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Colchester City Centre Masterplan

December 2023



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Colchester
City Council



Essex County Council

Revisions tracker

Revision	Date	Description
-	11-11-2022	Initial draft
A	28-11-2022	Draft issue for information
B	23-12-2022	Final draft for public engagement
C	06-03-2023	Final draft for public engagement with amendments
D	01-12-2023	Final draft for Local Plan Committee
E	20-12-2023	Final draft for Local Plan Committee - second round of comments

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Executive Summary

The Colchester City Centre Masterplan sets out a clear vision for the future development of Colchester city centre for years to come. This document has been informed by a period of in-depth research and engagement.

Colchester city centre is the focal point of a rapidly growing city with a high-quality historic environment. Colchester's rich heritage, collection of cultural organisations, educational institutions and growing creative and digital sectors are all positive elements that contribute to the city's unique identity and have a role to play in the future of its city centre.

The city centre currently faces environmental and economic challenges. Environmentally, it suffers from vehicular congestion and air pollution and is difficult to access by sustainable means of travel.

The centre is not immune from national trends in retail, and whilst some areas benefit from vibrant, independent high street businesses, larger national chains have been closing stores or relocating in recent years. An over-reliance on retail and hospitality jobs has created a low wage economy locally, by comparison with other regional centres.

Colchester was the UK's first city, and regained its status in 2022 to become one of its newest, too. It has all the potential to meet the twin challenges of the climate emergency and wider economic trends with bold, yet pragmatic, approaches.

Together, the proposals in this plan will support Colchester's development over the coming decades, with a respect for its past and ambition for its future.

The City Centre Masterplan delivers on this vision by proposing interventions at three different scales: The masterplan itself, which takes a look at the wider city centre area, urban design strategies, which focus in more detail on the retail core of the city centre, and design frameworks for key sites. The series of design frameworks that have been developed are supported by a delivery plan.

Taken together the proposals set out throughout this document lay the foundations for a bold, sustainable future for the Colchester's City Centre.

The interventions outlined in this document are driven by the following themes:

Actively respond to the climate emergency

Reducing pollution and carbon emissions by providing ways for nearby communities to travel to the city centre by walking, cycling and public transportation. This includes providing spaces for residents to park their cars on the periphery of the city centre and switch to more sustainable travel options while moving around the city centre.

Provide a safe, healthy, green, active and accessible city centre

Integrating improvements to the public realm with enhanced biodiversity, increased cycle access and enhanced pedestrian experience of the city centre, including for those with different abilities.

Diversify city centre uses to encourage footfall

Providing frameworks for future development in the city centre. With the appropriate land use and built form parameters, new uses such as housing can be introduced into the city centre in a contextually-sensitive and economically beneficial way.

Support the city centre economy to everyone's benefit

Guiding the future economy of the city centre, creating a framework for diversifying uses by strengthening the existing cultural, workspace and evening offer to re-energise the city centre's economy, whilst keeping retail at its heart.

Make the most of Colchester's rich heritage

Uplifting Colchester's heritage assets by improving their setting and allowing them to be experienced as 'more than the sum of their parts'. It also aims to ensure new development is integrated well into the existing historic city centre.

Vision

Colchester was the UK's first city, and regained its status in 2022 to become one of its newest, too. It has all the potential to meet the twin challenges of the climate emergency and wider economic trends with bold, yet pragmatic, approaches.

Together, the proposals in this plan will support Colchester's development over the coming decades, with a respect for its past and ambition for its future.

Colchester's natural and built heritage should be source of pride for residents, and attract visitors from across the region and the country. Development of the city centre must create quality streets and spaces that provide the perfect setting for historic buildings, make a walkable and enjoyable environment for everyone and support biodiversity across. Blue and green infrastructure in the city centre should be reinforced to enhance biodiversity through improved connectivity and management.

The city centre economy should be amplified with more diverse activities, including markets, community uses, independent retail and food and drink, and workspace for the creative and digital sector. This will create more high quality jobs in the city centre and sustain other businesses in turn.

People living in the city centre also sustain local businesses and make it a lively and vibrant place. Good quality and affordable homes, tapping into the appeal of city centre living, will support local shops and services, and the transition to low-carbon lifestyles.

As many people as possible should walk, cycle or use public transport to travel into the city centre. This is critical for reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality, and making the city a more pleasant place to spend time. This means re- connecting neighbourhoods to the city centre with attractive and easy walking and cycling routes; and improving public transport, particularly bus provision and including the new Rapid Transit System.

Reducing unnecessary traffic will mean that people who still need to travel into the city centre by car, will be able to do so more reliably. They should be able to park in safe and accessible locations, or be dropped off and picked up easily. Deliveries to and from businesses, by day and night, must be fully considered, along with improving the interchanges between different modes of transport.



Key

- Actively respond to the climate emergency
- Provide a safe, healthy, green, active and accessible city centre
- Diversify city centre uses to encourage footfall
- Support the city centre economy to everyone's benefit
- Make the most of Colchester's rich heritage

01

Setting the Scene



City Centre Profile

Camulodunum, Roman Colchester, was Britain's first recorded settlement and later Britain's first city and capital. Colchester regained its city status in 2022 to mark Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee - so it is both the oldest and one of the newest cities in the UK.

Colchester is one of the UK's fastest-growing places and one of the most important and diverse urban centres in the East of England, located midway between the largest UK container port and London's third airport. It provides work for around 24,000 people who travel into Colchester from the surrounding area and is home to more than 13,000 students from more than 130 countries who study at the University of Essex's Colchester campus, making it the UK's most international campus university. It is also a garrison city with a long military association which has brought international communities to Colchester from Nepal, Fiji and other countries.

Colchester's city centre

The city centre is the historic, retail, leisure and cultural heart of the community, as well as the main visitor destination for domestic and international tourism to the area. It is an important cultural hub for the East of England, and as of November 2022, the city centre is home to five Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations - Firstsite, the Mercury Theatre, Colchester Arts Centre, Signals Media and the Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service, which is responsible for three museums in the city centre alone. It has a major tourist attraction in Colchester Castle, the largest Norman keep in Europe and constructed on the foundations of a Roman temple, and has the earliest and best preserved Roman city walls in Britain.

The city centre draws in a large number of young people and students from the wider area through schools and colleges including Colchester Sixth Form College and Colchester Institute including University Campus Colchester. New developments are bringing cutting-edge digital facilities to the city centre in the new Centre for Immersive Innovation as well as



Location plan

a wide range of public realm, walking and cycling improvements.

Wider strategic changes will continue to impact the city centre, and are set out in further detail on the following pages.

Success criteria

In order to ensure a positive legacy and success of the Masterplan, it is advised to have a discussion and agreement on how any monitoring and evaluation could support future tracking of change in the city centre. Potential success criteria could include:

- Increased local pride among business and residents and increase in positive external perceptions of Colchester as a destination
- Modal shift from private car use to active and public travel resulting in a decrease in vehicle movements in the city centre area
- Increased footfall to the core city centre area
- Retention and growth of businesses within the city centre area
- Increase in higher wage jobs in the city centre area
- Provision of high quality and affordable housing within the city centre, sustaining local shops and services
- Increased attendance to cultural venues and events
- Increased evening economy and sustained vibrancy of evening venues
- Increased tourism, in particular overnight stays.

Opportunities

- City status and the change in internal and external perceptions of Colchester as a result
- Historic environment resulting in attractive, compact and walkable centre ideal for the 'experience economy'
- River as a corridor for nature and biodiversity
- Tourism potential of major heritage attractions as well as cultural venues
- Arts and cultural activity and the wider creative and digital economy
- Residential neighbourhoods surrounding the city centre within an easy walk - a large potential customer / visitor base
- High numbers of students and young people living and studying in and around the city centre
- Cultural diversity of Colchester's communities and the businesses and experiences they support
- Easy connectivity to London as well as other regional centres
- Reduction in commuting and increase in working from home, or working near home.

Challenges

- Historic perceptions of Colchester both internally and externally affecting confidence and local pride
- Physical severance of neighbourhoods from the city centre by arterial roads and topography
- Poor public transport and active travel infrastructure connecting neighbourhoods to the city centre, resulting in a reliance on the private car and resulting congestion
- Changes in retail and consumer patterns nationally which are also reflected locally, in particular for the evening economy
- Competition for retail and leisure customers from edge-of-centre locations including the Northern Gateway and Stanway Tollgate, with free parking and easy car access
- Ingrained transport habits of residents in the wider city area and a reluctance to adopt modal shift to active and public transport
- Tightly-knit historic street pattern creating conflicts between pedestrian, cyclists and business delivery and servicing needs
- Funding, viability and delivery of projects in a complex and constrained city centre including substantial archaeological and below ground constraints
- Climate change impacts on environment, liveability and biodiversity and adaptation
- Continuous recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Masterplan Scope and City Centre Transport Plan

The focus of the masterplan is on the core city centre area - the primary and secondary shopping area as defined in the Local Plan, as well as the main city centre development allocations and gateways to the surrounding neighbourhoods.

However, the continued economic and cultural vibrancy of the city centre lies in reconnecting it to the surrounding neighbourhoods and improving the walking and cycling experience of routes to the mainline rail station, the Roman Circus and the Hythe and University campus in particular. The masterplan therefore includes recommendations for wider area improvements with regard to connectivity and public realm.

Design frameworks have been prepared for the main city centre development allocations and gateways, which have been referred to as key sites.

The package of documents includes the City Centre Masterplan with appendices, the City Centre Transport Plan and the Delivery Note.

City Centre Transport Plan

Steer has prepared the City Centre Transport Plan (CCTP) a key document used to frame and inform the holistic City Centre Masterplan.

The overall aim of the CCTP is to recommend a range of transport interventions that can be packaged together to take forward as part of Colchester's city centre masterplan. The three potential packages will be tested following submission of this CCTP using the ECC Strategic Model.

The document recognises the current dominance of car travel in Colchester and the overarching need to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport through the provision of walking, cycling, bus and train facilities to improve the city centre through reduced congestion and to improve the quality of life for local residents and visitors. The document recognises improved accessibility, connectivity and movement as key drivers for change for achieving social inclusivity.

It reflects local policy drivers, the Future Transport Strategy in particular. Future proofing the city whilst protecting and enhancing cultural and historical assets is crucial to Colchester's ambition for a safer, greener and healthier future.

This CCTP shortlists a range of transport and urban realm interventions across a range of disciplines. The interventions related to physical / tangible measures have been geographically assigned to key corridors and City Gateways across Colchester's city centre, which were identified through a strategic assessment from a connections and accessibility perspective. This CCTP has further identified key zonal policies / measures, and service implementation / changes that cannot be linked to specific city centre geographical locations, but are equally as important for implementation to achieve the CCTP objectives.

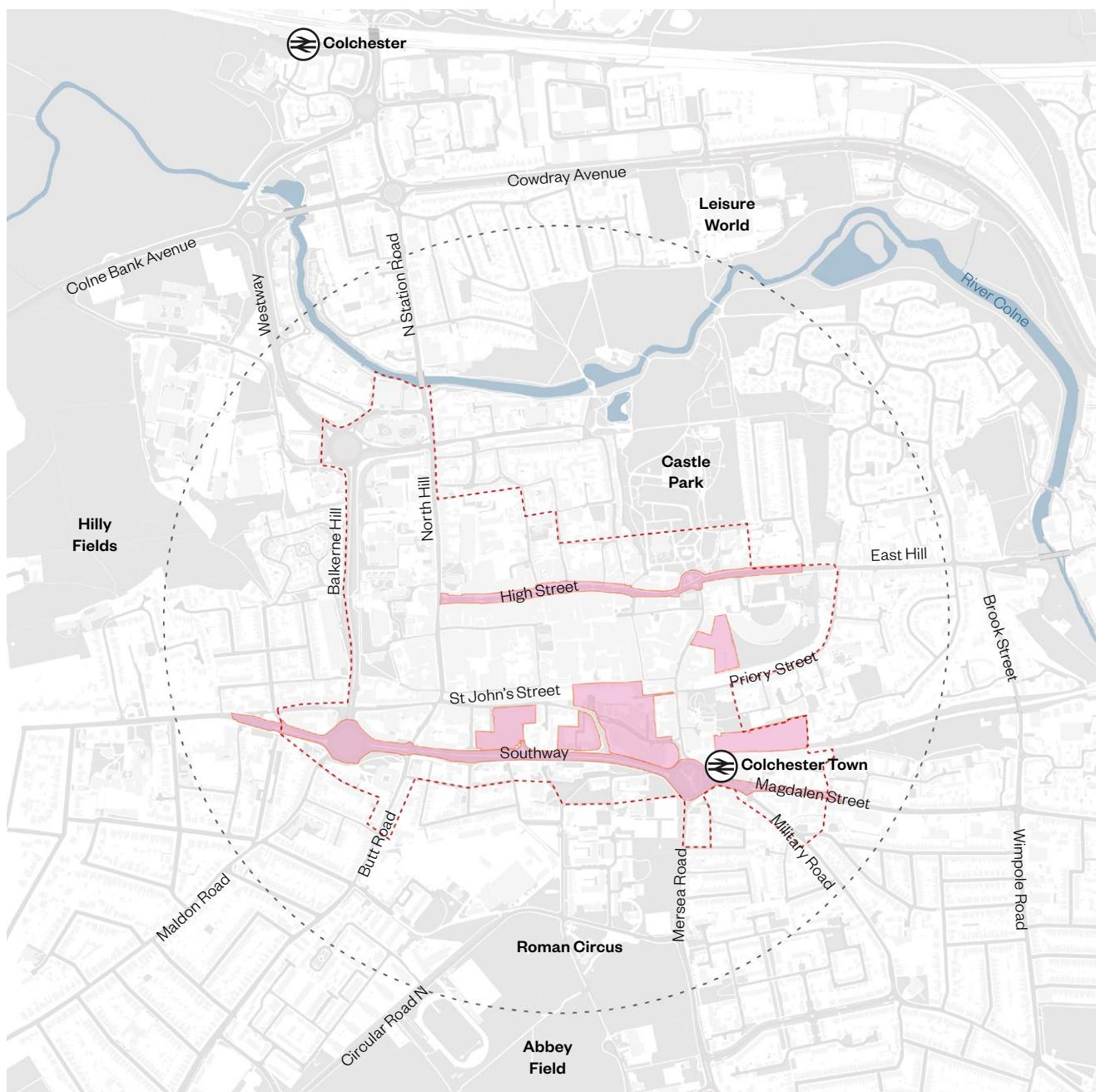
The CCTP recommendations have been integrated into the Masterplan and are particularly reflected in the following masterplan layers and accompanying urban design strategies: Actively Respond to the Climate Emergency, Provide a Health, Safe, Active and Accessible City Centre and Support the City Centre Economy for Everyone's Benefit.

Delivery Note

A separate delivery strategy for Colchester City Council and Essex County Council has been developed that outlines partnership, financing and delivery structures, as well as the actions / process required to implement the initiatives contained in the masterplan.

Key

- Wider area - connectivity and public realm improvements
- Core city centre area - urban design frameworks
- Key sites - design frameworks



Strategic Context

This masterplan builds on the vision and objectives for the city centre set out in the Local Plan as well as other strategies and policies developed by Colchester City Council and partners. It reflects work already being delivered through the Town Deal, the Active Travel Fund and other initiatives and funding sources, as well as priorities put forward as part of Colchester's Levelling Up Fund bid in 2022.

Planning policy context

The Colchester Borough Local Plan 2017 – 2033 Section 2 was adopted in July 2022. The vision for Colchester in 2033 is set out as:

'Colchester will be an active and welcoming town with its rich and prestigious heritage treasured and showcased for all to enjoy. Colchester will be acclaimed for the creative, innovative and sustainable ways in which it addresses the wide range of challenges facing the Borough, including climate change; population growth and its changing composition; new lifestyle and technological innovations; creating and maintaining strong safe, healthy communities; and shifting market forces.'

The vision also considers the city centre:

The Council will work proactively to ensure that the historic Town Centre continues its role as the cultural and economic heart of the Borough and international visitor destination.

The Local Plan objective 'Supporting the Town Centre as the Heart of the Borough' acknowledges that the city centre serves as a centre not only for the Borough but for a much wider area of North East Essex and has an important role as a heritage, retail and business destination. It "seeks to retain the pre-eminence and vitality of the Town Centre in the face of changing economic and lifestyle trends and the rapid pace of technological innovation."

The Local Plan sets out a number of strategic growth areas around the city centre as well as development site allocations within the city centre itself. In total, the Local Plan seeks to deliver at least 920 new homes per year over the Plan period, with most of this growth focused in and around the city. Key strategic sites include the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community (TCBGC) which will add 7000 to 9000 homes over the next 20 years. TCBGC will be connected with the rest of the city by the Rapid Transit System whose design and delivery has been enabled by HIF funding. Both the TCBGC and Middlewick Area are anticipated to start delivering housing growth in the next 10 years, whilst the substantial delivery of the TCBGC will go beyond 10 years and is anticipated to deliver from 2025/26. Other sites such as the Garrison Regeneration Area are already largely built out and



1. Town Centre and North Station Regeneration Area
2. Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community
3. University and Knowledge Gateway Area
4. Middlewick Area
5. Garrison Regeneration Area (remaining sites to be delivered are the ABRO site and Arena site)
6. Northern Gateway

01 Setting the Scene

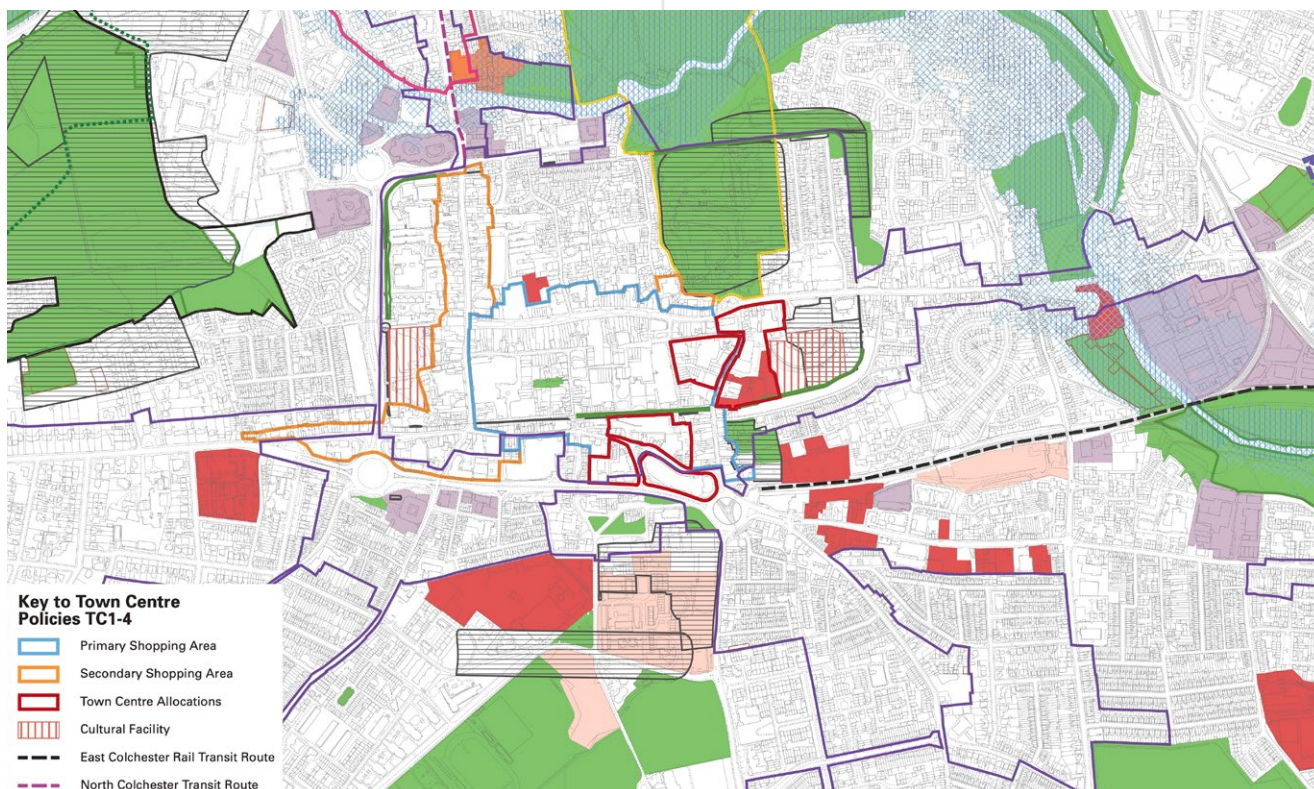
remaining development will likely be completed in the next five years.

Alongside this, locations are identified for additional business floorspace, which are also focused in and around the city, primarily at North Colchester and the Knowledge Gateway but including some floorspace within the city centre core itself.

With regard to the city centre, the Local Plan recognises that “Colchester Town Centre is the principal comparison goods shopping destination in the Borough supported by a number of non-retail facilities including services, leisure, cultural, and community uses. Research and analysis has established that the Town Centre is relatively healthy, although there are areas of weakness and concerns over longer term investment prospects. New retail and leisure development in particular is necessary to ensure the Town Centre’s vitality and viability over the plan period.” The Local Plan sets out a robust ‘town centre first’ approach to help protect the city centre against competition from other shopping destinations.

Key

- Primary Shopping Area
- Secondary Shopping Area
- City Centre Allocations
- Cultural Facility
- East Colchester Rail Transit Route
- North Colchester Rail Transit Route
- Settlement Boundary
- Existing Commitments (selected for illustrative purposes only)
- New Residential Allocation
- Employment
- New Residential-led Mixed Use Allocation
- Public Open Space
- Local Centre
- Environmental Agency Flood Zone 3
- Environmental Agency Flood Zone 2
- Conservation Area
- Scheduled Monument
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Allotments
- Borough Boundary



Colchester Town Centre Policies TC1-4

Policies TC1 and TC2 for the city centre are intended to encourage a greater diversity of city centre uses to provide a more robust economic environment including more evening activities. They also look for opportunities to enhance the public realm and the attractiveness of the street environment. Spatial definition is given on the policies map for the TC1 policy area as well as a Primary Shopping Area and Primary and Secondary Street Frontages given protection under policy TC2.

Policy TC3 sets out site allocations for additional residential and mixed use floorspace at Vineyard Gate; St Botolph's; Priory Walk; Britannia Car Park and part of St Runwalds Car Park. The Plan expects 290 new homes to be delivered on these sites during the Plan period. 'Windfall' (unallocated) housing development in the city centre is also anticipated through redevelopment of other small sites.

Policy TC4 sets out the transport policy position for the city centre and desired improvements including enhancements to Southway and St Botolph's Circus; improvements to public transport and the walking and cycling network generally within the city centre; and the provision of space for the Rapid Transit system.

Other relevant plans and strategies

The development of the masterplan has been informed by a wide range of other plans and strategies including and not limited to the following:

- Essex Local Transport Plan and Essex Transport Strategy
- Economic Plan for Essex and North Essex Economic Strategy
- Colchester City Council Strategic Plan, Economic Strategy, Environmental Sustainability Strategy, Cultural Strategy, Positive Parking Strategy, Parking Estate Plan
- Essex County Council's Colchester Future Transport Strategy, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
- Our Colchester BID's Leisure Recovery Strategy, Indies Vision

Colchester City Council was one of the first in the UK to declare a climate emergency, acknowledging urgent action is needed to limit the environmental, social and economic impacts of climate change and to committing to net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

Town Deal and Levelling Up Funds

The city was also awarded £18.2m of Town Deal funding in March 2021 which will enable a number of projects: developing the former Essex County Hospital for housing, delivering a number of public realm improvement projects in the city centre, restoring Holy Trinity Church and churchyard, starting the restoration of the Balverne Tower (Jumbo), improving community facilities in the Greenstead area, improving walking and cycling links between the city centre, Greenstead and the university and speeding up the introduction of 5G infrastructure.

'By 2030, Britain's First City will be a bustling, creative place. Inclusive, accessible and affordable, its cultural life will offer something for everyone.'

Source: Colchester Cultural Strategy, 2022

Masterplanning Process

The process of developing the masterplan began with reviewing existing policy and guidance, most importantly the Colchester Borough Local Plan 2017 – 2033 Section 2 and Better Colchester Strategic Plan 2020-2023.

A thorough baseline appraisal followed - the findings of this analysis are summarised on the following pages.

The policy review and baseline analysis resulted in identifying five masterplan objectives:

- Actively respond to the climate emergency
- Provide a safe, healthy, green, active and accessible city centre
- Diversify city centre uses to encourage footfall
- Support the city centre economy to everyone's benefit, and
- Make the most of Colchester's unique heritage.

The Masterplan has been structured around these five objectives, and the masterplan layers delivering against each objective are represented as high level spatial strategies.

At the next level of detail, each objective has been broken down into two themes and urban design strategies for each theme have been developed. These are intended to guide and shape development proposals across the core city centre.

Design frameworks have been developed for the site allocated for development / redevelopment in the Local Plan, as well as key public realm corridors.

Public and stakeholder engagement was integral to the development of the Masterplan, the findings informing almost every aspect of the Masterplan.

A parallel transport study was undertaken, results of which are integrated in the masterplanning work and are also separately contained within the City Centre Transport Plan. This illustrates the complex transportation challenges the city centre faces, as well as the opportunities for significant positive impact on sustainability and quality of life that improved transportation can achieve.

Policy and guidance



Baseline appraisal



Masterplan objectives and themes



Stakeholder conversations and public engagement



Masterplan and Transport Plan



Key site development frameworks

Baseline Appraisal Summary

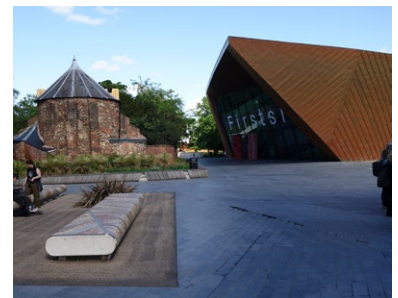
Wider Context and Uses

Key findings

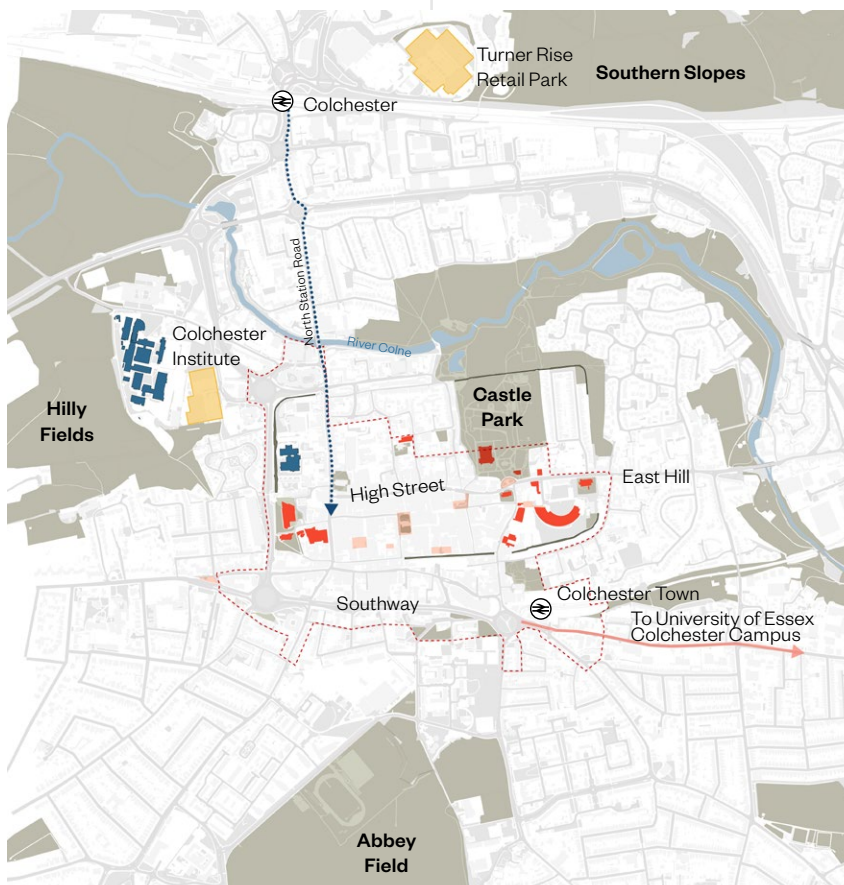
- Colchester city centre is rich in heritage, visitor attractions and has a strong retail and leisure offer
- The greatest challenge at present is the fast-changing nature of the way people work, shop and spend their leisure time, spurred by the growth of e-commerce and emergence of new post-pandemic norms
- Colchester's main train station is a 20 minute walk from the city centre, up a hill, which makes travel to the city centre challenging for those with reduced mobility
- Out-of-town shopping draws footfall and revenue away from the city centre
- The city centre's access to green space is relatively good due to the proximity and accessibility of Castle Park; the city centre is dotted with otherwise small open and green spaces, which are often associated with historic structures such as churchyards
- Colchester has a strong and diverse arts, cultural, digital and creative sector, which includes over 3,500 businesses (10% of overall number of businesses); the strength of the cultural sector is exemplified by five Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations.



Castle Park is one of Colchester's a major greenspaces

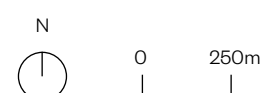


Firstsite Gallery is a popular cultural and community destination



Key

- Publicly accessible green space
- Publicly accessible square
- Shopping centre
- Creative and cultural facilities
- Route from Colchester station to city centre
- Route to University of Essex
- Train station
- Core city centre area
- Wider area

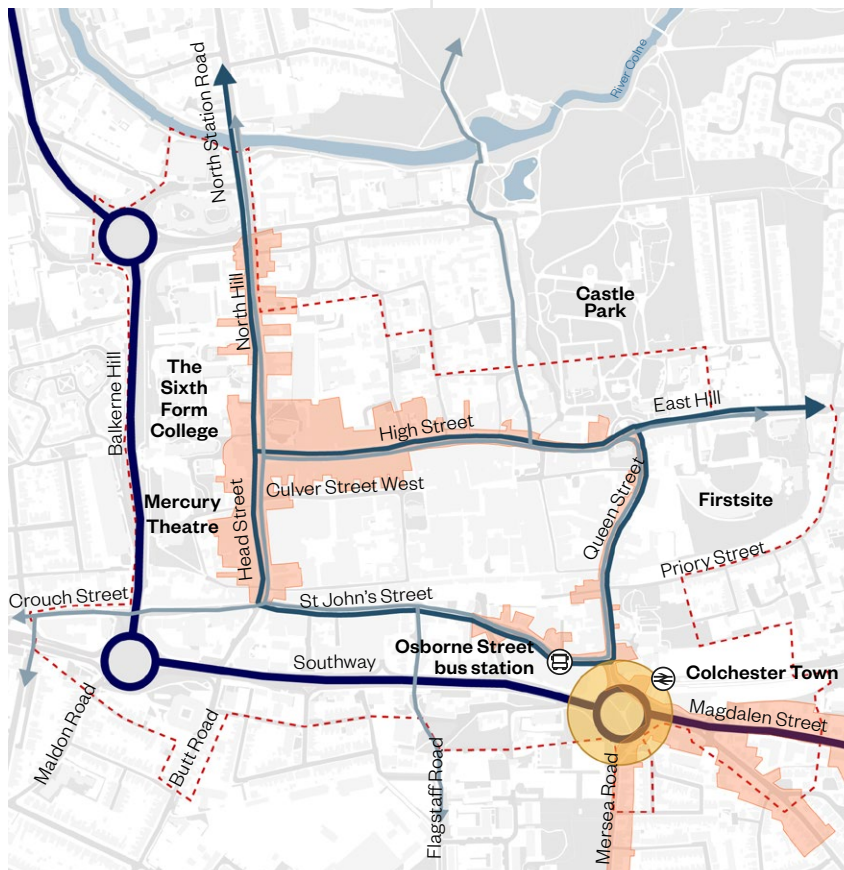


Baseline Appraisal Summary

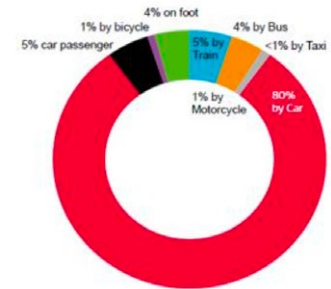
Transport

Key findings

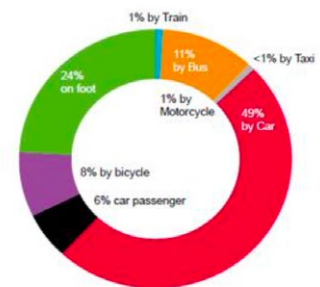
- Road traffic growth and significant congestion can occur during peak times on the limited number of routes in and out of the city centre
- High reliance on private car use - 58% of the population rely on a car as their method of travel to work, with 71% of the total population owning either 1 or 2 vehicles; high levels of private car use also supported by public survey results
- High volumes of traffic result in air pollution being above legal EU limit, with one marginal air quality exceedance identified in the existing Mersea Road air pollution hotspot, AQMA1).
- Reasonable level of cycling infrastructure, much of which is focused within the city centre itself and comprises a mixture of on and off-road routes, however these are often fragmented
- Southway is a major form of severance from areas south of the city centre
- Major planned transport improvements include Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) and implementation of the Rapid Transit System which will link the city centre with new major growth area Tendring/ Colchester Borders Garden Community
- A £20m funding bid to the Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF) has been successful - The bid improves St Botolph's circus and increases permeability and creates better active travel links.



Travel patterns for Colchester



Colchester workers living outside the city
24,176

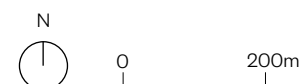


Colchester workers living inside the city
32,499

Source: Colchester City Council Factsheet, 2011

Key

- A134 and Southway
- Rapid Transport System route
- LCWIP routes
- Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)
- Levelling Up Fund bid - improvements to St Botolph's Circus design
- Core city centre area
- Wider area



Baseline Appraisal Summary

Heritage

Key findings

- Colchester is one of the most important historic and archaeologically rich cities of England, boasting a series of key landmarks such as the Roman Circus, Colchester Castle and the Jumbo.
- Despite its long history, Colchester is less visited than more high profile cathedral cities and a number of assets are considered at risk within the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register.
- St Botolph's Priory, the Roman Circus and the Roman Wall are opportunities for high impact improvements to Colchester's heritage offer.
- Better public realm and pedestrian connections to and between heritage assets can help piece back together some of fragmented parts of the city

centre and help Colchester to work as a unified whole.

Conservation areas

1. City Centre
2. Lexden Road, The Avenue
3. Colchester - Abbey Field Conservation Area (Garrison Conservation Area)
4. North Station and Environs
5. Mill Field Estate
6. Colchester New Town Conservation Area

Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM)

- a) Colchester Castle
- b) Town ditch
- c) SE corner of Roman town in Easthill House Gardens
- d) St Botolph's Augustinian Priory
- e) The Benedictine Abbey of St John
- f) Roman Wall
- g) Balcerne Gate



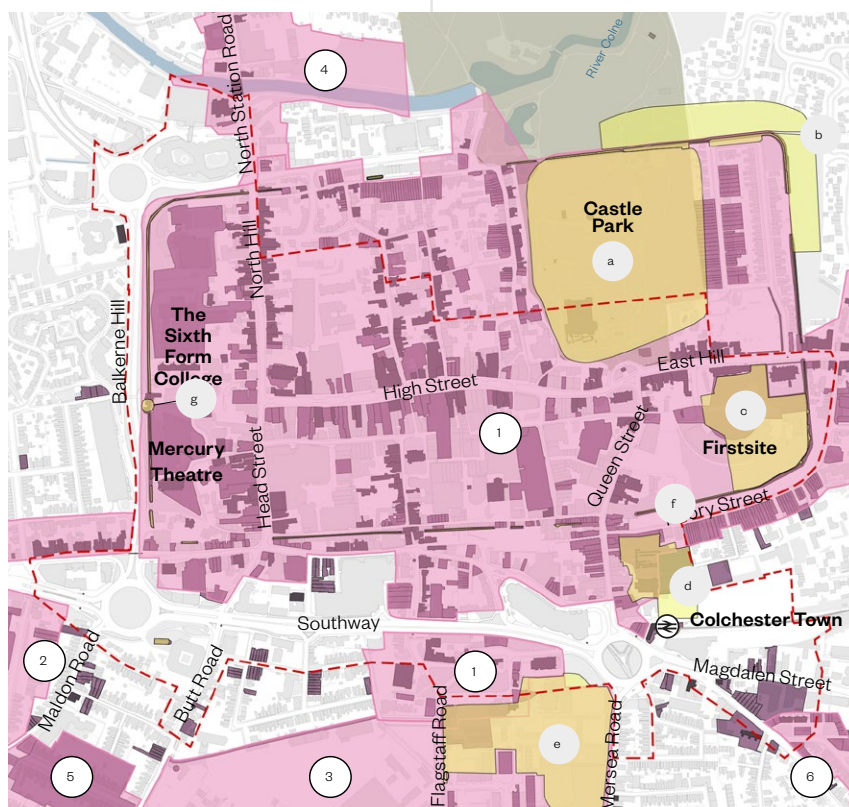
St Botolph's Priory



The Roman Circus

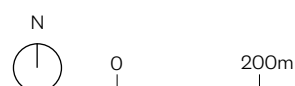


The Roman Wall



Key

- Listed building
- Locally listed building
- Conservation area
- Scheduled ancient monument (SAM)
- Historic park and garden
- Core city centre area



Baseline Appraisal Summary

Socio-Economic

Key findings

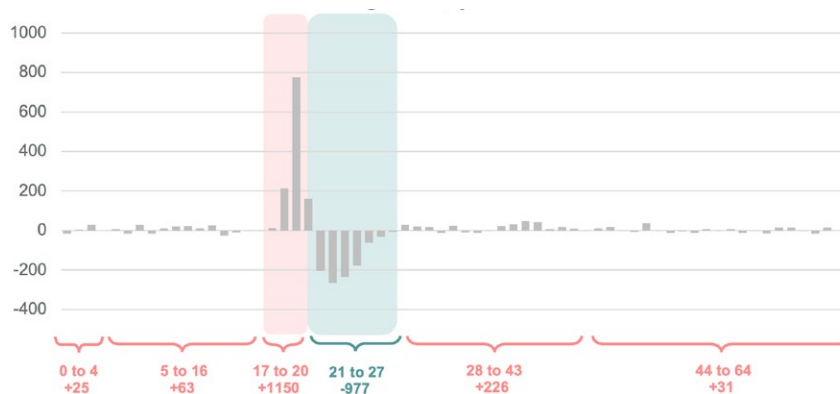
- Against comparators, Colchester appears to have more nighttime, retail and hospitality businesses and jobs; 30% of the city centre's jobs are in retail, hospitality, leisure and recreation - these are important for vitality but often experience low pay and poor job security
- A high proportion of those low paying jobs are concentrated in and around the city centre
- Colchester centre appears to have surprisingly high growth in families with young children—the 0 to 15 age group increased by 37% between 2011 and 2020.
- Against comparators, Colchester centre has low proportion of young adults, despite having a university in

the city

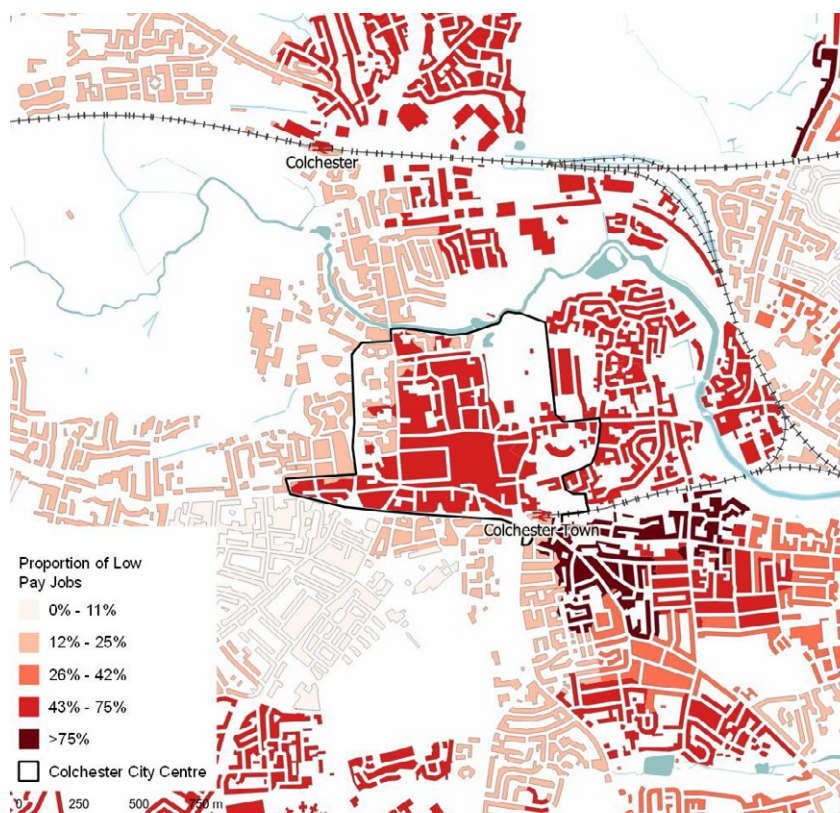
- Despite a regular influx of students coming to the University of Essex, retention of young working professionals is low

- Health and disability deprivation primarily affects residents within the city centre and areas to the east/southeast.

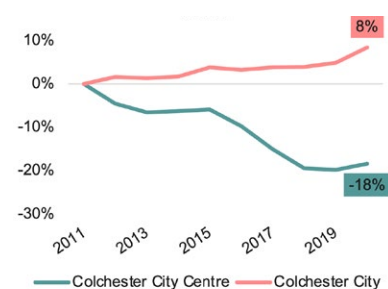
Net internal migration in Colchester in June 2020



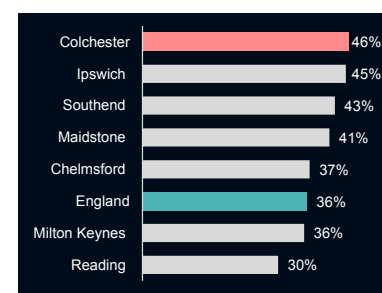
Spatial distribution of lowpaying jobs



10 year population change aged 16 - 24



Proportion of low paying jobs in city/town centres



Baseline Appraisal Summary

Key Findings

This spread summarises the key overarching findings from each discipline.

Wider Context and Uses

The city enjoys a rich and interconnected arts, culture and community sector.

Strong educational facilities are located in the city, including Colchester Institute and University of Essex.

Shopping centres outside of the city centre draw business and footfall away from it.

Ongoing improvements happening at various stages of delivery - Town Deal funding, the LUF bid, and RTS and LCWIP corridors.

Transport

Travel by car is the dominant mode of travel, resulting in congestion and air pollution within a large part of the core city centre and wider area.

The hilly terrain poses issues of accessibility for disabled and less able bodied people, particularly when accessing the city centre from the north and east.

While the core of the city centre is fairly pedestrian-friendly, the main roads forming the ring road are frequently congested, with poor air quality.

Heritage

Colchester has a rich and vast array of heritage assets which are currently not being capitalised on and celebrated to their full potential.

There are areas of historic interest that fall just outside of the city centre, such as East Street and East Hill and the Roman Circus, that could be better linked to the city.

Lack of connectivity across Southway severs routes to key heritage sites, such as the Roman Circus and reduces opportunities to develop the heritage offer.

Socio-Economic

30% of the city centre's jobs are in retail, hospitality, leisure, and recreation. These are important for vitality but often experience low pay and poor job security.

Despite a regular influx of students coming to Essex University, retention of graduates is low.

A variety of new sectors have appeared in the city centre— including 'artistic creation', engineering consulting, residential nursing—which could be seen as positive for its resilience and diversity.

Engagement Summary

Engagement Activities

Public and stakeholder engagement was integral to the development of the Colchester City Centre Masterplan; over the course of six months, the design team ran a series of engagement events that were designed to offer opportunities for concerned parties to voice their priorities for the future of Colchester city centre at different stages of the masterplan's development.

These engagement activities included:

Masterplan Officers Steering Group, throughout

Monthly meetings with Colchester City Council officers to present masterplan progress and key messages from engagement with officers feeding back on key development stages.

Council Members

Presenting the masterplan to Colchester City Council and Essex County Council councillors at Leadership, Members Masterplan Steering Group, All Members briefing and the Team Colchester regeneration board.

Strategic stakeholders, networks and organisations

Engaging with Our Colchester Business Improvement District (BID), Community 360, Civic Society, We Are Colchester, One Colchester Delivery Board and educational bodies, such as Colchester Institute.

Themed Co-Design Workshops

Five in-person and three online workshops related to specific themes: business, accessibility and active travel, heritage, health and wellbeing, community/residents and creative and digital. We Made That and HAT Projects joined existing group meetings including the Community360 September IAG, Local Estates Forum and Alliance Executive Group meeting.

Transport

Steer developed the City Centre Transport Plan through engaging with the Steer internal Expert Panel, three Transport Workshops with OCC and EOC officers and engagement with the BID, cycling groups and bus operators.

Youth Club consultations

Workshops with young people at youth clubs (10-18 years) and feedback from the youth workers, parents and volunteers.

One-to-one conversations with businesses

Fact finding discussions with local independent businesses, including Bill and Berts, Coda, Tymperlys, Dreams, Franklins, MM Oriental Supermarket, Church Street Tavern / Sun Inn Dedham.

Public event on the High Street, 13 August

A day-long public event was held in front of Barclays bank on the High Street where the design team engaged with more than a hundred people.

Engagement session at Holiday Fun, Firstsite, 23 August

Afternoon session as part of Firstsite's Holiday Fun programme where We Made That and HAT Projects engaged with visitors.

Online survey

An online survey was active on the Masterplan website from 10th August to 6th October 2022 and received 1843 responses.

Engagement on the draft masterplan

The team presented the draft masterplan at an online stakeholder session, which included BID members and the Civic Society, as well as the Leadership, Members Masterplan Steering Group and Team Colchester.

Further engagement / consultation

The Council held a six week public consultation over Summer 2023 and over 2,000 people had their say on the City's future. The Masterplan has been updated to reflect the feedback received



Engagement session at Holiday Fun, Firstsite



Public event on the High Street



Themed workshop with the creative and digital sector



Workshop mapping and ideation



The 'About You' engagement board used at the public events



Online heritage workshop

Engagement Summary

Key Feedback and Findings

Below are some of the most commonly expressed opinions that surfaced during the engagement process.

Heritage should be a source of pride for Colchester and enhance the experience of visiting the city centre

Despite concerns about traffic and congestion, Colchester does not yet have the infrastructure to support a complete transition to public transport and active travel - there still needs to be viable parking options

Businesses would like to see increased spend/revenue in the city centre

Expand and diversify the offer of things to do in Colchester city centre

Importance of the River Colne as a biodiversity corridor

The closure of M&S and Debenhams are opportunities to introduce more local, independent businesses and community facilities

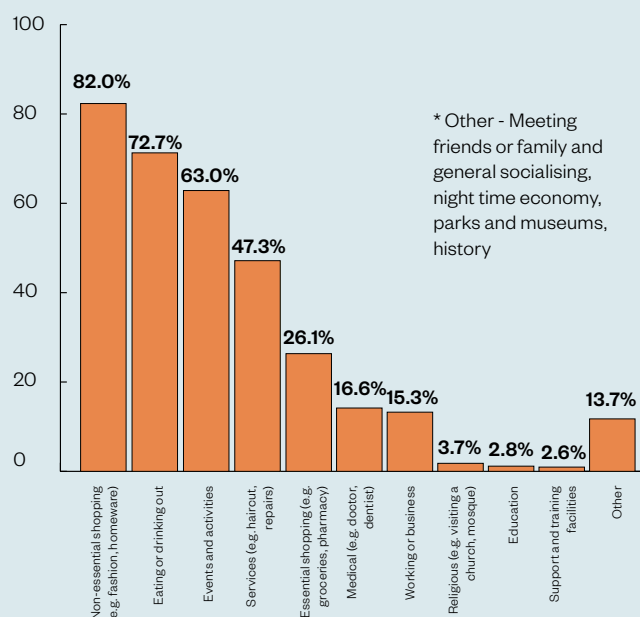
Retention of young people - offer them a good experience already when they are here as students

Accessibility and inclusivity should be an overarching and holistic goal of the Masterplan

Need for an improved pedestrianised experience and separation from cyclists/e-scooter users

What are your main reasons for visiting the city centre?

(Multiple choice question)

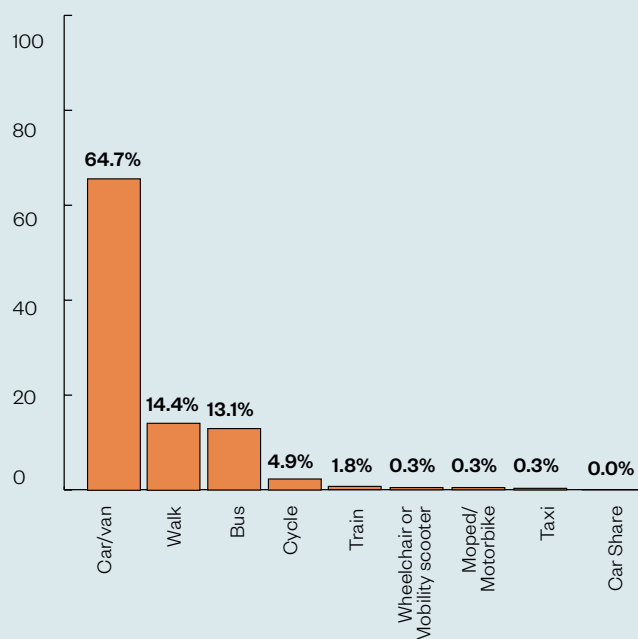


There is a wide range of reasons people visit Colchester city centre and this is generally consistent across all age groups. However, the response with the largest variation between age groups is “Eating and drinking out” - here, the largest percentage of people who visit the city centre for this purpose are 18-24 year olds (at 82%), while the age group with the smallest percentage of people who visit the city centre for eating and drinking out is 55-64 (52%).

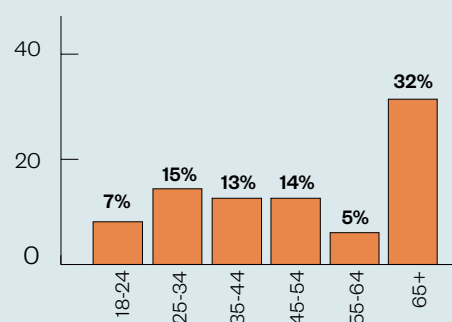
Despite the fact that 82% of respondents use the city centre for non-essential shopping, qualitative responses show that respondents think the non-essential shopping offer could be improved:

“City needs so many more chains to encourage people to visit. Other than Fenwick for the high end shoppers or Primark for the lower end and younger demographic, with very little in-between.”

How do you usually travel to the city centre?



Percentage of bus users based on age:



For all age categories, transport by car or van is the most common method of transport. After walking, taking the bus is the third most common method. The age group that use the bus most as their main mode of transport is that of 65+ years. At 19.2%, this age group is also the most likely to have a physical disability, indicating a reliance on public transport.

02

Vision and Masterplan

Site



Vision

Colchester was the UK's first city, and regained its status in 2022 to become one of its newest, too. It has all the potential to meet the twin challenges of the climate emergency and wider economic trends with bold, yet pragmatic, approaches.

Together, the proposals in this plan will support Colchester's development over the coming decades, with a respect for its past and ambition for its future.

Colchester's natural and built heritage should be source of pride for residents, and attract visitors from across the region and the country. Development of the city centre must create quality streets and spaces that provide the perfect setting for historic buildings, make a walkable and enjoyable environment for everyone and support biodiversity across. Blue and green infrastructure in the city centre should be reinforced to enhance biodiversity through improved connectivity and management.

The city centre economy should be amplified with more diverse activities, including markets, community uses, independent retail and food and drink, and workspace for the creative and digital sector. This will create more high quality jobs in the city centre and sustain other businesses in turn.

People living in the city centre also sustain local businesses and make it a lively and vibrant place. Good quality and affordable homes, tapping into the appeal of city centre living, will support local shops and services, and the transition to low-carbon lifestyles.

As many people as possible should walk, cycle or use public transport to travel into the city centre. This is critical for reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality, and making the city a more pleasant place to spend time. This means re- connecting neighbourhoods to the city centre with attractive and easy walking and cycling routes; and improving public transport, particularly bus provision and including the new Rapid Transit System.

Reducing unnecessary traffic will mean that people who still need to travel into the city centre by car, will be able to do so more reliably. They should be able to park in safe and accessible locations, or be dropped off and picked up easily. Deliveries to and from businesses, by day and night, must be fully considered, along with improving the interchanges between different modes of transport.



Key

- Actively respond to the climate emergency
- Provide a safe, healthy, green, active and accessible city centre
- Diversify city centre uses to encourage footfall
- Support the city centre economy to everyone's benefit
- Make the most of Colchester's rich heritage

Developing the Masterplan

The diagram overleaf outlines the structure of the Masterplan. The column to the left lists the five layers of the City Centre Masterplan, each corresponding to a theme from the Better Colchester Strategic Plan 2020-2023. The column to the right lists the ten urban design strategies that support the masterplan; each masterplan layer aligns with two corresponding urban design strategies.

In this document, the five Masterplan layers are separated onto their own pages: taken all together they form the City Centre Masterplan.

The masterplan layers take a wider view on the city centre, considering the connections between the city centre and its immediate wider surroundings.

The urban design strategies take a more detailed view, and focus on interventions within the retail heart of the city centre. The interventions shown in the urban design strategies also work towards achieving the objectives set out in their corresponding thematic masterplan layer.

Suggested interventions include both measures and changes that can be linked to a specific city centre geographical location, as well as those that cannot, but are equally as important for implementation to achieve the Masterplan objectives.

Actively respond to the climate emergency

Linking to the wider area

Environment and sustainability

Provide a safe, healthy, green, active and accessible city centre

Public realm, open space, biodiversity and landscape

Permeability and connectivity

Diversify city centre uses to encourage footfall

Land use strategy

Building heights, density and built form

Support the city centre economy to everyone's benefit

Diverse economy

Land assembly and delivery

Make the most of Colchester's rich heritage

Placemaking within the city centre

Protecting and integrating with heritage buildings

Actively Respond to the Climate Emergency Masterplan Layer

This masterplan layer aims to reduce pollution and carbon emissions by providing ways for nearby communities to travel to the city centre by walking, cycling and public transportation. This includes providing spaces for residents to park their cars on the periphery of the city centre and switch to more sustainable travel options while moving around the city centre.

In the context of a heavily built up and historic city centre, the measures that can have the greatest positive impact on the environment while being least disruptive to the historic fabric are related to transportation and reducing emissions from motor vehicles.

Therefore, the first set of strategic moves relate to linking wider communities, providing sustainable modes of travel into the city centre. This includes defining city gateways, which serve as entry points into the city centre and allow for travellers coming by car, bus or rail to switch to alternative sustainable modes of travel.

The second set of strategic moves relate to environment and sustainability within the city centre. They aim to reduce congestion and emissions in the city centre, and provide modes of sustainable travel to get around the city centre.

■ Linking to communities in the wider area

1. Encouraging active travel with high quality strategic walking and cycling routes
2. Improving public transport and ensuring integration of the future Rapid Transit System (RTS)
3. Defining key city gateways as arrival points
4. Improvements to existing car parks

■ Environment and sustainability

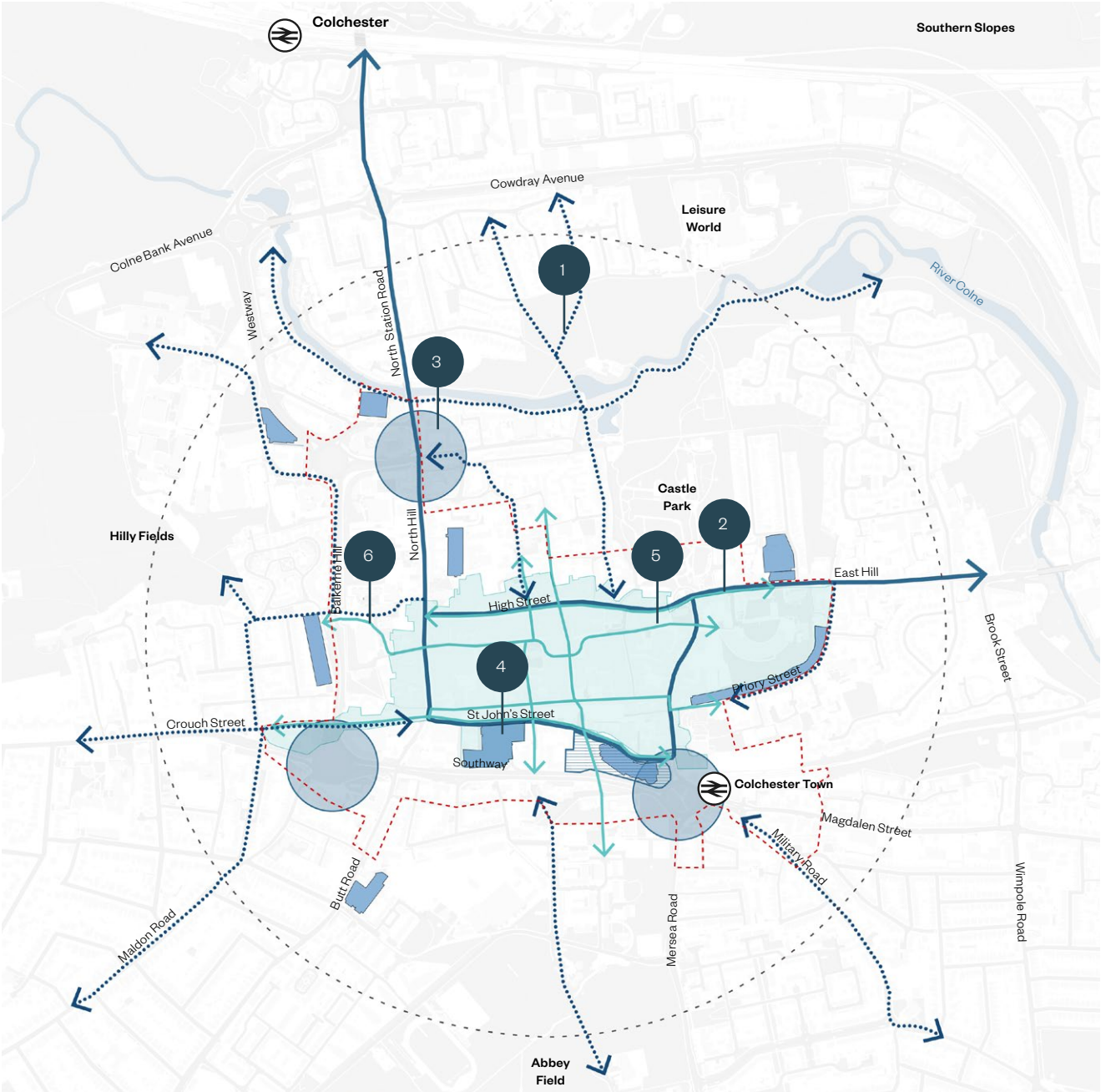
5. Implementing a car-lite city centre and a zero-emissions zone in the city centre
6. Ensuring key north-south and east-west city centre corridors provide clear, legible routes for active travel.

What We Learned

- Road traffic growth and significant congestion can occur during peak times on the limited number of routes in and out of the city centre
- A large part of the city centre is covered by an Air Quality Management Area due to emissions from road traffic
- A dispersed bus facility model in the city centre due to the its existing ring road configuration
- The Colchester Rapid Transit System proposals aiming for a 'trackless tram' connecting east to University of Essex Colchester Campus and Tendring/ Colchester Borders Garden Community
- Pre-pandemic car parking data indicates up to 800 public car parking spaces available across the city centre during peak periods
- Safety concerns and anti-social behaviours to be addressed for multi-storey car parks, such as St Mary's Multi-storey car park
- Extensive network of walking and cycling routes in and around Colchester.

What You Said

- Poor public transport options for accessing the city when travelling from outside of the city centre; the park and ride would be an alternative, but it is just as quick, easy and cheaper to drive and park in the city centre
- Traffic is a big problem at most times of the day
- There is an appetite for using car modes less and using alternative modes more
- City centre traders need to be involved in developing these proposals to ensure that deliveries and access to businesses are maintained.



- Key**
- Wider cycling routes
 - Proposed Rapid Transit System (RTS) corridor
 - City centre corridors
 - City gateways
 - Improved bus interchange zone
 - Improvements to existing car parks
 - Proposed car-lite city centre
 - Core city centre area
 - Wider area

Linking to Communities in the Wider Area

Urban Design Strategy

Suggested interventions:

1. Active travel

- Ensure safe routes into the centre and key activity destinations by walking and cycling
- Improve cycling and walking routes from mainline station to the city centre, and from city centre to University campus and Tendring/Colchester Borders Garden Community
- Wider cycling route connections (beyond those in LCWIP) - including those in Colchester Cycling Campaign's analysis shallow gradient alternative to North Hill (route through Dutch Quarter) and the shallow gradient alternative to East Hill (Rosebery Avenue through to Britannia Yard).
- Segregated cycle lanes along East Hill, North Station Road/ North Hill (narrow carriageway to 6m), and Lexden Road (upgrade from advisory to full segregation)

2. Rapid Transit System (RTS) - Ensure effective integration in order to deliver accessibility, speed and reliability

3. Buses

- Enhancement of the quality of all bus infrastructure
- Investigate opportunities to enhance night transport to support evening/night workers, as well as visitors
- Improved passenger waiting facilities and provision of additional Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) screens to support increased bus use
- Use of technology and traditional information wayfinding to encourage use of public transport
- Investigate the potential to extend bus service timetables further into the evening and on Sundays to/from park and ride locations
- Working with bus operators to identify opportunities for rationalising services to reduce bus congestion, whilst protecting levels of service
- Potential use of land at or close to Stanwell House site as a means of expanding existing facility at Osborne Street, for bus stands to free up congestion within the city centre core
- Investigate the potential to run a frequent shuttle service from Colchester rail station through the city centre.

4. City gateways

- Areas at major road junctions that serve as regional arrival and departure points that allow for interchanges between medium or long-distance travel modes (car, RTS, buses, Demand Responsive Transport (DRT), and/or rail) with last-mile modes
- Priority city gateway: St Botolph's Circus.

5. Improvements to existing car parks

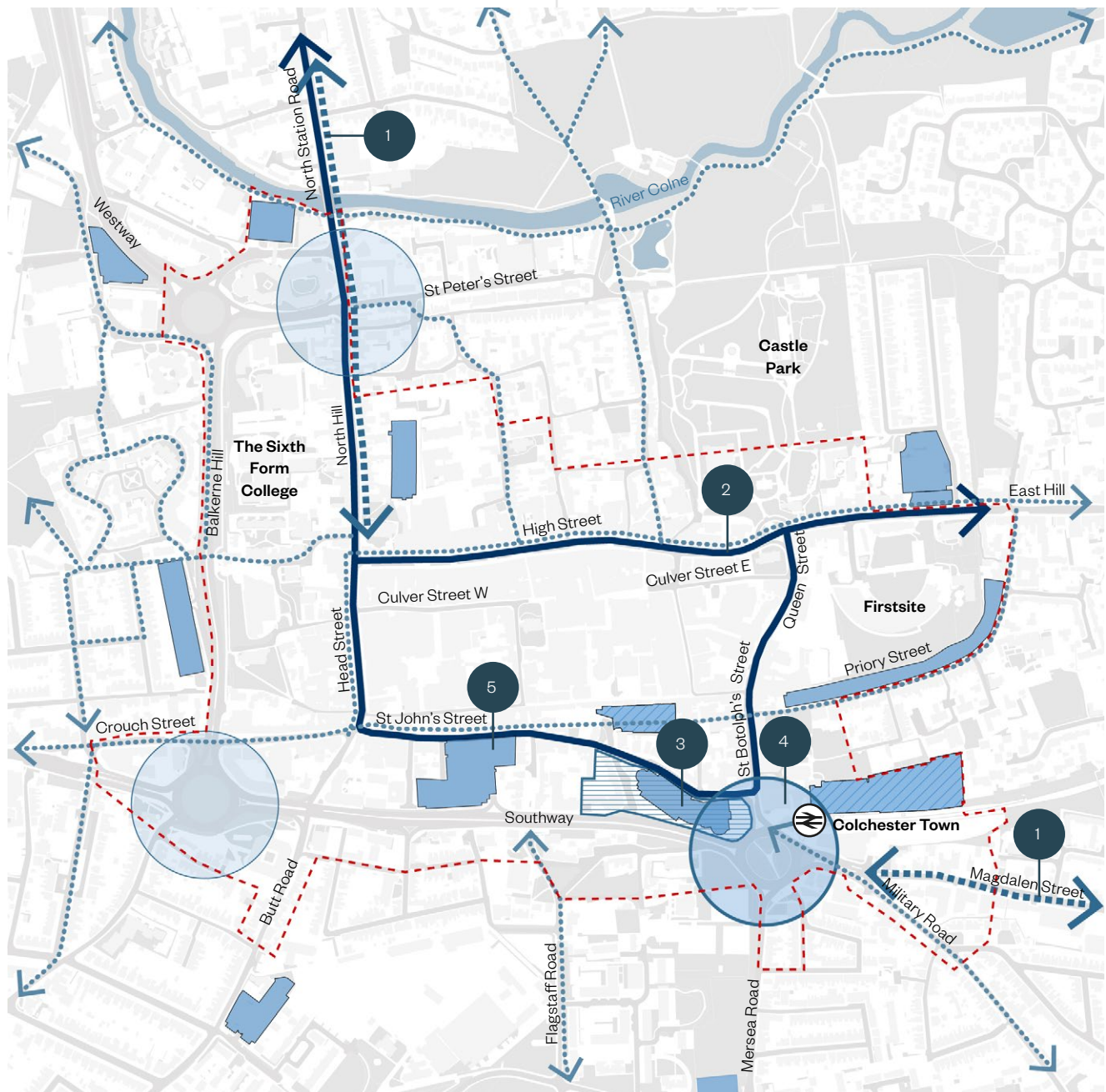
- Implement flexible parking charges (pay on exit or a linear tariff)
- Enhance car parking with attractive access forecourts and internal pedestrian routes
- Integrate electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- Expand the car club offer with additional allocated space at car parking and promotion
- Index-link parking fees with public transport, park and ride and shared transport options
- Support the use of park and ride through a reduction of long-stay parking options
- Create satellite urban logistics hub at car parks with spare capacity
- Ensure parking provision continues to meet demand when carparks earmarked for redevelopment are redeveloped

6. Accessibility and inclusivity

- Implement inclusive and accessible wayfinding focussed on movement between arrival points and places of interest
- Ensure well-designed, accessible car parking at key locations.



Car sharing station, Bremen, Germany



Key

- Improved walking and cycling route
- Wider cycling route
- Future Rapid Transit System (RTS) corridor
- Improved bus interchange zone
- City gateways
- Improvements to existing car parks
- Car parks earmarked for redevelopment
- Core city centre area



0 200m

Environment and Sustainability

Urban Design Strategy

Suggested interventions:

1. Car-lite access restrictions

- Allows buses, taxis, goods vehicles and cycles only within the city centre central core (including High Street and St John's Street), with access-only streets for private motor traffic
- Can help connect green spaces, leisure, sport and community hubs through active travel, and would drastically improve the pedestrian and cyclist environment
- Reducing motor traffic levels to volumes (500 vehicles per hour or lower) would meet LTN 1/20 standards for mixing cycling with motor traffic
- Long-term goal: implement a Zonal Traffic Circulation plan to the wider-area to significantly reduce through-traffic in the city centre
- Proposals to be developed in consultation with businesses and traders.

2. Supporting better air quality

- Supporting better air quality with the development of an air quality strategy and encouraging electric vehicle infrastructure rollout across the city, wider authority and county.

3. City centre corridors

- Key east-west and north-south corridors that aim to consolidate and extend pedestrian-friendly streets, create coherent active travel experiences between key sites and rationalise vehicular movement. Highest priority corridors are:
- Balcerne Gate - Culver Street West - priority east-west corridor between St Mary's Car Park to the west, the Mercury Theatre, through to Firstsite to the east
- Red Lion Yard - Stanwell Street - priority north-south corridor from the Dutch Quarter through the core city centre, Vineyard Gate, the improved bus interchange at Osborne Street, down to the Roman Circus to the south

4. Sustainable travel modes within the city centre

- Implement a Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) service along city centre corridors - a flexible shuttle-bus that creates routes based on demand and data from users
- Expand and enhance the existing shared micro-mobility offer (cycles for hire, e-scooters) within and around the city centre, including: integrating micromobility services / mobility hubs at car parks

5. Delivery consolidation

- Integrate parcel lockers on streets with high footfall, transport interchanges and car parks
- Create a last-mile delivery hub near Colchester Town rail station

6. Additional built fabric interventions

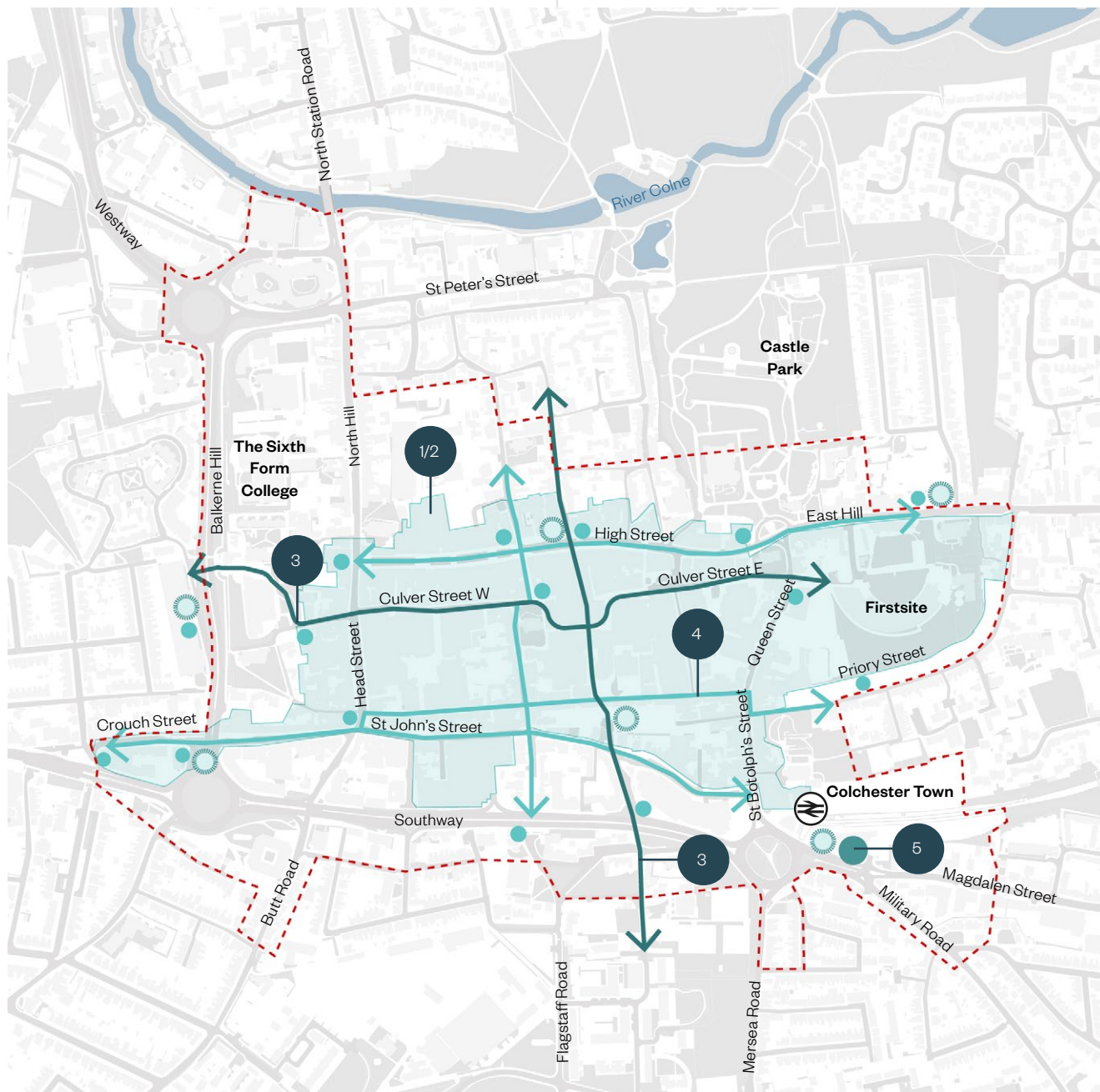
- Retrofit at scale - seek adaptive reuse of existing structures where possible, to reduce embodied carbon impacts
- New buildings to be built and older buildings to be refurbished with net zero in mind
- Review opportunities for roofspace solar panels or green roofs
- Long-term goal: zero waste zones within the city centre.



Restricted vehicular access allowing for on street spill out, Exmouth Market, London



'Surrey Connect', DDRT service in Surrey introduced by Surrey County Council



Key

- Car-lite city centre
- City centre corridor
- Priority city centre corridor
- Micromobility hub location
- Parcel locker location
- Last mile delivery hub
- Core city centre area



0 200m

Provide a Safe, Healthy, Green, Active and Accessible City Centre Masterplan Layer

This masterplan layer is primarily focused on integrating improvements to the public realm with increased cycle access and enhanced pedestrian experience of the city centre. This will also provide an opportunity to enhance biodiversity across the centre.

The first set of strategic moves relate to improved pedestrian and cycle permeability into and within the city centre. This is supported by providing new and improved pedestrian crossings across large vehicular routes and ensuring new pedestrian routes as part of new developments.

The second set of strategic moves, which are related to public realm, involve creating a Roman Wall Park, enhancing the river Colne as a biodiversity corridor and improving the public realm around Southway in conjunction with the proposed improved crossing points.

Public realm, open space and landscape

1. Roman Wall Park - new city park that considers the Roman Wall and its setting in its entirety, relinking disconnected parts of the Wall within an enhanced park setting and providing further environmental and biodiversity benefits
2. Enhancing the river and its environment to support biodiversity
3. Public realm improvements along Southway
4. Design vision for High Street and Head Street
5. Design vision for St Bolotph's Street, St John's Street and Osborne Street

Permeability and connectivity

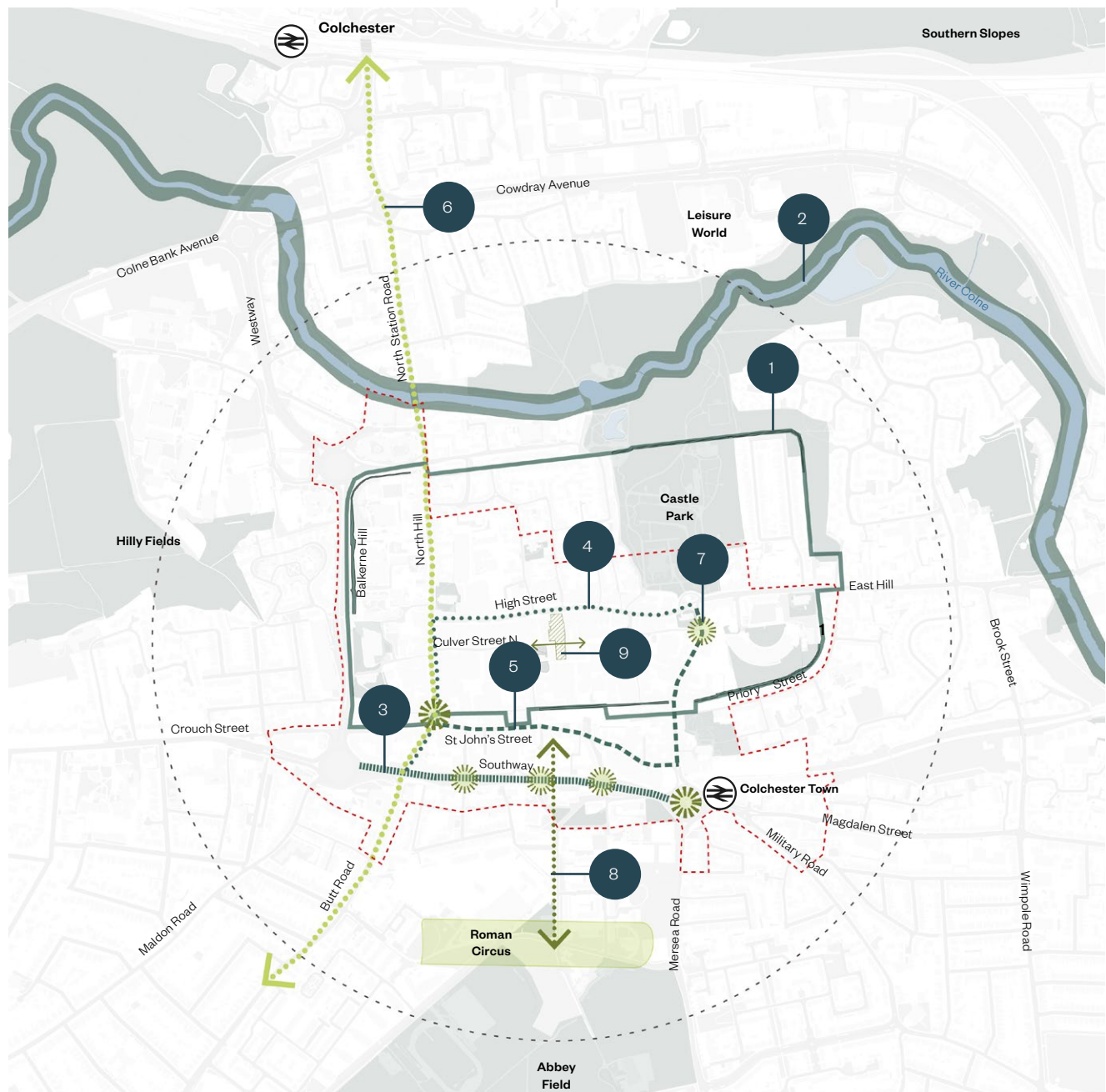
6. Improved connection to Colchester mainline station
7. Improved key junctions and introducing new pedestrian crossings
8. Improved pedestrian connectivity with the Roman Circus
9. Long-term aspiration of reinstating the Culver Street East and West connection

What We Learned

- Stark pedestrian severance across Southway
- Topography creates challenges for active travel
- Disconnected and disjointed cycling routes
- Health and disability deprivation primarily affecting residents within the city centre and areas to the east/southeast - opportunity to improve access to greenspaces
- Biodiversity needs to be considered throughout.

What You Said

- Conflict between pedestrians and cyclists/e-scooter users travelling on pavements
- Public gathering spaces are important as they offer informal, low pressure environment for interaction
- Concerns around safety in Crouch Street underpass
- Wish for segregated, continuous and direct cycle lanes and safe cycle parking distributed throughout the city centre.



Key

- Roman Wall Park
- Improved riverside and enhanced biodiversity
- Public realm improvements along Southway
- High Street and Head Street design vision
- Queen Street / St Botolph's Street and St John's Street / Osborne Street design vision
- Improved connection to Colchester mainline station
- Improved connection to Roman Circus

- Reinstated and improved links
 - Improved key junctions and new pedestrian crossings
 - Roman Circus
 - Former Marks and Spencer
 - Core city centre area
 - Wider area
- N
- 0 400m / 5 min walk

Permeability and Connectivity

Urban Design Strategy

Suggested interventions:

1. Accessible and inclusive city centre

- Any new intervention should comply to the highest standard of accessibility and inclusion requirements
- Implement inclusive and accessible wayfinding focussed on movement between arrival points and places of interest, including from Colchester and Colchester Town rail station to major city centre destinations.
- Specific considerations for those with dementia should be given when designing public realm interventions, and engagement with Dementia Groups should be pursued wherever possible.

2. High Street - Improved as a multi-functional, low-traffic public space which balances the needs of all users, rather than prohibiting vehicular traffic entirely - *for more detail refer to Design Frameworks in section 3*

3. Improved connection to Colchester mainline station along North Station Road - Improved pedestrian environment including wider footpaths, cycling infrastructure, signage, etc.

4. Connectivity, active travel improvements and public realm upgrade of the three city gateways in order to mark arrival and orient visitors towards the shopping core and key attractions

5. New pedestrian crossings at Southway - long term aspiration to improve connectivity with surrounding neighbourhoods. To be delivered incrementally as opportunities arise.

6. Improved public realm and pedestrian crossing at Queen Street junction with Culver Street East

7. Improve Head Street / St John's Street / Crouch Street junction

8. Improved pedestrian links

- From Vineyard Gate to Eld Lane (including lift/ accessible route)
- Explore long-term feasibility of reconnecting Culver Street East and West with landowners

9. Improved pedestrian connectivity with the Roman Circus

10. Ensure new developments make provisions for new routes that enable sites to connect well to their surroundings

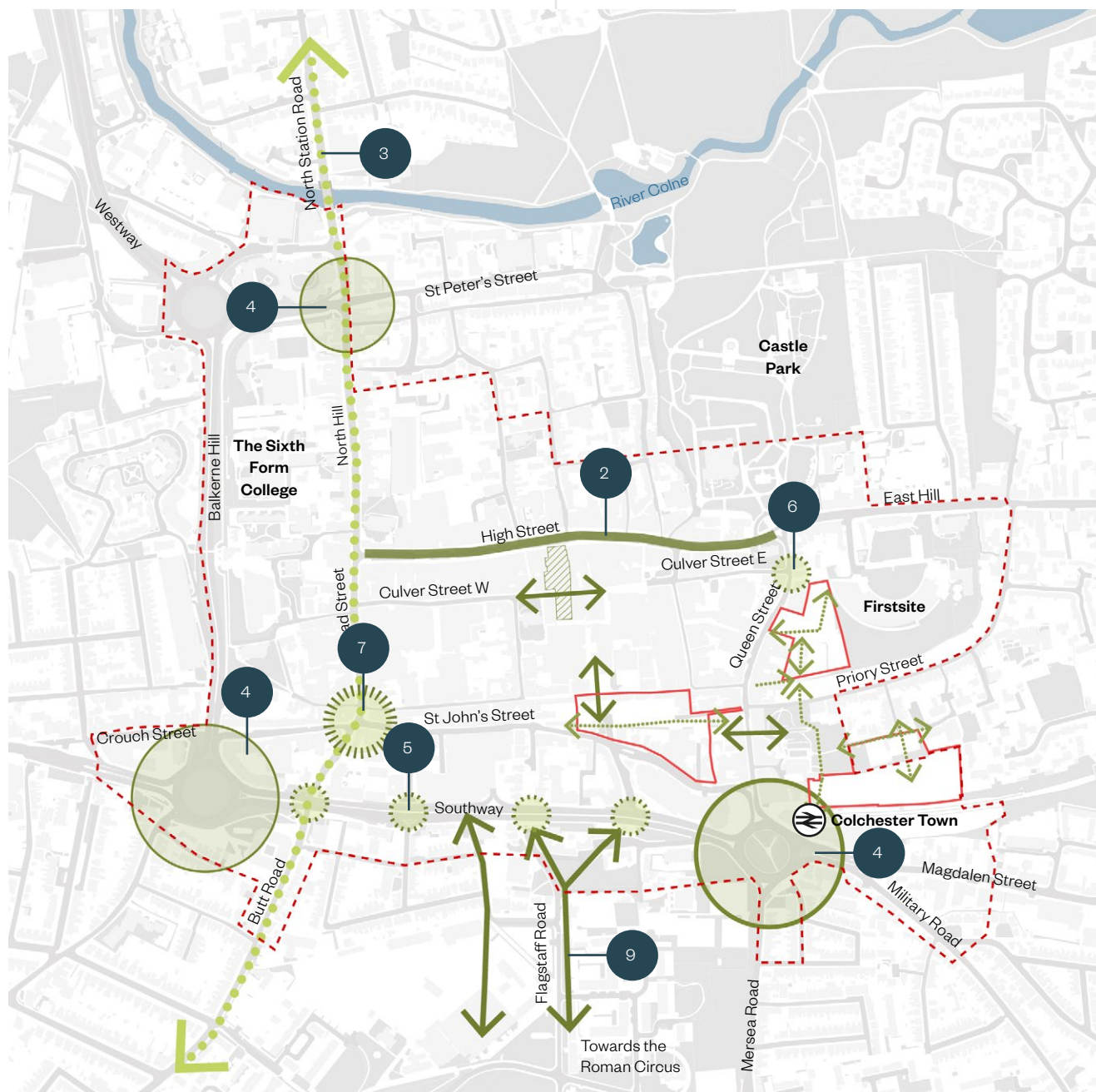
- Ensure new developments include infrastructure that enables and encourages active travel.



Segregated cycle path
Lyon, France



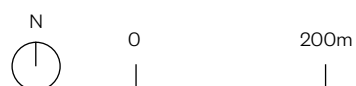
Narrowed carriageways and improved pedestrian environment on high street - Fishergate, Preston



Key

- Improvements along High Street
- Connection to Colchester mainline station
- ➔ Reinstated and improved links
- ⋯ Paths through new developments
- ⊙ New pedestrian crossings
- Improved Head Street/ St John's Street/ Crouch Street junction

- Upgrade of city gateways
- ▨ Marks and Spencer
- ▭ Key site (refer to Design Frameworks)
- ⋯ Core city centre area



Public Realm, Open Space, Biodiversity and Landscape

Urban Design Strategy

Suggested interventions:

- 1. Roman Wall Park to be managed to promote biodiversity** - new city park that considers the Roman Wall and its setting in its entirety with joined up existing open spaces along the walls and walking routes as close to Wall as possible
 - Ensure new developments create public access to the Wall, work with landowners to link currently disconnected areas and increase public access to both sides of the Wall, improve public realm around the Wall to enhance its setting
 - Biodiversity and nature enhancement through park setting
- 2. Develop integrated design for High Street and Head Street** as a multi-functional public space which meets the needs of priority users and businesses
- 3. Develop design vision for Queen Street / St Botolph's Street and St John's Street / Osborne Street** that integrates public transport, cycling and walking and create attractive and safe streets at all times of day and night
- 4. Develop design vision for Southway**, integrating at-grade crossings, tree planting and pavements (also unlocks potential development sites adjacent)
- 5. Continue to improve city squares and churchyards**
- 6. Continue to improve lanes within core city centre area** as level surface streets to improve accessibility for pedestrian users, in particular people with mobility and visual impairments
- 7. Biodiversity enhancements**
- 8. Introduce public realm design code** covering surfacing, lighting, street furniture and planting to ensure consistency and legibility - *further explained in relation to city centre character areas in Placemaking Within the City Centre urban design strategy.*



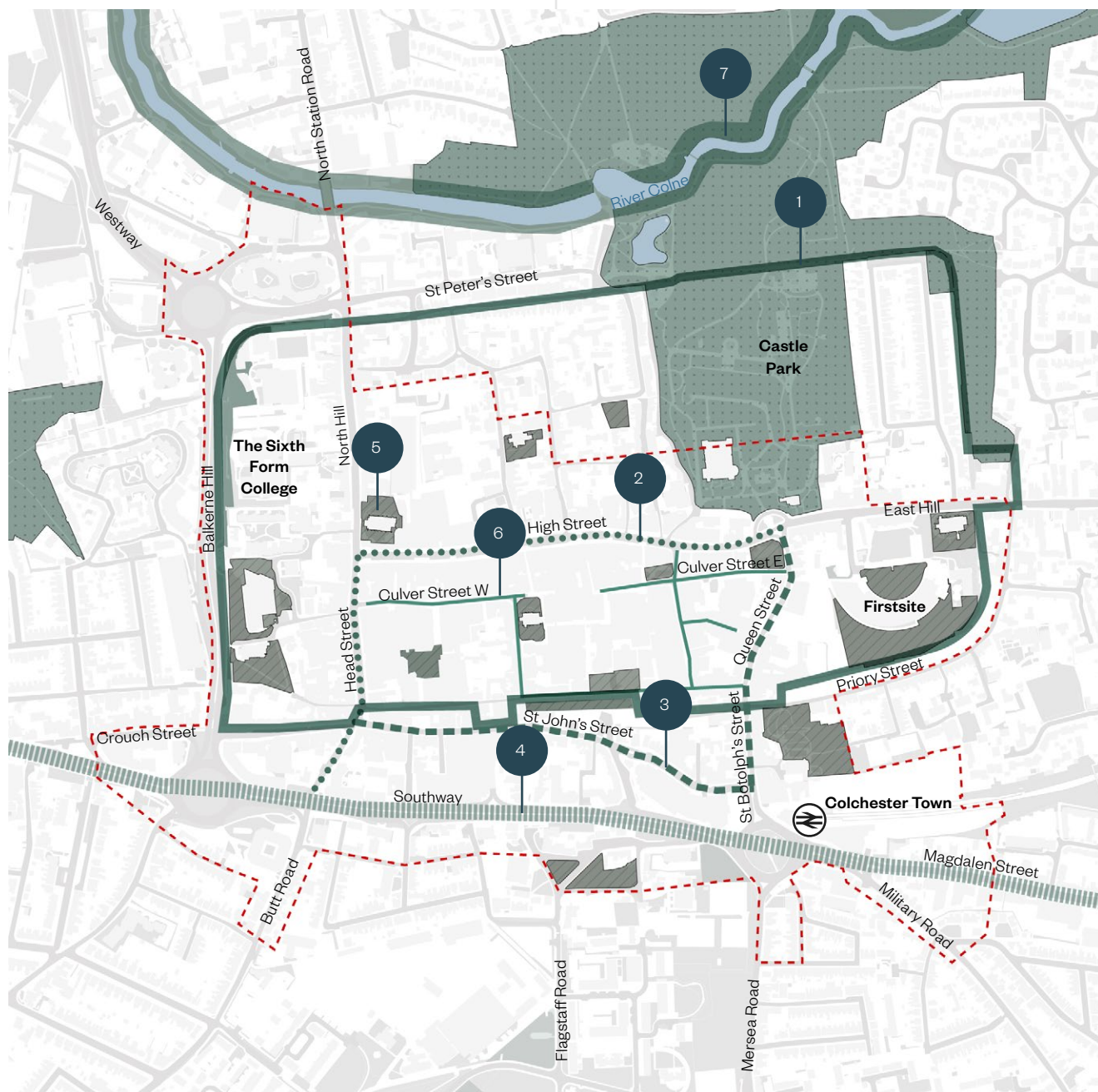
Tower of London Superbloom, London



High quality high street public realm - Eastgate Street, Chester



Transformation of a historic boulevard with a series of heritage installations along it - Princes Avenue, Liverpool



Key

- Roman Wall Park
- Southway public realm improvements
- Public realm improvements along High Street, Head Street
- Develop design vision for Queen Street, St Botolph's Street, St John's Street and Osborne Street
- Lane improvements
- Squares and churchyards improvements

- Castle Park
- Core city centre area



Diversify City Centre Uses to Encourage Footfall

Masterplan Layer

This masterplan layer and accompanying urban design strategies provide frameworks for future development in the city centre. With the appropriate land use and built form parameters, new uses such as housing can be introduced into the city centre in a contextually-sensitive and economically beneficial way.

In order to establish a vibrant mix of uses that result in an active, sustainable city centre and support both an active daytime and nighttime economy, the first urban design strategy relates to appropriate land uses of both ground and upper floors.

The accompanying urban design strategy relates to appropriate building heights, with a particular aim at informing the height and massing of any new city centre development, including new residential allocations as defined in the Local Plan.

Both urban design strategies use character areas to define appropriate uses and built form for each individual area.

Land use strategy

1. Achieving an appropriate and sustainable mix of uses that activates the city centre
2. Ensuring an appropriate balance of uses within the Primary Shopping Area.

More detailed development frameworks have been prepared for the following key sites:

- Former bus station site
- Britannia Yard
- Vineyard Gate

Building heights, density and built form

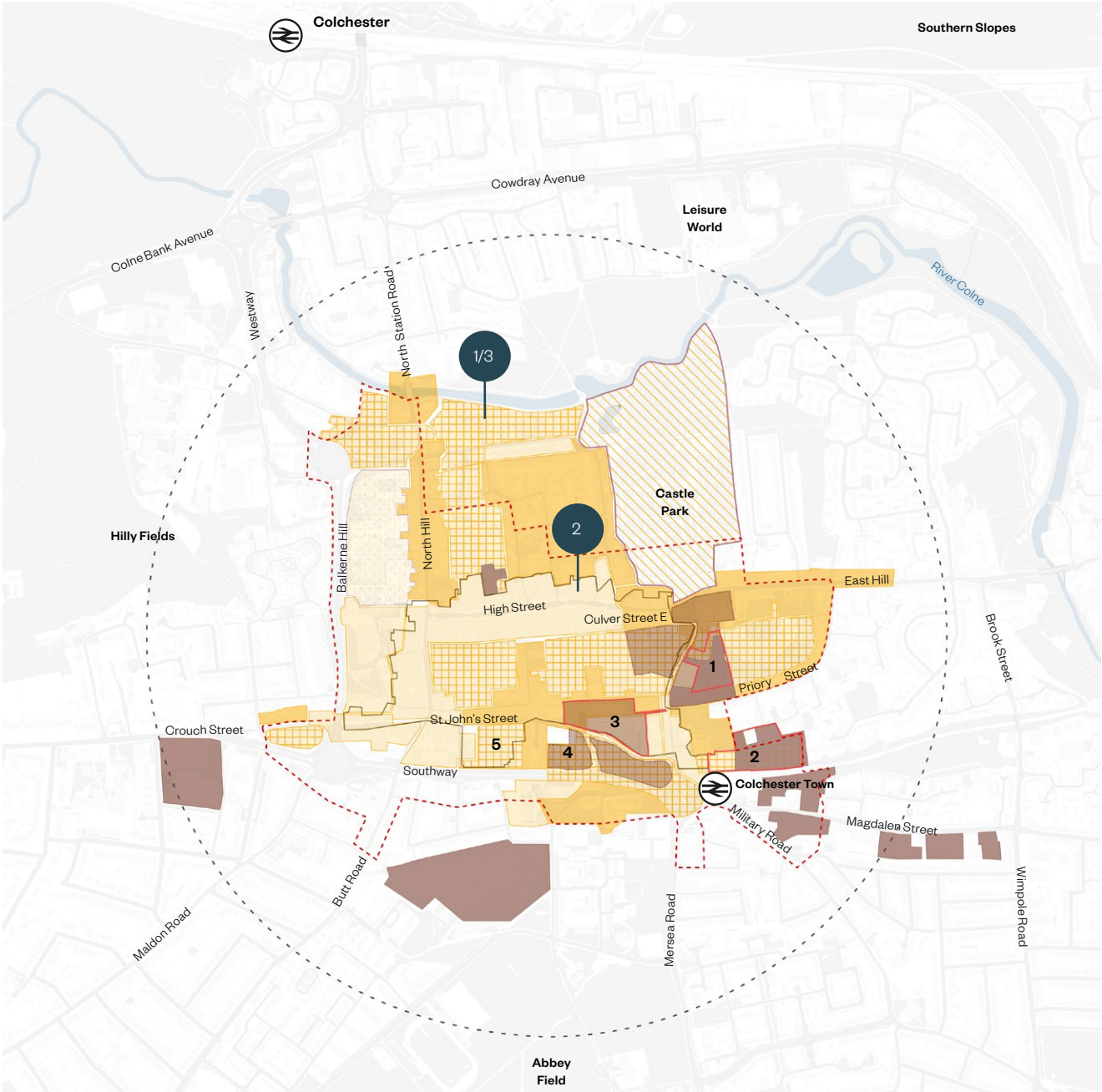
3. Ensure new developments are of appropriate city centre height and density.

What We Learned

- Areas in and near the city centre have seen population growth in families with school-age children and older people
- 55+ population will grow at faster rate than overall population during next decade
- A challenge for Colchester is to encourage residents to visit the city centre throughout the week
- Academic research on the estimated impact of working from home at the MSOA (neighbourhood) level indicates that Colchester city centre could be negatively affected by home working.

What You Said

- There was concern from some respondents related to building additional housing in the city centre; this was mostly related to impacts on traffic and the historic environment, both of which need careful consideration.



Key

- City Centre allocations as defined in the Local Plan
- New residential allocation as defined in the Local Plan
- Character areas
- Key sites for development
- Core city centre area
- Wider area





Land Use Strategy

Urban Design Strategy

The aim is to establish a vibrant mix of uses in order to ensure an active, sustainable city centre, creating both active day time and nighttime economies.


Prioritising identity areas around different uses within existing character areas to ensure a cohesive series of distinct areas are defined. The following uses within existing character areas are encouraged:

 Retail and city centre uses, including restaurant, bar and cafe uses, cultural and community facilities, and other entertainment and leisure uses. Commercial or residential upper floor uses to be permitted, with residential use mix to be compatible with a city centre location.
Ground floor use class: E and sui generis
Potential for upper floor residential, use class: C


 Retail centre uses should meet the requirements set out in the Local Plan:


- Maintain a high proportion of retail uses on each Primary Street Frontage within the Primary Shopping Area (70%)
- Within the Secondary Street Frontages support will be given for the continuing role of retail uses supported by other activity-generating city centre uses which enhance the vitality and activity of the area, including food and drink premises, non-residential institutions and leisure uses, at ground floor level (50%).

Potential for upper floor residential, use class: C


 Predominantly residential with some active ground floor uses compatible with residential uses.
Use class: C3

 New residential-led development with some active ground floor uses. *Refer to site-specific strategies for recommended use mix*

 Predominantly cultural institutions with associated open space. Use class: F1 and sui generis

 Predominantly commercial, business, service or community uses, with potential for commercial or residential at upper floors

 Educational uses

 Transport and car parking.



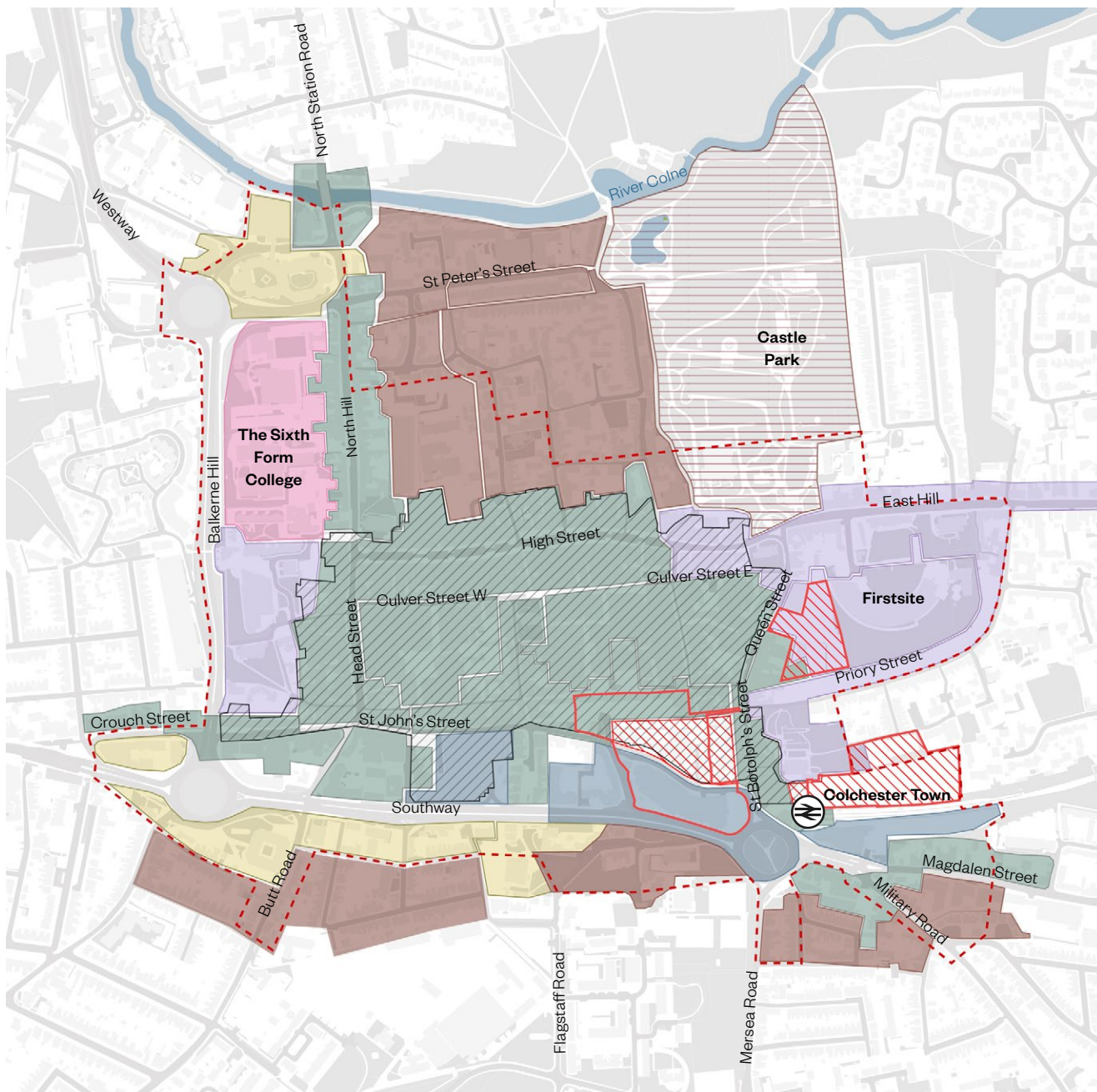
Integration of new with old, active ground floors with residential upper floors - Angel, London



Active corner in a new build within a historic urban fabric adding life to an evening on the street - Bermondsey, London



Active ground floors and outdoor seating supported by a high quality public realm - Shaw's Road, Altrincham, Greater Manchester



Key

- Retail city centre uses
- Retail centre uses that meet the Local Plan requirements
- Predominantly residential
- Predominantly cultural institutions
- Predominantly commercial, business, service or community
- Transport and car parking
- New residential-led development



0 200m

Building Heights, Density and Built Form Urban Design Strategy

The building heights framework uses character areas to determine zones of appropriate building heights. These represent general guidelines to the maximum potential storey heights, and proposals would need to be justified via Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and townscape analysis, including verified views as part of the Heritage Impact Assessment.

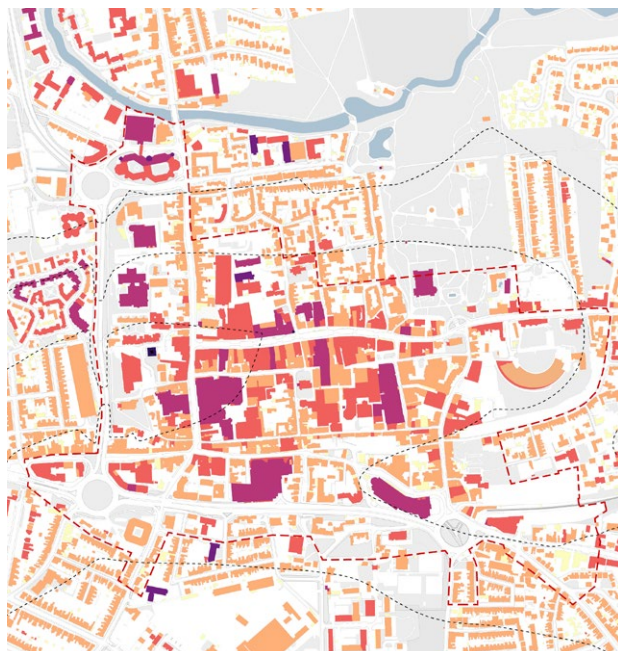
Maximum heights are determined by the prevalent building form within each character areas, the city centre's topography and opportunities for potential new views and landmarks. Key views to existing landmark should be preserved and protected.

The heights strategy follows the following principles:

- Consolidate taller scale around High Street / Head Street and within lower topographical areas which allow for screening.

Key

- 1 storey
- 2 storeys
- 3 storeys
- 4 storeys
- 5 storeys
- 6 storeys
- 7+ storeys
- Core city centre area



Existing heights plan, extract from Appraisal Report

- Sensitive scale required within the Dutch Quarter and other low-scale residential neighbourhoods
- Ensuring appropriate heights and built form that enhance the setting of heritage assets.

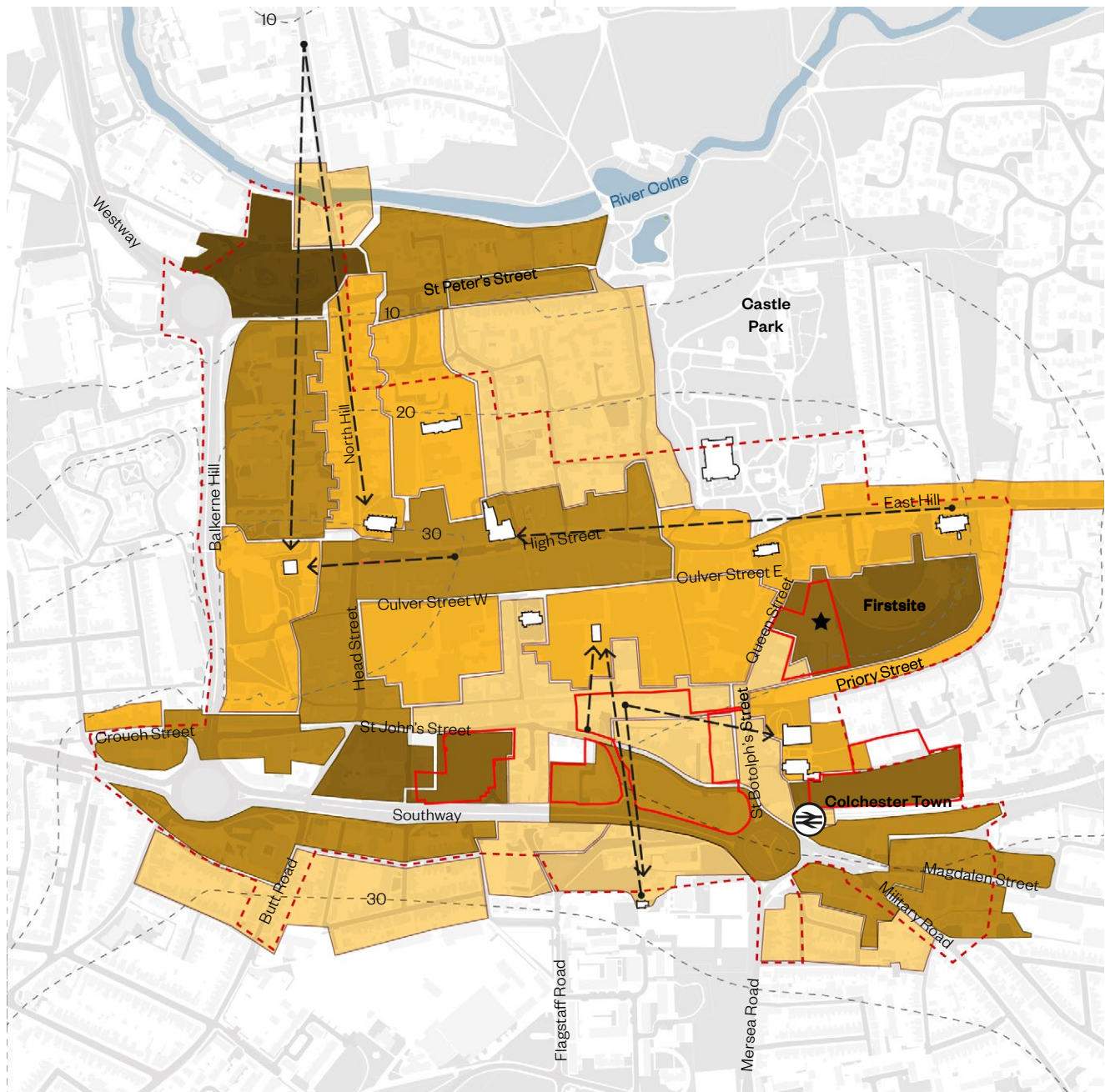
For height, density and built form with development sites, refer to Design Frameworks in section 3.



Award-winning residential development next to a historic water tower
The Avenue, Saffron Walden



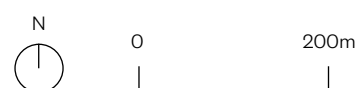
Mix of old and new with a range of heights respectful of existing character - Curtain Road, Shoreditch, London



Key

- Maximum 2.5 storeys
- Maximum 3 storeys
- Maximum 4 storeys
- Maximum 5 storeys
- Maximum 7 storeys
- Key site (refer to Design Frameworks)

- Existing landmark building
- Opportunity for new landmark building
- Key views
- Core city centre area



Support the City Centre Economy to Everyone's Benefit Masterplan Layer

This masterplan layer aims at diversifying the future economy of the city centre by keeping retail at its heart whilst strengthening the existing cultural, workspace and evening offer to re-energise the city centre's economy.

This means ensuring that there are options in the city centre which can include eating out, experiences, leisure, meeting friends, events, festivals, heritage tours etc. The strategic moves include strengthening the two clusters of cultural spaces at either end of High Street and ensuring strong links between them. Expanding the offer of cultural events, supporting the evening economy and establishing links with the University will aid in attracting and retaining a younger workforce. The local economy can also be supported through updates to the current outdoor market. Finally, opportunities for circular re-use should form part of the city centre's future economy.

Diverse economy

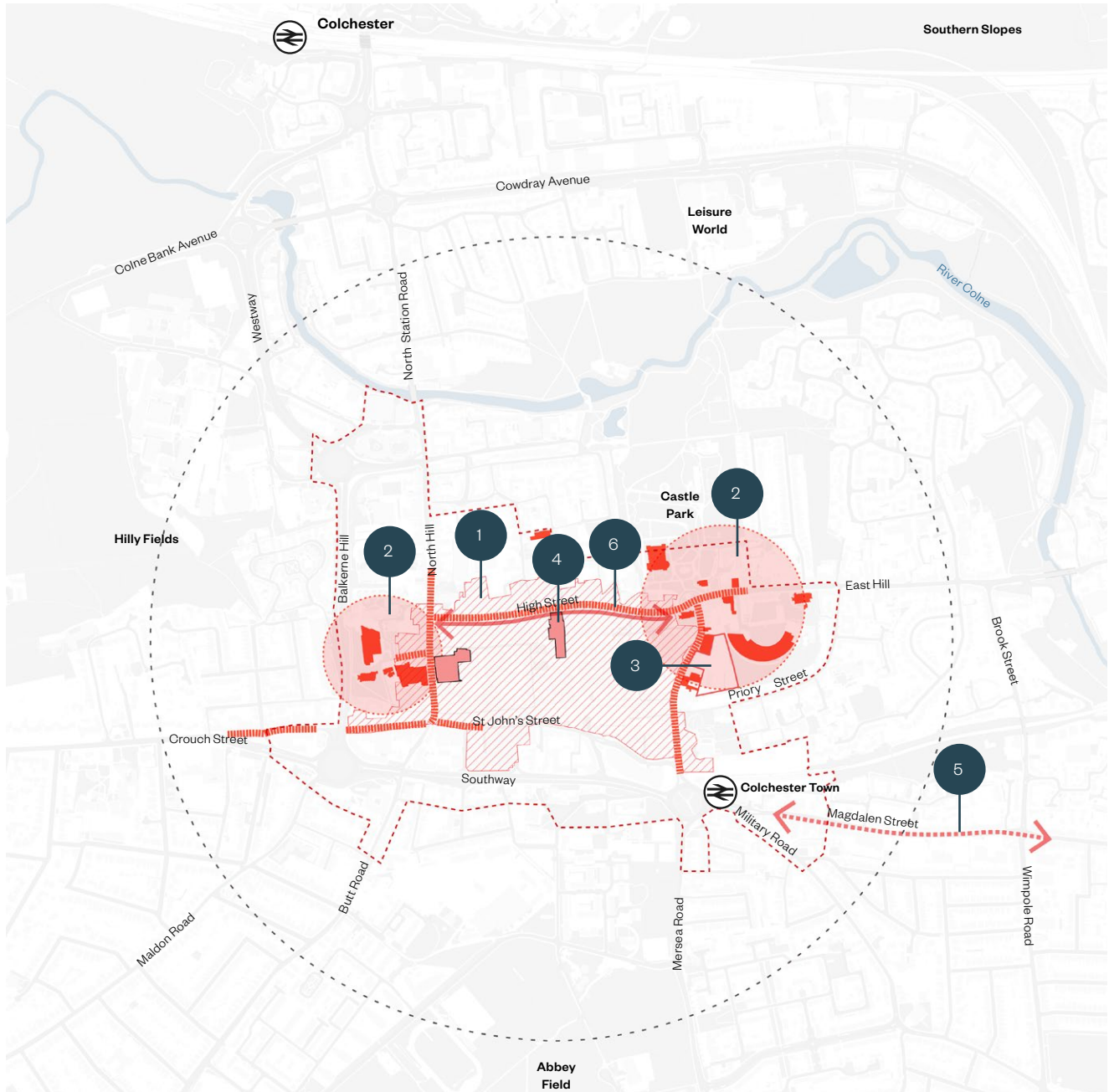
1. Uses and mix of uses along within the Primary Shopping Area to support the city centre's role at the top of the centre hierarchy
2. Support and strengthen the creative and digital clusters at either end of High Street and links between them
3. Incorporate workspaces as part of new developments
4. New uses for empty department stores
5. Support links with the University of Essex Colchester Campus
6. Support the evening and nighttime economy.

What We Learned

- Against comparators, Colchester appears to have more nighttime, retail and hospitality businesses and jobs; 30% of the city centre's jobs are in retail, hospitality, leisure and recreation - these are important for vitality but often experience low pay and poor job security
- Strong and diverse arts, cultural, digital and creative sector
- Despite a regular influx of students coming to the University or Essex, retention of young working professionals is low
- A variety of new sectors such as ICT, media, creative services and engineering have appeared in the city centre in the last five years.

What You Said

- Digital and creative sector struggling to attract high quality staff, despite availability of jobs
- Wish for a larger variety of the city centre offer
- Businesses would like to see increased spend as part of post-Covid recovery
- Closure of M&S and Debenhams are opportunities to introduce more local, independent businesses and community facilities
- Independent shops are an asset to the city and should be supported and protected
- Improved evening offer and concerns about the city centre atmosphere and safety at night
- Young adults not feeling like there is an offer suited for them in the city centre
- More activities for kids and teenagers in the city centre e.g. trampolining, festivals, concerts, sports facilities
- Dispersed offer of weekly market, positive views on monthly farmers market.



Key

- Primary shopping area
- Creative and digital clusters
- Existing creative and cultural spaces within clusters
- New development with SME workspace
- Enhanced links between creative and digital clusters
- Former department stores for adaptation
- Wider links to the University of Essex
- Evening economy areas

- Core city centre area
- Wider area



0 400m / 5 min walk

Diverse Economy Urban Design Strategy

Suggested interventions:

1. Diversify and enrich the city centre offer

- Uses and mix of uses along Primary and Secondary Street Frontages to abide by Policy TC3 in the Local Plan in order to support the city centre's role at the top of the centre hierarchy

2. Support the evening and nighttime economy

- Licencing and public realm improvements to enable outdoor dining and outdoor pub seating

3. Support and enhance the creative and digital economy and their activities in the city centre

- Support and enhance creative and digital clusters at either end of High Street

4. City centre activities that are suitable and accessible for families, older people

- Event and community spaces with all-ages programming – linked to heritage, tourism, green and blue space

5. Enhance the offer for children and young people

- Activities within existing arts/culture spaces aimed at young people and to attract young workforce
- Public spaces and activity spaces co-designed with and intended for teenagers and older children

6. New uses for vacant department stores in order to diversify the economy and make it more resilient, cater to a range of age groups and contribute to the evening and nighttime economy

- Potential uses: co-working, market, leisure, hotel, food/drink, culture

7. Support quality job creation and retention of graduates

- Incorporating Small Medium Enterprise (SME) and co-working workspaces as part of new developments, including the Former Bus Station Site - see *Development Frameworks* for more detail
- Apprenticeship and on-the-job training opportunities, especially linked to focus/growth sectors, BID organisations, major employers/anchors
- Potential incubator workspace linked to the University of Essex and its programmes (eg. biotech, biochemistry) where people can test ideas and businesses after graduation
- Training, apprenticeships and skills opportunities linking to tourism, hospitality, care, construction targeted at residents – potential for Colchester to act as a regional training hub for these sectors

8. Enable sharing and circular economy to happen in city centre, with a potential focus on businesses whose main activities are repairing, reuse, upcycling etc. - potential location within railway arches

- Potential for a green construction skills course or training, and/or a focus on retrofit construction skills
- Demonstrator projects to enable transition to circular economy; could be related to food or textiles

9. Updates to the outdoor market - build on existing markets (daily market and monthly farmers market) to bring in more/diverse stalls and market-day activities

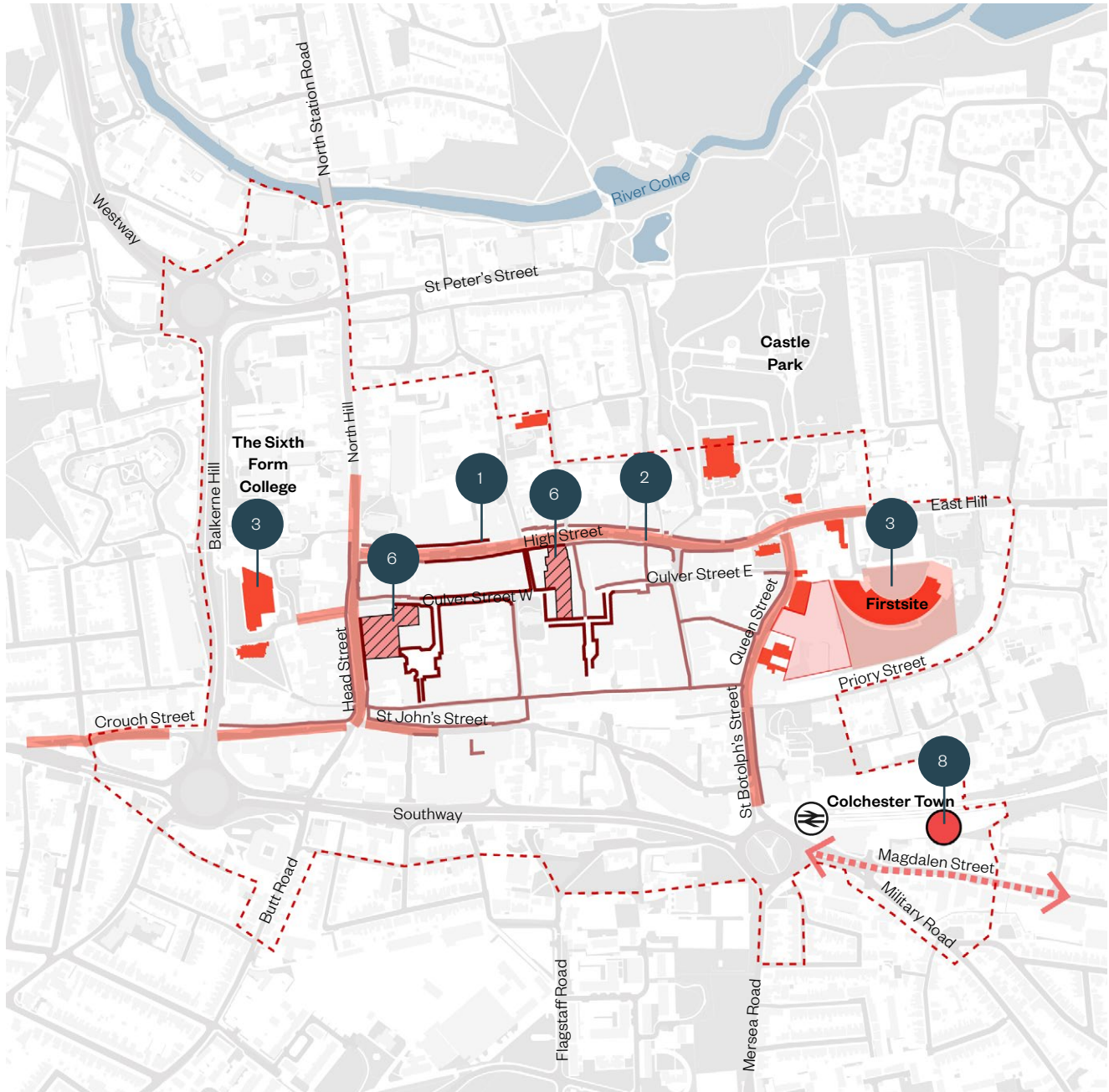
10. Reframe the importance of good, secure jobs as a business imperative, including wage charters for businesses to sign.



Office workspace in a previously dilapidated Edwardian department store - The Department Store, Brixton, London



Living wage pledge on a shop front door
Victoria Park Village, London



Key

- Evening economy areas
- Primary Street Frontage
- Secondary Street Frontage
- Existing creative and digital spaces
- New development with SME workspace
- Former department stores for adaptation

- Potential location for centre for circular and sharing economy
- Wider links to the University of Essex
- Core city centre area



0 200m

Make the Most of Colchester's Rich Heritage

Masterplan Layer

This masterplan layer aims to uplift Colchester's heritage assets by improving their setting and succeed in them being experienced as a totality. It also aims to ensure new development is integrated well into the existing historic city centre.

The first set of strategic moves relate to placemaking within the city centre. This includes defining design codes that reinforce character areas, in order to create a holistic experience of Colchester's rich and varied heritage. This also involves ensuring that new development complements and integrates well with the historic fabric.

The second set of strategic moves has to do with protecting and enhancing existing heritage assets. This includes defining anchor clusters of assets and city centre thresholds, and improving the setting and connections between them.

The Roman Circus, a unique national heritage asset, should become a key city centre attraction and along with the Roman Wall Park, an anchor for the city's Roman story.

Placemaking within the city centre

1. Using character areas to manage change
2. Defining design guidance for key sites in heritage-sensitive areas

Protecting and integrating with heritage buildings

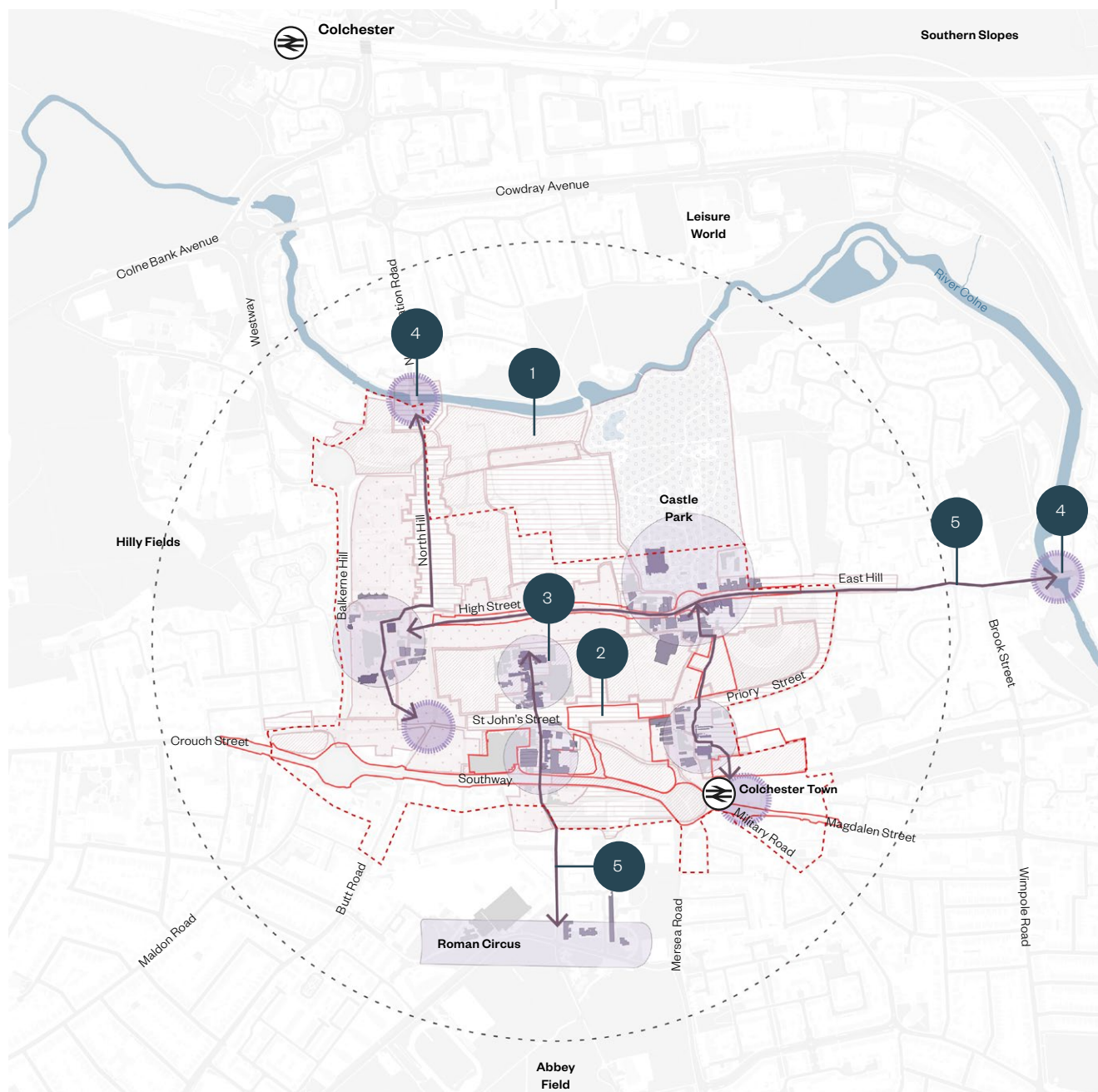
3. Reinforcing anchor clusters of heritage assets that support pedestrian footfall across the city centre
4. Reinforcing heritage significance of city centre thresholds
5. Improving routes between anchor clusters and city thresholds, including to the Roman Circus. Improve the Roman Circus' visibility and accessibility, and develop the Visitor Centre as a key attraction
6. Improving the setting of individual heritage assets and providing high quality public realm connections between them.

What We Learned

- Colchester is one of the most important historic cities of England but, despite its long history, is less visited than more high profile cathedral cities
- Heavy traffic and changing retail patterns are contemporary threats to the integrity and economic sustainability of Colchester's heritage assets
- Improvements to the public realm can help reconnect some of the fragmented parts of the city centre, allowing it to work as a unified whole.

What You Said

- Make heritage a source of pride for the city
- There should be a holistic approach to heritage, rather than focusing on bits and pieces
- Heritage can be used to encourage people to come to the city centre, as it moves away from retail
- There should be more of a focus on below-ground archaeology, such as the Roman Circus
- Implement heritage signage
- Good national examples where heritage is successfully marketed and is a large part of a city's offer, eg. York, Chester.



Key

- Character areas
- Heritage-sensitive key sites
- Anchor clusters of heritage assets
- Listed and locally listed buildings within anchor clusters
- City centre thresholds
- Connections between anchor clusters

- Core city centre area
- Wider area



0 400m / 5 min walk

Placemaking Within the City Centre

Urban Design Strategy

Placemaking within the city centre with a high degree of consideration for existing heritage should be achieved through an overall design code/design guide for the different s. These have been defined through mapping by building period which allows for connections and disjunctions between parts of the city centre that have a similar character.

Additional strategies should also support placemaking:

1. Ensure building heights, density and built form of new developments in key sites follow character area design guidance
2. Signage and wayfinding
3. Shopfront design strategy
4. Lighting strategy
5. Public art strategy including temporary commissions and installations.

The character areas within Colchester city centre are:

Medieval and post-Medieval/early modern

These are areas where timber-framed buildings are highly prominent in a mix of building styles and fabrics.

Areas of mixed historic fabric up to 1914

These are areas where no particular style or period predominates. They include a range of buildings from Roman and Medieval to modern.

Castle Park and environs

This space consists of the castle and its parkland grounds. It is a considerable contrast to the urban fabric adjacent and the two complement each other.

Predominantly post-1945

These areas are largely post-war in character. This varies from neo-vernacular to Modernist housing and slab commercial blocks.

Sixth Form College and environs

The education campus is its own enclave and largely hidden from public view.

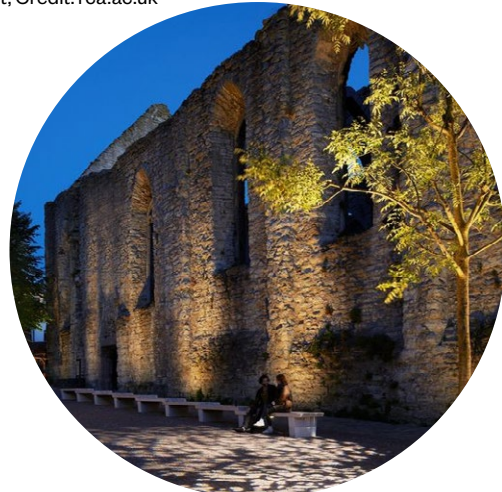
Character areas are described in more detail in the Appraisal Report and Heritage Report appendices.



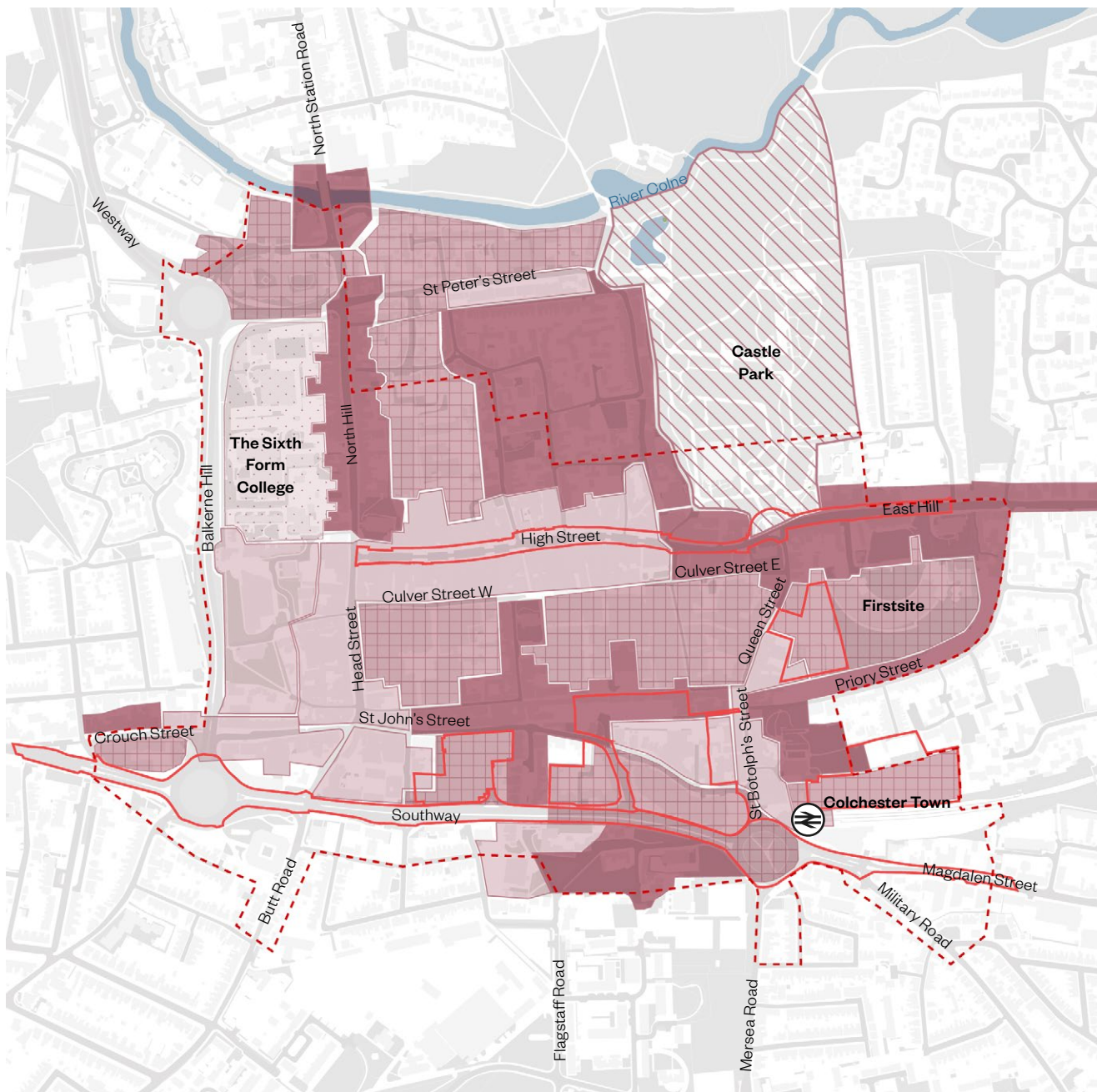
Bespoke signage within a sensitive historic setting
Zadar, Croatia



The Wood Street Altarpiece public artwork celebrating local places and stories gathered from the community - Eleanor Hill, Waltham Forest, Credit: roa.ac.uk



Lighting a historic structure and surrounding public realm
Visby Square, Sweden



Key

- Medieval and post-Medieval/early modern
- Areas of mixed historic fabric up to 1914
- Castle Park and environs
- Predominantly post-War
- Sixth Form College and environs
- Heritage-sensitive key sites
- Core city centre area

Areas with no highlighted character area do not have a predominant character.



Protecting and Integrating Heritage Assets

Urban Design Strategy

Suggested interventions:

- 1. Reinforcing anchor clusters of heritage assets** that support pedestrian footfall across the city centre; this includes new heritage-focused route from Colchester Town station through St Botolph's Priory to Castle Park
- 2. Reinforce heritage significance of city centre thresholds** at North Bridge, Southway/Butt Road/Head Gate junction and Colchester Town train station
- 3. Public realm approach and improved connectivity with the Roman Circus and development of the Visitor Centre as a key attraction;** short term improvements plus long-term vision and management strategy
- 4. Improved setting of St Botolph's Priory** within the city centre, including how Britannia Yard contributes to this - see *Design Frameworks for more detail*
 - Consider opening up to frontage of St Botolph's Priory from St Botolph's Street
- 5. Proactively work with property owners to find viable and sustainable new uses for buildings at risk and disused heritage assets**
- 6. Consider the Roman Wall and its setting in its entirety** - commission separate study on the potential of a Roman Wall Park with new public realm alongside, linking together disconnected parts of the Wall. Provide for adequate resources for maintenance and repair of the Wall.
- 7. Many of the public realm interventions would also have a positive benefit to heritage assets**
 - particularly looking at the churchyards as public spaces - see *Public Realm, Open Space and Landscape urban design strategy*
- 8. Consider mini heritage action zone approach for run down streets** eg. East Hill
- 9. Update existing Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Guidelines** to aid development control and set design quality expectations.

All proposals should be supported by Heritage

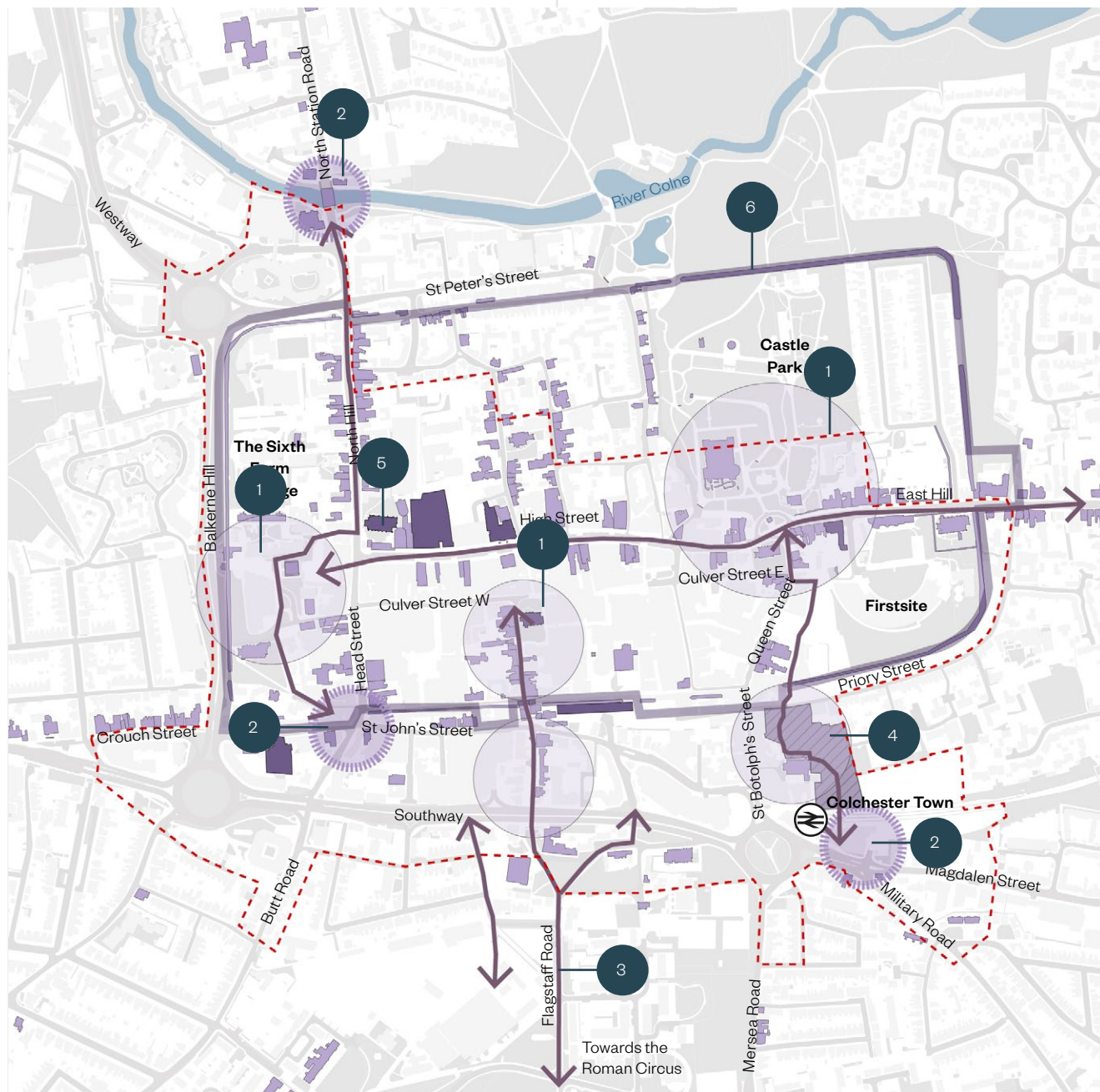
Impact Assessments to carefully consider direct and indirect impacts on heritage assets and the wider conservation area and townscape. In addition, all interventions should take into consideration the Town Wall Management Plan, Conservation Management Plans and below ground archaeology.



Creating a park and public space around the old city wall
Bergamo Heritage Park, Bergamo, Italy



Food hall in a historic market building
Altrincham Market, Greater Manchester



Key

- Anchor clusters of heritage assets
- City centre thresholds
- Connections between anchor clusters, including towards the Roman Circus
- St Botolph's Priory

- Buildings at risk and disused heritage assets
- Listed buildings
- Roman Wall Park
- Core city centre area



03

Design Frameworks



Introduction to Key Sites

Design frameworks have been prepared for key sites within the city centre that would benefit from either public realm improvements or are one of the city centre's few redevelopment opportunities.

The key sites are:

1. High Street

A low-traffic, people-focused street where space for walking, cycling and outdoor seating is maximised while ensuring necessary public transport, deliveries and blue badge holder access is maintained.

2. Southway and St John's Street / Osborne Street

Reconnecting communities to the south into the city centre, through frequent, at-grade crossing for pedestrians and cyclists. Creating a more attractive public realm that can catalyse the development of sites on either side and turn Southway from a 'back' to a 'front' while keeping traffic flowing.

3. Former bus station site

Public space and mixed-use development including space for creative and digital industries alongside housing. New public realm for events and casual use, including next to the Roman Wall.

4. Britannia Yard

A significant new public space that can be used for events, markets and casual use, designed to highlight the extraordinary heritage of St Botolph's Priory. New urban housing of various types, fully integrated with the existing neighbourhood south of Priory Street.

5. Vineyard Gate

Public open space next to the Roman Wall, an attractive walking and cycling route through to Queen Street, and fine-grain, tight-knit new homes and business space as infill in and around existing buildings.

6. St Botolph's Circus

Reclaiming space for people, interchange between different travel modes, and to mend the street frontage to the south of the circus through new mixed-use development.

Key sites 3-6 have been allocated in the Local Plan as City Centre Allocations in Policy TC3.



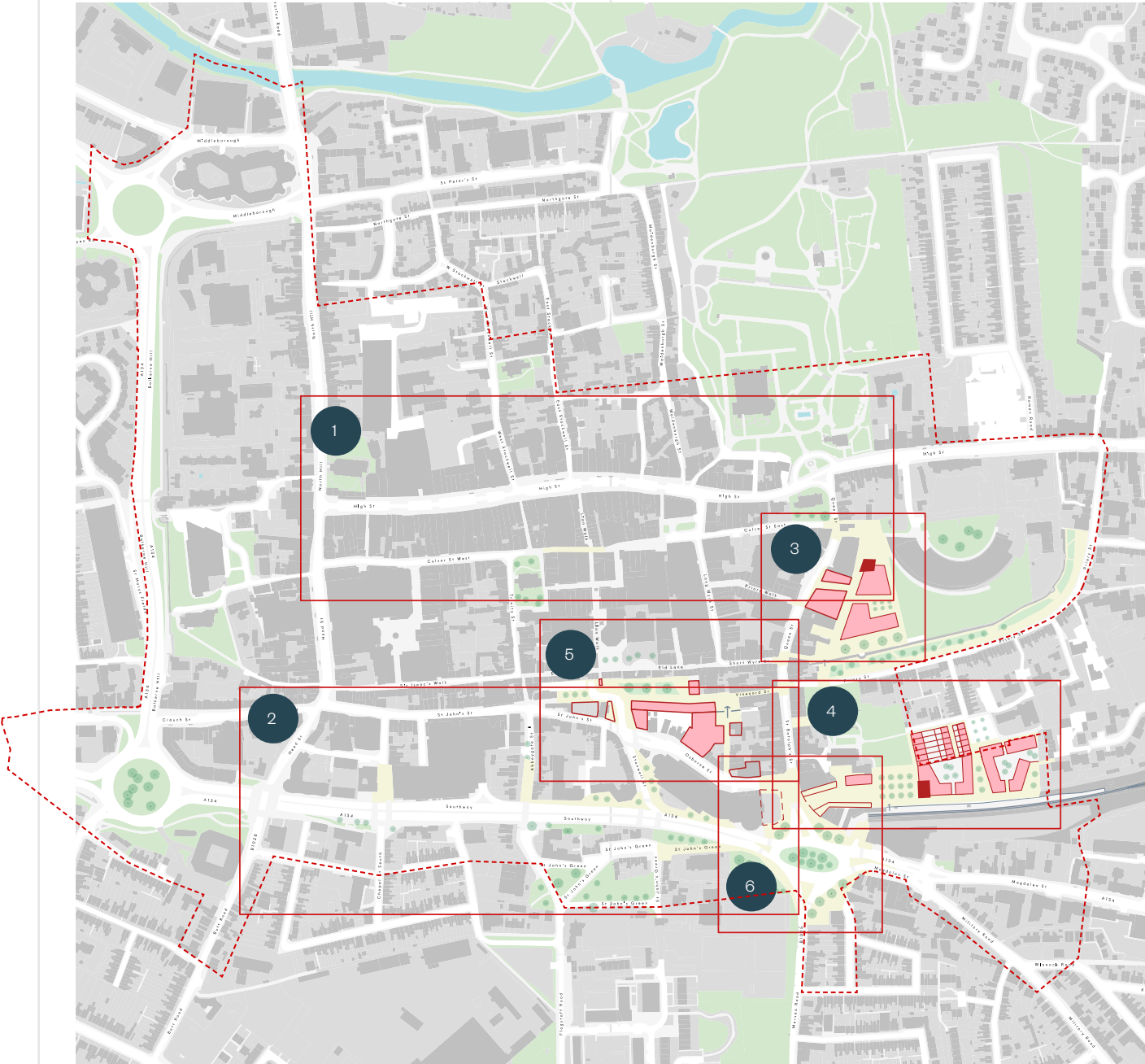
Southway with the Osborne Street NCP car park to the right



Britannia Car Park with St Botolph's Church and St Botolph's Priory in the back ground

Key

- Key sites
- Core city centre area



High Street

Planning and Design Framework

The High Street is an arrival point in the city centre for many people, as well as the civic heart of the city. It must be a generously designed place to dwell by day and night, with an active street life.

This design framework also considers Culver Street, an important counterpart to the High Street, as a largely vehicle-free route east-west, and should be considered in tandem with the development of the High Street.

Public realm and connectivity improvements

1. Continue to improve High Street as a multi-functional, low-traffic public space which balances the needs of users. For suggested design approaches, see following page.
2. Enhance crossing between West Stockwell Street and Pelham's Lane, improving accessibility of Dutch Quarter as low-traffic, lower-gradient alternative to North Hill for pedestrians and cyclists.
3. Seek to reinstate 24 / 7 public pedestrian connection between Culver Street East and West as a long-term aspiration.
4. Improve public realm along Culver Street East and West as level surface street with improved lighting and improved pedestrian crossing to Firstsite.
5. Improve setting of All Saints Church (Natural History Museum) including increased public access

6. Improve wayfinding with high quality signage along High Street and Culver Street East and West.

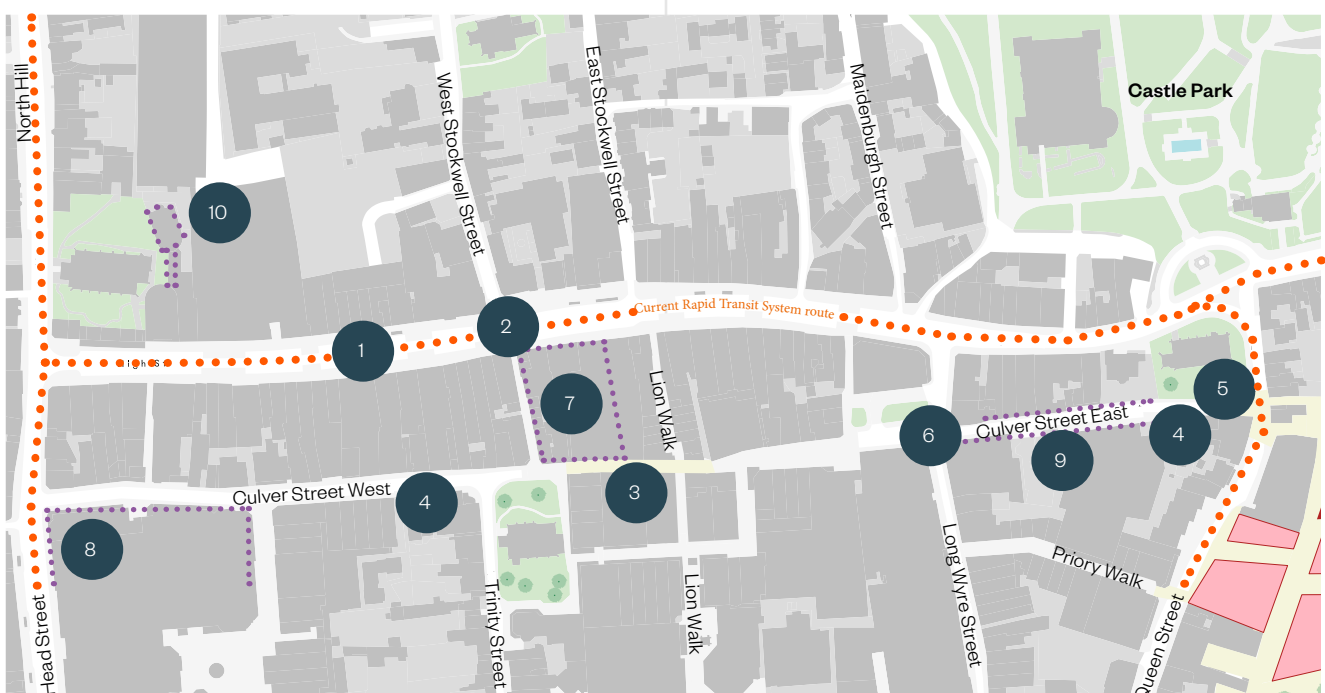
Trinity Square already has planned public realm improvements including increased public access.

Development / redevelopment sites

7. Encourage reuse of vacant department store structure (former M&S) for appropriate new uses, such as indoor market; workspace / co-working space; community uses.
8. Ensure new use or redevelopment of former Debenhams site increases active frontages on Culver Street West.
9. Improve Culver Street East to create more street level activity, screening service yards with active frontages.
10. Secure restoration and conversion of Grade 2 listed St George's Hall for long-term viable new uses which allow public access.

Key

- Reinstated public pedestrian connection
- Current Rapid Transport System route
- Development / redevelopment sites



High Street

Streetscape Design Considerations

A detailed design study for improvements to the highways layout and public realm on the High Street should be undertaken prior to the installation of additional infrastructure relating to the Rapid Transit System. This design study should assess the opportunities for improved sustainable transport along the High Street, particularly in a car-lite city centre environment which could include some limited east-west connectivity. The following design considerations should be addressed:

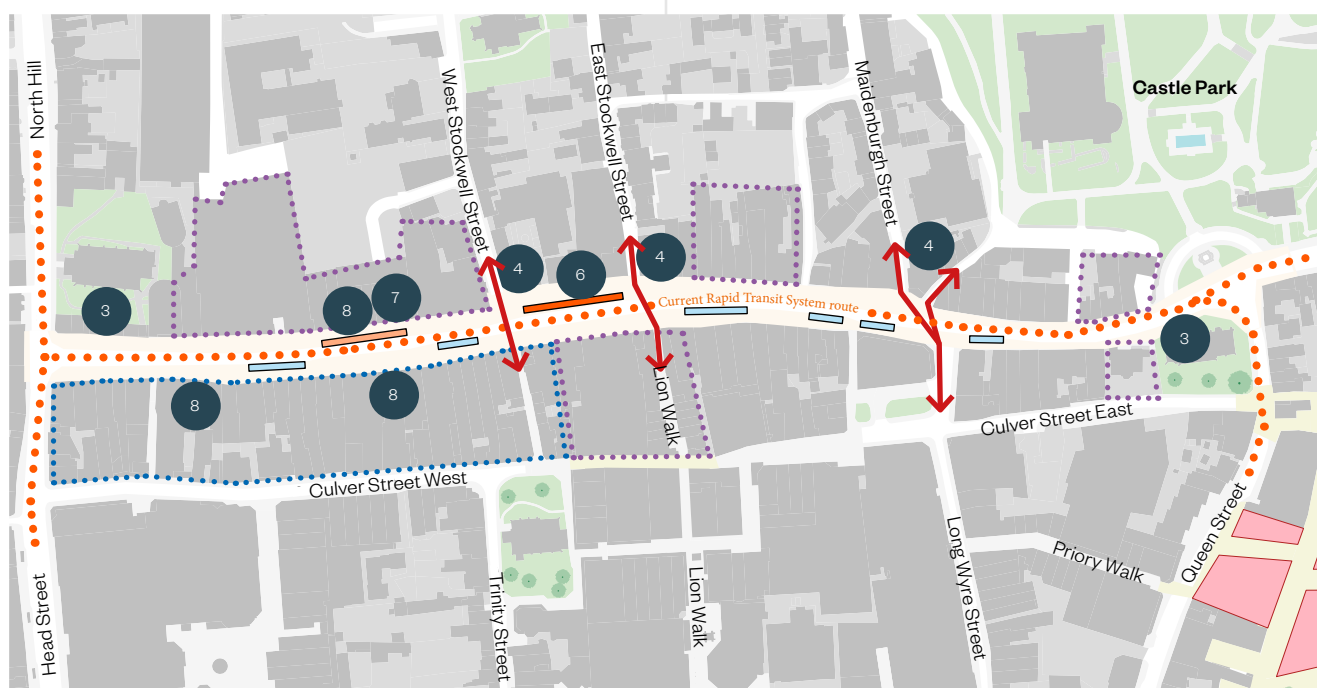
1. Achieving dwell time and making a pleasant pedestrian environment should be the priority on the High Street. Pavement (footway) space should be maximised in order to accommodate more outdoor seating, both public and outside food and drink venues, as well as opportunities for tree planting where feasible.
2. To maximise pavement space, bus stops, drop-off bays and on-street blue badge parking should be staggered so that space for vehicles is never greater than the equivalent of two lanes (6m). A further detailed study should be conducted to ensure that sufficient blue badge parking is provided.
3. Ensure footway at each end of the High Street is widened for the first 30-40m to avoid loading bays dominating the gateways to the High Street.
4. Current footway build-outs and signalled crossings do not generally align with where side streets meet the High Street so are not intuitive for pedestrians -

this should be addressed.

5. Cycle contraflow (east to west) is challenging to achieve while maintaining loading access from High Street to businesses on the south side of the street. Consider using Culver Street for east-west cycle route.
6. Consolidate bus stops into fewer zones as part of rationalisation of bus and RTS services. Bus stops between West Stockwell Street and George Street are located at the widest point along the High Street, so are the preferable location for retaining bus halts.
7. Taxi and blue badge parking / drop-off currently on south side of the street which results in passengers exiting into the path of oncoming traffic. Consider use of current loading bay area outside the Town Hall for taxi and drop-off.
8. Where businesses do not require High Street loading, footway should be built out to the maximum width. Encourage businesses to use alternative loading access, if this transition is possible.

Key

- Bus stop
- Taxi and blue badge drop off
- Loading / blue badge parking
- Proposed build-outs and signalled crossings
- Premises with rear loading yards or access to undercroft loading areas
- Premises with loading access from Culver Street West



High Street

Precedent Studies

Integration of vehicles into high quality streetscape

Foregate Street and Frodsham Street, Chester

Design features include:

- Stone surfacing to carriageway raises the visual quality of the space and gives visual cue to vehicles that pedestrians have priority
- Low raised kerb is good for visually impaired user safety and does not intrude visually
- Vehicle access and loading included but in limited locations
- Bus access integrated
- Some areas have no kerb level change at all but very careful design for visually impaired users which has resulted in good feedback from this part of the community



Integration of vehicles into high quality streetscape

Fishergate, Preston

Design features include:

- Carriageway narrowed to the minimum necessary
- High quality surface materials with good use of colour and texture differentiation to further reduce the apparent carriageway width
- Regular pedestrian crossing points made visually apparent by use of contrasting surfacing
- Low raised kerb is good for visually impaired user safety and does not intrude visually
- Good quality street trees added which will mature to a significant scale, strengthening the urban character of the street
- No bus integration

Photo credit: Planit-IE



Southway and St John's Street / Osborne Street

Planning and Design Framework

Southway is a barrier for pedestrian and cycle access from southern neighbourhoods of the city into the city centre. It is an unattractive and unsafe environment for all users apart from those in vehicles.

Addressing this severance will have a substantial impact in shifting residents to use walking and cycling to access the city centre, and will 'unlock' the development potential of sites either side of Southway.

Given the current role of Southway as a major transport corridor, changes are likely to be longer term and will be subject to further feasibility work and transport assessments.

Public realm and connectivity improvements

1. At-grade signalled pedestrian and cycle crossings at junction with Butt Road / Headgate.
2. At-grade signalled pedestrian and cycle crossings between Chapel Street North and South. This could include removing the turn lanes for vehicles turning into Chapel Street South, increasing footway width.
3. Improvement to public realm outside Headgate Theatre and up to St John's Street.
4. Signalled pedestrian crossing between Abbeygate and St John's Green and up to Roman Circus. Likely to require steps and ramp due to level changes, not suitable for cycle use.
5. At-grade signalled pedestrian and cycle crossing between Stanwell Street and St John's Green and up to the Abbey Gatehouse.
6. Improvement to bus facilities - refer to City Centre Transport Plan.
7. Potential bus / rapid transit stop locations on Southway could potentially be achieved by removing turn / filter lanes.
8. Implement high quality wayfinding signage at all junctions (1,2,4,5) and on St John's Street.

Development / redevelopment sites

The strategic approach is not to seek immediate redevelopment of existing multi-storey car parks due to their embodied carbon value, demolition costs and the continued need for parking for a significant proportion of city centre users and businesses. However, in time, subject to satisfaction of these issues and after modal shift in transport habits, these sites could come forward for mixed use development.

9. St John's multistorey and ground floor retail: Upgrade to form best-in-class parking facility with attractive entrances and street frontage allowing 24 / 7 secure and attractive access for all. Reallocate space, including ground floor units, to include micro-mobility hire; car club spaces; electric car charging; drop-off and pick-up; parcel pickup; waiting areas for delivery drivers. Install PV panel canopy at roof level.
10. Stanwell House: site may have the potential to address the need for improved bus waiting /



At-grade crossing at the eastern end of Lexden Road by Rawstorn Road



Example of four-lane arterial road with high quality tree planting, public realm and surface crossings

layover facilities. However, provision for increased bus stand/layover requires a wider review of the opportunities for transport interchange which go beyond this site and the scope of this masterplan study.





If the site is not required for that purpose, retain and adapt existing building to reduce embodied carbon impacts. Structure is likely to be suitable for E class ground floor uses (workspace, retail, cafe / bar / restaurant) with residential uses (compatible with city centre location and proximity to night-time economy activity) above. If extended or redeveloped at higher density, up to 15m to parapet height, with set-back upper storey, would be appropriate.

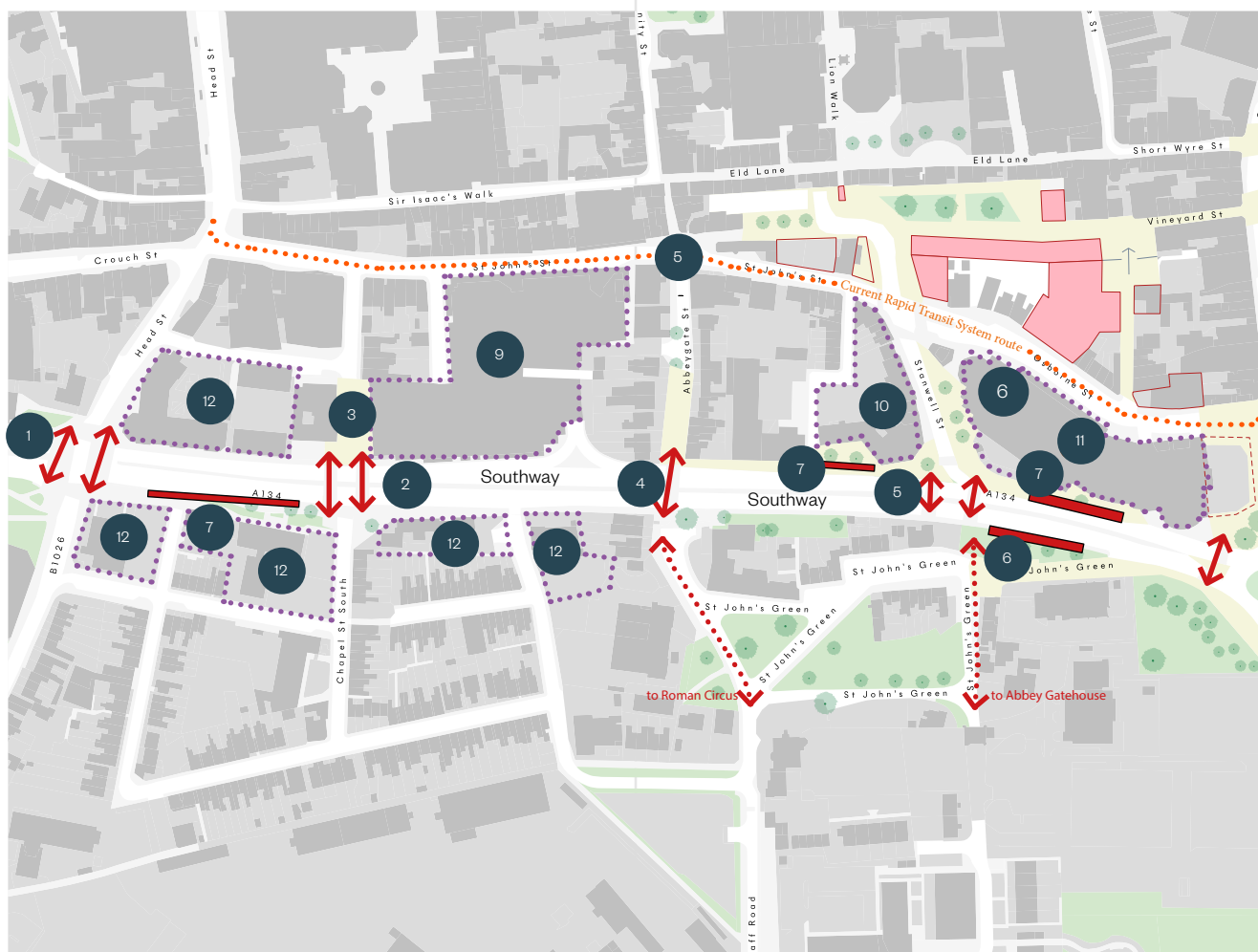
11. Osborne Street car park and ground floor bingo hall: Encourage change of use of ground floor space to create active frontages on all sides (retail, food and drink, workspace / coworking, community or cultural uses). Encourage operator to upgrade parking to form best-in-class parking facility including micro-

mobility hire; car club spaces; electric car charging; drop-off and pick-up; parcel pickup; waiting areas for delivery drivers; PV panel canopy at roof level. Explore moving vehicle entrance to Southway.

12. Sites with potential for intensification / redevelopment to a range of uses. Seek adaptive reuse of existing structures where possible, to reduce embodied carbon impacts. Ensure active ground floor uses (community or commercial) to Southway and to all sites on the north of Southway.

Key

-  New at-grade pedestrian and/or cycle crossing
-  Potential bus stop locations, subject to further studies
-  Current Rapid Transport System route
-  Development/ redevelopment sites



Former Bus Station Site

Design Principles

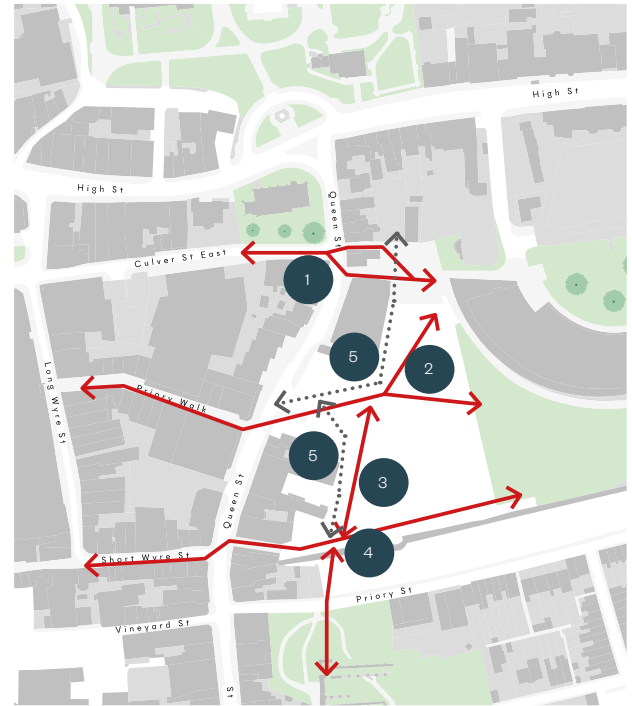
The former bus station site has been identified as a priority area for regeneration for over fifteen years. Adjacent to important heritage assets and the green space of Berryfields, it is at the heart of the creative and digital cluster created by Firstsite, the Minories, 37 Queen St, the Centre for Immersive Innovation in the former bus depot, and the Curzon. It is also adjacent to the vibrant economy of Queen Street which includes bars and restaurants open late into the evening, as well as a wide range of shops and services serving the diverse communities of Colchester.

The development of this site should include a wide range of uses at ground floor level while also being suitable for residential uses that are compatible with a vibrant city centre location. Creative and digital uses are encouraged. Public realm at the north and south ends of the site will enhance the setting of Firstsite and the Minories to the north; and the Roman Wall to the south, creating attractive areas for ground floor food and drink uses to spill out.

Key

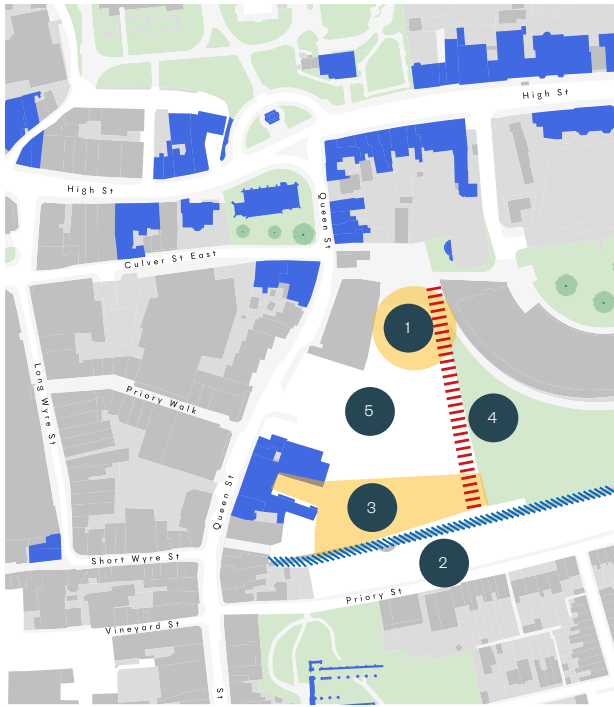
- Listed buildings
- |||| Active frontage and pedestrian links
- — — Roman Wall
- ↔ Pedestrian/cycle connection
- ↔ Vehicle access/servicing

Movement network



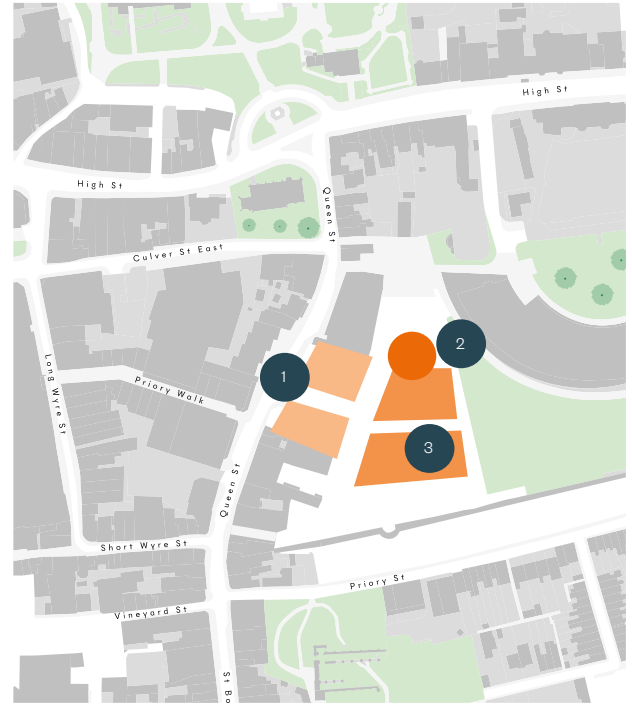
1. Improve pedestrian and cycle link from Firstsite to Culver Street East. Consider if no. 15 Queen Street might be redeveloped to improve visibility of Firstsite and more generous entrance to the public realm outside the gallery at this important gateway.
2. Ensure intuitive pedestrian/cycle movement from Priory Walk to entrance of Firstsite.
3. Pedestrian link being created at the former Bus Depot to be retained and continued, to retain potential new access to Berryfields.
4. New fully accessible pedestrian link through the Roman wall from Priory Street, to connect into St Botolph's Priory and Colchester Town Station.
5. Vehicle access to the rear of 1-13 and 37-49 Queen Street, required to be maintained, for accessible parking, deliveries and servicing only. To be strictly controlled for authorised users only and with improved boundary treatments and lighting.

Public realm and heritage setting



1. Expand existing public realm to create larger multi-functional square, ensuring the balcony of the Curzon cinema retains its view of Firstsite.
2. Ensure proposals do not cause significant harm to the setting of the City Wall and retain public access along the full length of the wall adjacent to the site, with appropriate landscaping and heritage interpretation.
3. Integrate courtyard at the rear of 37 Queen Street into the new public realm while ensuring security and safety.
4. Create active frontage and pedestrian link points to Berryfields open green space, to ensure that increased public access and use remains possible in the future, and to ensure an attractive setting to the green space is maintained.
5. Public realm design to allow for necessary delivery, servicing and accessible parking requirements without being vehicle dominated.
6. Enhance the setting of listed buildings around the site.

Height and massing



1. Frontage to Queen Street to broadly follow existing building heights set by Curzon, Priory Walk and the former Bus Depot development: approx. 12m from pavement level to parapet line. Set-back additional upper storeys may be accommodated with appropriate design and assessment of visual impact on the street.
2. Potential for taller building (up to 20m) as a visual landmark facing the public realm outside Firstsite, subject to exceptional design and vertical proportions in order to be seen as an elegant feature in the cityscape.
3. Development on the main part of the site to be a maximum of 15m to parapet line. Set-back upper storeys may be accommodated with appropriate design and assessment of visual impact in long-range views, including from Priory Street and St Botolph's Priory.
4. All detailed applications concerning the key sites will be subject to Heritage Impact Assessment and townscape analysis.

Former Bus Station Site

Site Strategy

Use mix

- Active ground floor uses to Queen Street - full range of E class uses would be suitable
- Active ground floor uses to new north-south street - flexible and affordable E class uses with creative / cultural uses preferred such as:
 - Affordable workspace for start-up and grow-on businesses in the creative and digital sector
 - Space for cultural and creative end-users such as media / film (e.g. Signals Media); live music; independent galleries
- Cafe, restaurant and bar end-users - public realm adjacent to the City Wall, and outside Firstsite / Curzon, to be used for outdoor seating
- Residential upper floor uses suitable for a city centre location, in line with the adopted site allocation policy, and in proximity to night-time economy activity
- All residential uses to be car-free except for provision of on-site blue-badge parking at appropriate ratios - consider an allocation for residents use of annual parking permits to Priory Street car park
- Car club and micro-mobility hire provision on-site
- Secure covered cycle storage, including e-bike lockers and charging points, to be provided at above-minimum ratios



Example of attractive, varied street scene including a range of building scales and architectural

Design and public realm

1. Multifunctional public square suitable for outdoor performances and events as well as informal day-to-day use including by young people
2. Public realm must be activated by active frontage uses adjacent to City Wall
3. Potential visual landmark / taller structure facing square
4. New frontages to Queen Street must contribute positively to the varied streetscape
5. Positive building frontage to green space
6. Servicing and delivery areas to be attractively landscaped to ensure a good setting to Berryfields Park

Related wider area improvements

7. Improved public realm on Queen Street including crossings from Culver Street East, Priory Walk and Short Wyre Street
8. Roman Wall Park
9. Rapid Transit System route



Example of shaded south-facing terraces encouraging active use



Britannia Yard








Design Principles

Britannia Yard has the potential to make a real contribution to the city centre and substantially improve the setting and appreciation of one of Colchester's most important heritage sites.

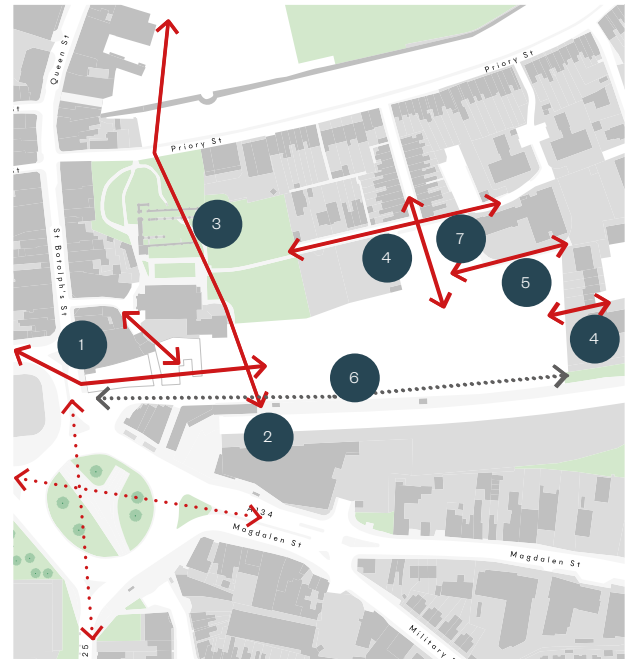
St Botolph's Priory is a spectacular and important site which deserves to be celebrated and widely visited by tourists and residents, but currently suffers from a poor quality setting.

The design strategy is guided by the site of the Scheduled Ancient Monument and uses this to create a high quality public space that can link Colchester Town Station up to Priory Street and beyond. New housing will 'complete' the neighbourhood between Priory Street and the railway line.

Key

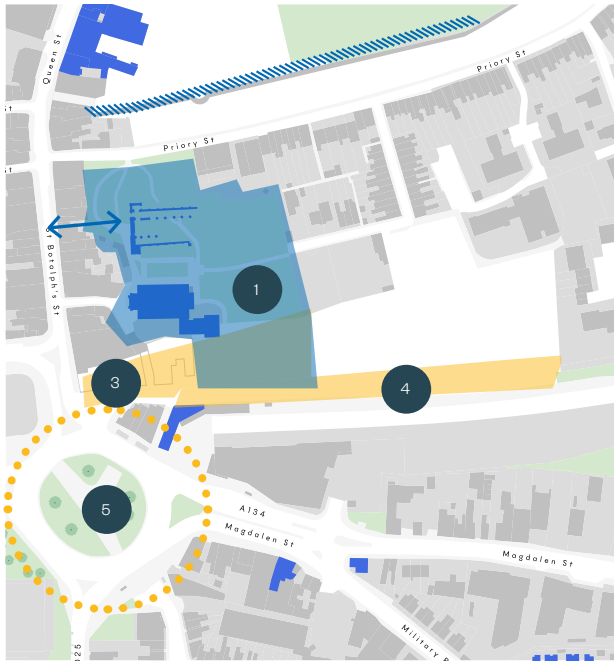
-  Pedestrian/cycle connection
-  Vehicle access/servicing
-  Listed buildings
-  Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)
-  Public realm
-  Roman wall
-  St Botolph's Circus

Movement network



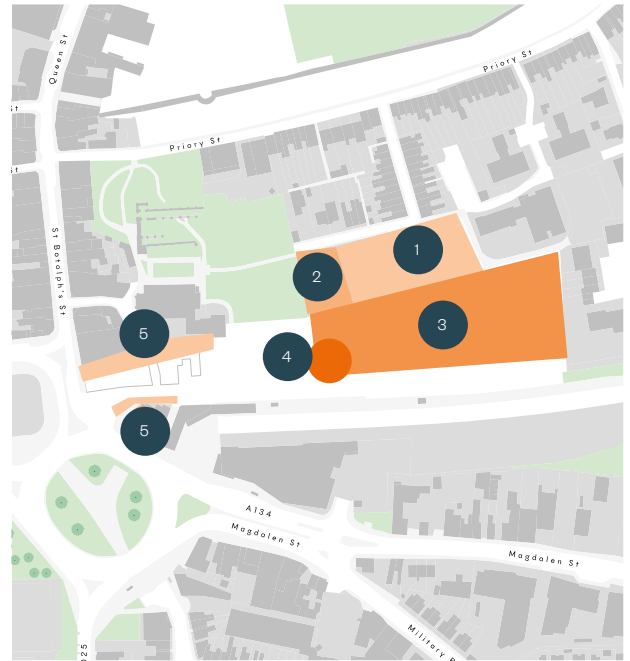
1. Ensure clear and intuitive pedestrian and cycle link from Osborne Street into the site including improved crossing over Queen Street.
2. New pedestrian and cycle entrance/exit into Colchester Station.
3. 'Quietway' for pedestrians through St Botolph's Priory up to Firstsite.
4. Create pedestrian and cycle links from St Julian Grove and Nicholson's Grove.
5. Integrated existing pedestrian paths around the north-east of the site.
6. Vehicle access and servicing for new development from Queen Street.
7. Retain resident parking provision for existing residents and add EV charging points.
8. Integrate with proposal for St Botolph's Circus

Public realm and heritage setting



1. No intrusive groundworks or building foundations in area of Scheduled Monument - use public realm to help interpret heritage site and improve understanding of its significance. Exact extent of the developable area will be defined by further archaeological evaluation and a Heritage Impact Assessment.
2. Consider how better visibility for the western frontage of St Botolph's Priory could be achieved through redevelopment of unlisted buildings on Queen Street.
3. Use public realm to create good visibility into site from Queen Street.
4. Use public realm to buffer new housing from noise of railway line.
5. Integrate with redesign of St Botolph's Circus.

Height and massing



1. Mews-style 2-3 storey development on the northern part of site.
2. Townhouse typologies of up to 4 storeys / 12m adjacent to Priory Park.
3. Mansion block typologies up to 5 storeys / 15m on south part of site - site levels drop down so overall impact of height on long range views is mitigated.
4. Articulation of corner could include slightly higher massing or feature, subject to design and view considerations with regard to the setting of the Priory and St Botolph's Church.
5. Create appropriate enclosure and screening of flank walls and service yards.
6. All detailed applications concerning the key sites will be subject to Heritage Impact Assessment and townscape analysis.

Britannia Yard Site Strategy

Use mix

- Active uses fronting new public square, including re-provision of Chinese Community Association premises
- Potential for E class ground floor uses if new development fronting public realm (or shared resident facilities e.g. co-working space, party / event space, shared laundry)
- Potential market function for new public realm, including provision of permanent / semi-permanent kiosks - consider use of railway arches for storage or E class uses
- Potential drop-off and taxi / delivery hub functionality to part of public realm, as part of transport mode interchange
- Residential to ground level except onto square and street, including:
 - Terraced family homes
 - Family apartments / maisonettes
 - 1 and 2 bed apartments
 - Independent retirement living
- All residential uses to be car-free except for provision of blue-badge parking at appropriate ratios
- Car club and micro-mobility hire provision on-site
- Secure covered cycle storage, including e-bike lockers and charging points, to be provided at above-minimum ratios



Reference for mansion block scale housing that could be appropriate for the south side of the site

Design and public realm

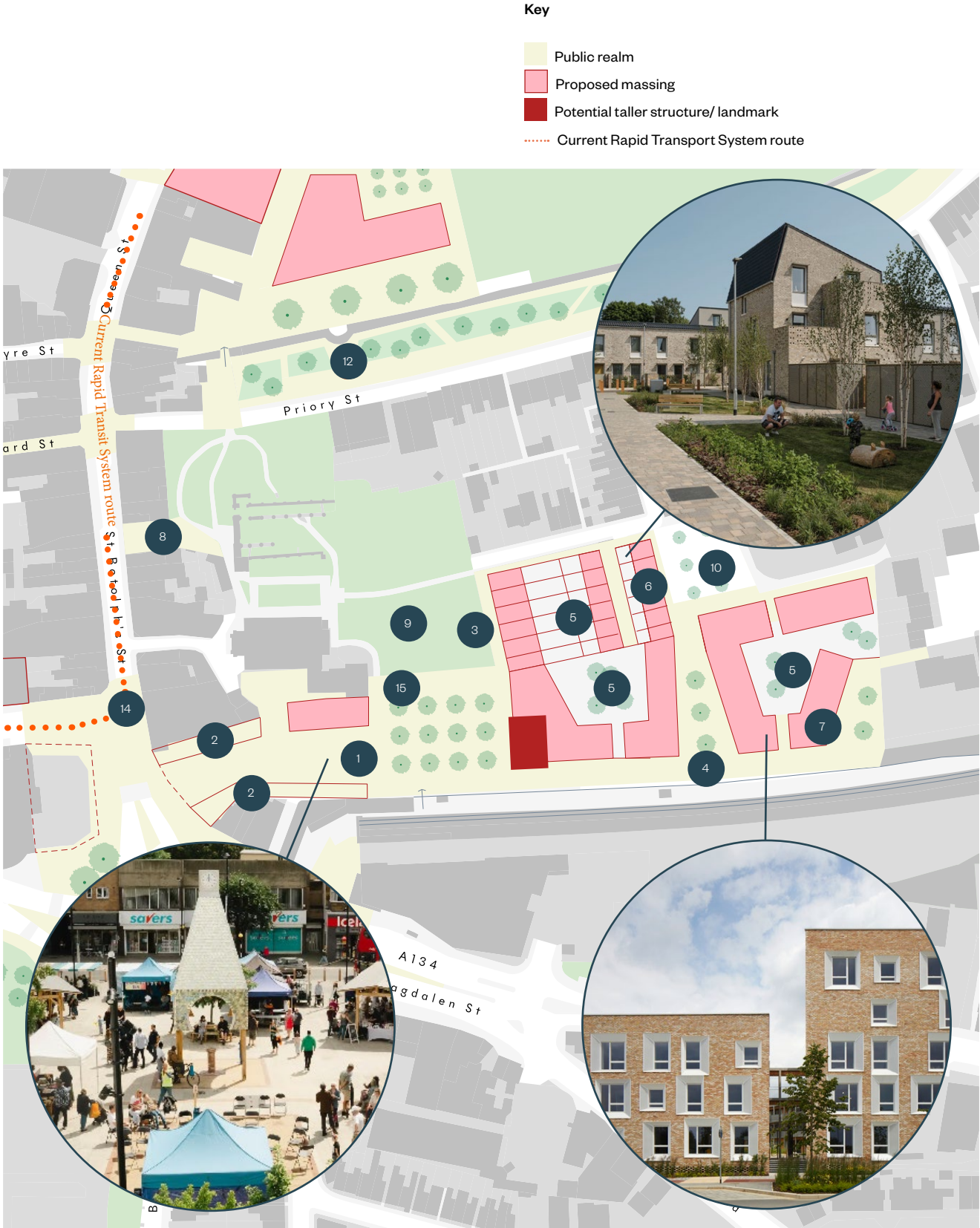
1. Multifunctional public square, integrating heritage interpretation
2. Potential arcade / small-scale retail to 'wrap' existing buildings
3. Positive building frontage to St Botolph's Priory Park
4. Blue badge resident parking, servicing and delivery access
5. Private shared courtyard gardens to block interiors, private gardens to terraced housing
6. Low rise, high density mews housing
7. Contemporary higher-density housing
8. Potential long-term opening from Queen Street to Priory, to give greater visibility to the important frontage of the Priory
9. Improvements to St Botolph's Priory Park including additional play provision for all ages
10. Retained resident parking for existing residents with EV charging

Related wider area improvements

11. Reconfigured St Botolph's / Southway junction
12. Roman Wall Park
13. Osborne Street / bus station / NCP reconfiguration and improvement
14. Rapid Transit System route / interchange
15. Walking and cycling infrastructure supports links to St Botolph's Circus and city wide active travel.



Reference for apartment buildings organised around multi-functional landscaped routes and yards, as suggested for the south side of the site



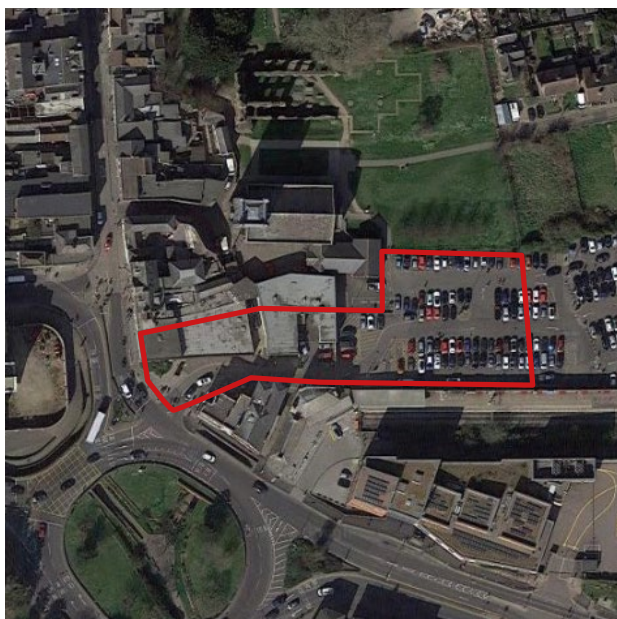
Britannia Yard

Public Realm

Scale Comparators

The main part of the public realm proposed in the site strategy is broadly equivalent to Culver Square. This scale of space offers opportunities for a range of uses. The brief and design approach should be explored through the further development of the site masterplan.

Britannia Yard - Public realm as shown on indicative masterplan



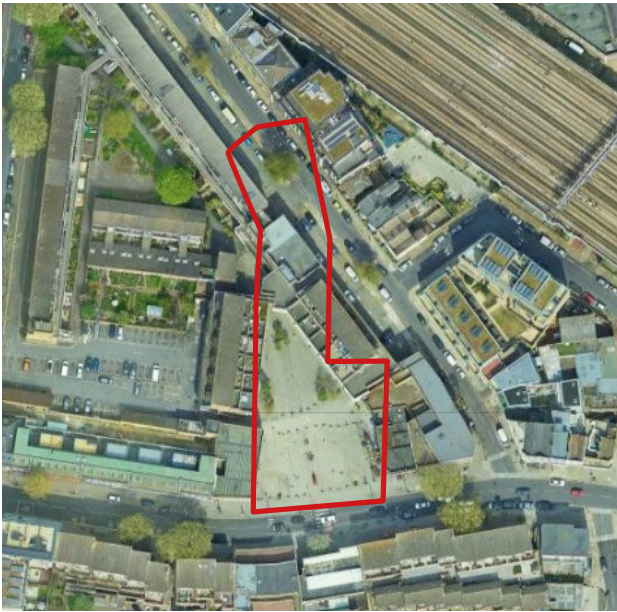
Culver Square, Colchester



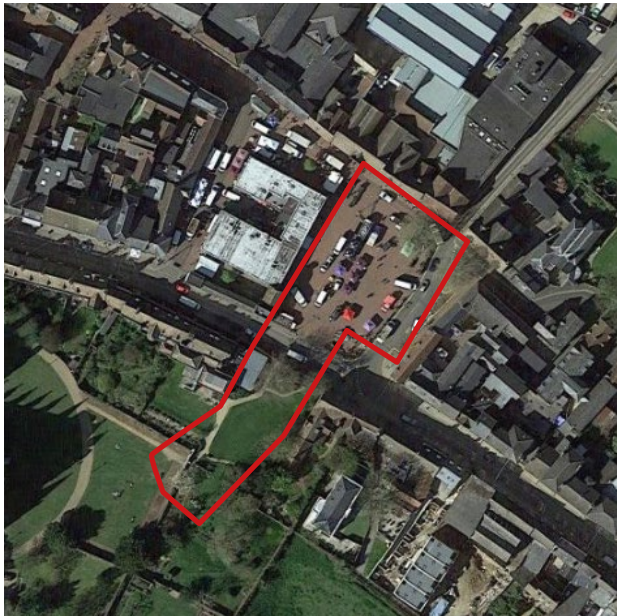
Senate House lawn, Cambridge



The Blue Market, Bermondsey



Ely Market Square



Vineyard Gate

Design Principles







Vineyard Gate sites adjacent to the Roman Wall and the remarkable range of buildings above it, which create a unique and memorable vista.

Currently the setting of the Roman Wall is poor and improving this must be a priority for this site, as well as integrating a good quality walking and cycling route from east to west as part of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

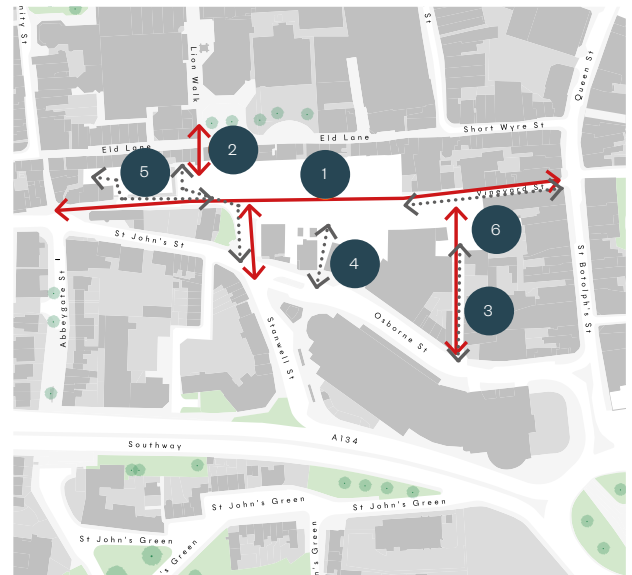
South of this route, the area traditionally had a tight knit grain of workshops around yards with living accommodation above, and much of this character survives albeit in a poor condition. Development should restore and enhance the best of this character through tight-knit and carefully designed infill development. This can mend the currently 'gappy' street frontage to Osborne Street, and create a new, unified frontage to the north facing the new public realm at the foot of the Roman Wall.

Uses should include commercial and residential suitable for an active city centre location.

Key

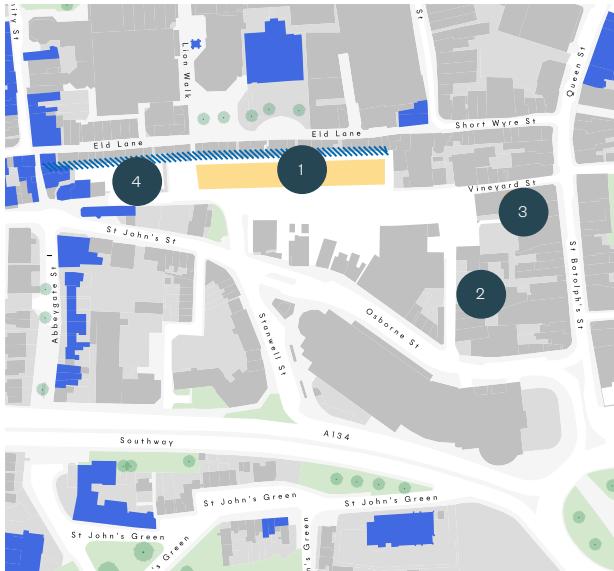
-  Pedestrian/cycle connection
-  Vehicle access/servicing
-  Listed buildings
-  Public realm
-  Roman wall
-  St Botolph's Circus

Movement network



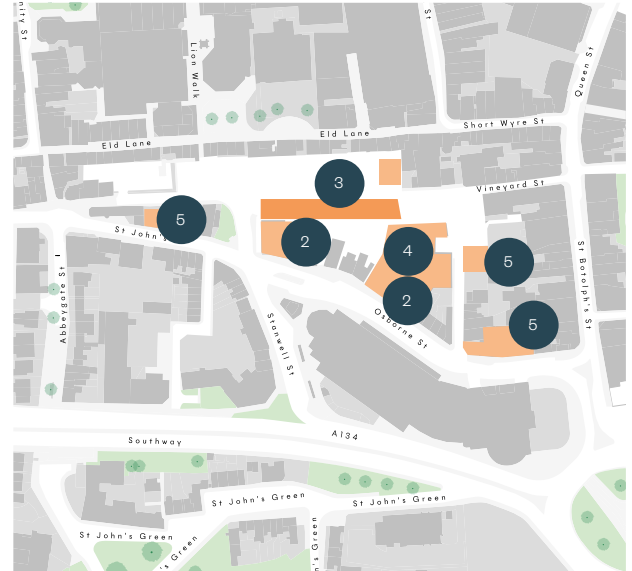
1. Key pedestrian and cycle link from Sheregate Steps to St Botolph's Street along Vineyard St.
2. Vertical connection to Lion Walk (replace/refurbish stairs/lift).
3. Create north-south pedestrian and cycle link connecting Osborne Street to Vineyard Street along Arthur Street (new steps/ramp required).
4. Retain servicing access for existing commercial occupiers (with appropriate access control).
5. Retain servicing access to Lion Walk undercroft (with appropriate access control).
6. Retain short-stay delivery driver waiting area off Vineyard Street.

Public realm and heritage setting



1. Improve setting of the Roman Wall and create new high quality public realm alongside the wall. Consider selective demolition to expose the important bastion at the east end of the site.
2. Maintain working yard character along Arthur Street but encourage improvements to surface materials and boundary treatments.
3. Resurface Vineyard Street as accessible level surface lane (pedestrian and cycle priority).
4. Acquire further parking areas at the west end of the site to enable a comprehensive approach to provision of blue-badge and business parking/ servicing, including electric vehicle rapid charge points (for commercial vehicles) and regular charging points (for employees).

Height and massing



1. Level change from Osborne Street to Vineyard Street is approx. 1 storey.
2. Redevelopment and infill along Osborne Street and St John's Street to a max of 9m to parapet/ eaves line along street frontage. Additional set-back upper storey may be accommodated in places with appropriate, high quality design and assessment of context.
3. Development at the upper level to be a maximum of 12m to parapet/eaves line. Additional set-back upper storey may be accommodated subject to appropriate, high quality design and assessment of long-range views including setting of Roman Wall.
4. Retain and reuse existing buildings, including steel/ concrete framed industrial structures, where possible, to reduce embodied carbon costs and retain a varied, characterful development pattern.
5. Consider land acquisition to enable further infill development along St John's Street and encourage redevelopment of low-quality premises along Osborne Street which are reaching end of life.
6. All detailed applications concerning the key sites will be subject to Heritage Impact Assessment and townscape analysis.

Vineyard Gate Site Strategy

Use mix

- Active E class uses at ground level fronting streets and public realm. Due to the development constraints and pattern, units will be small and suitable for independent businesses. Appropriate uses could include:
 - Small-scale independent retail
 - Cafe, restaurant and bar uses
 - Workspace, including workshop/studio space or office space
- Cafe/restaurant uses onto Roman Wall Park to be encouraged.
- Residential upper floor uses suitable for a city centre location in proximity to night-time economy uses and nearby transport interchange. Suitable for 1-2 bed apartments, not family housing.
- All residential uses to be car-free except for provision of on-site blue-badge parking at appropriate ratios. Consider an allocation for residents use of annual parking permits to NCP carpark.
- Car club and micro-mobility hire provision on-site.
- Secure covered cycle storage, including e-bike lockers and charging points, to be provided at above-minimum ratios.

Wider improvements outside the site boundary should be sought, including to repair and restore historic buildings atop the Roman Wall on the south side of Eld Lane to enhance the setting of the wall and townscape quality.



Example of quality public realm and active uses next to historic walls

Design and public realm

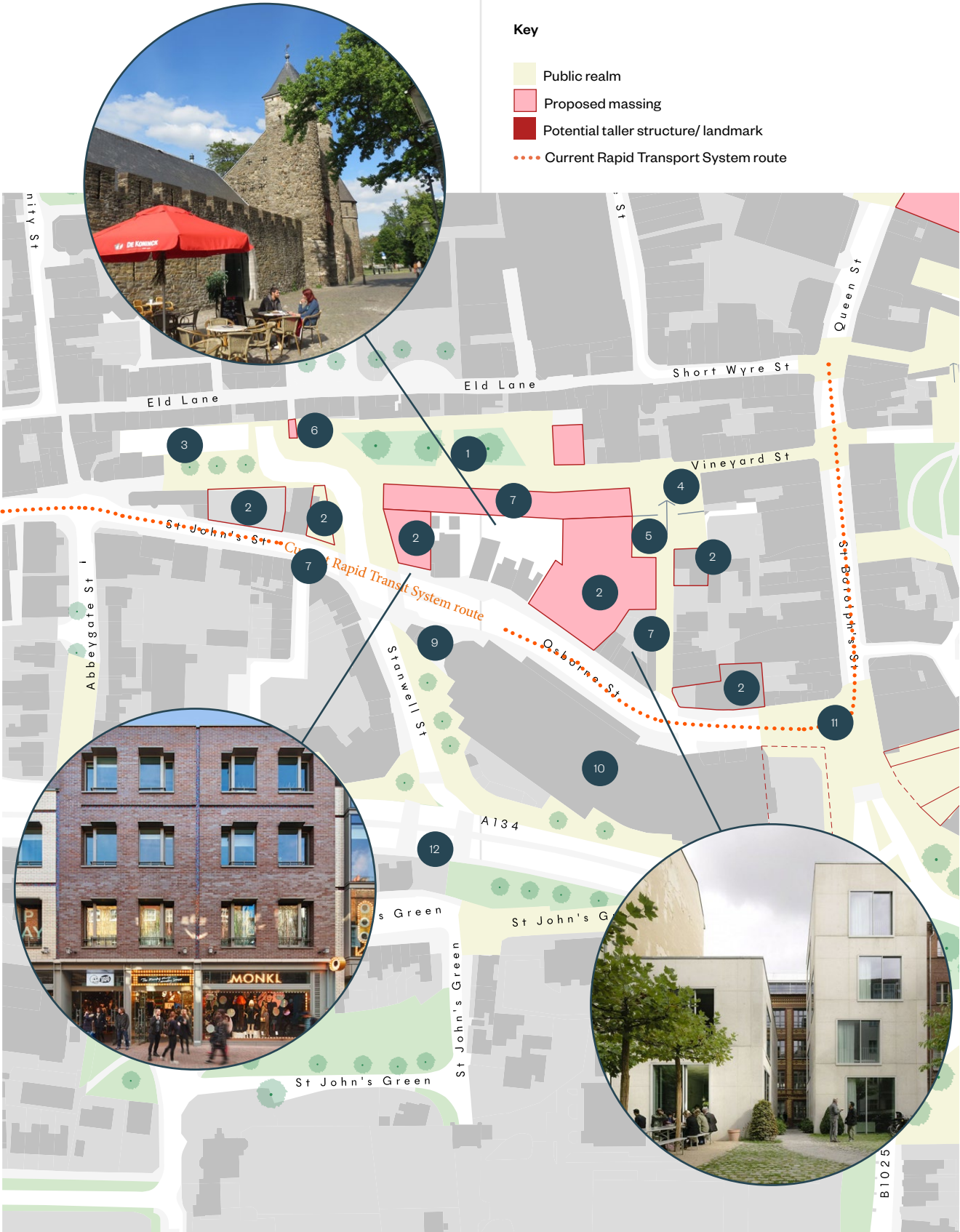
1. Roman Wall Park to be a high-quality public space including hard and soft landscaping, seating and features encouraging multi- generational use e.g. public chess, table-tennis, boules
2. Small-scale mews-style infill/new build to terminate currently untidy flank walls and side yards - may require further site acquisition
3. Well-landscaped blue-badge parking and delivery/ servicing for existing businesses at the west end of the site including EV charging
4. Improved landscaping to Vineyard Street and adjacent parking area
5. New steps up from Arthur Street to Vineyard Street, including a ramp if space allows
6. Refurbished/reconfigured lift and stairs to Eld Lane - retain as much existing structure as possible to reduce embodied carbon impacts
7. Mixed-use, mid-rise development
8. Opportunity for servicing yards to be integrated with public realm

Related wider area improvements

9. Osborne Street / bus station reconfiguration
10. Improvements to NCP carpark
11. Rapid Transit System route / interchange
12. Surface crossings to Southway



Example of mixed-use mid-rise development



St Botolph's Circus

Design recommendations

St Botolph's Circus is an important gateway to the city centre which is currently dominated by traffic and has a poor environment for pedestrian and cycle movement. It does not allow space for modal interchange between transport modes and increases the severance between the New Town neighbourhood and the city centre.

The plan shown here reflects the latest proposals for the roundabout itself, prepared by Essex Highways. The design recommendations set out below form the recommendations from the masterplan consultant team to maximise the public realm benefits of the project and create a high quality gateway to the city centre.

1. Ensure redesign of the junction balances the needs of all users according to the user hierarchy. Cycle tracks and pedestrian routes to be as direct as possible, following desire lines, and prioritised over vehicle movements. This will encourage active travel and reflect best practice guidance.
2. Maximise new street tree planting lining the highway, placing trees near the outer edge of the footway/ public realm area to create more enclosure of space, minimise the visual impact of the highway and provide usable public realm between trees and buildings. This will also ensure trees are sufficiently spaced away from buildings and can therefore be of species that will grow to substantial scale, creating good canopy cover and visual impact - for example London Plane trees as found elsewhere in the city centre.
3. Generous public realm at north-east corner of circus providing improved gateway to rail station.



Tall street trees lining carriageway reduce the visual width of the street

Integrate micro-mobility hire and additional cycle parking.

Longer term urban design principles to be considered as part of wider redevelopment of Osborne Street and Britannia Yard:

4. Vehicle entry to Britannia Yard will change function substantially when this site is redeveloped. Create more continuous active frontage and pedestrian experience around this important corner, and reduce vehicle movements to essential access and servicing only.
5. Area to the east of the NCP carpark has potential to be used for bus layover or related facilities, but should present a strong built frontage to the public realm on all sides.

Related wider area improvements

6. Osborne Street / bus station reconfiguration
7. Improvements to NCP carpark
8. Rapid Transit System route / interchange
9. Surface crossings to Southway
10. Vineyard Gate development site
11. Britannia Yard development site



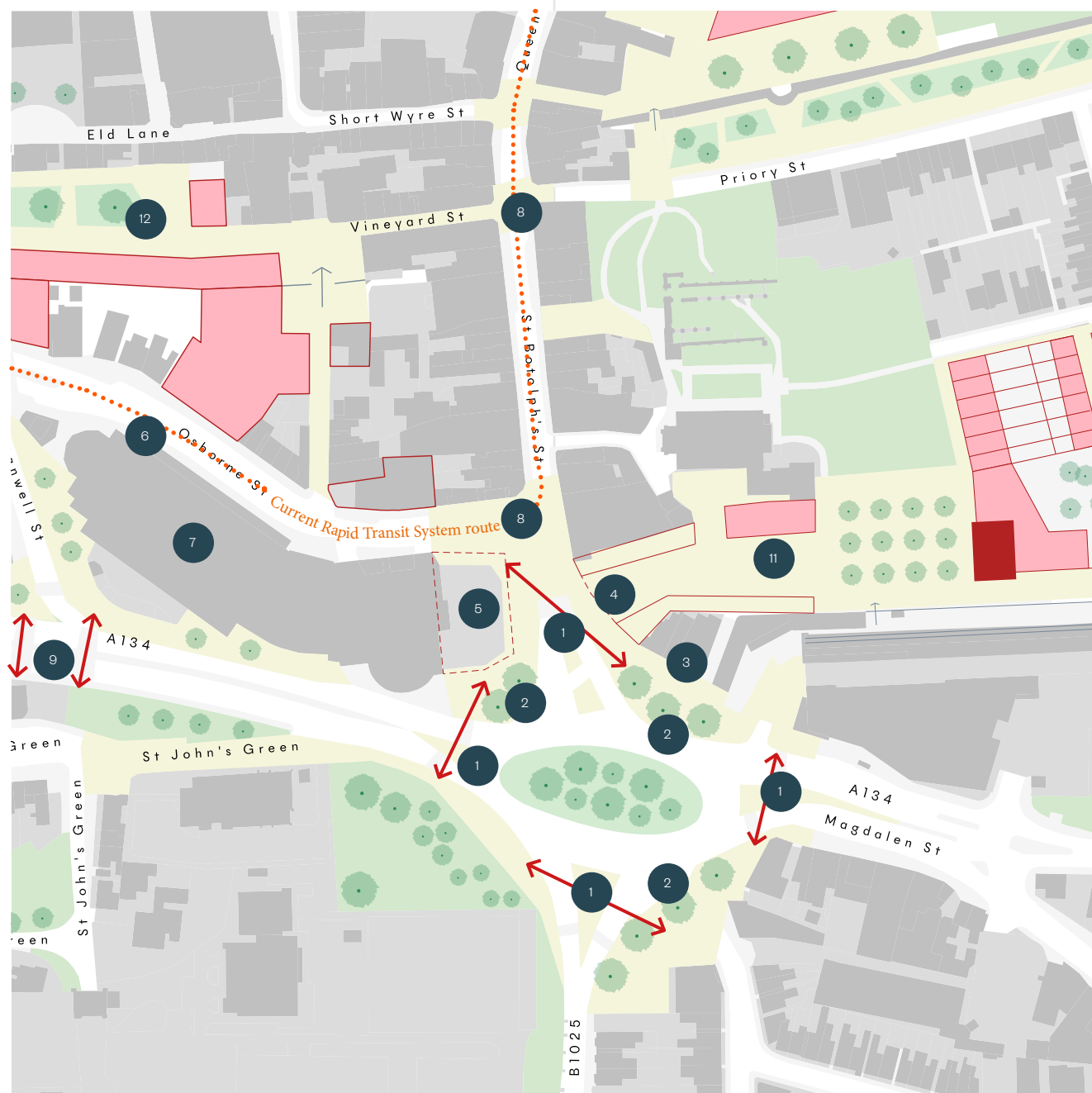
Creating people-friendly public realm between trees and buildings, mitigating the impact of traffic

Indicative Design Principles for St Botolph's Circus

(Junction layout reflects Essex Highways proposals)

Key

- Public realm
- Proposed massing
- Potential taller structure/ landmark
- Current Rapid Transport System route



04

Delivery Recommendation



Delivery Plan

We have developed a separate masterplan delivery outline for Colchester City Council and Essex County Council with information on partnership, financing, and delivery options as well as the high-level actions/process required to implement the initiatives contained in the masterplan.

As the two biggest landowners involved in the masterplan sites, an immediate action will be for Colchester City Council and Essex County Council to determine a suitable partnership arrangement between themselves. They will then need to establish the most effective working arrangements with other parties critical to delivering the masterplan (e.g. business improvement district, community groups, developers).

The pace and process for delivering the masterplan will be affected by these partnerships and arrangements. Based on the current funding and financing arrangements available, we might expect an outline delivery timescale as summarised in the table below (more actions are included in the separate delivery outline). The councils will need to determine more detailed actions as the masterplan progresses, as funding, financing, and partnership circumstances and opportunities are likely to evolve over time.

Interventions captured within the masterplan will be delivered through, or in combination with, third parties and may not regularly be funded by the public sector, except from public realm and highway or unless secured by public funding bids such as Town Deal, Levelling Up or other future programmes.

	Site 1 High Street	Site 2 Southway	Site 3 Former Bus Station Site	Site 4 Britannia Yard	Site 5 Vineyard Gate	Site 6 St Botolph's Round-about
Immediate	Determine CCC/ECC working arrangements and external stakeholder roles					
	Receive LUF allocation (CCC)					
	Community and stakeholder consultations (starting imminently but ongoing throughout)					
Short term		Determine interchange land requirements		Deploy LUF for archaeological works		Review roadworks consolidation options
		Review Stanwell building options		Create development briefs and confirm development approach; market test options		
Medium term		Deliver car park improvements				
	Deliver public realm improvements			Submit and process planning applications		
Long term		Construct Southway pedestrian crossing		Deliver new development		Construction

Glossary

Accessibility. Accessibility can be viewed as the “ability to access” and benefit from some system or entity. The concept focuses on enabling access for people with disabilities, or enabling access through the use of assistive technology.

Active Ground Floor Use. A use that attracts pedestrian activity and activates the surrounding space, such as a bar, a shop, a library.

Active Travel. Journeys made by modes of transport that are fully or partially people-powered, irrespective of the purpose of the journey. It includes walking, wheeling, cycling, scootering.

Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). An area where air pollution levels have exceeded the national air quality objectives. If a local authority finds any places where the objectives are not likely to be achieved, it must declare an Air Quality Management Area there and put together a plan to improve the air quality - a Local Air Quality Action Plan.

Baseline Appraisal. An analysis of the current situation to identify the starting points for a programme or project, setting benchmarks against which future progress can be assessed or comparisons made.

Biodiversity. The variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat, a high level of which is usually considered to be important and desirable.

Blue Badge Parking. Parking bays set aside exclusively for holders of a valid disabled persons’ parking permit (Blue

Badge).

Building Density. In the context of this document, the number of residential units in a given land area.

Built Form. The height, volume and overall shape of a building as well as its surface appearance.

Car Club. Short-term car rental service that allows members access to locally parked cars and pay by the minute, hour or day.

Car-lite. Using less private transport and using more public transport like trains, buses or other active modes such as walking or cycling.

Climate Emergency. A situation in which urgent action is required to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it.

Community Use. Use which has the primary purpose of serving the educational, religious, recreational, or governmental needs of the general community, including but not limited to educational and cultural institutions, public parks and buildings, community centres, schools.

Conservation Area. An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. In conservation areas there are some extra planning controls and considerations in place to protect the historic and architectural elements which make the place special.

Cycle Contraflow. Cyclists are

allowed to ride in both directions on a street that is one-way for cars.

Demand Responsive Transport (DRT). A flexible service that provides shared transport to users who specify their desired location and time of pick-up and drop-off. DRT can complement fixed route public transport services and improve mobility in low-density areas and at low-demand times of day.

Disabled. A person with a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Electric Vehicle (EV). A vehicle that uses one or more electric motors for propulsion.

Heritage. Heritage is a broad concept and includes the natural as well as the cultural environment. It encompasses landscapes, historic places, sites and built environments, as well as bio-diversity, collections, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences. It records and expresses the long processes of historic development, forming the essence of diverse national, regional, indigenous and local identities and is an integral part of modern life.

Heritage Asset. A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local

planning authority (including local listing).

Listed Building. Listed Buildings are buildings and structures defined by the Secretary of State as being of “special architectural or historic interest”. They include buildings and structures that are deemed to be of importance on a national scale.

LTN 1/20 Standards. A document from the Department for Transport (DfT) that sets out standards expected of cycle infrastructure – cycle lanes, cycle networks, junctions, etc.

Micro-mobility. Transportation using lightweight vehicles such as bicycles or scooters, especially electric ones that may be borrowed as part of a self-service scheme in which people hire vehicles for short-term use within a town or city.

Modal shift. The shifting of travel modes that humans go through based on a range of variables. For example, switching a car journey for a bike journey. Modal shift plays an important element in the discussion around creating more sustainable transport systems.

Park and Ride. A system for reducing urban traffic congestion, in which drivers leave their cars in car parks on the outskirts of a city and travel to the city centre on public transport.

Placemaking. Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces and more broadly urban environments. Placemaking capitalizes on a local community’s assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention

of creating spaces that improve urban vitality and promote people’s health, happiness, and well-being.

Public Realm. External urban spaces that are publicly accessible.

Rapid Transit System (RTS). In the context of this document, the Colchester RTS proposals refer to a ‘trackless tram’ providing a fast, reliable, frequent, convenience and comfortable service that is integrated with other modes and sustainable in operation.

Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI). RTPI systems provide a countdown of live predictions of when a bus is expected to arrive.

Scheduled Ancient Monument. A scheduled monument is a nationally important archaeological site or historic building, given protection against unauthorised change.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Documents which contain guidance that expands on the policies within Local Plans, showing how councils expects planning policies to be addressed by planning applications, and how the policies will be implemented by the council when making decisions on planning applications.

Transport Interchange. A facility allowing commuters to transfer between differing modes of public transport.

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