

CABINET - 1ST AUGUST 2013**Report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration
Lead Member: Councillor Stephen Hampson****Part A****ITEM 7 SHEPSHED TOWN CENTRE MASTER PLAN AND DELIVERY
FRAMEWORK**Purpose of Report

To inform Cabinet of the key findings and recommendations of the Shepshed Town Centre Master Plan and Delivery Framework prepared on behalf of the Council by BBP Regeneration and partners in consultation with the Shepshed Town Team. To seek Cabinet approval of the overall vision for Shepshed Town Centre, and the associated interventions and actions and commitment to working with the local community and key partners towards the delivery of the vision, subject to the availability of resources.

Recommendations

1. That the vision for Shepshed "to restore a range of shops, services and businesses supported by an enhanced public realm designed with pedestrian safety and comfort as a priority to enhance its vitality and viability at the heart of the community", as recommended in the Shepshed Town Centre Master Plan, is approved.
2. That the County Council is invited to take an active role in the delivery of the major townscape enhancements to the Bull Ring, Hall Croft, Market Place, Field Street and Britannia Street.
3. That the Borough Council continues to support the work of the Shepshed Town Team through Member representation and officer liaison.
4. That following wider partnership and community engagement the Town Team is assisted in the preparation of a prioritised action plan.

Reasons

1. To provide a clear commitment to the regeneration of Shepshed along with a platform for the preparation of development plan policies, supplementary planning guidance and development management decisions, and to inform bids for capital funding.
2. To ensure that the role and resources of the County Council as the highway authority and as the agency responsible for children and young people's services is fully engaged in the delivery of the vision.
3. To co-ordinate the delivery of actions and interventions requiring the engagement of the Borough Council and to support and enable the Shepshed Town Team to consolidate its role as a self sustaining organisation with the capacity to maintain the momentum of the local

community and businesses in the prioritisation and delivery of supporting interventions.

4. To confirm a programme of deliverable outcomes and opportunities within a defined time frame informed by key partner commitments and the availability of resources.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

“Our Place” the Corporate Plan for the period 2012 – 2016 commits to ensuring that Charnwood continues to be a prosperous and thriving Borough which embraces innovation and enterprise, whilst providing a wide range of employment opportunities.

In delivering that commitment the plan seeks to promote physical and economic growth across the Borough for which the primary delivery agent will be the adoption of the local plan. That will embrace the provision of new homes, supporting infrastructure and opportunities for growth whilst protecting the unique identity of our towns and villages and vital green spaces.

The Corporate Plan also aims to support growth through the provision of guidance to those towns that wish to develop a Town Centre Partnership.

Additionally the Charnwood Regeneration Strategy, approved by Cabinet in August 2012 (Minute 12/13: 42 applies), identified Shepshed as one of seven priority areas for regeneration across the Borough:

“.....to restore a range of shops and businesses supported by an enhanced public realm designed with pedestrian safety and comfort as a priority to enhance its vitality and viability at the heart of the community.”

In September 2012 Cabinet approved its preferred development strategy for the distribution of strategic housing needs across the Borough. This included the identification of Shepshed as a Direction of Growth for some 500 new homes and the allocation of a site to the west of Loughborough for a sustainable urban extension comprising some 3,000 homes in recognition of the regeneration needs of Shepshed, as identified in the council’s regeneration strategy (minute 48 12/13 refers). Those proposals, together with an extension of the Loughborough Science and Enterprise Park, form a west Loughborough growth area which is included within the publication draft Core Strategy approved by Cabinet in April 2013 (Minute 134 12/13 refers).

These commitments require a policy set within the emerging Core Strategy to be supported by an appropriate evidence base to secure the regeneration of Shepshed’s Town Centre. That policy set, which includes CS8 (Regeneration of Shepshed) and CS9 (Town Centres and Shops – Shepshed District Centre) of the publication draft Core Strategy, has been informed by the emerging Shepshed Town Centre Master Plan.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The delivery of recommended major physical improvements to the townscape and public realm promoted by the vision is envisaged to take a potential

period over ten years, as public sector capital spending programmes are rolled out, avenues for additional funding identified and opportunities for intervention presented by private sector partners.

Other elements from the table of recommended interventions offer more immediate to medium term prospects for delivery with provision for some having been made already through the emerging policies of the Publication draft Core Strategy.

Critically many initiatives rely for their delivery upon the active engagement of local community and business interests and the timeframe for delivery will be dictated by their particular perception of priorities, their capacity and their commitment.

The preparation of an action plan will aim to co-ordinate and prioritise activities from the menu of potential interventions recognised by the consultancy team and presented under the six strategic objectives.

Specific interventions seeking financial support from the Borough Council , or the development of a particular policy response will be referred to Cabinet for consideration as necessary.

There is no provision in the scrutiny work programme relevant to the progression of this project.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

The report has no direct financial implications.

Specific interventions emerging from the project that may require financial support from the Council will be reported to Cabinet separately as required.

Risk Management

The risks associated with the decision Cabinet is asked to make and proposed actions to mitigate those risks are set out in the table below.

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Management Actions Planned
That key partners are unable or unwilling to commit financial resources to support delivery	Probable	Moderate	Work with the Town Team to explore and deliver local interventions to create a favourable environment for private sector investment. Prepare a development brief to guide and control private sector investment in support of the vision.

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Management Actions Planned
			Engage with key funding partners at senior level to impress the need for Shepshed to be prioritized in regeneration and spending plans as a major component in Charnwood's growth strategy.
That the Town Team fails to attract and retain sufficient support to deliver	Possible	Major	Support the Town Team and encourage wider participation among the community and business interests to fill specific skills gaps. Publicize the action plan to stimulate interest and garner direct support within the community.

Equality and Diversity

The Shepshed Town Team has included representation from the Charnwood Disability Forum. The forum and other equality and diversity groups will be engaged as detailed proposals are worked up for implementation.

Crime and Disorder

Leicestershire Constabulary have been invited to join the Shepshed Town Team but have been unable to commit resources. The Police will be consulted as detailed proposals are worked up for implementation.

Sustainability

The primary purpose of the Master Plan and Delivery Strategy has been to encourage and enable the regeneration of the town centre to provide an accessible, vital and viable town centre to enhance the overall sustainability of the wider Shepshed community.

Key Decision: Yes

Background Papers: None

Officer(s) to contact: Richard Bennett (01509) 634763
richard.bennett@charnwood.gov.uk

Part B

Background

1. In December 2012 BBP Regeneration was appointed as the lead partner in a consultancy consortium including Wei Yang and Partners (urban designers and town planners) and Shared Intelligence (specialists in economic regeneration) to prepare a co-ordinated Master Plan and flexible Delivery Framework to improve the overall economic health and viability of Shepshed Town Centre.
2. The specific deliverables required of the commission were to provide a strategy for:
 - Encouraging community and economic activity within the town centre
 - Enhancing the overall town experience and offer for all users and investors
 - Improving the legibility of the town centre and viability of business activities
 - Improving connectivity of the town centre to the wider community
 - Providing a vehicle to support applications for capital funding
 - Co-ordinating redevelopment opportunities, and,
 - Balancing the needs for accessibility, movement, pedestrian safety and the maintenance of a high quality public realm.
3. The commission was undertaken in close consultation with the Shepshed Town Team which draws its representation from Leicestershire County Council, the Borough Council, Shepshed Town Council, Shepshed Community Plan Group, local businesses, community interest groups and residents.
4. A scenario planning workshop was held on 7 February 2013 at which four potential visions were shared with the Town Team with a view to defining a shared ambition and to agree the most appropriate approach for Shepshed. The workshop also provided the opportunity to capture additional knowledge from the community to verify, supplement or amend initial desk top research.
5. The preferred vision, focusing on delivering a local centre for local people and supporting a thriving independent sector, was then worked up in detail along with a series of objectives and desirable interventions (social, economic and environmental) to support the delivery of the vision. That work was discussed with the Town Team on 4 March 2013.
6. The emerging vision was the subject of a public exhibition in Shepshed on 18 March 2013 which was attended by over 80 visitors who shared their views on the proposals and some of whom submitted written comments. The results of the feedback were shared with the Town Team on 25 March 2013.
7. The draft final report was circulated to members of the Town Team and endorsed at a meeting held on 29 April 2013 as an accurate account of the proceedings of the commission with logically derived conclusions and recommendations.

8. BBP Regeneration submitted their final report on 8 May 2013 a full copy of which may be viewed at:

<http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/shepsheddraftmasterplan>

9. The Shepshed Town Team continues to meet regularly and is exploring avenues for the practical delivery of community and local business led interventions with a view to achieving “quick wins” and sustaining the momentum of the project to tackle some of the more challenging aspects of the delivery framework required to secure longer term change.

Master Plan Overview

10. The Master Plan is a substantial report but the executive summary, attached at Appendix 1, provides a convenient summary of the overall project. The following sections of this report will address the key elements of the Master Plan in greater detail.

The Vision

11. Engagement with the Town Team to determine a shared ambition for the town centre quickly dismissed scenarios based upon encouraging a major supermarket development either within the established town centre or in an out of centre or out of town location. The preferred approach focused on the encouragement of a local centre to meet local needs based on a thriving independent sector. The primary thrust of the Master Plan therefore aims to encourage a more cohesive, recognisable town centre with the intention of establishing a traditional High Street, encouraging pedestrian activity, linked shopping trips and a clear sense of arrival.

12. Accordingly the major physical components of the Master Plan rely on three distinct elements with a specific function assigned to each:

Hall Croft:	A place to meet at the heart of the town
The Bull Ring:	A clearly defined gateway creating a sense of arrival in the town centre
Market Place:	A heritage quarter linked to the Conservation Area

13. The overall concept plan is attached at Appendix 2A. That plan envisages the linkage of the three component elements by way of a pedestrian spine with active frontages retained along the route to consolidate the commercial core and encourage additional footfall supporting linked trips. New gateways are proposed at Britannia Street and Field Street to open up views and accessibility into the Hall Croft which presently is hidden from view. Development opportunities in Shepshed are few, but the potential is recognised for the redevelopment of property bordering the Hall Croft to create and define a new public space at the heart of the town.

14. The key features of each of the three constituent intervention areas are summarised below and illustrated in the plans attached at Appendices 2B – 2D.

Hall Croft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New mixed use development – shops, café restaurant, leisure uses at ground floor and residential commercial above off a new pedestrian thoroughfare accessed from Britannia Street (requiring the assembly of land currently occupied by the closed Britannia Inn, former Shepshed Snooker Club building and County Library).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a corner building (on the site of the library) enhancing legibility and providing focus.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved Market Place
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic calming in Field Street and Britannia Street to reduce vehicle speeds.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve surface materials linking to the heritage quarter to the north and to the Bull Ring to the south.
Bull Ring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign bus turning circle and new bus stops for the 4, 126, 127 and 129 services.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widen pavements to improve walking and shopping environment with additional pedestrian refuges on the main approaches to the junction increasing road crossing safety.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide planting and/or public art as a central feature within the roundabout to enhance the gateway status of the site.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve surface material linking to Field Street and Hall Croft.
Market Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-organise parking to reduce impact on the public realm, deliver a shared venue for special events and allow wider pavements to create a comfortable walking and shopping environment along with opportunities for outdoor seating areas.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared surface paving and ramps to slow down vehicular speed creating a pedestrian friendly environment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve surface materials linking into Hall Croft.

Delivering the Vision – 6 Strategic Objectives

15. Six strategic objectives to guide the delivery of the Master Plan were agreed in consultation with the Town Team. The report provides a comprehensive delivery framework, illustrated with examples of good practice, cataloguing a series of interventions required to meet each objective supported by specific actions, responsibilities, funding opportunities and time scales. The agreed objectives and headline interventions are summarised below. Those interventions in which the Borough Council might be expected to assume a leading role in its

capacity as the planning authority, licensing authority or by reason of its wider service delivery responsibilities are flagged with an asterisk.

❖ **Objective 1: To promote Shepshed as a historic town whose heritage and location will attract visitors and drive prosperity**

- Establish a “Shepshed Marketing Team” reporting to the Town Team
- Develop a brand / marketing programme – eg: “Gateway to the National Forest.”
- Enhance protection for important buildings, features, frontages and views.*
- Capitalise on historic assets through enhanced signage and art.
- Encourage leisure cycling developing and promoting a route for “health tourists.”

❖ **Objective 2: To reinvigorate town centre activity and prosperity based around a new/enhanced market and independent retail offer**

- Protect core retail area and frontages with planning policy.*
- Limit the expansion of uses that do not conform with the strategic vision through planning and licensing policy.*
- Make best use of empty shop space: facilitate “pop up” uses and quality shutter / window art.
- Provide financial and business support to small / start up retailers and help those looking to locate in the town centre.*
- Enhance and grow the weekday street market.*
- Relocate the Craft Fair to the town centre, expand the food element and link with seasonal / specialist touring markets.*

❖ **Objective 3: To provide enhanced leisure facilities across the town to serve the residents of Shepshed and to attract visitors to the town from outlying employment areas and surrounding settlements**

- Ensure planning and licensing policy facilitates flexible use of existing floor space and enables the development of new leisure facilities including places to eat and drink.*
- Organise a programme of night time entertainment events.
- Provide financial and business support to leisure operators and help those looking to locate in the town centre.*
- Secure new community uses such as public meeting space, children’s play groups, gymnasium, and youth facilities, especially as part of mixed use schemes in the town centre.*
- Secure land and finance for outdoor activities that have greater land requirements such as sports pitches, open space and allotments.*
- Safeguard and enhance publicly available leisure and sports facilities associated with schools and colleges.

❖ **Objective 4: To improve the visual appearance of the town centre to enhance the public realm making it an attractive environment to visit, shop and spend leisure time.**

- Establish a “Shepshed Public Realm Team” reporting to the Town Team
- Encourage shop front improvements.
- Initiate and manage other on-going aesthetic improvement and maintenance programmes to buildings and public spaces within the town centre.

❖ **Objective 5: To improve connectivity and make the town centre an easier and safer place to access and visit**

- Improve directional signage towards and around the town centre.
- Improve footpath, cycle and public transport connections to existing and new residential developments.
- Improve footpaths within the town centre when and where possible.
- Rationalise and improve town centre car parking.

❖ **Objective 6: To attract new businesses to Shepshed and to facilitate retailers and local businesses working together with appropriate support, a common purpose and mutual commitment to invest in the town centre.**

- Establish a Shepshed Retailers and Business Forum reporting to Town Team.
- Develop a voluntary Retailers Charter and encourage town centre retailers / landlords and businesses to sign up to certain standards.
- Support small business skills and training development to help start up retailers and other businesses.*
- Develop a collective approach to sharing knowledge and procurement
- Develop a strand of the Marketing Programme specifically targeted at attracting new businesses into the town

Delivering the Vision – Public Realm Improvements

16. Significant landscaping and public realm works are required to deliver the vision for both the Bull Ring and the Market Place. They fall primarily within the public highway and as such the scheme should be led by the county highway authority. That will require a commitment on the part of the County Council to align its spending programme and to support the delivery of the vision for Shepshed through its own capital programme. The Borough Council, as the local planning authority, will need to ensure that the policies are in place to justify the negotiation of developer contributions. The consultants advise that the Bull Ring and Market Place should be the priority for use of such contributions

17. The delivery of the proposals for Hall Croft are acknowledged as being far more complex and difficult; for that reason a preferred option is advanced alongside an alternative option.
18. The preferred option envisages a leading role for the Borough Council in securing the assembly of the site primarily through its own resources with a view to drafting a development brief and seeking a development / investment partner. Critically that would necessitate the acquisition of the Britannia Inn, and the adjacent former snooker club along with the co-operation of the County Council in making available the site of the public library for redevelopment. It would be a complex process which the consultants estimate could extend over a ten year period, but it is the scenario most likely to deliver transformational change at the heart of Shepshed.
19. The proposition is complicated by the status of the two properties fronting Britannia Street. At the commencement of the commission both were for sale on the open market but it appears that both are now sold / under offer.
20. The alternative option acknowledges the challenges of direct intervention in site acquisition and development and offers instead an alternative approach based upon the preparation of a development brief to establish a clear development control framework with defined use classes and design standards through which to influence and control private sector development. Developer contributions might still be considered to secure improvements to the public realm. A dialogue might be maintained with the County Council with a view to relocating the library along with other land owners to assemble an extended public space at the heart of the town.

Framework for Change – Policy

21. The study indicates that there is a clear need for the Town Council, Borough Council and County Council to align their policy with a firm commitment to prioritise the regeneration of Shepshed leading to the allocation of specific funds.
22. The Borough Council has a key role to play as the local planning authority. Recommended actions include:
 - Recognise the importance of Shepshed town centre as a retail area to be protected and reinforced.
 - Define the boundary of the town centre and secure appropriate uses within it.
 - Identify and protect important retail frontages.
 - Prioritise retail, leisure, community and food/drink uses at ground floor; offices and residential on upper floors. Encourage activity throughout the day to support the evening and night time economy.
 - Promote new leisure facilities for sports and recreational use across the town and pubs, cafes, restaurants and bars within the town centre.
 - Limit the expansion of uses in the town centre that do not align with the Master Plan vision.

- Enhance protection for important buildings, features frontages and views of historic and/or architectural merit.
 - Secure developer contributions for town centre improvements including connectivity, public realm and landscaping, leisure provision, public art and heritage enhancements.
23. The strategic components of planning policy including the status of Shepshed as a town centre and the commitment to regeneration with a menu of interventions defined to support that intent, which might be negotiated in part through developer contributions, are set out in the publication draft Core Strategy. The report ensures a sound platform within the evidence base to support and sustain those particular policies.
24. More “fine grained” policies directed towards the definition of primary shop fronts, the encouragement of some uses and discouragement of uses incompatible with the vision for the town centre will need to be rehearsed and independently examined through the Allocations and Development Management Development Plan Document.
25. A review of the Conservation Area and identification of additional buildings and structures of architectural and/or historic merit may be undertaken under the provisions of the relevant legislation at any time, subject to the availability of resources. There is a record of community groups assisting in that process as evidenced by the processes leading up to the designation of the Ashby Road Conservation Area in Loughborough.

Framework for Change – Funding

26. Not all of the recommended interventions will require funding. Many rely instead on community and entrepreneurial spirit and the Town Team will take the lead in some areas with the engagement and support of the Town Council and the emergent business forum. Other interventions will require substantial investment.
27. Some of that investment will come from the private sector. Businesses will look for a balance between risk and return and may be persuaded to invest where the public sector is able to intervene to create a favourable environment for investment and promote confidence. Typically that might include:
- Population growth
 - Low unemployment
 - High average earnings
 - Strong footfall in town centres
 - Retention of expenditure
 - Meaningful investment from other parties
28. The Borough Council together with Leicestershire County Council have pivotal roles in committing capital investment, in partnership with the LLEP to create a favourable environment for private investment and to encourage business investment and growth.

29. The report identifies opportunities to secure developer contributions from new housing schemes and other developments around Shepshed to assist in the delivery of the Master Plan. Qualifying projects could include:

- Connectivity and public transport provision
- Leisure provision
- Public realm improvements and landscaping works
- Public art and heritage improvements
- Other contributions as may be appropriate.

30. Developer contributions alone will not make significant inroads into the delivery of the Master Plan; that will require public sector capital investment, primarily on the part of the Borough Council and the County Council with the latter having particular responsibility for funding of highways and children and young people's services.

31. In addition the report identifies various public sector grants and loans which may be accessed in support of the project:

- CBC Staying Healthy Community Grants
- CBC Community Development Grants
- CBC Community Facilities Grants
- LLEP initiatives
- Community Builders Fund
- Government Departments
- National Lottery.

32. That list reasonably might be supplemented by the Borough Council's Growth Support Grant and the County Council's Rural Capital Programme Grant (to support rural businesses in the land-based, food and drink, tourism and creative sectors).

33. Identifying, targeting and co-ordinating funding opportunities will be a major work stream for the Town Team.

Concluding Assessment

34. The Master Plan and Delivery Framework succeeds in its primary objectives for the purposes of progressing the Local Plan Core Strategy. It provides a sound evidence base to support the Shepshed Town Centre Regeneration Strategy. That strategy in turn assists in the definition of a menu of regeneration interventions that might be supported by development in and around the town which will bring opportunities for attracting complementary private sector investment and scope for the negotiation of developer contributions

35. The Master Plan also sets out a delivery framework which emphasises the need for multi agency engagement in the delivery of the vision for the town. Not least is the opportunity for community engagement and leadership, in partnership with the business community, in applying their own time, skills, and energy to bring about improvements in the town centre. Indeed the preparation of the Master Plan itself has been instrumental in securing the foundation of the Town Team; a forum for

the effective engagement of stakeholders with the capacity to agree a common purpose, harness shared endeavour and form a cohesive lobby group. The processes involved in preparing the Master Plan have initiated a journey which still has far to go but the continuing commitment to the Town Team will be critical to its progress towards the delivery of the vision.

36. In line with the Corporate Plan commitment to the provision of guidance to assist in the formation of Town Centre Partnerships it is anticipated that the Shepshed Town Team will continue to require direct support until it is firmly established with the intention that it should become a self sustaining forum. However the Borough Council will remain a key member of the partnership with specific responsibility for the delivery of certain components of the Master Plan.
37. The report has identified a range of interventions necessitating a policy response on the part of the Borough Council, particularly as the local planning authority. Some aspects are already captured in the emerging Core Strategy; others, requiring finer detailed policy attention will properly fall to be considered through the Allocations and Development Management Development Plan Document. Parallel policy responses to conserve and enhance the historic heritage may be pursued under powers conferred by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
38. Other interventions will fall to be considered under the Borough Council's powers as the licensing authority. Additional avenues for Borough Council intervention and support reasonably might include

Function	Services
Leisure and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Markets management • Marketing and promotion • Town centre management (with support from Loughborough BID) • Tourism development • Public art • Community and facilities grants
Neighbourhood and Partnership Cleansing and Open Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure facilities • Green spaces
Regeneration and Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business support (advice and guidance) • Growth Support Fund

39. In combination these interventions will bring about change in Shepshed Town Centre.
40. But transformational change, as represented by the major public realm and townscape enhancements, will require the recognition of Shepshed Town Centre as a priority for regeneration on the part of both the County Council and the Borough Council together with the resources and financial commitments that such recognition bestows.

41. The preferred option for Hall Croft is particularly challenging. In the absence of a commercial development / investment partner committed to underwriting the costs of land acquisition and site assembly the risks to the Borough Council in pursuing such a strategy perhaps render that approach non viable.
42. The alternative approach is likely to be more affordable and deliverable over an extended time frame although the reduced level of control will impact upon the quality and character of the proposed new open space envisaged at the heart of the town.
43. The delivery of a substantial element of the vision for the Hall Croft will require the co-operation of the County Council in relocating or redeveloping the library to deliver an enhanced public space. The County Council's co-operation will be essential too in the delivery of the enhanced public realm within Market Place, The Bull Ring, Field Street and Britannia Street.
44. The County Council confirmed its priorities for economic growth on 13 November 2012, identifying five areas of focus:
- Worklessness
 - Employment Land and Buildings
 - A specific sector focus on Distribution and Logistics,
 - Capital Availability, and,
 - Enterprise Growth
45. There is the opportunity to align certain interventions proposed in the Master Plan with those priorities. However, the County Council will need to be persuaded of the benefits accruing from the proposed improvements to the highway and adjacent public realm presented in the vision to the prospects for delivering economic growth in Shepshed.

Appendices

Shepshed Town Centre Master Plan and Delivery Framework – May 2013

Shepshed Town Centre Master Plan and Delivery Framework

BBP Regeneration / Wei Yang & Partners / Shared Intelligence

Summary

Introduction and context

Although Shepshed has many qualities that other towns aspire to, decades of factory closures have resulted in a **loss of local jobs** and a decline in the level of economic activity within walking distance of the town centre.

Competing centres such as Loughborough and Coalville offer a wider range of shops and services, contributing to further decline.

The problems have been recognised for some time. Various studies have been undertaken but none have generated the critical mass of activity that is needed to reverse the decline. More recently, however, work on a variety of fronts has pointed the way to creating a policy framework that would support change. The **regeneration of Shepshed** will feature as a strategic priority in Charnwood Borough Council's Core Strategy (due to be published as a pre-Submission draft in June 2013), together with proposals for some 500+ dwellings in and around the town. **Shepshed's Town Team**, formed in late 2012, will play a pivotal role going forward - guiding and directing the regeneration process, creating opportunities for investment and ensuring that Shepshed makes the most of its assets.

The purpose of this commission was to deliver a **Master Plan** that provides a strategic vision, and a **flexible Delivery Framework** to improve the overall economic health and vitality of the town centre. The work was undertaken on a **collaborative and participatory** basis engaging the Town Team in three events and the wider community at a public exhibition.

Some of the **key issues** for Shepshed town centre include:

- Poor comparison retail offer (with few national multiple retailers located in the town)
- Low retention of retail expenditure, with residents travelling elsewhere to work and shop

- No clearly defined ‘town centre’ and no readily discernible ‘high street’ – retail uses interspersed with non-retail uses
- Poor public realm and pedestrian safety harm the town centre shopping experience
- A public space used for a declining street market in Hall Croft that is invisible to passing trade
- Lack of leisure facilities to meet the needs of its community

Conversely, some of the **key opportunities** include:

- An excellent location close to the M1 and National Forest
- An attractive urban fabric, particularly around Market Place
- A growing population, with potential new residential development of around 500 homes
- Potential to significantly improve access through better signage, rationalisation of traffic flows and parking, and improved links from car parks to the town centre
- A number of important buildings, features and frontages in the town centre that could be exploited and enhanced
- An active local community with lots of interest groups, clubs and societies across all ages

Defining the vision

Four broad scenarios were presented to and explored with the Town Team in order to define a new vision for Shepshed. During these discussions, it was recognised that due to the historic fabric of the town centre and limited amounts of vacant/underused land and buildings, the **scope for redevelopment within Shepshed was limited** and, in consequence, much of the vision would need to be delivered by way of **social and economic interventions, supported by environmental improvements**, as opposed to a spatial strategy delivering substantial amounts of new floorspace.

In the light of these conclusions, a preferred vision emerged: of a local centre for local people, based on support for, and expansion of, independent traders, repairing the physical fabric of the town and thereby making it more attractive. Defining this vision enabled the identification and agreement of **six Strategic Objectives**:

1. To promote Shepshed as a **historic market town** whose heritage and location will attract visitors and drive prosperity

2. To reinvigorate town centre activity and prosperity based around a **new/enhanced market and independent retail offer**
3. To provide **enhanced leisure facilities across the town** to serve the residents of Shepshed and to attract visitors to the town centre from outlying employment areas and surrounding settlements
4. To **improve the visual appearance** of the town centre to enhance the public realm making it an attractive environment to visit, shop and spend leisure time.
5. To **improve connectivity** and make the town centre an easier and safer place to access and visit.
6. To attract new businesses to Shepshed and to facilitate **retailers and local businesses** working together with appropriate support, a common purpose and mutual commitment to invest in the town centre.

Delivering the vision

The Master Plan

The Master Plan provides the framework within which detailed interventions can be designed, development proposals can be formulated, funding sought and planning policies prepared. It focuses interventions around a spine of complementary activities combining public realm improvements with strategies to relate character and identity to the town's retail function. Three 'destinations' would be created each with its own character, identity and economic rationale. The Bull Ring would be the principal gateway to the town, Market Place the 'heritage quarter and the central meeting / pedestrian area would be formed around Hall Croft, the 'heart' of the town.

The proposal for Hall Croft is by far the most complex and difficult intervention area to deliver. It is also perhaps the most important as it presents the one opportunity to give the town a "heart". A public sector led approach, which seeks to bring forward development by setting up the conditions for private developers to invest is most likely to deliver beneficial change.

However, recognising the current funding environment, we have also suggested an alternative development strategy based on the management of private sector led development proposals through the statutory planning system alongside more limited public sector investment over an extended period of time.

The Delivery Framework

The Master Plan vision will be delivered over many years and each action should be seen as one in a series of incremental steps building towards that

common goal. The Delivery Framework examines what actions, taken collectively, would deliver the Master Plan vision for Shepshed.

We propose a wide range of actions, some of which can be implemented at little or no cost, and others where substantial financial investment will be required. Similarly, with timescales, we have sought to set out some interventions which can be implemented immediately, some that will take a little longer, and others that may take a number of years to realise due to their complex nature and the need for funding. However, it is essential that those taking ownership of the delivery programme regularly review and amend the Delivery Framework to take account of changing circumstances and needs.

Finally, our list of proposed interventions is also intended to inspire – to get people thinking creatively about what can be done, how else the vision can be achieved, and what actions they can take to make it happen. We therefore include a number of examples of what has been successful elsewhere.

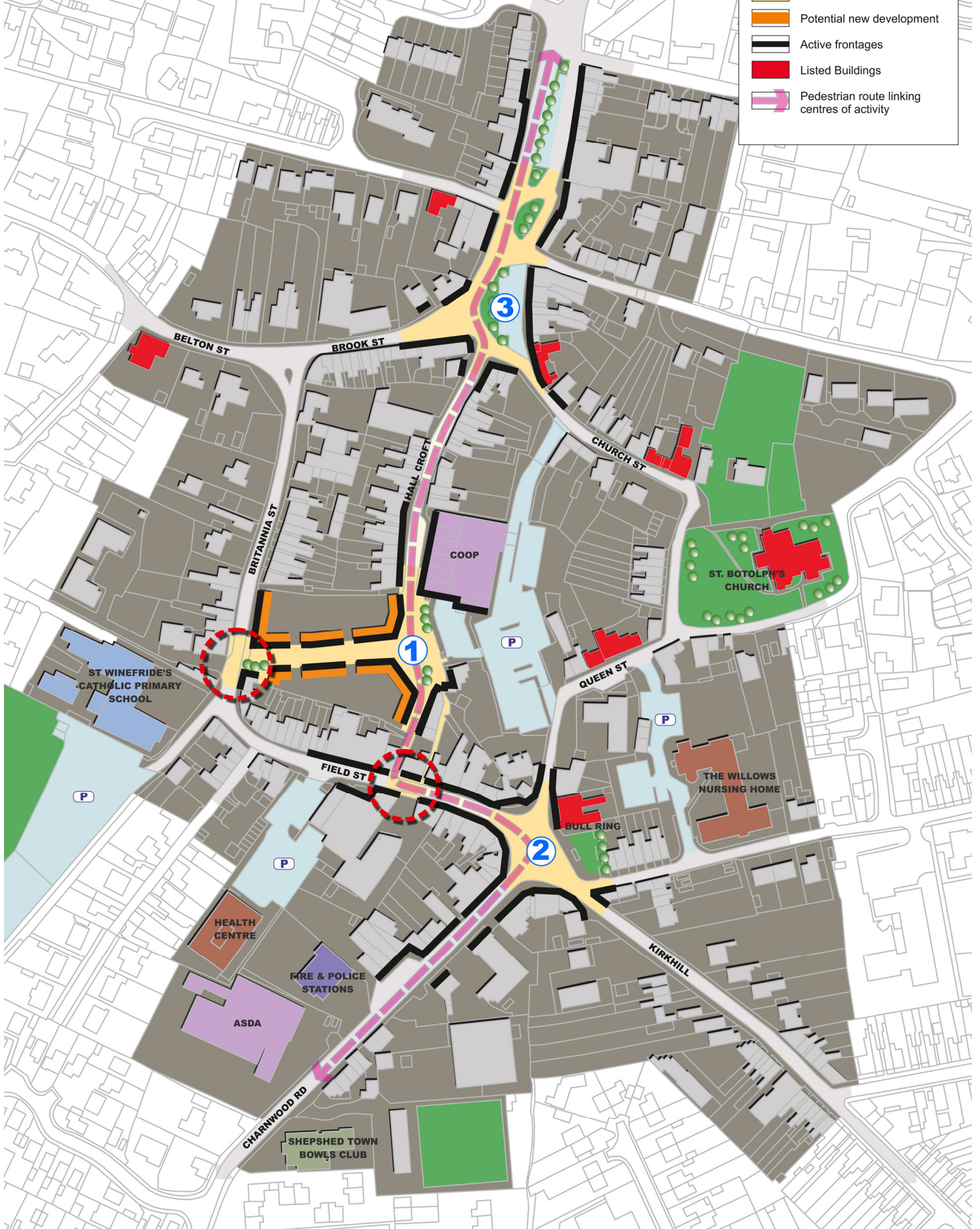
Establishing the framework for change

It is essential that structures to manage, facilitate and implement change are put in place swiftly as they form the basic framework upon which this Delivery Plan is conceived. In the final section of this report, we explore the three cross-cutting themes which need to be considered: policy, funding and governance.

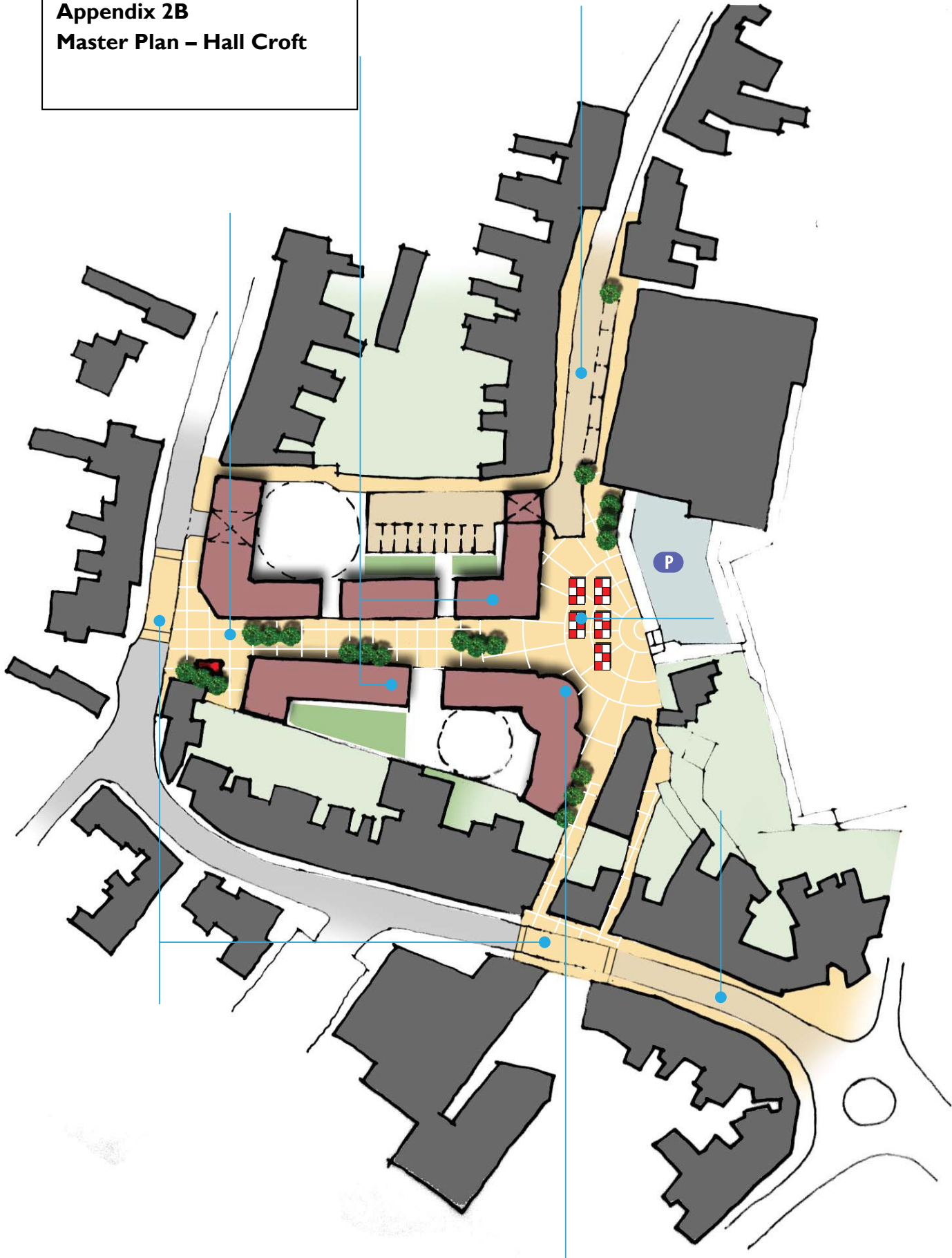
The Delivery Framework assumes at least a ten year programme of reinforcing activity. Money is important, but more important still is the willingness of local people, businesses, public bodies and other organisations to turn the vision into reality. Through the town's potential, the commitment of public bodies and the enthusiasm of local people, notable and lasting change can be achieved in Shepshed.

Appendix 2A Shephed Town Centre Master Plan

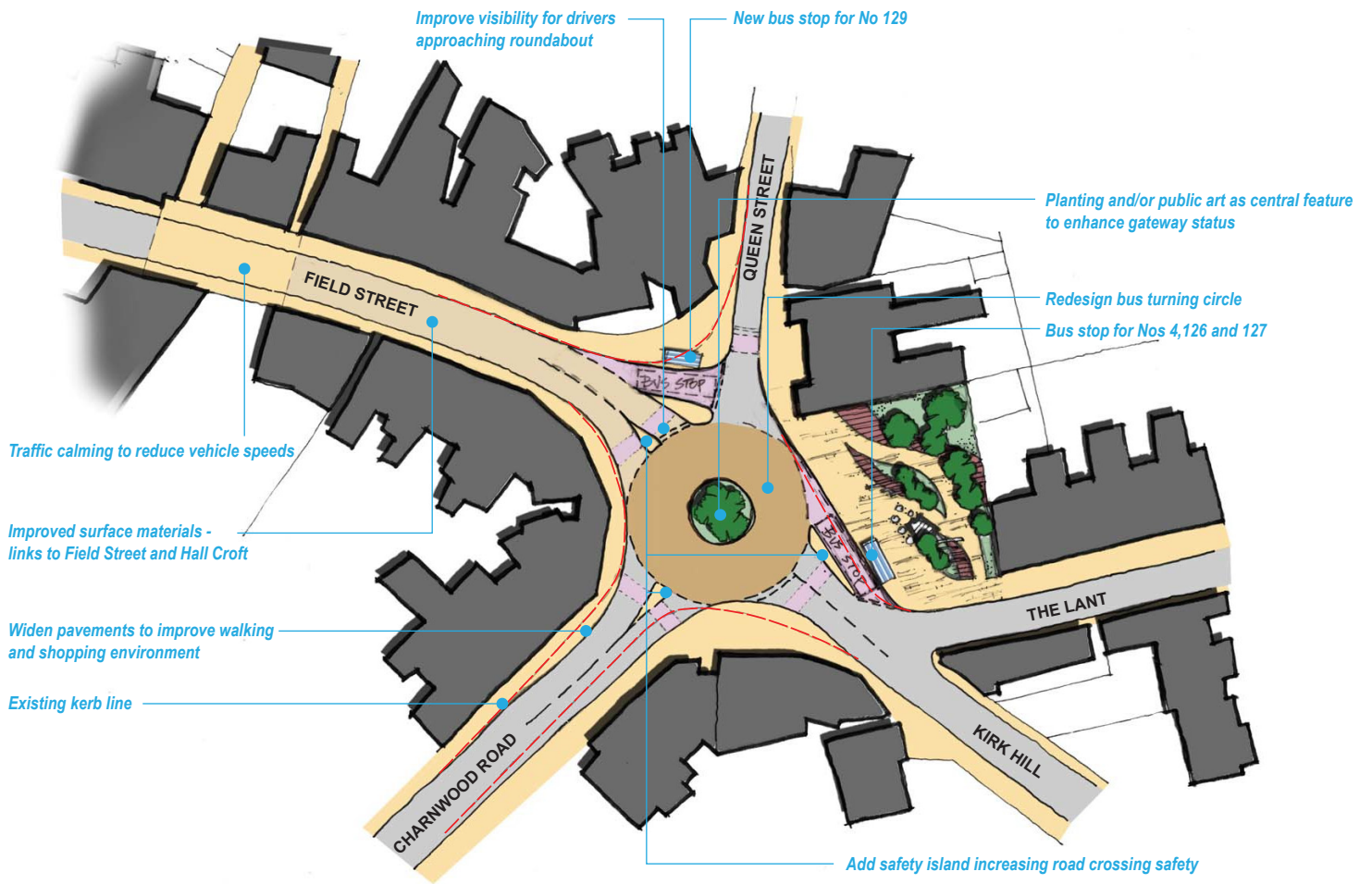
- ① Hall Croft - a meeting place, the 'heart' of the town
- ② The Bull Ring - the gateway to the town
- ③ Market Place - the heritage quarter
- ⊕ Minor gateway
- Public realm improvements
- Potential new development
- Active frontages
- Listed Buildings
- Pedestrian route linking centres of activity



Appendix 2B
Master Plan – Hall Croft



Master Plan – The Bull Ring



**Appendix 2D
Master Plan – Market Place**

Widen pavements to create a comfortable walking and shopping environment

Widen pavements to create outdoor seating areas

Re-organise parking with access directly from Brooke Street

Cycle Stands

Shared surface paving and ramps to slow down vehicular speed creating a pedestrian friendly environment

Shared surface car park and venue for special events

Re-organised car parking to reduce impact on the public realm

Improved surface materials - links to Hall Croft

