



Oadby & Wigston

Town Centres Area Action Plan

Situation Update Matter Three Issue 3.8

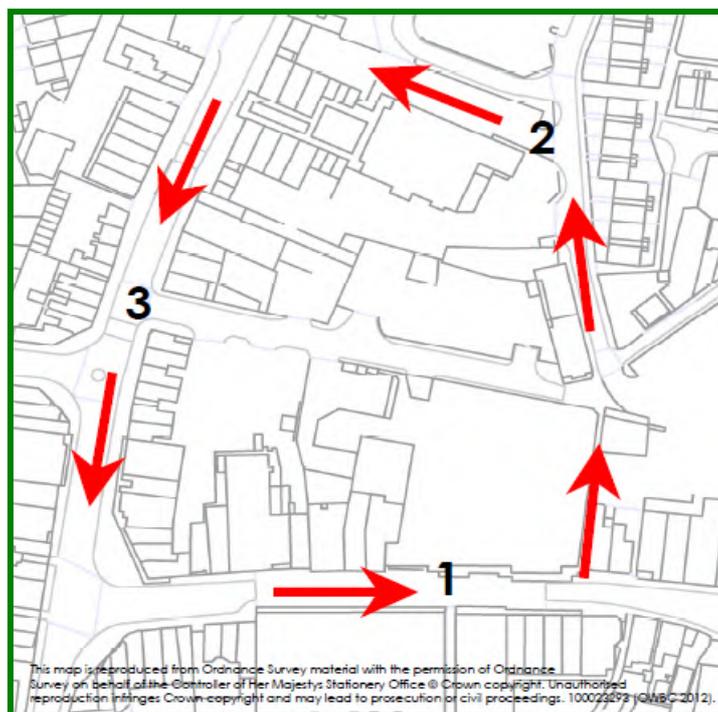




Situation update regarding pedestrian priority in Wigston Town Centre, in relation to pedestrian flows, focal points, development phasing and the quality of public realm.

1 Pedestrian Priority

- 1.1** Currently there are no fully pedestrianised shopping streets within Wigston town centre and the historic Lanes network is in need of significant improvement. The town also currently lacks a distinct 'retail circuit' that connects each of the key retail destinations located along Bell Street, Leicester Road and those in The Arcade.
- 1.2** The main thoroughfare of Wigston (Leicester Road), also a key retail destination, is currently vehicular dominated with no vehicular restrictions and only two traffic light controlled pedestrian crossing points. Bell Street currently allows no access to motor vehicles (other than exceptions¹) between the hours of 10am and 4pm. After 4pm (until 10am) access is permitted for disabled, taxi and loading vehicles.
- 1.3** The Town Centres Area Action Plan policies 13 to 16 have an emphasis on improving the pedestrian connections within Wigston town centre. The extension to the historic Lanes network seeks to improve north/south and east/west pedestrian movement, linking all parts of the town centre, including key pedestrian links to public car parks situated on Paddock Street and Junction Road. Improvements along; Leicester Road including the possible implementation of shared space raised tables; Frederick Street; as well as Bell Street will introduce greater pedestrian priority and allow for a freer pedestrian movement.



¹ Royal Mail, bullion vehicles, the emergency services and vehicles that are either being used for a statutory procedure (local authority) or for the purpose of building or demolition works.



- 1.4** Subject to certain criteria (also encouraged through policy set out in the Draft Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document) the Borough Council is also encouraging the full pedestrianisation of Bell Street, as well as the creation of a ‘retail circuit’ (see above illustrative map) around the town centre with improved retail opportunities and public realm.

2. Pedestrian Flows

- 2.1** Currently pedestrian flows within Wigston town centre are restricted by the lack of a defined ‘retail circuit’ (see paragraph 1.4), a shortage of focal points (see section 5) and a historic pedestrian network (The Lanes) that is in need of regeneration.
- 2.2** The Town Centres Area Action Plan is seeking to improve and extend The Lanes to contribute towards the defined ‘retail circuit’ that encourages pedestrian flow around the town in a systematic manner, rather than its current ad-hoc layout which has barriers to movement. The improvement and extension to the retail and commercial floor space proposed within the Burgess Junction development will connect the currently detached east and west of the town. The entire ‘retail circuit’ will connect Bell Street (1) to the proposed redevelopment of the Arcade (2) and Leicester Road (3) in a pedestrian friendly environment through improvements to the public realm. Creation of such a circuit will allow for a more fluid pedestrian movement that is devoid of barriers and gives the town centre a greater connectivity, as well as enhancing the retail experience.
- 2.3** Alongside the Town Centres Area Action Plan, the Draft Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document encourages the enhancement and/or redevelopment of connections that are currently sub standard (for example relatively narrow and dimly lit during hours of darkness), for example the passage ways that connect Junction Road Public Car Park to Leicester Road, those between Bell Street and Frederick Street and those connecting Paddock Street to Bell Street.

3. Development Phasing

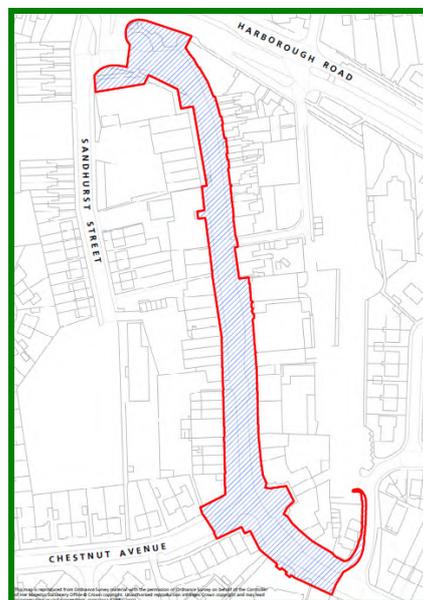
- 3.1** The Delivery Strategy – Wigston Town Centre Masterplan sets out the phasing for development proposed within the Town Centres Area Action Plan (Document Library reference: H6b).
- 3.2** Currently, in partnership, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council are preparing to submit detailed round two full applications for European Regional Development Fund relating to public realm schemes within the centres of both Wigston and Oadby (see illustrative map below for areas contained within the proposed bid), having already had Expressions of Interest successfully approved.



3.3 The bids are centred on significant public realm improvements (in line with Town Centres Area Action Plan policy) totalling approximately £815,000. The Wigston town centre scheme will improve the entire length of the semi-pedestrianised Bell Street, creating focal points at both the eastern and western ends and will improve pedestrian safety and movement. Currently public realm works are timetabled to commence spring 2013 (Phase 1 of the Masterplan process) and will seek to 'kick start' both Wigston and Oadby centres regeneration.



3.4 The Oadby public realm scheme, also due to commence early 2013, seeks to regenerate the entire length of The Parade with modern street furniture and high quality pedestrian paving as well as provide a raised shared surface on the intersection of The Parade and Chestnut Avenue.



3.5 Due to the tight constraints associated with European Regional Development Fund bids, the presence of the masterplans and the Town Centres Area Action Plan has greatly assisted in the preparation of the applications in order to demonstrate the strong relationship between the improvement of the public realm as a key mechanism in encouraging investment in and development of the sites allocated in the Town Centres Area Action Plan.



4. Quality of Public Realm

- 4.1** The current quality of Wigston town centres public realm is relatively poor. Most of the pavements are in a poor state of repair and are cluttered with unnecessary signage. There are few defined spaces to sit and relax and a lack of high quality street furniture.
- 4.2** The Town Centres Area Action Plan establishes and sets out the policy for public realm quality and design. Area Action Plan Policy 11 – Public Realm states that public realm design should be of the highest standard and that the use of poor quality materials in public realm improvements must be avoided to ensure the town presents an attractive and welcoming environment.
- 4.3** The Town Centres Area Action Plan states that further advice regarding public realm will be available in the Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document.
- 4.4** The Council are currently consulting upon a Draft Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (from Friday 16th March until 4.15pm 27th April 2012) that supplements policy set out in the Town Centres Area Action Plan and provides greater clarity on all public realm situated within the town centre.
- 4.5** As well as improving the quality and design of the public realm within Wigston town centre, the Draft Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document seeks to ‘turn the tables’ on conventional ways of thinking and make the motor vehicle second to the pedestrian and other modes of sustainable transport in accordance with government guidance.
- 4.6** In line with policy set out in the Town Centres Area Action Plan, the Draft Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document has targeted policies that actively encourage the redevelopment of The Lanes and full pedestrianisation of Bell Street.

5. Focal Points

- 5.1** The Town Centres Area Action Plan seeks to implement key focal points in various locations around Wigston. The six focal points prescribed within the Town Centres Area Action Plan are shown below.



- 5.2** The Key Gateways situated to the north of the town centre, at the entry to the proposed Burgess Junction site (2) and the Key Gateway to the south via Long Street and Paddock Street (1) are important access points into the town and will be improved to ‘announce’ the town and create a sense of arrival into the centre of Wigston. There are three proposed public squares; one located at the eastern end of Bell Street (4) another towards the west of the library (3), and the third towards the north along Junction Road (6). Each town square will be capable of holding outdoor events, for example seasonal markets, exhibitions and educational activities.
- 5.3** Through the public realm improvements along Bell Street, the western bell mouth onto Leicester Road/Long Street (5) is to see significant improvement works that will provide a high-quality uncluttered entrance onto the town’s main shopping street. As well as a space for events, the proposed regeneration works at the eastern end (4) of Bell Street, will create a small urban ‘pocket’ park that will attract further footfall, and dwell time thus economic gain.
- 5.4** The Focal Points represented by numbers 4 and 5 on the above illustrative map, will come forward through the enhancement works proposed in the round two full application for European Regional Development Fund monies, thus commencing Phase 1 of the Wigston Masterplan.
- 5.5** Focal points are also encouraged through policies set out in the Draft Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document with the creation of a public square or events space towards the eastern end of Bell Street and Chapel Mill public square which will seek to draw and entice members of the public towards this area to encourage further use and footfall.

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