

St Albans City Vision

Final Report | December 2009





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Ipsos MORI

Future
Unwrapped



5th
studio

urban
practitioners



BLACK WILLS

I. Introduction



I. Introduction

Urban Practitioners has been commissioned by St Albans City and District Council to lead a multi-disciplinary team in developing a St Albans City Vision for the coming twenty years. The Vision provides strategic direction for the City over the next twenty years. It is not a statutory planning document, but it contains land use proposals which may be taken forward as statutory planning policy at a later stage.

The project team for the Vision includes specialist input from 5th Studio architects, The Landscape Partnership landscape architects, CBRE property consultants and Alan Baxter and Associates transport and movement consultants. The project also has input from Rocket Science economic development experts, L&R Consulting tourism and leisure specialists and Future Unwrapped future proofing experts.

A comprehensive programme of engagement and consultation has been devised, for the project and this includes the provision of two focus group discussions with hard-to-reach and minority groups by Ipsos MORI.

The vision covers the social, cultural and economic development of the city over the coming decades, along with a spatial framework that can support these developments whilst providing an attractive place to live or visit.

Planning status

The Vision is a non-statutory planning document which informs the St Albans Core Strategy as part of its evidence base. However, the Vision has been produced in such a way that elements of it may be taken forward in a statutory form at a later date.

Project objectives

The brief for the project identified a number of key themes which should be considered throughout the project, as priorities for St Albans. These themes were:

- Defining the city's identity
- Public participation and involvement
- Environmental sustainability
- Equality and disadvantage
- Partnership development
- Creation of lasting structures and delivery mechanisms

These key issues have been considered at each stage of the project so far, and are addressed in the draft Vision and Framework.

Project programme

The full project programme runs from September 2008 until August 2009, with three key stages set out within this:

Stage 1: September - December 2008

Inception and familiarisation

Baseline analysis

Consultation and engagement

Opportunities and issues identification

Identification of key sites

Stage 2: January - March 2009

Consultation review

Draft Vision and Framework development

Options consultation

Identification of masterplan sites

Stage 3: April - August 2009

Final Vision and Framework Development

Masterplanning of key sites

Implementation plan development

Integration with the Rural Vision

St Albans City Vision has been developed in tandem with a Rural Vision, which was undertaken for the wider district. This included consultation with the seven parishes within St Albans City and District, and review of emerging local policies and contextual development factors.

A clear synergy has emerged between the two visions, with a number of issues raised at both the city and the district level. The key areas of coordination between the two include:

- Public transport links between the city centre and the surrounding town and villages;
- Walking and cycling infrastructure within the city and the wider district;
- Retail and cultural uses within the city centre;
- Public and green spaces within the city centre; and
- Community uses within the city and the wider district.

Proposals within the City Vision have therefore sought to address the issues raised both during the City Vision and Rural Vision projects. These include the Green Ring and its walking and cycling radial routes inward and outward; the provision of new retail and cultural uses in the centre, such as an enlarged theatre, a cinema and a gallery; the creation of a clear civic square in the city centre and the consideration of community uses throughout the district.

Report structure

This report sets out an overarching vision for the future of St Albans; a number of objectives to support this, which were developed as part of the direction of travel for the project, and themed strategies providing further information on how to meet the objectives for the vision.

The report builds on earlier baseline findings and consultation feedback set out in the interim report for the project, to provide a draft vision and framework for St Albans.

The structure of the report is set out as follows:

Chapter 2 sets out the overarching vision for St Albans - a vision statement regarding the future direction of St Albans is presented, based on St Albans' current strengths

Chapter 3 sets out the objectives for the city vision, developed for the 'direction of travel'

Chapter 4 sets out the findings of the public consultation on the key objectives which took place in late January 2009

Chapter 5 sets out a number of themed strategies designed to help meet the objectives for the city vision. These include:

- St Albans' economy and employment offer;
- Shops and services in the city;
- St Albans' cultural and leisure offer;
- St Albans' role as a sustainable centre;
- Transport and accessibility in the city; and
- A landscape and public realm strategy.

Chapter 6 sets out an overarching spatial framework for the city, objectives for the city centre, urban design guidelines and the central masterplan.

Chapter 7 sets out a delivery and implementation strategy to deliver the Vision proposals and masterplan principles





St Albans context

St Albans enjoys an attractive yet strategic location 35 kilometres north of central London, within the green belt surrounding the capital. It is well placed on the strategic road network, with immediate connections to the M25, the M1 and the A1 and is also well placed on the rail network, with rail connections to central London taking 21 minutes and direct links to the north of England. Further local rail links exist connecting the city with Watford.

St Albans itself is a huge asset. It offers a distinctive living environment, rich in heritage, arts and tourism on the doorstep of both the Hertfordshire countryside and London. The location and its Medieval architecture provide an attractive environment for St Albans' residents and the wider community; and places the City in a strong position to capitalise on the growing visitor economy, both nationally and internationally.

The city has a popular market which further contributes to a distinct identity. These positive characteristics, considered in tandem with the overall economic prosperity of the city and favourable health and education indicators, can easily explain why some would argue that St Albans need not change. However, the role of towns and cities, in terms of retail, employment and social life, and the challenges they face, is constantly changing. In order for St Albans to achieve its full potential in the coming decades, it is therefore highly important for strategic and high-level thinking to be undertaken now, and for consensus regarding the direction of the city to be reached.

St Albans provides a retail, leisure and employment centre for the 70,000 residents of the city proper and a total of 130,000 residents within the District of St Albans. The city is further used by some communities beyond this. The brief identifies that despite overall wealth, the city is not currently meeting the needs of all residents and means of addressing this should be explored. St Albans additionally sits at a critical juncture in terms of city centre development, with two large sites currently subject to development interest.

The design and development of these sites, and their integration with the city's strained vehicular network, will have a huge impact on the future of St Albans. The city has further been identified as a Growth Area in the region, with implications for house building and infrastructure to support this, hence the need for a vision is critical.

The City vision for St Albans provides an opportunity to address these issues and to consider the city at all scales – its appeal at a national and international level; its relationship with peer cities orbiting London; city wide assets and challenges; neighbourhood characteristics; and levels of integration.

Spatially, St Albans is defined by Verulamium, the Roman settlement, by seventeenth century St Albans and by the River Ver and its flood plain. The adjacent plan provides a graphic illustration of St Albans' spatial context and draws out a number of themes, including:

1. **Concentration:** St Albans is at the centre of a ring of towns which, if counted as a singular conurbation, would be Britain's 10th most populous urban area.

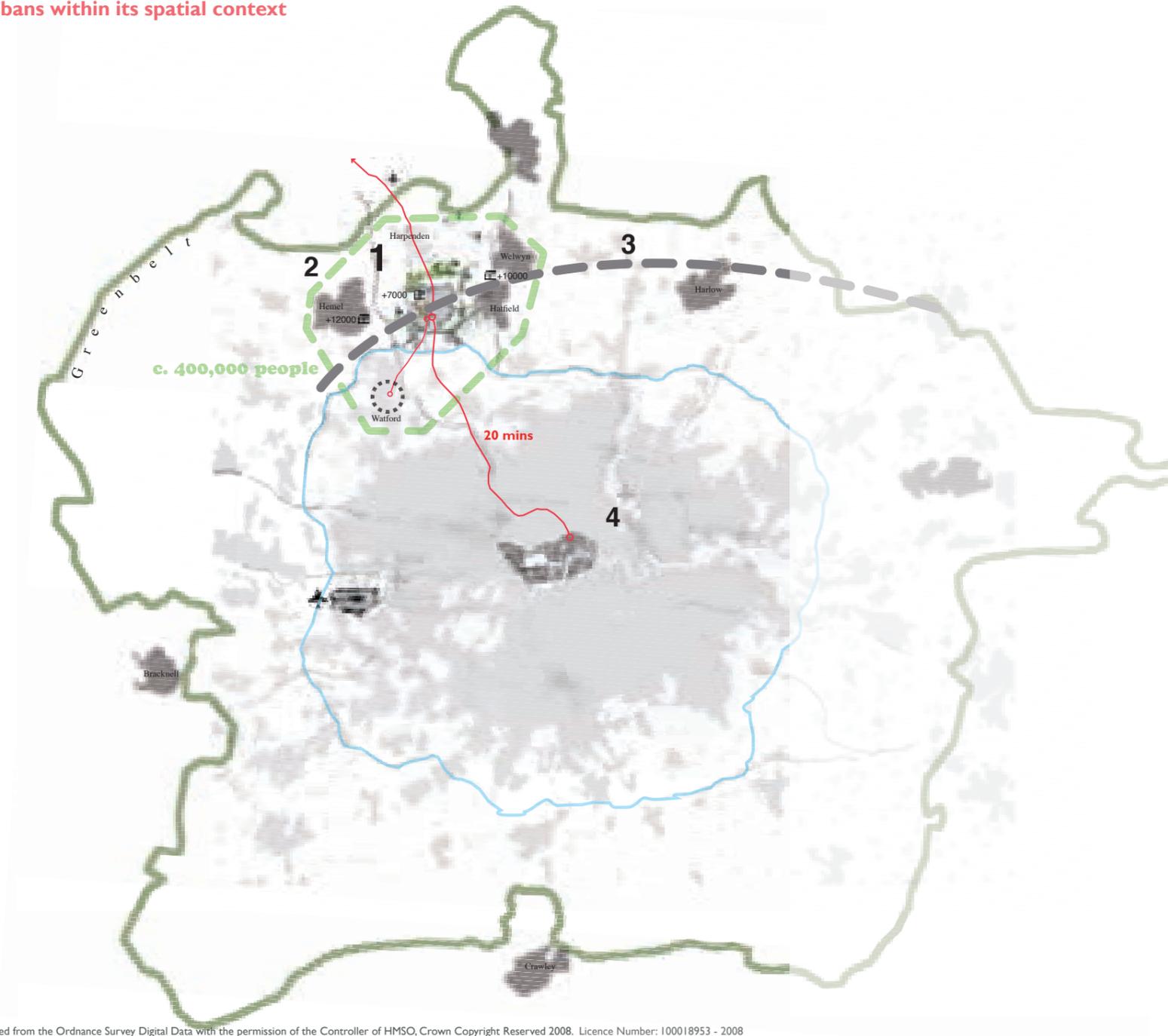
2. **Green belt:** between these urban areas often narrow, precious and highly inhabited areas of landscape define the physical separation of the towns.

Given these conditions, the potential exists to strengthen and reinforce the relationship between the city and countryside, particularly with regard to food, water, energy, tourism and leisure. Already Verulamium Park is interestingly positioned between the city centre and the countryside and presents potential to begin this.

3. **M25 towns:** St Albans sits within a London periphery of new and dormitory towns.

4. **Central London:** central London is only 20 minutes away by train from St Albans and clearly influences the town's centre of gravity.

St Albans within its spatial context



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**Pin
Petch
Thai
Restaurant
&
Take Away**

1-2 Waxhouse Gate
High Street
Tel: 01727 854 843



Thai
Restaurant



2. Vision statement

Integrated living for 2030: a creative and pioneering city for all which values the past and embraces the future

This report presents a vision for the development of St Albans for the coming 20 years.

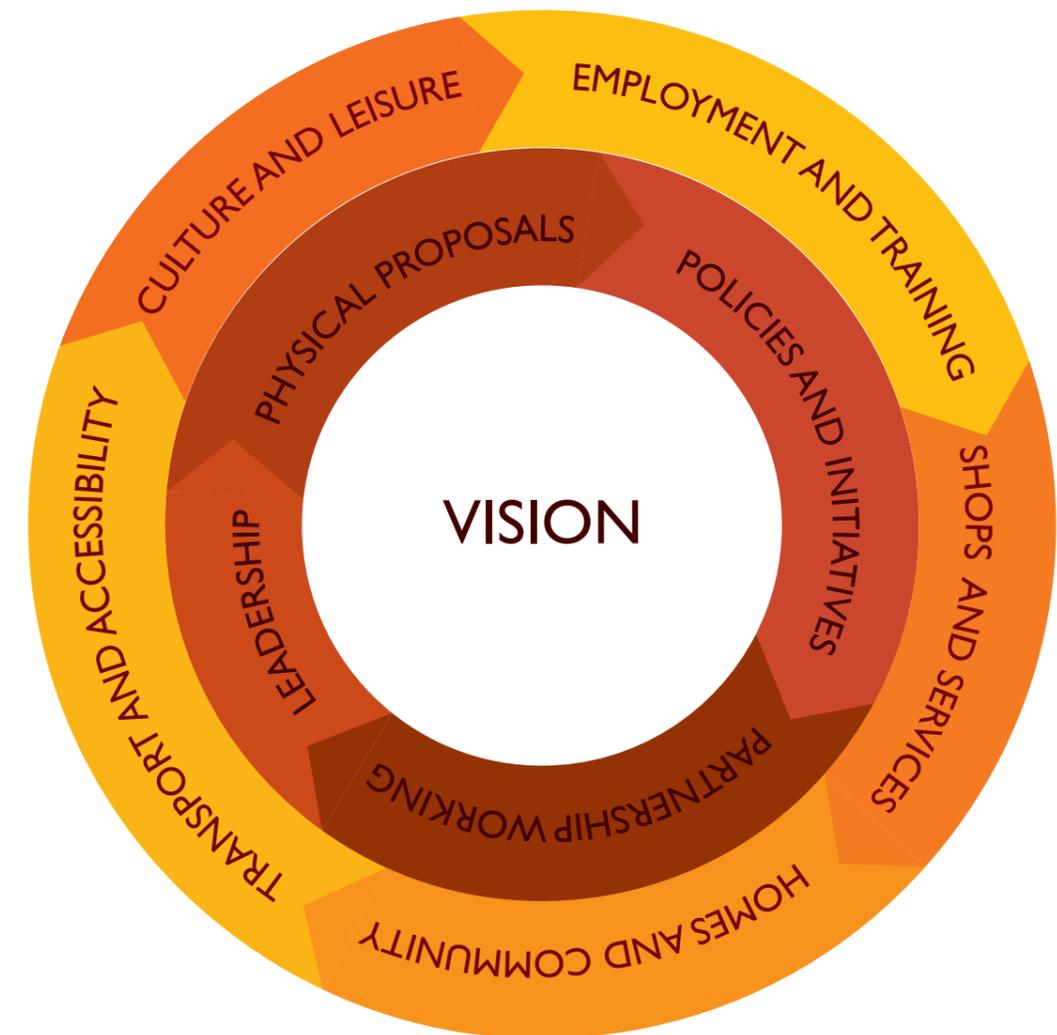
The strategy capitalises on the city's distinctiveness and rich heritage and seeks to ensure that this heritage continues for future generations; through the events and activities of a creative and prosperous city and through the creation of a strong architectural heritage that can proudly represent this period in St Albans' long history.

St Albans' prosperous economy will provide a sustainable and adaptable base from which to respond to changing markets and pioneer emerging sectors such as green technology and the creative industries. The City will boast a new range of shops and services which more than satisfy residents' needs and attract visitors from elsewhere. The city's active cultural life will be enhanced and diversified to help meet the needs of residents and visitors as lifestyles shift and priorities change, establishing St Albans as a cultural hub within the region. The city's relatively underexploited and exceptional Roman heritage, its proximity to London and the stunning rural surrounds will help to rapidly expand the visitor economy.

St Albans will become a sustainable transport centre, boasting a wide range of high quality and attractive public transport choices. Walking and cycling will be a mainstream way to travel, residents enjoying the high quality routes which permeate the City.

The vision sets out initiatives for St Albans to transform itself into a green and sustainable city with an accessible centre open to all. This, in turn, can help to bring about a renaissance in the public life of the city, with a central piazza of the highest quality and a stunning pedestrian environment. Homes, too, will be provided, which support a sustainable and diverse community for St Albans, attract young people to the area and provide a high quality of life.

Complex inter-relationships exist between the spheres of activity which make-up people's lives and the lives of cities, and integration is considered a key element of the vision for St Albans. The vision addresses homes and jobs, shopping and leisure facilities and transport and community issues in the city, and no single strand from these can secure a prosperous future for the city. Ensuring a strong relationship and coordination between these spheres will help to unlock the potential of the city in the future.





3. Vision objectives

3. Vision objectives

A number of objectives for the St Albans City vision were developed for the 'direction of travel' and then tested through various consultation methods. The objectives are grouped under a number of themes, designed to help the city reach its full potential. These themes are:

- Creating a sustainable and diverse economy for the 21st century
- Establishing St Albans as a cultural centre and visitor destination
- Unlocking the potential of the city's built environment
- Creating a quality public realm
- Establishing an integrated transport network and kick-starting a modal shift
- Establishing a framework for a sustainable future in St Albans
- Establishing a positive dynamic between the city's economy, its social and cultural life and its domestic sphere

The objectives for each of these themes are set out over the following pages.

Creating a sustainable and diverse economy for the 21st century

Addressing the low levels of economic self-containment in the city

St Albans has a relatively healthy economy, with high skill and employment levels. Analysis has identified, however, that the city has a very low level of self-containment and a high dependency on the banking, finance and insurance industries. These two characteristics can undermine the economic and environmental sustainability of the city and can leave it vulnerable to slumps in industries, as has been seen in the finance industries over the last year.

St Albans should explore methods of diversifying the economy, with a key focus being given to the creative industries; tourism; and environmental sustainability related sectors, which are all sectors likely to expand in the UK over the coming decades.

Providing flexible work space to respond to shifting lifestyles

As revealed through the future trends, an increasing number of people are placing greater importance in work-life balance, and the structure of businesses is diversifying, with the traditional office no longer providing suitable space for all businesses.

As a growth area, St Albans has a key opportunity to consider the balance of provision between homes and employment and the type of accommodation required for these. Live-work units, enterprise hubs and incubator space will be considered in terms of the role they can play in creating an attractive environment for future businesses and residents.

Effectively drawing on links with educational establishments

St Albans benefits from the leading 'business facing' university in the UK, in the University of Hertfordshire. The university prides itself on being embedded within the local community and providing strong links with local businesses. These links should be drawn on when considering new industries that can develop within the city, along with the important role that universities can play in encouraging small business creation.

Providing education and employment opportunities for all

Whilst St Albans has relatively low unemployment levels and a predominance of professional employment sectors, some Super Output Areas (SOAs) have comparably low achievement levels in both income levels and employment. The Vision considers means of targeted initiatives to raise aspirations and opportunities in these neighbourhoods. The Vision gives specific consideration to employment opportunities and training for school leavers in the city, to encourage young people to remain in the area and to address current concerns amongst young people.

Providing a sustainable centre for residents and workers

The Vision explores ways in which St Albans can improve its offer as a sustainable centre for residents, in terms of food retail provision and its accessibility, and in terms of a diverse range of independent and national stores and how these position the city in the regional retail hierarchy. Social infrastructure and cultural provision are also explored.

Providing an excellent range of specialist and quality retailing and markets

The Vision seeks to enhance the retail offer in St Albans and strengthen the strong mix of retailing in the centre, to provide an excellent range of shopping facilities in a first class environment. In addition, ways to enhance the excellent market are considered.

Establishing St Albans as a cultural centre and visitor destination

Drawing on St Albans' unique potential within the North London Arc

St Albans sits in the north London arc, running close to the M25 and as such has a relationship and comparator status with other towns on this arc. Review of the cities which feature in this group reveals that St Albans sits in a strong position in terms of its potential role as a cultural centre within the region.

It is understood that any catchment area for this role would be skewed to north, as people living to the south of the city would be more likely to venture into London. However, opportunity certainly exists for St Albans to develop this role and opportunities for this are explored in the city vision.

Exploring opportunities for creating a cultural hub and/or circuit

St Albans has a number of heritage and cultural attractors, but these are located in disparate locations within the city and visual and physical links between them are not strong. The Vision explores methods of strengthening the circuit which can connect these destinations.

During the consultation programme, many people have suggested that a cultural hub be created for the city on the Civic Centre site. This is explored in terms of feasible uses for the area, layout options and potential for refurbishment, as has taken place recently at Southbank in London. These options will be further explored at the masterplanning stage of the project.

Developing the contemporary, visual and performing arts

St Albans has a very strong heritage offer, with the Abbey, Verulamium Park and the excellent city museum. However, many people feel that contemporary visual and performing arts are underrepresented in the city and would like to see this sector developed. High level opportunities for this are explored in the vision.

Exploring methods of bringing St Albans' heritage to life

Residents and stakeholders agree that St Albans' Roman heritage is a unique asset which sets the city apart from other towns. The archaeological nature of this heritage, however, means that it is not visually available as more recent eras might be, and this poses a question of the best means of drawing on these assets as a visitor attraction. Options for bringing this heritage to life are explored in the vision.

Raising the profile of the city in the international arena

St Albans is extremely well connected to the centre of London, and now Europe with the opening of the fast speed rail link from St Pancras (20 minutes from St Albans). Opportunity exists to explore means of attracting European visitors to the city and capitalising on this link.

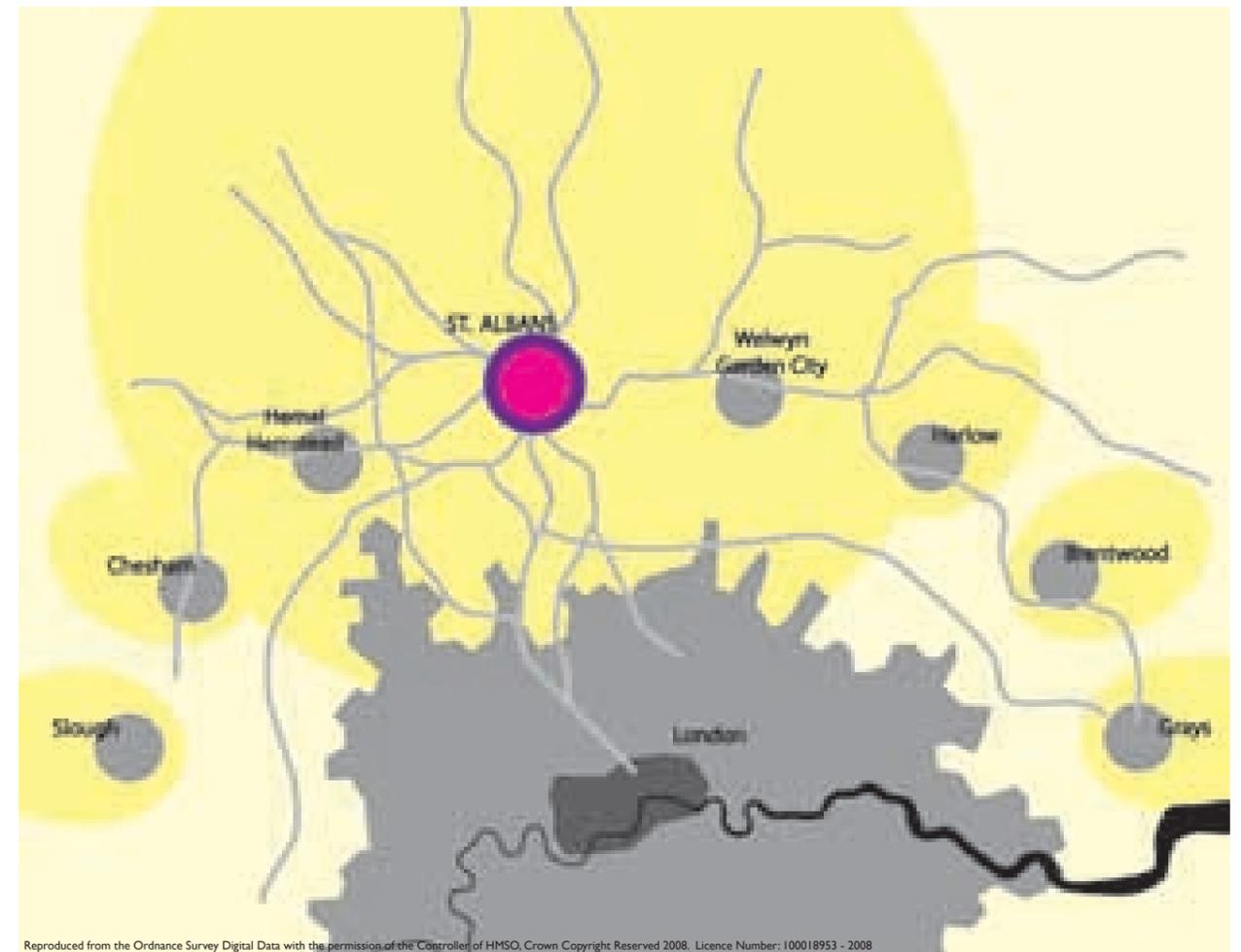
The city also has potential to attract North American visitors, with whom Stratford-upon-Avon and other historic centres are very popular. The potential of the international visitor market is assessed in the vision, along with other tourism options.

Exploring the feasibility of a cinema for the city

Throughout consultation, stakeholders and residents have highlighted the fact that St Albans does not have a cinema and agree that this would be a valuable addition to the city. The project team is aware of previous discussions regarding the former cinema on London Road and the proposed cinema for Bricket Road. Options for providing a cinema are explored, considering social and cultural value, suitable built form and economic feasibility.

Investigating options for increasing the hotel offer in the city

St Albans has a limited hotel provision across all budget levels and this is explored as a priority. Small, boutique hotels; budget hotels and camping facilities; and conference hotels and facilities are all considered in terms of suitable locations and feasibility.



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St Albans' potential cultural role in the North London Arc

3. Vision objectives

Unlocking the potential of the city's built environment

Facilitating quality, contemporary architecture

Whilst St Albans has a rich historic built fabric, there is little development of note in the city since the 1950s. During consultation, residents highlighted the fact that they would like future generations to be able to enjoy heritage from the current era and it was felt that at present, nothing provides this.

Flexible and coordinated working between the City Council and architects and developers could be a means of achieving this, along with the development of a design panel, or active use of the CABI Design Panel. Urban design guidelines for sensitive areas and design competitions are also options worth exploring in helping to achieve this.

Ensuring a coordinated approach to development

St Albans city centre currently has a small number of reasonably large sites which have been subject to planning applications or are subject to developer interest. It is important that key sites be developed with a coherent vision and masterplan which can help to ensure that piecemeal development does not take place on these sites.

Creating a quality public realm

St Albans has great potential in terms of its public realm, with a traditional market town layout and an engaging pedestrian environment, yet this is not currently exploited to its full capacity.

The public realm is inconsistent, with street clutter and uncoordinated street furniture, and the centre suffers from severe congestion.

The City Vision presents an opportunity to unlock the potential of the public realm in the city centre and to create a highly usable, quality physical environment which is representative of a high quality, regional and national visitor centre and can help to foster a real sense of civic pride.

Reconnecting the stations with the city centre

St Albans rail station is located a 10 minute walk from the city centre, which presents challenges in terms of the city's accessibility by rail. Whilst the distance itself is an issue, initiatives can be undertaken to improve the pedestrian link from the station to the centre through public realm works that improve the legibility and create an attractive street that draws people into the centre. Similar issues are also presented by Abbey station to the south, which are complicated by the nature of Holywell Hill

Creating a central public space

During consultation, local residents and stakeholders repeatedly identified the fact that St Albans does not currently have a central square or piazza where residents and visitors can gather for cultural and leisure events and all members of the community can engage in the public life of the city.

Market Place, and particularly the area to the front of the Old Town Hall, presents an opportunity for establishing such a space, as does the area connecting St Peters Street and the Civic Centre South area. Examples of improvements to these areas are included in the vision document and the feasibility of these will be considered during the masterplanning phase.

Enhancing the pedestrian routes from St Peters Street

As in many market towns, St Albans has a number of narrow pedestrian routes which lead from the central spine, St Peters Street, to the surrounding areas, and this helps to create a permeable environment which can be full of character. Unfortunately, some of these routes currently do not provide frontage, are not well lit, and often have refuse issues. Opportunity exists to improve these links by considering where frontage can be added and developing lighting and public realm solutions where frontage is not possible.

Addressing the issue of backlands in the centre

St Peters Street currently provides a relatively attractive environment with historic buildings, space for pedestrians, active frontage and a successful market. The 'backland' areas behind the main street, however, provide a very poor quality of environment and undermine the coherency of the city centre. Drovers Way presents a particular challenge and will be explored as part of the masterplanning stage. The Civic Centre site also has a number of backs, from the buildings which front St Peters Street, and this will also be considered. It is acknowledged that servicing issues will need to be considered as part of this process.

Connecting the Cathedral and Verulamium Park to the centre

Visual and physical links between both Verulamium Park and the Cathedral, and the city centre, are currently weak and could be significantly improved. As a result of the city's topography, the Cathedral and the Park are not visible from the city centre, and shopping visitors may be unaware of their existence.

An attractive pedestrian route does link the centre and the cathedral, but those unaware of this are likely to take Holywell Hill, which provides a far more stressful pedestrian environment.

Similarly, the hill can act as a deterrent to visitors to either the Cathedral or the Park from venturing into the city centre, depriving the city of a significant number of potential visitors. Strengthening these links is considered to be a key priority for the vision, by exploring pedestrian connections as well as other transport links.

Preserve and enhance the city's connection with the rural surrounds

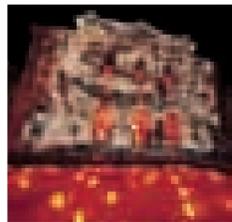
St Albans benefits from strong access, links and relationships between the city centre and the surrounding countryside through green wedge corridors linking the two. This is considered a major asset and the Vision will seek to preserve and enhance these high quality links.

Key Issues and Implications

 Potential artistic interventions



Connecting the city with the countryside



Temporary events and installations



Public art to enhance the public realm



Connecting the city with the countryside

-  Heritage route
-  Green network route
-  Civic spines

Increasing the presence and potential of the River Ver

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Establishing an integrated transport network and kick-starting a modal shift

Transforming arrival points in the city

Arrival by train

First impressions count and this fact currently presents significant challenges for St Albans. Arrival to the city by train does not fairly reflect the quality and offer within the city and can deter tourists and shopping visitors alike, with a potentially damaging impact on the image of the city and the local economy.

The train station currently turns its back on the city centre, with a poor physical environment and no visual link or clear indication of the direction to the centre. The city vision gives consideration to options for improving this important arrival point and reconnecting the station with city centre.

Arrival by car

Arrival to the city centre by car similarly fails to provide the visitor with a quality experience that in turn reflects poorly on the city and its image. Congestion firstly causes significant problems for the visitor, and car parks have been identified as difficult to locate. The physical environment within the car parks could be improved, and finally the pedestrian routes connecting the car parks with St Peters Street and other key shopping areas are unattractive and feel unsafe at night.

3. Vision objectives

Addressing congestion in the city centre

Both analysis and consultation have highlighted a significant issue regarding congestion within the city centre, and particularly along St Peters Street. Whilst there is broad agreement of the problem, there are differing opinions on the best way to address this, with pedestrianisation of St Peters Street supported by some and opposed by others. Other options suggested during consultation include the introduction of a congestion charge, the establishment of a bus priority scheme and a shared surface to St Peters Street to deter cars from using the street.

The city vision assesses this issue carefully and explores options available for relieving pressure on this key street, and on the city centre in general. The benefits and disbenefits of each will be explored and it is likely that this subject will be a key issue during consultation on the draft vision options.

Developing walking and cycling Infrastructure

Despite the potentially challenging topography, the level of walking and cycling for journeys to work are good. However there is scope to increase this further and replace some shorter car journeys. In particular, walking and cycling infrastructure around the city centre is poor. There is little in the way of formal cycle routes or lanes for example and many footways on important desire lines are narrow or not designed for use by people with mobility impairments. The Council is developing walking and cycling strategies and the Vision uses these as the basis to develop more detailed proposals to promote walking and cycling through infrastructure improvements that are sensitive to the city's historic context.

Improving bus provision

Throughout the consultation programme, the suggestion of a shuttle bus connecting the station, the city centre, and the cathedral-park area has been a consistent theme. It is understood that a 'tourist shuttle bus' was trialled 10 years ago but did not prove to be successful. The city vision explores whether the new context provided by today's congestion and sustainability challenges will provide a more favourable environment for such a bus.

Suggestions have also been made that a shuttle bus is required to connect villages surrounding St Albans with the city centre. This is also to be explored at the next stage, in terms of suitable destinations and feasibility. The project team is aware of opportunities which exist in relation to this through the new Oaklands College 'hub' and through the planned Butterfly World.

Encouraging more sustainable car use

Because of its convenience and ability to travel longer distances, the car is likely to remain the preferred mode of transport for a significant proportion of St Albans' citizens, particularly given the city's affluence. It is possible however for people to use cars in a more sustainable manner and the opportunities for this should be promoted alongside measures to encourage non-car modes. Car clubs, car share schemes and electric cars are ways of reducing the impact of car travel, by increasing occupancy and/or reducing emissions. Making such schemes work in non-metropolitan areas is challenging, but they have the potential to play an important role in the city's future transport needs.

Lastly, new technologies would be valuable, including real time travel information across the city centre, such as in offices and retail centres to complement the real time information currently being installed at bus stops in the centre.

Considering the location and role of car parks in the centre

Many local residents feel that car parking in the city centre is not managed and sign posted as effectively as it could be, which in turn exacerbates congestion in the city centre, as drivers circle the city looking for available parking spaces. By improving the signage to car parks in the city, and by considering the direction from which vehicles will arrive, a more effective system could potentially be established so that unnecessary vehicles can be removed from the main streets.

Exploring the option of a park and ride system

To further reduce the number of vehicles entering the city centre, the potential for a park & ride system and a park & walk system is explored. These can help reduce congestion, enhance and make better use of attractive green and pedestrian routes in the city, and support healthy living measures.

Improving transport connections with settlements in the city's catchment area

Consultation and analysis has highlighted the fact that villages and settlements within St Albans' catchment area do not have frequent or reliable public transport connections to the centre. The Vision explores opportunities for improving these connections using a shuttle bus to the villages.

Establishing a framework for a sustainable future in St Albans

The future positioning of St Albans as a model for sustainable living is considered a central thread to the City Vision, which runs through the key issues highlighted so far, including the creation of a sustainable self-contained economy and the championing of sustainable transport methods to reduce St Albans' carbon footprint. Initial analysis has additionally identified a number of specific opportunities for developing the Ver Valley as a valuable source of sustainable technology.

Developing sustainable energy production

The ground and water in the Ver Valley has significant potential as a heat and cooling source for new buildings via a heat pump, which moves heat energy from one place to another and from a lower to a higher temperature. Valuable information for such initiatives is now available from central Government and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE).

Establishing sustainable drainage systems

Providing for sustainable drainage, minimised flood risk and a sustainable water supply are important priorities in urban areas, particularly in settlements such as St Albans with an attractive and important riverine environment.

Opportunities to enhance the role of the wider river valley in flood water storage could be considered. Extensive areas of open land already exist and relatively minor landscape interventions could be explored to enhance the flood storage capacity of these spaces.

Managing the drainage of surface water run-off from the city centre down to the river valley could be enhanced by the retrofitting of sustainable drainage systems and the increased use of street trees and soft landscaping.

Exploring sustainable food production

The river valley's small food production could be enhanced through the creation of further allotments, community gardens and potentially orchards. The food produced could in the long term form the basis of an enhanced local food market in the town, once production moved beyond a small co-operative scale.

Considering sustainable waste management

As with all urban areas, the future management of waste produced in St Albans will need to be steered to have increasingly less environmental impact. The Vision will consider the opportunity to create medium scale compost facilities which could manage the city's garden and kitchen waste. The compost produced could be sold locally and also used in supporting the food production within the valley.

Adapting to climate change

In addition to climate change mitigation measures, it will also be important for St Albans to adapt to climate change which cannot be reversed. The vision will explore the role of green infrastructure, including green spaces, corridors and trees, which are central to adaptation. The city already benefits from a green character – particularly around the Ver Valley and some of the older residential areas and this character could be supported by the planting of further street trees to provide shelter and shade on the city's principal routes.

Establishing a positive dynamic between the city's economy, its social and cultural life and its domestic sphere

Providing mixed tenure and unit size housing, to meet residents' life-cycle requirements

St Albans currently struggles to re-attract young residents once they have left for university, and this is in part due to the lack of affordable housing in the area. It will be extremely important for the city to provide a range of housing provision in the coming decades, to ensure that this can provide for people throughout their life-cycle – with affordable housing, city centre housing, family housing and social housing all accessible, if required.

Co-ordination can also be made here between housing provision and flexible workspace provision, to ensure that live-work units are available for self-employed residents and start-ups.

Addressing pockets of deprivation with targeted initiatives

Overall wealth in St Albans has traditionally masked pockets of deprivation within the city, and funding has therefore been difficult to secure to address these issues. The socio-demographic analysis identified acute levels of deprivation in terms of crime in the wards of Sopwell, Cunningham and Batchwood, along with high levels of deprivation in terms of income. The vision looks at initiatives that could help to address these issues.

Providing facilities and activities for young people

All age groups within the city currently feel that greater provision can be made for young people in the area in terms of facilities and activities. The Vision explores opportunities for new cultural and community facilities for young people in the area, along with more effective use and promotion of existing facilities in the area.

Celebrating diversity in the city

St Albans has a local Bangladeshi community and also a European community and the Vision considers methods of drawing on this diversity and using this asset.

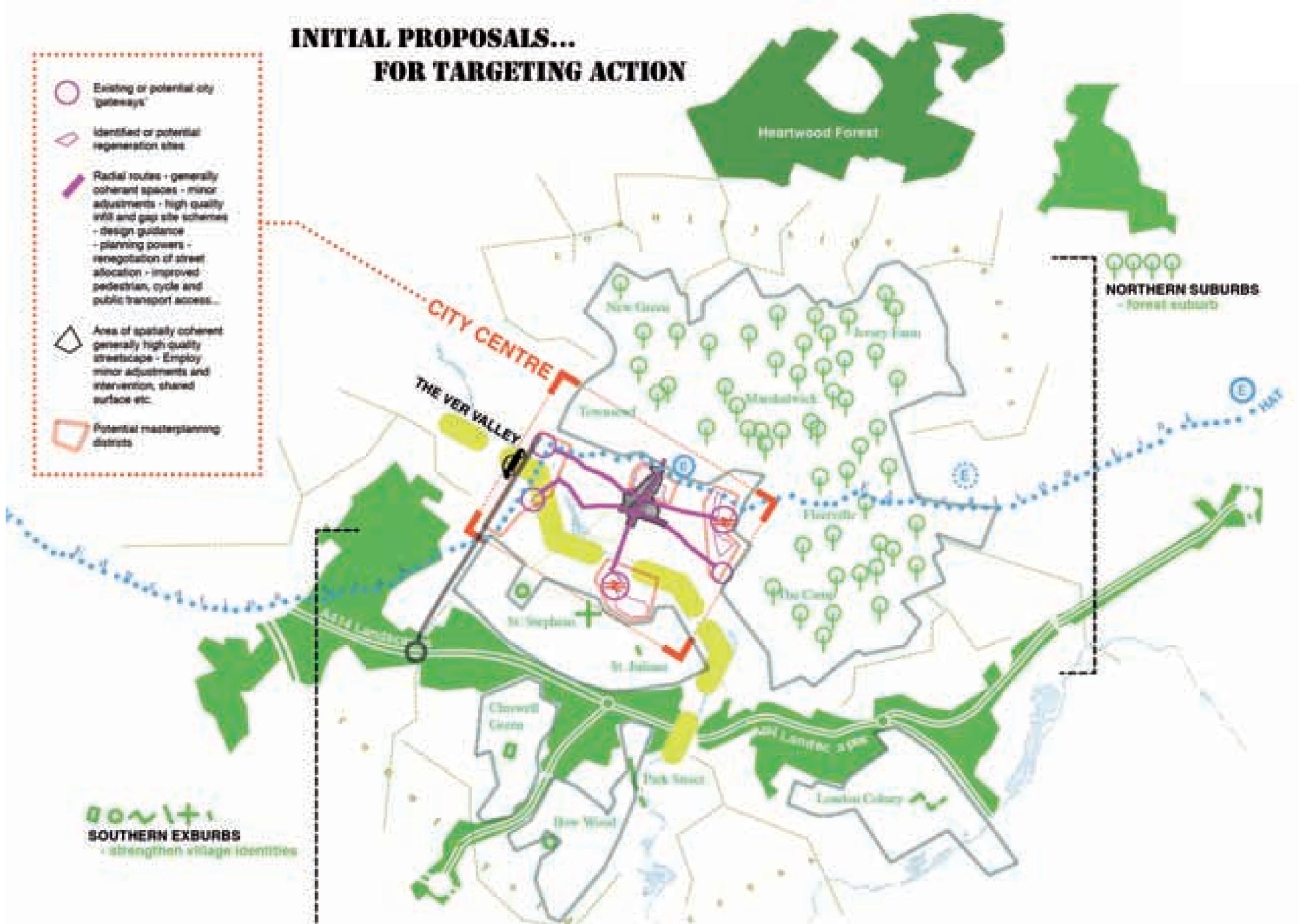
Creating a public life for the city

St Albans' general wealth has resulted in a certain privatisation of the public sphere, as highlighted through the high use of private cars, but also through the use of private social and leisure facilities, such as gym membership.

During consultation, local residents expressed a desire for the city to operate according to a more European model, with social and cultural events that bring all age groups together, and a strong community support network.

The Vision explores methods of helping to foster this sense of public life and community cohesion, which is so elusive in modern British cities.

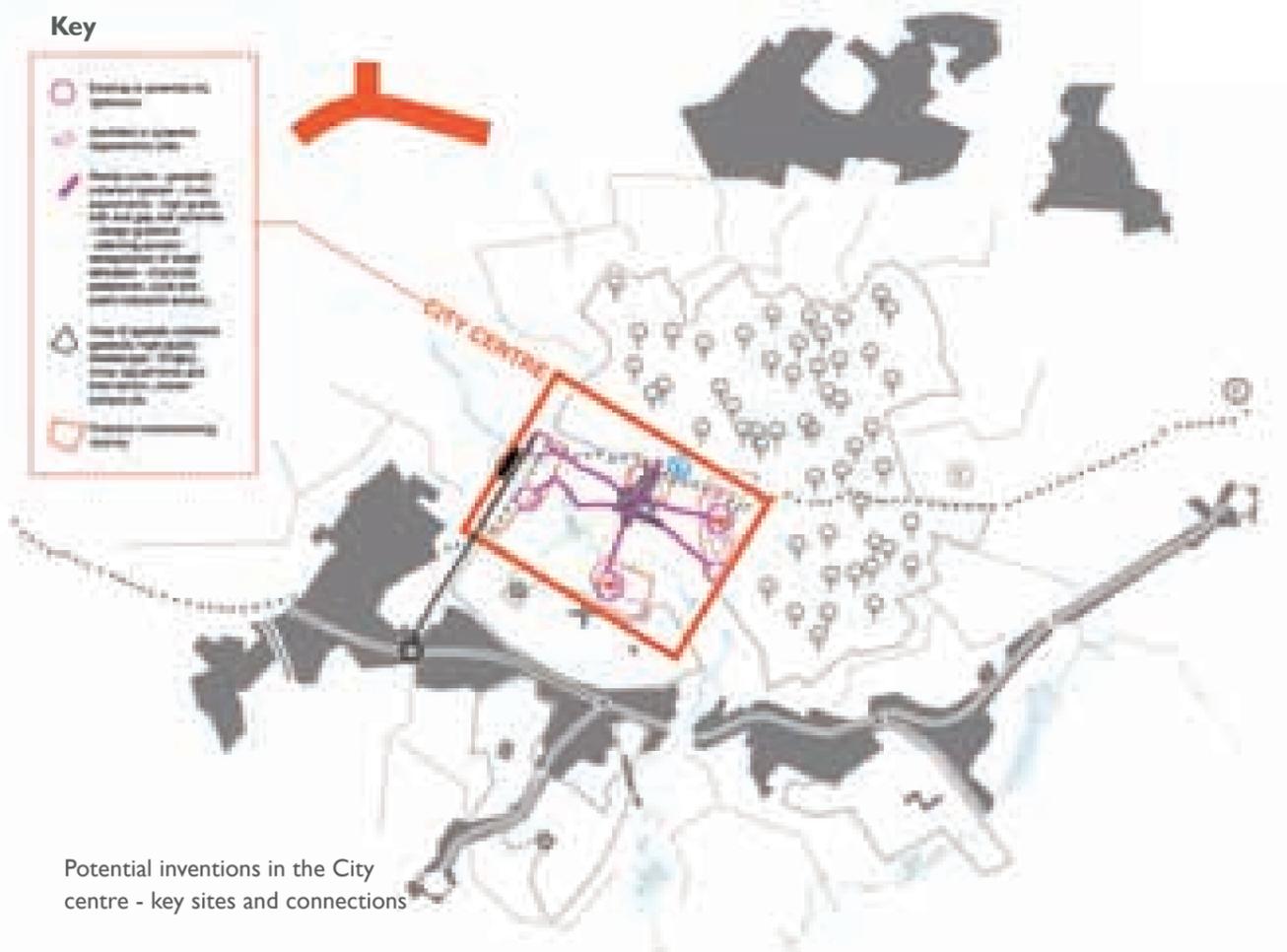
INITIAL PROPOSALS... FOR TARGETING ACTION



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Key

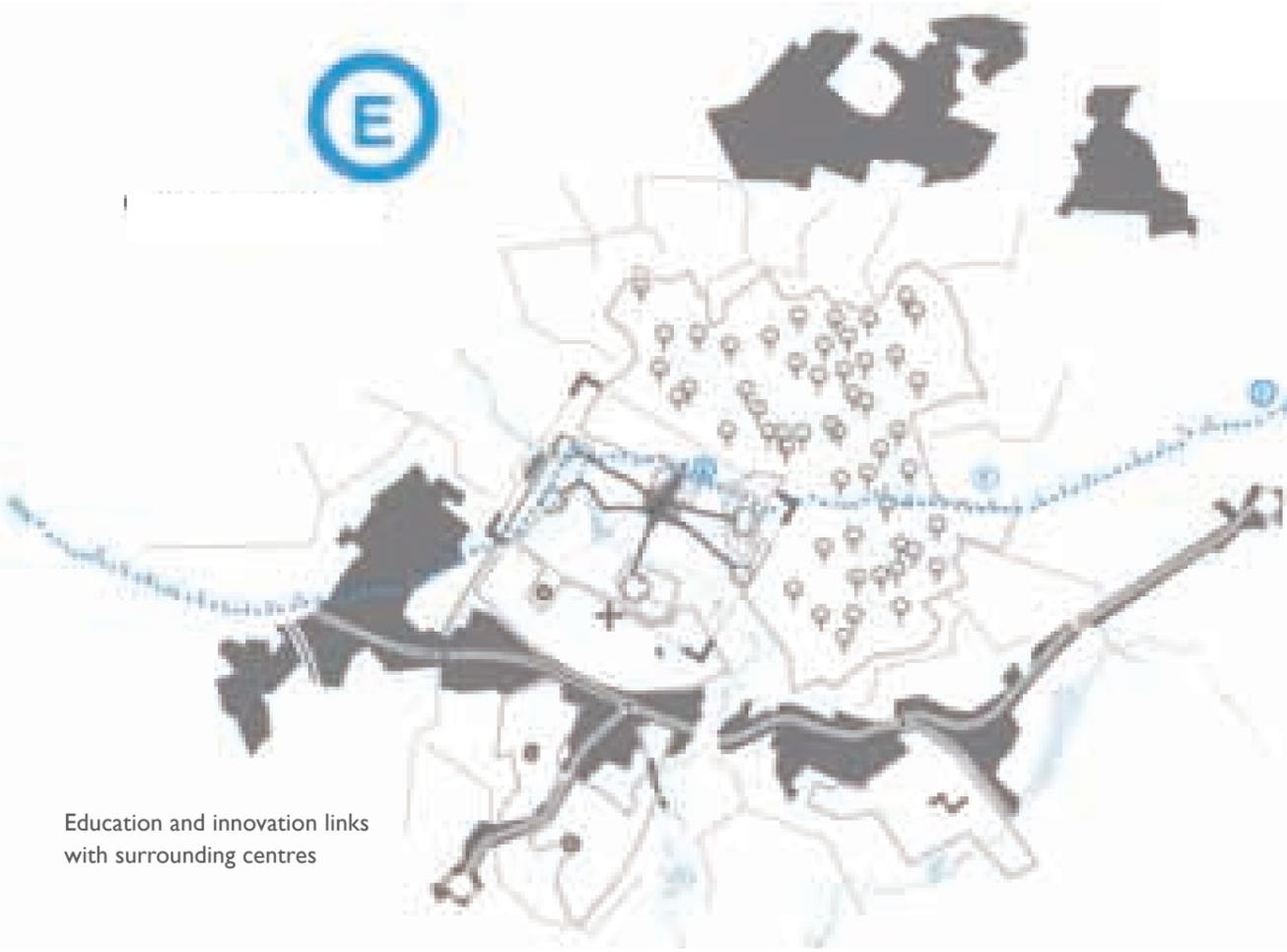
A legend box containing several symbols and text labels, including a red circle, a purple circle, a blue circle, a green circle, a red line, a purple line, a blue line, a green line, a red square, a purple square, a blue square, and a green square. The text labels are too small to read but appear to describe different types of sites and connections.



Potential inventions in the City centre - key sites and connections



Sustainability opportunities for the Ver Valley



Education and innovation links with surrounding centres



Opportunities for the villages to the south of the City Centre



Opportunities for the northern suburbs



Potential improved links into the countryside

Initial identification of opportunity areas

1. Drovers Way

This site currently has a negative impact on the overall character of the city centre, creating a 'backlands' area, which feels unsafe at night and with a use which does not seem appropriate for a city centre site.

At the next stage, the potential to redevelop this site will carefully considered, taking account of issues such as the car park lease and the market storage facilities.

The Aboyne Lodge School has been included, to ensure that all options are considered, but the sensitivities of this site will be taken into account, including the local listing of the building and the requirement to find alternative playground space.

2. Coupers Garage

This site currently represents an underused city centre site, with a use that would be more appropriate slightly further from St Peters Street. This is being considered in the broadest terms at this stage.

3. Jubilee Centre

This Council owned, locally listed building currently provides a valuable lunch club service for the elderly in the area, and the project team will take this into account. At this stage, the site is being considered to see if it is being used to its full potential and whether facilities could be better provided in a purpose built centre

4, 5, 6. Civic Centre South area

This site represents a valuable opportunity to transform the city centre and create an engaging and attractive centre that works, in terms of movement. This will be considered in terms of redevelopment or refurbishment potential to create a cultural hub, with consideration given to the desirable mix of uses and economic feasibility.

7. University of Hertfordshire

The project team is aware of potential for this site to become a higher profile gallery and exhibition space, in coordination with the Museum. This will be considered during the next stage of the project.

8. Oaklands College

This former site is currently subject to a large, mostly residential, development, which is considered to be a positive addition to the city, providing central living opportunities and retaining listed buildings.

9. Eversheds site, London Road (subject to unsuccessful application by Tesco)

This is an extremely controversial site, locally, and the subject of an unsuccessful planning application. The site, however, represents a development opportunity within the city and this will be considered, in terms of suitable uses at the next stage.

10. Odeon

The former Odeon cinema has been vacant for some time and was identified as having a negative impact on the physical environment during consultation. This is a sensitive site and will be

considered carefully in terms of suitable uses and economic feasibility.

11. Abbey Station and Griffiths Way

This area holds potential as a mini southern hub to the city, with proximity to Verulamium Park and train access.

12. Westminster Lodge

This Council owned leisure centre is subject to refurbishment plans, which will bring great benefits to the city when it is complete. The Vision supports these plans for the leisure centre. As redevelopment of this site is already programmed, this site is not viewed as an opportunity area.

13. Station edge

This area is currently under-utilised, and consideration will be given to potential development and suitable uses for the site. A decision would only be taken following careful consideration of parking provision and capacity in the city.

14. Western edge (Verulamium Museum)

This site will be explored in terms of raising the profile of the Park and the Roman Heritage, and in terms of providing stronger connections to the city centre. Any decisions taken will be informed by the Verulamium Park Masterplan study undertaken by The Landscape Partnership.



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8AM - 11PM

SATURDAY
9AM - 11PM

SUNDAY
9AM - 10PM

Carluccio's

4. Consultation on vision and masterplan

4. Consultation on objectives

The direction of travel was assessed via two strands of consultation; a Test and Review workshop where a group of local stakeholders discussed priorities for the spatial vision in depth, and an exhibition publicised and open to the wider public, aiming to gather wider public opinion on the key issues raised. Details of both are presented here.

Test and Review workshop

The St Albans City Vision Direction of Travel Test and Review workshop took place on 24 January 2009. The purpose of the workshop was to present baseline findings and the emerging strategies contained in the Interim Report to a wide range of local residents and community groups and other stakeholders.

Programme

The event was introduced by Councillor Melvyn Teare of St Albans City and District Council, and by Antony Rifkin, from Urban Practitioners, who explained the purpose and programme for the day.

The programme for the day was broadly composed of two sessions. The first session was designed to gather feedback from participants on the direction of travel and to identify strategic priorities within it. During the second session, participants were encouraged to consider the spatial implications of the priorities they had identified.

The programme is displayed opposite.

Key issues group activity

This session commenced with a presentation by Louise Mansfield of Urban Practitioners, during which the key findings and strategies contained in the Direction of Travel were described and explained.

Following this, the participants were divided into five smaller sub-groups in order to identify and agree on what they thought to be the priorities for St Albans. Each sub-group was given a sheet (displayed opposite) showing the seven strategies set out in the Direction of Travel. The seven strategies are:

1. Creating a sustainable and diverse economy for the 21st century
2. Establishing St Albans as a cultural centre and visitor destination
3. Unlocking the potential of the built environment
4. Creating a quality public realm
5. Establishing an integrated transport network and kick-starting a modal shift
6. Establishing a framework for a sustainable future in St Albans
7. Establishing a positive dynamic between the city's economy, its social and cultural life, and its domestic sphere

Under these headings the worksheet listed the various components of each strategy. In each sub-group, each participant was asked to select their top priority for each strategy, leaving a score for each component. This process required considered discussion around each theme, and informed selection of priorities for St Albans.

The results are presented below, for the combined groups by theme. Once priorities had been selected, each sub-group was given the opportunity to feed back their agreed priorities to the wider audience, to ensure that individuals were made aware of the wider group's views.

st albans city vision
TEST AND REVIEW WORKSHOP

Creating a sustainable and diverse economy for the 21st century	Establishing St Albans as a cultural centre and visitor destination	Unlocking the potential of the city's built environment	Creating a quality public realm	Establishing an integrated transport network and kick-starting a modal shift	Establishing a framework for a sustainable future in St Albans	Establishing a positive dynamic between the city's economy, its social and cultural life and its domestic sphere
Addressing the low levels of economic self-containment in the city	Drawing on St Albans unique potential within the North London Arc	Facilitating quality, contemporary architecture	Reconnecting the station with the city centre	Transforming arrival points in the city (by car and train)	Developing sustainable energy production	Providing mixed tenure and unit size housing, to meet residents' life-cycle requirements
Providing flexible work space to respond to shifting lifestyles	Exploring opportunities for creating a cultural hub and/or circuit	Ensuring a coordinated approach to development	Creating a central public space	Addressing congestion in the city centre	Establishing sustainable drainage systems	Addressing pockets of deprivation with targeted initiatives
Effectively drawing on links with educational establishments	Developing the contemporary, visual and performing arts	Preserve and enhance the city's connection with the rural surrounds	Enhancing the medieval routes from St Peters Street	Developing walking and cycling infrastructure	Exploring sustainable food production	Providing facilities and activities for young people
Providing education and employment opportunities for all	Exploring methods of bringing St Albans heritage to life		Addressing the issue of backlands in the centre	Improving bus provision	Considering sustainable waste management	Celebrating diversity in the city
Providing a sustainable centre for residents and workers	Raising the profile of the city in the international arena		Connecting the Cathedral and Verulamium Park to the centre	Encouraging more sustainable car use	Adapting to climate change	Creating a public life for the city
Providing an excellent range of specialist and quality retailing and markets	Exploring the feasibility of a cinema for the city			Considering the role and location of car parks in the centre		
	Investigating options for increasing the hotel offer in the city			Improving transport connections with the city's catchment area		

TEST AND REVIEW WORKSHOP // SATURDAY 24 JANUARY 2009

Priority initiatives

Spatial conflicts and complementary uses

Objectives, as laid out at the Test and Review Workshop



Direction of travel strategies rankings

In order to assess the relative importance of each objective within the strategies, participants in each group were asked to rank each of the priorities from 1 to 5. The rankings were then added up across the groups to provide an overall rating score, where the lowest score denotes the most favoured priority. Although each score cannot be compared across the themes, within them, relative differences reveal the level of importance attached to each one.

21st century economy

1. Sustainable centre: retail & work (8)
2. Self -containment (10)
3. Range of shops with independents (15.5)
4. Links with universities/colleges (18)
5. Education and employment for all (20)
6. Flexible work space (20.5)

Cultural/visitor centre

1. Cultural hub and circuit (8)
2. Bringing heritage to life (13.5)
3. Cinema (15)
4. Unique potential in North London Arc (18)
5. Raising international profile (20.5)
6. Contemporary arts (21.5)
7. Hotels (21.5)

Built environment

1. Coordinated development (6.5)
2. Quality contemporary architecture (7)
3. Connections to rural surrounds (16.5)

Public realm

1. Reconnecting stations (6.5)
2. Creating central public space (10.5)
3. Addressing backlands (11.5)
4. Enhancing routes from St Peters Street (14)
5. Connections to Abbey & park to centre (21)

Transport modal shift

1. Walking and cycling infrastructure (14)
2. Improving bus provision (17)
3. Address congestion (17)
4. Role and location of car parks (17)
5. Improve arrival points (17.5)
6. Transport links to catchment area (20)
7. Sustainable car use (22)

Sustainability

1. Sustainable energy production (8)
2. Sustainable drainage systems (11)
3. Sustainable waste management (12)
4. Adapting to climate change (13)
5. Sustainable food production (18)

Public/private dynamic

1. Facilities for young people (4)
2. Addressing pockets of deprivation (9.5)
3. Creating public life for city (12)
4. Mixed tenure and size housing (13)
5. Celebrating diversity (13)

st albans city vision
TEST AND REVIEW WORKSHOP

PROGRAMME

- 11.00am Registration
- 11.10am Welcome and introduction
Cllr Malvyn Teare, St Albans City and District Council
Antony Rifkin, Urban Practitioners
- 11.20am Presentation on City Vision 'direction of travel'
Louise Mansfield, Urban Practitioners
- 11.40am Key issues group activity
- 12.10pm Feedback session
- 12.20pm Lunch
- 12.55pm Introduction to group workshop
Louise Mansfield, Urban Practitioners
- 1.00pm Group workshop
- 1.45pm Feedback session
- 1.55pm Next steps
- 2.00pm Close

24 January 2009 | 11.00am - 2.00pm
St Albans District Council Offices

Test and Review workshop programme

4. Consultation on 'direction of travel' objectives

Group workshop

During the second session, participants were asked to consider spatial opportunities and constraints, in view of their chosen priorities. To do this, each group was given a plan showing St Albans and the potential sites of change identified within the Direction of Travel. The groups were also asked to put down their top priorities, in order, and to suggest the most important regeneration initiatives for the Council to pursue.

Group 1

This group felt that it was important to increase permeability and flow through the City, particularly for pedestrians. They saw St Peters Street as a bipolar axis, with the Abbey and Verulamium Park at one end and a cultural hub at the other end based around the Museum of St Albans and St Peter's Church. Within this scheme, St Peters and the Abbey would, as visual landmarks, act as magnets, attracting residents and visitors through an improved retail core. These could be enhanced by improved routes between the town centre and the station and through Verulamium Park, connecting up with St Michaels and a new outdoor entertainment area at Westminster Lodge.

In addition, the group also saw scope for a conference centre and new cinema at the Tesco site.

Spatial priorities - group 1



Group 3

This group was keen to see educational uses at Aboyne Lodge relocated north of the Alms Houses, in order to release a substantial site for an in-City department store. The Tesco site was thought to be most appropriately developed as commercial/light industrial uses, providing training and employment opportunities for the City. There was also support

for a hotel and improved leisure facilities at Westminster Lodge.

Gateways would be enhanced to increase City identity.

The group's priorities were to create a sustainable centre through coordinated development of sites.

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Priorities

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Diverse sustainable centre | 5. Congestion |
| 2. Unique arc potential | 6. Waste and drains |
| 3. Coordinated developments | 7. Young people |
| 4. Central music space | |



Spatial priorities - group 3

Group 4

The top priorities for group 4 were shopping provision for economic self-containment and promotion of a cultural hub. The group discussed the sites within the town centre which they thought should be the focus for intervention and change, seeing the Civic Centre South site as suitable for retail and leisure around a revitalised Alban

Arena. In addition, the group saw opportunity for an improved pedestrian environment at St Peters Street, and improvements to Drovers Way which would enhance the historic passage ways there. The possibility of relocating the St Albans Museum was also discussed.

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Priorities

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Economic self containment / shops | 3. Coordinated approach | 6. Flooding/ waste packaging |
| 2. Cultural hub | 4. Reconnecting the City Centre with stations | 7. Mixed housing / youth facilities |
| | 5. Congestion / car parking | |



Spatial priorities - group 4

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Priorities

- Views
- Magnets required at either end of St Peters Street
- Frequency of buses
- Strategic/balanced views
- New desirable routes

Other regeneration initiatives

- Conference centre on London Road
- Verulamium Park route: St Michael's to Westminster Lodge



Spatial priorities - group 5

Group 5

This group thought that urban design should be a central focus of the spatial vision to protect and enhance views and encourage flow through St Peters Street with attractions at either end. Pedestrian route improvements should be focused on Victoria Street and on a new route through Verulamium Park between St Michaels and Westminster Lodge. The group considered how different land uses might be arranged over the different opportunity sites identified during the baseline analysis. Their chosen configuration was for a music facility at the University of Hertfordshire, a new cultural hub at the Civic Centre South site, incorporating a relocated Abbey Theatre, a school on the 'Tesco site' with a new cinema opposite.

The group also suggested providing a film studio adjacent to The Abbey rail station and a conference centre on London Road



4. Public exhibition



St Albans City Vision Direction of Travel Exhibition boards

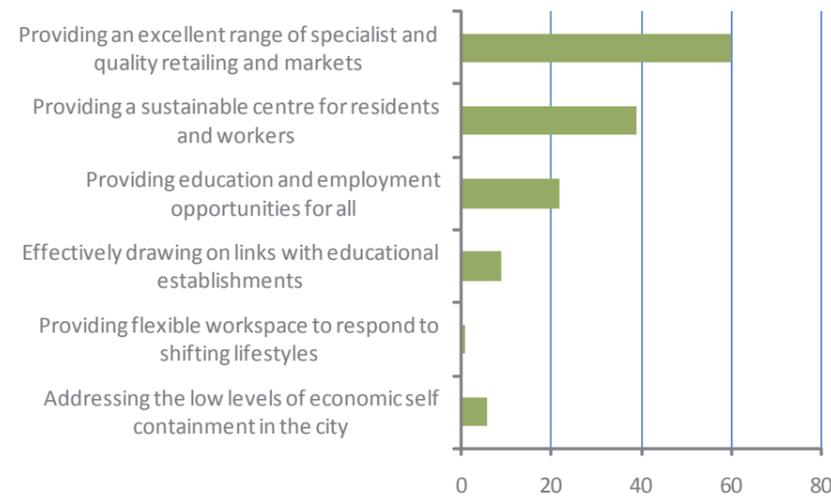
Public Exhibition

The public exhibition took place in January 2009 and was open to the public in the St Albans City and District Offices for a week. The purpose of the exhibition was to explain the objectives of the St Albans City Vision programme, to publicise the key findings of the baseline analysis stage of the project, and to gather public views on the direction of travel objectives and aspirations. The exhibition was laid out as a series of boards, displayed overleaf.

Feedback was gathered from viewers in two ways. Firstly, the public were asked to vote for the proposals and objectives shown under each theme contained in the direction of travel. The results are shown opposite.

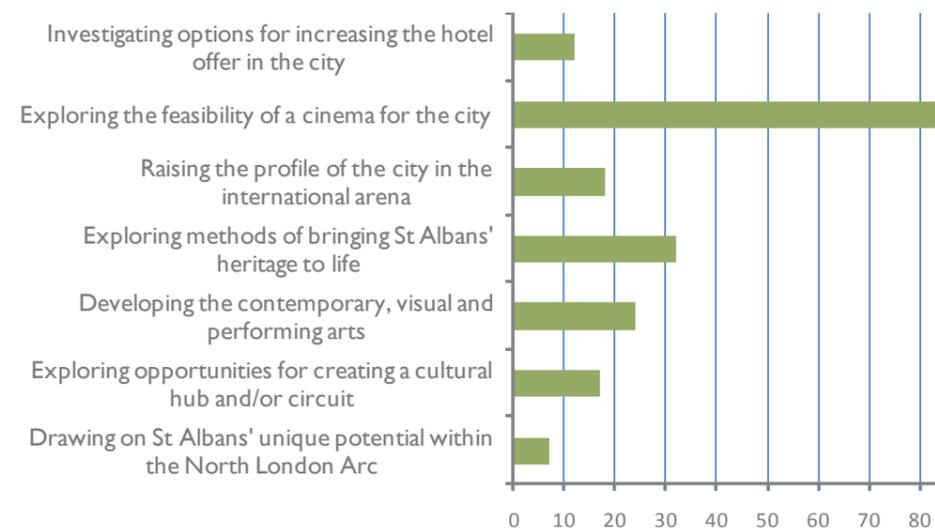
Secondly, detailed comments were gathered via a comments box, to ensure that more qualitative responses could be made to the objectives shown.

1. Creating a sustainable and diverse economy for the 21st century



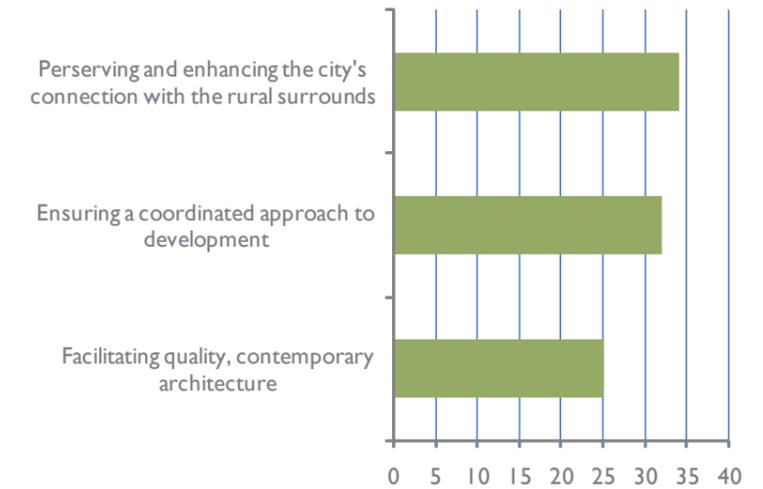
Clear priority to address the range and quality of retail, and to provide better for residents needs within the immediate centre: shopping, services, employment and education

2. Establishing St Albans as a cultural centre and visitor destination



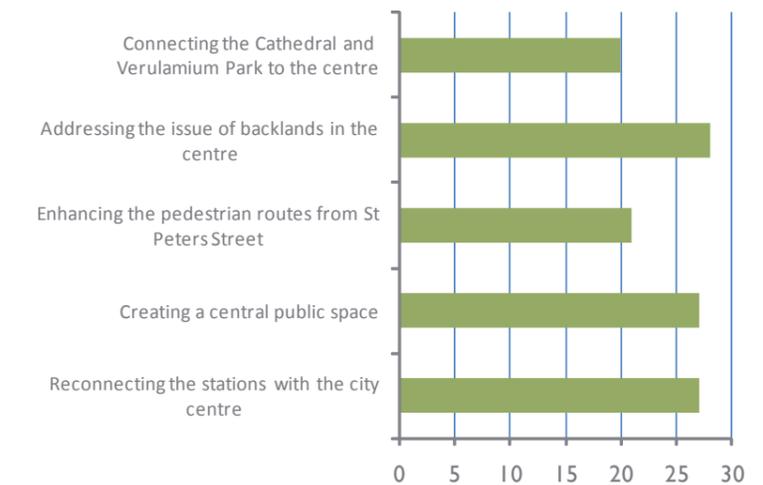
Overwhelming support for provision of a cinema in St Albans. Similar levels of the support for the remaining objectives, with slight preferences for heritage and cultural opportunities

3. Unlocking the potential of the city's built environment



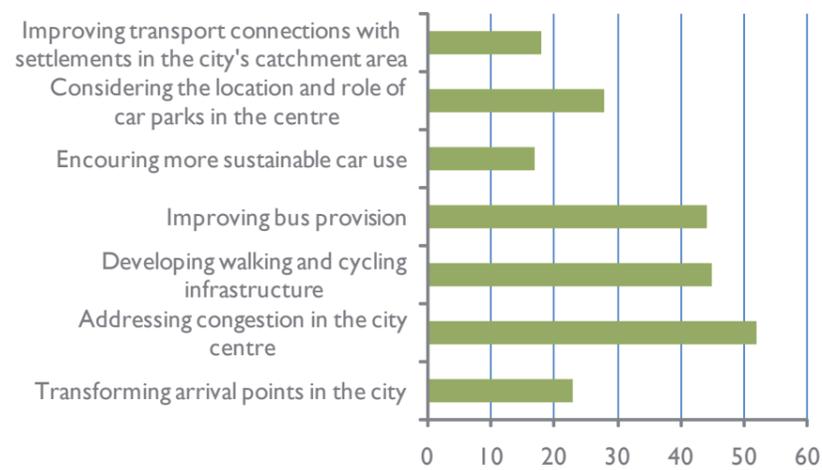
Broadly even support for each of the built environment objectives

4. Creating a quality public realm



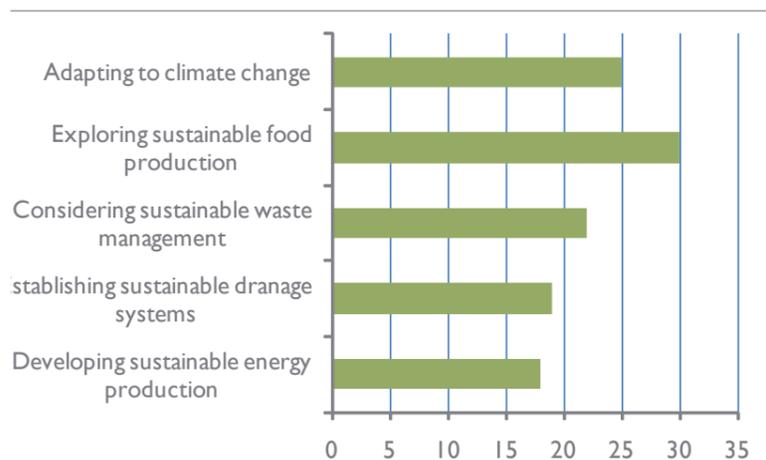
Broadly even support for public realm objectives with an emphasis on stations connectivity, a central public space and improvements to the backlands

5. Establishing an integrated transport network and kick-starting a modal shift



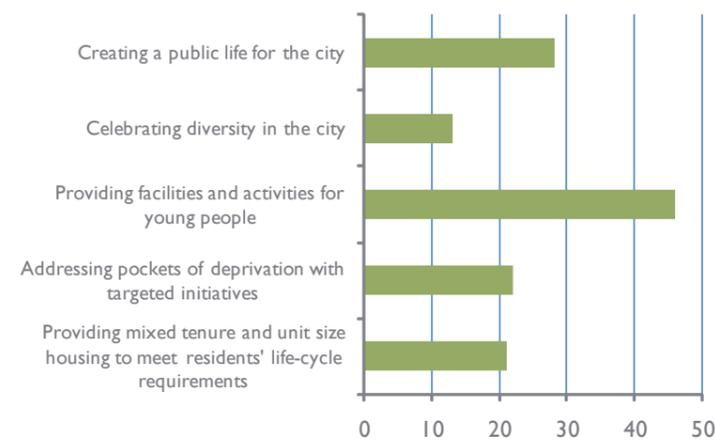
Traffic congestion considered the most pressing issue in initiating a modal shift, supported by improvements to bus provision and walking and cycling infrastructure

6. Establishing a framework for a sustainable future in St Albans



Broadly equal priorities regarding city-wide sustainability, with sustainable food production given most weight, and sustainable energy least weight.

7. Establishing a positive dynamic between the city's economy, its social and cultural life and its domestic sphere



Youth provision considered the most important intervention regarding social cohesion, followed by support for public and community events

Suggestion box

The suggestions forms drew responses on a wide range of issues.

Retail

Several comments were made regarding retail provision. Retail provision was identified as a concern, in terms of quality, range, and choice for all incomes. Protection and support for the market was suggested, as well as a strategy to address vacancy rates, and there was a request that no new department store be delivered in St Albans.

Traffic and transport

A large number of comments related to traffic and transport. Many of these were complaints about traffic congestion, for example 'rat running', pollution and the unwanted presence of lorries. The remaining comments offered solutions to these issues: Part pedestrianisation of the city centre (x2), park and ride (x2), improved bus services, rural walkways and cycle ways, and improvements to the station. One comment expressed opposition to congestion charging.

Visitor economy and leisure

A new Cinema was the most common request within this category (x5), with the Rex at Berkhamstead regarded as a useful model. Respondents also suggested improvements targeted at visitors, provision of space for young people, and measures to address anti-social behaviour related to the evening economy.

4. Consultation on objectives

Heritage

It was suggested that the 'direction of travel' does not sufficiently promote St Albans' post-Roman history, and that a new museum should be provided for the City.

Public realm

Victoria Street and St Peters Street were thought to be the most important foci for public realm investment, and it was thought that improvements should include measures to make the public realm more user-friendly for people with disabilities.

Other comments

There was a call for the Vision to protect the greenbelt and prevent urban sprawl around St Albans, and it was felt that the Vision should do more to address conservatism. Two comments suggested that the consultation process in general could have been better.

Summary and implications

In taking an overview of consultation on the direction of travel, a comparison between the two groups regarding their preferred priorities is useful.

Creating a sustainable and diverse economy for the 21st century:

The top priority for the stakeholder group was provision of a sustainable centre in terms of retail and work. The public put specialist retail and markets as their top priority, followed by provision of a sustainable centre.

Establishing St Albans as a cultural centre and visitor destination

Stakeholders prioritised the cultural hub, while for the public, provision of a cinema was the overwhelming choice.

Unlocking the potential of the city's built environment and Creating a quality public realm

In both consultations, there were even levels of support for each of the strategies

Establishing an integrated transport network and kick-starting a modal shift

The stakeholder group felt that provision of walking and cycling infrastructure was the key to this objective, while members of the public put traffic congestion as the urgent priority.

Establishing a framework for a sustainable future in St Albans

Energy was thought to be the primary focus for intervention among stakeholders, where for the public, flooding was the greatest concern.

Establishing a positive dynamic between the city's economy, its social and cultural life and its domestic sphere

In both cases, young people were felt to be the top priority. This confirms the importance of targeting youth activities as part of St Albans' culture and leisure offer.

Spatial workshop

The spatial workshop revealed strong support for initiatives which would enhance key routes through the city, to connect up key spaces and destinations, and to improve footfall in retail areas. Choices regarding land uses at the opportunity sites were largely inconclusive, with support for culture, leisure and residential uses at the Civic Centre South site, support in principle for regeneration of Drovers Way, and support for a conference centre at London Road.

Implications

It is fair to say that consultation on the direction of travel revealed broad agreement for the objectives contained in it. There was strong support for some of the themed strategies in one or two instances, but very few instances where strategies gained little or no support. The one exception to this was provision of flexible workspace, which was seen as a surprisingly low priority by the stakeholder group. This may reflect the fact that flexible working is not currently a mainstream part of St Albans' major employment sectors. Equally, qualitative suggestions during the public consultation tended to request that certain objectives be given particular weight, rather than expressing disagreement or opposition.

4. Stakeholder Workshop - 3 September 2009

Introduction

Following the publication of the Draft City Vision in March 2009, a series of masterplans were produced for key opportunity sites in the City Centre to ensure that their future spatial development can contribute to the wider City Vision principles. These masterplans were accompanied by detailed public realm and transport strategies.

The masterplanning process was informed by direct consultation with the relevant stakeholders, taking into account landowner and local authority aspirations for the key sites, viability issues and transport and urban design opportunities.

The stakeholder workshop, held on 3 September 2009, was another stage in this thread of consultation, and provided the opportunity for stakeholders to review and comment on the masterplan proposals before they were presented to the wider public.

The purpose of the workshop was to identify any issues which might fundamentally impact the deliverability of the masterplans, as well as any opportunities to improve them.



Participants

Invites for the workshop were targeted at those who had a direct interest in the sites, either as landowners, or in a public/professional capacity. These were:

- Landowners and their representatives
- Site tenants
- St Albans City and District Council officers
- St Albans City and District Council members
- Hertfordshire County Council officers
- Transport providers
- Service providers
- Representatives of local retail and commerce
- Representatives of St Albans Cathedral

Structure

The workshop was introduced by Louise Mansfield of Urban Practitioners who explained the purpose and programme for the event.

Following on from this, the consultant team presented the draft masterplans to the audience via a Powerpoint presentation. The masterplans presented were:

- Option 1 for each of four sites
- Option 2 for each of four sites
- Wider links plan
- Transport initiatives plan

The presentation set out the key components of each proposal and the planning and urban design rationale behind them.

Group break-out sessions

Feedback on the proposals was then gathered via a hands-on mini-masterplanning session. Participants were divided into small groups and given the opportunity to openly discuss and critique the plans, drawing up any amendments they felt suitable on hard copies of the plans.

Each group was facilitated by a member of Urban Practitioners to ensure that all the key issues were raised, and that every member of the group was allowed to give their views.

In support of this process, the worksheets were accompanied by a series of questions as follows:

Public realm

Which initiatives do you particularly support?
Which do you think will be problematic and why?

Options

What issues do you envisage with this option (in terms of land use, viability, servicing, access, urban design?)

How could the option be improved?

Which option does your group prefer overall?

What are the reasons for this?

Wider links plan

Which initiatives do you particularly support for St Albans?

Which initiatives do you think would be problematic and why?

Do you have any further suggestions for improving the city spatially?

Transport plan

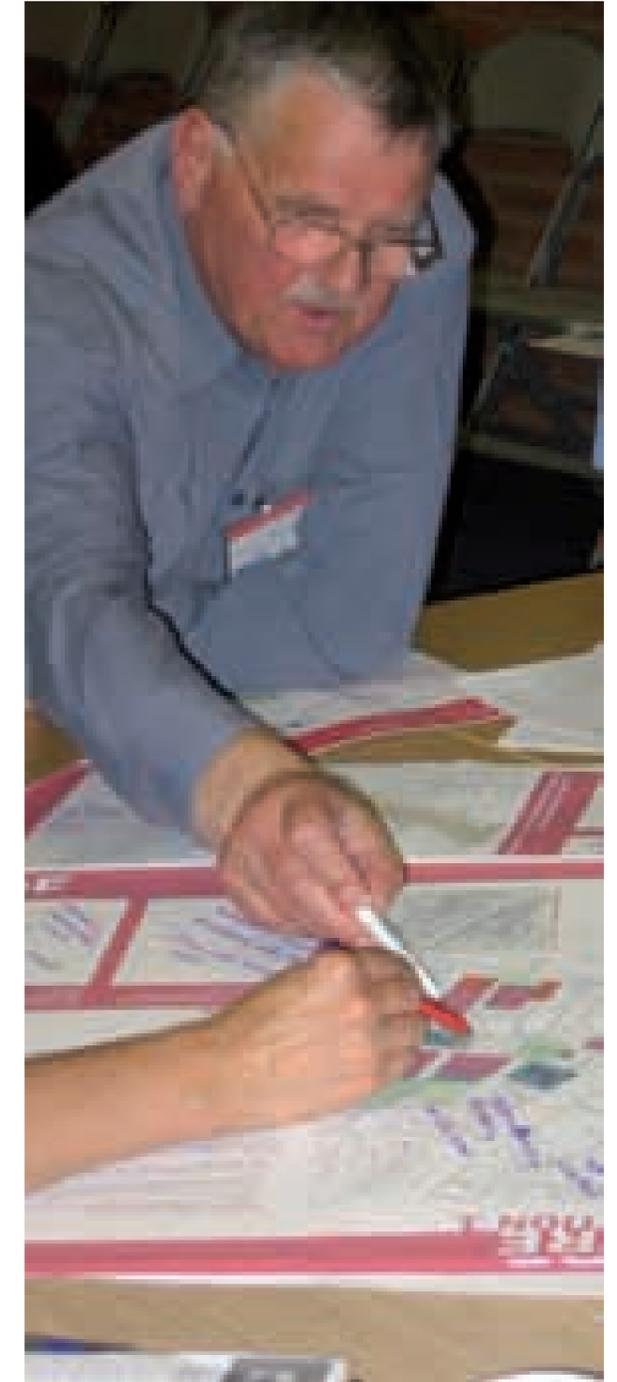
Which initiatives do you particularly support for St Albans?

Which initiatives do you think would be problematic and why?

Do you have any further suggestions for improving the city spatially?

Group feedback

After the workshop sessions, each set was given the opportunity to feedback their ideas to the wider group. This allowed everyone to hear common comments and each others' different ideas.



Public Realm

There was broad support for these concepts for their benefits to quality of life and access to the countryside. However, some participants expressed concern that public realm works would create a constraint on car parking at the edge of the city. Others were concerned about their maintenance and the need to address anti-social behaviour through design, particularly pocket spaces. It was suggested that schools could be mapped and linked into public realm plans, and that plans should also show wider context and links to the Green Ring. It was suggested that the City centre ring should be complete.

Wider links

Wider links were welcomed for the benefits they could have for accessibility and for safe movement, for example, for children. Detailed design of surfacing, gateways and landscaping and gateways were considered crucial in ensuring good legibility.

It was suggested that green walling and planting would bring invisible spaces to life and that school programmes could be brought into such schemes to engender local pride. This would require strong collaboration of relevant authorities.

It was suggested that further detail would need to be worked up for Park and Ride schemes.

Transport

Enhancements to Victoria Street were supported. There was much discussion regarding measures to reduce traffic congestion in the City Centre, particularly regarding potential displacement of traffic onto surrounding streets. However, it was felt the traffic reductions would benefit St Peters Street by making it more attractive to pedestrians. It was suggested, however, that there may be conflicts between pedestrian and bus routes which would need to be addressed carefully. There were concerns regarding funding of Park and Ride and a potential hopper bus.

It was thought that bus stops on St Peters Street would need reconfiguration to improve sustainable transport.

It was thought that parking spaces would have to be found outside the immediate City Centre, and London Road and Westminster Lodge were suggested.



Masterplan option 1

It was recognised that the masterplan would need to successfully resolve the tension between masterplanning/common vision and individual sites and development.

The positioning of the department store in option was thought to be unattractive to developers, needing a minimum of 90,000 sqft. The cinema was thought by some to be poorly located due to the design challenges it would present in addressing its frontage.

It was felt that servicing of shops in St Peters Street could prove problematic in this option. It was suggested that a Verulamium Road service entrance could removed load off St Peter's Street

It was felt that relocation of certain uses would require greater explanation, and that community facing council services should be retained in a central location

It was thought that the University and Museum site should be for educational uses.

There was concern for loss of car parking in this option, and it was thought be some that this plan ignored existing pedestrian routes

It was suggested that more be made of the Victoria Street/ Bricket Road corner.

Participants wanted to stress the importance of long distance views, particularly in relation to tall buildings.

What is tall?

A culture centre at the north of St Peters Street was discussed, and an alternative strategy of pepper-potting cultural uses across the City was suggested.

It was considered important that quality links be established between active uses



Masterplan Option 2

The main reasons why this option was like were because of its permeable block structure and balance of uses.

The cinema fronting St Peter's Street was identified as a problem visually, potentially offering a poor built form in a prominent location. Parking provision was thought to be an issue, and greater provision suggested of short-medium stay spaces. The viability of underground parking was questioned by some, and others felt that additional development would bring traffic into town centre.

There were concerns that ground floor cafes would have height implications.

There were concerns that Option 2 would be too costly due to the need to redevelop Woolworths to establish a new route to Drovers Way, and the need to relocate Civic uses.

A number of improvements were suggested to the option:

- enhancement and reinforcement of the street market to allow lateral movements across the street;
- inclusion of residential and hotel rooms;
- measures to ensure local distinctiveness in all new development;
- extension to the public square;
- Narrowing of the public route at the Woolworths' site for new shops and an entrance to the mall.
- Significant improvement to St Peter's Street frontages through redevelopment of poor frontages and stringent guidelines; and
- Inclusion of undercroft delivery at Drover's Way.

It was suggested that a cinema should not be constructed on St Peter's Street due to the anti-social behaviour this would attract.

Key Issues by theme

Viability

Viability and deliverability were important concerns, both in terms of the positioning bocks and regarding funding of projects. In particular, the location and size of the department store on the Civic Centre South site in Option 1 could make it unattractive to developers. Also the position of the cinema in both options was questioned, making poor use of primary retail frontage. The costs of underground parking proposed redevelopment was a concern.

Urban design

The green ring concept was felt to be very positive for St Albans, but it was felt that the ring should be more strongly linked in to the City and surrounding countryside. In terms of the masterplan options participants expressed support for the finer urban grain proposed by the masterplans, and considered this a strength of Option 2, along with the balance of uses proposed. In reference to Option 1 there was explicit Support for proposals which established frontage onto existing routes to enliven them as quality links.

The position of the cinema was debated regarding both options, potentially offering inactive facades to important spaces.

Some felt that the masterplans should place greater emphasis on redevelopment of poor frontages on St Peter's Street, regulated with strict design guidance.

Transport

Loss of car parking was the major transport issue. There were also concerns that new City Centre retail would bring a traffic increase to the City Centre.

Design suggestions

It was thought that the Woolworths' site is wide enough for two shops and an entrance to new development at Drovers Way. In addition, a service entrance road was suggested at Verulamium Road, which could remove some traffic load off St Peter's Street and allow for undercroft delivery at Drover's Way.

4. Masterplan Exhibition

Introduction and Purpose

A public exhibition was held between 14 and 26 September in St Albans to present the masterplan proposals to members of the public. A vacant shop unit within the Maltings Shopping Centre provided a visible and accessible location for the exhibition, and the exhibition was open between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm on week days and Saturdays to allow a wide range of groups time to visit it.

A rough tally kept by exhibition staff suggests that the exhibition was visited by between 1,700 and 1,800 people.

Exhibition

The exhibition contained a series of 8 boards which presented the following pieces of information:

- Background, scope and objectives of the CityVision project
- Programme for the CityVision project, including the masterplanning stage
- The Masterplan proposals:
 - Green Ring concept
 - Public spaces strategy
 - Sustainable transport strategy
- The masterplan options 1 and 2
- Delivery and next steps
- How to give feedback on the CityVision



masterplans

The exhibition boards are displayed opposite and on the following page.

The content of the exhibition was reproduced in a leaflet which visitors could take away for further perusal, and which was also available for download from the Council's website. The exhibition was also staffed by members of Urban Practitioners and St Albans City Council, available to answer questions and receive feedback.

Feedback Questionnaire

Feedback was gathered primarily via a feedback questionnaire (shown opposite). The feedback form asked respondents to show their support or dissatisfaction with the proposals for each theme, with a single rating for each one. The themes were:

1. Green ring circling the City
2. New public spaces
3. Small green spaces
4. A shift to green transport
5. Masterplan Option 1
6. Masterplan Option 2

In each case, a rating was requested from the following categories:

This is great!

I like this

Mixed feelings

I dislike this

Bad idea!

Respondents were also asked to clarify their rating if they wished in a comments space under each theme.

In addition, a further space was provided at the end of the questionnaire for general comments on the masterplans.

The questionnaire included an opportunity to suggest a new name for the Municipal Gardens to the north of the Civic Offices.

The questionnaire ratings have been used to generate a quantitative evaluation of the proposals, while the written comments are addressed as a separate qualitative response.

Further written feedback

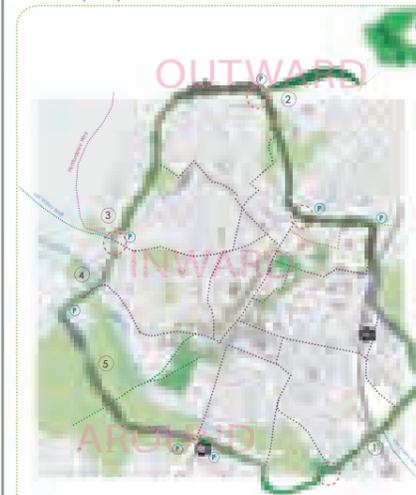
Visitors were also encouraged to submit written comments via the Council's website, or directly to Urban Practitioners. These responses have been included in the qualitative feedback section.

ST ALBANS CITY VISION.

VISION STATEMENT:
INTEGRATED LIVING FOR 2020: A CREATIVE AND PIONEERING CITY FOR ALL WHICH VALUES THE PAST AND EMBRACES THE FUTURE

A Green Ring circling the City

By connecting the scattered green spaces that surround the City we will create a "Green Ring" around St Albans. The new loop will be used by pedestrians and cyclists, and will have clear signposting. The ring has three main purposes;



Projects along the Green Ring

- 1. Alban Way**
We will seek to create a clear connecting route from the Abbey Station to the start of the Alban Way. New information points and signage will point the way and the Green Ring segment of Alban Way will have its own distinct identity.
- 2. Beech Bottom Dyke**
Trees and bushes will be trimmed back to open up views, and a clear footpath and entrance will be provided.
- 3. Everlasting Lane**
Everlasting Lane will benefit from some of the changes made to Alban Way, and will be widened for use by both pedestrians and cyclists.
- 4. Down Edge Community Green Space**
By consulting local residents and schools, improvements will be made to the Community Green Space. These could include new trees, play facilities, seating, and signage.
- 5. Verulamium Park**
A masterplan has already been drawn up to improve the park, and will create improved entrance points, new play facilities, thus making the most of the area's heritage.
- 6. St Albans hill top**
Part of the City is based on a hill top. By focusing development in this area we will make the most of the City's excellent views out to surrounding settlements and countryside.

Attractive Streets

The Vision includes a series of proposals for improving streets around the City.

Section 1
• Shared surface
• Flush edges
• Urban feel / high quality materials
• Stronger route between Civic Centre and the Maltings

Section 2
• Offices
• Improved crossing points

Section 3
• Shopping parade
• Wider pavements
• Parking bays integrated
• Street trees
• Removal of street clutter

Section 4
• Station approach
• Improved pedestrian link
• Cycle path
• Replacement/ removal of railings

Other labels: Green route, Start of the City Centre, Station Entrance, Victoria Street

Section 1
• Medieval, Heritage focus
• Clock Tower space redesigned

Section 2
• Market focus
• Incorporates new Market Square

Section 3
• Civic focus leads to new Civic Square
• Seating, feature paving relating to the square

Section 4
• Transport focus
• Taxi ranks, lay-by parking

Other labels: Drovers Way Courtyards, Market Square, Civic Square, St Peter's Street

Currently this is a busy road with a lack of pedestrian crossings, an attractive route cuts across this road but it is poorly defined.

Improved routes from St Peter's Churchyard to the new Civic Space and adjacent gardens, with custom designed natural stone markers to indicate the inner green garden circuit

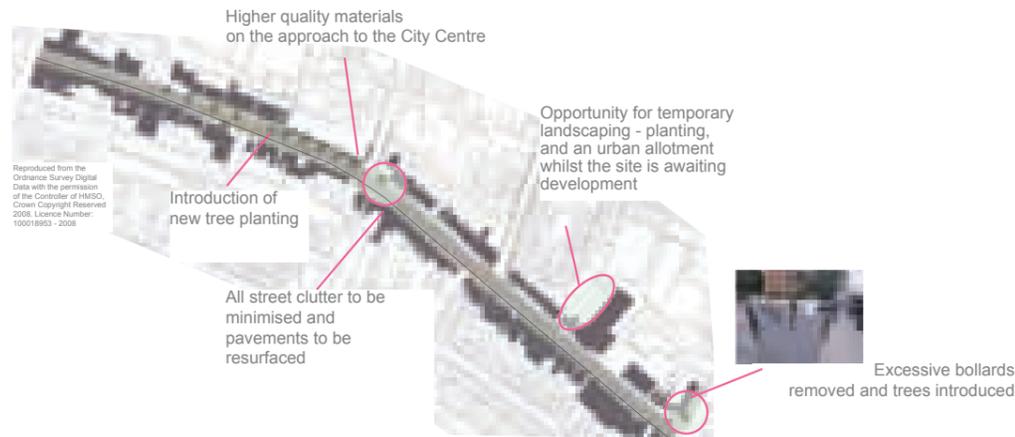
Raised table - provides a much needed pedestrian crossing, helps connect the green route, and provides a better relationship between the museum and the Alms house and calms traffic close to the centre

Improved entrance to Clarence Park

Other labels: Hatfield Road

Currently there is an incoherent built form and streetscape, which needs to be harmonised and de-cluttered with improved surfaces introduced.

London Road



New and improved public spaces

An inner garden loop

A network of varied and unique gardens and green spaces filter through the City Centre. These form attractive routes and offer a respite from the built environment. The inner garden loop will relate to the Green Ring, offering a more intimate series of experiences.

1. St. Peter's Churchyard
2. Civic Centre Square
3. Quakers Burial Ground
4. Romelands Garden
5. Green links



Inner green ring

A network of popular and attractive public spaces

Whilst the spaces to the east of St Peter's Street will be punctuated and defined with green spaces, the west of St. Peter's Street will be marked by the introduction of small courtyards, fully integrated with the new shopping development. These will be fine grain urban spaces that will reference St Alban's Medieval heritage.

1. Market Place
2. Clock Tower Square
3. Drovers Way Courtyards
4. St Albans Abbey Approach and Orchard
5. Busy and active alleys



Network of new public spaces

The Masterplan

As part of the City Vision, the two key development sites at Drovers Way and the Civic Centre have been studied in more detail, to create masterplans for these important areas. Here, we have looked at how the physical environment can be improved and how new cultural uses and shops can be accommodated in the city. The masterplans cover land uses, pedestrian movement, key public spaces, parking and servicing arrangements.

In developing a masterplan for these sites, we identified a number of objectives. These are:

1. A green and sustainable St Albans
2. Creating a new shopping circuit with a department store and cinema
3. A new piazza for St Albans for everyone to use and enjoy
4. Safer and comfortable pedestrian alleys
5. Creating a people friendly, intimate environment reflecting St Albans' heritage
6. Ensuring a flexible approach to the masterplan
7. Ensuring a mixed use development
8. A sensitive scale for the city centre
9. Celebrating the historic environment
10. A deliverable solution

Option 1

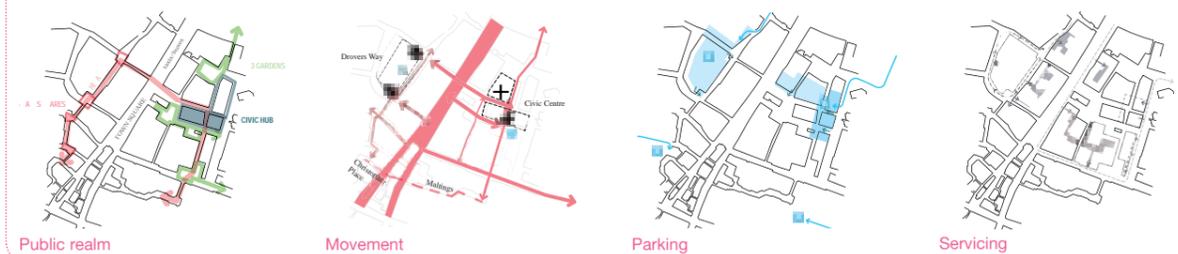


Uses and facilities

A new civic hub // upgraded Alban Arena // relocated City museum and gallery // cinema // winter garden public space // department store fronting onto a new Civic Square // new high street shops linking Victoria Street and a new cultural hub and Civic Square // PCT offices retained in their existing location // New hotels by Victoria Square and at the northern end of St Peter's Street // reconfigured BHS store // small retailers to front the pedestrian link through to Drovers Way // food retailer in Drovers Way // reconfigured Boots store, with a new link connecting Drovers Way to the south // New high street shops replacing the rear of the Argos Extra // relocated Council Offices // New housing on Russell Avenue // New apartments and offices above

Character

Four new courtyard spaces to the west of St Peter's Street // small connected green spaces to the east of St Peter's Street, including a Winter Garden // new Civic Square for cafés and events, enclosed by the cultural hub and new department store // new Victoria Square, taking in the Quaker Gardens // clear, attractive new routes // new route between Christopher Place and Drovers Way // Drovers Way unmoved // basement parking provided at Drovers Way and the Civic Centre // basement, front and yard servicing.



Option 2

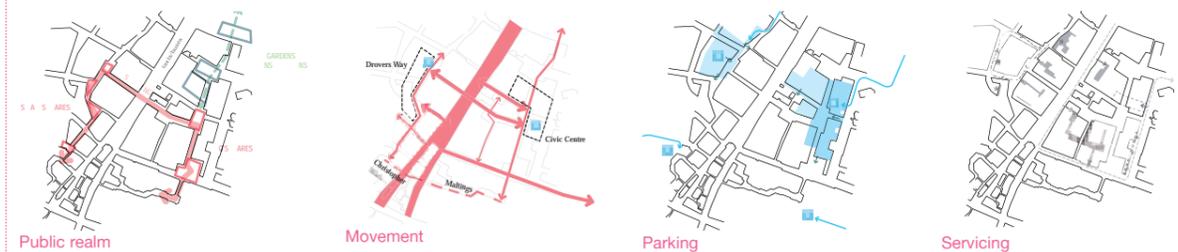


Uses and facilities

A new civic hub // relocated, enlarged Alban Arena // relocated City museum with gallery space // new boutique cinema with shops and restaurants below and the box office opening onto St Peter's Street // new retail lane with High Street shops linking through from Victoria Street, via a new Civic Square and onto St Peter's Street // new food retailer on Brickett Road // PCT offices reprovided on site or moved within the City Centre // New hotels by Victoria Square and on St Peter's Street // new lane of high street shops linking St Peter's Street to Drovers Way // department store in Drovers Way // replacement Boots store, fronting onto small square // new link through Argos with new Argos and shops // relocated Council Offices to Hatfield Road // new terrace housing on Russell Avenue and north of the supermarket // New apartment housing and offices above

Character

Four new courtyard spaces to the west of St Peter's Street // new Civic Square // new Victoria Square, taking in Quaker Gardens // Drovers Way is realigned and fronted with new shops and department store // new route between Christopher Place and Drovers Way // basement parking on Drovers Way and off Brickett Road // Basement service access provided through Russell Avenue for the new anchor block here // basement, front and yard servicing



The wider picture

The masterplans sit at the centre of some important changes proposed for the wider City, which are summarised in this plan. These include:

- More attractive and pedestrian-friendly routes will act as spokes linking the City Centre with the outskirts and the surrounding countryside
- There will be new ways to see, understand and experience the City's fascinating Roman past which lies dormant under Verulamium Park. The City's rich Roman, Medieval and recent history will be brought together in a new cultural circuit linking the Roman Museum, the Amphitheatre, Verulamium Park and a centrally relocated St Albans Museum.
- A new hotel could also be provided close to the Roman Museum and amphitheatre, which could be supported by the pubs and cafés of St Micheal's
- In the south of the City, plans to redevelop Westminster Lodge will bring better leisure to local residents, and London Road will be the location for new businesses and homes.
- Access to St Albans Station will be made easier with a new entrance coming directly onto Victoria Street.



Give us your feedback!

This is our last public consultation event before we prepare the final masterplan, so please let us have your views on our proposals by completing the response form available here at the exhibition.

Alternatively, you can view the exhibition and download a form online at the Council's website www.stalbans.gov.uk and send written responses to us by post to the following address:

Nick Bishop
Urban Practitioners
70 Cowcross Street
London
EC1M 6EJ

Please return your feedback forms by **5.00pm on 26 September, 2009**. If you have any queries, please email us at: nick.bishop@urbanpractitioners.co.uk

What happens next?

After the exhibition we will read your comments and use them to make any appropriate amendments before we produce the finalised masterplans. Once we have finalised the masterplans we will revisit the City Vision strategies and alter them if necessary in light of our masterplanning work.

We will then produce a delivery and implementation strategy to help the Vision to become a reality. We will also be drawing up design guidelines for key locations in the City to help developers put forward high quality and appropriate proposals.

The final City Vision document will then be produced later this year and the Council will then take it through a formal approval process, prior to publication.

We are grateful to you for your assistance. We want everyone to participate so please tell your friends to come and see the exhibition and tell us what they think!

ST ALBANS CITY VISION EXHIBITION

Thank you very much for taking the time to visit the St Albans City Vision masterplan exhibition. The proposals shown here could transform St Albans over the next twenty years and it is vital that we find out what you think about our plans.

FEEDBACK FORM

We want to hear your views!

Please tick the box that best describes your thoughts on the proposals you have seen, and add any further comments or suggestions in the space provided.

This is great!
 I Like this
 Mixed feelings
 I Dislike this
 Bad idea!

1. Green ring circling the City

2. New public spaces

3. Small green spaces

4. A shift to green transport

ST ALBANS CITY VISION EXHIBITION



This is great!
 I Like this
 Mixed feelings
 I Dislike this
 Bad idea!

5. Masterplan Option 1

6. Masterplan Option 2

Please write any further comments you have regarding the strategies and masterplan options shown in the exhibition, or any other general comments you may have relating to the St Albans City Vision.

Opportunity exists to rename the Municipal Gardens to the north of the Council Offices. We would love to hear your suggestions for a new name with local significance. Please make suggestions here:

Please place this form in the box provided. Alternatively, you can submit further comments to us in writing, or on the Council's website at the following web address: www.stalbans.gov.uk

Please ensure that all comments are returned to us no later than **5.00pm on 26th September 2009**.

If you have any further enquiries, please email us at nick.bishop@urbanpractitioners.co.uk

Questionnaire responses

Green ring circling the city

Figure 1 below shows that just over 80% of respondents supported the green ring proposals.

Written comments confirmed broad support for the green ring proposal, particularly in its capacity as a cycle connection. Verulamium Park and the St Albans Way were identified as key sections along for cycle links along the ring. While many saw the Green Ring as an appropriate solution to City Centre transport congestion, others felt that, using existing routes, the concept did not bring anything new to the City.

Many of the comments related to the physical design of the green ring; there were several

suggestions that there should be separate walking and cycling lanes in the interests of safety, as well as lighting for pedestrians. Others were keen to ensure that the ring wouldn't detract from the environments it crossed in terms of visual attractiveness and natural habitats, for example through excessive engineering or street furniture and signage. Verulamium Park, the Fighting Cocks Bridge and Beech Bottom were singled out as particularly sensitive areas.

Feasibility and cost were identified as concerns, and some felt that the Green Ring would prove problematic to achieve at the detailed design stage, particularly proposals for park and ride.

New public spaces

Figure 2 below shows that 78% of respondents supported the establishment of new and enhanced public spaces.

Many of the responses were additional suggestions to feed into improvement work at the design stage, such as covered public seating areas at spaces away from vehicular areas, benches with comfortable backs, quality landscaping, planting, bike racks and heritage references (potentially creating a heritage trail). Increased seating for the City centre was a common request. Two new public spaces were suggested: one at the southern entrance to Christopher Place, the other, a cafe added to

the roof of the Corn Exchange as a glass box, to encourage café society.

Concerns about public spaces centred around maintenance and management, measures to address litter and antisocial behaviour, and the need to ensure that spaces are designed with a purpose. There were also concerns about expense and unnecessary repaving, as well as unnecessary signage and cluttering. Some felt that new alleyways proposed in the masterplan may not be appropriate or desirable.

It was suggested that the public spaces strategy should be coordinated with market objectives to avoid conflicts.

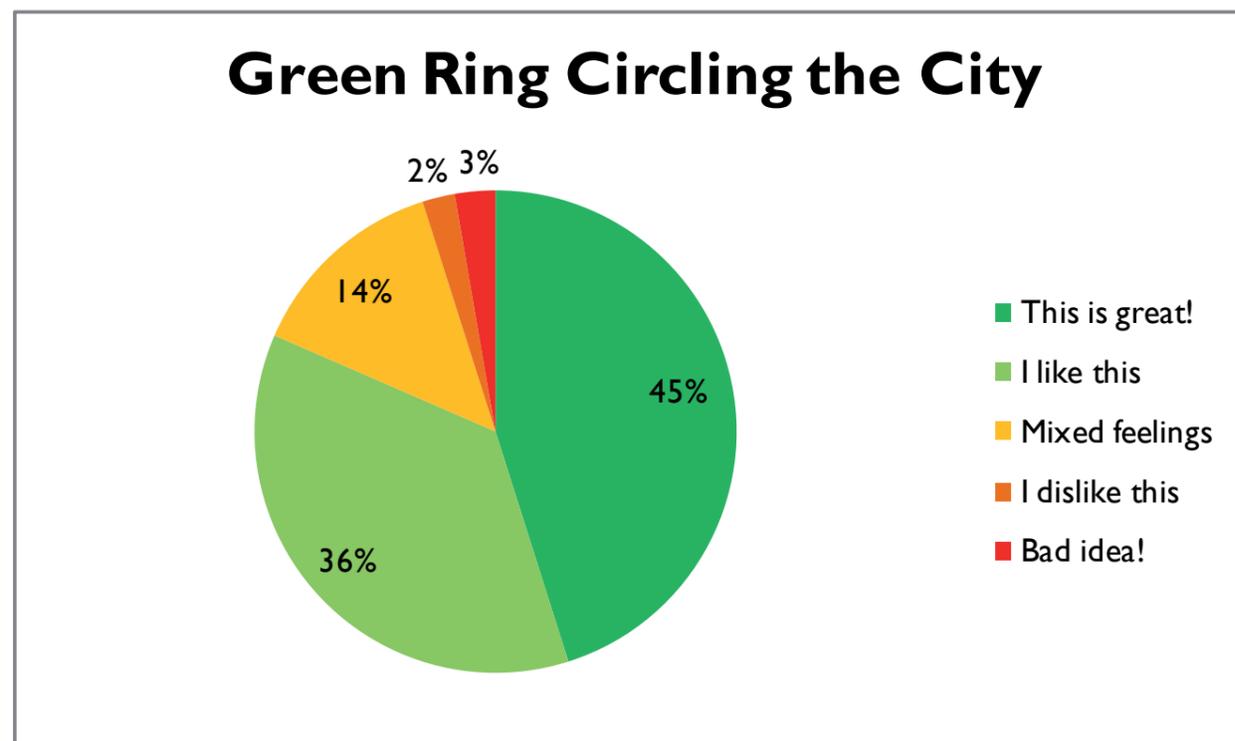
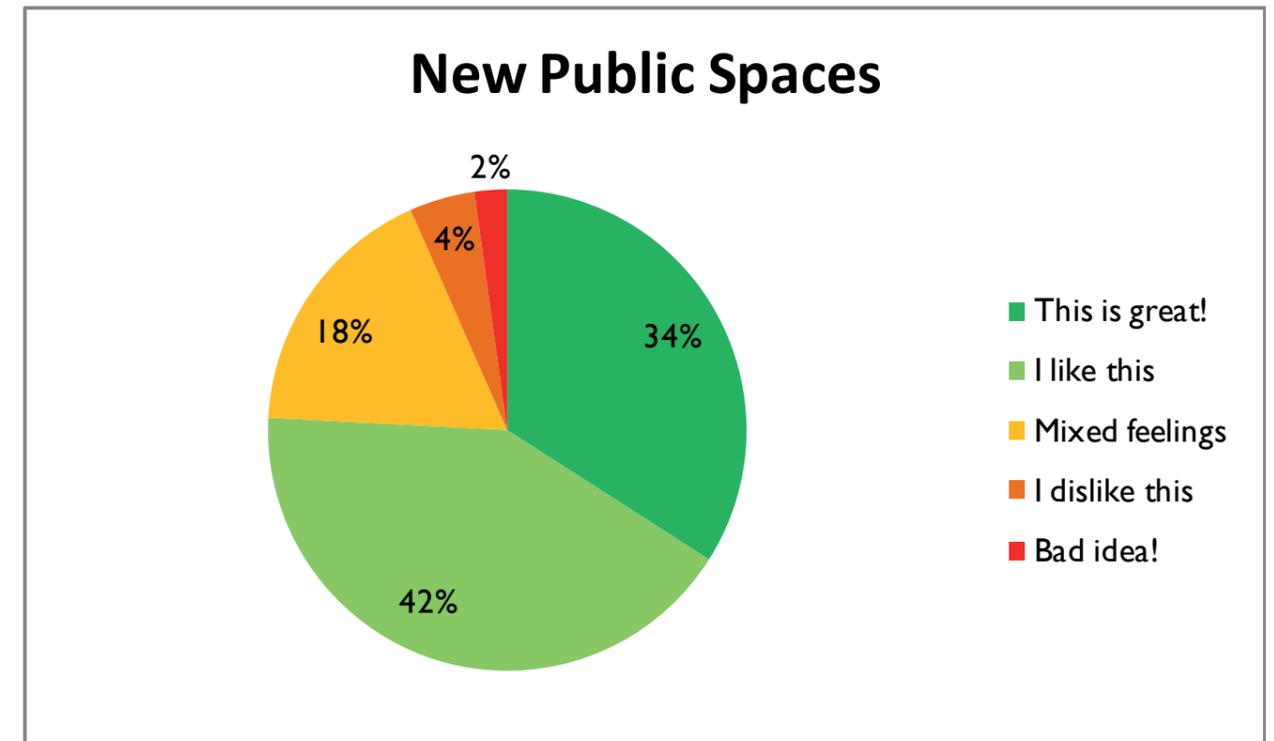


Figure 1. Responses to the Green Ring proposals.



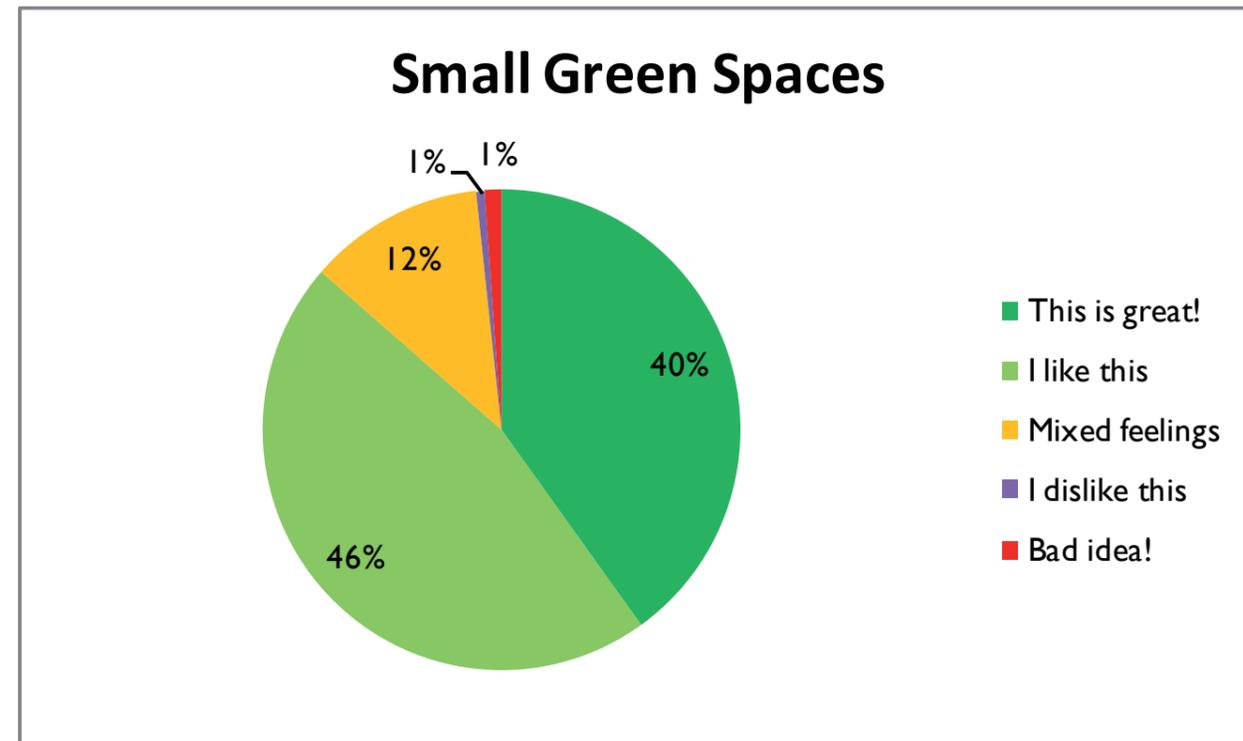
Small green spaces comments

Figure 3 below shows that 86% of respondents indicated their support for new small green spaces.

There were relatively few comments regarding the proposed small green spaces, and several of the responses were suggestions for improvement, including their use as growing spaces for food and opportunities to protect and establish new mature trees.

There were concerns, however, regarding good management and maintenance to prevent anti-social behaviour, and there were worries that smaller spaces may not be viable or function well.

It was suggested that the proposals should include Vintry Garden.



Transport comments

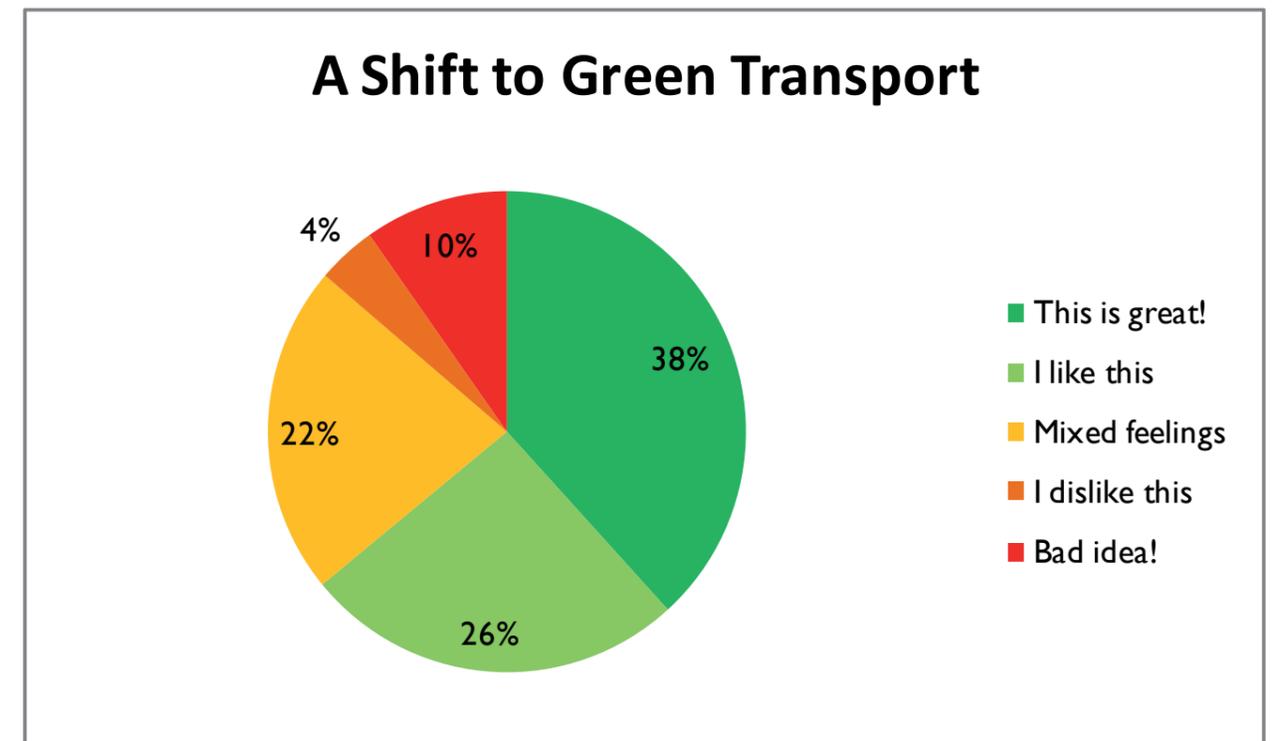
Transport received a more mixed response than the public space proposals, with 64% showing their support, 22% percent stating mixed feelings and 14% suggesting dislike of the proposals. The major issues of contention were traffic interventions on St Peters Street and the issue of parking.

Responses to traffic congestion reduction on St Peters Street were entirely mixed with some demanding full pedestrianisation and others expressing concern at any restriction to traffic flow. In addition there were also concerns that any interventions would place a heavy traffic burden

on surrounding residential streets. It was suggested that modelling should be carried out to support proposals.

There were concerns that parking provision would not be adequate for the proposed increase in activity in the City Centre and that the shift to sustainable transport could reduce trade in the City. Some suggested that a bypass was an appropriate solution. It was suggested that parking could be accommodated underground at Drovers Way, and that access to Drovers Way could be improved.

There was both support and objection to Park and Ride schemes, with objections on the grounds that these would not prove popular, and that the parking



sites shown for it were not large enough. It was acknowledged that the City needs to improve sustainable transport, but that certain groups, such as older people with limited mobility, may need to continue using cars.

There were calls for improvements to bus services to provide an alternative to the car, such as training for new drivers, safety for customers, better reliable times and more information for locals and visitors. Services to Abbey Station and Hatfield Road were singled out in particular. It was suggested, however, that improvements to bus timetabling would be dependent on measures to address congestion, including well located pedestrian crossings.

It was suggested that cyclists should be properly separated from pedestrians and cars, with safer, easier routes, and

A number of transport measures were suggested: traffic calming measures in St Peters Street, secure cycle parking in the centre, a cycle path to Sandridge Road, improvements to links between the 2 stations and the centre and free electric vehicle parking and charging to support uptake of electric vehicles.

Options comparison

Both options received a mixture of responses, with similar proportions of responses for each rating. In both cases, the greatest response was 'mixed feelings', followed by 'I like this', 'Bad idea', 'Great Idea' and, finally, 'I dislike this'. This shows that there was no clear preference for either option, rather there were strong feelings both ways about different elements of each option. If anything, there was slightly greater support for Option 1 where 15% responded 'This is great' compared to only 9% for Option 2.

Option 1 comments

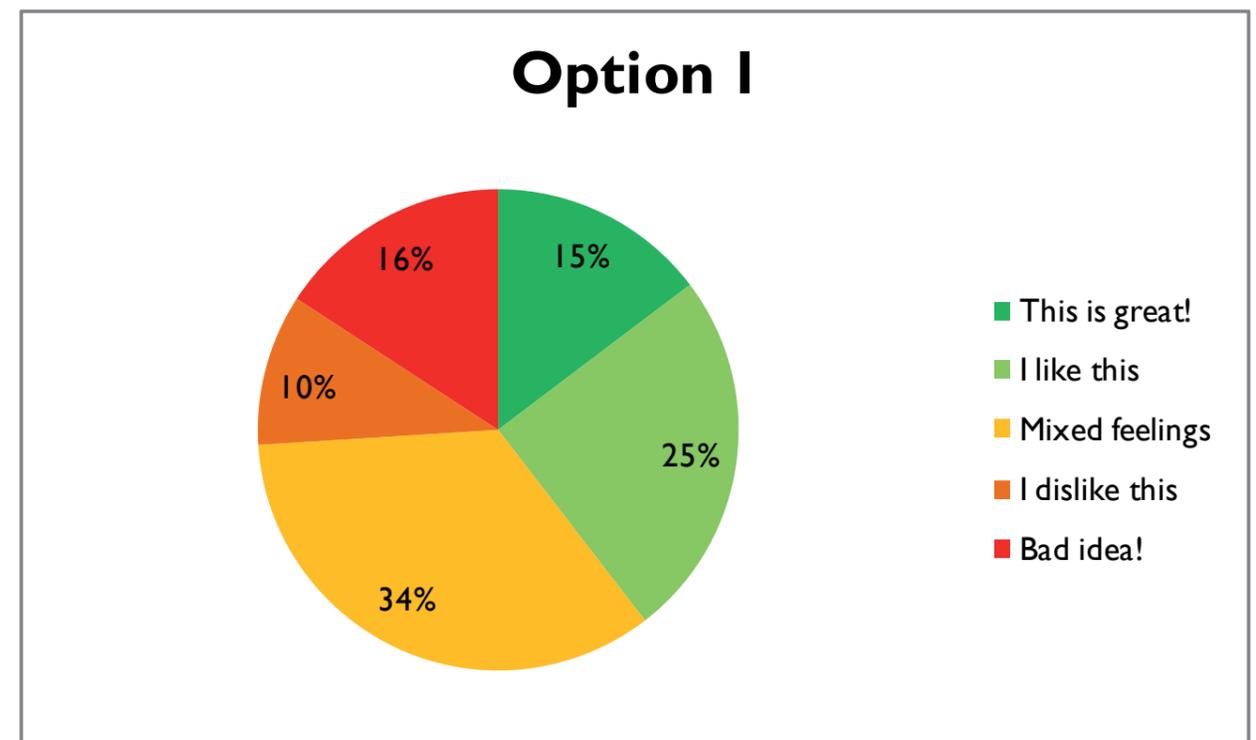
Option 1 was considered the most deliverable option by some. It was also favoured as providing the most appropriate locations for retail and the supermarket which would create a strong series of spaces with appropriate frontages, however, some felt that the both the department store and supermarket might be too isolated in these locations.

There was support for the upgraded Alban Arena as the most deliverable scenario, but some considered these proposals to be too ambitious, with refurbishment a more real likelihood. There was also support for the reduced and relocated Council

Offices for the improvements this could bring to the Civic Square and it was suggested that the PCT offices should be relocated. The Civic square was thought by some to be the most appropriate location for cinema as part of a compact cultural hub.

There were calls for a larger department store, but for a smaller supermarket. A linked series of squares between Victoria Street and St Peters Street was supported, but some thought that there were poor thoroughfares between shopping areas.

Some felt that Option 1 didn't address access to Drovers Way.



Option 2 comments

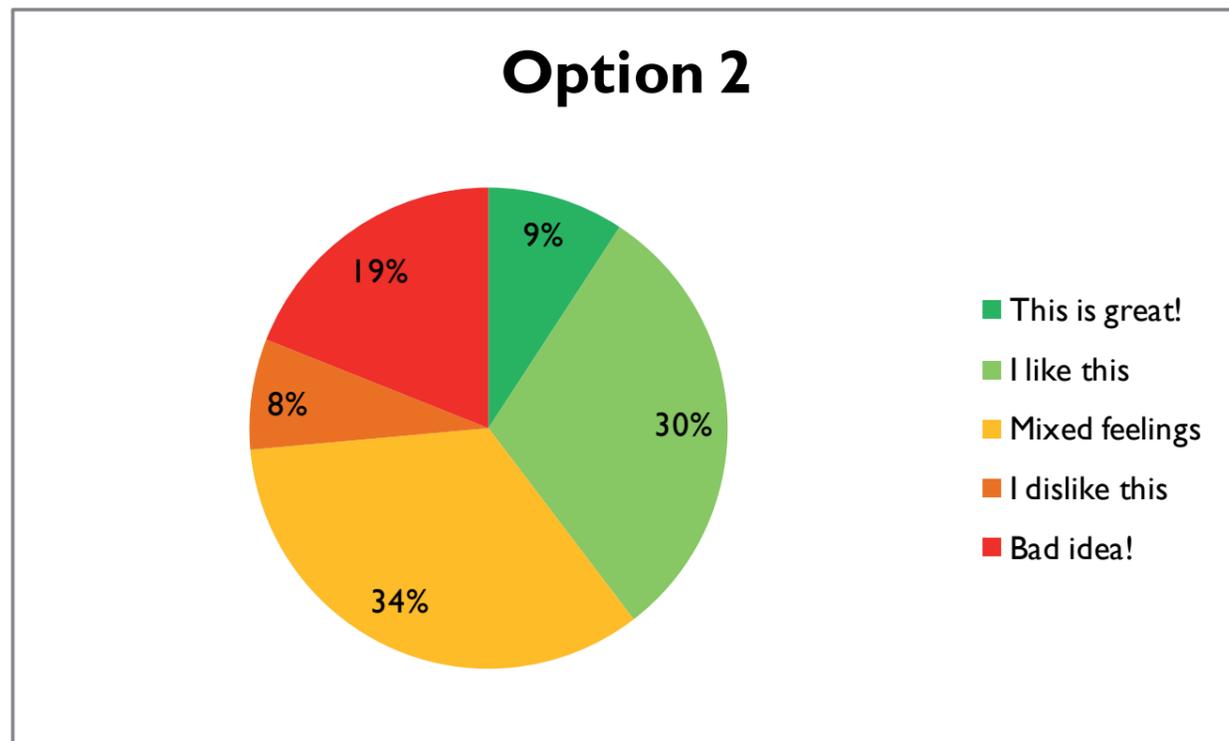
Option 2 was popular for its provision of individual retail outlets, and clear pedestrian routes which would widen the shopping area and improve pedestrian flow. The route between Drovers Way and St Peters Street was thought to be beneficial, and it was suggested that this could become an enclosed mall.

The Supermarket location was supported for its inconspicuous position, strong traffic links as well as its distance from residential areas and small shops. It was suggested, however, that the supermarket location might not be suitable so close to an arts

centre.

There was support for relocation of the Council Offices to Hatfield Road, and for the formation of an arts complex fronting onto St Peters Street. Option 2 was preferred for its larger department store and location, but there was concern about the impact of new architecture on surrounding residential areas. Others saw Option 2 as an opportunity to address poor architecture around the Civic Centre area - Civic Offices, Police Station, Barclays, Betting shop, Drovers Way, and the rear of Boots and Argos.

There was general concern about the level of funding needed for option 2, with the proposed



rebuilding of the Arena and Council Offices, and for the loss of open space as place for events.

General comments

Design and construction

It was suggested that building heights should be guided to capitalise on the City's topography, and that designs should respond to the existing built fabric, but that there was an opportunity for an iconic building in the Civic Centre area. It was thought that there were opportunities for sustainable design and construction. The Nationwide building was singled out for redevelopment, its current use and parking thought to be problematic to its surrounding spaces. A strong route between St Peters Street and Drovers Way was considered important, and the redesigned backlands were welcomed.

Retail

Should focus on role of market as key source of groceries and for local producers to connect directly.

There was support for a central supermarket in terms of accessibility. However, the need for an additional supermarket provision was questioned by some, and there were concerns that a centrally located supermarket would add to congestion without supporting existing shops and services. Some felt that a supermarket would be better located out of the centre.

There were concerns of the economic health of smaller shops and the market within the masterplan proposals. It was suggested that supermarket

provision should be kept small, and that an independent food quarter should be established.

There was support for the department store, it was suggested that this should be high-end to have the greatest benefit for the city. As with the supermarket, however, there were worries that the department store could create problems for smaller shops. There were also concerns that it wouldn't be possible to attract a department store.

Culture, leisure and community

The City Centre Cinema was supported in general, subject to financial viability, with a preference for a boutique format rather than a multiplex. The decision not to propose reuse of the Odeon site was questioned. There was support for a cultural hub but reservations about its scale, and mixed views about relocation of the museum as part of it. It was suggested that the Civic Centre would be better located at the city station as a more accessible location with available parking space, and that this would leave room for a day centre for the elderly in the city centre. Arts provision was considered essential, but would need coordination across providers in St Albans, including the Maltings, Town hall, Abbey Theatre, and Marlborough Road Methodist Church.

There was concern that additional residential would not be supported with community, education, health and transport infrastructure. Children's needs in the centre were singled out as a priority. However, the masterplan was also credited as providing a good balance of facilities for residents and tourists.

There was concern that the old cattle run would be lost as part of new development at Drovers Way,

including original gates. It was suggested that greater heritage reference could be provided throughout the City.

Public space

There was general support for a new civic square but concern at the loss of space and at the cost of redeveloping the Civic Centre. Small green spaces and courtyards were considered valuable, but security was raised as an issue. It was suggested that the masterplan provide a community garden or orchard in St Albans, for opportunities to grow local fruit and vegetables.

Transport

It was thought that improved district-wide bus services were needed, particularly evening services, and stronger links with the stations for shoppers. It was thought that the masterplan didn't adequately address hotel and trader parking.

Written responses

Formal written responses were received from a number of public and private sector organisations, local interest groups and individual residents. The organisations represented were:

- Hertfordshire Constabulary
- Abbey Theatre Trust
- Indigo Planning, representing
- Society of St Michaels and Kingsbury
- Councillor Kate Morris
- Tesco Ltd

- Antringham Verulamium, land owners of site within the Civic Centre South
- St Albans Architectural and Archaeological Society
- Ramblers Association

Public realm and routes

There was general support for the Green Ring concept, but concern at pedestrians and cyclists sharing lanes.

There was support for the principle of series of interlinked green spaces, improvements to medieval alleyways, and provision of public art and interpretation panels. However, there was also concern at the viability these spaces. The suggestion was made that Aboyne Lodge gardens should be opened up. Paving maintenance was felt to be a key area for public realm intervention, along with tree planting. It was suggested that the Vision should make greater reference to the need for public art and sculpture.

There were concerns at proposals for a walkway through the St Albans Police Station and Antringham Verulamium site in terms of its impacts on viability. There were also fears that the Station would be relocated to an inaccessible location out of the City Centre.

Culture and leisure

It was thought that there was more scope for reference to culture and heritage, and for the cultural hub with landmark uses and a relocated library and new cinema. It was suggested that the Vision should support expansion of the Abbey

Theatre facilities. There was a desire to see greater youth facilities and improvement to existing ones at Westminster Lodge and Cottonmill Lane. There was support for a new cinema, but fears that locating it on St Peters Street would attract anti-social behaviour there.

Hotel provision

There were several concerns that the hotel shown in St Michaels in the exhibition would not be suitable to its surroundings and could have negative traffic impacts on the village. Equally, it was thought that the hotel on St Peters Street would suffer from noise associated with traffic and the market.

Transport

It was thought that the Park and Ride proposals at the car parking sites suggested non-workable. There were concerns about increases to traffic flow resulting from additional development, and a lack of parking to service it.

A tunnel under the City into Drovers Way was suggested as a possible improvement to access there. It was pointed out that patients visiting the Health practitioners at Russell Avenue would need easily accessible parking.

It was suggested that interventions on St Peters Street should ensure better sharing of public space there between pedestrians and traffic, based on sound evidence.

Retail

It was suggested that the development sites in the centre of St Albans would not be attractive enough

to developers to accommodate retail, but it was also felt that out-of-town sites, including London Road, would not be suitable for a supermarket. Concern about shopping circuit undermine St Peters Street. There were several suggestions that additional supermarket provision was unnecessary.

Design

Respondents were keen to ensure that the Vision promoted high quality new development and buildings which were sensitive to their location in terms of scale, height and style. There was also concern to preserve Locally listed buildings at the Hatfield Road site, and it was suggested that the Vision provided an opportunity to replace the tax office at Bricket Road with a much more attractive building.

Other

The timing of the Vision document was questioned in its relationship with the Core Strategy and its was requested that the status of the document be made clearer.

It was suggested that demolition of the council offices was unnecessary from a sustainability point of view, and that the Civic Centre should be kept free of non-civic uses.

It was suggested that a City centre manager would be effective in improving the day-to-day maintenance of the City Centre and monitoring of issues.

There was concern that the Vision should address the top end of St Peter's Street adequately.



NOVIELLOS

Quality Ices

Multi-flavour



Multi-flavour

M 99 FLK

Currys Digital

Currys

THE PLACE TO BE

5. Themed strategies

5.1 Employment and training

“St Albans’ prosperous economy will provide a sustainable and adaptable base from which to respond to changing markets and pioneer emerging sectors such as green technology and the creative industries. The City will boast a new range of shops and services which more than satisfy residents’ needs and attract visitors from elsewhere.”

Introduction

St Albans has an extremely strong economy based upon the banking, finance and insurance sectors, and a highly educated workforce commanding high incomes. Employment levels for residents are high though a large proportion commutes to London for work, resulting in a lack of self-containment and sustainability issues for the city, both financially and environmentally. General levels of affluence and high-level employment also mask pockets of deprivation in the outer lying wards.

The city vision sets out a strategy for diversifying the economy and improving levels of self-containment in the city, and explores means of encouraging the growth of new Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the area. Fostering connections between businesses and schools is identified as a priority and the potential for establishing an enterprise hub is highlighted.

Vision objectives

- Addressing the low levels of economic self-containment in the city
- Providing flexible work space to respond to shifting lifestyles
- Effectively drawing on links with educational establishments
- Providing education and employment opportunities for all
- Providing a sustainable centre for residents and workers



Encouraging self-containment

The economic self-containment of a city is a good determinant of the strength of its economy but there is more than one type of economic self-containment. Some can be affected by the Council; others cannot. The low level of employment self-containment in St Albans is, to a large extent, to be expected given its close proximity to London. The employment self-containment of an area will be largely determined by its location and role within the sub-region. As well as being close to London, St Albans is a more desirable place to live than many neighbouring conurbations because of the quality of schools, quality of life, and its cultural offer. Given those factors, it will be attractive to well paid professionals who see St Albans as offering them the ideal suburban life from which to commute into London.

It may not be practical – or indeed desirable – for St Albans to aim to reduce, as a percentage, the number of people leaving the area for their employment. At the moment more money comes back into St Albans after the working day than leaves. The average wage of those leaving St Albans is roughly £772 per week, which is strong and characterised by professional services occupations, compared to roughly £460 for those remaining in St Albans. In any case, while St Albans has a burgeoning financial services sector, it would not be able to compete with that of London and other satellite towns and cities such as Reading – which, even though it has a significant local economy, has an outward commuting rate of roughly 40%.

St Albans City and District Council can ensure that the economic benefits of high earners are maximised for the remaining St Albans residents. One aspect of economic self-containment is the extent of leakage to local urban conurbations for retail. The retail offer in St Albans should at least be sufficient to discourage residents from going to local competitors such as Watford, Hemel Hempstead or further afield such as Brent Cross. The consultation showed that residents want a department store and a wide range of smaller, independent stores (Haberdashers, Pet Shops). Currently residents leave St Albans to meet these needs. Another strand is business to business leakage (see case study 1, tackling this issue).

Reducing both retail and business-to-business leakage will ensure St Albans remains a competitive economy. St Albans City and District Council will have to take direct interventions to return St Albans to somewhere near the self-contained retail and services conurbation it once was.

At the same time as reducing leakage, St Albans can draw more people into the area for work. Some sectors are increasing, such as the green economy, and many new, small companies will require help setting up (see case study 4). Indeed the 'green' economy was a sector mentioned throughout the consultation as appealing to residents of St Albans. There is potential for 'green' economy services such as retrofitting of buildings with more energy efficient technologies to thrive in St Albans, where a significant section of the population will be willing and able to procure such services.

Case Study 1: LEGI St Helens – increasing economic activity and helping local businesses

St Helens was chosen as one of 10 areas in the country to deliver LEGI in March 2006. The St Helens LEGI programme is a joint venture between the Council and the St Helens Chamber of Commerce. St Helens has designed 11 projects along the three broad LEGI themes: Increasing Entrepreneurial Activity; Supporting Local Businesses; and Attracting Investment. Here we outline three programmes that may be of relevance to St Albans.

Enterprising St Helens – The project is aimed at ensuring future generations of school leavers understand work, enterprise and entrepreneurship, and see their future in that context. There is a problem of generational unemployment in St Helens which needs to be broken. This could be the same for the children in the wards with higher unemployment in St Albans. All secondary schools in St Helens now have business links and to date 1,408 students have done work experience with over 600 businesses in the area.

A similar programme run through St Albans Chamber of Commerce and the University of Hertfordshire could be of great benefit.

Get a New Start – Aimed at tackling the older generation of unemployed residents, this programme has three main strands:

- Enhancing the services of Starting Point, the information, advice and guidance centre for jobs, education and training, enabling an Outreach Service to be delivered.
- Providing a 'bridge' to reach out to economically inactive people, making them aware of the opportunities available and removing the barriers which stop them moving into employment or training – enabling them to move beyond long term benefit dependency.
- Employer Compact - providing support or training linked directly to job opportunities where there is an identified gap which mainstream agencies cannot meet.

Results were seen immediately. At the end of year one 2492 people were receiving advice or guidance with 804 progressing into work. 276 of those came from priority areas and 337 people progressed into training or voluntary work. A similar programme could be beneficial in the wards in most need of employment services in St Albans.

Business winning business – The objective of the project was to build the capacity of St Helens companies to win more business locally as well as from outside the area and to retain as much of the money as possible within the borough. Consultants were appointed to deliver supplier qualification support. This includes getting companies ISO accredited, delivering 'How to Tender' seminars, and 'Meet the Buyer' events. The scheme is leading to more investable companies in St Helens that can win contracts and purchase further services from companies in the Borough.

Case study summary: You can always do better

St Albans has a successful economy and population – in general. Every effort should be made to bring up the levels of the poorer wards; if done in an integrated manner this should be of benefit to St Albans as a whole.

5.1 Employment and training

Future sectors – the future is bright, the future is green

There are some sectors that are expected to grow. In general, knowledge based sectors will continue to grow. In particular, a clear interest has been taken in the green economy throughout the consultation. This focus is justified. In the medium to long term, the green economy will be a growth sector in the UK and is a target for government support. An example of public sector funding for growth sectors – such as the green economy – is the recent £35million fund for business start-ups in the North West, to be distributed by North West Development Agency. This shows the extent to which national and regional agencies are, and will be, supporting business start-ups and emerging sectors. At the launch Lord Mandelson gave the following message:

“The next industrial revolution will, once again, be driven by the regions..... It won’t be cotton, but it will be bioscience, or green tech, or precision engineering or creative industries”

Central government has made a commitment to create a million ‘green’ jobs:

“The global market for low carbon and environmental goods and services is currently worth about £3trillion, and it is projected to grow strongly over the next decade as both the developed and the emerging world makes the shift to low carbon or post-carbon...We could see more than a million jobs in this sector by the middle of the next decade”

The East of England’s Regional Economic Strategy places a strong focus on small business start ups, knowledge driven sectors and the low-carbon, resource efficient economy. The green economy is a worthy focus for St Albans, but this should be complemented by an effort to encourage business creation in all sectors.

What can SACDC do?

- SACDC should be exploring the attitudes of major employers within the City to ensure that any concerns can be addressed and that employers will remain in St Albans.
- SACDC should explore the potential for a department store to form the centrepiece of an enhanced retail offer for St Albans’ residents.
- SACDC should develop, potentially in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire, a one-stop shop for business start-ups and businesses considering locating in St Albans.
- A set number of retail spaces should be designated for boutique stores, independent retailers, and services not currently on offer in St Albans.

Flexible work space

Lifestyles and work patterns are becoming increasingly flexible. Working remotely or from home is now common practice and many new businesses adopt flexible, progressive work patterns. Creating flexible work spaces in a similar fashion to ‘The Hub@Islington’ and ‘No.1 Nottingham Science Park’ (see case studies 2 and 3) provides space for small business start-ups with service support, though it can be expensive and cannot be guaranteed to succeed in aiding St Albans as a small business centre.

The Council would need to test demand levels and assess competition with other, more affordable areas which are a similar distance from London. Whilst the absence of an existing research base in the St Albans area would make developing a site such as No.1 Nottingham Science Park difficult, it represents a useful example of an enterprise hub which supports small businesses and provides a forum for relationships to be built between small businesses. The work spaces on offer from ‘The Hub’ in Islington provide a model which could be more directly applied to St Albans’ context and identifies the potential for an enterprise hub in the city.

St Albans has an entrepreneurial population, which is the best source of new, small businesses; demonstrated by the high number of VAT registrations and de-registrations. Such entrepreneurial activity could be aided through fast broadband access across the city, or a planning regime that makes it easy for residents to convert parts of their house from residential to business use. These actions would make working from home easier which may lead to small business start up levels that diversify the economy.

The University of Hertfordshire has a business innovation centre for knowledge based businesses with potentially superior support services to those available in St Albans. However, building greater connections with the University could lead to collaboration when supporting new businesses and finding businesses permanent premises.

What can SACDC do?

- Focus on sectors that are underprovided for in the sub-region (social enterprises, The Hub style organisations) and avoid competing with established conurbations (Cambridge for science and research).
- Make working from home, or setting up a business in a home, more feasible. For example look at planning controls that may restrict residents’ ability to work from home, or ensure that the whole City has high speed internet access (A WiFi City).

Case study 2: flexible work spaces

Hub@Islington, Kings Cross, Bristol... St Albans?

The Hub is a social enterprise running a global network of work spaces in North America, South America, Africa, Asia and Europe. The focus is on providing social entrepreneurs and like-minded people with the facilities needed to make their ideas and enterprises grow. The facilities are often renovated buildings and offer some character.

There are currently three Hubs in England: Islington, Kings Cross and Bristol with plans for one on the South Bank, London. As social enterprises take on an increased role in the economy, and there is a backlash against the culture of consumerism that has gripped the economy for the last two decades, The Hub and associated ventures could well have a higher demand placed on them.

The ethos of the Hub seems to be very much reflected in the consultation thus far and would fit with St Albans' aims to be greener, more creative and to diversify its economy. St Albans' close links with London would also be a huge asset.

No.1 Nottingham Science Park

No.1 Nottingham Science Park sits at the heart of a wider academic and industrial location, with two universities and the Toyota/Castle College Training Centre in close proximity, enabling the Science Park to feed into and benefit from surrounding activities. The facility has a high specification with high speed broadband throughout, accommodation from 1,500 sq ft to 42,000 sq ft and, crucially for St Albans, secure, car parking.

No.1 Nottingham Science Park works because it is located in close proximity to a range of complementary institutions. There are considerable barriers to St Albans developing something similar, especially with Cambridge so close by.

Case study Summary: Know your capability

The two case studies serve to highlight the practical limitations of St Albans' ambition. It would be difficult for St Albans to compete against centres such as No.1 Nottingham Science Park due to a host of factors. However St Albans could look towards working with groups such as 'The Hub'. Currently 'The Hub' locations are in large cities (London, Bristol), but the offer of a Hub somewhere more peaceful yet close to London could be an attractive proposition.

Case Study 3: Munich – Encouraging new sectors by providing all you need under one roof

Like many of Germany's regions, Munich has a diverse economy with traditionally strong manufacturing as well as a current focus on particular sectors: High-tech (ICT, Biotechnology and aerospace); Creative industries (fashion, design); and 'Grass-roots' (skilled crafts and retail). Central to Munich's strong economy is the city's Department of Labour and Economic Development which promotes itself as providing, 'All the services you need from a single source'.

The Department undertakes a great deal of work on general issues and sector promotion.

- Business interests are factored into policy and the 'amendment of legal norms at local government level'.
- Help businesses, from in or outside of the city, find a new base and relocate, maintain and develop their existing location, and get through the necessary administrative processes.
- Provide assistance to start-ups:
 - Advice on general issues from a dedicated business start-up office
 - Financing offers at special rates for start-ups
 - Collaboration with a number of start-up initiatives to reinforce the network available to new businesses in Munich.

Munich may be considerably larger than St Albans but there are lessons to be learnt from the Munich approach, especially as business and the economy navigates the current financial climate.

5.1 Employment and training

Links with educational establishments

Whilst St Albans does not have a university within its boundaries, the University of Hertfordshire is based close by and offers St Albans City and District Council a significant resource. Universities and other educational and learning institutions can be excellent vehicles for encouraging a diverse economy with a wealth of small and medium size enterprises. The University of Hertfordshire is one of the premier business facing universities and as such has a lot to offer St Albans. St Albans City and District Council should therefore look to work more closely with the University.

There is currently no formal work between the University Business team and St Albans City and District Council and the University's Business Services Team would welcome stronger links with the Council with a view to helping St Albans diversify its economy. St Albans could develop a similar project to the 'Sussex Academic Corridor' (see case study 4) with the University of Hertfordshire and Oaklands College whereby knowledge led businesses are incubated alongside readily affordable and accessible support services.

The focus on a knowledge economy in St Albans can be informed by research conducted by the Work Foundation on the Ideopolis and 'Secondary Ideopolises'. For St Albans to become a knowledge-driven city, a secondary Ideopolis, stronger links with the University of Hertfordshire are required. In which case St Albans should invest in infrastructure, and look to specialise in a complementary manner to the nearest Ideopolis. St Albans needs to see itself in relation to London and Cambridge in this sense. It needs to understand their specialities and find a complementary sector. This could well be done in conjunction with the University of Hertfordshire.

What can SACDC do?

- SACDC should begin discussions with the University of Hertfordshire as soon as possible to explore the potential for closer working. Such as:
- Internship programme for school leavers. The University of Hertfordshire Business Services Team will place secondary school leavers with one of the business start-ups at the centre. This will offer support to the start-ups and give the school leavers a taste of business.
- Business graduate scheme where businesses incubated in the University of Hertfordshire Centre move to St Albans at a subsidised rate
- Formal links with Oaklands College's Energy Centre for apprenticeships and training courses.

CASE STUDY 4: Public sector and Academic partnership Case Study: Sussex Innovation Centre

The University of Sussex, business and public sector agencies have partnered to develop a Business Incubator. The centre was the flagship development of the 'Sussex Academic Corridor'. The members of the 'Sussex Academic Corridor' are:

- University of Sussex
- University of Brighton
- City College Brighton and Hove
- South Downs College
- Brighton and Hove City Council
- East Sussex County Council
- Lewes District Council

Brighton and Hove City Council (£1.4million) and East Sussex Council (£400,000) originally funded the centre. The University of Sussex provided the land and Seaboard provided £250,000 cash sponsorship. The centre was originally 20,000 sq ft but has since doubled in size following a further investment of £2.5 million from the University of Sussex and £750,000 from the Brighton and Hove SRB programme. Since 1996 over 130 companies have been based at the centre with a cumulative revenue of over £120million. The companies employ 400 people in the local area. The centre is not sector specific but businesses do need to apply for tenancy. Businesses are selected based on growth potential. The centre is profitable for the University and the local authorities benefit through the impact on the local economy.

Education and employment opportunities for all

The current recession will place stresses on education, training and employment opportunities and services across the country. St Albans City and District is generally wealthy and well educated but there are some wards in St Albans with significant levels of deprivation. As of April 2008 the average unemployment rate for a ward in St Albans was 0.9%; however there are four wards that report significantly higher levels of unemployment: Batchwood, Cunningham 1.6%, London Colney 1.5%, and Sopwell 1.4%. Although unemployment is generally low, St Albans Job Centre has noticed an increase of young people (under 25 years old) claiming. This is a worrying trend, especially as this was reported pre recession. If this trend is particularly acute in the disadvantaged wards then the trend could become generational. It is the residents and areas in most need that require the greatest level of intervention. As an example, in St Helens work was undertaken (Get a New Start, see case study 1) to break an ingrained cycle of generational unemployment.

Levels of education in St Albans tend to be comparatively good, demonstrated by the low level of school leavers that are NEET (not in education, employment or training) compared to the rest of Hertfordshire and England. Even if this is the case measures should still be taken to reduce the number of NEETs, and to break any possible generational unemployment cycle. St Albans could develop programmes to encourage children from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter training or employment when finishing school in much the same way that St Helens Council has done with its Enterprising St Helens project (see Appendix 4).



What can SACDC do?

- Develop programmes targeted on the wards with the highest levels of unemployment.
- Develop programmes targeted at the schools with the highest levels of school leavers going NEET.
- Deliver programmes and courses for business start-ups, potentially in conjunction with the University of Hertfordshire.

A sustainable centre for residents and workers

The consultation process showed a clear desire to make St Albans a greener and more sustainable city. St Albans needs to ask what makes for a sustainable city. Forum for the Future has developed the Sustainable Cities Index which ranks cities on 13 indicators. There are three broad areas: Environmental Impact; Quality of Life; and Future-Proofing. Currently St Albans' performance is mixed with some areas performing well but others less so. This is demonstrated by the WWF report of October 2007 claiming St Albans has the second worst ecological footprint in the country.

The Index provides St Albans with a clear set of areas to address. From the consultation it would appear the demands of St Albans' residents chime with some of the indicators. St Albans City and District Council wants to develop the green economy and make commitments on Climate Change. The residents have mentioned congestion as an issue and there is a general low level of satisfaction with the current bus service.

For St Albans to be a sustainable city it needs to place sustainability at the heart of the vision for an area. St Albans has placed reduction of waste, CO² emissions, and an increase in sustainable transport in its Local Area Agreement but to become highly sustainable the agenda needs to cut across the full breadth of Council strategies, policies and programmes. This is exactly what Brighton and Hove Council has undertaken (see case study 5).

What can SACDC do?

- Develop a sustainability plan that cuts across the full range of Council activities.
- Establish a Cabinet Member for Sustainability.
- Visit leading cities on sustainability to learn and apply lessons.

5.1 Employment and training

Case study 5: Sustainable City Case Study: Brighton and Hove

Brighton and Hove Council has developed a Sustainability Strategy with 12 areas encompassing almost all of the Council's responsibilities:

- Access to basic elements of life
- Air quality
- Culture, recreation and leisure
- Community Safety
- Economy and work
- Education
- Energy use
- Housing
- Land use
- Natural environment
- Transport
- Waste

The plan has objectives for each of the areas listed above. By accessing the Land Use category below it is possible to see what actions Brighton and Hove is taking. Brighton and Hove Council will use Land Use planning to meet a range of sustainability measures. Objectives include reducing dependence on the car by promoting sustainable transport such as cycling, walking and bus. To complement this there will be higher density building where transport connections are good. Another objective is to reduce the use of non-renewable resources and maximise efficiency. This will be undertaken by requiring all development proposals to show that regard has been given to the minimisation and reuse of construction waste. Development proposals will also be expected to demonstrate a high standard of efficiency in the use of energy, water and materials.

The ambition and all encompassing nature of the Brighton and Hove plan should act as an inspiration to St Albans City and District Council. The plan is ambitious and looks to place sustainability at the centre of Brighton and Hove's development.

Summary

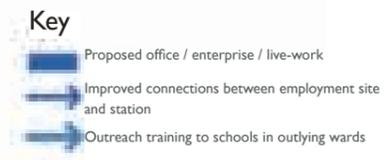
St Albans City and District Council has been admirably ambitious in developing the 'Direction of Travel' objectives with the project team. Delivering on these objectives within the context of a vision for the city will be more difficult, which makes a realistic and practical approach essential.

The delivery of a sustainable economic development future for St Albans needs to be linked to the governance arrangements for ensuring ownership of, and accountability for the wider city vision. Many cities like St Albans opt to use the area's Local Strategic Partnership as the primary vehicle for driving economic development. Currently, SACDC recognises a number of potentially overlapping groups all of which have a stake in the future economy of the city – the LSP itself, the City Centre Reference Group and the City Forum and a Business/Economic Forum centred on the Chamber of Commerce. We propose that the Council uses the production of the city vision to galvanise and, where appropriate, rationalise some of the existing partnership arrangements in order to mobilise the necessary combined resources of the public, private and third sectors behind the vision.

From an economic development perspective, an essential step for the Council will be to make contact with its key partners, not least the University of Hertfordshire's Business Services Team, in order to establish closer working relations and shared responsibility for delivering relevant aspects of the vision. St Albans needs to understand itself and its economic offer in relation to the rest of the London Arc (an area stretching from Watford in the west to Chelmsford in the east with a population of 1.35million) – this may be as the sub-region's green and social enterprise hub.

An initial group of key partners to take the work forward, accountable to the overarching Local Strategic Partnership Board, should include:

- St Albans City and District Council officers
- St Albans Chamber of Commerce
- University of Hertfordshire
- Oaklands College
- Representative of Secondary Schools
- Jobcentre Plus
- 2-3 major employers
- St Albans District Council for Voluntary Service



Summary of issues with spatial interventions:

- Provide flexible work space to support SMEs;
- Ensure that employment locations are central and easily accessible from the stations;
- Encourage employment related outreach work to schools in Batchwood, Cunningham and Sopwell, where employment and income levels are lower than for the city as a whole; and
- Explore the potential for developing an 'enterprise hub' in the city.

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5.2 Shops and services

“The City will boast a new range of shops and services which more than satisfy residents’ needs and attract visitors from elsewhere.”

Introduction

While St Albans has a healthy retail economy with a distinctive offer of shops and services, the city’s position within the regional retail hierarchy is challenged by competing centres surrounding the city. Analysis and consultation for the city vision project have revealed fairly significant levels of leakage of expenditure to surrounding centres for shopping and leisure activities. However, proven demand for greater retail provision, in the form of the Council’s Retail Capacity Study, along with the emergence of centrally located opportunity sites in the city, provide an opportunity to turn this situation around and to make St Albans much more economically self-contained.

Through providing a greater range and quality of shops and services in the centre of the city, St Albans could become a more vibrant place which better meets the needs and aspirations of St Albans’ residents and potential shoppers from the surrounding area. Hosting a greater number of national retailers alongside a strengthened and expanded cluster of independent and specialist shops, St Albans would have a more defined place within the retail hierarchy. St Albans has great potential and a stronger retail environment could draw greater numbers of visitors, given its excellent historic setting, and supported by public realm improvements, offering an exceptional shopping experience. In addition, the market is an exception asset and animates the centre and strengthens its appeal.

Vision objectives

- Providing a sustainable centre for residents and workers



- Providing an excellent range of specialist and quality retailing and markets
- Addressing the issue of backlands in the centre
- Exploring sustainable food production

Providing a sustainable centre for residents and workers

Central food provision is a crucial element of a sustainable centre, yet St Albans lacks a major food store in the centre of the city. Such a store should be established at the heart of the town centre as a retail anchor for the city, and the potential for encouraging and facilitating linked trips to other shops should be explored.

Given that 22% of the district's carbon footprint is made up of food travel miles, this could have significant environmental benefits for the city and district. It would also increase accessibility for those without access to cars and make residential elements of city-centre mixed-use schemes more attractive to the market. The over arching framework provides options for food retail at two possible sites, namely Drovers Way and the Civic Centre South site.

Provision of a food retailer would have to be accompanied by improvements to sustainable infrastructure and appropriate parking arrangements to ensure that this does not bring increased volumes of traffic to the city centre and that linked trips can be effectively facilitated.

Providing an excellent range of specialist and quality retailing and markets

St Albans is a vibrant retail centre, but has capacity for further comparison provision. Fulfilment of this capacity could reduce leakage to surrounding centres in the long term. Consultation found broad support for provision of a department store, although there were concerns that this could lead to loss of identity for St Albans as a retail environment.

St Albans has a strong range of independent retailers, with the market as its centrepiece. Set within the City's high quality historic environment, independent retail is one of the City's key assets, creating a distinct and personable shopping experience and differentiating its offer within the local retail hierarchy. This asset is well valued by residents and visiting shoppers.

St Albans should strengthen its independent and specialist retail offer in the city centre to support its role and position within the retail hierarchy, and to meet the identified needs and aspirations of its residents. New space should be provided for specialist retailers, through greater availability of affordable units. This approach should be coordinated with environmental improvements to ensure the highest quality retail experience, capitalising on the City's excellent historic environment.

Drovers Way and the Civic Centre site have been identified as suitable sites to accommodate new national retailers and further independent shops and will be subject to further consideration at the masterplanning stage.

Given St Albans' catchment area and the size of the opportunity sites, it is likely that St Albans would be able to attract a small – medium sized department store as an anchor within a new retail-led scheme.

St Albans' market currently operates two different types of offer - a high quality 'continental' style food market, and a more general market run by local vendors. The market is rooted in St Albans' history and makes a significant contribution to the City's distinctiveness. It will be crucial to ensure that this asset continues to thrive in the future. A coordinated approach between the market and the City Council should be taken to ensure that the market's offer and quality matches the needs and aspirations of its customer base. Within the City, the market's offer should be perceived by the customer as being integrated with the City's permanent retail offer. Occasional night markets during the summer months could provide the City with a new and exciting evening activity, and could be tied in with festivals in Verulamium Park.

What can SACDC do?

- Lead the delivery of new retail developments within St Albans by deciding on the sites for them and providing support where necessary in addressing redevelopment challenges.
- Support the market by assisting with enhancements where desirable, connecting into any new retail circuits which may be developed within the City, and publicising the market within surrounding settlements.
- Maintain contact with retail developers to gauge interest levels for development in

the city and to informally assess feasibility of proposals.

- A home delivery scheme could be investigated for the market to support its competitiveness within the retail economy, and to help support the market's independence from parking provision for customers.

5.2 Shops and services

Retail locations and circuit

New retail should be strategically placed to maximise the footfall it can bring to existing retailers. Well located anchor stores at the Civic Centre site and/or Drovers Way site should establish strong retail circuits within the town centre. These would knit together retail areas at St Peters Street, Victoria Street, the Maltings and Christopher Place. To maximise this, retail anchors would have to be located so as to be highly visible along sightlines within the circuit. The retail plan (p.49) illustrates ways in which this could be achieved. The spatial propositions in the overarching spatial framework chapter of this report look in more detail at how these can be achieved.

It is envisaged that new development should operate as traditional streets, rather than be within a mall style design. Inspiration can be drawn from successful recent retail developments in Exeter and Canterbury, both of which had to meet the challenge of providing large scale new retail in a sensitive historic environment, as St Albans would have to do. Further details on these examples are provided in the case study to the right, and will be used as reference guides at the masterplanning stage of the project.

Any new retail development should be built to the highest architectural quality to maintain the standards set by earlier generations and to seize an opportunity for raising the profile of St Albans within the region.

Outlying neighbourhood scale retail locations such as Fleetville and the Quadrant should be protected and enhanced, continuing to provide walkable access to basic goods for their surrounding communities.

Case studies

Princesshay, Exeter

This scheme provides 400,000 square ft of retail space, along with around 100 residential units and is of a comparable size to the kind of development which could be feasible in St Albans. The scheme is anchored by Debenhams, with the anchor store located toward the back of the scheme to facilitate footfall, but located to ensure the best visibility possible (especially from the High Street). Debenhams relocated to anchor the centre, and the scheme has attracted a large number of national retailers who weren't previously represented in Exeter.

Whitefriars, Canterbury

Whitefriars was completed in 2005 and is situated within Canterbury's city walls. The scheme contains a range of national retailers, 30 residential units, a 530 space car park and a bus station. The retail centre replaces a previous commercial and retail scheme dating to the 1950s, offering modern retail premises and a design which is more sensitive to the city's historic character than that of its predecessor.

What can SACDC do?

- Draw up masterplans and site briefs for key retail development sites. These could contain principles to ensure that retail layouts would meet the highest standards of urban design, taking into account retailers' preferences regarding unit layout and, choice of materials and architectural design.

Addressing the issue of backlands in the centre

The backlands currently present underused spaces in prime locations within the City and are an eyesore at Drovers Way. Although they would be too small to meet the needs of high street retailers, they could provide spaces for a cluster of independent shops which could form the core of a specialist retail frontage, connecting through to Christopher Place physically and in terms of urban character.

What can SACDC do?

- Identify suitable backlands sites for redevelopment

Raising the profile of shops

Competition with St Albans' surrounding retail centres will always be challenging for the City, given its constraints in terms of available land and immediate catchment area. However, the City could reach out to a greater proportion of the market within its hinterland through initiatives designed to raise awareness of its retail offer and experience.

The shopstalbans.co.uk website, launched recently with support from the Chamber of Commerce,

provides a useful first step in raising the profile of St Albans for shopping and providing a unified front for retailers. It is important that the website can maintain a high position on search engines so potential shoppers are aware that it exists.

What can SACDC do?

- Develop a marketing strategy to identify customers who might be persuaded to shop in St Albans, based on a strengthened shopping market and cultural offer (see culture and leisure section).
- Further expand the shopstalbans.co.uk website to encourage more shoppers to St Albans and to make a visit as simple and trouble free as possible.
- Invest in creating the highest possible quality of public realm.



Ensuring a prosperous and vibrant city centre

Recent developments in the British and global economy have placed considerable pressure on national and independent retailers as evidenced by the increasing number of vacant retail units in towns and cities across the country. Vacant units on key retail streets can have a knock-on negative impact upon the health of a retail centre by lowering the quality of the environment and projecting an image of decline.

Rather than sitting empty, vacant retail units can provide valuable spaces for community and other uses and can be used to host exhibitions and other community based events. The Council should be as flexible as possible in supporting the creative use of empty units in the city centre in the short term. The long term nature of the City Vision means that this issue is only likely to remain a challenge in the early stages of delivering the vision and strategy.

In the current challenging economic climate, St Albans' existing retailers could help to ensure a coordinated and strategic approach to retail in the city centre and retain high footfall figures by forming a Business Improvement District (BID). This has proved extremely successful in other market towns such as Lincoln and Hitchin, allowing businesses to pool resources to address issues regarding marketing of the centre, public realm works and business development.

Exploring sustainable food production

The true cost of food miles to the environment and to transport congestion is increasingly being acknowledged by the public at large, and, as shown during consultation, by St Albans' residents. There is an opportunity for St Albans to react to this trend and to pioneer the marketing and sale of locally grown food. As food supply uncertainties could become a real prospect in the long term due to climate change, there are added benefits in terms of reliability.

Surrounded by the Hertfordshire countryside, St Albans is ideally placed to work towards more localised food supply. The City already supports this at a micro scale in the form of allotments and through the market, but it could, in the long term, provide further space for resident-led food production, and could build links between local growers and local shops within the district and east of England region.

What can SACDC do?

- Liaise with St Albans' food retailers to assess interest and feasibility of a scheme to ensure that food sold in St Albans is locally sourced where at all possible.

5.2 Shops and services

A strategic approach to St Albans' retail spatial hierarchy

In order for St Albans to establish itself as a higher profile shopping destination within the region, it will be important for a strategic approach to be developed in terms of retail hierarchy within the city, setting a framework for the type of retail - primary, secondary and food retail - and the format for that retail - national retailer provision, fine grain independent retail provision and big box retail parks.

It is important, for example, for the Griffiths Way retail park to be further developed in a way that improves the physical environment of the area and strengthens the offer, but does not compete with St Albans city centre. It would be useful to intensify the activity here and residential development is considered appropriate, however, it would be extremely challenging to provide desirable accommodation in this environment and an innovative approach would be required, setting out clear urban design solutions that can help to create a sense of place.

Similarly, food retail should be subject to sequential testing, so that it is provided at the most central location appropriate within the city. This will provide greater scope for linked trips and have greater accessibility by public transport, which is likely to increase in importance as a means of travel over the coming decades.

Primary retail, with both national and independent shops, is considered to be appropriate only in the city centre, on the two key sites available for development.

Victoria Street, connecting the main station to the city centre, provides a valuable opportunity for developing secondary and independent retail. The street has been earmarked for extensive public realm works in order to strengthen the pedestrian links between the station and the centre.

A greater transformation of the street is possible and this is considered a transition area in the city. Further independent and specialist retailers could enhance the existing offer, which includes outdoor equipment specialists.

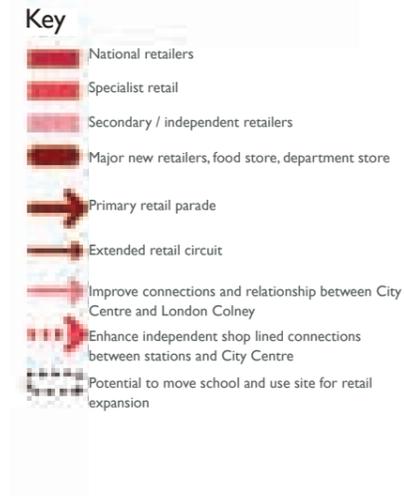
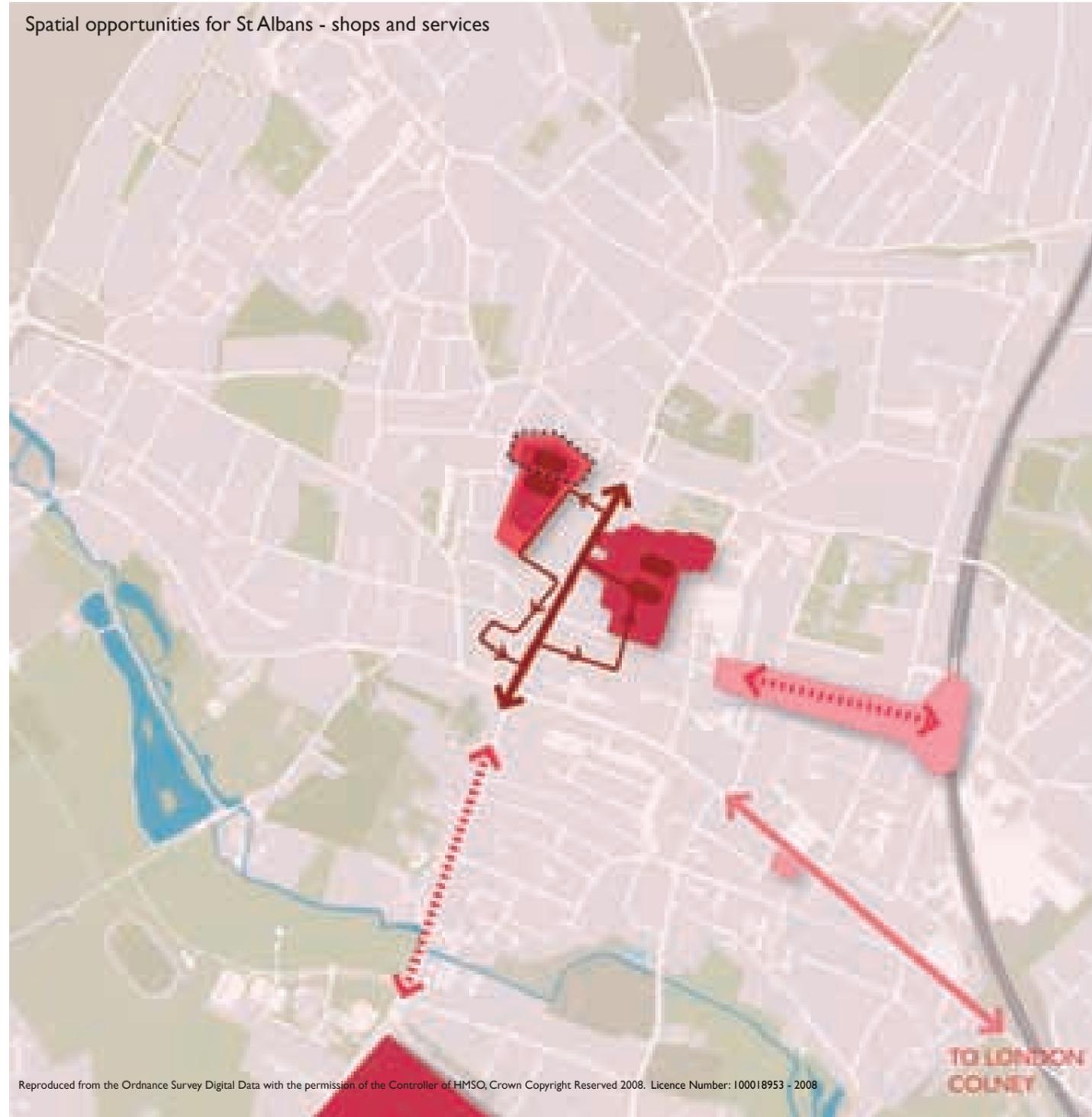
By establishing a stronger secondary retail offer on this street, the psychological distance between the station and the centre could be reduced, as visitors would feel they were already entering the city as they progressed along the street.

Finally, London Colney provides a large retail park shopping provision close to the city, including a Marks and Spencers which currently acts as a department store for the city. It is considered important that the links between the two shopping areas are strong, so that they can operate in conjunction with one another rather than competing.

What can SACDC do?

- Ensure sequential testing is used when assessing appropriateness of food and other retail, and actively explore site options to provide the most effective offer for the city.
- Carefully develop Griffiths Way, ensuring that it does not compete with the city centre.
- Approach Victoria Street as a 'transition zone' for the city, with the potential to transform the main arrival experience and overcome the gap between the station and the city centre.
- Provide strong public transport connections with London Colney retail park.

Spatial opportunities for St Albans - shops and services



Summary of issues with spatial interventions:

- National retailers and new independent shops in central locations and located on a retail circuit. Drovers Way car park and the Civic Centre site are considered to provide the greatest potential for this;
- Transformation of Victoria Street, both in terms of public realm and retail provision. Secondary and independent retail can be provided to enhance the existing offer. This can help to overcome the psychological barrier between the station and the town centre;
- Strengthened links between Abbey Station and the city centre, through public realm works and signage;
- Explore the potential for London Colney to be included on a shuttle bus route, so that the two shopping centres can work in conjunction with one another rather than competing; and
- Intensified development at Griffiths Way, developed carefully to ensure that it provides a separate offer to the city centre and does not compete with it.

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5.3 Culture and leisure

“The city’s active cultural life will be enhanced and diversified to help meet the needs of residents and visitors as lifestyles shift and priorities change, establishing St Albans as a cultural hub within the region.

Introduction

St Albans has a strong base from which to provide an engaging and inclusive cultural and leisure offer for residents of the city and visitors alike. The city’s rich heritage as a centre for governance, theatre and worship throughout history gives the city a unique identity and high profile within the region.

The cultural services offer includes theatres, a museum, a gallery strong Roman and Medieval heritage, and a library and arts organisations are active within the city.

The raw materials exist for St Albans to thrive as a regional cultural centre which can provide an engaging cultural life for residents and attract visitors from the local area, London and further afield. By providing focused investment in key areas, with ambitious physical proposals, and coordinated partnership working, this potential can be brought to fruition.

Objectives

- **Drawing on St Albans’ unique potential within the North London Arc**
- **Exploring opportunities for creating a cultural hub and/or circuit**
- **Developing the contemporary, visual and performing arts**
- **Exploring methods of bringing St Albans’ heritage to life**
- **Raising the profile of the city in the international arena**
- **Exploring the feasibility of a cinema for the city**
- **Investigating options for increasing the hotel offer in the city**
- **Raising the profile of the Abbey**
- **Becoming a key filming location**



St Albans' potential with the region and further afield

St Albans occupies a strategic location within the north London Arc, providing a cultural and historic offer not readily available amongst other towns along the arc. This strength can be effectively drawn upon to attract day and evening visitors from other towns and villages within the region, including Slough, Chesham, Harlow and Brentwood.

Attracting visitors from these locations would be underpinned by initiatives suggested in the vision to create a cultural hub in the centre of the city and develop contemporary and performing arts. The opportunity presented by large sites in the city centre which could accommodate these uses in addition to radically improving the shopping offer in the city could help bring this element of the vision to fruition.

Such a strategy would fit well with visitor economy research which has indicated that St Albans has greater potential to attract day and weekend visitors from the region, from London and from England in general, than to attract international visitors for longer visits.

To help strengthen St Albans' offer as a destination for a day or weekend trip, the city can also capitalise on the attractive pedestrian links which exist to the stunning countryside surrounding the city and the walking routes and country pubs found in the area, including Gorhambury Walk, open to the public across the A4147 Hemel Hempstead Road which leads into the immediate surrounding countryside.

Similar historic towns and cities have successfully drawn on this combination to attract weekend visitors, including York, Chester, Canterbury, Winchester and Ross-on-Wye.

St Albans is distinctive in providing an historic, market town with a rich heritage, attractive historic environment and beautiful countryside in a location

that is just 20 minutes from central London. This is seen as a huge asset in attracting visitors from London for day and potentially weekend trips. In advertising to central London the City could draw on its associations with internationally known figures such as Nicolas Brakespear, Francis Bacon and Samuel Ryder, as well as historic events of national significance such as the Peasants Revolt and the drawing up of the Magna Carta. Marketing could be coordinated with public transport providers such as First Capital Connect and local bus companies as part of an attractive package.

Further options for developing St Albans as a regional hub are set out in the sub-section on 'Raising the profile of St Albans as a tourist destination' later in this section.

SACDC should:

- Support and facilitate the creation of a cultural hub within the city centre (outlined in detail later in this section).
- Raise the profile of the city in towns along the North London Arc and in the region in general, including Slough, Chesham, Harlow and Brentwood, and in London.
- Raise the profile of the North London Arc in general, through signage on relevant motorways in the local area.
- Work in collaboration with the Parish Councils to raise the profile of the countryside offer immediately surrounding St Albans and explore marketing options for creating a linked offer between the historic, cultural city and a 'pub and walk' activities. The St Albans tour guides website goes some way to addressing this though a higher profile forum may be useful.

Case study 1: Chester as a regional hub

Chester provides a useful example for St Albans in terms of raising its profile as a day and weekend visitor destination, based on a similar offer and character to St Albans. The city has a strong Roman heritage, a cathedral quarter and medieval historic environment, and also draws on a strong provision of independent and specialist retailers.

Chester is within the catchment area of Liverpool and Manchester, as St Albans is in a similar catchment with London, and has the potential to draw on its own catchment of smaller towns, as St Albans does.

The city has in excess of 10 hotels in or close to the centre, in addition to B&Bs in the area, and has established a profile for weekend and day visitors who also make use of the high quality countryside surrounding the city.

In 2007 Chester Council announced a 10-year plan to see Chester become a "must see European destination", at a cost of £1.3 billion. The plan sets out a number of refurbishment and renaissance propositions for the city, including a townscape heritage initiative, public realm works and refurbishment of the Town Hall.

The Council operates a visitchester.com website, which sets out information on where to stay in the city, where to eat, attractions available in Chester; and provides offers and deals. This raises the profile of the city and makes it far easier for people to plan a visit to the city for a day or a weekend, and helps to create a virtuous circle, by raising the profile of the city and attracting visitor service provider businesses.

5.3 Culture and leisure

Opportunities for creating heritage circuits around the city

Visitors who have come specifically to the city are likely to focus activity in a tightly defined area of the centre, rather than wandering through the residential streets. Currently the visitor offer in St Albans is based around two key experiences:

- The Cathedral, town centre, shopping/markets and the town centre visitor attractions; and
- Roman Verulamium sites – the Museum, Roman Theatre, Verulamium Park and up hill to the Cathedral.

These attractors mean that the visitor experience is based only on a south west slice of the city.

St Albans is a relatively compact city but nonetheless distances between the city centre and the Park and Roman remains can be daunting on foot. Looking up at the Cathedral from the Verulamium Museum, the city centre appears quite a distance away.

The legibility of St Albans can be improved to encourage visitors to discover its rich heritage and interesting quarters. Continuity of message, style and quality and distinctiveness of the design of gateways, signing and interpretation are all essential to encouraging exploration. Good signing, pedestrian routes and trails also provide an opportunity to influence the routes visitors take; showing them the best face of the city.

The Council has developed a small number of walking trails, with materials available both online and in print. Currently, however, there is no relationship between these trails and the visitor experience in-situ. The value of the investment in

trail print could be significantly enhanced by joining up information boards, interpretation and the trail literature. There are four key areas for action in achieving this:

To improve first impressions, welcome and information at the main gateways into the city – this includes trunk road entrances, car parks, railway stations and coach drop off points. A coherent welcome, clear signing and orientation at the car parks and the railway stations is particularly important. Visitors should feel confident about how to reach their final destination. First impressions and initial information can significantly influence visitor behaviour. Information should be welcoming, relevant and clear. For example, information at a coach park needs to separate visitor and driver needs.

To deliver consistent and enhanced pedestrian signing that creates a series of loops and routes around and across the city centre. This provides a good immediate opportunity to increase the ‘size’ of the city’s offer to visitors by encouraging wider exploration. A new fingerpost system already signs destinations and the distances between them based on a conservative time it takes to reach them on foot. However, the system is not comprehensive and key gaps to fill include routes to and from the railway stations. Also the aged and worn fingerpost signs across Verulamium Park can and should be replaced. It is important to ensure a consistent quality and style of signing across the city. The practice of setting out walking distance times can also be as off putting as it is encouraging and it is worth reassessing the role of including walking times on signage.

Signing needs to be augmented by interpretation - the fingerpost system should fully incorporate Verulamium Park and the Museum with external interpretation and signing to encourage visitors to explore more widely and to learn about the history in-situ. Interpretation can be through traditional panels and pieces of art and sculpture that enhance the visitor experience. The emphasis should be about informing but also challenging the visitor’s perceptions, understanding and emotions in an exciting and engaging way. Interpretation should be more than information.

Enhancing the potential of St Michael’s as a visitor quarter – Heading down George Street, Fishpool Street and into St Michael’s Street provides an altogether different atmosphere of the city, culminating in the village feel of St Michael’s. This setting, with its numerous pubs and restaurants combined with a walk across the River Ver and linked to Verulamium and the Roman Museum is a destination in its own right. Improved signing and promotion could encourage visitors to either visit the park or the city centre to explore further. Coach parties visiting the Roman sites should be encouraged to extend their stay by exploring St Michael’s village.

In addition to this extended visit to the area around Verulamium, the privately owned Roman Theatre and Gorhambury Walk, open to the public across the A4147 Hemel Hempstead Road, offer more links and walks into the immediate surrounding countryside which can add to the current visitor experience. Heritage walks into the surrounding countryside could be offered as an extension of the current tourist walks programme, supported by additional volunteers and marketing. St Albans’ battlefields could also provide the basis for a new

heritage circuit, with support from the Battlefields Trust.

SACDC should:

- Improve information and guidance for visitors at gateways to the city.
- Establish coherent and attractive signage that creates a series of loops around the city and also de-clutter the public realm of unnecessary signage.
- Explore methods of augmenting signage with interpretation such as art and additional information to enhance the visitor experience.
- Raise the profile of St Michael’s as a visitor quarter for the city, to enlarge the visitor circuit and reveal hidden gems of the city.
- Ensure a high profile for cultural and visitor attractions in the north and east of the city, such as the existing museum and gallery and any future attractions in this area, to help ensure that the informal heritage and cultural circuit covers the city centre more comprehensively.



Creating a central cultural hub for the city

With the Civic Centre site, St Albans has a rare and valuable opportunity to transform its centre and to raise the profile of the city on a regional and national scale. By creating a cultural hub in the heart of the city, with a theatre, an art gallery, a cinema and a library, and supporting uses such as cafés and restaurants and related shops, the city can potentially redefine its image and profile on a national and regional scale.

The Alban Arena, for example, could either be replaced or refurbished and pared back to reveal its original design, as has been achieved extremely successfully with the Royal Festival Hall and the Southbank. A public space can be created with cultural uses fronting onto this, such as the theatre, a cinema or a gallery, and this could serve as the 'living room' for the city - a place for public events and for simply lingering and enjoying the city.

The cultural uses that have been identified as desirable during consultation and analysis include a larger theatre and music venue, a larger art gallery, a new library, a new museum space and a lecture theatre. Exploring the potential to accommodate these uses together in a central location, or close to one another will be extremely important for the city and will be considered in the masterplanning of the vision for the city.

Opportunity also exists through this proposal to create a striking contemporary building for the city which can boldly advertise St Albans' aspirations and intentions with regard to becoming a contemporary cultural centre, which will also help to address some of the objectives identified for enhancing the built environment. This could be developed through an architectural competition which in itself could help to raise the profile of the city and its cultural offer.

An overall cultural strategy which sets out clear roles for the cultural hub and the Cathedral, can help to ensure that activities in these two areas are coordinated and complement one another rather than competing with each other.

SACDC should:

- Explore the feasibility of creating a central cultural hub in the civic centre area during the masterplanning phase of the vision project, with consideration of the re-provision of existing uses elsewhere and on the site.
- Consider secondary options for providing a coherent and quality cultural offer in the city at the museum and university site.
- Commission an architectural competition to help create a bold, contemporary building for the city and to raise the profile of the city.
- Explore funding opportunities for supporting flagship cultural uses in the city.

5.3 Culture and leisure

Contemporary visual and performing arts

During consultation, many members of the local community highlighted that while St Albans has a strong heritage offer, it does not have a quality provision of contemporary visual and performing arts, and local residents would like to see this offer improve. Enhancing cultural facilities in the city would also help to raise the profile of St Albans as a visitor destination for day and weekend trips.

The lack of a contemporary arts offer in St Albans is partly as a result of a lack of suitable facilities and partly as a result of the city's profile and identity, which is not currently that of a premier cultural centre. These two factors are highly interrelated and by addressing the issue of suitable facilities, the city's profile will also begin to change. It will be important to manage this shift, however, to ensure that momentum can be built in terms of St Albans' identity, creating a virtuous circle.

In addition to providing new facilities, opportunities also exist to enhance the contemporary cultural offer using St Albans' existing assets. Verulamium Park, for example provides a stunning environment in which to hold public art and events. An open air film festival during the summer months can make use of this valuable asset, help to address the lack of cinema facilities in the city and also raise St Albans' profile as a cultural city. In doing this, it will also help to attract young people to locate in the area through an appealing image, providing affordable housing can be included.

The Old Town Hall also represents an extremely valuable resource for hosting cultural events in an historic, characterful building in the centre of the city. The St Albans Arts (STARTS) organisation located in the building also provides a useful delivery body for attracting and managing events in the main hall of the building. Whilst the room may not be suitable for all events, it provides a great space for local performance and art groups and it would be beneficial to St Albans to strengthen the links between these organisations so that cultural network can be established.

Lastly, a festival is suggested later in this section, to help to bring St Albans' heritage to life, but this can also be used to animate the city and can have contemporary and interactive elements. Ideas for a festival are explored further in the section on St Albans' heritage.

SACDC should:

- Establish a festival for the city to animate the streets and raise the profile of the city.
- Host public art and performance in Verulamium Park during the summer, such as open air film screenings.
- Working with STARTS group, based in the Old Town Hall, to facilitate the hosting of theatre and art from local arts groups.
- Redevelop a larger art gallery in the city centre, perhaps using an architectural competition to create an iconic contemporary building for the city.
- Refurbish or redevelop the Alban Arena with larger capacity to attract national and international acts, and marketing a combined offer of theatre and heritage.
- Create a piazza on to which the Alban Arena can front, to bring performance into the public arena.
- Explore further opportunities for using the Abbey as a venue for classical and other concerts.

Bringing St Albans' heritage to life

Verulamium Park

St Albans has an extremely rich heritage, including a coveted role as one of the Romans' key settlements in Britain. The archaeological nature of the Roman settlement, however, presents a challenge in terms of bringing this heritage to life. Evidence of Roman life is hidden beneath the ground and the remains are highly sensitive so solutions need to be explored carefully.

The potential for St Albans' Roman heritage to raise the profile of the city and to provide a nationally renowned educational and cultural visitor experience is huge and is currently underexploited. It is felt that a comprehensive set of options, ranging from bold and challenging interventions to more conservative interpretation techniques should be explored by the council and relevant heritage bodies to help bring this national treasure more effectively to life for people- local residents and visitors alike.

Recreating part of the city - A bold proposition for drawing on the city's Roman heritage would be to bring the Roman settlement to life visually by recreating some of the city so that visitors can have a sense of how it would have been to live in the city – to walk its streets or stand at key buildings. Reconstruction is not a commonly preferred approach to archaeological sites within the UK; the charter of Venice (1969), which governs the UK's policy stance on this, advises that any reconstruction of a monument must stop at the point where conjecture begins, and does not suggest restoration of features. However, English Heritage's draft document Reconstruction on Historic Sites (AMAC 1999) indicates that a degree of restoration may be acceptable, so



long as the original fabric of the site was not damaged, nor its appearance or setting, and that proposed constructions could be reversible and distinguishable from the original fabric.

Guided by input from English Heritage, and undertaken with detailed historic research and integrity in terms of materials reconstruction could range from a section of the city, to simply the city gates. Such projects would clearly require significant amounts of capital funding, and would raise a series of questions which would need to be answered through City-wide debate.

Marking the footprint of the city – The original city could also be made more visually apparent by marking the footprint of the city using chalk, as was done to create White Horse Hill in Oxfordshire. This could give people a sense of the city and provide an opportunity to ‘walk the streets’ of the Roman settlement without requiring the recreation of built forms.

Interpretation techniques – visualisations of the city could be provided on clear glass at key points around the site, to give an impression to the visitor of how the city would appear from different angles. If positioned carefully, these perspective visualisations could be viewed in conjunction with the chalk marked layout so that the city actually appears on the marked streets.

It will be important for any intervention to help to tell the story of the Roman settlement and to provide greater visual access in some form to this incredible heritage of national importance.

There is also an opportunity to increase awareness of the City’s wider Medieval and Ironage heritage within updated exhibitions at the St Albans Museum. Modern technologies have a lot to offer in creating long term and temporary exhibitions which can

appeal to a wide audience, helping to visually reconstruct the past and make profound links through to the present. This should be an area for future investment.

St Albans Cathedral has a clear educational focus in its vision and development plans for the coming years, and this presents a real opportunity to bring the heritage of the Cathedral and the city to life.

Events & Festivals

Events and festivals offer a good way to raise the profile of the city and generate new and additional visits. St Albans will seek to become identified as the leading event destination across the North London Arc building on the current calendar of events through greater promotion and a broadened programme of event activity.

The City Vision seeks to create a more vibrant, cultural and event base to the city. In particular, opportunities can be developed by making more of the Roman heritage of Verulamium and the Christian heritage of the Cathedral and Abbey Church. It could draw on local academic links in surrounding Universities, including its proximity to the ‘Golden Triangle’ research Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and London, and could have wider educational benefits for the local population. In the longer term events can be used as a trigger for generating increased in-region visitors, broadening the awareness of St Albans as a cultural destination with year round activity.

We recommend three actions:

- The city explores the opportunity to develop a new additional festival built around a theme with integrity to the city and its vision for the future. This might be themed around a particular aspect of culture and heritage. It presents a tangible project that demonstrates how increased support for tourism and cultural activities is integral to the City Vision. The potential of events and festivals to build up over time needs to be acknowledged. During that period the city should measure progress and success, aiming to increase sponsorship and support. Events and festivals can introduce St Albans to new audiences and creates a specific reason to visit that can positively help shape and change perceptions of the city.
- To build on the Roman events offer currently available in St Albans. The city already uses its Roman heritage as a theme throughout the year for various occasional events including Roman re-enactments, legionaries, ‘chariot racing’ and food and crafts. Verulamium Park acts as a venue during the St Albans Festival as well as at other times of the year. Achieving growth on the current level of activity will require additional investment to support the existing collaboration between the museum service, green spaces and parks team and tourism team. Verulamium Park offers the potential to host a separate event outside of the summer St Albans Festival that could provide support to summer weekends or a Bank Holiday weekend.

5.3 Culture and leisure

- There is also the opportunity to optimise the role of niche spiritual tourism including the importance of the Cathedral as the site of the first British Christian martyr, St Alban. The Albantide Procession is a significant feature of the summer Festival and more could be made of the historic nature of the city.

To deliver these three actions and maximise the economic benefit St Albans needs:

- to ensure events planning and development engage and work with tourism businesses and bring the event into the city centre;
- to translate this joint working into commercial opportunities for city centre shops, cafes and restaurants and visitor accommodation by identifying specific opportunities to develop festival promotions and for individual establishments to deliver themed displays or hold additional activities; and
- to seek sponsorship for events to augment budgets and help expand the extent and nature of festival activity.

Subject to funding, a particular opportunity is to use the proposed 410 Festival to strengthen the heritage festival offer and as a foothold into wider opportunities for more populist heritage events based around Roman Verulamium.

The 410 Festival is an archaeology, museum and heritage project to commemorate 1600 years since the departure of the Romans from Britain in 2010. The project, supported by the Council, aims to reach out to as wide an audience as possible with links to the Cultural Olympiad. While the three main strands to this project - academic, educational and public access - and promoting a greater understanding of archaeology are not targeting visitors directly there are opportunities to broaden the audience for the festival.

SACDC should:

- Develop an ambitious and challenging set of proposals for bringing Verulamium to life, which can then be explored with heritage bodies. These can include proposals suggested in the Verulamium Park Conservation Management Plan and in those from this section.
- Continue to explore options for developing a festival for the city, celebrating the Roman and Christian heritage of the city, ensuring clarity of purpose for each of the city's festivals
- Explore options for commissioning a piece of public art to celebrate the city's Roman heritage.



Raising the profile of St Albans as a tourist destination

Tourism is about visitors; the people who come to St Albans for either leisure or business purposes on a non-regular basis. Visitors may come to see friends and relatives, for a meeting with a business located in St Albans or on a discretionary basis, choosing this historic city rather than another destination for a day out or a short break. St Albans can influence discretionary visitors, encouraging new people to come to St Albans, to stay longer and come back again.

The visitor economy is the total experience; the visitor attractions, the visitor accommodation and, significantly, the total environment in which these activities take place and how that space is presented and managed. The public realm in St Albans is not designed and managed exclusively for the benefit of visitors but it is important to consider any different needs they might have compared with local regular users and residents of the city.

St Albans has some headline information about its visitors but much of its knowledge about visitor profiles and visitor activities is anecdotal. Consultations and a review of available data suggest that currently tourism in St Albans comprises predominantly non-discretionary business visits, visiting friends and relatives (VFR), leisure day visitors attracted by the city's heritage and retail offer and visitors to events and festivals. However, the City has associations with figures of international significance (for example Francis Bacon, and Samuel Ryder who is very well known in America), which could be drawn on more effectively to draw visitors up from London. This process could be reinforced through collaboration with St Albans Museum in terms of its permanent collection.

Extremely limited resources means that St Albans has so far not been able to pro-actively identify and develop its destination potential or undertake destination marketing. Consultations showed consensus and enthusiasm for including tourism in the vision for St Albans future. The community and the local authority recognise and agree that St Albans, as a cathedral city with a rich Roman heritage and distinctive leisure shopping, may be under performing in the tourism sector. A cultural centre would contribute to that offer and add breadth and depth to it.

St Albans is the visitor destination in Hertfordshire with arguably the strongest tourism growth potential because of its rich heritage, strong specialist shopping offer and attractive historic city centre. It also has good rail and road connections to other parts of the region and to both North and South London. As such, part of the vision for the city's future should be to set the standard for tourism development, marketing and management for the County.

There are a number of key ongoing and immediate actions which St Albans need to take. These actions are important building blocks to realising the tourism potential of St Albans.

Valuing and investing in market intelligence – St Albans needs to prioritise developing a better understanding of who visits St Albans now. In particular the city needs to understand the motivation of its visitors, their opinion of the city, their interests and their patterns of visiting. This information will assist in planning tactical marketing and promotional activity in the immediate future. It will feed into longer term planning including building up a more detailed picture of target markets.

Developing a 5 year Tourism Strategy and Action Plan – St Albans should develop a tourism strategy which provides a framework and rationale for future investment in tourism. This tourism strategy will sit beneath the City Vision as a delivery tool for tourism. The strategy will include a clear identification of target market segments and the investment that needs to be made to the product offer and to the total visitor experience to meet the needs of these markets. It will also set out marketing priorities and media. It will identify the scale and nature of people and funding resources required. The process of developing the tourism strategy should be designed to help engender joint working, building on what has been achieved to date, including through the development of this City Vision. The strategy will have an accompanying action plan set within a prioritised timeline. This will include indicative budgets for key tasks, identify methods to measure progress and to evaluate success. The action plan will identify lead roles for partners. It could also produce a branding strategy with logos to provide a memorable image for target markets.

Putting staff and delivery funding in place to deliver the plan – St Albans' commitment to tourism needs to include allocating financial resources commensurate with the scale of ambition for the city. A balance needs to be struck between what is desirable and what is achievable. Any tourism strategy would need to work closely with the local authority and the industry to help achieve that and look at how resources can be maximised through working in partnership with other destinations, with the County and with the region more widely to make marketing budgets go further and through reinforcing key messages to target audiences and sharing market intelligence. The new Butterfly World is an exciting opportunity to attract additional visitors into the city centre but

will only be successful through close planning and collaboration takes place with the visitor attraction.

Target Visitor Markets

The direct value of tourism to the local economy is created by visitor spend. Different types of visitor offer higher spend opportunities than others. Maximising the potential of that spend is reliant on developing, presenting and packaging a visitor experience that offers what target markets want, when they want.

Culture and heritage and festivals are key target themes for tourism in the East of England. There are opportunities to strengthen links within the region to add value to the St Albans proposition.

St Albans and the surrounding countryside can also have a strong appeal to the London market and the rural and market town character of the city, in such close proximity to the capital should be exploited.

Culture and heritage have a strong appeal to older professional couples from higher socio-economic groups travelling independently or on special interest group visits. This is a growing market segment but a hugely competitive one with every destination targeting these visitors. St Albans needs to target its own promotion carefully to ensure a good return on its investment. We recommend that St Albans commissions detailed market segmentation work to pinpoint more precisely where the real opportunities lie. Ideally, this work will be undertaken to coincide with developing the tourism strategy, so each piece of work informs the other.

5.3 Culture and leisure

We recommend St Albans takes a three stage approach to developing its tourism markets.

Stage 1 – focus on developing the potential of existing visitors including those visiting the city variously for its heritage, leisure shopping and for festivals and events. Key actions are:

- To develop a better understanding of the profile and activities of existing markets by undertaking visitor surveys throughout the year within the city centre
- To use this intelligence to inform product investment priorities and to help develop targeted marketing and promotional activity working in partnership with the tourism industry and retailers to encourage new and repeat day visitors and to extend the length of stay

Stage 2 - develop in-region visitors for day trips and overnight stays. St Albans has a potential visitor base of a considerable size within the East of England region. Key actions:

- To identify combinations of products and experiences and to develop marketing and promotional activity around the heritage, shopping, eating out and events and festivals offer
- To evolve and develop these opportunities overtime and as the CityVision is rolled out, using the delivery of key culture and heritage projects as triggers for new promotional actions. In particular focusing on developing the overnight market assuming growth in numbers of bedspaces.
- To use planned attractions such as Butterfly World and the Heartwood Forest as particular

opportunities, working closely with the attractions to achieve two venue visits.

- To ensure strong coordination with Town Centre Management and attractions with the city, so that visits can be well coordinated between Verulamium, the Cathedral and the city centre.

Stage 3 – extend the market reach for short breaks – competition, ease of access and market fit will determine the priority geographical locations over time. Monitoring and evaluation of marketing activity will inform priorities and help determine target locations that offer the strongest potential and the greatest return on investment. Key to achieving potential is:

- To explore opportunities to work more effectively with other parts of the region to offer a critical mass of product of comparative quality and to maximise the customer relationship marketing through the development of a tourism site for St Albans and by linking up with Visit East of England site.

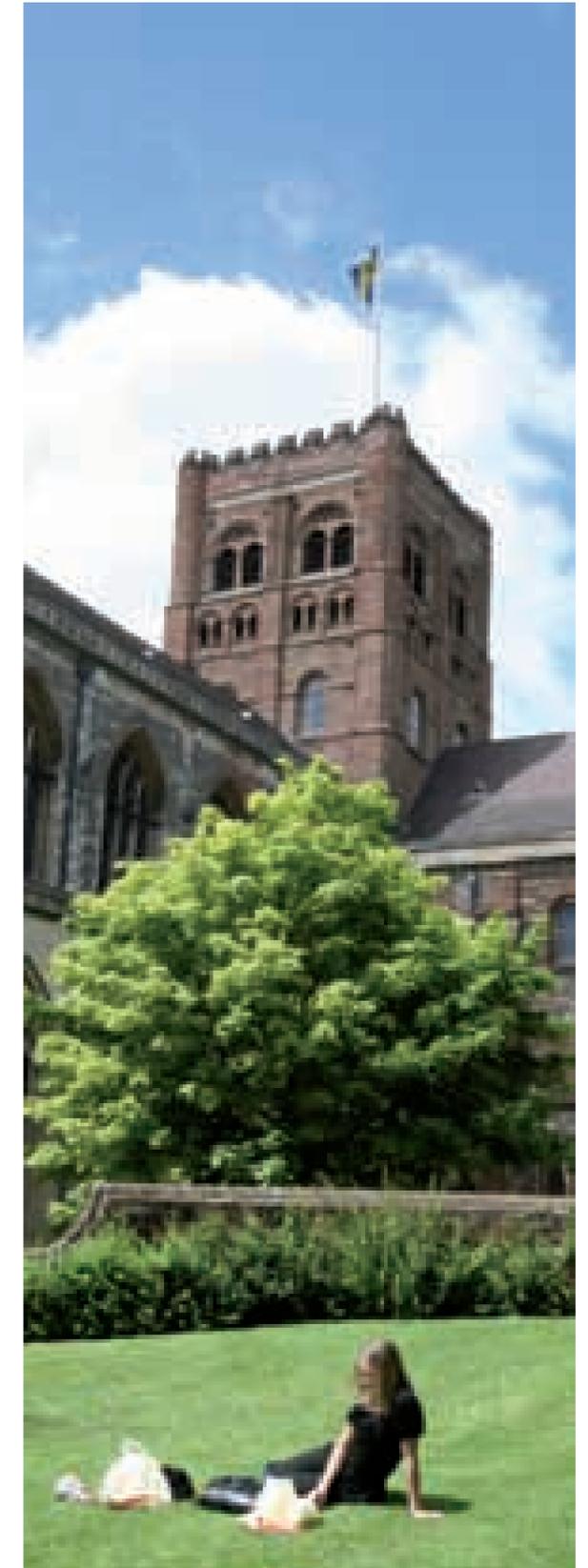
St Albans should make more of PR which creates a way of getting key messages out to target audiences for little or no cost. It can be instigated at short notice.

Building on Success and Improving the Offer

Delivering the marketing promise is essential to build up image, reputation and help to generate repeat trips. Three specific opportunities have been identified for focus and product investment in the short to medium term: events and festivals, improving the legibility of the city and its heritage and growing bed capacity to grow the short-break market.

SACDC should:

- Build up a body of evidence regarding the type of visitors to St Albans now and their motivations for visiting, to inform a strategic approach for attracting visitors.
- Consider the development of a five-year tourism strategy.
- Explore methods of increasing delivery funding and staff training.
- Identify cross-theme uses which can help support the development of the visitor economy, including shops, restaurants, the heritage offer and festival.
- Ensure strong communication with Butterfly World.
- Explore opportunities for working with other parts of the region to maximise the benefit of marketing funding for the city.



Opportunity for a cinema in the city

St Albans has been without a cinema for a good number of years and during consultation, this was repeatedly identified as a desirable use for the city. Providing a cinema would also help to address another key issue which emerged during the consultation for the project, which is to improve the facilities and activities available for young people in the area.

The refurbishment of the former cinema on London Road has been suggested by the public and there has been interest from the team which refurbished the Rex in Berkhamstead. Proposals have also been put forward for the development of a multiplex style cinema on the civic centre site. To date, none of these proposals have proved to be feasible, and the multiplex option also met with some opposition in terms of scale and massing.

There is no doubt that providing a cinema in St Albans will be challenging, but a city of St Albans' size and status should certainly have cinema facilities for its community. In addition to this, providing a cinema in the centre of the city will support activity in the evening and provide an alternative evening economy use to alcohol based activities. It can also attract visitors from the surrounding area, which can bring benefits to St Albans through linked shopping trips.

Costs for small cinemas have been prohibitively expensive for a number of years, but with changes to the way in which films are distributed and screened currently underway, this situation could improve. Traditional 35mm equipment has shifted to DVD format recently, and a shift is again likely over the coming years to digital projection. This format has an expensive initial outlay but does not

have the associated high costs of film rental from a supplier. St Albans could be in a position to be at the forefront of this new technology.

There are a number of cinema models, covering differing scales, and all will be considered during the masterplanning stage of the project. The key issues and financial considerations for each are set out in the table opposite. The favoured format for a cinema would be small, independent cinema which could locate in the centre of the city without causing issues relating to scale and massing. It is envisaged that the cinema could have a café at the ground floor to provide active frontage and animation to the street.

In addition to these options, a further community model has been pioneered by a number of small cinemas across the country, including the Wotton Electric Picture House in Wotton-Under-Edge, Gloucestershire and the Qube in Owesry, Shropshire.

Scale/Size	Key Characteristics	Financial Considerations
Small/ boutique: 1 – 3 screens	Typically regional rather than national providers Parking desirable but not always necessary Can offer a range of showings not just mainstream e.g. arthouse Digital technology is important Typical operators – City Screens, Everyman, Reel Cinemas May take 'alternative/existing buildings' and refurbish for use Prefer town/city centres	Financial deals vary considerably from those who pay a rent with no premium/subsidy, to those who do. Sometimes rent is based on turnover Often weaker covenants can present higher risk Some small scale cinemas are currently expanding e.g. Everyman Can be co-located with other community uses May not operate 7 days per week
Medium: 4 – 7 screens –(circa 15,000 – 25,000 sq. ft. for cinema only)	Require parking, and not conflicting with other uses at peak times although cross use can be acceptable Almost always developed with other leisure related uses (restaurants/café) Generally prefer town/city centre locations Mainstream film showings Visibility important New build Typical operators – Apollo, Cine UK, Vue	Cinema operator heavily subsidised c. £1m - £2.5m cross subsidy Rent often below market value c. £7.50 - £9.50 psf. Cinema usually developed alongside other major uses to fund (typically) unviable leisure element e.g. residential, foodstore etc. Some operators in this category only target towns of a certain scale. e.g. Apollo Usually quite challenging to deliver in financial terms
Large/ multiplex: 8+ screens (25,000 sq. ft+ for cinema only).	Always require significant adjacent parking Viability important Developed with other leisure uses – bowling alleys, bingo halls, nightclubs, casinos, restaurants, cafés, bars etc. Large sites required to create sufficient critical mass Visibility important New build Tendency to be edge of/out of town Typical operators – Vue, Cineworld	Subsidies to operators dependent on scheme mix Rents likely to be closer to open market value Can be viable without other cross funding uses Low value sites are key to delivery – hence town centre locations not preferred

5.3 Culture and leisure

Hotel development opportunities in St Albans

For St Albans to maximise the economic potential of tourism it needs to deliver additional bed spaces that meet the needs of target markets. If St Albans achieves growth in tourism overall, hotel development will follow. What is key is to plan that process as far as possible to achieve the desired outcomes. Not all visitor beds have the same value to St Albans.

Investment in hotels tends to follow increases in economic activity for business and leisure tourism. The proposed edge of town development for a 2 and 4 star hotel is likely to have been triggered by the new Butterfly World attraction and is a good example of this investment pattern.

Successful enhancements can also encourage existing operators to reinvest and refurbish accommodation in order to raise the quality of their offer to meet new competition or to transfer ownership or branding. So there are also evolutionary achievements to be gained from long term visioning and regeneration.

Masterplans offer local authorities an important opportunity to influence the type of hotel development that takes place where they are in ownership of the land. This is not the case in St Albans, so the city is reliant on its strategic activity to influence market forces. A good inward investment communications strategy has a key role to play here.

St Albans is part of the first wave of a new trend for enhancements in historic cities that also includes Chester, Lincoln, Salisbury and Durham. The visitor economy is an important sector to help deliver the visions in these places because it is already an established sector. St Albans has yet to establish a foothold in this market and will be competing for hotel developer interest with larger historic cities with more established visitor profiles. Hotel developers have been quick to respond to the enhancement of historic towns by investing in new hotels, in particular boutique hotel chains that recognise the strong alignment between the values of historic cities and their brand.

City centre full-service hotels, (that is those that offer not only beds but also meeting rooms and conference facilities and possibly a restaurant open to non-residents), tend to generate higher direct economic impacts compared to budget hotels. They may also play a key part in attracting other leisure, commercial and residential investors, in part because their brand association helps reposition the destination in the mind of the consumer and investor.

In St Albans there is a need to take a two phased approach:

Short term opportunity – interest exists from a hotel provider for a 2 and 4 star hotel development on the edge of the city close to the planned Butterfly World site.

The proposal is an excellent opportunity to realise dedicated conference facilities, enabling St Albans to offer a better and enhanced business tourism offer for the region. It also presents an opportunity to support transport objectives with proposals for the inclusion of a park and ride base with a link into the city centre as part of the development.

Experience elsewhere shows that easy public transport routes between attractions, hotels and the city centre is essential to encourage visitors to travel between facilities. The Council should regard the park and ride element as integral to the development. Clearly, there is a revenue cost to the city in running that service.

Hotel provision within the city centre is considered to bring greater value for St Albans and the proposed hotel site is on greenbelt land, though adjacent to roads and developed land on all sides.

However, hotel and conference facilities are both in high demand and active provider interest presents a means of achieving this. Potential coordination with Butterfly World and public transport facilities bring additional value for the proposal.

The Cathedral presents an additional opportunity to develop conference facilities within the city centre, either linked to a hotel offer in the city, or for one day conferences. The Cathedral is currently exploring opportunities for providing such facilities.

Longer term – attracting a boutique or town house hotel into the city centre. Success will be inter-dependent on growing the size of the overnight leisure and business tourism market and diversifying the offer.

5.3 Culture and leisure - St Albans Cathedral

Introduction

St Albans Cathedral is integral to the identity of the city, placing it in a select number of 'cathedral cities' in the country which enjoy a strong national profile. The Abbey is a popular pilgrimage destination, attracting more than 200,000 visitors and pilgrims a year and remains a proud reminder of St Albans' rich religious and community heritage, having been a site of Christian worship for over 1,700 years.

The national profile of the cathedral is matched by active engagement with the local community, with a congregation numbering more than 1,500 and an award winning heritage education programme which benefits 16,000 school children a year.

The Abbey and its environs provide a unique environment which is considered to be one of St Albans' key assets. Attractive open and secluded public green spaces are provided through the Orchard and Vintry Garden, which are extremely popular in the summer, and courtyard areas provide further potential as key public spaces for events.

Despite the Abbey's national profile, however, it remains relatively hidden within the city, physically, visually and structurally. Opportunity exists, therefore to integrate the cathedral with the city centre more effectively – both physically and psychologically.

This section explores this and other key issues relating to the Abbey and sets out proposals for how these might be addressed in the future.

Context

Abbey vision

The Dean and Chapter are currently developing a strategic vision for the Abbey, which crystallises the role and identity of the Abbey and sets out the strategic direction for the organisation. The timeframe for the vision covers the next 20 years or so, coordinating well with the vision for the wider city. It is therefore important that links are made between the two and that thinking between the Abbey and the District Council is coordinated.

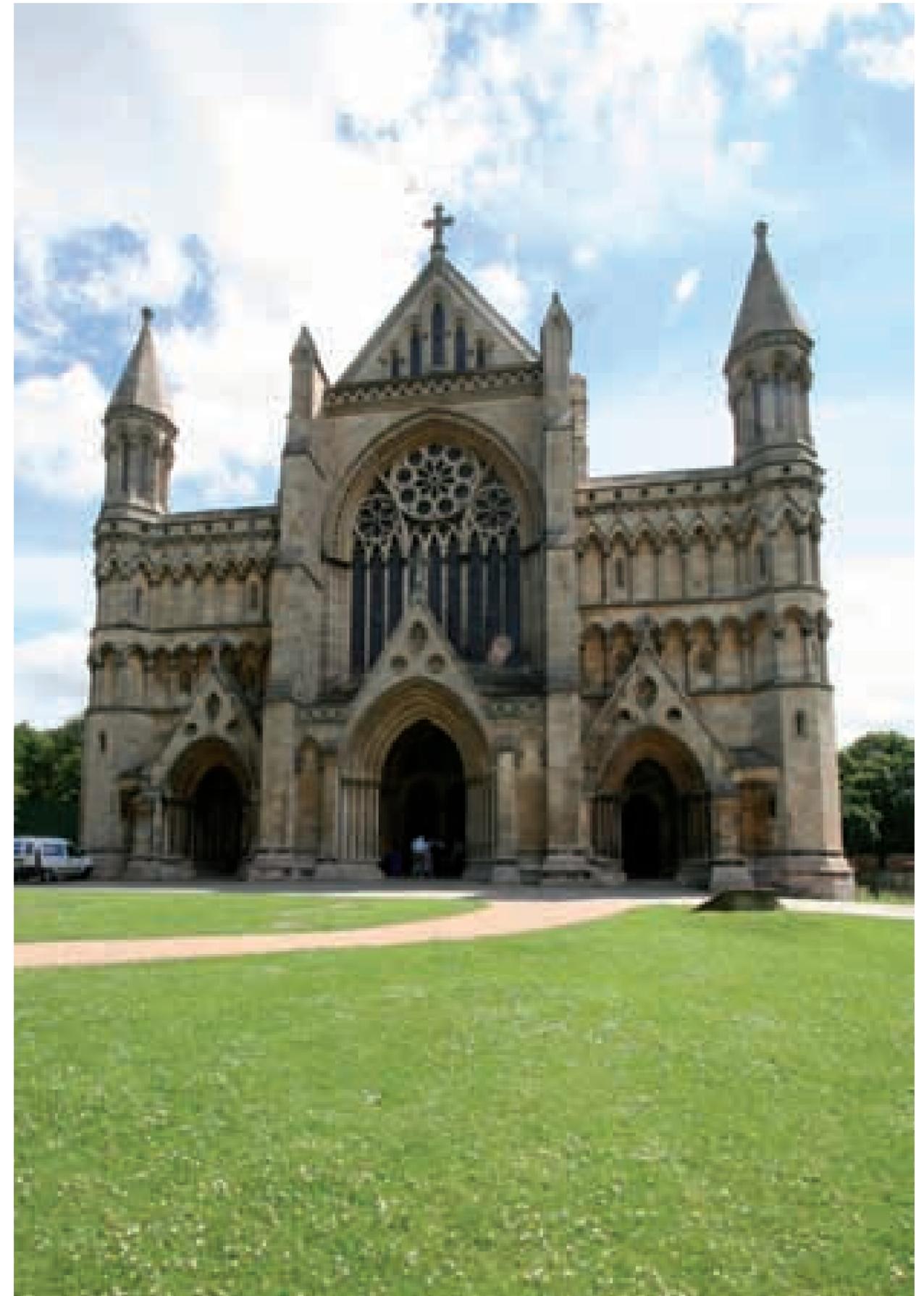
The developing vision identifies the essence of the Abbey as:

"inspired by Alban, Britain's first Christian martyr, sustained by our tradition of hospitality, worship and learning, and renowned as a place of pilgrimage, the cathedral is a community of welcome and witness".

The vision further develops a number of key themes which will guide the Abbey's future investment and activity. These include enhancing Abbey's national and local profile, expanding and improving its education and outreach work, and enhancing its facilities to fulfil its role as a centre of community activity.

Heritage Lottery Fund bid

The Dean and Chapter is in the process of preparing a Heritage Lottery Fund bid to help undertake the vision proposals for improving education and interpretation facilities for visitors and students to the Abbey. Securing such funding will help to achieve the step change needed in order to deliver the proposals and is considered a key priority for the Abbey over the coming year.



5.3 Culture and leisure - St Albans Cathedral

Raising the profile of the Abbey

Despite being a cathedral of national profile and site of national and international pilgrimage, St Albans Cathedral remains relatively hidden within the city itself for a number of reasons:

- The local topography means that the cathedral spire is visible from few locations;
- The development of the medieval city to the north east of the Abbey means that the cathedral's western entrance now faces away from the city centre
- The intricate and fine grain historic built fabric mean that there are no viewing corridors towards the cathedral for the city centre

The Abbey's sheltered location within the city does have its merits, providing a quiet and reflexive space for pilgrims and visitors and a calm and relaxing environment for the local community to enjoy lunch in the summer or to read a book. It is considered important, therefore, to raise the profile of the cathedral and improve its connections to the city centre without losing the distinct character of the area.

Suggestions

- The unique character of the Abbey's setting could be emphasised through the creation of a Cathedral Quarter, with distinct paving, lighting and signage that would help to raise the profile of the Abbey area. Signage to the Cathedral Quarter could also form an important way-finding tool for the Abbey from other parts of the city.

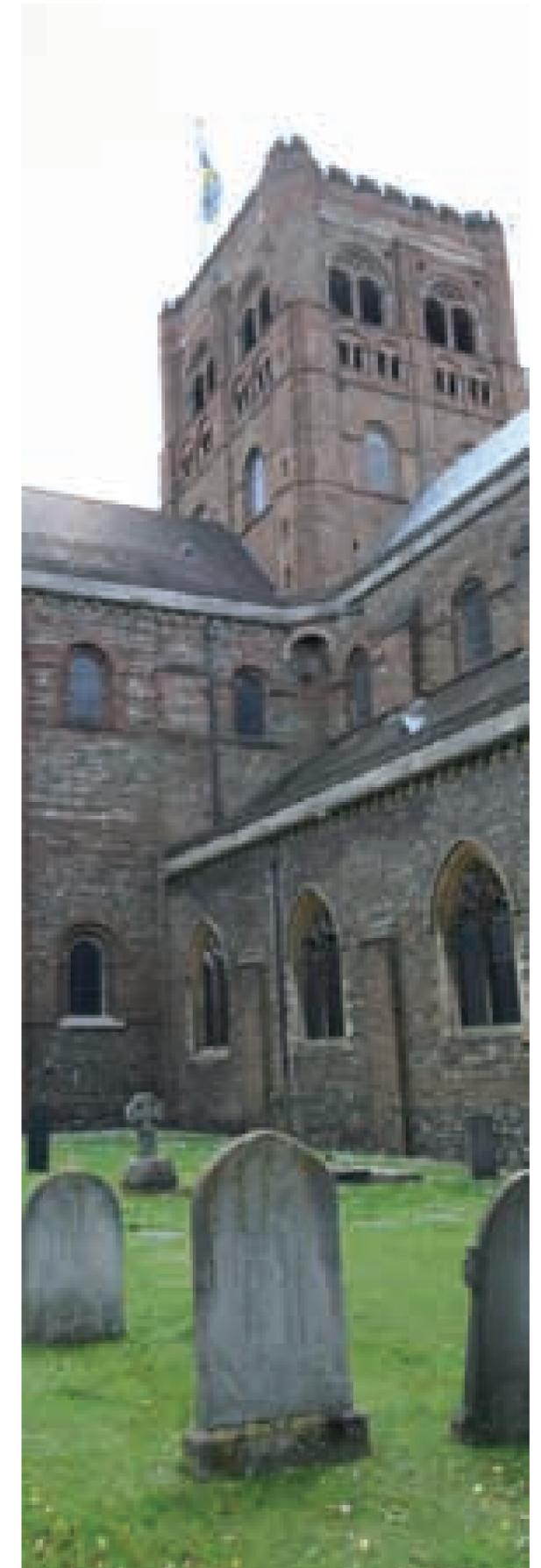
The Abbey could be physically and visually integrated with the city centre through providing stronger links to the High Street, giving the Abbey a presence on this key route which separates the cathedral area from the core of the city.

- To achieve this, the Abbey visitor shop could be relocated to one of the retail sites adjacent to Waxhouse Gate. This would provide a strong physical presence in the city centre, opposite the key public space at the Clocktower, and would mark the entrance to the Cathedral Quarter. It would also draw visitors down this route to the northern entrance to the Cathedral. It is likely that the Cathedral itself would also retain a visitor shop.
- A physical pedestrian link could be considered to the west of the Heritage Close development, with a direct visual link being created to the Abbey's stained glass window on the northern side of the Abbey. Views to this key feature of the cathedral are currently extremely limited.

Consideration has also been given to strengthening the link from Waxhouse Gate to the Abbey. However, the Listed Buildings enclosing the gateway complicate this option and the kink at the northern end of the passageway prevents a direct visual link to the Abbey from being created. The enclosed

character of the passageway further represents a distinctive historic language of the city which lends character to St Albans and has been used as a prompt for the central masterplan.

- The profile of the Abbey could be further enhanced through stronger connections with the city museum. The current location of the city museum at the northern end of the city centre acts as a competing directional force and pulls visitors away from the Abbey. The suggested new location for the museum in the central cultural hub, however, would enable the two institutions to complement one another.
- This link could be further strengthened by creating cross links in the information and exhibits at each institution. The city museum does not currently provide much detail on the Abbey, and vice versa, and opportunity exists to exploit these links more effectively
- A creative lighting strategy for the Abbey could further raise its profile, including lighting the building from the inside at night and locating LED lights along the roofline of the cathedral building. This approach could be both energy efficient and creative



Enhancing the visitor interpretation experience of the Cathedral

The western aspect of the main entrance to the Abbey results in few visitors entering the Cathedral from the entrance originally intended to the welcoming point. This has an impact on the experience of the visitor to the Abbey and presents challenges in providing a clear interpretive narrative for the Abbey.

As with St Albans' Roman heritage, the Abbey also sits above a rich archaeological heritage which currently remains unseen by visitors.

Suggestions

- Potential exists to encourage more visitors to approach the Cathedral from Verulamium Park, creating a stronger interpretation route which follows the chronological history of the city, from Roman times, to the creation of the Abbey and then on to medieval St Albans. Promotion of such a heritage trail would further raise the profile of the Abbey within the city.
- Should a pedestrian link be developed from the High Street to the north directly to the northern wall with the stained glass window (as mentioned above) it would be easier to then direct visitors from here to the main western entrance
- It may benefit the Cathedral to develop an interpretive route which is flexible in terms of starting point, so that visitors can appreciate the value of the Abbey whether approaching the main entrance to the west, or approaching the northern entrance from the city centre, which is currently a far busier route
- It would be useful for a full spatial review of the Cathedral and its surrounds to be undertaken, to analyse the flow of visitors and explore methods of restructuring the movement networks and flows around the Abbey.
- If funding can be secured, it would be valuable for the Cathedral to reveal some of the rich heritage which sits beneath the grounds of the cathedral, such as uncovering some of the catacombs and providing a protective glass layer.



5.3 Culture and leisure - St Albans Cathedral

Developing and improving the educational and outreach work of the Cathedral

The Cathedral currently operates a very successful education programme with 16,000 school children visiting each year. However, the facilities for this educational work are currently stretched and the Cathedral would require additional educational space in order to continue to develop the educational services at the Cathedral and achieve the goals set out in the Cathedral vision.

The Dean and Chapter currently has clear ideas regarding new facilities required to deliver the enhanced education programme at the Cathedral, including re-establishing a cloisters space and a developing a second chapter house to accommodate a new educational facility. The Cathedral has strong potential to achieve this in terms of the space available to the Dean and Chapter, but securing funding would be critical to bringing these plans to fruition.

Suggestions

- It would be useful to build a clear business and funding case for potential development work by preparing an estates strategy which sets out the current spaces and facilities, the requirements for new provision in terms of space, access, and facilities and the requirements therefore for new development go accommodate these.

Developing the events programme at the Cathedral

The Cathedral currently runs a successful events programme, with bookings for the spaces within the Cathedral filling two years in advance. However, the Cathedral currently operates in response to event requests and would like to manage these more strategically.

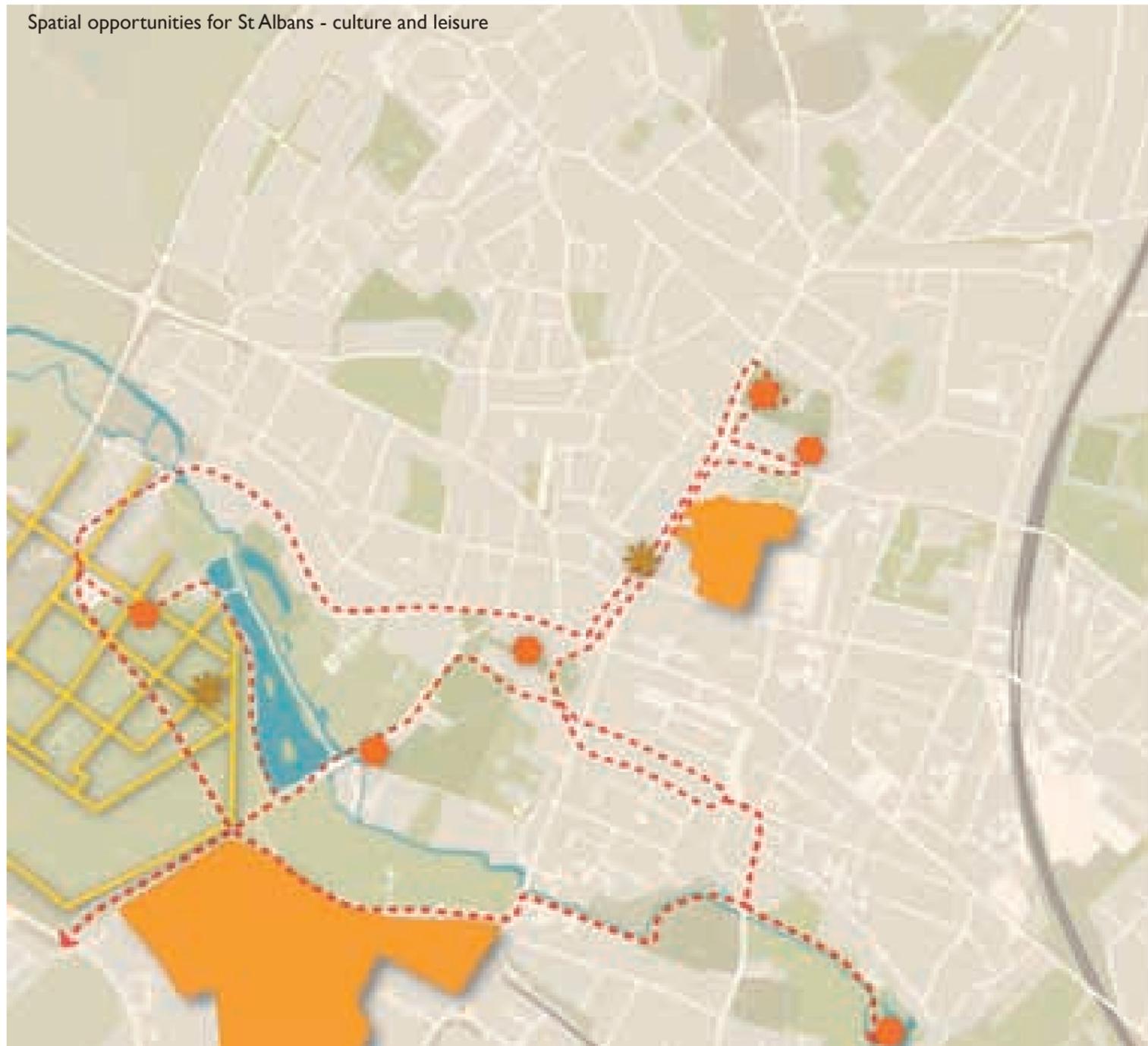
The popularity of the Cathedral as a venue means that it is difficult to accommodate events and activities for the St Albans Festival and the Dean and Chapter would like to ensure forward planning so that the Cathedral can play a key role in future festivals in the city

The Cathedral is a popular location for television and film productions and currently responds to these requests on an ad hoc basis. It would be useful to the Cathedral to have the organisational structures and facilities to develop the Cathedral's profile as a filming location.

Suggestions

- The Dean and Chapter can establish seasons of events and performances, proactively approaching acts and performers who would strengthen the offer and appeal of the seasons. This would help to raise the profile of the Cathedral, with valuable marketing opportunities
- Close coordination between the Cathedral and District Council will ensure that festival events can be flagged in advance and can be accommodated at the cathedral. Active participation of the Cathedral in taking forward the City Vision, through a steering group role, will help to ensure this close coordination.

Spatial opportunities for St Albans - culture and leisure



Key

-  Cultural and public focus with mix of Hotel, cinema, leisure, gallery, museum, theatre
-  Cultural anchor
-  Public events
-  Heritage circuit
-  Visible Roman city

Summary of spatial interventions

- Enhancing the heritage route in the city, with consistent signage and interpretation along the route;
- Creating a central cultural hub in the city centre, with flagship cultural uses, including a cinema, a refurbished theatre and an art gallery;
- Revealing the footprint of the Roman city and providing interpretive installations and public art celebrating the history of the city;
- Providing public art and animation through events in key spaces such as Market Place and Verulamium Park; and
- Exploring the potential for creating new Roman baths for the city which draw inspiration from the original bath house from the Roman city.
- Improving hotel provision.

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5.4 Sustainable Community

“Homes will be provided, which support a sustainable and diverse community for St Albans and attract young people to the area. St Albans will transform itself into a green and sustainable city with an accessible centre open to all, which can in turn help to bring about a renaissance in the public life of the city centre.”

Like any other settlement, St Albans must play its part in addressing the global sustainability issues such as overconsumption of natural resources and climate change. At a more local level the City must help accommodate the South East's growing population, ensuring that service and job provision keeps pace with residential growth, and promoting social cohesion among an increasingly diverse population. Intensification of St Albans City Centre implies an increased demand for local resources, particularly water and energy and greater generation of waste, and pressure on the local transport network is a particular issue for the City.

St Albans is a comparatively wealthy city, with a significant portion of residents earning well above the national average. As a result, however, St Albans is no longer an affordable place to live. This could lead to greater inequality within the city and a skewed demographic.

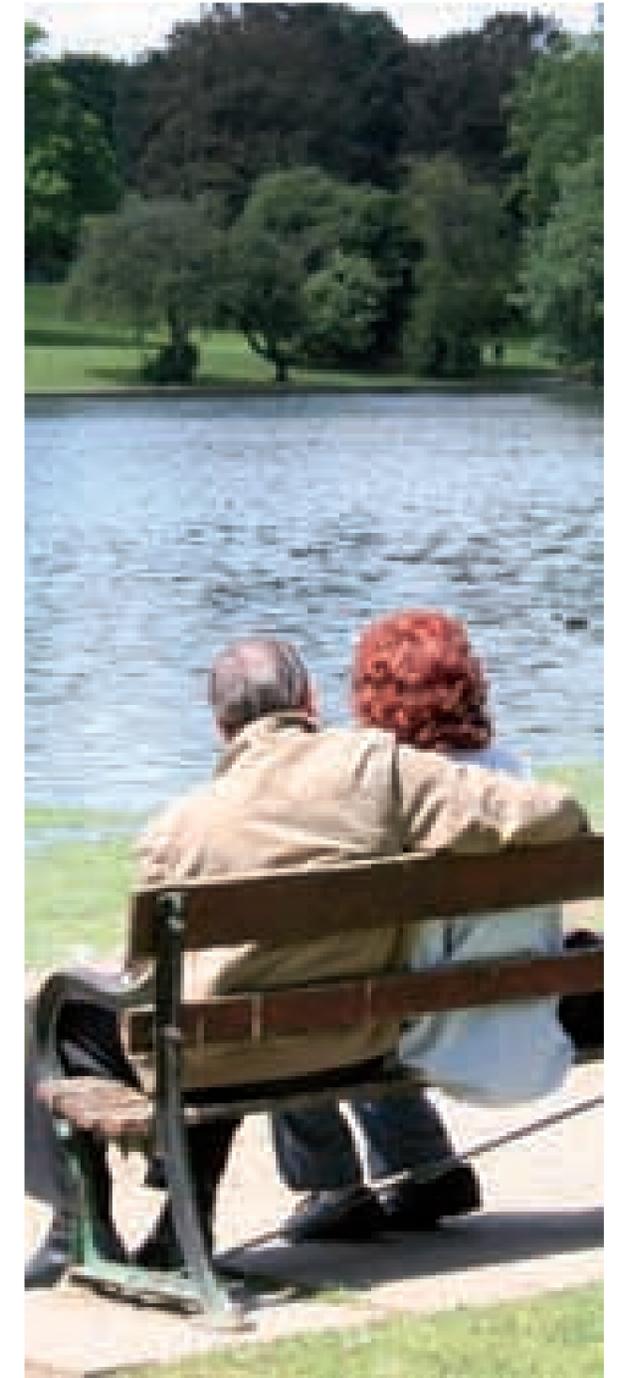
In addressing social issues the City has a strong sense of local identity and community to build on, with active community and voluntary groups. But there is also a need to ensure that macro changes are addressed at a local scale. St Albans has a large carbon footprint and is relatively inefficient in its use of resources compared with its peers nationally, yet the City's residents are keen to see greater action in mitigating climate change.

The strategy proposals offer a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to implement a step-change in sustainable living as part of potentially significant change in the centre. The strategy also provides ways in which St Albans can provide for the social needs of all its residents, particularly younger and older groups, by providing a wide range of suitable housing, better access to social infrastructure and

a more vibrant public life to promote community cohesion.

Vision Objectives

- Providing education and employment opportunities for all
- Providing mixed tenure and unit size housing, to meet residents' life-cycle requirements
- Addressing pockets of deprivation with targeted initiatives
- Celebrating diversity in the city
- Creating a public life for the city
- Providing facilities and activities for young people
- Developing sustainable energy management
- Ensuring sustainable water and waste management
- Adapting to climate change



Providing mixed tenure and unit size housing, to meet residents' life-cycle requirements

St Albans currently suffers from a lack of affordable housing. This issue, which was registered during the consultation process, could become an even more significant issue for the city over the next decade, should no action be taken. Likely impacts could include increased inequalities in some of the City's most deprived areas, a lack of choice for young families and lower retention of younger groups and graduates. The City should be aiming to retain graduates in particular, to support the City's entrepreneurial base as part of a diversification of the City's economy.

There is an opportunity to provide a significant amount of affordable housing as part of St Albans' contribution to regional targets: the East of England's Regional Spatial Strategy identifies a minimum capacity for 7,200 homes within St Albans City and District until 2021, and there are a number of city centre opportunity sites where some of these could be delivered. The recent Housing Needs Survey and Update recommended adoption of a 40% affordable 2:1 social rented to intermediate housing policy in order to fully meet St Albans' need for affordable housing. Where possible, older housing stock should be over-hauled.

St Albans should provide a greater range of housing sizes and types, including a significant portion of affordable housing in order to meet the needs of first time buyers, families, and the less well-off. This could be most effectively achieved through policy mechanisms, drawing on the recommendations of the recent Housing Needs Survey and Update. St Albans should also help increase provision of family-sized units.

It will be important to ensure that affordable homes are built to the highest standards, and of equal quality to market housing. City-wide adoption of national design codes and standards such as Building for Life, (produced by CABE and the House Builders Federation) and the Government's Lifetime Homes standard (Joseph Rowntree Foundation) demonstrate the Council's commitment to quality and simplify the quality assessment process for both the Council and developers. Their criteria assure high but deliverable standards of design quality, and are supported by a wealth of case studies nation-wide.

New homes should be located on opportunity sites in and around the city centre to maximise use of brownfield and encourage and strengthen city centre living in St Albans, reflecting national planning policy. Increased provision could also be achieved through redevelopment of poor quality residential developments to higher densities where appropriate, and through redevelopment of disused sites.

Locating homes in the City Centre would ensure best ease of access, encourage sustainable movement and support the City's vibrancy. Homes should be provided as part of mixed use developments, offering high quality city centre living in an attractive and vibrant environment. New homes could also be offered around St Albans' Stations, to encourage sustainable transport.

What can SACDC do?

- In meeting its regional housing targets, SACDC should pursue the Housing Needs Survey recommendations through robust local planning policies and stringent development control

- SACDC should enforce the highest standards of housing design through site briefs and urban design guidelines which adopt national standards such as Building for Life and Lifetime Homes. The Council should proactively help developers meet these standards by providing information and technical support, or incentives where feasible

Addressing pockets of deprivation with targeted initiatives

Taken as a whole, St Albans may be considered an affluent city by national comparison, yet the settlement has pockets of deprivation which can be masked by this relatively privileged city-wide position.

Crime

According to the 2004 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 9 of St Albans' Super Output Areas (SOAs) were ranked within the 30% most deprived nationally in terms of crime. These included SOAs 012B and 012A, representing the immediate city centre around St Peters Street. The outer lying wards are badly affected; Sopwell ward is ranked within the 10% most deprived wards nationally, while Batchwood is ranked in the top 5%.

The Council should pursue different initiatives to address centre crime and local neighbourhood crime within the outer areas. Within the city centre, public realm improvements could play an effective role in crime reduction by designing out the physical conditions which favour it, for example, dark and overly enclosed spaces which do not benefit from natural surveillance by the public. The Council should promote secure design in new developments and public realm upgrades, utilising national guidance documents such as Secured by Design.

The Council's planning department could also work directly with the police to target crime hotspots where urban design solutions would be effective.

Consultation suggested that a significant portion of town centre crime was related to St Albans' night time economy and drinking culture. This should be tackled through a dual approach. The Council should investigate targeted measure to address anti-social behaviour in liaison with the police. However, in the long term, an alternative and complementary approach could be to increase the public's presence on St Albans' Streets through street-based activities as a means of better control and social integration.

Urban design could also have an impact on the outer lying residential areas, but here the Council should also focus on provision of leisure and entertainment. This could include provision of a greater range of community activities and better use and marketing of existing facilities such as Pioneer skate park.

Employment and income

The Super Output Areas (SOAs) 009A in Batchwood ward, 016A in Cunningham ward and 017A in Sopwell ward all score within the top 30% nationally for income and employment deprivation. Outreach in these areas would help raise aspirations and awareness of St Albans' excellent education opportunities. In particular, links should be created between local businesses, schools, and St Albans' business education sector to maximise the potential represented by St Albans' local economic strengths.

5.4 Sustainable Community

What can SACDC do?

- Use site briefs and urban design guidelines to ensure that new developments meet the highest standards of secure urban design.
- Work with the police to develop targeted strategies to address anti-social behaviour associated with the night time economy.
- Lead outreach programmes in local schools and community clubs, utilising local business expertise.



Education, employment opportunities and health access for all

Education is of a comparatively high standard within the city and district, but there are some pockets of deprivation where educational attainment is conspicuously lower than average. Outreach programmes could help address this, to raise awareness of the value of education and training, and to establish apprenticeships with local businesses.

Health provision is an important element of social sustainability, ensuring that a city can meet the needs of residents throughout their lifetimes, and has been raised as an issue by the LSP. While there are no plans for major health expansion in St Albans, consultation revealed a firm desire to see an Accident and Emergency department at St Albans hospital, and this could be reconsidered as a long term possibility, given St Albans' residential growth capacity. Another focus for health provision should be support for healthy lifestyles. The Council could promote this directly by increasing awareness about the benefits of health, but it should also have a key role in delivering the infrastructure which allows residents to remain healthy – programmes to get children engaged in sports activities, and provision of high quality places for people to take exercise. This could be tied in with strategies to encourage sustainable transport.



What can SACDC do?

- The Council should organise outreach programmes. A dedicated officer could establish links between local businesses and schools and be responsible for organising business education programmes and identifying apprenticeship opportunities.
- In liaison with the LSP, the Council should investigate the most effective ways to encourage healthy lifestyles and support the voluntary and community sector in providing preventative and support services.
- Ensure that s106 contributions are channelled into education and health facilities to maintain and improve the City's health and education standards.
- Investigate opportunities for pooled resources with Hertfordshire County Council and surrounding parishes to deliver shared services.

Providing facilities and activities for young people

Youth provision emerged as a key priority throughout the consultation process and is a key priority for the LSP. Young people indicated that they tend to socialise in outdoor spaces such as Verulamium Park, but complained about the quality of such spaces. They wanted to see more spaces which they could feel ownership over. In addition, St Albans was felt to be lacking youth-centred activities such as sports facilities and youth entertainment.

Youth provision should become one of St Albans' strengths, with organised activities utilising excellent youth spaces and facilities. The City should offer a wide range of quality spaces which are suitable for younger people, and which young people can feel ownership over. This could be achieved in part through better management strategies for Verulamium Park, but a new youth-centered space could be provided within the park, and within other public spaces in St Albans. The City should also explore the feasibility of providing additional facilities for young people such as a climbing wall, a bowling complex, an ice rink, a music venue and, most importantly, a cinema (see culture and leisure section). Upgrades at Westminster Lodge could contribute to this provision, and it should also form part of the brief for the development of a cultural hub. Supported by the Council, organised youth activities will become a more regular part of St Albans life.

What the SACDC can do

- Commission public realm competitions to design youth spaces for Verulamium Park and other suitable city spaces.
- Identify the costs associated with a range of different youth facilities for the city, and take a lead on delivering them within new developments.



Celebrating diversity in the city

St Albans has a slightly more diverse population than England as a whole, with significant Bangladeshi communities in the wards of Sopwell and Ashley. According to the last census, Bangladeshi children tend to suffer disproportionately under a range of indicators. Grasping a nation-wide trend towards cultural diversity across Britain, St Albans should become a place where ethnic and cultural origins do not predispose residents to any form of deprivation through high quality and target service provision to these communities. The City should become a more welcoming place for different ethnicities, providing a high level of linguistic and community support to new arrivals, and ensuring that all members of the community have a voice.

The City should draw on the strength of its existing diversity to offer home-grown cultural festivals and events. These would showcase the City's ethnic variety and build relationships between different ethnic groups within the community, and could be linked in with St Albans' leisure and cultural strategy.

What can SACDC do?

- SACDC should work with community representatives to identify the most important support services they require.
- Integrate cultural diversity into organised public events.

Creating a public life for the city

Responding to a gradual privatisation of public facilities and spaces, a renaissance will be delivered to the public sphere in St Albans, re-asserting public life and bolstering social integration. The focus of this will be greater sponsorship of public and community events by the Council and community groups, helping to bring different resident groups together, drawing on St Albans' rich history, culture and identity. In doing so, it will be important for the Council to set the right balance between Council support and community leadership of events, to ensure that the community feel full ownership of them. Events could draw on existing community groups such as STARTS.

Improved public spaces will be crucial to this. St Albans does not currently have a central square piazza where the community can gather and integrate into public life. St Peter's Street has been the heart of city life since the Middle Ages, and it should be reinvented as a space for public enjoyment and entertainment through new, high quality design. Pedestrian ownership of the area in front of the Town Hall could be asserted through suitable paving treatments. A secondary public space should be provided as part of any redevelopment proposals for the Civic Centre South. The area in front of the Alban Arena would be well suited to this, although its design is currently dated, and refurbishment could therefore increase usage by the public. It could be redesigned as a single coherent space, taking any redevelopment opportunities to provide high quality frontage to it.

5.4 Sustainable Community

What can SACDC do?

- Support new public events and activities with organisational help and funding support.
- Establish community groups to lead the content of new public events, and to source and engage participants.
- Investigate funding for events through coordinated initiatives which meet the joint needs of Hertfordshire County, St Albans City and its surrounding parishes.

Developing sustainable energy management

St Albans City Council is committed to raising standards of sustainable design and construction. Addressing national and regional carbon emissions targets, the Council has agreed to reduce its emissions by 25% by 2013 (against a baseline year of 2006/2007) and is implementing a Carbon Management Plan to monitor progress. The Council has endorsed the Local Strategic Partnership's aspiration to reduce District-wide carbon emissions by 50% by 2021, and has begun to identify ways to do this through the St Albans City and District Council Nottingham Declaration Action Plan, including supporting the Government's Zero Carbon Homes programme, promoting Combined Heat and Power and investigating greater use of renewable sources. The Local Strategic Partnership's target is challenging and will require concerted public sector action through a number of initiatives, including a strong policy stance.

The Vision proposals provide an opportunity to make great progress on City-wide carbon emissions reductions. The scale of potential new development in the centre and the degree of Council control as the major land owner offers the opportunity for the Council to ensure the highest standards of sustainable new development in excess of national standards and targets. New development should be viewed as an opportunity for the Council to lead by example. The Council can support this process by promoting environmental awareness among the construction industry in partnership with the Environment Agency.

While intensification of the City Centre implies an increase of carbon emissions, the savings to be made by establishing more efficient Combined Heat and Power (CHP) and decentralised energy systems

Case Study: Woking Borough Council – taking an entrepreneurial approach to efficient energy provision

Woking Borough Council has pioneered the use of CHP and other renewable energy sources within municipal buildings and social housing in Woking Surrey. In doing so, the Council provides nationally recognised leadership by example, and has reduced the Council's CO² emissions by 77% since 1990. The energy infrastructure was funded by energy efficiency savings and is operated by a Council owned company which intends to extend its energy services to private institutional, business and residential customers.

Case Study: South Tyneside Council - partnership projects with Salix

In Tyneside, Salix has helped finance a number of energy saving measures in the City. At Temple Park Leisure Centre, energy efficient lighting, operation controls and insulation has been installed to achieve a 30% saving in electricity consumption compared with 2003/2004.

could more than compensate for this increase. The point of new development is the best moment to achieve this both from a logistical and financial point of view. A supply network could be laid down from the CHP units at the construction stage, so that additional units could be connected in thereafter. There is an opportunity for St Albans to take a lead by exceeding these national standards in site briefs and urban design guidelines, at the same time helping to nurture emerging local sectors in green technology. These could include micro generation in wind and solar power.

St Albans should fully embrace sustainable design and construction technologies and become a beacon of environmental sustainability.

The Council should ensure that a proportion of energy needs at opportunity sites are met through renewable energy sources, either on-site or off-site. It should investigate the feasibility and cost of implementing different renewable technologies within the City Centre and across the district, embracing new technologies as they become more reliable and affordable.

New development will comprise only a small proportion of the City's total housing stock, and retro-fit of existing stock will remain an effective and cost-efficient way of reducing carbon emissions by improving energy efficiency. A considerable proportion of the City's stock is composed of post-war residential typologies which are likely to be inefficient in retaining indoor heat, which accounts for much of an average home's energy demand.

The Council already offers an energy efficiency programme which subsidises energy efficiency improvements among private landlords. The Council should investigate regulatory measures to support this process further, for example, by

requiring energy efficiency improvements as part of applications for building extensions. This approach has been successfully pioneered by Uttlesford District Council.

Sustainable retro fitting of existing buildings should become standard practice in renovation and refurbishment across the City and new developments should meet the highest environmental standards. or, within larger developments, on-site Combined Heat and Power (CHP) units.

To deliver sustainable infrastructure, St Albans could draw on support from publicly funded companies which invest in sustainable infrastructure, such as Salix (www.Salixfinance.co.uk).

Case Study: Uttlesford District Council

Uttlesford District Council requires energy efficiency improvements to be applied to individual units as part of extensions. This ensures that the extra energy used by extension, for example, additional space heating and lighting, is compensated for by efficiency increases to the unit as a whole.

The requirement is established through a Supplementary Planning Document on Home Extensions which was adopted in November 2005. Owners are required to submit details of energy efficiency measures as part of their application, which are then agreed by the Council.

Uttlesford District Council is the first Local Authority to adopt this approach, but the emerging Planning and Energy Act will support its wider uptake nationally.

A transition town movement has emerged in St Albans, which aims to 'support community action within the St Albans area, in order to respond effectively and positively to climate change and peak oil' (Transition St Albans constitution). There are around 40 transition towns across the UK where the transition movement has been successful in promoting sustainable management of local resources through community initiatives. There is an opportunity for the Council to connect with the transition movement in St Albans and support common objectives.

What can SACDC do?

- Initially, the Council would have to ensure a high level of knowledge about sustainable infrastructure within relevant departments. A sustainability consultant could recommend ways in which the Council could deliver sustainability outcomes within the City, and could provide necessary training to officers
- The Council should adopt city-wide standards of environmental design and construction using and reaching beyond national policy guidelines. These could be reinforced and kept up-to-date in site-briefs and design guidance such as the Government's Code for Sustainable Homes.
- The Council should provide leadership on provision of sustainable technologies within St Albans, such as solar, wind and Combined Heat and Power (CHP). This could include promoting established and emerging technologies to developers, and implementing them within Council-led projects by example.
- Feasibility studies into wind, solar, biomass and ground source heat pumps could indicate future opportunities for carbon savings. Opportunities for ground source heat pumps would need to be assessed in consultation with the

Environment Agency for any adverse impacts they may have on the local environment. The Environment Agency have indicated that an open loop system would be inappropriate for much of St Albans, which is located on a major aquifer, and that a closed loop system would need to be designed to use non-hazardous substances.

- The Council should adopt an entrepreneurial approach to localised sustainable energy services, as other Councils have done elsewhere in the UK, helping deliver necessary infrastructure prior to site redevelopment, and making necessary service provision arrangements for operation. This could include partnership projects with private sustainable infrastructure investors.
- The Council should liaise with representatives of the transition movement in St Albans to identify common goals and identify ways in which the transition movement influence City-wide sustainability initiatives and policies..

Ensuring Sustainable water and waste management

Water management

St Albans is located in a water stressed area, as designated by Defra, with current levels of water usage in St Albans causing unacceptable environmental impacts on the River Ver. This situation could be exacerbated by additional development and climate change. The Council should adopt a strategic approach to water management to ensure that water consumption is minimised, and to help the City meet Water Framework Directive targets from the forthcoming Thames River Basin Management Plan.

In new development, secure supply and sustainable drainage should be implemented before new development is laid down. Water efficiency should be a key feature of new development and could be enforced through the Government's Code for Sustainable Homes initiative. Water saving measures could include water meters, low flush toilets, low flow showerheads and water butts for gardens. In addition, the Council should manage water demand across the City. One measure could include a programme to retrofit existing stock with water saving devices. The Environment Agency estimates that this could generate an 8% saving of water, or 120 litres per day. Improved water efficiency could also improve energy efficiency, as a significant proportion of household energy is used for heating water.

Flood risk is generally increasing over time resulting from climate change. The River Ver corridor is susceptible to flooding from very high groundwater levels and from intensive and prolonged rainfall events.

5.4 Sustainable Community

Consideration of strategic schemes to provide flood storage and wetland habitat creation can be effective alongside the promotion of retro-fitting of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS). Future landscaping work on the banks of the River Ver corridor should be informed by flood defence needs, in consultation with the Environment Agency. New development should be designed to ensure that run off rates are kept to Greenfield rates. Techniques include green roofs, rainwater harvesting, permeable pavements, wetlands and ponds. Road improvements should include SUDS through infiltration, where it can be demonstrated that this does not cause ground source water contamination. Designs which limit ground source water contamination are particularly important for St Albans, as much of the City sits on a major aquifer.

Recycling and waste

The Council is required to monitor the City's waste output and to reduce it progressively in line with European Directives. Major changes to the way St Albans manages waste would have to be addressed through alterations to the regional waste network. However, there is still scope for greater recycling campaigns, for example, focussed around the self-contained city concept, and tapping into St Albans' well-mobilised, active local community with initiatives to promote consumer-led change, for example ethical and sustainable sourcing. The masterplan identifies local sourcing of food and promotes allotments which will help minimise waste and resource consumption.

What can SACDC do?

- The Council should adopt a strategic approach to water management, ensuring that in new development water run-off rates and consumption is minimised by enforcing and outpacing government guidelines on water efficiency standards.
- The Council should ensure that future landscaping work on the banks of the River Ver takes account of opportunities to improve flood defences.
- The Council should consider the potential for improved SUDS in any public realm improvements it oversees.
- The Council should take a strong lead on publicising the need to recycle more and promoting the 'self-contained city' concept.
- The Council should work with local producers to reduce food miles by sourcing local and environmentally sustainable products.

Adapting to climate change

Taking a lead on sustainable design and construction will also be the most effective way of delivering sustainable drainage systems and climate-change resilient homes.

The River Ver corridor is an important asset in terms of St Albans' adaptability to climate change, providing a publicly accessible area of open space which is kept cool by the river. It will be important to ensure that all parts of the City have best access to it through public realm enhancements and well designed pedestrian and cycle routes running out from the City centre. Equally, planting in the City centre will help regulate the pedestrian environment by reducing the heat island effect and reducing water run-off rates as part of sustainable urban drainage.

Design guidelines should require that new schemes are constructed to be resilient to climate change impacts, including hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. Particular to St Albans, guidelines identify potential conflicts between sustainable and heritage-sensitive design, and provide case studies which address this successfully.

What can SACDC do?

- The Council should enhance and protect the River Ver for public enjoyment with high quality, clear and legible routes.
- The Council should ensure that public realm interventions are designed to help St Albans adapt to climate change by addressing the urban heat island effect, and incorporating sustainable urban drainage systems where possible.

Promoting biodiversity

Intensification of St Albans City Centre could have greater impacts on its wildlife. There are opportunities to mitigate against this process in urban design by increasing planting and connecting up existing greenspaces to create biodiversity corridors. This is dealt with in the physical environment section.

Spatial opportunities for St Albans - homes and community

Summary of issues with spatial interventions

- Homes should be provided as part of mixed use development in suitable opportunity sites located in the centre of the City where they will have the most positive impact on vibrancy. The most suitable sites would be Drovers Way, Coupers Garage, the Civic Centre South site and the London Road site.
- Accompanying residential development, and live work units would be appropriate at the Drovers Way, Civic Centre South, Coupers Garage and London Road sites.
- The University of Hertfordshire site would be best retained for educational uses to maintain the public presence of the City Centre at its northern end. This site could accommodate a relocated Aboyne Lodge school, or as part of a new gallery development in partnership with the Museum of St Albans. Education outreach should be taken to the outer areas of the City, notably the wards identified for deprivation at the last census.
- The town centre should be the focus of sustainable infrastructure, where CHP and other sustainable technologies could be applied to the most dense part of St Albans' townscape. The Ver should be assessed for landscape interventions to manage flood risk and accommodate sustainable drainage systems.
- An Accident and Emergency unit could be provided in St Albans hospital.



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5.5 Transport

“St Albans will become a sustainable transport centre, boasting a wide range of high quality and attractive public transport choices. Walking and cycling will be a mainstream way to travel, residents enjoying the high quality routes which permeate the City.”

Vision Objectives

- Encouraging more sustainable car use
- Addressing congestion in the city centre
- Developing walking and cycling infrastructure
- Transforming arrival points in the city
- Rationalising car parking provision in the city
- Improving transport connections with settlements in the city’s catchment area
- Better connecting key attractors in the city centre

Current travel patterns in St Albans

St Albans’ major periods of growth were in the Interwar and Post-war years of the twentieth century. The suburban housing and street pattern created at this time reflected the new freedoms offered by the private car. Curving streets and cul-de-sacs provided excellent driving conditions. Hertfordshire as a whole also experienced major urbanisation in this period, with Watford and Hemel Hempstead subject to major expansion, and entirely new places created at Welwyn and Hatfield. All followed the model of car-based urbanism.

The St Albans Urban Transport plan, May 2008, describes the high degree of car use at the start of the twenty-first century. Hertfordshire has the 4th highest car ownership in England (0.558 cars per head). 82% of households have access to one or



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more cars and 41% of households have access to two or more cars, 9% to 3 or more cars (para 2.9).

The most significant journey is the daily commute to work. The data shows that 63% of people in St Albans travel to work by car, 19% by rail, 12% walk, only 4% use the bus, and just 2% cycle (para 2.12). Additional analysis (ABA Baseline study) shows that 49% of St Albans' residents work in the town, 20% work elsewhere within Hertfordshire, 22% work in London and 9% work in other counties.

Correlating these two suggests the following movement pattern for St Albans. 19% of the population travel to London by train, benefiting from the direct Thameslink service to Kings Cross, Farringdon and the City of London. Of the 49% of the residents working in St Albans, taking those as including the 12% who walk, the 4% who use the bus and the 2% that cycle, this means that 31% of people who both live and work in the town drive to work.

Taking this figure from the 63% of people who drive to work leaves 32% of the population driving to work elsewhere in Hertfordshire (20%) such as to Hatfield, Watford and Stevenage, to towns in other counties (9%), such as Luton, Bedford and Cambridge, and finally a small proportion driving to North London (3%).

In summary, of the working population of St Albans around a third drive to work within St Albans, while a fifth use sustainable transport, a fifth take the train to London, and the remainder drive to other towns.

Two further considerations are, firstly, the level of inward commuting to St Albans that accounts for

the remaining 51% of all jobs in the city. Of these, 76% are made by car. Secondly, given the position of St Albans in Hertfordshire's road network, there is also a degree of through traffic. As a result, as described by the St Albans Urban Transport Plan, "Currently, the transport system serving St Albans city is characterised by high levels of congestion." (para 2.5)

The future evolution of travel in St Albans

With a proposed expansion for housing in St Albans of 7000 homes, following the model of urban densification, the travel patterns in and around St Albans will change in the future. A target to double passenger numbers on the train line from the Abbey station to Watford is proposed for 2011. Meanwhile, the volume of road traffic is expected to increase by 13% by 2011 and by 23% by 2021. Clearly this presents major problems for the creation of a functional, pleasant and environmentally sustainable city over the period of the next 20 to 30 years. Addressing the nature of movement is essential for ensuring a positive future for St Albans.

The most appropriate measures to enact first are those that produce the greatest results for the least investment of resources. Here, the 30% of workers who drive a short distance to work represent a clear opportunity for change. The leading case studies come from the Department for Transport's Sustainable Travel Towns pilot programme. (www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/demonstrationtowns/)

This involved a range of basic initiatives in Worcester, Darlington and Peterborough such as promoting the health benefits of walking and cycling, and better advertising of bus services through a process of individualised travel marketing. Investment was channelled towards a high quality public realm for pedestrians, cyclists and bus users. The results were a startling reduction in car use of between 11 and 13%. Each of these case studies

adopted different approaches based on their local context, but schemes included linking town-wide promotions with the marketing related to new urban development, projects addressing journeys to school, and improving the provision for cyclists in the town centre and at workplaces. For those who were dependant on their cars for the journey to work information on better car use was provided.

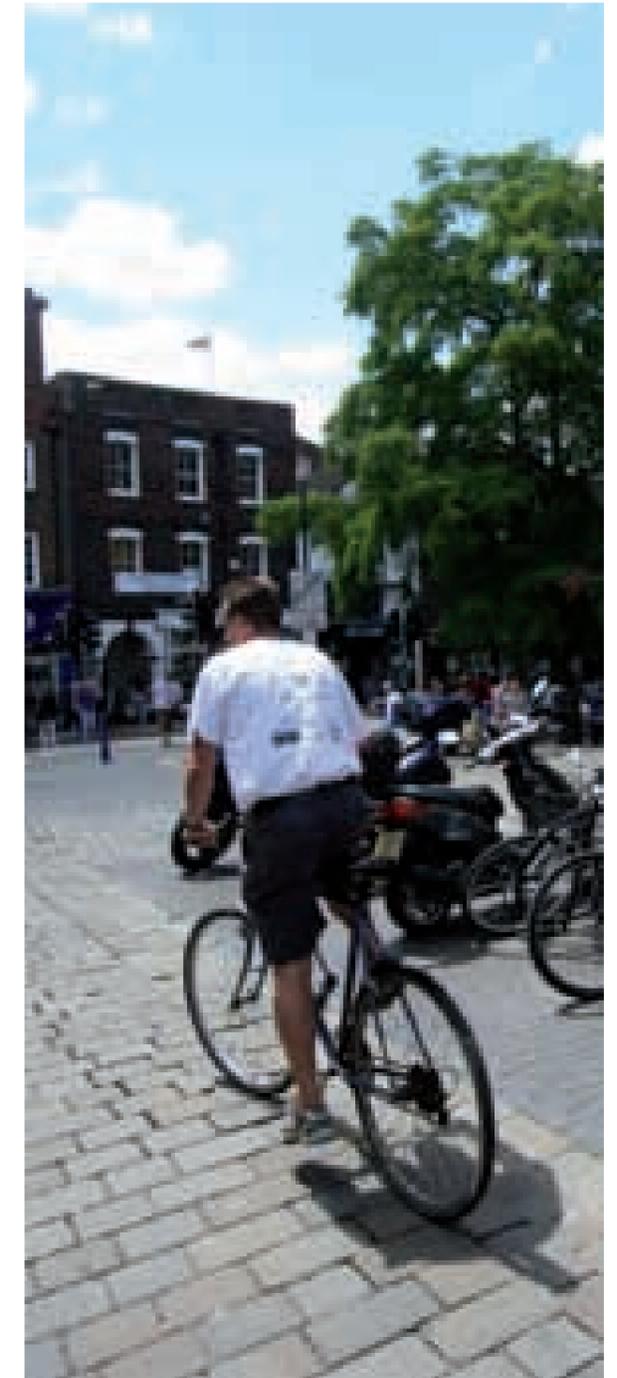
It would be extremely useful for St Albans to adopt similar plans to these and it is recommended that a feasibility study be undertaken.

Encouraging more Sustainable car use

Looking ahead 20 or 30 years to the year 2030 and beyond it is clear that there will be significant change in the way we travel. Predicting this with certainty is of course impossible but a number of lessons from history are worth considering. Firstly, those of political vision and leadership, and secondly on the nature of social and technological change.

First is the experience of Denmark in the 1970s. Today, we think of the capital city of Copenhagen as among the most cycle and pedestrian friendly in the world. The reason for this was the deliberate policy devised by city councillors in response to the mid 70s energy crisis. A decision was made to reduce the dependence on foreign oil, and over the course of 30 years steps were taken to remove car parking from the city's historic squares, allowing them to be reclaimed as people-friendly places, and various measures to encourage cycling. Today, the Christiania Bike developed in the city is a world-famous 'cargo cycle' with a carrying bay capable of taking the kids to school or bringing the shopping home. (www.christiania-bikes.com)

The second issue concerns the transformational effect on society of technological change. Between 1994 and 1998 the Windows PC, the internet and



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mobile phones increased in power and reduced in price. They moved from a high-end niche item to becoming a mainstream proposition. Between 1998 and 2002, they became ubiquitous as a consumer essential. Market penetration of mobile phones achieved over 90% and the internet is unrelenting in its transformation of business and society. The relevance of this is in considering the equivalent degree of technological innovation now occurring in the pursuit of low and zero emissions transport.

Today, electric vehicles are appearing in commercial fleets from transit vans up to the scale of 12 tonne trucks (such as those from Smith Electric in Sunderland, www.smithelectricvehicles.com used by the Royal Mail, Sainsburys, BskyB and TNT). Fleet operators find that lower operating costs in fuel and maintenance compared to petrol vehicles easily offset the higher purchase price over the long-term. The predictable journey lengths means that recharging can be easily accommodated, and in terms of total carbon emitted, even if charged from the National Grid this still produces less carbon per kilometre than petrol vehicles (www.evdl.org/docs/powerplant.pdf).

Many international car manufacturers are developing consumer models across their full range, from sports cars to SUVs, due to launch between 2010 and 2012. Within another four years after that, by 2016, electric vehicles are likely to have increased in power and reduced in cost, resulting in a high level of market penetration.

The masterplan supports the promotion of electric cars with the aim of reducing emissions across the city and in particular along Holywell Hill, where emissions levels are known to be high. Whilst most electric car owners will be able to charge

batteries at home, there remains a need to provide public charging points so that owners have greater flexibility with regards to when, where and how long they charge their batteries for.

'Plugged in Places' is a Government scheme to provide funding to a small number of cities and regions to trial different types of public re-charging infrastructure, with the long term goal of creating an integrated national network. Any city can bid to become a 'Plugged in Place', based on specific criteria being met. It is proposed that St. Albans should bid to become a 'Plugged in Place'. Because St. Albans is a small city, the bid may have to be a joint bid including neighbouring towns such as Watford and Hemel Hempstead to create a South Hertfordshire region.

The charging points should be provided at a mixture of on-street and off-street locations. Off-street charging points should be located at key destinations such as within public car parks and at the two stations. Charging points can be 'slow charging', which can take many hours for a full charge or 'fast charging'. Therefore there is scope for charging points to be located at both short stay and long stay car parks. This will need the agreement of the relevant land owners. The Council should also engage with employers in the city that have larger car parks to investigate the possibility of installing charging points for their employees. On-street charging points should be located on streets close to the city centre where there is currently space for on-street parking. Most streets around the city centre are quite narrow, but potential locations include High Street, Verulam Road, Bricket Road and Marlborough Road.

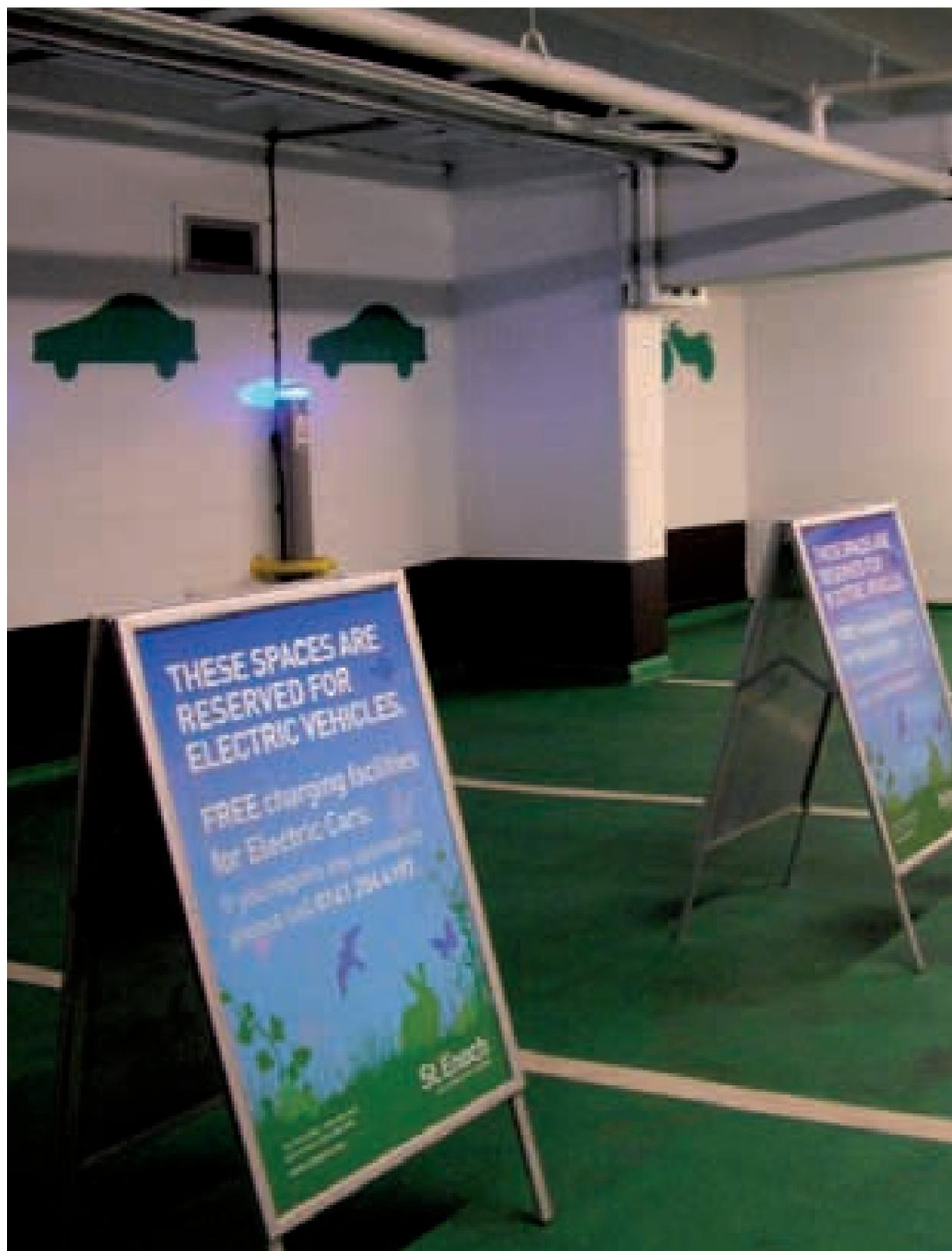
On-street charging points and those in Council run car parks should be free. Charging points on privately owned land may need to be subsidised by the Council or operated on a time-based low fee structure. As electric cars become more common, a time limit will need to be placed at charging points, which will require them to be fitted with some form of vehicle identification technology – e.g. an oyster card type system.

Electric car owners should also enjoy other benefits to encourage uptake. This could be in the form of discounted parking charges both within Council run car parks and on-street spaces. In the longer term as uptake increases, specific parking spaces could be reserved for electric vehicles, similar to the system for car club vehicles. It is proposed that vehicular access along St Peter's Street should be restricted during the day between Victoria Street and Hatfield Road. In the short term, electric vehicles could be exempted from this restriction although as uptake increases this exemption should be removed to prevent congestion from building up.

It is important to note that traffic modelling data is not yet available for St Albans city centre. It will be important for this to be considered and a risk assessment undertaken regarding the provision of facilities and priority treatment for electric cars in St Albans city centre at the implementation stage of the City Vision.

What can SACDC do?

- For St Albans, the local authority vehicle fleet can explore procuring low and zero-emission vehicles in order to achieve lower operating carbon emissions.
- The take-up of electric vehicles by St Albans' residents may also benefit from a proactive approach to charging infrastructure, whether in the form of pavement cable guards to prevent trip-hazards, or the provision of charging points in car parks. A number of shopping malls have already installed electric vehicle charging points, including the Harlequin Centre, Watford and The Chimes, Uxbridge.
- St Albans District Council could coordinate with neighbouring towns to bid for Plugged in Places funding to provide re-charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.
- Electric cars could benefit from advantages such as cheaper parking rates and priority access to St Peter's Street, should it be closed to other private vehicles (in the short term).
- The Council can explore the scope for large employers in the city to provide charging points for employees.
- Car share clubs should be explored for new residential developments in the District. This could be particularly influential given the city's Growth Area status.
- Shared taxi runs can be explored as a means of discouraging people from driving private cars to the station and parking all day.



Addressing congestion in the city centre

Shifting the nature of car travel from petrol to electric or other low or zero emissions vehicles will help reduce carbon emissions and air pollution. It will not in itself address St Albans' problems of traffic congestion. To see an overall reduction in traffic levels requires a number of interventions.

These measures may include better signalling to improve traffic flow, and thus prevent tailbacks and information technology can be expected to improve this sector considerably over the next 20 years. Consultation feedback has indicated that signals should be improved to relieve congestion, though this is likely to have a negative impact on pedestrians. An assessment of the impacts should therefore be undertaken before this could be introduced.

Changes to the roadway such as better junctions can reduce bottlenecks, which slow the network as a whole. Some junctions within St Albans, such as the Peahen junction, are too narrow for this to be undertaken but others have scope for improvements and should be considered at the next stage.

Priority routes for buses can also help make them more reliable. The City Vision proposes a detailed study be undertaken to explore opportunity to limit St Peters Street private traffic during the day, allowing priority for buses. Providing dedicated bus lanes on key routes into the city is more challenging, however, as a result of the narrow, historic streets. 'Greenways', giving buses priority at traffic lights would be effective, but would also rely on a detailed study regarding potential for dedicated bus lanes.

Finally, systems of road-user charging are technologically possible as a means to penalise for using cars at certain times in certain places. This would currently be expensive to establish, but the City Vision proposes national case studies are

reviewed, to monitor whether it could be successful for St Albans.

The first round of the Department for Transport's Innovation Fund provided pump priming for local authorities to explore the potential for introducing a congestion charge. This followed from the experience of London's congestion charge, enabled by the Greater London Authority Act 1999, which built on the experiences of Singapore and Trondheim. The Transport Act 2000 gave local authorities the right to impose such schemes but where put to a local referendum, as in Manchester, the schemes have proved unpopular with motorists. London by contrast succeeded in introducing the scheme as business was allied against the economic impact of congestion and the majority of Londoners commute by public transport.

Other measures aimed at reducing congestion and creating safer streets include the introduction (and enforcement) of a 20 mph speed limit on residential streets, physical measures such as speed bumps and rumble strips, raised tables at junctions and altering the ratio of pavement width to roadway width. These help to slow traffic to a 20 mph maximum with subsequent improvements in road safety. These physical interventions can help reduce or prevent rat-running and slowing traffic speeds in general in urban areas can also result in improved network flow by limiting the rate at which traffic reaches bottlenecks. St Albans does not currently suffer from significant rat running, so these measures are not currently necessary, but this should be monitored in the future.

Specific interventions in St Albans will depend on the specific context. On long suburban streets introducing separate cycle ways may not be possible given the nature of the road space. For instance, cycle paths can be introduced onto the roadside verge and pavement if there is sufficient space, or onto the roadway, with a kerb separator.

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However, the Sandridge Road has been identified as having capacity for a dedicated cycle lane, and a detailed study should be undertaken to explore this and the onward network of cycle routes, both street based and along the Green Ring and the Alban Way.

The nature of road-side parking can also be a factor. In general petrol-based private car movement is anticipated as declining due to a number of intractable problems and political responses. If the number of people driving decreased instead of increased, the drop in traffic would make cycling on the roadway more appealing. The two forthcoming issues that may constrain private car use are the peak oil crisis and the challenge of climate change. Peak oil was recently outlined in the International Energy Agency's World Energy Outlook 2008 (www.worldenergyoutlook.org/) as likely from 2020. As a result, the Obama Government has committed to achieving independence from foreign oil by 2020.

For climate change, the UK Government has outlined the requirement to achieve an 80% reduction in carbon emissions from the 1990 base level by 2050. The Climate Change Act 2008 requires local authorities to account for carbon emissions, and for the Treasury to base spending decisions on the basis of a carbon budget to be published alongside the annual financial budget. As a result of these factors low and zero carbon transport will become a priority over the next 20 years. The simplest and easiest measure to enact is to increase the viability of cycling and walking to work or the shops for local residents. The experience of Copenhagen since the 1970s shows what can be achieved over this timescale.

Potential western road enhancement

Consultants Colin Buchanan have undertaken a study investigating the possibility of introducing a new relief road to the southwest of the city

between the M10 and the A4147 Hemel Hempstead Road. The aim of the new link road is to reduce some of the congestion on city roads that is due to through traffic. The city centre road of St. Peter's Street, Hatfield Road, Verulam Road, London Road and Holywell Hill have been identified as being congestion hotspots. The study predicts that if the new relief road is constructed, up to 332 trips can be removed from the city centre area during the AM peak. 73 of these would be on London Road and 56 on St. Peter's Street. During the day, the reduction in trips is likely to be smaller. However the masterplan also proposes that during the day, St. Peter's Street is closed to general traffic. Consequently during this time, the benefit of the relief road to Hatfield Road, London Road and

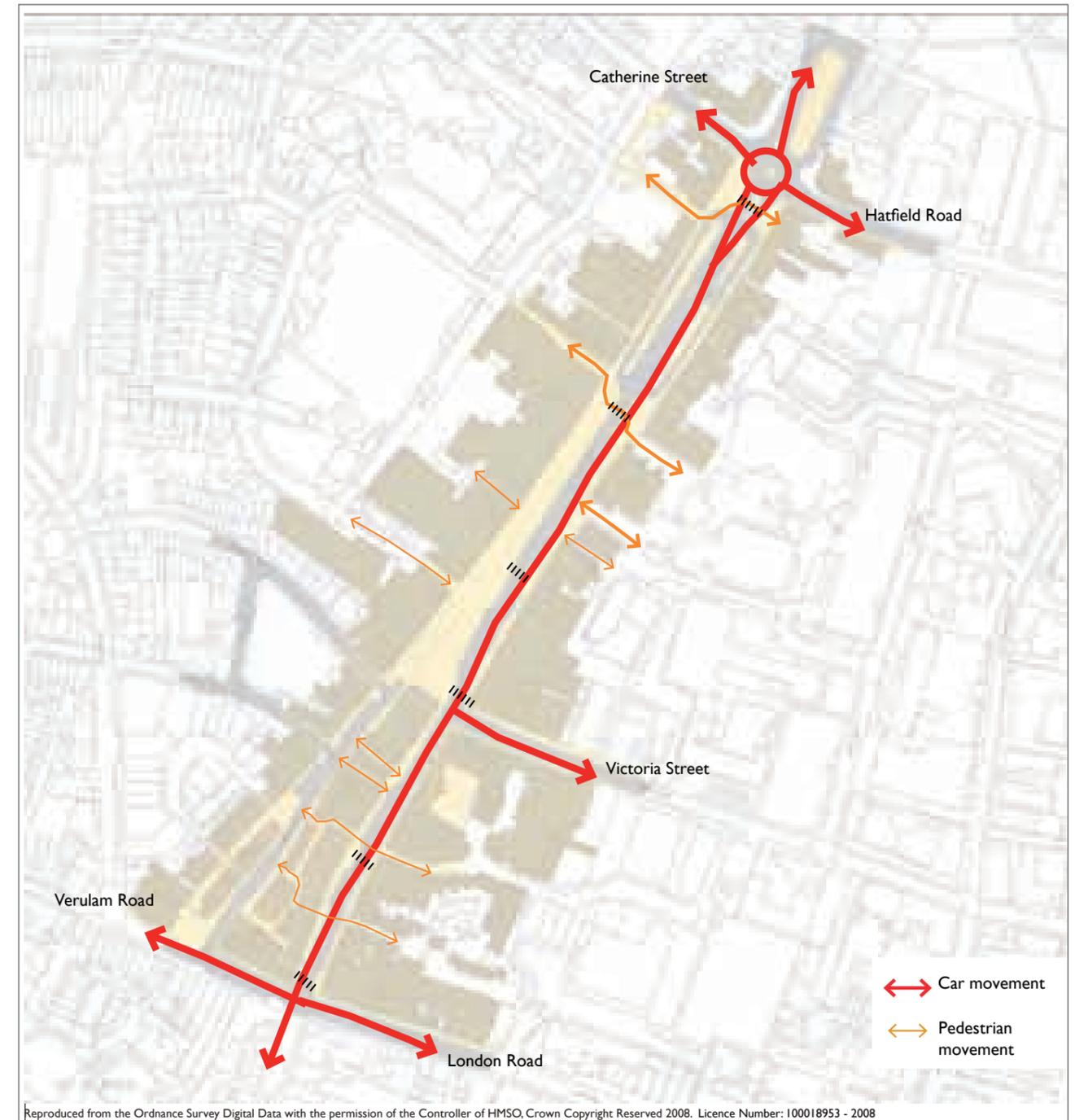
Verulam Road is likely to be cancelled out by traffic diverting using alternative routes to St. Peter's Street.

It will be important to consider the potential impacts of the potential western road enhancement and the potential closure of St Peters Street at certain points during the day in coordination with one another.

Congestion on St. Peter's Street

The main street through St Albans' commercial centre currently suffers serious congestion problems, creating a poor environment for visitors. Opportunities to improve the pedestrian experience have been explored. Consultation has identified pedestrianisation as a popular option and this would enhance the environment both aesthetically and in air quality terms. However, this may simply shift the congestion and its associated impacts onto peripheral roads that may not have sufficient capacity. Options for this street need to be considered as part of an integrated package of streetworks and transport proposals in the wider city.

St Peters Street - existing



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Full pedestrianisation can also lead to a fall in activity in the public realm in the evenings and a decline in natural surveillance. A desolate pedestrian precinct must be avoided, especially when the road in question is the historic thoroughfare. Similar investigations in Leamington Spa aimed at reducing the high levels of traffic accidents on the main street, The Parade, found that the preferred option for reducing levels of traffic included increasing the pavement width by removing on-street parking and reassigning the places elsewhere. Parts of the street are also closed to traffic on some weekends to host a popular French street market (www.warwickshire.gov.uk).

St Peters Street - existing

St Peters Street is the main retail artery of St Albans. Its width varies from 40 metres to the south to 30 metres to the north. Its length is approximately 260 metres between Market Place and the roundabout to the north. It is a dual carriageway which accommodates on average flow of 30,000 cars per day.

This traffic flow occurs along a north-south axis across St Albans. At a more strategic level, St Peters Street connects the A1081 and B651 to the north to the M414, M1 and M25 to the south. Locally, St Peters Street leads to St Albans Rail Station via Victoria Street.

St Peters Street - proposed

Limiting the number of cars on St Peter's Street between Hatfield Road and Victoria Street will help buses run to time, decrease pollution levels in the centre and improve the pedestrian environment. Access could be limited to buses, taxis and emergency service vehicles between 10am and 4pm. On-street servicing on St Peter's Street could also be limited to outside this time period.



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The impact of different timed closures would be tested to ensure the best solution. Initial studies have shown that alternative routes for traffic do exist. However, it would be important for a further detailed study to be undertaken using traffic modelling data. This would provide a clear picture of the impact on surrounding residential streets.

To encourage residents to switch to less polluting vehicles in the shorter term, access for electric and car club vehicles could be permitted. The time frame of this would be important, in terms of existing and projected electric car ownership in the area.

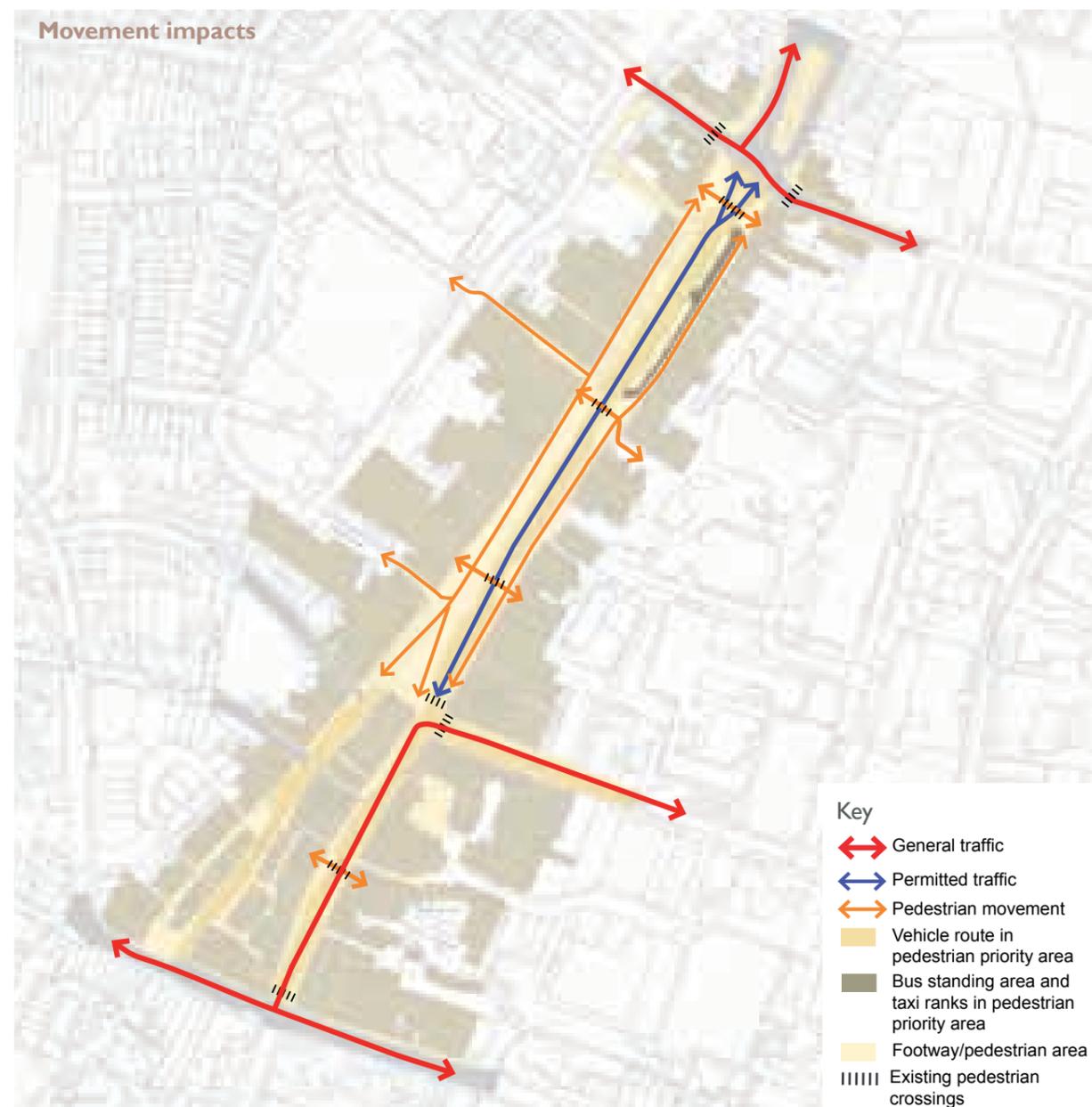
Shared space between pedestrians and public transport and electric cars

- Reconfiguring the street as a shared surface of pavements and carriageway
- Retaining the width of carriageway to allow public buses to go through in both directions
- Removing the roundabout and replacing it with another type of junction
- Decluttering of the street
- Reconfiguring the pedestrian crossings to the south
- Enhancing the legibility of the streetscape
- Retaining the existing 20mph zone
- Rationalising the bus and taxi ranks at the northern end of St Peters Street

5.5 Transport

Impacts

- Reduction of traffic congestion caused by cars
- Enhanced public realm and retail destination
- Sense of continuity and unity of the street from north to south
- Opportunity to enhance the mix of uses and 24 hour activities and use
- Enhanced pedestrian and cyclist permeability on north-south and east-west axes
- Risk of diverting car congestion into nearby residential streets



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Around 12,000 vehicles per day use St. Peter's Street. The impact of closing St. Peter's Street needs to be tested within either of the two traffic models that are being developed for St. Albans – the more strategic and coarse SATURN model and the more refined Paramics model. However, an estimate of the impact of closing St. Peter's Street can be made based on a number of assumptions.

It is common rule of thumb that around 10% of the daily traffic flow for a road occurs during each peak hour. It could be assumed then that 50% of daily traffic occurs between the two peaks (9:00am to 5:00pm). This equates to 6.25% per hour. Therefore between 10:00am and 4:00pm (the hours of the proposed closure), St. Peter's Street could see a reduction of 4,500 vehicles. This traffic will be diverted either via Verulam Road and Catherine Street or London Road and Hatfield Road (vehicles are more likely to use London Road than Victoria Road because of the more pedestrian friendly nature proposed for Chequer Street). Because of the one-way system between Verulam Road and Catherine Street, more vehicles are likely to use the London Road route. Therefore based on these assumptions, a ball-park estimate is that due to the closure of St. Peter's street traffic on Verulam Road and Catherine Street could increase by 1,500 vehicles per day (approx. 10,000 to 11,500), and on London Road and Hatfield Road, there could be an increase of 3,000 vehicles per day (approx. 20,000 to 23,000).

However this increase will be counteracted by a decrease in car trips due to people choosing to travel by more sustainable modes. Given the long-term nature of the masterplan, a predicted shift of 20% of all journeys is probably conservative. Based on the assumptions, this would reduce traffic on Verulam Road and Catherine Road to 9,200 vehicles per day and on London Road and Hatfield Road to 19,000 vehicles per day.

The removal of private vehicles from St Peters Street is most likely to detract from congestion and through traffic to parallel streets, which lead towards the M1, M10 and M25 to the south of St Albans and to A5183, A1081 and B651 to the north.

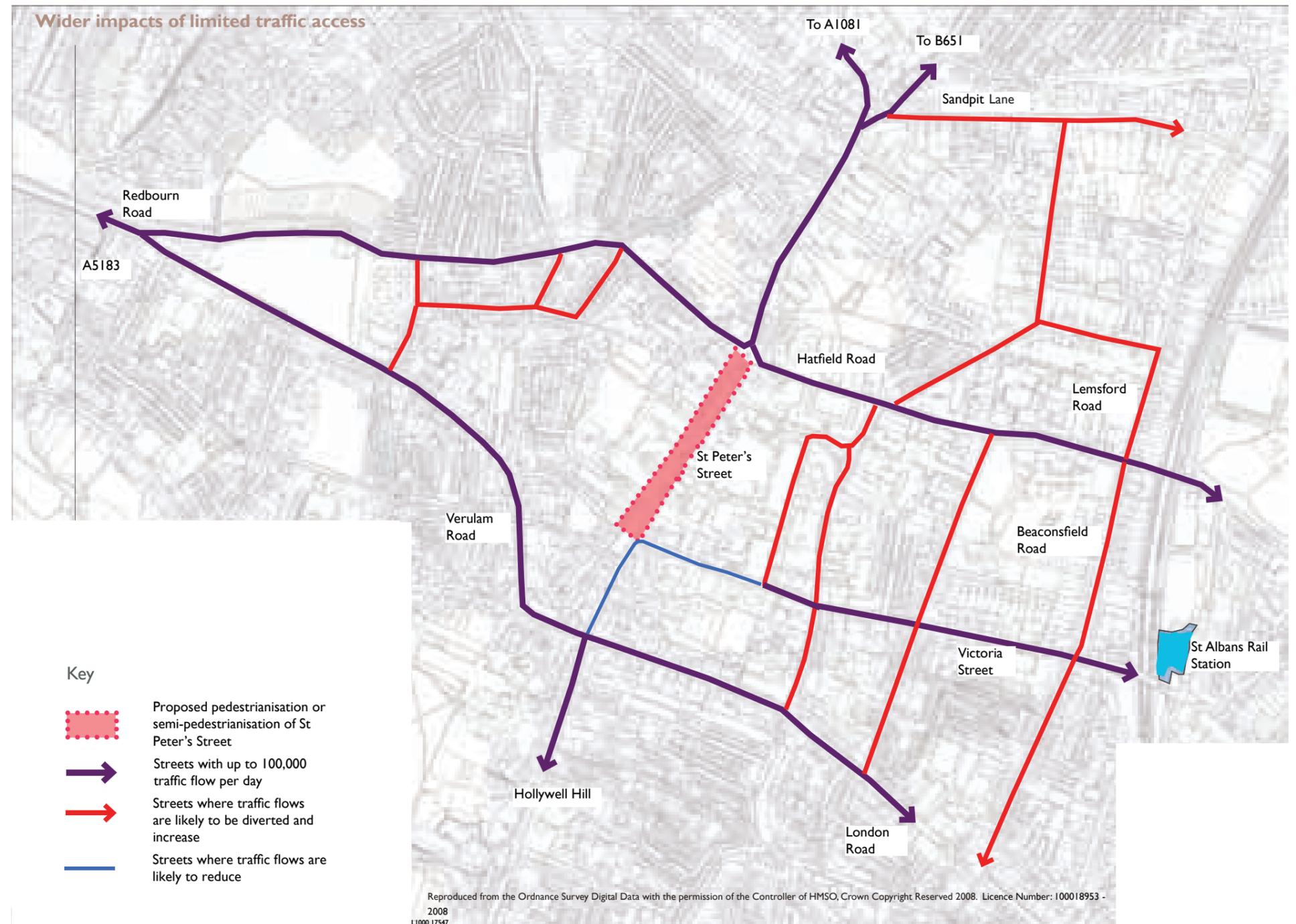
Few streets are likely to see a reduction in traffic because of the pedestrianisation of St Peters Street. Those are highlighted in blue.

Market Place

In order to create a better environment for shoppers in the city centre, it is proposed that Market Place should be pedestrianised. This street currently carries low levels of traffic and pedestrianisation would create significant benefits in urban design terms. However a number of design factors need to be considered in order to facilitate this.

Market Place is used for parking by traders on market days. If the road is to be pedestrianised, then the traffic order will need to make allowance for this practice to continue, perhaps using a permit system. Similarly, there will need to be some allowance for deliveries to be made to the properties on Market Place.

Both Spencer Street and Upper Dagnall Street have connections through to Market Place. These connections will need to be closed off, creating two dead ends. Because of the tight urban form in this area, there is limited scope to provide turning space at the ends of these roads. It may be possible to provide small turning spaces suitable only for cars, but this should be supplemented by signage at the junctions with Cross Street to forewarn drivers, particularly of larger vehicles.



5.5 Transport

Developing walking and cycling infrastructure

Despite the constraints of topography and narrow streets, there is strong support to promote walking and cycling within St. Albans. Therefore to complement the Green Ring, improvements need to be made to cycling facilities into and within the city centre. This process has begun with the production of the City & District Cycling Strategy, which this masterplan supports.

Potential for on-road cycle lanes is limited but there are streets where it may at least be possible to provide a lane in one direction through redistribution of carriageway width or removal of on-street parking. These locations include Waverley Road, Normandy Road, St. Peter's Street (north of Hatfield Road), Sandridge Road, Verulam Road, London Road, Cottonmill Lane, Marlborough Road and Victoria Road (immediately west of the main station). There is greater scope for advanced stop lines to be provided at signalised junctions with short lead-in lanes and potential locations of these have been identified in the Urban Transport Plan as along Victoria Street and at the Hatfield Road / Camp Road junction east of the station.

Cycle parking facilities in the city will need to be expanded, with provision at key destinations. These locations would include both rail stations, Verulamium Park, Westminster Lodge, St. Albans City Hospital and Clarence Park (St. Albans football club). Within the city centre, cycle parking should be provided close to the Abbey and the Civic Centre. With the proposal to pedestrianise Market Place, there is an opportunity to provide cycle parking on this street. Cyclists should also have an option to park in a more secure location if desired and so cycle parking should be provided within the larger car parks, such as Drovers Way and Bricket Road. The Council should also negotiate with local employers and private shopping centre operators (e.g. Christopher's Place and the Maltings) to

encourage the provision of significant additional cycle parking at these locations.

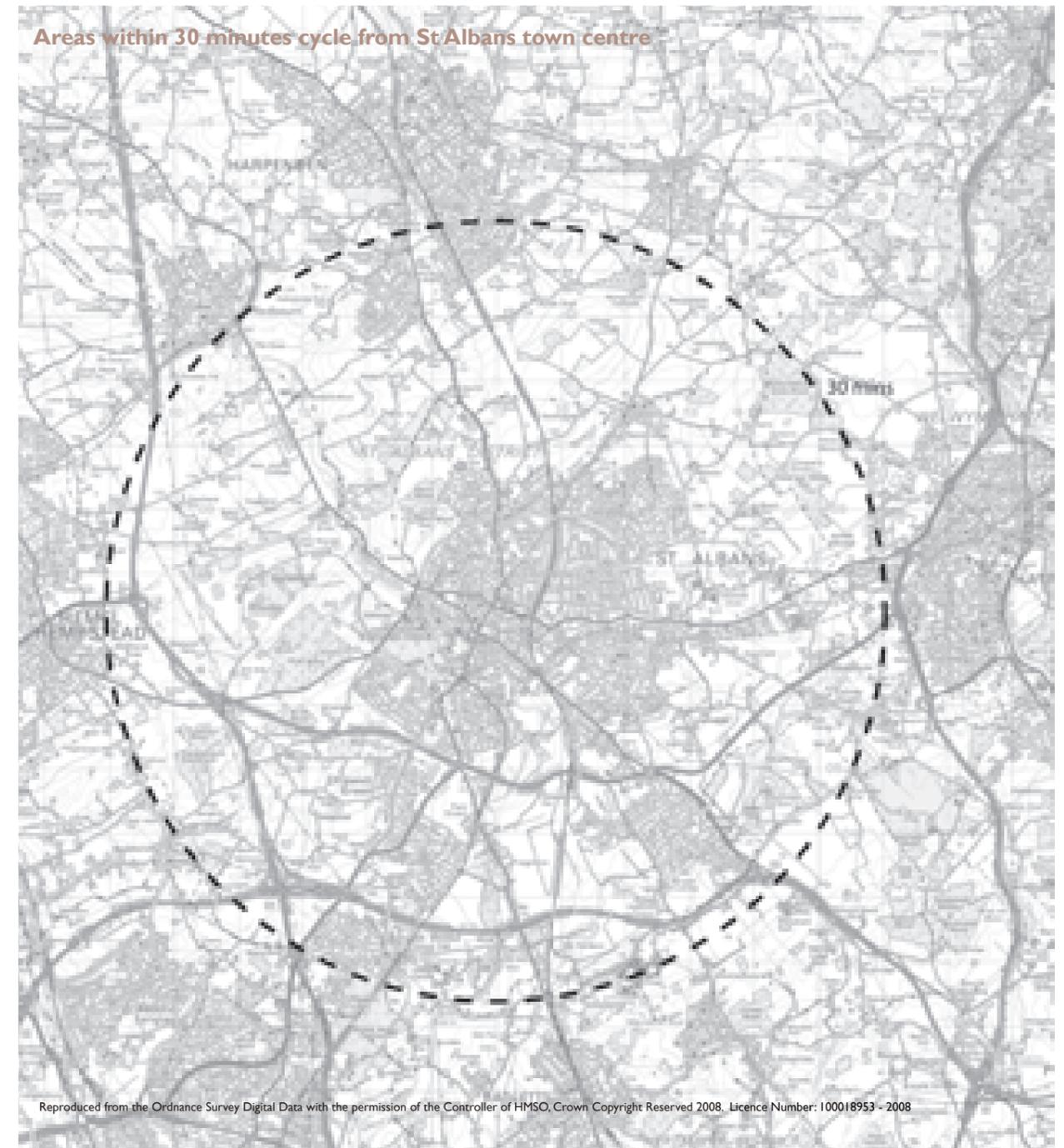
Links to the station

St Albans main rail station, with its large car parks, has much higher levels of accessibility for car than for other modes. However, the levels of cycling to the station have increased over recent years, due to increased parking charges, better awareness of the health benefits and as a way to beat the traffic congestion around the station at peak times.

As a result the provision of cycle parking at the station has expanded substantially, including covered cycle parking around the edge of the multi-storey car park. There is room for further provision and this should be exploited (see Overarching Spatial Strategy).

One highly successful cycle route to the station is the off-road National Cycle Route 61, running along a former railway line, extending from St Albans all the way to Hatfield, 6.5 miles away. This route should be improved with better road surfacing and on-going regular maintenance to increase the uptake of its use as a commuter route rather than merely a route for leisure cycling. Links from other parts of St Albans to the main station, and Abbey station should also be investigated, including formal cycle lanes or cycle routes parallel to main roads as appropriate.

The improvements to the train service from St Albans Cathedral to Watford may consider the provision of carrying cycles on the train. A dialogue with the local authority in Watford regarding cycle networks from Watford station to the town centre and other employment sites there may encourage more people to move between the two towns for work, shopping or leisure. Improving the provision of public transport services and accommodating increased cycle use will create a significant benefit for sustainable patterns of movement.



Similarly, in St Albans, the location of both stations on the periphery of the city centre may discourage people from walking between the station and the centre, particularly visitors unfamiliar with the area. The walking and cycling links between the two are in any case mostly poor. As outlined in the St Albans Urban Transport Plan new pedestrian and cycle links across St Albans City railway line would greatly enhance the ease with which people could access the city centre by these modes (para 2.37).

St Peters Street

We propose transforming St Peter's Street through de-cluttering the street and introducing a single level surface of high quality paving, with the road, taxi rank and bus holding area demarcated via materials rather than level changes. The single level surface can help to improve the pedestrian experience and encourage pedestrian movement between the two development areas at Drovers Way and the Civic Centre.

This surfacing treatment could extend along Market Place, the top of Victoria Street and Chequer Street to provide a transition zone where cars have access at all times. The character is more pedestrian friendly, giving a more attractive setting for the Old Town Hall and town square. Similar treatments combining flat surfaces and limited car access have been used very successfully in Newcastle and other cities.

It is important to note that new cycle paths would need to be investigated further to understand the practical implications and how they relate to HCC's wider cycling strategy and government standards.

Potential cycle routes leading from the Green Ring and beyond



What can SACDC do?

- Introduce facilities such as additional secure cycle parking in the city centre and at key locations such as the stations, Verulamium Park, the Abbey, the Civic Centre, Westminster Lodge and City Hospital.
- Improve the physical environment and safety for walkers and cyclists, providing sufficient lighting, removing clutter and providing maximum space. These should be sufficient for the scale required and undertaken in ways that are sensitive to the historic character of the city.
- Implement enhancements to National Cycle Route 61 to make it more attractive as a commuter route
- Implement high profile cycle routes from St Albans centre and residential areas to the stations. Particular opportunity exists to link with the proposed Green Ring, with space on some routes for dedicated cycle lanes to be considered.
- Establish a cycle hire scheme in the city, as demonstrated successfully in Copenhagen, with cycle hire points at the stations, in the city centre and at key points along the Green Ring.
- Provide a single level surface along St Peters Street in order to improve the pedestrian environment and shift the priority of the city centre away from cars.
- Promote the health living benefits of walking and cycling.
- Explore cycle/walk to school schemes to limit school run traffic.

5.3 Transport

Transforming arrival points

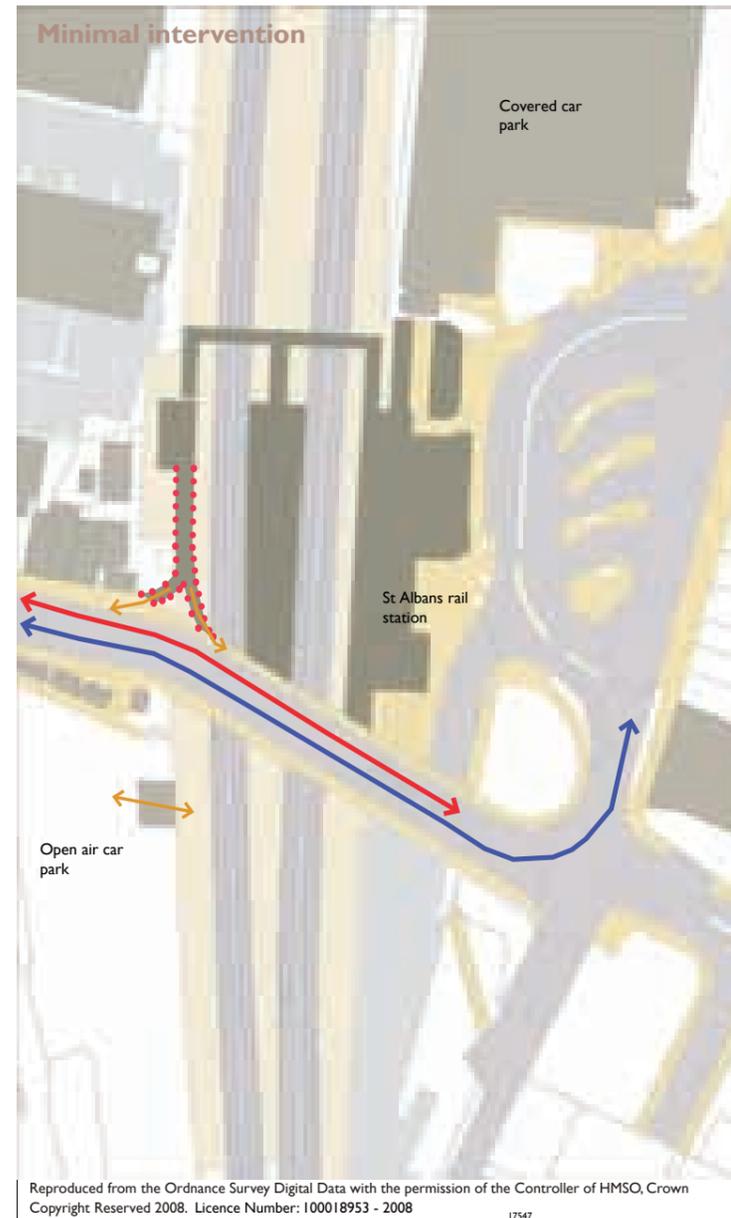
St Albans train station has recently undergone a refurbishment which has improved the arrival experience of residents and visitors to the City. The 20-30 year time frame of the City Vision, however, means that it is worth considering redesigning the station so that it faces the City Centre and addresses Victoria Street, either by improving the western entrance to the station, or a more ambitious plan for the main station building to front Victoria Street.

In the short term, potential exists to improve the south western entrance to the station, encouraging people walk to and from the city centre from here and enhancing the cycle parking here. Opportunity further exists to create a north western entrance, as shown in the diagram to the right.

In the longer term, it would be enormously beneficial to St Albans for a new station to be created, which addresses the city centre, providing clear links to the centre and an arrival experience which is more in keeping with the status of the city. This could include the creation of a square in front of the station.

Abbey station equally has a low profile, with no presence onto Holywell Hill and poor connections with the city centre. This can be enhanced by improving signage to it and enhancing the entrance from Holywell Hill. Better facilities would also improve the usability of the station.

Connections to the city centre can be improved through the introduction of a hopper bus, connecting to the city centre and St Albans main rail station. The walking route into the city centre is also likely to improve with a shift to electric cars, which will improve the air quality on Holywell Hill.



Short term intervention

- Creation of an elevated bridge linked to Victoria Street.

Impacts:

- Provide a pedestrian shortcut for passengers who can walk into and out of the station
- May recreate the western orientation to the station
- Little or no impact to enhance the station as a place
- May create congestion within the station

Long term ambitious intervention

- Decking over the rail and acquiring land to the west of the current station
- Building a whole new station, much wider than the previous one and which meets Victoria Street
- Segregating the coach services from the main and secondary entrances
- Providing a large public square to the west of the station
- Creating a large drop off area to the south
- Enhancing the eastern frontage with the coach station
- Enhancing intermodal changes, including between cycling and rail through the provision of cycle facilities and parking

Impacts:

- Recreating the western orientation of the station
- Creating two active frontages onto Victoria Street and onto the public square to the left
- Enabling for a mix of uses within the station and onto the public square
- Providing the station with a main entrance and a secondary one
- Enabling better movement within the station

The arrival points to the city by car are also addressed, with the location and role of car parks considered, support for the GPS system identification of vacant parking spaces in the city, to make efficient use of the spaces which exist and to ensure cars do not add to congestion by circling the city looking for a space.

What can SACDC do?

- Improve the western entrance St Albans station in the short term and explore opportunity to more significantly restructure the station in the longer term.
- Improve the pedestrian link along Victoria Street, connecting to the city centre, through landscape and public realm works.
- Invest in raising the profile of the Abbey station, with better links to the city centre, perhaps through a hopper bus; a clearer entrance to the station so that it has a presence on the street; and improved
- Improve gateway points for cars entering the city, so that it is clear when the city centre begins. This could be done through signage, public realm works or public art.



Rationalising car parking in the centre

Public car parking appears to be plentiful in the city, yet the perception from consultation is that there is not enough. In part this perception may be due to the dominance of the car in the city, which should be addressed by measures to encourage modal shift. However there is also a problem in the way that parking is distributed, with short stay spaces representing less than one third of public parking spaces in the city, even when the station car parks are excluded. This makes it difficult for shoppers and visitors to find spaces, increasing congestion and potentially driving people away.

The City Vision proposes a graded parking strategy for St Albans, with premium, short stay parking in the city centre and cheaper or free parking further from the centre and connected to walking and cycling routes into the centre (as part of the Green Ring).

Overall, a very modest decrease in the level of parking is proposed in the city centre, which will feed into wider proposals for achieving a modal shift in the city. Of these central spaces, it is proposed that a slightly greater proportion be short stay spaces. This will encourage a high turnover of vehicles and hence generate greater footfall for shops and businesses. Although high turnover of vehicles generates more traffic, this will be spread throughout the day, not just at peak times and so this does not necessarily have an adverse impact on congestion in the city.

Whilst it is proposed that short term parking plays a greater role in the central parking provision, the role of the market and the ability of traders to park in a suitable location is also considered, and sufficient capacity at Bricket Road/Drovers Way should be dedicated for longer term parking for traders on market days.

5.5 Transport

To ensure that traffic does not diminish from the quality of St. Peter's Street as an area of public realm and a place for pedestrians, 'interceptor' car parks are proposed at accessible points coming into the city centre so that vehicles from all directions can access a car park without having to drive along the section of St. Peter's Street between London Road and Hatfield Road. The key corridors into the city centre are: St. Peter's Street (north of Hatfield Road), Catherine Street, Verulam Road, Holywell Hill, Hatfield Road, Victoria Street and London Road.

Access to the Drovers Way car park is currently convoluted because of the one-way system around Russell Avenue and Selby Avenue. The tight nature of the urban form in this area means that major interventions such as new link would not appear to be feasible. An option with greater potential would be to remove the one-way system and revert these streets to two-way operation. These streets are not very wide, especially because of the on-street parking provision. Therefore some carriageway widening or removal of on-street parking bays may be necessary to create two-way working. The feasibility of this should be considered with further more detailed studies looking at the geometry of these streets and taking into account the levels of traffic that will be using these streets.

The central masterplan for the CityVision does propose a shift in the proportion of the central parking in the city centre from Drovers Way to Bricket Road, which is has greater accessibility and is less likely to cause circling traffic in the city centre. The establishment of 'real-time' information regarding the availability of spaces within the city centre will also help to ensure that parking spaces within the centre are used efficiently and will limit the number of cars circling the city centre. Plans are already underway to introduce this technology.

The long-term provision of car parking will be integrated with the objective of reducing congestion and supporting modal shift, whilst at the same time

not undermining the economic vitality of the city centre. Further from the city centre, parking should become cheaper and allow for longer durations of stay. Longer stay car parking is likely to have a greater impact on peak time congestion and so should be located further out from the city centre. Making this car parking cheaper may also convince some short stay visitors to park further out and continue their journey by bus or on foot.

Car parks within 1km of St. Peter's Street could be branded and marketed as 'Park and Walk' facilities to help reinforce the concept that although they are not in the heart of the city centre, they are still within walking distance.

Park and Ride

Beyond 1km from St. Peter's Street, people are less likely to be willing to walk and car parks in this area will be 'Park and Ride' style car parks. This could either be informal, with car parks located on existing bus routes, or formal Park and Ride sites with dedicated express bus links to the city centre. This parking should be the cheapest available in the city, to encourage people to leave their cars on the edge bringing a greater impact on reducing congestion within the city.

Park and Ride facilities are just one of the various solutions for reducing congestion in the city centre and surrounding roads. For park and ride schemes to be effective they need to be accompanied by incentives to encourage people not to drive into the city centre. A pricing strategy that makes the Park and Ride cheaper than parking in the city centre is one option. Bus priority measures on the Park and Ride routes can potentially mean the buses run faster than cars to the centre. All measures should be accompanied by sufficient communications on the benefits of the scheme.

Park and Ride car park locations have not yet been identified in the city, and options are still subject to

- Key
- Short term premium spaces
 - Medium term parking on the Green Ring
 - Long term parking at formal and informal park and ride
 - Potential electric car charging points



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further testing. The historic streets of St Albans also mean it is difficult to provide bus priority lanes in the city. By providing bus lanes where space is limited, congestion of private traffic can increase.

However, ensure that buses (park and ride and public) can be preferred choices the private car, it may be necessary to create priority lanes.

Park and ride facilities are therefore suggested for further detailed study at a later stage. If Park and Ride is explored in detail, it would also be useful to revisit the parking levels in the city centre, to ensure a coordinated approach.

Improving transport connections with settlements in the city's catchment area

Over the long-term, establishing viable cycle routes to the employment areas at Hemel Hempstead, should be explored. A kerb separated cycle route along the A4147 would substantially increase sustainable travel connectivity between these two towns, and could be considered as part of the improvements to east-west movement from St Albans to the rest of the county (see bus section below). This would serve to counterbalance the predominant movement routes that are radial lines going north-south from London.

Cross country routes and cycling links to Harpenden and surrounding villages, or further to Watford and Luton could also be considered to promote long-term sustainable connectivity.

St Albans is well connected to its neighbours by road and rail, and this could be improved further by the proposed tram service from the Abbey Station to Watford. Ensuring that the opportunity for movement in and out can be undertaken by sustainable means, particularly public transport, is essential for reducing traffic congestion and reducing carbon emissions. Furthermore, ensuring the journey in to St Albans centre is attractive by public transport will help support the ease with which people from surrounding towns will come to the city for a day out or to visit a museum or theatre by means other than driving.

A major shift from the existing dominance of car travel to more sustainable means, including public transport, will require an integrated transport strategy. It will need to combine changes to car provision – such as parking – and improvement to bus and train provision, which will result in a progressive shift from one to the other over time.

Improving bus provision

There is no shortage of buses within St Albans, yet buses are under-utilised as a mode of transport, particularly for journeys to work. A number of factors have been suggested for this, including low frequencies, poor reliability, cost of travel and the poor quality of the bus fleet. St Albans is a car dominated city and bus has the greatest potential to replace the private car for longer journeys and create a more sustainable transport profile for the city. The reasons for low bus patronage need to be better understood and measures to change this need to be considered.

The private operation of the bus services mean it is difficult for the Council to make any swift or significant changes. However, by engaging with the bus operators, the services can be reviewed and a strategic overview provided regarding future changes. A detailed risk assessment could then be undertaken regarding the potential for introducing bus priority measures which can improve the efficiency and attract more users making them more economically efficient and potentially kick-starting a virtuous circle. The modest decrease in central parking spaces proposed for the city centre in the masterplan and the graded pricing strategy of parking in the city will also help to ensure that buses into the centre are a realistic choice for residents of the district.

Financing of buses

A Bus Network Review has been carried out by Hertfordshire County Council. Consultation regarding this has occurred and the final document is due to be published early in the 2009/10 financial year.



A Quality Network Partnership has recently been formed between the County Council, St Albans District Council and local bus operators. It is anticipated that the Partnership will address issues such as inefficient timetabling caused by the desire of operators to compete. The provisions of the Local Transport Act 2008 makes it easier to address such issues. The Quality Network Partnership will also be in a good position to make joint applications for funding.

5.3 Transport

Possible improvements to provision

There is currently a Quality Bus Stop initiative to renovate bus stops, making them more accessible and ensuring that up-to-date information is provided. This type of initiative is vital to making travel by bus an attractive option.

Travel by bus in St Albans is complicated by the division of routes between a number of competing operators all with their own liveries. Integrated travel information is provided through the Intalink Partnership between Hertfordshire County Council, local authorities and bus and train operators. The Intalink Explorer ticket provides unlimited travel for one day on all Intalink Partnership buses. BusNET passes also provide travel across services provided by different operators for specific groups of people such as staff and students of Oaklands College. It is recommended that efforts are made to integrate ticketing across operators on a more general basis.

There is potential to make greater use of the existing Intalink branding as a means to unify the bus network. Buses could be clearly marked with the Intalink brand in addition to their operator specific livery. Bus stops and bus information could be similarly branded.

There is a need to make bus service information as clear as possible. Route maps showing travel times could be provided at bus stops in addition to departure time and frequency information. There should be an aspiration to provide real time information at bus stops throughout the network.

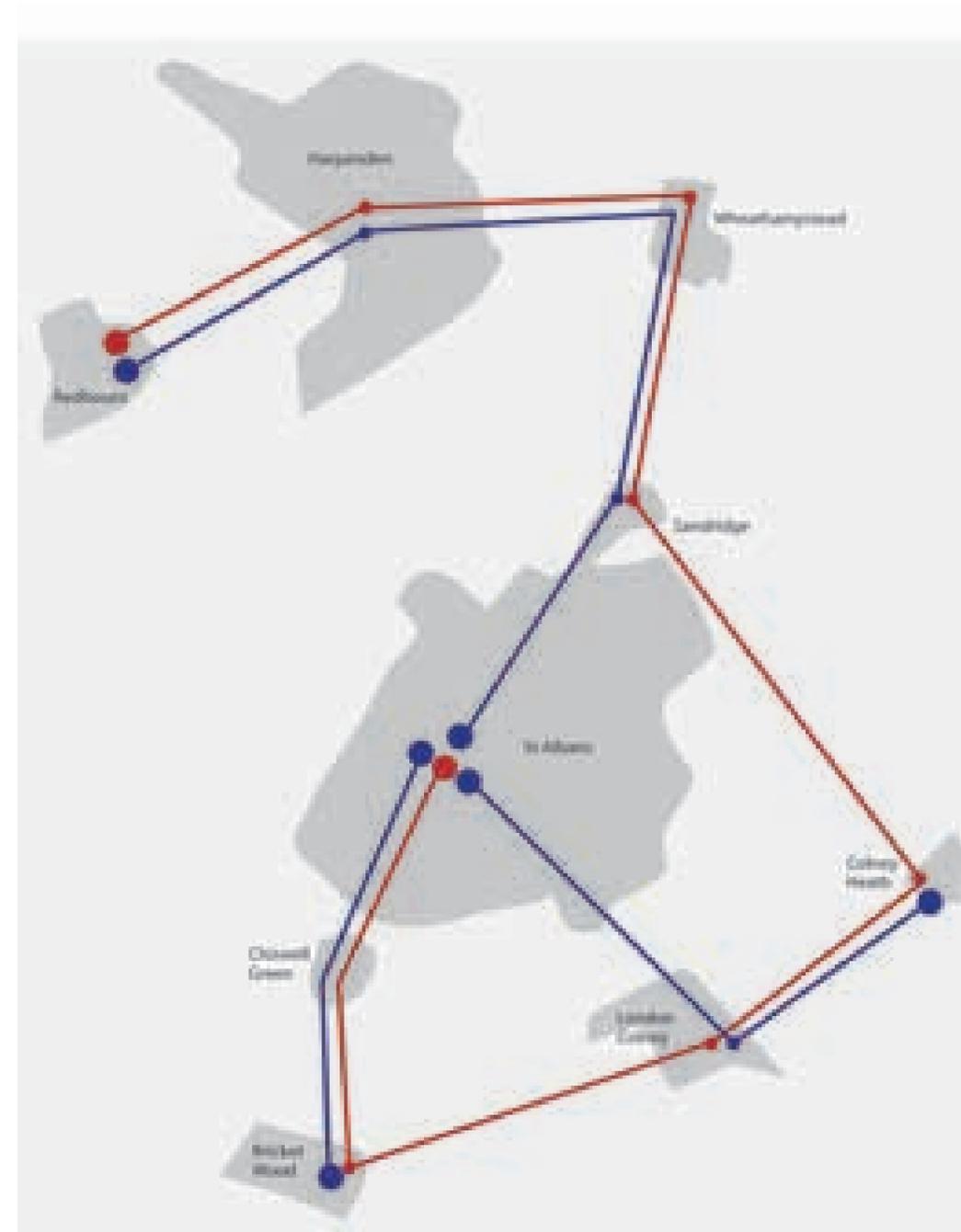
Rural bus links

One of the issues raised during consultation on the Rural Vision for St Albans was the lack of public transport connectivity between the city and its surrounding villages. Two of the villages operate parish-run minibuses to transport residents into the city centre once a week. This scheme could be extended to include more villages under the management of the City and District Council.

One option would be to provide a single bus that picks up from all villages on a circular route before driving into the city centre. This would be more economic but potentially slow. A second option would be to run three smaller buses, one picking up from Chiswell Green and Bricket Wood, one from London Colney and Colney Heath and one picking up from Redbourn, Harpenden, Wheathampstead and Sandridge. This would provide faster access to the city centre but would potentially be more expensive to run.

The concept of linking the outlying villages could be developed further with the implementation of a 'dial-a-ride' type scheme for the villages, for the elderly and other vulnerable residents. This could be controlled with a membership scheme to ensure that the service would only be used by those for whom it was intended. The ability of mobile phones and the internet to enable such services means that innovative services along these lines will become increasingly viable in the future.

- Option 1 – Single bus serving all outlying settlements
- Option 2 – Three smaller buses serving north, south-west and south-east separately



Improvements to east-west transport links

Bus services between St Albans and Hatfield are currently provided by Unobus and Arriva. Unobus operates three routes with a combined weekday daytime frequency of six buses per hour. All of these buses call at the University of Hertfordshire College Lane campus whilst five buses per hour also call at the University of Hertfordshire de Havilland campus and at Colney Heath Lane for Oaklands College. On Saturdays there are three Unobus services per hour and on Sundays there are two services per hour. In addition to these services, Arriva operates four buses per hour on Mondays to Saturdays between Hemel Hempstead and Stevenage via St Albans, Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City.

It is recommended that the link between St Albans and the University of Hertfordshire campuses via the Oaklands College Smallford Campus be strengthened and marketed as an educational link. From 2010, with the opening of the new hub building, the Smallford Campus will become the main Oaklands College site. As a result, more students will travel to the site.

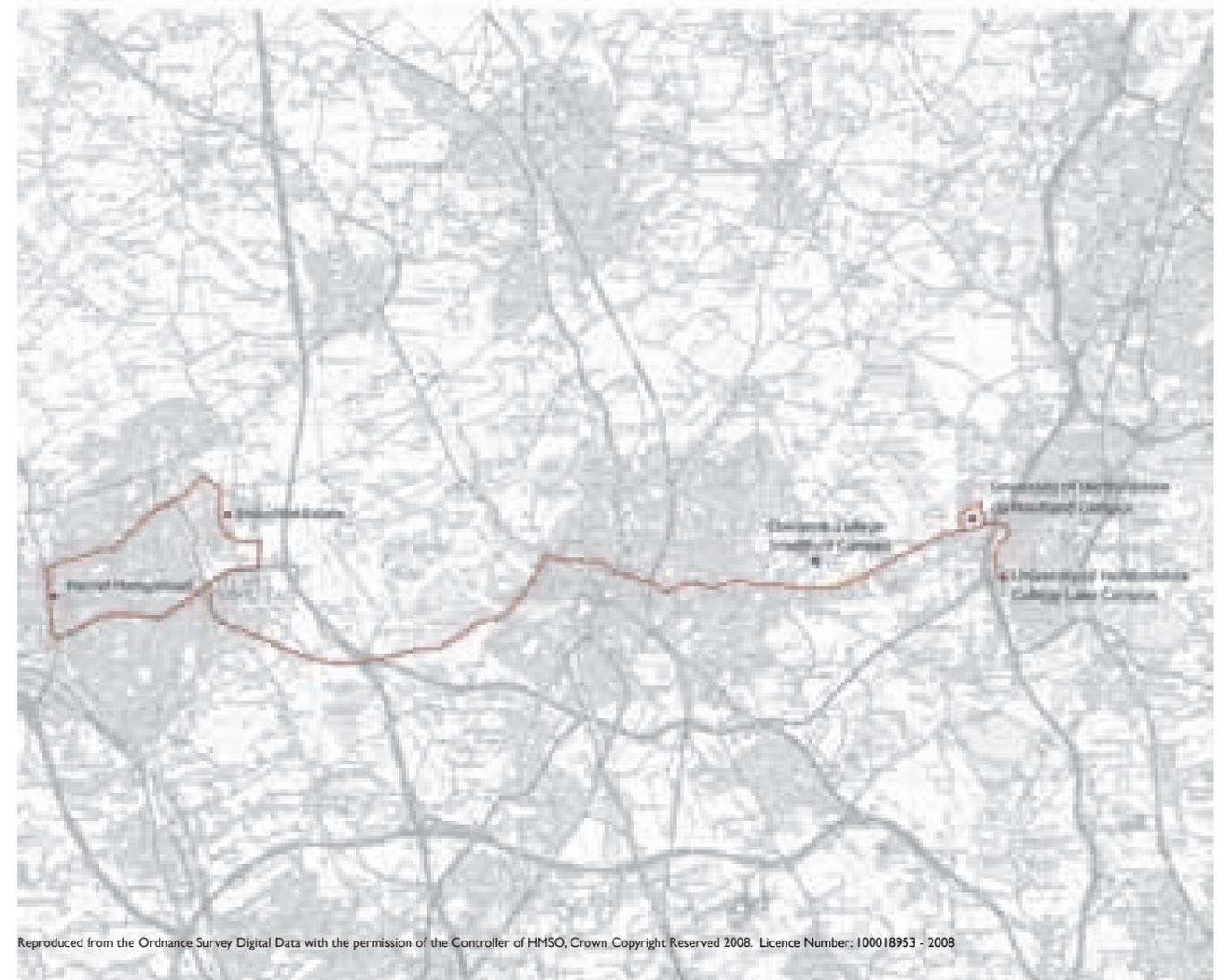
One option is to create a new limited stop service between Hemel Hempstead and Hatfield stopping at Hemel Hempstead Industrial Estate, St Albans town centre, Oaklands College Smallford Campus, University of Hertfordshire de Havilland campus and University of Hertfordshire College Lane campus. This would strengthen east-west links in the region and provide highly visible access to educational facilities in the area.

A second option is to review the existing provision between Hemel Hempstead, St Albans and Hatfield with the aim of introducing more frequent services and/or additional stops where necessary. In conjunction with this integrated timetables could be produced for each educational site which clearly indicate the combined service frequency in one place.

Improved marketing and information provision for existing links

There are currently approximately 15 bus services per hour operating between St Albans railway station and St Peters Street in the town centre during the daytime on weekdays. This is a high level of service which may be considered adequate if better information can be given to potential passengers. At the railway station, buses to the town centre would either all stop at one stand or at two adjacent stands as necessary. The stands would be clearly marked as gateways for journeys to the town centre. Both inside and outside the station building, information should be prominently displayed showing the next bus departures to the town centre using real time information. Similarly, in St Peters Street, all buses to St Albans railway station would also stop at one stand or at two adjacent stands as necessary. These stands would be clearly marked with railway station symbols and real time departure and frequency information would be clearly provided. In addition, buses calling at the railway station could be marked with special insignia. Similar improvements could be made for the link between St Albans Cathedral Station and the town centre.

Potential new east-west bus link



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5.5 Transport

Potential for Abbey line tram

Hertfordshire County Council has recently announced proposals for the Abbey rail line to operate as a tram line in the future, with potential for a passing loop on the line. The service would allow for two trams per hour (compared with one train every 45 minutes at present), with scope for three trams per hour in the longer term. This would be taken into account for future proposals, and may help to support the redevelopment of the Abbey Station, with initiatives to raise its profile and accessibility within the city.

Taxis

It is understood that currently an arrangement exists by which St Albans registered taxis which take passengers to Luton Airport, are not allowed to pick up fares from the Airport. Similarly, Luton registered taxis who pick up from the Airport and take passengers to St Albans are not allowed to pick up fares from St Albans. This arrangement generates a high environmental cost due to taxis travelling empty for long distances and also leads to increased fares for passengers who are effectively paying for a two-way journey even though they are only travelling one-way. This situation could be improved through a partnership scheme between the local authorities allowing taxis to pick up fares in each others areas.

Better connecting key attractors in the city

The suggestion of a bus connecting the station, the city centre and the cathedral-park area was a constant theme throughout the consultation period.

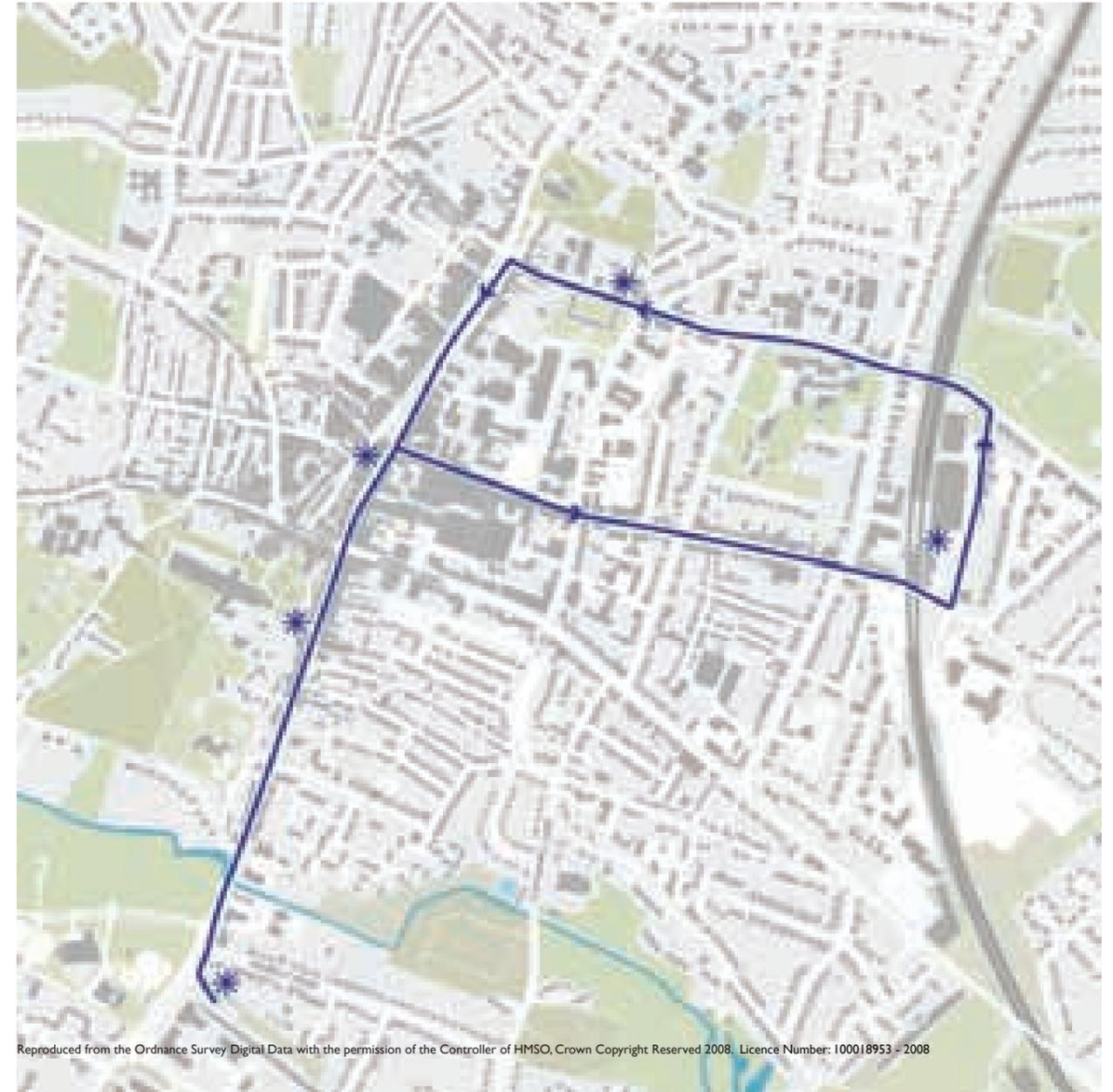
There are currently approximately 15 bus services per hour operating between St Albans railway station and St Peters Street during the daytime on weekdays. These routes use a number of different stops at both the station interchange and in St Peters Street. As a result, it is difficult for passengers to work out where to catch a bus to the town centre from the railway station and vice versa. The frequency of service is also not clear to potential passengers.

The existence of the smaller St Albans Cathedral railway station may cause further confusion for visitors to the town especially when trying to catch a bus from the town centre to the correct railway station. At the moment there are approximately 8 bus services per hour operating between St Peters Street and St Albans Cathedral station. There are currently only a small number of buses which stop at both railway stations, generally at peak times only.

Station link hopper bus

This new service would operate as a limited stop service linking both railway stations with the Cathedral and the town centre. The route would operate in an anticlockwise direction from St Albans railway station, stopping outside the entrance to the Civic Centre in Hatfield Road, in Chequer Street for the town centre shops, on Holywell Hill for access to the Cathedral and at St Albans Cathedral station. From here, it would return to the town centre via the Cathedral and Chequer Street stops before returning to St Albans railway station along Victoria Street.

Suggested route for the city centre hopper bus



5.5 Transport

Travel and the future growth of the city

Plans to increase the number of homes in the city will need to consider the impact on movement. The integration of these new development with the advancement of sustainable transport provision will be essential. Building to the Code for Sustainable Homes will entail the provision of secure cycle parking for homes. Building should ensure public transport accessibility is high for the dominant movement patterns, such as to the centre of St Albans, to the train stations and to the employment centres of surrounding towns.

A dense urban concentration for housing in the centre may increase the viability of public transport services, but make parking provision more difficult. One increasingly popular solution is for the provision of car clubs. This provides the convenience of a car for occasional trips, but reduces the amount of parking space needed to provide such convenience to a community of users. Low or zero emission car club vehicles further reduce the carbon impact of cars.

Overall, the nature of change in the urban form must be integrated with the ambition for sustainable transport. The opportunity for increasing the level of self-containment in the city is also highly compatible with the demands of sustainability. Building on the cluster of creative professions in the city and the highly attractive spaces in the city, the creation of a people-friendly environment with beautiful parks and green routes allowing high quality walking and cycling network will be a major asset for future prosperity.

Yet, with the commercial life blood of a city's shops, offices or arts centres dependent on the ability of people to travel in from elsewhere, mobility should not be curtailed for its own sake, but transformed to create patterns that do not result in congestion and that meet the requirements of environmental sustainability.

Over-arching transport plan



5.6 Landscape and public realm strategy

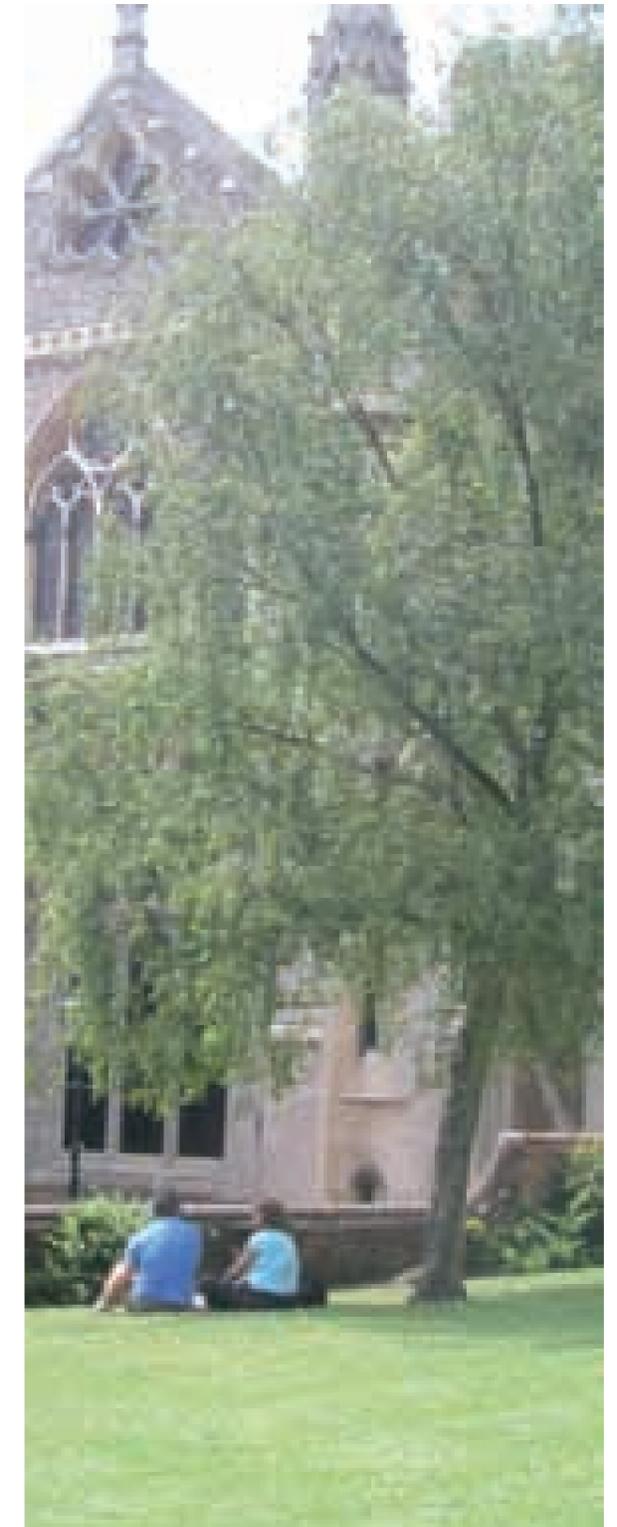
“St Albans will be a first rate pedestrian city with well designed, attractive routes between centre and periphery. The City will be defined by the distinctive series of public spaces which lie at its heart, and which underpin St Albans’ renaissance in public life.”

St Albans has the assets which are necessary for successful pedestrian-friendly places, including an attractive historic core and a wealth of greenspaces, yet its pedestrian links and key spaces do not create a coherent walking environment.

St Albans currently has a strong green infrastructure which is a major asset for the city and its residents. The surrounding greenbelt encircles the city and there are some good links between the city and countryside. The city itself is blessed with a rich variety of public open space including formal, informal, naturalistic, sports fields and play areas, which receive a good level of maintenance and are highly valued by the community - in the recent Place Survey carried out by the District Council St Albans was rated as the top place to live, with many citing the City’s parks and green spaces as a key factor in their contentment with their town. Mature trees are spread across the city both in the public highway areas and in private gardens. These parks, green spaces and established framework of urban trees play a critical role in the quality and character of the city today. These spaces also have an intrinsic value for local biodiversity, providing habitats for local species. Public realm enhancements to protect local biodiversity will be crucial in countering the potential adverse impacts from future intensification of activity in the City Centre.

Fundamental to the landscape strategy for the city therefore is the need to promote these green spaces and green character, secure their longevity and ensure maximum enjoyment for all. Central to the vision is the desire to strengthen connections between the green spaces and reinforce the framework of urban trees to ensure that the benefits are maximised for all.

The city is also imbued with a fascinating spectrum of history, which is chronicled amongst the streets and buildings. Most notable are the remains of Roman Verulamium, the Abbey and its surrounds, the narrow Medieval streets fronted with timber gabled buildings and a scattering of Edwardian and Georgian properties that document the city’s development. The market has helped form the backbone of civic life since the thirteenth century and still creates a colourful event twice weekly along St Peters Street. This rich heritage should be celebrated and showcased effectively. However, at present the public realm is disappointing in parts, failing to effectively capitalise on its assets. It is important that these areas are reinvigorated but as part of a clear and cohesive public realm strategy. It is also important to compliment the past whilst also looking ahead to embrace the future and create a vibrant city for the twenty first century.



Vision Objectives:

Landscape

- Build on the role of St Albans as a 'green city' and help green spaces to be positively developed and promoted as part of the tourist offer.
- Develop a framework of 'green rings' by introducing new green spaces and enhancing existing green spaces and routes to provide attractive green connections around the city.
- Develop the potential for urban food production allotments and community gardens
- Ultimately promote St Albans as a green and sustainable, attractive environment in which to live, work and recreate reinforcing the aims and objectives raised in the walking strategy

Public Realm

- Create a thriving, high quality public realm
- Allow the heritage to read effectively
- Provide a civic focus, defining spaces and creating destinations
- Enhance the character of the city, provide a coherent public realm with a unique St Albans identity

With these tenets established, the goal is then to lace together the landscape and urban environment to form a fully cohesive strategy.



5.6 Landscape and public realm strategy

The Green Ring

The review of the existing landscape framework and urban grain reveals that there is a unique and valuable opportunity to create a 'green ring' to surround the city. This should incorporate, perpetuate and capitalise upon the existing greenery, granting many benefits and performing many roles. Essentially it would provide the potential to:

Connect into the city

Green radial strands would then stem from this circuit to create links to the city centre. St Albans has a relatively compact centre and most locations can be reached within a fifteen minute walk of the green ring. A good provision of car parking currently exists at key locations around the ring and there is potential to include more. This situation creates an innovative opportunity to pioneer a park and walk scheme. This would provide an alternative to the traditional park and ride scheme and see St Albans championing sustainable travel in a way which could substantially alleviate the congestion currently present in the city centre. At the same time it offers the opportunity for improvements to health and well-being and encourages increased use and enjoyment of the city's green space.

Connect around the city

It would offer a pleasant and attractive route in its own right for recreation, promoting both walking and cycling. It would unite existing spaces and would change in character around its perimeter as it incorporates a range of heritage features, sport and play facilities and ecological habitats.

Connect out, to the wider countryside

The green ring would also act as a pivot between town and countryside. At certain locations, key gateways exist which in addition to offering routes into the city would also provide a connection to routes in the wider countryside such as the Hertfordshire Way and the Ver Valley Walk.

Encircling the wider settlement of St Albans, the Green Belt should be protected and enhanced, with development concentrated on brown field land. Opportunities to reclaim brownfield sites or improve poor quality greenfield sites should be taken

Connecting inwards.....



Connecting outwards.....



Connecting around.....



5.6 Landscape and public realm strategy

Green Ring projects

From this overarching 'green ring' strategy a number of projects have emerged.

1. Alban Way

The start of this charming greenway leading to Hatfield is currently not effectively announced. It has good proximity to St Albans Cathedral station and a clear route should be provided to guide the way from here. Information points would feature at intervals along the Alban Way with maps to aid orientation. Connecting routes and walks e.g. Ver Valley Walk would also be clearly signed to encourage wider exploration. A lively, co-ordinated signage strategy should be introduced and the Green Ring segment of this route should be clearly demarcated with a distinct identity.

2. Beech Bottom Dyke

The dyke is an impressive, historic feature but is largely understated and underused. It begins at a busy traffic intersection before being swiftly tucked behind a stretch of housing. A small, simple sign marks its presence, which is easily missed. Following the course of the dyke provides a way out to the wider countryside towards the proposed Heartwood Forest, soon to be the largest new native forest in England. However, the path alongside the dyke is not readily apparent.

Vegetation should be trimmed to open some sight lines into ditch and provide a clear route. This should need to be handled sensitively to prevent the inherent wilderness from being spoilt. Interpretation and route boards should also be included, which would form part of a wider signage strategy for the city.

3. Everlasting Lane

This long green lane is a pleasant offset from traffic-orientated Batchwood Drive and is ideally placed for connecting the eastern segment of the city as part of the green ring. However, it lacks presence and currently appears hemmed in and underused.

The surface should be improved and widened where possible to create an easier terrain for cyclists and walkers. Routes should be connected where possible – most notably the hospital and its grounds and the adjacent housing developments.

Its terminus just to the north of the green space on Verulam Road provides an excellent gateway for exploring the wider countryside. Both the Hertfordshire Way and Ver Valley Walk pass through this vicinity but again both are unstated. Through the instatement of the green ring both could enjoy an increased profile and greater accessibility. Everlasting Lane could mirror the Alban Way in its nature and should be developed and managed in a similar way.



The Alban Way



Everlasting Lane

4. Down Edge Community Green Space

This large swath of green currently contains little interest and could be reviewed to provide a more meaningful and valued green space. It should be developed through community consultation but improvements could include additional tree planting, meadow edges, play equipment, community allotments, trim trail facilities, seating, signage and a clear path, linking the space to the start of Everlasting Lane.

5. Verulamium Park

A masterplan has already been developed to improve this extensive, archaeologically important park and this includes:

- Improved entrance points and circulation
- Additional play facilities
- Creative interpretation of the site's heritage
- Improvements to the lakes

This masterplan has been carefully produced to respect the park's past through contemporary and original means of interpretation. It should also provide upgraded and new facilities to meet the needs of the local community and reflect a twenty first century park of this size and status.



Verulamium Park masterplan

6. Lighting

A further detailed study should be undertaken to assess the possibility of lighting parts of the green ring.

During the winter months, the route will be dark from late afternoon and it is important that it is safe and useable at different times of the year; However, it is also important to balance the natural character of the sections along the Green Ring with usability.

A more detailed study will help to determine if there are routes and areas where lighting might be beneficial.

5.6 Landscape and public realm strategy

7. Allotments, orchards, community gardens and urban food production:

St Albans has a significant number of allotment sites which are distributed throughout the city, but with a concentration in the south east corner. In line with national trends in allotment use, these allotments are extremely popular and, all have substantial waiting lists. This demonstrates an increased interest in food growing, which is likely to be linked to concerns about food prices and provenance of food stuffs. It is widely accepted that now more than ever before it is important to ensure that more food is grown closer to where people live.

Allotments produce both striking and intriguing green spaces and also generate a range of economic, health and social benefits. Extending allotment and urban agriculture possibilities further would offer another way to promote St Albans as a sustainable green city and increase the link between country and the city by bringing food production, a typically rural activity, into the urban realm. The produce could then readily be sold as part of the city's twice weekly market.

There are opportunities to introduce new allotment plots within existing open spaces. Where possible these new plots should be carefully integrated for whilst allotments can foster community spirit and places to meet people, they can also appear insular and can segregate spaces for those not involved. Whilst it is appreciated that the need to secure plots is important, it is also important to create paths through the allotment areas to ensure enjoyment and appreciation for the wider public.

Allotments could also be introduced in more informal or temporary situations. Community schemes could be established to offer advice and equipment introducing those who have the interest but perhaps not the knowledge or time to commit to fully commit to an independent plot. Allotments do not have to be confined to existing green spaces. Growing food can in fact maximise the potential of any vacant plot. Where there is a lack of topsoil and subsoil raised planters can be used. Alternatively, temporary gardens could be created which can readily be dismantled and/ or moved once the plot is ready for development. There are presently some vacant lots on London Road. These present the opportunity to transform dreary, vacant land into ephemeral pockets of delight at little expense.

Until approximately forty years ago Hertfordshire displayed an abundance of orchards growing a wide variety of different fruit. Orchards and fruiting trees should be reintroduced where possible. The most obvious location to reinstate an orchard would be the grounds of the Abbey to reference this historic use of the land.



The Nunnery Allotments site



Green Ring landscape projects

Inner Green Ring/ secret gardens

A network of varied and unique gardens and green spaces filter through the city centre. They form attractive routes and offer a welcome respite from the built environment.

Whilst the green ring provides an overarching green infrastructure, the inner green garden ring sits within this, offering an inner layer providing a more intimate series of experiences.

There are a number of projects that can help articulate and strengthen this.

1. St. Peter's Churchyard Improvements

There is now much emphasis placed on the diversification of churchyards to enable their full educational, ecological and cultural value to be realised. St Peter's Churchyard harbours much potential to be developed as a multifaceted space and is in need of revitalising. The street furniture is old and worn and the paths are suffering from root heave. These elements should be upgraded. In addition signage would greatly aid orientation and effective lighting at night would emphasise its presence on the High Street. New planting would enliven the space as current vegetation lacks colour and variety and the garden for the blind is now jaded and has become a focus for anti social behaviour. The importance of improving St Peter's churchyard has been acknowledged by the council and project plans are underway to address these issues and celebrate it as a significant part of the historic townscape and a green oasis.

2. Quakers Burial Ground

This space has a clear local significance forming an important commemorative element. However, it would benefit from closer integration with the surrounding streetscape to help establish a more successful focal point on Victoria Street and

provide improved opportunities for reflection and contemplation. The Ground should be improved to create a space which is more inviting and engaging. Moreover, it could help form a welcome connection between the Maltings and the Alban Arena incorporating new pedestrian routes.

3. St Albans Cathedral

St Albans Cathedral Approach

The Abbey is a defining part of St Albans and an impressive, historic feature, which in its day had huge stature, comprised an extensive complex and formed the heart of the city.

Now however, its presence within the city is significantly less. This is largely due to its location - at the bottom of the High Street and the orientation of the neighbouring shops, which turn away from the Abbey and limit permeability between the high street and the abbey surrounds. Moreover, the traditional primary approach to this building (from the west) and hence the most impressive is away from the main pedestrian routes and is often not fully experienced and appreciated.

Proposals should seek to enhance this approach, recreate a sense of the importance of the Abbey and of its original structure chronicling its development and significance over time. Elements documenting the extent of the Abbey still exist in the form of the Abbey gateway and the old stable wall and gestures could be made so that they can be read as part of one heritage feature. This could be achieved through paving strips and/ or planting/ walls of light at night that could connect and mark out the footprint of these former buildings.

The Abbey should be more successfully connected to the surrounding environs establishing a true Cathedral quarter. To achieve this, distinct, bespoke strips of pavement with etched concrete could stem



Inner Green Ring landscape projects

5.6 Landscape and public realm strategy

The Projects



St Peter's Churchyard

Existing gardens



Municipal Gardens



St Albans Museum Garden

from the High Street, with one strand extending through Waxhouse Gate and another extending towards Romeland Garden to suggest the direction of movement, to lead visitors to the cathedral and direct attention to this city landmark. Creative lighting could emphasise the façade at night with changing colours to emphasis different seasons and festivals within the church calendar.

The vision acknowledges that much project planning is already underway as part of a heritage lottery bid and these aims and objects correlate with this.

The Abbey Orchard

This large, open green space beyond the presence of the Cathedral currently contains few features and the impact of the Cathedral is not fully maximised. There are opportunities for Cathedral activities to spill into the adjacent grounds and activate this space. The paths are macadam, many suffer from root heave, it is unclear where some of them lead and one appears redundant. Clear signage and orientation is needed. These paths are appended by poor quality benches, lights and bins, which are all in need of upgrading.

Improvements would include the resurfacing of paths and upgraded lighting and street furniture. The proposals to recreate the Abbey Orchard on its historic site with community involvement and management should be supported. Artworks could be introduced to further punctuate the space and lead pedestrians through to Verulamium Park.

Together, the abbey proposals should create a distinct series of spaces which are clearly connected and historically referenced. This should enable visitors to freely move around the perimeter of the Abbey experiencing the grand entrance, intimate garden spaces – Vintry Gardens and the wider orchard area.

4. Romeland Garden

Romeland Garden was once the most important entrance into the old monastery. This has recently been upgraded. However, further improvements could be made by establishing a clearer connection with the Abbey. Dropped kerbs should provide easy access and refreshed interpretation signs could enhance the space. There is also potential to resurface the surrounding road with stone setts establishing it as a key space within the cathedral quarter.

For Romelands Garden, as for the other cathedral spaces, it will be important to set out a clear purpose and use for the public space, so that they can be effectively managed.

5. Route enhancements

Distinct and cohesive signage accompanied with a clear and consistent palette of materials and planting should indicate the direction of the route of the inner green ring and establish a unique language acting as a guide through these inner gardens. Threshold paving and bespoke paving markers would be appropriate in this situation.

Maintenance of all green spaces both new and existing is of paramount importance for ensuring that they are effective and enjoyed by all.



Example of bespoke threshold paving which could help demarcate inner green ring links

Funding streams

Case study: Red Cross Garden, London Borough of Southwark

Red Cross garden is owned by London Borough of Southwark but leased and managed by a not for profit organisation, Bankside Open Spaces Trust. (BOST) This is a successful partnership and BOST manages a number of green spaces in the area, maintaining their upkeep through recruiting volunteers and organising community events. The status of BOST as a charity organisation means that it is able to attract financial support from a range of funds including the lottery and whilst also being funded by the council's park budget. BOST also sub contracts works to other organisations for example those for homeless people or those with special needs.

Case study/ funding examples



Red Cross Garden

Street Routes

Victoria Street, London Road and Hatfield Road are three key radial roads leading to and from the city centre which are often busy and congested and would significantly benefit from improvement works. Generally, the street scene is cluttered with a jumble of materials, signs and low quality street furniture (much of which is superfluous). There are a number of ways in which the approach to the city centre could be improved for both traffic and pedestrians.

Victoria Street

Victoria Street is the key artery which links the main railway station to the centre and for visitors by train offers the first experience of the city. The orientation of the main station entrance unfortunately faces away from the city centre and the rising incline on Victoria Street near the centre increases the perception of distance. The development of the Civic Centre should go some way to overcome/ counteract this since it should extend the city centre in an eastward direction, towards the station. There is a secondary exit from the station which currently leads directly into the rear car park. This exit should be developed and enhanced so that it is clearly signed, reconfigured and provides a better sense of arrival with information and proper provision for pedestrians. It would then immediately deliver visitors closer to the centre.

Victoria Street has been considered in four sections which relate to the changing character of the street along its length. Plans have been developed in line with these different characters but consistency should apply in terms of materials and a cohesive vision has been developed. In addition to general resurfacing, decluttering and junctions improvements, there is a wider aspiration to create an enhanced shopping parade with street trees

and integrated parking. A shared surface should be introduced where Victoria Street meets St Peter's Street which should signify the start of the city centre. Ultimately these improvements would provide a more pleasing stroll to the city centre.

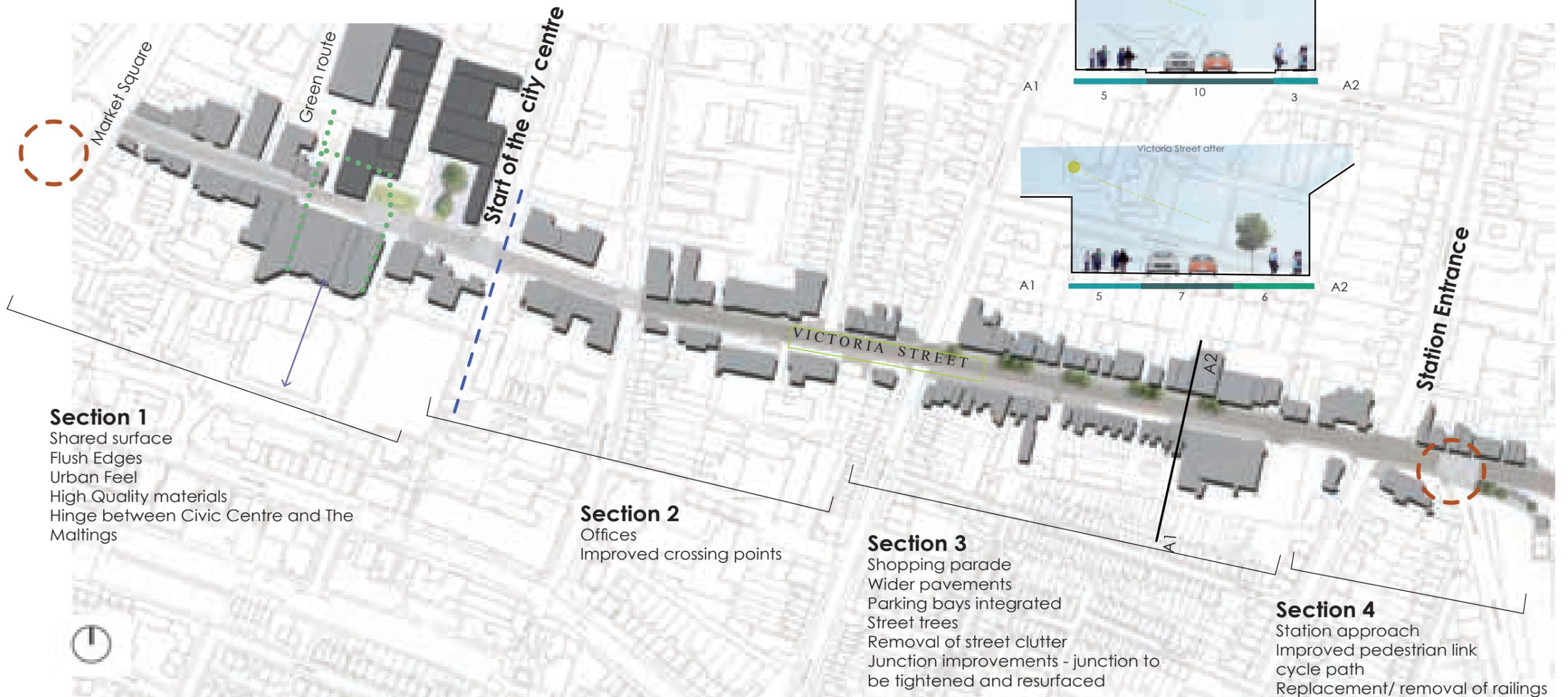


Station Approach- Proposed



Station Approach- Existing

Victoria Street



5.6 Landscape and public realm strategy

Hatfield Road

The section of Hatfield Road nearest the city centre supports an interesting cultural hub with the presence of the old Law School, the Marlborough Alms House, St Albans Museum and links to St Peter's Churchyard. Improvements to the road should carefully consider the relationship of these buildings and their character. Presently this busy road does little to aid their charm. Attractive pedestrian links bisect this busy street passing between these attractions but they are unsigned and subtle. Furthermore, a lack of pedestrian crossings at appropriate points means that pedestrian movement is hindered and less fluid than desired. It is important that this area can be read more clearly as a cultural quarter and that the pedestrian routes are emphasised. A crossing point, preferably flush, should form the pedestrian crossings. These should be further articulated with threshold paving, which could be unique to the route.



Hatfield Road

Currently this is a busy road with a lack of pedestrian crossings, an attractive route cuts across this road but it is poorly defined .



The existing alley leading towards the Civic Centre



The existing alley leading from St Peter's Churchyard to Hatfield Road

Shared surfaces (St Peters Street)

St Peters Street currently suffers acute congestion. It is important to create an improved, attractive retail environment for pedestrians, without significantly diverting vehicles and increasing the pressure on adjacent roads. A number of options have been explored to determine the most effective solution. A shared surface should offer the most successful balance. It would have clear aesthetic advantages, allow greater flexibility and increase pedestrian flow without prohibiting necessary vehicular movement. This should help promote St Albans as a premier High Street.

Plans for St Peters Street have been developed in accordance with its different characteristics and functions. Existing parameters have been considered and incorporated. Appropriate provision for taxis and buses should be retained. The market should still form a major feature and focus and the streetscape should be flexible in its layout to accommodate this. The existing street trees make an important contribution and in some parts quality materials have been employed. These elements should remain and shall form the basis of a new design which creates a street which demonstrates consistent high quality throughout. There is a distinct lack of seating in St Peter's Street and this shall also be addressed. The greatest concentration of seating should be in zone three, which should provide an appropriate pause half way along the High Street and is in an attractive setting. Seating should be carefully located and more sparsely located within the market zone so as not to interfere with the flow of this area on market days.

Case study Exeter

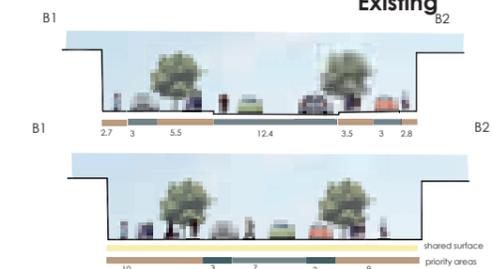
Exeter has an historic centre with smaller winding lanes, juxtaposed with a typical linear High Street, which is not dissimilar in character and scale to St Albans. The width of the High Street is also comparable and here whilst vehicles are not prohibited, a narrow road width and generous pavements limit their presence and creates a high quality, largely pedestrian friendly environment.



St Peter's Street-Proposed



St Peter's Street-Existing



Bedford Street, Exeter a successful shared surface

5.6 Landscape and public realm strategy

Intimate courtyards

Whilst the east side of St Peters Street should be characterised largely by small scale green spaces, the medieval core to the west of the high Street requires a different approach. Small integrated courtyards should be introduced to complement the new shopping loop providing places to pause. These spaces should help reference and reiterate the fine historic grain. A high quality, natural stone surface should be introduced to unify the area. It should be simple in its realisation to provide a successful backdrop, allowing the activities of the street to animate the spaces.

These courtyards would provide appropriate locations to focus bespoke seating elements. Contemporary seats could be dedicated to famous past residents or those that have helped shape the city for example Sir Francis Bacon, Stanley Kubrick, George Gilbert Scott, Benny Hill and Samuel Ryder. These seats could form a timeline throughout the central area and would be informative, fun and original, helping to promote a distinct identity for St. Albans.

Market Cross although larger and separate from this new retail loop should provide a flagship space at the heart of old Medieval St Albans, which these courtyard spaces should reference in terms of character and materials. This space situated at the end of quaint, pedestrianised, French Row is a popular gathering point and the clock tower provides a striking backdrop. However, the space is looking tired and in need of an upgrade.

French Row 1970s tessellated concrete paving blocks are tired and in need of repaving. Historic granite setts and feature paving would be suitable materials to use in this location. The Clock Tower would be illuminated at night to highlight this

as a priority public realm space punctuating the southern end of the High Street. Creative lighting could be employed and could perhaps reference the semaphore signals that were once transmitted via this landmark.

Seating precedents:

Bespoke seats in Newcastle's historic Grainger Town offer a repeated form yet each is engraved with a different detail. These seats help contribute to a high quality public realm.

Seating in Duke of York Square, London is cleverly designed to incorporate bins and reduce street clutter.

Bespoke seating in Potter's Fields London incorporates a Wedgwood china pattern to reflect the history of the site by, offering a reference to the industry that previously existed in this location.

Case Study: Coventry Phoenix Project

Coventry's Phoenix project demonstrates the successful regeneration of a city through investment in the public realm. The project is a successful integration between art and the urban environment and offers an innovative interpretation of the past. The complimentary series of spaces are effectively linked via a route which originates at the cathedral and culminates in a redesigned civic square. A rejuvenated walled garden and contemporary knot garden comprise enchanting green elements.



Cultural/historic reference, Potters Fields, London



Bespoke seating, Grainger Town, Newcastle



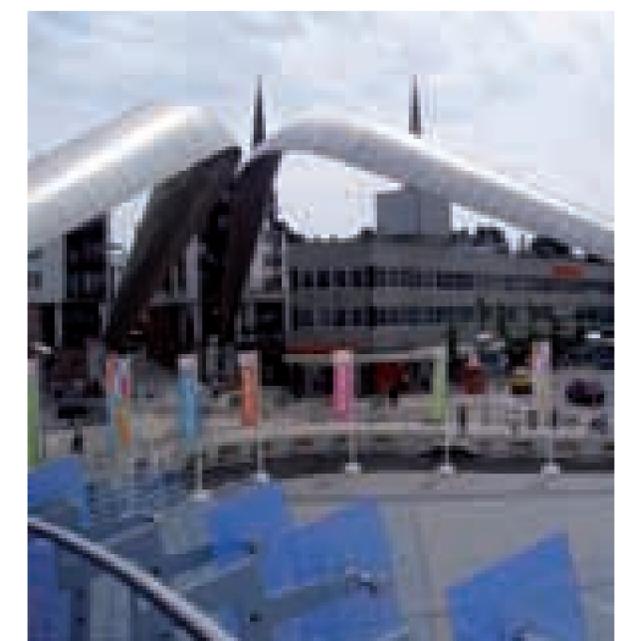
Integrated seating with bins, Duke of York Square, London



Typical courtyard



Priory garden, Phoenix project, Coventry



The Whittle Arch and Millennium Place, Phoenix Project, Coventry

Civic Spaces (Market Place and Civic Square)

Civic gardens:

St Albans currently lacks a defining focal civic space and core central gathering place. The introduction of two new different, yet complimentary spaces should reinforce a clear identity for St Albans, lift the public realm, accent key architectural features and offer a stage for events.

The proposed civic gardens presents the opportunity for a new multi-functional open space or contemporary 'public garden' with cafes/tea rooms, civic offices and the theatre spilling on to the space. The space should be restful, benefiting from its location set off the main high street, yet lively, providing a place to linger, eat lunch and meet friends. It should provide a focus for local cultural events and have a character unique to St Albans. It could provide a venue for outdoor exhibitions, small scale music events, craft fairs or a local Christmas market. It would form a destination space for local office workers at lunchtime, pre and post theatre groups, tourists, early evening drinks, lunchtime concerts etc. The space would combine high quality paved areas with softer areas of planting and lawn, seating and water features creating an inspiring and unique space for a wide range of users. It would form a valuable addition to the city centre and an important link as part of the inner garden ring, celebrating and raising the profile of this green circuit.



Case Study: Peace gardens, Sheffield

This is a comparable space (albeit larger) outside the Sheffield Council civic offices with a unique design and character offering a highly popular destination for residents and tourists alike. It provides a successful integration of hard and soft materials with high quality detailing using stone, metalwork and ceramics. The presence of water features means the space is animated at all times.



Market Square

The market square should be developed as the main civic space for the city. It would be the venue for large civic events including open-air screenings, temporary stage events, fairs, parades and more. When the market and other events are not taking place, the space should function as a large open space lined with substantial trees, with a single high quality surface treatment and a co-ordinated treatment of street furniture. The design and character of the space should draw on its current and historical function as a market place providing a simple open space which can be used in a variety of different ways with or without cars. The market should be retained and improved facilities should be provided for servicing the market including lighting, drainage and cleansing.

Case study: Duke of York Square, Chelsea, London

This simple, flexible design works well. The space is busy accommodating the Saturday market and other events, yet is equally successful when quiet. Adjacent cafes and shops animate the space. Use of York stone throughout ensures a space that is high quality and robust. Historic references are creatively integrated through paving details and artwork.

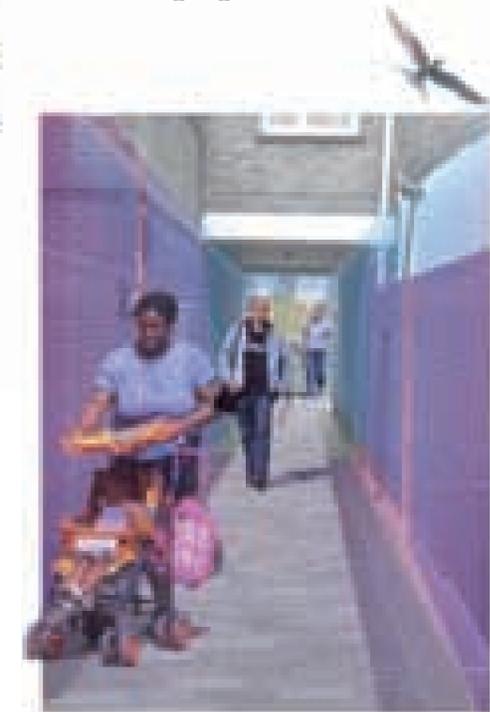


Lanes

The narrow lanes branching from French Row are curious and delightful features inherited from Medieval St Albans. Further lanes exist to the north linking the west side of St Peters Street to Drovers Way or the back lands. Whilst these lanes maybe in keeping with the historic urban grain they are presently, uninviting and bland through-routes. These lanes need animating with lively frontages, improved paving and good lighting to create user friendly charming experiences.

Case study: Rose Street Edinburgh

Rose Street, which is set back and runs parallel to bustling, Princes Street was initially conceived as little more than an access road to service the high street shops. Nowadays Rose Street is lined with bars, cafes and small shops. This area is pedestrianised with vehicular access limited to deliveries. This provides a quaint, calmer alternative to the teeming High Street.



Demarcate

Outer gateways:

Gateways

Gateways into the city are important in creating a sense of arrival and identity and these gateways should operate across two levels and scales. On a broad scale, entrances into St Albans should be marked at key nodal points with distinctive tree planting and entrance signs. Arrival into the city centre should then in turn be marked with hard landscape elements and changes in paving, which should create a threshold to the city centre.

These two methods of marking the gateways should be contextually appropriate and it is felt that subtle gestures rather than grand statements would be a neater more effective way of creating the desired effect.

Signage has an important role to play within the city, in addition to simple finger posts and orientation maps, there are many features which merit interpretation. It should be carefully designed and carefully integrated to enhance rather than detract from the surrounding environment. All signage should be rationalised and developed holistically with a clear and cohesive strategy. This should help provide a distinct identity for St Albans.



Inner gateways:



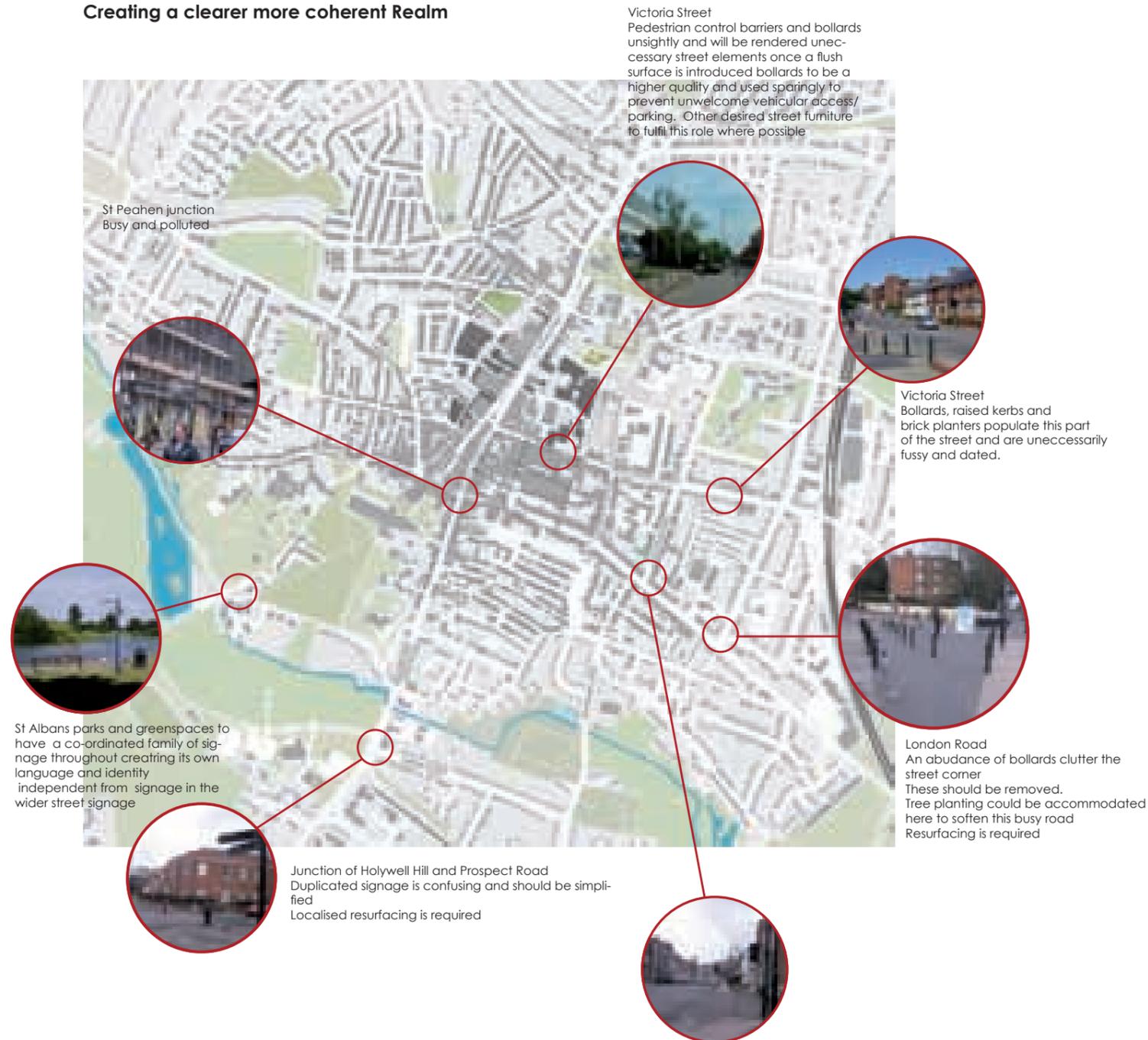
Key

- public realm high priority zone (focus for highest quality materials)
- public realm priority zone (high quality materials used more sparingly)

5.6 Landscape and public realm strategy

Declutter

Creating a clearer more coherent Realm



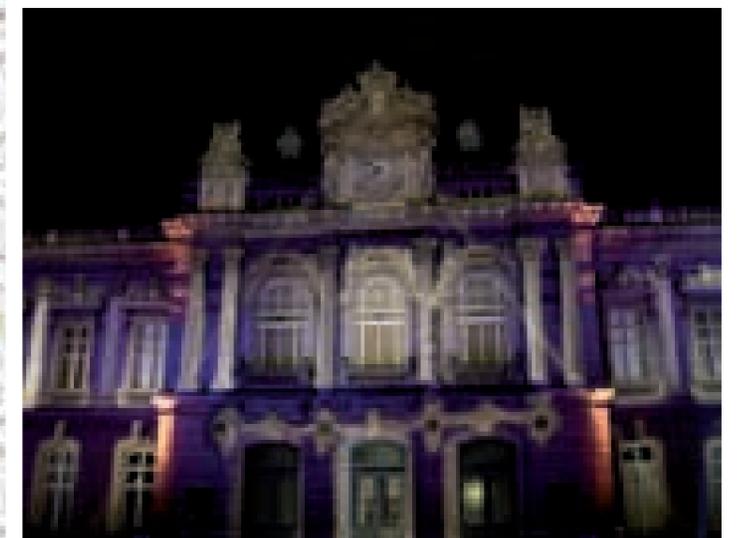
Install the correct street furniture in the most suitable locations



Lighting Strategy

Improvements to the lighting in the city could help contribute to an effective night time economy and could add additional interest to temporary festivals such as Alban Day. St.Albans has many structures/buildings and spaces that could be accentuated through the use of creative lighting. This could be through the use of non standard light fittings and fixtures, illuminating facades of landmark building and features and uplighting trees. Key spaces/buildings to target would be:

- St.Albans Abbey and the Abbey orchard - Effective lighting to the west façade would help highlight this important approach. Seasonal coloured lighting could be designed to change throughout the year reflecting the church calendar.
- The Abbey gateway
- Verulamium Park- lighting of the key routes through the park and of the extant Roman remains. (Detailed design will need to ensure that the habitat and local foraging areas for bats in the park are not adversely affected)
- The Clock Tower - Beacons to mark either end of the High Street.
- St Peter's Church
- St Peter's Street





FREEHOLD
UNDER OFFER

THAT SQUARE

American Nails

HFY
SILVER CRY
LONGER

6. Masterplan and urban design strategy

6 Introduction

Introduction

This chapter sets out the overarching spatial framework for the city vision, designed to help ensure that the city develops with a strategic spatial vision, both in terms of the city as a whole and in terms of accommodating future uses in a way which creates the best quality environment and helps to secure St Albans continued prosperity.

The chapter sets out a number of key plans which tell the story of the spatial framework, ranging from city scale, through zones of activity, to consideration of sites within the city centre. These plans are not designed to be masterplans and are instead intended to inform the development of plans at the masterplanning stage, to prompt discussion of key issues and to present options to the local community for the draft vision exhibition.

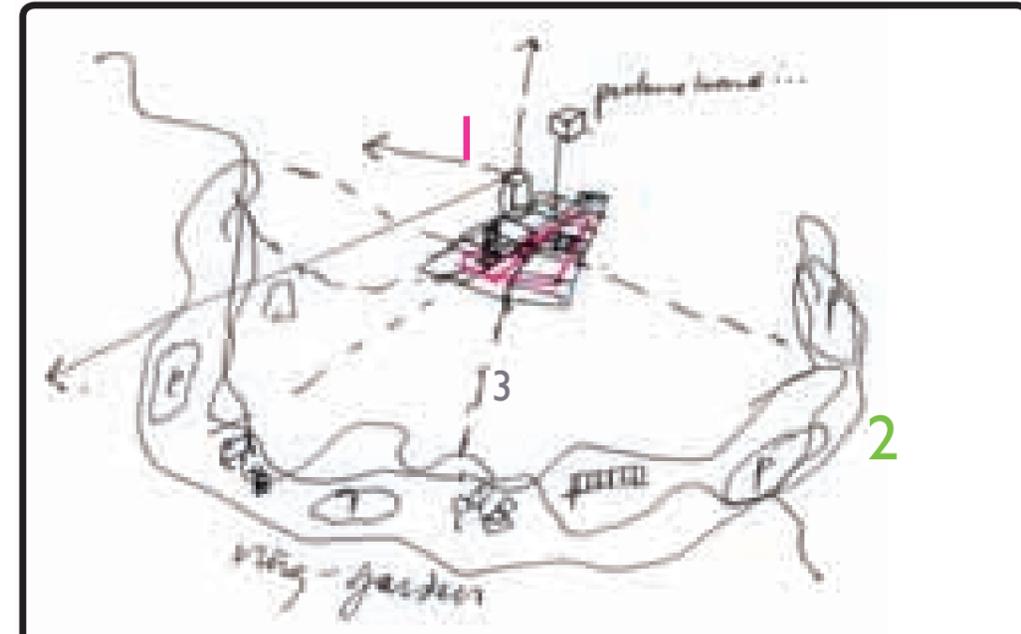
The chapter is set out according to the following structure:

- City wide spatial considerations including an overarching spatial framework; a city wide concept; and city wide interventions.
- City centre issues, including suggested zones of activity of activity, movement and uses, and principles for the city centre.
- Urban design guidelines for the city centre
- The central area masterplan, setting out the concept and public realm, movement and anchors, land uses, parking, servicing and the final masterplan.

- Outline objectives and guidelines for the Abbey and its surrounds.
- Outline objectives and guidelines for the London Road area
- Outline objectives and guidelines for the University of Herts and the city museum site

Overarching spatial framework

3 propositions...



- 1 Consolidate and intensify the city on the hill**
using the opportunities afforded by:
 - The topography and views from the hill
 - The quality of much of the existing built fabric
 - The potential quality of many of the existing streets (especially st. Peters street)
 - The possibility of substantial redevelopment at the Drover's Way and the Civic Centre sites
- 2 Garden ring**
Encourage the formation of a continuous orbit of connected landscapes that would:
 - link together the city's suburbs
 - provide a setting for community facilities
 - help structure the tourist experience of, and access to, the city
 - mark entry to the city and intercept city centre bound traffic
- 3 Radials**
Provide excellent walking and cycle routes, alongside public transport connections between the city on the hill and the garden ring

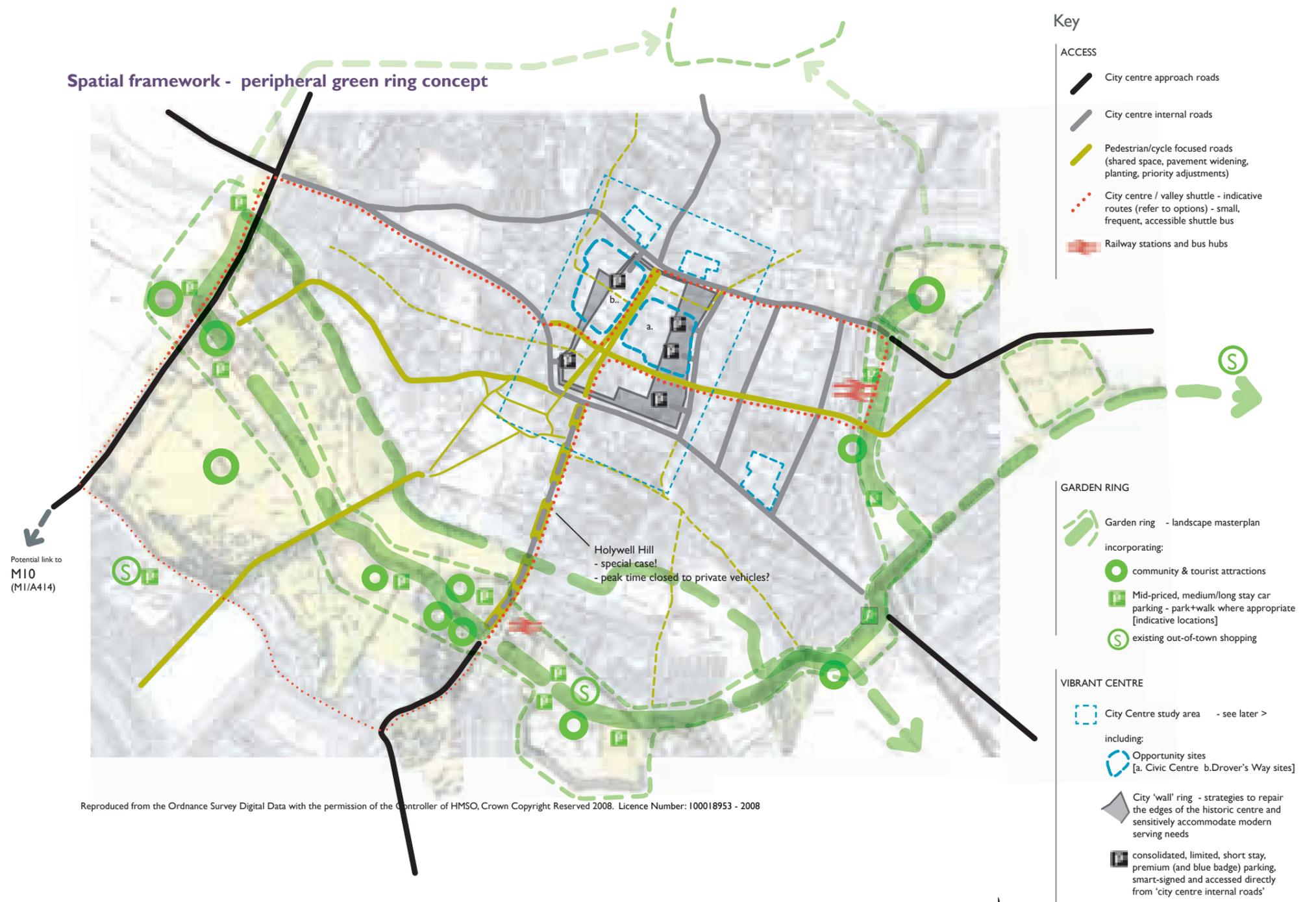
6.1 City wide spatial proposals

A peripheral green ring

The existence of Verulamium Park to the south of the city, the Alban Way, Clarence Park to the east and Bernards Heath to the north provide huge potential to connect a green ring around the city, operating as a green infrastructure version of the traditional city wall, within which residents are safe and protected.

This peripheral route can be connected by pedestrian and cycle lanes, creating a green circuit around the city, which could in turn be connected to the city centre via radial routes. This presents great scope for pioneering a 'park and walk' system within the city, in which visitors to St Albans by car park on the periphery of the city and enjoy an attractive walk into the city centre along an attractive green route. This can link effectively into healthy living initiatives for the city and provide a creative extension of the park and ride system.

In the city itself, development can be intensified in the city centre, to accommodate new uses over the coming 20 years through the creation of a thriving and animated compact centre, with stunning views afforded by the hilltop location, to the south, past the Abbey and out to the countryside beyond. Sensitive intervention can help to repair the edges of the historic centre to accommodate modern uses.



6.1 City wide spatial proposals

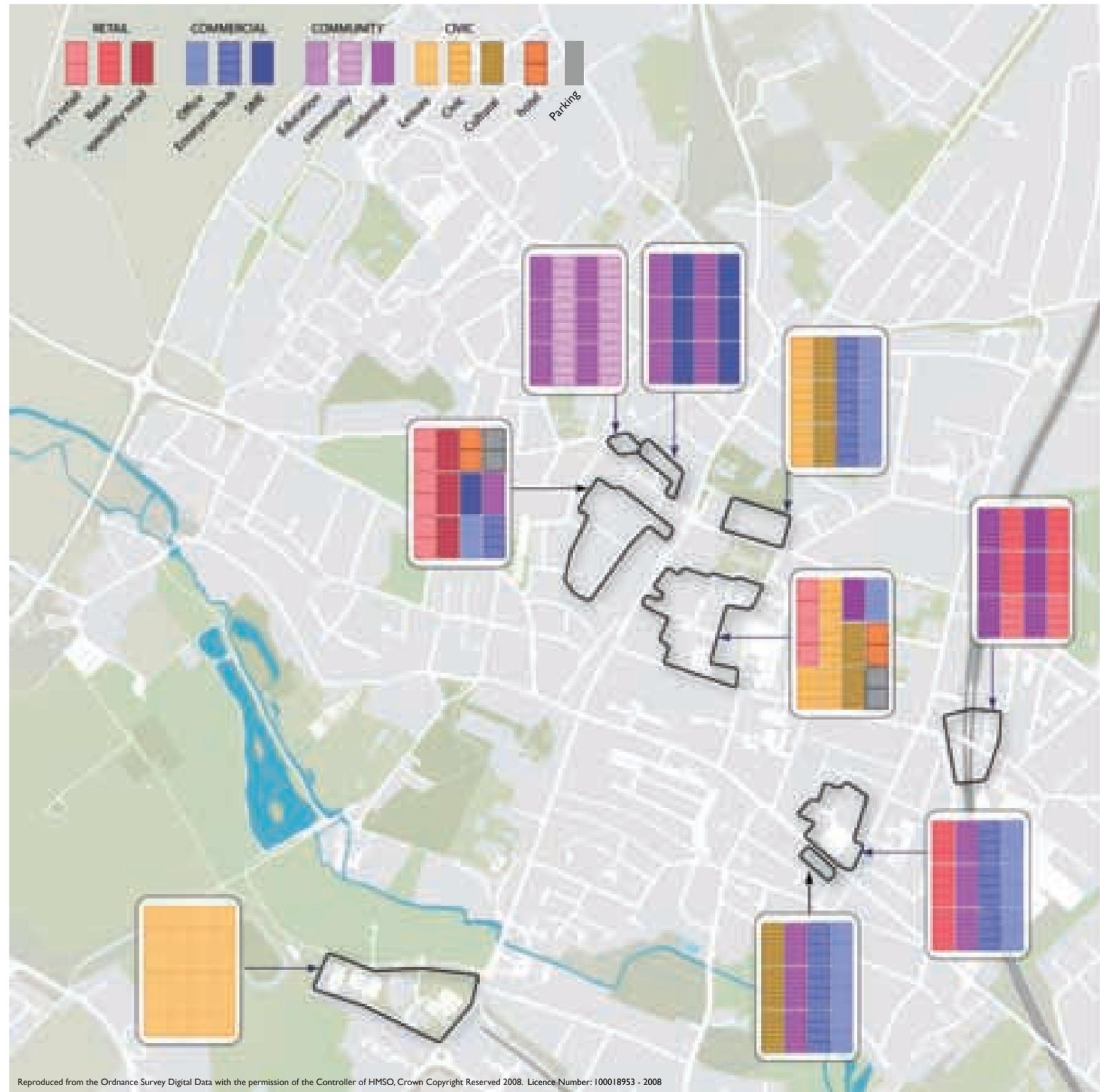


City wide interventions

At the city wide level, a number of important interventions of varying scale are proposed within the City Vision. These include:

- The central masterplan for the two key city centre sites (Drovers Way and the Civic Centre), which will transform the city centre.
- More attractive and pedestrian-friendly routes which will act as spokes linking the city centre with the outskirts and the surrounding countryside.
- New ways to see, understand and experience the city's fascinating Roman past which lies dormant under Verulamium Park. The city's rich Roman, medieval and recent history can be brought together in a new cultural circuit linking the Roman Museum, Theatre, Verulamium Park and a centrally relocated St Albans Museum.
- In the south of the City, plans to redevelop Westminster Lodge bring better leisure to local residents, and London Road will be the location for new businesses and homes.
- Access to St Albans Station will be made easier with potential for a new entrance coming directly onto Victoria Street.
- The creation of new homes and jobs in the London Road area.
- Improved community facilities at Westminster Lodge and Bernards Heath.

Spatial framework - zones of activity



Zones of activity in the centre

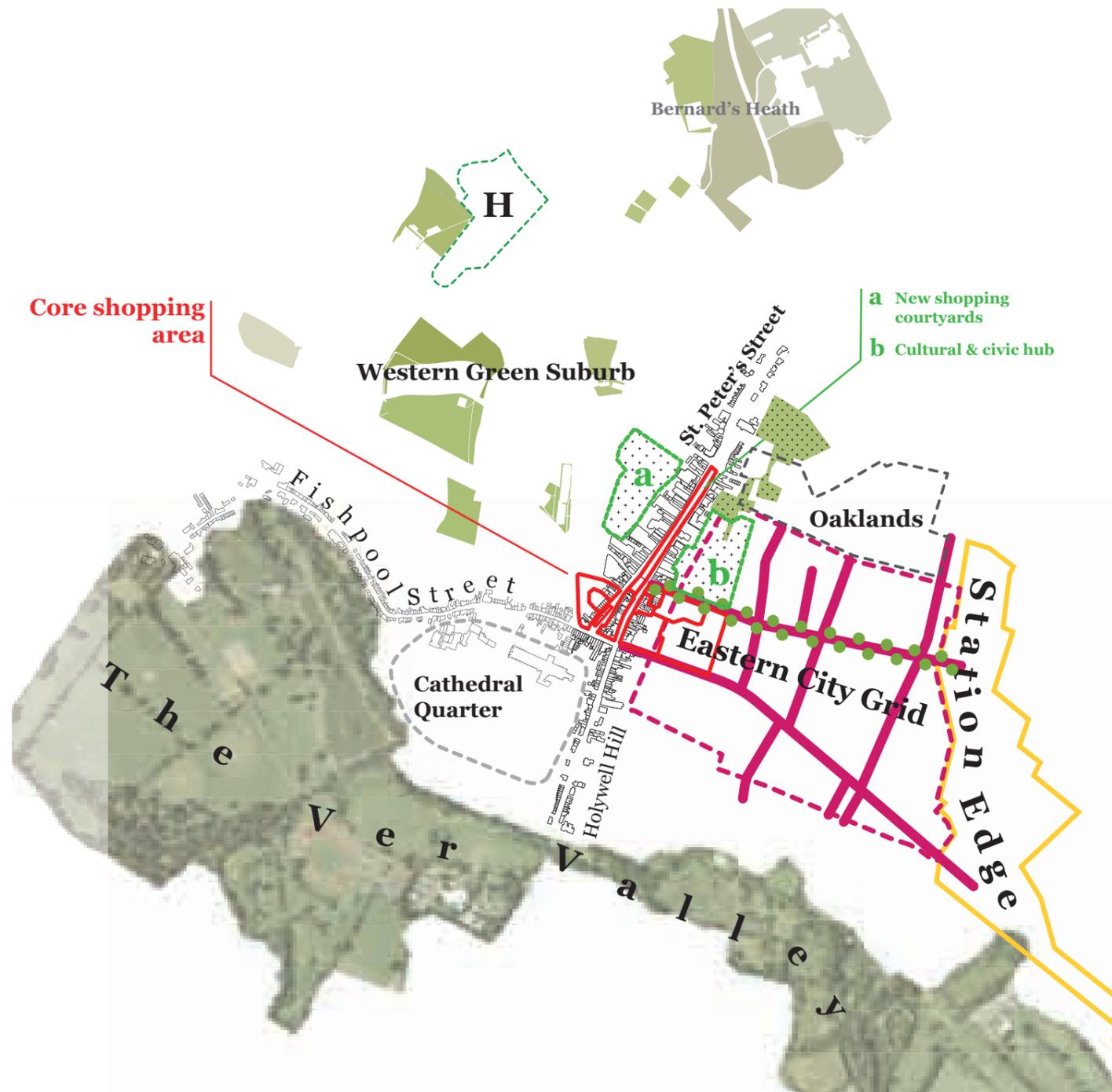
A number of key sites were identified during the baseline analysis for the project and consideration has been given to suitable uses for each of these sites, in view of planning policy and broad market viability, so that St Albans can retain a clear hierarchy of uses and be legible and accessible for all.

This plan sets out the type of uses considered appropriate for each of the sites, grouped by major themes of retail, commercial, community and civic, and with sub sections within these for particular uses which have been identified as desirable during the consultation phase.

In addition to activity type, the plan also shows the grain associated with each of the uses, indicated by the sub-sections within the blocks. Independent specialist retailers, for example, are expected to create a more fine grain building pattern than provided by new development for primary retail.

The plan gives an overall indication of the types of activities and associated urban grain for different areas, and the overall hue for these areas, indicating zones of activity,

6.1 City wide spatial proposals



A number of key character areas have been identified within St Albans which help to give the city a unique identity. It is suggested that these character areas be respected and enhanced to improve the legibility of the city at a city-wide scale.

The key character areas include:

- The Ver Valley green ribbon which takes in Verulamium Park and the Roman heritage, along with the River Ver and the green swathe in which this sits.
- The enclosed and calm Cathedral Quarter, in which the Abbey and its surrounding courtyards and green spaces sit.
- The core shopping area of Market Place and St Peter's Street.
- New shopping courtyards proposed for Drovers Way.
- The cultural and civic hub at the civic centre area.
- The secret gardens at the north end of the city centre, incorporating the municipal gardens, the almshouses gardens and St Peter's churchyard.
- Victoria Street liveable route, providing a strong connection between the station and the city centre.
- The eastern city grid which provides employment uses and residential neighbourhoods set out on a traditional street pattern.
- Station edge, which accommodates offices uses and parking areas, with potential for new development to come forward in the future.
- The western green suburb, with lower density residential areas and key public spaces and facilities such as the hospital.

Land use aspirations for the city centre

During the detailed consultation and baseline analysis stage of the city vision project, a number of uses were identified as being particularly useful and desirable for St Albans, either as a result of capacity studies undertaken for the city, for as identified by a large proportion of consultees. The uses and activities wish list includes:

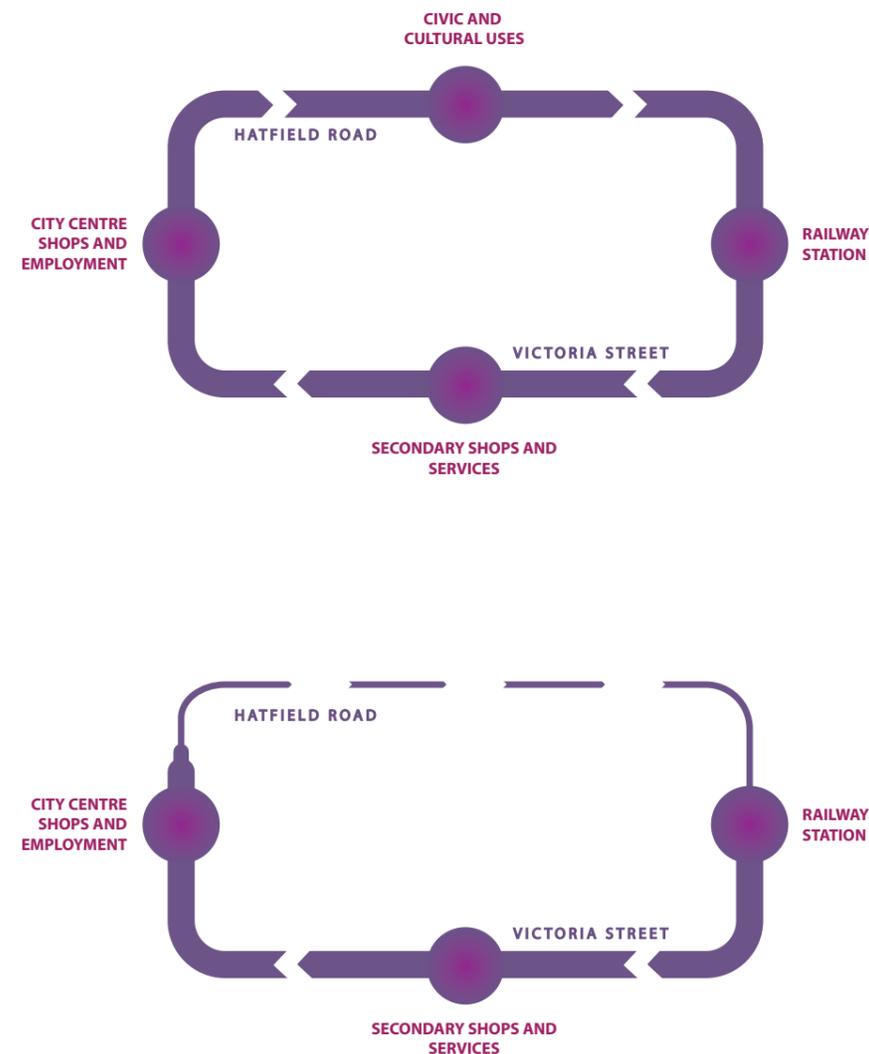
- A museum and gallery combined complex;
- Flexible work spaces for businesses;
- An enterprise hub for learning, training, small businesses;
- City centre residential and live/work spaces;
- Central food retail;
- A cinema;
- A lecture hall;
- A department store;
- A replacement/refurbished theatre;
- A new library;
- Specialist and independent shops;
- Central hotels; and
- Car parking in more strategic locations.

This list has been used as a basis for developing initial high level options for the central sites in the city which can be used to gauge interest and preferences of the local community and to inform the development of the masterplanning stage of the project. These diagrams are set out on the following pages.

Retaining a movement circuit to St Albans

St Albans has traditionally had a movement circuit linking the station with the city centre via Victoria Street in the south and Hatfield Road in the north. The removal of civic uses from the Hatfield Road area, including the closure of the large Oaklands College site, has resulted in a dip in activity in this area of the city in recent years and may be partly responsible for the lower performance of shops at the north end of the High Street.

To avoid this circuit being further broken, it is considered important for the opportunity area on Hatfield Road covering the University of Hertfordshire and museum sites to remain as a civic, cultural or education use. This would retain a public facing element to the site, bringing greater activity and preserving the circuit to the station.



6.2 City centre concept and principles

At the city centre scale, there are a number of concepts and priorities which underpin proposals for guiding new development in the city. These include:

1) Establishing a clear pedestrian circuit with anchors

This draws on existing links, but explores how these can be improved to effectively encompass the Civic Centre and Drovers Way, so that new cultural and shopping areas are attractive and easy to find. We have concentrated on ensuring that a defined route is provided, which better connects the east and west of St Peters Street and also links well with Christopher Place and The Maltings shopping areas.

2) Creating a Civic Square

Public consultation indicated that the St Albans community is keen for a civic square to be created, which can act as the civic centre of the city and can accommodate events and celebrations. We propose creating a new square to the east of St Peters Street, which is overlooked by cafés, restaurants, shops and cultural uses.

The masterplan also proposes improving the public realm around the Old Town Hall and Market Place, so that this area can function as a true civic square.

A flexible public space that is usable all year round, is also proposed, following consultation feedback. In the masterplan a Winter Garden is proposed adjacent to the Alban Arena in order to provide a weather-independent public space.

3) Improving the pedestrian alleys

St Albans has a number of pedestrian links which add real character to the city but currently provide a poor physical environment in some cases. The masterplan proposes recreating these routes, with shops fronting onto this where possible and improved the lighting and materials so they feel cleaner and safer where this isn't possible.

4) Creating a legible layout to the centre

The building layout in the Drovers Way area and Civic Centre area is currently poor, with spaces that are not enclosed or overlooked. The masterplan seeks to create a clearer layout to buildings so that public squares and routes are more defined and provide a sense of enclosure with active frontage. This includes creating smaller building 'blocks', which are currently very large. This intervention will help to sensitively repair the edges to the historic core, which currently serve as backlands.

5) Creating a civic and cultural hub

The masterplan seeks to capitalise on the civic and cultural uses already present at the Civic Centre and to enhance these to create a strong cultural and civic hub with an attractive setting which can be a hive of activity. This includes an enlarged Alban Arena and a cinema; the relocation of the city museum with a large dedicated temporary gallery space; and potential for a new, relocated library.

The masterplan has been designed to be flexible to maximise viability but has been developed so that this cultural hub can be achieved, whether an ambitious development is undertaken, or a smaller intervention,

6) Ensuring a mixed use development

The masterplan shows the key ground floor uses and focuses on how the centre can accommodate new shopping and cultural facilities. It is designed, however, as a mixed use scheme, with residential and office uses accommodated above the commercial and cultural uses. These are shown in less detail but are considered to be critical to the success of a scheme, both in economic and social sustainability terms. By providing a mix of uses in these key, central locations, the masterplan also supports the city wide aspirations to consolidate key commercial uses on the hill in the city centre.

The masterplan ensures that different housing types can be accommodated in the centre, with terraced family housing provided to the west of St Peters Street and potential for apartments of different sizes to be included throughout the scheme.

Whilst the University of Hertfordshire, Museum and Coupers Garage site have not been considered in detail, we are aware that these sites can provide complimentary and associated uses in the City Centre, including community, commercial and cultural uses.

7) Ensuring suitable building heights and sizes

When development comes forward at these key sites, it will be important for the design to work with the existing topography in the centre, to ensure that new development integrates well with the existing buildings in the city centre. We envisage the buildings being three or four storeys throughout the schemes, with certain sites identified as being suitable for slightly taller buildings of up to 6 storeys. These could be at the Drovers Way site, to make use of the attractive views from here, and for a slim building on the Civic Centre site to act as a focal point.

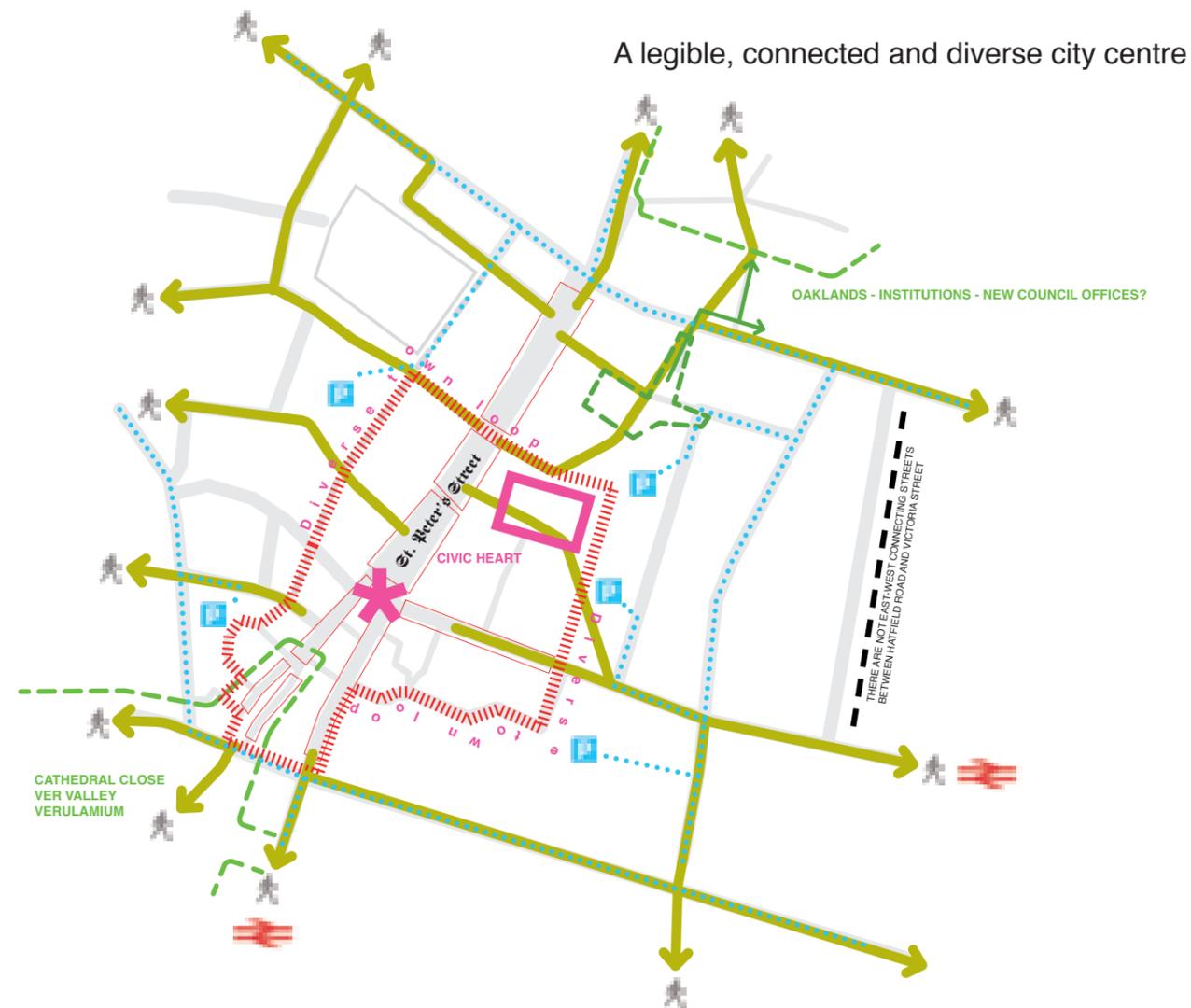
8) Ensuring flexibility in development plans

The masterplan represents the end stage of a lengthy testing of options with key stakeholders and with the public. This is not designed to be a prescriptive plan and it is unlikely that development would come forward in the exact layout set out in this report.

The masterplan instead represents one illustration of the expression of the key principles set out here and the urban design guidelines developed for the centre. It is these principles and guidelines which will help shape any development which comes forward at these key sites.

These principles have informed the development of the masterplan for the city centre and are designed to be guiding principles for development that comes forward.

6.3 Urban design guidelines



To accompany the guiding concept and principles for the city centre, a series of urban design guidelines have been developed, to help steer future development within the city, and particularly the city centre.

The central masterplan has been developed according to these guidelines and it is considered important that detailed schemes in the city follow these guidelines.

These guidelines provide reassurance that whilst development proposals for the city centre may not reflect the illustrative masterplan, they will still follow a set of criteria that can help to ensure a successful and characterful city centre.

The urban design guidelines cover the following themes:

- building heights and scale;
- block structure;
- permeability and legibility;
- heritage;
- frontages;
- land uses;
- unit sizes;
- parking;
- materials; and
- sustainability guidelines.

Building heights and scale

- Building heights should naturally follow the city's topography, including areas on higher ground where limited building heights could unduly flatten the City's skyline.
- Building heights should respect and respond to the existing heights in the city centre, which are generally 2-4 storeys, and impacts on the skyline should be modelled.
- Scope exists for a contemporary, 'iconic' building in the city centre. Height is not considered to be a crucial element of this, however, and a tall building would need to respond well to the surrounding area.
- Ensure maximum benefits are afforded by the city's topography to ensure buildings in key locations have appropriate uses. This includes:
 - Potential for a roof garden, terrace or restaurant on a building replacing the existing Drivers Way car park, such as on a department store or hotel.
 - Potential for a roof garden, terrace or restaurant at the Hertfordshire University site
- Buildings and frontages fronting public spaces should be scaled to ensure well proportioned enclosure.

6.3 Urban design guidelines

Block structure

- The block structure of new development should connect into the historic, fine grain block structure of St Albans, particularly in the central core, maintaining and improving existing routes and connections, and, where appropriate, create new ones.
- In the historic core of the City new pedestrian routes should echo the scale and character of the City's historic alleyways.
- New blocks should fit well with the City's existing hierarchy of blocks, routes and spaces to help legibility and reinforce St Albans' existing local identity.
- Where appropriate, new blocks should help complete and form new enclosed public and amenity spaces.
- Upper floors should be built as perimeter blocks to maximise natural lighting of units and to help enclose amenity spaces within building footprints.
- Block structure should facilitate flexible use over time in order to maximise viability in the event of changing economic and social requirements of space.

Permeability and legibility

- Block structure should strengthen pedestrian connections throughout the City, including (where relevant) east-west connections across St Peters Street. However, blocks should contribute to a walking circuit which does not challenge the linear high street, but which provides a greater depth to St Albans City Centre.
- The position of new routes should have consideration for links beyond the site in question and should reinforce connectivity between strategic destinations and thoroughfares within the local hierarchy of routes and spaces.
- Where relevant, routes should be designed to strengthen footfall around local retail circuits.
- Pedestrian routes should reflect the historic language and identity of the city, which is characterised by irregular (but coherent) streets and spaces rather than geometric patterns.
- Routes and blocks and building forms should be configured to provide strong sightlines to landmark buildings and uses, and any other key destinations. In particular, strong sightlines should link new retail anchors with areas of high pedestrian footfall.

Heritage

- Designs for new development in or adjacent to St Albans' historic core should be based on a sound understanding of the historic evolution of their immediate site and surroundings, as set out in English Heritage's Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance. In particular, designs should maintain scales, forms, grains, plot widths or route alignments which have historic origins and which may have intrinsic heritage value as evidence of earlier uses and activities, as well as contributing to local character.
- New development should demonstrate a positive relationship to adjacent and surrounding buildings in terms of scale, style and materials in order to ensure that new and older buildings create successful ensembles. This can be assisted by use of local materials and vernacular references where appropriate.
- The scale and form of new buildings should fit successfully within the established urban hierarchy which characterises St Albans' historic townscape. Scale and form should reflect the building's position within the City's range of scales, from the Cathedral through to domestic scaled shops and houses.
- Mixed-use development should be reflected at street level, as well as vertically, to ensure that new neighbourhoods portray their mixed use character and function effectively.
- The existing historic fabric within the city centre should be preserved and enhanced and opportunities should be taken to improve poor quality and neutral fabric through redevelopment. This will ensure continuity in the city's identity and maintain a broad mix of building periods within the city centre which contributes to the city's rich patina and identity.

Frontages

- New frontages should be designed integrate well with existing high quality and historic facades with regard to style and choice of materials.
- Where historic plots have been amalgamated, new frontages should be designed to synchronise with the vertical rhythm established by surviving historic plots.

Land uses

- Building uses should reflect the strategic guidance set out in the City Centre concept and principles to ensure that development across the City is coordinated to ensure that new uses are complementary.
- Mixed-use buildings should be configured with non-residential uses at ground level and lower floors, with residential uses above ground and on upper floors.



Historic Fishpool Street

Unit sizes

- Medium-sized and larger new retail developments should provide a variety of unit sizes in order to ensure that the City Centre can provide space for a variety of new businesses in the future.
- Smaller unit sizes should be provided in order to protect St Albans character, identity and unique shopping offer in the area of small, independent shops.
- Larger unit sizes should be provided so that St Albans can attract national retailers, for which capacity has been identified, and can address leakage to Watford and Welwyn Garden City.
- Medium-sized and larger residential development should provide a variety of unit sizes to meet the needs of a variety of different age groups, including families, first-time buyers and older people.

Parking

- For larger new retail developments parking provision levels should be coordinated with City-wide transport objectives, helping the City promote sustainable transport. Where feasible and viable, parking for such developments should be provided underground to maximise efficient use of land and improve the visual quality of the built environment.
- Parking provision for new residential units in the centre should be minimal, in order to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport. More detailed guidance on parking standards should be taken from relevant Council policy documents as they emerge.
- In City-Centre locations parking for hotels should be limited in line with the sustainable transport objectives outlined in the Vision. Where possible additional parking needs should be met through arrangements with existing public car parks located nearby.

Materials

- New development should use high quality materials to enhance St Albans' attractive environment for residents and visitors, which is one of the City's assets.
- Public routes and space should be built with quality paving, signage and street furniture to provide an attractive setting for new and historic buildings in the City.

6.3 Urban design guidelines

Sustainability principles

Buildings:

- New buildings should be built to the highest standards of resource efficiency, drawing on recommendations and standards set out in national guidance documents such as the *Code for Sustainable Homes* and *Code for Sustainable Buildings*.
- Where possible and appropriate new buildings should be orientated southwards towards the sun, where possible, with windows maximized on south facing facades
- The use of green roofs should be maximised on new buildings and considered for existing buildings to help prevent and mitigate against climate change, subject to due consideration of their impact on the historic roofscape. The benefits of green roofs include:
 - Evaporative cooling, improving the microclimate of surrounding areas;
 - Shade for buildings, preventing solar gain and helping with passive cooling in summer and reducing demand for air conditioning;
 - insulation to buildings, preventing heat loss in winter;
 - Alternative habitats for some species, helping them adapt to changes;
 - Reducing the rate and volume of surface water run-off;
 - Providing public or private amenity space;
 - Extending the lifespan of the roof membrane; and;
 - Reducing noise levels.

Three forms of green roof exist - intensive, simple intensive and extensive – which could be used throughout the city centre.

- Buildings should be designed and developed to be flexible over time, so that they can accommodate changing uses, adapting to economic and cultural shifts, following available guidance such as *Built for Life* standards.
- The ‘whole-life costs’ of new buildings in the city centre should be calculated, whereby the cost of developing, operating and maintaining a building over its whole life through to disposal is taken into account. This approach balances capital with revenue costs to achieve an optimum solution over a building’s whole life and can ensure that initial costs associated with sustainable building development are balanced against long-term savings afforded by this.
- The potential for solar energy and any other viable micro-generation technologies should be considered to power city centre services such as bus timetable information, street lights etc
- Sustainable Urban Drainage systems should be implemented in all new development to minimize run-off rates during heavy rainfall.

Public realm:

- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) should be employed to help mitigate the impacts of climate change, such as predicted wetter winters. This could include porous surfaces and planting. Landscaping of the river Ver corridor should be designed to accommodate fluvial flooding, potentially through the introduction of swales, ponds, infiltration trenches in the adjacent areas of green space to provide additional capacity in times of flooding.
- Tree and vegetation planting should be encouraged where appropriate throughout St Albans. This can provide shade in summer and lower water run-off rates in times of heavy rain, and it has intrinsic value for local biodiversity. Greater levels of public seating should be provided to capitalize on the amenity value of greenery in public places.
- Public routes and spaces should be retained in public ownership to ensure that they are open and accessible to all at all times of the day for a range of different activities and functions.
- Public spaces should be designed to fulfill a desired purpose and function, responding to the strategies set out in the Masterplan principles section of the Vision.

Further information on sustainable initiatives is included in the sustainable communities themed strategy.

6.4 Central masterplan

Role of the masterplan

As set out in the guiding principles for the city centre, the masterplan is not designed to be a rigid plan but rather a framework for development and a set of illustrative spatial proposals that can stimulate and help direct development. and renewal of the two large backland sites - with the aim of securing the vitality of the city centre as a whole over the next 30 years.

The masterplan's role as a guiding tool for development in the city centre is supported by the guiding principles for the city centre and by the urban design guidelines set out later in this section. Together, these are designed to provide a flexible yet robust set of tools for helping to shape the city centre over the coming 20 years, in a way that can provide for new uses and ensure an attractive and accessible environment.

Introduction

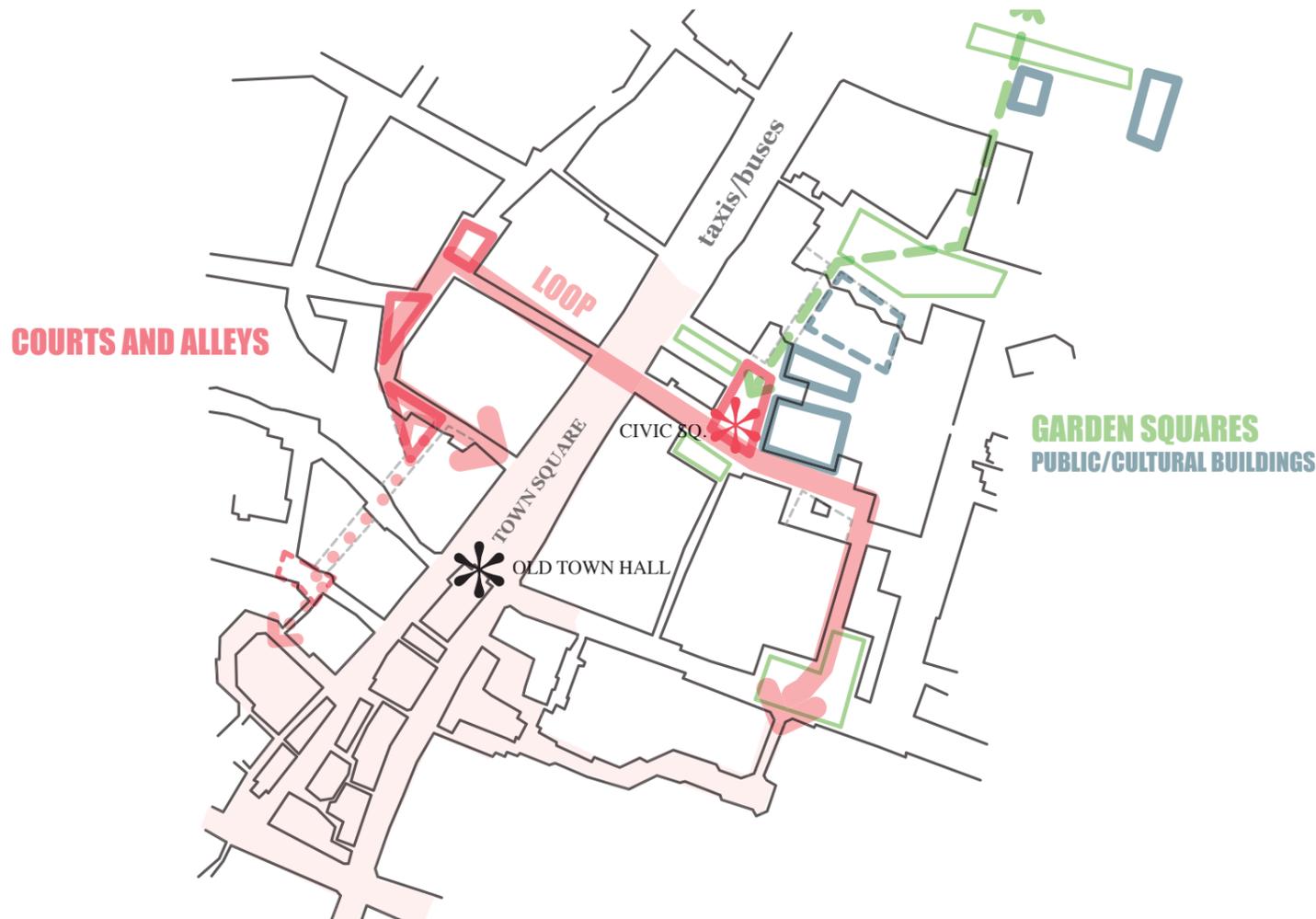
Given the scale of change imagined it will be important to avoid the problems often encountered with large-scale comprehensive development of integrating new and old. As such, the masterplan aims to consolidate the existing character and conserve the urban fabric where this is positive - and in so doing reinforce the unique characteristics of the city.

The masterplan also aims to put in place a finer grain of streets/blocks than currently exists - the street being a robust and flexible structuring element for cities. That said, the masterplan needs to accommodate significant additional large format and space hungry uses - and existing uses that might need to be re-provided - in particular larger format retail areas and car-parking. By utilising the drop in level away from St. Peter's Street to partially bury car-parking, and carefully locating the largest built elements the masterplan manages to provide a finer grain of public space.

While driven largely by an increase in additional shopping space, the masterplan ensures that this is enriched by civic cultural institutions and a resident population - with upper levels utilised widely for housing.



6.4 Central masterplan



Concept and public realm

The masterplan has been developed from a clear concept and public realm framework which has informed the subsequent block structure and key links. The primary elements of the public realm concept are:

Enhance St Peter's Street as the city's spine

Clear and simplify St. Peter's Street as a shared surface space particularly in the area fronting the Town Hall - which should operate as the primary civic space within the town. Concentrate vehicle stopping (local buses and taxis) in the northern portion of the street - drawing on the tradition of 'coaching' along St. Peter's Street and helping to maintain the vitality this area.

Create a pedestrian loop in the retail area

Establish a continuous legible pedestrian loop, centred on St. Peter's Street and tying into new retail and cultural areas at Drovers Way and the Civic Centre, respectively. This would connect with the Victoria Street entrance to the Maltings in the east and in the future, to the northern pedestrian entrance to St. Christopher's Place in west.

Courts and Alleys

Shop fronted pedestrian lanes are provided, leading from St. Peter's Street to a series of intimate 'courts' along Drovers Way. These are designed to be similar in scale to the square by the Clock Tower - providing a bustling but intimate shopping environment characteristic of the areas around Market Place. This would create an attractive environment for shoppers and would provide a suitable location for cafés with outdoor seating.

Garden Squares

A series of three larger public spaces establishing and characterising a new north-south route running from the churchyard of St. Peter's Church to Victoria Street. Each of these public spaces has a distinct character, capitalising on existing mature landscaping/gardens, and plays a slightly different role within the centre. The three squares are:

- i. quiet rose garden in the north
- ii. active, festive civic square fronting the Arena/winter garden
- iii. busy, urban square to Victoria Street acting as a key entry point into the city centre from the station.

As a counterpoint to the commerce of St Peter's Street this sequence of garden squares is seen as supporting the civic life of the town by relating to the upgraded and augmented Alban Arena and new Winter Gardens, and providing a route to relocated council offices, moved north to Hatfield Road, as the culmination of this garden sequence.

Illustrative examples of these proposals are shown on the following page. **Building heights and scale**



The existing Alban Arena square

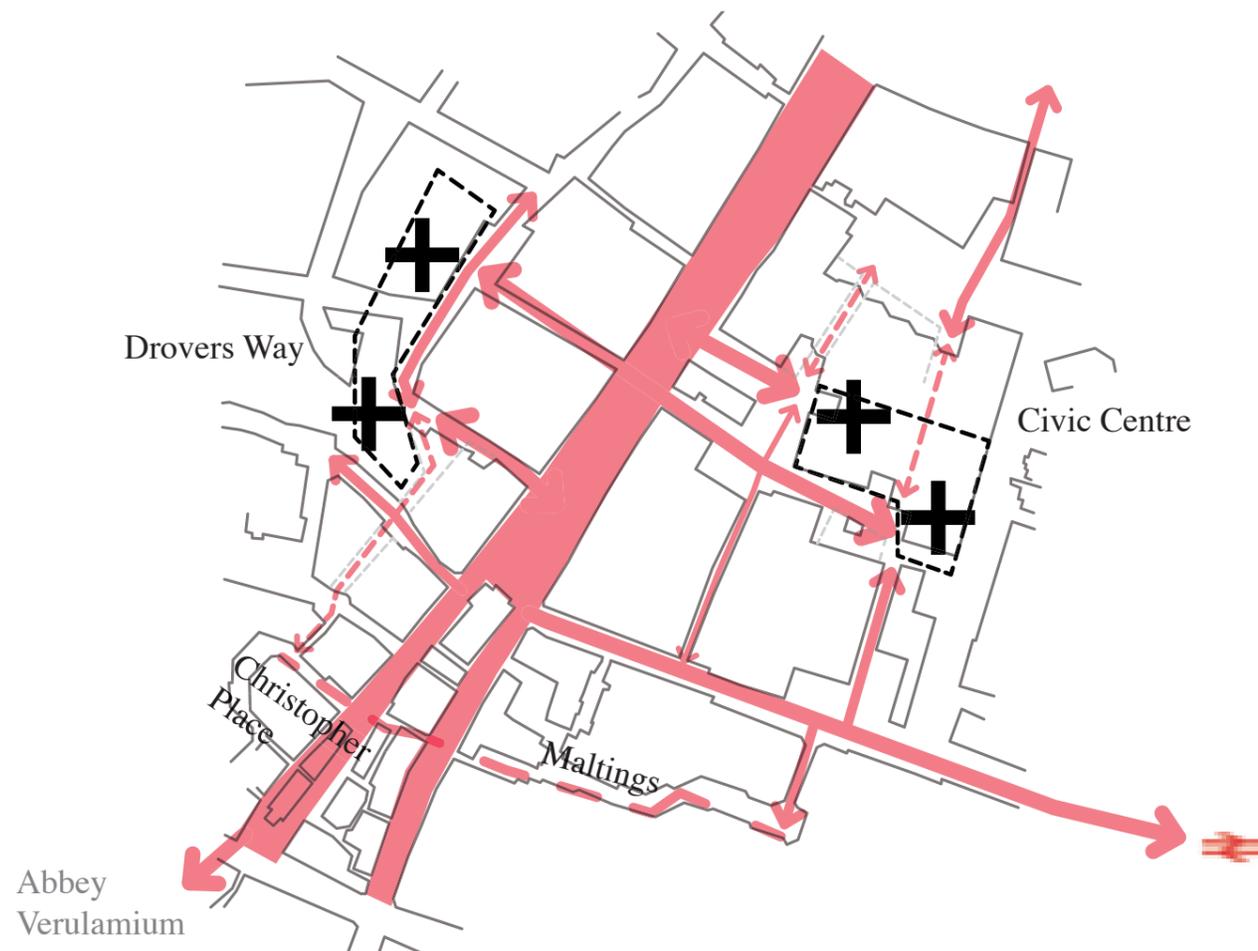


A civic square fronted by a refurbished Alban Arena and new Winter Gardens



A new courtyard space by Drovers Way

6.4 Central masterplan



Movement and anchors

A permeable network

The masterplan seeks to create a permeable pedestrian network, which supports the linear high street provided by St Peter's Street but addresses the backland areas through the creation of east-west links connecting the new retail area and cultural hub.

The grain of the block structure created by these links is designed to integrate with the existing adjacent streets.

The primary pedestrian cross route linking the key retail and cultural anchors with St Peter's Street would be a new shop lined street replacing the former Woolworths store on the west, and to the south of the existing Nationwide building on the east.

Secondary north-south connections are also provided through the existing right of way which runs beside the Courts building and through the Civic Centre South site to the east of St Peter's Street. To the west of St Peter's Street, a new connection is made through the existing Argos block, with potential to extend this sensitively through Spencer Street to link up with the new courtyards in Drovers Way.

Drovers Way itself is realigned slightly westwards in the masterplan, so that the block on the east side of the road and be completed, providing a clear and legible route and a more attractive environment.

Key anchors

Key anchors such as a department store or food retailer have been located at visible points at the axis of the strengthened east-west links and secondary north-south links. This will help to draw people into the new retail and cultural areas and support the pedestrian loop in the city centre. The illustrative masterplan suggests that these could be the expanded Alban Arena and cinema, and a supermarket in the Civic Centre area and a department store or cluster of primary retailers in the Drovers Way area.

Parking provision is also located at these anchor points so that visitors to the city centre can easily pick up the pedestrian loop and navigate the city centre.

In terms of the wider city centre, these anchor locations coordinate well with the primary retailers in the Maltings and the quality national retailers in Christopher Place.

Illustrative examples of these proposals are shown on the following pages.

A new food retailer, viewed through the Civic Centre South site from the enhanced square by the Quaker Gardens on Victoria Street



A new department store or anchor in the Drovers Way area, visible from St Peters Street through a shop lined street which replaces the Woolworths building



An improved Waddington Road alley, with frontage provided to this pedestrian route - and the existing alleyway.



6.4 Central masterplan

Land uses

In order to ensure delivery of the masterplan, it has been developed so that it could be brought forward according to two scenarios. The first of these sets out the complete option, which includes the replacement of the Council Offices, with relocation within the town, and the replacement of the PCT offices with new retail led mixed-use development, which will strengthen the retail circuit within the city,

The routes, anchors and land use principles of the masterplan would remain intact, however, if these two elements were to come forward at a later stage as a result of organisational or financial priorities,

Scenario I

The key elements of scenario I include:

- The creation of a new civic and cultural hub, including a refurbished and enlarged Alban Arena, a new boutique cinema; a relocated city museum with a temporary gallery space and potential for a relocated museum.
- A winter garden which acts as a gateway point to the cultural hub and provides a covered public space for the winter months
- A new food retailer behind the Alban Arena, with car access from Bricket Road and pedestrian access onto the new retail and commercial area at the Civic Centre
- The longer term relocation of the PCT offices, with retail led mixed-use development that provides active frontage to this key pedestrian route
- New hotels provided by the square fronting Victoria Street and at the northern end of St Peters Street.
- A new lane of high street shops linking St Peters Street and Drovers Way, through the former Woolworths site.
- A new department store or cluster of primary retailers in Drovers Way, fronting onto attractive new courtyards and visible from St Peter's Street.
- New housing provided onto Russell Avenue west side, with potential for commercial uses at the ground floor.
- New small office/studios on the northern section of Russell Avenue, ensuring compatibility with the market storage activities.
- Market storage relocated slightly to the northern site of Russell Avenue, with access to this from Drovers Way, with potential for general public events equipment also to be stored here.
- New apartment housing provided above development throughout the centre
- New office space provided above development throughout the centre
- Retail replacement to the existing Ladbrokes and Barclays buildings
- The relocation of the Council Offices to the current Herts University site on Hatfield Road.

Schedule of accommodation

The scenario I, full scheme, potentially delivers the following **additional** net accommodation:

- 17,000 sq. m. of retail, restaurant, cafe etc. uses
- A new hotel
- A cinema and Alban Arena foyer upgrade/extension
- Gallery and lecture theatre
- 10,000 sq. m. of offices
- c. 120 residential units (generally at upper levels)

	A Shopping, services, restaurants, pubs, cafes
	B Business
	A/B either shopping etc. or business use (street level)
	C1 Hotels
	C3 Residential
	B/C either residential or business use (upper levels)
	D Public Buildings (civic, arts and leisure)

Indicative upper floor



Ground floor



RETAIL ACCOMMODATION SCHEDULE

Drovers Way	Civic Centre	TOTAL
Replaced retail spaces		
5,065 sqm	1,025 sqm	6,090 sqm
New anchor retail space		
3,400 sqm	3,800 sqm	7,200 sqm
New retail (ground floor)		
8,195 sqm	6,330 sqm	14,525 sqm
New retail (upper floors)		
4,635 sqm	-	4,635 sqm
Total additional space		
11,165 sqm	9,105 sqm	20,270 sqm gross
		16,216 sqm net (based on 80%)
		800 storage to retail shift (Argos)
		17,016 sqm net

RESIDENTIAL AND OFFICE ACCOMMODATION SCHEDULE

Drovers Way	Civic Centre	TOTAL
Displaced spaces		
-	3,425 sqm	3,425 sqm
New space (ground floor)		
1,650 sqm	360 sqm	2,010 sqm
New space (upper floors)		
12,280 sqm	15,780 sqm	28,060 sqm
Total additional space		
13,930 sqm	12,715 sqm	26,645 sqm gross
		21,316 sqm net (based on 80%)

6.4 Central masterplan

Scenario 2

Scenario 2 has been established to ensure that the key elements of the masterplan are flexible and demonstrate that these could still be achieved, should elements of the plan be taken forward in a later phase 2.

The key differences between scenario 1 and scenario 2 are:

- The retention of the Council Offices, with a new entrance to the offices complex offered by the winter gardens. This would provide a more attractive frontage ensure an attractive character to the cultural
- The refurbishment and enlargement of the Alban Arena, and the establishment of a boutique cinema, but the retention of the city museum and the library at their current sites.
- A new food retailer behind the Alban Arena, with car access from Bricket Road and pedestrian access onto a new garden square
- Retention of the PCT offices at their existing site
- The creation of a garden square to the north of the PCT building, which will provide space for pedestrian movement flow at the entrance to the new food retailer.

Schedule of accommodation

The scenario 2, core elements scheme, potentially delivers the following **additional** accommodation:

- 14,000 sq. m. of retail, restaurant, cafe etc. uses
- A new hotel
- A cinema and Alban Arena foyer upgrade/extension
- 5600 sq. m. of offices
- c. 70 residential units (generally at upper levels)

Key

A	Shopping, services, restaurants, pubs, cafes
B	Business
A/B	either shopping etc. or business use (street level)
C1	Hotels
C3	Residential
B/C	either residential or business use (upper levels)
D	Public Buildings (civic, arts and leisure)

Indicative upper floor



Ground floor



RETAIL ACCOMMODATION SCHEDULE

Drovers Way	Civic Centre	TOTAL
Replaced retail spaces (ground floor)		
1,165 sqm	1,025 sqm	2,190 sqm
New anchor retail space		
3,400 sqm	3,800 sqm	7,200 sqm
New retail (ground floor)		
5,355 sqm	3,710 sqm	9,065 sqm
New retail (upper floors)		
3,355 sqm	-	3,355 sqm
Total additional space		
10,945 sqm	6,485 sqm	17,430 sqm gross
		13,944 sqm net

RESIDENTIAL AND OFFICE ACCOMMODATION SCHEDULE

Drovers Way	Civic Centre	TOTAL
Displaced spaces		
-	3,425 sqm	3,425 sqm
New space (ground floor)		
1,650 sqm	-	1,650 sqm
New space (upper floors)		
9,840 sqm	6,030 sqm	15,870 sqm
Total additional space		
11,490 sqm	2,605 sqm	14,095 sqm gross
		11,276 sqm net (based on 80%)

Delivering the masterplan

Further details on the land ownership and lease patterns for the sites within the central masterplan and the potential phasing to deliver the masterplan are provided in the Delivery and Implementation chapter.

The specific sites, along with land owners and active developers, potential delivery partners and funding considerations are also set out within the Delivery and Implementation chapter.

It is therefore advised that this chapter is read in conjunction with chapter 7.

6.4 Central masterplan

Servicing

The masterplan aims to ensure that servicing is designed to be more inconspicuous within the streetscape, but remains adequate to meet the needs of St Peter's Street retailers and services.

Drovers Way could be serviced from the street with discrete service bay entrances integrated into a continuous street frontage. The preferred entrance for this important retail block is considered to be the south eastern corner of the block, in order to minimise any negative impacts upon houses on Russell Avenue.

Service access has been maintained on Drovers Way to the shops which front the west side of St Peter's Street.

The Market store is reprovided at ground floor level within a new commercial building.

East of St. Peter's Street would be best served by a combination of servicing via existing service yards leading from Victoria Street. Access could be provided at two points from St Peter's Street and access to buildings at the Civic Centre South site would be from Bricket Road. An undercroft service bay giving access for Heavy Goods Vehicles would be provided to the supermarket and to the Arena stage door.



Parking

The parking strategy set out in the Vision aims to support the shift to sustainable transport while ensuring that parking is adequate to support the City's retail environment. It also aims to take opportunities to reconfigure current provision in favour of a more attractive public realm in the City Centre.

With a moderate reduction in car parking spaces, and moderate excavation (semi-basement has been assumed but this would need to be tested in detail) the existing multistorey car parks could be removed. In the process there would be a rebalancing of car parking provision such that more spaces would be provided east of St. Peter's Street. This fits well with analysis and consultation feedback which has suggested that Bricket Road car park is more accessible than the Drovers Way car park.

As shown in the table opposite, the current scheme accommodates a total of 1075 parking spaces, representing a reduction of 109 from the existing 1184 spaces. This is considered to be acceptable in terms of parking levels and also in terms of the costs of delivering these parking levels. The proposals work with the natural level changes on the sites and would be relatively cost efficient to provide, given the existence of natural ventilation and limited excavation requirements. Any additional car parking would be accommodated at sub-basement level - and would be likely to add significantly to costs. The level changes are illustrated on page 152.

The parking proposals include the relocation of the existing Council offices within the scheme, with the removal of 220 spaces from the Civic Centre site, relocating 80 of them at the University of Hertfordshire site where they could be feasibly accommodated in a basement or semi-basement format due to level changes.



This level of central parking capacity is in line with the wider parking strategy linked to the Green Ring to address congestion in the city. This encourages short term parking only in the city centre, with spaces more than compensated by long term parking opportunities further out, which have attractive and direct routes to the centre.

Additional parking is available at the Maltings, Christopher Place, and the new rail station car park, which are not currently used to capacity. Emerging GPS technologies will help to ensure that these car parks can be used more efficiently in the future.

Should these measures prove insufficient for parking requirements, potential also exists to provide another deck of parking at London Road, which would instantly absorb the 109 space loss in the masterplan.

Finally, consideration could be given to the role of private car parks in the city centre, which currently represent an inefficient use of space and could provide weekend parking opportunities.

In the longer term, a change in the culture of car use should be sought, with a greater reduction in car parking spaces, balanced with the implementation of Green Travel Plans, a consistent and incentivising pricing strategy and the further development of a park+walk/mini park + ride scheme.

Loss of existing spaces	
Drovers Way	1022
Civic Centre sites	162
New provision of spaces	
Drovers Way	400
Civic Centre sites	675
Overall difference in spaces	
Drovers Way	-622
Civic Centre sites	+513
Total spaces	-109

Change in car parking provision levels identified in the masterplan

6.4 Central masterplan

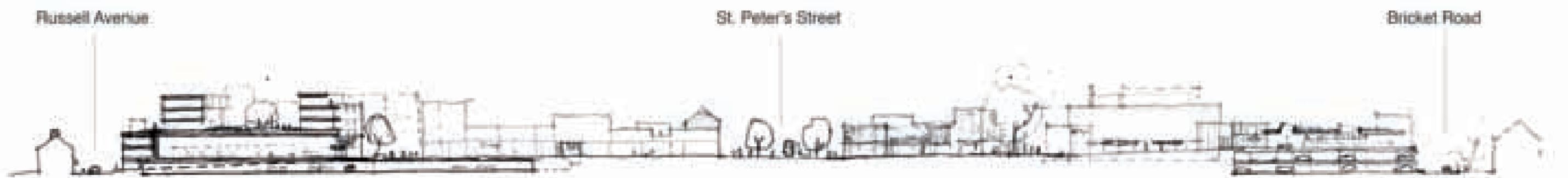
Character and environment

The plan to the right provides an illustration of the potential environment and character created by the city centre principles and urban design guidelines, whilst accommodating the retail capacity which has been identified for the city centre and the cultural and civic uses which were on the uses 'wish list' for the city.

The diagram includes indicative green roofs, as set out in the sustainability principles for the masterplan and accommodates space for market stalls in the existing locations along St Peter's Street and creates market stall spaces in the connecting public space between St Peter's Street and the new civic square in front of the Alban Arena.

Mature trees are retained wherever possible and high quality landscaping is undertaken for the new retail and cultural areas at Drovers Way and the Civic Centre.

The east-west section below illustrates the use of the natural topography in accommodating undercroft parking and servicing for the masterplan, improving the physical environment for residents and visitors and also reducing potential development costs significantly.



6.5 St Albans Cathedral and its surrounds

Despite a beautiful setting and a high national profile, St Albans Cathedral struggles with a low profile within the city as a result of the topography, the development of the city to the north east of the cathedral and through a lack of direct visual links between the city centre and the Abbey grounds.

The Abbey currently operates a successful education programme and would like to extend this but currently lacks the physical space to do so. A second chapter house and the reestablishment of a cloisters area have been identified as priorities to this end.

The low profile of the western entrance of the cathedral currently hampers efforts to develop a coherent visitor interpretation offer and improving access to this is lastly considered a priority.

Objectives

- To raise the physical and psychological profile of the Abbey within the city.
- To integrate the Abbey more directly with the pedestrian network of the city.
- To restructure pedestrian movement networks around the Abbey so that the western entrance provides a gateway point.
- To develop further educational space within the Abbey grounds
- To improve the environment for pedestrians within the Abbey surrounds

Development Strategy

- Create a Cathedral Quarter, with distinct lighting, paving and street furniture and with signage throughout the city centre.
- Develop a clear lighting strategy for the cathedral which is both energy efficient and creative.
- Consider potential to forge a visual and pedestrian link from the High Street to the rose stained glass window on the northern tip of the church.
- Undertake a thorough estates strategy to review current facilities, future needs and resulting requirements.
- Consider undertaking a detailed spatial strategy for the Abbey and its surrounds.
- Explore potential for the Abbey to have a shop presence on the High Street, adjacent to Waxhouse Gate in order to mark the gateway to the Cathedral Quarter.
- Explore potential for strengthening the raised pedestrian crossing surface and materials, to connect the Waxhouse Gate entrance to Market Cross.
- Remove cars from the Abbey courtyards and immediate surrounds.



6.6 London Road sites

London Road sites

The London Road sites are currently unused and create a poor physical environment which detracts from the character of the residential areas which surround them.

Objectives

- Bring the sites back into use and allow them to help meet Growth Area targets
- Improve the local physical environment through redevelopment and reuse
- Capitalise on the site's location outside to the City Centre, but close to the station
- Establish viable reuse of the former Odeon Cinema building or site

Development Strategy

- Mixed use development with a significant residential element, but including employment uses and potentially, an enterprise hub
- Potential for small-scale food and associated retail to serve the local area
- Appropriate designs which respond well to the Odeon Cinema and are sensitive to the scale of the surrounding residential neighbourhoods, for example, through variations in building heights to allow lower heights at the edges of the site.



6.7 University of Hertfordshire and Museum of St Albans

The University of Hertfordshire intends to relocate its St Albans campus Law School to a site four miles away and the City Vision supports transferral of the Museum of St Albans to a more central location within the Civic Centre area.

Three of the buildings on the site are locally listed; the Museum building, the Liberal Club and the former school to the rear of the Law School site. There is a covenant on the site which states that it should be retained for educational uses. A public right-of-way runs through the site connecting Hatfield Road with St Peters Church gardens.

The site is considered a suitable location to accommodate the Civic Offices shown in the main masterplan

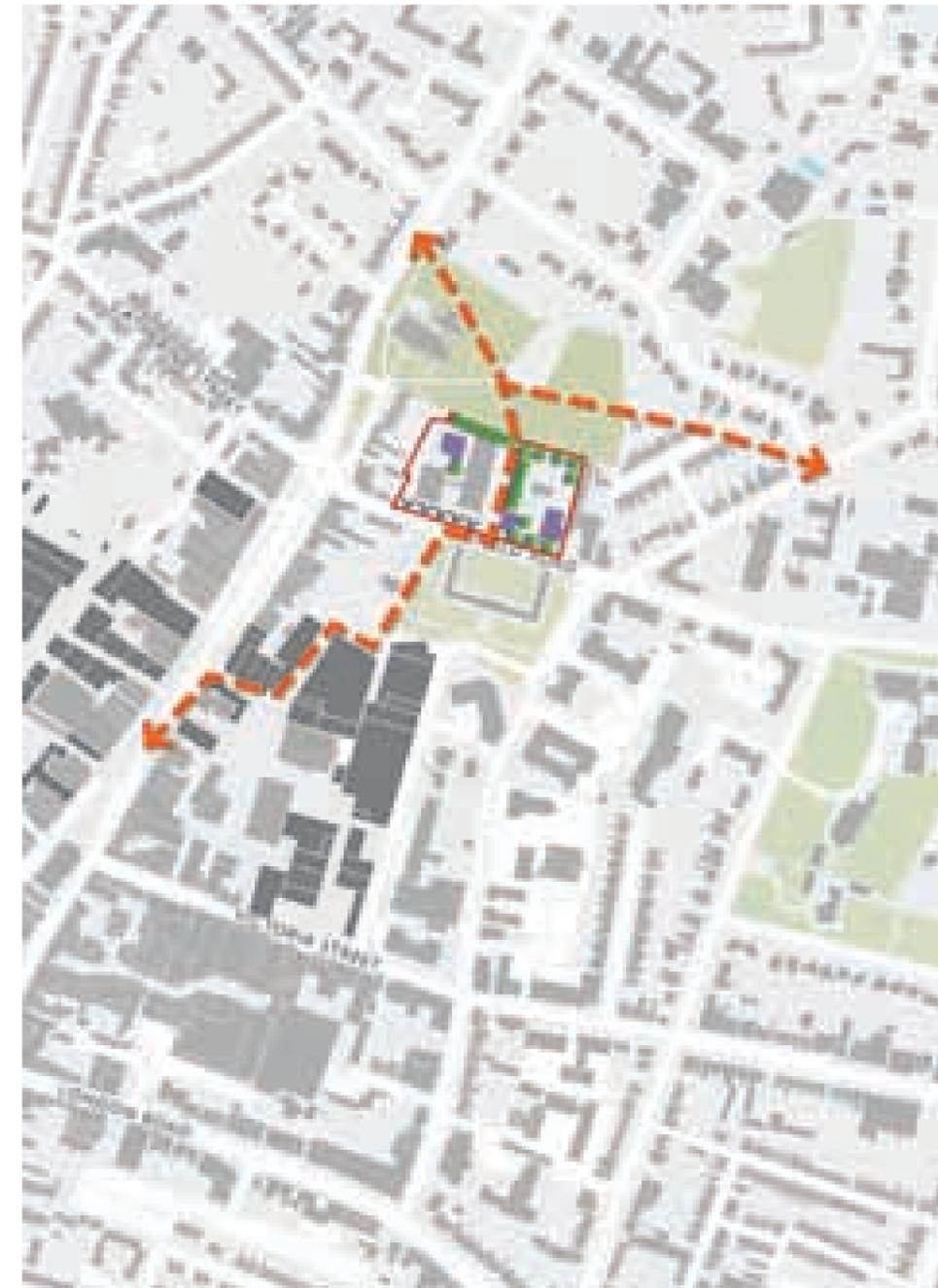
Objectives

- Maintain non-residential city-centre uses at the site to help support the vibrancy and vitality of the northern end of St Peters Street.
- Make best use of the site to provide for identified City Centre land use needs.
- Capitalise on the heritage value and historic character offered by the locally listed buildings through sensitive reuse and appropriate redevelopment.
- Safeguard the public right-of-way which runs through the site.

- Improve legibility and connectivity of the site, particularly regarding pedestrian routes to the City Centre, Station and northwards through surrounding residential neighbourhoods.

Development Strategy

- Support non-residential or mixed-use development on the site. This could include provision of a hotel, use for the relocated Council Offices, or education should this prove viable and should the site be able to meet outdoor play space requirements.
- Support designs which are appropriate to the historic character of the neighbourhood, and building heights which respect the scale of surrounding residential uses.



6.8 Longer term opportunities

A number of sites have been identified within the city centre which are not covered by proposals, but which hold potential in the future to accommodate uses which are needed in the city and which can bring value to the city centre. Given the 20-30 year time frame of the City Vision, it is valuable to consider the long term future of these sites.

Coupers Garage and the parking areas behind this currently represent a relatively low value use in a high value location within the city centre, and have scope for alternative uses in the future. Within this area, the Jubilee Centre is also under review in terms of its use and capacity. No specific uses have been identified for this site, but capacity requirements for the city should be monitored over the coming years, with this site considered in helping to meet these.

Aboyne Lodge School is located in an area within the city which has an identified shortfall in primary school provision. The locally listed school building does not currently use the site efficiently, but expansion of the school is not possible without provision of additional outdoor space close by, which cannot currently be accommodated.

Future consideration should be given to potential for increasing the capacity of the school on-site, or for providing a larger primary school close by, if a suitable site can be identified, and then considering the most suitable future use for the existing site.

The Maltings shopping centre accommodates a number of key retailers within the city centre and provides covered public outdoor space at the bandstand. Over the coming 20 years, however, the shopping centre could reach the end of its life span and it is important to consider how this central site could contribute to the vitality of the city centre, through its integration with surrounding areas and provision of key retail, public space and other requirements.

St Albans station area has been subject to recent development, with the establishment of the multi-storey car park and new homes. Like many station surrounds, the area is not intensively developed and could have potential to accommodate office uses, capitalising on the high level of accessibility.

Longer term potential also exists to restructure St Albans station itself, so that it addresses the city centre to the west and provides a stronger gateway point to the city. Given the recent refurbishment of the station, this will be a longer term goal but is considered an opportunity to vastly improve the visitor experience to the city and to improve capacity.



-  Coupers Garage site
-  Aboyne Lodge School site
-  The Maltings
-  St Albans Station

7. Delivery and Implementation

7 Delivery and implementation

This chapter sets out the implementation and delivery strategy for the St Albans City Vision, and particularly the central masterplan sites. Given the economic climate at the time of the City Vision preparation, along with planned changes to the regional political and funding structure within the UK, the delivery section is considered to be particularly important in helping to ensure that the proposals set out in the City Vision and masterplan are deliverable.

The chapter is set out according to the following structure:

7.1 New and reprovided uses

This sets out new uses identified either through the baseline analysis for the project, including the property market review and review of the retail capacity study, and through detailed consultation with local residents.

The relocation and reprovision of uses to accommodate the proposed masterplan is also set out.

7.2 Programme of key masterplan projects

This programme sets out the key development projects outlined in the masterplan, giving a proposal summary, a delivery approach and timescales and phasing for each project. The broad brush financial implications of each project are considered and potential delivery partners identified.

7.3 Improving deliverability and viability

This section sets out key measures which can help to improve the overall deliverability and viability for the masterplan.

7.4 Land ownership

The land ownership of the key sites within the masterplan area is set out here, with retailers and leaseholders/freeholders described.

7.5 Phasing of key development

Indicative phasing for the key sites within the masterplan area is identified, with the need for a flexible approach to phasing and delivery reiterated.

7.6 Programme of key city vision projects

The key proposals from each of the vision themes are identified, with a proposal summary, potential links to development projects and delivery partners identified.

7.7 Funding

Here, overarching funding issues are addressed, including the shifts in funding from regional bodies, and the potential impacts of this. Potential funding mechanisms are outlined, including TIFs and the potential for a BID scheme. High level Section 106 advice is also provided.

7.8 Delivery vehicle structure and tasks

The next stage of tasks to be undertaken by the City Vision delivery vehicle are identified, including specific short, medium and long term tasks and further studies which to help proposals be realised.

7.9 Delivery vehicle options

An appraisal is provided here of three delivery body options for taking forward the proposals within the City Vision and masterplan to delivery. A preferred option is identified.

7.10 Statutory planning options

Options for taking the City Vision forward, either as a statutory planning document or as a supplementary planning document are provided here.



7.1 New and reprovided uses

A number of new uses for the city centre are proposed within the masterplan and wider city vision. These are uses which have been identified as beneficial to St Albans, either through baseline analysis for the city vision and masterplan or through consultation during the project. The key new uses identified have been allocated preferred sites within the city, which are set out to the right.

In addition to the new uses, the masterplanning exercise has necessitated the relocation of a number of existing uses within the city centre. This has been either to ensure that uses and facilities are in the location that will provide the best environment for St Albans and will generate the maximum possible use of the services, or to accommodate valuable uses at their current site in the centre. In the case of car parking spaces, provision is retained in the same locations as currently exists, with a shift in the ratio of spaces from the Drovers Way site to the Civic Centre site. With regard to Argos, aspiration exists to reprovide a smaller store on-site (Argos, rather than Argos Xtra).

As with the masterplan, these suggested locations remain flexible and are dependent upon the market, the land owners and the retailers' interests.

New use	Suggested location
Temporary gallery space for exhibitions	Civic Centre site
Offices	Central area
Enterprise hub for small businesses	London Road
City centre homes	Civic Centre, CCS, Drovers Way
City Centre live/work spaces	Drovers Way
A cinema	Civic Centre site
A lecture hall	Civic Centre site
A department store	Drovers Way
Food store	Civic Centre site
Specialist, independent shops	Drovers Way/Civic Centre site
Central hotel	St Peters Street, CCS, Hatfield Road

Relocated/reprovided uses	Current site	Suggested site
City museum	Hatfield Road	Civic Centre site
Alban Arena Theatre	Civic Centre site	Civic Centre site
Civic Offices (with ambitious intervention)	Civic Centre site	Civic Centre site / Hatfield Road
Car parking	Drovers Way and Civic Centre site	Drovers Way and Civic Centre site
Market storage facility	Drovers Way	Russell Avenue
Police offices	CCS	Victoria Street
Woolworths	St Peters Street	N/A
Ladbrokes	St Peters Street	Drovers Way
Argos	Spencer Street	Spencer Street
Barclays	St Peters Street	Within the centre
Boots	St Peters Street	Drovers Way
Library (potential long term)*	The Maltings	Civic Centre site

* HCC does not currently have plans to relocate the library from The Maltings. However, the current location of the library has a low profile and in the longer term, it would be valuable to co-locate this resource as part of a civic hub in the city.

7.2 Programme of key masterplan projects

Short term - during 2010
 Mid-term - 3-5 years
 Long term - 5 years or more

MASTERPLAN PROJECTS

SITE	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	SUGGESTED DELIVERY APPROACH	TIMESCALES AND PHASING	FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS	DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
1 Land west of St Peters Street/ Drovers Lane	Presently occupied by a multi-storey car park, service yards and access ways. Ability to create new retail circuit off St Peters Street and connecting elsewhere to the town. Area transformed to accommodate retail uses at ground floor, with possibility of space for an anchor/department store. Car parking provided in semi basement/basement format. Access to parking and servicing off Drovers Lane. Residential uses flank western edge of the scheme and in stand alone blocks. At upper levels a mix of uses envisaged, with an anticipated focus on residential and office space and positioned to take advantage of views across town. Some units here could be live-work.	Relatively complex land ownership and property interest patterns. Almost certainty to require the use of (or threat) of compulsory purchase powers to assemble the land. The Council as majority landowner will be expected to lead the delivery. The approach to delivering the scheme would be expected to take the form of an EU compliant procurement process to select a development partner. Before this, further detailed design and financial testing of the proposals alongside soft market testing is envisaged to take place. To strengthen the planning policy position, a Supplementary Planning Document could be prepared as an early delivery step.	Mid term. Timescales for delivery initially subject to termination of existing leasing/management arrangements on Drovers Way car park. Phasing likely to be guided by the need to provide an acceptable level of car parking here and across the town centre (or balancing this requirement with other more sustainable travel modes), both during and after the scheme construction. This may, for example, relate to enhancing car parking provision elsewhere – for example, at land to the east of St Peters Street. Assuming this, and other enabling conditions can be made including dealing with existing service access ways, then a likely approach will be development of the Drovers Lane car park before punching through a possible new route to St Peter’s Street to achieve practical completion.	Neutral/Uplift	SADC Private developer/s Woolworths’ agent HCC Transport
2 Civic Centre <i>(additional elements for scenario I)</i>	Redevelopment of Bricket Road car park and Civic Centre area to provide an upgraded Alban Arena and a cinema with a foodstore and additional retailers/commercial uses alongside improvements to the Arena centre, set beside an improved public space. Office space and residential space would be accommodated on upper floors. <i>If undertaking the full scheme in scenario I, this also includes the relocation of the civic offices, with the creation of a new gallery, museum and lecture hall space.</i>	Expected to be public sector led, given their ownership in the area plus the aim to improve cultural facilities. Delivery most likely through an EU procurement process. Potential also to include the land presently occupied by the Council offices. This is dependent on the aspirations of the Council, and their need for accommodation alongside financial and regeneration considerations. Proposals expected to accord with a development framework for the wider area, and potentially through preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document encompasses sites 2, 3A, 3B, 6, 7 and 8.	Mid term. Key phasing issue relate to ensuring that sufficient parking is provided here or elsewhere in the centre; or perhaps balanced with the prospect of more sustainable travel solutions for St Albans. If Council offices are redeveloped then relocation needed before development – possibly as part of development here or to other sites in the centre such as at Hatfield Road.	Neutral/Uplift	SADC Private developer/s HCC Transport

7.2 Programme of key masterplan projects

MASTERPLAN PROJECTS

SITE	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	SUGGESTED DELIVERY APPROACH	TIMESCALES AND PHASING	FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS	DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
3A Civic Centre South (west)	Redevelopment of existing office block and open space to provide a mix of uses including a hotel and retail (A1-A5), with offices and residential envisaged to be provided above. Development to secure stronger link to core Civic Centre area.	Private sector led, and set within a coherent and strong development framework for land east of St Peters Street (comprising sites 2, 3A, 3B, 6, 7 and 8). Possible scope to come forward in conjunction with site 3B to maximise the opportunity.	Short term. Development dependent on relocating/re-providing suitable accommodation for the Police. Envisaged to be taken forward as a single phase development.	Uplift	SADC Private developer/s Police Authority
3B Civic Centre South (east)	Redevelopment of mostly open space for a mix of retail (A1 – A5), offices and residential uses.	Private sector led, and set within a framework for land east of St Peters Street. Possible scope to come forward together with site 3A. Fairly simple land ownership pattern will be expected to assist in quicker delivery.	Short term. Open space and vacant nature of site should present little difficulty in terms of phasing issues.	Uplift	SADC Private Developer/s
4 <i>Retail block at Spencer Street/Cross Street</i> <i>(Scenario I only)</i>	<i>Opportunity to sub-divide large retail unit (presently occupied by Argos) and allowing for link to Christophers Place</i>	<i>The re-development of the retail block at Spencer Street/Cross Street envisaged to be private sector and taken forward when lease and other market conditions are favourable.</i>	<i>Mid to long term.</i> <i>Re-development opportunity envisaged as a single phase, with timing related to lease terms and market conditions.</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>SADC</i> <i>Private developer</i> <i>Argos</i> <i>Lombard Properties</i>
5 <i>9 St Peters Street</i> <i>(Scenario I only)</i>	<i>Opportunity to redevelop large retail unit at 9 St Peter's Street (Boots store) for smaller units and to create link.</i>	<i>No. 9 St Peters Street could form part of the Drovers Lane scheme, say through tenant relocation occurring, or may be a separate private sector venture taken when market conditions and lease profile provides viable opportunity.</i>	<i>Mid to long term.</i> <i>Earlier redevelopment opportunity triggered if tenant relocates as part of Drovers Way proposal. Otherwise, likely to be longer term aspiration.</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>SADC</i> <i>Private developer</i> <i>Boots</i>
6 Ladbroke's, St Peters Street	Redevelopment of single unit to increase floorspace.	Private sector led.	Short to long term. Timing of development depends on lease structures of tenants and market conditions. Key phasing issue likely to be ability to relocate tenants.	Neutral	SADC Private developer Ladbroke's

7.2 Programme of key masterplan projects

MASTERPLAN PROJECTS

SITE	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	SUGGESTED DELIVERY APPROACH	TIMESCALES AND PHASING	FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS	DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS	
7	Lockey House	Redevelopment of retail block to provide modern better quality space. Possible uses provided above could include office or residential space.	Expected to be private sector led. If necessary, the Council could assist in land assembly.	Mid to long term. Timing of development depends on lease structure of tenants and market conditions. Key phasing likely to be the ability to relocate tenants.	Neutral/Uplift	SADC Private developer
8	Rear of Barclays, St Peters Street	Extension to the rear of existing unit to create additional retail space overlooking the Civic Square.	Expected to be private sector led, with Council disposing of its land as necessary to create the opportunity.	Mid to long term. Most likely to occur once improvements to Arena/Civic Square occur.	Uplift	SADC Private developer Barclays
9	Land at the north of St Peters Street (73 – 77A)	Presently a vacant retail block. Potential to re-develop to accommodate a hotel, and possibly other attractive/active ground floor uses.	Anticipated to be characterised by a fairly simple land ownership pattern. On that basis, then a private sector led development, potentially initiated through testing the opportunity with possible hotel operators and smaller scale developers. The Council could act as a conduit to facilitate early landowner discussions, if necessary.	Short to mid term. Envisaged to be developed as a single block.	Uplift	SADC Private developer

7.3 Improving deliverability and viability for the masterplan

As with all schemes in emerging masterplans, there are a number of ways which can be examined to improve deliverability and viability of schemes. As the proposals are worked up in more detail there will be a need to fully financially test the options. In doing so, the evolution of the proposals will need to be aware of:

- That on upper floors of the proposals there is flexibility created for viable uses (and particularly offices and residential in the core town centre) and to a reasonable height. These uses will be needed to enhance scheme viability.
- That careful consideration is given to the form and quantum of car parking, or other possible travel solutions. Car parking is generally seen as a positive attribute in terms of making retail, office and residential accommodation as attractive as possible. However, solutions such as basement and semi basement car parking can be very costly.
- As more detailed design and financial testing is undertaken, careful consideration of the land take and interests affected is needed to minimise costs.

More specifically, for the land to the west of St Peters Street, then the following would enhance deliverability.

- Including more retail space – to achieve greater critical mass, then additional retail space could be regarded as a more attractive proposition to the development market. It would also assist in scheme viability. This may include extending the scheme into adjacent land, if possible.
- That a careful balance is struck between the need to provide sufficient car parking to support the scheme alongside cost effective solutions.
- Careful consideration of where a possible new link to St Peters Street could be forged, in light of likely acquisition costs.

For land to the east of St Peter's Street then:

- Consideration of the role that the redevelopment of the Council offices could perform within this area. The Council's input could help influence the form of scheme, and possibly strengthen it financially.



7.4 Land ownership

This plan sets out the key land ownership/ contacts for the sites covered by the central area masterplan. As illustrated, the two key sites, which will be instrumental in bringing forward the new developments within the centre are within St Albans District Council ownership.

It is worth noting that the Civic Centre South site has been considered in greater detail, in order to ensure a comprehensive solution to the site can be achieved, which integrates with the surrounding sites and contributes to the overarching framework and objectives for the city centre, but which is still capable of coming forward within existing land ownership boundaries.

- Council Property
- NAC
- Birmingham Developer
- Police Authority (Townsend Development)
- British Academic Properties
- LaBanks (Leasfield)
- Westons - D&S
- West - Leasfield



7.5 Phasing of key development

This section sets out an indicative phasing approach based on current planning applications and identified development constraints. These include sites that may be dependent on cross-funding or site where there are associated land ownership sensitivities. The phasing set out here should be viewed as flexible rather than prescriptive and years are indicative only.

Phase 1a Hertfordshire Police (yr 1-2) - The police are in the process of selecting a preferred developer to bring their site forward.

Phase 1b Antringham Verulamium site (yr 1-2) - a planning application has been submitted for this site.

Phase 2 Drovers Way (yr 3-7) - the Council owns this site and has expressed an interest in redeveloping it in line with City Vision principles. The site is likely to have a substantial uplift in value and will be open to redevelopment once its lease has expired in 2014.

Phase 3 Civic Centre site (yr 5-10) - the lease for this site comes up in 2014, but the site is used for Civic cultural uses and has significant costs associated with it.

Phase 4 Ladbroke's, phase 5 Barclays Bank, phase 6 The Grange (yr 5-10) - these sites would best be addressed alongside comprehensive redevelopment of the Civic Centre South site in order to ensure that the different sites are redeveloped to a coherent design.

Phase 7 Argos site (yr 10-15) - appropriate redevelopment of this site will be determined by the eventual layout of the Drovers Way site to ensure that routes between the two match successfully.

Phase 8 Hotel site (open) - this site is independent of the other sites shown here, but reliant on suitable market conditions.

Phase 9 Boots (yr 10-15) - this site will need to follow completion of Drovers Way where Boots would intend to relocate, and the design of a redeveloped Drovers Way would inform the reconfiguration of the Boots site to ensure connectivity through to Christopher Place.



7.6 Programme of key public realm projects

Short term - 1-2 years

Mid-term - 3-5 years

Long term - 5 years or more

PUBLIC REALM PROJECTS

SITE	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	SUGGESTED DELIVERY APPROACH	TIMESCALES AND PHASING	FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS	DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
1	Physical environment improvements to St Peters Street This is likely to include the improvements to the area in front of the Old Town Hall to enhance its role as a civic square.	Public sector led with potential for S106 funding	Medium term To follow a detailed landscape study for the key public spaces in St Albans and transport modelling/accessibility analysis.	Cost / neutral	SADC Private developer/s HCC Transport Herts Highways
2	Resurfacing of parts of road, with potential for shared surface; widening of pavements and tree planting and key points; reworking of Victoria St/Alma Road junction.	Public sector led with public funding with potential for S106 funding.	Short term. Potential to achieve some environmental improvements reasonably swiftly, if funding is available, However, to follow a detailed landscape study for the key public spaces in St Albans	Cost	SADC Private contractor HCC Transport Herts Highways
4	Planting and repaving parts of London Road's pavements	Public sector led with potential for S106 funding	Short- to mid-term. To follow a detailed landscape study for the key public spaces in St Albans and transport modelling/accessibility analysis. Uncomplicated nature of proposals mean this could happen in the short term, but may benefit from coordination with private development.	Cost / neutral	SADC Private developer Private contractor HCC Transport Herts Highways
5	Environmental improvements to Hatfield Road, with potential for additional pedestrian crossing	Public sector led with potential for S106 funding	Medium term. These improvements would be informed by whichever uses come forward on the University of Herts site and City Museum site.	Cost / neutral	SADC Private developer Private contractor HCC Transport Herts Highways

7.6 Programme of key public realm projects

PUBLIC REALM PROJECTS

SITE	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	SUGGESTED DELIVERY APPROACH	TIMESCALES AND PHASING	FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS	DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
6	Creation of Green Ring and associated landscaping projects Landscaping works, signage and lighting improvements; introduction of secure cycle parking and cycle hire points at appropriate locations. Review of parking locations along the Green Ring and development of space and costing strategy	Public sector led with potential GAF funding.	Medium term. This would follow a detailed landscape study and would be informed by traffic modelling data, to be available in early 2010.	Cost	SADC Private contractor HCC Transport Herts Highways
7	Inner garden ring projects Landscaping works, street furniture and lighting improvements;	Public sector led with potential for S106 funding	Short- to Mid-term This would follow a detailed landscape study but individual projects could come forward as part of development proposals.	Cost/ neutral	SADC Private developer Private contractor HCC Transport Herts Highways
8	Courtyard spaces Landscaping and detailed design for paving, street furniture and lighting.	Likely to come forward as part of development proposal	Medium term. This is likely to come forward as part of the wider development proposals for the Drivers Way site and as such could not be developed before the 2014 car park lease expiry date.	Neutral	SADC Private developer Private contractor HCC Transport Herts Highways
9	New Civic Square Landscaping and detailed design for paving, street furniture and lighting.	Likely to come forward as part of development proposal	Medium term. This is likely to come forward as part of the wider development proposals for the Civic Centre site and as such could not be developed before the 2014 car park lease expiry date.	Neutral	SADC Private developer Private contractor HCC Transport Herts Highways
10	Gateway projects Landscaping and potential for signage/public art	Public sector led.	Medium term. These projects are likely to come forward following a more detailed strategy development.	Cost	SADC Private contractor HCC Transport Herts Highways

7.6 Programme of key employment and training projects

PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
1 Maintain communication with large employers in the city, to ensure that any issues are addressed and a strategic approach to the city's employment base can be taken	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development Chamber of Commerce Major city employers	Continual
2 Develop, potentially in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire, a one-stop shop for business start-ups and businesses considering locating in St Albans.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development University of Hertfordshire SADC Property	Medium term
3 A set number of retail spaces should be designated for boutique stores, independent retailers, and services not currently on offer in St Albans.	To be monitored through the unit sizes developed in detailed masterplanning for the city centre. SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development Architect, planning consultants and developers	Medium term.
4 Support industries which are under-represented in the area. - social enterprise, hub style organisations.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development St Albans District Council for Voluntary Service	Medium term.
5 Improve feasibility of working from home, or setting up a business in a home in the local area. For example look at planning controls that may restrict residents' ability to work from home, or ensure that the whole City has high speed internet access (A WiFi City).	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development SADC Planning	short- to mid-term

PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
6 Explore options for closer working with the University of Hertfordshire, including potential for an internship programme for school leavers, a business graduate scheme and formal links with Oaklands College's Energy Centre.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development University of Hertfordshire Oaklands College St Albans secondary schools	Medium term
7 Develop programmes targeted at the schools with the highest levels of school leavers going NEET (not in employment, education or training).	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development HCC Education University of Hertfordshire Job Centre Plus	Continual
8 Deliver programmes and courses for business start-ups, potentially in conjunction with the University of Hertfordshire.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development University of Hertfordshire	Medium term
9 Develop a sustainability plan that cuts across the full range of Council activities.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development Local Strategic Partnership	Medium term.
10 Establish a Cabinet Member for Sustainability.	SADC Chief Executive's Office	Medium term.
11 Visit leading cities on sustainability to learn and apply lessons	N/A	short- to mid-term

7.6 Programme of key shops and services projects

PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
1 Lead the delivery of new retail developments within St Albans by deciding on the sites for them and providing support where necessary in addressing redevelopment challenges.	This has been undertaken through the development of the central masterplan, and will be continued.	Continual
2 Support the market by assisting with enhancements where desirable, connecting into any new retail circuits which may be developed within the City, and publicising the market within surrounding settlements.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development SADC Planning	Medium term
3 Maintain contact with retail developers to gauge interest levels for development in the city and to informally assess feasibility of proposals.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development Retail Forum	Continual
4 Explore a home delivery scheme for the market, to support its competitiveness within the retail economy, and to help support the market's independence from parking provision for customers.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development Market Management	Medium term.
5 Draw up masterplans and site briefs for key retail development sites. These could contain principles to ensure that retail layouts would meet the highest standards of urban design, taking into account retailers' preferences regarding unit layout and, choice of materials and architectural design.	Further detail for this is provided in the delivery body section and key masterplan projects section.	short- to mid-term

PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
6 Lead the delivery of new retail developments within St Albans by deciding on the sites for them and providing support where necessary in addressing redevelopment challenges.	This has been undertaken through the development of the central masterplan, and will be continued.	Continual
7 Identify suitable backlands sites for redevelopment	This has been undertaken.	N/A
8 Develop a marketing strategy to identify customers who might be persuaded to shop in St Albans, based on a strengthened shopping market and cultural offer (see culture and leisure section).	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development	Short- to mid-term
9 Further expand the shopstalbans.co.uk website to encourage more shoppers to St Albans and to make a visit as simple and trouble free as possible.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development Retail Forum	Continual
10 Invest in creating the highest possible quality of public realm.	See public realm section	N/A
11 Liaise with St Albans' food retailers to assess interest and feasibility of a scheme to ensure that food sold in St Albans is locally sourced where at all possible.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development Retail Forum Market Management	Medium term
12 Ensure sequential testing is used when assessing appropriateness of food and other retail, and actively explore site options to provide the most effective offer for the city.	This has been undertaken through the masterplan SADC Planning	Short- to mid-term

7.6 Programme of key shops and services projects

	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
13	Carefully develop Griffiths Way, ensuring that it does not compete with the city centre.	SADC Planning SADC Town Centre Management	Continual
14	Approach Victoria Street as a 'transition zone' for the city, with the potential to transform the main arrival experience and overcome the gap between the station and the city centre.	See proposals for the masterplan and public realm.	N/A
15	Provide strong public transport connections with London Colney retail park.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term

7.6 Programme of key culture and leisure projects

	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
1	Support and facilitate the creation of a cultural hub within the city centre (outlined in detail later in this section).	This is being addressed through the central masterplan. SADC Culture and leisure SADC Property SADC Planning	Medium term
2	Raise the profile of the city in towns along the North London Arc and in the region	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development	Continual
3	Raise the profile of the North London Arc in general, through signage on relevant motorways in the local area.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development Highways	Medium term
4	Work in collaboration with the Parish Councils to raise the profile of the countryside offer immediately surrounding St Albans	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development Local Strategic Partnership Parish Councils	Continual
5	Improve information and guidance for visitors at gateways to the city.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development Network Rail	Medium term.
6	Establish coherent and attractive signage that creates a series of loops around the city and also de-clutter the public realm of unnecessary signage.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development SADC Planning Overview and Scrutiny panel	short- to mid-term

PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
7 Explore methods of augmenting signage with interpretation such as art and additional information to enhance the visitor experience.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development St Albans Museum St Albans Cathedral	Medium term
8 Raise the profile of St Michael's as a visitor quarter for the city, to enlarge the visitor circuit and reveal hidden gems of the city.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development	Medium term
9 Ensure a high profile for cultural and visitor attractions in the north and east of the city,	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development	Medium term
10 Explore the feasibility of creating a central cultural hub in the civic centre area	Completed during the masterplan.	-
11 Consider secondary options for providing a coherent and quality cultural offer in the city at the museum and university site.	SADC Culture and Leisure (to be considered should the cultural hub prove to be unviable)	Medium term.
12 Commission an architectural competition to help create a bold, contemporary building for the city and to raise the profile of the city.	SADC Property SADC Planning SADC Urban Design	Meidum term
13 Explore funding opportunities for supporting flagship cultural uses in the city.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development SADC Culture and Leisure	Short- to mid-term

PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
14 Establish a festival for the city to animate the streets and raise the profile of the city.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development St Albans Museum St Albans Cathedral	Medium term
15 Host public art and performance in Verulamium Park during the summer, such as open air film screenings.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development SADC Culture and Leisure	short term
16 Work with STARTS group, based in the Old Town Hall, to facilitate the hosting of theatre and art from local arts groups.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development SADC Culture and Leisure STARTS group	Short- to mid-term
17 Redevelop a larger art gallery in the city centre, perhaps using an architectural competition to create an iconic contemporary building for the city.	To be completed as part of the masterplan delivery programme	-
18 Refurbish or redevelop the Alban Arena with larger capacity to attract national and international acts, and marketing a combined offer of theatre and heritage.	To be completed as part of the masterplan delivery programme	-
19 Create a piazza on to which the Alban Arena can front, to bring performance into the public arena.	To be completed as part of the masterplan delivery programme	-
20 Explore further opportunities for using the Abbey as a venue for classical and other concerts.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development SADC Culture and Leisure St Albans Cathedral	Short- to mid-term

7.6 Programme of key culture and leisure projects

	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
21	Develop an ambitious and challenging set of proposals for bringing Verulamium to life, which can then be explored with heritage bodies. These can include proposals suggested in the Verulamium Park Conservation Management Plan and in those from this section.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development SADC Culture and Leisure St Albans Museum	Medium term
22	Continue to explore options for developing a festival for the city, celebrating the Roman and Christian heritage of the city, ensuring clarity of purpose for each of the city's festivals	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development SADC Culture and Leisure	Short term
23	Explore options for commissioning a piece of public art to celebrate the city's Roman heritage.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development SADC Culture and Leisure	Short- to mid-term
24	Build up a body of evidence regarding the type of visitors to St Albans now and their motivations for visiting, to inform a strategic approach for attracting visitors.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development SADC Culture and Leisure	Short term
25	Consider the development of a five-year tourism strategy.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development	Short term
26	Explore methods of increasing delivery funding and staff training.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development Chief Executive's Office	Short term
27	Identify cross-theme uses which can help support the development of the visitor economy, including shops, restaurants, the heritage offer and festival.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development	Short term

	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
28	Ensure strong communication with Butterfly World.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development SADC Culture and Leisure	Short term
29	Explore opportunities for working with other parts of the region to maximise the benefit of marketing funding for the city.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development	Short term
30	Explore the creation of a cathedral quarter, to raise the profile of the cathedral area, with stronger pedestrian links to the city centre	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development St Albans Cathedral	Short- to mid-term
31	Explore potential for establishing a visitor shop for the cathedral by Waxhouse Gate	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development St Albans Cathedral	Short term
32	Consider the creation of a pedestrian link to the Cathedral to the west of Heritage Close	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development SADC Planning	Short term
33	Strengthen physical and organisational connections between the Cathedral and the City Museum	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development St Albans Cathedral SADC Culture and Leisure	Short term
34	Develop a creative and sustainable lighting strategy for the Cathedral.	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development St Albans Cathedral SADC Planning	Short term

7.6 Programme of key sustainable community projects

	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
35	Encourage visitors to approach the Cathedral from Verulamium Park, creating a stronger chronological interpretation route	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development SADC Culture and Leisure SADC Planning St Albans Cathedral	Medium term
36	Explore a flexible interpretation route for the Cathedral	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development St Albans Cathedral	Short term
37	Undertake a spatial review of the Cathedral and its surrounds	St Albans Cathedral	Short- to mid-term
38	Funding dependent, reveal some of the rich heritage which sits beneath the Cathedral	St Albans Cathedral	Short term
39	Build a clear business and funding case for potential development work at the Cathedral, through the preparation of an estates review and strategy	St Albans Cathedral	Short term
40	Establish seasons of events at the Cathedral	St Albans Cathedral	Short term
41	Ensure close coordination between the Cathedral and the Council regarding St Albans festival and other events	SADC Town Centre Management / Economic Development St Albans Cathedral	Short term

	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
1	Pursue the Housing Needs Survey recommendations through robust local planning policies and stringent development control, in meeting regional housing targets	SADC Planning	Continual
2	Enforce the highest standards of housing design through site briefs and urban design guidelines which adopt national standards such as Building for Life and Lifetime Homes, and proactively help developers to meet these	SADC Planning	Continual
3	In liaison with the LSP, the Council should investigate the most effective ways to encourage healthy lifestyles and support the voluntary and community sector	SADC Culture and Leisure PCT Local Strategic Partnership	Short- to mid-term
4	Ensure that s106 contributions are channelled into education and health facilities to maintain and improve the City's health and education standards.	SADC Planning SADC Culture and Leisure	Continual
5	Investigate opportunities for pooled resources with Hertfordshire County Council and surrounding parishes to deliver shared services.	SADC departments HCC Transport, Education and PCT Parish Councils	Continual
6	Commission public realm competitions to design youth spaces for Verulamium Park and other suitable city spaces.	SADC Planning	Short- to mid-term
7	Work with community representatives to identify the most important support services they require.	SADC Consultation SADC Equalities Officer	Continual

7.6 Programme of key sustainable community projects

	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
8	Integrate cultural diversity into organised public events.	SADC Culture and Leisure SADC Equalities Officer	Continual
9	Support new public events and activities with organisational help and funding support.	SADC Culture and Leisure SADC Equalities Officer	Continual
10	Establish community groups to lead the content of new public events, and to source and engage participants.	SADC Culture and Leisure SADC Equalities Officer SADC Consultation Officer	Short- to mid-term
11	Investigate funding for events through coordinated initiatives which meet the joint needs of Hertfordshire County, St Albans City and its surrounding parishes.	SADC Planning SADC Culture and Leisure	Continual
12	Ensure a high level of knowledge about sustainable infrastructure within relevant departments	SADC Chief Executive's Office	Continual
13	Adopt city-wide standards of environmental design and construction using and reaching beyond national policy guidelines.	SADC Planning	Short- to mid-term
14	Provide leadership on provision of sustainable technologies within St Albans, such as solar, wind and Combined Heat and Power (CHP). This could include promoting established and emerging technologies to developers, and implementing them within Council-led projects by example.	SADC Planning	Continual

	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
15	Undertake feasibility studies into wind, solar, biomass and ground source heat pumps, in consultation with the Environment Agency, which could indicate future opportunities for carbon savings.	SADC Planning	Short- to mid-term
16	Adopt an entrepreneurial approach to localised sustainable energy services, helping deliver necessary infrastructure prior to site redevelopment.	SADC Planning	Continual
17	Liaise with representatives of the transition movement in St Albans to identify common goals and identify ways in which the transition movement influence City-wide sustainability initiatives and policies.	SADC Planning SADC Consultation Officer	Short- to mid-term
18	Adopt a strategic approach to water management, ensuring that in new development water run-off rates and consumption is minimised by enforcing and outpacing government guidelines on water efficiency standards.	SADC Planning	Continual
19	Ensure that future landscaping work on the banks of the River Ver takes account of opportunities to improve flood defences.	SADC Planning	Continual
20	Adopt city-wide standards of environmental design and construction using and reaching beyond national policy guidelines.	SADC Planning	Short- to mid-term

7.6 Programme of key transport projects

	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
21	Consider the potential for improved SUDS in any public realm improvements it oversees.	SADC Planning	Short- to mid-term
22	Take a strong lead on publicising the need to recycle more and promoting the 'self-contained city' concept.	SADC Consultation Officer	Continual
23	Work with local producers to reduce food miles by sourcing local and environmentally sustainable products.	SADC Planning SADC Consultation Officer	Short- to mid-term
24	Enhance and protect the River Ver for public enjoyment with high quality, clear and legible routes.	SADC Planning	Short- to mid-term
25	Ensure that public realm interventions are designed to help St Albans adapt to climate change by addressing the urban heat island effect, and incorporating sustainable urban drainage systems where possible.	SADC Planning	Continual

	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
1	Explore procuring low and zero-emission vehicles for the local authority fleet in order to achieve lower operating carbon emissions.	SADC Chief Executive's Office	Short- to mid-term
2	Develop a proactive approach to charging infrastructure for electric cars, whether in the form of pavement cable guards to prevent trip-hazards, or the provision of charging points	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term
3	Coordinate with neighbouring towns to bid for Plugged in Places funding to provide re-charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term
4	Test priority measure for electric cars, such as cheaper parking rates and priority access to St Peters Street, should it be closed to other private vehicles (in the short term).	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term
5	Explore the scope for large employers in the city to provide charging points for employees.	SADC Planning SADC Consultation Officer	Short- to mid-term
6	Explore opportunities for car share clubs in new residential developments in the District.	SADC Planning	Continual

7.6 Programme of key transport projects

	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
7	Explore potential for shared taxi runs as a means of discouraging people from driving private cars to the station and parking all day.	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term
8	Undertake traffic modelling to explore the impact of closing St Peters Street to private vehicles during the day.	HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term
9	Undertake a detailed transport landscape architecture study to assess the feasibility of closing St Peters Street to traffic and of improving the physical environment for pedestrians.	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term
10	Undertake a risk assessment study regarding the introduction of bus lanes on some routes in the city	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term
11	Undertake a review of key junctions in the city to assess which of these can be widened to ease congestion and which can accommodate bus priority at traffic lights	SADC Planning SADC Consultation Officer	Short- to mid-term
12	Explore opportunities for car share clubs in new residential developments in the District.	SADC Planning	Continual
13	Coordinate plans for any western road enhancement and proposals for the city centre so that the impacts of each can be taken into account.	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term
14	Explore the potential for pedestrianising Market Place (with market trader vehicles excepted) based on transport modelling data	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term

	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
15	Undertake a detailed study regarding which routes in the city can accommodate dedicated and on-street cycle lanes (based on those proposed)	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term
16	Undertake a thorough audit of signage in the city centre, to ensure consistency	SADC Planning	Short term
17	Introduce facilities such as additional secure cycle parking in the city centre and at key locations such as the stations, Verulamium Park, the Abbey, the Civic Centre, Westminster Lodge and City Hospital.	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Medium term
18	Improve the physical environment and safety for walkers and cyclists, providing sufficient lighting, removing clutter and providing maximum space.	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term
19	Implement enhancements to National Cycle Route 61 to make it more attractive as a commuter route	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short term
20	Implement high profile cycle routes from St Albans centre and residential areas to the stations. Particular opportunity exists to link with the proposed Green Ring, with space on some routes for dedicated cycle lanes to be considered.	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term
21	Establish a cycle hire scheme in the city, as demonstrated successfully in Copenhagen, with cycle hire points at the stations, in the city centre and at key points along the Green Ring.	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Medium term

	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
22	Promote the health living benefits of walking and cycling.	SADC Culture and Leisure HCC Consultation/Marketing	Short- to mid-term
23	Explore cycle/walk to school schemes to limit school run traffic.	HCC Transport HCC Education SADC Planning	Short term
24	Improve the western entrance St Albans station in the short term and explore opportunity to more significantly restructure the station in the longer term.	SADC Planning Network Rail	Medium term/ Long term
25	Improve the pedestrian link along Victoria Street, connecting to the city centre, through landscape and public realm works.	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term
26	Invest in raising the profile of the Abbey station, with better links to the city centre, perhaps through a hopper bus; a clearer entrance to the station so that it has a presence on the street; and improved	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Medium term
27	Improve gateway points for cars entering the city, so that it is clear when the city centre begins. This could be done through signage, public realm works or public art.	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term

	PROPOSAL SUMMARY	DELIVERY PARTNERS	TIMESCALES
28	Explore options for park and ride parking provision on the edge of the city, including close monitoring of the Butterfly World development.	SADC Planning HCC Transport	Short- to mid-term
29	Undertake a detailed assessment of the feasibility of providing a hopper bus connecting key stations and attractions in the city	HCC Transport SADC Planning	Short term
30	Coordinate with private bus operators to ensure an adequate and strategic provision of buses across the District	SADC Planning HCC Transport Private bus operators	Medium term/ Long term

7.7 Funding

The plans detailed in the St.Albans City vision will require major financing. Proposed improvements to the city centre's transport infrastructure and retail and leisure offer represent the largest single wave of regeneration in St Albans in modern times.

The level of complexity and number of affected parties means that, from inception to completion, the development could take upwards of 10 years (see Princesshay, Exeter case study). This document therefore sets out the potential funding mechanisms for such a development and analyses their suitability over a medium-term timeframe. They include the potential for a St.Albans City Business Improvement District (BID) and the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF). In addition to the BID and TIF, the paper also considers the role of section 106 funding of such a major development. It is also timely, less than a year ahead of the next General Election, to analyse the potential changes to regional funding and local authority powers that a change in government may bring.

PRINCESSHAY, EXETER

Like St Albans, Exeter is a historic cathedral city with many visitor attractions. Peter Cleary, Head of Retail Development at Land Securities, the Princesshay developer said "For many years Exeter enjoyed internationally renowned heritage and cultural status, but lacked a high quality retail and leisure offer to transform the city into a day and evening destination".

The Princesshay development has brought a high quality retail and leisure offer to Exeter immediately next to the Cathedral. The development has been designed to be sympathetic to Exeter's heritage. It has brought in 37 new retailers including one of the UK's few Apple stores, anchor stores such as Next and Topshop as well as boutique brands including Neal's Yard Remedies and Chocolat. A 270 space multi-storey car park was built and the development created circa 1,500 new jobs for local people. Princesshay required considerable planning and negotiations with residents and local businesses. Consultants, Alder King, acquired 14 long leasehold and freehold units and 62 occupier leases from retailers in the development area. A Compulsory Purchase Order was obtained from Exeter City Council in 2004 following negotiations. Alder King and Land Securities first discussed the development in 1993 and conducted a viability assessment. Planning permission was granted in 2003 and doors opened in September 2007.

The project cost £225 million and has created 530,000 sq ft of retail space¹.

¹ AKfocus Autumn 2007, Alder King Property Consultants

Regional development funds following a general election

Regional development funds are likely to be reviewed in Spring 2010, regardless of the outcome of the planned general election for that time. It is therefore important to take account of these likely changes in the planning of the City Vision delivery.

Should the Conservative Party be successful in the general election, the RDAs could be removed, with powers being devolved to local authorities, taking away levels of bureaucracy and giving 'more powers and freedoms to local councils'¹. The latest Conservative statement on the future of the RDAs, delivered by Shadow Business Minister Mark Prisk at Regeneration and Renewal's Northern Regeneration Summit, is that the Conservatives would not axe RDAs without first checking that this was what local councils and their private and voluntary sector partners wanted².

This statement is in line with suggestions over the last 12 months that a Conservative administration would repeal the Regional Development Agency Act of 1998, leaving the fate of the RDAs in the hands of councils.

Should the Labour Party win the general election, there may still be changes to the structure and this should be monitored carefully.

¹ Conservative Party website, Local Government policy section. Date accessed 30th October 2009.

² Regeneration and Renewal, 26th October 2009

Local authority powers

Control Shift lays out a series of further plans, though the full cost implications are not yet available. Plans include:

Replacing the Local Authority Business Growth Initiative (LABGI) with a Business Increase Bonus (BIB). BIB would mean that any council in whose area the amount of business rates in a given year rises by more than the indexed rise in the national business rate will be entitled to keep the difference for six years.

The implication for St Albans would be that a significant redevelopment of the city centre that attracted new businesses should yield extra funds for the Council, but only after the development.

A new power for local authorities to provide business rate discounts. This measure is designed to encourage growth and regeneration. Local authorities will be able to reduce business rates if they can find funds from other sources of local income, or avoided costs. This measure would only apply to precepting authorities (authorities that have the power to instruct another local authority to collect an amount from Council Tax on its behalf). In the case of St Albans, Hertfordshire County Council is the precepting authority.

Local authority bonds will be explored as a way to allow local authorities to deliver privately-financed local projects, such as a new transport service or business development. Bonds would be secured against the projected income stream associated with a specific project. They would explicitly not be backed by direct local authority liability, but instead

7.7 Funding

would be issued in the name of a commercial or third-sector operator on behalf of the project.

The hollowing out of Regional Development Agencies and encouragement of local authorities to form Local Enterprise Partnerships. The Partnerships would need to be signed-off by the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.

It is unclear where, and how much of the funds currently allocated to Regional Development Agencies will be reallocated. In the current economic situation, and with the Conservative party mooting tax reductions, it is conceivable that the funds left for economic development nationally will fall well below their current level.

It is likely that some form of RDA will remain for at least 12 months after the general election, even should there be a change of government. However, the emphasis on allowing local authorities in the region to decide on the future of their RDA is a concern for the future of EEDA. The East of England is a largely Conservative region politically, with strong advocates (e.g. Lord Hanningfield, Leader of Essex County Council) calling for considerable powers to be devolved to local authorities. It is possible that EEDA would lose more powers than other RDAs under a Conservative Government.

Current EEDA priorities

Given the uncertainties over the future of RDAs post-May 2010 the existing EEDA Corporate Plan 2008 – 2011 (June 2009 refresh) provides the best understanding of short term priorities for the region.

EEDA's seven corporate objectives for the remainder of the Corporate Plan period do not fit tightly with the redesign and development of St Albans. Only one objective (number 4, to 'improve employability and increase economic opportunities for individuals to participate in the region's economy') fits with the redevelopment of an already successful city centre. St Albans City and District Council needs to continue to emphasise the extent to which it already supports employment in neighbouring areas (42% of local jobs are taken by in commuters equating to over 23,000 jobs). Improvements to St Albans city centre would further boost St Albans as a sub-regional employment hub.

Summary

It is unlikely that there will be significant funds available from EEDA pre or post general election for the kind of activities required to realise the City Vision in St Albans. However, the future financing vehicles and increased fiscal freedoms envisaged by the Conservative Party could provide St Albans City and District Council with a range of funding alternatives.

Possible funding vehicles

Here we analyse the applicability of two possible methods of "gap funding", one already in use in the UK and one that may well be introduced under a new government.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) – not currently used in the UK

Tax Incremental Finance is a mechanism for using anticipated future increases in taxation to finance improvements that are expected to generate those increased revenues. TIF has been used extensively in the US to attract investment to areas that ordinarily may not receive it. Sometimes the costs of preparing brownfield land can make an investment unattractive. In this circumstance the public sector can remediate the land using TIF, therefore using TIF to attract private investors by making the land more attractive.

The underlying principle for using TIF is that the development of new or improved infrastructure leads to further new developments and an increase in the value of surrounding property, thus improving the future tax revenue from an area. TIF is generally used in areas that require regeneration which is not entirely the case in St Albans however it is worth considering the advantages and disadvantages of the TIF approach.

Advantages of TIF

- Finances can be raised without depleting general revenues;
- Developers see a commitment to regeneration and development from the local authority;
- Costs that could have been incurred by the developer are covered;
- Property owners in the area may see their property value rise after development;
- Studies show TIF programs are a successful method for generating revenues for areas in need of regeneration;
- TIFs can empower communities as the level of central government involvement is minimal.

There are clear benefits to the TIF model, but there are also certain disadvantages:

- Borrowing against projected revenues can be risky especially if growth does not match projections;
- Impacts and demands on infrastructure outside of the TIF area may require financing through other routes;
- TIF financing limits the power of elected officials to make decisions about the use of public funds³;

³ Tax Increment Financing: A new tool for funding regeneration in the UK? British Property Federation. November 2008

7.7 Funding

The applicability of TIFs to the UK and St Albans

TIFs do not have a legal basis in the UK and subsequently do not provide an existing source of financing for the proposed developments in St Albans. PriceWaterhouseCoopers is working with the Core Cities Group to develop Accelerated Development Zones (ADZs), which are similar to TIFs but are directly applicable in the UK. However a change in Government, and a reduced public purse, would make forms of public-private financing more attractive.

Should St Albans City and District Council require extra funding to make the City Vision more attractive to developers, TIFs or some form of upfront financing such as Accelerated Development Zones will need to be considered and could help to fund the start up of a Special Delivery Vehicle (SDV) for delivering the City Vision.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are used quite widely in the UK (there are currently 88 formal BIDs). BIDs are flexible funding mechanisms to improve and manage a clearly defined commercial area. It is an additional levy on all defined ratepayers following a majority vote. Once the vote is successful, the levy becomes mandatory for all ratepayers and is treated the same way as the Business Rate.

Enabling legislation for BIDs was only passed in 2003 in England and Wales and 2006 in Scotland. The first BID in Britain went to ballot in December 2004.

Given that BIDs require extra funding from business ratepayers, they tend only to be applicable in areas where businesses are successful. Businesses operating in prosperous areas are more likely to be prepared to pay the levy due to the lucrative nature of operating in the area.

BIDs are primarily about business-led partnerships. However local authorities will invariably play an important enabling role in establishing and running the BID organisation. Reflecting this there needs to be a core group of businesses engaged and involved early on in the process.

Key stages to developing a BID

1. Demonstrating need
 - What is the urban management need in the area?
 - Why has this need arisen? Is it short or long term?
 - Undertake a feasibility study
 - Will a BID provide the appropriate solution?
2. Develop private sector interest – the private sector in the area will be expected to pay for this and hence it needs to be supportive.
3. Develop an inclusive partnership including the private sector, local authority and other key stakeholders
4. BID viability – model the feasibility of a BID levy for St. Albans
5. Visioning exercise – develop an indicative business plan
6. Assign resources for development of the partnership
7. Incorporate the St. Albans BID company

Applicability of a BID to St Albans

Although BIDs are best used in areas like St. Albans which are successful but want to improve, the likely funds raised by a BID would not be sufficient to fill a funding gap of the size anticipated to realise the St. Albans City Vision. The revenue from a BID varies hugely depending on the number of hereditaments in a BID area. BIDs vary from 50 – 2,500 hereditaments and from £50,000 to over £2 million in revenue per annum. Kingston BID is of a similar size to the area that could be covered by a St Albans BID and is of a similar profile. It raises £900,000 per annum in revenue⁵.

A BID may be used as an indication of the strength of partnership between St Albans City and District Council and the local business, but the revenue generated would not be sufficient to fund major developments.

⁴ www.britishbids.info Date accessed 30th October 2009

⁵ www.kingstonfirst.co.uk

7.7 Funding

Planning gain funding / Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

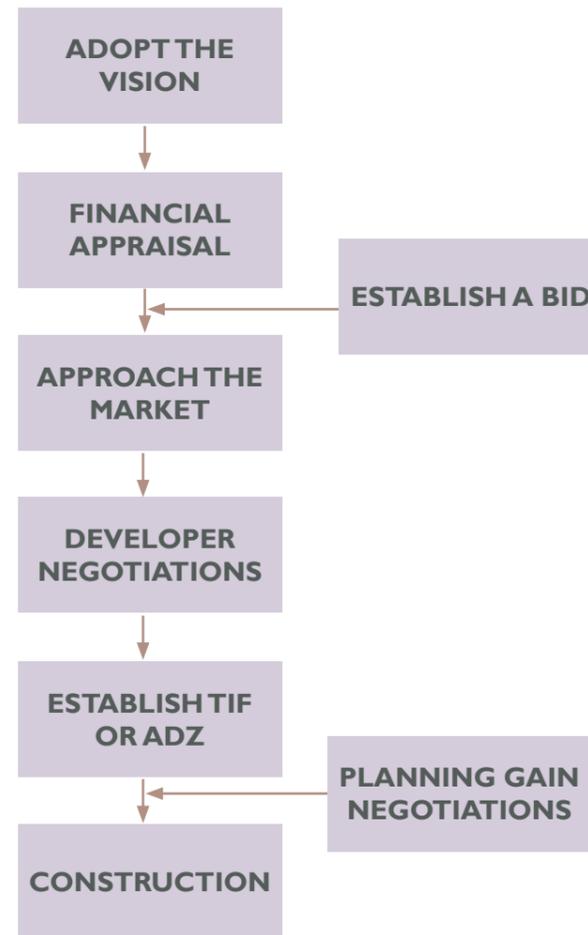
Planning gain agreements deliver or address matters that are necessary to make a development acceptable in planning terms. Typically planning gain agreements are used to support the provision of services and infrastructure, such as transport and affordable housing.

In relation to the St Albans City Vision, it may be that aspects of the transport section are prioritised and funded through a planning gain agreement as part of a major retail development project. Equally, the Green Ring or the range of new public spaces could be funded through planning gain.

In the current economic climate, the level of work or funds committed by developers through planning gain could be squeezed quite significantly. St Albans City and District Council should look to evidence planning gain demands to demonstrate the potential economic benefit to the developer (this could in part be done by the consultancy that costs the vision).

For example a major retail development in St Albans will be more profitable for the developer if the transport infrastructure is improved to allow greater access. Equally a development will be more profitable if there are other, non-retail, attractions in the city. The Green Ring would make St Albans more pleasant to visit, provide new walkways and reduce vehicle traffic in the centre.

Legislation is being passed to introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which will replace earlier forms of planning gain such as Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.



7.8 Delivery vehicle structure and tasks

The chosen delivery vehicle for taking the City Vision proposals forward would be characterised by a distinct set of values in order to ensure the successful realisation of the complex proposals set out in the Vision. These should include:

- Leadership and vision;
- A dedicated time and financial resource;
- A strong understanding of the City Vision and its holistic concepts;
- Multi-disciplinary approach and expertise; and
- Transparency and accountability.

Operating within this set of values, the delivery body would have a number of distinct objectives in order to ensure the maximum benefit is secured for the future of St Albans. The key objectives for the group would include:

- Securing public funding;
- Ensuring financial viability of plans;
- Attracting major development partners);
- Land assembly;
- Marketing of sites;
- Ensuring that development values are captured for the District;
- Proactive identification of development opportunities;
- Providing a single interface between public, private and voluntary sector;
- Ensuring planning decisions support strategic goals and successful development; and
- Marketing and publicity for the city.

In order to help meet these objectives, a number of tasks have been identified for the delivery body, which have been divided according to their time frame. These are set out below:

Short term:

- Ensure that the sites from the Vision and Masterplan are identified within a DPD in the LDF such as the Core Strategy/Site Allocation document.
- Establish a steering group/partnership with key stakeholders and service providers to ensure transparency and 'buy-in' to the city vision implementation.
- Schedule an early meeting with Government Office regarding statutory/supplementary document route (AAP or SPD).
- Undertake/commission further studies required to bring City Vision proposals forward (see below).
- Prepare funding applications for short and medium term projects.
- Actively engage with stakeholders from the outset to ensure no loss of momentum from the original City Vision project.
- Establish a design review panel comprising local, regional and national experts to ensure objective evaluation of later design submissions which appreciate the local context.
- Ensure active engagement and clear communication regarding the City Vision to Members and the public.

Medium term:

- Pre-market the sites in order to raise awareness of opportunities and encourage developer interest in the city centre. PIN and other soft marketing options to be considered
- Manage the tendering/OJEU process in order to appoint developer teams for sites, with legal and property advice and input and manage a development competition for the key sites) in the city centre.
- OR, enter into a qualitative open book process in order to appoint a preferred developer and select a preferred design (this could be difficult and would require detailed legal advice).
- OR establish a Public-Private Partnership to bring forward sites with a development partner
- Ensure exit/succession arrangements exist for all assets

Long term:

- Proactively manage the development of outline and detailed planning applications in order to ensure these reflect the Vision and masterplan objectives and the timeframe is managed well
- Use Council returns from the increase in land values to provide further infrastructure, where possible
- Ensure Vision and has sufficient flexibility to adapt to changing market conditions

Continuous:

- Hosting regular meetings of a steering group comprising key players in bringing the Vision forward
- Scanning for development opportunities and potential coordination between land owners
- Constant dialogue with land owners to raise awareness of opportunities

In undertaking these tasks, a balance will be established between further studies which are required and delivering projects on the ground in the city, to ensure that outcomes from the City Vision can be achieved in the short term, with visible evidence for the local community.

7.8 Delivery vehicle structure and tasks

Based on these tasks, the following Delivery vehicle structure is suggested to ensure that all the necessary stakeholders are represented.

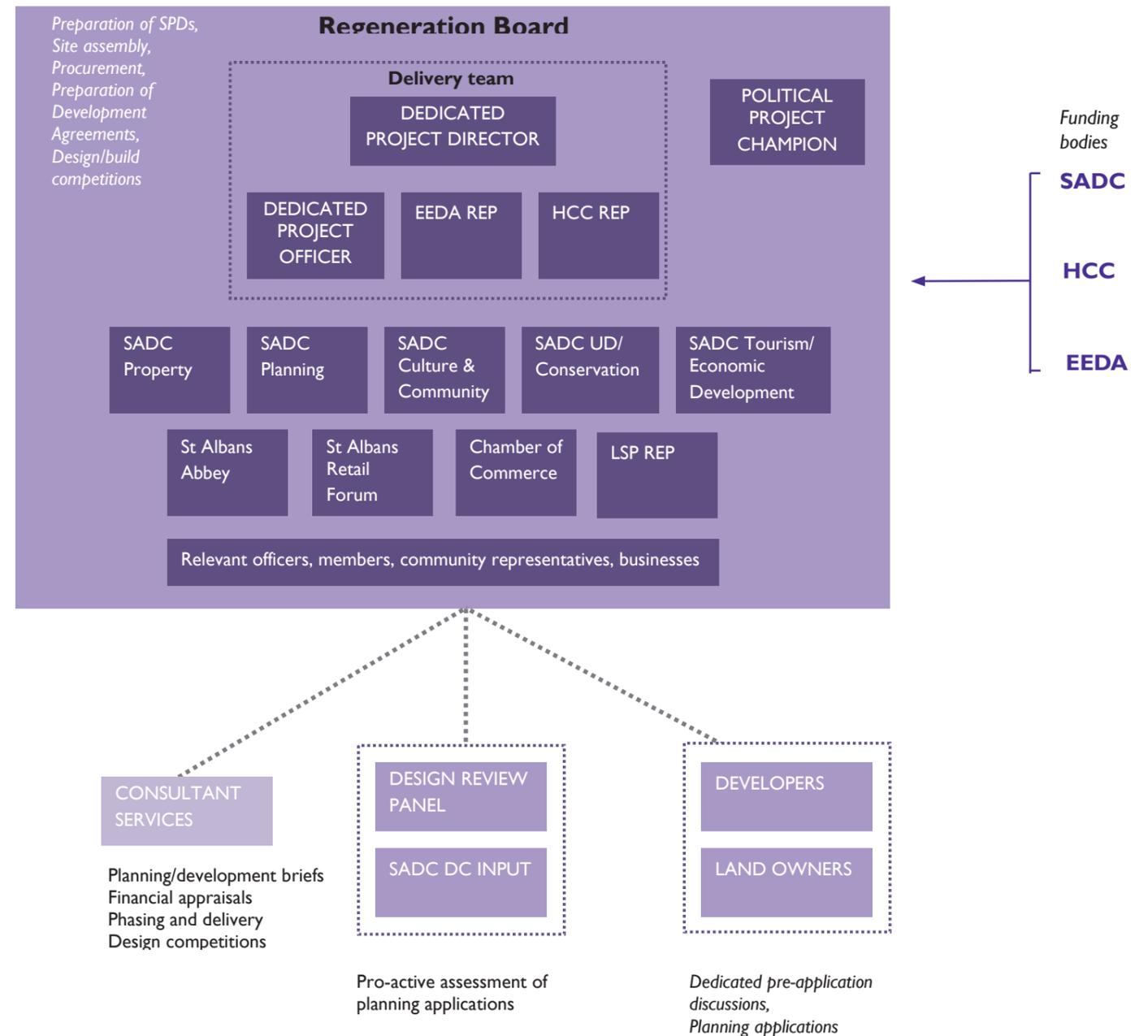
Regeneration Board

The Regeneration Board brings together the different Council departments, along with other major public sector, community and business stakeholders in the City - the Abbey, the Retail Forum, Chamber of Commerce and Local Strategic Partners. Officers could be seconded as appropriate, and additional representatives would be identified as part of the on-going consultation process. The Regeneration Board brings together necessary technical advice to the Project Director and ensures that departmental objectives are being met through the implementation of the Vision.

Within the Regeneration Board, the day-to-day work is carried out by a project team. The team is managed by a project director with support from a project officer, and from representatives of the Regional Development Agency and County Council who are joint funders. A political project champion represents local governmental control of the delivery vehicle, and provides political direction in decision-making.

Partners

The core project team has regular contact with Developers and Land owners, and draws on consultant services where necessary to assist with planning. A design review panel and SADC Development Control provide independent and informed judgements on design quality.



7.8 Delivery vehicle structure and tasks

Further studies

In addition to the tasks identified for the delivery body, a number of specific further studies have been identified; some of which would be critical in bringing about the masterplan proposals; some of which would provide useful clear guidance in taking forward wider proposals.

The key further studies identified are:

- Planning briefs for each of the key sites within the central masterplan area, including detailed financial appraisals:
 - Civic Centre site
 - Nationwide/Ladbroke/Barclays area
 - Drovers Way site
 - Argos area site
- Financial and legal advice on the most suitable model for tendering projects and the relative merits and issues related to an OJEU and non-OJEU process
- Public realm study with design for streets, squares and spaces
- A statutory document (AAP) or supplementary guidance to a DPD document (SPD) with more detailed design and development guidance for central masterplan area. This should ideally include:
 - More detailed architectural and spatial plans for each of the sites;
 - A detailed massing study of the key sites, using either a 3D graphic or physical model
 - Guidance on the infrastructure requirements related to site developments;
 - Site specific guidance on efficient energy and waste management
 - Detailed phasing of sites, identifying meaningful parcels of land and complexities of these

- Transport study with detailed testing of proposals for St Peters Street, parking levels/requirements and park and ride, reflecting on modelling data to be available in early 2010
- Green Ring study – transport, biodiversity and landscape architecture input
- Potential for a Businesses Improvement District to be established help deliver some of the public realm works

Immediate priorities

The priority actions in driving the Vision forward are considered to be:

- A market improvement project;
- A tourism marketing work;
- An economic development strategy;
- A public realm enhancement project at Victoria Street;
- Other City-wide public realm enhancement projects;
- Detailed planning appraisals; and
- Detailed financial and procurement advice.

A significant proportion of funds for the City Vision will go to projects themselves, in order to ensure that tangible benefits can be achieved in the short term as a result of the City Vision.

	Project	Timescale	Fields of expertise	Indicative budget
1	Detailed tourism and marketing material and prospectus	Short term priority	Marketing Regeneration Graphic design	£30,000
2	Economic development study	Short term priority	Planning Economic Development	£tbc
3	Detailed landscape design study for Victoria Street	Short term priority	Planning/UD Landscape architecture	£65,000
4	Detailed public realm design for key streets and spaces	Short term priority	Planning/UD Landscape architecture	£tbc
5	Planning briefs with detailed financial appraisal	Short term priority	Planning/UD Property & finance Architecture	Civic Centre area £70,000 Drovers Way £70,000 St Peters/Civic Centre £25,000 Argos area circa £25,000
6	Financial and legal advice on attracting development partner	Short term priority	Finance Legal Planning	£30,000
7	Statutory report/ supplementary report to DPD	Medium term	Planning/UD Architecture	£90,000
8	Transport study	Medium term	Transport Planning/UD	£40,000
9	Green ring study	Medium term	Landscape architecture Planning Transport	£20,000
10	Potential BID scheme appraisal	Medium term	Economic development Planning/regen	£20,000

7.9 Appraisal of delivery vehicle options: no delivery vehicle

Possible delivery vehicles

This section considers possible delivery structures which might be most appropriate and effective in bringing the City Vision forward in St Albans. Given St Albans' size and relative economic strength it is considered that a statutory regeneration vehicle is not appropriate for the City. Therefore, the three options open to St Albans are:

1. No delivery vehicle
2. Internal partnership
3. Regeneration company

These are considered and assessed in terms of their benefits and limitations:

1. No delivery vehicle

Structure

For Council-owned sites the Council could deliver development through procurement and development agreement, informed by City Vision principles. For non-Council-owned sites City Vision influence on development would be indirect, informing development control decisions as part of the LDF evidence base, or potentially more directly through a statutory planning document. The City Vision steering group could form the basis of an advisory in-house delivery board. This approach has been employed in Sheep Street in Bicester (see below)

Potential benefits

- Management of delivery and implementation could take place within Council budgets

Potential limitations

- At privately owned sites the initiative for development would remain with the developer and market.
- Implementation would put a large strain on relevant Council departments in addition to their daily work-load and may only allow Council officers to devote limited attention to projects identified in the City Vision, particularly the complex Civic Centre South and Drivers Way sites. This, in turn, could have a negative impact on the eventual quality of schemes.
- Despite sign-up to the City Vision process, weak cross-departmental links could restrict coordination, causing unsatisfactory or incomplete resolution of departmental conflicts.
- With limited control over development a holistic approach to development may not be achievable, and opportunities for complementary City centre uses would be missed. This could potentially create new issues for the City in the long-term. Some of the value of the City Vision work would therefore be lost.
- Some of the key uses provided for in the masterplan may be less likely to be delivered as sites remain unattractive to developers. Poor phasing could exacerbate or create new planning issues for the City (eg, greater traffic congestion or a deterioration in retail choice and quality).
- Lack of political appetite to use Compulsory Purchase Orders if necessary could reduce the Council's ability to manage land assembly in support of Vision principles.

Example: Sheep Street, Bicester

- Retail capacity identified and sequentially preferable site tested in feasibility and financial terms
- SPD prepared building on feasibility study
- Site marketed by Council; development competition to select preferred development partner
- Negotiations conducted leading to deal and scheme delivery

7.9 Appraisal of delivery vehicle options: internal partnership

2. Internal partnership

Structure

A project team would be set up within the Council, guided by a regeneration board based on the current steering group. The project team would manage the day-to-day coordination of City Vision delivery, and would hold planning and CPO powers as an extension of the Council's planning team. For Council-owned sites the Council could deliver development through procurement and development agreement, informed by City Vision principles. For non-Council-owned sites City Vision influence on development would be indirect, informing development control decisions as part of the LDF evidence base, or potentially more directly through a statutory planning document. The City Vision steering group could form the basis of an advisory in-house delivery board. However, the project team would have dedicated time and financial resources to manage the delivery process independently of Council workloads, potentially as seconded officers working several days a week on the City Vision, or as additional posts within the Council working full-time.

Potential benefits

- The dedicated project team would be able to engage more quickly and effectively with delivery stakeholders than over-stretched Council Officers and be more proactive in implementing City Vision principles through pre-application discussion. This could ensure higher quality outcomes for new developments and city-wide projects

Potential limitations

- An additional project team may require additional funding
- Planning and CPO decisions in support of the City Vision principles would be subject to local politics, restricting the ability of the project group to implement difficult challenging proposals
- Control over schemes at privately-owned sites would be limited to pre-application discussion and development control and the initiative for development would remain with the developer and market. This could create flaws in efforts to ensure holistic and well-phased development

Example: Durham City Vision

- Led by Durham City Centre Steering Group and formed of cross-departmental partnerships within the County and City Councils
- Delivery board contains chief officers from each partnership body: Durham City Council, Durham County Council, One NorthEast, Durham University and Durham Cathedral Chapter, County Durham Tourism Partnership
- Delivered a series of urban design projects across the City



7.9 Appraisal of delivery vehicle options: regeneration company

Regeneration Company

Structure

An arms-length regeneration company could be established consisting of a regeneration board of public stakeholders, including relevant Council departments and delivery vehicle funding agencies.

The Board could include a project delivery team with dedicated officers to manage the day-to-day administration of delivery projects. An advisory panel could be established to provide technical advice to the regeneration board and project team, and the regeneration company could be headed by a political champion. Partnership groups could be formed to formalise links with private stakeholders in the delivery of privately owned sites, including developers, landowners and leaseholders.

The company could assemble land and help prepare sites for private development, or procure a development partner for Council-owned sites. To do this, the company would hold CPO powers, but planning decisions could be retained internally with the Council.

Examples of this approach include Castle Point and Southend-on-sea.

Potential benefits

- There would be more potential for greater linkage with private stakeholders through a single point of contact for City Vision projects with dedicated time and financial resource
- A private-sector led project team could help ensure rapid progress
- There could be greater capacity to guide development of non-Council-owned sites through regular contact with land owners and relevant public-sector officers via formalised channels
- Regular cross-departmental meetings within the advisory steering group would ensure strong coordination of Council Officer expertise in guiding development and tackling major issues
- The delivery board membership could ensure cross-party support for delivery vehicle and its decisions
- Long-term stability of delivery would ensure continuity of expertise and understanding of City Vision principles
- Arms-length distance from local politics would allow the delivery team greater freedom for manoeuvre in making tough decisions
- The Project team could be funded by pooled resources from local and regional authorities plus other grant funds where possible
- The retained steering group could ensure continuity of Vision objectives and coordinated approach to development

Potential limitations

- A dedicated financial resource would be required, which would need time to bring together
- The complexities of setting up a regeneration board

Example: Renaissance Southend

- Regeneration body formed in 2005 to assist, promote, encourage, develop and secure regeneration of Southend-on-Sea
- RSL benefits from separation from the Council, being able to work with greater speed and efficiency than the Council due to its size and specific mandate
- RSL is able to test the waters with more radical ideas and pave the way for proposals which the Council might otherwise find too politically challenging to take forward
- The RSL brokerage role has been invaluable in bringing together private sector and public sector and unlocking HCA / EEDA / CLG funding

Example: Castle Point Regeneration Board

- Regeneration body formed to promote change at Canvey Island. Body comprises Borough Council, EEDA among others
- Regeneration manager appointed (paid position) to co-ordinate projects
- Influence on projects is stronger where public sector land ownership exists, but more limited where private sector land interests exist. Initial step of regeneration body is typically to prepare a masterplan for an area, then the role depends on the agreed remit of the parties

Conclusions

A review of these three options suggests that there would be significant advantages to the establishment of a Regeneration Company as the preferred delivery vehicle.

The scale of the projects proposed in the City Vision suggests that the Council would be unable to effectively deliver it without a dedicated resource and without better control over development of key privately-owned sites. While the partnership approach would bring great resource and speed to projects and greater control over them, the Regeneration Company approach would be more effective and would have the greatest scope for high quality development. In this format, the 'arms length' distance between the Regeneration Board and the Council as a political body is also considered of significant value in allowing the delivery team to make the bold decisions required to make the Vision a reality.

In moving forward with delivering the City Vision, the tasks set out in section 7.8 should be considered in the context of the formation of a special delivery vehicle, in which short term tasks to prepare for delivery are first undertaken, then an internal team is created with a similar structure to a delivery vehicle, so that a special delivery vehicle can be created more efficiently.

7.10 Statutory planning options

Statutory/supplementary guidance

Three main options exist in taking forward either a statutory policy document for the central masterplan area or a supplementary document relating to a DPD document within the LDF. The key issues for the three options are set out below, with a preferred option identified.

Option 1: No specific LDF document for St Albans City

This approach implies reliance on the Core Strategy (publication Feb 2010), Site allocations DPD (consultation June 2010) and Development Policies DPD (consultation June 2010).

The Vision document would be treated as an evidence base document and would be used to inform the spatial policies in the Core Strategy, the Site Allocations DPD and the District-wide policies in the Development Policies DPD.

The end result would be of a similar scope to the type of material in the existing Local Plan. The Vision document could be endorsed as an informal statement of indicative guidance for the city. This fits in with existing LDF programme of document production.

However, this will not capture the spirit of the Vision document – material and guidance will be too dispersed within the District wide DPD documents. Document will incorporate insufficient spatial / design / area-specific City-focused guidance. It might not capture the imagination of developers or the general public. Too weak and does not respond to the fundamental principles of the new planning system.

Endorsement of the existing Vision document would be quite weak compared with the other options

In the context of the City delivery vehicle, therefore, a specific and bespoke planning document is required to drive things forward.

Option 2: Supplementary Planning Document

In this approach, the SPD gains weight in planning terms through the process of SA and consultation. However, it has less weight than a formal DPD.

The process of preparing an SPD is fairly quick compared to other LDF documents – depending on the extent of additional consultation at the front end, this would take about eight months.

There is a question of how the SPD would relate to the LDF, with the following possibilities:

1. Supplement the Core Strategy (and other DPDs?)
2. Supplement the saved policies from the Local Plan
3. Supplement the Core Strategy and selected relevant policies in the Local Plan (i.e.... those that would eventually be replaced by the site allocations / development policies DPDs)

SPDs cannot allocate sites or designate major changes in land use policy – they have to supplement existing adopted guidance. In that context, a judgement would need to be made about how an SPD would relate to the existing local planning framework.

The SPD would probably work quite well in terms of the public realm and landscape projects, but it is possible that even if the existing City site designations in the Local Plan are saved policies, the proposals in the Vision might represent a departure. If this is the case, it's likely that the Government Office would prefer to see the site allocations / development policies DPD taking shape and reaching a relatively advanced stage before the SPD could be consulted upon and adopted. If this happened, the merits associated with a streamlined SPD might be negated by the delay associated with the sites/development policies DPDs.

Option 3: Area Action Plan

AAPs take longer to produce and are more resource heavy. They are also subject to greater scrutiny so the risk of delay or additional work is greater as the AAP would be subject to Examination in Public before adoption. However, an AAP route would provide an opportunity to define a coherent and integrated spatial strategy in a single document.

The AAP would hang off the Core Strategy (which we understand is progressing well and should be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by June 2010). A major benefit of taking this approach is that the AAP would be fully integrated in terms of site allocations and designations, as well as the overall vision / strategic approach and design principles.

The scale of change and ambition in the City Vision document fits with the rationale for preparing AAPs in PPS12.

Timescales associated with the preparation of AAPs vary considerably. Assuming that the work to date provides the bulk of the evidence base for the AAP, as well as the basis for issues and options, the document could reach submission stage in approximately 18 months. A clear priority would be to get the SA Scoping Report underway at an early stage in the process. There would also be an additional period of time between submission and the Examination/Adoption of AAP.

There would need to be a careful scoping of the evidence base at an early stage to establish whether there are any gaps, and the extent to which District wide studies (e.g.... flooding) can be used to inform the City AAP.

7.10 Statutory planning options

A way forward

The SPD approach would take less time but the adoption of the document could be delayed due to the chain of conformity with other DPD documents.

It is possible that the Government Office would take a view that the emerging Core Strategy combined with an endorsed City Vision document and saved policies sets a sufficient context for an early adoption of the SPD. In this case the SPD using the Core Strategy and saved policies would be the most suitable option, with likely adoption from June 2011.

If this is not the case, then AAP is likely to be the most suitable option in this instance and it would be useful for the delivery group to review the issues associated with timescales, conformity, saved policies in the first instance and then meet with the Government Office to make sure they are happy with the approach.

In conclusion, meeting with Government Office will be a short term priority, and if the LDF's saved policies are considered to provide sufficient context, an SPD is the preferred option, as this will be most time efficient whilst still providing sufficient statutory power.

If Government Office does not consider the saved policies to provide sufficient context, for an SPD, then an AAP should be produced, to ensure sufficient statutory power, albeit at a slower timescale.

