

be lost. Alternatively if it were developed wholly for retail development, there is a danger that it could overly compete with the town centre core, and detract from the vitality and viability of the area.

Site 2: Premier Drum

- 5.23 The redevelopment of the Premier Drum site for employment-led mixed uses provides an opportunity to significantly enhance a primary gateway into South Wigston from the east. This would make the best use of the site, given its proximity to the rail lines. Other complementary uses (e.g. kiosk type / small scale retail to provide for local employees) would also be appropriate, where they support the employment uses.
- 5.24 The redevelopment of the site for residential uses has not been pursued at this stage. This is because employment uses are considered to be appropriate at this gateway site, given its location between railway line, Tesco and Magna Road employment site opposite. It is also considered that whilst redeveloping the site for edge-of-centre retail could visually improve this gateway site, extending the retail function of the Town Centre in this direction may weaken the centre, as this site would be separated from the concentration of shops on Blaby Road by non-retail uses. This would not support a convenient and attractive shopping circuit.

Site 3: Magna Road

- 5.25 This site has the potential to be important to the future of South Wigston, as it provides a significant area for potential change to the south of the Town. Redeveloping the site for employment uses would provide additional extra employment space and opportunities for the Town and wider Borough, and strengthen its existing role as an employment area. The site could also provide a suitable location for potentially relocated employment uses as part of a wider strategy, which are not currently in appropriate locations e.g. the Station Street site. This would therefore support other potential interventions for the Town.
- 5.26 Promoting and managing the site as public open space is not being pursued, as it is considered that the Town already benefits from Blaby Road park, which is a quality open space within the core of the town. In addition, new residential development close to Magna Road site is also providing additional public open space. In this location, the open space would be isolated and poorly overlooked.

Site 4: South Canal Street

- 5.27 The redevelopment of the South Canal Street site presents an opportunity to link the Town better with the canalside. This development will also play a key role in linking the canalside to Blaby Road Park, which are two of South Wigston's key assets. The canalside is currently an underutilised asset and could provide a very attractive setting for a mix of uses, including leisure / community uses, supported by some residential development. These uses would maximise the use of the canal as an asset, creating a more attractive and populated area in which to spend time. However, this would involve the relocation of the existing employment uses to an alternative location (e.g. Magna Road).

- 5.28 Its retention and / or redevelopment for industrial and employment uses have not been pursued. It is considered that there are more suitable locations for such uses e.g. Magna Road, Wilson Road and Premier Drum. Its retention for such uses would not maximise the canalside location which should be a key asset for South Wigston.

Site 5: Jacobs

- 5.29 The Jacobs site is a key employer in the Town and important to South Wigston's economy. The current site, whilst appearing to suffer from accessibility problems and very restrictive boundaries, serves its purpose and therefore no changes other than improvements to the building fabric and appearance are proposed. Should this position change in the longer term, this would be more appropriately used for non-industrial uses. Therefore, this site could represent an expansion site for the College or a residential development opportunity overlooking the park, or a mix of compatible uses.

Site 6: Infill sites (various)

- 5.30 There are a number of infill sites located throughout the area, which could be better utilised and make a valuable contribution to the aesthetics and offer of the Town Centre. These include under-used car parks, vacant plots and buildings. If redeveloped for housing, these sites would make better use of the sites and increase the local population and activity.
- 5.31 Redevelopment of these sites for non-residential uses has not been pursued at this time. Environmental improvement would not generate any significant long-term change, and redevelopment for retail or non-residential uses could lead to inappropriate uses in predominantly residential areas.

Site 7: Railway triangle

- 5.32 The railway triangle is a significant underused greenspace site sandwiched between three live railway lines, close to the Town Centre. The eastern half of the site is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). It is considered that this space could be environmentally improved (Contraction), including an art project, which could create a gateway into South Wigston, announcing the Town to rail passengers. The biodiversity and nature conservation value could also be maximised.
- 5.33 Its redevelopment for other uses has not been pursued through the masterplan, as the costs and practicalities involved providing infrastructure to cross the live railway line is likely to make other uses unviable and unachievable. Should development proposals come forward that adequately overcome accessibility issues, employment uses would be the most appropriate bearing in mind the information set out above. It would also need to be a design that reflects the importance of the site to passing rail passengers, for example detail on side elevations and take account of / mitigate SINC designation.
- 5.34 The site is not considered appropriate for residential development given the likely impact of noise and disturbance of residential amenity. Furthermore, there are currently employment sites within the Town which are easier to progress.

- 5.35 Its redevelopment for retail development is also considered unsuitable, as the site is physically detached from the Town Centre shopping circuit on this edge-of-centre site, and retail development is very unlikely to improve the vitality and viability owing to the likely trade draw from the centre.

Site 8: Wilson Road

- 5.36 Wilson Road is a significant gateway site to the west of the Town. The site is well suited for employment development. Therefore its retention and limited infill for employment uses is supported (Consolidation). This will strengthen the existing offer and provide additional employment opportunities for the Town. Some infill development would provide opportunities both to increase the offer and improve the appearance of the site.
- 5.37 Environmental improvements in isolation have not been pursued at this time, as this would be of limited long-term value to strengthening the offer in this location (Contraction). The growth option of residential is also not pursued, as this site has large established employment offer, in a suitable location, making a valuable contribution to the Town.

Site 9: Blaby Road access

- 5.38 Access and servicing to the shops on Blaby Road is an issue for the Town, particularly to the south of Blaby Road. To achieve a strong core retail offer along Blaby Road, would necessitate improved access and servicing and it is proposed that this is facilitated through improved access to the front of retail units and to the rear of units where rear access already exists.
- 5.39 Making no change to the servicing arrangements (contraction) is not considered to contribute to Town Centre retail offer and therefore this option has not been pursued. The more radical approach of improving and extending the rear servicing facilities would be extremely costly, time consuming and the overall benefits are not justified in relation to this cost, disruption and necessary purchase of private land. This option has therefore not been pursued, and it is recommended that front servicing is improved only.

Non-physical projects

- 5.40 To achieve the vision and objectives set out in Section 3, the physical interventions described above must be supported by non-physical interventions. The following sets out the recommended non-physical projects.

Town Centre Management

- 5.41 To achieve sustainable change for South Wigston Town Centre, the Baseline and Options report identified a range of measures that would fall under the remit of town centre management. A key town centre management intervention would be the appointment of a town centre manager (who could also cover Oadby and Wigston). The town centre manager would be able to take a lead in the achievement of many non-physical projects. This could include newsletters and local press articles, as well as working with other organisations to market the town, organise events and achieve funding etc. This may include development a Business Improvement District scheme, Townscape Heritage Initiatives or

other relevant grant regimes as appropriate. Making better use of existing community facilities, for example Church Halls etc (where appropriate) to help host events, could also fall under the remit of the town centre manager.

Better Design Decisions

- 5.42 This would involve taking the guidance set out in this document, together with a more comprehensive approach than simply on a case-by-case, ad-hoc basis. The guidance in this report, supplemented by best practice and policy guidance such as that issued by CABI will assist the Council in determining planning applications and resisting poorly designed developments that are not in accordance with these documents and their own development plan policies.

Access and Circulation

- 5.43 The development of a strategy for pedestrian routes linked to signage and junction design would support many of the physical projects as set out above. A comprehensive strategy would be required to ensure that works in the different areas of the Town represented a common theme so as to link the Town together.

Young People initiatives

- 5.44 Many interventions under this umbrella could be delivered by the town centre manager, such as crime reduction and anti-graffiti initiatives.

Marketing

- 5.45 Marketing is an important tool to help promote the use and attractiveness of the Town as a place to shop, work, live and visit. A co-ordinated marketing strategy should be prepared that utilises the full range of media to help promote the qualities of the town. This would encourage investment and increased use and activity, including high quality events, specialist markets and themed initiatives such as the coordination and promotion of the evening economy. Forums should be strengthened and created as Partnerships are important in the ongoing promotion and marketing of the town.
- 5.46 Specific focuses for marketing include the train station – a key but underutilised and underemphasised asset of the Town Centre. Its town centre location and ease of access into the Town from Leicester and other locations should be promoted. This should be supported by clear signage.
- 5.47 Also marketing of the range of employment premises and opportunities within the Town are also important, to attract investment and employees into the Town Centre.
- 5.48 Promotion of Town Centre activities e.g. markets would also need to be marketed and promoted. This attracts existing and new users into the Town Centre, encouraging them to spend more time and money in the area.
- 5.49 Opportunity sites within the Town Centre should also be marketed well, increasing interest and investment potential for the area. This could be through development briefs or mini competitions.

- 5.50 As mentioned above, the above actions would need to be brought together in a coordinated marketing strategy within the remit of a town centre manager, and linked closely to town centre management.

Transport Framework

Overview

- 5.51 In terms of its strategic position on the highway network, South Wigston is located approximately 6km south of Leicester and is neighboured by Wigston to the east and Blaby to the west. The B582 Blaby Road runs west to east through South Wigston from Blaby to Wigston. The B5366 runs south from Leicester and ends in South Wigston where it meets the B582.
- 5.52 The M1 runs about 3 miles to the west of South Wigston with the nearest junction being M1 Junction 21 to the northwest of the town. By road, the distance from the Town Centre to M1 Junction 21 is less than 4 miles.
- 5.53 The Town also has a two-platform train station with some trains running between Birmingham and Leicester stopping at South Wigston. The Midland Main Line also runs along the eastern edge of the town and serves as a boundary between South Wigston and Wigston Magna.

Vehicle Movement

- 5.54 Blaby Road is a key local distributor route for the area and suffers congestion owing to the high volume of through traffic that uses it. Blaby Road runs parallel to the A563, which is the Leicester Ring Road. Consequently, Blaby Road is used as an alternative east-west route through the Town to avoid congestion on the A563. A significant amount of the vehicular traffic using the B582 Blaby Road is considered to be external traffic, passing through South Wigston as part of a longer route. A full origin and destination survey could be undertaken to identify where the traffic is travelling from and to. Given the distinct lack of alternative routes for this through-traffic, other than along the Leicester Ring Road to the north, initiatives to remove through traffic from Blaby Road has not formed part of this study. Therefore consideration of traffic management measures along Blaby Road in the vicinity of the Town Centre will be considered.
- 5.55 Observations have also revealed that a significant proportion of vehicles on Blaby Road are light or heavy goods vehicles, largely associated with the industrial units in Wigston and South Wigston. The presence of goods vehicles along a busy shopping street has safety implications for pedestrians, in addition to the access problems experienced by traffic wishing to access Blaby Road from the residential streets to the north. The access problems could be managed by the addition of traffic control measures such as traffic signals, which would regulate the flow of traffic to and from Blaby Road. One possible option would be to signalise the staggered junctions at either end of the main shopping street in South Wigston and alter the existing one-way streets to make Station Street and Clifford Street the only points of access onto Blaby Road from the residential streets to the north. This option is shown on Figure 5.2.
- 5.56 A revised one-way system would be subject to the implementation of a revised Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), and would require the full support of the

Emergency Services. The diversion of traffic created by a revised one-way system will be minimal and overall journey times may be improved through the introduction of signalised junctions.

- 5.57 Controlling access to and from the residential streets to the north of Blaby Road would reduce some of the congestion along Blaby Road and create a safer shopping environment. Cycle and pedestrian crossing facilities could be incorporated within the signalised staggered crossroad layout, again improving the pedestrian environment around the main shopping centre.
- 5.58 The provision of pedestrian crossing facilities between these two signalised junctions should also be considered to facilitate the safe and direct movement of pedestrians along the shopping street. The type and location of crossing facilities should be appropriate for the level of pedestrian and vehicular activity experienced between these points, and additional surveys will be required to identify desire lines and design constraints which may affect the location of a new crossing facility. Blaby Road is a busy vehicular through route and the impact of new pedestrian crossing facilities on the movement of traffic must also be considered. If either of the options above were to be progressed, this would require further detailed capacity assessment and modelling work of the local area.
- 5.59 The Baseline and Options Study identified that there was a possible risk of vehicles travelling at excessive speeds on the Countesthorpe Road approach to South Wigston. Prior to crossing over the canal, Countesthorpe Road does a dog leg right-left which is subject to the national speed limit. Once over the bridge, the speed limit changes to 30mph. As a result, drivers often take this section of road at speed, increasing the potential risk of a serious accident and making the road unattractive for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists.
- 5.60 As part of the masterplan the start of the 30mph speed limit could be moved prior to the sharp bends to reduce vehicle speeds along this section. The start of the speed limit could be integrated with the existing gateway feature to reinforce the speed limit and sense of arrival at South Wigston. Any decision to alter the speed limit will require amendments to the existing Traffic Regulation Order and will need careful assessment in line with DfT Circular 01/2006. Leicestershire County Council and the Police should be involved in early discussions regarding proposed changes to the speed limit.
- 5.61 South Wigston is linked to Leicester by continuous development and hence it is not well defined as an independent location. In particular the edge of the Town is not clearly identified on most of the entries into the centre. To raise the profile and create a distinct identity for the town, gateways can be created to mark the main entry points into South Wigston. Key locations have been identified, two primary gateways at key junctions with Blaby Road and secondary gateways along Saffron Road and Countesthorpe Road. These will complement the existing gateway for the Borough of Oadby and Wigston (see Figure 5.1).

Car Parking

Off-Street Car Parks

- 5.62 Observations would suggest that the existing parking stock is appropriate for the current level of demand in South Wigston. Off-street car parks exist at either end of the shopping section on Blaby Road, and additional facilities are provided in the Countesthorpe Road car park and the Tesco car park, both of which are free to use, but for a limited time period. There is an additional car park on Station Street part of which has now been developed. The Kirkdale Road car park is also well used by those using the train station.
- 5.63 It is important to direct traffic to the nearest car park from any direction to reduce unnecessary trips on Blaby Road through the main shopping area. This can be achieved through the implementation of a comprehensive signage strategy, ensuring that each car park has adequate capacity and is secure and convenient for the local facilities. All car parks should be well lit and have strong pedestrian linkages with local facilities and the Town Centre.
- 5.64 Parking provision will need to be reviewed alongside any proposed development which is likely to generate vehicular movements, to ensure that parking stock is suitable in terms of turnover, location and quantity. The over-provision of off-street parking facilities is undesirable as it may encourage unnecessary car-based journeys and may accommodate prime development land.
- 5.65 Disabled parking bays should be designated within all off-street car parks, closest to the facilities which they serve. The number of disabled parking spaces should be in accordance with Leicestershire County Council's current Parking Standards. Pedestrian signage should be installed to direct visitors from the car park to the main leisure and retail facilities of the town.
- 5.66 The existing vehicular access arrangements and layout of the Countesthorpe Road car park appears to be difficult to use, particularly when entering from the south. This arrangement should be reviewed in detail to find a more suitable access and layout arrangement, whilst still retaining a level of parking stock which is suitable for the current demand. This should be supported by environmental improvements.

On-Street Parking

- 5.67 On-street parking is available on all of the main residential streets around the centre of South Wigston. This parking does not appear to be restricted and observations suggest that commuter and shoppers parking does not encroach into the residential areas. This would suggest that the off-street parking provision is currently appropriate, if not slightly over provided, for the current level of activity around the town centre. However, the parking stock should be reviewed in conjunction with any proposed development where an increase in parking need is anticipated.
- 5.68 Evidence from site observations would also suggest that very little on-street parking occurs on Canal Street. The vehicles that have been observed parking here are concentrated at the Blaby Road end, closer to the shops. Therefore, it may be beneficial to remove some of these parking spaces to make better use

of the highway, and to widen the footways and provide streetscape improvements. This could be achieved by the extension of the existing public realm improvements being carried out on Blaby Road, which would also provide an improved and safer setting for the new College development.

- 5.69 There is also some on street parking provided by the main shops on Blaby Road which is well used.

Parking Management

- 5.70 The initial observations made in this study have been limited to a small number of days and may not be representative of the actual parking issues within South Wigston. Therefore, to gain more confidence in the findings a more detailed study could be carried out to determine the parking requirements and concerns in the town.
- 5.71 The provision of adequate parking facilities is important for sustaining the functions of a Town Centre. Whilst the under-provision of parking facilities may displace parking onto nearby residential streets or at worse, may divert shoppers to nearby town centres with better parking facilities, the over-provision of parking may encourage an unsustainable dependency on car use and add to congestion in the Town Centre. The number, location and turnover of off-street parking is important for Town Centre vitality and should be assessed against the current use and predicted demand for parking created by new housing, leisure and retail development. If future developments are expected to increase vehicular-based journeys, additional on and off-street parking surveys should be undertaken to determine a suitable parking management strategy. This type of information could be undertaken by applicants in support of planning proposals.
- 5.72 Off-street parking facilities appear to be conveniently located for the Town Centre and are preferable to parking on nearby residential streets adjacent to the main shopping street. There may be scope to rationalise the amount of Town Centre parking, potentially opening up new sites for development. However, any rationalisation should follow a comprehensive parking study and will need to be looked at in conjunction with improvements to the existing parking stock. Improved lighting and security and pedestrian infrastructure within existing car parks may encourage modified parking behaviour in the Town Centre.

Public Transport

- 5.73 South Wigston greatly benefits from having a train station with direct trains to Leicester and Birmingham. However, there are opportunities to enhance the existing infrastructure and facilities and the availability of passenger travel information. Pedestrian infrastructure between the train station and the Town Centre is crucial to encourage residents and visitors to use rail as a convenient mode of transport. The identification of a suitable pedestrian route and upgrade of existing infrastructure where possible will facilitate the safe and direct movement of pedestrians and cyclists between the station and the Town Centre. This should be complemented by a pedestrian and cycle signage strategy. Links and signage to the existing train station car park on Kirkdale Road should also be improved. In the longer term, there is also potential to increase the parking

provision to the north of the train station, if development is feasible within the Triangle Site (as allocated in the Local Plan).

- 5.74 Movement within the train station should also be enhanced, and access to the platform should be compliant with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements. Improved waiting areas will make the station more attractive for regular users and visitors to the area. Significant improvement can also be made in the desirability and accessibility of the station by the inclusion of real time information screens, handrails, new shelters and lighting. These facilities could be introduced over a period of time and would not require a large budget.
- 5.75 The Leicestershire Star-Trak system is already in use within South Wigston with the minimum of mobile text message service information being provided at stops. Where possible, bus stops and shelters should be standardised to enhance the overall streetscape appearance. The provision of wider waiting areas, timetable information and seating would also be beneficial.
- 5.76 The demand for public transport facilities may increase following the potential creation of new housing, health centre and retail opportunities. New routes and bus stop locations should be considered in conjunction with these developments.

Non Motorised Users

- 5.77 South Wigston is a compact town and has very good potential for encouraging walking and cycling trips as an alternative to the car for short distance journeys. The reduction in vehicular trips would help to reduce congestion along Blaby Road, and increased pedestrian movements would encourage social interaction and could create opportunities for the development of new social spaces along new or established pedestrian corridors.
- 5.78 Some of the key walking and cycling routes within South Wigston have been identified on the Transport Solutions plan (see Figure 5.2). A further study could identify walking and cycling networks, in particular linkages should be enhanced between the existing local cycle network, the Town Centre and the train station. Existing pedestrian and cycling infrastructure should be improved where necessary to ensure the provision of high quality networks, and should be well lit and clearly signed from key locations such as the Town Centre and the bus and railway stations. Improvements may include areas of localised widening to enable the unhindered passage of pedestrians and cyclists, the installation of dropped crossings, tactile paving and formal crossing facilities. New pedestrian and cycle routes should be developed to the same high standard and should be promoted through the use of leaflets, maps and special events (such as the national Cycle 2 Work week).
- 5.79 In particular, optimum use should be made of the Blaby Road Park in providing a green corridor from the main shops down to the picnic site at Crow Mills. Whilst the Park benefits from a bridal path, paths generally in the park do not provide for cycle use as they are too narrow. Provision for cyclists could be made by widening footways or providing dedicated cycle paths through the park. Additional improvements to the picnic area at the south of the park will encourage cyclists and pedestrians to use this route not only as a convenient linkage from the south into the Town Centre, but also encourage the use of this area for social and leisurely activities.

- 5.80 Blaby Road Park is an attractive open space which can be utilised for frequent social events and gatherings, and this area needs to be promoted from within the Town Centre. Blaby Road Park offers an attractive retreat from the Town Centre which should be promoted to local shoppers and Town Centre employees. The park is within easy walking distance of the main shopping street and the introduction of a modern picnic area will encourage people to visit this area during their lunch-break or after work. Finger posts should be provided in all car parks and from the main shopping street in the direction of the park, with the development of a key pedestrian and cycle corridor between the two destinations. Pedestrian crossing facilities should be provided where appropriate.
- 5.81 The existing National Cycle Route Network and off road cycle routes within South Wigston largely run from east to west between Wigston and Blaby, to the north and south of the main shopping street. North-south linkages should be created between these two parallel routes, incorporating a linkage adjacent to the railway station. For long term effectiveness the networks should be reviewed at regular intervals and well maintained to ensure that they best serve the needs of the local community.

- 5.84 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.
- 5.85 Improvements to the public realm run through the whole Town Centre. Blaby Road has already benefited from upgrades to its public realm. This should be continued, particularly around key gateways into the Town Centre e.g. street furniture, lighting and public art. This section of the report sets out a broad public realm framework, considering the different types of spaces throughout the Town and how those may be treated. Demonstrator projects and the design guidance, detailed later in this report, offer much more information on the detailed design and materials.

Green Space

- 5.86 Green space in South Wigston adds value to the Town Centre offer. However, an overarching design and management guide is required to encompass all green space, gardens, trees and planting schemes to ensure successful integrated design with the public realm.
- 5.87 Green space design should complement the proposed high quality design code, character of the area and provide the contemporary design expression discussed earlier. At the same time, schemes should be self-facing and respond innovatively to the demands of climate change, sustainability and community. Planting should be supportive of biodiversity, and through intelligent design incorporate residential areas seamlessly with other mixed uses of the Town Centre. Planting proposals of new developments should fit within this 'green' design code.

Residential Neighbourhoods

- 5.88 To ensure that South Wigston continues to become a desirable place to live, it is important that key residential streets remain attractive and safe. This can be achieved through relatively low level interventions such as pavement treatments, lighting and improved maintenance of incidental green space. The residential development that has been proposed in the Masterplan would consist of such intervention.
- 5.89 The overall appearance of residential neighbourhoods is difficult to control as homes are most often privately owned by individuals. It is normally beyond the control of public authorities to intervene in the appearance and maintenance of residential properties. Nevertheless, where necessary and possible, it would be important to seek to work with the community with the aim of achieving overall improvements.

Key linkages

- 5.90 The improvement of key linkages and junctions is fundamental to South Wigston's Town Centre. Being able to walk safely into the centre of the Town is fundamental to our Masterplan. As such, the preferred option for the site on South Canal Street is a comprehensive package of improvements that will include a green link from the Grand Union Canal to the Park, pavement conditions and appearance, road junctions, appropriate surface treatments,

lighting, street furniture, and signage. More information is also given in the transport sections of this report.

Shop Front Design

- 5.91 The poor condition and appearance of the public realm in the Town Centre has previously been identified and needs to be resolved in order to help improve the attractiveness of the town. Improving the public realm will help to boost investor confidence and indeed much work has recently been delivered in this area. 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 it is therefore recommended that this includes extending the new paving (e.g. along Canal Street) and better relationships with shop fronts, and a co-ordinated suite of street furniture including benches, litter bins and lighting, as well as the continuation of 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.
- 5.92 The public realm (publicly accessible streets, pathways and open space) should be framed and defined by building frontages. However, where a continuous building frontage is not possible or appropriate, gaps can be filled using tree planting and / or attractive boundary walls. The backs of properties should back onto each other for mutual protection from possible invasions of privacy or intrusion.



Examples of the existing retail units along Blaby Road

- 5.93 Council initiatives could be in place to allow for grant aided schemes to be implemented to enhance these key routes and provide a stronger perception of South Wigston.
- 5.94 A Shop Front Improvement Scheme could be extended and encouragement given to all shop owners to take up the scheme within the town centre. More funding could be made available to the owners of the shops to pay for part of the cost of repairing and reinstating of the shop front. It would also include, signage, lighting repairs, stone, brick work, painting, replacing gutters or down pipes and repairing or replacing windows and doors.

- 5.95 Shop Front design should relate to the design of the wider building in terms of vertical lines, distinction of use, architectural detailing, materials and colours. This suggests a bespoke approach where standard corporate designs are not allowed to compromise the integrity and visual appeal of the building and wider town centre townscape. Characterless wall to wall glazing should be avoided. It will also be important to control advertisement consents to encourage a 'better than standard' approach to lift the appearance of the centre, for example the use of more traditional materials and lighting approaches.
- 5.96 An example of a successful 'Shopfront Improvement Scheme' is the City of Edinburgh – Leith and Portobello. All information can be found on their website; <http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk>.



'Before and After' Portobello High Street, 'Edinburgh Shopfront Improvement Scheme'



'Before and After' Tam O' Shanter Public House Leith, Edinburgh 'Shopfront Improvement Scheme'

- 5.97 As Blaby Road is the main shopping street the Shopfront Improvement Scheme should be focused here. It should avoid any unnecessary gaps in the retail frontage arising from vacant units, blank walls, backs of development, or other uses (e.g. residential) at ground level. These are likely to detract from and water down the shopping experience, which in turn will impact on the viability of other units.
- 5.98 Corners from non-retail streets should also be considered from a townscape and natural surveillance perspective. Where retail turns the corner to side streets, an active edge (including a shop window) should be provided to this side street rather than a blank uninviting wall. Similarly, excessive servicing and parking areas should be avoided where they adjoin the public realm.

Achieving Better Design

5.99 Award-winning design should be achieved in all aspects of South Wigston's Town Centre. Inspirational design will add value to the new developments, socially, environmentally and economically, and will support the long-term regeneration and prosperity of South Wigston. To achieve this, the following principles should be followed:

- Invest in delivery and commit to high standards
- Invest in public realm early to spark wider economic activity
- Recognise the importance of local identity and sense of place
- Recognise the importance of connecting places - footfall flows
- Recognise the wider benefits of creating spaces
- Maintenance is vitally important. It should be considered from the outset, and
- Innovative design generates solutions above the ordinary - 'The Wow Factor'

5.100 Detailed design guidance would be beneficial to the Council and applicants, and this could be achieved on a Borough wide scale, perhaps updating current guidance taking into account Masterplans for Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston as well as other parallel work being undertaken. However it should be clarified that the Council should not accept a poor standard of design in South Wigston (or indeed anywhere in the Borough), or that which does not meet the principles of design as set out in this report and the wider development of the Town Centre, or indeed those principles as set out in best practice guidance as produced by CABI in particular. Planning applications that do not meet these standards or can not undergo a process of negotiation to achieve these standards should be refused.

Movement

5.101 The design of the built environment should balance the needs of the different modes of transport. South Wigston retains some of its historic and permeable urban grain, which allows a choice of pedestrian routes through the area. New development should add to and support this network.

5.102 The building and landscape treatment of streets and pathways should reinforce the role each link plays within the route hierarchy. Primary links should be strongest visually. Secondary links might include those linking primary links. Public realm improvements to key links, for example from the Town Centre to the Canal, should include well designed public art, street furniture, lighting, tree planting, signage, pathway materials, on-street parking and bus facilities.

5.103 The public realm of residential streets should maximise the use and visual appeal of the street space. On these residential only streets Homezone measures are suitable where limited through traffic is intended. Homezones are designated zones designed to prioritise resident activities, pedestrian access and safety whilst still accommodating vehicles. Homezone measures include 10/20mph speed restrictions, shared surfaces (designed for pedestrian priority), pavement/road pinch points, bollards and tree planting, surface material

changes, planting beds, on-street parking, road narrowing, articulation of the road, etc.

Townscape and Legibility – Design Principles

Key gateways

- 5.104 Key gateways to South Wigston need to be strengthened to promote the attractions on offer, to help invite people in and to emphasise the sense of arrival. The obvious choice for these gateways are at both ends of Blaby Road. Similarly gateways at the micro-level are important to attract people to key parts of the Town Centre. Gateways can be defined by strong building design, high quality public realm, banners, landmarks and art works. As part of the College development there may be an opportunity to provide some gateways in this area, and on Blaby Road Park as part of the review of Blaby Road Park that is currently underway.

Landmarks

- 5.105 Landmarks should be used to identify places of importance, such as key, gateways, key open spaces and uses. Landmarks provide markers within the urban landscape aiding navigation and orientation, and identifying areas of use. Landmarks should be prominently located to maximise their usefulness.
- 5.106 Landmarks are any features which are visually prominent, distinct and memorable, whether they are buildings, art works, open spaces, etc. Landmarks taller than the surrounding roofscape punctuate the Town Centre skyline adding to their visual prominence. Landmarks should be of the highest visual quality given their visual prominence.

Vistas

- 5.107 Key vistas should be strongly framed using buildings and/or trees. Key views should either extend to surrounding landscapes / open spaces or end on attractive 'vista-stopper' buildings or features. Street corners, vista-stoppers and open spaces provide the most visibly prominent locations within the Town Centre and should be of high visual appeal. Prominent unattractive and/ or missing building frontages should be targeted for improvement.
- 5.108 Signage should provide additional direction to key points of interest but should be consolidated to avoid cluttering of the street-scene.

Character

- 5.109 Architectural and public realm design should complement the existing character of the area, and provide contemporary design expression, which reflects modern functions, styles and the diversity of people.
- 5.110 New development should use a palette of predominantly locally sourced materials, which are fit for purpose, to provide coherence with existing development and with the surrounding built and landscape environment. Where standards set down by authorities are at odds with the vision, innovative design

solutions should be explored and/or persuasive argument used to guarantee the best possible design outcome.

Materials and Products

- 5.111 The materials and products that are selected should be appropriate to the design intentions and be of a high standard with respect to durability, availability and sustainability.

Sustainable Development

- 5.112 Principles of sustainable development are incorporated throughout the Masterplan, which seeks to ensure the economic, social and environmental regeneration of the Town Centre. The Masterplan provides the context within which individual development and investment projects will be brought forward. The following provides a brief overview of sustainable development issues relating to the Masterplan.

Social Inclusion

- 5.113 The Masterplan is committed to equality and to ensuring that implementation of the proposals provides opportunities to meet the needs of all parts of the community. The Masterplan seeks to provide an opportunity to create an easily accessible, inclusive environment for all the community in the following ways:

- To ensure people can reach facilities nearby using appropriate transport modes, encouraging walking and public transport use and reducing the use of private cars for shorter journeys
- To improve health and reduce health inequalities by promoting healthy lifestyles, protecting and providing health services for all age groups
- To ensure that developments support vibrant, diverse and inclusive communities which integrate with surrounding communities
- To ensure that the existing and future housing stock meets the housing needs of all communities in the region, including the provision of adequate affordable homes
- To improve community safety, reduce crime and the fear of crime
- To promote high levels of appropriate education, and
- Increasing well being and access to opportunities are important aspirations for the Masterplan

Environmental

- 5.114 The Masterplan promotes sensitive development and related investment, and strives to achieve the following principles:

- To ensure that ecology is conserved and enhanced, maintaining biodiversity and protecting existing natural habitats which can contribute to and enhance the amenity of the town
- To protect, enhance and manage the rich diversity of the natural, cultural and built environment of the town
- To ensure new developments have an integrated approach to sustainability in their design and management

- To ensure that all development proposals consider adapting to climate change, reducing pollution and have a minimal carbon footprint
- To ensure that all new housing meet Code for Sustainable Homes standards
- To ensure the provision of affordable housing
- To ensure new developments have Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS)
- To ensure installation of Micro generation Technologies (Government funding under low carbon building programme)
- To recognise the importance of trees and create tree planting initiatives
- To promote the more sustainable use of resources related to the construction of new developments, and
- To promote more sustainable use of resources of developments under the principle of reduce, reuse and recycle, avoiding non-renewable resources

Economic

- To ensure that developments contribute to the sustainable economic viability of the local area and region
- To provide the physical conditions for a modern economic structure, including infrastructure, and
- To attract investment

Spatial

- To ensure that the most sustainable sites are used for development and that the design process, layout, structure and form provide developments that are appropriate to the local context and support sustainable communities
- To ensure that the overall design of individual buildings does not undermine the sustainability of the overall development
- Reducing energy use and reliance on fossil fuels – to reduce the town centre's carbon footprint and minimise the effects of climate change
- Improving health
- The regeneration of derelict and underused sites
- The protection of the urban environment of biodiversity, heritage and culture, and
- The promotion of economic activity – to maintain a vibrant economy

Property Commentary

5.115 The town of South Wigston 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.

5.116 There is substantial public sector investment and regeneration that is transforming the Leicester area. This is especially so in Leicester City Centre, and particularly with regard to the office and residential sectors. This will inevitably have substantial positive impact on South Wigston, and is likely to increase the demand for housing, retail, employment space and community facilities. It will improve the economy, and provide more employment and better