ARUP

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council

Wigston Town Centre Refreshed Masterplan 2022

Issue | 7 June 2022

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1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

This report has been prepared by Ove Arup and Partners Ltd (Arup) and LDA Design on behalf of Oadby and Wigston Borough Council to support them in updating their Town Centres Masterplan, previously included within the Town Centre's Area Action Plan (AAP), with the aim of positioning the Council to best inform decisions around development within Wigston town centre in addition to informing potential future bids for Government funding for development and regeneration should such opportunities arise.

1.2 Background Context

The Borough of Oadby and Wigston sits directly to the south of Leicester city centre, and its built-up areas fall within the Leicester Principal Urban Area (PUA). Wigston is the main town centre in the Borough (Figure 1). The town currently acts as a suburban town centre to the main conurbation with the majority of residents commuting into Leicester for work.

Situated just off A5199, the town centre of Wigston is one of very few recognised centres outside the Leicester conurbation. Wigston offers easy access to Leicester with the city ring road (A563) and Welford Road providing direct links into the city centre and the surrounding area. The M1 sits within easy reach to the west, primarily accessed via the B5418 and A563. However, the three main routes in Leicester City from the south, comprising the M1, A14 and A47, pass through the Borough causing significant congestion, particularly at peak times. South Wigston train station sits approximately 2km to the west with regular services to Leicester and Birmingham New Street. The town centre of Oadby sits to the east and offers a number of amenities, including a number of popular cafes and restaurants.

Wigston is well served in terms of green space provision, with Willow Park in close proximity, Peace Memorial Park within the town centre and Brocks Hill Country Park located just over 1km from the town centre, with Glen Gorse Golf Course just over 2km away.

The Oadby and Wigston Town Centres Area Action Plan was adopted September 2013 to guide development within the Borough's centres. The AAP formed a significant part of Oadby and Wigston's statutory planning documents for the determination of development proposals. The AAP included a masterplan for future development within the town centre.

Almost ten years on, following the full impact of the economic downturn, a number of iterations of the NPPF, a new Local Plan, the full impact of Covid and changes in the planning system, a refresh of the masterplan is due. This links to the Government's Levelling Up agenda and the potential to seek grant funding to help bring regenerative town centre schemes to life.

Figure 1: Location Plan of Wigston

1.3 Report Purpose

The Levelling Up White Paper was published February 2022 and sets out how the government will spread opportunity more equally across the UK through their Levelling Up agenda, including from grant funding from the Levelling up Fund (LUF).

Initial rounds of funding for local projects across the country were announced in October 2021. The government see levelling up as a long term plan of action though a clear framework to identify physical, human, intangible, financial, social and institutional capitals which can drive progress in addressing spatial disparity. It is hoped as part of LUF that people do not have to leave their local community for a good life with diverse opportunities.

Within these six capitals, plans include locally based projects to enhance town centres in addition to wider government investment in education, sports and cultural facilities in addition to creating in-work training and progression opportunities by central government departments. The government would like to see increases in key indicators such as pay, productivity and employment by 2030 following from LUF projects across the country.

The LUF is now progressing through its second round of bidding for town centre projects, inviting applicants to submit their bids by 6th July 2022. This second round of the fund will focus on the same three investment themes as the first round, which are:

- Transport Investments;
- Regeneration and Town Centres Investment; and
- Cultural Investments.

Having a visible impact and supporting Net Zero ambitions are cited in particular as clear projects aims.

With LUF submissions due in July 2022, it is vital Oadby and Wigston begin now to put themselves in the strongest position to prepare a positive bid. It was noted that during Round 1 of the LUF, the successful applications were those Authorities which had undertaken significant work to develop coherent and detailed propositions with a 'golden thread' that aligned their objectives to those of the LUF.

In order for the Council to position themselves well for future funding opportunities, it is key that the overall masterplan for Wigston is refreshed to best reflect a post-covid world and the new functions, roles and operations of town centres.

The original masterplan was strongly focused around the dominance of a towns' retail and office functions as was prevalent in that previous economic climate and as reflected in the significant floorspace growth that was proposed. Nevertheless, towns are now about much more than retail and office space today, with a stronger focus on the lived experiences of the town by creating safe, public open space, cafes and activities for residents and visitors to spend time and enjoy the area. A refreshed masterplan would seek to maximise this potential, picking up on the key themes of the LUF.

This report therefore updates the Masterplan setting a strong foundation for a LUF Round 2 bid, other potential funds, as well as informing development decisions for the town in the future.

1.4 Structure

This report provides a review of the current policy context and a theory of change to support a refreshed masterplan for the Wigston AAP. The report is structured under the following headings:

- Renewed Policy Context;
- Theory of Change;
- Overall Masterplan;
- Priority Projects; and
- Delivery and Next Steps

2. Renewed Policy Context

The Oadby and Wigston Borough Council Town Centres AAP (2013) was largely based on the Core Strategy (2010) and supplementary planning documents as part of Oadby and Wigston Borough Council's Development Plan at the time. However, this development plan, including the Town Centres AAP, has now been superseded by the adoption of the new Borough of Oadby and Wigston Local Plan (2019) which maintains the principles of the original masterplan.

2.1 NPPF

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in England. The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies and how these should be applied.

Paragraph 86 of the NPPF (2021) states that planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. This includes allowing town centres to grow and diversify in a way that ensures they can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries and remain resilient.

The NPPF defines Main Town Centre uses as including:

- Retail Development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres);
- Leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls);
- Offices; and
- Arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

The NPPF also encourages local planning authorities to take a positive approach to alternative uses of land '*which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans*' provided that it would not '*undermine the viability of town centres*.'

2.2 Levelling Up Agenda and White Paper

The Levelling Up White Paper[1] sets out twelve bold national Levelling Up Missions, achievable by 2030 and given status in law, that will shift the government's focus and resources to Britain's forgotten communities.

One of the Levelling Up Missions focuses on 'restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging'. The 'Pride in Place' Mission looks to raise people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community by 2030. The Mission identifies three elements to help support improving pride in place: regeneration, communities and culture, heritage and sport.

The government's Levelling Up Agenda includes the LUF. The first round of LUF was announced in the 2020 Spending Review to support communities in tackling economic differences and driving prosperity in order to create positive change and enhance communities' pride in place.

The LUF has been responsible for creating the Towns Fund programme, which allocated £3.6 billion divided between 101 towns to help them to regenerate their town centres. Towns were selected and invited to develop proposals for a Town Deal with proposals that focussed on long term economic and productivity growth through investment in connectivity, land use, economic assets including cultural assets, skills and enterprise infrastructure. This programme has been successful in allocating £3.6bn to towns across England and demonstrates the government's ambition to level up

[1] Levelling Up Publication

areas in England that have suffered from a history of decline and a subsequent lack of investment.

The second round of the LUF will continue to invest directly in communities across the UK, continuing to fund the regeneration of towns in need. This second round of the Fund will focus on the same investment themes as round 1: local transport projects that make a genuine difference to local areas; town centre and high street regeneration; and support for cultural and heritage assets.

The prospectus[2] states that 'investment proposals should focus on supporting high priority and high impact projects that will make a visible difference to local areas.'

This refreshed masterplan therefore creates a foundation for any potential future LUF applications the Council may wish to make, in addition to any other future opportunities which may support in help bringing regenerative town centre schemes within Wigston to life.

2.3 Local Plan

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council adopted the new Borough of Oadby and Wigston Local Plan in April 2019. The plan is the Council's principal planning policy document which sets out the vision spatial objectives, spatial strategy and planning policies for development within the Borough, for a period up to 2031. The plan supersedes the previous development plan which includes the Council's saved Local Plan, the Town Centres AAP, and the Core Strategy.

The new Local Plan amends the levels of growth set out in the Town Centres AAP, based on an updated evidence base, to take account of development and regeneration that has occurred since 2013. The Local Plan supersedes the Town Centre AAP as a policy document; however, due to the AAP's positive impact on the town centres, it will be retained as guidance until such a time that it is superseded.

The Local Plan has a number of Spatial Objectives that will ensure the vision and strategy of the plan will be delivered. The most relevant objectives include:

Spatial Objective 1: Regeneration of town and district centres

The Local Plan's first spatial objective focuses on the regeneration of the town and district centres and delivering growth and investment in the centres of Oadby and Wigston. The objective states that the centres *'will be the key locations for retail, leisure, community facilities, office based employment and some residential development. New development will respect the unique character of each centre and ensure the provision of open areas of public space that residents and visitors can enjoy'.*

Spatial Objective 2: Wigston Town Centre

Spatial Objective 2 focuses on reinforcing Wigston's role as the Borough's main town. The objective outlines that '*Building on the recent public realm regeneration works along Bell Street, continued regeneration of the town centre will encourage investment from national retailers as well as supporting the smaller independent retailers that provide a diverse and unique mix of retail outlets*.'

Spatial Objective 5: Improved Employment Opportunities

Office and retail employment spaces to be located in '*the most sustainable locations*' with land allocated within town centres '*as well as offering opportunities for businesses to grow and establish.*'

Spatial Objective 6: Accessible Transport Links

Sustainable modes of transport and active travel are highly encouraged through spatial objective 6 which focuses on improving residents and employees' access to '*fast, frequent and reliable public transport'*.

[2] Levelling Up Prospectus

Spatial Objective 8: A Balanced Housing Market

Spatial Objective 8 focuses on delivering a mix of housing opportunities with '*the primary focus for new housing will be within the three main centres*' and '*support will be given to proposals or schemes which realise these primary focus locations*'

Spatial Objective 11: Conserving and enhancing green infrastructure

Spatial Objective 11 states that 'all development should be respectful to the natural environment and landscape, as well as conserving and enhancing the Borough's biodiversity.

Spatial Objective 12: Enhancing Local Heritage

Spatial Objective 12 focuses on encouraging the *'enhancement and conservation of historically significant buildings and heritage assets and their settings*'; this includes the objective to '*conserve and enhance the Borough's heritage, respecting historic buildings and their settings, links and views'*.

The Local Plan's Spatial objectives are supported by the distinct topic and theme based policies and allocations, The following policies are most relevant to guiding development in Wigston's town centre so that the Area Action Plan aligns, and is compliant, with the wider aspirations of the Borough.

Policy 2: Spatial Strategy for development within the Borough

Policy 2 states that '*the Council will always seek the reuse of previously developed land and will concentrate development within the Borough's key centres.'*

Policy 8: Green Infrastructure

Policy 8 states that '*the Council will seek a net gain in Green Infrastructure through the preservation and enhancement of open spaces and assets that comprise the Borough's Green Infrastructure and its network.'*

Policy 10: Public Realm

Policy 10 states that '*all proposals for large scale development and / or refurbishment and / or regeneration, must incorporate high quality public realm on-site and / or contribute towards public realm improvements off-site. All proposals that propose new public realm or impact upon the existing public realm must ensure that the pedestrian is prioritised over other modes of transport and that materials and design are of the highest standards.'*

The policy specifically supports improvements to public realm within the centre of Wigston and the extension and improvement of The Lanes in Wigston town centre. All public realm improvements must follow the Council adopted Public Realm Strategy SPD, which was updated and adopted in March 2021.

Policy 12: Housing Density

Policy 12 states that '*proposed development sites that have a gross site size of 0.3 hectares and larger and are located within the town centre boundary of Wigston or the district centre boundaries of Oadby and South Wigston will be required to achieve an average density of at least 50 dwellings per hectare.'*

Policy 15: Urban Infill Development

Policy 15 states that '*proposals for infill development on previously developed land that are of high quality design, improve the character of the locale, do not have any adverse effect on / or loss of amenity to adjacent properties or nearby properties, and do not cause unacceptable noise, will in principle be supported.'*

Policy 22: Delivering Retail

Policy 22 states that '*the town and district centres of the Borough will be the focus for new additional retail floorspace, maintaining the Borough's current hierarchy and market share between centres.'*

The policy identifies an additional 1,169 sqm net floorspace that will be sought for retail uses up to 2031.

Policy 40: Culture and Historic Environment Assets

Policy 40 states that '*all development proposals must safeguard, conserve or enhance both designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings, as well as the character and setting of areas of acknowledged significance.'*

Policy 41: Development in Conservation Areas

Policy 41 states that '*the Council will only permit new development in Conservation Areas provided it will conserve and enhance the character and prevailing quality of the area.'*

Policy 44: Landscape and Character

Policy 44 states that '*all development proposals within the Borough will be determined against the need to conserve and enhance the distinctive landscapes in the Borough. The Council will ensure that all development proposals reflect the prevailing quality, character and features such as settlement patterns, important views, open spaces and significant natural habitats. Development proposals will only be permitted where it is in keeping with the area in which it is situated. Development proposals that are contrary to the policy guidance as set out within the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, the Conservation Areas Supplementary Planning Document and / or the Conservation Area Appraisals will not be approved.'*

2.4 Local Planning Policy Summary

The policies outlined in the Local Plan show a clear ambition in the Borough to enhance and preserve existing heritage and landscape assets, whilst also improving underutilised land and capitalising on opportunities to create a more vibrant and attractive town centre with active travel links.

There is a strong focus within local policy to redevelop Wigston town centre as a destination of choice for local residents, which fits within the retail hierarchy. However, the focus of redevelopment has shifted away from facilitating a strong retail core, instead creating a mixed-use town centre with strong connectivity links that meets needs of the local community.

This approach is supported by the policies within the NPPF that set out an ambition for town centres to sit at the heart of communities; the policies outline the importance of a creating a diverse range of land uses in order to both meet the needs of the local community and give town centres greater resilience in the face of rapid changes in the market.

3. Theory of Change

3.1 Why change is needed

In the 2013 Town Centres AAP, Wigston town centre was identified as having suffered from a lack of investment, particularly in relation to public realm and making the most effective use of land. However, nearly 10 years on Wigston town centre is still suffering from a lack of investment, impacting on levels of footfall and vacancy levels. Apart from the regeneration of the public realm along Bell Street in 2015, the centre has seen little change since it was identified as a major opportunity area for development.

To address the challenges in Wigston, the AAP had a strong focus on retail development as a core driver of change. However, since the adoption of the AAP, there has been a fundamental shift in the role of town centres which had started well before the Covid-19 pandemic. This changing relationship people have with town centres is due to a number of factors including the continual rise in online shopping, a move from retail to leisure focused activities and wanting to support independent businesses[3].

Centres which have flourished over the past ten years and following Covid-19 lockdowns have focused on creating smaller centres with a diverse mix of uses, with retail footprint decreasing and increasing lifestyle spaces such as gyms, green spaces and restaurants to create a unique sense of place and experiences for visitors and local residents[4].

According to a KPMG 2021 report '*retail will never again represent the same size in terms of space on the high street'*[5] due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Towns today are therefore much more than retail floorspace with high streets needing to become mixed-use experiences in order to increase footfall, to draw both local residents and visitors, and become a more attractive place for investment.

However, this can be seen as a key opportunity for Wigston because district and neighbourhood centres have been rediscovered by many people during the recent pandemic lockdowns, with a renewed focus on shopping local, as opposed to travelling to retail parks or city centres[6]. Wigston could capitalise on this shift in focus to encourage people to explore its town centre offer.

This trend in retail floorspace delivery was reflected in the 2020 change to the use class system with the creation of Class E for commercial, business and service spaces, replacing the former A, B and D classes, avoiding the need for planning permission for such changes of use. The new Class E Use Class provides increased flexibility in how commercial and employment premises can be used and the speed at which they can evolve in the future. Preceding this, changes to permitted development rights enabled the change of use from office to residential and whilst often considered controversial, adds to the opportunity of town centre redevelopment.

This new flexibility demonstrates the government's ambition to increase the resilience of high streets, creating opportunities for them to flourish and assisting in bringing back into use vacant or underutilised sites or buildings. This has resulted in the creation of flexible spaces for different uses across town centres, with the potential for running previously considered different uses concurrently or during different times of the day or week to mirror this fundamental change in how people use their local town centre[7].

The Council also previously implemented a Local Development Order (LDO) to help streamline the planning process and enable the redevelopment of the Paddock Street site within Wigston town centre, which has been identified as a major regeneration opportunity. The LDO sought to promote a high-quality

[3] 'Town Centres: Planning for the Future', Lichfields 2018 and 'Revitalising Town Centres: A Handbook for Council Leadership', LGA 2018

[4] 'Revitalising Town Centres: A Handbook for Council Leadership', LGA 2018, 'Build Back Better: Covid-19 Supplement for Town Centres', Grimsey Review 2020, 'What is the future role of high streets and town centres?', Turner and Townsend, 2020 and 'Public Space, Public Life, and Covid-19' Gehl and Realdania 2020

[5] The Future of Towns and Cities post Covid-19, KPMG January 2021

[6] Review of High Street Footfall July 2019-June 2020, High Streets Task Force, August 2021

[7] Explanatory Memorandum to the Town and Country Planning (use classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020 No 757

scheme for the site which accords with the surrounding uses in the area. However, this site remains undeveloped to date and the LDO has now expired, indicating that further support and intervention is required to bring the site forward.

As the principal town centre in the Borough, Wigston town centre has a key role to play in providing a range of services for local residents and being the destination of choice for the local community as opposed to travelling further to destinations including Leicester City centre. Improving the facilities and overall attractiveness of the town centre would also help the Borough to improve its sustainability ambitions by encouraging people to stay local.

Furthermore, the seven District and Borough Council's in Leicestershire have the ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030[8]. Therefore, Wigston needs to explore how it can encourage visitors and local residents to live more sustainably while celebrating and using the town centre.

Therefore, these core issues experienced by Wigston since the AAP and masterplan were adopted, all reinforce the importance of refreshing the masterplan for the town in order to take advantage of major opportunities in the future, benefiting current and future residents, visitors and businesses.

3.2 Engagement

A series of engagement activities have been undertaken with local stakeholders to help inform a comprehensive understanding of the town, linked with formal data as well as professional views both from 2022 but also from the preparation of the original masterplan with the same core consultants having been retained. Engagement has been undertaken with the Council Place Shaping Member Working Group in May 2022.

Key themes emerging from the engagement activities are as follows:

- A feeling that the town has gone downhill even with the public realm improvements
- Perception there have been increasing vacancy rates but with overall shift in the retail offer, not drawing people to the town centre
- General feeling of apathy from retailers with increasing rental levels particularly detracting to local / independent retail
- A loss of identity, creating the perception Wigston is a forgotten town
- Security and safety concerns when walking around the town centre
- General feeling that the town centre is disjointed with no clear wayfinding

Feedback shared outlined what stakeholders would like to see the town centre become:

- A vibrant and inviting town with a café and restaurant culture
- A compact but diverse retail core to cater for local residents' needs
- A welcoming and accessible town for all with clear wayfinding
- Provides spaces for events and leisure activities which encourage visitors to celebrate Wigston
- Encouraging active and sustainable travel modes for local residents and visitors

3.3 Evidence of Need

Figure 2 shows the number of vacant buildings in the town centre from 2012 to 2021. It shows that current vacancy levels are similar to 10 years ago and despite improving between 2012-2017, vacancy levels were increasing significantly prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The high level of vacancies today demonstrates not only the lack of investment in Wigston town centre but also the inability of the area to attract new investment. The 2013 AAP identified a lack of retail investment in the

[8] Environment Strategy and Action Plan Update and Leicestershire Collective Vision, March 2020

centre due to competition with Leicester City Centre, as well as the minimal office provision. Recent vacancy trends therefore evidence that little has changed in the ability of the town to attract such investment and a fundamental shift is necessary to address these prolonged challenges.

Figure 3 shows the footfall in Wigston town centre between 2018-2021. The data shows that despite the significant fall in footfall during 2020 and the beginning of 2021 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, footfall levels have remained relatively consistent notwithstanding the introduction of car park charging. Whilst this is not a negative trend, it highlights the need for the town centre to improve its service offer, beyond retail, in order to maintain and attract more people into the centre and subsequently draw in investment.

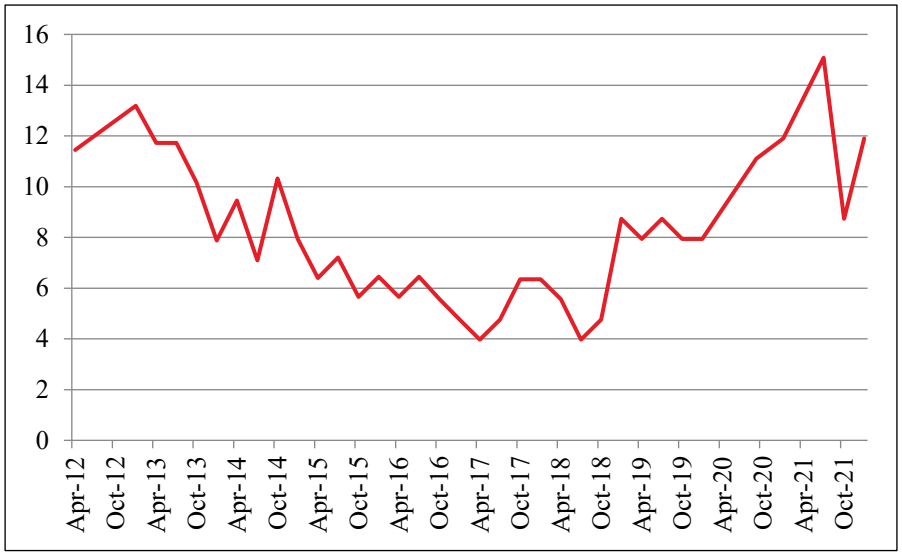


Figure 2: Vacant buildings in Wigston 2012-2021

Additionally, the 2013 AAP identified a lack of permeability through the town for pedestrians due to the poor-quality linkages, as well as noting cycle routes as being inconsistent. Active travel links within the town centre have seen little change or investment; this coupled with the poor public transport links[9] in the centre create a significant barrier to accessibility, as reflected in the footfall data, and thus detracting from the town being a destination of choice for the local community.

The 2013 AAP also identified the quality, functionality and appearance of the public realm as becoming outdated and highlighted the negative impact of the fragmented and dominating surface car parks that detract from the town centre's appearance. To address this challenge, in 2014, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council and Leicester County Council worked together to fund the redevelopment of the public realm along Bell Street, Wigston. The project saw significant improvement in the public realm, through new design standards in the paving, street furniture and planting which transformed pedestrian environment into safe, open space. The scheme also attracted economic investment on the street by widening the facilities available and making it a better place to visit.

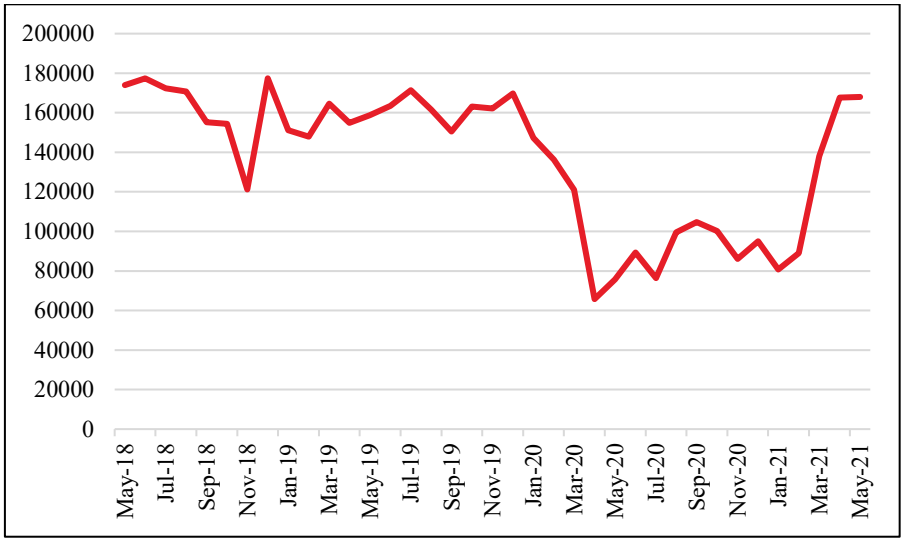


Figure 3: Footfall in Wigston 2018-2021

[9] Leicester Bus Routes

Despite this, the public realm beyond Bell Street has seen little change and car parks still dominate significant areas of the town centre; the lack of further investment in the town centre highlights a strong need for investment in order to address the barriers to progress that were identified in 2013.

Interestingly however, it was noted that the roles of the main shopping streets of Bell Street and Leicester Road have developed over time with an increase in activity along Leicester Road compared to 2013 site work (anecdotal, supported by stakeholder engagement). Even with significant investment in the public realm, retailers are still choosing to locate on Leicester Road. This has a higher volume of passing trade of course but no immediate parking, and it is not a pleasant shopping experience so lower rental levels are assumed as perhaps a driver of these locational choices by new retailers in the town.

Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2019, no new office or retail floorspace has been provided or additional residential units created within Wigston town centre. These are key indicators of Local Plan Policies 2 and 22 which cover the spatial strategy and the delivery of retail development across the Borough, suggesting that more positive action needs to be taken.

There is also a continued delivery of new housing within Wigston, with sites being actively delivered which will bring forward 1000 new dwellings over the next few years. Therefore, with new residents moving into the area, rejuvenating the town centre is of the upmost importance to influence new residents' shopping and leisure patterns as early as possible and to minimise loss of spend to neighbouring locations.

Looking more broadly across the Borough, between July 2020 and June 2021, the unemployment rate was at 4.8%, increasing by 2% from 2019 to 2020 figures. Comparatively, the wider East Midland's rate is 5.5% and the national unemployment rate is 5%. Therefore, while the Borough's unemployment is not too dissimilar to other parts of the country a boost in employment opportunities within Wigston would be strongly beneficial.

3.4 Opportunities within Wigston

Whilst the preceding sections of this report highlight the threats and weaknesses, there are a number of strengths and opportunities which can be realised to support the enhancement of the town centre. These have been highlighted from engagement activities with local stakeholders in addition to opportunity mapping of the town centre:

- The historic core of the town and the importance of The Lanes
- The flat topography
- The close proximity to local communities
- The public transport connectivity
- The already completed work regenerating the public realm along Bell Street
- Peace Memorial Park and the allotments

3.5 Historical Spatial Portrait

Historically, Wigston was an agricultural land passed from one owner to another for centuries. In 1300, it was visited by Edward I on his way to stay at Leicester Castle, when a number of men were recruited to help in fighting the Scottish Wars. During the Civil Wars Wigston became a market town to supply the Royalist Troops garrisoned. About the same time prisoners were brought from the County Goal to be lodged where is now the Memorial Park.

After the XVII century, with the advent of the knitting frames, the first signs of industry other than agriculture began to appear in Wigston, followed by the opening of the Grand Union Canal in 1798, and the coming of the railway, with the Leicester to Rugby line being opened in 1840. By the end of the century, there were “handsome engine sheds”, several factories and a cast-iron church - since rebuilt in brick, as well as gas lighting. Numerous other trades, besides the railway works, have since been introduced into the Borough.

In 1754 an Act was passed making a turnpike road from Welford to Leicester, which became the main route of the mail coach from Leicester to London. The Blue Bell Inn, which stood in Bell Street, was a noted coaching hostelry.

There are three conservation areas in Wigston and several listed buildings, including the Grade I Listed Church of All Saints located just outside the town centre boundary to the south on Moat Street - Newgate End.

Studying the historic maps has helped to understand the growth of the town centre over the past century (Figure 4 and Figure 5). Figure 4 presents a comparison of the street grid shown on maps from 1885-1900 in black and nowadays in grey. This clearly shows how the structure of the northern edge changed when Bull Head Street has been introduced. It is also clear that east-west streets have been severed to allow for car parking and servicing of large retail units. The result is a less permeable and traffic-dominated town centre.

The resultant environment has led a number of areas which are ‘back of house’ with little or no active frontages as shown by the limited internal streets and development surrounded by roads in Figure 6. This has resulted in negative spaces which have issues of anti-social behaviour and littering.

Figure 4: Plan of Wigston from 1885 – 1900 (black) vs Nowadays (brown)

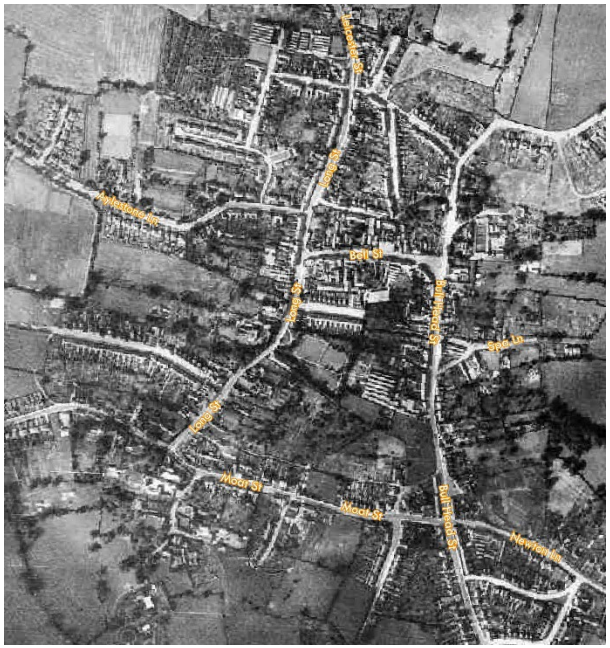


Figure 5: Wigston Magna from ca. 1942

3.6 2022 Spatial Portrait

As set out in the Local Plan 2019, Wigston is the Borough's main town centre, containing the largest variety of shops, services and facilities. Wigston therefore plays an important role in providing such services to the local community, particularly residents living in the southern areas of the PUA.

Wigston town centre generally has a flat terrain and is centred around The Lanes Conservation Area, characterised by village style features (Figure 6). The town centre was previously described in the AAP as '*a fragmented local shopping centre with a shopping street at its heart*'.

The town centre has a degree of permeability, with some dead-end streets providing pedestrian and cycle through passage. The key active travel corridor runs north south and is located centrally within of the area. Three gateways can be clearly identified, at the Wakes Road Roundabout, junction of Bull Head Street and Paddock Street, and Aylestone Lane and Leicester Road. None of them, however, provides a feeling of arrival.

Within the town centre boundary, the public open space provision is limited to pedestrianised high street and Peace Memorial Park. Manchester Gardens cover an area of approximately 1 ha and are fenced off and in multiple ownerships.

The town centre is almost divided in two in respect of land use (Figure 6a). North of Paddock Street the area is dominated by commercial services with pockets of residential buildings and a series of surface car parks. The area to the south is mainly residential with recreation areas of Peace Memorial Park and the allotments. Facing onto Bull Head Street, the southern area provides a commercial verge consisting of two large scale retail units, police station, fire and rescue station, and petrol station.

Wigston town centre is clearly delineated by a network of roads, making it very highways dominated. The town centre is flanked to the east by the A5199 - Bull Head Street; Long Street and Leicester Road to the west; and Wakes Rd to the north, with the large Wakes Road Roundabout marking the northern gateway to the town centre. The town centre itself has several east-west streets which have largely been severed to effectively create a roundabout function around the town centre. Frederick Street and Paddock Street are key east west streets, providing a residential and service function. Bell Street is the primary high street for the town, however key retail frontage has spilled onto Leicester Road up to The Arcade.

The town centre can be accessed easily by bus, with several bus stops along the key routes and multiple surface car parks.

A significant proportion of the town centre is dominated by fragmented surface car parking which detracts from its appearance and cover areas that have been identified as major opportunity sites for development, and indeed add to localised congestion as drivers look for a space.

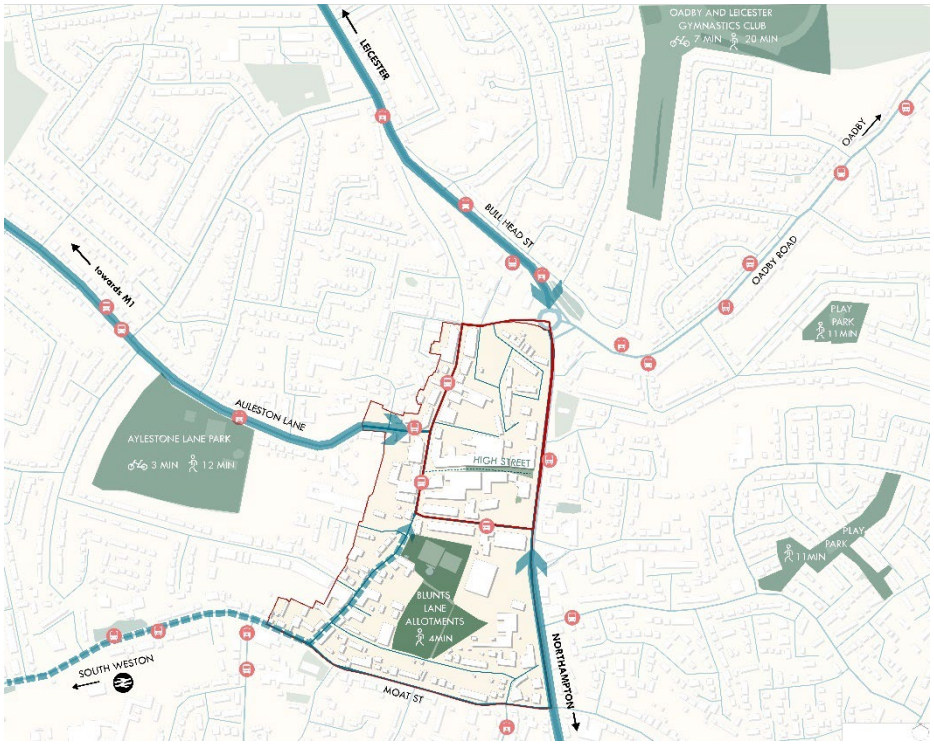


Figure 6: Plan of Wigston from 2022 with a detailed Town Centre on the following page

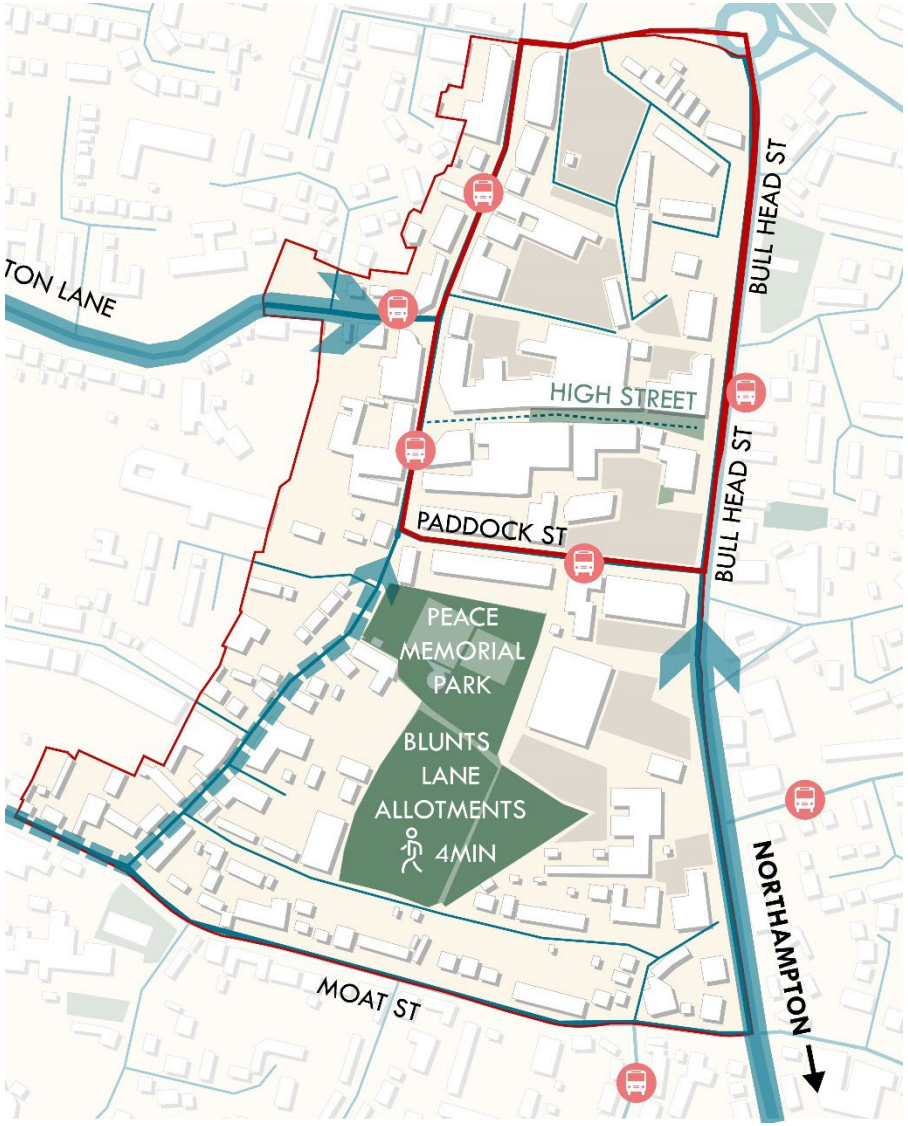


Figure 6a: Detailed plan of Wigston Town Centre from 2022 (grey areas are surface car parks)

3.7 Refreshed Masterplan's Vison and Objectives

The Vision as set out in the original AAP was very much related to the town centre trends at the time which have since moved on as explored earlier in Sections 2 and 3. The refreshed masterplan is guided by the recently adopted Local Plan Vision which states:

In 2031, the Borough of Oadby and Wigston will be a safe, clean, and attractive place in which to live, work and visit. The Borough and its assets will be accessible to all through sustainable modes of transport. It will have a resilient and prosperous economy, secure environment, vibrant centres and healthy empowered communities. The Borough will be continuing to promote sustainable economic growth, as well as making the best use of its natural and heritage assets.

Growth will contribute to people's health, happiness and well-being in the Borough through the timely delivery of well-designed and high quality development. High quality development will continue raising the level in terms of environmental standards, quality of life and local distinctiveness.

Residents in the Borough will have the opportunity to enjoy peaceful, harmonious, high quality and healthy active lifestyles in communities that offer a range of; quality new housing which meet local needs; job opportunities; and other important services and facilities.

Residents will be able to enjoy a variety of open landscapes including parks, sporting facilities and the open countryside with its elements of natural beauty and wealth of wildlife areas where biodiversity has been conserved and enhanced.

This vision is then reflected and looked to be delivered through 14 key spatial objectives. The spatial objectives we have identified to guide the refreshed masterplan are:

- Spatial Objective 1: Regeneration of Town and District Centres
- Spatial Objective 2: Wigston Town Centre

- Spatial Objective 5: Improved Employment Opportunities
- Spatial Objective 6: Accessible Transport Links
- Spatial Objective 8: A Balanced Housing Market
- Spatial Objective 11: Conserving and Enhancing Green Infrastructure
- Spatial Objective 12: Enhancing Local Heritage

These objectives are explored in greater detail in section 2.3 but for ease, the Spatial Objective for Wigston is repeated here:

Reinforce Wigston's role as the Borough's main town and one of only a small number of town centres in the Leicester PUA. Building on the recent public realm regeneration works along Bell Street, continued regeneration of the town centre will encourage investment from national retailers as well as supporting the smaller independent retailers that provide a diverse and unique mix of retail outlets. The realisation of the adopted Local Development Order and objectives set out within the Town and District Centre Guidance document will also support this regeneration.

From the vision for the Borough, and focusing through the spatial objectives, this revised masterplan explores the potential for Wigston to grow into a strong town centre supporting both national and independent retailers with a diverse mix of uses to support local residents become a destination centre for visitors.

Whilst retail remains the dominant function of a town centre, this report demonstrates the need to diversify the town centre function, use, experience and occupiers to benefit the town and attract more people and investment into the centre, as in line with the evidence explored in section 3.

3.8 What do Projects Need to Achieve?

Following the direction from the vision and strategic objectives combined with the evidence explored during the preparation of this report, it is considered that the following actions will help to achieve change and hence information potential interventions and project priorities:

- Maximise the potential of walking and cycling
- Address varied public realm quality
- Address car parking dominance
- Create a more attractive investment destination for retail and local businesses throughout the town
- Achieve a more sustainable approach to development
- Create a trigger to town centre development

In making these fundamental changes to how people access Wigston and their experience while visiting, it will help shift the town centre to becoming a strong and resilient hub of retail, employment, residential and community spaces for current and future generations.

The focus on more sustainable travel modes has focused on walking as the priority mode and the introduction of 'Walkable Wigston' as a concept and framework project, and a series of five linked priority projects that can be delivered either independently within an overall framework, or delivered together to deliver more fundamental and comprehensive change and a strong foundation for further investment.

This is explained in the following section of the report.

4. Masterplan of Walkable Wigston

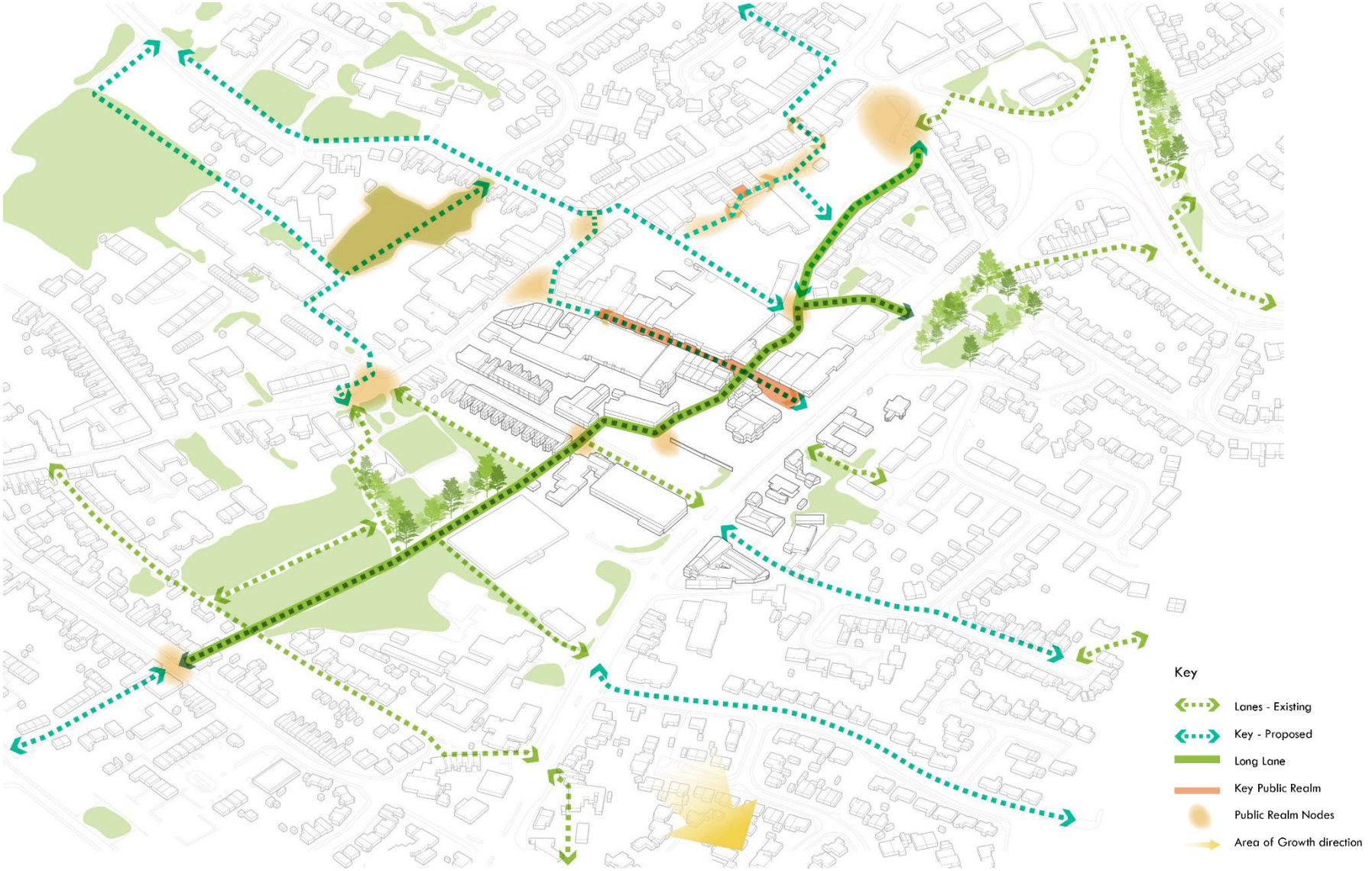


Figure 7: Walkable Wigston

The concept of 'Walkable Wigston' developed from looking at the potential for pedestrian and cycle-friendly connections across Wigston. The dark green spine is the heart of the town with the Lanes and high street providing key north-south connectivity. 'Walkable Wigston' aims to enhance this connection, in addition to east-west connectivity shown from the green and blue arrows into the into the residential areas of the town (Figure 7).

With Wigston's flat topography, this masterplan vision hopes to create a network of well-designed, active and greener corridors which traverse the town, supporting sustainable models of travel for local residents and visitors to utilise in years to come to access the town centre.

Using the 1km grid of the town centre core to create a permeable 'green-grid' of movement corridors the masterplan can deliver a place which makes walking and cycling into town a pleasurable and easy choice, resulting in fewer residents needing to drive into the centre and creating more sustainable lifestyles. Currently, a significant number of residents can walk or cycle into town (Figure 8). However, many do not, choosing to drive instead.

This 'green-grid' will be centred around the Long Lane as a Greenway through the town. Long Lane will provide a continuous and characterful movement corridor which will take people away from the dominant highway and navigate them through a network of new green spaces and pocket parks, which will all evolve over time. The wider green-grid will intersect with Long Lane, providing interconnected networks of movement and landscape in the town.

All of the above means that Wigston will be within an easy and pleasant 10 minute walk for most residents and even more for people cycling into the town for the many new attractions this plan will bring.

It is believed that Long Lane and other walking and cycling provisions within the town centre will act as a catalyst for change in wider town context.

The current walking and cycling provision, as shown in Figure 9, will be enhanced with an improved network of green corridors, building on what has already been delivered within the town. This will encourage more people to travel into the town sustainably and create a welcoming environment whilst everyone enjoys the town centre. It will also help to reduce the demand for town centre car parking from local residents that might otherwise drive.

To support the overall ambition for Wigston, five priority projects have been identified with the foundation project, and are dotted along Long Lane as part of the 'Walkable Wigston' network, explored further in Section 5.

There is also the further opportunity to not only provide enhanced infrastructure, streets and spaces that encourage people to cycle into and within the town, but also to connect to the wider Leicester cycle network[10].

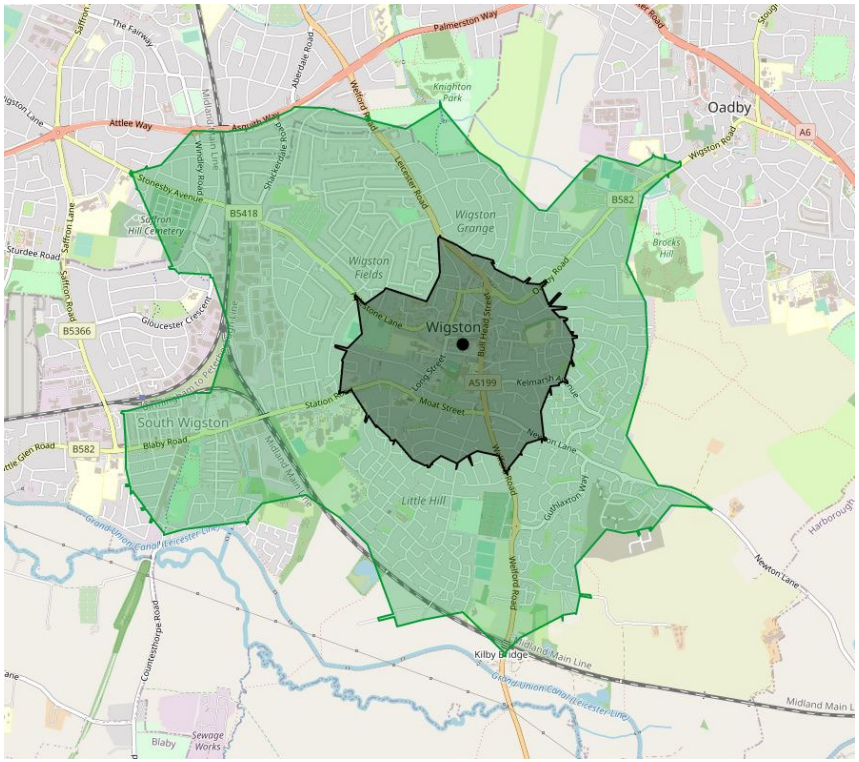


Figure 8: 10 Minute Walking and Cycling Isochrone

[10] Cycle routes in Leicester and Leicestershire

Figure 9: Current Walking and Cycling Access within Wigston in 2022

It is vital that our five priority projects are located within the proposed walking and cycling network, providing connectivity from North to South and East to West for both visitors and residents.

This is because of both the fundamental shift in providing opportunities and enhancing active travel routes, with the creation of the new executive Active Travel England and the government's agenda on supporting cycling and walking through the 'Gear Change' initiative, in addition to the recent work undertaken highlighting the key role active travel has in benefitting local economies and town centres.

For example, it has been found that those who travel into town centres by walking and cycling tend to have an increased retail spend than those travelling by car, tend to make more trips to their local high street and combined with improvements in public realm high streets saw up to a 30% increase in retail sales[11]. Similarly, in trials created for low-traffic high streets, vacancy rates were the lowest recorded compared to their previous years with trade significantly increasing with surrounding congestion not rising due to people cycling short journeys who would have originally driven[12].

Furthermore, these benefits are in addition to the considerable health benefits of both those cycling and walking in addition to reducing air pollution from decreasing car use[13]. According to a report produced by Leicestershire City Council in 2018, Oadby and Wigston had the fourth largest inequality in male life expectancy at birth in England and that the rate of change in life expectancy in the most and least affluent areas in Oadby and Wigston is much greater than the national pattern[14].

Following this, the Oadby and Wigston Health and Wellbeing Board identified physical activity as being crucial for health and well-being in the Borough, as well as addressing air pollution concerns caused by significant congestion in the area[15]. Therefore, these interventions are considered to benefit the health and well-being of the wider community around the town centre.

In making accessible, sustainable active travel routes to high streets, such as we propose through 'Walkable Wigston', it enables five priority projects to be located on routes within the overall foundation project which will hopefully

[11] TfL Walking and cycling: the economic benefits, 2018, Investing in Cycling and Walking: the economic case for action, 2015

[12] Gear Change: a bold vision for cycling and walking, 2020

[13] Claiming the Health Dividend: A summary and discussion of value for money estimates from studies of investment in walking and cycling, 2014, Working together to promote active travel: a briefing for local authorities, 2016

[14] Inequalities in Life Expectancy between Oadby and Wigston, 2018

[15] Exploring Health Inequalities in Oadby and Wigston: A Qualitative Approach 2020

benefit from increased active travel users, amplifying their benefit and value each project can bring to the town centre. These are as follows:

- A Wigston Welcome
- Junction Walk and Garden
- The Bell Street Garden
- Secret Garden Back Alley
- Develop Paddock Street Car Park

5. Walkable Wigston Projects

These five projects each form a key part of creating 'Walkable Wigston', based upon the foundation project. Each project has been explored to create a vision of what could be delivered within the town centre. The Paddock Street car park project has been explored in greater detail to support its delivery.

5.1 Walkable Wigston Foundation Project

This foundation project encompasses the wider town centre and delves into residential areas to create a robust network and provide strategic connectivity for walkers and cyclists to travel directly to the high street and Long Lane (Figure 10). This would unlock the town centre for a large proportion of Wigston residents without the use of a private car or public transport.

This foundation project utilises a dumbbell approach of focusing on the town's edges to allow the town centre at its core to thrive. By doing so, 'Walkable Wigston' hopes to reach out into the residential communities surrounding the town centre and encourage everyone to access the high street in sustainable travel modes through this proposed grid of movement, which can assist in unlocking development opportunities in Wigston.

This network needs to ensure users feel comfortable and confident in using the routes throughout the year and across the day. This includes ensuring the network has appropriate crossing points, wayfinding and security measures.

By implementing these steps, it provides connectivity and walkability to a strengthened town centre with the additional priority projects along the 'Walkable Wigston' network, amplifying their impact for the town and Borough.

Therefore, this project proposes to update and improve existing routes across Wigston for non-motorised travellers with enhanced lighting along key routes, directional signage, green landscaping, security measures such as CCTV and suitable crossing points when users are met with cars.

Figure 10: Strategic Connectivity Opportunity through Walkable Wigston

This strategic network provides a 10 minute walking and cycling opportunity for many local residents, including those within the identified Direction for Growth (Figure 11) which is currently under construction with a significant approved pipeline of future housing growth. The 20 minute walking neighbourhood is a globally recognised concept within planning policy[16], however Wigston has a unique opportunity to go one step further due to the town's unique scale and urban fabric to deliver a 10 minute walking neighbourhood.

[16] Implementing 20 Minute Neighbourhoods, RTPI 2021

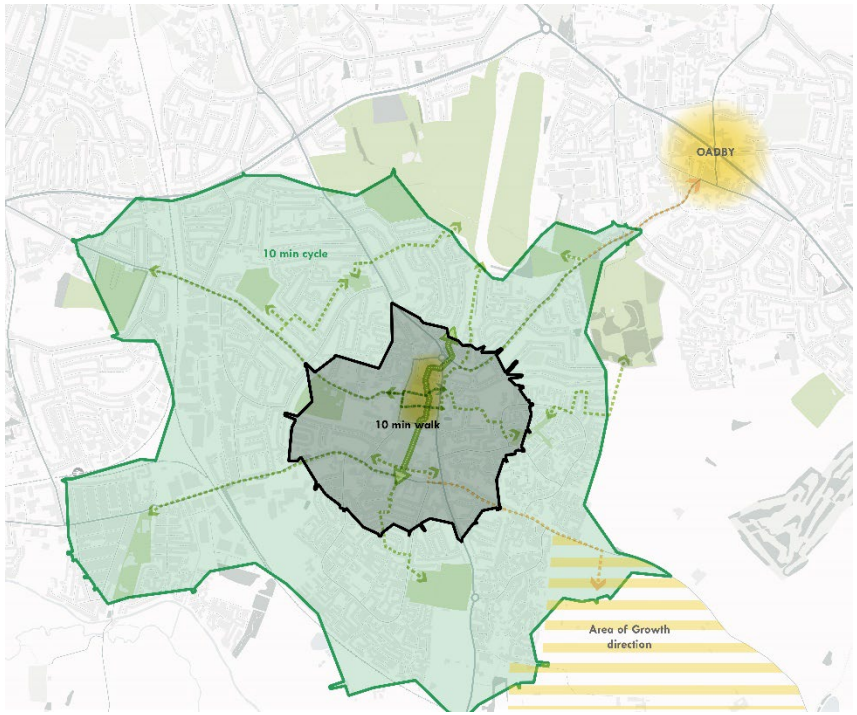


Figure 11: Walkable Wigston's 10 minute Walking and Cycling Isochrone

Key streets to form part of this network within the town centre which have been identified in Figure 12, though this is not limited to only these streets. These streets may require active travel interventions which are explored in Appendix B. Bell Street and Fredrick Street would need to form key cross connections within the town centre, tying into the core high street spine where the priority projects are located, which would likely carry the majority of walkers and cyclists into the core of Wigston from the outer town's residential edges, with key crossing points likely needed at Bull Head Street and Long Street. This network includes East-West connections onto Long Lane, including Aylestone Lane to Willow Park for example. These would need to be located in optimum positions to ensure they create welcoming arrival points for those coming into town utilising the network (Figure 13).

1. Bell St
2. Frederick St
3. Aylestone Ln - Exeter Rd - Chellaston Rd & Repton Rd -Alfreton Rd - Castleton Rd - Milverton Dr - Grangeway Rd - Heathfield Rd - Ruskington Dr
4. Moat St - Bushloe End - Station Rd - Blaby Rd
5. Cedar Ave - Bude Rd - Falmouth Dr - Truro Dr - Horsewell Ln - Exmoor Cl
6. Blunt's Ln - Cross St - Bull Head St - Newton Ln - Ada Wright Wy
7. Church Nook - Boulter Cres - Acorn Way - Milton Cl
8. Meadow Way - Blakesley Rd - Tendring Dr - School Path
9. Glebe Cl - Cleveland Rd
10. Oadby Rd - by Wash Brook

Figure 12: Key Walkable Wigston Routes

Figure 13: Key Cross Connections and Welcoming Points

5.2 A Wigston Welcome

This area is a crucial arrival point into the town centre (Figure 14). This gateway will frame the arrival, with a consolidation of car parking at Junction Road car park, clear wayfinding and the potential to provide flexibility for occasional events such as outdoor markets balanced with the important function of providing car parking for the town.

The area can also be a potential future development plot as set out in the original masterplan. This area will be rich in activity and space, providing opportunities such as planting and wayfinding to encourage movement into Long Lane (Figure 15).

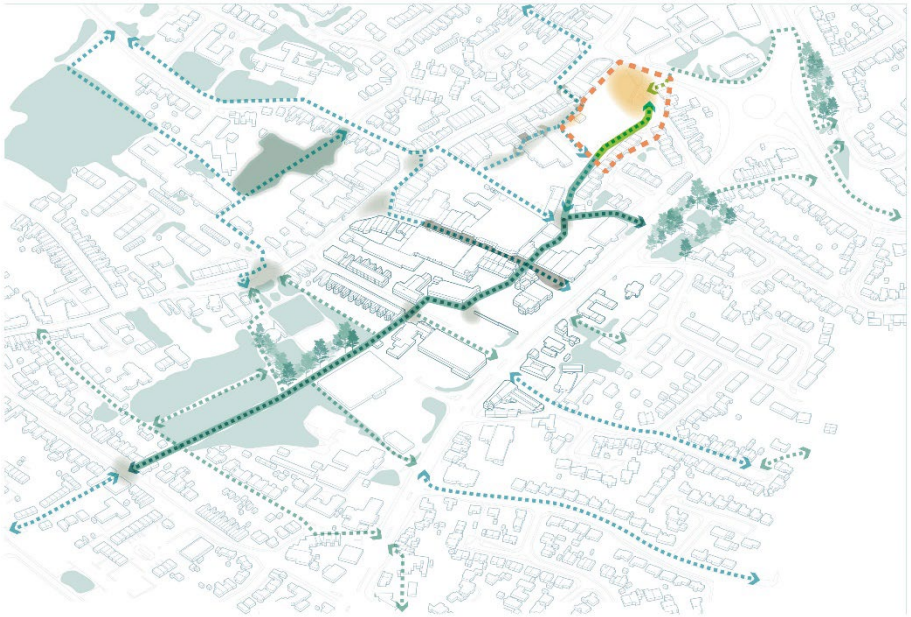


Figure 14: Wigston Welcome Location Plan

Figure 15: Walkable Wigston Inspiration

5.3 Junction Walk and Garden

Moving away from the gateway experience, south along Junction Road, the extended Long Lane will frame this residential edge by creating a verdant corridor which concludes at a new pocket park space outside Wesleyan Chapel.

The park, currently a small car park, will be shaped by the community to create a garden at the edge of the town centre (Figure 16). Disabled car parking spaces could be retained as part of the scheme. Community gardens and pollen rich flowers will bring nature to the area, as well as a much-needed green space to sit and rest. This stretch should feel cosy and friendly, almost like an internal alleyway where life from the homes spill out (Figure 17).

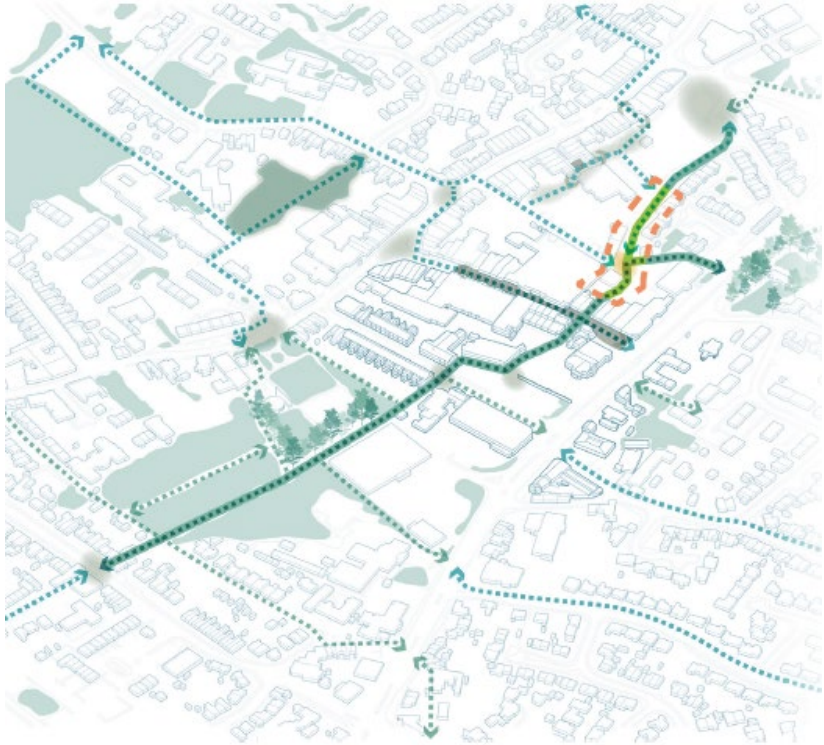


Figure 16: Junction Walk and Garden Location Plan

Figure 17: Junction Walk and Garden Inspiration

5.4 The Bell Street Green

Once the Lane intersects with Bell Street it takes on a more urban form. With clear wayfinding and branding, its intersection with Bell Street brings the energy and greenery onto the town's high street (Figure 18). The use of art on the walls, wayfinding and decorative thresholds will create a sense of arrival as people enter the town's core, especially across Bell Street to maximise positive wayfinding (Figure 19). Moving south from the high street, Long Lane approaches the central space of the Paddock Street development where a new public space will provide a mirror to the Junction Garden to the north.

Figure 18: The Bell Street Green Location Plan

Figure 19: Bell Street Green Inspiration

5.5 Secret Garden Back Alley

Long Lane then slims to enter a much more verdant, wilder and secluded place bordered by parks, allotments and gardens (Figure 20). Direct access to the Peace Memorial Park will bring the park back into the town centre and the wild edges of the Blunts Lane Allotments will further enhance the character of the route.

Here is where the character of the lane changes remarkably, with a feeling of a path through a secret garden. On the approach to Blunt's Lane and Moat Street the character turns back into a residential lane celebrating the everyday life of the neighbourhood. The arrival off Moat Street will be clearly defined with thresholds and wayfinding creating a legible access to onto the Long Lane experience. Routes to Cedar Avenue and All Saints Church should draw people towards Long Lane and the town centre beyond (Figure 21).

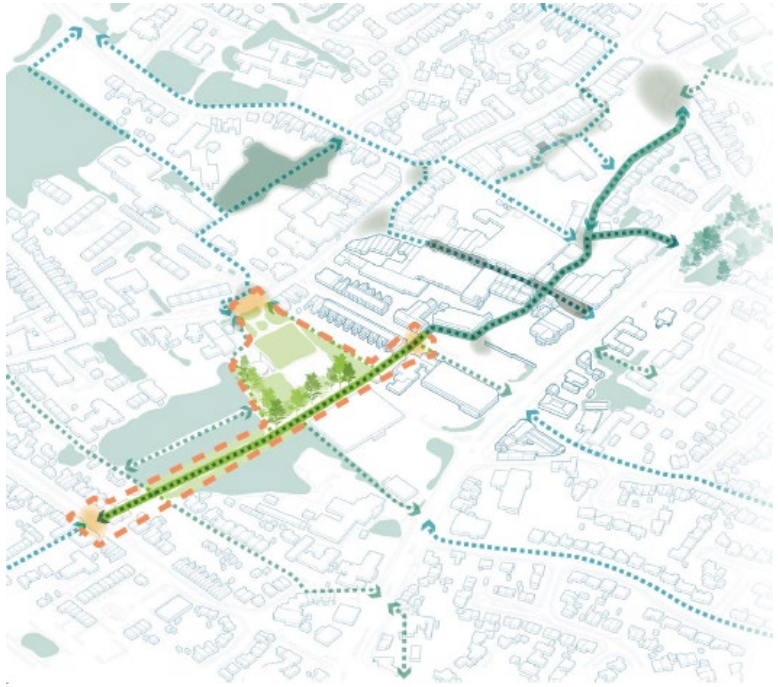


Figure 20: Secret Garden Back Alley Location Plan

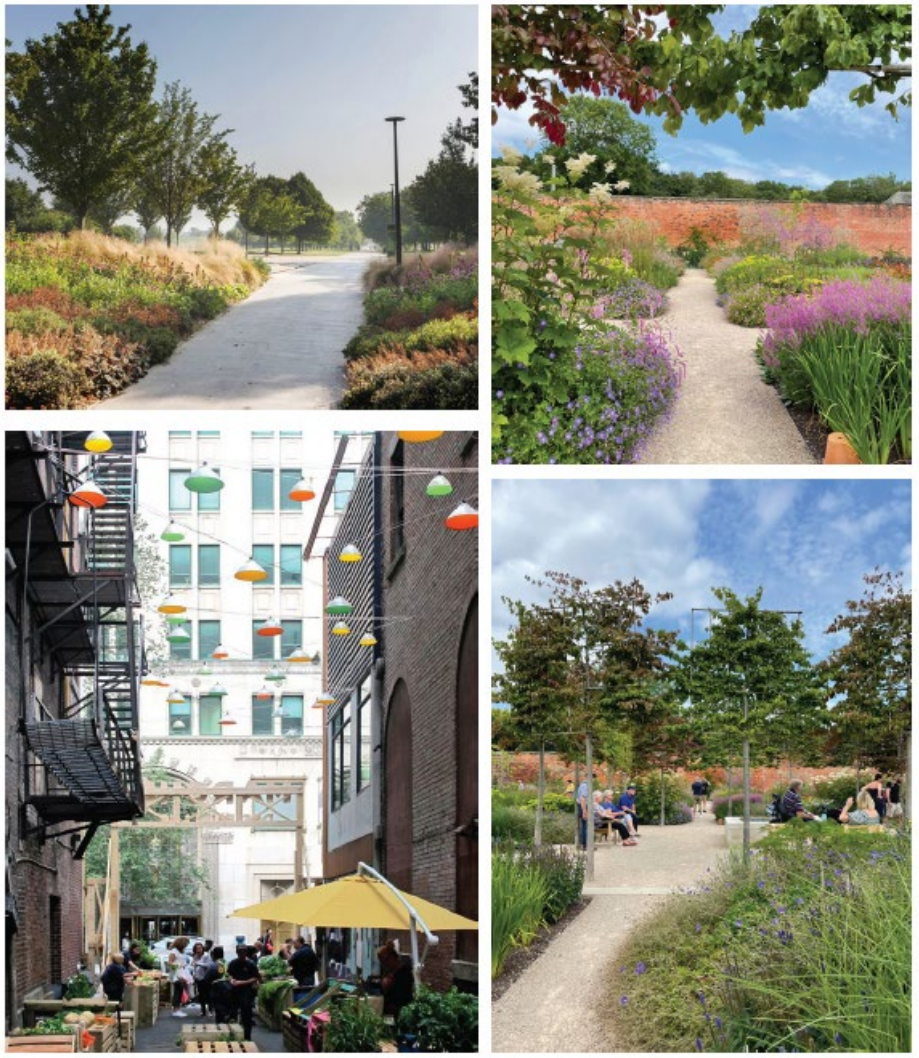


Figure 21: Secret Garden Back Alley Inspiration

5.6 Redevelop Paddock Street Car Park

The Vision

This plot off Paddock Street is a strategic town centre site located at the south east corner of the commercial core (Figure 22). This masterplan explores the potential of redeveloping the site to create a landmark gateway into the town and linking into the proposed walkable network crossing the town.

Paddock Street corner can become a vibrant space, where life flourishes between the buildings, and pedestrians and cyclists take over the roads.

The very corner of Paddock Street and Bull Head Street will provide a clear and welcoming gateway into Wigston's commercial core, with residential active frontage spilling onto the pavement alongside Paddock Street. Implementation of Wigston Lanes together with new public realm, located in the heart of the development, will encourage active travel among the community.

By providing this opportunity for residential development in a key location within the town centre, in addition to public open space and café units, this development is vital in supporting the town's ambitions of becoming a vibrant, welcoming and active town centre by encouraging people to live within the town centre, both within apartments and family homes.

Key Design Drivers

- Site has the potential to create a landmark building at the corner of Paddock St and Bull Head St
- Provide durable, high quality and affordable homes which are easy to maintain and run
- Promote pedestrian and cycle movement over cars with safe routes along well-overlooked street
- To link into the strategic opportunity for a new green lanes concept for Wigston

Opportunities and Constraints

There are a number of opportunities and constraints must be considered when developing the site and the key factors are presented in Figures 23 and 24 and explored further in the following text.

Figure 22: Paddock Street Car Park Location Plan

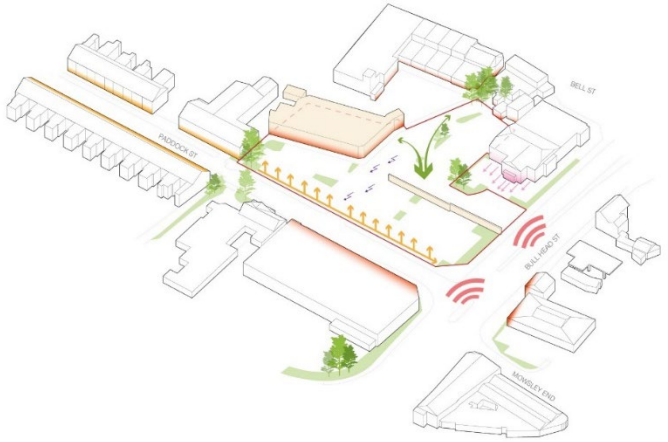


Figure 23: Summary of Opportunities and Constraints for Paddock Street Car Park

Land Use

The site is located at the southern extent of the retail and commercial core of Wigston, marking a transition to residential land use. Paddock Street is largely residential (terraced homes and a small apartment block), however the use and form changes adjacent to the site to include civic, retail and leisure uses.

The Two Steeples pub is a dominant use on Bull Head Street and creates a defined edge to Bell Street. There are potential issues related to noise and anti-social behaviour if residential uses are proposed on the site.

The service yard and commercial properties (offices, retail, gymnasium) require service access and a further potential conflict in terms of noise and security. The rear elevations and inactive frontage reinforce the negative appearance of these areas.

The proposal on the corner of Paddock Street and Bull Head Street needs to reflect the mix and address the key frontages accordingly.

Frontages

Retail frontage stretches along both sides of Bell Street and spreads north onto both sides of Leicester Road and the south corner by Bell Street. Most of those are, however, just with shop entrances that don't provide any interaction with the local high street. South of Bell Street, when Leicester Road changes into Long Street, residential uses start to dominate with front doors opening onto the street.

In terms of frontages, Paddock Street is split in two, with its west end providing residential front doors facing the street on both sides, while its east end opens up onto a surface car park north of the street, with the passive façade of retail unit to the south.

Heritage

The site is partially included within The Lanes Conservation Area, which wraps around the site to the south along Paddock Street. This conservation area is a legacy of Wigston's origins, a series of quiet routes away from traffic through the urban environment. The area is characterised by a contrast between centrally located, though "hidden", Manchester Gardens (nowadays Blunts Lane Allotments) and surrounding built environment.

The Spa Lanes Conservation Area, located to the east of Bull Head Street consists of mixed residential and industrial buildings.

There are two listed buildings in close proximity of the site: grade II no. 34 Long Street, and grade II nos. 7 and 9 Spa Lane.

In addition to the formal listings around the site there a number of prominent buildings of quality, including the Two Steeples Pub. Paddock Street offers a high quality residential street providing a typical red-brick terrace style, concluded at either end of the street by prominent structures.

The development proposal must be cognisant of the site's location within and adjacent to the conservation areas outlined, as well respecting views towards no. 34 Long Street and nos. 7 and 9 Spa Lane.

The focal point of the local high street is the memorial The Bank, which used to be a focal point and important meeting area. It got its name due to the location at the top of the village and where historically three fields systems met.

Pedestrian and Cycle Movement

Pedestrian access to the site is limited to the western extent, offering a continuation of Long Lane to connect to Bell Street. The remainder of the site is dominated by the car park and there are numerous conflicts with vehicle movement.

Pedestrian permeability is limited to the western edge and through the car park. The site is not accessible due to retaining wall and perimeter planting.

Pavements are provided on both sides of Paddock Street. Pedestrian movement is constrained by high levels of car parking, highways clutter and the bus stop which results in limited crossing opportunities. Long Lane provides a clear desire line into the site, however this is not afforded a crossing or wayfinding to confirm this.

No cycle provision currently exists within or adjacent to the site.

Vehicular Movement

The site is defined to the east by the A5199, Bull Head Street, and to the south by Paddock Street. The site is currently occupied by a pay & display surface car park, accessed off Paddock Street. In addition to the car park the site offers access to service areas for commercial properties facing the high street (Bell Street) and the Two Steeples pub car park.

Paddock Street is a one-way route (west), accessed off Bull Head Street, with a narrowing of the carriageway provided to allow for residential on-street parking. Access to the site is provided via a right turn feeder lane with vehicles entering and exiting the site via the same junction. A bus stop is located to the south of the site adjacent to the entrance/ exit. The development of the site would need to include or resolve the access to the back of the Two Steeples pub and commercial properties to the northwest.

Views

As mentioned before, there are two listed buildings in a close proximity to the site, thus views out along Paddock Street and across the Paddock Street and Bull Head Street junction are important.

Looking from the outside towards the site, the frontage at the junction of Paddock Street and Bull Head Street is critical as it marks a key arrival into the town centre. This offer the potential to create a new, positive gateway and ‘announce’ the arrival into the town centre. Importantly, however, it must retain a sense of ‘permeability’ to ensure the town centre does not appear closed off from the rest of the town.

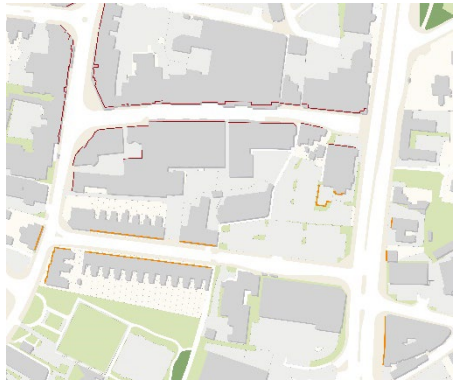
Comfort

Environmental setting has significant impact on the perception and use of spaces, as well as the potential sustainability of the built form. It is important, therefore, to fully consider the environmental conditions which will impact the site.

The site is south facing, with the fall of the site towards Paddock Street reinforcing this profile and access to light. There is limited overshadowing from the surrounding built form, however the western extent of the site will miss evening sun.

There is a south-east prevailing wind, making the Bull Head Street corner being the most exposed part of the site.

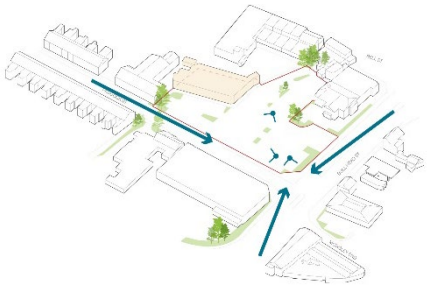
The above indicates that a centrally located public space will be afforded the most comfort and access to light. A higher built form on the south eastern corner will provide maximum wind protection and have the least impact in terms of overshadowing for internal spaces.



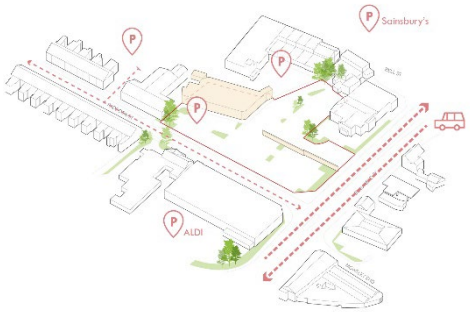
Frontages Surrounding Paddock Street

Heritage Considerations Surrounding Paddock Street

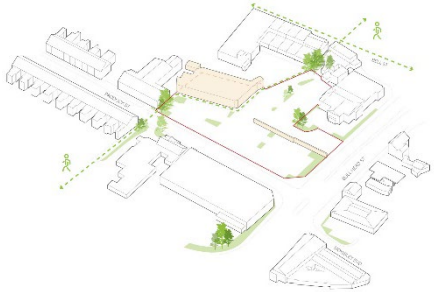
Land Uses surrounding Paddock Street



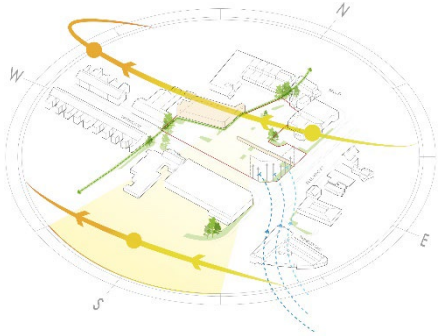
Views surrounding Paddock Street



Vehicular Movements surrounding Paddock Street



Pedestrian and Cycle Movements surrounding Paddock Street



Environmental Setting of Paddock Street

Figure 24: Opportunities and Constraints for Paddock Street Cark Park

Urban Design and Policy Principles

A series of urban design (Figure 25) and planning policy principles have been established:

Create a Continues Active Frontage
The plan should seek to continue the residential frontage along the whole length of Paddock Street in order to 'complete' the street.

Responsive Built Form
Respond to surrounding scale and changes in level to deliver a sensitive scale, density and massing approach for the site.

Frame the Space
Putting public space in the heart of the proposal enhances the sense of the community and creates a focal point for the site.

Emphasised and Welcoming Arrival
There is much pressure on the corner of the plot facing both Paddock Street and Bull Head Street. It's the landmark at the junction and the gateway into the retail core of Wigston, and the arrival space into the development. It also needs to protect the internal space from wind while not overshadowing it.

Statement Corner
Define the south-eastern corner of the site through the use of scale and high quality architectural form.

Enhance the Long Lane
The extension of Long Lane runs adjacent to the site boundary, squeezed between derelict walls, creating a negative space. The proposal should consider how the environmental along Long Lane can be enhanced and encourage positive pedestrian movement into and through the site.

Permeable Edges
The site will be accessible on all edges for pedestrians and one for vehicles (Paddock Street).

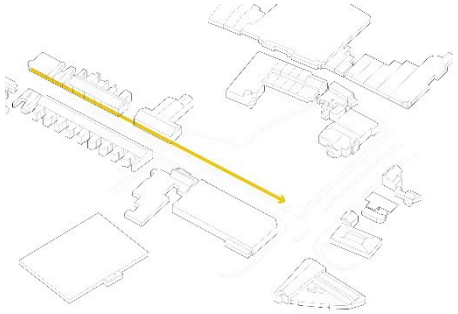
Land Use
It is considered residential is the most appropriate use for the site. A mixture of tenures including 1, 2 & 3 bed apartments and town houses will be the most appropriate mix for the site.

Surrounding Properties
The plan considers that the existing gymnasium to the north west of the site should be considered for redevelopment as residential, and brought into this development opportunity. This would unlock further development potential for the site and create a more manageable, positive edge to the site.

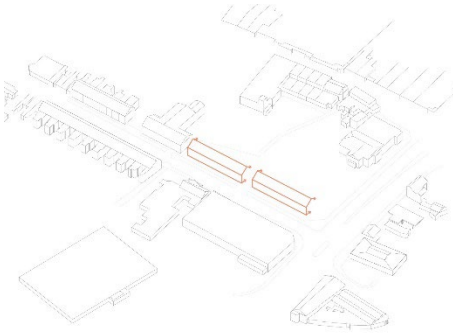
Car Parking
It is considered that a reduction in the current planning requirements is needed to unlock development of the site. Depending on the number of units which we want to deliver, we can provide 100% resident's car parking.

Affordable Housing
Following the Council Local Plan and considering the potential number of dwellings to be within the proposal, the development should provide at least 20% affordable housing. The exact number should be specified once more detailed masterplan is available and should match the local needs at the time.

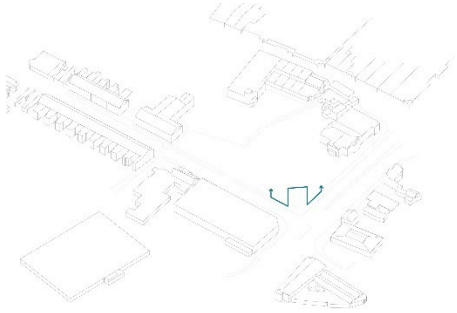
Access
Vehicular and pedestrian access will be retained off Paddock Street, with Paddock Street potentially becoming two way to the east. Long Lane will be retained (in its current or alternative position) to provide access between Paddock Street and Bell Street. Access to service yards behind Bell Street retail may need to be managed to achieve the vision.



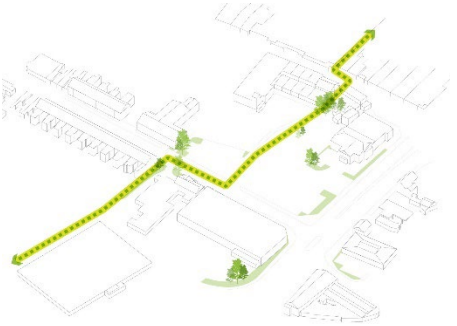
Active Frontages



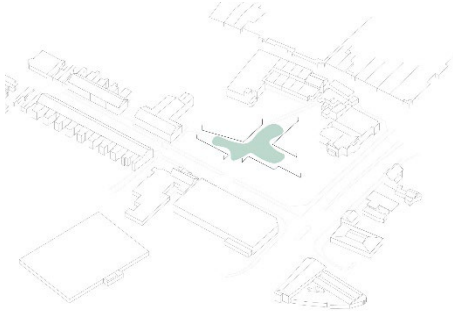
Responsive Built Form



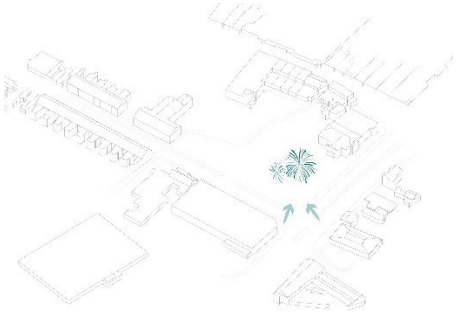
Statement Corner



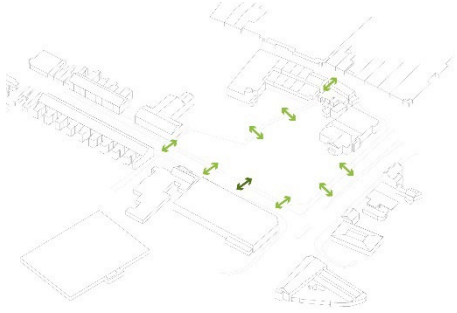
Enhancing Long Lane



Framing the Space



Welcome and Arrival



Permeable Edges

Figure 25: Urban Design and Policy Principles for Paddock Street

Proposed Development

Two proposals for the redevelopment of the Paddock Street site have been considered.

Proposal 1

This proposal diverts the extension of Long Lane bringing it into and through the centre of the new development (Figure 26). providing public open space in the centre of the proposal, it forces to rethink the access to blocks and vehicular movement within the site.

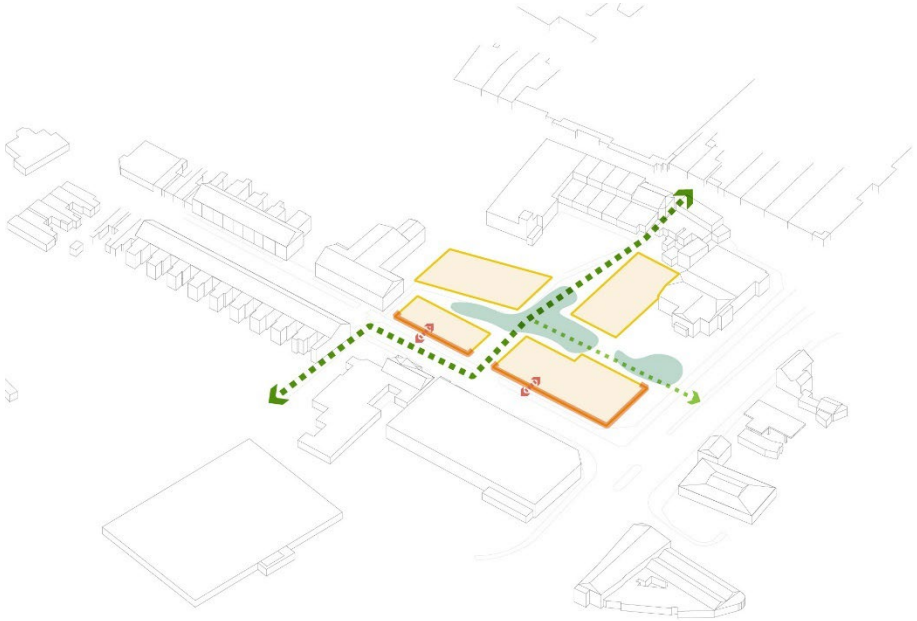


Figure 26: Proposal 1 Site Development Concept Plan

Access and Movement

Vehicular access off Paddock Street is moved to the west to free up the centre of the site for pedestrians, keeping the internal spaces car-free.

Pedestrian access is via the slightly diverted extension of Long Lane located centrally along Paddock Street, roughly at the location of the current vehicle access, with additional pedestrian access onto Bull Head Street (Figure 27).

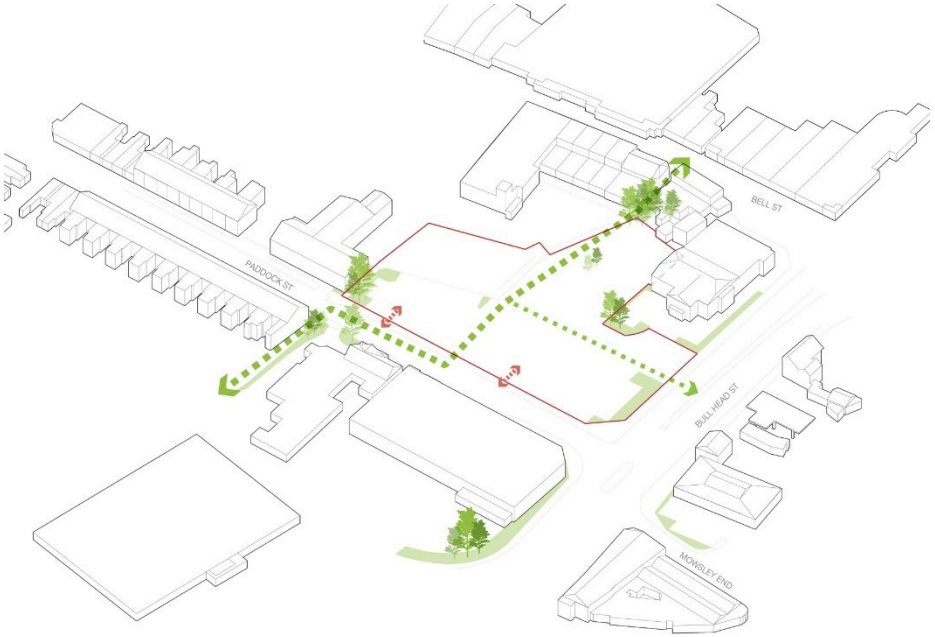


Figure 27: Proposal 1 Access and Movement

Development and Frontage

Due to the context and site levels, the proposed buildings should be limited to 4-storeys, with potential for scaling up on the corner facing the Bull Head Street.

Primary frontage will be facing Paddock Street and Bull Head Street with balconies and gardens overlooking the centrally located public realm. Access to the service yard to the north-west of the site will need to be managed (Figure 28).

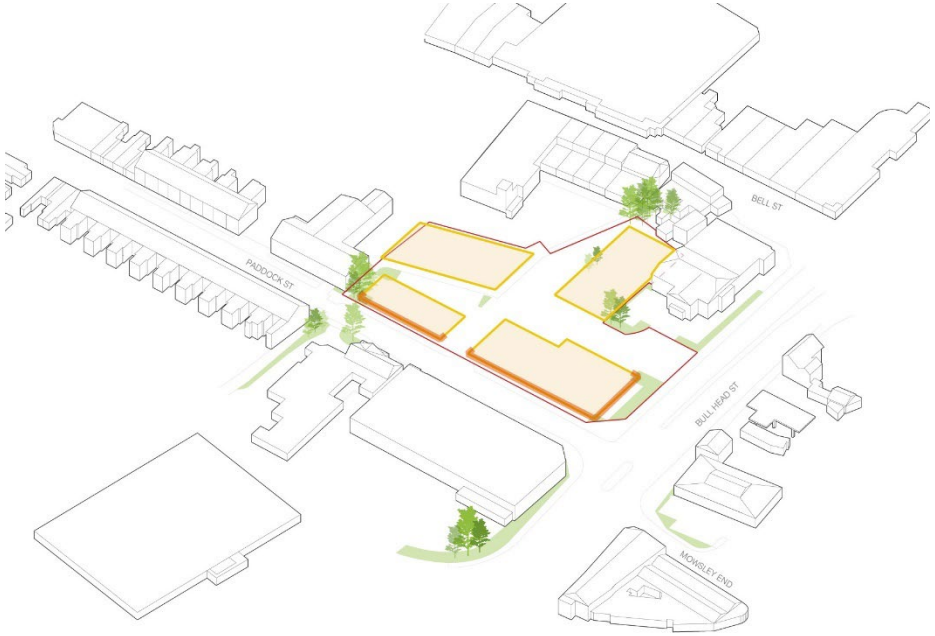


Figure 28: Proposal 1 Development Frontage

Public Realm

There is a major opportunity for public open space at the heart of the site, with an axis of pedestrian routes concluding within the space (Figure 29).

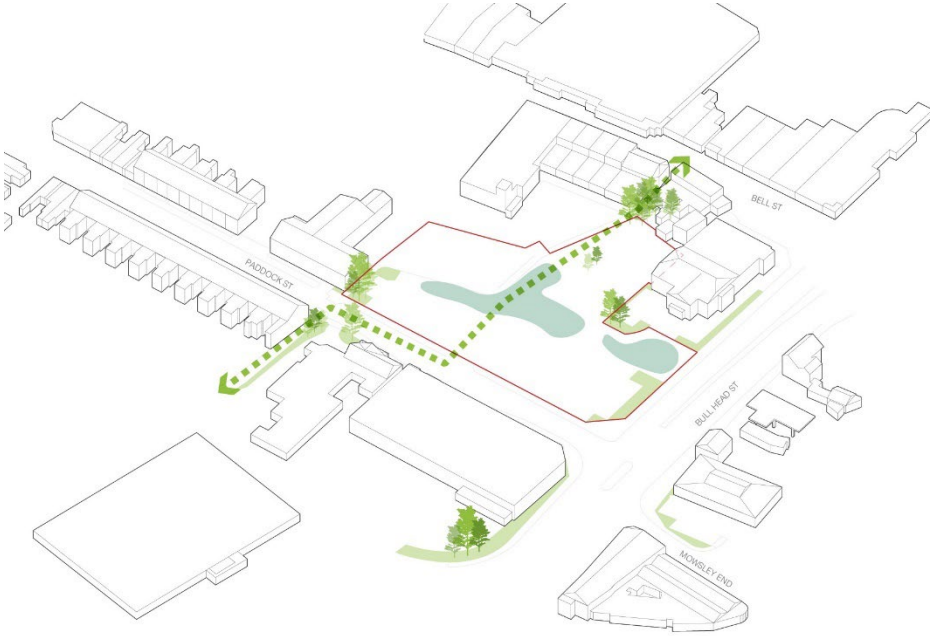


Figure 29: Proposal 1 Public Realm

Proposal 2

This proposal keeps the extension of long lane on its current alignment, however the redevelopment of the gymnasium will provide an active route with doors opening onto the lane to create a mews style route (Figure 30). This allows us to keep the access to the site off Paddock Street in its current location and offer a similar access context.

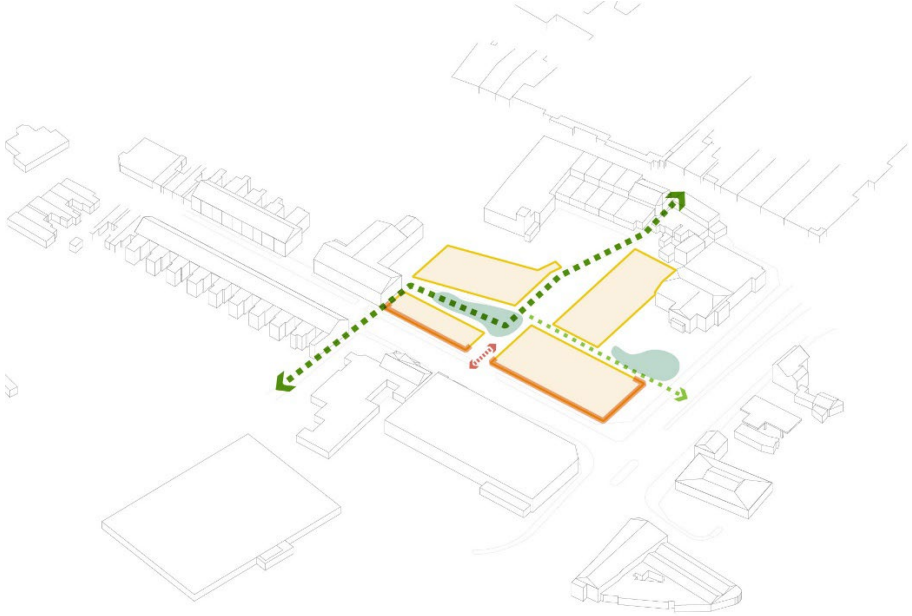


Figure 30: Proposal 2 Site Development Concept Plan

Access and Movement

Vehicular access remains as existing, via Paddock Street. The internal movement through the site should be reduced to minimum to promote pedestrians and cyclists over the cars (Figure 31).

Pedestrian access stays as existing to the west of the plot via Long Lane and is incorporated into a new central space. An additional access onto Bull Head Street is provided.

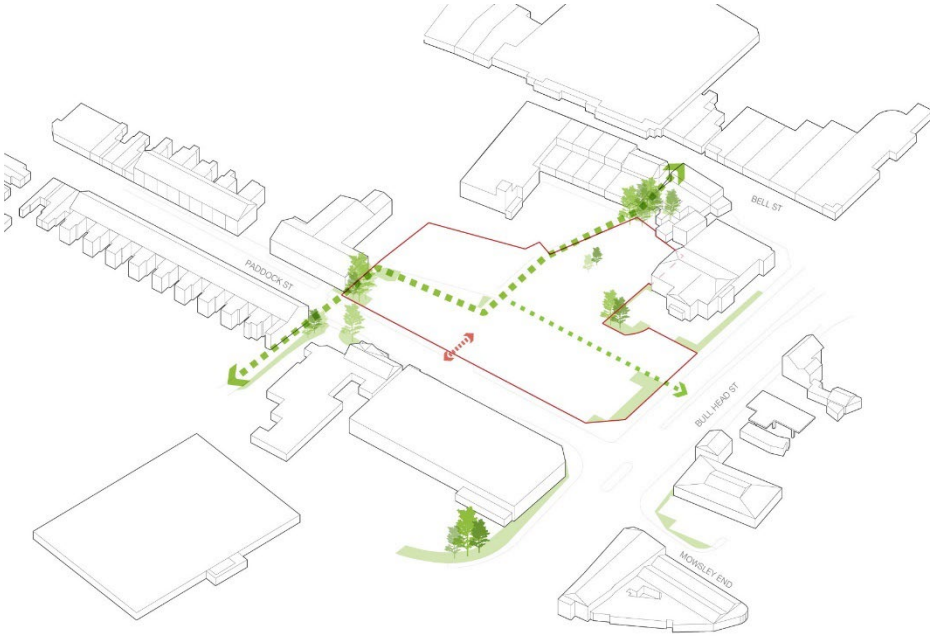


Figure 31: Proposal 2 Access and Movement

Development and Frontage

Due to the context and site levels, the proposed buildings should be limited to 4-storeys, with potential for scaling up on the corner facing the junction (Figure 32).

Primary frontage will be facing Paddock Street and Bull Head Street with potential balconies overlooking the centrally located public realm.

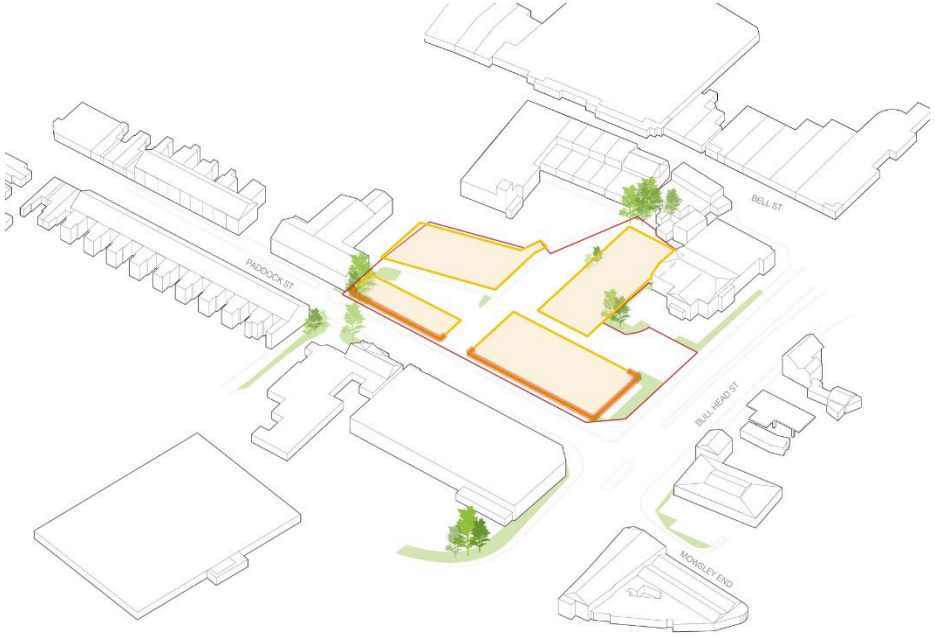


Figure 32: Proposal 2 Development and Frontage

Public Realm

The is an opportunity to create two smaller public open space within the site, one alongside the slightly diverted extension of Long Lane and another as a pocket park facing Bull Head Street (Figure 33).

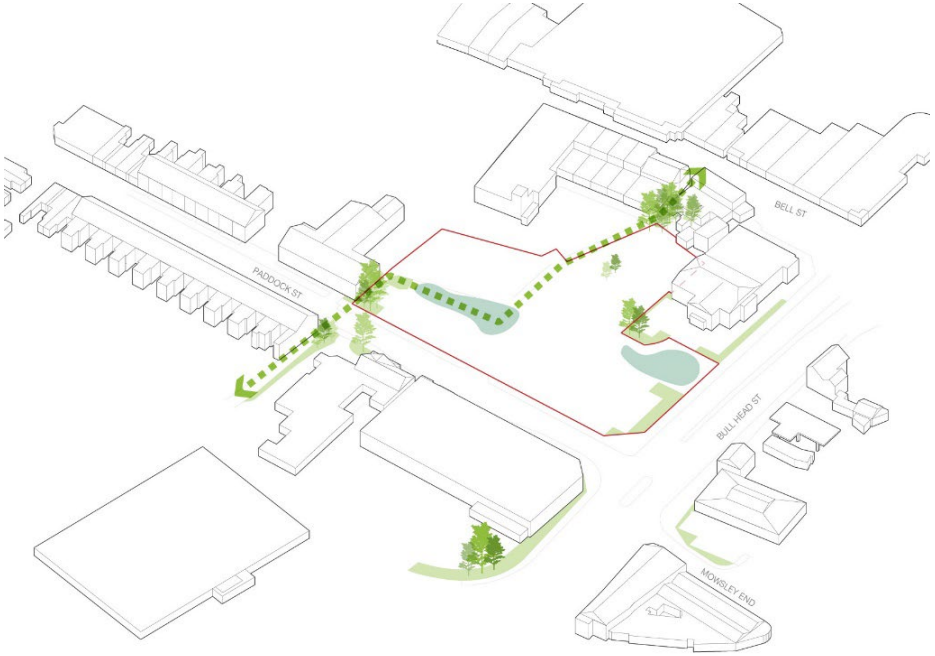


Figure 33: Proposal 2 Public Realm

Overall Masterplan and Development Capacity

Figure 34: Proposed Masterplan for Paddock Street

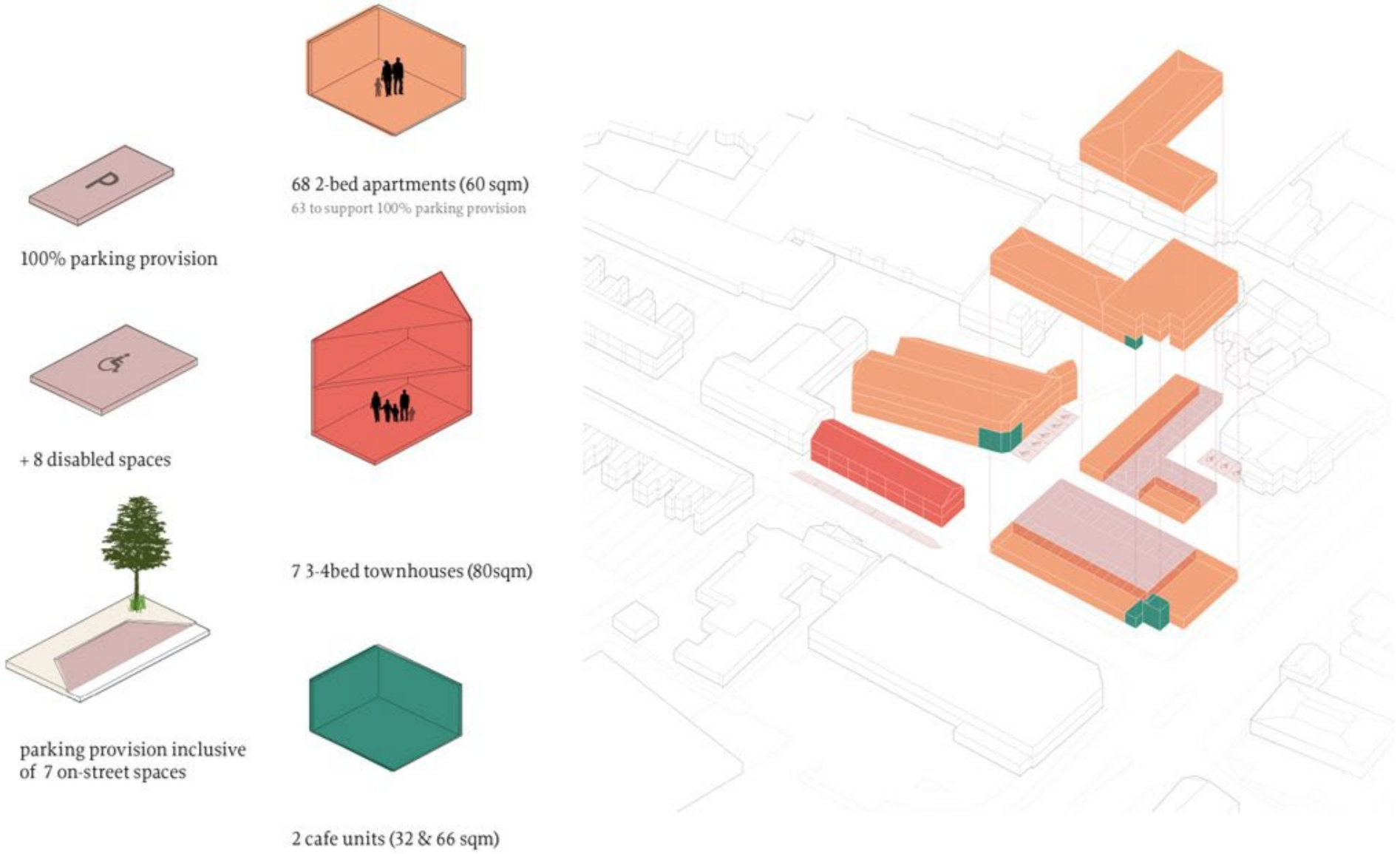


Figure 35: Proposed Development Capacity for Paddock Street

6. Delivery and Next Steps

Following the full impact of the economic downturn, a number of iterations of the NPPF, a new Local Plan, the full impact of Covid and changes in the planning system, this refreshed masterplan of Wigston is needed to support future prosperity within the town centre.

As the principal town centre in the Borough, Wigston town centre has a key role to play in providing a range of services for local residents and being the destination of choice for the local community as opposed to travelling further to Leicester City centre.

By this refreshed masterplan and the identified priority projects capitalising of the unique opportunities Wigston town centre presents, this plan can help the creation of a sustainable and welcoming town centre celebrating its unique character and community.

Moreover, enhancing facilities and overall attractiveness of the town centre would help the Borough to improve the town's sustainability ambitions by encouraging people to stay local, utilise sustainable travel modes, provide opportunities for retail and employment growth as desired within the Local Plan and increase confidence in Wigston's town centre as a destination.

Therefore, this masterplan aims to enhance the town's unique heritage through brightening the Lanes with greenery and active travel routes, regenerate the high street by creating strong welcoming spaces from the Paddock Street redevelopment and the Wigston welcome proposal and improve the town's transportation links with clearer active travel routes across the town centre and into the surrounding residential streets.

Furthermore, the proposed masterplan of 'Walkable Wigston' addresses the fundamental shift in wider policy to support and deliver active travel routes for both health and economic benefits identified.

These priority projects placed along the 'Walkable Wigston' foundation project aim to reflect and act on the identified opportunities and key issues facing the town including the change in Use Class E, the changing relationship between consumers and town centres from a retail focused to a leisure focused mindset, the climate emergency, the increased importance placed on active travel, the expiration of the LDO, the implications of Covid-19 and the rise of online shopping, the lack of increased footfall and decreasing vacancy rates.

The refreshed masterplan provides a robust basis for the second upcoming round of levelling up funding, with the next step to support the delivery of the refreshed masterplan being the submission of an application in July 2022 for funding to support the implementation of the vision for Wigston with the Walkable Wigston foundation project and the five identified priority projects.

Overall, this refreshed masterplan creates a strong foundation for future regeneration within the town centre and positions the Borough Council well to seize opportunities for funding and support on regional and national scales.

Appendix A

Report Imagery

LEGEND

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Manual key:
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LDĀ DESIGN

PROJECT TITLE
PROJECT TITLE

DRAWING TITLE
Drawing title

ISSUED BY	Oxford	T: 01865 887 050	
DATE	1 Jan 2017	DRAWN	XX
SCALE @A1	1:2,500	CHECKED	XX
STATUS	Draft	APPROVED	XX

DWG. NO. 0001_001_A

No dimensions are to be scaled from this drawing.
All dimensions are to be checked on site.
Area measurements for indicative purposes only.

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Sources: Ordnance Survey

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GLENFIELD
New Parks Way
A563
River Soar
Abbey Park
Willow Brook
7 km
A563
SCRAPTOFT
FRONG ISLAND
SAINT MATTHEWS
Bushby Brook
Scraptoft Brook
A47
Uppingham Rd
LEICESTER
SPINNEY HILLS
A47
BUSHBY
WESTCOTES
De Montfort University
HIGHFIELDS
Evington Brook
5 km
THURNBY
A47
Bushby Brook
Braunstone Park & Skatepark
University of Leicester
Victoria Park
Stoughton Dr
EVINGTON
M1
Narborough Rd
The Leicestershire Golf Club
Evington Brook
Saffordn Brook
Aylestone Meadows Local Nature Reserve
A5199
Leicester Rd
A6
STOUGHTON
BRAUNSTONE TOWN
River Soar
Leicester Airport
2000 m
FOSSE PARK
Knighton Park
OADBY
Glenhills Way
A563
Saffordn Brook
1000 m
Brocks Hill Country Park
Glen Rd
M1
River Soar
500m
WIGSTON
GLEN PARVA
Glen Gorse Golf Course
SOUTH WIGSTON
River Sence, Wigston
Welford Rd
WHETSTON
Grand Union Canal
A6
BLABY

LEICESTER

BULL HEAD ST

OADBY AND LEICESTER GYMNASTICS CLUB

7 MIN 20 MIN

OADBY

OADBY ROAD

PLAY PARK 11MIN

towards M1

AULESTON LANE

AYLESTONE LANE PARK

3 MIN 12 MIN

HIGH STREET

BLUNTS LANE ALLOTMENTS

4MIN

PLAY PARK 11MIN

SOUTH WESTON

MOAT ST

NORTHAMPTON

TON LANE

HIGH STREET

PADDOCK ST

BULL HEAD ST

BULL HEAD ST

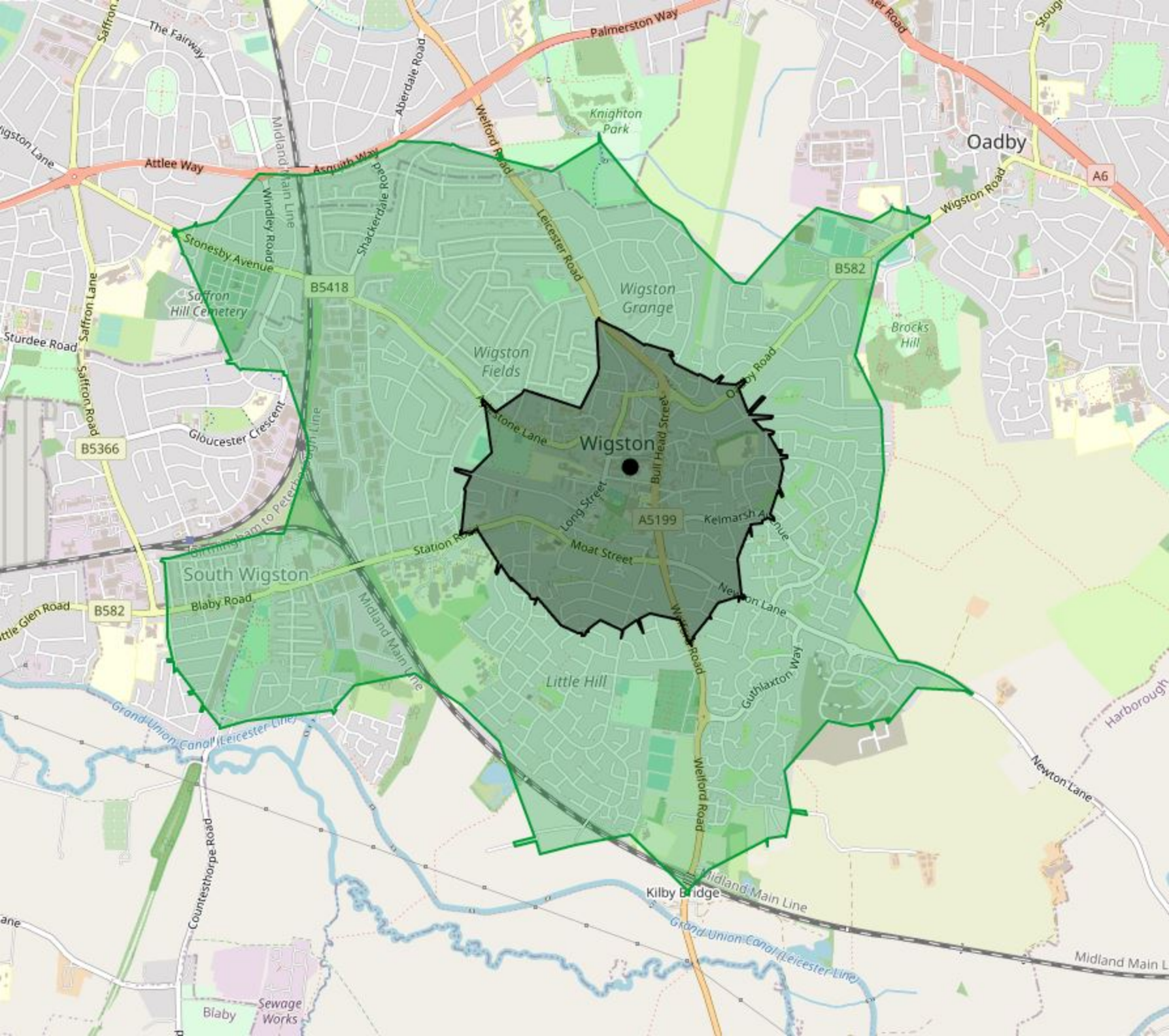
PEACE MEMORIAL PARK

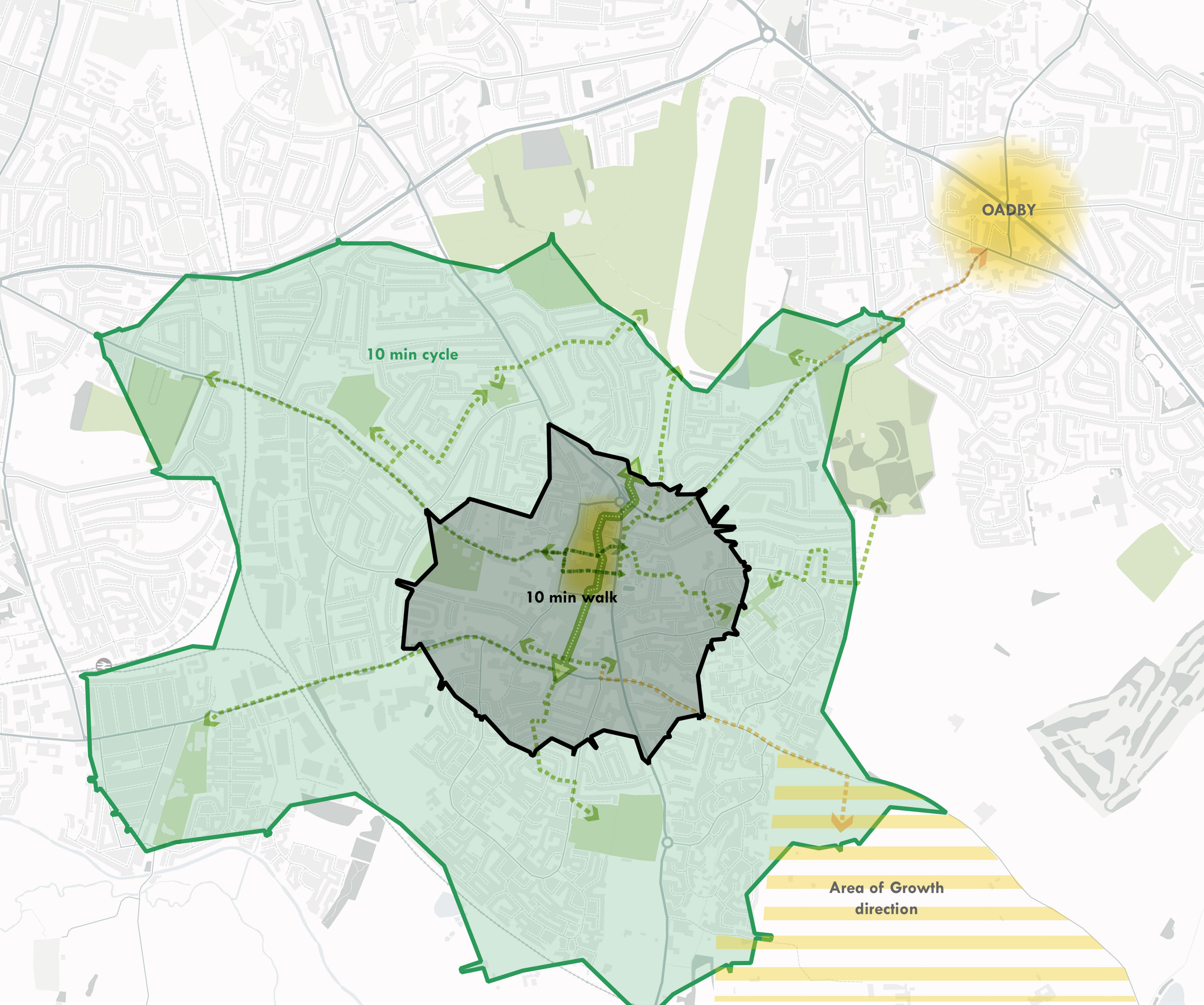
BLUNTS LANE ALLOTMENTS

4MIN

MOAT ST

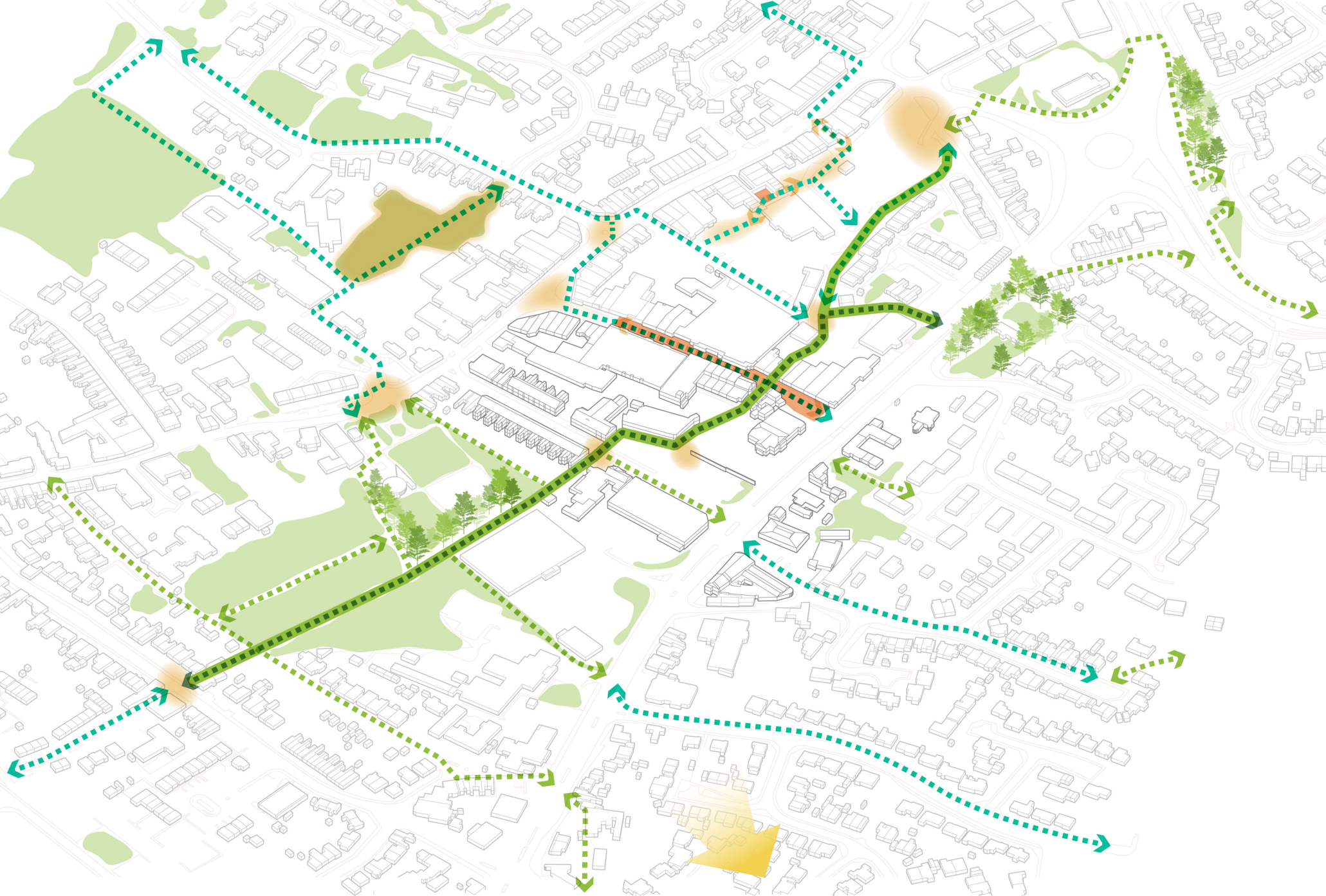
NORTHAMPTON

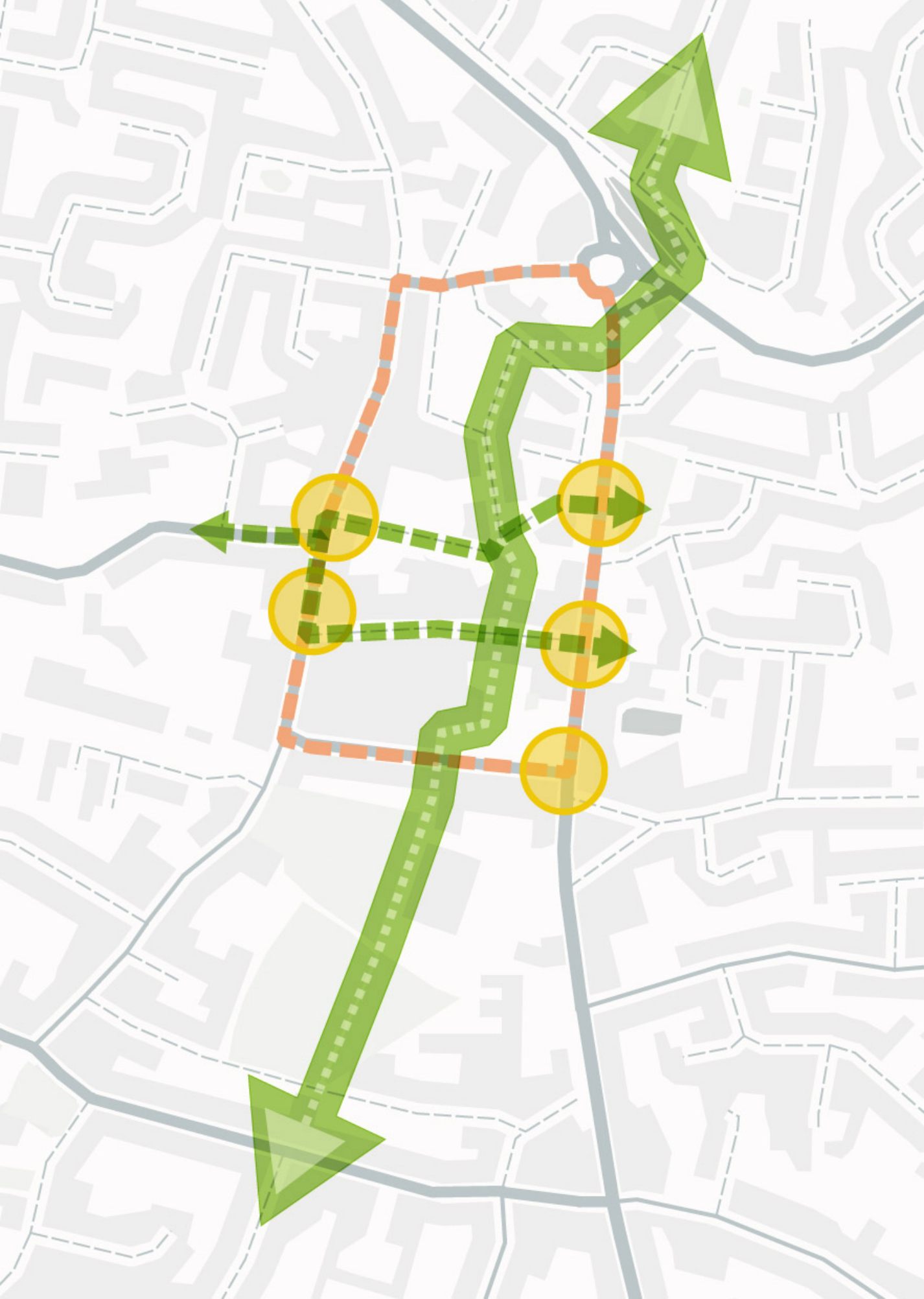

Wigston
Oadby
South Wigston
Wigston Fields
Wigston Grange
Little Hill
Knighton Park
Saffron Hill Cemetery
Brocks Hill
Kilby Bridge
Blaby
Sewage Works
Palmerston Way
Attlee Way
Aylestone Road
Welford Road
Leicester Road
Wigston Road
Stonesby Avenue
Windley Road
Shackerdale Road
Aberdale Road
Saffron Lane
Sturdee Road
Saffron Road
Gloucester Crescent
Bull Head Street
Long Street
Moat Street
Kelmarsh Avenue
Newton Lane
Guthlaxton Way
Blaby Road
Countesthorpe Road
Midland Main Line
Grand Union Canal (Leicester Line)
Harborough
B5418
B582
B5366
A5199
A6

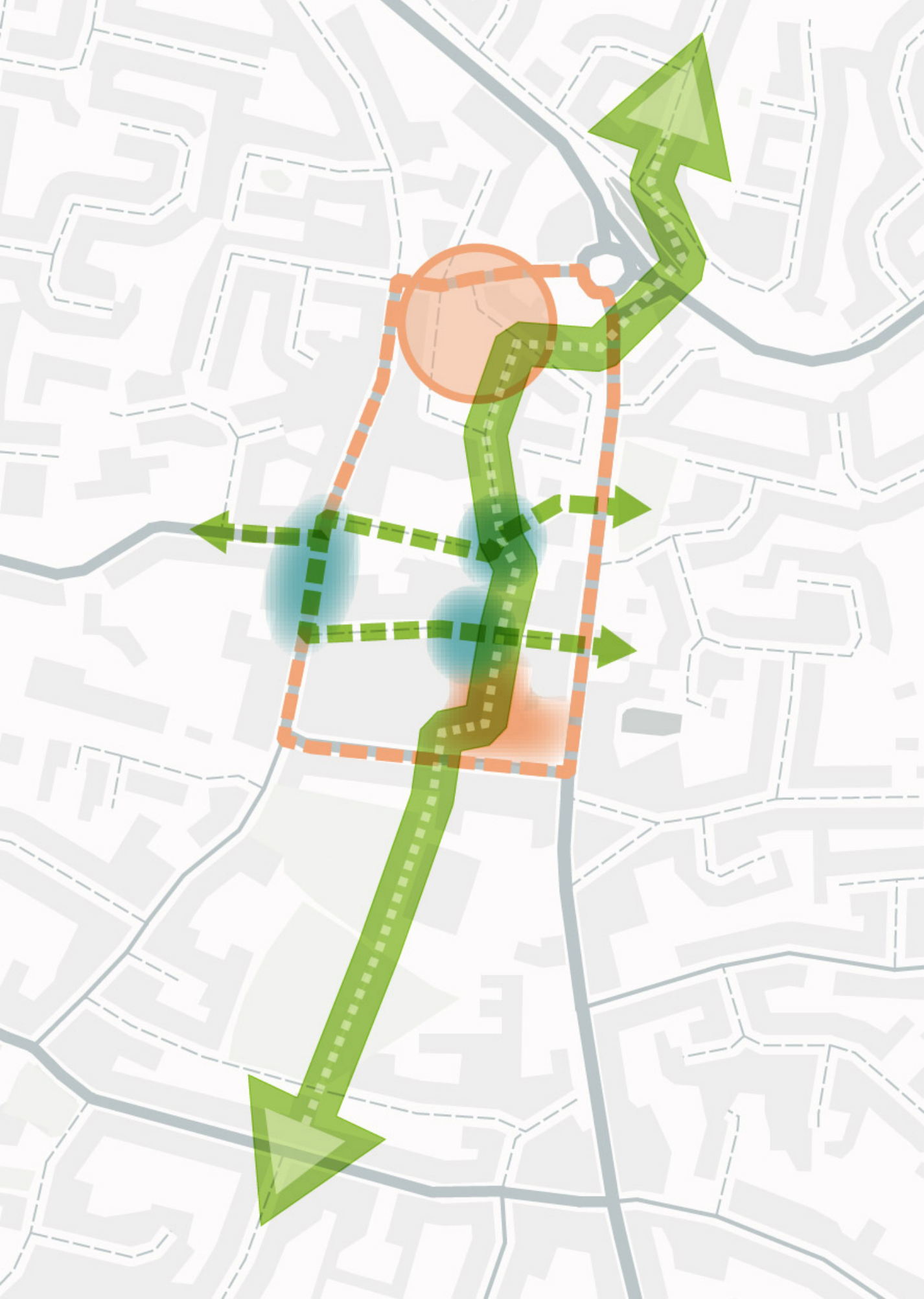

OADBY
10 min cycle
10 min walk
Area of Growth
direction

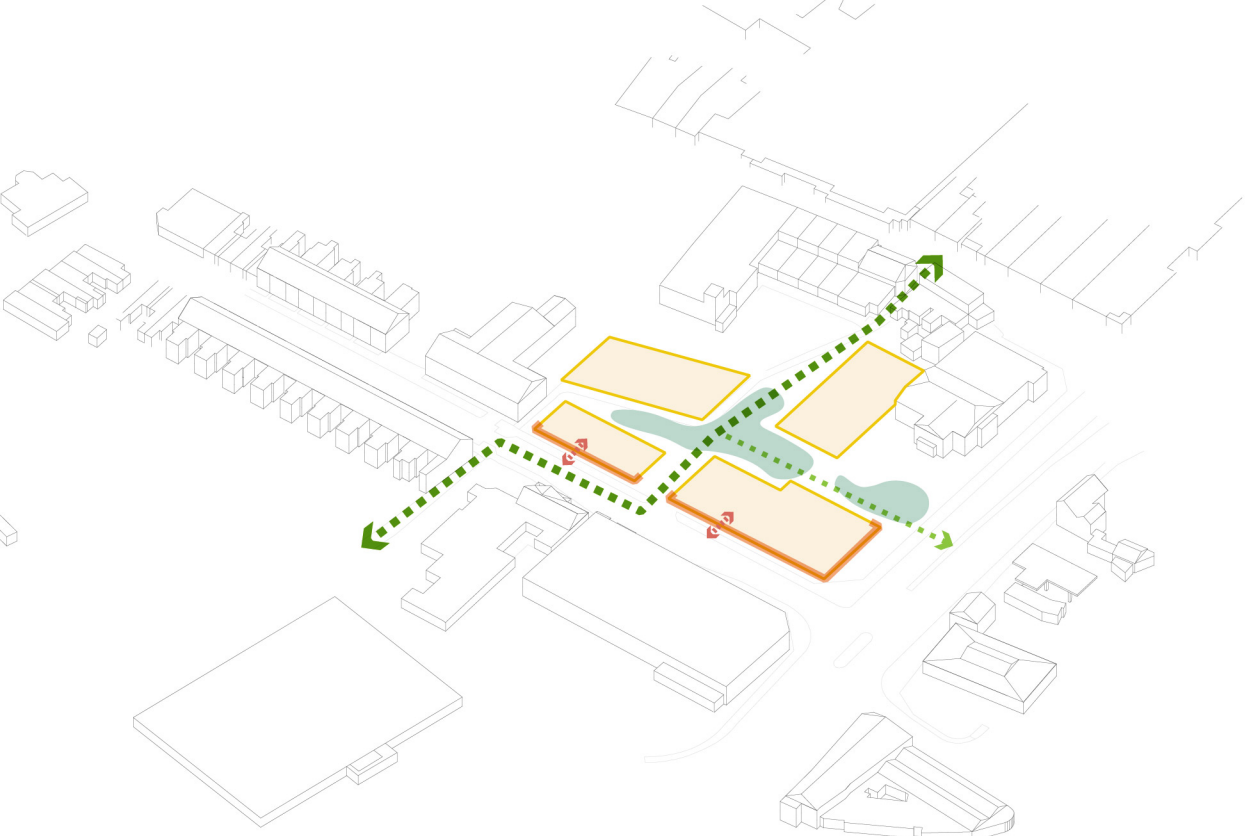
OADBY

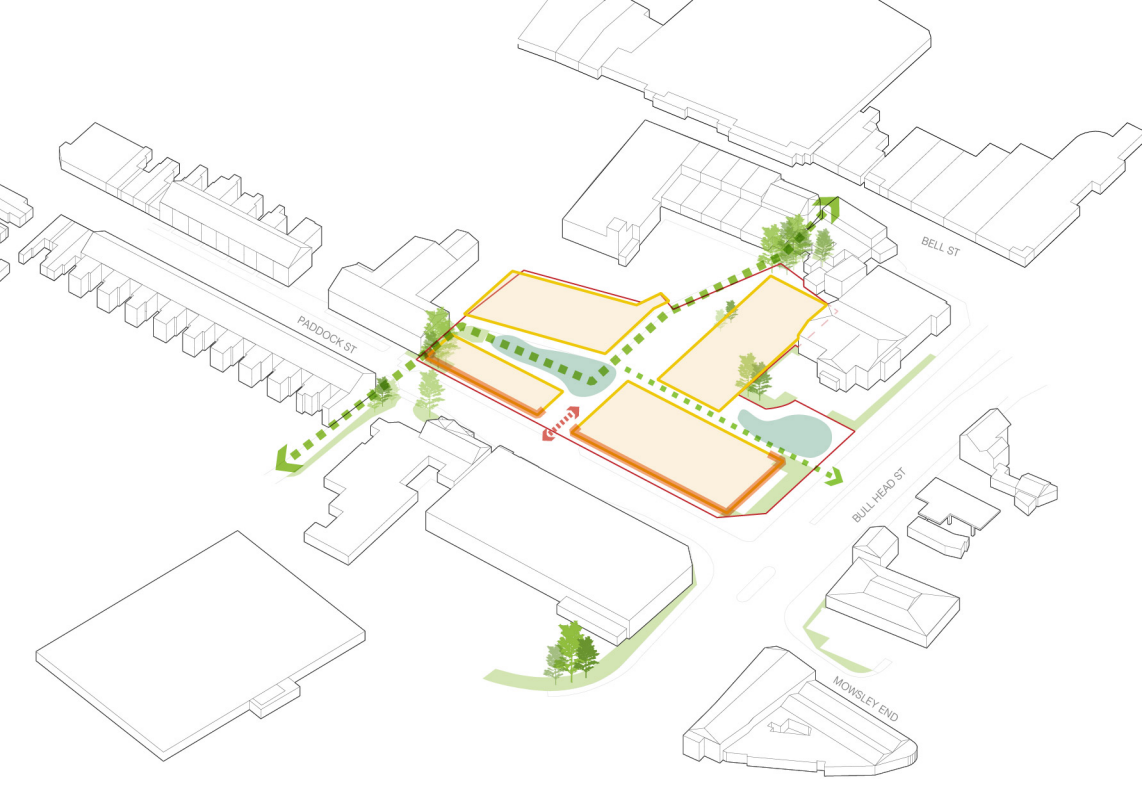
Area of Growth direction

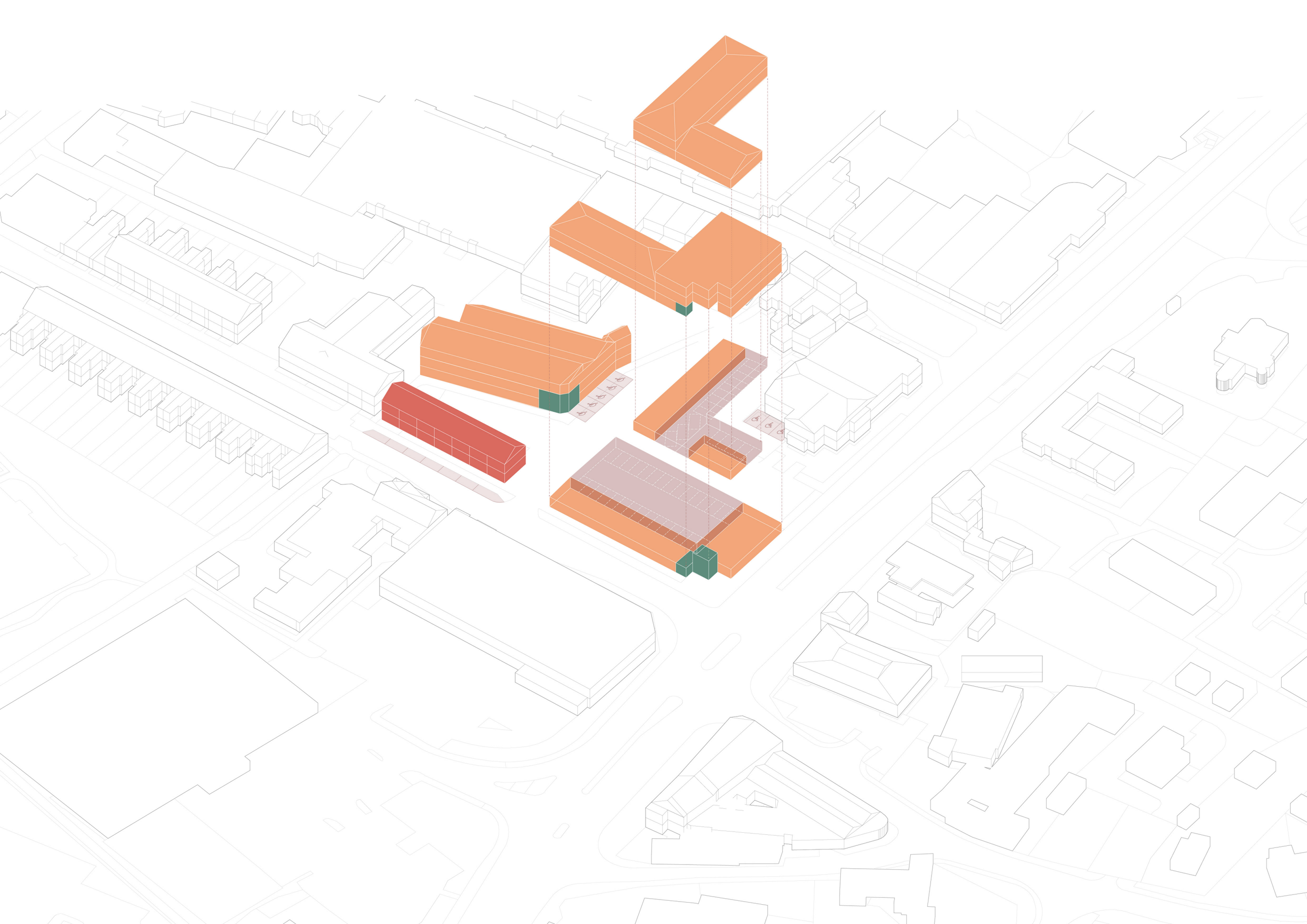






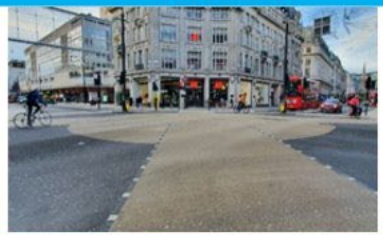



PADDOCK ST
BELL ST
BULL HEAD ST
MOWSLEY END



Appendix B

Potential Active Travel Interventions

Advanced cycle stop line	Parallel crossing	Zebra crossing	Raised table crossing
A stop line for cyclists at traffic signals marked beyond the stop line for general traffic. This helps bring priority to cyclists as they pull away in front of traffic. It also helps avoid issues of conflict with vehicles turning.	A crossing facility for pedestrian and cyclists which has priority over the road which it crosses, marked as a zebra crossing with a parallel priority cycleway.	A crossing facility for pedestrians marked with alternate black and white stripes which gives pedestrians priority. Once a pedestrian has indicated their intent to cross motorists and cyclists are obliged to stop.	A crossing that is raised above the road level. They help indicate pedestrian priority and encourage vehicles to slow down. They can be coupled with other crossing types mentioned in this section to more clearly show priority.
Pelican / Puffin crossing	**Toucan crossing**	**Pegasus crossing**	**X crossing**
			
A signal-controlled crossing for pedestrians. Pelicans crossings are demanded by push buttons whereas Puffin crossings are activated by detectors.	An unsegregated signal-controlled crossing for pedestrians and cyclists, linking cycle track and footway systems on opposite sides of a carriageway.	A signal-controlled crossing for horse-riders, pedestrians and cyclists which uses far-side signal heads and a flashing amber/flashing green crossing period which is push demanded at a level for horse riders.	An all-red traffic signal phase that allows green time for pedestrians to cross at busy junctions in every direction, including diagonally, at the same time.

Delineating	Bus gate	Contraflow cycle route	Cycle track
A physical feature that separates cyclist and pedestrian space, such as a kerb and/or a change in surface material.	A short section of road through which only buses, cyclists and other authorised vehicles can travel. They can operate 24/7, or on a time basis (e.g. during peak periods).	Infrastructure that allows cyclists to ride in the opposite direction to one-way motorised traffic, bringing more flexibility and convenience to this mode. It is best implemented by raising the route to footway level or via a protected lane at the road level.	A separated route specifically for cycles that runs alongside a road or street. It is distinguished by vertical barriers, coloured asphalt/paint and/or elevation differences.
Greenway	**Footway**	**Shared use zone**	**Localised footway widening**
A pedestrian and cycle route through a greenfield area, completely separate from traffic. They are typically established along either a natural corridor or adjacent to other transport corridors. They should be consistent in design and be complemented by high-quality wayfinding.	Footways should be wide enough to accommodate not just current but planned pedestrian demand (including families, wheelchair users, etc.), they should have quality paving and avoid street cluttering which disrupts flows.	An area or route open to the public that is separate from motorised traffic and is designated for the use of pedestrians, wheelchair users and cyclists.	Localised widening of the footway/cycle infrastructure. This can help allocate new street functions (e.g. seating, cycle parking, greenery and shade, etc.) and to aid on movement on challenging, hilly topography.

Public right of way	Quietway	Wayfinding and signage	Footway buildout
A route which the public has a legally protected right to travel along at all times. They are classified according to the nature of use, including footpaths, bridleways and byways.	Strategic walking and cycling routes which link key destinations using less heavily trafficked local streets, through parks, and along waterways or tree-lined streets. Usually supported by traffic calming measures (e.g. speed limits, and other design interventions).	Wayfinding can be provided through user-friendly maps (including walking distance ranges and key landmarks), as well as through distinctive paving and other public realm interventions along key routes.	A section of footway extended out into the carriageway to reduce the crossing distance and improve visibility for pedestrians. It is also intended to limit the speed of vehicles.
Healthy neighbourhood	**Modal filter**	**Speed reduction**	**Traffic calming**
An area of residential streets where through traffic is removed or reduced to provide a better, more liveable neighbourhood which supports walking and cycling while retaining local access for residents and visitors.	A road design feature that restricts access to through-traffic for motorised vehicles but allows the passage of walking and cycling, usually by means of planters or bollards.	A section of carriageway or zone with a lower posted speed limit than the statutory speed limit.	Physical design (e.g. lane narrowing, speed bumps) and psychological measures (e.g. different surface material) which encourage motorists and cyclists to slow down along a specific section of road.

Car parking space reallocation	Cycle parking	Cycle storage hub	Parklets
Removal and repurposing of one or more parking bays to other modes. Examples of this include for widening footways, providing protected cycle infrastructure, parklets or cycle parking.	Must be pleasant, sufficient and convenient. It should be located at close proximity to businesses and other key attractors, and preferably at well-overlooked places. It must also consider the needs of different users by catering for different types of cycles.	A secure, enclosed structure providing cycle parking with a swipe-card entry system. They are usually located at key local hubs, train stations and other key transport interchanges and open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.	A small seating area or green space created as a public amenity on or alongside a footway, and usually in a former on-road parking space.
Street amenities	**Public realm improvements**	**Resting points**	**Dropped kerb and tactile paving**
Features that improve the experience of dwelling and moving through a street. They can include hard and soft infrastructure which brings functional, aesthetic or ecological value.	Measures to enhance the visual aesthetic and feel of an area. This includes greenery, street art, seating and other features to make public spaces more enjoyable.	A space for pedestrians and cyclists to rest without disrupting existing movement patterns. They are usually provided at regular intervals and can include seating, shelters, drinking fountains.	Dropped kerbs facilitate non stepped access, usually between the footway and carriageway. These should be accompanied by tactile paving, which provides a distinctive, raised surface profile to be detected by both sighted and visually impaired users.

Appendix C

Financial Costings