improving passenger information, providing printed and online timetable, route and fares information at bus stops and in key public spaces
- Consolidating and improving bus stops at the railway station (including potential new interchange on south side), Southgate, Market Place and East Gate, ensuring appropriate shelter, seating and passenger information are available
- Providing dedicated bus school bus stop locations in close proximity to schools, enforcing no private car drop-off and pick-up which to ensure efficient operations

Justification: encouraging mode shift to public transport.

Sensitivity: financial outlay on public transport services.



Existing situation



22A. Reducing Traffic in Town Centre

- Location: Southgate and Carre Street
- Deliverability: ●●●○○
- Timescale: Short to Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type/themes: Public realm enhancements, walking, cycling

Description: Reduce/remove through traffic from Southgate and Carre Street.

Key short-term elements include:

- Review signage to encourage longer-distance traffic to use bypasses (subject to further detailed modelling to be undertaken as part of LTP update)
- Traffic calming and footway widening on Southgate
- Traffic calming on Carre Street
- Revert western end of Eastgate to two-way working
- Revert western end of Boston Road to two-way working
- Modify Southgate/Eastgate and Southgate/Boston Road junctions to accommodate changes in traffic flows

Justification: enhancing public realm, opening up town centre and encouraging footfall, reducing the need for traffic to use sensitive streets.



Existing situation



22B. Eastgate to Boston Road - New Link Road

- Location: East of NKDC offices and East Banks Car Park (part)
- Deliverability: ●●●●○
- Timescale: Medium to longer-term
- Priority: High
- Project type/themes: Traffic reduction in town centre, public realm enhancements, walking, cycling

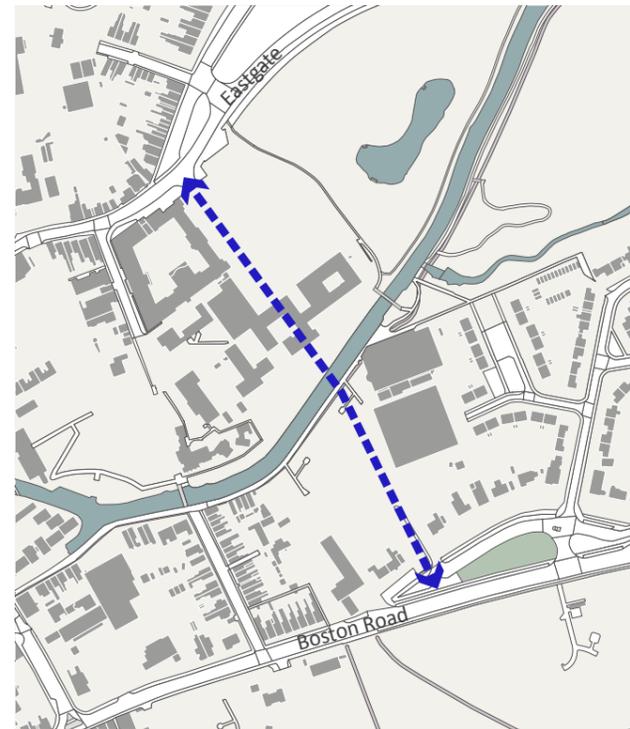
Description: New link road east of NKDC offices between Eastgate and Boston Rd. Daytime closures as Southgate and Care Street.

Key medium-term elements include:

- Construct new link road east of NKDC offices between Eastgate and Boston Road
- Enhance operation of King Edward Street level crossing to handle more traffic
- Daytime closures

Justification: enhancing public realm, opening up town centre and encouraging footfall, reducing the need for traffic to use sensitive streets.

Sensitivities: impact of new link road upon open space and floodplain, some frontages will potentially experience increased exposure to traffic (subject to detailed modelling).



Indicative location for link road between Eastgate and Boston Road



23. Watergate Junction

- Location: Watergate junction with West Banks
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type themes: Traffic calming, connectivity improvements

Description: Introduce traffic calming measures to announce pedestrian priority, improve town centre connectivity and address vehicular traffic and pedestrian conflict at this dangerous junction.

Key elements include:

- Traffic calming measures e.g. resurface existing junction to slow down traffic and create a safe and quiet pedestrian route connecting town centre with Westgate
- Improve town centre connectivity
- Address safety issues relating to the junction
- Promote quiet routes
- Create attractive public realm adjacent to the junction as part of riverside and Riverside Shopping Centre improvements
- Improve access and visibility of the existing link between Watergate, West Banks junction and Westgate

Justification: Improving town centre safety and connectivity.

Sensitivities: consultation with highways.



Existing situation



24. Perimeter Parking

- Locations: Various
- Deliverability: ●●●○○
- Timescale: Short to Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type/themes: Public realm enhancements, walking, reduce impacts of traffic in town centre, assist redevelopment opportunities

Description: Encourage greater use of perimeter car parks, reduce need for parking in heart of town centre, ongoing review of tariffs to prioritise short-stay parking.

Key short-term elements include:

- Install variable message signing system
- Enhance walking routes and signage from car parks on edge of town centre
- Further review of tariffs to discourage longer-stay parking in car parks accessed from Southgate and Carre Street
- Close 26 Southgate car park for redevelopment
- Reduce parking provision in Market Place to encourage outdoor dining

Key medium-term elements include:

- Expand Grantham Road car park onto redundant Network Rail land
- Reduce capacity of Moneys Yard car park to facilitate enhanced pedestrian connections and infill development
- Further review of parking tariffs

Justification: reducing the need for traffic to use sensitive streets, extending reach of town centre, reducing need for traffic to cross level crossings.

Sensitivities: impacts of new signage in heritage areas.



Existing situation



25. Shared & Micro Mobility

- Location: various town centre locations, key employment areas and SUEs
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Short
- Priority: Medium
- Project type/themes: Encourage more trips by sustainable modes, reduce impacts of traffic in town centre

Description: Introduce a small bike/e-bike and/or scooter hire scheme, with locations at various key destinations in the town centre, to encourage active and sustainable transport.

Key elements include:

- Mobility hub at the railway station to maximise interchange with bus and train. The hub should incorporate bike and scooter docking stations, secure cycle parking for general use, a public cycle tyre pump and related equipment, and information on mobility options
- The hub should be available 24/7. Consideration should be given to surveillance and after hours access to secure cycle storage area
- Additional designated pick-up/drop-off points should be provided at key places around the centre such as major employers and important local destinations
- The scheme could be operated by a local business or run by the town or district council

Justification: encouraging mode shift to sustainable modes.

Sensitivities: financial outlay and ongoing operational considerations.



26. Business and Community Hub

- Locations: Various
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Short to Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type/themes: Diversification of town centre; town centre footfall driver; community engagement and support; existing and new business support and networking.

Description: Provision of new town centre business and community hub to support existing and new businesses and entrepreneurs within flexible, affordable workspace and creative incubator space. Providing networking opportunities and business advice to support start-ups. Either stand-alone or part of a wider mixed-use development.

Key elements:

- Inclusion of flexible floorplates to alter the internal shape and space configurations to suit different types and scale of business, and to ensure future-proofing in response to market and commercial changes over time
- Encouraging growth businesses to stay in Sleaford as space can adapt to accommodate their growing space requirements
- Ability to accommodate a variety of workspace users of different types and scales including individual freelancers, small and growing businesses and creative entrepreneurs
- Space suited to different commercial sectors including office/desk-based through to the creative arts and workshop space
- Links to wider Lincolnshire business and growth hubs to access support and advice, and regional networking
- Inclusion of community space for events, youth entrepreneurship, community initiatives, workshops, and youth/adult learning courses
- Importance of creating a networking space within the hub through the linked provision of retail space in the form of a café, that can also be hired out for events and used as business break-out space
- Depending on location, could include high street facing retail units to let, or to provide concession rates for local start-ups

Justification: to support the diversification of the town centre, and to encourage town centre activity and business support whilst retaining growth within Sleaford.

Sensitivities: deliverability and viability, based on space demand and decisions around funding, target markets and usage



27. Food, Culture and Social Hub

- Locations: Various
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Short to Medium
- Priority: High
- Project type/themes: Diversification of town centre; town centre footfall driver; community engagement and support; existing and new business support and networking.

Description: Introduction of an indoor mall bringing together food, drink, retail, entertainment and socialising under one roof. Supporting and promoting Sleaford as 'the' modern market town in Lincolnshire..

Key elements:

- Offering space to both permanent traders and visiting traders on a rotational basis to keep the offer new to explore and interesting for return visits
- Artisanal vendors, fresh produce, scattered seating, food stalls
- Themed weekend markets covering local and regional food producers, vintage fashion and furniture, home, house and garden, and contemporary craft
- An assortment of small, independent food traders offering regional to international street food cuisine under one roof; ensuring a focus on promoting local produce from quality independent food operators
- Bars and beverage operators serving craft beers, wines and spirits
- Creation of a central eating area to eat, drink and meet with friends
- A year-round schedule of entertainment and a weekly community-led programme of events with the central hall area or adjoining rooms and/or outdoor terrace space
- Potential to link space with creative entrepreneurial workspace/workshops

Justification: to support the diversification of the town centre, to leverage regional connections into Sleaford, to attract visitors from further afield, to offer a diverse range of activities under one roof, to offer a vibrant entertainment destination for the local and regional population.

Sensitivities: Physical opportunity and space requirements, and the need to knit the destination into the existing Primary Shopping Area to support the wider town centre through linked trips and improved connectivity.



28. Youth Project

- Locations: Various
- Deliverability: ●●○○○
- Timescale: Short to Medium
- Priority: High

Project type/themes: Diversification of town centre; town centre footfall driver; community engagement and support; youth target market; youth support; youth facilities and networking.

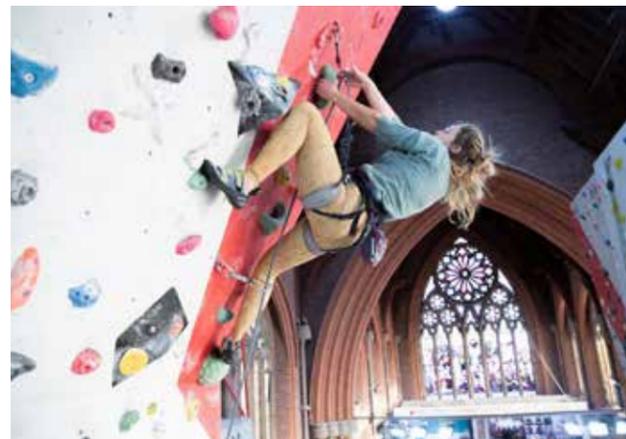
Description: Provision of new town centre youth facility and/or attraction, possibly in the form a youth zone, providing affordable access to high-quality sports, arts and leisure facilities and activities. Possible climbing wall or skate-park facility. Could be stand-alone or linked to the business/community hub offering career advice and opportunities.

Key elements:

- A safe environment where young people can enjoy themselves, raise their aspirations and confidence and meet new people
- Indoor and possibly some outdoor space;
- Boxing gyms, youth gyms, climbing walls, sports hall/dance studio, linked outdoor skate-park
- Fully equipped kitchens for cooking skills; music rooms for group sessions and recording; break-out lounge areas; library and computing facilities
- Offering support for staff also in the form of courses, programmes, and diplomas, for example
- Café space, possibly linked to the business/community hub

Justification: to support the youth market, development of younger people, mental health, and diversification of the town centre.

Sensitivities: deliverability and viability, based on space demand and decisions around funding, target markets and usage.



7.4 Town Centre Composition - Planning Intervention

This section focuses on the composition of retail and leisure uses within the Sleaford Primary Shopping Area and across the Opportunity Sites. Building on the baseline, we recommend planning policy and development control interventions that can assist in delivering town centre uses proposed as part of this Masterplan.

National Context

It is a pivotal time for the high street, with the retail and leisure sector undergoing a period of unprecedented change. There is much optimism for the future of our high streets, but since the publication of the previous Masterplan in 2011, town centres have had to swiftly evolve to become more than simply a place to shop, presenting themselves as multi-purpose ‘destinations’. Key contributory factors to this evolution have included the continued rise of online shopping and home delivery dining, and ongoing economic uncertainty triggered by Brexit and now the Covid-19 global health pandemic.

It is apparent that these ‘extra layers/diversity of uses’ are in addition to the core retail role, but should be closely connected to ensure a joined-up experience and strong pedestrian circuit within a comprehensive town centre strategy. Investment in a wider mix of land-uses and public realm/public space improvements will benefit a consolidated retail offer, leading to improved town centre footfall activity. Short-term investment projects alongside longer term investment for major projects can have far-reaching positive benefits to the performance of a town centre.

Policy Context

The NPPF (2021) continues to advocate a ‘town centres first’ approach, and requires planning policies to positively promote competitive town centre environments and manage the growth of centres over the plan period. The NPPF encourages LPA’s to recognise that town centres are the heart of their communities and to pursue policies which protect their health and vitality.

The emerging draft Local Plan (2021) endorses this town centre policy approach, identifying Sleaford’s important role in providing a local destination for the surrounding area. Sleaford is expected to continue to benefit from planned growth with a focus on housing and employment, which will in turn support the town centre through a larger economy and increased footfall.

In response to national trends, the draft Local Plan recognises the need to ‘diversify’ the town centre offer, developing as a destination with a greater reliance on food and drink, leisure uses and visitor attractions. The Primary Shopping Area has been rationalised to create a consolidated and focused retail area, whilst the retention of active ground floor ‘retail’ frontages throughout the PSA is a strong commitment within the draft Local Plan, noting the need to avoid lengthy ‘dead’ frontages.

Town Centre Composition/Performance

The baseline analysis of Sleaford has concluded the town centre to be performing well, offering a good balance and mix of uses. No substantial over or under representation of category was identified, although the leisure sector in the form of cafés, bars and restaurants has not kept pace with identified market growth. The proportion of quality restaurant operators is low, whilst fast food take-aways is the most dominant use in this category. This might correct itself as we emerge from Covid-19, but this sector should continue to be supported within the town centre, whilst restricting sui generis hot food take-aways, consistent with the policy direction set out in the draft Local Plan.

The convenience sector provides a strong range and breadth of operator, and has been concluded to be over-trading in recent years leading to identified ‘need’ for additional floorspace. In the context of wider national trends, and also on-site observations, it is concluded that whilst the foodstores are performing well, they are not at full physical capacity and could absorb identified surplus expenditure. It is concluded that there is no need to allocate sites for additional foodstores in Sleaford, and the focus should remain on enhancing and strengthening retail in the Primary Shopping Area, including the food street market.

In other sectors, there continues to be a small representation of comparison goods national multiple retailers, albeit there has been no growth or new business introductions in recent years. Given wider national trends and the decline of this sector across UK town centres, it is not expected that Sleaford will achieve future growth in representation – although support for potential new attractors should be supported within the PSA. There has been a number of new quality comparison goods independent businesses across the town centre, and this is where the focus of growth is likely to remain over the Local Plan period. The small reduction of the PSA in the draft Local Plan and need to consolidate the existing core retail area, recognises this trend.

Elsewhere across the PSA, vacant units are particularly low and continuing to fall through new lettings. There is a clearly defined need and market demand for a new independent cinema operator well integrated with the PSA, combined with an integral or linked bar/restaurant use to enhance the visitor experience and role as a destination attractor. The retail service category should be recognised as helping to diversify the town centre offer, whilst the role of the main banks in dominant historic buildings is recognised as an important factor in the vitality and viability of the high street – with both sectors performing an integral role in linked trips.

Masterplan Planning Recommendations

A strong mix and diversity of uses should be encouraged, but there is no identified need to extend or expand the PSA. This position is recognised and endorsed in the draft Local Plan. The focus should be on consolidating the retail and leisure offer within the PSA, encouraging diversification and promoting the food market, independent convenience and comparison goods retailers, restaurant operators and an independent cinema operator.

Within the new Use Class E category it is important to reinforce the continued importance of retail and leisure uses to the overall vitality and viability of town centres. The draft Local Plan responds to this change in policy, directing new retail and leisure development into the Sleaford PSA in order to reinforce its role and performance. The draft Local Plan specifically aims to protect retail uses within ground floor commercial units, and this Masterplan endorses this policy approach.

The redevelopment of floorspace and delivery of new floorspace should include ground floor retail/leisure floorspace within the PSA frontage and elsewhere as specified in the Masterplan. Policy site allocations should specify land uses, whilst new planning permissions should be conditioned accordingly by land use category / description, not general ‘Use Class E’. This might include restaurants, a cinema, comparison goods unit shops or doctors surgery, for example, and will help shape the Opportunity Sites at a finer grain, rather than the generic and wider Use Class E definition. The Council should work closely with developers and landlords to bring forward specific and desired land uses in ground floor frontages, and promote proposed uses within the Opportunity Sites.

This Masterplan specifies land uses on a site by site basis, but ‘town centre’ Sui Generis uses should be restricted elsewhere in the Primary Shopping Area and considered on a case by case basis, including, for example:

- Amusement arcades and casinos
- Nightclubs
- Betting offices/shops
- Pay day loan shops
- Public houses, wine bars or drinking establishments
- Hot food take-aways

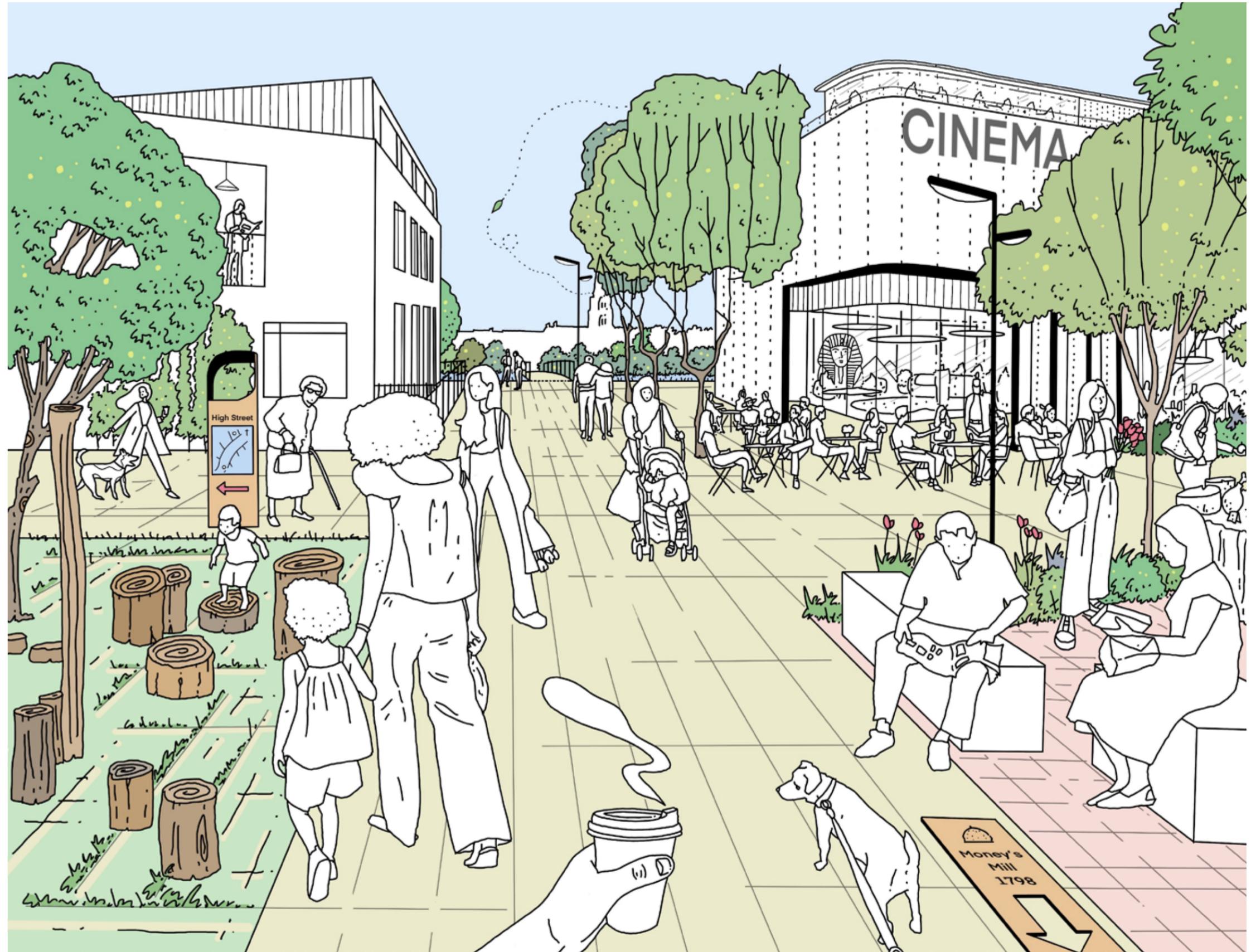
The baseline analysis has concluded the vacancy rate to be low and falling, which is a strong vitality indicator in Sleaford Town Centre. Nevertheless, beyond the Opportunity Sites and across the PSA, the Council should support flexibility and the temporary or ‘meanwhile’ uses of vacant properties - particularly those in key central locations. Meanwhile uses are generally for the benefit of the local community, for example; meeting spaces, informal training and learning spaces, temporary rehearsal spaces, pop-up shops and exhibitions, and so on. They can offer a breeding ground for innovative ideas and empower the local community, lasting just a few days or several years.

Permitted Development and the Use of Article 4 Directions

A new permitted development (PD) right to allow the change of use from any use, or mix of uses, from the Commercial, Business and Service use class (Class E) to residential use (Class C3) came into force on 1 August 2021. In town centres, retail shops can change use to residential use without the need for planning permission. This applies to ‘unused’ buildings that have been vacant for 3 months, are not larger than 1,500 sq m, and were previously used for at least 2 years for commercial, business or service use. This new permitted development could dilute retail frontages and erode the overall vitality and viability of a town centre.

As discussed above, retail continues to remain an important footfall driver in centres. Whilst town centres are undoubtedly going through a period of transition, successful centres continue to be supported by retail. Whilst this study has demonstrated that Sleaford is a healthy town centre, there is a need to ensure it remains strong and able to meet the full range of local residents’ day-to-day shopping needs. The vitality and viability of a town centre is dependent on providing a critical mass and diversity of quality, footfall-generating retail and leisure uses. An Article 4 direction covering Sleaford PSA would ensure that the core retail area remains healthy over the new Plan period.

**Money's Yard -
view north from new
public space towards
new footbridge over the
River Slea, framed by
cinema and housing**



8. Development Sites Concept Proposals

8.1 Introduction

The following pages illustrate conceptual approaches to developing or regenerating the twelve sites, addressing issues and opportunities identified in the Baseline Assessment section of this report.

Where sites are located near to one another they are presented on the same plan, to make clear adjacencies and interrelationships that have a bearing on the design approach proposed.

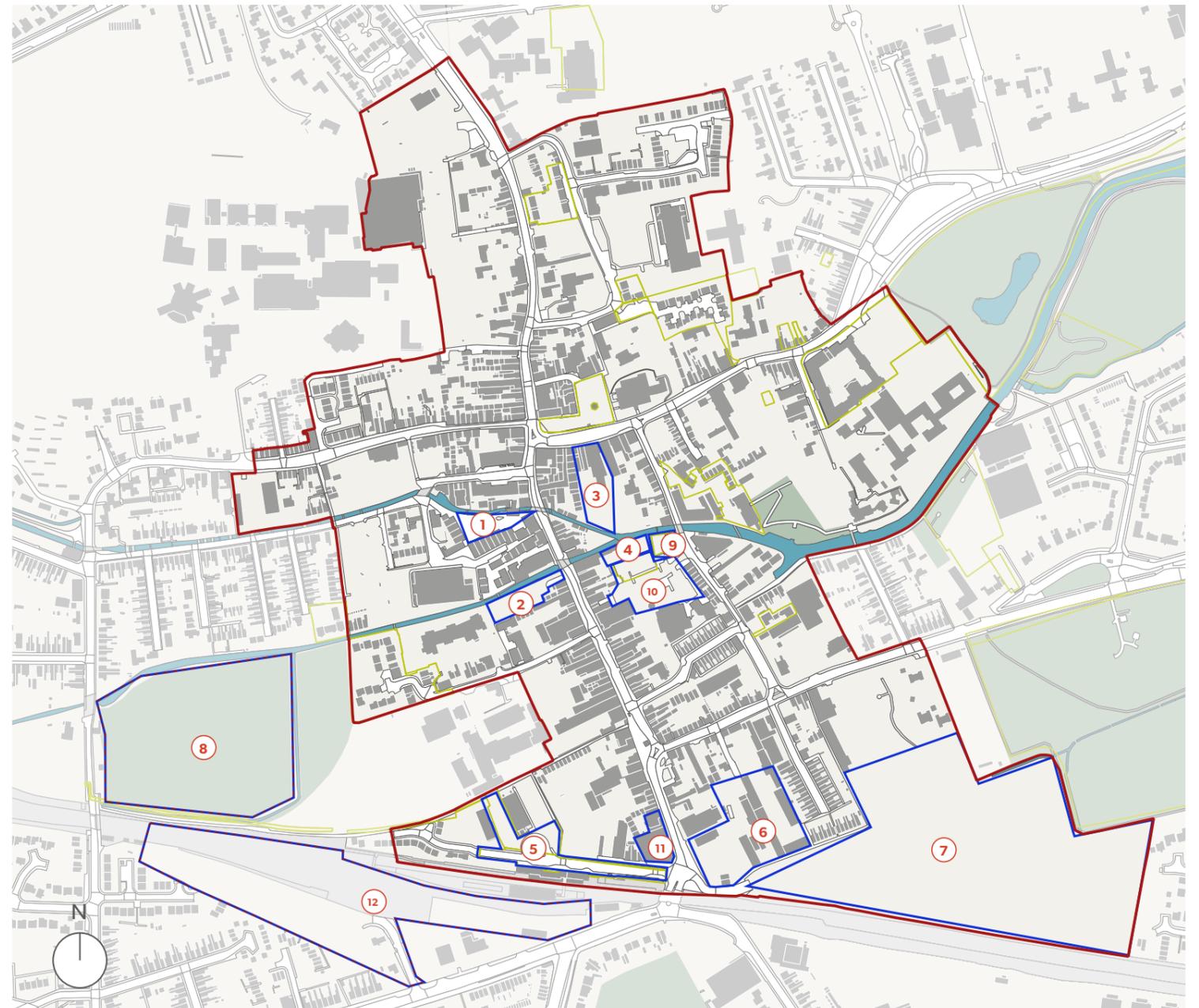
A high level explanation of key aspects of each site is provided, covering:

- Main land uses envisaged
- Access and connections for vehicles and pedestrians
- Suggested building typologies
- Areas of public space and approach to public realm improvements

As noted in the baseline analysis section of this report, the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Review - Proposed Submission Local Plan (regulation 19 submission) was published in March 2022 and consultation on this document was ongoing at the time this report was being prepared. The ideas presented on the following pages for the various sites will need to be developed in accordance with the Proposed Submission Local Plan policies, as and when these are adopted. Key policies to note that are especially relevant to the sites are policies S38 and NS74.

1. Riverside
2. 26 Southgate
3. Heart of Sleaford
4. 25b Southgate
5. Station Approach
6. Turnbull's
7. Advanta seeds site
8. Castle Field
9. Advice Services Building
10. Money's Yard
11. 82-88 Southgate
12. Station Car Park

- Key:-**
- Town Centre Boundary
 - Opportunity Sites
 - Council Owned Sites



Town Centre Sites - North Concept Diagram

1:1250

Key:-

- Development Site boundary
- 1. Riverside
- 2. 26 Southgate

- ⇔ Potential pedestrian connection
- ⇔ Existing pedestrian connection
- ⇔ Potential vehicle access
- ⇔ Potential emergency / bus access
- ⇔ Potential shared surface vehicle access
- ▨ Potential new public realm
- ▨ Potential improved public realm
- ▨ Potential green space
- ▨ Potential residential development
- ▨ Potential town centre uses
- ▨ Potential commercial/office use
- Potential redevelopment for town centre uses and residential
- ▨ Potential parking / servicing area
- ▨ Active frontage
- Retained TPO trees
- ▨ Potential new bridge





Town Centre Sites - North

Riverside (1) and 26 Southgate (2)

Sites (1) and (2) in the Sleaford Town Centre are significant development sites defined by similar contexts and analogous development approaches.

The main opportunities for both of these sites are their proximity to the high street and town centre of Sleaford and their location on the River Sleas edge. These factors provide an opportunity to foster greater permeability in the town centre and enhance connections to existing and future natural, cultural and heritage attractions.

The location of these sites in the Sleaford Town Centre Conservation Area restricts scope of development, which is further limited by the poor vehicular access and visibility of both of these sites.

Development on these sites has the potential to support key themes, including:

- help reveal the River Sleas
- diversify town centre uses
- support sensitive residential development
- celebrate nature and heritage (in this case the River Sleas natural feature)
- connect people with places

Uses

In the short term, improvements to Riverside (1) should reflect the current and planned uses of existing retail units, and focus on public realm improvements within the existing space. See additional description below.

26 Southgate (2) as well as Riverside (1) in the longer term both have high potential for successful and attractive residential riverside developments. This is what is illustrated in the plan; potentially solely residential at the rear of Riverside (1), and residential above retail in other areas of (1) and 26 Southgate (2).

In order to activate the frontage alongside the water, the ground floors that front the river side of both sites can provide town centre uses such as food and beverage or retail that spill out onto the riverside promenade, enhancing this connection and capitalising on proximity to the water. The interface with Southgate on both of these sites also provides potential for town centre uses such as retail and F&B here.



Building typologies

In response to the sensitive context of the Conservation Area, these sites provide opportunities for mews and/or townhouse type residential developments. Limited apartment type development could be considered where appropriate, sensitive to the heritage context. This could include the west end of Riverside (1), where a slightly larger building mass could be appropriate.

Connectivity

The main connections across these sites follow the river edges, that run east-west, and which also provide potential fronts for these developments. Additionally, on the Riverside (1) site there is an opportunity to strengthen the north-south connection between Millstream Square and Watergate; a more pedestrian-friendly option than the link via the Sainsbury's car park.

On 26 Southgate (2) the site layout should futureproof the potential for long-term provision of an additional pedestrian link connecting west, along the River.

Due to their poor vehicle accessibility but good location in the town centre, these developments should be considered car-free or with very low parking provision.

The current servicing access for Riverside (1) is via a rear lane accessed from West Banks. This should be maintained in the future for servicing vehicles. 26 Southgate (2) would ideally be serviced from Southgate. However the public realm along the river within the site should be designed as a shared access for occasional vehicle access if needed.

Public realm

Vacant retail units within Riverside (1) have recently been let, and the property is to be fully occupied for the first time in many years. The Post Office is one of the recent tenants to locate here. Future tenants are likely to include new community focussed uses such as a community centre, a community cafe, and a community-run grocery store.

The adjacent public realm would benefit from improvements that enhance the general appearance of the area and setting for these businesses in the short term. It is understood that the property owner (The Coop) and their new tenants are keen to promote use of the adjacent public realm for active use, so improvements should also facilitate appropriate events and activities.

Short term improvements for Riverside should focus on:

- Increase visibility from Southgate, using artwork or graphic elements on floor and/or building surfaces and feature lighting to strongly denote the entrance
- Introduce more green, using large format freestanding planters with small trees or bold planting that is highly visible
- Introduce more seating, fixed and/or moveable, to encourage people to pause
- Emphasise the river, positioning both planting and seating to relate to the water's edge and helping define a promenade space along it
- Keep a large area of space clear for temporary events and activities, and develop a programme in conjunction with tenants to be implemented here
- Programmed events should be varied but help address the gap in the town centre for activities for families, children and young people. E.g. including performances by local groups, making or crafting workshops, temporary play elements etc.

In the long term, public realm interventions on both sites should focus on the interface with the River, with a wide pedestrian promenade on each. This should be sufficient to allow spill-out activity from adjacent active frontages, complementing active uses in Millstream Square.

Phasing

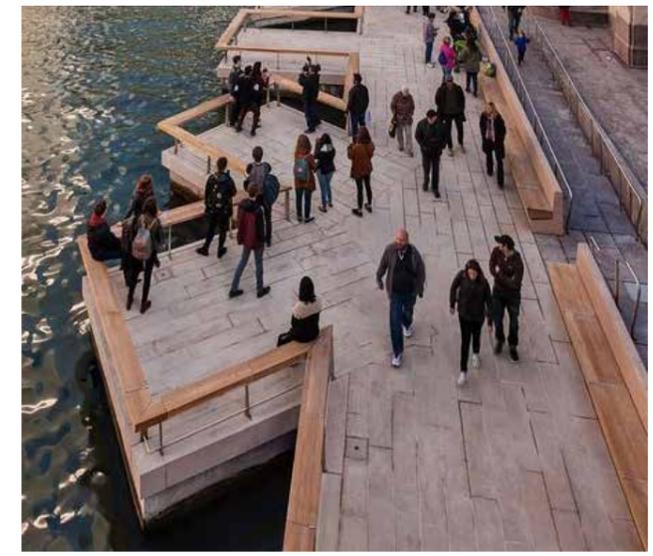
The potential for residential development of Riverside (1) site should be realised in the long-term. In the short-term, the improvement of the existing public realm would provide immediate gains and increased footfall around Riverside Shopping Centre. The 26 Southgate (2) site should be designed to futureproof the connection west to the Castle Field.

Town Centre Sites - North Concept Diagram

1:1250

Key:-

- Development Site boundary
- 3. Heart of Sleaford
- 4. 25b Southgate
- 9. Advice Services Building
- 10. Money's Yard
- ⇌ Potential pedestrian connection
- ⇌ Existing pedestrian connection
- ⇌ Potential vehicle access
- ⇌ Potential emergency / bus access
- ⇌ Potential shared surface vehicle access
- Potential new public realm
- Potential improved public realm
- Potential green space
- Potential residential development
- Potential town centre uses
- Potential commercial/office use
- Potential redevelopment for town centre uses and residential
- Potential parking / servicing area
- Active frontage
- Retained TPO trees
- ⇌ Potential new bridge





Town Centre Sites - North

Heart of Sleaford (3), 25b Southgate (4), CAB (9) and Money's Yard (10)

These four sites have significant potential for improvements to benefit Sleaford Town Centre. They are considered and designed together, due to their proximity and potential for synergies, despite them having different ownerships.

All four sites are directly or indirectly connected to the River Sleas. Their location creates an important opportunity for improving connectivity in the town centre, as well as providing access to and celebrating the River. The presence of heritage assets such as Money's Mill, the Butter Market and the Corn Exchange is an opportunity to articulate a series of spaces and development which emphasises heritage character.

The quantum of space provided by the cumulation of these sites is an opportunity for new generous, high quality public space in the town centre, with enhanced greenery.

The location of these sites in the Sleaford Town Centre Conservation Area needs to be carefully considered. This will influence the scale and design of the development. It is also important to note the limitations in terms of vehicular access on some of the sites, and the need to retain servicing access via Money's Yard for various buildings.

Development on these sites has the potential to support all of the established Sleaford Town Centre design themes, namely to:

- reveal the River Sleas
- create public spaces
- diversify town centre uses
- support with sensitive development
- celebrate nature and heritage (River Sleas, the Butter Market, Corn Exchange)
- connect people with places

Uses

The Heart of Sleaford (HoS, 3) site has been the subject of previous planning work to develop the Butter Market or adjacent 1960s concrete-framed building as a new cinema, with associated restaurant or cafe uses to

provide activity. The option of having a cinema here should not be discounted, however it is considered that a more feasible location would be to the south as described below. With sensitive restoration other uses could be considered for the Butter Market, e.g. as a covered market hall showcasing local food and produce. With the right operator this could create both a destination, and also complement the nearby cinema.

The HoS (3) frontage addressing Eastgate would be suited to a mix of town centre uses such as retail or restaurant on ground floor and office above.

The cluster of 25b Southgate (4), Citizens Advice Bureau (9) and Money's Yard (10) sites provides an ideal location for a cinema. This is proposed on the Carre Street site of the area, with good visibility from on-street and across the proposed new public space, fronting onto the River, and a short walk to/from the public car park at Eastgate. The cinema building should be two storey, with a cafe/bar on the ground floor that address both the River and the proposed square. The upper floor would house the screens, ideally at least three.

Small-scale sensitively designed infill residential is proposed elsewhere on the site. The Boyes Department Store building is suggested for redevelopment; e.g. re-providing the retail space with residential uses above.

The uses described above should frame and activate a major new destination public space (see further details below). In addition the design should enable the creation of the portion of the Riverside Promenade along here, connecting to areas further east and west.

Building typologies

Development on these sites should mainly take the form of refurbishment of existing heritage buildings such as the Butter Market, Corn Exchange and other existing buildings along Eastgate and within HoS site (3).

New two-storey residential development on site (4) can potentially frame the view of a new bridge across the River connecting to site (3). The suggested location for the cinema building on site (9) should frame the bridge on its other side, and also create a new pedestrian link on its northern face, along the River Sleas.

To the south of Money's Yard the redevelopment of the Boyes Department Store would enable the potential for a new building which better relates to the new public space. It could be up to three-storeys in height with an active ground floor, and residential apartments above.

Connectivity

HoS (3) site has potential to be directly connected to the Bristol Arcade, via a retail unit re-purposed as a pedestrian connection, as has previously been proposed for the site. It should also provide access to the south and along the River. The provision of a new pedestrian bridge across the River is essential to increase the permeability of these sites and link them into a network.

In Money's Yard servicing access and limited parking will need to be retained (blue badge, and potentially short stay). A shared surface vehicle access should be integrated within the new public space.

Public realm

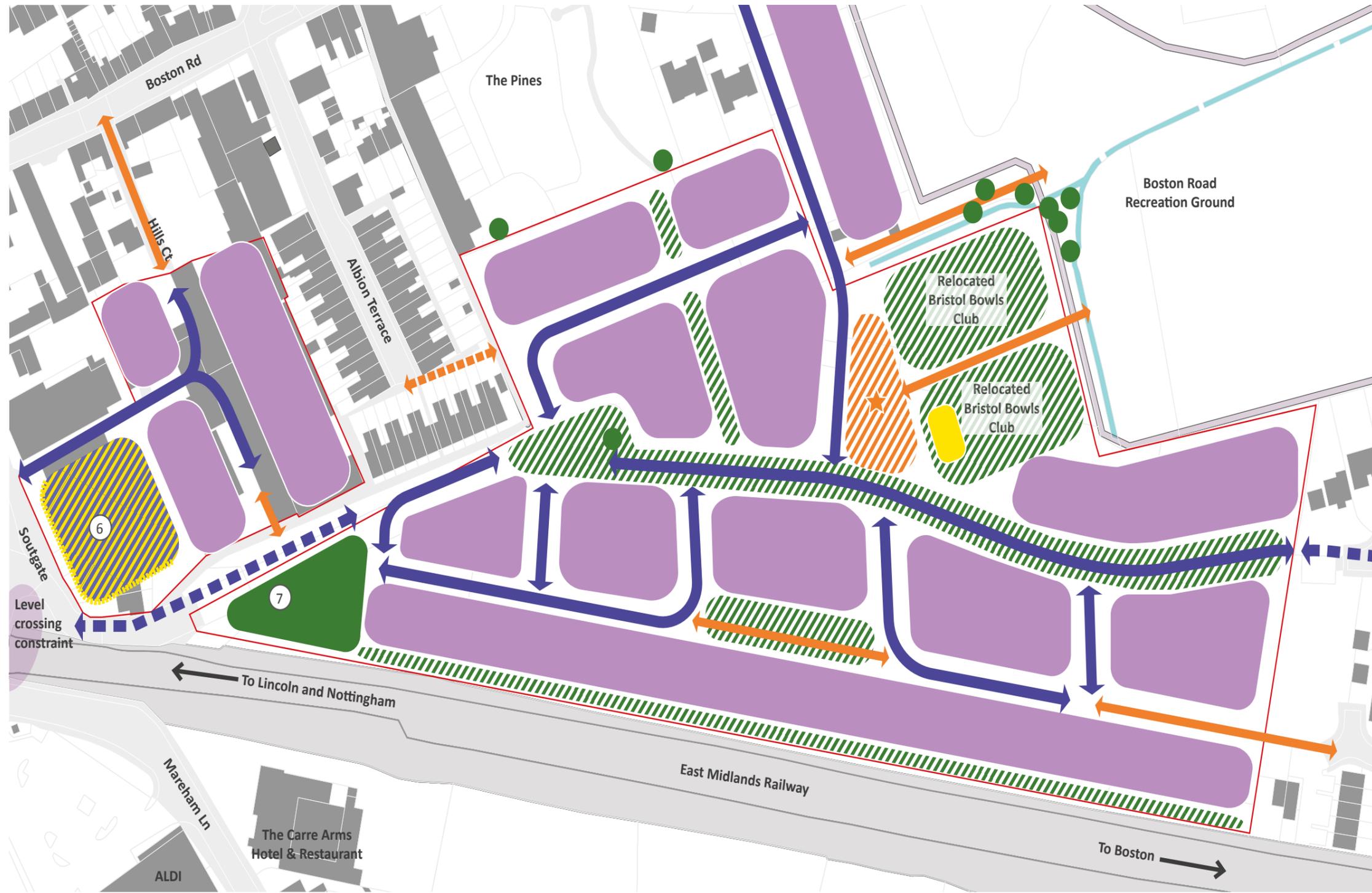
These sites provide an opportunity for a network of public spaces, linked with new and improved pedestrian connections. The main focus will be a major new, high quality public space in Money's Yard, incorporating the Mill building. This should be informal and green in character, differentiating itself from the more formal future Market Place. The space should be designed to accommodate spill-out areas from adjacent active uses, and also host larger scale events such as performances or markets. Sensitively designed informal play elements should also be included within the space.

Both sides of the river should be designed to provide new sections of the riverside promenade. Within the HoS this should connect via the Bristol Arcade and also north towards Market Square. On the south side a new eastwards connection is proposed which would continue along the river behind the Barge and Bottle, either on the bank or cantilevered over the water.

A number of trees with TPOs are located within this cluster of sites and should be retained where possible.

Town Centre Sites - South-East Concept Diagram

1:1250



- Key:-**
- Development Site boundary
 - 6. Turnbull's
 - 7. Advanta Seeds
 - ↔ Potential pedestrian connection
 - ⋯↔ Existing pedestrian connection
 - ↔ Potential vehicle access
 - ⋯↔ Potential emergency / bus access
 - ↔ Potential shared surface vehicle access
 - Potential new public realm
 - Potential improved public realm
 - Potential green space
 - Potential residential development
 - Potential town centre uses
 - Potential commercial/office use
 - Potential redevelopment for town centre uses and residential
 - Potential parking / servicing area
 - Active frontage
 - Retained TPO trees

Town Centre Sites - South-East Turnbull's (6) and Advanta Seeds (7)

Together these two sites form the Sleaford southern gateway, east of the high street. They provide a major development opportunity, visible from Sleaford railway station, in proximity to the significant Bass Maltings heritage asset. The railway line cuts these sites off to the south, and the level crossing limits access from the west.

Development on these sites has the potential to support these design themes from the masterplan vision:

- support sensitive residential development
- create public spaces
- connect people with places

Uses

Both sites are proposed for residential-led development. The Turnbull's (6) site is considered suitable for a car-free residential development, with an element of active ground floor on Southgate such as offices. The Advanta Seeds (7) site has potential for significant residential development, including later living. Other uses could be considered that are ancillary to / support residential. the Bristol Bowls Club is proposed to be relocated.

Building typologies

The Turnbull's (6) site would be suitable for a slightly higher apartment building on the Southgate site, with mews or terraces behind. The Advanta Seeds (7) site is appropriate for a range of typologies including detached, semi-detached and terraced housing. The site is also idea for some higher density flatted later living blocks, e.g. located in the area just south of The Pines.

Connectivity

There is a major opportunity to create new pedestrian and cycle connections across the site to reconnect the existing Boston Road residential development east of site (7) to Southgate and the railway station. The vehicular access for site (7) would be from Boston Road. This link could connect to the Boston Road development with a bus-gate to facilitate an extension of route IT1, if viable. There would be no vehicular access to site (7) from Southgate apart from in emergency.

Public realm

The relocation of the Bristol Bowls Club provides an opportunity for consolidating amenity at the centre of the site (7), with a small square or green. A new high-quality green space would be provided at the western end of the site, and a new east-west green corridor.



Town Centre Sites - South-West

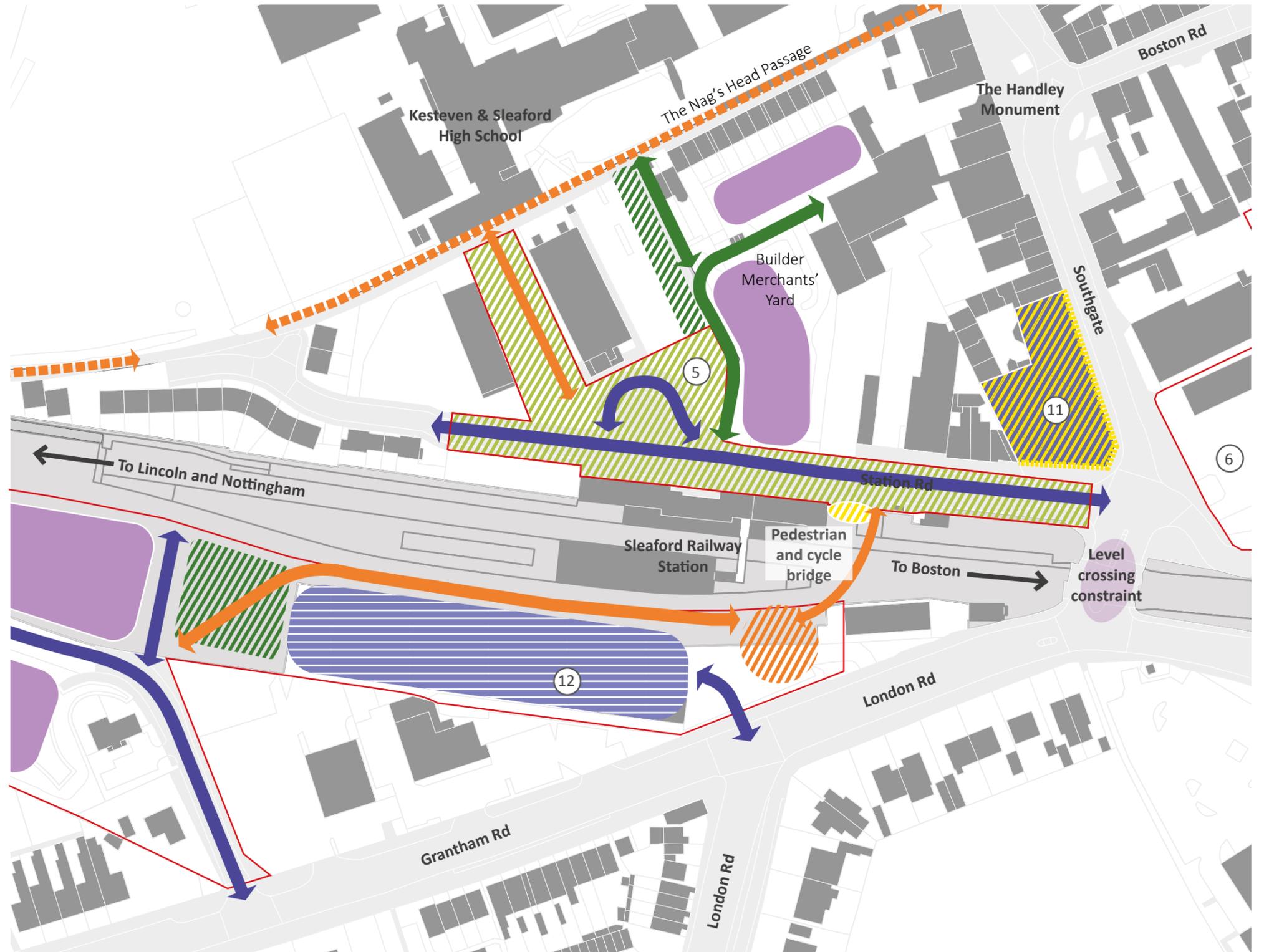
Concept diagram

1:1250

Key:-

- Development Site boundary
 - 5. Station Approach
 - 11. 82-88 Southgate
 - 12. Station Car Park
 - ⇌ Potential pedestrian connection
 - ⋯⇌ Existing pedestrian connection
 - ⇌ Potential vehicle access
 - ⋯⇌ Potential emergency / bus access
 - ⇌ Potential shared surface vehicle access
 - Potential new public realm
 - Potential improved public realm
 - Potential green space
 - Potential residential development
 - Potential town centre uses
 - Potential commercial/office use
 - Potential redevelopment for town centre uses and residential
 - Potential parking / servicing area
 - Active frontage
 - Retained TPO trees
- N

0 10m 25m 50m





Moray Mews, London



Woodside Square, London



Plaza de Santa Barbara, Madrid



Station square with interchange facilities and activity, Cambridge



Network Rail prototype of innovative low-cost modular footbridge

Town Centre Sites - South-West

Station Approach (5) and 82-88 Southgate (11)

These two sites form the setting and context of Sleaford Station and its approach from Southgate. Together they are the gateway to Sleaford for people travelling by rail.

These sites provide an important opportunity to improve connectivity between the railway station and key town centre destinations. There is potential for a high quality station forecourt that celebrates the attractive heritage context of the listed station building. The Turnbull's yard opposite the station also has potential for development. Site 82-88 Southgate (11) is located at the southern gateway to town centre and visible from the station, making it a strategic corner in this area.

Existing buildings on these sites are in mixed conditions, and some are in need of redevelopment. At the same time all these sites are within the Sleaford Town Centre Conservation Area, and development will need to be sensitive to this. The proximity of these sites to the railway line causes poor connectivity to the south.

Development on these sites has the potential to support these design themes from the masterplan vision:

- create public spaces
- diversify town centre uses
- support with sensitive development
- celebrate nature and heritage (listed Sleaford railway station)
- connect people with places

Uses

Refurbishment and upgrading of the public realm is a major part of the potential of this strategic cluster of sites. However, there is also potential for sensitive residential development on the site of the Turnbull's yard. At 82-88 Southgate (11) the higher, more prominent corner provides an opportunity for residential development with active ground floor uses such as retail. Some additional town centre uses such as a small retail kiosk at the foot of the pedestrian and cycle bridge would also activate the public realm and this new route.

Building typologies

On the prominent corner at the southern gateway of Sleaford, there is potential for flatted development up to at least three storeys high, mirroring the old cinema building across the road.

The Turnbull's Yard location is an opportunity for residential development in a two-storey mews or terrace form, in keeping with adjacent properties on Nag's Head Passage. The frontages could provide enclosure to the station forecourt and help activate public realm, including the link to Nag's Head Passage.

Connectivity

A new pedestrian and cycle bridge spanning across the railway lines would be a major benefit to the whole of the town centre, reducing the severance created by the level crossing. This should include an accessible lift on the station side and either a lift or ramp access on the southern side, plus lifts for step-free access to platforms.

The residential units proposed for the Turnbull's Yard site would require vehicular access from Station Road; this could be provided as a shared surface vehicle access route parallel to the pedestrian connection to Nag's Head Passage. The existing residential car park here could be retained but in a reduced or reconfigured form.

In the long term, as and when the Kesteven & Sleaford High School site becomes available for redevelopment, this vehicular access route could be extended north across Nag's Head Passage to provide access to this otherwise landlocked site. This connection would also improve pedestrian access to Nag's Head Passage and connect the station to the Town Centre and Castle Field.

Public realm

The station forecourt public realm scheme upgrade is a major opportunity to create a new plaza and gateway space. This should be a high quality and distinctive urban space that responds to the heritage context and creates a sense of arrival, acting as a gateway space to the town centre. It should incorporate and improve current interchange provisions, including with micro-mobility options, and upgrade access to the station building itself.

Southgate - looking north with new developments on left (82-88 Southgate) and right (Turnbull's) plus public realm improvements

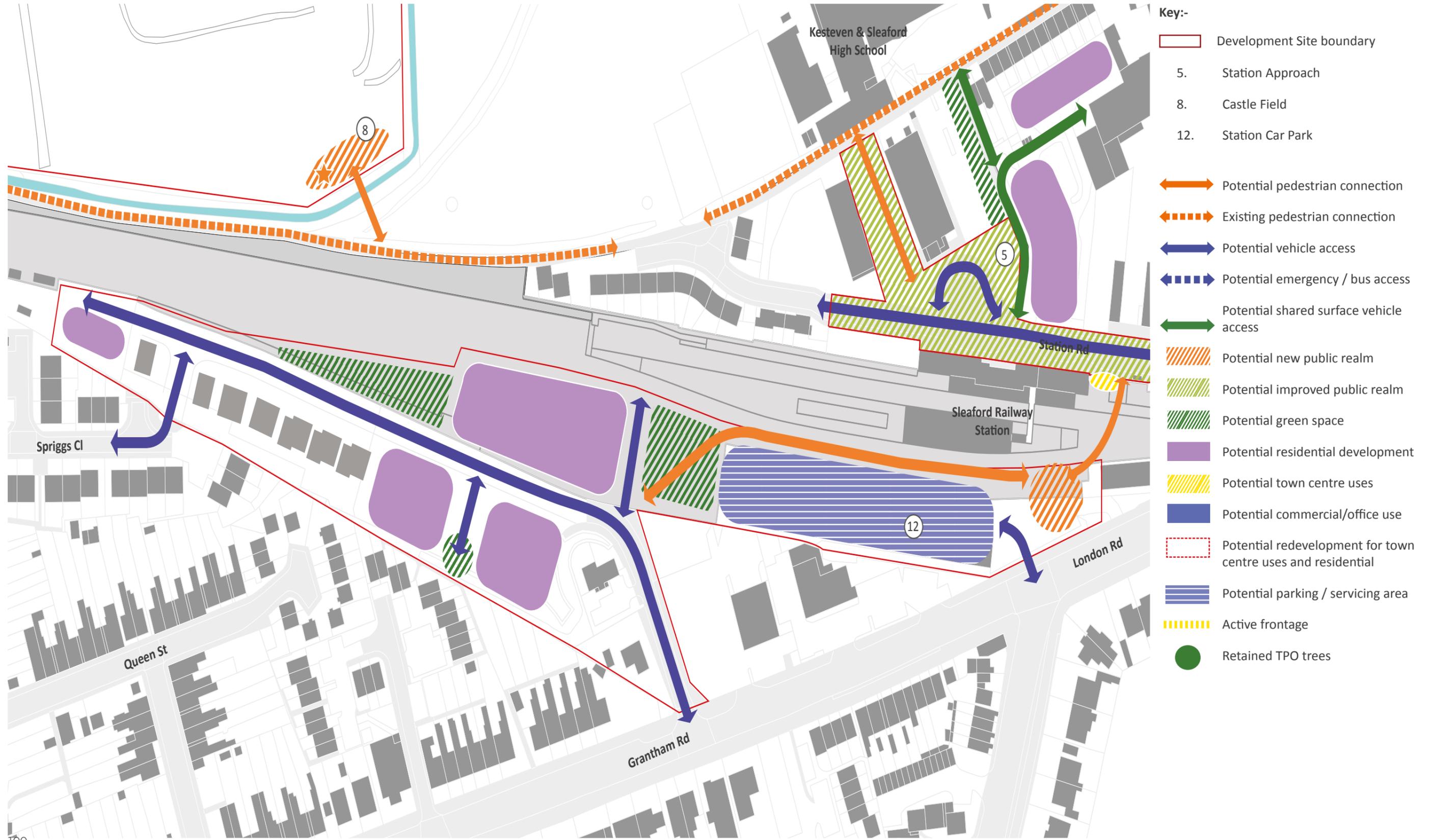




Station Approach - looking east over new shared space plaza with refurbished station building (right) and new development (left) fronting improved pedestrian route to Nags' Head Passage

Station Car Park Site Concept diagram

1:1250



Station Car Park Site (12)



Brooklands, Milton Keynes



Carrowbeck Meadow, Norfolk



Bridge in Darmstadt

The station car park site provides an opportunity for development along the railway line and for the improving the sense of arrival into and appearance of Sleaford from the south.

This site will need to accommodate the southern part of the foot and cycle bridge including a landing space. It will also deliver one of the proposed perimeter car parks as per the 2011 Masterplan. Elsewhere the site offers the potential for some further residential development.

The proximity to the railway line creates significant severance and isolates the site. Additionally the proximity to the level crossing demands reconfiguration of access to this site from Grantham Road. Any development must take into consideration that the release of this site depends on the National Rail depot relocation.

Development on these sites has the potential to support these design themes from the masterplan vision:

- create public spaces
- diversify town centre uses
- support with sensitive development
- connect people with places

Uses

Some of the land along the southern boundary of this site has recently been developed for residential. The release of more land provides potential for additional residential development to the site's west and centre.

The Grantham Road end of the site is ideal for town centre car parking, taking advantage of proximity to the road network and being only a short walk from this end of the site into the town centre via the new footbridge.

Building typologies

In keeping with the recent adjacent residential development and its existing context, the residential typologies considered appropriate for infill within this site would be semi-detached or detached housing.

The area of the site given over to car parking could be solely surface parking, or with a decked parking structure, should this be required to accommodate level of demand.

Connectivity

Vehicular access to the two main potential uses on this site - residential use and car parking - should be via separate access points. A new roundabout junction on London Road would provide ease of access to the car park. The existing vehicular access from Grantham Road would be retained for residential development. If feasible residential access could be supplemented with a link to Spriggs Close.

The new car parking would be highly accessible from the railway station via the pedestrian and cycle bridge. A pedestrian route would also connect past the car park to new residential areas.

Public realm

The new pedestrian and cycle bridge should be provided with a generous arrival space; a new public square that provides a setting for the structure and creates a sense of arrival into the town centre for people walking or cycling. Cycle parking should be integrated here for people accessing the railway station from the south.

The residential infill development should be buffered from the railway station by landscape. A new green space could provide separation from the car park, create a transition area between the town centre and the residential neighbourhood, and provide amenity space for new residents.

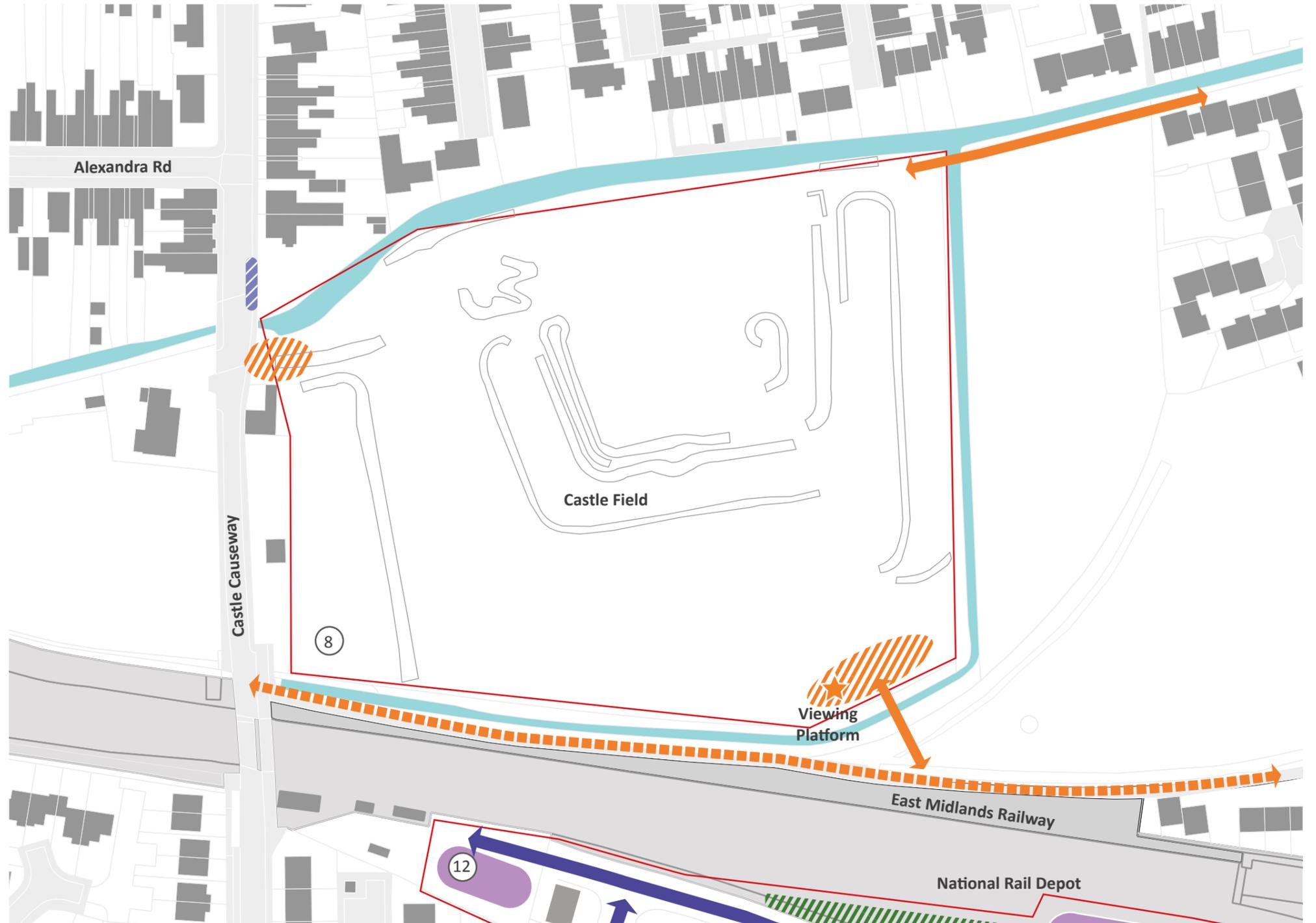
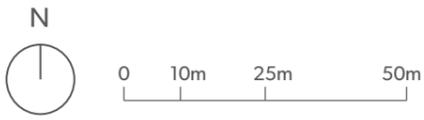
Castle Field Site

Opportunities & Constraints

1:1250

Key:-

- Development Site boundary
- 8. Castle Field
- 12. Station Car Park
- ⇔ Potential pedestrian connection
- ⇔ Existing pedestrian connection
- ⇔ Potential vehicle access
- ⇔ Potential emergency / bus access
- ⇔ Potential shared surface vehicle access
- Potential new public realm
- Potential improved public realm
- Potential green space
- Potential residential development
- Potential town centre uses
- Potential commercial/office use
- Potential redevelopment for town centre uses and residential
- Potential parking / servicing area
- Active frontage
- Retained TPO trees





Site map, tactile interpretation panel and 3D model



Quzhou Luming Park viewing platform, in Quzhou, Zhejiang, China



Public realm entrance area for green space in heritage setting

Castle Field Site (8)

Castle Field site provides a major opportunity for strengthening Sleaford's heritage identity, with potential for showcasing heritage on site, and to promote the existence of this asset through a centrally located visitor centre.

This site is also a major opportunity to improve outdoor leisure and cultural offer of Sleaford Town Centre, provide general amenity, and to improve connections between the town centre and the western side of Sleaford.

This site also presents significant development limitations due to being an archaeological site, an ancient scheduled monument and a site within the Sleaford Town Centre Conservation Area. Additionally any improvements must consider flood risk.

Development on the sites has the potential to support these design themes from the masterplan vision:

- reveal the River Sleat;
- celebrate nature and heritage (Sleaford Castle); and
- connect people with places.

Uses

In order to activate and promote this significant heritage asset, the history of the Castle and the site should be showcased with a dedicated exhibition space in the town centre (see description in the Project Bank chapter). This can be reinforced with smaller information points at the entrance to the Field and along the main routes that connect it to the Town Centre.

The potential for a viewing platform- mindful of sensitivities related to foundations within a scheduled monument- should be investigated. This could enable an overview of the site and extent of the Castle helping visitors interpret the remnant foundations and visualise the former use of the site.

Additionally the site has great potential to host programmed cultural events. This could include re-enactments, festivals, history open days, events aimed at families and similar.

Connectivity

Reconnecting this site to the railway station and the town centre is vital to help activate this heritage and cultural asset. The Sleaford Castle Heritage Group has explored options for improved pedestrian connections. Their proposal to connect the southeast corner of site to Nag's Head Passage via a small pedestrian bridge across the former castle moat should be supported.

Long-term there is potential for an additional pedestrian route through the current Kesteven & Sleaford High School site, when it is redeveloped, and potentially a riverside promenade connection from the 26 Southgate (2) site east of Castle Field or via Jermyn Close.

A small area of blue badge parking on-street on Castle Causeway should be provided. Other visitors arriving by car can use the new car park south of the station and take the short walk via Nag's Head Passage.

An area of space for loading and servicing for events should also be identified. Subject to Historic England requirements limited vehicular access could be considered from Castle Causeway via the existing gate, e.g. with a small turning head surfaced in gravel.

Public realm

Depending upon the requirements of HE regarding scheduled monument status, the Castle Field site has potential for two small arrival areas, one on Castle Causeway and one at the Nag's Head Passage bridge. These should provide seating, bins, interpretative information and could also have informal play elements.

An accessible route should be created within the site from these arrival points. Again this will need to be mindful of HE requirements relative to the scheduled monument status.

8.2 Planning considerations - town centre uses

This section sets out further detail on use class and planning considerations related to several of the key sites where town centre uses such as retail or restaurants are suggested within the site.

Site 1 - Riverside

New planning permissions should be conditioned accordingly by land use category/description, not general/generic Use Class E.

For Site 1, any site allocation and subsequent planning conditions should allow (with associated description of land use):

- Use Class E (a)- retail sales
- Use Class E (b)- f&b
- Use Class E (d)- indoor sport/gym

Upper floors for residential and/or Use Class E (g)(i)- offices.

Planning can continue to control uses in allocated, new and redeveloped space.

In this location, we would recommend up to six adjoining units (this will provide flexibility in unit size without over-providing unlettable space), fronting onto the new promenade space with spill-out areas. This could attract an interesting mix of comparison and convenience goods operators, with a focus on Use Class E(b) for restaurants and/or cafés. The strategy should aim to leverage operators with a lengthy opening period, breakfast/brunch/lunch/dinner, for example, to encourage footfall throughout the day.

Site 3 - Heart of Sleaford

Existing ground floor commercial units are within the existing retail frontage. This is infill space, so should not present a concern regarding oversupply of retail space.

Policy S37 supports retail at ground floor for new development proposals, but this site is existing space, so planning cannot control within Use Class E. Despite this it is likely that would remain in this use. The masterplan should encourage retail and food & beverage type use here to give the Council and others assistance in leveraging operators to this location.

The rear of the site (location of Butter Market and 1960s concrete frame building) have been proposed for a cinema. However as the previous pages illustrate an alternative location on the site of the Advice Services Building could be better suited for this use. The rear yard could instead be used for a market hall type destination building. A alternative offer could be as a business hub/flexible workspace.

This type of use would be Use Class E (a) and (b), but the masterplan for the site, development plan site allocation and any planning conditions would have to be specific around description of land use.

Sites 4, 9, 10 - 25b Southgate, Advice Services Building, Money's Yard

The cinema should be encouraged to offer internal bar/dining area. Site allocation should be restricted to a 'cinema' use, very specific in wording rather than Use Class E. Cinema is sui generis, so site masterplan would need to quote 'cinema' in this location. If a cinema is not viable, then other retail should not be encouraged in this location. In that situation, alternative uses that could be considered include the business hub, market hall, or gym/fitness provision (which is Use Class E(d)). The market hall would be Use Class E, but the allocation should be very specific about the use, along with associated planning conditions. E.g. should specifically state whether gym/health fitness facility, business hub or food and drink hub etc.

These uses are all good commercial footfall drivers that would help diversify town centre offer, whilst removing concern around over-providing retail/leisure uses.

With regard to the suggested redevelopment of the Boye's Department Store, the ground floor could be suited to evening economy type uses being close to the cinema, but with improved links to the high street it also offers flexibility for use for retail and/or restaurants. An estimated four small units could be included within the space.

Consideration could also be given to a retail/art gallery space in Money's Yard; this would be Use Class F1(b). Holt, in Norfolk, provides a good example of how retail, art gallery space and retail craft space all sit well in 'backland' car park areas, creating pleasant visitor experience.

Site 6 - Turnbull's

New planning permissions should be conditioned accordingly by land use category/description, not general/generic Use Class E. For Site 6, any site allocation and subsequent planning conditions should allow (with associated description of land use):

- Use Class E (a)- retail sales
- Use Class E (b)- f&b
- Use Class E (d)- indoor sport/gym

Upper floors for residential and/or Use Class E (g)(i)- offices.

Planning can continue to control uses in allocated, new and redeveloped space.

Commercial units should front Southgate to ensure an active street frontage consistent with the Draft Local Plan Policy S37. Commercial frontage should be uninterrupted at this point.

9. Next steps

9.1 Next steps

The immediate next step following completion of this report is that it is formally considered and approved by NKDC. Subject to this taking place, the key next steps are:

- Progress short timescale and quick win projects as soon as feasible where funding is available. Given the specific nature of several proposed interventions it is likely that suppliers could be appointed directly to design and deliver the projects, with relevant liaison with and other parties as required
- Prepare design briefs for longer term, larger scale and more complex projects which will require feasibility work, and commission any necessary surveys to support feasibility design development. As and when funding becomes available seek to procure designers to undertake this work
- Identify a town centre improvement champion within NKDC or another organisation to help drive delivery, liaise with businesses and the general public about projects, and ensure the design approach for individual projects is consistent with overall vision

Appendix A: Policy Context and National Trends

Policy Context

Three tiers of local government apply to Sleaford:

- Lincolnshire County Council
- North Kesteven District Council
- Sleaford Town Council

Therefore, the masterplan refresh must be cognizant and respond to this local policy context as well as overarching national planning policy.

This section summarises information from key documents within these different layers of policy context.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

The Government published the new version of the NPPF in July 2021, confirming in a statement that the intention is to ‘place greater emphasis on beauty, place-making, the environment, and sustainable development and underlines the importance of local design codes’. There are no changes of relevance to retail and town centres, which continues to safeguard and promote the vitality of town centres, placing them at the heart of their communities, and encouraging a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation.

In order to be considered ‘sound’, Local Plans should be positively prepared, justified, deliverable and consistent with national policy. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.

Paragraph 53 and 54 of the newly published NPPF provides new guidance for the use of Article 4 Directions, in the context of newly introduced Permitted Development. Changes to planning legislation, and the reasoning behind these new NPPF paragraphs, is discussed in more detail later in this section, but we quote paragraph 53 and 54 of the NPPF as follows:

“53. The use of Article 4 directions to remove national permitted development rights should:

- where they relate to change from non-residential use to residential use, be limited to situations where an Article 4 direction is necessary to avoid wholly

unacceptable adverse impacts (this could include the loss of the essential core of a primary shopping area which would seriously undermine its vitality and viability, but would be very unlikely to extend to the whole of a town centre)

- in other cases, be limited to situations where an Article 4 direction is necessary to protect local amenity or the well-being of the area (this could include the use of Article 4 directions to require planning permission for the demolition of local facilities)
 - in all cases, be based on robust evidence, and apply to the smallest geographical area possible
54. Similarly, planning conditions should not be used to restrict national permitted development rights unless there is clear justification to do so.”

Section 7 seeks to ensure the vitality of town centres, emphasising that planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, with a positive approach taken to their growth, management and adaptation.

Section 7 emphasises that planning policies are encouraged to seek a series of outcomes relating to the long-term vitality and viability of the hierarchy of town centres, the extent of primary shopping areas and the location of sufficient development opportunity sites. Local authorities are encouraged to define a network and hierarchy of town centres and to promote their long-term vitality and viability, facilitating them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries and reflecting their distinctive characters. The NPPF states that planning policies should also recognise the benefits of residential development and town centre living in ensuring the vitality of centres.

In respect of Development Management, paragraph 87 of the NPPF (as revised) states that a sequential assessment is required for planning applications for ‘main town centre uses’ (which include retail) that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up to date Local Plan. Proposals for main town centre

uses should be located in town centre locations, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered. Paragraph 88 adds that when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre.

Paragraph 90 of the NPPF confirms that when assessing applications for retail and leisure development outside of town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan, LPAs should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set threshold. If there is no locally set floorspace threshold, the default threshold is 2,500 sq m of gross floorspace. Impact assessments are required to assess:

- the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal
- the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and the wider retail catchment (as applicable to the scale and nature of the scheme)

The NPPF directs that where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have a significant adverse impact on one or more of the considerations in paragraph 90, it should be refused.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (2014)

In March 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) launched online Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). Town centres and retail guidance was last updated in September 2020.

Although it does not constitute a statement of Government policy, it provides technical guidance on how to prepare a robust evidence base and how to assess the impact of proposals for main town centre uses. The web-based resource also provides guidance on how to assess and plan to meet the needs of main

town centre uses in full through the production of a positive vision or strategy for town centres.

The guidance provides additional detail on applying the sequential and impact test, and whilst the NPPF has removed reference to shopping ‘frontages’, the PPG confirms that authorities may, where appropriate, wish to define primary and secondary retail frontages where their use can be justified in supporting the vitality and viability of particular centres. These frontage allocations would be in addition to Primary Shopping Areas.

The PPG confirms that the impact test only applies to proposals exceeding 2,500 square metres gross of floorspace, unless a different locally appropriate threshold is set by the local planning authority.

Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (2017)

The Adopted Local Plan for Central Lincolnshire (CLLP) sets out policies for the growth and regeneration of Central Lincolnshire ‘over the next 20 years and beyond’, including sites allocated for development and other areas designated for protection. Central Lincolnshire refers to the combined area covered by the City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey. Sleaford lies within North Kesteven District Council – a historic market town situated on the River Slea in the heart of Lincolnshire.

Section 2 provides background context, noting that Central Lincolnshire’s population lives in a range of settlements that vary greatly in size and character. Lincoln is recognised as being the largest settlement, acting as a service centre over a wide area; many villages and outlying areas look to Lincoln for most of their service and employment needs. Beyond Lincoln, the main towns in the area are identified as Gainsborough and Sleaford, serving the northern and southern parts respectively. Sleaford is described as a ‘thriving market town which has experienced rapid housing growth and an expanding population over the last two decades’.

The ‘settlement hierarchy’ is discussed in Section 3, confirming that the Central Lincolnshire spatial strategy seeks to concentrate growth on the main urban areas of

Lincoln, Gainsborough and Sleaford, and in settlements that support their roles. Policy LP2 seeks to develop strong, sustainable, cohesive and inclusive communities, and emphasises that decisions on investment in services and facilities, and on the location and scale of development will be assisted by the Central Lincolnshire Settlement Hierarchy, as follows:

- Lincoln Urban Area: the principal focus for development in Central Lincolnshire
- Main Towns: Sleaford and Gainsborough: to maintain and enhance their roles as main towns and to meet the objectives for regeneration, the towns will be the focus for substantial housing development supported by appropriate levels of employment growth, retail growth and wider service provision. This will occur primarily on sites allocated in the adopted Local Plan

The settlement hierarchy, as set out in Policy LP2, also identifies a large network of market towns, large, medium and small villages, and hamlets, below Lincoln, Sleaford and Gainsborough.

Section 3.6 sets out the policy approach for retail and town centres, recognising their importance at the heart of communities, providing accessible shops and services, employment and leisure facilities. Paragraph 3.6.1 highlights that ‘vital and viable centres not only provide economic and social benefits, such as reducing social isolation and health inequalities and improving community resilience, but that areas of niche and independent retailing and distinctive historic retail premises also help to foster civic pride and promote local identity’.

Policy LP6 sets out the ‘retail hierarchy’ to guide investment and other activity to improve the vitality and viability of the identified centres. Lincoln is recorded as the ‘City Centre’, and Sleaford is identified as a second tier ‘Town Centre’ alongside Gainsborough, Market Rasen and Caistor. Policy confirms that development proposals for retail and/or other town centre uses will be directed to the City, Town, District and Local centres. When considering planning applications for new

development, an impact threshold of 500 sq m gross is set for proposals in and around Sleaford Town Centre.

Paragraph 3.6.7 and 3.6.8 addresses the need for additional retail floorspace in Sleaford Town Centre. The Local Plan confirms that the City and Town Centres Study update (2015) identifies the quantitative need for additional retail floorspace in each of the four main centres over the Plan period. It is noted, however, that the calculation of quantitative need in the long term should be viewed with caution due to obvious difficulties inherent in predicting the performance of the economy and shopping habits over time. Due to these uncertainties, Policy LP6 does not include floorspace need figures but instead refers to those included in the most up-to-date evidence base, which at present is the Central Lincolnshire City and Town Centres Study 2012 and 2015 update.

Section 9 focuses on Sleaford Town Centre. The contextual introduction recognises the rapid population growth over the past 30 years rising from 8,000 in 1981 to around 18,000 today (2017) with a further 30,000 people living within 10 miles of the town. Growth has largely been the result of people moving to the area attracted by the quality of life, low crime rates, relatively low house prices, good-quality education and its central location with good road and rail links to national employment centres including to London. The Local Plan notes that the quality of life Sleaford offers means that the town will continue to experience pressure for further growth.

Paragraph 9.1.6 references the 25 year masterplan for Sleaford (March 2011), setting out a vision for Sleaford and comprehensive strategy for the town, including a series of projects to unlock the town’s potential through environmental improvement and opportunities for the creation of new attractions. The Local Plan confirms that the principles of that masterplan remain a sound basis for developing the town.

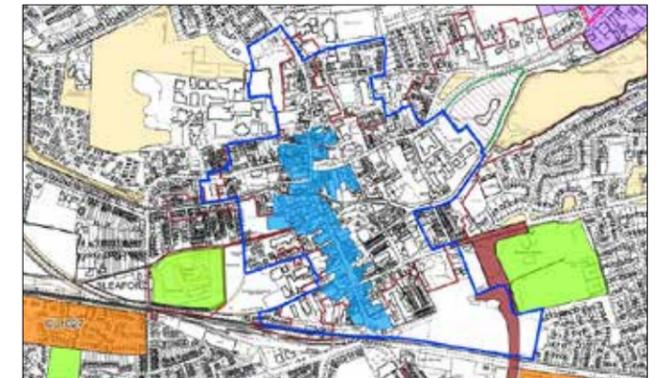
Section 9.5 notes the central location of Sleaford Town Centre and direct competition with a number of towns including Grantham, Boston, Spalding, Stamford

and Newark as well as the major centres of Lincoln, Peterborough and Nottingham. In 2017, the Local Plan concluded that Sleaford was not competing as well as it should be within this wider network. The ‘Sleaford Town Centre Visioning Report’ (July 2015) is referenced in paragraph 9.5.1, and states that it was identified that Sleaford was not fulfilling its full potential and needed to attract further national and independent retailers to the town along with broadening its leisure uses.

Paragraph 9.5.2 highlights the constant circulation of vehicle traffic around the one-way traffic management system as a key barrier to enhancing the town centre’s retail core. The Local Plan emphasises that this has many negative impacts upon the town centre including delays to public transport, problems for deliveries to local businesses and contributes to the poor environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Paragraph 9.5.3 adds that the retail offer is also constrained in part due to the town centre’s heritage, comprising a tight urban grain and small commercial shop premises. When published in 2017, it was concluded that this limited the opportunity to attract and expand the representation of national multiple retailers. The Masterplan is referenced as identifying a number of opportunities where the introduction of larger and more varied shop premises could be achieved.

The Town Centre Boundary and Primary Shopping Area for Sleaford (2017 Local Plan) remain unchanged from the previous adopted Local Plan. Evidence base reports were prepared to inform the Local Plan, and these did not highlight a need to change the town centre boundary. The Primary Shopping Area is also defined based on an analysis of A1 retail uses and an understanding of how the town centre functions. The town centre boundary and Primary Shopping Area are illustrated on the proposals map and below in the figure below.



Sleaford Town Centre Boundary and Primary Shopping Area

Policy LP46 states that proposals for main town centre uses within the Sleaford town centre will, in principle, be permitted. Within the defined primary shopping area, the following criteria will apply:

- Priority will be given to A1 retail uses with active shopfronts at ground floor level
- Proposals for other uses which support retail activity and add to the viability and vitality of the primary shopping area will be supported
- Offices in use class B1a and residential uses will be supported above ground floor level only
- Proposals for non-retail uses at the ground floor level will be required to demonstrate that the development is complementary to and supports the competitiveness of the primary shopping area
- Development that creates an over concentration of uses that undermines the primary shopping area’s overall retail function and character will not be permitted

Supporting text adds that within the primary shopping area, retailing will continue to be the predominant land use and should be protected to retain the retail character of the town centre. The NPPF identifies office and residential uses as town centre uses. Whilst the value of these uses in town centres is recognised, these are only appropriate in upper floors in the primary shopping area. The Local Plan states that such uses

would not provide active frontages and are likely to cause harm to the vitality and viability of the primary retail core through diluting the identity of the area as a focus for retail activity.

In terms of transport, the plan sets out to make efficient use of existing infrastructure, reduce the need to travel by car, improve accessibility to jobs and services for all and to ensure that all journeys are undertaken by the most sustainable travel modes (particularly public transport, walking and cycling).

In regard of future development, the CLLP stresses that these should be located where travel can be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes maximised. Further, any development should minimise additional travel demand through measures such as travel planning, safe and convenient. The plan further outlines that developments should make an allowance for low and ultra-low emission vehicle refuelling infrastructure.

Strategic Transport Infrastructure

Initiatives which promote calming traffic through Sleaford's Town Centre are in line with the CLLP which highlights the need to improve and manage the wider road infrastructure to benefit local communities including through the use of traffic management and calming initiatives and key transport links in the towns and villages.

Public and Community Transport Infrastructure

The CLLP stresses that the need to assist in the implementation of infrastructure which will help all communities in Central Lincolnshire to have opportunities to travel without a car for essential journeys. The plan's further aim is to improve the integration, efficiency, accessibility, safety, convenience and comfort of public transport stations, including both rail and buses. The need to support the enhancement of existing or proposed transport interchanges is further noted as an objective within the strategic transport infrastructure section.

Walking and Cycling Infrastructure

The CLLP notes the general desire to deliver networks and facilities for walking and cycling, which are appropriately linked and integrated into the wider transport network, are well maintained and promoted, and which help facilitate schemes, such as Access Lincoln's 'Hirebike' scheme and 'Bikeability', to encourage people to walk or cycle. Further, the plan stresses that schemes that complete gaps in the network, especially those that will encourage more local walking and cycling journeys should be prioritised.

Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Review, Consultation Draft (June 2021)

Consultation on the next stage of the Local Plan review, a Proposed Submission Local Plan, is taking place between 16th March and 9th May 2022.

The Local Plan Review is proposed to replace the Local Plan adopted in 2017. The review was begun with an Issues and Options consultation undertaken in June and July 2019 followed by a Draft Local Plan consultation undertaken between 30th June and 24th August 2021. The new Local Plan will contain planning policies and allocations for the growth and regeneration of Central Lincolnshire over the next 20 years.

The overarching strategic priorities confirm the aspiration for Lincoln City Centre to continue to provide the primary destination for shopping and leisure for the area, with Gainsborough and Sleaford also continuing in their roles to provide a local destination for the surround local areas. The 'vision' focuses planned growth in Lincoln, Gainsborough and Sleaford, to include new homes and jobs, and improved infrastructure.

In respect of town centres, the draft Local Plan notes that whilst Sleaford is a popular local retail destination, it has a relatively weak comparison goods offer for a town of its size and catchment and is subject to significant leakage. The draft plan recognises that the challenges facing the retail sector has grown substantially with many retail names being lost in recent years. It is emphasised that centres such as Sleaford must now

focus on developing as a destination and meeting place to continue to attract footfall with a greater reliance on food and drink, leisure uses and visitor attractions.

Policy S34 confirms that Sleaford will be categorised as a Tier 2 Town Centre alongside Gainsborough, Caistor and Market Rasen, and below Tier 1 Lincoln City Centre. Policy S34 outlines that development proposals for retail and/or other town centre uses will be directed to the Tier 1 to 2 centres, and should be appropriate in scale and nature to the size and function of the relevant centre. Within Primary Shopping Areas, development proposals are encouraged to maintain an active street frontage, thereby avoiding lengthy 'dead' frontages.

The town centre boundary and Primary Shopping Area in Sleaford have been rationalised in the draft Local Plan, reducing them both slightly from the extent in the previous adopted Local Plan. The draft plan states that this reflects the need for a focused area for retail and leisure as a destination in response to the challenges faced by the sector. The key changes remove retail frontage on Westgate from the Primary Shopping Area, and also removes some small areas located off the main pitch including on Carre Street and south of Watergate. Sainsbury's food store has also been removed from the Primary Shopping Area.

Policy S37 continues to promote retail as the dominant land use within the Primary Shopping Area, whilst acknowledging the value of residential and office uses in upper floors. Policy S37 emphasises that proposals for non-retail use on ground floors will only be supported if they are a recognised main town centre use under E Use Class, would not result in the over concentration of nonretail uses or 'dead' frontages that would undermine the Primary Shopping Area's retail function, and would have no demonstrable impact on the vitality and viability of the centre as a whole. Issues including design, connectivity and highways are also highlighted as key considerations when considering development proposals within Sleaford Town Centre.

Central Lincolnshire City and Town Centre Study Update (2015)

This document was prepared to explore the performance and need for additional retail floorspace in the four key settlements including Sleaford. The update formed part of the evidence base to support the emerging Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, but as noted earlier in this section, floorspace figures were not cited in Local Plan policies due to future forecasting uncertainties around the economy, shopping habits, and ambitious employment and housing growth projections.

In respect of convenience goods, the analysis concluded floorspace in Sleaford to be performing well and above expected trading levels – particularly the Tesco Store Northgate and Lidl Northgate Centre. Driven by the strong performance of food stores, the evidence base study concluded there to be surplus expenditure to support additional convenience goods floorspace in Sleaford Town Centre, totalling around 4,000 sq m net to the period 2026. The forecasts excluded the planning permission for a new Tesco Extra food store at the Advanta Seeds site, a scheme which was halted by Tesco due to changes in business strategy in the preceding months.

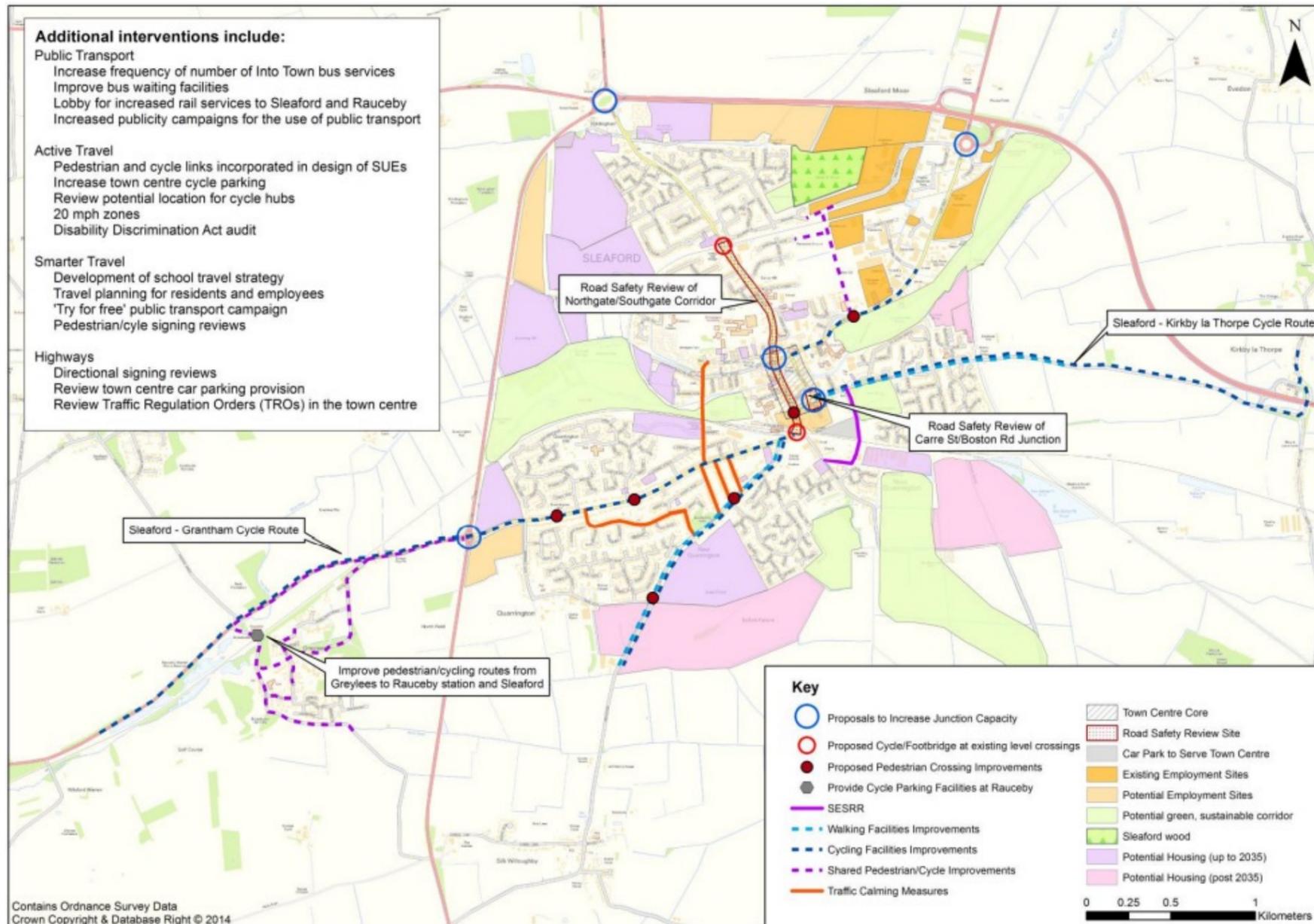
The evidence base identified a low comparison goods market share given the extent of competition across the wider catchment area, and limited need for additional floorspace over the plan period. When commitments for new development were taken into consideration, it was concluded that there was an expenditure deficiency to support new comparison goods floorspace in Sleaford town centre over the plan period.

Lincolnshire Local Transport Plan (2013)

The Lincolnshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) adopted in 2013 sets out a vision for Lincolnshire to:

- Provide good inter- and intraregional access through a choice of modes, for both jobs and leisure
- Manage the road network to improve safety and maximise reliability and reduce impact of traffic on communities

Sleaford Transport Strategy (2014) Interventions



- Have streets in built-up areas seen primarily as places where people can carry on their activities in a pleasant environment.

Works are currently underway on review of the Local Transport Plan. Engagement has been undertaken between Steer and Lincolnshire County Council to ensure alignment between this project and the LTP update.

Sleaford Transport Strategy (2014)

The Sleaford Transport Strategy sets out a series of short/medium and long-term interventions to enhance transport in and around the town, some of which are summarised on the figure to the left. The overarching objectives of the strategy are to support and enhance sustainable travel and alternatives to the private car through widening choice, improving public transport and increasing provision for cycling and walking. Doing so would help minimise carbon emissions from personal travel and freight transport, reduce noise and air quality issues.

Lincolnshire County Council is presently preparing a new transport strategy for Sleaford, expected to be published in draft in Spring 2022. Preliminary transport objectives will see the strategy eager to create a vibrant town centre, with dominant travel mode shifting away from car. While strategy details are pending transport impacts assessment, emerging objectives point at:

- Limiting the number of cars in the town centre
- Promoting perimeter car parking
- Reverting Market Square to non-car users
- Improving urban realm along Southgate
- Promoting travel sharing.

Legislative Change: Use Classes Order

In October 2018, the Government published a consultation into a series of proposed planning reforms designed to speed up and simplify the planning system; the focus of which was on supporting the high street and increasing the delivery of new homes. The consultation recognised the changing and evolving nature of high streets and town centres across the country, and invited responses on a variety of development management methods which Councils could use to promote greater flexibility.

Part 1 of the consultation included proposals in respect of new and amended Permitted Development (PD) rights and changes to use classes, including to support the regeneration of the high street and to extend existing buildings upwards to create new homes. The Government proposed new PD rights to allow existing premises in typical high street uses to change to a wider range of uses, allowing more leisure and community uses such as gyms, libraries, health care and office use as well as homes.

With the rise of internet shopping, and the change in how people use the high street, the consultation highlighted that it was timely to consider how the operation of the Use Classes Order can support greater flexibility. It noted the need to support the modernisation of the high street and enable businesses to adapt to changes in consumer demands.

The Government published their response to the consultation in May 2019, which confirmed the intention to move away from a suggested single use class which would merge A1, A2 and A3. The government response paper stated that ‘more than half of the 276 responses agreed that changes to the A use classes would support the high street [and] there was considerable support to simplify the A1 use class to accommodate new and emerging retail models’. There was, however, concern that:

“...merging the A1, A2 and A3 use classes would enable change to restaurant use without any local consideration of the potential impacts from longer opening hours

and increased noise and odours. It could lead to a proliferation and increased concentration of restaurants, including fast food restaurants, in an area with an impact on the health of local residents and local amenity. There was also a concern that it would limit the ability of local communities to shape their high streets as set out in local or neighbourhood plans.”

Rather than the far-reaching amendments proposed as part of the consultation paper, and in response to the consultation, the Government announced that it would only amend the A1 (shops) use class to ensure it captured current and future retail models and include clarification on the ability of (A) use classes to diversify and incorporate ancillary uses.

Shortly afterwards however, as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government decided to go further and introduce more wide-reaching reforms to the Use Classes – without further public consultation. This was a specific and swift response to the economic impact of Coronavirus on high streets and those premises in A1 and A3 in particular. In force from 1st September 2020, new planning regulations revoked parts A and D of the existing use classes order and introduced a new ‘commercial, business and service’ Use Class E. In relation to retail and main town centre uses, the changes are as follows:

New Class E includes:

- Shops (former A1)
- Provision of financial and professional services (former A2)
- Sale of food and drink consumption on premises, café’s and restaurants (former A3)
- Indoor sport, recreation, fitness (gyms) (former D2)
- Provision of medical or health services (former D1)
- Crèche, day nursery or day centre (former D1)
- Offices, research and development, light industrial (former B1a, b and c)

Former A4 (drinking establishments, public houses/wine bars) and A5 (hot food takeaway) uses to become defined as Sui Generis.

Former D2 cinemas, concert halls/live music venues, bingo halls and dance halls to become defined as Sui Generis.

A series of more protected community uses have been moved into a new Class F, including isolated small shops in rural locations, public halls, the provision of education and libraries.

Legislative Change: Permitted Development

Following consultation in December 2020, the Government confirmed on 31st March 2021 that a new permitted development (PD) right to allow the change of use from any use, or mix of uses, from the Commercial, Business and Service use class (Class E) to residential use (Class C3) will be introduced under Class MA of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development etc.) (England) Order 2021.

The government considers that the announced package of measures will help support the creation of much needed homes while also giving high streets a new lease of life, enabling them to adapt and thrive – ‘transforming unused buildings and making the most of brownfield land’.

The new PD rights, which commenced on 1st August 2021, allow unused commercial buildings – or parts of buildings – to be granted permission for residential use via a fast track prior approval process. Councils are only able to assess prior approval applications on a narrow range of specific considerations including: flooding, noise from commercial premises, adequate light to habitable rooms and impact on a conservation area, for example. The PD rights include the following restrictions:

- a vacancy requirement that will ensure the building changing use has been vacant for a continuous period of 3 months before the date of the application to protect successful businesses in existing use
- the building must have been in a commercial, business, or service use for at least two continuous years previously

- a size limit of 1,500 square metres of floorspace applies, to avoid the loss of larger units. The permitted development right does not apply if more 1,500sqm of cumulative floorspace is to be converted. This is significantly more than the 150sqm permitted under Class M retail to residential at present, but a significant new restriction for office to residential change of use via permitted development

Article 4 Directions

An article 4 direction is made by the local planning authority. It restricts the scope of permitted development rights either in relation to a particular area or site, or a particular type of development anywhere in the authority’s area. Where an article 4 direction is in effect, a planning application may be required for development that would otherwise have been permitted development.

It is possible to introduce an Article 4 Direction to prevent permitted change of use from Use Class E to residential use. In a statement made by Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, on 1st July 2021 it was highlighted that “in very specific circumstances, local authorities can make Article 4 directions to suspend individual permitted development rights, when justified by robust evidence, [but added that it must be] used in a highly targeted way to protect the thriving core of historic high street areas, but does not unnecessarily restrict the ability to deliver much needed housing through national permitted development rights.

The statement confirmed the introduction of the new paragraph 53 and 54 of the National Planning Policy Framework (see above), and encourages Councils to ‘recognise the value to housing supply and increasing resident town centre footfall from supporting ‘flats above shops’; for example’. The Government consider this to be important to support mixed and flexible high streets, to deliver additional homes more easily, and to support jobs in the construction industry, while increasing demand for local high street services through new high street homes.

The statement encourages local authorities to carefully target any proposed Article 4 areas, focusing on the Primary Shopping Area supported by robust evidence to justify the Article 4 direction and the area it covers.

Others policy and supporting documents

The ARU team has reviewed a number of other documents to inform the masterplan refresh, including:

- Sleaford Town Council Strategic Plan 2019-2023
- Sleaford Neighbourhood Plan background material on website
- Sleaford Conservation Area Appraisal, (adopted in April 2016)
- North Kesteven Heritage Strategy (January 2022)
- Sleaford Signage Strategy (2018)
- Cycling Strategy (2018)
- Sleaford Car Parking Strategy (2018)
- Sleaford Transport Advice Paper (2018)
- Sleaford Town Transformation Report (2018)

National Trends

Consumer and economic trends in the retail and leisure sector have important implications on the formulation of planning and spatial strategies and the future vitality and viability of each individual town centre across the UK. We provide a detailed insight in this section, drawing out the key points of relevance for town centre planning in North Kesteven and more specifically, Sleaford.

Trends in recent years have been well documented. They closely follow global economic fluctuations, growth in on-line shopping/multi-channel retailing; changes in the property and space requirements of retail operators; evolution towards multi-dimensional town centres; the growth of the commercial leisure sector; and changes in the convenience goods sector with the growth of discount retailers and more varied food shopping habits. Sectoral analysis and published evidence confirm that town centres will need to continue to evolve and adapt to remain vital and viable locations.

The Covid-19 pandemic shut high streets across the UK in March 2020, with no timeline in place for re-opening. The longer term impact of Covid-19 on wider society and our town centres is still uncertain, but it is widely accepted that town and city centres will bounce back to varying degrees, and that Covid-19 has accelerated trends and challenges facing our high streets. We discuss the implications of the pandemic on our high streets further in this section.

The Evolving Role of the Town Centre

Retail will continue to be an important footfall driver in town centres, and whilst high streets are evolving, the role of retail and retail operators should continue to form an important element to any town centre strategy moving forwards. Nevertheless, trends and the need to inject life into our high streets have introduced new, multi-dimensional elements to town centres which should be promoted and incorporated alongside retail into emerging town centre strategies. These can be summarised as follows:

- The development of an ‘experience’ for visitors who are increasingly seeking to combine retail and

leisure activities as part of a single ‘going out’ trip. Town centres must provide an attractive experience for visitors which the internet is unable to match. This might include specialist markets, independent cinemas, street food and seasonal events, for example

- Town centres acting as genuine hubs for their communities, and the need to create a vibrant social, commercial and cultural destination. Uses might include cultural space, co-working space, space for small and medium-sized enterprises (SME’s), community facilities including libraries, education space, community halls/meeting venues, and health centres
- Larger scale ‘destination’ uses including conference centres, hotels, offices, cultural and performance venues
- Growth in town centre living and residential space/student accommodation – delivering footfall in the evenings and at weekends as well as during the daytime. A town centre strategy will require consideration of noise, environmental health and licensing hours in order to consider residential amenity alongside a supported evening economy

Uncertainty around the future of our town centres and observations around how they are evolving has been taking place for some years. In December 2018, the Government published ‘The High Street Report’, setting out the findings of the ‘High Streets Expert Panel’ which was established earlier in 2018. The Panel, Chaired by Sir John Timpson, sought to identify the key issues facing high streets and town centres, and advise on the best practical measures which the Government can take to help. In introducing the report, Sir John stated:

“Town centres are evolving, and retail will not return to the high streets that existed 10 or 20 years ago. A combination of internet shopping, the convenience of out of town retailing and an exceptional number of well-established retail formats reaching the end of their commercial life, has led to a marked increase in empty shops and a decline in footfall.

In completing this report, I have more hope for the future of our town centres than when we first started gathering evidence.”

He added that throughout their report, they use the term ‘town centre’ rather than ‘high street’ because their recommendations are not just about shops and shopping. The town centre of the future should attract local people to take part in a variety of activities – including dining, leisure and sport, culture and the arts, entertainment, medical services, and many more uses. They should also contain business premises, offices, and residential including affordable housing.

Instructed by ‘Key Cities Group’, consultants ‘Infusion’ were asked to ‘review the current state of play across our town and city centres’. The 2019 report starts by highlighting that over the course of the last decade, the British High Street has faced some of its biggest challenges in history. From a major economic downturn, through new retail methods and in conjunction with already-ongoing shifts in consumer spending and visiting patterns, some of the country’s most recognisable names have disappeared from our city centres. Many more major retailers were identified as facing huge difficulties and consequently undertaking seismic shifts in order to maintain their viability.

The report presents a strong position statement – ‘with the retail sector undergoing such major change, there is a very real threat to the existing model underpinning the vibrancy and sustainability of our city centres’. It emphasises that the retail sector has historically anchored much of our central area floor space, particularly at the visible and impactful ground floor level, and generated the bulk of footfall. With the convenience of newer methods of shopping likely to outweigh the convenience of central area shopping for the foreseeable future, it concludes that city centres can no longer rely on retail to be relevant.

The report states that central areas need to be diverse in the way their space is used to maintain their vibrancy, and activity in centres cannot be confined to daytimes. Ideally, town and city centres should not

only be locations people shop in, but also eat in, drink in, work in and live in. The role of retail is still relevant and important, but the report concludes that ‘as well as town centres being a focal point for retail, they need to become areas in which people live, work and spend their leisure time’.

Economic Trends

Since the 2012 and 2015 Town Centre Studies were published, the UK’s 2016 decision to leave the European Union has become an influencing factor in forecasts of economic growth. The UK economy slowed during 2019, sliding to a 7 year low by the end of the year, household spending growth slowed to an 8 year low of 1.2% in 2019, income growth was disappointing, and retail sales volumes grew by 3%- the weakest reading since 2014. The Experian ‘Retail Planner Briefing Note 17 (February 2020) attributed this to the period being dominated by heightened Brexit uncertainty and a weaker global economy.

Experian note that the outcome of the December 2019 general election removed near-term political uncertainty and the risk of a no deal Brexit, empowering the government to push forward with spending pledges and EU withdrawal plans. In February 2020, Experian recorded that the latest indicators pointed to a pick-up in business confidence and investment intentions; whilst housing market surveys suggested activity was rebounding and consumer sentiment improving.

Nevertheless, and even before factoring in Covid-19, Experian forecast that GDP growth was set to remain on a slower growth trajectory of 1-1.5% over 2020 and 2021, well below the performance of earlier years. The uncertainty around forecasting for retail floorspace need is recognised in the Adopted Local Plan (2017), referencing the evidence base study and requirement to provide updates throughout the Local Plan period.

COVID-19

On Monday 23rd March 2020 the country introduced ‘lockdown’ measures and social distancing including the closure of all but essential shops and services. This

had an immediate impact on town centres and town centre businesses unable to trade, with doors shut and no timeline in place for re-opening. In the Retail Planner Briefing Note 18, October 2020, Experian state:

“the outbreak of coronavirus (Covid-19) and measures to contain it has had a considerable impact on the UK and global economies. During the intensive stage of the lockdown, the economy suffered an unprecedented contraction, employment fell markedly and over 9 million employees were furloughed. Consumer demand suffered given social distancing and low confidence, leading to a big drop in social consumption, especially for recreation, leisure and travel.

In addition, investment fell markedly, as waning business confidence and deteriorating financial positions lead to the postponement and cancellation of projects. Exports have also been undermined by a fall in international demand for UK goods and services, as other countries enforce lockdown or social distancing measures to varying degrees. Supply side factors have reinforced this trend, such as the temporary closure of factories and businesses and disruptions to supply chains.”

In the October 2020 report, Experian forecast a ‘near-term’, ‘central/medium’ and ‘long term’ outlook. This Retail and Leisure Study incorporates forecasts based on the Experian ‘central/medium’ term outlook on the basis that an effective medical treatment (the vaccine) was in place by (around) mid-2021, enabling the recovery to regain momentum as confidence recovered. Research by Savills, GfK and Bank of England (graph right) currently supports this central trend based on the UK’s swift vaccine roll-out.

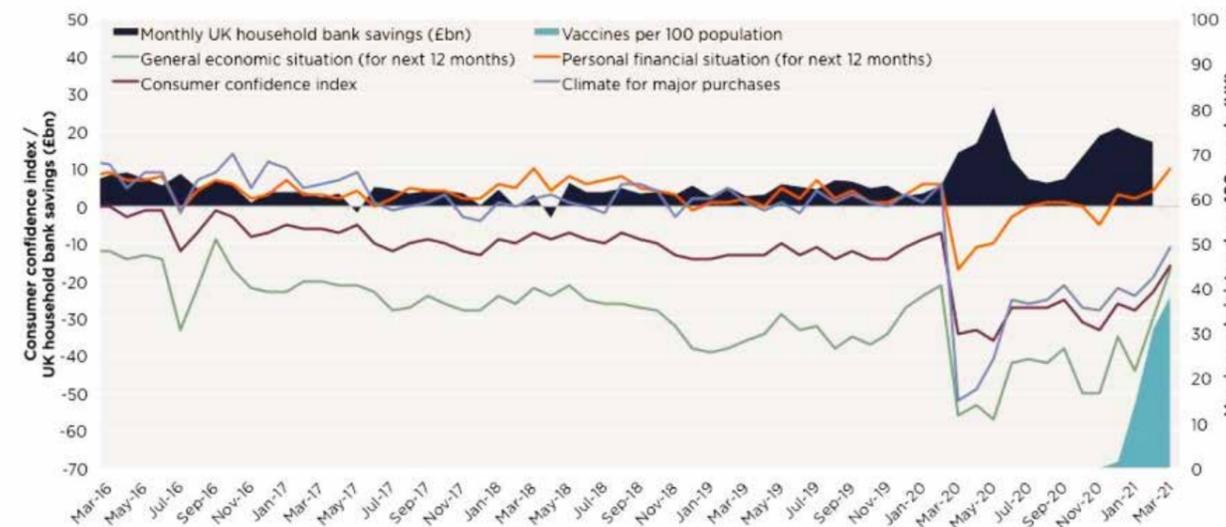
The vaccine roll-out has progressed swiftly and smoothly as expected under the ‘central/medium’ term scenario. As social distancing measures continue to unwind, social consumption is expected to continue to recover; and alongside this, some correction in the share of online spending is assumed, but it will nevertheless remain elevated compared to pre-Covid-19 projections.

Moving forwards, Experian explain that recovery over the coming years will be shaped by the course of the

pandemic, the success of measures to contain it and the extent of potential scarring to the UK’s longer term economic potential. The unprecedented nature of these issues means all forecasts will be subject to greater than usual uncertainty, with the following key variables:

- The role and implementation of any social-distancing measures over the coming months
- How successful government measures are in mitigating the economic impact on households and businesses
- Rebound of household and business confidence levels
- Global backdrop including trade and supply chain impacts on industry

Government finances have deteriorated markedly following exceptional measures taken to support the economy. Over the medium term, fiscal policy will likely be a constraint on growth as corrective measures such as spending cuts or tax rises may be required. It is expected that monetary policy will remain supportive over the medium term, with interest rates expected to remain at exceptionally low levels of the foreseeable future.



Online and Multi-Channel Retailing

Online spending has become a firmly established method of shopping. Evidence demonstrates the continued growth of this sector in terms of those that have internet access, those that use the internet every day, the methods and modes used to undertake such transactions, and the breadth of the population taking advantage of what is on offer, with the largest rise in the 65+ age group in recent years.

Recent data from the ONS confirms the extent to which online platforms now form part of the population’s shopping habits. The most recent data available from the ONS on online usage is from August 2020, which identified that:

- In January to February 2020, 96% of households in Great Britain had internet access, up from 93% in 2019 and 57% in 2006 when comparable records began
- Over 85% of adults use the Internet every day. Daily internet usage has more than doubled since 2008.
- In January to February 2020, 76% of adults in Great Britain used internet banking, increasing from 30% in 2007 and 73% in 2019

- 78% use mobile phones/smartphones to access the Internet. In certain age groups this figure is substantially higher: in the 25-34 year old age group, the figure is 99%; for 16-24 year olds it is 98%; and for 35-44 year olds it is 96%
- In January to February 2020, 87% of all adults shopped online within the last 12 months, up from 53% in 2008; those aged 65 years and over had the highest growth, rising from 16% to 65% over this period
- In August 2020, 100% of adults in the 16-24 and 25-34 old age group shopped online; and over 96% of 35-54 age group shopped online. By contrast, only 67% of those over 65 years shop online- however this age group has shown the largest increase in online shopping uptake, increasing from 48% in 2018, and 16% in 2008

When looking at the frequency of online shopping and the amount typically spent online, it can be seen that considerable amounts of spend are now being diverted online, which is spend lost from ‘bricks and mortar’ town centre stores. The ONS identifies that:

- Of those adults who purchased online in the last three months, adults aged 16-24 typically shopped online once or twice; however those in the 25-34, 35-44 and 45-54 age groups most typically shopped online at least ten times over a three month period. In the 35-44 age group, 48% shopped online more than ten times over the three month period
- Across all age groups, shoppers typically spent between £100 and £499 online in the last three months. In the 35-44 year age group, 30% of adults spent over £1,000 online in the three month period

Importantly for town centres, it has been evidenced that only 15% of online shoppers buy all of their fashion items online, with the remaining 85% using both online and physical stores. This highlights the importance of having a ‘joined-up’ town centre ‘experience’ to lure shoppers away from the internet and instead to visit the high street and to extend their dwell time through a range of retail and leisure attractions.

Covid-19 and Online Shopping

Experian report that there has been a marked increase in online shopping since the Covid-19 crisis broke, which has further accelerated the already strong growth trend seen over the past decade. The rising share of internet sales in total retail transactions is the key trend for SFT. Internet sales share of total retail surpassed 19% in 2019 before lurching up to over 30% in the second quarter of 2020, against less than 5% in 2008.

With lockdown measures related to Covid-19 relaxing since the second quarter of 2020, the share of internet sales in total retail transactions has eased from its peak (see charts to the right). We expect this unwinding to continue in the coming months, however it is anticipated that some of the increase in the internet sales share seen during the pandemic will remain throughout the forecast period. The charts to the right illustrates the small drop from the high peak of growth, but not to pre-Covid-19 levels, and will be followed by continued steady forecast growth.

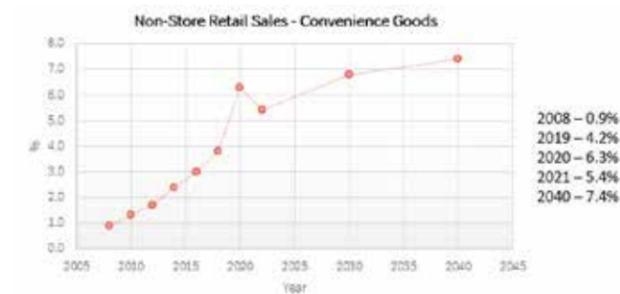
The ease of online purchasing has also continued to improve rapidly, with technological advances, particularly around smartphones and connectivity. Faster delivery times, including same day delivery, and easier returns processes have also encouraged the trend. Beyond 2021, Experian expect the SFT market share to continue to growth strongly in the mid-term.

Click and Collect

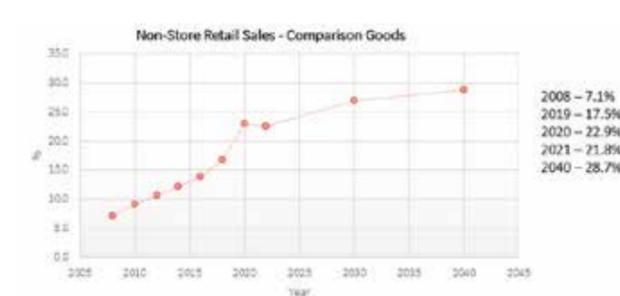
Research indicates that the click and collect market will grow by a further 46% by 2023. Click and collect allows a shopper to order and pay for a product online, and then have it delivered to the nearest physical retail store of that operator. This has presented a strong opportunity for those larger town centres with a wider range of national multiple retailers offering this service for their own product ranges. Such click and collect services underpins linked trips within town and city centres.

Sleaford has a more limited breadth of opportunity given the more limited range of national multiple retailers,

Convenience Goods Internet Sales Growth Trends and Forecasts



Comparison Goods Internet Sales Growth Trends and Forecasts



but does offer a range of alternative town centre parcel delivery and collection services, helping to drive town centre footfall in a similar way.

WB Wilson on Northgate, Worrells News on Southgate, and Baltic Food on White Hart Mews, all offer a parcel delivery and return service for online operators including DHL, Yodel, Amazon, DPD, Ebay and Parcel2Go, for example. Most national multiple retailers – including clothing and footwear – deliver via these services, and can help underpin town centre footfall as people visit to collect or return items. This type of service is facing increasing competition from fast track, next day or sometimes same day delivery services to peoples homes.

High Street Losses

The economic trends referred to above, combined with the continued growth in on-line sales have had a significant and permanent impact on consumer shopping and spending behaviour. In turn, this has created significant hurdles for traditional ‘bricks-and-mortar’ retailing and the high street.

These national trends have added to operator challenges already being experienced as a consequence of the retail property business model. Notably, operators face high costs of running retail outlets, including rents, business rates and high labour costs; they experience low profitability caused by high costs, slow growth in sales, squeezed profit margins and heavy price competition. They have been slow to respond and to prepare for the fast-paced changes being experienced on the high street, overlooking and disregarding the need to invest.

Operators have experienced a significant impact from the economic environment, the rise in online shopping and the property market, with many high profile high street casualties in recent years. Many operators will survive, but may instead look to rationalise their store portfolios. In recent years, the following found themselves in administration and in many cases, closure:

- Beales (2020)
- Hawkins Bazaar (2020)
- Top Shop / Top Man
- LK Bennett (2020)
- Oasis and Warehouse (2020)
- Dorothy Perkins (2020)
- Miss Selfridge (2020)
- Burton (2020)
- Jaeger (2019)
- TM Lewin (2020)
- Kath Kidston (2020)
- Laura Ashley (2020)
- Mothercare (2019)
- Select (2019)
- Debenhams (2019)
- Edinburgh Woollen Mill (2019)
- HMV (2018)
- House of Fraser (2018)
- Poundworld (2018)
- Conviviality Retail (2018)
- Maplin (2018)
- Toys R Us (2018)
- Palmer & Harvey (2017)
- Store Twenty One (2017)
- BHS (2016)
- Brantano (2016)
- Phones4U (2014)
- HMV (2013)
- Blockbuster (2013)
- Comet (2012)
- Clinton Cards (2012)
- Game (2012)
- Peacocks (2012)
- JJB Sports (2012)
- Alexon (2012)
- Focus DIY (2011)

The Covid-19 Grimsey Review (June 2020) references statistics published in the months just prior to the pandemic by CBRE, highlighting the stark downturn in the retail property market. The report quotes a 42% fall in retail property investment between 2014 and 2018; a 78% drop in shopping centre investment over the same period; and a 47% drop in the value of retail property assets changing hands between 2017 and 2018. The report adds that there were no new shopping centre openings in 2019, although some were extended, whilst a third of London shopping centres were subject to planning applications for at least some element of conversion to residential use.

It is predicted that the Covid-19 pandemic will drive a substantial amount of retail property into the hands of insolvency practitioners over the next few months.

Commercial Leisure Sector

Trends in the commercial leisure sector have been discussed in earlier sections of this report, documenting the need to inject life into our high streets and the continued evolution towards multi-dimensional town centres. The town centre of the future should attract local people to take part in a variety of activities – including dining, leisure and sport, culture and the arts, entertainment and medical services alongside business premises, offices, and residential.

In recent years, the commercial leisure sector has played an increasingly important role in the vitality and viability of town centres, as the nature of town centres continues to evolve. Leisure uses will continue to be important attractors in town centres, but there are challenges. The casual dining sector, for example, has reached a level of saturation and increased competition has led to casualties in recent years. Analysts suggest that in addition to market saturation, the rise in food costs, staff costs, rents and business rates have all impacted on operators’ profits; as well as emerging on-line delivery companies such as Uber Eats, Deliveroo and Just Eat.

The consequences of Covid-19 and associated lockdown and social distancing since March 2020, will have further

far-reaching impacts on the leisure and casual dining sector, with on-line delivery companies becoming firmly established in people’s homes. Competition for high street operators has exacerbated and accelerated over a very short period of time.

Nevertheless, leisure uses will continue to form an important part of our town centres over the forthcoming plan period. The impacts of Covid-19 on leisure spend has been substantially greater than for retail, with a fall of 53.8% in spend per head during 2020 as all leisure venues closed for long periods of time. The ‘pent up’ demand for leisure experiences and socialising is reflected in the particularly strong growth in spend per head during 2021 (64.7%). Whilst this an anomaly within longer term trends, it is clear that leisure spend will experience a stronger growth than retail throughout 2022 and remain at strong levels from 2023 onwards (2.9%).

It is evident from the data that leisure uses will remain a valued and relevant part of our town centres in the future. Despite ‘at home’ leisure experiences such as streaming services growing in popularity, the pandemic has highlighted the need and desire for people to leave their homes and socialise with friends and family across a range of leisure experiences.

Vol Growth Per Head (%)	2020	2021	2022	2023-27	2028-40
Convenience Goods	8.4%	-6.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%
Comparison Goods	-8.5%	6.5%	3.8%	3.0%	2.9%
Leisure Spend	-53.8%	64.7%	14.8%	2.9%	0.9%

Source: Experian Business Strategies, October 2020, [Figure 1a]

UK retail and leisure spend per head 2020-40

Cinema

Traditional cinema venues are changing and adapting in response to wider TV, movie and streaming trends, and whilst the presence of cinemas in the leisure sector appears secure at present, the future is somewhat uncertain. From an historic high immediately post-war of 1.64 billion admissions during 1946, UK cinema admissions gradually declined to an all-time low of just 54 million in 1984. Since that time, the advent of the multiplex and record levels of investment in improving the theatrical experience, has seen admissions recover and since 2000 they have remained above 150 million.

There has been much uncertainty in the cinema market given the advent of on-demand streaming services such as Netflix, a cheaper option in the comfort of your own home. Nevertheless, a serious detrimental impact has not yet occurred, with cinemas experiencing their highest admission figures in 2018 and 2019 since 1971.

Reasons for the market growth is varied. The industry has focused on the release of major blockbuster movies drawing in the crowds, and – importantly – include a more diverse genre from musicals to superhero and animated family films. Alongside films, cinemas have sought to diversify to offer live theatre and opera screenings, providing an alternative entertainment experience, and making West End productions affordable to a wider audience.

Alongside film release has been the significant investment in the actual cinema venues and the creation of an attractive cinema-going experience. Consumer expectations have risen, and cinemas have become places of comfy sofas, licensed bars, and good quality food and drink. Big cinema chains have installed higher-quality screens, and are beginning to introduce monthly subscription plans similar to the ‘streamers’. Notably, the industry has seen the rise of more boutique operators such as Everyman; and chain that has tripled its number of venues and level of attendance across the UK over the last 4 years by offering a high end, boutique, quality cinema experience.

Crucially, as the younger generation question the need for cinema visits, preferring to stream more cost effectively at home, the largest growth has been in the older age categories. These groups, with a greater disposable income, often enjoy a pre-film dinner in the bar with friends, followed by a drink in the comfy reclining chairs on offer.

A relatively new trend in the cinema market is the growth of the ‘pop-up’ cinema, estimated to be worth around £10 million in 2019, and growing at between 20-25% per year. A pop-up cinema is a mobile or temporary cinema, usually set-up in locations such as a park, beach, the grounds of a visitor attraction, on a city centre roof-top or other distinctive indoor or outdoor venue. Sometimes, for example, they are decorated seasonally, such as the Christmas themed secret cinemas. They tend to screen timeless classics or popular modern films that consumers are very familiar with, enjoying the experience of watching them again in a very different environment. Operators include Luna, Rooftop Film Club, Sundown Cinema, Backyard Cinema and Secret Cinema, for example.

Cinemas were continuing to perform well throughout 2019, but a post Covid world and the continued march of streaming services like Netflix and the Pop-Up Cinema trend, retain a level of uncertainty over what the future for the cinema industry might look like and what direction it might take, nevertheless, given the post-Covid growth in the leisure economy alongside wider cinema trends, the need for a cinema in Sleaford remains relevant and a key opportunity to strengthen and diversify the centre.

The Convenience Sector

The trends being experienced in the food retailing sector were establishing themselves to varying degrees at the time of the 2015 City and Town Centre update. Food superstores have experienced a substantial decline in market share, small format top-up stores are gaining market share, discount retailers – Aldi and Lidl – are achieving strong growth, and on-line spend is continuing to grow although not to the same extent as non-food

shopping. The market leaders pulled back on large superstore openings a number of years ago – reflected in the pull-back by Tesco on the Advanta Seeds site in Sleaford – and, whilst small convenience stores continue to open this is not at the same pace as that seen in recent years.

Banks and Financial

The services of the high street banks have traditionally been delivered through their branch networks, meaning that in town centres at all levels in the hierarchy the presence of a wide range of banks and building societies formed an important part of a centre’s mix of uses. The numbers of bank branches in the UK have been in decline for the past thirty years, due to a variety of reasons including the desire by banks to cut costs; mergers within the industry; competitive pressures from new entrants in the banking sector; changes in the nature of retail banking transactions; and a growth in alternative means of accessing bank services, particularly driven by technological advances such as online and mobile banking.

According to research from CACI , customer visits to retail bank branches are forecast to drop by 36% between 2017 and 2022, with mobile transactions rising 121% in the same period. CACI estimate that the typical person will visit a retail bank branch just four times a year, down from seven in 2017.

Most banks have an alliance with the Post Office (whose own branch network has remained relatively stable in recent years), meaning that in most smaller centres there are still banking facilities available to those who are not able to use alternative means. However, the decline of bank branches has also served to free up large, often historic and listed commercial premises in central town centre locations, which are in some instances challenging to let.

Summary

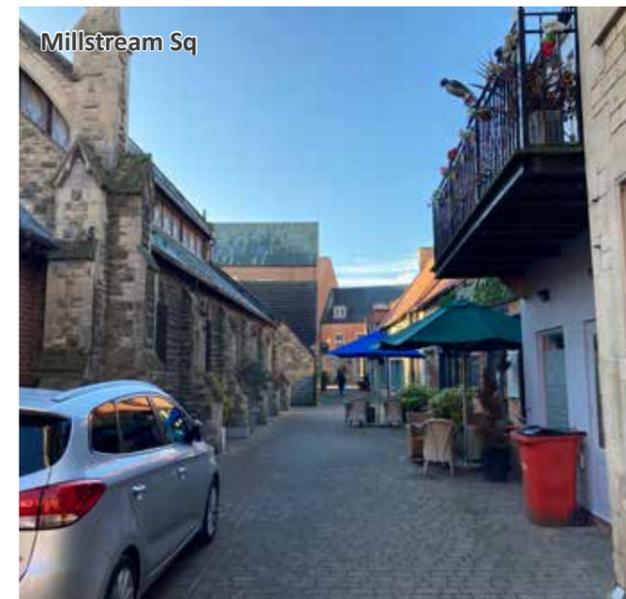
- The role of town centres as a focus for retail remains relevant in today’s market to draw in shoppers and footfall. Current thinking and research consistently repeats, however, the need to look beyond the role of retail in order to reinvent the high street, emphasising that the town centre of the future must add an extra dimension to the retail experience. Covid-19 and new planning legislation have and will continue to accelerate these trends. It is apparent that these ‘extra layers/diversity of uses’ are in addition to the core retail role, but should be closely connected to ensure a joined-up experience within a comprehensive town centre strategy.
- Investment in a wider mix of land-uses and public realm/public space improvements will benefit a consolidated retail offer, leading to improved town centre footfall activity. Short-term investment projects alongside longer term investment for major projects can have far-reaching positive benefits to the performance of a town centre.



Southgate



Riverside Shopping Centre



Millstream Sq



Market Street

Appendix B: Engagement Feedback Report

Introduction

This report has been prepared by AR Urbanism, on behalf of North Kesteven District Council (NKDC). It provides a summary of feedback received from public and stakeholder engagement activities that were undertaken as part of the Sleaford Masterplan Refresh project in February 2022.

The objectives of the engagement were to make people aware of the Sleaford Masterplan Refresh project, uncover local aspirations for Sleaford Town Centre and capture changes that have occurred since the 2011 Masterplan had been published, including those brought by the pandemic.

Engagement activities undertaken included:

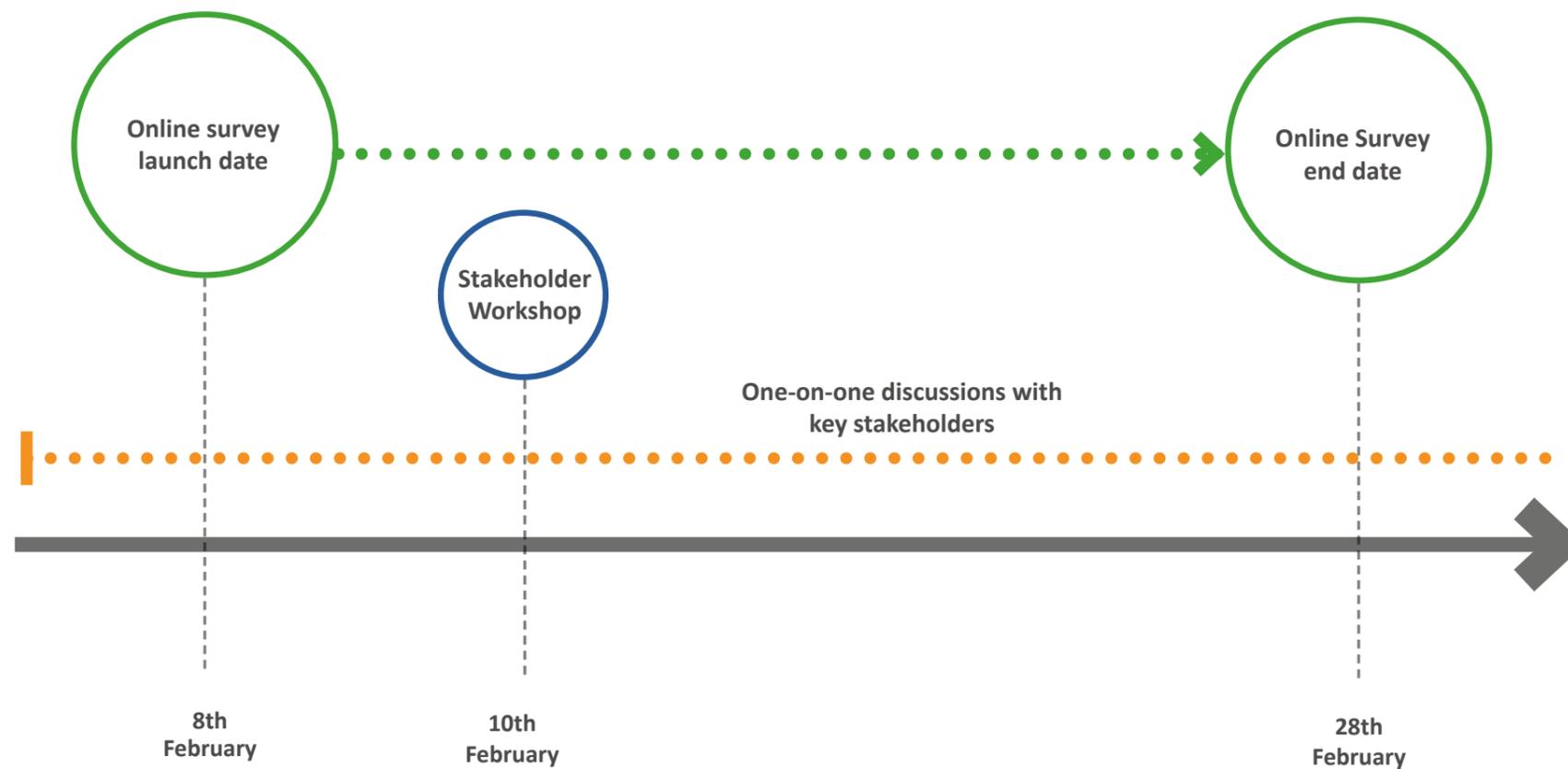
- An online questionnaire survey
- An online workshop with a various key stakeholders
- One-to-one meetings and telephone conversations with key stakeholders

The online survey was promoted on the NKDC's Website, via email invitations sent to various stakeholder groups, and flyer distribution.

The workshop was attended by the local business stakeholders and representatives of the local groups, who were invited to participate in the event via email.

The feedback from these activities has informed the team's understanding of Sleaford Town Centre and its surroundings. It has confirmed and extended the team's knowledge of issues and opportunities and has been used to help shape the proposed strategy and shape specific ideas for projects and site redevelopment.

This report summarises the results of the survey and the workshop.



Engagement Timeline
February 2022

Online survey

Survey approach and questions

The Resident and Business Survey had been launched on 8th February and it stayed open for three weeks until 28th February 2022. The survey comprised 12 close-ended and multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question.

Overall 903 participants took part in the survey and gave answers to the following 7 close-ended questions:

1. What do you generally visit the town centre for?
2. How often do you visit the town centre?
3. How do you normally travel into the town centre?
4. What are the positive aspects of the town centre?
5. What are the negative aspects of the town centre?
6. On average, how long do you stay on a visit to the town centre?
7. Which of the following best describes your involvement in Sleaford?
 - I own or run a business in Sleaford,
 - I work in Sleaford, I go to school in Sleaford,
 - I live in Sleaford,
 - I visit Sleaford sometimes- I live somewhere else.

The local business owners were asked the following two questions;

8. How do you think the Covid-19 pandemic impacted your business?
 9. In what ways did the pandemic impact your business?
- Questions 10 and 11 aimed to analyse the impact of Covid-19 on the town centre;

10. How do you think the pandemic impacted your experience of Sleaford?

11. The Masterplan Refresh will look at ways to improve Sleaford Town Centre, including helping it recover from the impacts of the pandemic and make it more resilient for the future. Where do you think the effort should be focused to improve the town centre the most?

The open-ended Question 12 asked whether participants had any other comments regarding Sleaford Town Centre that they wanted to share. This question received 472 comments, all of which can be found in the Appendix.

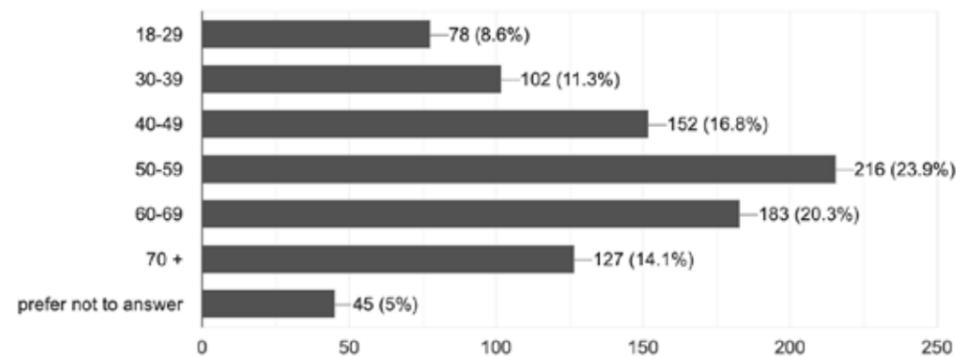
Demographic profile of the respondents was as follows:

- the vast majority of participants were female
- 9% of participants were between 18-29 years old
- approximately 25% were between 30-49
- and nearly 45% of respondents were between 50-69
- the majority of respondents were in full-time employment (nearly 40%)
- and 28% were retired

The summary of the survey responses takes into account the highest scoring answers to each question. The complete feedback spreadsheet has been supplied separately to NKDC.

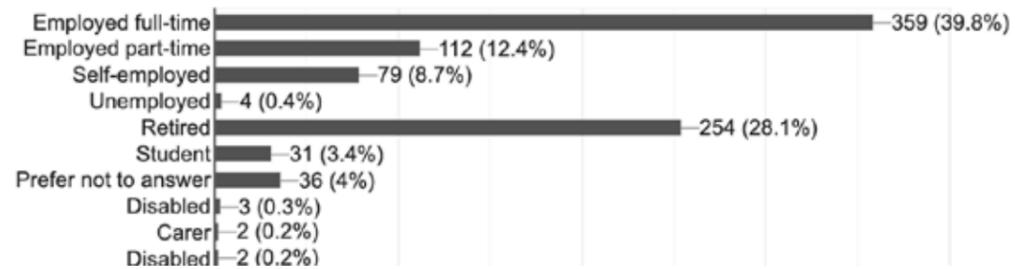
What's your age ?

903 responses



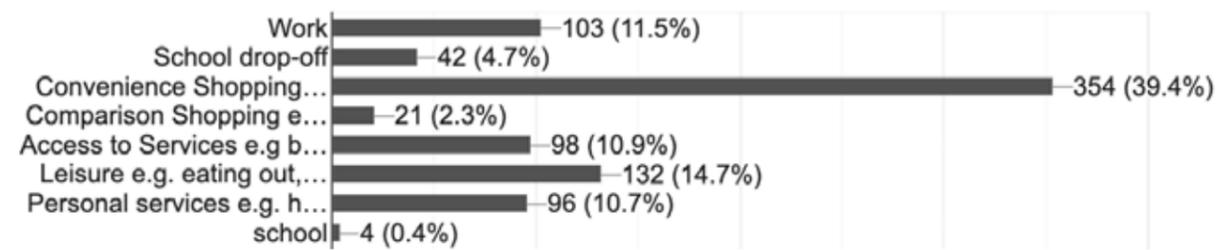
What's your employment status ?

903 responses

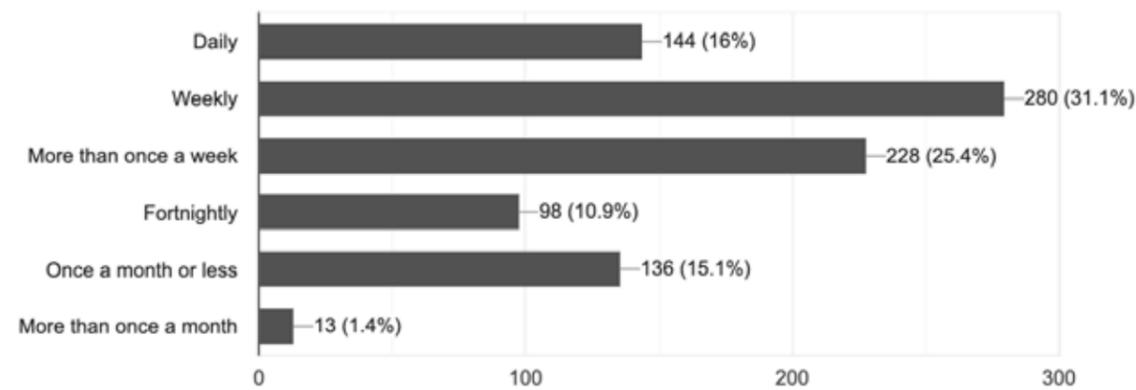


Survey participants - demographic data

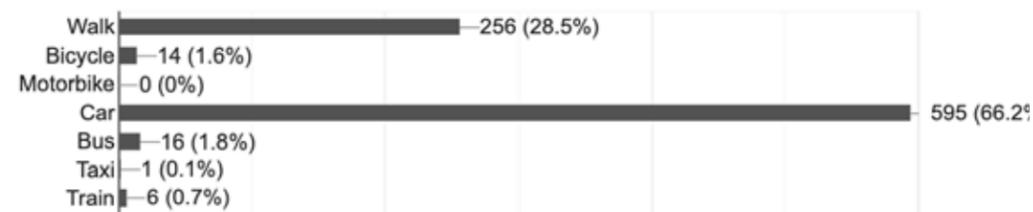
1. What do you generally visit the Town Centre for?



2. How often do you visit the Town Centre?



3. How do you normally travel into the Town Centre?



Question responses

Question 1

What do you generally visit the town centre for?

- The majority of respondents (40%) visit town centre for convenience shopping such as drinks, food, toiletries and newspapers
- 15% visit the town centre mainly for leisure e.g. eating out, drinking or meeting friends
- Some other high scoring answers were; work, access to services such as a bank, post office or library, access to personal services including hair and beauty and medical appointments

Question 2

How often do you visit the town centre?

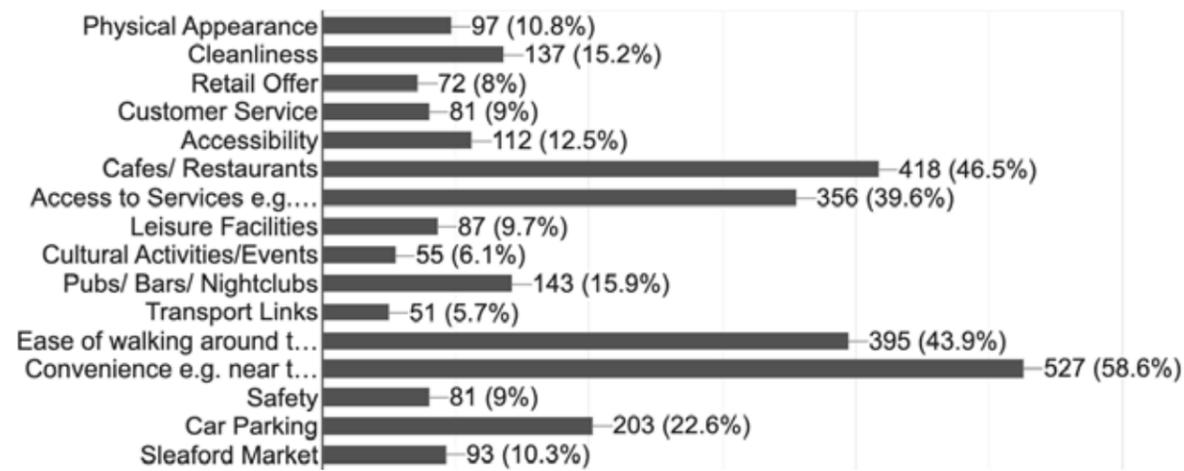
- The majority of respondents visit town centre weekly or more than once a week
- 16% goes to the town centre every day

Question 3

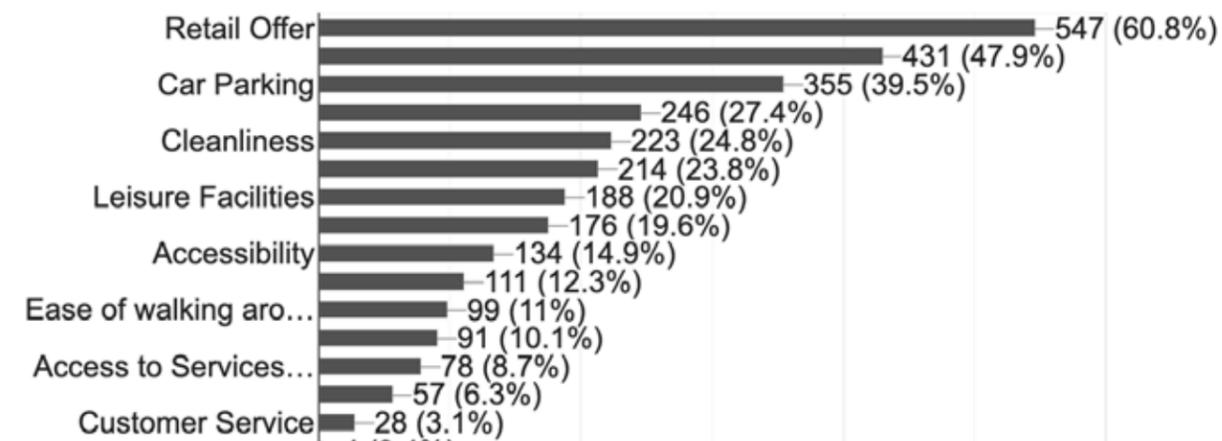
How do you normally travel into the town centre?

- Town centre visitors mainly travel by car (66%)
- or by foot (28%)

4. What are the positive aspects of the Town Centre? Choose up to 5 answers.



5. What are the negative aspects of the Town Centre? Choose up to 5 answers.



Question 4
What are the positive aspects of the town centre?
(multiple answers were chosen)

The top five answers were as follows:

1. Convenience (near to where I live)
2. Cafés and restaurants
3. Ease of walking around the town centre
4. Access to services (banks, post-office, library)
5. Car parking

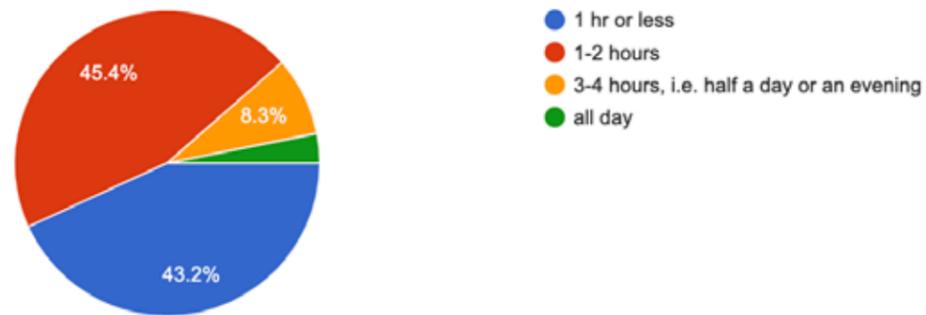
Question 5
What are the negative aspects of the town centre?
(multiple answers were chosen)

The top five answers were as follows:

1. Retail offer
2. Physical appearance
3. Car parking
4. Transport links
5. Cleanliness

A high number of respondents have chosen 'car parking' as a positive and negative aspect of the town centre, which indicates that people have wide-ranging views on car parking provision in Sleaford Town Centre.

6. On average, how long do you stay on a visit to the Town Centre?



Question 6

How long do you stay on a visit to the town centre?

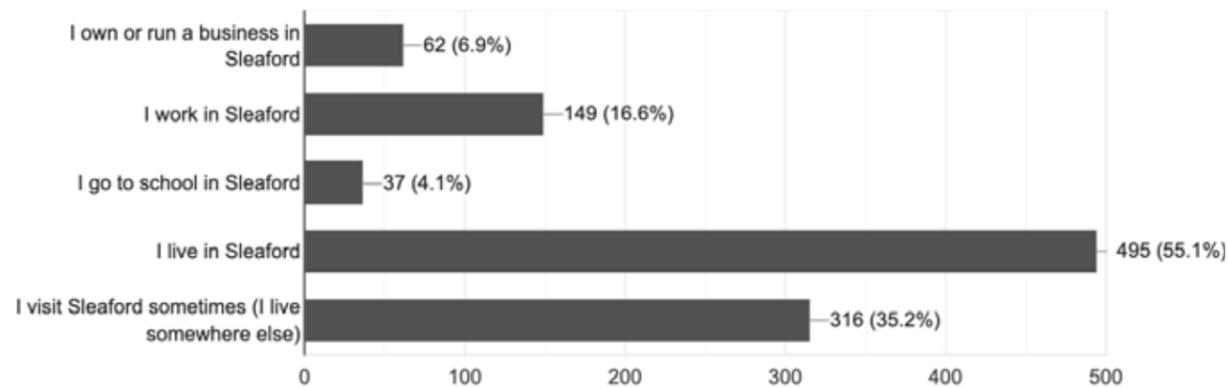
- The majority of respondents stay in the town centre for 1-2 hours or less than one hour.

Question 7

Which of the following best describes your involvement in Sleaford?

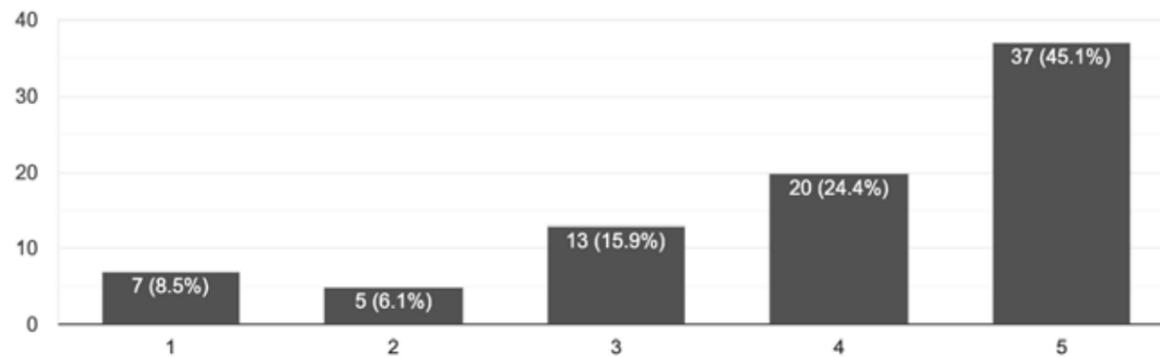
- The majority of respondents live in Sleaford (55%)
- Nearly 35% of respondents live elsewhere but visit Sleaford Town Centre.

7. Which of the following best describes your involvement in Sleaford? You can select multiple options.



8. If you own a business in Sleaford, how do you think the Covid-19 pandemic impacted your business. If you aren't a business owner please skip to question 10

82 responses



Question 8

How do you think the Covid-19 pandemic impacted your business? Provide an answer on the scale from 'not at all', to 'significantly'.

- This questions received 82 answers
- 45% of business owners answered that their businesses were significantly affected by the pandemic

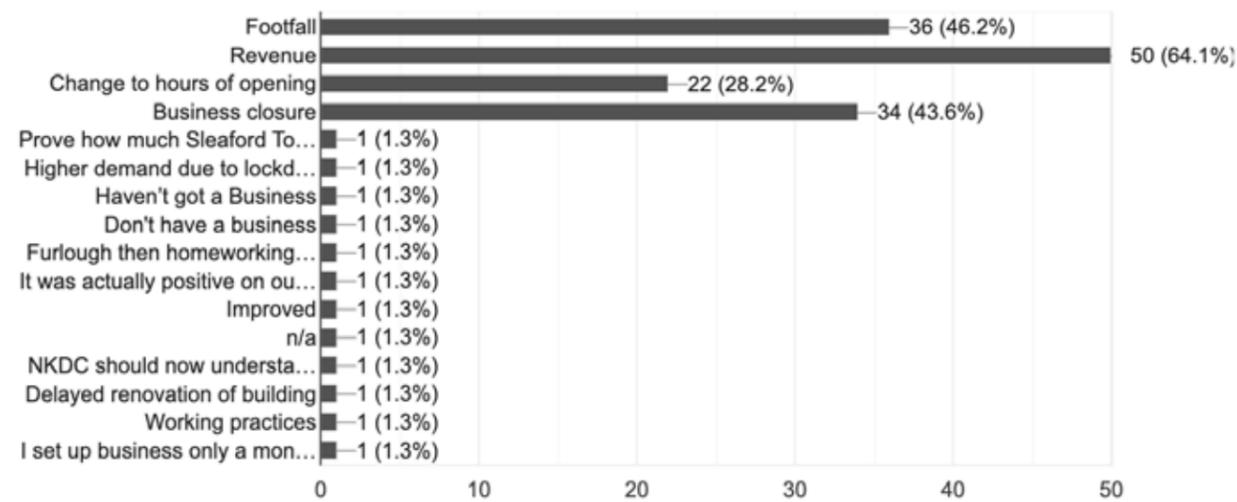
Question 9

In what way did the pandemic impact your business?

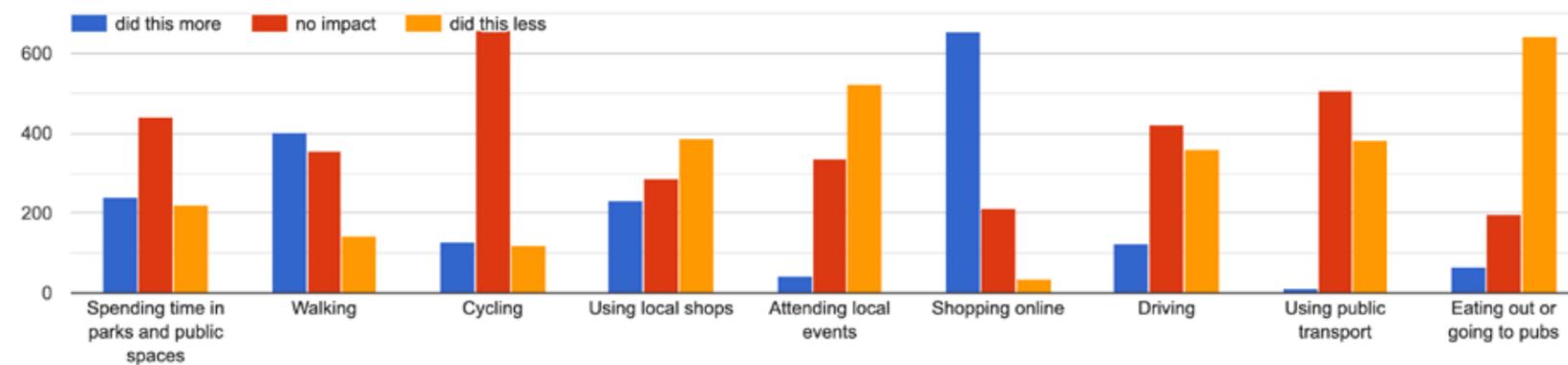
- This questions received 78 responses
- The majority of businesses in Sleaford suffered loses in revenue (64%)
- 46% responded that the pandemic effected footfall ,
- while 43% of respondents had to cease their business

9. In what ways did the pandemic impact your business? You can select multiple answers.

78 responses

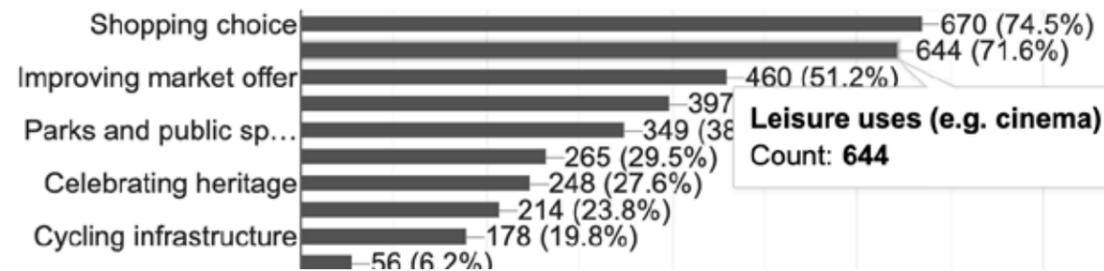


10. How do you think the pandemic impacted your experience of Sleaford?



11. The masterplan refresh will look at ways to improve Sleaford town centre, including helping it recover from the impacts of the pandemic and make it more resilient for the future. Where do you think effort should be focused to improve the town centre the most? You can select multiple answers.

899 responses



Question 10

How do you think the pandemic impacted your experience of Sleaford?

This question measured town centre changes brought by the pandemic relating to the following aspects:

- Spending time in parks and public spaces- 'no impact' was the highest scoring answer
- Walking- 'did this more' was the highest-scoring answer
- Cycling- no impact
- Using local shops - 'did this less' was the highest-scoring answer
- Attending local events - 'did this less' was the highest-scoring answer
- Shopping online- the was majority of respondents did shop online more
- Driving- 'no impact' was the highest scoring answer,
- Using public transport - 'no impact' was the highest scoring answer
- Eating out- 'did this less' was the highest-scoring answer

Question 11

The masterplan refresh will look at ways to improve Sleaford Town Centre, including helping it recover from the impacts of the pandemic and make it more resilient for the future. Where do you think effort should be focused to improve the town centre the most? (multiple answers were chosen)

The highest-scoring answers were as follows:

- Shopping choice
- Leisure uses (e.g a cinema)
- Improving market offer
- Better parking
- Parks and public spaces improvements

12. Have you got any other comments regarding Sleaford town centre that you would like to share with us?

472 responses

Do something with the Bass Maltings

I think Sleaford needs more shops that are popular for young people, but most importantly more activities for teenagers and young adults.

I would really like to see more use of the waterside shopping centre by putting in more mainstream shops, I feel like this would draw more business to the local shops neighboring the currently vacant spaces. With a lack of shops targeted to the younger generation (19+), there is very little appeal for youths to go anywhere but places like the recreational ground on Boston Road which are regularly commented on for their anti-social occurrences. The continuation of the cinema in the town centre is also something i would like to see.

At present the lack of options within Sleaford for retail is rapidly declining and instead the number of houses are increasing but there are no facilities for them - this town needs more retail to reduce the number of people from going to Boston, Grantham, Lincoln and Newark to do their shopping. The Tesco retail park needs to be moved forward and constructed as well as the Sleaford Cinema project needs to come to fruition. All of these can help keep people in Sleaford and allow the town to no longer become a ghost town. Also business rates need to be looked at. Unfortunately most of Southgate these days consists of charity shops, barbers and estate agents. Not something that will bring people to Sleaford or

Too many buildings look neglected.

Public transport from where I live is not available for me to visit monthly farmers market, or be able to stay in town after 12 noon.

Move Macdonald's. Move Tesco's. 20 mph speed limit from monument in Southgate to church lane junction in Northgate. Stop vehicles using handley street as a shortcut. Change the sequence of lights at railway crossing . Monitor vehicle emissions in Southgate and publish the results on social media. More police on foot patrol

Selected responses to question 12 (selection continues on page 11)

Question 12

Have you got any other comments regarding Sleaford Town Centre that you would like to share with us?

This Question received 472 comments, some of the commonly mentioned aspects are listed below and the full list of comments can be found in Appendix.

- improve cycle routes and reduce town centre traffic
- regenerate Bass Maltings site
- improve town centre by taking better care of buildings that look neglected
- provide new uses in empty units and badly maintained shops
- attract new business
- improve shopping offer; provide more options
- town centre feels neglected and needs better maintenance
- provide free parking opportunities
- speed-up 'the cinema' project
- improve Sleaford Market
- traffic problems in town centre needs to be addressed, including congestions around schools during the rush hours
- re-purpose and regenerate Riverside Centre
- improve walking routes
- improve bus services and bus stops
- improve heritage assets

Car parking charges are too high and this puts off visitors. Traffic levels are still very high along Southgate and a pedestrianised scheme, even for certain days and times, would give a more relaxed feel and be much safer.

Riverside has a huge amount of potential but the shops there have remained empty for years. The cinema and Butter Market project needs to be revived and completed as it would be a huge draw to the town.

Having moved here from East Lancashire, Sleaford town centre is better than several Lancashire town centres, but always room for improvement.

Crossing the road, you can wait ages. Not easy for the less mobile. Needs places of people to sit and rest when out shopping, ie older people. Easier access for those not so mobile and at the same time less traffic and less congestion of traffic flow (I don't know how you do this!).

there needs to be some form of stuartship for when the schools come out as they cause a lot of caos as there is so many trying to go into town at the same time

It's not a destination town - purely functional. This is a shame as some of the building stock is lovely and heritage is rich. The shops in the town centre let it down and it's appearance is down at heel. It would be great if this was reversed - more Independent shops should be encouraged and better quality high street shops. Make more of the heritage of the town.

Pedestrianised centre. Re-worked road system. Better (free) car parking.

Public transport from where I live is not available for me to visit monthly farmers market, or be able to stay in town after 12 noon.

If the choice of retail shops were better I would visit the town centre much more often rather than going to Lincoln. Sleaford also needs a large supermarket (Sainsbury's or Tesco) sited on the industrial estate (accessible from the bypass) which would remove so much traffic from the centre of town. Considering how many new homes are being built the current supermarket provision is inadequate.

Summary

The key survey findings are as follows:

- The vast majority of people travel to Sleaford Town Centre by car, once or more than once a week where they usually spend 1 to 2 hours.
- People visit the town centre mainly for convenience shopping, leisure including food and beverage amenities and services, however many feel that the town centre offer is currently limited and needs improving.
- Respondents feel that the physical appearance of Sleaford Town Centre should be improved and buildings including heritage assets should be better maintained.
- Car parking provision in Sleaford needs reconsideration.
- Town centre visitors enjoy walking around the town centre however they feel it is poorly maintained and its cleanliness needs improving.
- Town centre improvements to physical appearance, extended offer and public realm enhancement would support increased dwell time and footfall.

The Covid-19 panedmic has had an impact on the town centre in the following ways:

- About 45% of town centre businesses were significantly affected by the pandemic, and the majority of businesses in Sleaford suffered losses in revenue,
- As a result of the pandemic there was a slight increase in people walking,

- More people shopped online shopping during the pandemic,
- Time spent on town centre type activities significantly reduced: people ate out less, attended fewer events or used local shops as much,
- Respondents feel that to accelerate postpandemic recovery the focus should be on; improving shopping choices and leisure uses (e.g. a cinema), improving the market offer, parking provision, and parks and public spaces.

Selected responses to question 12 (continued from page 10)

The key comments recorded during the workshop have been categorised into the following themes:

Youth and education

- An increase in mental health issues and well-being amongst pupils have been recorded during lockdowns.
- The role of schools as spaces for social interactions and activities for pupils has increased.
- Town centre and local authority should support schools in providing after-school activities for youth to improve well-being.
- Over 70% of students are from outside of Sleaford and town centre should provide opportunities for them e.g. places to go to, activities to get involved in after school.

Business support

- Only 2 out of 6 traders had an opportunity to trade online.
- Outdoor events (markets) were hosted to encourage people into the square, and outdoor activities are envisaged to continue in the future.
- A good wayfinding strategy in town centre including signage at the railway station is essential to support the recovery of businesses and improve town centre business environment.
- A heavier online presence and support from the council in advertising is required.
- Any improvements and initiatives (events, festivals, business support opportunities) that bring people to Sleaford are beneficial for businesses.

Sleaford Castle Field

- Sleaford Castle is located close to Sleaford Town Centre but it is difficult to get to and badly connected with the town.
- Pedestrian connections should be improved including Nags Head passage (e.g. consider a pedestrian bridge).
- Better signage in the centre to advertise and sign post the Castle is required.
- A visitors centre at the Castle Field or in the town centre would be beneficial - the Castle is the key monument and heritage asset, its potential should be maximised.
- Education and leisure opportunities of the Castle Field should be maximised.

Heritage assets and important destinations

- The Castle is poorly signposted.
- The Hub is poorly signposted, and difficult to get to.
- Connections on the eastern-western axis are very poor.
- Heritage buildings in town centre need an upgrade.
- Grade II listed shops and pubs should receive help and be improved.
- Navigation House currently operates under limited opening time restrictions and functions as an information centre. There is an opportunity to maximise the potential of this location.

Connectivity

- It's difficult to navigate around car-parks.
- Poor east-west connections.
- Poor signage and wayfinding.
- Heart of Sleaford project gives an opportunity to create the east-west connection.

Public realm

- Very little opportunity for dwell time in the town centre.
- No real place to sit and rest.
- People need to go out of the town centre for any dwell space.
- Sleaford would benefit from public art and benches.
- Consider proposals to widen footways and restrict the carriageway space to create a café culture.
- Heart of Sleaford should provide a green and quiet 'dwell' space in town centre.
- Consider opportunities to improve Riverside precinct.
- Need to improve the area in front of the train station to improve the arrival experience to Sleaford.

Online presence

- A central place (a website) providing all information about businesses, activities, events, and town centre offer in general is required.
- Digital platform - a TripAdvisor type service would support local businesses and accelerate recovery.
- An app to help navigate around the town centre and advertise local offer could be more effective than a any new signage strategy

Parking

- In general the public has a broad range of opinions relating to car parking provision - from a complete ban of cars in the town centre to the creation of multi-storey car park.
- NKDC car park doesn't increase congestion in the town centre and its capacity should be maximised.
- Free parking between certain hours should be considered.
- Consider removal of car-parking spaces from Market Place.

Hospitality and Retail

- Shopping locally should be encouraged and supported especially after the pandemic.
- New uses in the town centre should be encouraged.
- Empty units to be filled with new uses.
- Some units aren't well-maintained.
- Local authority should provide equal support for various town centre destinations. Current improvements and investments have been concentrated around the Market Place.
- Sleaford evening economy needs improving.
- More events that encourage people into the town centre are required.

Traffic and transport

- Heavy traffic in the town centre limits opportunities to improve town centre offer and extend town centre dwell time.
- There is a need for better bus interchange, information and improved public space at the train station. Currently arrival at Sleaford is unwelcoming.
- Holdingham Roundabout has improved traffic.
- Improvements to the level crossing are required.

