

## Public Realm Framework

- 5.60. The public realm – useable spaces in between buildings, such as streets, squares and green spaces, have an important role to play in town centres. The improvement of the quality and use of such spaces is a cross-cutting theme that runs throughout the options and the proposed interventions.
- 5.61. Environmental improvements and visual amenity can help to promote a distinctive location, enhancing area perceptions or urban renewal for general developers which may help reinforce investment decisions. Good public realm and positive attitudes about a place can help to encourage private investment.
- 5.62. Within the remit of this AAP, the public realm strategy seeks to follow the overall strategy for the town by focusing on the central retail core. This should not be at the cost of its surroundings, and indeed improved links from such areas and the overall improvements to these areas, for example surrounding residential neighbourhoods, are fundamental to the overall success of the AAP strategy.
- 5.63. Improvements to the public realm run through all options as put forward at the Issues and Options stage, and the issue is therefore to what level the public realm is improved in the centre and its immediate environs. This section of the report therefore sets out a broad public realm framework, considering the different types of spaces throughout the town and how those may be treated (figure 5.4). Demonstrator projects and design guidance as detailed later in this report offer much more information on the detailed design and materials identifying how this framework can be implemented.
- 5.64. Very broadly, the key types of areas can be considered as residential neighbourhoods, key linkages including road junctions, the main shopping area itself, and specific open spaces within that area.



### Main shopping area

- 5.67. As is set out in the introductory paragraphs above, an improved public realm will help to boost investor confidence. The poor condition and appearance of the public realm in the centre has previously been identified and needs to be resolved in order to help improve the attractiveness of the town. At the lowest level of intervention, cleaning pavements and chewing gum removal will have a positive impact, but is a very short term success. More fundamental intervention would be required and is therefore recommended that would include new paving, and a co-ordinated suite of street furniture including benches, litter bins and lighting as well as a comprehensive shop front improvement scheme. It is a combination of these short-term 'wins' and longer-term interventions that make up the preferred option. Any intervention should complement that proposed in the new retail development and a comprehensive approach would best integrate the old with the new areas of the town.

### Property Commentary

- 5.68. The town of Oadby in strategic planning terms is in the Principal Urban Area (PUA) of Leicester and as such is a focus of economic development and regeneration for the whole of the East Midlands. Its economic success is strongly influenced by the City of Leicester.
- 5.69. There is substantial public sector investment and regeneration that is transforming Leicester. This is especially so in the city centre, and particularly with regard to the office and residential sectors. This will inevitably have substantial positive impact on Oadby, and is likely to increase the demand for housing, retail, employment space and community facilities, etc. It will improve the economy, and provide more employment and better quality jobs.
- 5.70. The activities of the Leicester Regeneration Company will significantly remodel and change land use patterns close to the city centre. As a result, businesses have to be relocated from this part of the city, providing opportunities for surrounding centres.
- 5.71. There is also a general shift to higher value activities that is leading to a need for more modern and efficient business space. This is raising the quality expected in office accommodation. Some office-based companies are also looking for shorter term, more flexible property solutions, matching national trends.
- 5.72. The town's commercial property market is generally healthy, albeit small (reflecting its size), complemented by a strong small business sector. The retail market is more mixed. In discussions with property professionals, some respondents emphasised that Fosse Park has removed local demand for comparison goods. Others noted that the recent entry of Marks and Spencer into the town has highlighted the attractiveness of Oadby to retailers (and local retailers indicated that they did not see Fosse Park as a threat to trade). The Retail Capacity Study, undertaken as part of the baseline research, indicates that capacity exists for a further 1476 sqm of retail space to 2016 (901 sqm of comparison space, 575 sqm of convenience space). This however reflects the current position of the town and not the possible future, i.e. this doesn't reflect the

regenerative impact of development in the town or in neighbouring Leicester and the wider region. It is anticipated that the impact of this would be to encourage more retail and leisure development in the town.

- 5.73. In terms of leisure, the nearest cinemas and bowling facilities are all in Leicester (with several cinemas in the south of the city). All are within six miles of Oadby, with the ongoing regeneration of the City likely to increase provision. The catchment population is insufficient to attract volume space users such as cinemas and bowling. Further development of what appears an established and successful group of restaurants, bars and clubs in the town centre (which require lower numbers of clientele, and where reputation will draw customers from further afield) presents a more realistic leisure opportunity.
- 5.74. The town centre residential market is broadly buoyant and successful. The village atmosphere of Oadby is a selling point, but the suburban style of most housing is not distinctive from that available elsewhere in the PUA. Ease of access to Leicester is also a strong selling point, but one that can also be applied to many other similar, neighbouring areas.