

St Stephens Street area masterplan

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In November 2008 Norwich City Council commissioned consultants Urban Initiatives to prepare a masterplan for the St Stephens Street Area.

The masterplan is needed to shape development that is expected to result from the growth of Norwich's population and economy over the next 20 years.

The Area

It covers 17.5 hectares in the south east part of the city centre. The inner ring road is to the south, Chapelfield to the west, the castle to the north and the Wensum valley to the east. The area contains the bus station, entrances to Castle Mall and Chapelfield and AVIVA's Norwich headquarters on Surrey Street.



- | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 City Hall | 7 Theatre Street | 13 Timber Hill | 19 St Stephens Street | 25 Bus station |
| 2 Market Square | 8 Assembly House | 14 John Lewis | 20 Surrey Street | 26 Notre Dame High School |
| 3 Norwich Castle | 9 Castle Mall | 15 Ber Street | 21 Chapelfield Plain | 27 Chapelfield Shopping Centre |
| 4 Norwich Lanes | 10 St Stephens Church | 16 All Saints Green | 22 Chantry Car Park | 28 Queens Road |
| 5 The Forum | 11 Marks and Spencer | 17 Thorn Lane | 23 Chapelfield Gardens | 29 St Stephens Road |
| 6 St. Peter Mancroft | 12 Westlegate | 18 Surrey House | 24 St Stephens Towers | |

What has happened so far?

The team has gathered lots of information about the area and met businesses, landowners and interest groups that care about its future.

From there we have developed a vision for the area and mapped out options for how the area could develop.

Tell us what you think

We want your help to make sure the plans are right. Please fill in the forms at the exhibition and put them in the box or take it away and post it to Ben Webster at City Hall, Norwich NR2 1NH.

You can also give feedback online at www.norwich.gov.uk.

We need your comments by 24 July 2009.

What happens next?

The City and County Councils and their partners in the project have much more work to do. The proposals in this exhibition are only proposals. Nothing has been agreed or endorsed and some of the proposals may prove too challenging to implement.

We will review all the comments that we receive and use them to decide on a preferred option for the development of the area with the potential for phased implementation identified and explained. This will be published in October as an outline masterplan.

We intend to undertake more detailed work, including financial viability testing, so that the full masterplan can be adopted as planning policy at the end of 2010. We expect it to support policies in the Joint Core Strategy, which will set out the strategy for the growth of Norwich, Broadland and South Norfolk.

Context

St Stephens Street area masterplan

History



Georg Braun and Franz Hogenburg perspective of Norwich, 1581 (Study area outlined in red)

Since the Middle Ages St Stephens Street has been an important entrance into the city on the route from London.

The area was just inside the city walls and their remains can be still found today along Queens Road. Until the late 18th century imposing gates at St Stephens Street and All Saints Green marked the entrance into the city. This history is reflected in its status as a conservation area with numerous listed buildings.

The area saw a radical transformation after the second world war with the rebuilding and widening of St Stephens Street and the development of large office buildings on Surrey Street and Westlegate.

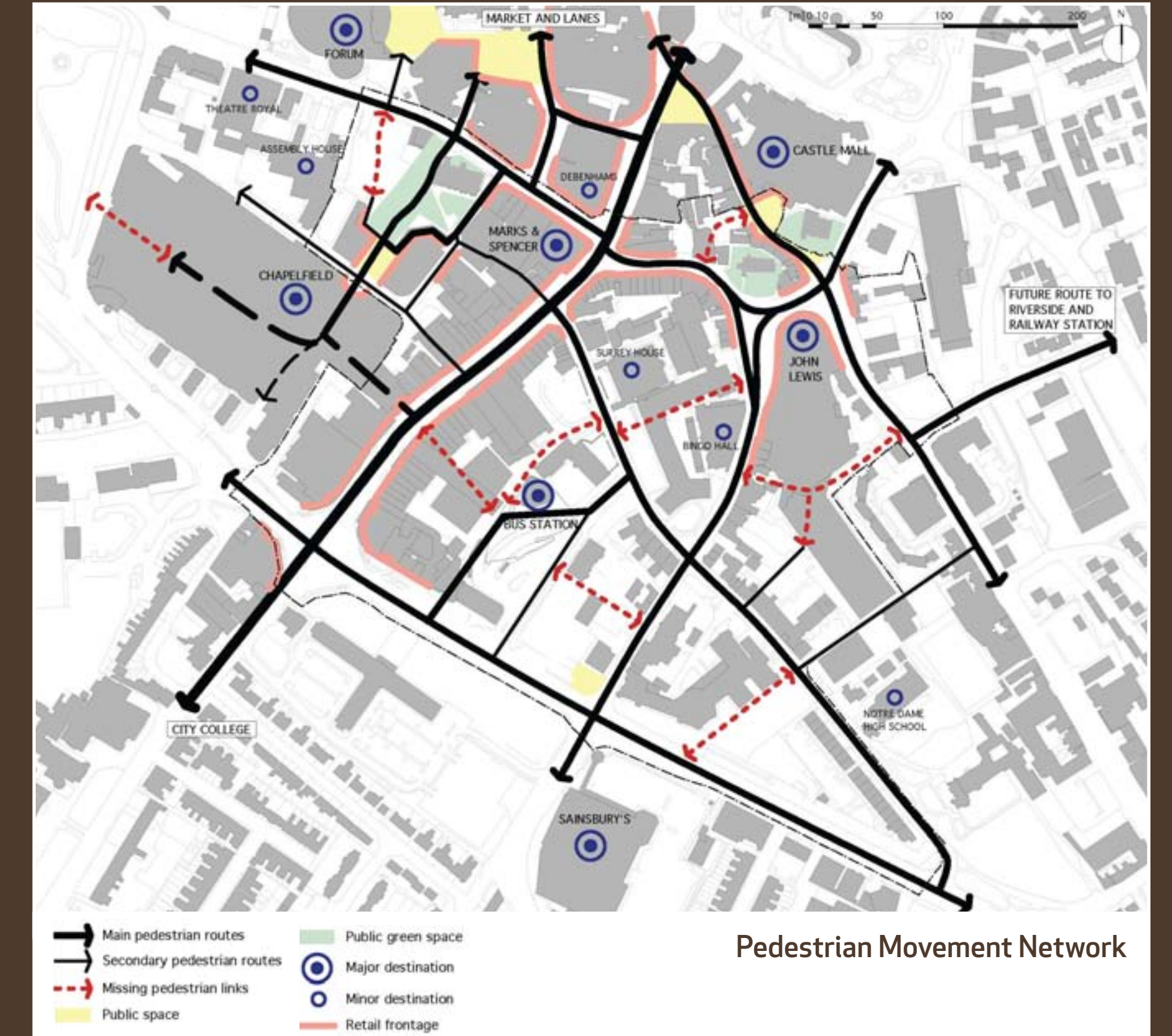
In the last ten years Chapelfield Shopping Centre replaced the chocolate factory and the bus station was rebuilt.



- 1 Westlegate Westlegate House construction, 1961
- 2 All Saints Green Carlton at night, 1935
- 3 Surrey St 2 thatched Boar's Head Inn, 1934
- 4 Surrey St Norwich Union from bus station, 1962
- 5 St. Stephen's St opposite Marks and Spencer following road widening, 1961
- 6 All Saints Green Bond's store ,1955
- 7 St Stephen's Plain 6 to 7 St Stephen's St 1, 1953
- 8 St Stephen's St 8 to 12 after completion, 1955

All © George Plunkett (www.the-plunketts.freeserve.co.uk)

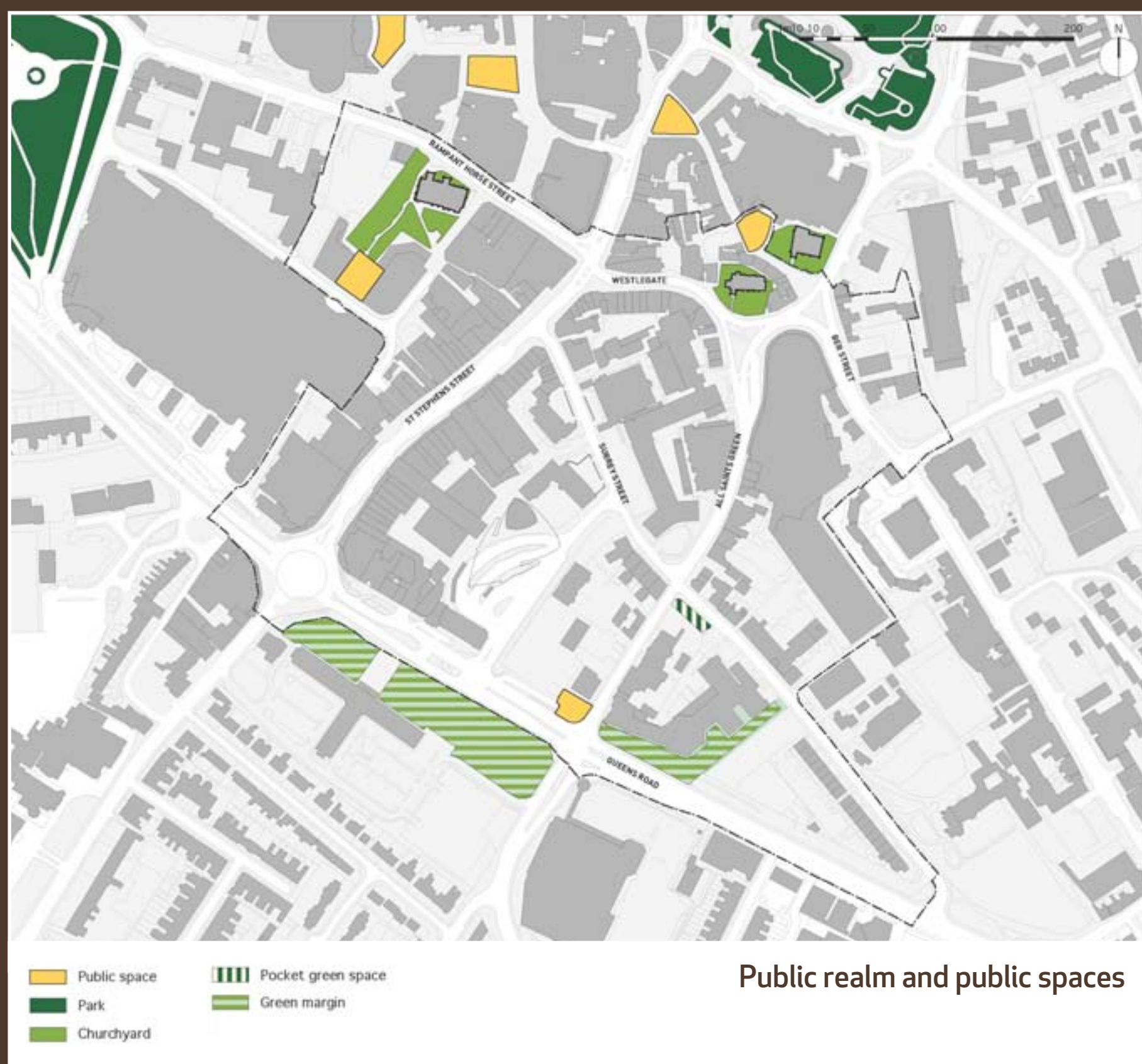
Shape of the area



The historic network of streets in the study area creates a pattern of urban blocks that are larger than in other parts of the city centre.

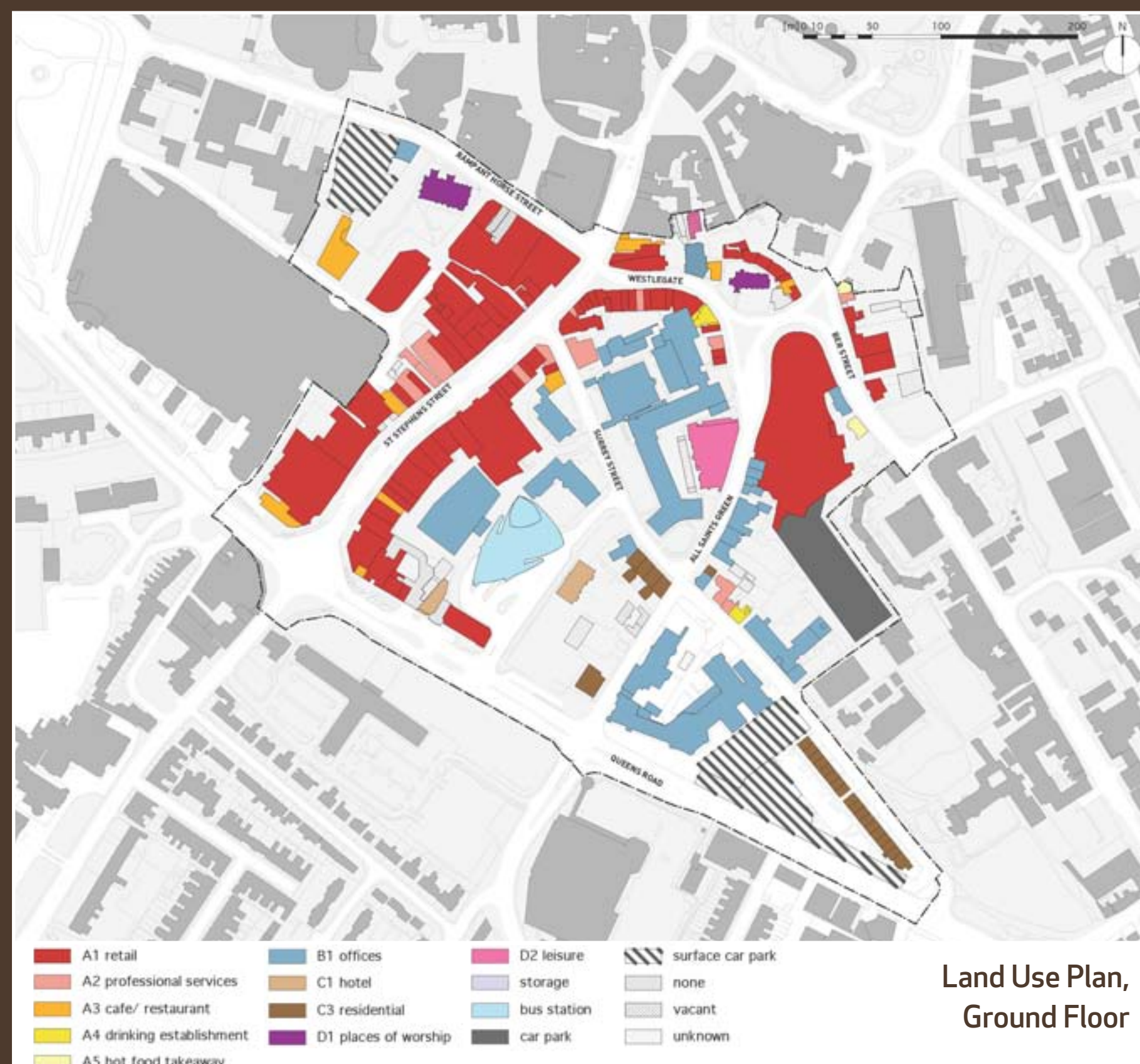
This means that some places, like St Stephens Street and the bus station, are disconnected. This forces people to take longer and more convoluted routes. The red arrows on the diagram indicate where new or better connections are needed.

Public spaces



The area suffers from a lack of public space. There are few places to sit down.

Land Uses

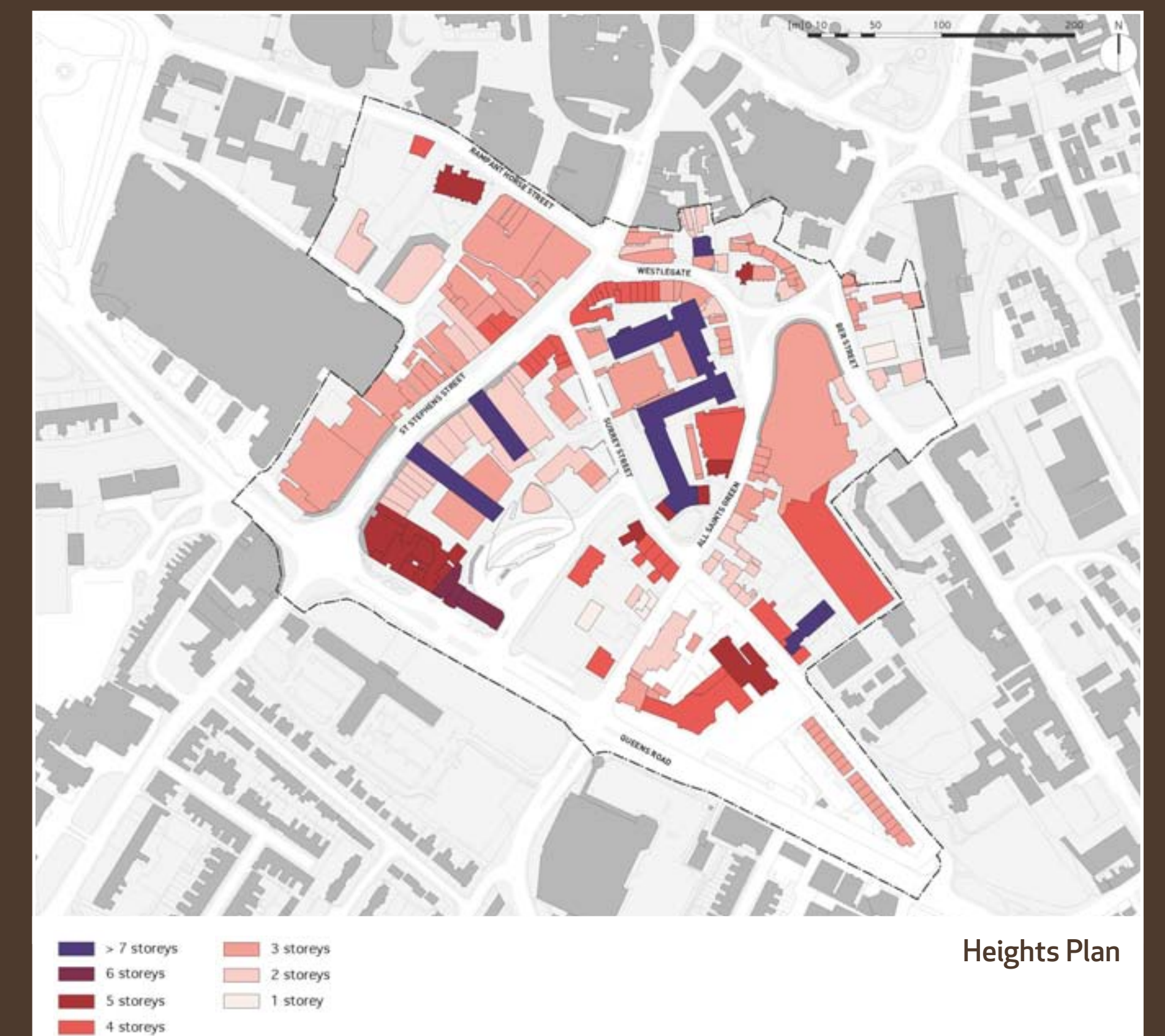


Shops and offices dominate the area. The shops range from large national retailers, banks and service providers on St Stephens Street to small independent shops on Timberhill.

Most of the office space is occupied by AVIVA but some smaller companies have offices around All Saints Green and Surrey Street.

There is a lot of housing close by but hardly anyone lives in the area. The area also has few cafes, restaurants and pubs so people leave the area after the shops and offices close making it less animated and safe.

Building heights



Building heights vary greatly. Many streets are lined with historic two to three storey buildings, but a number of post-war developments are tall and bulky disrupting the historic building pattern and damaging the skyline.

Vision

St Stephens Street area masterplan

Vision Principles

Nine principles underpin the masterplan:

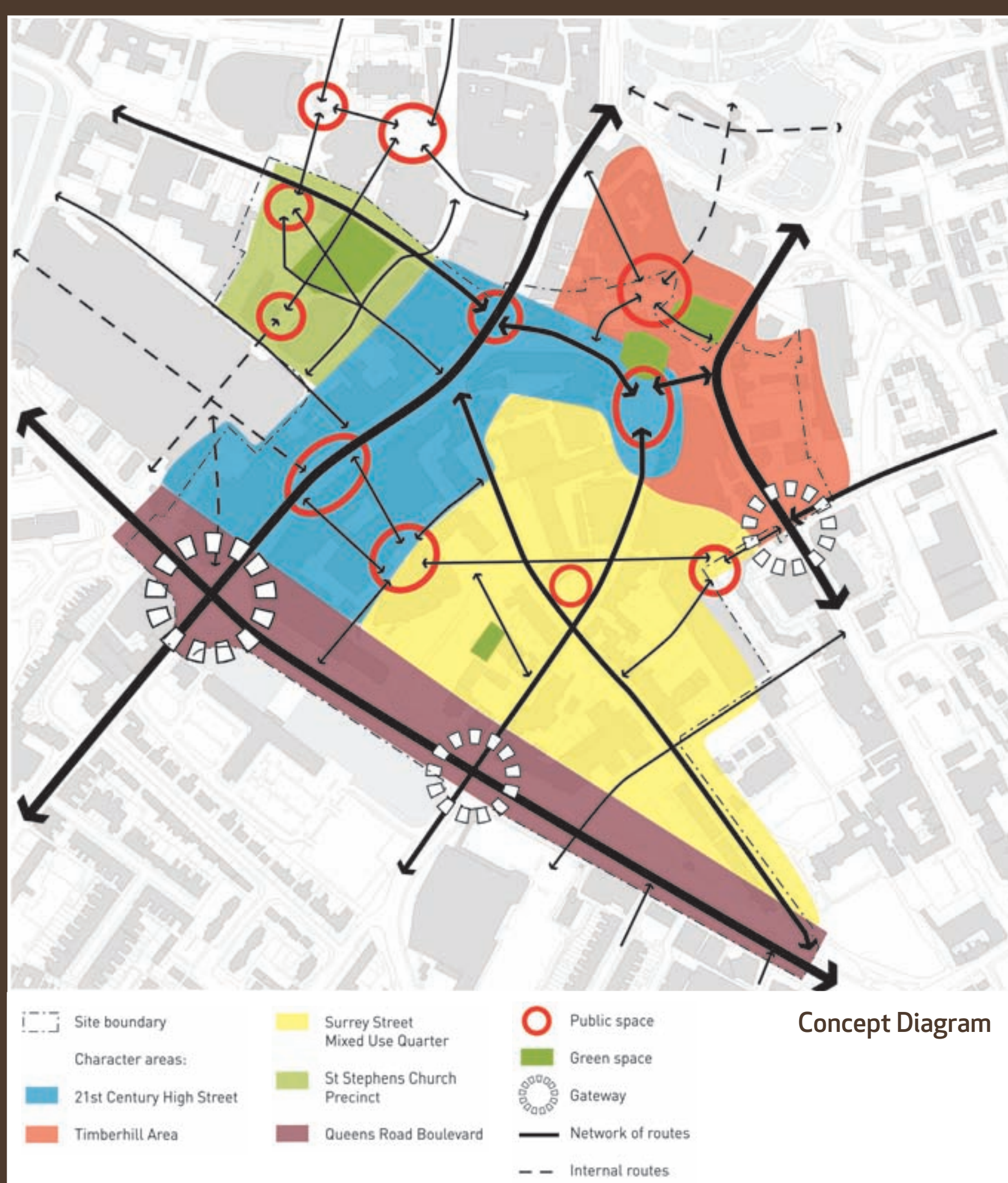
- 1 To create a vibrant, thriving and attractive part of the city centre with a variety of uses.
- 2 To strengthen Norwich's role as the East of England's most important retail centre.
- 3 To strengthen the St Stephens Street Area as an important employment location in Norwich.
- 4 To create appropriate gateways into the city centre.
- 5 To enhance the setting of historic buildings and reflect the character and history of the area.
- 6 To establish better connections and an enhanced pedestrian experience.
- 7 To improve access to the city centre by sustainable modes of transport: walking, cycling, bus, rail and taxi.
- 8 To provide a high quality public realm and a number of attractive public spaces.
- 9 To minimise the environmental impact of new development, aiming for a low to zero carbon footprint.



Artist's impression of new St Stephens Street Gateway, existing situation inset.

Character areas

Five character areas can be identified and there are separate but related proposals for each:



Example of how the area could feel (image not of Norwich)

21st Century High Street

Extending along St Stephens Street and up Westlegate, this is the area for busy modern shops. It will provide a mixed retail offer within an attractive and contemporary streetscape; a place that is busy and vibrant but where there is opportunity to step away from the crowds and watch the world pass by from a street side café or from a bench under a canopy of trees.



Example of how the area could feel (image not of Norwich)

Timberhill Area

The area surrounding the northern ends of All Saints Green and Ber Street, Westlegate and Timberhill is rich in architectural heritage, but is blighted by Westlegate Tower. The mediaeval pattern of small plots, still evident in many places, create a unique and enticing ambience. Proposals for this area are to strengthen connections and to heal the damage caused by inappropriate uses and architecture.



Example of how the area could feel (image not of Norwich)

St Stephens Church Precinct

The development of Chapelfield has dramatically improved the setting of St Stephens Church and its churchyard. The area now experiences significant footfall leading towards the shopping centre but it is marred by the expanse of Chantry car park and the exposed backs of buildings. The open area around the church gives the area a green and airy feel but new development is required to give it stronger form and to overcome its fragmentation.



Example of how the area could feel (image not of Norwich)

Surrey Street Mixed Use Quarter

Rows of historic houses and impressive buildings like Surrey House, the Edwardian Norwich Union Offices, can be found along Surrey Street and All Saints Green. The area suffers from a lack of continuous street frontages and the juxtaposition of historic buildings with newer buildings of a different scale, such as the AVIVA offices behind Surrey House, the Mecca Bingo Hall and Norfolk Tower. There is opportunity to expand its urban qualities and establish a good mix between commercial and residential uses.



Example of how the area could feel (image not of Norwich)

Queens Road Boulevard

Queens Road forms part of the city's inner ring road and is designed to accommodate movement of vehicles through the city. The street presents an unattractive environment with car parks, vacant lots and green verges on its edge. The few remnants of the city wall suffer from traffic and a poor setting. Although it must continue to function as part of the inner ring road there is an opportunity to turn Queens Road into a green boulevard and attractive new edge to the city centre with better pedestrian crossings.

Masterplan

St Stephens Street area masterplan

An outline masterplan has been developed from the vision. It looks 20 years ahead. We are aware of the serious challenges in making ambitious changes happen in a complicated area and have therefore developed two options for some parts of the area, one more radical than the other.

The more ambitious option is shown on this board and the variations possible in the other option are shown on the last two boards.

These options are not necessarily mutually exclusive and allow for the possibility of phasing. It is important to avoid an over-provision of new retail floor space that risks damaging the vitality of other parts of the city centre. Both options are based on the same set of transport and movement proposals.

Both have the potential to deliver the following benefits:

- Significant amounts of new retail and office floorspace;
- New homes;
- More capacity for buses to drop off and pick up passengers;
- Transformation of St Stephens Street by banning general traffic to make it better for pedestrians and cyclists and to reduce congestion that delays buses and causes pollution;
- Pedestrianised Westlegate creating a busy shopping link between Marks and Spencer and John Lewis with two new public spaces at St Stephens Plain and All Saints Green;
- A route that enables people to walk directly from St Stephens Street near the entrance to Chapelfield to the bus station;
- A better walking route from the front of the Forum to Chapelfield Plain;
- A new route between Thorn Lane and the bus station passing to the back of John Lewis;
- An enhanced walking route between Westlegate, Timberhill and Castle Mall;
- A transformed gateway to the city centre at the south end of St Stephens Street with the potential to replace the roundabout and subways with surface signalised crossings;
- A tree lined Queens Road Boulevard;
- The redevelopment or refurbishment of eyesore buildings and empty or car dominated sites; and
- Retained access for motorists to car parks and other places in the city centre, although they may have to take different routes.
- Better facilities and routes for cyclists including: Queens Road paths, links from Queens Road to Chapelfield Gardens, more cycle stands and a northbound route along Golden Ball Street and beyond.



Proposed Masterplan - High Intervention Option

Proposed Land Uses



Land Use - High Intervention Option

It is proposed to extend the main shopping area to the bus station, to the east of John Lewis on Ber Street and to the west of St Stephens Churchyard.

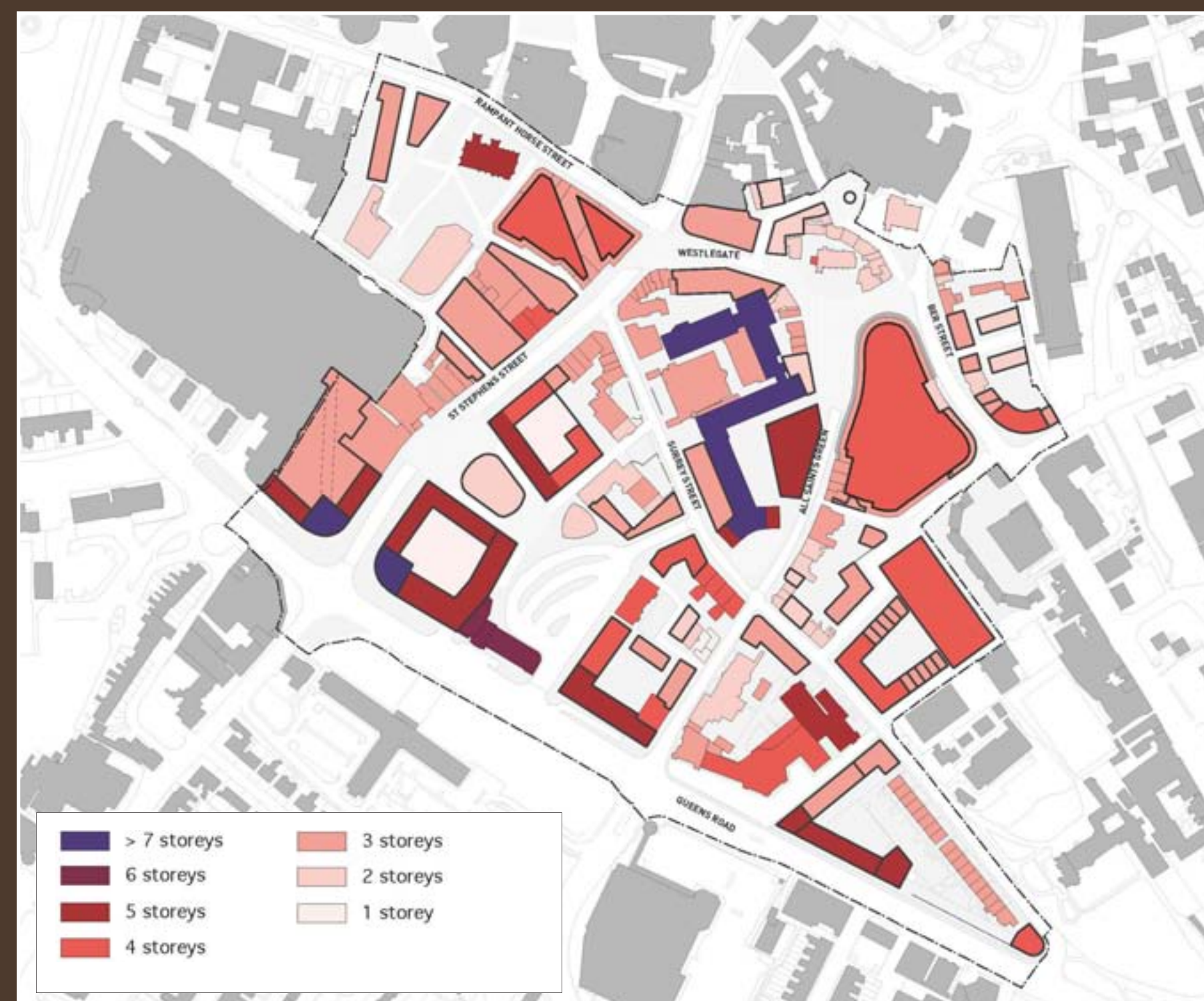
Refurbishment or redevelopment is proposed for the Co-op Department Store, Marks & Spencers and John Lewis. The new link between Westlegate and Timberhill could have small shops and cafes grouped around intimate spaces.

New food, drink and leisure uses would be concentrated around the bus station, the Chapelfield Plain / Chantry car park development site and around All Saints Green.

Office uses are concentrated along the central part of Surrey Street and between St Stephens Street and the bus station.

New residential uses are located in the upper floors overlooking St Stephens Street, the bus station and along Surrey Street.

Proposed Heights



Building Heights - High Intervention Option

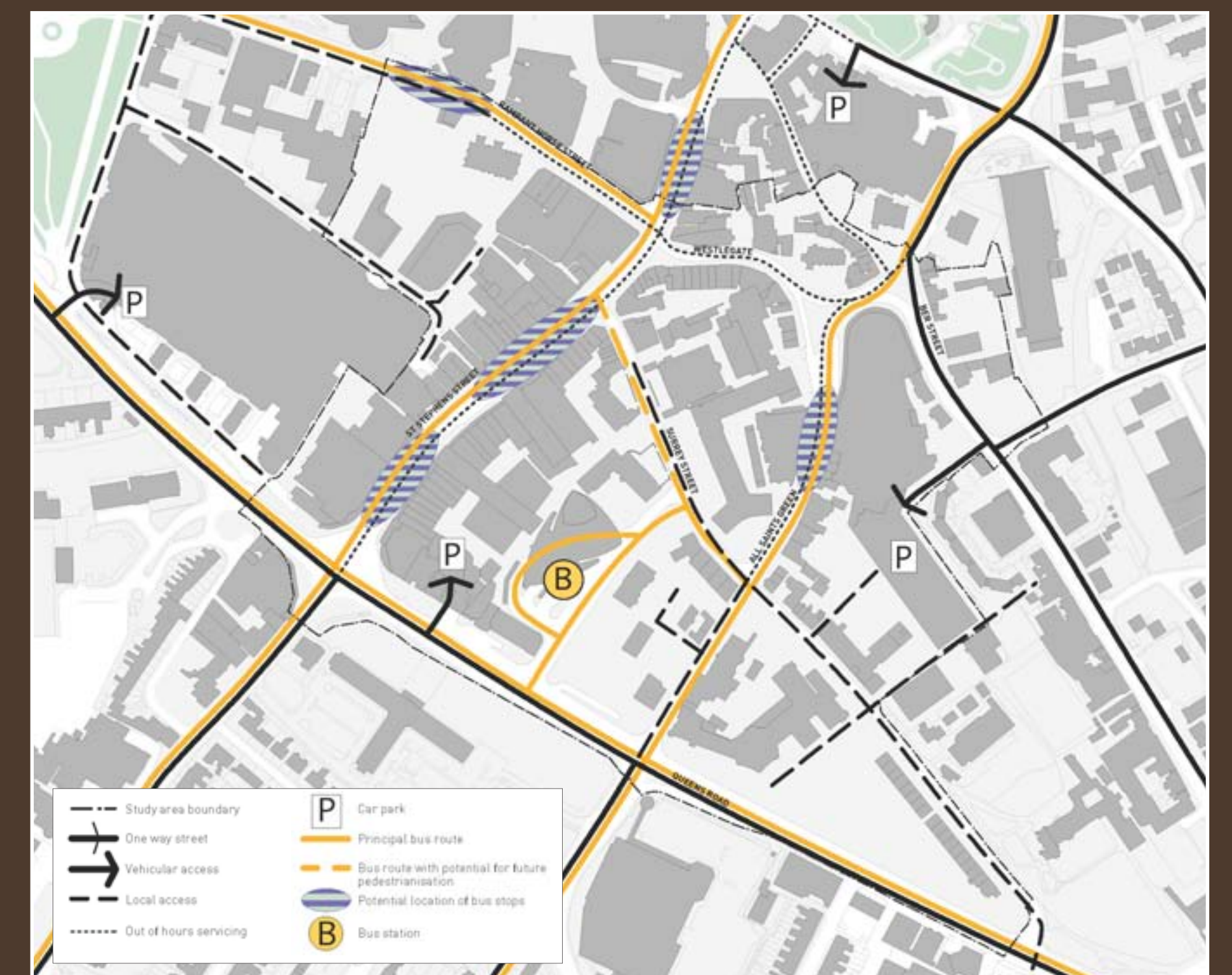
The height of proposed development relates to its context reinforcing the historic pattern and ensuring a coherent townscape.

In many areas new infill development will have a height of three storeys. This includes new development on the Westlegate to Timberhill link, Ber Street and Surrey Street.

Along Queens Road a height of five storeys is appropriate to respond to the scale of the corridor. The gateway at St Stephens Street is marked with a seven-storey landmark.

Westlegate Tower is removed, which significantly enhances the setting of All Saints Centre, Cappacios and Timberhill.

Transport



Proposed Street Function

The City and County Councils are working together on transport planning for the city to support the growth of the wider area. The plans will build on successful projects like the new bus station and the pedestrianisation of St Georges Street to create up to six fast bus routes into the centre, improve walking and cycling and relieve congestion.

The St Stephens masterplan will fit with the transport planning for the wider area. It will be difficult to implement many of the measures and therefore we cannot be sure at this stage which can happen. Some of the measures also rely on construction of the northern distributor road. We are not asking for your detailed views on the transport proposals as part of this consultation. There will be detailed consultation on the transport plans during the autumn.

Options

For the 21st Century High Street, the Timberhill Area and the St Stephens Church Precinct.

St Stephens Street



Higher Intervention Lower Intervention

Higher Intervention

- Redevelop the Co-op Store with new retail space and provide a potential new entrance into the Chapelfield Shopping Centre
- New residential and commercial development providing a gateway to St Stephens Street at Queens Road
- Change St Stephens Street to bus-only and improve its street design
- Demolish St Stephens Towers and the NCP car park and replace them with two development blocks with basement parking, retail on the ground floor, and residential and commercial uses above
- Establish a new link lined with shops between St Stephens Street and the bus station and featuring a new public space that is served by café and restaurant uses within a new pavilion building
- Widen One Post Alley and provide new retail uses on both sides to make it a better pedestrian link with Chantry Road and Chapelfield Gardens

Lower Intervention

As above but differs on the southern side of the street with:

- Refurbish the St Stephens Street Towers, the retail podium, and provide an external facelift to the NCP car park
- Create a link through to the bus station lined with shops and cafes and create a small public space at St Stephens Street
- Refurbish shops and remove canopies on the west side of the street



Westlegate



Higher Intervention Lower Intervention



Higher Intervention

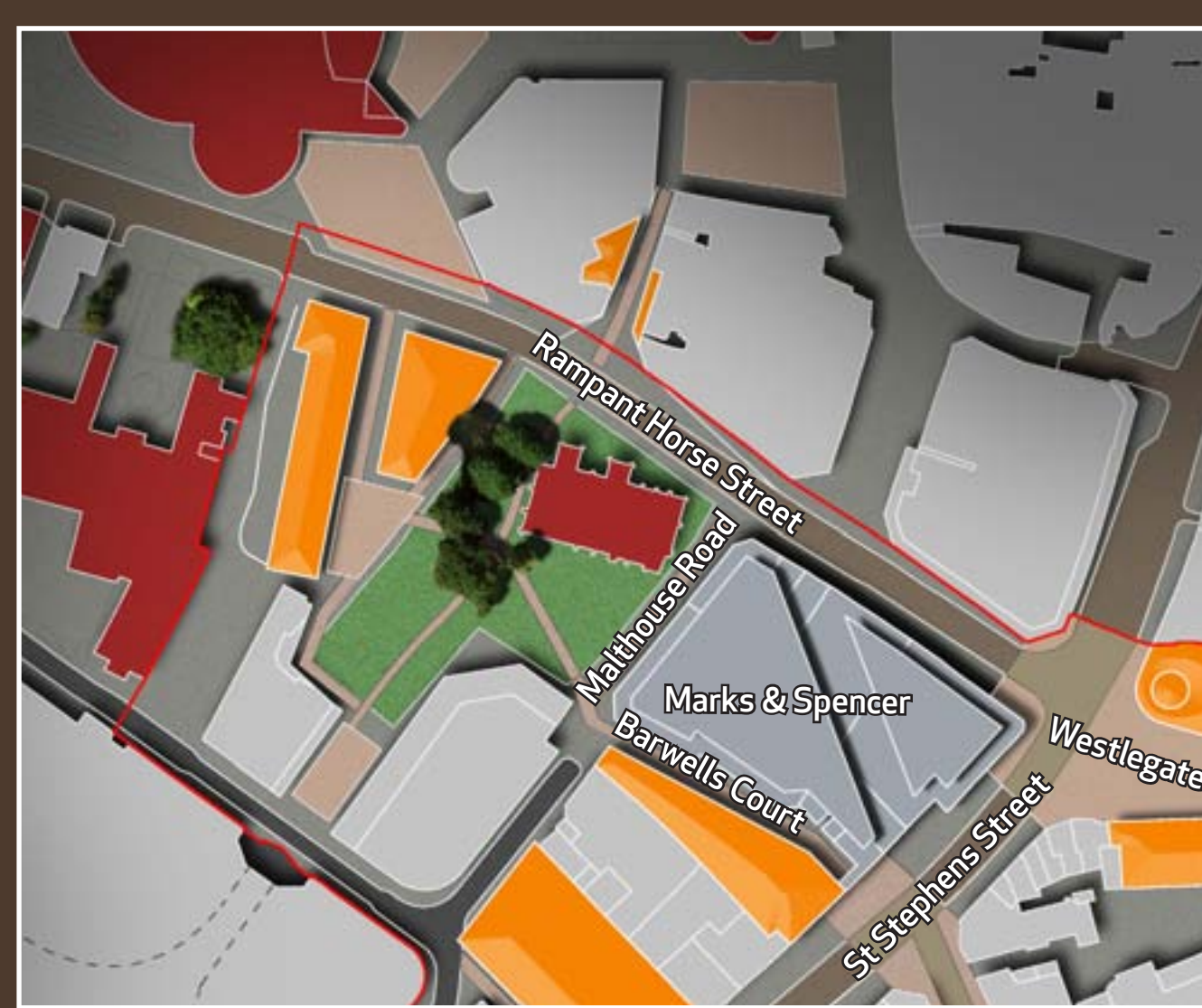
- Pedestrianise Westlegate and create a high quality public realm that completely transforms the feel of this street
- Widen the western end of Westlegate to create a new public space on St Stephens Street and open up views to the John Lewis store
- Redevelop the buildings on the corner of St Stephens Street and Westlegate to create a prominent feature at the end of the vista along St Stephens Street,
- Remove Westlegate Tower and create a new retail link with smaller shops through to Timberhill and the square next to the Castle Mall entrance, this will add liveliness to Timberhill and reconnect this area with the main retail core
- Promote the redevelopment of the southern side of Westlegate
- Close All Saints Green outside John Lewis for general traffic, only allowing buses to pass through, to improve pedestrian movement between Westlegate and John Lewis
- Create a high quality public square in All Saints Green as a gathering space that invites sitting out, meeting and street festivals
- Promote a new entrance pavilion for the AVIVA offices that completes the building line
- Establish a kiosk outside the Castle Mall entrance that animates this space at Timberhill

Lower Intervention

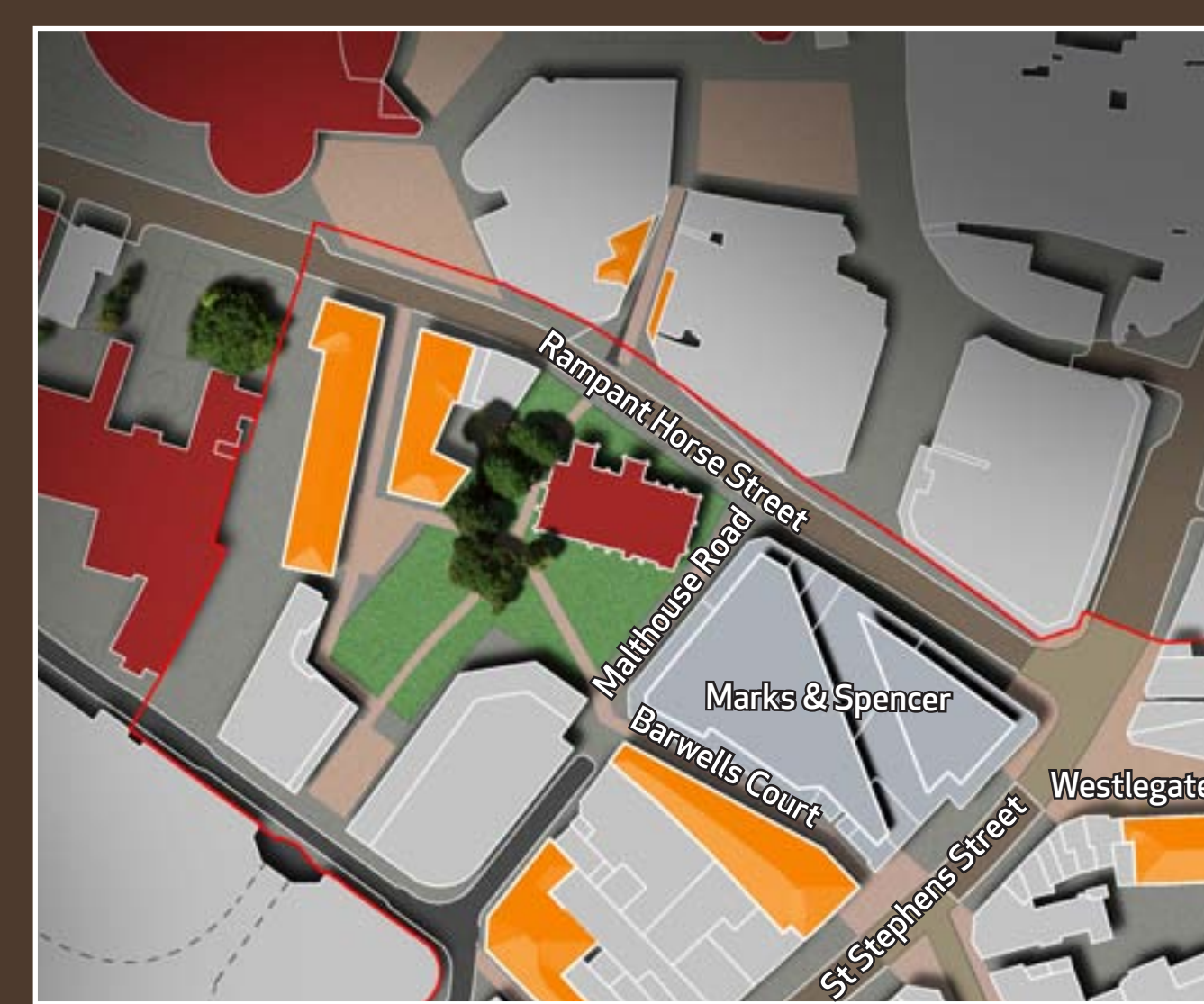
As Higher Intervention but differs with:

- The retention of the buildings on the corner of St Stephens Street and Westlegate
- The redevelopment of Westlegate Tower site with a more modest proposal that offers a reduced retail potential and a less direct route.

St Stephens Church Precinct



Higher Intervention



Lower Intervention

Higher Intervention

- Redevelop Chantry car park with retail, café and restaurant uses on the ground floor to expand the leisure focus around this area, this includes the removal of the office building on Theatre Street next to the church
- Create a new pedestrian street that links Millennium Plain with Chapelfield Plain
- Establish a small south-facing square that provides a pleasant sitting out experience just off the main pedestrian route and next to the churchyard
- Create a pedestrian path that leads from the churchyard directly to this space

- Promote the refurbishment or partial redevelopment of the Marks and Spencer store with a new front towards Malthouse Road
- Promote the widening of Barwells Court and provide new retail uses

Lower Intervention

The difference is:

The retention of the office building on Theatre Street and its wrapping by the Chantry car park development.



Artist's impression of the new link between St Stephens Street and the bus station (existing situation above)

Options

For the Surrey Street Mixed Use Quarter and the Queens Road Boulevard

Ber Street to Surrey Street



Higher Intervention Lower Intervention

Higher Intervention

- Create the opportunity to refurbish or part redevelop and expand the John Lewis Store to ensure its continued success
- Develop a new gateway at the eastern corner of the store to welcome people arriving from Thorn Lane via the new river bridge to the station
- Create a new pedestrian route linking Thorn Lane with All Saints Green
- Physically separate the multi storey car park from John Lewis, and extend its opening times to support evening activities in the area
- Remove Norfolk Tower and build new houses and flats of a sympathetic scale and height to the context of the terraces on All Saints Green to add to the residential mix in the city centre
- Provide development at Surrey Grove that further animates and overlooks this route



Lower Intervention

This differs in the following areas:

- The current John Lewis multi-storey car park is retained, and a well-lit, direct pedestrian route leads through the ground floor of the car park to link with All Saints Green and Surrey Grove
- Norfolk Tower is retained, refurbished and extended to better define Surrey Grove

Junction All Saints Green with Surrey Street



Higher Intervention



Lower Intervention

Higher Intervention

- Repair the street frontages with commercial development that better encloses the street space along All Saints Green and Surrey Street
- Change the alignment of the entrance of the bus station from Surrey Street to better serve people arriving from the east
- Create a new public space to the south of the AVIVA offices as a local focus and amenity space inviting for lunch breaks

Lower Intervention

Differs in that the green space at the junction of Surrey Street and All Saints Green is preserved.

Bus Station Area



Intervention

- Complete the block east of the bus station with development that sits to the back of footways and strongly defines the street space, integrating the historic development
- Provide a mix of flats and houses to support a diverse resident population
- Establish a shared route through the block and create an internal amenity space for residents

Queens Road Boulevard



Intervention

- Transform the street into a tree lined boulevard with wide footways and direct pedestrian crossings
- Replace the roundabout at St Stephens Street with a cross road junction with signalised pedestrian crossings



Surrey Street South Area

Intervention

Create a defined street block to complete the terraces with a mix of residential and commercial development that protects their sides and backs.



Artist's impression of Westgate, view towards John Lewis (existing situation above)