

A faint, light blue graphic in the background depicts a stylized tree on the right side, with its canopy overlapping a building-like structure on the left. The tree has a thick trunk and several branches, with a cluster of small circles representing leaves. The building has a series of vertical lines suggesting a facade or a grid.

# Stroud town centre



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# Executive Summary

## Strategy for the public realm

Stroud must find ways to improve its offer to visitors and residents. This strategy for the public realm seeks to build on what makes Stroud distinctive by celebrating key attractions such as the lanes and alleyways, the markets, independent retailers and the high quality buildings of the historic centre.

The strategy sets out a series of strategic priorities seeking to achieve a better balance between pedestrians and traffic in the historic centre to encourage more people to explore the town, stay longer and spend more money in local businesses.

In summary the key priorities include:

### Improving the historic centre

- The upper end of the High Street should be a primary destination for shoppers and visitors, with a high quality public realm creating a sense of arrival.
- The Merrywalks / King Street area should be a more pedestrian friendly space, marking a clear transition from the modern enclosed Merrywalks Centre to the open historic streets of the town.
- Subscription Rooms forecourt must fulfil its role as Stroud's principal civic space, providing a larger, safer area that is not constrained by passing traffic.
- Improvements to the seating areas and lighting should establish Bank Gardens as an attractive, safe and inviting place to relax, offering visitors and shoppers the opportunity to enjoy the green space in the town centre and an alternative route to the attractions at Lansdown.

### Improving traffic management

- The central area of Stroud will present a clear street network with a distinct priority for pedestrians.
- Restricting access to the historic retail streets to buses, taxis, blue badge holders and delivery vehicles only (consideration is being given to High Street, Kendrick Street, King Street, George Street, Threadneedle Street, John Street and Union Street).
- Bays for parking and loading within the historic retail streets should be clearly defined by their surface materials.
- Russell Street and London Road could potentially be re-opened to two way traffic, adopting low speed design principles to simplify vehicular circulation and improve access to car parks.

### Improving connections

- Attractive, consistent, high quality surface materials should encourage pedestrians through the main retail route from King Street and up the High Street towards The Cross.
- A new design solution should replace the obstruction of the wall at the end of High Street / The Cross to encourage greater access and pedestrian movement.
- Future opportunities such as the restoration of the canal and Brunel Goods Shed should support the historic centre through improved pedestrian connections.
- Enhancing opportunities to improve access to existing and future leisure opportunities.
- Integrating potential town centre expansion areas to enable Stroud to improve its offer.

### Public realm guidelines

The strategy also provides recommendations to guide improvements to detailed public realm components, including:

**Ground surfaces** that help to unify the streets and spaces within the town centre, complementing the high quality architecture and encouraging greater pedestrian activity.

**Street furniture** that is well sited, offering clear benefit for all users, with a consistent style to ensure visual continuity.

**Planting** that respects the historic character of the town, bringing texture and colour to special areas.

**Signage** that is simple and well positioned to convey essential information only.

**Lighting** that defines entrances to the town, celebrating focal points and key connections to help encourage greater activity after dark.

**Public art** that engages the community, reinforces identity and creates opportunities for play and social interaction.

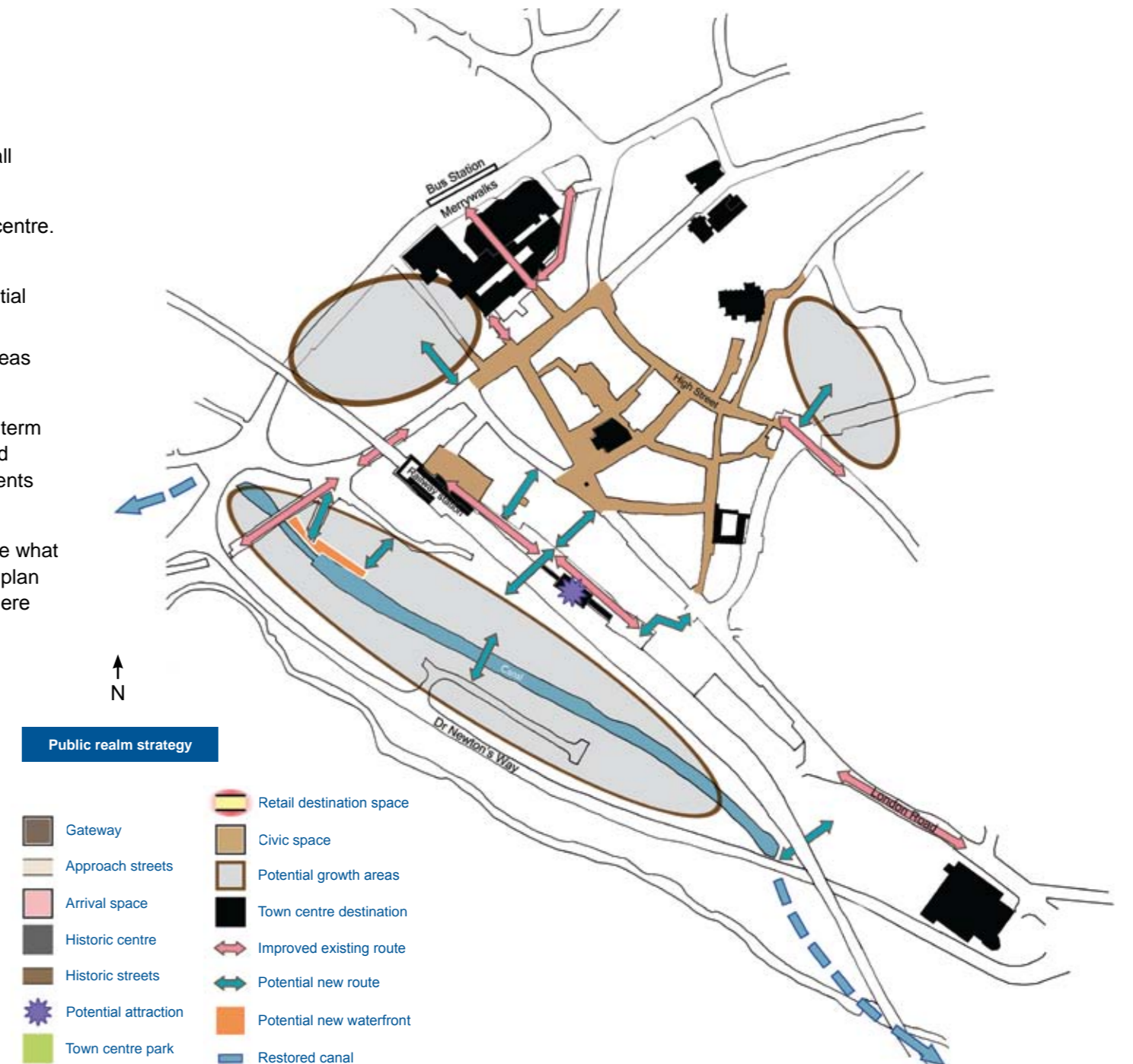
### The strategy

The following diagram brings the strategic recommendations together to present an overall strategy for change in Stroud town centre that:

- Emphasises the importance of the historic centre.
- Prioritises destination spaces.
- Strengthens key routes and identifies potential new connections.
- Identifies and integrates potential growth areas for the town.

This public realm strategy is the start of a long term process of change. It defines key principles and priorities to help guide public realm enhancements in Stroud town centre.

It presents a series of concepts to help illustrate what could be achieved and an outline for an action plan to progress investigations. It is at this stage where further testing and consultation will help inform detailed design work as progress is made towards implementation. In particular detailed investigations will be required for the traffic management proposals to assess their feasibility.

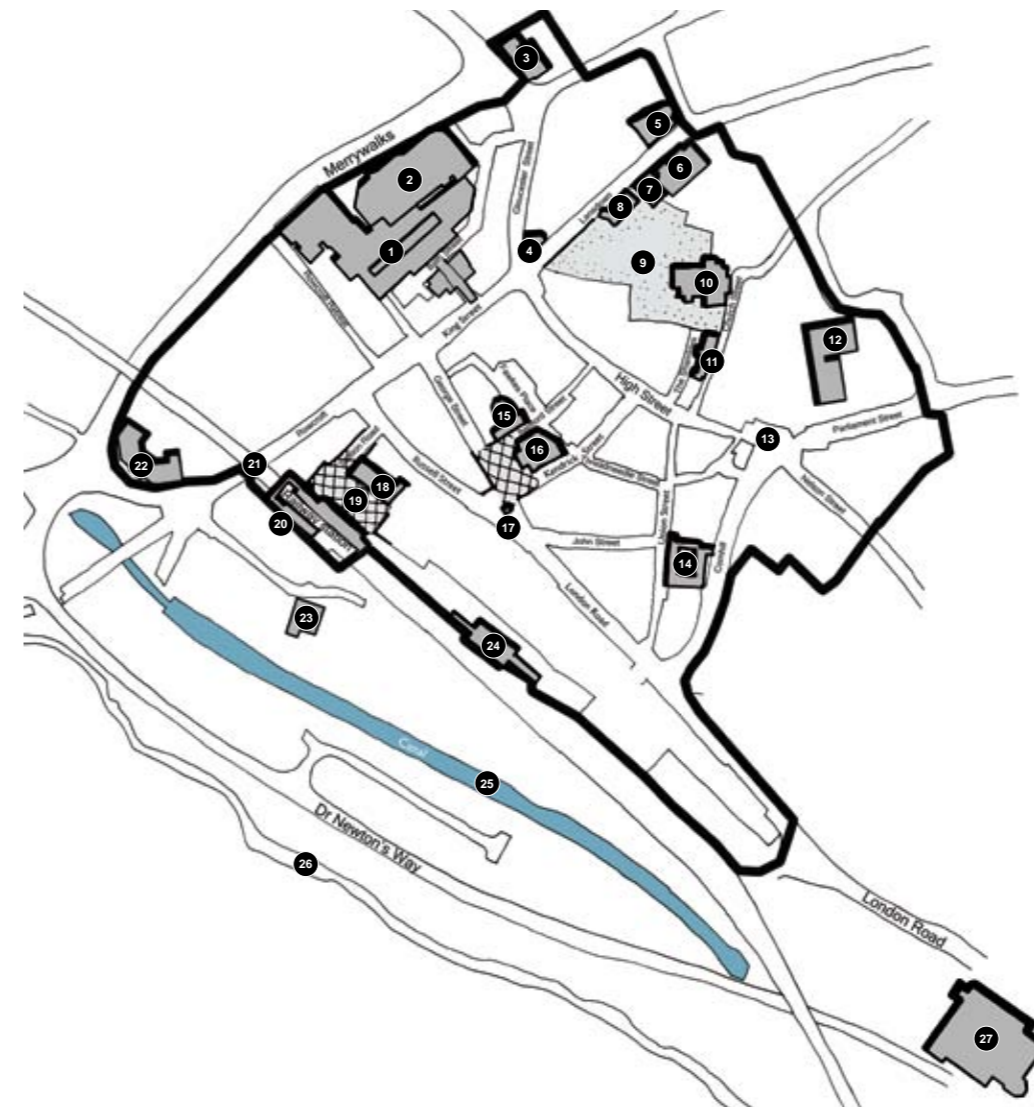


# 01

## Introduction

Stroud must develop a shared vision for the streets and spaces in the central area, to improve the image of the town and establish a better position for potential investment.

The Stroud Concordat commissioned NEW Masterplanning with Hamilton-Baillie Associates to prepare this public realm strategy which seeks to improve the key streets and spaces in Stroud to attract more visitors and better serve the local community.



### 1. Stroud town centre

- 1. Stroud town centre boundary
- 1. Merrywalks shopping centre
- 2. Cinema and bowling
- 3. Old Police Station
- 4. Greyhound public house
- 5. School of Science and Art
- 6. Library
- 7. Stroud Spiritualist Church
- 8. 'The Space'
- 9. Bank Gardens
- 10. St Laurence's Church
- 11. Old Town Hall
- 12. Police Station
- 13. The Cross ('The Berlin Wall')
- 14. Cornhill Market
- 15. Congregational Church
- 16. Subscription Rooms and forecourt
- 17. Four Clocks
- 18. Imperial Hotel
- 19. Station Square
- 20. Railway station
- 21. Railway bridge
- 22. Stroud and Swindon building
- 23. Hill Paul building
- 24. Brunel Goods Shed
- 25. Canal
- 26. River Frome
- 27. Waitrose

### Stroud town centre

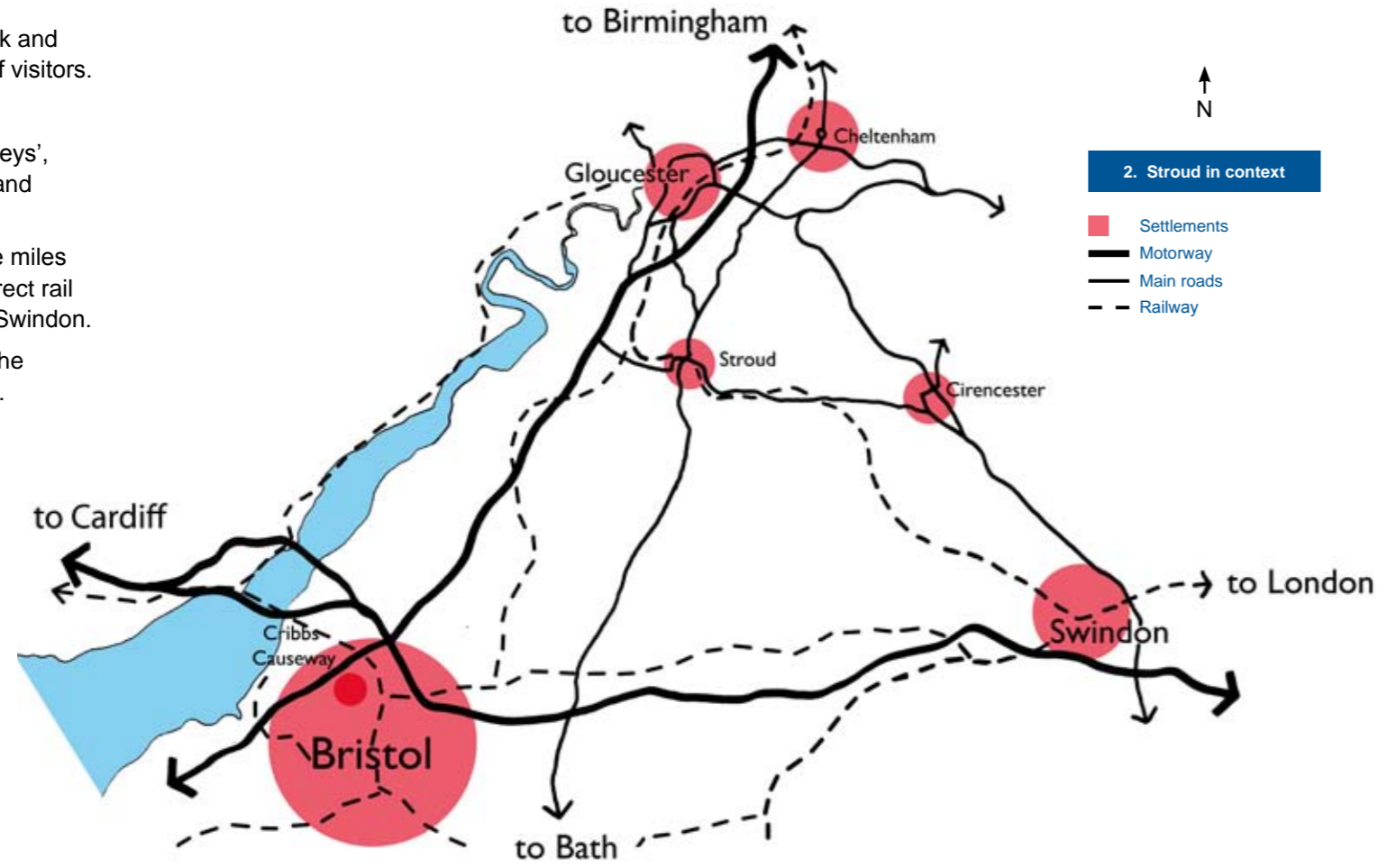
For the purpose of this study the boundary of Stroud town centre is broadly defined by the A46 Merrywalks to the west, the railway line to the south, Cornhill link road to the east and the Lansdown / Locking Hill junction and Ryeleaze Road to the north. The proposed bridge and roundabout works at Wallbridge are being addressed separately by Gloucestershire County Council, subject to funding.

## Stroud in context

The market town of Stroud is situated on the River Frome valley side in the south Cotswolds. It is the main commercial centre for the district serving a rural hinterland of over 55,000 people including an immediate urban population of approximately 26,000.

Stroud is an attractive place to live and work and has the potential to attract large numbers of visitors. The town benefits from:

- Its position at the centre of the 'Five Valleys', providing a dramatic landscape setting and connection with the countryside.
- Its transport connections, being only five miles from junction 13 of the M5 and with a direct rail connection to London, Gloucester, and Swindon.
- Significant recent investments such as the cinema, which is a key leisure attraction.



## A town in competition

The benefits of Stroud's location and accessibility are coupled with the competition from other, often larger settlements, to create a wide variety of choice for visitors and potential investors.

These competing centres are continuing to improve their offer, for example, there is the Gloucester Quays retail development and emerging town centre strategies for improvement being developed in Cheltenham and Cirencester.

Stroud, like other smaller market towns, must seek to present a clear and attractive incentive for people to visit and spend more time and money within the town. Such places often rely upon the distinctiveness of their retail offer and distinctiveness of the public realm in order to compete with larger centres.



Gloucester Quays retail outlet will add to local competition.



A strategy for improving Cirencester town centre is currently being prepared.

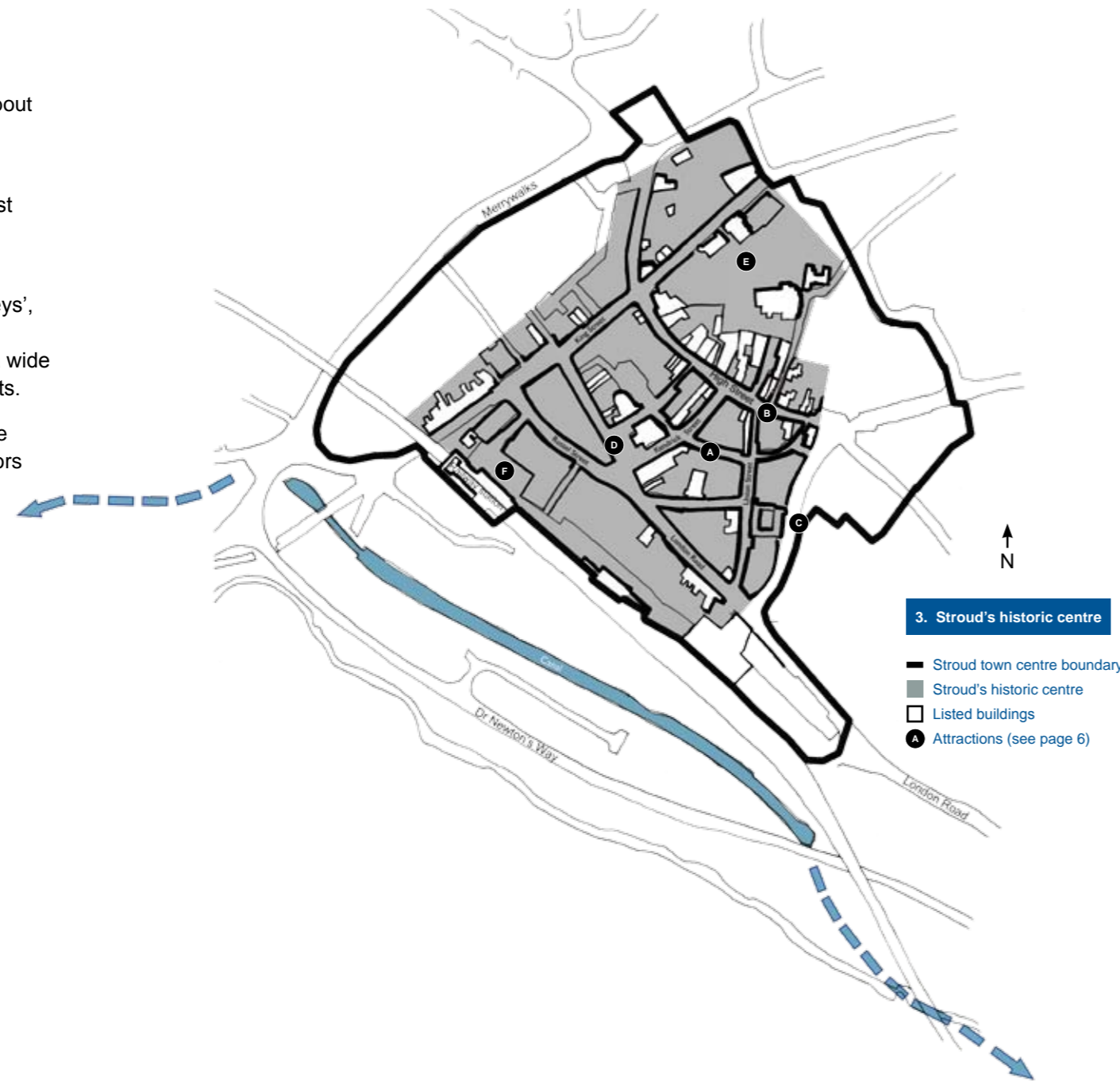
### Stroud's historic centre

The historic centre is what is most distinctive about Stroud and where the town can offer something different.

It is the focus for independent retailing, specialist markets, civic functions, listed buildings, public events and celebrations.

It is the social and cultural hub of the 'Five Valleys', with its library, art galleries, exhibition spaces, performance venues and meeting rooms, and a wide range of cafes, bars, pubs, clubs and restaurants.

This is the priority area for Stroud's future where efforts should focus to improve the offer to visitors and residents.



### Distinctive qualities

Key attractions include:

**Historic retail streets** – The tight knit network of streets and alleyways creates a unique character and point of interest for visitors that should be enhanced by a high quality public realm. ● A

**The 'old town'** – The upper end of the High Street around St. Laurence's Church defines the heart of Stroud's historic centre. The Shambles, the striking countryside views and architecture help make this one of the most important locations in Stroud. The public realm must support this destination. ● B

**The farmers' market** – The success of the weekly farmers' market has established Cornhill Market Place as one of Stroud's greatest attractions. It is essential to build on this and encourage people to explore more of the town from this location. ● C

**The Subscription Rooms** – The Subscription Rooms and forecourt provide an important civic and cultural function for Stroud. The role of the forecourt space is currently undermined by the level of passing traffic and the condition of the surface. ● D

**Bank Gardens / Lansdown** – Bank Gardens is the only significant green space in central Stroud. The role of this space as a destination and route through to Lansdown is limited as a result of hidden points of entry, perceived feelings of insecurity, an uninviting layout and poor quality seating areas. ● E

**Station Square** – The square has an impressive setting defined by the Imperial Hotel and the railway station buildings. Its potential as a civic space is undermined by traffic and parked cars. ● F



The charm and intrigue of Stroud's historic streets.



Public open space at Bank Gardens.



The striking architecture (School of Science and Art, Lansdown).



The attraction of the farmers' market.

## The challenge for Stroud

Stroud must now find ways to improve its offer and compete with other settlements in order to stem potential leakage of spending and the loss of key facilities and businesses.

The public realm in Stroud town centre has been identified as undermining the existing qualities of the town, with concerns relating to the management of traffic, the condition of surfaces and street furniture and the general attractiveness of the town.

A recent survey of shoppers (Beacon Research, Stroud Shoppers Survey, November 2006) identified that almost 75% of those surveyed considered the overall attractiveness of Stroud town centre as poor or average.

This is reflected in the current fragility of Stroud town centre. Retail assessments indicate ground floor vacancy rates similar to the national average and fluctuating pedestrian flows.

It is critical for Stroud to find ways to strengthen pedestrian activity, encouraging more people to explore the qualities of the town, to stay longer, to enjoy the range of cultural activities on offer, meet one another and spend more money in local businesses.

Following public realm strategy identifies a number of priority areas and routes for enhancement in central Stroud, setting out guiding principles for change to help Stroud fulfil its potential for residents and visitors.



The challenge for Stroud town centre. (Clockwise from top left: retail vacancies, pedestrian and vehicular conflict, poor quality surfaces and street furniture).

## Approach and structure

The public realm strategy has been developed in close working arrangement with the Concordat team (Stroud District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud Town Council and Project Stroud) at all stages. Through this process we have ensured that the key findings and recommendations have been considered by those involved in the implementation of the strategy.

The engagement of local stakeholders and the public has played a pivotal role in the development of the strategy. Presentations, workshops, exhibitions and the publication of material on Stroud District Council's website has helped to pinpoint priorities for the strategy and to test concepts and recommendations for change.

The strategy:

- Is based on an understanding of the role and function of Stroud town centre.
- Defines key urban design principles to guide the growth of the central area.
- Prioritises those spaces, places and routes where investment should be focused.
- Develops detailed streetscape proposals for key areas which will set the tone for wider public realm treatments.
- Ensures new linkages are developed as part of a network rather than in isolation.
- Proposes a consistent and unified approach to the public realm throughout the town centre.

The aim is for this strategy to be adopted by Stroud District Council as a 'Supplementary Planning Advice' and be used for:

- Developing detailed designs and proposals for Stroud's public realm.
- Making planning decisions on applications that impinge on the streets in the town centre.
- Procuring street infrastructure.
- Prioritising street management and maintenance.

The structure of the strategy is as follows:

### Section 2 – Value of the public realm

The strategy is informed by an understanding of the social, economic and environmental value associated with a high quality public realm.

### Section 3 – Context to the strategy

Understanding Stroud's evolution and the key historic influences that have shaped the structure of the town is an essential starting point for the strategy. This section also considers the principles of existing policy and guidance.

### Section 4 – Understanding Stroud town centre

To develop a strategy for the public realm we must analyse how people currently arrive, circulate and use the town centre, identifying existing problems and pressures and examining the spatial qualities.

## Section 5 – Strategy for the public realm

The strategy identifies and justifies the key priorities for change to enhance the historic centre of Stroud for visitors, businesses, shoppers and residents and introduces a co-ordinated approach to improving access and parking. The strategy also considers the opportunities for growing the central area to increase Stroud's attractiveness.

### Section 6 – Guidelines for change

Recommendations for streetscape enhancements will guide decisions on surface materials, street furniture specifications, signage, and lighting. These recommendations are not prescriptive, but offer guidance in order to achieve a consistent result.

### Section 7 – Delivery and implementation

The final section of the strategy identifies and prioritises actions for delivery. Recommendations are set out for phasing works required to enhance the physical environment and unify spaces throughout the public realm.



# 02

## Value of the public realm

Public realm means many different things to different people, but essentially it is the space in which public life takes place.

The following section explores what we mean by public realm in this strategy, how this relates to Stroud town centre, and the importance and value associated with a high quality public realm.

### The public realm

The term public realm is often used to describe the space between and within buildings which is publicly accessible, including streets, lanes, alleys, squares, forecourts, parks and open spaces.

'By Design' (CABE, 2001), helps to define a more detailed understanding of what we mean by a high quality public realm and what it contains, setting a context for this strategy:

*'A place with attractive and successful outdoor areas where the success of the public realm depends on the arrangement of paving, planting, lighting, orientation, shelter, signage, street furniture and the way it is overlooked, as well as the routes which pass through it, and the uses in and next to it'.*



Public life in Stroud's High Street.

## Stroud's public realm

In 1748 the Italian architect Giambattista Nolli drew a plan of Rome which showed all of the public space in white and private space and buildings in black. He even included the inside of public buildings like churches, displaying them in white to illustrate their role in the public life.

The application of Nolli's principles to Stroud clearly identifies the network of streets and spaces (in white) where the public life of the town takes place. This is Stroud's public realm.

In addition to Nolli's black and white we have shown in grey private space that has an important impact on the appearance of the public space.



Nolli's plan of Rome 1748.



## Why is the public realm important?

Public realm can help to deliver far reaching social, economic and environmental benefits, including:

- Enhancing identity and civic pride.
- Attracting more visitors.
- Increasing expenditure.
- Helping independent retailers.
- Creating safe places.

Case study examples for Chepstow and Shrewsbury are set out in Appendix 3 exploring in more detail the measured impact of implemented public realm enhancements.

### Enhancing identity and civic pride

The public realm can help to foster a sense of identity, loyalty and civic pride. The distinctive characteristics associated with Stroud can be celebrated in the public realm, helping to differentiate Stroud from other places.

A rich industrial heritage, the growing reputation for creative industries and the distinctive topography are all positive characteristics that could be reinforced through the public realm.

Finding ways to strengthen local 'ownership' of a town is just as important as creating a recognisable image of a place for visitors.



Celebrating identity in Chepstow through the public realm.

### Attracting more visitors

An attractive built environment with inviting, logical connections that link key destinations and attractions together can encourage more people to explore a place and spend more time there.

Often the public realm is the first and lasting impression a town centre makes on a visitor. From the point of arrival to the experience as a pedestrian exploring the town, the public realm plays a significant role in the statement a town makes and its profile as a destination.

Existing edge of centre destinations such as the cinema and Waitrose attract a high number of visitors in their own right. The public realm can play an important role in seeking to capitalise on these assets to draw visitors into the central area.

The connections from key arrival points such as the rail station and car parks must also present a safe and inviting route into the town centre.

The restoration of the Cotswold Canals presents a further source of potential visitors to be connected to the central area through improvements to the public realm.



Demonstrating the importance of good quality public realm at key arrival points (Sheffield rail station).

### Increasing expenditure

Investing in the public realm can help to improve the competitive performance of a town centre by providing an environment that encourages people to spend more time there.

Interesting streets and spaces, which are easy to move around in, with attractive areas for people to relax and appreciate what the town has to offer, are critical to this process.

The historic street network in Stroud characterised by narrow alleyways leading from wider connecting streets presents an attractive base for the town, but there are clear opportunities to improve connections within and beyond the central area to encourage greater circulation of people.



Attractive retail environments help to encourage greater expenditure (Exeter and Chester).

### Helping independent retailers

The combination of characteristic buildings and spaces, independent shops and an attractive public realm help to distinguish one town centre from another, and often represent an attraction in their own right.

These types of shops are mostly found in the high quality, distinctive parts of town centres, where they can relate to their surrounding character and help to create a unique atmosphere that encourages people to visit and to shop.

The upper High Street, where it meets with Union Street and The Shambles, is a prime location for Stroud. The striking views, historic street pattern, regular markets and the attractive architecture make it potentially a key destination for visitors.

The public realm should support this potential, reinforcing the role of independent retailing and striking a clear balance with other destinations such as the Merrywalks centre, Waitrose and the future development potential by the canal.



Stroud's independent retail offer at the upper end of the High Street.

### Creating safe places

A successful public realm provides safe spaces for people to meet, encouraging people to come into the town more often and spend more time there, creating opportunities for social interaction.

The public realm can help to reduce the fear of crime and add to the sense of safety in public spaces by day and night. Encouraging greater activity, more passers-by on the street, making spaces more visible to neighbouring uses, and ensuring spaces are well lit can all assist in promoting a safer town centre.

Key centre spaces such as Bank Gardens and focal points such as the Subscription Rooms forecourt are priority areas for Stroud, where the public realm can increase the feeling of safety. The public realm can also assist in establishing a better balance between pedestrians and vehicle movement.



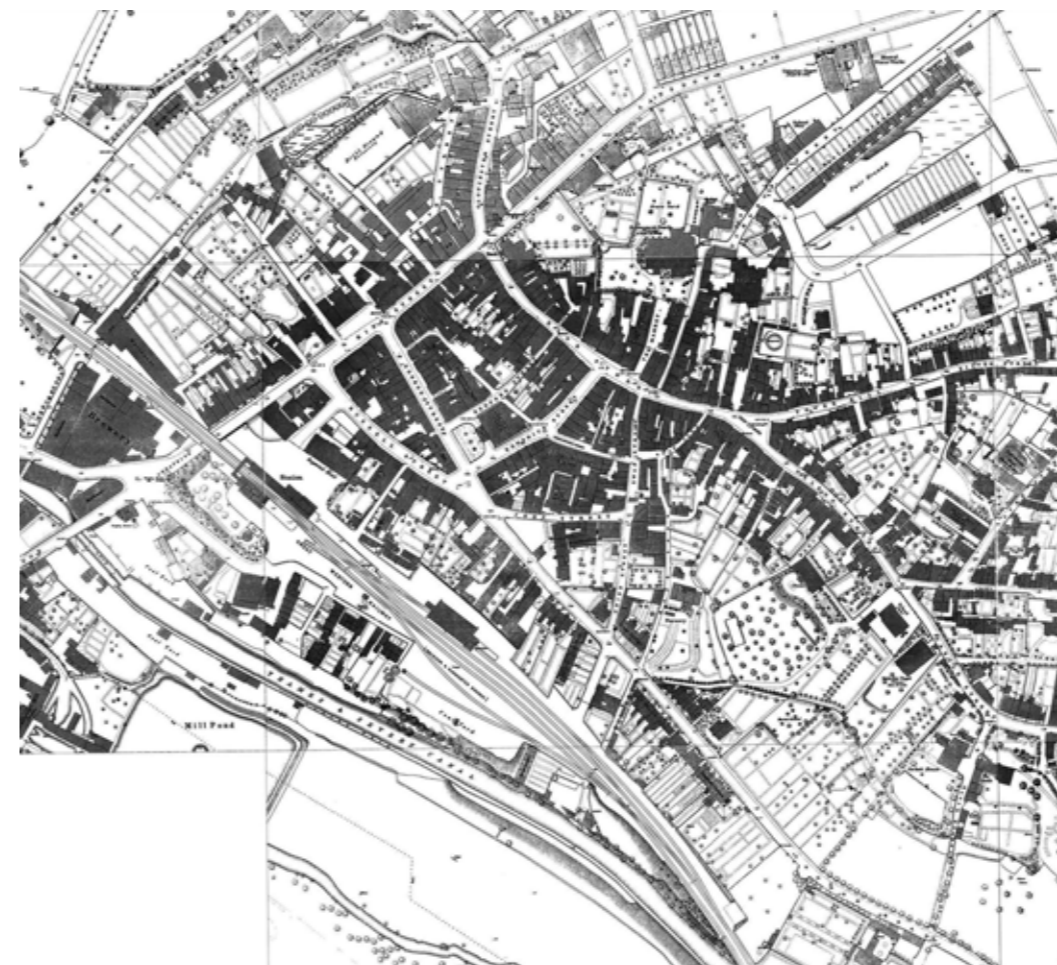
Safe and inviting public spaces strengthen communities – an attractive, well used park in Liverpool.

# 03

## Context to the strategy

Understanding how a place has evolved is an important starting point in developing a strategy for change.

The following section explores the historic influences that have helped define Stroud town centre and seeks to identify the current policy and guidance informing the future.



Stroud street network 1880's. The historic tight knit street pattern remains in place today.

### Evolution of Stroud

The form and layout of the town has been shaped by a rich history of industrial activity, through transportation routes such as the canal and railway, and the focus of manufacturing along the valley floor.

#### The origins

The origins of the settlement can be traced back as early as the 13th century, focused around the north end of the High Street as we know it today. St. Laurence's Church, dating back to 1279 defines Stroud's historic core and the centre point of expansion through the ages.

This area provided the main trading space for the town, with the Town Hall building, The Shambles market area and The Cross becoming established features of Stroud's townscape during the 16th century. It has remained as the focal point for Stroud throughout the 17th century, a period when Stroud became a centre for the textile production industry.

### The arrival of the canal

The late 18th century saw the arrival of the canal, connecting the town to the River Severn. The extension of this canal to the River Thames was completed in 1789. The potential economic benefits from the canal as a major route for commerce for Stroud however were never fully realised.

Despite this, the 19th century saw a rapid expansion of Stroud, with the town almost doubling in size. This period saw the evolution of the urban form to the south west of the historic core, with streets such as George Street, Union Street and John Street being formed.

The canal however remains detached from the central area and has yet to be successfully integrated with the town.

Today the Cotswold Canals are subject to an ambitious restoration programme that seeks to reestablish a continuous waterway from Saul Junction on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal to the Thames at Lechlade, including the section of canal that passes south of Stroud town centre.



The underutilised asset of the canal, with the Hill Paul building restored and converted to flats.

### The arrival of the railway

The mid 19th century brought the railway to Stroud. The routing of the railway ensured the focus of the town centre remains to the north, detaching areas south of the track such as Rowcroft and Bath Place. The works also required the lowering of the road at Rowcroft so that traffic could get under the railway bridge.

The railway track remains as a substantial physical barrier to the expansion of Stroud and the integration of the canal.

The arrival of the railway provided a basis for industrial growth, but this period did not result in significant expansion of the town. The network of streets established at this time comprises a tight knit structure that has not altered significantly to the present day.



Stroud rail station – a key asset.

## The 20th century

The impact of the car has altered the form of the town, most notably with large areas of car parking that surround the central area of Stroud, and the routing of the Cornhill link, which removed the historic Cross at the end of the High Street and severed the connection through to Nelson Street.

Developments such as the Merrywalks shopping centre, the cinema, and the edge of town food stores do provide key attractions for the town and are significant investments that many similar sized towns would be pursuing.

The peripheral location of these developments has also helped to minimise their impact on the historic core, thereby retaining the high quality of the built environment at the heart of town.

The public realm has an important role seeking to draw visitors from these attractions into the central area, encouraging further exploration of the town and what it has to offer.



20th century interventions. (Clockwise from top left: cinema and bus station, London Road multi-storey car park, Cornhill link road and Merrywalks entrance).

## Principles of policy

The preparation of this strategy is set within a detailed context of established policy and guidance at both a national and local level (see Appendix 1 for full review).

### National policy and guidance

National planning policy through Planning Policy Statements PPS 1 'Delivering sustainable development', PPS 6 'Planning for town centres', PPS 12 'Local development frameworks', and Planning Policy Guidance notes PPG 13 'Transport', and PPG 17 'Planning for open space', provide the following guidance to inform the preparation of a public realm strategy for Stroud:

- Community and stakeholder involvement in the development of policy is essential.
- Strategic design policy should relate to local conditions and objectives.
- Well designed spaces, high quality and safe environments can improve the health, vitality and economic potential of town centres, essential if they are to remain attractive and competitive.
- High quality and inclusive design should bring people together and provide opportunities for physical activity and recreation.
- People should come before traffic.
- Places that work well are designed to be used safely and securely by all in the community, frequently for a wide range of purposes and throughout the day and evening.

National best practice guidance regarding urban design, street design and management, and the influence of the public realm from CABI, central government departments and English Partnerships highlights the following key considerations of relevance for Stroud:

- Well designed places where people want to live, spend time and work generate financial and wider social value.
- The design of streets and spaces should recognise their multifunctional purpose, providing versatility and accessibility for all.
- Design should be sympathetic to local character and activity context.
- Streets and places should prioritise the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.
- Clear and easy routes of movement through spaces should be facilitated.
- Focus should be on design innovation and excellence where risk is managed, not eliminated all together.
- Safety in public spaces is often achieved through active use, citizen surveillance and an engendered sense of personal and social responsibility and ownership.

### Local policy and guidance

The local policy and guidance context to the strategy is provided by the adopted local plan for the district, the town council strategy for enhancing pedestrian movement and strategies for improving the appearance of shop fronts and the offer of the evening economy.

The objectives include:

- To enhance the town's physical environment and improve the competitiveness as a retail centre.
- Redevelop sites within and around the town centre for mixed use development seeking to enhance the role and function of the town.
- Well maintained shopping areas are more attractive to visitors and can improve trade and encourage economic growth.
- Priority should be given for pedestrians in the central area and linkages improved to the wider town area.
- Focus is required to address the gateways to the town, to make them more welcoming, easier and safer for people to move through.
- Innovation should be encouraged in urban design wherever possible to overcome standardised responses.
- The historic character of the central area must be respected, guided by the principles of the conservation area designations.
- Management of the public realm must be taken forward with strong leadership, involving a wide range of interests and be focused for the long term.

# 04

## Understanding Stroud town centre

To prepare a public realm strategy we must first understand how people arrive, circulate and use Stroud town centre.

The following section analyses the current issues and pressures facing Stroud town centre, examining the spatial qualities and opportunities for change.

### Finding Stroud town centre

It is important to recognise the different types of visitor that come to Stroud, how and where they arrive and the difficulties they encounter in trying to find the historic centre.

Arriving by car, foot, bicycle or public transport the points of entry to the historic centre should be clear, inviting and celebrated; creating the feeling you are entering somewhere special.



Accessing the town centre by car, foot and public transport can present difficulties with traffic congestion, narrow pavements and poorly defined arrival spaces and connecting routes. (Above: arriving to Stroud from the east).



## Arrival by car

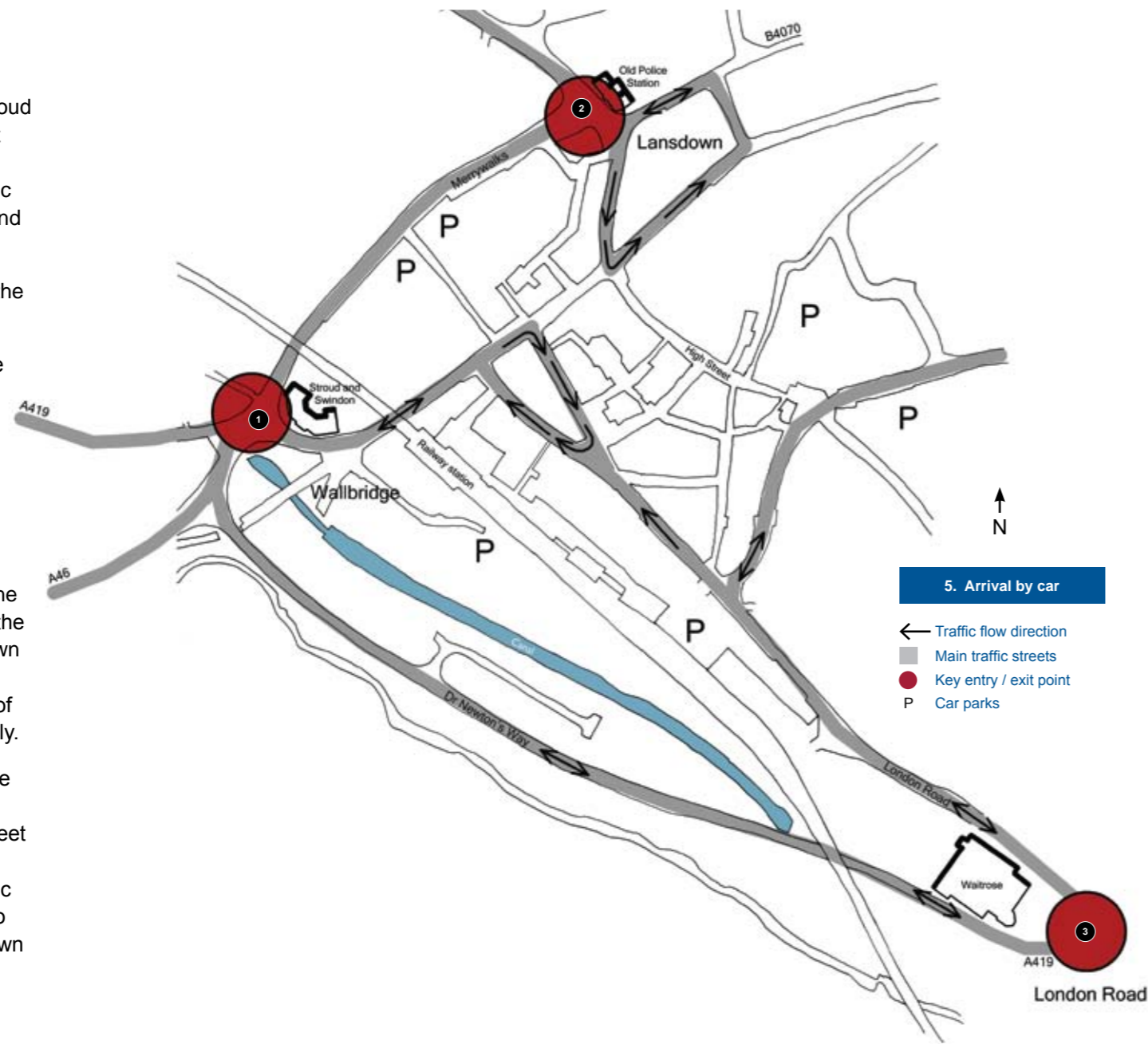
A recent shopping survey (Beacon Research, Stroud Shoppers Survey, November 2006) identified that over 50% of visitors arrived in Stroud by car. The strategic road network directs the majority of traffic to two principal access points to the south west and north west of the town centre.

- ❶ From the M4 via the A46 and from the M5 via the A419 vehicles arrive at the Wallbridge junction.
- ❷ From Gloucester and Painswick vehicles come to the Merrywalks roundabout with the B4070.

These two strategic points of access act as the primary gateways to Stroud town centre. A successful gateway should mark the entrance to the town and encourage through movement to make the transition into the town centre.

These gateways however are poorly defined by the surrounding development, which fails to enclose the space and create the inviting passage into the town centre. Only the Stroud and Swindon building at Wallbridge and the Old Police Station at the end of Gloucester Street address these spaces effectively.

Both gateway spaces come under added pressure as a result of the traffic management within the central area. The closure at the top of the High Street combined with the introduction of one-way flows along London Road leaves only two exits for traffic from the town, namely the route down Rowcroft to the Wallbridge gateway to the south, and Lansdown and Locking Hill to the north into the Gloucester Street gateway.



The routes into the town centre from these gateways are via Rowcroft and Gloucester Street. Both routes involve an ascent towards the centre, and are not assisted by the narrow or single sided pavements.

The one way system also presents a confusing route network that creates difficulties for cars in accessing the main car parks when arriving from the west. The complication of this system does nothing to encourage drivers to come to Stroud more frequently.

A third arrival point is from the east.

- ❸ From Cirencester and Swindon via the A419 vehicles arrive at the London Road / Dr. Newton's Way junction.

This is an unassuming entrance to the town, with only Waitrose and the public car park providing a marker for the start of the central area. The route into the historic centre is not obvious and is constrained by narrow pavements.



Wallbridge gateway fails to define the entrance to the town centre.

## Edge of town car parks

Stroud has more than 1,250 car parking spaces distributed amongst eight car parks on the edge of the historic centre. Collectively these car parks rarely operate at full capacity.

The perceived availability of on-street parking within the historic centre and the difficulties associated with finding and accessing the car parks may contribute to the under use of these spaces. In particular, one way traffic flow on London Road restricts access for vehicles arriving in the town centre from the west to Stroud's largest car park (London Road multi-storey).

The pedestrian connections from these key points of arrival are also poor. To the south of the town, links from the Cheapside car parks require the use of the station footbridge or a roundabout route via Rowcroft under the railway bridge. To the east of the centre, Parliament Street car park is cut off from the town by the bleak environment of Cornhill and the isolation of the High Street created by the wall at The Cross (locally this is referred to as 'The Berlin Wall').

The public realm has a role to play in encouraging more efficient use of car parks and ensuring a safe and inviting route for pedestrians accessing the town centre from them.



The route to the town centre via Rowcroft.



The barrier of 'the Berlin Wall' at the top of the High Street.

### Arrival on foot

A large proportion of people access Stroud town centre on foot (over 30% in Beacon Research, Stroud Shoppers Survey, November 2006), highlighting the importance for the public realm of presenting attractive and safe routes to the town for pedestrians.

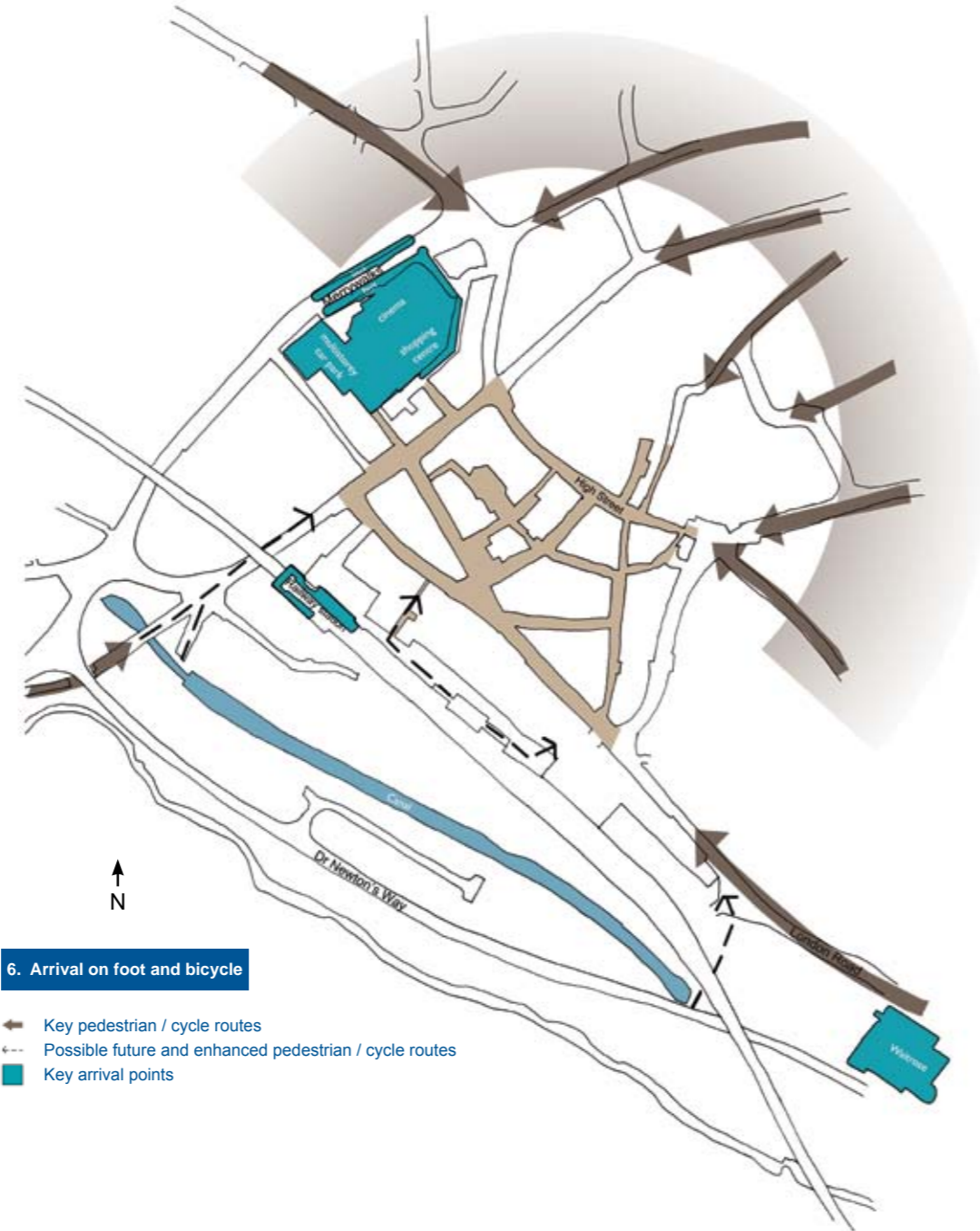
The main residential areas of Stroud lie to the north and east of the central area. The town needs to meet the shopping and leisure needs of existing residents and build on the civic pride which already exists.

From these areas Stroud's historic centre is often difficult to find. The points of entry to the historic centre should be celebrated and create the feeling that you are entering somewhere special.

### Arrival by bicycle

Cyclists also use these routes to access the town centre. In particular, the route to the east along London Road is very popular, but the narrowness of the road, indirect alternative routes and poor signage combine to present an unattractive experience.

Creating safe access routes for cyclists and providing adequate cycle facilities close to key destination points will be important to encourage more people into the historic centre.



### Edge of centre leisure and retail

Stroud is fortunate to have leisure and retail attractions such as the cinema, bowling alley, shopping centre and quality retail stores such as Waitrose. These are investments that many similar sized towns lack. Visitors to these destinations during the day and evening should be encouraged to explore more of the town.

Arriving from the attractions at the Merrywalks area brings pedestrians into King Street, one of Stroud's busiest places. This should be a 'shop window' for the historic centre, but the area generally feels unwelcoming.

From Waitrose it is not clear where the centre is and visitors on foot are often uncertain whether to carry on along London Road or turn into Cornhill. The width and surface of the London Road footpath impairs access. The public realm has a key role to play in defining a welcoming entrance to the historic centre.



Poor quality arrival from Merrywalks car park leading to King Street.

### Public transport

The train and bus stations bring large numbers of people to the edge of the historic centre. The first impressions of the town from these points of arrival are important in attracting people to explore more of the historic centre.

Arriving at the rail station, Station Square offers the potential for a welcoming gateway with the quality architecture of the Imperial Hotel and station building defining the public space, but it is undermined by the dominance of parked cars.

From the bus station, the blank frontages of the cinema, Merrywalks Shopping Centre and multi-storey car park present an uninviting connection into the historic centre. The pedestrian bridge across the A46 connects to a frequently used route via Bath Street. The quality and sense of safety on this route is poor.



Station Square – a key arrival space.

### Future opportunities

The Cotswold Canals are subject of an ambitious restoration programme that will establish the canal as a leisure destination and route. Development along the canal should encourage visitors to stop and visit the town centre. The proposed conversion of the Brunel Goods Shed will also help to attract more people close to the historic centre.

Attractive connections to the historic centre from these destinations are essential for Stroud's future. The railway line is however a significant barrier to accessing the town from the canal, with only one crossing point at the railway station. Creating new connections to the canal is also difficult as a result of the differences in level.

Investigations to develop the rail station car park as a transport interchange have been delayed, with no budget allocation up to 2013. Pedestrian access to and from the bus station at Merrywalks requires improvement, however this will be reliant on a multi agency approach including significant investment and participation by key land owners.



The physical constraints to expansion (varying levels and railway line).

## Historic streets

The street network in Stroud's historic centre is characterised by narrow lanes and alleyways that feed from the High Street spine.

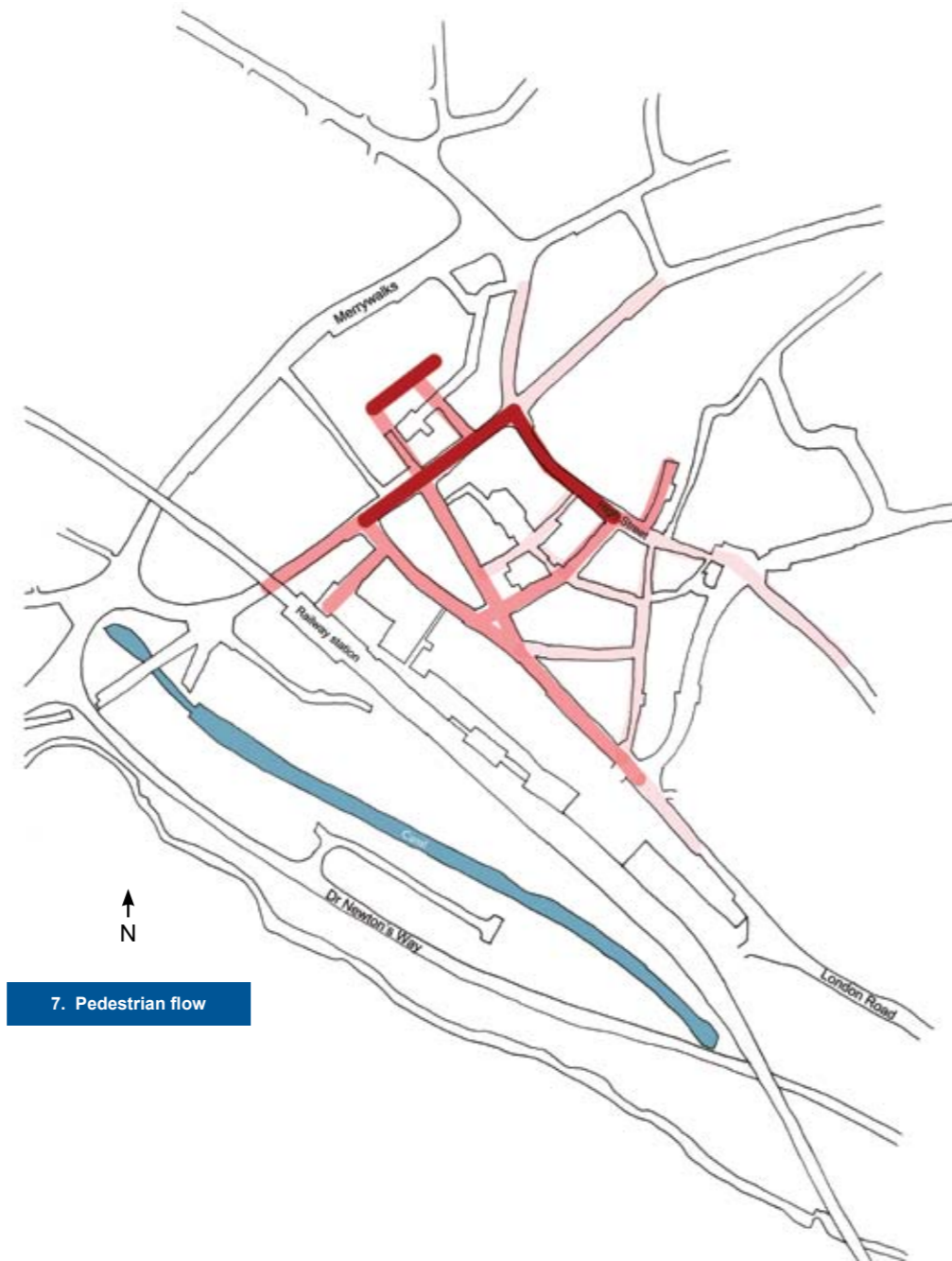
These narrow routes are supported by contrasting wider connecting streets such as Lansdown, Kendrick Street and George Street. The variety of streets is part of the charm and intrigue of the historic centre, but the network is challenging to comprehend and often confusing for the pedestrian.

## Strengthening pedestrian activity

Current recordings of pedestrian activity indicate that the busiest area is along King Street (in front of the Merrywalks Shopping Centre) leading into the High Street and Kendrick Street. This represents the primary retail area in Stroud where the majority of national retailers are located.

The function of this retail circuit is currently undermined by the dominance of traffic, even in the pedestrian zones of King Street, High Street and Union Street. Delivery and unloading spaces are ill-defined and uncontrolled and the expectation of available parking spaces (both illegal and legal) creates considerable traffic pressures on these key retail streets.

This pressure is magnified by the lack of west to east connections across town created by the one way system restrictions on Russell Street / London Road, bringing large volumes of traffic in front of the Subscription Rooms and reducing the sense of pedestrian safety.



Recorded pedestrian flows (dark red indicates high intensity). Flows need to be strengthened within historic retail streets. Encouraging more people to explore Stroud from the main retail route which connects King Street with the High Street will be critical.

Activity rates fall quite significantly as progress is made up the High Street with the challenge presented by its steepness, the poor condition of the surface and the obstructions by servicing vehicles throughout the day.

In addition, the wall that curtails the end of the High Street creates a significant visual, physical and psychological barrier that often results in people turning back on themselves limiting the number of visitors to the upper end of the High Street.

This undermines Stroud's ability to showcase the unique and individual qualities of its historic core and to attract people into exploring Church Street, The Shambles, and Union Street.

The public realm has an important role to play in supporting the existing qualities of the street network, creating a clear and safe environment that enhances the experience for pedestrians and encourages greater and more frequent activity.



Poor management of traffic undermines the qualities of the key retail streets. (Clockwise from top left: King Street, bottom of the High Street, the High Street and Union Street).

## Spaces

A successful public realm provides safe spaces for people to meet, encouraging them to come into the town more often and spend more time there, creating opportunities for social interaction.

Stroud supports a wide variety of central spaces, providing opportunities for events, relaxation, shopping, servicing and car parking.

### Central spaces

Within the historic centre, the use of space is more varied, with adaptable areas like The Shambles and Cornhill Market Place, and more incidental spaces such as the 'bowl' space created at the top of High Street as a result of the termination of the street, and the space on King Street near Woolworths.

These central spaces have an integral role as reception areas for people arriving in the town, like Station Square. This forecourt to the station is a potential civic space, reinforced by the high quality architecture of the station building and the Imperial Hotel. At present the use of this space for car parking does little to reflect its potential and celebrate arrival in central Stroud.



These spaces also represent attractive destinations, most notably Cornhill Market Place (with the draw of its weekly farmers' market) on Union Street and the market space on The Shambles.

A recent shopping survey (Beacon Research, Stroud Shoppers Survey, November 2006) identified that over 40% of shoppers confirmed that the weekly farmers' market influenced the frequency of their visit to the town. The connections and linkages between these areas are critical for Stroud to ensure that visitors are encouraged to explore the town.

The connection between Cornhill Market Place and the High Street along Union Street is undermined by service vehicles, traffic and the inconsistent and unattractive surfaces.

Fawkes Place provides disabled parking in the heart of the town centre and also servicing areas to the rear of units on King Street, George Street and the High Street as well as access to the flats above.

These are important functions for the town centre, but the management of these uses and the condition of the surfaces creates a visually unattractive space that fails to support the qualities of the surrounding buildings such as the Congregational Church.

There are a limited number of central spaces of a sufficient scale to support events. Fawkes Place however offers the potential to be adapted for events and special occasions when required for which it is already occasionally used.



Fawkes Places – A functional and adaptable space, but a poor environment.

### Civic space

The Subscription Rooms forecourt provides the only truly civic space in Stroud. Its potential is constrained by its size, the condition of the surface and furniture materials and the impact of passing cars.

This space is important to Stroud as a setting for the impressive Subscription Rooms, but also as an area that can be used to host events and serve as a focus for the town.



Subscription Rooms – the principal civic space.

### Green space

Stratford Park on the outskirts of the town centre provides the main recreational space for Stroud. Within the town centre, Bank Gardens provides the only significant green area.

Bank Gardens offers a potentially attractive route from the top end of the High Street via The Shambles through to Lansdown. At present the success of this area as a space for relaxation and as a green route through the town is constrained by a confusing layout, stepped changes of level and poor definition of the through route. Inadequate lighting also undermines this route at night.

Bank Gardens has the potential to reinforce the prime location at the top of the High Street, providing an additional route into this area, incorporating the striking reference point of St. Laurence's Church.



Bank Gardens – an underutilised asset.

### Materials

The quality and state of street surfaces, signs, bollards, cycle racks, bins and seating have a significant influence on the perceived quality of the public realm. It has a key role in unifying streets and spaces and bringing identity to a town centre.

The charm and intrigue presented by the variety in Stroud's historic street network is often undermined by inconsistent and badly maintained materials.

A number of surface treatments are present in Stroud's central area, including block paving, tarmac, concrete slabs, stone paving and resin material. The inconsistent application of surface materials complicates the streetscape, doing little to complement the setting of historic buildings and aid the orientation of pedestrians.



#### 9. Surface treatments

- Tarmac road and pavement
- Tarmac road and concrete slab pavement
- Concrete slabs
- Concrete block paving
- Tarmac road and stone pavement
- Stone paving
- Tarmac and brick paving
- Brick paving
- Resin bound gravel
- Granite cobbles
- Grass

### Surface materials

The aesthetic impact of this inconsistency is particularly poor where a number of surface treatments converge in one space or street.

The inconsistent use of paving materials fails to reinforce the role of certain streets and spaces in the town centre, and presents a significant challenge to identifying a material that is inherently 'Stroud'.

The Shambles presents one of the few surface treatments in Stroud that adequately supports the multitude of uses demanded from streets, whilst maintaining its condition and balance with the surrounding buildings.

The condition of the materials is also in places very poor. Problems include cracked paving slabs, grease and chewing gum staining, and inconsistent surface repair following utility works. This presents a negative first impression of the town and does little to encourage greater pedestrian movement around the centre.



Surface materials in Stroud – inconsistent and in a poor state of repair.

### Street Furniture

Many streets and spaces in Stroud present a clutter of uncoordinated street furniture and signage that often obstructs pedestrian movement and hides much of the town's character.

As with surface materials, the furniture in Stroud is very inconsistent. There is a significant variation in colour, shading, size and form. This is particularly apparent with the bollards, which are heavily used in Stroud to delineate streets and spaces.

Bollards and other items such as cycle racks, and benches are also often poorly sited and in a poor state of repair, further undermining the streetscape and the quality of pedestrian experience.



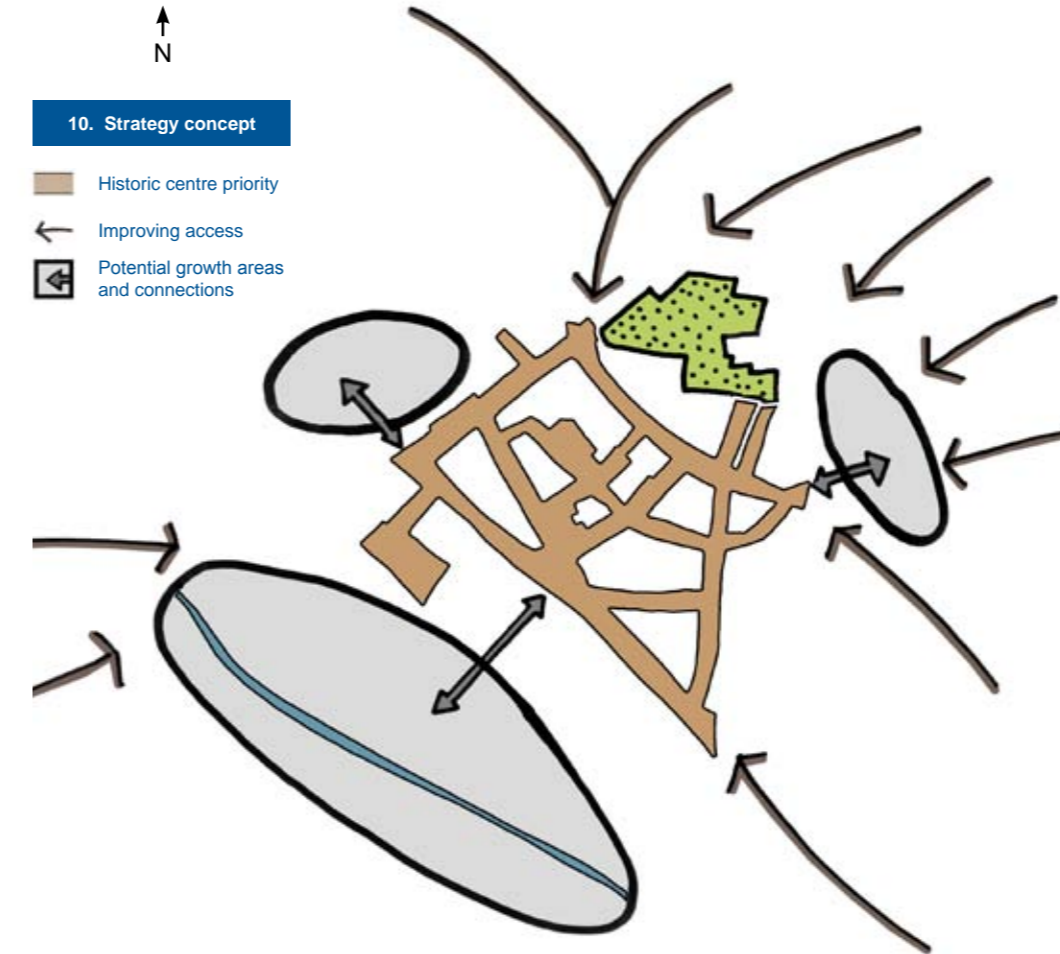
Uncoordinated street furniture treatment.

# 05

## Strategy for the public realm

The public realm has a key role to play in encouraging people to visit more often, visit different parts of the town, stay longer and as a result spend more money with local businesses.

The following section builds on the analysis and consultation undertaken in preparing this study to set out a series of strategic recommendations for change in Stroud, seeking to establish the town centre as an inviting destination for visitors and residents.



The strategy for the public realm in Stroud prioritises the historic centre, seeking to encourage more people to explore the town, stay longer and spend more in local businesses, with improved connections to future growth opportunities.

### Introducing the strategy

The principles defined in this section set a context for long term change and investment, building on the potential of this historic location.

The recommendations provide a basis to develop more detailed designs for the streetscape and the development and integration of opportunity sites.

Three interlinking objectives help shape this public realm strategy:

1. To enhance the quality of the public realm within Stroud's historic centre and establish it as a distinct destination.
2. To simplify and clarify access to the town centre and establish a better balance in the pedestrian environment.
3. To identify opportunities for connecting and expanding the public realm to enable Stroud town centre to grow and improve its offer.

## 1. The historic centre – a distinct destination

The historic centre extends from London Road / Russell Street northwards to St. Laurence's Church and Bank Gardens, enclosed by the Cornhill link road to the east and the modern edge of centre developments to the west of Rowcroft and King Street.

The heart of the historic centre is defined at the top end of the High Street where a number of narrow lanes and alleyways converge on the High Street, and The Shambles connects with St. Laurence's Church.

The consultation events undertaken in preparing this strategy identified a strong support for focusing on the historic centre as an overall priority area for improvement (over 94% support – see Appendix 2).



### Why is this important for Stroud?

Distinctiveness is critical in promoting Stroud as a destination and enabling the town to compete with other local centres.

The historic centre is where Stroud can showcase what is special about the town. It offers an experience that is unique:

- It is the focus of the independent, distinctive, often quirky shops together with regular markets.
- It is the location of a number of listed buildings including the Subscription Rooms, Congregational Church, the old Town Hall and St. Laurence's Church.
- It offers the charm of the tight knit historic street network, which scales the steep slope, creating intrigue and character for pedestrians, while at the same time framing dramatic views out over the surrounding countryside.
- It is where events, exhibitions and celebrations within public spaces such as the Subscription Room forecourt, Cornhill Market Place, Fawkes Place and Bank Gardens take place.

The existing destinations on the periphery of the town centre such as the Merrywalks centre, the cinema and food stores can only bring people to the fringes of Stroud. It is the offer and experience of the historic centre that will dictate the value that can be drawn from these assets.



The distinctive qualities of Stroud's historic centre. (Above: Union Street looking out over Rodborough Fields).



### Priorities for change

It is vital for Stroud's long term prospects to increase the number of people exploring the town. The public realm must help to increase the amount of pedestrian activity, particularly on key retail circuits.

In the historic centre enhancements to the public realm must deliver:

- A clear sense of arrival, where points of entry announce the uniqueness of the historic centre.
- A simple, consistent and coherent street structure that gives priority to pedestrians.
- A consistent and attractive streetscape that encourages people to explore the town on foot.
- An inviting network of streets that are clean and well lit, offering safe and efficient connections between key attractions.
- A streetscape quality that matches the existing qualities of the buildings and independent retailers.
- Distinctive spaces that attract people and provide opportunities for events, relaxation, meeting up and dwell time whilst shopping.

A number of areas and routes in need of improvement can be identified within Stroud's historic centre. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list, but focuses on potential economic and social benefits and therefore which routes and areas should have priority.

For example, the analysis identified Fawkes Place as a central space with potential for enhancement. This space already fulfils an essential role as a servicing area and although improvements could be made it is not considered a priority at this stage.

Strengthening pedestrian connections in the prime retail area is however a priority, focusing the need to improve street surfaces on key routes adjacent to Fawkes Place, such as Bedford Street which connects the High Street to George Street past the Subscription Rooms.



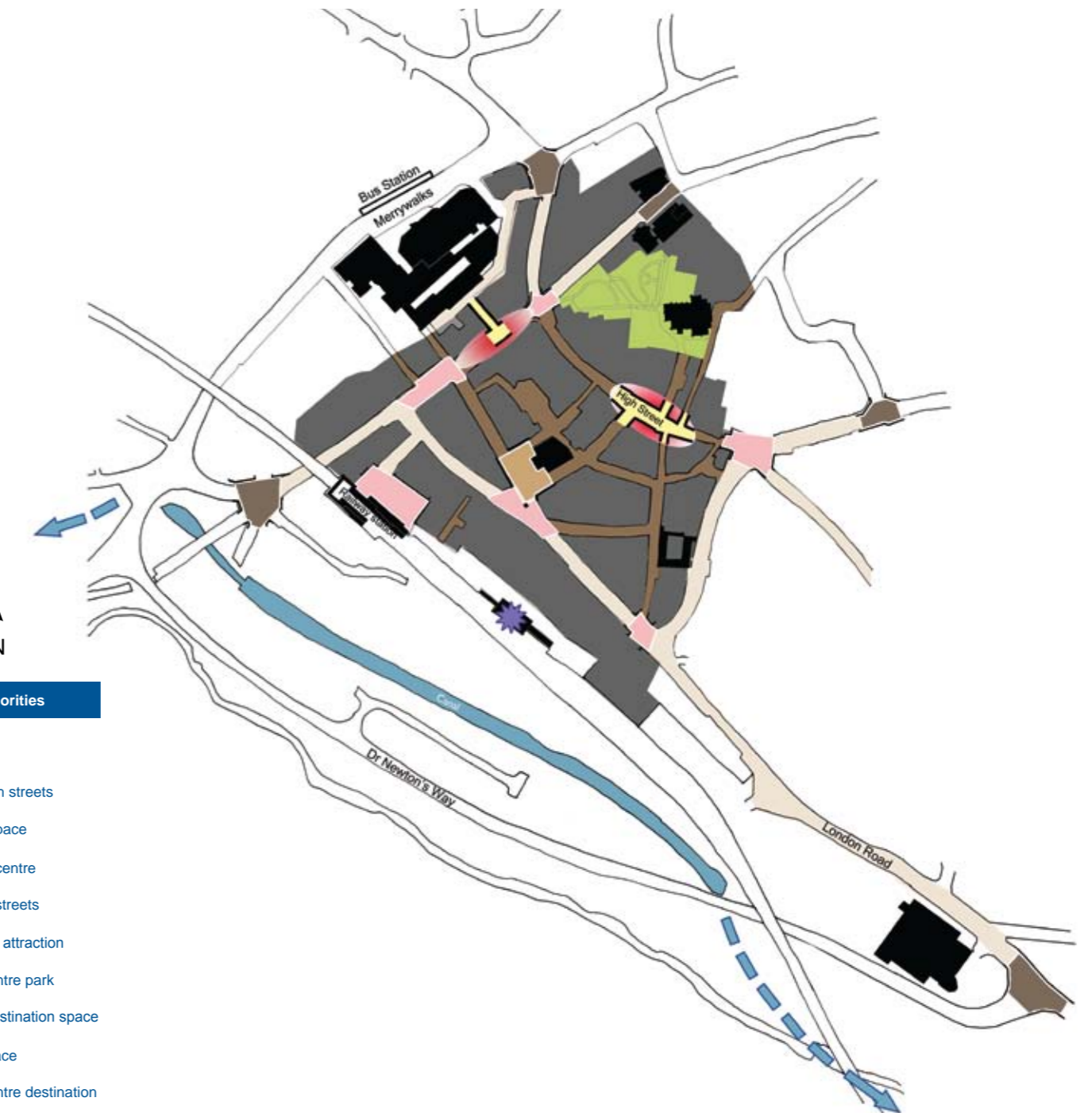
Key priorities.  
(Clockwise from top left: Four Clocks arrival space, retail destination at King Street, the High Street and public open space at Bank Gardens).

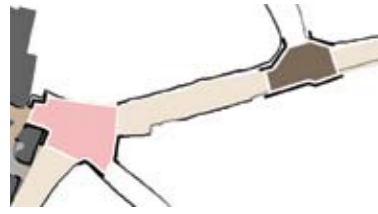
To enhance Stroud's historic centre as a destination, the key priority areas for improvement are:

- Gateways and arrival spaces.
- Upper end of the High Street.
- King Street / Merrywalks entrance.
- Connecting retail streets.
- Bank Gardens.
- Subscription Rooms forecourt.

The diagram opposite brings together the key priority areas of the historic centre.

The following pages set out a series of recommendations for improvement and illustrate the potential character.





### Gateways and arrival spaces

These areas define the boundaries of the town and historic centre and must serve to signify entry to this distinct area.

At gateways the public realm can help to:

- Clearly define the start of the town centre through enhanced lighting, surfaces and signage.
- Offer clear and inviting routes for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.
- Present essential access information, particularly the location of the car parks.
- Strengthen a sense of arrival through carefully sited gateway buildings of high architectural quality.
- Establish connections between the canal and the historic centre.

At arrival spaces the public realm can help to:

- Create a sense of arrival that celebrates the qualities of the historic centre through high quality streetscape details.
- Mark a clear transition to pedestrian priority through subtle changes in surface materials.
- Encourage pedestrian movement through the arrival spaces to key routes and spaces.



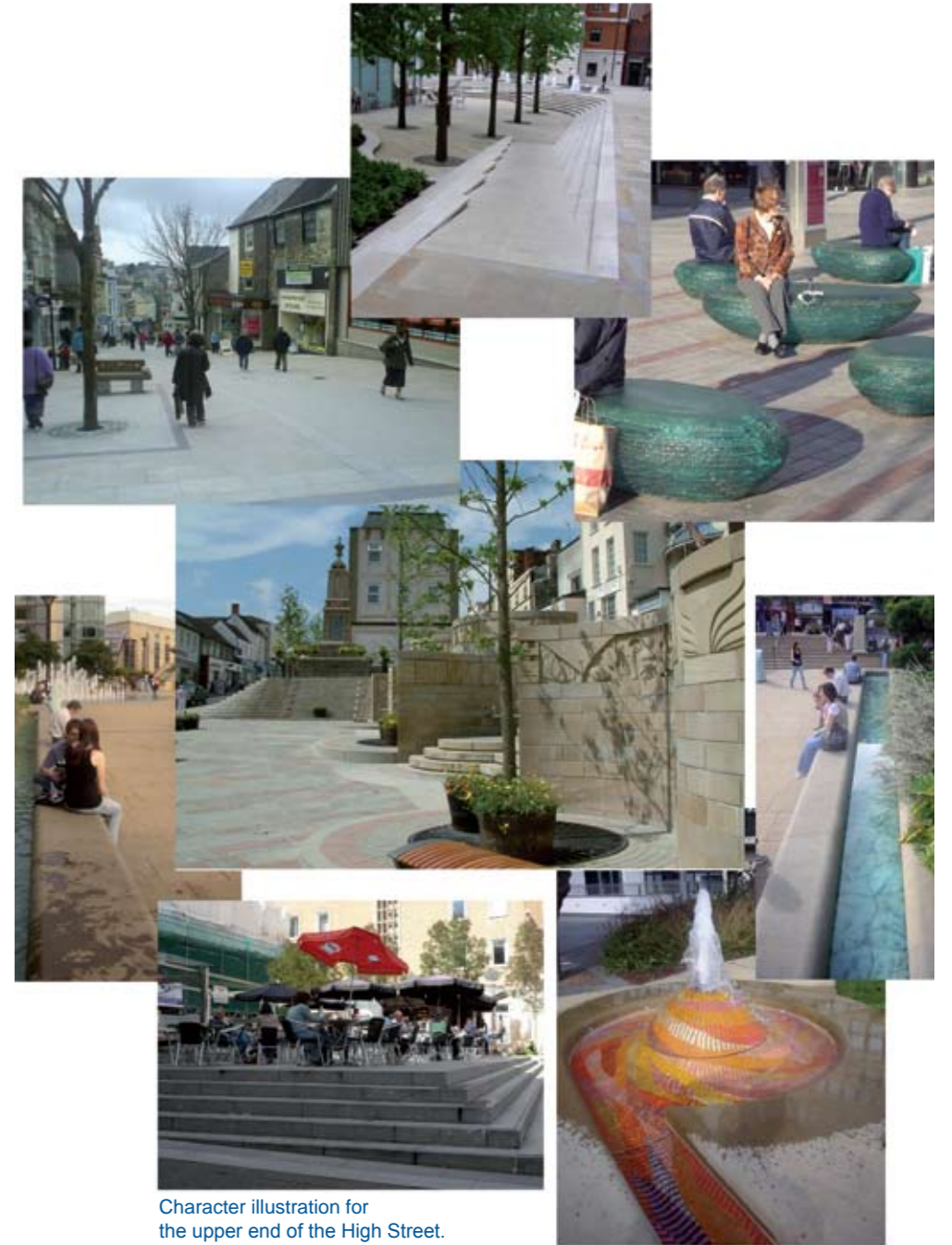
Character illustration for gateways and arrival spaces.



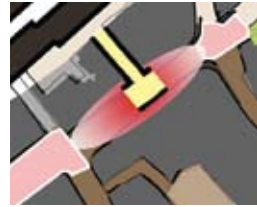
### Upper end of the High Street

This area should be a primary destination for shoppers and visitors. Enhancements to the public realm in this location should help to:

- Define a distinct arrival space through the use of high quality streetscape materials.
- Encourage dwell time to support independent retailers (including the markets).
- Exploit the striking views out over the surrounding countryside.
- Create an attraction to draw pedestrians further up the High Street.
- Encourage connections to key retail streets such as Kendrick Street, Union Street and The Shambles.



Character illustration for the upper end of the High Street.



#### King Street / Merrywalks entrance

This area should be more pedestrian friendly reflecting its position as Stroud's busiest location. Enhancements to the public realm should help to:

- Establish a high quality streetscape environment through improved shop fronts and paving, reflecting this prime retail position and helping to attract more shoppers.
- Demonstrate a commitment to improving this location to attract potential investors / new occupiers.
- Create an appropriate transition from the modern enclosed environment of the Merrywalks shopping centre to the traditional open streets of the historic centre.
- Provide easy, safe and attractive connection to George Street and the High Street.
- Signal a sense of pedestrian priority to drivers entering the historic centre.



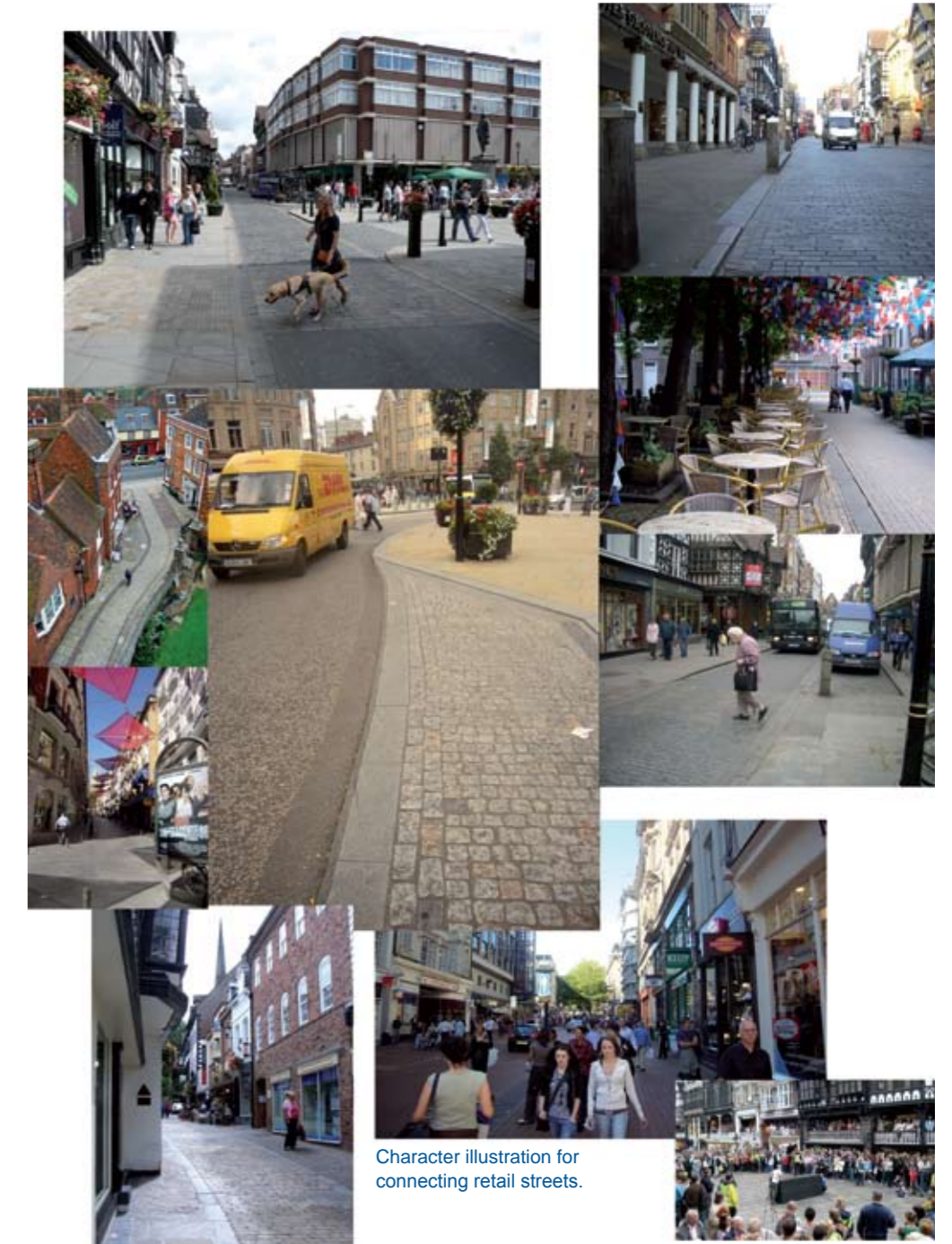
Character illustration for King Street / Merrywalks entrance.



#### Connecting retail streets

Streets such as George Street, Union Street, John Street, Threadneedle Street and Kendrick Street should encourage greater pedestrian activity, particularly on the key retail circuit. Enhancements to the public realm should help to:

- Reinforce the connection into and along the High Street with attractive high quality paving materials.
- Deliver a clear sense of pedestrian priority.
- Unify the historic street network with a consistent use of paving materials.
- Organise and manage the vehicular servicing arrangements to create a safer pedestrian environment.
- Reduce streetscape clutter, including signage and road markings.
- Support dwell time with appropriately positioned and coordinated seating.



Character illustration for connecting retail streets.



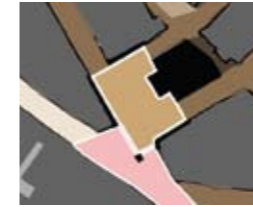
### Bank Gardens

This area should fulfil its potential as Stroud's only significant green space in the town centre. Enhancements to the public realm should help to:

- Create a safe space for relaxation just off the main retail streets.
- Provide opportunities for play, meeting up and community life.
- Create an inviting and safe green route to and from Lansdown during the day and evening.
- Establish an area for biodiversity and nature interest.
- Create opportunities for public events and activities.
- Encourage access through enhancements to the existing points of entry and explore the potential for new connections.
- Provide points of interest and local interpretation through public art.
- Explore opportunities to provide cafe / kiosk facilities to help establish the gardens as a destination and improved supervision and safety.



Character illustration for Bank Gardens.



### Subscription Rooms forecourt

This area must better support its role as Stroud's principal civic space. Enhancements to the public realm can help to:

- Expand the civic area to better facilitate functions and events.
- Reduce the impact of passing traffic and improve the sense of safety.
- Enhance the setting of key buildings such as the Subscription Rooms and Congregational Church through the use of high quality surface materials.
- Ensure the space offers flexibility to accommodate a range of civic requirements.



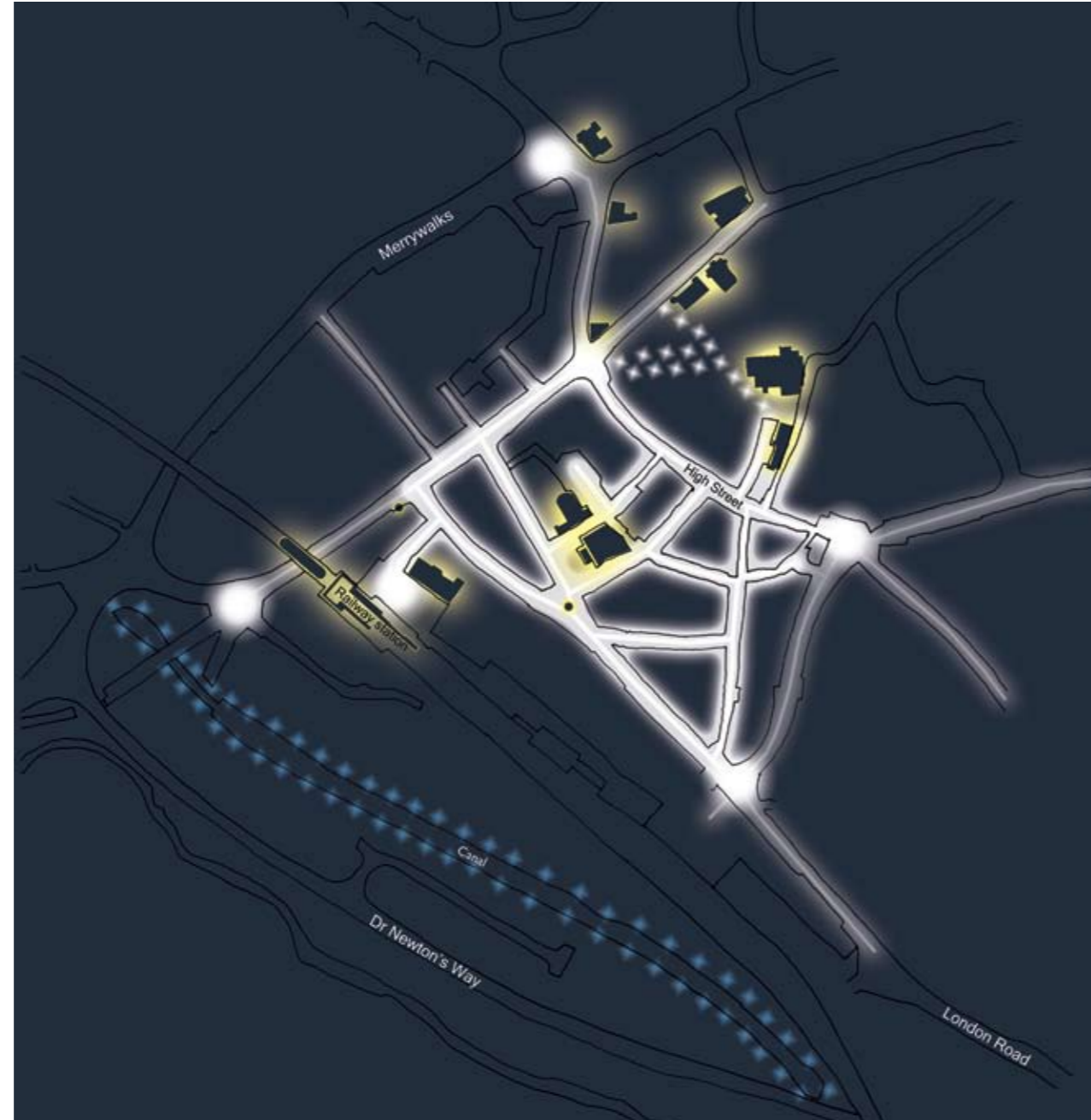
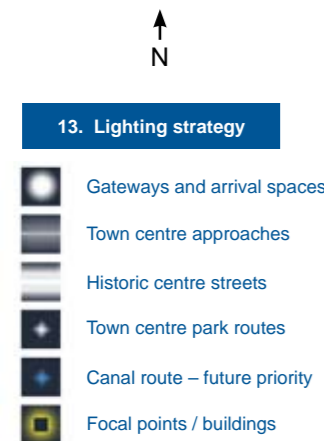
Character illustration for the Subscription Rooms forecourt.

### Improving the streetscape at night

It is vital to encourage greater access and activity after dark, in support of the growing evening economy in the historic centre.

Lighting is a fundamental component of any pedestrian street or space and has a key role to play in making the town more attractive and safer, particularly at night.

This is important in attracting a greater range of people to the town in the evening. An increase in footfall at night will serve to encourage investment in developing evening attractions.



The approach to lighting in Stroud should seek to:

#### Define the entrances

The key gateways at Wallbridge and Gloucester Street should mark the entrance to the lit town centre, with a further emphasis on lighting the entrances to the historic centre. The railway bridge at Rowcroft in particular is a priority for lighting improvement to encourage greater movement into the centre.

#### Enliven key spaces

Key spaces in the town such as Bank Gardens, Station Square and the Subscription Rooms forecourt can be enlivened by improved lighting, to provide a greater sense of safety and create an inviting atmosphere.

#### Celebrate focal points

The School of Science and Art, St. Laurence's Church, the Subscription Rooms and the Congregational Church are key architectural assets and points of reference unique to Stroud. Feature lighting can celebrate these focal points and create added drama in the streetscape.

#### Emphasise key links

The key routes within the historic centre must be well lit to encourage greater pedestrian activity at night and support the growth of the evening economy. The main arrival points from the edge of centre car parks and leisure destinations such as the cinema and bowling alley must be connected by safe and inviting routes into the centre. The route along the canal is a future priority for enhanced lighting.

The key design guidelines for lighting are defined in section 6 of this strategy.



Enhanced lighting at Rowcroft would improve the route into the town and create a sense of arrival.

## 2. A co-ordinated approach to access and parking

Getting into Stroud by car is confusing. One-way systems, gyratory roads and poorly signed car parks create unnecessary journeys within the historic centre. This creates an unpleasant environment for pedestrians and makes access for essential motorists more difficult. All of which serves to discourage potential visitors.

The consultation events and surveys confirms understanding (full findings presented in Appendix 2), with:

- 78% strongly agreeing / agreeing that getting into Stroud town centre was difficult.
- 80% strongly agreeing / agreeing that the one-way system was confusing and off putting to visitors.
- 94% strongly agreeing / agreeing that on-street parking in the historic centre added to congestion and created a number of car journeys into the centre.
- 92% strongly agreeing / agreeing that the unorganised arrangements for delivery and service vehicles created obstacles for pedestrians.

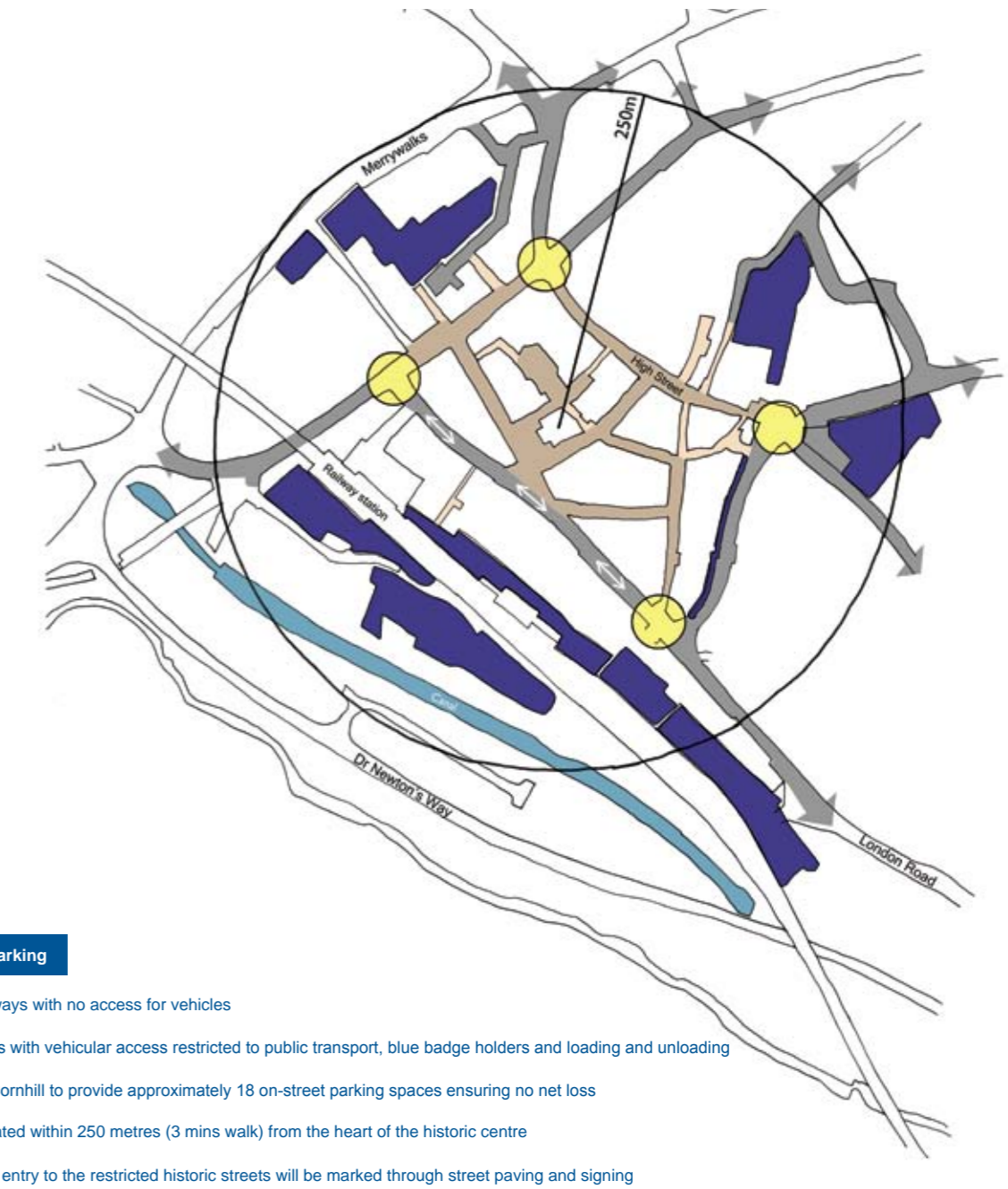
This public realm strategy seeks to simplify the management of traffic, creating a better balance with the pedestrian and historic environment to establish Stroud as a more attractive and accessible destination.

The key recommendations for change have been developed in discussion with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC). More detailed investigation and testing of these proposed concepts will be required in order to fully evaluate their feasibility and to inform the next stages of public realm design. A key process will be the attainment and analysis of robust traffic modelling data for in and around the central area of Stroud.

The following strategic recommendations set out a co-ordinated approach to:

- Defining the historic centre.
- Simplifying the network of streets.
- Simplifying traffic circulation.
- Improving access to the car parks.
- Improving access to and within the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists.

The diagram opposite brings together the key recommendations for access and parking.



### Defining the historic centre

The absolute priority is to enhance the quality of the public realm within the historic centre and improve conditions for pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair users and people pushing buggies.

The strategy aims to remove as much non-essential traffic from circulating in the historic centre as possible. To achieve this it is proposed that a simplified set of Traffic Regulation Orders is introduced to restrict general traffic from entering the historic centre at all times.

It is proposed that access to the High Street, Kendrick Street, King Street, George Street, together with Fawkes Place, Threadneedle Street, Union Street and John Street would be restricted to public transport (including taxis), blue badge holders and delivery vehicles loading and unloading only.

A simple restricted access designation for the historic centre provides a clear basis for street and space design to support and encourage pedestrian activity, facilitating the selection of high quality streetscape materials.

This approach will deliver a significant shift to pedestrian priority in key retail locations. For example, from Wallbridge / Rowcroft only restricted traffic would be able to continue into Kings Parade and access George Street, substantially reducing the existing traffic pressure on this gyratory.

This also provides a context for the Subscription Rooms forecourt to expand and fulfil its role as Stroud's principal civic space.



Above: George Street today – heavy traffic, narrow pavements and the clutter of road markings and signs undermine the role of this historic street.



Opposite: An indicative illustration of George Street. Historic streets such as George Street should prioritise the pedestrian by:

- restricting general traffic access
- reducing the clutter of signage and road markings
- clearly defining loading and delivery areas
- using high quality paving materials, ensuring the colour complements the buildings

### Managing vehicles in the historic centre

The strategy also seeks to establish a clear and comprehensible approach to parking and loading within the historic street network, clearly defining where stopping and unloading is allowed. This is in contrast to allowing parking and loading everywhere not specifically prohibited as at present.

It is recommended that a Restricted Parking Zone designation be applied in conjunction with the Traffic Regulation Orders to manage better the traffic that can access the historic centre (public transport, delivery vehicles and blue badge holders). Appropriate signing would be required at the four key entry points.

The designation allows bays to be defined through the use of surface materials, street furniture and discreet signing. It removes the requirement for yellow-line road markings or other signing restrictions that undermine the qualities of the historic environment and obstruct pedestrian flow.

Street design should ensure that drivers are in no doubt as to where stopping is permitted. Carriageways should be narrowed to the minimum necessary for the expected movements.

Measures to help manage traffic and facilitate high quality public realm improvements have been successful in bolstering the economic performance of historic towns across the UK. In Chepstow, for example, a scheme for the High Street has been recognised in helping to significantly reduce retail vacancies (see Appendix 3).

A more detailed traffic assessment is required to determine the most appropriate movement pattern for permitted traffic within the historic centre, which should be combined with research to understand the servicing requirements of retailers.



Restricted Parking Zone – organisation within the street is established by surface materials and discreet signage without the need for yellow road line markings. (Clockwise from top left: Edinburgh, Chester and Shrewsbury).



### Simplifying the network of streets

To reinforce the historic centre and co-ordinate access the strategy proposes a simple classification into three distinct street types:

#### Alleyways and lanes

- Narrow historic alleyways and lanes that converge on the wider connecting streets.
- Closed to vehicles.
- Support specialist retail and food outlets.
- A distinctive feature of central Stroud in their own right.

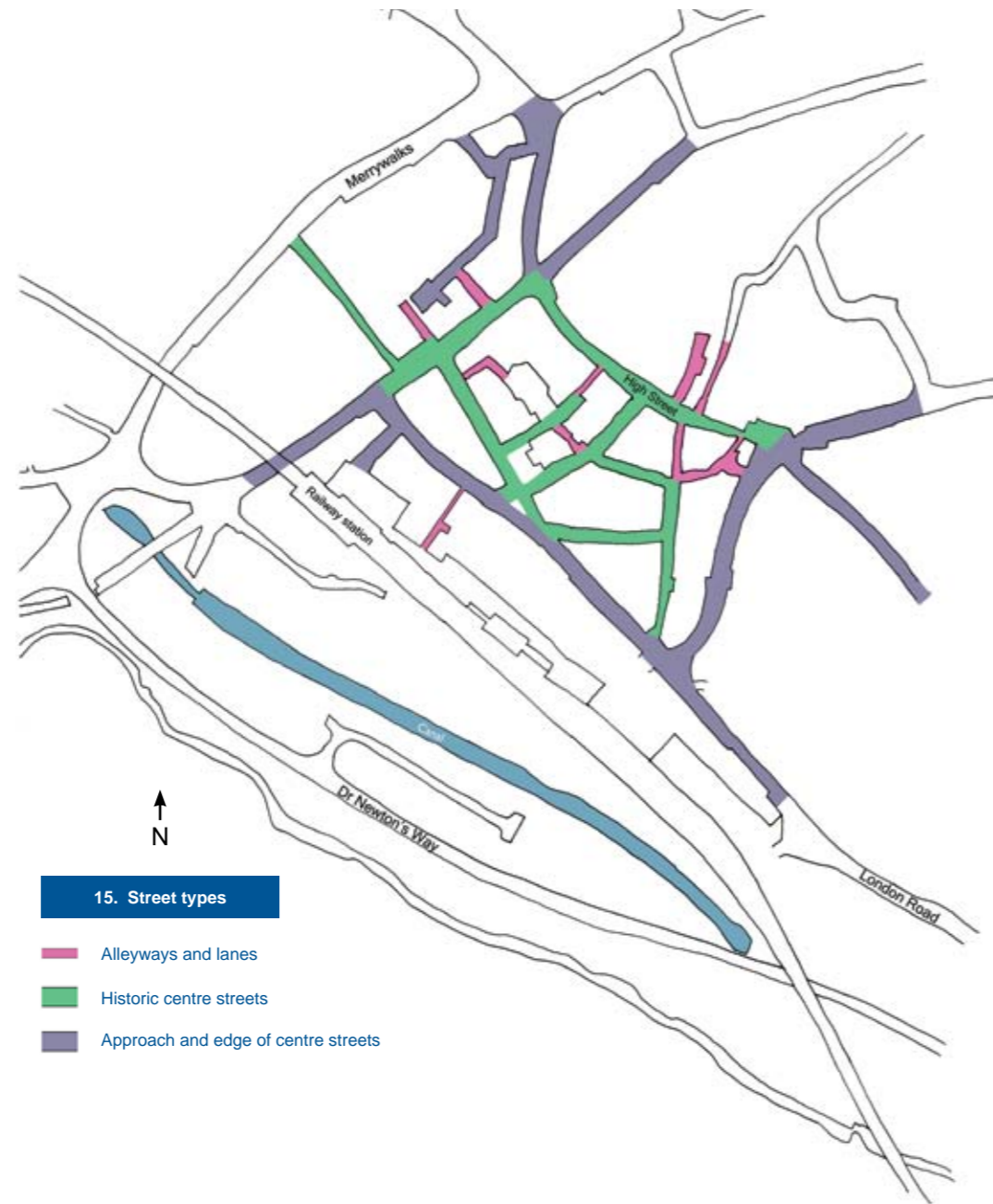
#### Historic centre streets

- Main retail and commercial streets.
- Consistent character that is dominated by pedestrian activity.
- Restricted access for general traffic.
- Deliveries and disabled parking provision in clearly defined bays.

#### Approach and edge of centre streets

- Wider streets that approach the edge of the historic centre.
- Provide access and exit for vehicles and pedestrians.
- Support a mix of land uses.

Section 6 outlines the key treatment guidelines that will shape this simplified street network.



### Simplifying traffic circulation

Consultation undertaken in developing this strategy identified a need to address traffic pressure created by Stroud's one-way system.

The proposals outlined below now require more detailed investigations with Gloucestershire County Council to assess the implications for traffic flow. It will be important that a holistic approach to traffic modelling is undertaken to fully understand the effect of proposals to all carriageways within the town.

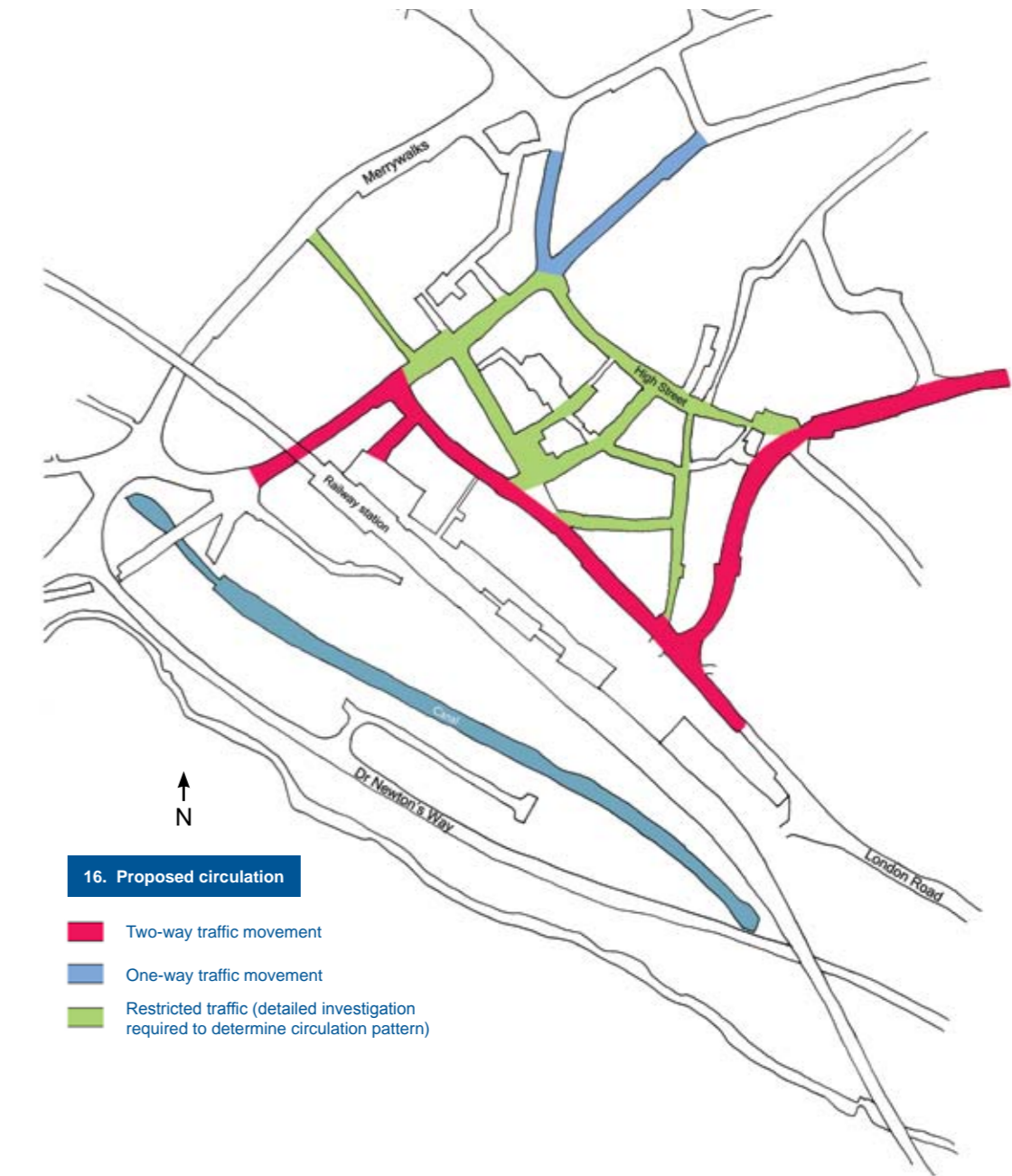
#### Improving west to east connections

Re-opening Russell Street and London Road to two-way traffic would simplify circulation and improve connections along the southern edge of the town centre. This would allow general traffic arriving from the west (along Rowcroft) to turn right into Russell Street and be presented with a simple and direct route across the town centre, enabling access to the rail station and the London Road car parks.

The two-way movement pattern on this route would also help to improve connectivity at key intersections:

- Station Road junction: General traffic leaving the Station Square will be able to turn left or right onto Russell Street and exit the town to the east or west.
- Four Clocks junction: Restricted traffic exiting the historic retail streets will be able to turn left or right onto Russell Street / London Road and exit the town to the east or west.

A range of potential options for Russell Street and London Road will need to be further evaluated by undertaking a detailed investigation of each option and applying traffic modelling techniques.



### Low speed designs

The strategy proposed for Russell Street / London Road has, at its core, the introduction of a 'design speed' of less than 20 mph, ensuring a balance with the pedestrian environment and an added degree of safety for cyclists.

The concept of a design speed should be clearly distinguished from a speed limit (although the latter may be helpful as reinforcement).

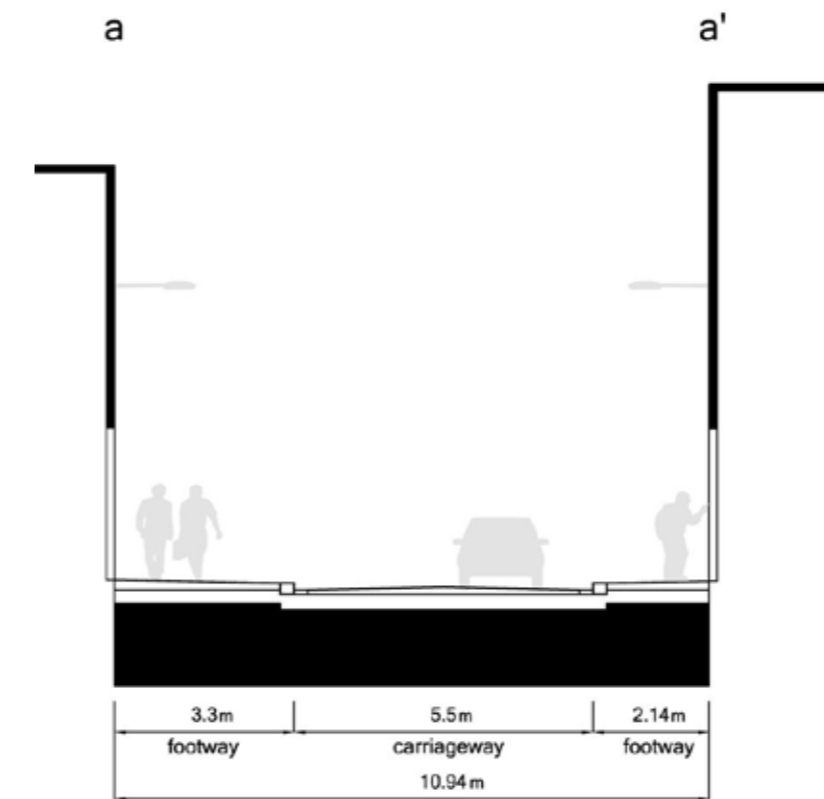
The narrowness of Russell Street, and the volume of pedestrian movements, may give rise to some degree of congestion and slow-moving traffic. The existence of Dr. Newton's Way bypass allows for an alternative route.

The potential effects for all road users will need to be reviewed through traffic modelling and further detailed investigations. In particular it will be important to ensure that the proposed two-way movement for Russell Street / London Road will not lead to a traffic 'rat-run' at peak periods. However, it is considered that the proposed low speed design principles would discourage this.

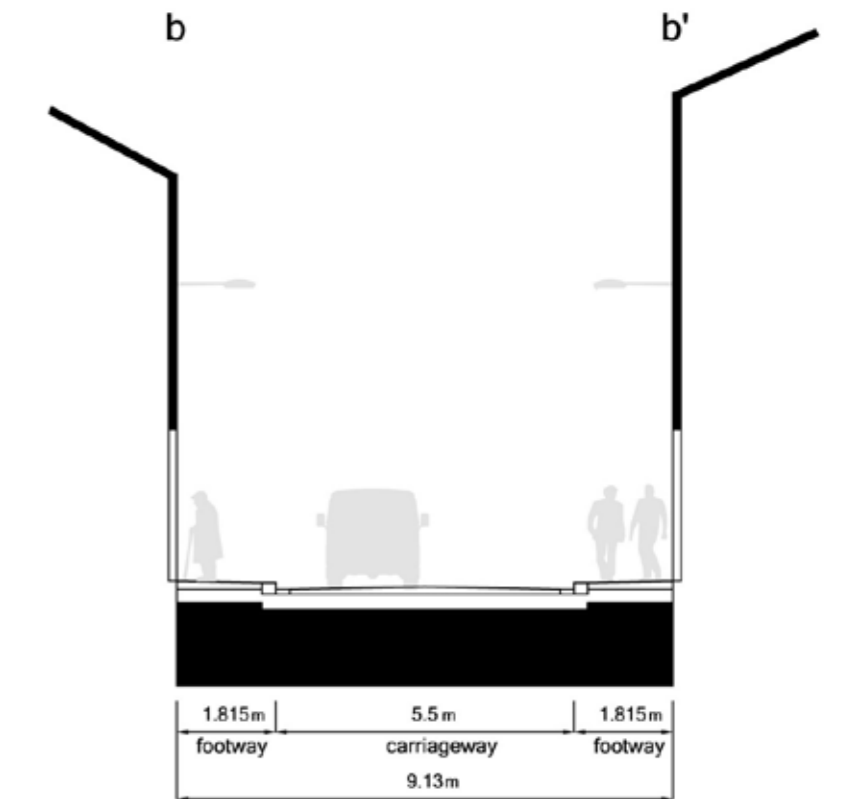
Low speed design principles include:

- Maintaining the apparent carriageway width at 5.5 metres.
- Introducing an 'edge strip' between the kerb and carriageway to allow larger vehicles to pass.
- Sustaining pavement widths close to 2 metres where possible.
- Reducing kerb heights to a minimum necessary to provide tactile guidance, whilst encouraging informal pedestrian crossing.
- Creating a series of distinct 'places' at street intersections, so that lengths of continuous, unbroken carriageway are reduced.
- Removing any edge or centre-line markings.

Opposite: Cross sections taken at points on London Road and Russell Street illustrate the implementation of the low speed design principles and the feasibility of re-introducing two-way traffic flow.



London Road



Russell Street

17. London Road and Russell Street cross sections

### Key intersections – the Four Clocks

Establishing low speed designs on London Road / Russell Street is fundamental to creating a successful arrival space at the Four Clocks intersection.

In common with best practice and precedents for low speed designs in other towns, negotiation and interaction between drivers and other street users are encouraged. This is a key principle of the public realm design at this intersection.

Street design must manage the flow of passing traffic alongside the creation of a distinctive entry space that encourages pedestrian connections to the historic centre.

High quality materials should be used to define the carriageway and footways, and celebrate the Clock Tower whilst delivering a clear message to drivers that the use of this space is shared.

The design of this key intersection should also have regard to the long term possibility of establishing a connecting route to the Brunel Goods Shed and beyond to the canal. The Four Clocks would be a striking arrival point and entrance to the historic centre.

Section 6: Guidelines, outlines a detailed design layout for this key intersection and demonstrates how the demands of this space can be delivered.



Above: Four Clocks today.



Opposite: An indicative illustration to show how enhancements to the public realm can establish an inviting space that celebrates the monument. Removing streetscape clutter is a priority.

### Improving access to the car parks

Stroud has over 1,250 parking spaces located in edge of centre car parks that lie within 250m (a 3 minute walk) of the heart of the historic centre. Whilst at lunchtimes and on Saturdays all facilities are often well used, but at other times parking spaces are readily available with the exception of the Church Street car park.

Getting more people to visit and explore the historic centre means that locating and reaching these car parks must be made as easy and simple as possible. Drivers need clear instructions on where to go in order to park near to their destination, minimising frustration and making it more likely that they will return.

Car parking surveys together with a review of access to car parks should be a consideration in taking forward future traffic proposals.

### Improving signage and orientation

The URBED evening economy action plan for Stroud recommends renaming car parks to identify their location. This approach is supported in this public realm strategy.

Renaming Church Street and Parliament Street car parks as the 'Upper End' car parks, promoting the Merrywalks car park as the 'West End', London Road as the 'East End' and Cheapside as 'Canalside', would clarify where parking can be found and the orientation of the historic centre.

Improved car park signing is also required to help direct people to the most appropriate and available parking when they first arrive in Stroud. For example, the Wallbridge area should direct traffic to the 'West

End' car park via Merrywalks and to the 'East and Upper End' car parks via Dr. Newton's Way.

Similar signing opportunities exist at the key arrival gateways like the Gloucester Street / Merrywalks junction.

### Enabling west to east movement

The potential for two-way traffic on London Road will serve to improve access to the edge of centre car parks for traffic approaching the historic centre via Wallbridge / Rowcroft.

A simple and direct route to the 'East End' (London Road) surface and multi-storey car park will be possible as a result of the strategy recommendations. The main signed route for traffic accessing this car park will however be via Dr. Newton's Way, which will help to reduce the level of traffic on the fringes of the historic centre.

### Relocating on-street parking

The proposed two-way traffic flow for Russell Street and London Road and the restricted access designation for George Street require the relocation of up to 18 on-street parking spaces.

In general, the improved access to and awareness of principal car parks should help reduce the demand for on-street parking spaces in the historic centre. It is however possible to ensure no net loss of parking through a simple redesign of Cornhill.



Above: Located just next to the historic centre, Cornhill has the potential to provide parking and access to the retail streets.



Opposite: An indicative illustration of Cornhill. A minimum of 18 on-street parking spaces can be accommodated whilst retaining access for the servicing of retail units on Union Street. On market days the priority would be given to market traders.

### 3. Growing the town centre

To support the historic centre longer term opportunities for investment and the development of new attractions are vital.

Three potential growth areas can be identified, representing long term opportunities that will need to be considered in the context of wider regeneration objectives.

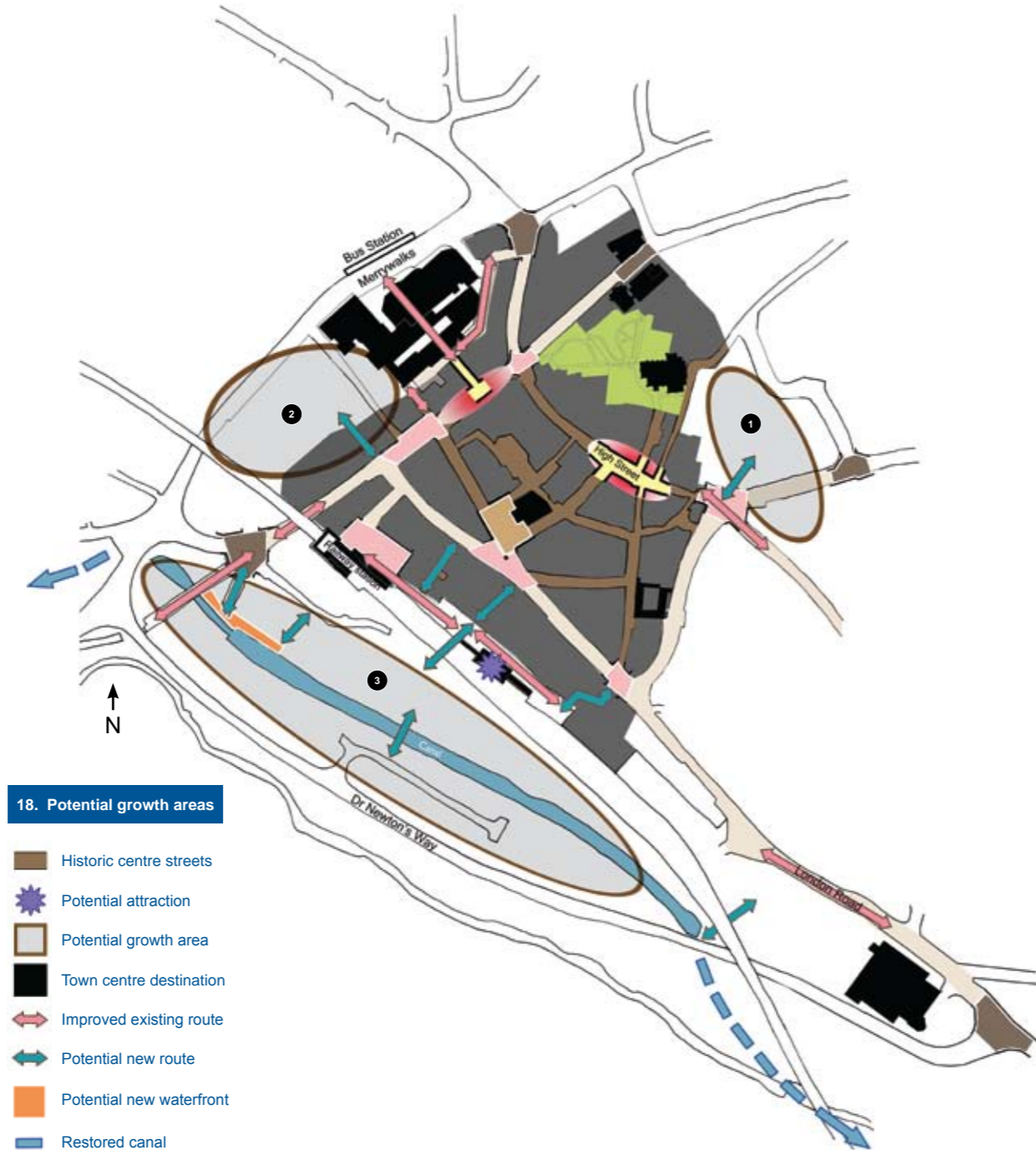
- ❶ Top of the High Street, including either side of Parliament Street, Church Street car park and the Police Station.
- ❷ South west of the Merrywalks Centre, between Merrywalks and Rowcroft comprising a health centre, McDonalds restaurant and redundant land, potentially extending through to King Street.
- ❸ Canalside including the Cheapside and Fromeside areas comprising redundant land north of the canal and industrial areas to the south.

For Stroud it is important to explore ways to:

- Develop visitor attractions.
- Attract new retailers.
- Connect with the canal.

The public realm has a key role to ensure that as new opportunities arise they are successfully integrated into an expanded town centre, reinforcing existing routes and establishing new connections.

Should emerging policies support the principle of town centre expansion, more detailed investigations, possibly through a series of design briefs, will be required to integrate development.



### Developing visitor attractions

It is important for Stroud to improve its offer to visitors and raise the profile of the town as a destination.

The restoration proposals for the Brunel Goods Shed as a textile centre offer the potential to attract a large number of visitors to the fringe of the historic centre.

Improving connections between the Goods Shed area and the centre will be critical to ensuring visitors experience the wider qualities of the town.

The redevelopment may also serve as a catalyst for the regeneration of the wider area between London Road and the railway line. The existing surface car parking undermines the setting of the listed Goods Shed and presents an uninviting gateway to the historic centre.

### Connections

- The topography and railway line mean it is a challenge to establish new pedestrian routes, making it important to strengthen existing ones.
- The existing route to Station Square should be improved, establishing a better balance with traffic accessing the station.
- The routes from Russell Street via Post Office Lane, and between the Brunel Mall and the former music shop on London Road are potential connections, which require detailed attention to address complicated changes in levels.
- Should a comprehensive development opportunity arise, a direct connection from the Goods Shed through to the Four Clocks area on London Road would establish a strong physical link between this area and the historic centre.
- Where possible new development should front these connections to help create an active street, improving the sense of safety and encouraging pedestrian circulation.



Historic assets such as the Brunel Goods Shed offering the potential for a new town centre attraction.

### Attracting new retailers

Stroud should identify opportunities to improve its offer to shoppers. The historic characteristics of the central area limit opportunities for large new retail space.

One possibility is the area either side of Parliament Street, comprising Church Street car park, the police station and Parliament Street car park as a potential long term area for retail growth.

Retail uses in this location would 'anchor' this end of the High Street and offer a balance with the Merrywalks shopping centre to the south. New development should front The Cross and create an attractive, active street scene that will be successful in drawing pedestrians along the High Street and better integrate the existing shops on Nelson Street.



Above: Views towards the countryside enhance the residential potential of this site.

The topography here offers exciting views out to the countryside, making residential uses on the upper floors of new development an attractive option. This would bring more people to live close to the town centre, supporting key town centre uses by day and night.

This opportunity is dependent on the successful relocation of the police station and court, and a reconfiguration of car parking within any new scheme. This would not necessarily result in a loss of public car parking in this location.

### Connections

- The priority route for improvement is the pedestrian connection to and from the High Street into Nelson Street.
- A new design solution is required to replace the obstruction of the wall at the end of the High Street / The Cross to encourage greater access and pedestrian movement.
- A further connection route north of The Cross should link the growth area around the police station to the top of the High Street.



Above: Top of the High Street (The Cross) is an opportunity area for retail led growth of the town centre, where public realm improvements are needed to address the barrier created by the wall.

Opposite: An indicative illustration for the top of the High Street highlighting the opportunity in principle for:

- New retail led development to 'anchor' this end of the High Street
- An arrival space that is framed by new development to define an entry point to the historic centre
- A design solution for the 'wall' that encourages greater pedestrian movement to and from Nelson Street, whilst retaining the necessary safety measures
- Potential vehicular exit / access at the top of the High Street for restricted traffic
- High quality public realm materials to be used to celebrate this arrival space, incorporating detailed design features that work with the topography, such as a water channel and seating area
- Improving accessibility for all by incorporating ramps in addition to steps



### Connecting with the canal

The Cotswold canals are the subject of an ambitious restoration that will establish the canal as a key leisure destination and route.

Clear, safe and interesting connections must be available to encourage more people to and from the historic centre. This will be essential if Stroud is to benefit fully from this asset.

### Connections

- The topography, railway line, the tow path position and different land ownerships present significant challenges to establishing new pedestrian routes, emphasizing the need to strengthen existing connections.
- The Wallbridge area should present a welcoming arrival space that allows easy pedestrian access to and from the waterway.
- Rowcroft must offer a more inviting and obvious route to the historic centre for pedestrians, with improvements to lighting, signage, and paving materials (see page 50 for lighting proposals).
- New development opportunities on existing vacant plots should help to create activity and a sense of arrival, providing definition to key spaces.
- Development opportunities at Cheapside should provide public access to and from the waterfront, helping to create a lively and inviting space to mark the start of the town.

- Establishing a new pedestrian bridge across the railway is a long term priority to create a more direct link between the water and the historic centre.
- This link should align with potential regeneration opportunities north of the railway line and if possible through to the historic centre at the Four Clocks.
- A new pedestrian bridge across the canal would assist with access from the south side tow path and help integrate future development opportunities south of the canal.



Above: The uninviting route to the canal from the town centre via Rowcroft.



Opposite: An indicative illustration demonstrating improved connections to the canal, highlighting the opportunity in principle for:

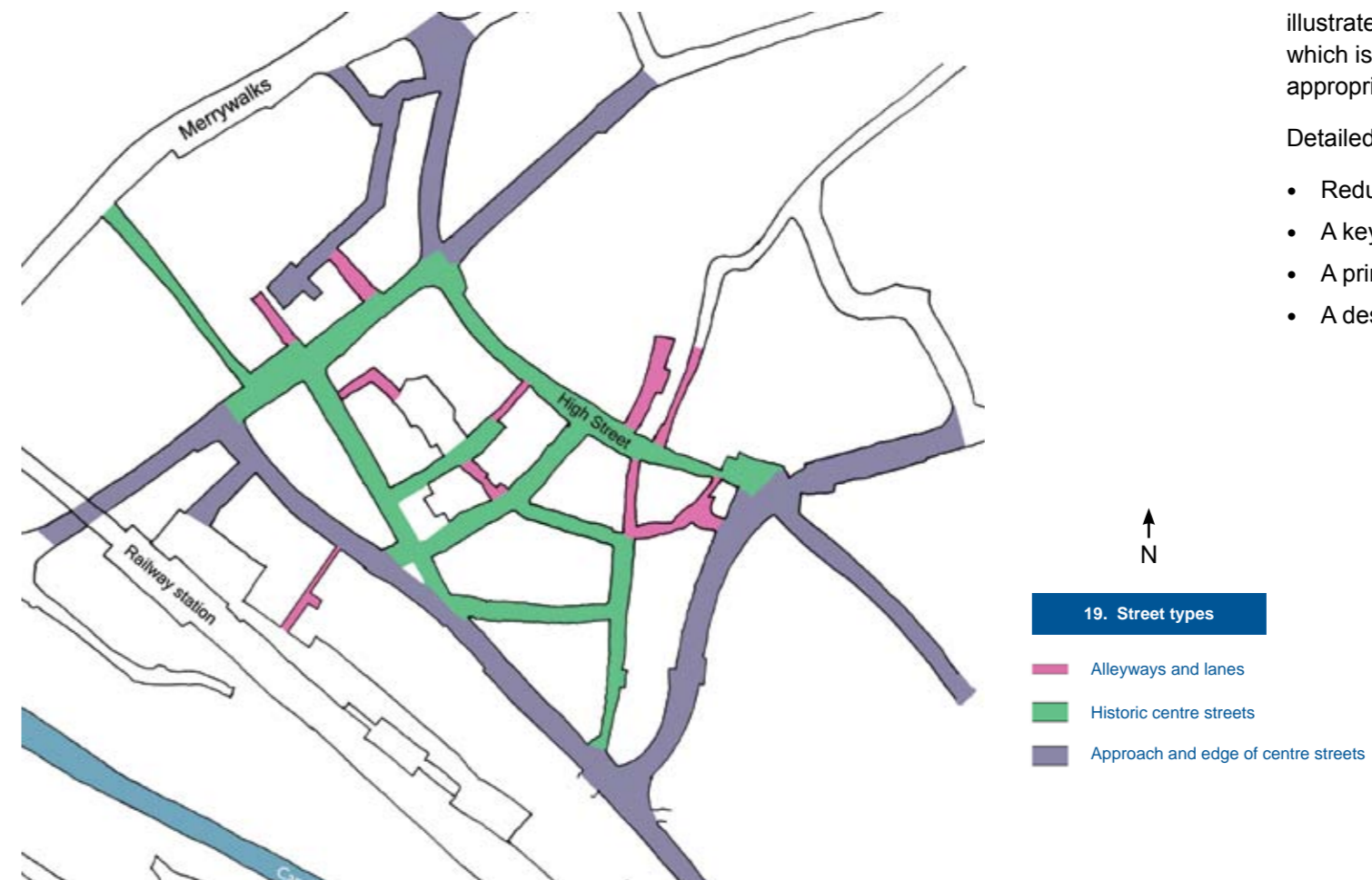
- New development defining this gateway to the town centre
- Improved pedestrian environment through widened pavements
- Encouraging greater pedestrian movement to and from the Wallbridge area through high quality paving materials helping to define a clear and attractive route
- Potential connections to the canal via Cheapside, which may require steps to address changes in level

# 06

## Guidelines for change

Detailing the public realm must be guided by high performance standards for design and implementation.

The following section provides a series of principles for the treatment of streets and spaces in Stroud considering street layout, surfaces, furniture, signage, lighting and public art.



### Guidelines for streets

Stroud's simplified street network comprises three distinct street types:

- Alleyways and lanes.
- Historic centre streets.
- Approach and edge of centre streets.

The sectional diagrams on the following pages illustrate the key design principles for each category, which is an essential prerequisite to the selection of appropriate surface materials.

Detailed guidelines set out the design principles for:

- Reduced height kerb edging.
- A key intersection – Four Clocks.
- A primary retail area – King Street.
- A destination space – upper end of High Street.



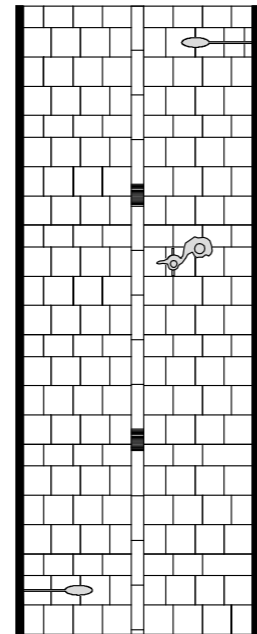
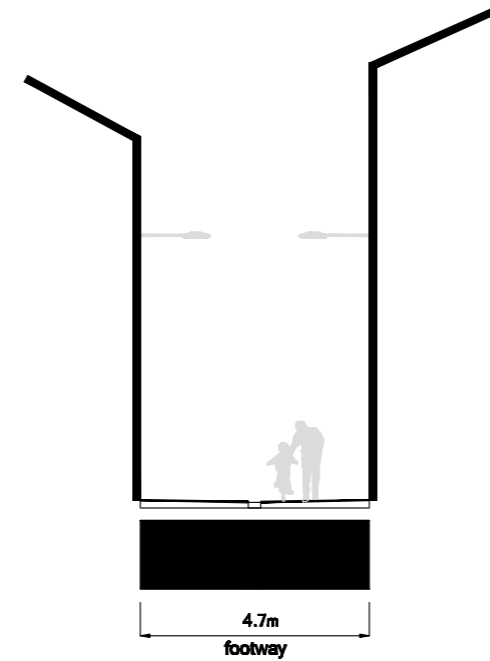
### Alleyways and lanes

Narrow traffic free routes that feed from the wider connecting streets.

- Simple, single material type.
- Wall to wall paving.
- Large, smooth surface paving slabs.
- Although traffic free, paving must be able to cope with occasional vehicles (emergencies).
- Central drainage channel with gully grating (dimensions to fit channel).
- Keep surface clutter free with lighting fitted to buildings where possible.

Examples include:

Church Street, The Shambles, and the start of Union Street, Swan Lane and Bedford Street. Example shown is start of Union Street.



20. Alleyways and lanes cross section and plan

### Historic centre streets

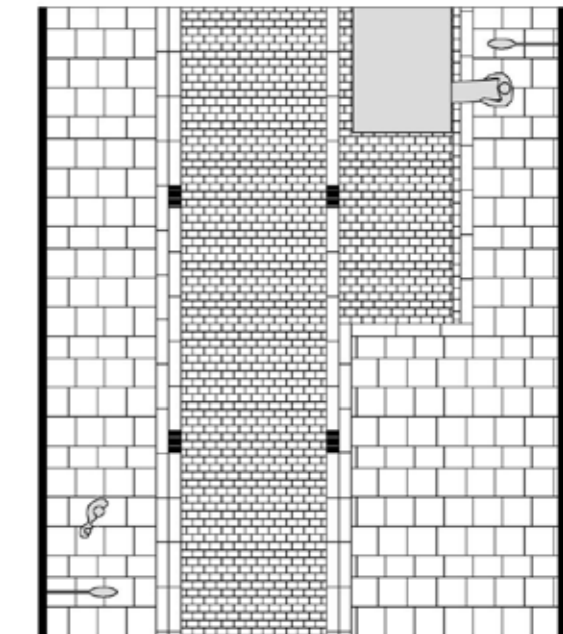
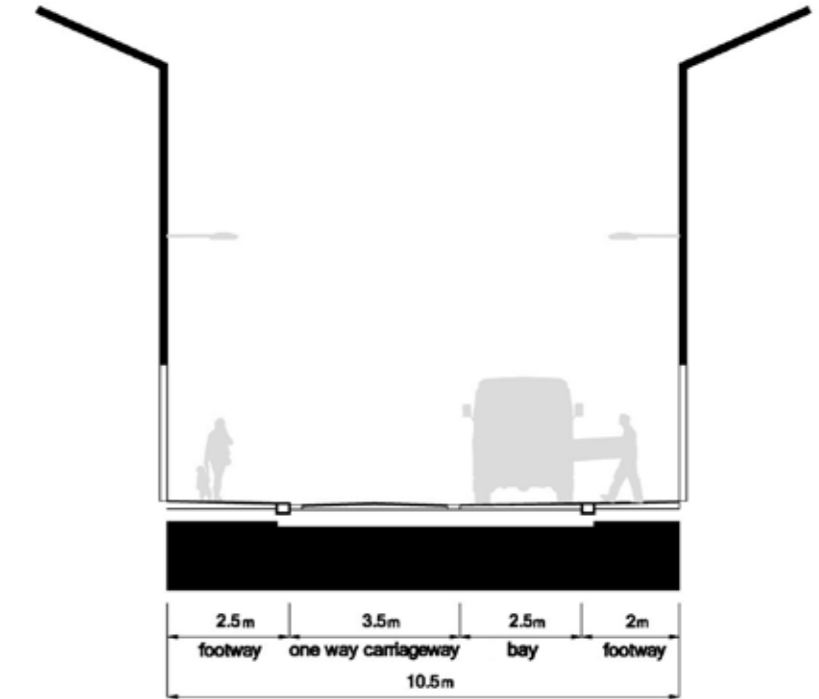
The dimensions of these streets vary, but all share a consistent character, dominated by pedestrian activity. These streets are designed to accommodate deliveries and some disabled parking provision in clearly defined bays.

Streetscape treatments should deliver a clear message that you have entered somewhere special and transition has been made to pedestrian priority.

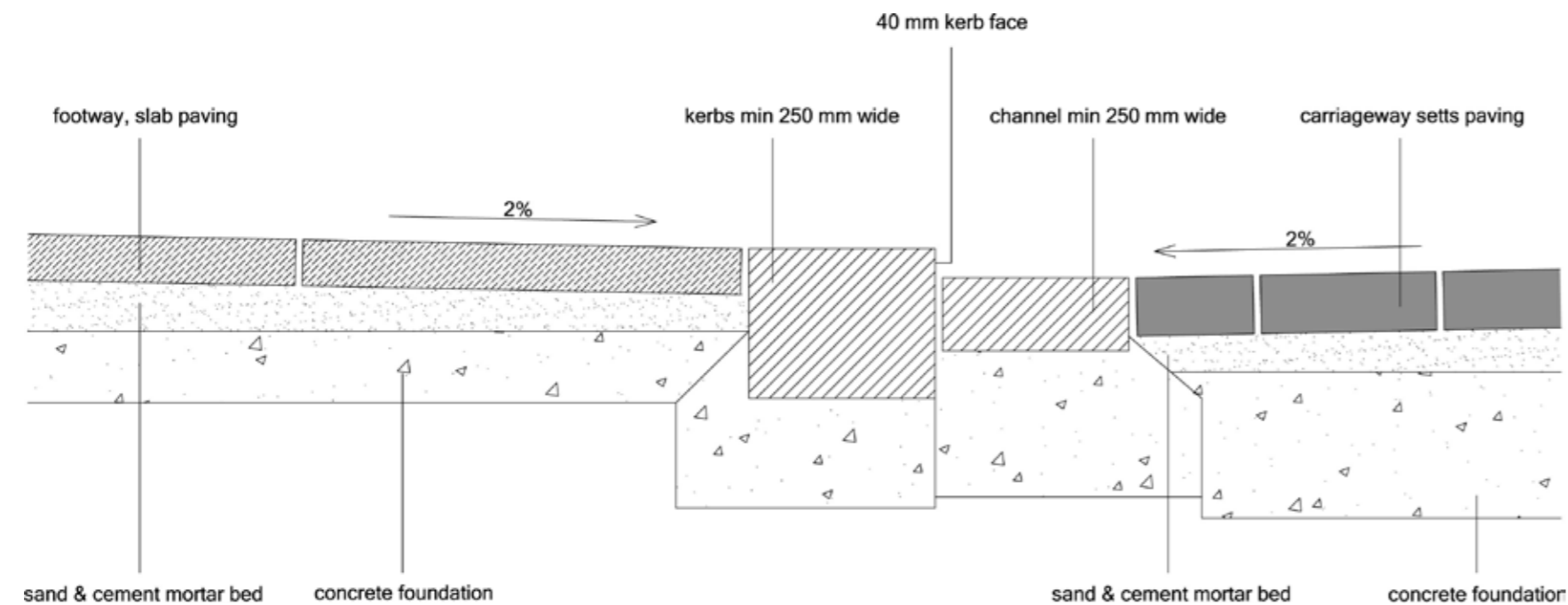
- Traditional street layout with footway, kerb and carriageway.
- Large, smooth surface paving slabs on footway.
- Small paving (setts) on carriageway and loading / parking bays.
- Aim for minimum footway width of 2 metres.
- Minimum kerb upstand of 40 mm (see detail overleaf).
- Kerb and channel of same material and used as a clear marker for carriageway and bay areas.
- Footway material colour to be sympathetic to buildings.
- Carriageway material colour capable of absorbing unavoidable staining from vehicles.
- Keep surface clutter free with lighting fitted to buildings where possible.

Examples include:

High Street, Kendrick Street, George Street and the one-way circuit of Threadneedle Street, Union Street and John Street. Example shown is George Street.



21. Historic centre streets cross section and plan



22. Kerb implementation guide: minimum kerb upstand of 40 mm.

### Approach and edge of centre streets

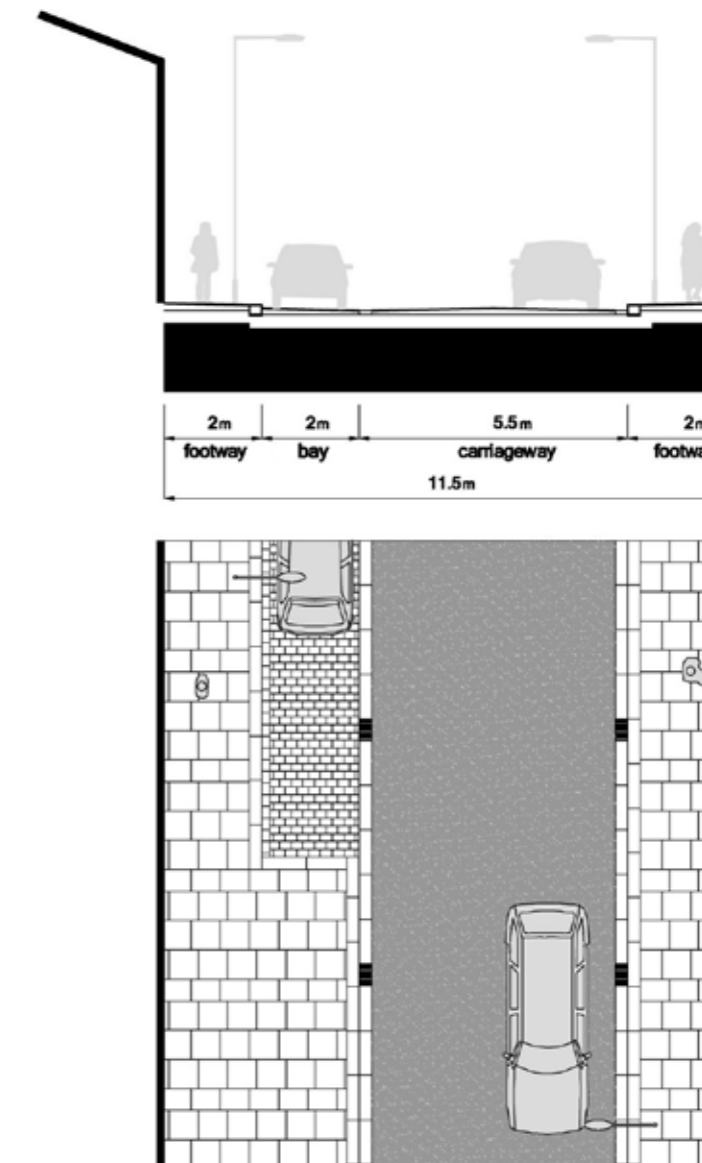
Wider approach streets to the edge of the historic centre providing access and exit for vehicles and pedestrians, accommodating on-street parking in some locations.

Streetscape treatments should deliver a clear message that this is the entry to Stroud town centre, emphasizing the start of the transition to pedestrian priority.

- Traditional street layout capable of carrying general traffic.
- Footway paving material to be consistent with historic street footways.
- Asphalt carriageway treated to improve finish and appearance.
- Kerb and channel of same material and used as a clear marker for carriageway and bay areas.
- Loading / parking bays to be defined by small setts, which are consistent with the treatment in the historic streets.
- More traditional kerb upstand 75mm.
- Use of lighting columns is unavoidable in places (locate as close as possible to kerb 500mm).

Examples include:

Rowcroft, Russell Street (no bays here), London Road, Cornhill, Lansdown and Gloucester Street. Example shown is Cornhill.



23. Approach streets cross section and plan

### Key intersections – the Four Clocks

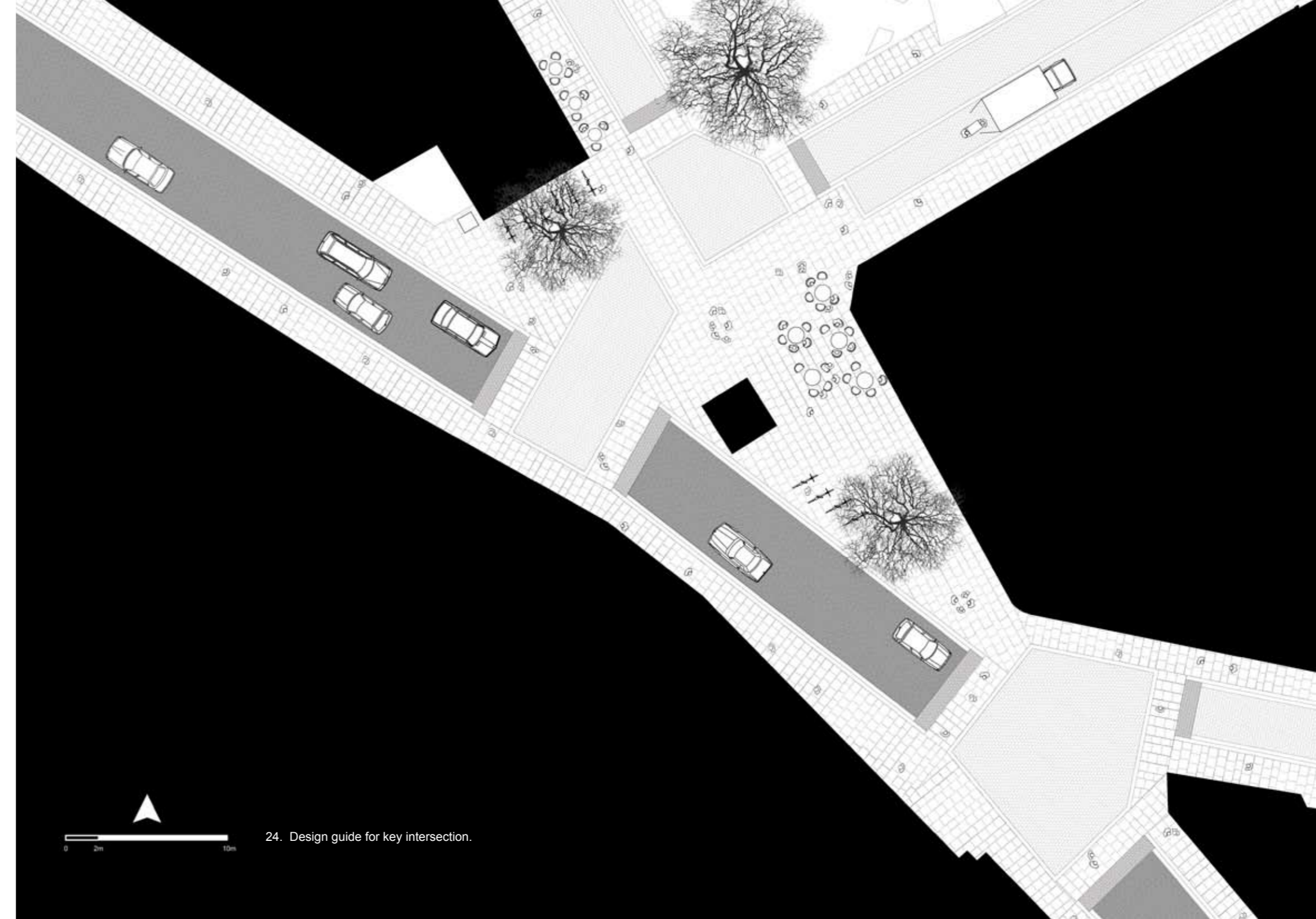
The indicative design guide opposite illustrates the implementation of public realm principles at the key intersection of the Four Clocks. The design demonstrates:

- Potential re-introduction of two-way traffic flow on London Road / Russell Street.
- Ability for restricted traffic to exit the historic centre streets, turning left or right at the enhanced junction.
- Creation of an arrival space which supports community life.
- Improved setting of the Four Clocks.
- De-clutter of inessential streetscape items (signs, bollards, barriers and planters).
- Reconfigured bike / scooter parking.
- Additional tree planting.
- Surface materials used to guide traffic flow (flush kerbing).
- Raised 'tables' on the carriageway deliver clear message to drivers.
- 'Tables' are flush with high quality wide slab paving on the footway.
- 'Herringbone' paving pattern at key pressure points to support turning vehicles.
- Asphalt carriageway combined with setts to define spaces.



Above: Location of the Four Clocks intersection.

Opposite: Indicative design guide for the intersection of Russell Street, George Street, Kendrick Street and London Road.



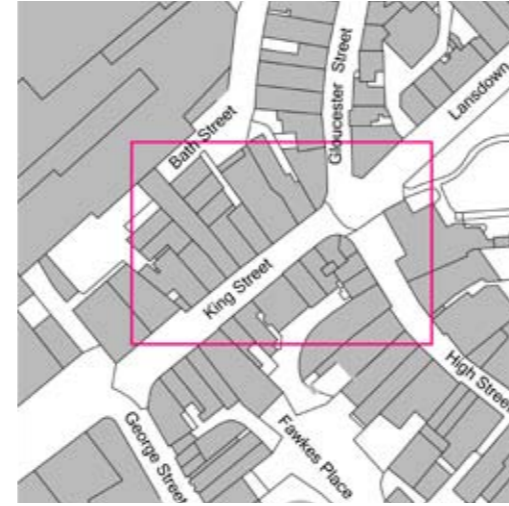
24. Design guide for key intersection.

### Key destination – King Street / Merrywalks entrance

The indicative design guide opposite illustrates the implementation of public realm principles at the key retail destination space at King Street / Merrywalks shopping centre entrance. The design demonstrates:

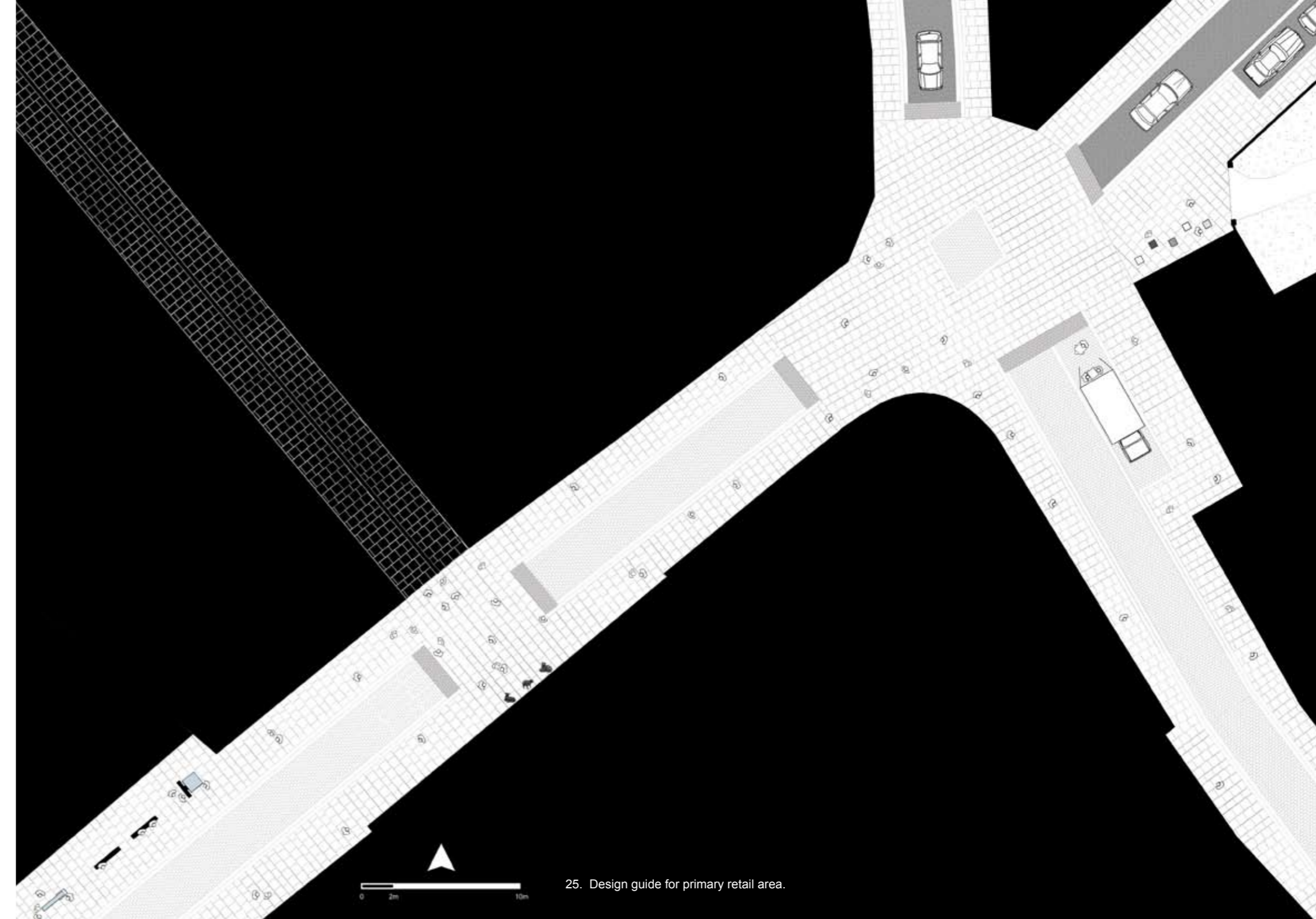
- High quality paving materials defining an attractive, open historic street which contrasts with the enclosed modern environment of the shopping centre.
- A clear pedestrian route to connect from King Street into the High Street is established through consistent application of high quality paving materials.
- Wide paving slabs emphasise pedestrian priority outside the Merrywalks shopping centre entrance.
- Paving materials could continue into the Merrywalks shopping centre to encourage greater pedestrian flow to and from this key attraction.

- Single carriageway for restricted traffic defined by smaller setts establishes a clear route for vehicles through this destination space.
- Where possible the servicing of retail units in this location should be via Fawkes Place, limiting the need for off carriageway bays (confirmation needed with traders).
- Opportunity to provide an enhanced setting to the listed Greyhound public house through high quality paving materials and de-cluttering of inessential streetscape items.
- Enhanced entrance to Bank Gardens through improved paving to encourage greater pedestrian movement and connections between these attractions of Stroud's historic centre.
- Opportunities for seating and public art elements on King Street and the beginning of the High Street to mark and connect these locations.



Above: Location of King Street / Merrywalks entrance.

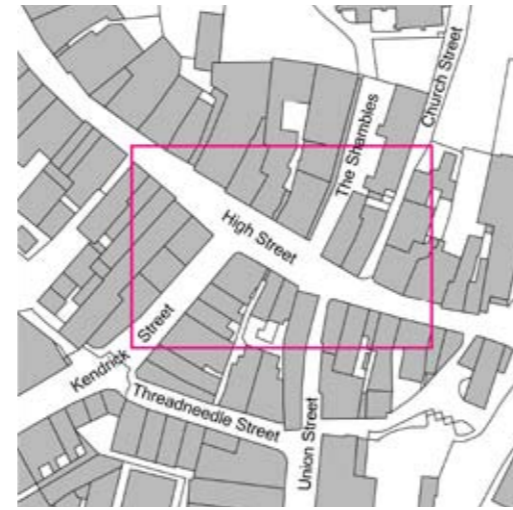
Opposite: Indicative design guide for the key retail destination at King Street / Merrywalks entrance.



### Key destination – Upper end of the High Street

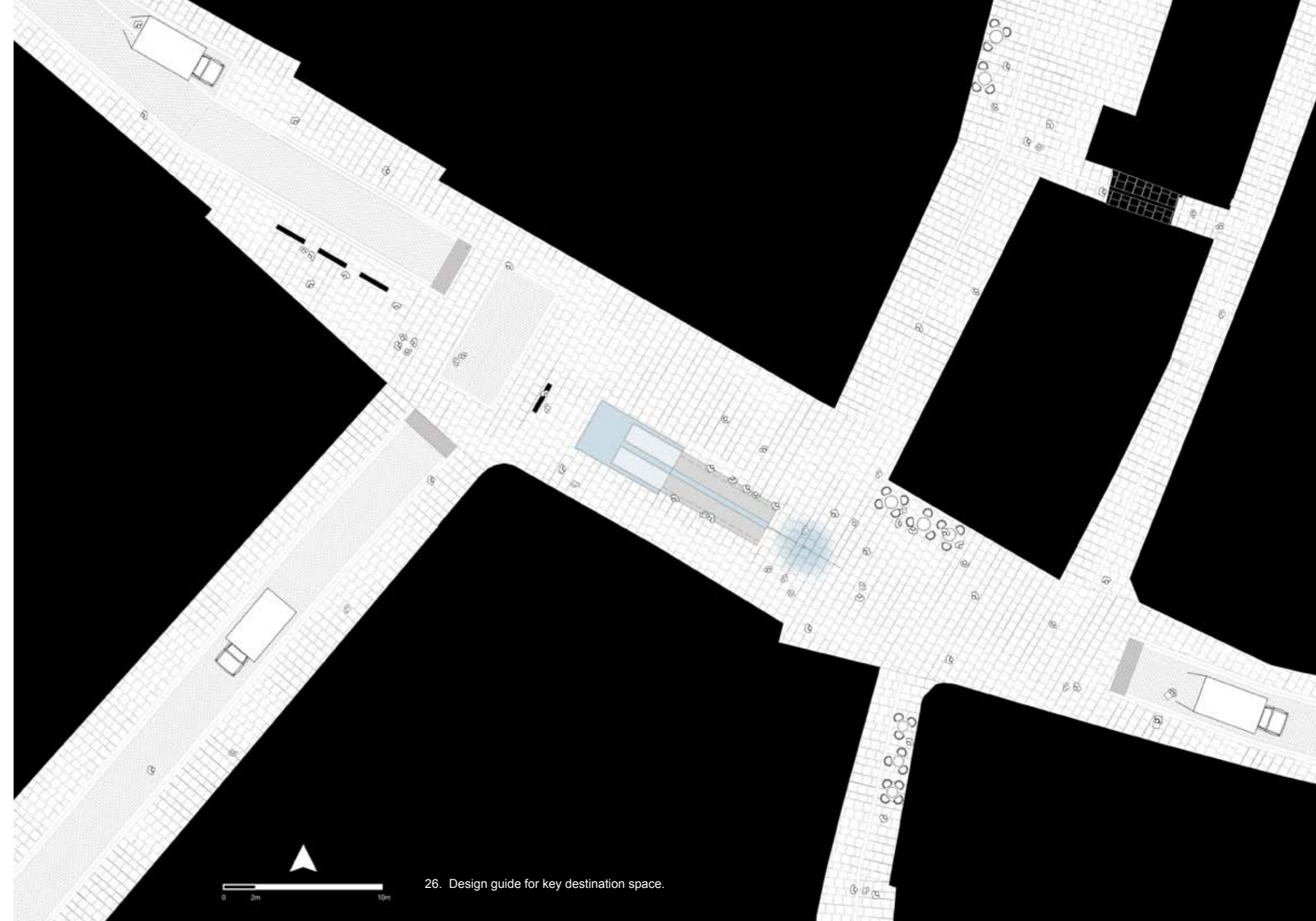
The indicative design guide opposite illustrates the implementation of public realm principles at the key destination and arrival space at the upper end of the High Street. The design demonstrates:

- Creation of a destination space which supports community life.
- Opportunity for a high quality design feature to mark this destination space and encourage greater activity at this key retail location.
- Opportunity to combine design feature with public seating, exploiting the striking views out towards the surrounding countryside.
- De-clutter of inessential streetscape items (signs, bollards, barriers and planters) and the opportunity to integrate lighting with a new design feature to highlight this location at night.
- High quality paving slabs define a pedestrian priority area and encourage improved connections to and from key streets such as The Shambles, Union Street and Church Street.
- Surface materials define areas for traffic and opportunities for loading and unloading.
- Herringbone' paving pattern at key pressure points to support turning vehicles.



Above: Location of upper High Street destination.

Opposite: Indicative design guide for the destination at the upper High Street.



### A new design feature

The upper end of the High Street in Stroud presents an opportunity to develop a new design feature to celebrate this special location.

The slope of the High Street allows striking views out towards the surrounding countryside, making this a great place for public seating.

Key historic streets such as Union Street, Church Street and The Shambles all converge on this spot, emphasising the importance of attracting a greater number of people.

A new streetscape design here could work with the challenge of the topography and incorporate water as an attraction.

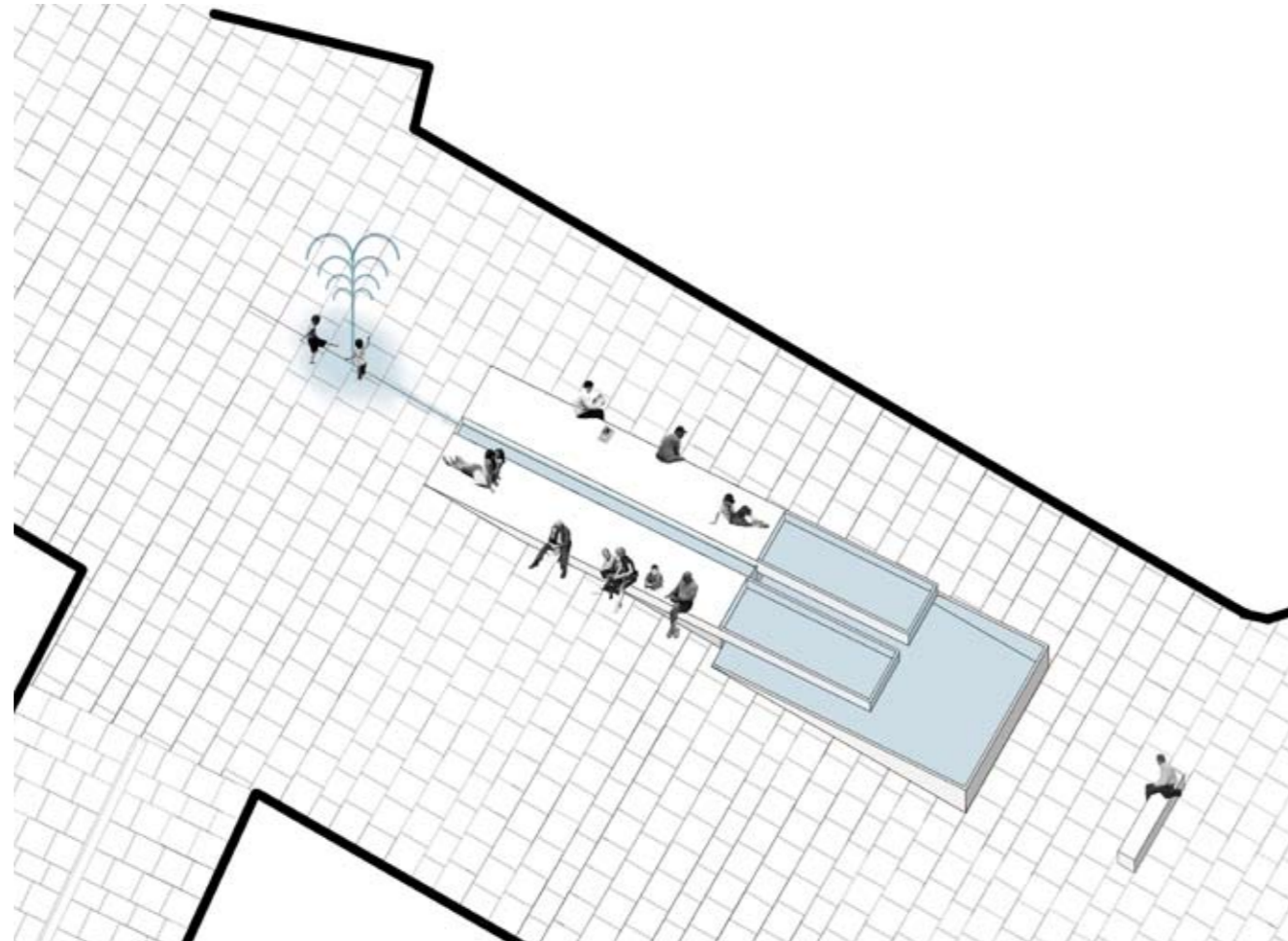
The indicative design works with the slope of the High Street, with a fountain in the pavement feeding into 'infinity' water pools (these create the impression of a disappearing edge with water extending into the horizon).

Special lighting at night could emphasise the water pools and create the impression the design feature is floating.

Future investigations and feasibility would need to address issues such as maintenance requirements, energy costs and management to reduce the risk of vandalism.



27. Above: Indicative cross section of the High Street design feature.



28. Above: Indicative design guide for the new design feature.



Character illustration for the new design feature incorporating a water fountain that feeds into 'infinity' water pools via channels. Feature lighting can create a dramatic floating effect for the pools at night.



## Detailing the streetscape

The following guidelines for streetscape materials consider the treatment of:

- Ground surfaces.
- Street furniture.
- Planting.
- Signage.
- Lighting.
- Public art.

### Ground surfaces

Ground surfaces comprise footways, carriageways and kerbing. The following key principles should inform the selection of surface materials for Stroud:

**Consistent** – The application of surface materials should be consistent to help unify the streets and spaces within the town centre and bring definition to key areas.

**Neutral** – Surfaces should form a seamless and neutral base that does not compete with the surrounding buildings, spaces and features.

**Natural** – Where possible, natural, local materials should be used ahead of manmade alternatives. The initial high cost of natural materials is often off-set by appearance and durability.

**Simple** – Ground surfacing should be simple and not a focal point.

**Robust** – Surfaces should be fit for purpose, supporting the functions and demands placed upon them from all users (pedestrians and vehicles) and be easy to clean and maintain. Given Stroud's topography it is particularly important to choose materials with a high slip resistance.

**Available** – Selected materials should be readily available to maintain consistency, using local sustainable sources wherever possible.

It is important for the ground surface materials to be appropriate to their surroundings and respectful of local character.

Stroud's built form is defined by:

- Natural Cotswold stone.
- Light coloured render.
- Detailed brickwork (red, orange and brown).
- Strong colour accents.

The ground surfaces in Stroud must support, not compete with these qualities.



The defining colours of Stroud's built environment.

A selection of suitable surface materials will need to be made to enable detailed streetscape designs to be taken forward. The final selection must accord with Gloucestershire County Council's enhanced materials policy, which is currently being prepared.

The materials highlighted opposite are not an exhaustive list, but a range of suitable options that follow the key principles of this strategy for the public realm. In making the final selection it will be important to ensure consistency and compatibility across the surface elements (footways, carriageways and edging).

### Footways

Large, smooth surface natural yorkstone or sandstone paving slabs are suitable. An alternative option is a concrete natural aggregate mix.



Diamond sawn yorkstone.



Forest of Dean sandstone (setts are also available for carriageways).



Perfecta smooth aggregate mix.

### Carriageways

For the historic streets natural stone or a concrete natural aggregate mix setts are suitable. For approach streets, treated asphalt (natural aggregate mix) is suitable help to distinguish general traffic streets.



Yorkstone setts.



Granite setts.



Treated asphalt.

### Edging

Kerb edging should complement the selected material for the carriageways and footways. Granite or sandstone options are suitable or a granite aggregate mix.



Granite kerb.



Sandstone kerb.



Granite aggregate mix kerb.

### Furniture

Street furniture covers a range of public items that appear in the streetscape including benches and seats, litter bins, cycle racks and bollards.

The first key recommendation for Stroud is to continue to audit its street furniture to appraise the condition, appearance, use and siting of all existing items. Items with conservation interest / value should be retained or relocated if possible.

As a general rule nothing should be placed in the streetscape unless there is a clear public benefit – all surplus/redundant items should be removed to improve visibility and reduce clutter.

When considering the selection of new furniture the following design guidelines should be followed:

- Furniture should not seek to imitate historic styles. It is not possible or desirable to design street furniture to reflect any era of the historic environment.
- Simple, elegant and contemporary items should be selected that are appropriate to a wide range of architectural and spatial settings.
- Items should be sited to increase visibility in the street and create a safe environment, using existing buildings and pavement lines as a guide (positioning where possible at the back edge of footways).

- Consistency in style and material should be applied to ensure visual continuity and ease of maintenance. Stainless steel eliminates the problem of paint chipping and sustains a quality appearance for longer.
- A common approach should be agreed with all departments and bodies involved in the management and maintenance of street furniture.

### Cycle racks

A simple design in stainless steel offers an elegant, robust and practical option for cyclists. Cycle racks should be positioned at key entry points to the historic centre.

Consideration should be given to the impact on ground surfaces. Narrow, rectangle supports rather than rounded tubes can help to reduce the need to break and fill the surface pattern.



Narrow, rectangular supports reduce impact on surfaces.



### Seats and benches

A traditional form with a contemporary design should be selected.

The positioning of seating should take account of the micro-climate, ensuring protection from the wind and maximizing sunlight. Careful positioning can also enhance use of spaces and assist with maintenance.

Within key spaces in the town such as Bank Gardens and the Subscription Rooms forecourt there is an opportunity for bespoke seating to be designed as an integral part of each scheme.



New seating should follow a traditional form with a contemporary design.

### Litter bins

Smart, unfussy and contemporary design should be selected, which is functional and meets the requirements of those responsible for cleaning and emptying.

There is the opportunity to consider the introduction of recycle bins, which follow a similar style.



Litter bins and bollards should be carefully placed.

### Bollards

Bollards should only be installed when strictly necessary and when there is no viable alternative. They often impede pedestrian movement, are visually intrusive and require reinstatement of surfacing when nudged over.

Where possible a higher quality kerb definition should reduce the need for bollards. As a last resort a simple, contemporary stainless steel bollard has the advantage of never chipping or needing to be repainted.



### Planting

Stroud has a strong visual relationship with the countryside surrounding the town centre. This brings a 'green feel' to many street scenes and reduces the need for substantial planting in the form of trees, ground box planters, floral displays, shrubbery, and hanging baskets.

Where new planting is considered, the following guiding principles apply:

- Existing street trees should be assessed on their contribution to the townscape and retained wherever possible.
- In general there should be a presumption against introducing lines or groups of trees into historic areas where none have existed previously.



Views out create a 'green feel' to Stroud's streets.

- Where new trees are introduced they should be considered as part of a detailed design for that area, ensuring key views and linkages are not interrupted. The specific location of new trees may be guided by the position of underground services.
- Individual specimen trees can be used to mark special areas, bring colour and texture to the street, compliment architecture and emphasize important views. Opportunities for new trees may exist at the Four Clocks, Cornhill and at the top of the High Street at the Cross (as illustrated in the strategy section).
- Generally, the use of gravel at the base of the tree combined with a level grille is preferred as it provides a porous, flexible surface that accommodates wheelchairs and pushchairs whilst preventing the collection of rubbish.



Specimen trees can bring colour and texture to the street.

- The use of vertical tree guards should be avoided where possible as they often collect and trap litter.
- The use of isolated ground level planters should be avoided as they often impede pedestrian flow.
- Baskets or hanging floral displays can bring seasonal colour to the street, but should be wall mounted to reduce the need for additional poles or columns.
- A maintenance programme for all planting should be established to ensure regular inspections, feeding, pruning and replacement where necessary. This should also involve the regular clearance of leaves to avoid potential slipping hazards.



Level tree grilles bound with gravel.

## Signage

Signage in the public realm typically takes three forms; street name plates, pedestrian orientation signs and traffic signs.

Signage is designed to convey directional and orientation information (particularly for visitors) but also to provide reminders for an update of information (particularly for residents).

For Stroud the key guiding principles for signage in the public realm include:

- Minimise the number of new signs introduced to reduce visual clutter.
- Where older street signs remain, they should be retained and restored to reinforce local character.
- Where possible street nameplates should be fixed to walls, buildings or railings or placed at the back edge of footways to minimise obstruction and visual intrusion.
- Other signs, such as information boards or finger posts, should where possible be mounted on existing furniture.

- If new posts are required a simple, elegant and contemporary style should be chosen that complements the surrounding street furniture and does not compete with the built form.
- A town centre 'identity' can be achieved by consideration of typeface, colour, shape and use of logos or symbols.
- The use of traffic signs should be restricted to those which display essential information and these should be located to ensure sufficient notice to drivers and improve navigation around the town.
- Traffic signs and signals where possible should be fixed to existing lamp columns, posts, railings or buildings to avoid the need for additional poles.
- Car park signing is required at key gateways to help direct people to the most appropriate and available parking when they first arrive.



New signage should be simple and well positioned to convey essential information only. Temporary display and information boards can be used to celebrate events and history.



## Lighting

Lighting is fundamental to any pedestrian street or space and has a key role to play in helping to provide greater safety and clarity for visitors to Stroud, particularly at night. The guiding design principles for lighting in Stroud include:

- Retain and restore historic lighting fixtures where possible, particularly in the historic centre and conservation areas.
- Where new lighting is introduced the design should be in a simple, contemporary style that complements the street and other furniture elements. Pastiche lighting columns should be avoided.
- Consider street lighting in conjunction with other light sources, including shop windows and floodlit buildings.
- Lighting should be designed to limit light pollution. The use of full cut-off lighting may be appropriate in areas of architectural importance.
- In general, building mounted or ground fitted lights are preferred to pole mounted lights in the town to minimise clutter.
- Lighting in areas where safety and security is an issue should conform to BS5489 3/2 Code of Practice for Crime and Safety.
- Regard should be given to Stroud's District Council's environmental policies.

A lighting strategy incorporating the role of strategic and feature lighting will be required for substantial or prominent development sites, and for those areas where evening activity is to be encouraged.



Historic lighting should be retained and restored where possible.



Modern lighting should be wall mounted where possible.



Feature ground lights can enhance key pedestrian routes at night without obstructive lighting columns.

## Public art

Public art should be encouraged to enhance orientation and identity and help to reinforce a sense of place.

Stroud has a rich industrial heritage and an interesting topography that provide an exciting and challenging context for the commission of public arts.

It will be important for Stroud to develop a public art strategy for the town to guide on size, content, siting, appropriateness to context and maintenance. A number of key principles will underpin the preparation of a more detailed strategy for public art, including:

- Public art should represent the highest standards of quality in both design and materials.
- Art should be site specific and have a clear relationship to the local geography, features and communities in which it is to be placed.
- There should be a clear economic / social / environmental benefit associated with a commission for art.
- Artists should be involved at the earliest opportunity in the design process in order to successfully integrate commissions.
- Participation by the community, including local artists, through consultation and /or a practical contribution to the process will be essential to engender a sense of ownership.
- Different approaches to procurement should be explored including open competitions (particularly useful for engaging the local community), selected invitation competitions or specific invitations to a single artist for prestigious or difficult commissions.



Public art can be used to celebrate distinctive and historical qualities, such as Stroud's textile industry. Art can become an interactive feature in the streetscape and an attraction in its own right, creating opportunities for play and social interaction and marking key places and destinations. The illustrations above present a starting point for public art inspiration, reflecting the town's industrial heritage.

## Accessibility for all

The public realm in Stroud town centre must present an accessible and inviting environment for all, particularly for users with special needs and requirements. Such groups include people with disabilities, the elderly, cyclists, and those with small children pushing prams and pushchairs.

In developing this public realm strategy consultation has been undertaken with interest groups such as the Stroud Community Access Group and the District Cycle and Pedestrian Forum.

The core principles of the strategy recognise the need in Stroud town centre to establish a better balance between all users of streets and spaces and reduce the current dominance of traffic.

There is also a clear recognition of the need to improve the surfaces and streetscape elements in central Stroud, not only from the built environment perspective, but also from an accessibility perspective, ensuring materials are safe, coordinated and supportive of all users.

The key guiding principles for improving accessibility for all in Stroud's historic centre include:

- Highway and planning authorities must comply with the Disability Equality Duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. This means that in their decisions and actions, authorities are required to encourage participation by disabled persons in public life.
- Consultation should continue with interest groups particularly at the detailed design stage.
- Efforts should focus on improving areas where people make the transition from the car to the pedestrian environment. Car parks, bus stops and the train station should present a safe and easy connection to the town centre wherever possible.

- Detailed streetscape elements such as tactile paving must be integrated sensitively to ensure they do not detract from the appearance and quality of the surrounding treatment.
- The introduction of new street furniture should ensure that the design meets the needs of all users and is sited to ensure unimpeded routes.
- Public lighting should be at an adequate level to help create safe routes and space for all.
- Detailed consideration must be given to kerb heights and the demarcation of carriageways, and to the approaches to shops and town centre facilities.



Improvements to the public realm in Stroud must seek to encourage greater access in and around the town centre for all, particularly for groups with special needs and requirements.



# 07

## Delivery and implementation

A public realm strategy for Stroud town centre is the start of a long term process of change.

The following section sets out key recommendations and actions to take the strategy forward.

### Introduction

This public realm strategy establishes key priorities for enhancement of Stroud town centre. Delivery of this vision will require a consensus between stakeholders and the community of Stroud. To build on the principles of this strategy the following section considers:

- Next work steps.
- Phasing of improvements.
- Funding and delivery mechanisms.
- Management and maintenance.



Implementing public realm improvements.

## Key work steps

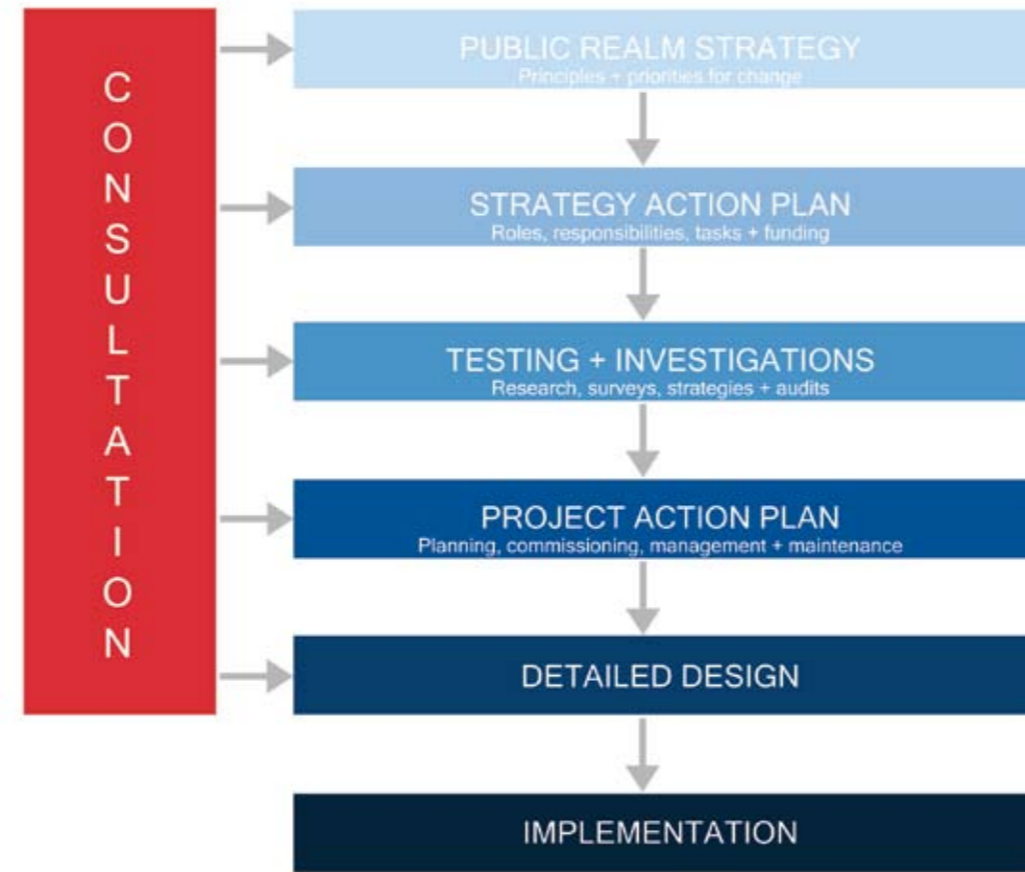
The key principles established in this document should now be subject to further investigation as progress is made towards implementation. Four broad work stages should be followed:

**Strategy action plan** – An outline action plan for the strategy is presented on page 100, which should now be progressed by the Concordat. Conclusions should be made on responsibilities, timings and funding opportunities to be pursued.

**Testing and investigations** – A number of research projects, surveys and audits are now required in order to test the proposals in more detail and establish evidence and information required for further consultation and the design stages (an initial scope of the work areas is presented on page 98).

**Project action plans** – As resources are identified, individual action plans for each project must be prepared by the appointed lead body, mapping out the key work stages from commissioning and planning through to implementation and subsequent management and maintenance.

**Detailed design** – The detailed design stage is likely to involve all members of the Concordat as design options are prepared, tested and consulted upon. Specialist input at this stage will be required from engineers, architects and landscape architects as progress is made through the planning process. Contractors would be fully engaged at this stage.



29. The public realm strategy is the start of a long term process for change in Stroud.

Initial work areas include:

### Management and structure

A key first step is for the Concordat to review and agree key roles and responsibilities within the group (further details are provided on page 101).

### Traffic and movement

Detailed investigation is required to evaluate the proposed concept for Russell Street and London Road, exploring the range of potential treatments and the implications for traffic flow and circulation within and around the town. The scope, timeframe and funding arrangements will need to be reviewed with GCC and Gloucestershire Highways.

A comprehensive parking review is recommended to explore on-street parking use and the needs of 'blue badge' holders. Preliminary design and parking capacity work is required for Cornhill proposals.

Investigations will also be required to identify the most appropriate location for loading bays on the historic centre streets. It may be suitable for these elements to be progressed collectively as a comprehensive traffic study for the town prior to further consultation with the public.

### Audits

Regular audits should continue to review the condition, position and qualities of existing streetscape items, informing decisions on maintenance and potential replacement / repositioning. Work should continue to monitor the requirements and movement patterns of pedestrians, cyclists and visitors to the town assessing the overall quality of the public realm.

### Strategies

More detailed work will be required to guide improvements on specific aspects of the public realm such as lighting and public art, taking forward the basis for improvement established in this strategy.

### Materials

Prior to the detailed design stage key decisions must be made on the palette of suitable surface materials and the range of street furniture items, following the principles established in this strategy and in accordance with Gloucestershire County Council policy.

### Development briefs

This strategy document identifies a number of opportunities for regeneration in Stroud town centre, highlighting where important connections and routes should be improved or created to integrate these areas. Such areas include:

- Either side of the Cotswold Canals.
- North of the High Street (Police Station, Parliament Street and Church Street car parks).
- Between Rowcroft and Merrywalks north of the railway line.

These long term opportunities rely on an agreed strategy for growth that would form a fundamental component of the Core Strategy document in the Local Development Framework for the district. This will then enable the preparation of development briefs.

Development briefs are growing in importance within the new planning system, given the potential weight afforded to them as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).

### Traffic Regulation Orders and Restricted Parking Zone

Following extensive consultation, Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) can be applied for and put in place by Gloucestershire County Council following the procedures laid down by the Secretary of State for Transport. The implementation of TROs will allow a change in traffic management and traffic flows in the different areas. TROs for restricted access can be progressed on a 'street by street' basis although a comprehensive approach is recommended.

Restricted Parking Zone (RPZ) designation will enable physical changes to take place in the streetscape without the need for yellow lines and excessive signage within the historic centre. Parking restrictions will be enforced by Civil Enforcement Officers.

The regulations governing RPZs are outlined in Section 13 of the Traffic Signs Manual. The designation requires specific consent from the Department for Transport (DfT). The application would be made by Gloucestershire County Council, taking about 6 months with early discussions with the DfT recommended. Schemes are often introduced on a one-year experimental basis.

It is considered beneficial to progress the applications for TROs and RPZs collectively at an early stage in order to consult and take forward the traffic management proposals comprehensively.

The RPZ however can only be fully implemented according to the phasing schedule, when the physical works take place (carriageway and parking bays defined by materials), in order to ensure its legibility and effectiveness.

## Phasing

It is recognised that it will not be possible to deliver all the proposed changes at once. Phasing will depend on a range of factors including the availability of funding, planning, local opinion, effects on trading activities and opportunities presented by the private sector.

Following the adoption of the strategy, the priority will be to establish the management structure, gather research and information, design, test and consult. Beyond this, three broad implementation phases can be identified:

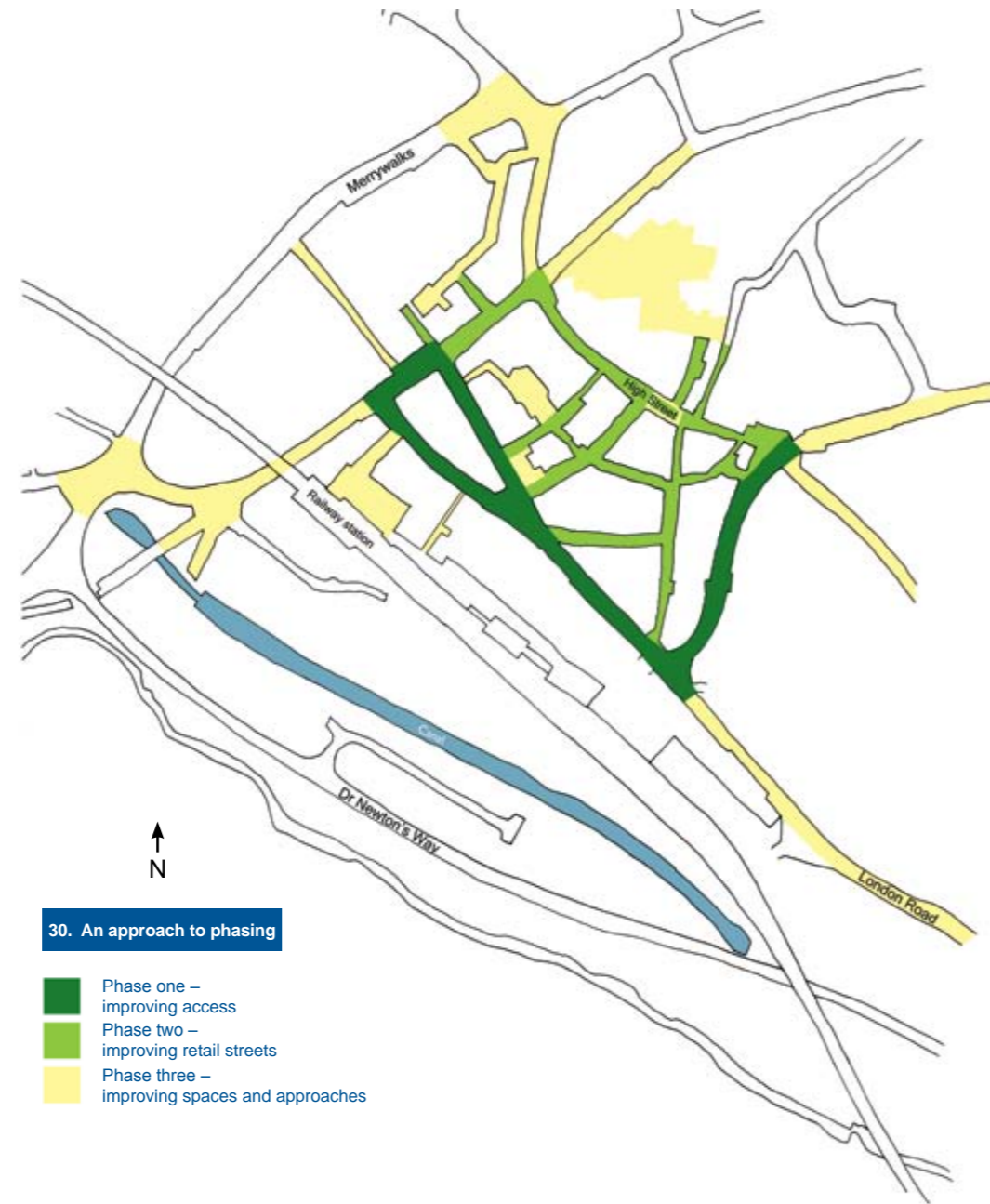
**Phase one** – Short term focusing on improving access through improvements to London Road / Russell Street and the traffic management orders to enable improvements to George Street.

**Phase two** – Medium term focusing on improving the key retail streets starting with King Street and leading into the High Street, which must be considered comprehensively with opportunities at the top of the High Street (The Cross).

**Phase three** – Long term focusing on improving the key spaces such as the Subscription Rooms forecourt and arrival areas and approach streets such as Wallbridge / Rowcroft.

### Quick wins

Flexibility exists for individual projects and proposals to come forward earlier depending on the factors identified above. Stand alone projects such as Bank Gardens and the proposals for Cornhill are potential ‘quick wins’ that could be brought forward swiftly. Should restoration plans for the canal accelerate it may also be possible to bring forward the work for Wallbridge / Rowcroft.



## Action plan

The table opposite presents an outline of an action plan for taking the strategy forward, highlighting the early priorities and the key projects for each implementation phase.

The plan identifies the potential lead body within the Concordat team who would take responsibility for the particular work area or project.

A project order is also suggested, which recognises where projects are linked and should be considered together. This outline action plan should now be progressed by the Concordat team developing a specific timetable for delivery which is dependent on resources and budgets for lead organisations.

It is acknowledged that an action plan has previously been developed for progressing Stroud’s evening economy. The priorities identified in the public realm strategy builds on this process to provide a basis for developing the operational issues which were previously identified.

Project / area	Actions	Lead body	Timings	
Management & structure	Review roles and responsibilities within the Concordat and appoint lead for the public realm	Concordat	Early priority	
Circulation & flow analysis	Investigate and assess options for traffic circulation, flow direction and capacity implications	GCC	Early priority	
London Road / Russell	Survey work to support proposals and design (levels, street dimensions and utilities)	GCC	Early priority	
Parking review	Investigate on-street parking provision and use and ‘blue badge holder’ needs	SDC / GCC	Early priority	
Loading & servicing review	Investigate loading and servicing needs and determine carriageway bay location	STC	Early priority	
Cornhill parking design study	Investigate capacity and design detail for on-street parking at Cornhill	GCC	Early priority	
Traffic proposals consultation	Present findings and confirm recommendations for change with public	GCC	Early priority	
Auditing	Progress / update streetscape, movement and public realm quality audits	STC/SDC/GCC	On going	
Furniture & materials palette	Agree range of street furniture items and surface materials palette	GCC	Early priority	
Lighting strategy	Commission a lighting strategy for detailed treatment recommendations	SDC	Early priority	
Public arts strategy	Commission a public arts strategy to guide art proposals	SDC	Early priority	
Development briefs	Prepare development briefs for potential growth areas, if these accord with LDF policy	SDC	Link to LDF	
<b>Implementation phase one – improving access</b>				<b>Order</b>
Traffic management	Action plan and apply for Restricted Parking Zone and Traffic Regulation Orders	GCC	Short	1
London Road / Russell Street	Action plan and design for two-way traffic flow, adopting low speed framework principles	GCC	Short	1
Cornhill *	Action plan, design and implement with traffic management proposals	SDC / GCC	Short	2
King Street Parade	Action plan, design and implement with traffic management proposals	SDC / GCC	Short	3
George Street	Action plan, design and implement with traffic management proposals	SDC / GCC	Short	4
Four Clocks space	Action plan, design and implement	SDC / GCC	Short	4
<b>Implementation phase two – improving retail streets</b>				
King Street	Action plan, design and implement (including Merrywalks entrances) with traffic management proposals	SDC / GCC	Medium	5
High Street	Action plan, design and implement with traffic management proposals	SDC / GCC	Medium	6
Top of the High Street	Action plan, design and implement linking with wider regeneration opportunity to expand the town centre	SDC / GCC	Medium	6
Connecting retail streets	Action plan, design and implement with traffic management proposals	SDC / GCC	Medium	7
<b>Implementation phase three – improving spaces and approaches</b>				
Upper end of High Street	Action plan, design and implement ‘design feature’	SDC / GCC	Long	8
Subscription Rooms forecourt	Action plan, design and implement key civic space	SDC / GCC	Long	9
Bank Gardens *	Action plan, design and implement public gardens	SDC / STC	Long	10
Wallbridge / Rowcroft *	Action plan, design and implement gateway and approach street, linking with canal restoration plans	SDC / GCC	Long	11
Station Square and approach	Action plan, design and implement arrival space (link with Brunel Goods Shed plans)	SDC / GCC	Long	12
Fawkes Place	Action plan, design and implement new surface treatment for this adaptable space	SDC / GCC	Long	13
Approach streets	Action plan, design and implement with traffic management proposals	SDC / GCC	Long	14

\* Potential quick win project

## Funding & delivery mechanisms

A number of potential funding streams and delivery mechanisms will need to be considered in taking forward the ambitious recommendations set out in this document.

### Developer contributions

All town centre uses and users can benefit from a high quality public realm and all developments will place some demands on the public realm within the town. It is therefore appropriate that all new developments in close proximity to Stroud town centre should contribute to public realm improvements and maintenance in the town centre. Justification for this approach is set out in Circular 05/2005 (para B15).

Development and regeneration in Stroud town centre will bring investment and new opportunities to raise funding through commuted sum payments. Expanding the town centre to embrace the canal for example will present significant opportunities to draw funding for public realm improvements, particularly to enhance connections.

It may be appropriate to develop a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for public realm funding. This could set out the funding requirements for particular projects and define a formula for gathering funds, typically based on a price per square metre of development type (e.g £50 per sqm of A1 development).

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has recently adopted an SPD seeking contributions from all development within designated regeneration areas (town centres), from developments exceeding

100 sqm or sites larger than 0.1 hectares within walking distance of a town centre, and from all new residential development borough wide (including conversions and changes of use).

The council has established a contribution total of approximately £475 per dwelling for every new home completed in the next 15 years to generate almost £4.5 million towards new public realm improvements and maintenance. Contributions will be ring fenced and spent on improving the public realm in the centres where the future occupiers would reasonably be expected to visit.

### Funding initiatives

National and regional funding streams may also present opportunities to finance public realm projects and the necessary supporting work to progress detailed designs.

The 'Townscape Heritage Initiative' (part of the 'Heritage Lottery Fund') allows up to 25% of grants to involve works towards the public realm. Proposals must be within a conservation area, involving work to historic buildings, and be part of a wider regeneration strategy benefiting the local community.

The 'Parks for People' lottery initiative helps with the restorations and regeneration of public parks and gardens, including squares, walks and promenades in England, and could offer funding options for improvements to Bank Gardens for example. Grants of between £250,000 and £5 million are available that must be matched by at least 25% from other funding sources.

Funding may also be available from the Regional Development Agency, who have previously funded

public realm projects in the south west through their 'Civic Pride' programme and 'Market and Coastal Towns Initiative'. This strategy document will help to demonstrate to such bodies that a coherent and agreed process for change in Stroud has been established.

### Business Improvement District (BID)

A BID is a partnership approach to funding established between a local authority and the local business community. BIDs are set up to develop projects and services that will benefit the trading environment within the boundary of a clearly defined commercial area. Over 45 BIDs are already successfully operating in the UK helping to fund and support improvements in the public realm.

Although more commonly associated with larger towns (higher number of contributing businesses) there are examples of smaller more focused BIDs forming in Great Yarmouth, Dorchester, Leamington Spa and a BID proposal is also currently progressing for Alloa town centre (Scotland).

Non-domestic occupiers of buildings within the BID area are charged a levy on top of their business rate charges (usually 1%). This money is then supplemented by further funding from the local authority and from voluntary contributions. The money would be ring fenced to support agreed projects defined within the BIDs business plan, which could be informed by the objectives of the public realm strategy.

A BID can only be set up after it has met two tests, more than 50% of votes cast must be in favour of the BID and the positive vote must represent more than 50% of the rateable value of the votes cast. This presents a bespoke option for funding for projects in Stroud.

## Management and maintenance

The implementation of a new public realm will constitute a substantial investment of both public and private funds into Stroud town centre. It is imperative that new schemes are designed to be readily maintainable and that a management structure is in place to guide and protect investments.

### Partnership working

The Concordat group brings together the key bodies and individuals with the ability and responsibility to bring about positive change in Stroud. This collaborative approach to working ensures that the Concordat has the mix of expertise required to successfully take the Strategy forward. A Signatories Agreement is in place confirming members' commitment to this approach.

A close working arrangement with companies responsible for public utilities is essential if a quality environment appropriate to Stroud's historic status is to be delivered. Members of the Concordat can assist in providing weight and support to further the effort made to deliver quality public realm works, and hence the need to maintain this environment to high standards.

The Public Realm Strategy should be used as a means to build relationships between other organisations and groups with an interest in, and/or who helped shape its development. The role of these groups and in some cases individuals, should be embraced so as to infuse civic pride in the local community.

It is recognised that the project leads will vary depending on the core business of the Concordat member organisation. The strong relationship which exists between members negates the need

to appoint a single driver in the delivery of actions. Delivery and monitoring of actions is reported and discussed at Concordat meetings. These regular meetings also provide an avenue to seek additional support and guidance in a professional forum.

### Design for maintenance

The designers of the public realm must seek to ensure that all unnecessary maintenance is designed out and that each project has a maintenance plan that can both feed into and be guided by the Concordat.

An individual project maintenance plan should:

- Incorporate the agreed procedures for maintenance works.
- Provide the names and contact details for all suppliers.
- Outline procedures for reinstatement works by public utilities companies.
- Set out a cleaning and maintenance regime, inspection regime and response times for cleaning and repair works (including a chewing gum removal regime).

### Service providers

Public utilities underground such as sewers, electricity, gas, water, television and telecommunications cables often present significant challenges for the design and maintenance of the public realm.

Designers of schemes must ensure that they are aware of all services within project areas, especially if considering alterations to surface levels. It is also important to establish an appropriate mechanism to manage excavation works for repairs and new services once a scheme is completed.

The works are permitted under the New Roads and Street Works Act and the public utility companies have a statutory right to dig up the highway, to lay and maintain their equipment. Increasingly, they are using contractors to carry out the work and it may not be possible to immediately identify on whose behalf the works are being carried out.

The following recommendations highlight possible ways to safeguard public realm investments from public utility company's activities:

- Involve service providers at the earliest possible opportunity in order to give sufficient notice of works to encourage any repairs or implementation works to be carried out in advance of public realm works.
- All repair works taking place are regulated and monitored by Gloucestershire County Council in accordance with the New Road and Street Works Act to ensure reinstatement of the surfacing to the original quality. In more recent times GCC have placed more rigorous requirements on utility companies to ensure their contractors reinstate in line with requirements. This monitoring should continue to ensure past practices do not reoccur.
- All utility companies undertaking work on high quality public realm areas should be provided with a full set of construction information to enable successful reinstatement.

# 01

## Appendix – Policy review

Review of established policy and guidance (national and local level).

### Introduction

The following review explores national and local policy and guidance highlighting principles that have informed the preparation of the public realm strategy. This review also serves to reinforce the value and purpose of preparing a public realm strategy in the context of policy.

The review commences with national planning policy defined in Planning Policy Statements, and then considers a range of national guidance documents covering the design and management of public space, before concluding with local plans, policies and strategies.

The end of each section pinpoints the key guiding principles which have informed the development of a public realm strategy for Stroud.

### National Policy

#### Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) – Delivering sustainable development

PPS1 places community involvement as an essential element of the new system and requires that all interest groups and people be actively involved in the planning process.

PPS1 stipulates that good design should contribute positively to making places better for people. High quality and inclusive design should create well-mixed and integrated developments which avoid segregation and have well-planned public spaces that bring people together and provide opportunities for physical activity and recreation.

PPS 1 acknowledges 'By Design' as good practice guidelines for planning authorities to assess the achievement of high quality and inclusive design. It identifies the objectives of good urban design. These objectives allow analysis of the factors that contribute to successful streets, spaces, villages, towns and cities and are as follows:

- Character – A place with its own identity.
- Continuity and Enclosure – A place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished.
- Quality of the public realm – A place with attractive and successful outdoor areas.
- Legibility – A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand.
- Adaptability – A place that can change easily.
- Diversity – A place with variety and choice.

#### Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6) – Planning for town centres

PPS 6 seeks to promote high quality and inclusive design in town centres, improve the quality of the public realm and open spaces, protect and enhance the architectural and historic heritage, provide a sense of place and a focus for the community and for civic activity, and to ensure that town centres provide an attractive and safe environment for businesses, shoppers and residents.

PPS 6 encourages local planning authorities to actively plan for growth and manage change in town centres over the period of their development plan, through making better use of existing land and buildings, including where appropriate redevelopment. PPS 6 also recognises that where necessary it may be appropriate to consider options for extending town centres.

The value of the public realm is recognised by PPS 6, stating it is essential that town centres provide a high quality and safe environment if they are to remain attractive and competitive.

Through PPS 6 the government identifies that well designed public spaces and buildings, which are fit for purpose, comfortable, safe, attractive, accessible and durable are key elements which can improve the health, vitality and economic potential of a town centre.



### Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS 12) – Local development frameworks

PPS 12 recognises that well designed development responds to the local physical, social and economic context, being safe, clean, attractive and accessible for all users. The government also promotes the development of policy and guidance that relate to local conditions and objectives.

Local planning authorities are encouraged through PPS 12 to prepare supplementary planning documents taking into consideration the process of continuous community involvement.

### Planning Policy Guidance 13 (PPG 13) – Transport

This guidance emphasises the key role land use planning has in delivering the objectives of an integrated transport strategy by:

- Promoting more sustainable transport choices for people and for moving freight.
- Promoting accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling.
- Reducing the need to travel, especially by car.

PPG 13 recognises that the physical form and qualities of a place, shape – and are shaped by – the way it is used and the way people and vehicles move through it.

New development should help to create places that connect with each other sustainably, providing the right conditions to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

PPG 13 is clear that people should come before traffic. Places that work well are designed to be used safely and securely by all in the community, frequently for a wide range of purposes and throughout the day and evening.

### Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG 17) – Planning for open space

PPG 17 has a role in supporting an urban renaissance, through promoting local networks of high quality and well managed and maintained open spaces, seeking to create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe.

Green spaces in urban areas are recognised by PPG 17 as performing a vital function for nature conservation and biodiversity and by acting as ‘green lungs’ to assist in improving air quality.

PPG 17 stipulates that local planning authorities should identify where to locate new areas of open space and seek to improve the quality of the public realm through implementing good design.

#### Key findings for Stroud

- Community and stakeholder involvement in the development of policy is essential.
- Strategic design policy should relate to local conditions and objectives.
- Well designed spaces, high quality and safe environments can improve the health, vitality and economic potential of town centres, essential if they are to remain attractive and competitive.
- High quality and inclusive design should bring people together and provide opportunities for physical activity and recreation.
- People should come before traffic.
- Places that work well are designed to be used safely and securely by all in the community, frequently for a wide range of purposes and throughout the day and evening.

### National Guidance

#### Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) – Paving the way: how we achieve clean, safe and attractive streets

This CABE study highlights that the street is, by definition, a multi-functional space, providing enclosure and activity as well as movement. Its main functions are:

- Circulation, for vehicles and pedestrians.
- Access to buildings, and the provision of light and ventilation for buildings.
- A route for utilities.
- Storage space, especially for vehicles.
- Public space for human interaction and sociability.

The study defines a set of key indicators of quality in the streetscape, including:

- Comfortable and safe for pedestrians and disabled people.
- Designed to accommodate all sorts of functions.
- Visually simple and free of clutter.
- Well cared for.
- Sympathetic to local character and activity.
- Making appropriate ordered provision for access, deliveries and storage of vehicles.

The study concludes by defining an agenda to create better designed and managed streets, which satisfy the needs of all who use them. It recognises that improving streets is not simply a design issue, it addresses wider social issues particularly safety. The study sets out a series of recommendations to change prevailing attitudes and priorities:

- Highway design guidance and regulation – Must recognise the needs of all other street users.
- Management processes – Within local authorities, a cross-sectoral, integrated approach to the management of streets should be widely used to over come current confusing divisions of responsibilities.
- Design detail and training – Street design should be integrated into training and local policy making.
- Control of utility companies – Must control the effects of works on streets and halt poor quality interventions.
- Long term care – Encourage and promote community commitment to street improvements.

#### CABE – Living with risk: promoting better public space design

CABE research project that argues that risk can be accommodated in public realm without compromising the quality of our places. It is essential to support the creation of innovation and stimulating spaces.

The report highlights that exciting public spaces create inspiring and interesting environments. They are the focal point for communities, the fundamental platform for civic life. However, pressures to minimise risks and liability in the public realm can lead to ‘playing it safe’, resulting in bland and standardised spaces.

The report finds that individuals perceive and react to risk in different ways and that making judgements about these issues is a difficult task. It is easier for designers to minimise hazard than the more challenging route of using risk to create interest and stimulation in the design, but in the context of an appropriate level of risk management.

It is argued that designs that increase the perception of risk of injury reduce actual risk by forcing all users of the space to slow down. Safety is achieved through active use, citizen surveillance and an engendered sense of personal and social responsibility and ownership.

### Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) – Living places: Caring for Quality

This ODPM research project examines how local authorities and other stakeholders can better manage public spaces.

The report highlights that public spaces are complex with characters shaped by a wide range of attributes encompassed in their basic kit of part (the uses and physical components), inherent qualities (their cleanliness, accessibility etc) and the particular context in which they are found.

The research on which the discussion in Caring for Quality is based revealed two clear messages:

1. The whole process of public space management has suffered from a historic lack of investment, lack of good practice, and most of all an apparent lack of interest from key stakeholders.

2. This is changing. Increasingly, both at the national and local levels, the quality of external public space is becoming a focus for new interest, new innovative practice and, sometimes, renewed investment.

A lack of understanding of the elements and qualities of public space is a root cause behind the deterioration of much public space. This is because quality as an overarching objective features poorly (or not at all) in the decision making logic of many stakeholders in the management of public space.

The report concludes with future steps for public space design being:

- Explicitly considering how to focus on design innovation and excellence where risk is managed, not eliminated altogether. Risks often present opportunities.
- Judgements about risk are best taken in a process that involves all stakeholders – a debate. People perceive and think about risk in different ways.
- Promote risk management techniques. Organisations should promote principles of sensible risk management to people making decisions about public space.

The report highlights that the most successful approaches to public space management share a number of key characteristics:

- Leading with vision – Strong leadership and a clear sense of direction.
- Integrating actions – A crosscutting approach that consciously integrates all key public space management processes.
- Involving others – An inclusive approach that actively involves a wide range of interests and stakeholders.
- Setting standards – An aspiration and ability to deliver the highest standards of service and public space.
- Attracting resources – Adequate resource levels – both human and financial – to deliver on the aspirations.
- Delivering for the long-term – Effective and efficient delivery mechanisms that over time consistently deliver quality.
- Responding to Context – A caring culture that is sensitive to the full range of physical and socio-economic contexts.
- Monitoring success – A questioning process that continually learns from experience and aims to do better.

### Manual for streets

The manual is limited to residential and other lightly trafficked streets, although some of its principles may be applied to other road types where appropriate.

A key message from the manual is that streets should not be designed to accommodate the movement of motor vehicles – a prime consideration is that they meet the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

The manual argues that increased consideration should be given to the ‘place’ function of a street, which is essentially what distinguishes it from a road. The manual introduces a user hierarchy in which pedestrians are considered first in the design process to ensure that all user groups are properly considered at an early stage.

In addition to the user hierarchy, the manual introduces hierarchies of provision for pedestrians and cyclists. These provide a basic approach to the design of improvements to existing infrastructure and encourage consideration of how traffic impact may be reduced.

The manual recognises that places often fail because of the poor relationship between buildings and streets. The manual notes that the width between buildings is key to how well streets work and their aesthetic qualities. Planting is also recognised for its visual and sensory value and also in improving air quality and microclimate.

The manual stipulates that the design of streets should take into account their function, and the type, density and character of surrounding development. The manual recognises the value of shared surfaces in relatively calm traffic environments as a means to

encourage low vehicles speeds and promote social interaction.

In relation to traffic signs and road markings, the manual advises that designers should begin by assuming a total absence of signs and introduce them only where they serve a clear function. To be most effective signs should be used sparingly. The manual suggests opportunities to reduce sign clutter:

- Use of centre line is not an absolute requirement.
- No statutory requirement for priority to be specified at a junction.
- For information signs, the lettering size should reflect the traffic speed.

The manual advises that street furniture and lighting should be integral to the overall design, with furniture on a footway being best aligned along its rear edge. Adequate lighting helps to reduce crime and can encourage pedestrian activity.

Finally the manual stipulates that sustaining the quality of new development requires good initial design and construction, followed by proper management and maintenance.

### Urban design compendium

The first design compendium states that a comfortable and stimulating public realm that encourages social interaction requires detailed attention to the structure of a space and the elements it contains. This involves the surfaces; what is hard, what is soft; what forms of planting are appropriate; and what surfaces are for vehicles as well as pedestrian use, for example. It also requires that the issues of security, public art, street furniture, lighting, signage and so on be looked at characteristically.

The compendium sets out a number of key principles that make up a thriving public realm:

- Focus activity areas – The best public spaces often have nodes of activity, complemented by quiet zones for rest and people watching.
- Versatility – People will use spaces differently. Design should seek to integrate different user groups in spaces rather than segregate them.
- Routes through – Spaces should facilitate desire lines of movement and allow direct pedestrian passage.
- Stimulating senses – People are influenced by sounds, smells and touch and places should seek to stimulate sense through materials, surrounding uses and planting for example.
- Strengthen local identity – Incorporation of local materials, historic associations and involving the local community can aid this process.
- Built to last – Quality through high standards of materials is important and can also assist in influencing how people respond to a place and move through it.

- Clean up clutter – To remove the confusion and visual scarring of unnecessary signage and road markings.
- Lighting – Appropriate treatment can encourage night time uses in spaces and increase safety.
- Art – Public art can help to add character and identity to a space and deliver a layer of quality in the public realm.

## Urban design compendium 2

This document builds on the guidance set out in the first compendium, it does not replace it. The first compendium sets out the principles which apply at all scales of place, whilst the second compendium describes the processes needed to achieve them.

The compendium identifies several ingredients to creating high quality places:

- Commitment and leadership – to ensure quality and to steer the vision.
- Integrated approach – seeking to relate communities, resources, built form, landscape and materials.
- Work collaboratively – Gaining input from a range of key players and stakeholders.
- Long term involvement – To maintain the vision.
- Legacy and management – To ensure quality is sustained.

The second compendium recognises that well designed places where people want to live, spend time and work generate financial value. Poor design can bring continuing costs to tackle issues such as crime and poor health.

The compendium summarises CABE findings that well planned improvements to public space can boost commercial trading by up to 40% and improvements to street design could add 5% to residential and retail rents and prices.

The compendium also notes that landmark buildings can add value by promoting the image and culture of a place and encourage businesses to locate and boost tourism.

## Key findings for Stroud

- Well designed places where people want to live, spend time and work generate financial and wider social value.
- The design of streets and spaces should recognise their multifunctional purpose, providing versatility and accessibility for all.
- Design should be sympathetic to local character and activity context.
- Streets and places should prioritise the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.
- Clear and easy routes of movement through spaces should be facilitated.
- High quality materials and landscape planting should stimulate senses and make a lasting impression.
- Focus should be on design innovation and excellence where risk is managed, not eliminated altogether.
- Safety in public spaces is often achieved through active use, citizen surveillance and an engendered sense of personal and social responsibility and ownership.
- Management of the public realm must be taken forward with strong leadership, involving a wide range of interests and a long term focus.

## Local policy

### Shop front improvements: A design guide and improvement scheme

The design guide and improvement scheme recognises that smart and well maintained shopping areas are more attractive to visitors and can improve trade and encourage economic growth.

The design guide sets out guidelines to preserve traditional features and defines a number of design details to enhance the appearance of shop fronts in the town. Key principles within the guide include:

- New shop fronts must reflect the original construction materials and not introduce too many new materials.
- Clearly display the shop numbers.
- Be built using timber from a sustainable source.
- Avoid use of plastic, glazed tiles, MDF, plywood and aluminium.
- Not use strong, garish colours or paint any stone that has not already been painted.

Stroud District Council operates a shop front improvement scheme where grant applications can be made to assist with the costs of restoration or improvement works to shop frontages. This is particularly relevant to listed buildings and shops within the conservation area.

### Stepping Out: Towards an action plan for Stroud's evening economy

The report identifies the value of a lively evening economy, recognising that Stroud is lagging behind in terms of access, amenity and security at night.

The report establishes a vision of Stroud town centre both as the heart of the Five Valleys', and a great place to meet up and socialise. The emerging strategy seeks to:

- Make Stroud easier to access by car and taxi at night.
- Give priority for pedestrians in the centre and improved links at the edges.
- Provide more shared surfaces.
- Better information.
- Generally cleaner, safer and greener.
- Brighter lighting.
- More welcoming gateways.
- Good management.
- Broaden the food offer.

The action plan for the strategy seeks to deliver:

- Better walks and 'green links' – to encourage better circulation through the town and between key attractions, highlighting opportunities for signage and upgrading of existing routes and connections.
- Easier parking – to relax parking policies and encourage more people to come into the town, highlighting opportunities to rename car parks to aid orientation, to cease charges at certain times and to extend short term parking areas.
- Improved taxi service – to provide an efficient and responsive service, highlighting opportunities to enable taxis to take shorter routes, encouraging shared use through set fares, and better marshalling schemes around nightclubs.
- Redesigning gateways – to make it easier and safer for people to get to and move between the centre and car parks, highlighting priorities at Gloucester Street and the Cheapside.
- Destination places to eat – to increase the choice and offer of sit down eating places, highlighting opportunities to develop a unique Stroud branding, youth cafes and the remodelling of the Sub Rooms.
- Joint marketing – to enhance the way in which attractions are publicised, highlighting opportunities to improve information sharing, training and learning, and defining roles for areas of the town.

### Stroud Town Council: Walking and transport strategy

The town council seeks to create an attractive environment which encourages people to move about on foot and is made easier for those with mobility difficulties. The strategy seeks to redress the balance between the car and the pedestrian in the centre, defining a number of specific requirements, including:

- Pedestrians – Repairing pavements, widening pavements in busy areas, improving crossing facilities, pedestrianisation in certain areas and reducing overall vehicle speeds.
- Cyclists – Providing segregated cycle tracks in a network, that are well maintained, with lighting and signage, cycle parking next to destinations.
- Public transport – To clean and maintain all existing infrastructure, to provide more bus stops and explore the use of bus lanes.
- Parking – enable easy access, good signage and access for those with mobility difficulties close to destinations, look to reduce parking costs on the periphery of the town centre.

### Stroud District Council local plan (adopted 2005)

The local plan sets out a number of objectives seeking to enhance Stroud town centre's physical environment and improve safety and security in the central area, providing a policy basis for the development of a public realm strategy. The retail strategy within the local plan aims to link shopping proposals with environmental enhancement and traffic management to achieve an attractive environment for future investment.

The Built Environment section of the local plan recognises the many physical qualities of Stroud town centre and defines the council's aspiration to promote a higher quality of public realm, highlighting a number of key aspects that should be addressed in development:

- Permeability – movement to and through a place: giving pedestrian priority and ensuring there are no unnecessary barriers to the ease of movement.
- Legibility – ease of orientation: recognising the role of physical features in making places distinctive and memorable.
- Human scale – what is perceived at eye level: ensuring streets and public spaces are defined by built form, or where appropriate structural planting.
- Public and private space – ensuring a clear distinction between the two, with buildings fronting streets or other public spaces, which will increase awareness of activities in public spaces and improve orientation and safety.
- Public art – aiding legibility of the public realm and establishing a sense of ownership.
- Landscape – open space design should contribute to the character and quality of the place, with the needs of users being the priority.

The local plan also notes that in many places the street pattern has become standardised and consequently Stroud District Council wishes to encourage innovation in urban design wherever possible, whilst respecting the historic pattern in sensitive locations.

Redevelopment proposals at Cheapside Wharf must ensure it is neither physically nor functionally separated from the town centre. The local plan encourages the provision of pedestrian and cycle links across the railway line to integrate the site with the town centre.

Land between London Road and the railway line adjacent to the rail station is allocated in the local plan for a bus / rail interchange.

The local plan aims to protect and improve existing footpaths and develop a network of footpaths in the town. The plan states that pedestrian routes that link key areas are needed along routes where traffic speeds are kept low and pedestrians have priority.

Five conservation area designations affect the central area of Stroud, namely Stratford Park, Town Centre, Shambles, Top the Town, and the Industrial Heritage area. The local plan defines a number of policies seeking to ensure that the existing character of the town centre conservation areas is preserved and / or enhanced. The policies seek to ensure development respects existing open spaces, patterns of building layout, trees, hedges, walls and fences.

Significantly, the local plan notes that where improvement or enhancement schemes are proposed for ground surfaces and hard landscaping, road repairs and utility works are inevitable and ongoing; hence surfaces should be easy to repair and reinstate. High quality materials, which accord with those traditionally found in the area should be used for both hard landscaping schemes and ground surfacing.

The local plan states that due regard will be had to any proposals that may affect the character of a conservation area through increased traffic generation, and development which detracts from or obstructs an important view through, out of or into a conservation area will not normally be permitted.

The local plan highlights that trees contribute significantly to the character and quality of the townscape, most notably those around the church and Bank Gardens, but also the few isolated trees elsewhere.

### Key findings for Stroud

- Well maintained shopping areas are more attractive to visitors and can improve trade and encourage economic growth.
- Development opportunities should seek to integrate with the town centre and establish strong pedestrian and cycle linkages.
- Priority should be given to pedestrians in the central area and linkages improved to the wider town area.
- The gateways to the town need to be made more welcoming, and easier and safer.
- Innovation should be encouraged in urban design wherever possible to overcome standardised responses in street pattern and design.
- The historic character of the central area must be respected, guided by the principles of the conservation area designations.
- High quality materials, which accord with those traditionally found in the area should be used for both hard landscaping and ground surfacing.

# 02

## Appendix – Consultation review

Review and record of the two consultation events

### Introduction

The engagement of local stakeholders and the public has played a pivotal role in the development of the strategy.

Presentations, workshops, exhibitions, regular steering group meetings and the publication of material on Stroud District Council's website and associated consultation feedback have helped to pinpoint the priorities for the strategy and to test concepts and recommendations for change.

The following appendix records the process and key findings from the three consultation events.

### Event 1 – Stakeholder presentation and workshop

The first stakeholder event was held on the morning of Thursday 31st January 2008 at the Subscription Rooms, Stroud.

### Format

The event ran from 10am to 2pm and comprised:

- Presentation from NEW Masterplanning and Hamilton-Baillie Associates.
- Facilitated group workshop session (6 groups).
- Group feedback session.
- Plenary session.

### Attendees

Forty nine representatives from key local stakeholder and interest groups attended the event from:

- Gloucestershire County Council (members and officers).
- Stroud District Council (members and officers).

- Stroud Town Council.
- Transport and access groups (including taxi, disability, pedestrian, and cycle groups).
- Business groups (including Chamber of Trade).
- Community groups (including Civic Society and Project Stroud).
- Land owners (including British Waterways, developers and individual property owners).
- Employers (including Ecotricity).

### Objectives

The opening event for the project sought to:

- Establish a consensus on the need for a public realm strategy.
- Develop a wider understanding of how Stroud works today, identifying strengths, issues and opportunities.
- Test and review the initial analysis work.
- Agree key objectives / aims of the study.

### Findings

The key strengths, issues and opportunities identified at this first session include:

Key strengths:

- The quality of retail offer (Waitrose and independent outlets).
- The markets.
- The cinema.
- Food shops and cafes.
- Creative industries.
- Historic qualities of the built environment.

- The back alleys and short cuts within the street network.
- The industrial heritage – 'Stroud is not a twee Cotswold town'.

Key issues:

- The potential to 'soften' the town through greenery.
- Poor condition of surfaces, particularly King Street and the High Street.
- Clutter in the street (signs, seats and bins).
- Illegal parking and service vehicles.
- The confusing one-system putting people off the town.
- Traffic congestion from people searching for on-street parking.
- People assume they can just park anywhere.
- The entrances to the town failing to invite people in.
- The existing events spaces do not adequately support the demands – not big enough.
- The appearance of the town centre fails to attract people from destinations such as the cinema, markets and Waitrose into the town centre.
- The Merrywalks Shopping Centre is not well connected to the town centre.
- Clarity is needed as to which, if any streets are pedestrianised.

### Key opportunities

- Build on the heritage of the town.
- The creative industries should be celebrated.

- More should be made of the unique offer Stroud already delivers with the markets, the attractive buildings and interesting alleyways and back lanes.
- Stroud is 'quirky' and interesting and this should be promoted more.
- The canal is an asset that must be connected to the town centre.
- Need to find ways to support the evening economy.
- Need to establish more public art to reflect the creativity of the town.

The three interlinking aims of the strategy were shaped following this event:

1. To enhance the quality of the public realm within Stroud's historic centre and establish a distinct destination.
2. To simplify access to the town centre and establish a better balance in the pedestrian environment.
3. To identify opportunities for connecting and expanding the public realm to enable Stroud town centre to grow and improve its offer.

#### Event 2 – Stakeholder presentation and public exhibition

The second event was held on the afternoon of Thursday 8th May 2008 at the Subscription Rooms, Stroud. The event was widely advertised through the local press, Stroud District Councils' website, several displays located at the library, town council and district council offices and posters were sent to all parish councils. Comments were invited for a two week period following the public consultation.

#### Format

The event ran from 2pm to 8pm and comprised:

- Presentation from NEW Masterplanning and Hamilton-Baillie Associates for invited stakeholders.
- Question and answer session for invited stakeholders.
- Manned exhibition for the general public.
- Exhibition material displayed on Stroud District Council website.
- Comment forms provided at the exhibition and online.
- Full display and associated feedback forms were available at the library and district and town council offices.

#### Attendees

Thirty five representatives from key local stakeholder and interest groups attended the presentation and Q&A session. From 5pm to 8pm the exhibition panels were staffed by members of the client and consultant team, where a further thirty six members of the public reviewed the display boards.

Fifty nine additional comment forms were completed and submitted during the public consultation period.

#### Objectives

The second event sought to:

- Agree the key priorities and review the emerging recommendations of the strategy.
- Identify areas requiring further work.
- Establish a consensus for finalising the strategy report.

#### Findings

Analysis of the comment forms identified:

Priority issues for attention

- 78% strongly agreed / agreed that getting into Stroud town centre was difficult.
- 80% strongly agreed / agreed that the one way system was confusing and off putting to visitors.
- 94% strongly agreed / agreed that on-street parking in the historic centre added to congestion and generated additional car journeys into the centre.
- 92% strongly agreed / agreed that the unorganised arrangements for delivery and service vehicles created blockages and obstacles for pedestrians in the public realm.
- 80% strongly agreed / agreed that the Merrywalks Shopping Centre is poorly integrated into the town centre.
- 74% strongly agreed / agreed that visitors are often confused and unsure as to where to go in Stroud town centre.
- Over 80% strongly agreed / agreed that the surfaces in the town centre were poor and contributed to an unattractive environment.

#### Strategy feedback

- 94% felt that it was correct to focus on improving the historic centre of Stroud as a priority.
- 83% felt the strategy proposals would help to establish a better balance between pedestrians, cars, cyclists and delivery vehicles.
- 77% considered the proposals would deliver a high quality and safe environment.

- 85% felt the proposals would help to establish an attractive town centre.
- 84% consider the recommendations would help to create a more pleasant shopping experience.
- 54% felt they would be more likely to visit the town centre more frequently if the recommendations for change were implemented (22% were not sure at this stage).

This consultation period reinforced support for improvements in the public realm to encourage greater retailing activity, particularly with the independent outlets. The greatest concern related to the management of traffic and the negative impact of poor quality street surfaces and uncoordinated paving materials.

Feedback helped to focus the preparation of the final report, highlighting the need to respond more comprehensively to the issues of accessibility for all. It also emphasised a need to demonstrate how traffic could be better managed (demonstrating the feasibility of two way traffic for example).



#### Invitees

The following list sets out the invitees to the two events:

Andrew Watton Surveyors  
 British Waterways  
 Business Link  
 Chelbury Homes – Joy Sheward  
 Chelbury Homes – Julian Magee  
 Churches Together – Revd Canon Barry Coker  
 College Stroud Gloucestershire  
 Ecotricity – Head of planning  
 Federation of Small Businesses/ Project Stroud  
 Terry Morgan  
 First Group  
 General Manager Health and Social Care – Glos NHS  
 Gloucestershire Enterprise Business Services  
 Gloucestershire First  
 Health and Well Being – Jan Jepps  
 Merrywalks Owner – Bill Wrather  
 Network Rail



Workshops, presentations and exhibitions have informed the preparation of this strategy document.

PCT/ Health and Well being  
 Pedestrians Association (Living Streets)  
 Project Stroud – Alan Ford  
 Project Stroud – Ben Spencer  
 Project Stroud – Geoff Beckerleg  
 Project Stroud – Jane Douch  
 Project Stroud – Max Comfort  
 Shire Training (Painswick Inn Project)  
 Stroud and District Business Club  
 Stroud and Swindon HQ  
 Stroud Chamber of Trade  
 Stroud Civic Society – Juliet Shipman  
 Stroud Civic Society/ Project Stroud – Tim Mars  
 Stroud Community Access Group – Howard Powell  
 Stroud Community Access Group – Sue Allard  
 Stroud District and Stroud Town Cllr Linda Townley  
 Stroud District Cycle and Pedestrian Forum  
 Stroud in Bloom – Linda Philips Vice Chair  
 Stroud in Bloom – Malcolm Tarling  
 Stroud Preservation Trust – Anne Mackintosh  
 Stroud Preservation Trust – Emma Stuart  
 Stroud Taxi Association (Chair)  
 Stroud Taxi Association (Secretary)  
 Stroud Valleys Art Space  
 Stroud Valleys Project / Director of Projects / Social Enterprise Centre  
 Stroud Youth Centre  
 Stroudwater Textile Trust & Project Stroud – Lizzi Walton  
 Sub Rooms/ TIC Staff  
 The Door  
 Town centre property owner – Fawkes Place  
 Vision Mills Architect  
 Volunteer and Community Action (Stroud)  
 Youth Council rep. Steve Miles SDC



# 03

## Appendix – Case study examples

Exploring the impact of public realm enhancements in Chepstow and Shrewsbury, two historic market towns presenting similar issues to Stroud.

### Chepstow High Street Scheme

#### What were the issues?

Chepstow is a similar sized town to Stroud, serving a wide rural hinterland. It has a historic town centre and a similarly challenging topography.

An economic health check in 2000 revealed a town in danger of decline. The poor physical environment in the town centre exacerbated by traffic congestion was identified as a contributory factor.

Between 1996 and 2000:

- Pedestrian activity had dropped by over 8%.
- Shop vacancy rates rose from 10% to 14% (peaking at 17% in 1997).
- Trade was being lost to competing centres.

#### What was done?

The £2.4 million Chepstow High Street Regeneration Scheme delivered a dramatic improvement to the pedestrian environment of the town centre by:

- Alleviating traffic problems in the High Street by introducing a Restricted Parking Zone, with a projected reduction in through traffic.
- Improving the pedestrian experience by widening pavements, and creating safe and accessible spaces.
- Enhancing the quality of the public realm through high quality paving materials and public art that reinforced the town's history and identity.
- Improving the setting of keynote buildings and the primary shopping area which helped to encourage re-investment and new activity.



High quality public realm improvements have helped to improve the economic performance of Chepstow High Street.



### Did it work?

The project itself has been an undoubted success, receiving major recognition as a winner of prestigious awards. The formation of a local partnership by the town and district councils and the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism developed and implemented the design for Chepstow.

The partnership were successful in levering £1.65 million from external grants such as European Objective 2 funding.

The partnership engaged the wider community throughout, with over 400 residents taking part in a final survey showing over 86% public support and 70% of businesses agreeing with the proposals.

The use of high quality materials and landscaping has created a stronger commercial confidence, which increases the potential for the town centre for inward investment and indigenous growth.

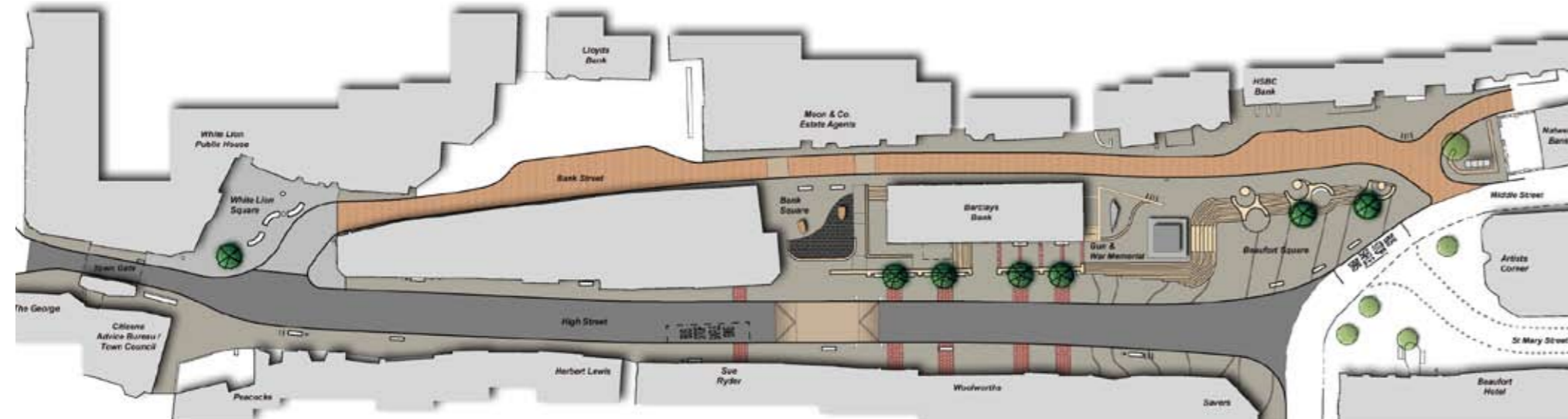
A survey conducted two years after the completion of the scheme highlighted:

- A significant drop in retail vacancy rates from 14% to 5.7% (2006).
- A net gain and protection of 77 jobs amongst the surveyed businesses.
- A positive response from surveyed visitors, with 88% confirming they would recommend Chepstow as destination to friends and family.

Despite the measured successes in employment and investment and much improved visitor perception, the disturbances encountered during implementation resulted in more mixed views from retailers.

Nonetheless, the strong and significant results presented in the survey provide renewed confidence that Chepstow has turned the corner and is a town moving forward.

Visitors now view Chepstow as having more to offer than just the Castle, and the town centre is regarded as an exciting destination in itself. New businesses are coming into the town, reflecting a growing retail confidence in the wider shopping experience.



Chepstow High Street design created a new public square and improved pedestrian connections between the High Street and Bank Street, assisted by traffic management measures.

## The High Street Route, Shrewsbury

### What were the issues?

The historic centre of Shrewsbury was under threat as a viable commercial and business centre as a result of increasing traffic, with attendant problems of air pollution, noise and accidents.

Prior to implementing the scheme, daily traffic flows were in the order of 7,000 vehicles, which significantly undermined the pedestrian environment.

### What was done?

The High Street Route plan was a major element of an Integrated Transport Plan produced in 1994 that sought to improve the management of traffic in the town and enhance the physical environment.

The whole route was made a Restricted Parking Zone, dispensing with yellow lines. On-street waiting is restricted to blue badge parking bays.

The loading bays may be used for waiting after 6.30pm and all day on Sundays. Informal pedestrian crossing places (eleven in all) with dropped kerbs and contrasting surface across the carriageway, are provided at regular intervals along the route.

High quality materials were used to delineate designated bays. The carriageway and bus bays were surfaced with basalt (Whinstone) setts. The channels were formed in the same material, but with longer blocks.

Loading bays and blue badge holder bays were surfaced with York stone setts, providing a contrast in colour and texture with the carriageway surface. Darker coloured setts were used to delineate bays.

Footways were surfaced with fine sawn York stone flags. The same flags with the studs machined from the stone were used as tactile surfaces at the edges of pedestrian crossings.

### Did it work?

Surveys conducted following the implementation of the High Street Route highlighted:

- a decrease of almost 30% in the daily traffic flow (because waiting is restricted during the working day, there is less incentive for those looking for parking places to enter this area).
- mean vehicle speeds were reduced from 17 mph to 10 mph.
- pedestrian crossing flows increased by almost 25%.
- 70% of those interviewed thought the scheme had improved the appearance of the town centre.



Shrewsbury High Street improvements have helped to reduce traffic speeds and improve the attractiveness of the town centre

