

Future Place - North Northamptonshire Midland Road, Wellingborough

Landscape and Green Infrastructure-led placemaking

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Wellingborough - a place to wander?



This place has been imagined by some antiquaries to derive its name from the Teutonic Vandalen, or from the Saxon to wander, whence Vandali, Wandalens and Wendelens.

The History and Antiquities of Wellingborough, John Cole, 1837

Consult the genius of the place in all

Epistle IV to Lord Burlington. Alexander Pope, 1731

Wanderer above a sea of fog

Caspar David Friedrich, ca. 1818

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01 Introduction

Future Place North Northamptonshire

Landscape/green infrastructure-led placemaking

This illustrated strategy was prepared by Fereday Pollard Architects in December 2019 as the output from the RIBA Future Place – North Northamptonshire initiative.

About Future Place

The Future Place programme run by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), Local Government Association (LGA), Homes England and Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) - was a 3-month joint project to unlock place-making potential at local level through quality in design, future thinking, and knowledge sharing. The programme was designed to promote best practice and the potential of innovative delivery, design and funding models, cross-sector collaborations, capacity building, and knowledge sharing at a local level. Five local authorities across England participated, with their own dedicated design teams selected through a RIBA competition.

About North Northamptonshire

North Northamptonshire comprises five partner local authorities (Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering, Wellingborough, and Northamptonshire County Council), currently moving towards the formation of a unitary authority. It has had a North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee and Joint Planning Unit (NNJPU) since 2004, combined in 2017 with a delivery unit forming the Joint Planning and Deliver Unit (NNJDPU). The Joint Core Strategy was adopted in July 2016 and takes a place shaping approach to development. The study has benefitted from the input of Borough Council of Wellingborough [BCW] in addition to NNJDPU officers.

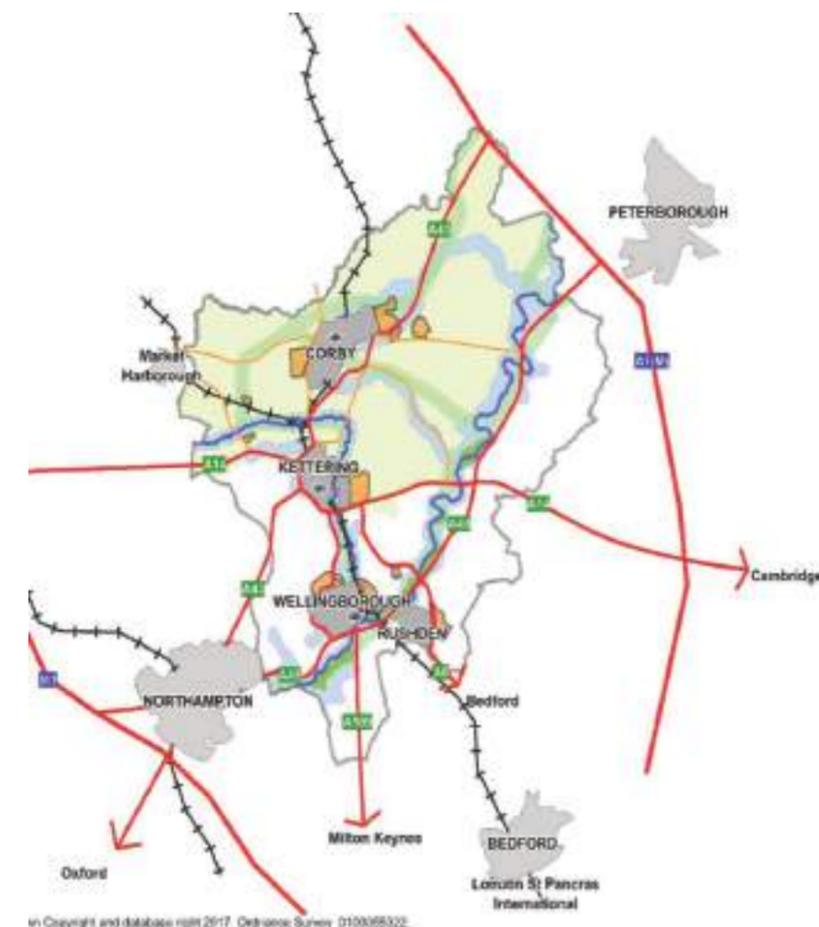
Vision

NNJDPU's ambitious growth strategy is to build 40,000 homes between 2011 and 2031 to increase the population by 25% and create high quality Sustainable Urban Extensions. North Northamptonshire's vision is to create an interconnected green network of urban and rural areas, to support a high quality of life and prosperous economy. All partners and stakeholders are keen to see the clear integration of the new communities with the existing built up form, and the key theme selected for NNJDPU's Future Place strategy was Landscape/Green Infrastructure-led Placemaking

7000 of the new homes will be delivered at Wellingborough. While the focus of the Future Place study is a historic radial route linking the town centre with one of the new communities, the aim is to include design principles that can apply elsewhere in North Northamptonshire.

About Fereday Pollard Architects

FPA is a multidisciplinary practice of architects, landscape architects and urban designers, London-based but working throughout the UK and internationally. Through our particular expertise in infrastructure, we recognise the need to consider place and context within the wider environment and believe that the integration between buildings and their physical and social setting is critical to successful places and public facilities.



Wellingborough and other North Northamptonshire Growth Towns and their rail and major road connections

Wellingborough and Stanton Cross

A brief portrait

Wellingborough is a historic market town of around 80,000 inhabitants. Like the other North Northamptonshire 'growth towns' Kettering, Corby, Rushden and nearby smaller communities, Wellingborough is expanding. Of the 7000 new homes planned here, 3600 will be in Stanton Cross, the 'sustainable urban extension' on the town's eastern edge, now under construction.

Under 50 minutes by train from Kings Cross St Pancras, the development is likely to attract families moving out of London to enjoy a greener, healthier and more affordable lifestyle. Commutability will also boost employment and start up businesses in the zones designated as mixed-use near the station.

Wellingborough is a charming place, though showing signs of high street decline like many other UK towns and occasionally blighted by poor-quality urban interventions from past decades. Its historic built fabric is outstanding. It takes justifiable pride in its abundant green space and rural setting. In addition to the important green infrastructure corridors of the Nene river valley to the south and Ise valley to the east [between Wellingborough and Stanton Cross], a swathe of open space runs almost uninterrupted along the Swanspool Brook west to east through the middle of town.

Planning strategies promote wider sustainability including sustainable transport to reduce the dominance of the car, which is one of the town's major disadvantages - a barrier to an interconnected green network of urban and rural areas that deters walking and cycling, contributes to air pollution and colonises space, detracting from the town's attractiveness.

The focus of the Future Place project is to enhance the pedestrian and cycle experience of Midland Road, the radial road linking town centre to railway station and potentially the most direct route to Stanton Cross. The station will become a key node and transport hub between existing and new towns. But the railway line, historically the eastern edge of Wellingborough, now severs sustainable movement between the two communities, since the connecting infrastructure planned is predicated on the car.



WHEN
YOU'RE
HERE
YOU'RE
CONNECTED



Extract from Stanton Cross marketing material; Wellingborough from Stanton Cross; Castle Fields park; Swansgate Shopping Centre.; Midland Road; Market Street

Wellingborough and Stanton Cross



Stanton Cross masterplan overlaid on aerial photograph of Wellingborough, with the railway line dividing the two. The railway station is marked as a yellow dot.

02 Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Midland Road is one of Wellingborough's historic radial routes, running east from the town centre to the railway station.

Its role is radically changing. With the development of Stanton Cross, a sustainable urban extension of 3600 new homes east of the railway across the Ise valley, the station, formerly the terminus of Midland Road on the edge of town, will become a key node at the mid-point of the route connecting the old market town with its new community.

The original scope of the project was to propose enhancements for pedestrians and cyclists to Midland Road, as a radial route linking to an urban extension, with design principles that could apply equally to other existing routes earmarked as the connections between town centres and new satellite developments elsewhere in North Northamptonshire.

Following site visits and analysis of existing quality and character, and also of the development in construction, consented or proposed under the Stanton Cross masterplan for the area around and to the east of the station, it became obvious that the radial route, for non-motorists, connects very poorly with the urban extension, via a detour through a heavily traffic dominated environment that will not achieve the local planning policy aspiration for a 'modal shift' in transport towards walking and cycling and away from reliance on the car. In addition, although the railway station is the key gateway to the expanding town, proposed designs for its environs are also dominated by vehicles and parking. They offer little sense of place or of welcome to Wellingborough, and risk detracting from the natural setting of the Ise valley, a unique selling point for both the town and Stanton Cross.

It was agreed with the local authority client body that the scope could usefully expand to explore, as well as environmental improvements to the existing route, more radical preliminary ideas - which might include an ambitious new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the railway - to address the barriers to connectivity between Midland Road and Wellingborough station and the changing context. These high-level initial concepts take a place-making approach and are presented as a sketch masterplan marrying public

realm with possible residential and business start-up mixed use redevelopment around the station.

Based on analysis of urban design issues, potential improvements to the currently unprepossessing 'town gateway' at the western end of Midland Road are identified, for consideration by the separately-appointed Town Centre Vision team. The study proposes walking, cycling and landscape enhancements to the main length of Midland Road, and also to the three streets that could provide excellent access to the swathe of urban Green Infrastructure along the Swanspool Brook, tantalisingly close just to the south, an opportunity that is at present disregarded.

The design concepts are preliminary and have evolved without the benefit of detailed information or extensive conversations with stakeholders. They range from 'quick wins', comparatively inexpensive and easy to achieve, to aspirational long-term opportunities requiring thorough investigation and the input of all partners. They are shown on plan and collated into an annotated matrix to aid future discussions, categorised by comparative cost, implementation speed and level of impact.

Based on the 'lessons learned' from this project and relevant guidance, the study lists strategic recommendations and urban design principles that could apply to other radial routes throughout North Northamptonshire. It concludes with suggestions for next steps and notes on funding challenges and potential opportunities.

The study is structured as follows

- A broad overview of relevant key planning policies and strategies
- Quality and character analysis of Midland Road
- Review of development under construction, consented and proposed around the station
- Summary of issues, assessment against long-term aspirations, and opportunities
- Focus areas and proposals -
 - Midland Road 'Town Gateway'
 - Main stretch of Midland Road
 - Streets linking to Green Infrastructure
 - A vision for the station environment west and east of the railway
- Matrix of potential projects
- Design Principles and application to other radial routes
- Next steps



Long-term aspiration for Midland Road

03 Project Aims

Project Aims - Landscape and Green Infrastructure-led placemaking

The project aims are to

- Improve the quality + character of a key radial route linking town centre, train station and new communities
- Improve pedestrian + cycle access and maintaining traffic flows
- Enhance overall quality + character including tree planting, active frontages and air quality
- Create safe, pleasant, lively + characterful streets for all
- Deliver wider health, Green Infrastructure, environmental + economic benefits
- Draw on best practice examples from UK and elsewhere

The project outcomes are

- Based on analysis + principles of Joint Core Strategy + Urban Structures Study
- To provide initial interventions – ‘quick wins’ to kick-start process
- To focus on an initial route, with principles applicable to others
- Will be developed in collaboration with the local authority as client

04 Background - Planning Policies + Strategies

Key Policies + Strategies

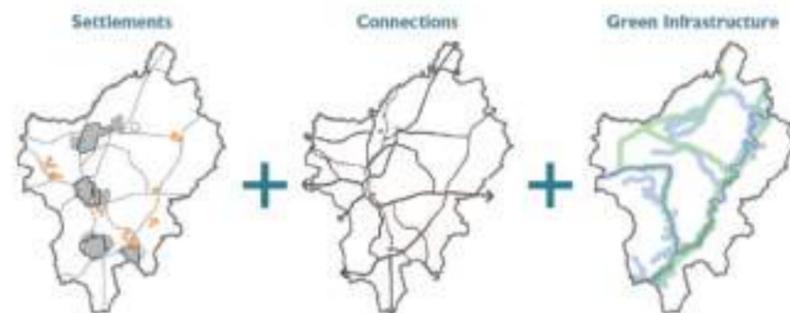
Joint Core Strategy 2011 - 2031

North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee and Joint Planning and Delivery Unit (NNJPDU) produced a strategic Part 1 Local Plan, the Joint Core Strategy [JCS], adopted in July 2016.

The vision of the JCS is that North Northamptonshire will be a *showpiece for modern green living and ... sustainable development; increased ... ability to adapt to... climate change and ... global economic changes... special mixed urban-rural character ... maintained through urban-focused growth supporting a strong network of vibrant and regenerated settlements, which each maintain their ... distinct character within an enhanced green framework of living, working countryside.*

The 'outcomes' to which the JCS aspires include - distinctive environments where local cultural and natural character is respected and enhanced, more walkable places, vibrant well-connected towns and countryside, thriving towns, a balance of sustainable development with local jobs and an enhanced quality of life for all.

The vision and outcomes combine with a suite of policies to set out a strongly place-shaping and spatial approach to development at all scales. Protecting and enhancing the region's cultural, historic and landscape assets and biodiversity, the spatial policies aim to deliver sustainable, high

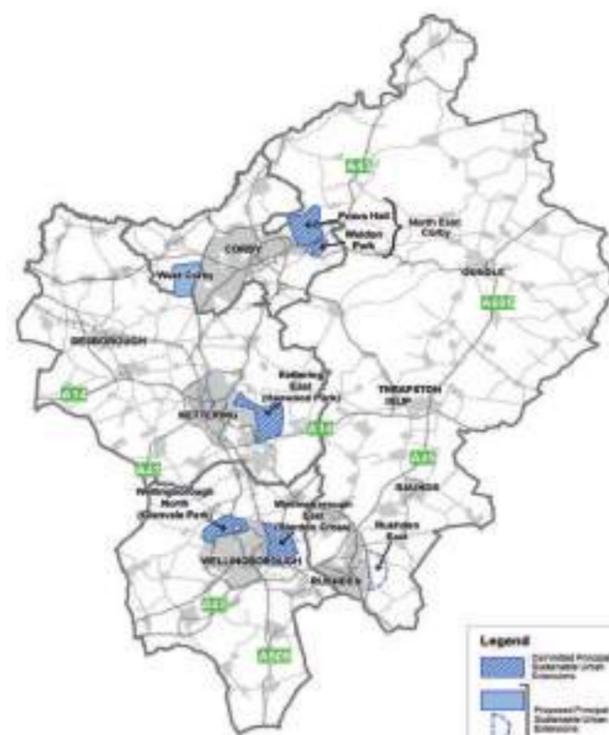


Components of the North Northamptonshire Spatial Strategy

quality development to establish a strong network of urban and rural areas, improve connections between them with reduced reliance on the car, and enhance the Green Infrastructure framework.

The policies provide specific Place Shaping Principles, many focusing on connectivity between existing and new developments through legible, safe, green and pleasant streets and spaces to foster active, healthy communities and a good quality of life.

The JCS also identifies Sustainable Urban Extensions [SUEs] - large mixed use developments integrated with the larger existing 'Growth Towns' - as key to delivering growth. The connection between Wellingborough and the SUE of Stanton Cross is the subject of this Future Place study, but several of its findings and recommendations can apply equally to other urban expansions.



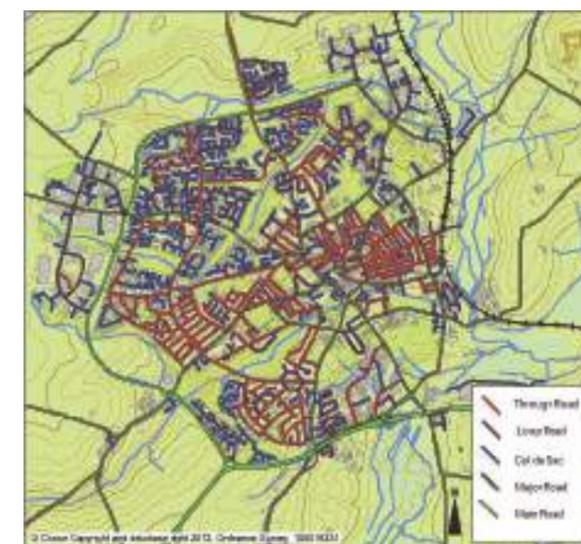
Principal Sustainable Urban Extensions

Urban Structure Study 2015

The USS informs the JCS and is the basis for many of its Place Shaping Principles. It analyses the spatial framework, land use, and in particular, movement and transport patterns of 12 North Northamptonshire towns, with the aim of removing barriers to connectivity within towns and between urban and rural areas to enhance social, economic and environmental performance and also explores the key role of public spaces.

The USS envisages that North Northamptonshire's towns will be *vibrant places where it is easy and pleasant to get around, where people can access what they need or where they work easily, where people choose to walk, cycle or take public transport rather than to drive, and where each town retains its local distinctiveness and has a strong, positive sense of place.* To achieve this vision, the USS sets down 3 principles -

- Well connected places - to the centre, through the suburban periphery and to the countryside edge
- Mixing up land uses and
- Streets for All - designed to be safe, pleasant, lively and characterful



Wellingborough - Route Structure

Key Policies + Strategies

The study identifies the historic 'radial routes' as the most important in improving access to the urban centres and recommends improving their safety and ease of use for walking, cycling and public transport, enhancing their quality from centre to edge as green approaches to town, removing barriers and maximising direct linkage with adjacent street networks and relationship with new development. It also emphasises the need to remove the severance between town and countryside created by major infrastructure, typically high speed roads, which also obstruct good connectivity between established and new developments on the urban fringe. Site-specific landscape and urban design solutions and sensitive planning of the rural edge are required to address existing problems and avoid replicating them in future.

The USS supports boosting the 'offer' and mix of uses in town centres as the most connected locations. Local centres and community facilities should be on the most accessible streets to reduce car journeys, and mixed use development at human scale incorporating through-routes should be favoured over employment zones dominated by large warehouse blocks.



USS
example of a
radial route
hostile to
non-
vehicular
users
[Kettering]

Streets for all should be 'sticky streets' - where, *as you move along it, you are constantly enticed to slow down, stop and enjoy*. This entails a step-change in the approach to streetscape design, as environments to encourage walking, cycling and public transport rather than primarily as vehicular highways. As well as being safe, with reduced speeds where appropriate, streets should be well-connected, animated by active frontage, have distinctive character and be legible and beautiful, with tree planting and other public realm enhancements. The USS recommends redesign to humanise the key radial routes to rebalance place and movement functions.

The USS recommends improvements to the 6 historic radial routes in Wellingborough and further design to address the major infrastructure barriers at the edge of town, compounded by development that turns its back to the rural setting. It notes that ***the radial link out to the proposed extension to the east ... has potential to be very strong and fit in with the existing town pattern, provided that excellent access across the railway lines can be achieved to promote walking and cycling access.*** Neighbourhoods need to be more walkable and there is a need to create better first impressions of the town through 'gateways' at key accesses.



USS
precedent
image of
main route
for walking
and cycling,
Seville

The Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough, Adopted Plan 2019

While the Joint Core Strategy forms part 1 of the local plan, policies specific to the town and its surroundings are contained in Part 2, the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough [PBW].

Several policies aim to maintain the town centre as the primary focus for town centre uses, despite competition from the new out of town shopping centre at Rushden Lakes and from 'e-tailing'. The PBW embodies several recommendations of the **Town Centre and Retail Study** [WYG, 2016]. No immediate additional 'comparison' goods [occasional non-food purchases] floorspace is envisaged, but the need to enhance the offer, diversify uses and fill vacant units is recognised through policies to establish a town centre boundary and retail hierarchy, promote the improvement of the market and upgrade shop fronts. The retail study also suggested the creation of attractive 'gateways' for legibility and to foster a positive image. Parking numbers are protected [unless no long term demand is demonstrated], as free parking attracts consumers, though only 63% of the 2500 off-street spaces in the centre are occupied at any time, compared to the 85% threshold beyond which cars searching for spaces increase congestion. The policy to provide high quality, well-connected public realm is based on a comprehensive **Public Realm Strategy** with materials palette, adopted as an SPD in 2009. All town centre initiatives must respect and enhance the historic environment and Conservation Area.

Design principles are set out for the Sustainable Urban Extensions at Wellingborough East [Stanton Cross], including requirements for safe and convenient access for all modes of transport between the site, existing town and wider transport network, with reduced reliance on the car, and a multi-modal interchange at the railway station incorporating bus and cycle facilities and respecting the setting of the listed building. Stanton Cross is to include a new secondary, as well as primary schools, and employment uses will be accommodated at 'Station Island' and masterplan zones to its north and south, helping integrate old and new communities and creating movement between them.

Key Policies + Strategies

Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure [GI] is a network of 'multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities' [National Planning Policy Framework]. It includes, but is not limited to, public open space, and incorporates a mosaic of different natural and man-made landscapes and features, urban and rural, with 'blue infrastructure' comprising river systems and lakes. Its multi-functional essence enables it to tackle a range of critical issues, for instance public health and wellbeing, social cohesion, food and energy security, carbon sequestration, climate change and microclimate mitigation, flood management and biodiversity. Green Infrastructure can often meet social, environmental and economic objectives more cost-effectively and resiliently than conventional 'grey' infrastructure. More information can be found in the Landscape Institute's Position Statement.

GI is given great weight in North Northamptonshire's planning policy. The enhancement of the GI framework is one of the three key place shaping themes of the JCS, which identifies a network of sub-regional corridors, among them the Nene and Ise Valleys [a designated NIA - Nature Improvement Area - and in part a Ramsar site and Special Protection Area of international importance for waterfowl]. Policies aim to attract investment

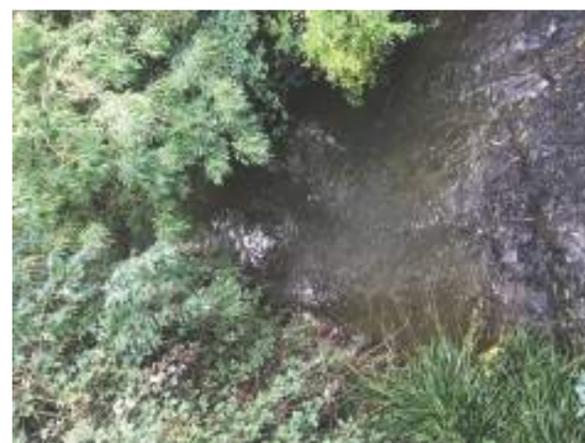
to strengthen natural assets, improve visual and physical linkages and the relationship of development and public realm with the rivers while protecting sensitive areas, provide strategic recreation trails and develop the tourist potential of adjacent towns like Wellingborough as gateways.

The USS calls for GI corridors to be strengthened and harnessed to enhance access and movement networks and promotes the use of urban trees and pocket landscapes to create green streets linking larger open spaces.

Wellingborough's local plan contains many measures to protect, enhance and create new GI and open space. The town prides itself on its green setting. The Nene valley is to its south and the Ise valley to its east, between the town and the masterplan area at Stanton Cross, which will deliver a new country park along the Ise. A swathe of high quality green space along the Swanspool Brook contributes significantly to the amenity of the town centre, though to the east Castle Fields park is disconnected by roads and car parks and the railway and housing sever continuity with the Ise Valley. Wellingborough's historic radial routes are typically lined by handsome mature large street trees [limes], but in places these are now fragmentary.



Nene Valley NIA Vision graphic, Wildlife Trust BCN



Right, top- Wellingborough Green Infrastructure; below - Castle Fields park



Left, Swanspool Brook

Key Policies + Strategies

Walking and Cycling

Local planning policy strongly promotes a 'modal shift' from reliance on the car towards sustainable and active transport. The Urban Structures Study emphasises streets as attractive environments, not just vehicular highways, and the Manual for Streets [Departments of Transport, Communities and Local Government] identifies the need to change from a purely 'movement' to a 'place' based definition of streets.

Northamptonshire's Walking and Cycling Strategies [2013], part of an overall Transportation Plan which aims to be 'Fit for Purpose' for the sustainable growth of the county, note the high use of the car locally. A quarter of all journeys are less than 1 mile, where walking should be the preferred mode of travel, but a quarter of car trips are less than 2 miles and two thirds of them under 5 miles. Cycling to work is only around 2% in Northamptonshire, against 8% in Bristol - and 28% in Cambridge.

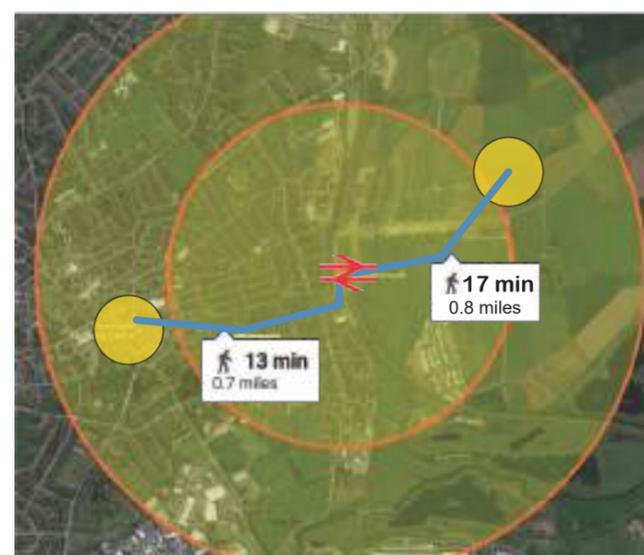
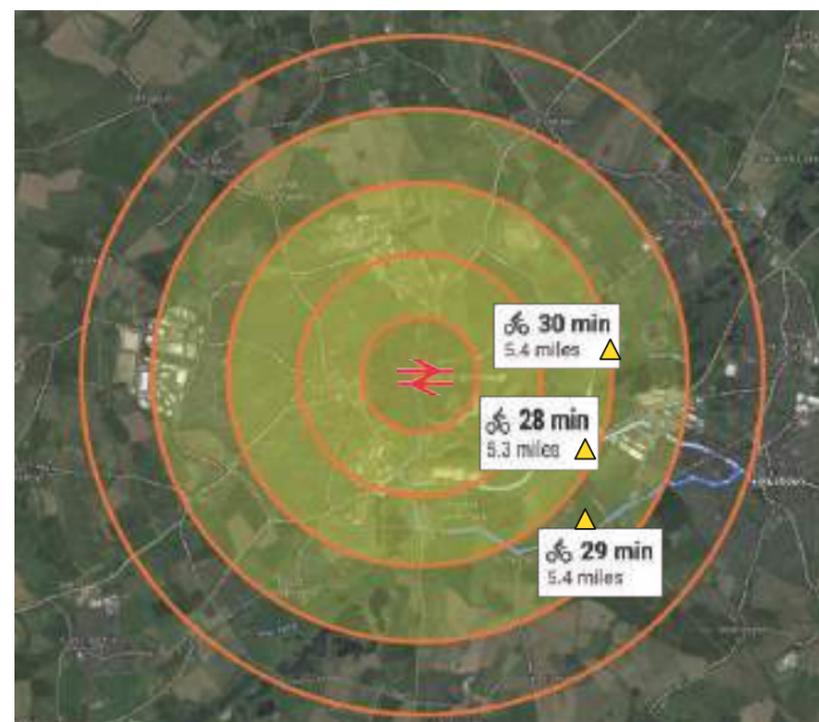
Wellingborough is fairly flat. Walking or cycling should be the automatic choice for short trips. In 30 minutes, it is possible to cycle well beyond the town and into the surrounding countryside [eg to Irchester or the edges of Rushden]. The town centre is only a 13 minute walk from the station [4 minutes by bike]. From the station to the new Stanton Cross community centre via a direct footpath would take 17 minutes on foot [5 minute cycle.]

And yet, according to Northampton's cycling app, Wellingborough currently has only 63 cyclists!

[<https://www.pct.bike/m/?r=northamptonshire>]

If unrestrained, the Transport Strategies predict that traffic levels could double over the next 20 years, increasing congestion, particularly in town centres, poor air quality and related environmental and health problems. The modal shift targets to be achieved by 2031 are -

- A **reduction of 5% in single occupancy car journeys to work** from the existing towns
- A **reduction of 20% in single occupancy car journeys to work** from new developments

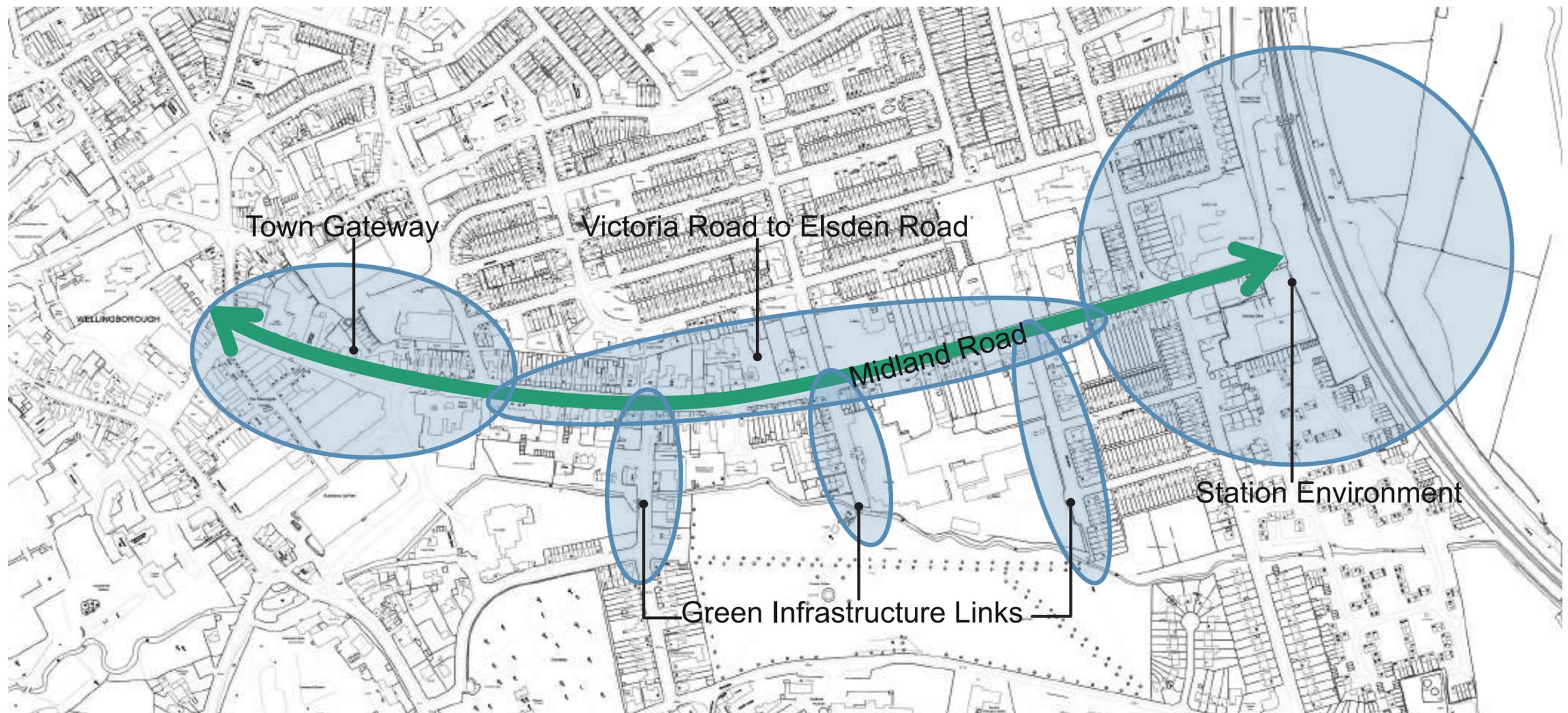


The Strategies recognise the quality of the environment as a key factor in encouraging walking and cycling. In addition to concerns about road accidents, an unattractive environment is a key deterrent to sustainable transport, exacerbated by ingrained transport habits, misconceptions and lack of awareness.

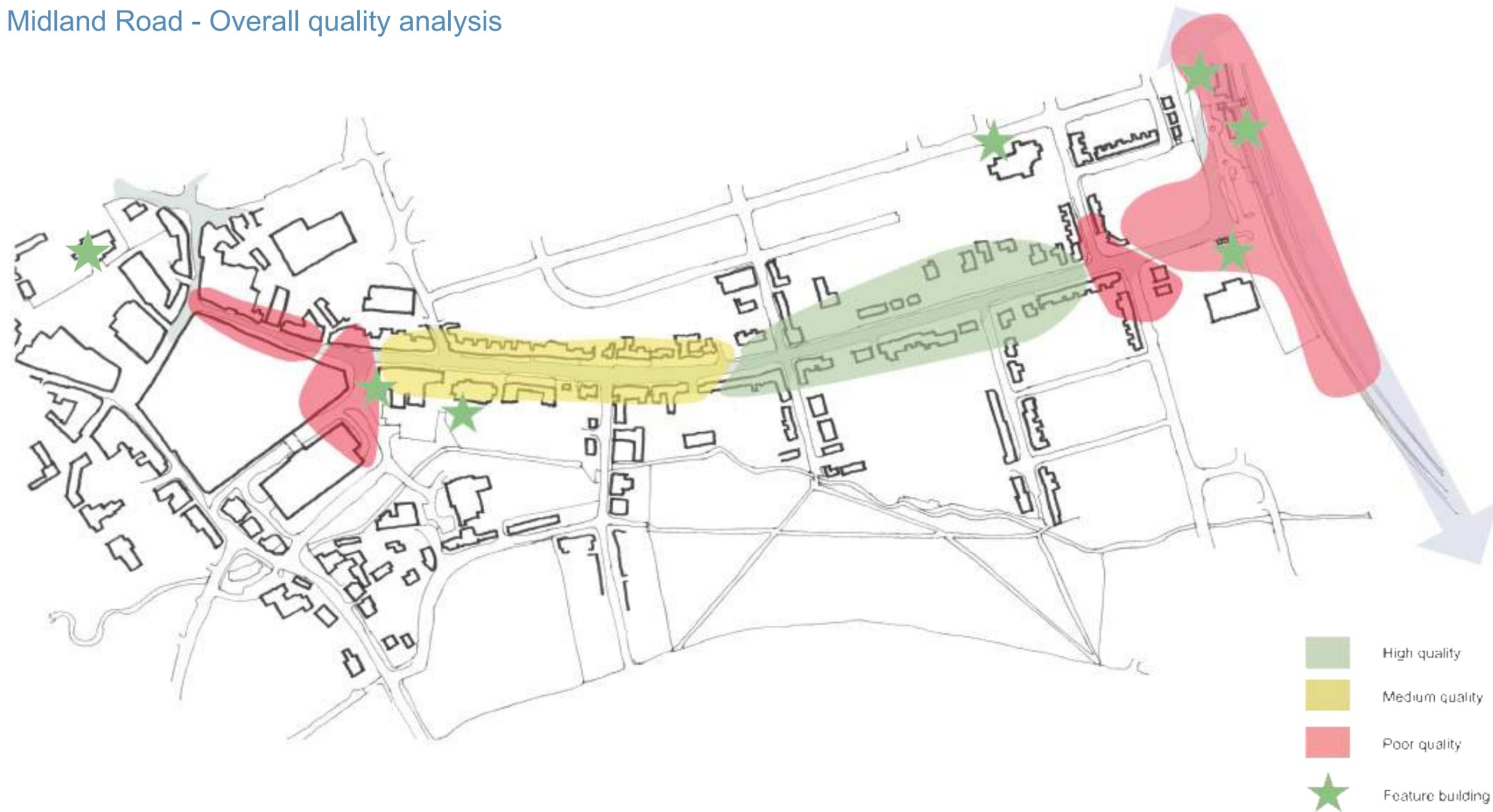
Cycling [above] and walking [below] distances from Wellingborough station; poster inviting purchasers to drive to Stanton Cross; diagram from Northamptonshire Walking Strategy

05 Appraisal + Analysis - Midland Road West to East

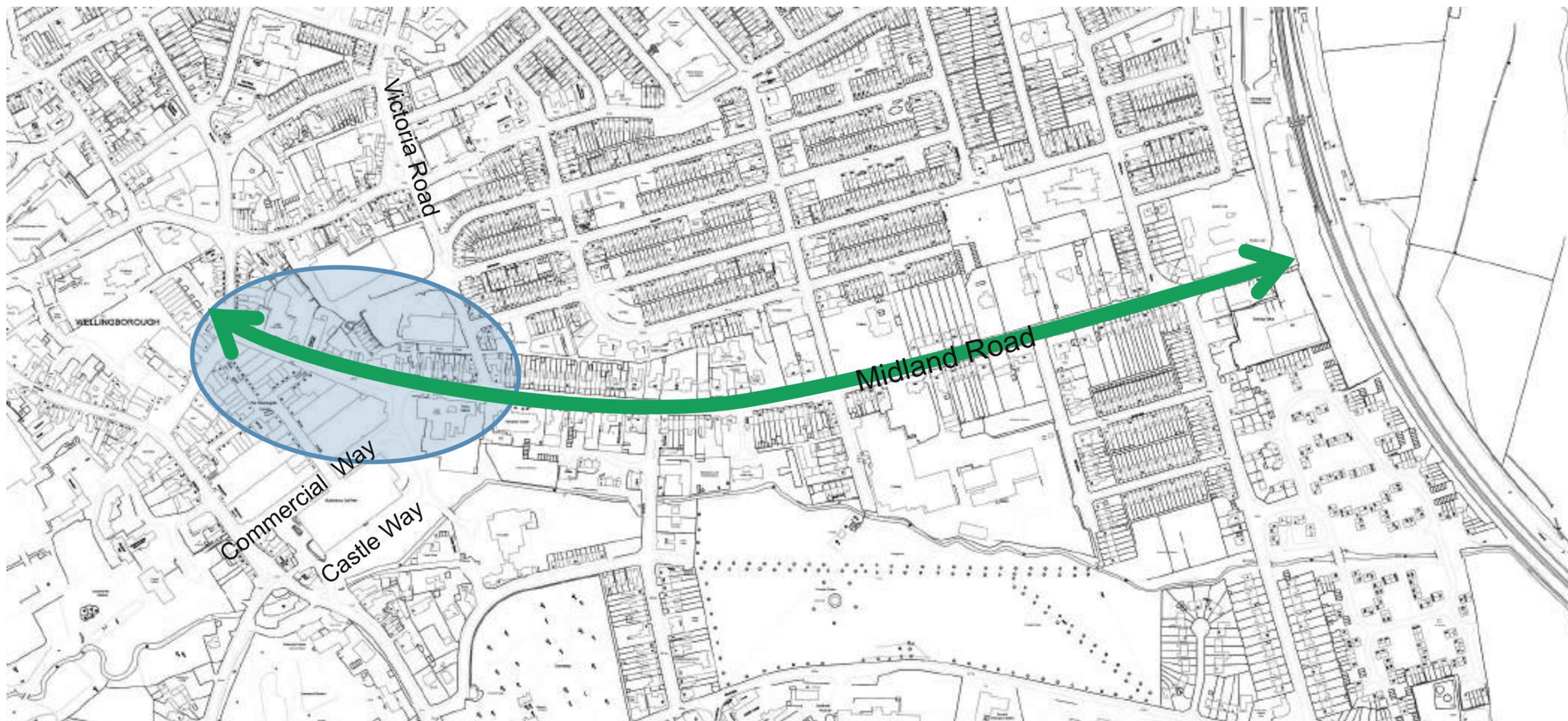
Midland Road - 4 Character Zones identified



Midland Road - Overall quality analysis



Town Gateway



Town Gateway

The Swanspool shopping centre constitutes an internal street that has the unfortunate effect of sucking life from the outdoors. Its frontage to much of the west end of Midland Road is dead wall.

Approaching from the east, it presents an unattractive facade at a key gateway to the town centre. There is no sense of arrival. As the team appointed to develop Wellingborough's Town Centre Vision concurs, the scene suggests 'edge of town', not a gateway to the historic centre. Legibility is poor, exacerbated by the open junction with Castle Way/ Commercial Way, which lacks definition, is extremely wide and dominated by the double-width highways and associated traffic and paraphernalia, putting the blank walls of the multi-storey car park on full view. For drivers, it is not clear how to reach the town: the route is diverted counter-intuitively away from it into a townscape of backs of large buildings only partly masked by trees. There is no pedestrian crossing across the wide junction on the Midland Road south pavement between the court and the middle of town.

The one-way stretch of Midland Road between here and Market St is paved

in buff coloured brick paver and asphalt rather than in the natural stone palette of the historic inner town, denoting secondary status, not part of the centre proper. Lay-bys and parking are differentiated in red brick that emphasises vehicular geometry and gives the impression that pedestrians are allocated the space left over after traffic. The north pavement is cramped and mean, especially at the bus stop; the southern one more generous despite low footfall due to few shop entrances, but pedestrian movement is blocked at the east end by shrubs in raised dark brick planters that fill an awkward space but contribute little to the amenity. The variety of materials does not gel into coherent streetscape. Furniture - mainly Victorian reproduction - is cluttered and there are both heritage-style and taller highway type lamp posts.

To the east, Victoria Road meets Midland Road at a signalled junction, on axis with the Victorian Trinity church. However, the view to the historic building is marred by street clutter, bollards and poor streetscape at the adjacent police station.



Above - one-way town centre stretch of Midland Rd - cramped pedestrian space and poor materials



Midland Road 'gateway' to town centre - unappealing, illegible and traffic-dominated [Google Streetview image]

Below - key view to fine church, marred by street clutter and poor environment outside police station



Midland Road between Victoria Road and Elsdon Road



Midland Road between Victoria and Elsdon Roads - the 'Good Ordinary'

Frontage, edges and enclosure

For most of its length, Midland Road [the B572] is a decent suburban street of medium to good quality. It has some fine architecture – Victorian villas and historic civic buildings like Trinity Church and the Court House. To the north-east, large houses on substantial plots – many converted or redeveloped as multiple-occupancy housing – retain their traditional high red brick boundary walls. Though not 'active frontage', they are attractive features. Mature trees in their gardens augment the remaining street trees, giving a leafy quality and good sense of scale and enclosure to this part of the road.

Elsewhere, the road is dominated by low terraced housing, with doors and windows overlooking the street, bringing good passive surveillance. The original small front gardens are retained where they are too shallow to accommodate a car, but many have been removed in favour of off-street parking that erodes the consistent low boundary treatment, increases hard surface [and surface water drainage requirements, if not permeable], reduces greenery in gardens and mitigates against street tree planting. It does not increase available parking, since it sterilises any on-street parking

in front of the property, leaving the highway some 2 metres wider than is needed for movement. The footway becomes less safe for pedestrians and also requires drop kerbs or crossovers to meet carriageway level. The recent care home opposite Castle Street has been permitted to turn its entire frontage into car park, highly visible through a light railing, which is poor urban design, unsightly and out of keeping with the adjacent context.

Right and below -

Traditional small front gardens to smaller terraced properties;

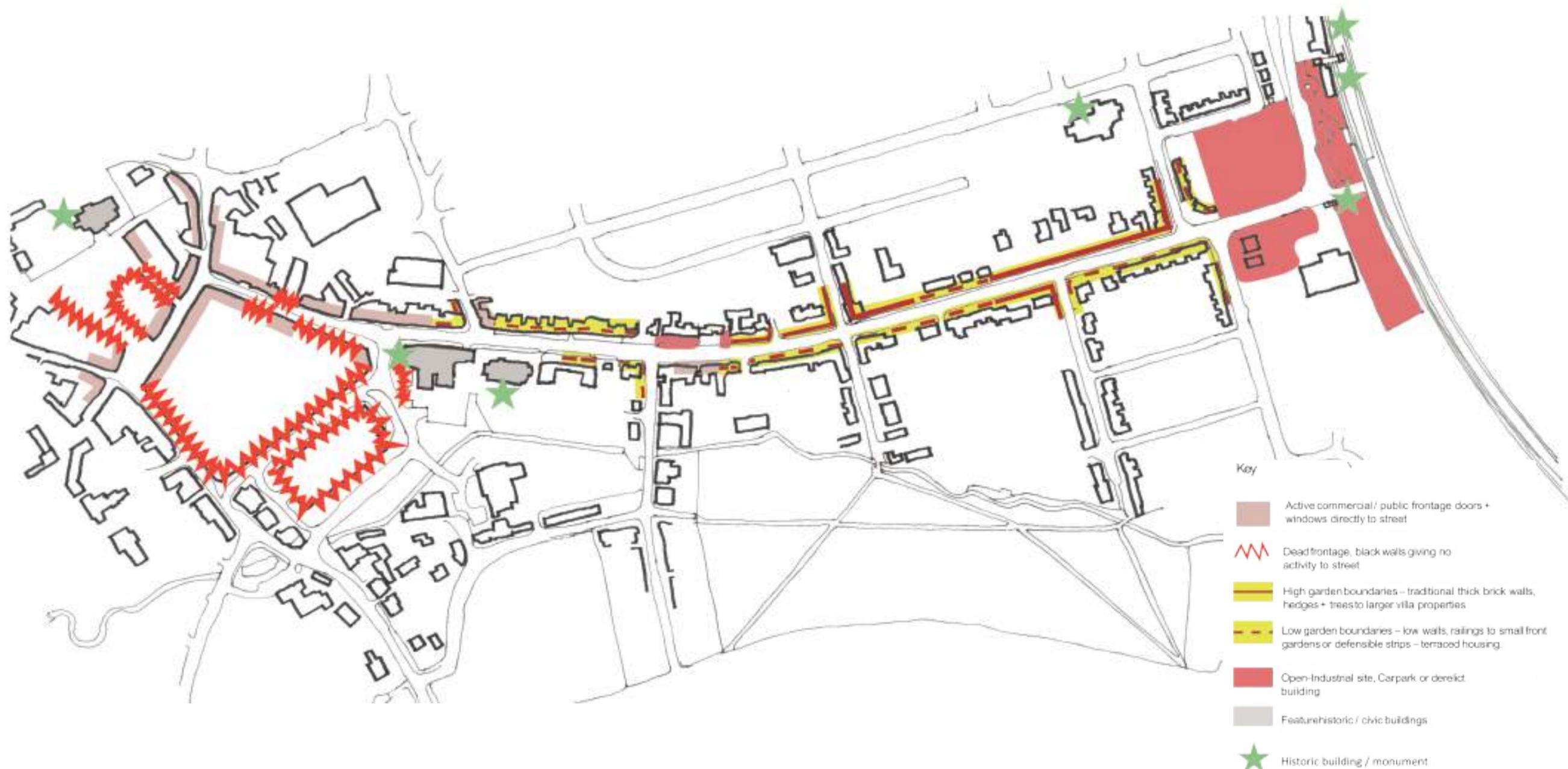
Continuity and enclosure are eroded where gardens are converted to off-street parking;

Prominent car parking in front of care home opposite Castle Street has a negative impact on the streetscape



Above - Midland Road has large Victorian properties with mature gardens and traditional brick boundaries to the north-east; Some fine buildings and landmarks [glimpse to St Mary's Church tower]

Midland Road - frontage and enclosure analysis



Midland Road between Victoria and Elsdon Roads - the 'Good Ordinary'

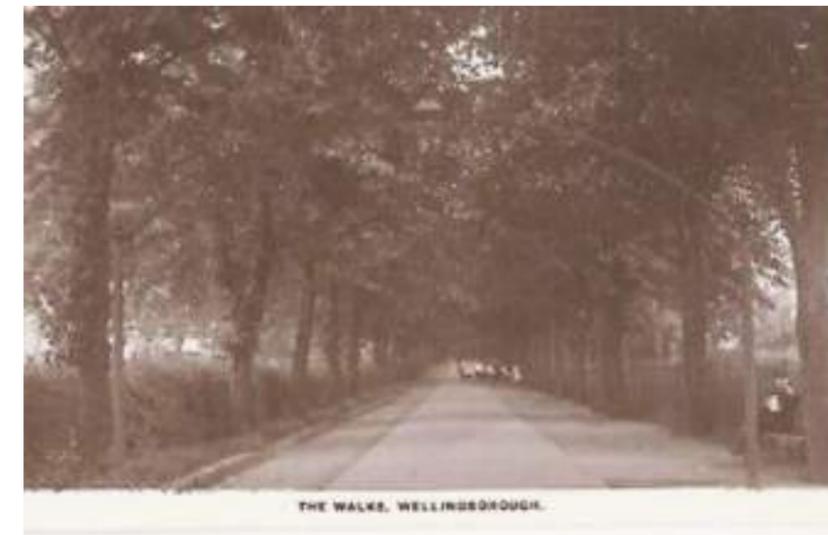
Street trees

Street trees – mainly mature limes, which suit the scale of the road – are all on the south pavement, perhaps deliberately to avoid overshadowing to properties. In the east, large trees in private gardens on the north side enhance their impact by completing a section of treed boulevard.

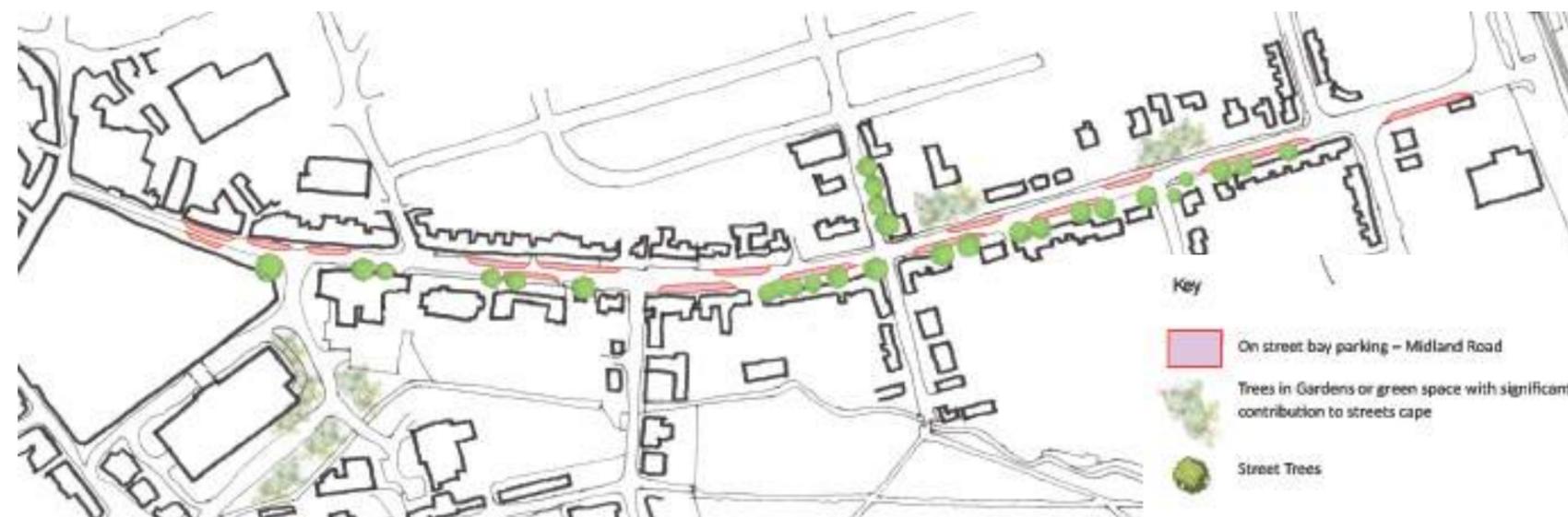
Wellingborough was celebrated for the trees lining its main roads [Wellingborough Walks] and some streets, like London Road, retain that character. Along most of Midland Road, however, tree cover is now fragmentary or missing and needs strengthened [although challenges like narrow pavements and underground utilities would need addressed].



Street trees to the left [south] and garden trees opposite create an avenue



Historic postcard of the famous 'Wellingborough Walks'



Existing street tree locations showing trees elsewhere that contribute to the streetscape and approximate location of parking



But tree cover along much of Midland Road is now absent or fragmented

Midland Road between Victoria and Elsdon Roads - the 'Good Ordinary'

Spatial allocation for different street users

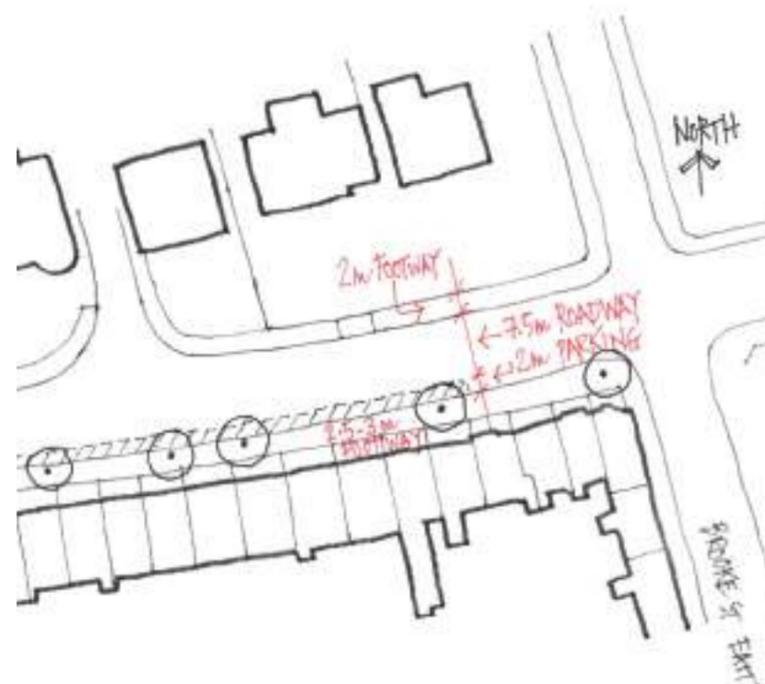
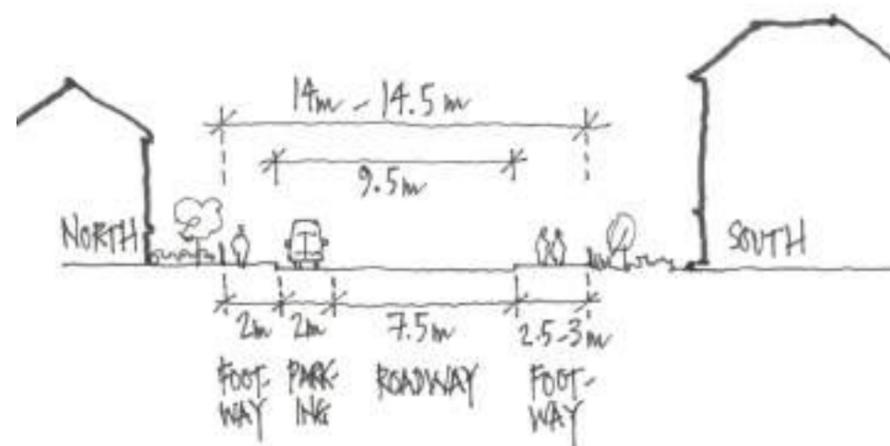
The width of the street envelope between property boundaries is around 14.5 metres. The north pavement is only 2 metres wide, though it seems to be preferred by walkers, conceivably because it is sunnier and not disrupted by tree roots. The south pavement is generally between 2.5 metres and 3 metres wide and in places contains street trees. The carriageway is between 9.5 and 10 metres wide, of which approximately 2 metres is allocated to permitted parallel parking in intermittent stretches on alternative sides of the street, usually coinciding with small terraced housing without private parking, though parking is restricted where residents have created off-street car spaces in front gardens. [Parking on both sides of the road occurs only at the little parade of commercial units between Castle St and Victoria Road; here, the southern footway is unusually wide.]

The usable width of two-lane carriageway for vehicle movement is therefore at least 7.5 metres, compared to 6 metres minimum for a bus route on residential streets or the 5.5 metres recommended in the Department for Transport's Manual for Streets as allowing two large rigid vehicles to pass.

The geometry appears to be historic, and perhaps dates from a period of low usage by horse-drawn carriages, when streets were shared-use and unsurfaced, requiring more space to negotiate ruts and potholes.

As a built-up urban road with street lighting, the permitted speed is assumed to be 30 miles per hour, although Manual for Streets recommends 20 mph for residential streets and Midland Road is predominantly residential. Between the junctions at west and east ends, traffic on the main length of the road seems light.

These assumptions need further testing with the input of the Highways Department and more detailed survey and traffic study information.



Sketch typical section and plan showing existing allocation of space on Midland Road

On-street parking alternates between north and south sides of the road; only at the small parade of shops does it occur on both sides

Midland Road between Victoria and Elsdon Roads - the 'Good Ordinary'

Materials, lighting and furniture

Both highway and footways are surfaced in black asphalt, a material conventionally implying vehicular use, which, combined with the wide carriageway and comparatively narrow pavements, contributes to the sense that the road is primarily designed for vehicles rather than as a pleasant place for non-drivers.

Footways are paved in buff brick at the west end, but this treatment is part of a town centre secondary street palette and extends no further east than Victoria Road.

Away from the main junctions at east and west, the street is reasonably uncluttered. No electric car charging points have been noted, and there are no seats outside the town centre.

Street lighting consists of utilitarian galvanised steel columns some 8 metres high, appropriate to a major highway. A simple, lower lamppost in a dark colour would be more sympathetic to the residential character.

Where front gardens are not provided, or are too small to use, bins are left on the street, giving a poor impression and sometimes obstructing narrow pavements.



Brick paved surface extends only as far as the Town Gateway, then becomes asphalt; bins are a problem if sufficient storage is not provided



Surfacing of both carriageway and footpaths in black asphalt tends to emphasise street as vehicle corridor over street as place.

Green Infrastructure Links



Green Infrastructure Links - Castle Street, Brook Street East and Chester Road

There is no hint from Midland Road that these minor roads provide access to a large park [Castle Fields] and the swathe of green infrastructure along the Swanspool Brook to Croyland Gardens, the town centre and westward.

All three streets have oversized carriageways out of proportion to their status in the traffic network. Pedestrian surfaces are by comparison cramped. There is no tree planting or street greenery to make thematic and ecological connections to the green space. Views towards the park are dominated by traffic and parking. It is not clear that it can be reached from access points at the end of the streets. There is no wayfinding.

Castle Street connects to a main entrance to Castle Fields, but the gates are tucked away in a short side street to the east, invisible from the road. Opposite, a ramp down to the Castle Theatre car park makes it possible to walk [on the grass verge or through cars] west along the brook to the theatre, museum, civic offices and town centre, eventually reaching the off-road cycle and pedestrian paths through Croyland Park and Gardens. With modification of the car park, better crossings, wayfinding and enhancement of the ramp to make it transparent and inviting, this is an achievable opportunity to knit the green infrastructure along the Swanspool Brook into a longer, more intuitive quiet way. Since Castle Street also houses the All Saints Primary School, it is important to create not only safe but pleasant

routes to school, to encourage children and carers to walk and cycle to improve health and reduce congestion and air pollution. Wider pavements, pedestrian priority, low traffic speeds, trees and other street greenery and furniture could all contribute.

Brook Street East and Chester Road are treeless and traffic-dominated. On Chester Road, the width of highway is augmented by off-road parking designed and consented directly in front of a recent development of terraced townhouses, entailing cars crossing the pavement and the inability to use the road for street parking. Both roads would benefit from wider pavements with tree planting and wayfinding and in particular, a redesign of the environment at their southern ends to improve the footbridges over the brook and make legible the park entrances, currently obstructed by parked vehicles and vegetation. New crossings would connect the north pavement of Midland Road to the green infrastructure, particularly at Chester Road, which is the easternmost access to the park. [The brook then runs eastwards in a narrow gap between domestic gardens where a public path would not be feasible.]

Clockwise from top left - entrance to park hidden off Castle St; footbridges across brook into park are illegible and cramped; ramp from Castle St to theatre car park; a walk west along the brook to the town centre is possible with adjustments to the parking



Above, left to right - Castle Street, Brook Street East and Chester Road

Above - Castle Fields Park

Station Environment



Station environment

Elsden Road/ Senwick Road junction to the station

The staggered junction with Elsdon Rd and Senwick Rd [B573], where Midland Road meets the north-south through-route linking to the A6 at Finedon and the A45 and A509 at Little Irchester, is extremely busy, though possibly [in winter 2019] extra traffic was being generated by temporary road closures for the construction of Stanton Cross and its new access road [‘Route 4’]. It is very difficult and potentially dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists to cross. However, it is understood that proposals to widen and signalise the junction with dedicated crossings will shortly be constructed.

While the north-west and south-west corners are both defined by reasonably good housing, the north-east corner is bordered by a block of two semi-detached houses at 45 degrees to the road. Buildings then dwindle to a single storey café extension towards the station; the site immediately east has been cleared and is used as a temporary station car park. A tyre fitter [Kwikfit] occupies the south-east corner and sits lower than the road. Both it and the neighbouring industrial unit [a vehicle repair workshop] have very poor street presence. As car-based business, these firms could be equally successful anywhere locally with good road access. This junction is an important node for those travelling north-south or going to and from the

station and is a prime ‘advertising’ location where high-quality design would communicate positive messages about Wellingborough to a wide audience. However, the buildings on the east sides currently fail to provide ‘positive corners’ and give the impression of a run-down town with little civic pride.

The eastern end of Midland Road has recently been widened to meet Route 4, the new road link to Stanton Cross. The area is dominated by carriageways and parking; highway lighting and signage read particularly strongly as verticals in the open setting. The land slopes down gently to the east, giving excellent views to the housing in construction on the ridge across the Ise valley (and vice versa - the centre of Wellingborough also sits on high ground and is visible from Stanton Cross, with the tower of St Mary’s church a prominent landmark).

The connection between the two communities is only visual, however: there is no direct route over the railway. (It is assumed that the Network Rail bridge currently being extended will not be open to anyone without a travel ticket.) Route 4 turns north, rising towards a bridge over the railway some 200 metres from the station. Route 4 is a heavily engineered expanse of black asphalt edged on the west by a high acoustic barrier, a raw structure unsoftened by planting. Though provided with a segregated cycle lane to

highways standards and with adequate pavements, the new road is an uninviting detour through a vehicular environment for walkers and cyclists and is unlikely to encourage the active mobility embedded in local planning policy, beyond essential trips.



Right - view north along Route 4, nearing completion



Above, left to right - junction with Elsden Road; view east across Senwick Road towards Stanton Cross on ridge; industrial units on SE corner of junction; view west from Stanton Cross with Wellingborough on skyline

Station environment

Wellingborough station

Wellingborough station is a Victorian small-scale listed building in red brick. The adjacent historic train shed in matching brick, also listed, is currently dilapidated. (There is a further very small ruined building of similar and age and style on Midland Road beside the access to the postal sorting office, a new building sitting at lower level to the south of the road]. The Network Rail bridge over the railway lines is being extended to an eastern platform serving Stanton Cross.

Although the station environment has recently been refurbished, with new paving to the forecourt immediately in front of the building, they are dominated by vehicular demands - roundabouts, drop-offs and parking, creating an unattractive approach for pedestrians. Cycle parking appears limited to a few spaces on the platform - it is not known whether more spaces are planned. Other issues include bins in a very prominent location on a main route to the station, although this is perhaps a temporary situation pending completion of construction works.

Being off-axis from Midland Road, the station suffers from poor legibility as there are few clear views to it to aid intuitive wayfinding. Similarly, rail

passengers alighting at Wellingborough find themselves in an environment with little sense of welcome or of arrival. It is not obvious where the town centre [or Stanton Cross] is, and few clues to the best way to get there.

The completion of Route 4 works may mitigate the situation by directing passengers out to bus stops on the new road, but the plans will not address all of the challenges.



Above - Wellingborough station - listed building
Below - approach to station from Midland Road



Above, left to right - listed train shed with bin storage; small historic structure by sorting office on Midland Road; station approach; top - cycle parking

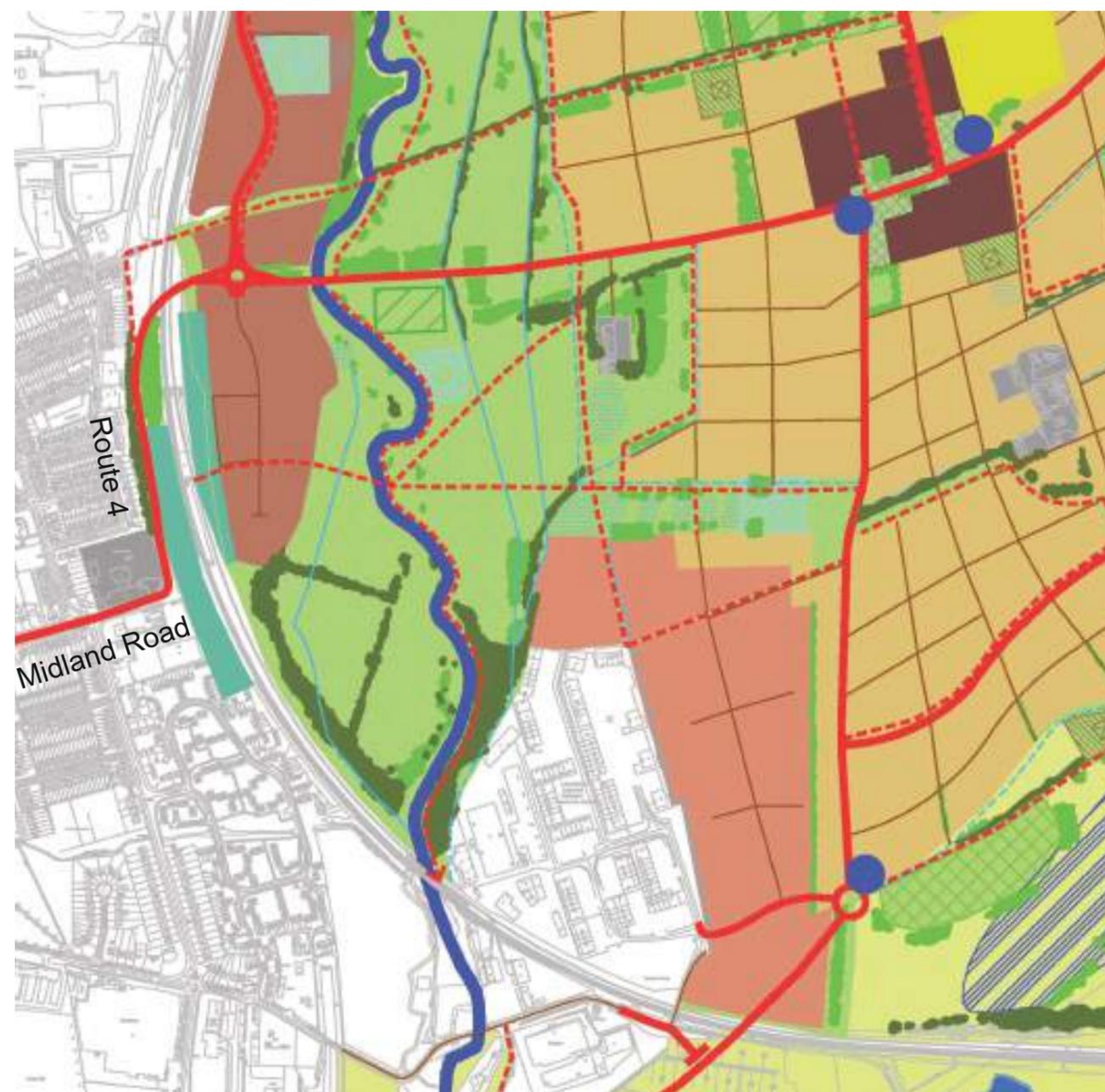
Existing and planned development around the station

Midland Road and the station area need to be considered in the light of proposed developments, as well as in its existing context.

The masterplan for the Sustainable Urban Extension at Stanton Cross will provide 3600 new homes, over half of those planned for Wellingborough as one of North Northamptonshire's Growth Towns. In addition to residential areas, it will include employment opportunities, a community hub, new schools and a Town and Country Park along the valley of the River Ise

The masterplan is subdivided into phases, at various stages of development. The housing due east of the station, in winter 2019, was nearing completion - including the finger of open space that will eventually accommodate a footpath to the station - and construction was underway on the community centre to the north. Much of the infrastructure was complete, notably Route 4, which links Midland Road to Stanton Cross via a high vehicular bridge over the railway tracks.

The next section explores in more detail the proposals planned or in construction in the vicinity of the station, and their impact on connectivity between the existing and new communities from the perspective of pedestrians and cyclists.



Above - extract from Stanton Cross Masterplan, with Midland Road, Route 4 and the railway station centre left

Existing and planned development - 'Station Island'

West of the railway, as at December 2019, construction was nearing completion on Route 4 and on station forecourt and parking improvements. Refurbishment proposals to the listed buildings had been consented; the train shed being adapted to expand platform waiting space [although it has great potential as a public-facing community or small retail facility]. The station's Network Rail bridge had been reconstructed and was being extended eastwards to serve passengers from Stanton Cross.

The planning application for the area immediately east of the railway was granted consent in 2012. It consists of - an access road layout [in construction] connecting with Route 4; a modular station building; a six-storey multi-storey car park to the north and a two-storey multi-storey car park to the south; and an urban piazza and cycle storage facilities.

The whole development, if built, will provide over 1000 vehicle spaces in at-grade car parks and in multi-storeys. The marked-up overlay of the site plan

illustrates graphically the proportion of space dedicated - as highways or parking - to vehicular traffic. This level of provision seems to contradict local planning policies to reduce car trips in favour of increased sustainable mobility, and to create local jobs that do not rely on 'out-commuting.'

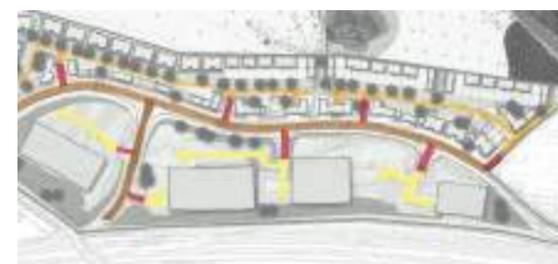
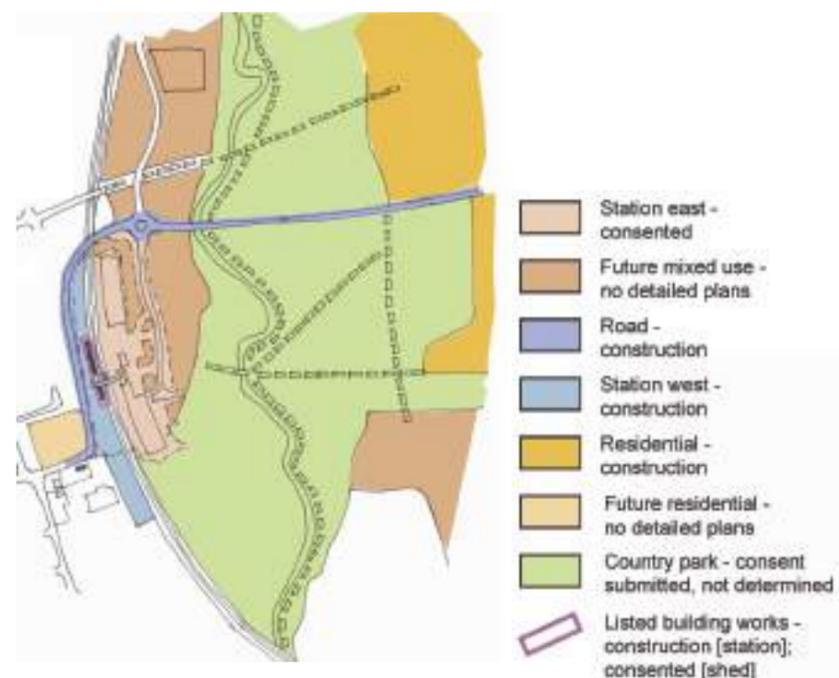
While the impact of the six-storey structure will be mitigated by the levels of the new roads as they rise to meet the bridge over the railway, the two-storey car park south of the station will tend to block the visual connection between old and new communities across the river valley.

The eastern station is a modular structure clad in terracotta, perhaps to echo the colour of the listed buildings. It is, however, likely to obstruct views from the east to the historic station and west to the landscape. The functional form, urbanised piazza and site layout based on highway geometry may sit uncomfortably with the naturalistic park at the heart of the masterplan.

The Town and Country Park scheme along the Ise valley was submitted for consent in July 2019 but is not yet determined. Crucially for connectivity, it shows part of the footpath from the station to the new housing, but provides no information on how it arrives at the station from the edge of the park.

The zone between the park and the station is earmarked under the masterplan as mixed-use development, but is not designed in detail. If it follows design guidance for a similar plot north of Mill Road ['Station Island North'], it is liable to comprise large, warehouse-type industrial units towards the railway, fringed by small scale housing fronting the park. Such a layout risks becoming a physical and psychological barrier between the town and its new extension and destroying any opportunities for good connectivity

On the west of the station, the masterplan designates the large temporary car park on the corner of Midland Road and Route 4 as residential, but again, no detail has yet been developed.



Above, left to right - indicative status of developments around station [winter 2019]; elevation of modular station building; sketch layout for mixed use at Station Island North; proportion of space allocated to cars east and west of station

06 Issues, Opportunities and Aspirations - a summary

Analysis meets aspiration - comparison with project aims

A road connects places. Improvements to Midland Road will be cosmetic if they do not address the points of departure and destination and how they connect. The railway station, historically a terminus at the end of the Midland Road radial route on the edge of town, has radically changed role and has now become a major node at the mid-point of the link between old Wellingborough and its new urban extension.

There is a disjunct between local planning policies promoting a modal shift to sustainable transport, reduced reliance on the car, healthier lifestyles, Green Infrastructure, clean air and streets for people, and the consented schemes now being built around the station, which create barriers to connectivity and are likely to increase vehicular congestion.

Major issues need to be resolved to enable the project to meet the Future Places aims.

Project aims are to

- Improve the quality + character of a key radial route linking town centre, train station and new communities
- Improve pedestrian + cycle access and maintaining traffic flows
- Enhance overall quality + character including tree planting, active frontages and air quality
- Create safe, pleasant, lively + characterful streets for all
- Deliver wider health, Green Infrastructure, environmental + economic benefits
- Draw on best practice from UK and elsewhere



Key Issues

- Major barriers to pedestrian & cycle movement disrupting linkage between communities
- Current planned development around the station
- Poor gateway/approach lacking sense of place and welcome - key node dominated by vehicles and industrial uses
- Poor pedestrian and cycling environment



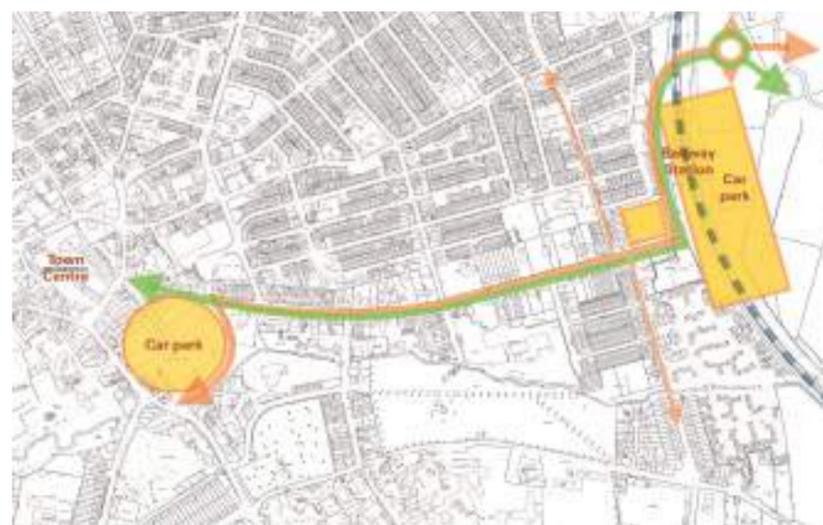
Top - railway station - historic and future function; above - key issues diagram

Adapting the brief to long-term aspirations

Following site visits and analysis and review of policies and forthcoming consented development, the local authority agreed the proposal to expand the brief to include not only enhancements to the historic route but more radical preliminary ideas on how to address the challenges to the integration of Midland Road and Wellingborough station with the future context.

The combination of the existing urban fabric with planned interventions in effect turns Midland Road into a vehicular route anchored at both the town centre and the station ends by multi-storey car parks, with a detour for all road users to Stanton Cross.

The long term aspiration could have a very different diagram, with the town centre an enhanced destination, the environment of Midland Road improved as a street for all, clear and intuitive links to Green Infrastructure, a direct connection over the railway for pedestrians and cyclists, and the station designed as Wellingborough's gateway, with accommodation to support creative businesses and living, and excellent physical, visual and thematic connections to the green heart of the Ise Valley and Stanton Cross.



Diagrammatic analysis of existing and planned situation



Diagrammatic summary of long-term aspiration

Key Opportunities

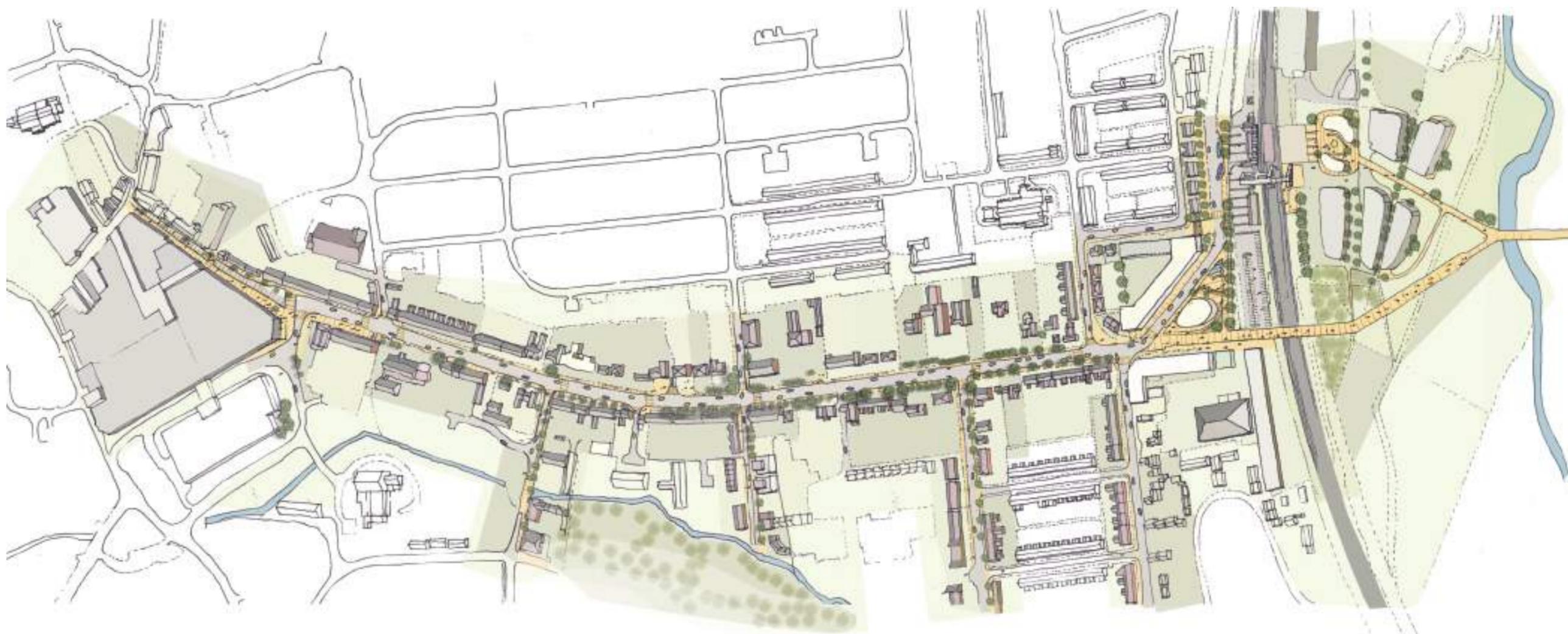
- Improve station approach & environment as gateway with sense of arrival
- Potential pedestrian/ cycle bridge over railway, linking Stanton Cross
- Attractive work and living developments to enhance sense of place
- Creative start-up hubs & community/ cultural venues
- Enhance key route and Green Infrastructure connections
- Reconfigure town gateway
- Potential improvements to traffic system to create streets for people

Key opportunities diagram

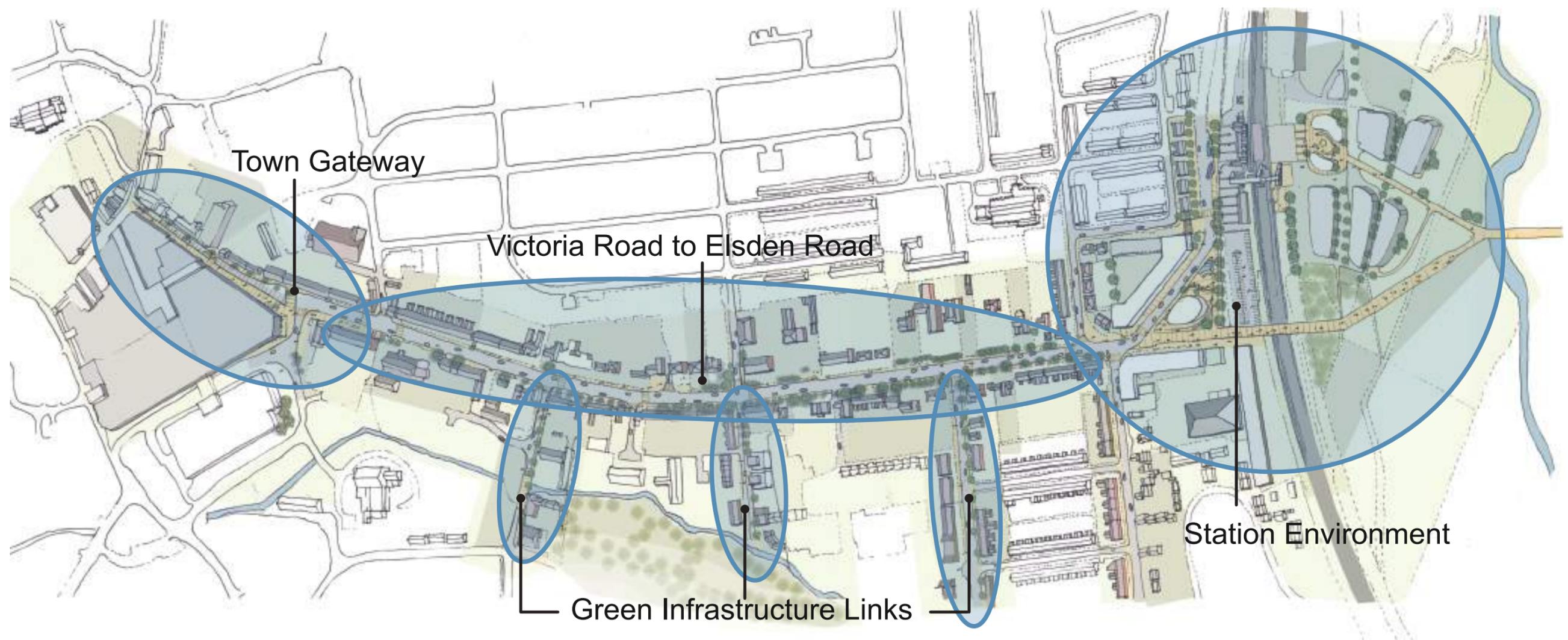
07 Focus Areas And Proposals

Concept proposals - axonometric sketch overview

This sketch overview provides a composite illustration of key proposals along Midland Road to address the issues and opportunities identified through the analysis stage.



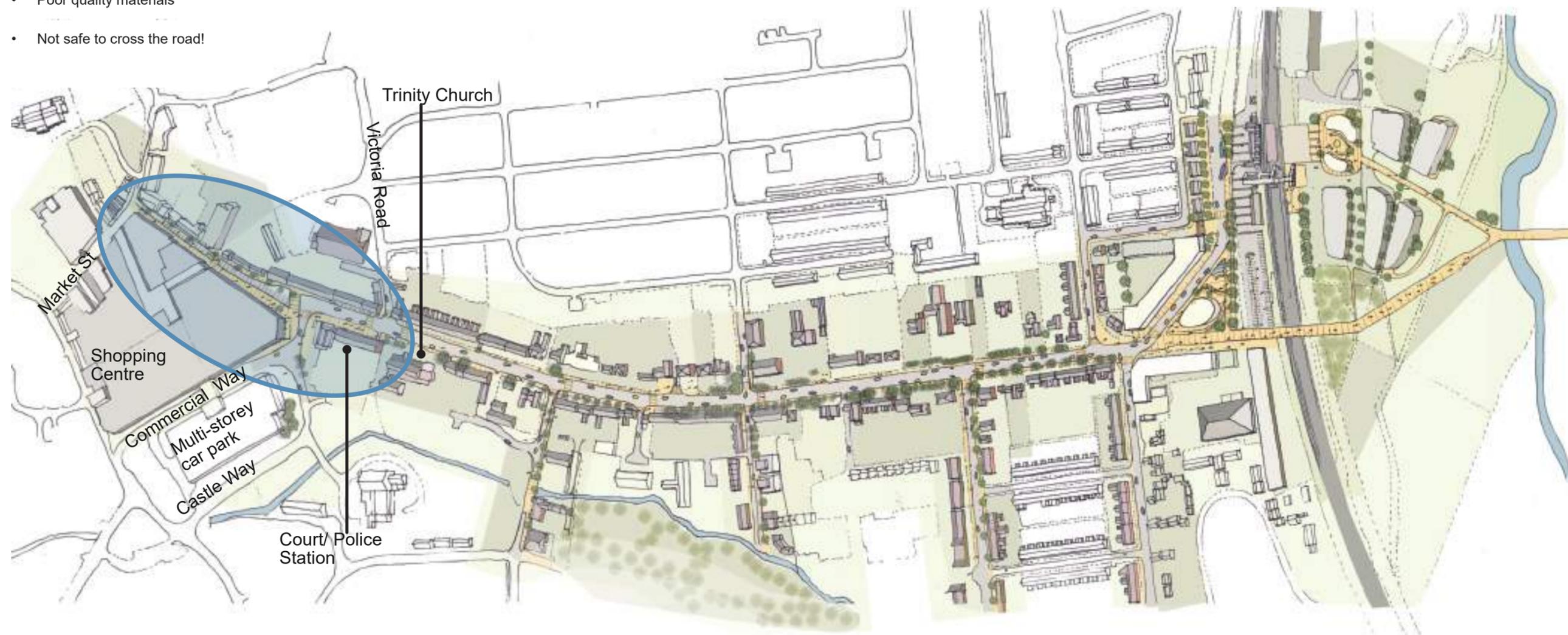
Focus areas



Town Gateway

Key Issues

- Wide junction dominated by highways
- Dead frontage to shopping centre and multi-storey car park
- Negative impression as gateway to historic Wellingborough
- Illegible with no sense of arrival
- Poor quality materials
- Not safe to cross the road!



Town Gateway

Early ideas

Wellingborough has appointed consultants to develop a Town Centre Vision. These concepts are offered only as preliminary thoughts on how the issues identified in the site analysis might be addressed. However, they need testing with the collaboration of several key stakeholders, including the Vision team, Highways department and retail experts.

Key Principles

- Narrow the junction with Commercial Way/ Castle Way to create enclosure and mitigate views to the multi-storey car park
- Remodel shopping centre - gateway eastern facade and additional units with active frontage to animate Midland Road
- Gateway threshold with town-wide Wellingborough Wayfinding feature
- Redistribute highway space for coherence and pedestrian priority
- Bring Midland Road into the Town centre with same restrained natural stone materials palette and minimal street clutter
- Improved road crossings
- Declutter and improve streetscape at key view to Trinity Church and outside police station
- Potential review of town centre traffic movements, one-way system and multi-storey car park access

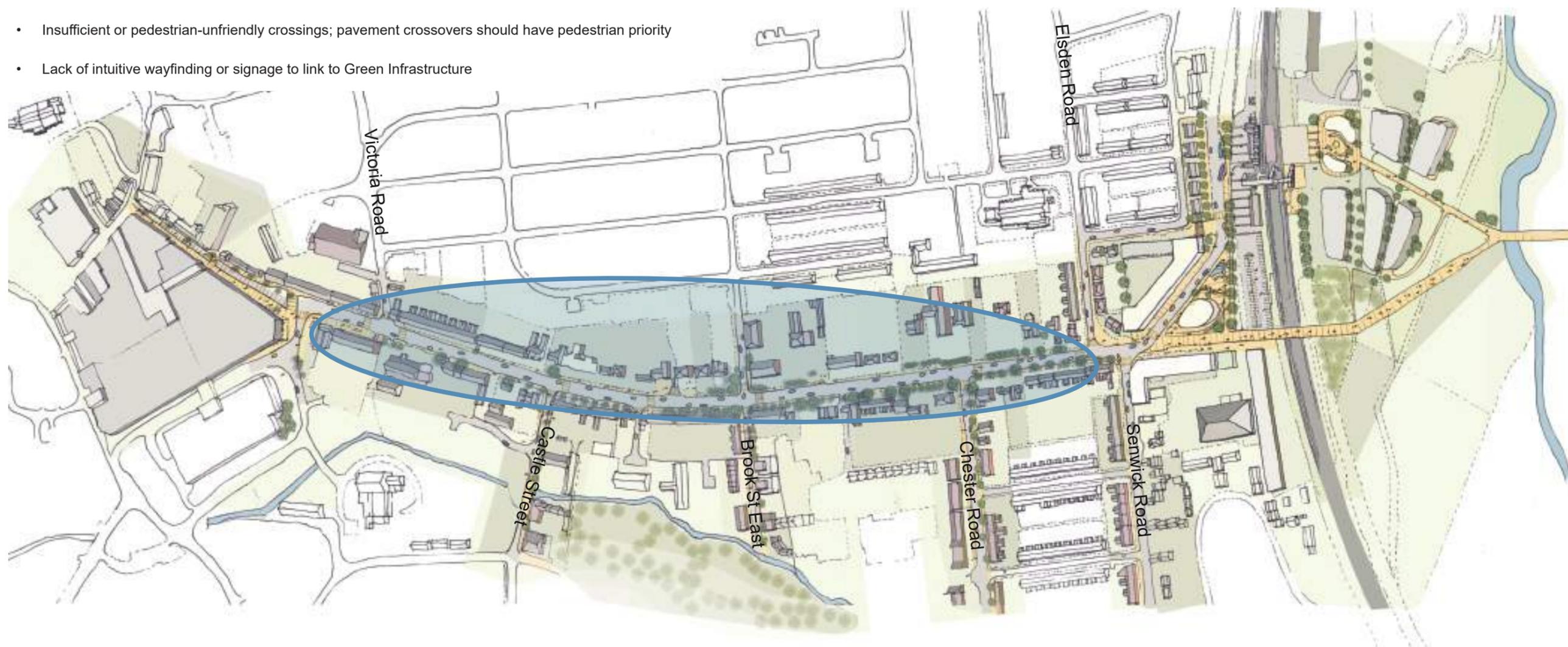


Brunswick Centre - failing brutalist shopping centre reanimated with 'bolt-on' retail units [Levitt Bernstein]; high quality natural stone palette at Leonard Circus [LB Hackney]; bespoke wayfinding totem [Mile End Park, Tower Hamlets]

Midland Road between Victoria and Elsden Roads - the 'Good Ordinary'

Key Issues

- Pavements not wide enough for shared cycle/ pedestrian use, no segregated cycle lanes
- Use of asphalt for pavements emphasises street as vehicle corridor over place for people
- Traditional Wellingborough continuous avenue of trees now fragmentary
- Good historic fabric but conversion of small gardens to parking erodes enclosure
- Insufficient or pedestrian-unfriendly crossings; pavement crossovers should have pedestrian priority
- Lack of intuitive wayfinding or signage to link to Green Infrastructure



Midland Road between Victoria and Elsden Roads - the 'Good Ordinary'



Concept sketch

Like all the proposals in this study, these are high-level ideas, produced without traffic studies, topographical or utilities surveys and with only preliminary input from key stakeholders like Highways officers, bus operators or emergency services. Engagement with all interested parties and further information are important next steps.

With an envelope of around 14.5 metres, Midland Road is generously wide, but there are competing pressures on the space. 2 metres is allocated to on-street parking. Alternative options should be explored. For instance, segregated cycle lanes are recommended as safer for high volumes of bike traffic, and could be installed, but at the expense of parking which mainly serves small terraced properties with no private parking. It has been assumed that, even with a modal shift to sustainable transport, cyclists [currently 63 in the town] would be unlikely to become so numerous as to justify a cycle superhighway on Midland Road.

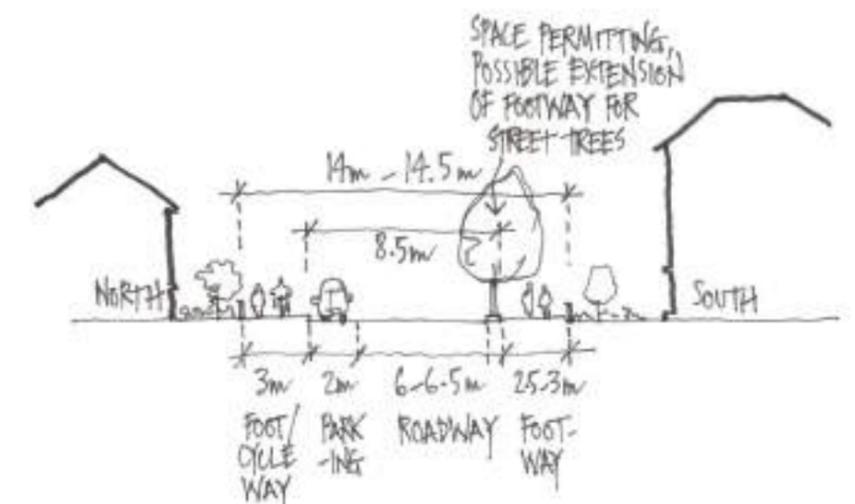
Carriageway widths also need further consideration - it may be prudent to narrow them further as recommended in the DOT's Manual for Streets, to avoid drivers squeezing past cyclists

The proposals are deliberately modest, in keeping with the 'Good Ordinary' character of the street, and reasonably inexpensive to realise and maintain.

Key Principles

- Pleasant environment to foster walking and cycling - widen north pavement from 2 metres to min. 3 metres as informal shared foot- and cycle way
- Reduce car dominance while retaining essential parking and minimum carriageway of 6.5 metres
- Improve crossings at side streets for pedestrians and cyclists by eg reducing width, tighter radii on curves and raised tables
- Continue pedestrian priority surface across junctions and pavement crossovers
- Strengthen links to Swanspool Brook Green Infrastructure (visibility, legibility and wayfinding, ease of access and character)
- Restrained, high quality and easily maintained materials palette to enhance traditional character and distinguish pedestrian and cycle route
- Reinstate continuous line of street trees characteristic of Wellingborough to south side

- Consider reducing speed to 20 mph
- Restrict removal of front gardens for off-street parking [and discourage new housing with this arrangement]
- Introduce bus stops following consultation with operators, and charging points for electric cars for cleaner air quality



Typical sketch section of Midland Road - a potential reallocation of space

Midland Road between Victoria and Elsdon Roads - the 'Good Ordinary'

Materials

A smooth surface is recommended for cycling. For Midland Road foot/ cycle paths, a coloured asphalt in natural soft buff [avoiding the more garish shades] would be in keeping with the natural stone paving in the town centre, achieving visual coordination with a more rural feel, appropriate for a route to the countryside. Though more expensive than black asphalt, it is cheaper than brick unit pavers to install and maintain and is less susceptible to disruption by tree roots. This material has the advantage that it can be overrun by vehicles, so can continue across junctions and crossovers to denote pedestrian priority.

Wellingborough's street trees are historically limes, as are most of the remaining mature trees on Midland Road. Their scale suits the street, they are tolerant of being planted in hard surfaces and they give a better sense of enclosure than smaller species. A restricted tree palette should be used for consistency, but other trees of similar stature could be introduced with the limes to improve biodiversity and future-proof against possible diseases.



Gravel-coloured asphalt, pedestrian priority emphasised by continuing surface material across a raised table; consistent street trees



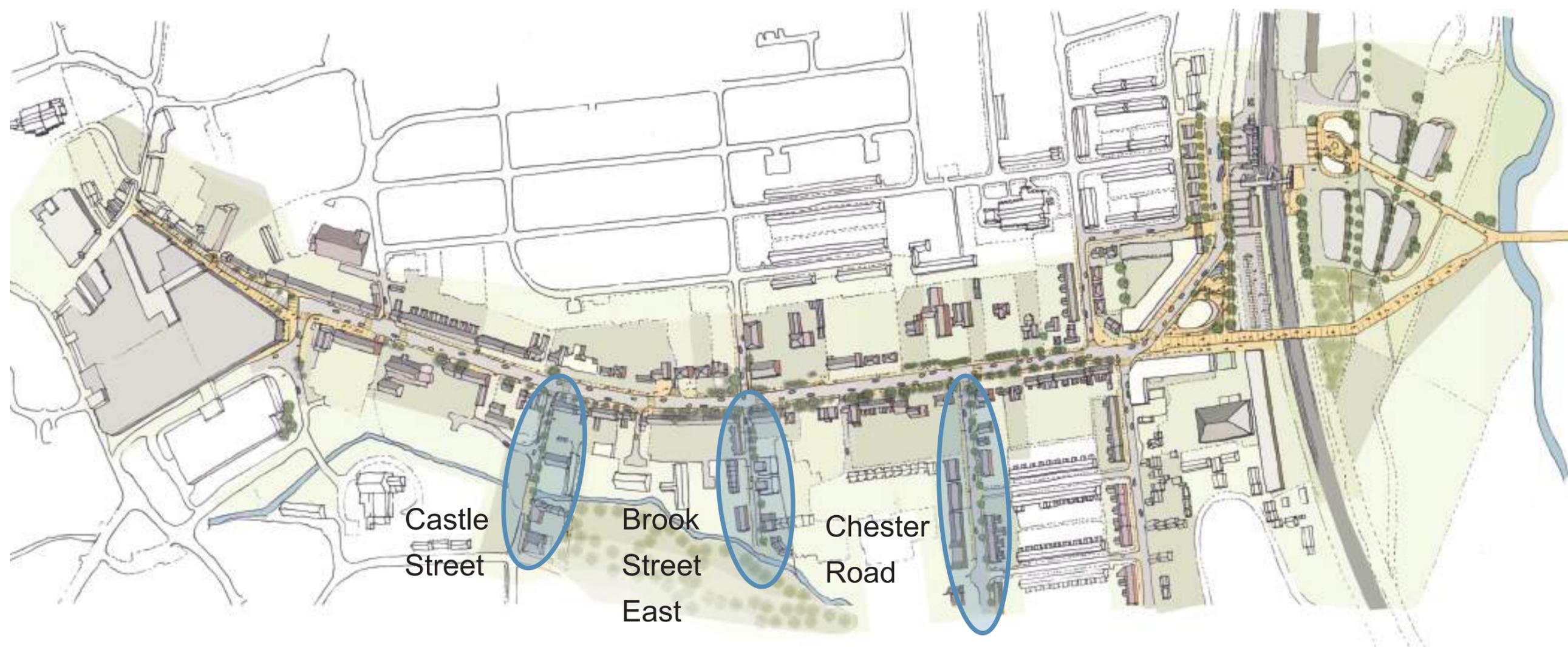
Midland Road between Victoria and Elsden Roads - the 'Good Ordinary'



Bespoke wayfinding, gives a sense of identity at Mile End Park; electric car charging point



Green Infrastructure links



Green links - Castle Street, Chester Road and Brook Street East

Castle Street

Castle Street is the westernmost of the links running south from Midland Road, but at present is heavily vehicle-dominated, with no indication that it gives pedestrian and cycle access to a large park, the Castle Theatre and [potentially] the town centre and belt of green spaces along the Swanspool Brook. It does not 'celebrate' nor provide an inviting route to All Saints Primary School. Streetscape enhancements with trees to mitigate air pollution could help address these issues.

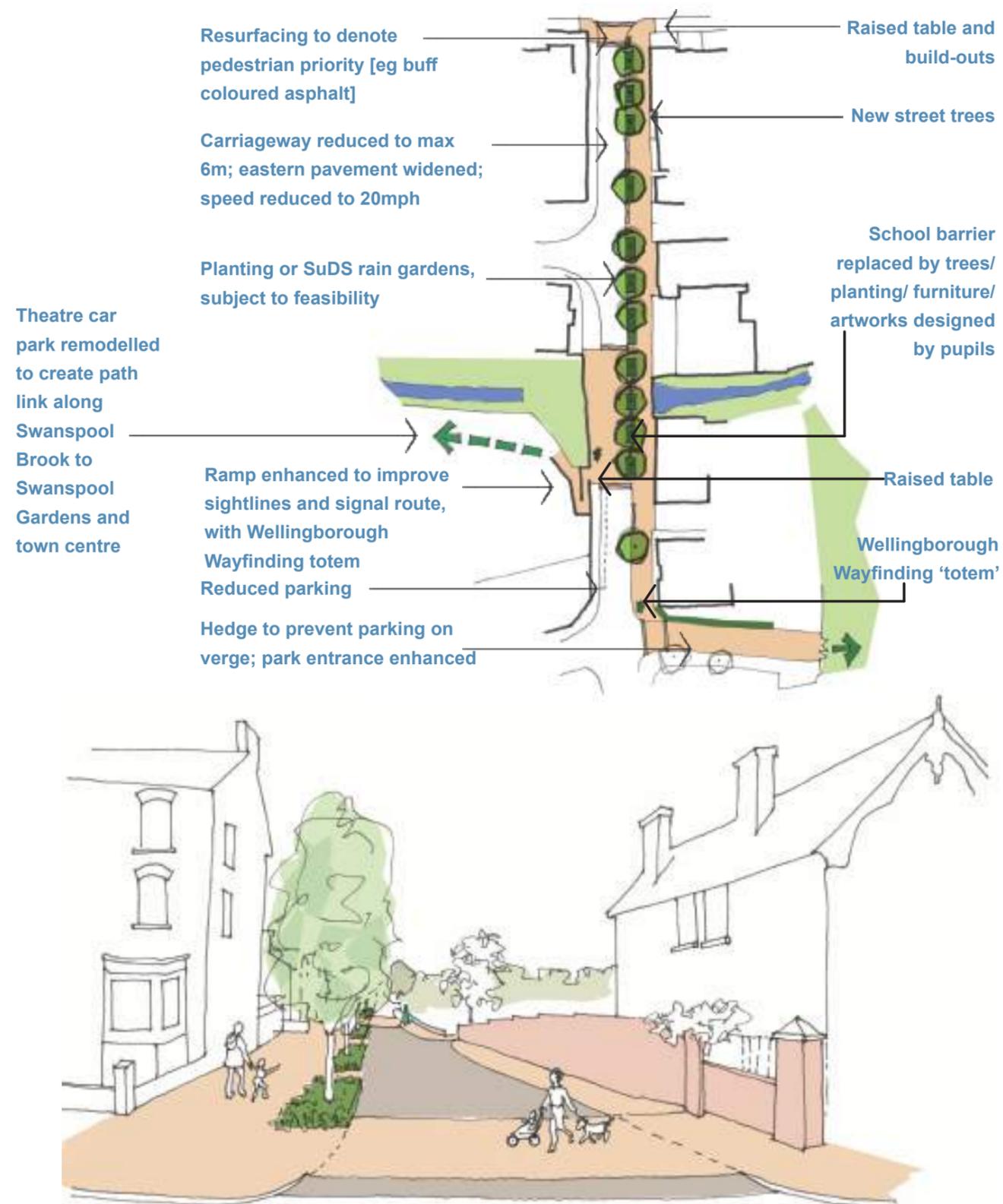
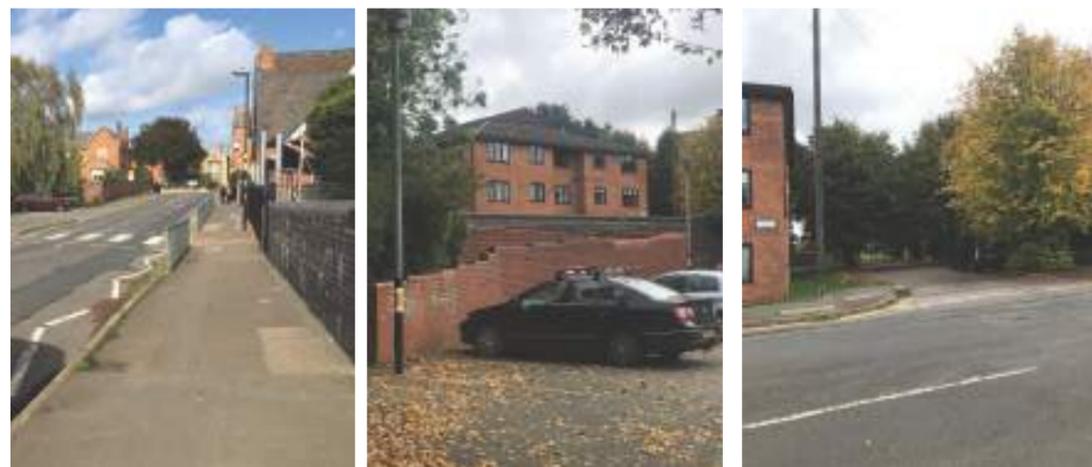
Entrance to Castle Fields park [important amenity and Green Infrastructure] is completely hidden

Ramp down to Castle Theatre uninviting and illegible, with no footpath through car park to town centre



Route to school is cramped and unattractive

Entrance dominated by vehicles and highways paraphernalia; 9m carriageway is too wide for a residential street of this scale

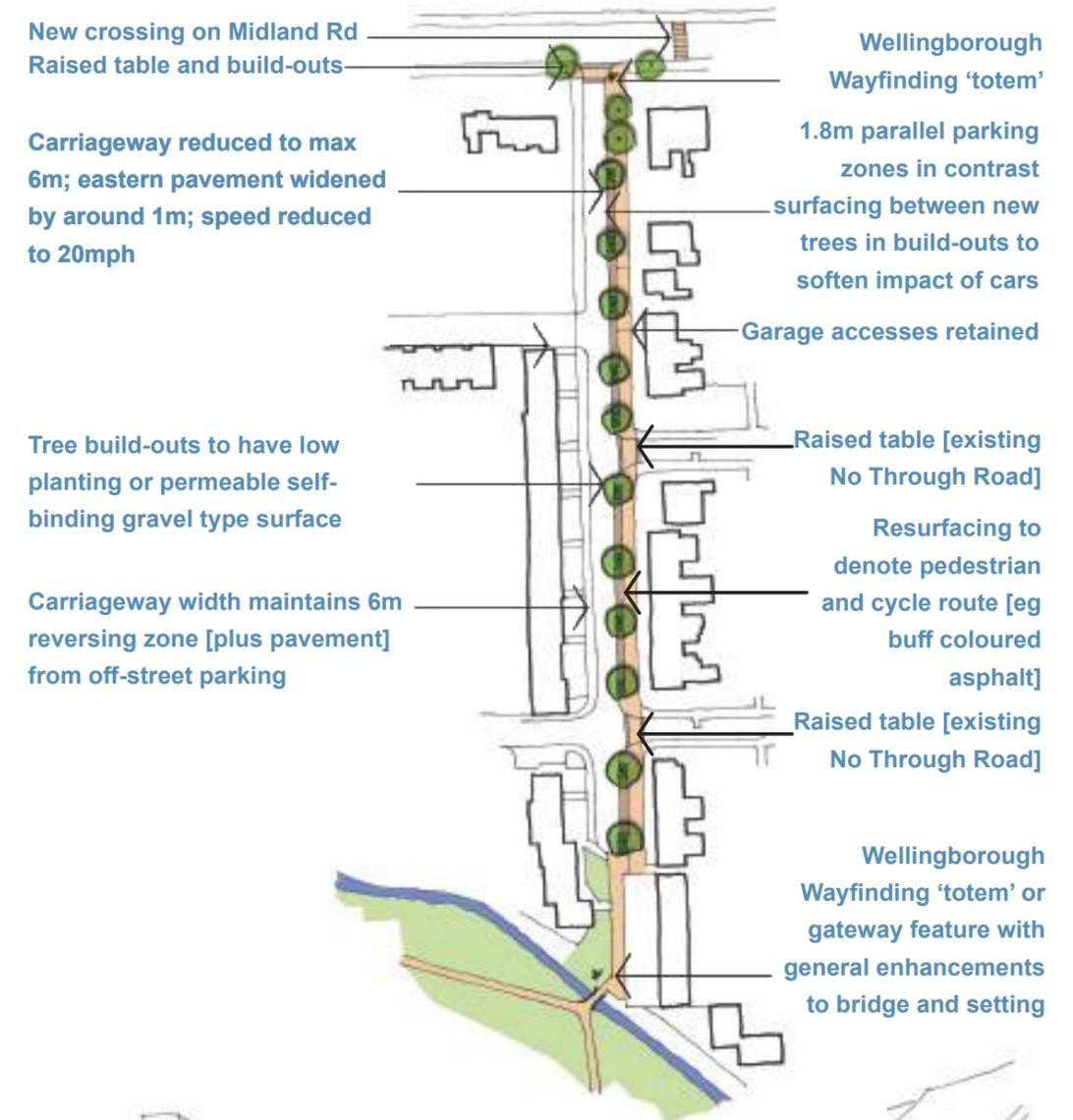
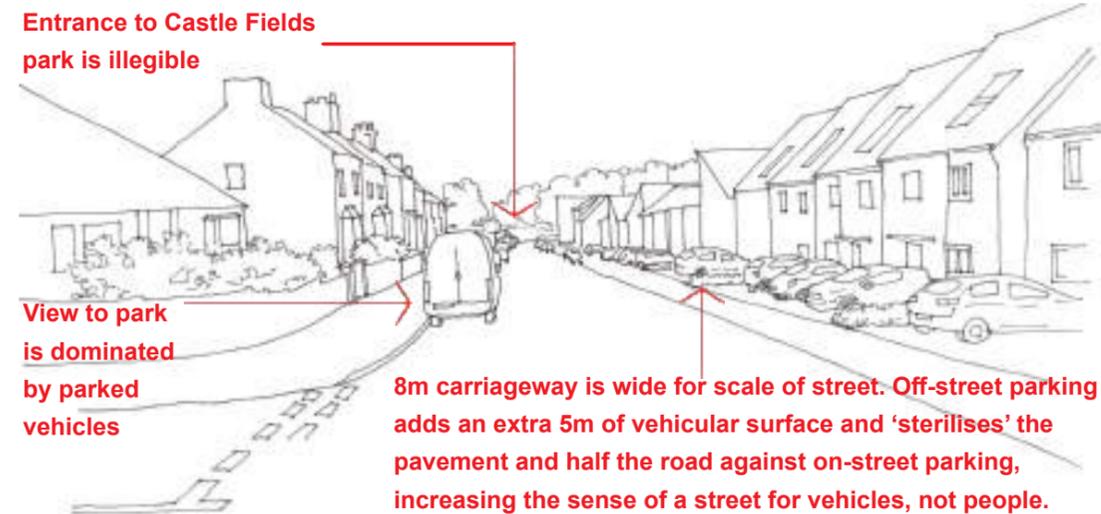


Green Links - Chester Road

Chester Road is the link between Midland Road and the eastern entrance to Castle Fields park. The public path along the Swanspool Brook does not continue eastwards and the park becomes a dead end, blocked by housing, giving Chester Road particular importance as the only pedestrian and cycle access from the station, Stanton Cross and north-east Wellingborough to the chain of green spaces.

Although the park is visible from the Midland Road junction, there is no indication whether it can be accessed from Chester Road, nor any sense of invitation to explore a wider walking or cycling route. Visitors exiting the park would be unclear where the road leads. It lacks street trees and the view is dominated by parking. The impression Chester Road gives is of a wide expanse of asphalt out of proportion to the two-storey dwellings that edge it. Vehicular dominance is exacerbated along the southern half by off-street parking in front of the new housing, increasing the space designed for cars rather than people, eroding the sense of enclosure provided by traditional garden boundaries and, unless permeably-surfaced, augmenting rainwater run-off to drainage systems.

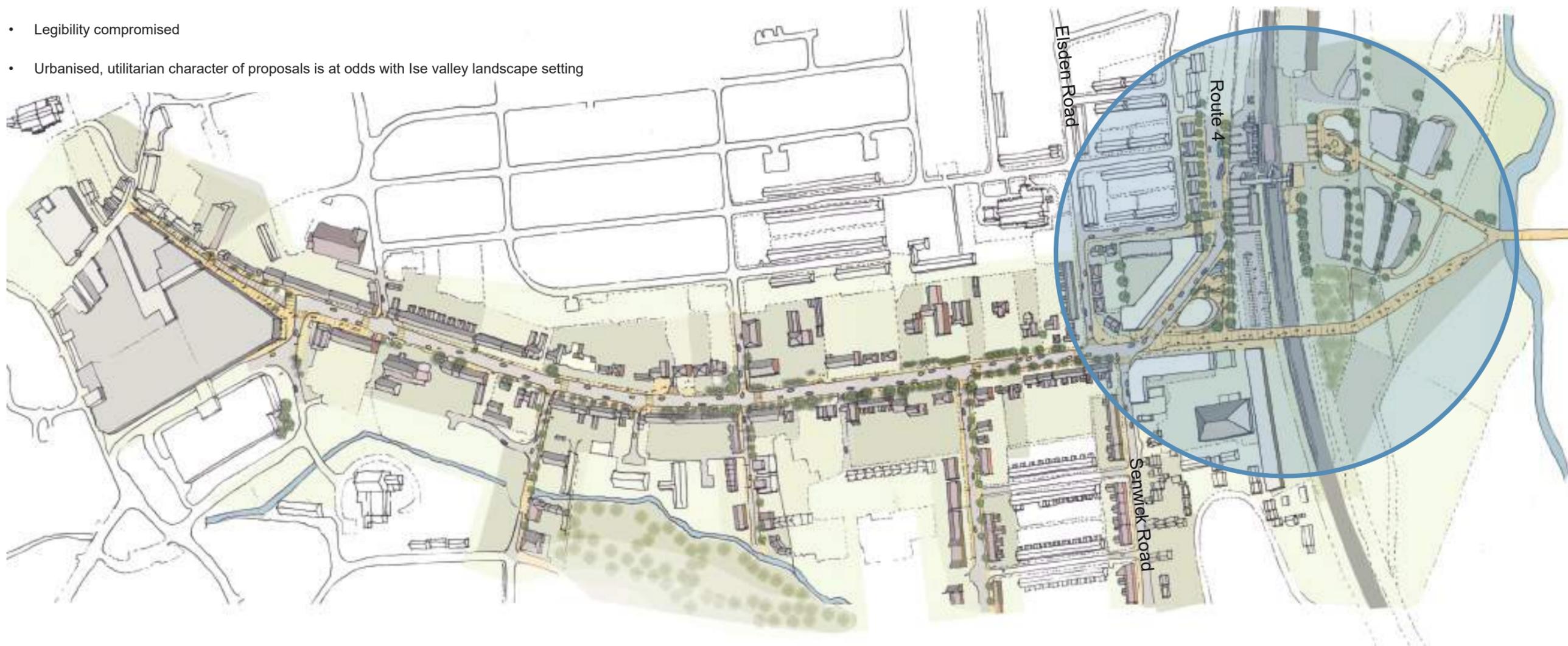
Note that **Brook Street East**, though not drawn, should follow same principles as Castle Street and Chester Road.



Station environment

Key Issues

- Railway is a major barrier to connectivity between town and Stanton Cross
- No direct crossing for pedestrians and cyclists - road connection is circuitous and unsympathetic to non-drivers
- Existing and planned development is dominated by the vehicle - engineered highways and multi-storey and at-grade parking
- Station is a poor gateway with no sense of welcome or arrival in Wellingborough
- Legibility compromised
- Urbanised, utilitarian character of proposals is at odds with Ise valley landscape setting



Tomorrow's Living Station

Stations don't only have to be used for transit. Arup's recent report for Network Rail encapsulates a step-change in the concept of a railway station, from access points to the rail network to 'bustling, multi-modal hubs' integral to life, work and the changing urban fabric in our expanding towns and cities. Stations of the future are envisaged

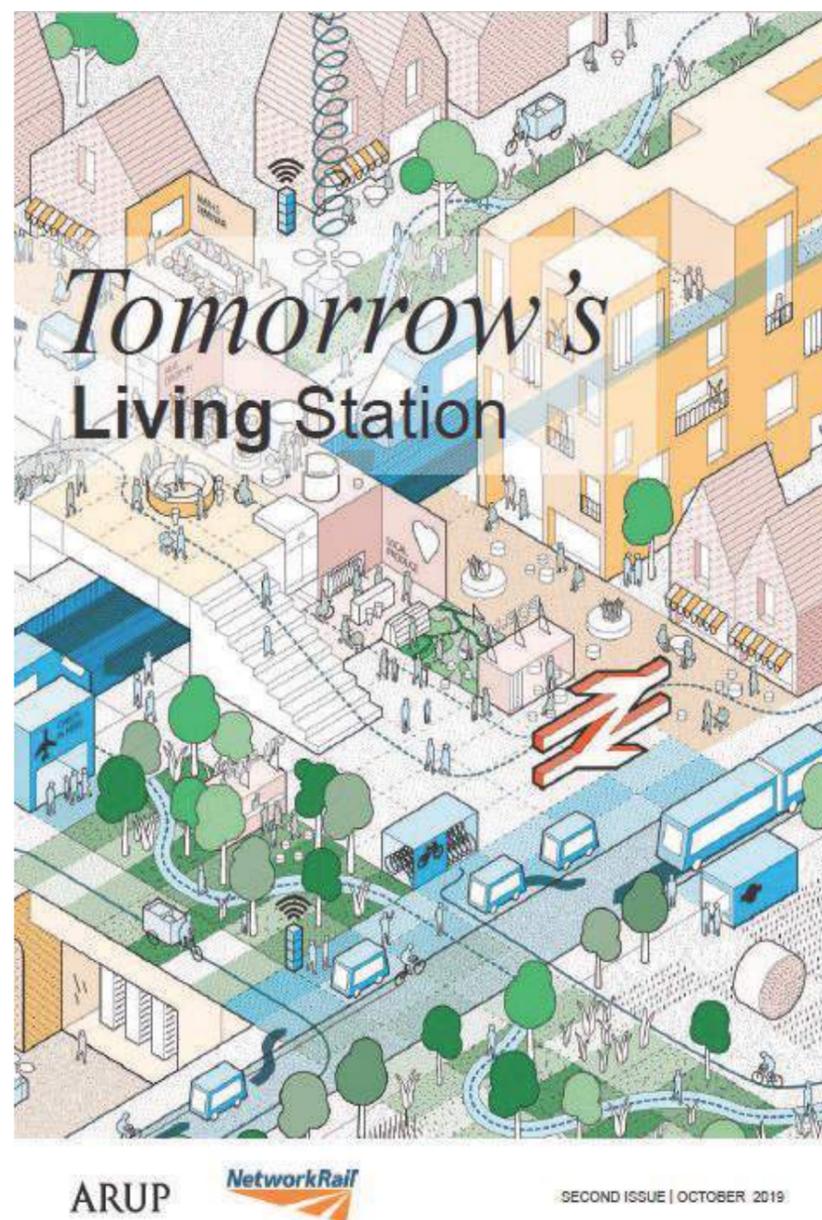
- As the centre of movement for people
- As supporting inclusive growth
- As the heart of healthy communities

The report stresses that, while proposals must be tailored to their context, the principles can be applied to even the most modest stations -

'As well as beautiful public spaces, stations can be the core of a healthy network – where cycling and walking are easy and obvious choices – part of an active journey through a natural environment. Living Stations will be expected to provide experiences like this regardless of their scale or location, always providing safe, healthy and welcoming places to meet, relax and move.'



Hilversum [De Zwarte Hond/ OKRA]



<https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/promotional-materials/section/tomorrows-living-station>



Above - Campina Fabriek, Eindhoven [Studiosinedots/ Delva]

Below - Utrecht [Buro Sant]



Artists impressions of visionary integration of railway stations and industrial heritage with their urban context in Holland

Station as Gateway - a vision for the station environment

- ① Pedestrian / cycle bridge with scenic views of Ise Valley.
- ② Sloping paths, road junction modified.
- ③ Tilted plaza with 'Welcome to Wellingborough' fountain or feature.
- ④ 'The Tilt', eye-catching low building; innovation hub.
- ⑤ Modified station forecourt, short term parking/cycle storage.
- ⑥ Wellingborough Railway Station.
- ⑦ Low, car, live-work units accessed from residential car park. (Option A - decked over parking; Option B, retain as parking)
- ⑧ Historic small building, reconstruct elsewhere.
- ⑨ Existing car-dependent uses relocated; high quality redevelopment.
- ⑩ Sorting office access relocated from car, free route.
- ⑪ Start-up / live-work units; communal outdoor space on deck over parking accessed from Dryden Rd.
- ⑫ Terraced housing to complete street
- ⑬ Views to landmark Church tower.
- ⑭ Stepped access to station.
- ⑮ Simple canopied park pavilion "station" with automated gates.
- ⑯ Cycle storage.
- ⑰ Multi - storey car park omitted to permit visual connection to east; short stay / disabled parking.
- ⑱ Existing woodland retained; selective felling to create 'Treetop Walk' on bridge.
- ⑲ Landscaped piazza with feature buildings.



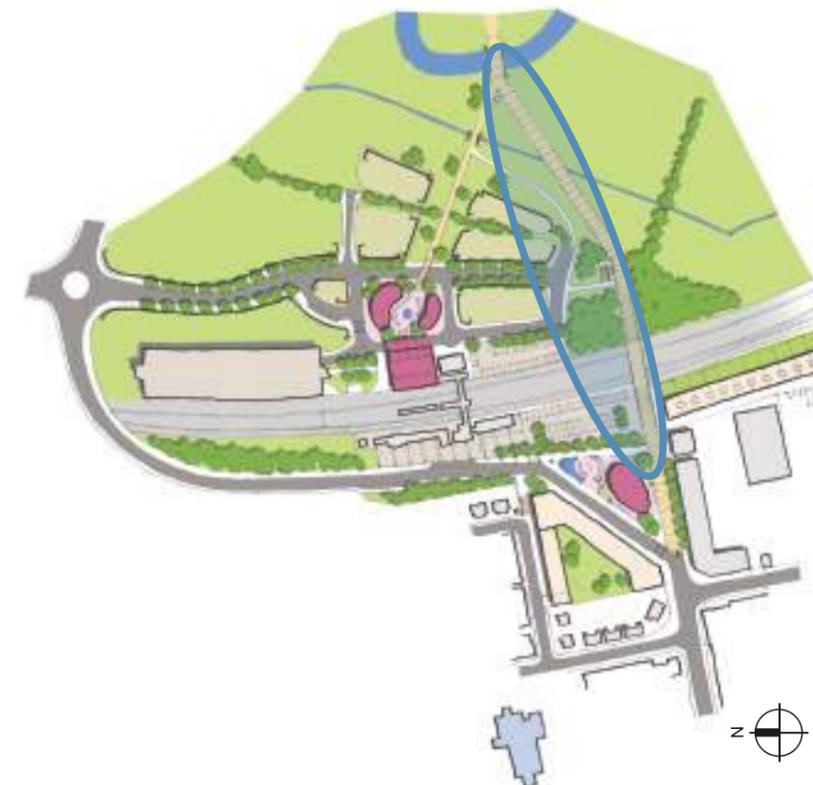
- ⑳ Direct foot / cycle link; buildings set back for clear view to park / station.
- ㉑ Opportunity to retain landscape feature (field boundary).
- ㉒ Buildings kept low for visual connectivity; best facades front on to key public realm.
- ㉓ 6-storey car park as consented; height mitigated by road bridge levels.
- ㉔ Wellingborough wayfinding art at key spots.

Station environment - new pedestrian and cycle bridge over railway

By modifying the highway connection between Midland Road and Route 4 to give a more direct route and view to the station, it should be feasible to create sloping pedestrianised paths rising from the end of Midland Road and from the station up towards a new footbridge over the railway. By retaining most of the block of existing woodland on the east side, a stretch of the bridge could become a treetop walk, similar to the one at Kew Gardens.

The bridge, if generously wide, could become a visitor attraction in its own right, incorporating public furniture and features, and offering fantastic views along the Ise and Nene valleys.

This concept has been developed with only very general information on existing ground levels, and assumptions on required clearance above rail tracks are based on Fereday Pollard's experience on other station projects. Detailed surveys and engagement with key stakeholders including Network Rail are needed to develop the proposal in more detail.



High Line, New York [James Corner Field/ Piet Oudolf]



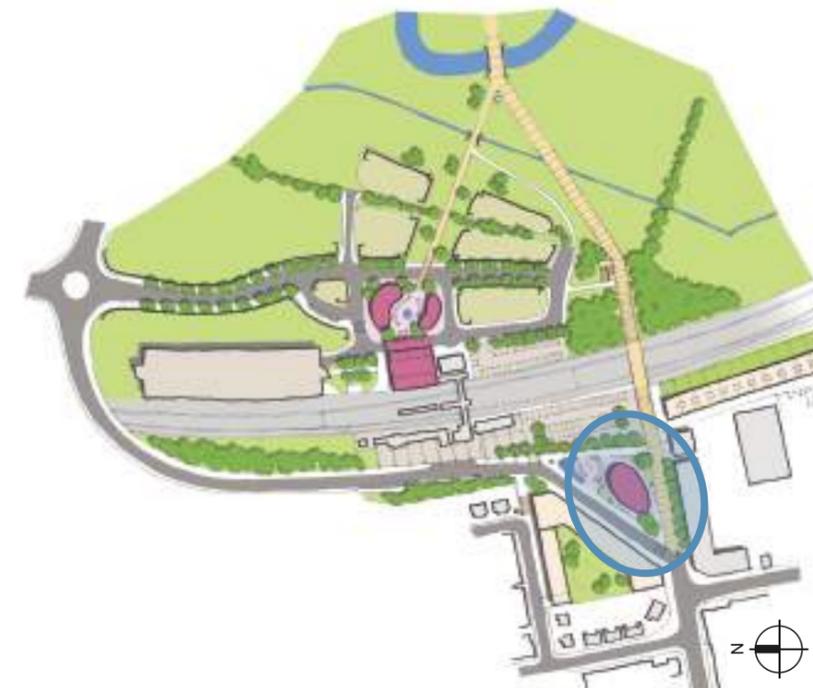
Tramway, Rainham Marshes [Peter Beard LANDROOM]



Kew treetop walk [Marks Barfield]

Station environment - The Tilt - sloping public plaza with signature building

The manipulation of ground levels sloping up from the station and from Midland Road to the new footbridge would create a slanted piazza with great potential as a unique sculptural public space, directly visible from the station and providing a strong sense of arrival and welcome to Wellingborough. A fountain, artwork or bespoke wayfinding at its apex could reinforce its identity. The location could be exploited by a small feature building, perhaps used as a cultural or creative hub to showcase the town's attractions. Timing permitting, this might be built as a 'pop-up' marketing pavilion for the new development before converting to long term use.

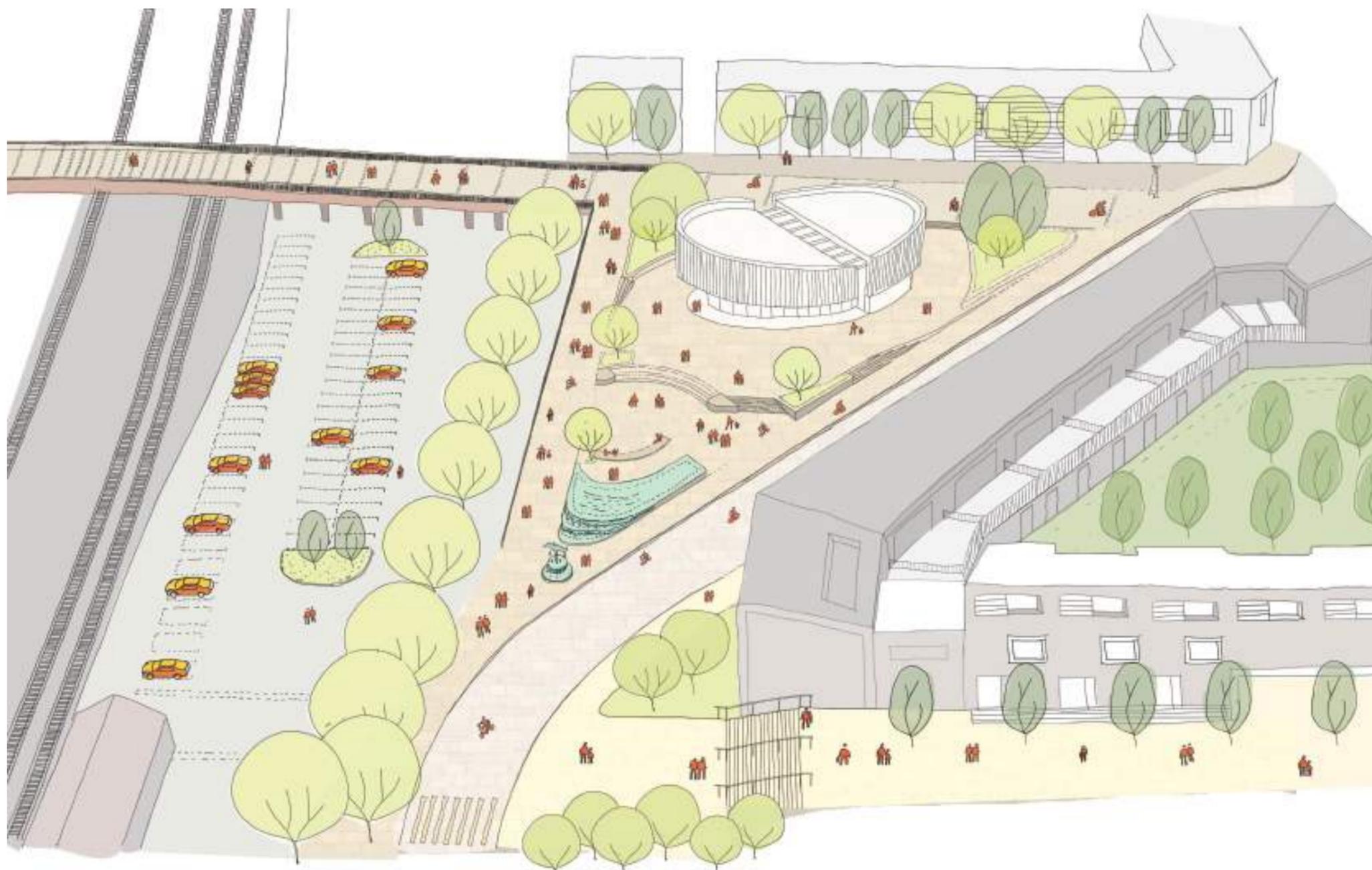


Sketch visualisation from tilted piazza to railway station

Public square, Banyoles [Mias Arquitectes]



Station environment - The Tilt - sloping public plaza with signature building



Sketch axonometric towards new footbridge, showing tilted piazza and showcase building, given enclosure by new residential, live-work and business start up development

Station environment - potential development sites and building types

Visible from all sides, the showcase building on the public plaza must be an architectural gem of the highest quality, designed 'in the round'.

The location close to a transport hub, accessed sustainably by public transport, could be affordable and attractive to business, particularly as a hub to encourage start-up companies in line with planning policies to encourage local jobs and discourage out-commuting to London. Mixed use schemes with high quality architecture of a scale appropriate to Wellingborough could also incorporate live-work units, residential, communal facilities and modest retail, but shopping and civic functions should not replicate or compete with the historic town centre, already under pressure from out-of-town retail parks.

Historic buildings like the listed train shed could be repurposed and integrated in the 'offer'.



Above - Media Library, Thionville [Dominique Coulon];
Carousel Pavilion, Stamford Gray Organschi Architects]



Residential/ live work units, Accordia, Cambridge [Fielden
Clegg Bradley]



Portsoken Pavilion, City of London [Make Architects]



Mixed use regeneration around restored buildings - Ram Brewery, Wandsworth [EPR Architects]



Station environment - east of the railway - landscape first

The new Town and Country park along the Lse valley is a major selling point of the Stanton Cross development and should become a valued Green Infrastructure resource - an amenity for existing and new residents, rich in biodiversity and helping manage surface water. To maximise the relationship [and premium property values] between landscape and new buildings, it will be crucial that both are considered holistically, to forestall over-urbanised development ruinous to the natural character and avoid constructing a barrier of large-scale warehouses between Wellingborough and its countryside.

We propose that the masterplan's layout of mixed-use plots should be refined to maintain open views and paths and allow fingers of landscape to permeate and inform the development, and that heights, massing and infrastructure be carefully considered to achieve optimum harmony between buildings and context. For instance, best facades - whether office or residential - should face the park and public realm, with service access and parking in secondary locations. At-grade parking with hedging and trees should be preferred over multi-storey structures, where the latter risk obstructing open views across the valley.

The new eastern station, rather than a modular building with little in common with the context, could be cost-effectively achieved as a lightweight canopy over ticket barriers - a contemporary park pavilion - allowing views to the valley and to the listed structure, without competing with the Victorian architecture.



Park pavilion canopies



Rain gardens and swales SuDS features



Landscape-led development. Clockwise from top left - Green Park, Reading [Fosters/ Edwards Gale Landscape]; Ram Brewery, Wandsworth [EPR Architects]; surface-level parking softened by trees; Alison Brooks/ Terence O'Rourke masterplanners]



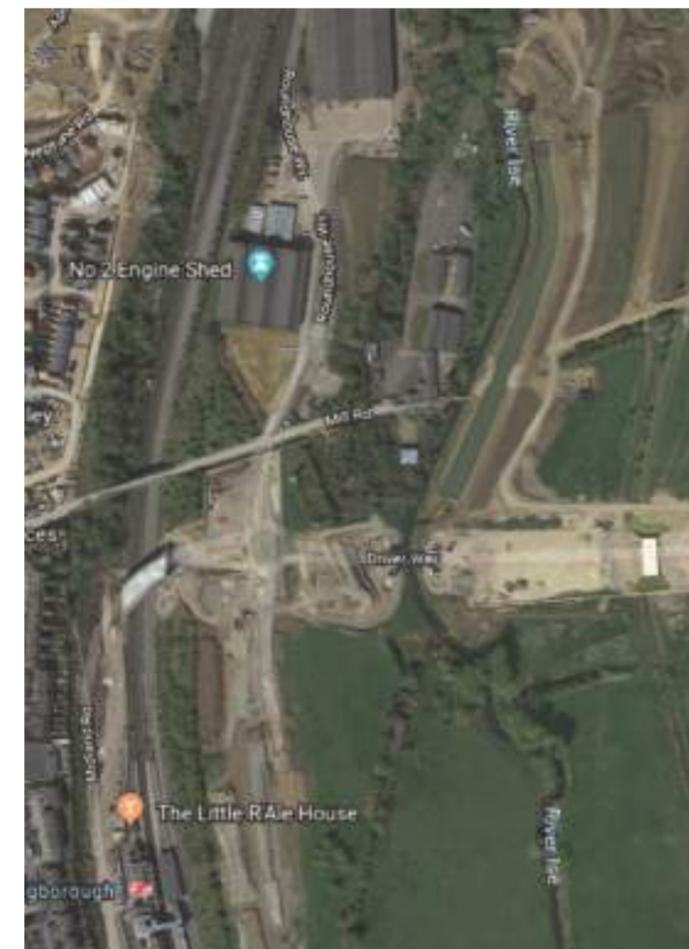
Innovation hubs and heritage-led regeneration

Historic buildings, restored, repurposed and enthusiastically curated as creative business start-up units and community cultural centres, have proved extremely successful in regenerating neighbourhoods. As the station area redevelops, the disused train shed next to the station may have potential beyond the additional platform space currently planned, as a quirky and attractive public-facing facility [similar to the Little R' Ale House micro pub on the other side of the station].

Although there are few remnants of industrial heritage in the immediate study area, the engine sheds in the former Neilson's Sidings north of Mill Road still appear in sound condition. Walter Neilson was a farmer who opened an ironstone quarry in the 19th and into the 20th Centuries, transporting the ore by a narrow gauge tramway south to Wellingborough station and then via rail. These buildings are of a scale to be converted into a significant creative start-up hub or other facility, and could provide a leitmotiv for the development of their neighbourhood.

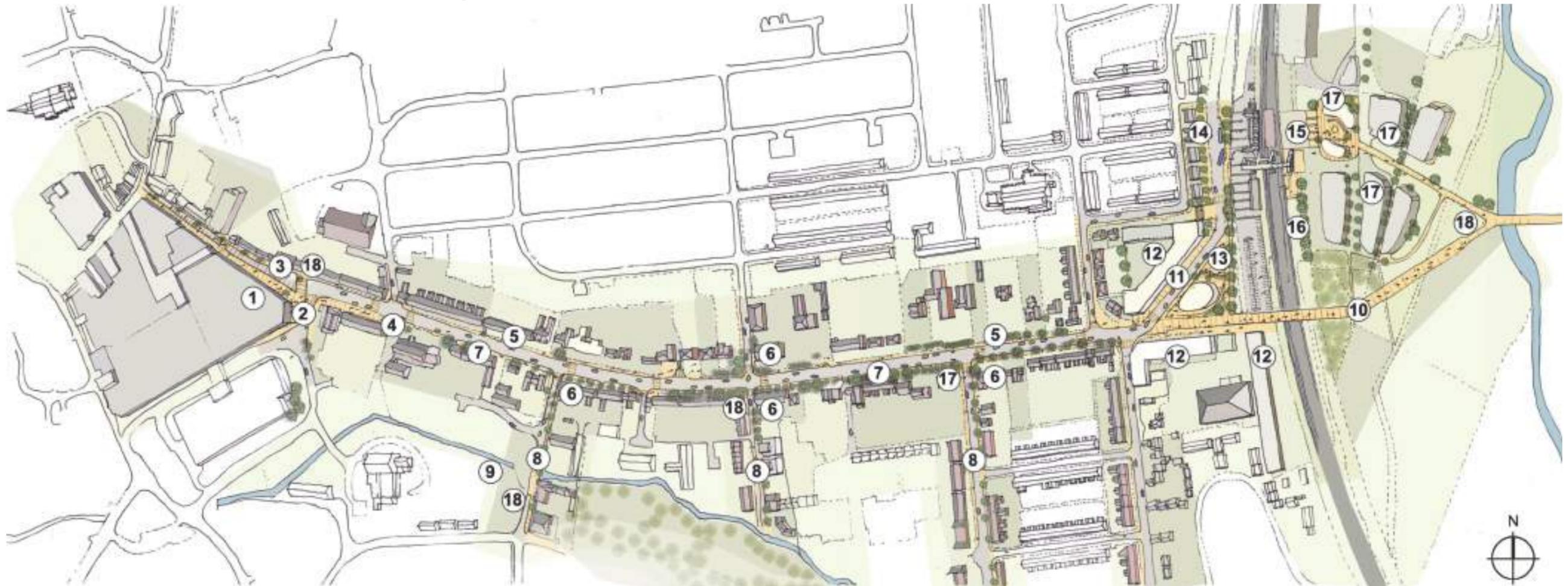


Above - Walthamstow Wetlands - former pumping station on reservoir transformed into wildlife sanctuary, now a popular visitor centre] [Witherford Watson Mann/ Kinnear Landscape Architects]
 Left - Duke Studios, Leeds; RAM Brewery quarter, Wandsworth [EPR architects]



08 Implementation Plan

Implementation plan - potential projects



Implementation plan - potential projects

- ① Remodel shopping centre frontage as gateway and to animate street
- ② Narrow the junction and potential traffic movement changes
- ③ Reconfigure and repave Midland Road town centre section
- ④ Declutter/ improve streetscape at church and police station
- ⑤ Widen and resurface north pavement full length of Midland Road
- ⑥ Pedestrian crossings and junction enhancements
- ⑦ Pavement improvements, tree planting and resurfacing south pavement
- ⑧ Pavement works and tree planting to Green Infrastructure link streets
- ⑨ Enhance ramp and create path to theatre and town centre along brook
- ⑩ New cycle & pedestrian bridge over railway to Stanton Cross
- ⑪ Modifications to Midland Road/ Route 4 junction
- ⑫ New development and parking changes west of station
- ⑬ New public realm and signature building
- ⑭ Greening to Route 4 acoustic wall
- ⑮ Modification to proposed east station building and forecourt
- ⑯ Modification to proposed east station multi-storey parking
- ⑰ Refinement to masterplanned mixed use & public realm to improve connectivity
- ⑱ Suite of feature 'Wellingborough Wayfinding' at key nodes

Implementation plan - potential projects

	Description	Comparative cost -£ - low; ££ - moderate; £££ - high	Speed - Quick; Medium; Long-term	Impact - High; Medium, Low	Interdependencies	Next steps
Town Gateway						
1	Remodel shopping centre - active frontage and gateway	£££	Long-term	***	2	Involve Town Vision team & stakeholders
2	Narrow the junction / possible traffic system changes	££	Long-term	***	1, 3	Involve Town Vision team, Highways & stakeholders
3	Reconfigure/ repave Midland Road with threshold feature	££	Medium	***	1,2	Involve Town Vision team, Highways & stakeholders
4	Declutter/ improve streetscape at church and police station	£	Quick	**	-	Audit with Highways & stakeholders; design
Midland Road between Victoria & Elsdon Roads						
5	Widen and resurface north pavement full length of Midland Road	££	Medium	**	-	Feasibility study, surveys, design with Highways/ stakeholder input
6	Pedestrian crossing and junction enhancements	££	Medium	**	-	Feasibility study, surveys, design with Highways/ stakeholder input
7	South pavement improvements, tree planting and resurfacing	££	Medium	**	-	Feasibility study, surveys, design with Highways/ stakeholder input
Green Infrastructure link streets						
8	Pavement works and tree planting	££	Medium	**	6	Feasibility study, surveys, design with Highways/ stakeholder input
9	Enhance ramp; create path to theatre and town centre along brook	£	Quick	**	-	Further study, surveys, design with Highways/ theatre/ stakeholder and Town Vision team input
Station environment						
10	New cycle & pedestrian bridge over railway to Stanton Cross	£££	Long-term	***	11, 12, 13	Feasibility study, surveys, design with Network Rail/ stakeholder input
Station environment west						
11	Modifications to Midland Road/ Route 4 junction	££	Medium	***	10, 12, 13	Feasibility studies, liaison with all stakeholders and masterplan needed for footbridge and all interrelated options west of station
12	New development and parking changes west of station	£££	Long-term	***	10, 11, 13	As 11
13	New public realm and signature building	£££	Long-term	***	10, 11, 13	As 11
14	Greening to Route 4 acoustic wall	£	Quick	**	-	
Station environment east						
15	Modification to proposed east station building and forecourt	£	Medium	**	-	Dependent on how close current scheme is to construction - to establish If feasible, then requires redesign work with stakeholder/ client input
16	Modification to proposed east station multi-storey parking	£	Medium	**	-	As 15
17	Refinement to masterplanned mixed use & public realm to improve connectivity	£	Long-term	***	10, 15, 16	Detailed design of plot and planning application could be relatively fast, though construction and developer involvement might be longer-term
Town - wide						
18	Suite of feature 'Wellingborough Wayfinding' at key nodes	£	Quick	**	-	Develop brief and procure design, for installation as locations are ready

09 Design Principles for other Radial Routes

Design Principles for other North Northamptonshire Radial Routes connecting to new communities

Clearly, some of the main issues affecting Midland Road and obstacles to connectivity with Stanton Cross are likely to affect many key radial routes across North Northamptonshire. In the case of Midland Road, the infrastructure barrier between existing and new communities is the railway; in other locations, it may equally take the form of the major highways and ring roads which constrain several towns. The Urban Structures Study 2015 assesses potential expansion sites across the region in terms of connectivity and provides development principles for each site; for Stanton Cross [formerly WEAST], two of its principles were -

- Make connections to radial routes as straight and direct as possible
- Improvements to gateway points to the site including the station

The fact that these recommendations have not been comprehensively adopted in planning new developments has led in large part to the problems identified by this study five years later.

Strategic-level recommendations

- 1. Timely.** Consider pedestrian and cycling connectivity as early as possible in the process - it is increasingly difficult to retrofit integration as individual proposals become concrete.
- 2. Collaborative and holistic.** Sustainable transport and Green Infrastructure by definition straddle planning and political boundaries; leadership structures are needed with the overview, authority and resources to ensure inter-departmental and stakeholder collaboration
- 3. Site specific.** Each radial route is unique and needs its own character assessment to determine appropriate interventions, encompassing -
 - Connectivity, directness and ease of movement/ accessibility
 - Character, including history
 - Amenity - attractiveness as place
 - Safety - from vehicles/ community safety

- Land use and function
- Spatial allocation and needs of different road users
- Enclosure and active/ dead frontage
- Legibility, gateways, nodes and focal points
- Sustainability and green infrastructure potential
- Study of neighbouring future developments
- Study of current/ future movement patterns and travel modes, and key attractors
- Identification of blights, barriers and challenges to connectivity

4. Changing cultures. To achieve the desired 'modal shift', proposals for physical improvements to facilitate sustainable mobility need to be part of a suite of coordinated initiatives, from better public transport, promotion of car-sharing, electric car and bike hire schemes, education and raising awareness on the benefits and opportunities for healthy travel in the area.

Design standards/ urban design principles

Since good public realm design depends on a thorough and caring understanding of place and context, it would be inappropriate and counter-productive to provide a set of rigid standards - for instance, for new development, materials, or cycle /footpath widths - based on a pilot project. Many of the environmental improvement proposals for Midland Road [for instance, increasing footway widths and new tree planting] may apply generically to streets elsewhere, and there may be merit in using design standards and materials palettes at a later stage to achieve consistency along a radial road or within a town, but each route will require bespoke solutions tailored to its character, issues and planned growth. The principles of good urban design, repeated below, however, should apply universally -

- Streets as pleasant places for all, not just vehicular movement corridors

- Address traffic dominance, for instance by narrowing carriageways and junctions, traffic calming, reducing speeds and a palette of materials to reinforce hierarchy of different users
- Safe streets - addressing perceived fear of crime and of road accidents
- Create distinctiveness through respecting and enhancing character
- Maximise direct connectivity and accommodate key desire lines
- Promote intuitive legibility by manipulating sightlines and creating character, amplified by high-quality wayfinding where needed
- Enhance Green Infrastructure - for instance, treed streets, good links to green spaces, Sustainable Urban Drainage and landscape features
- Good quality, robust, durable and easily-maintained materials
- Use new development to provide enclosure, active frontage and good connections to the radial route; avoid wide access roads and visible parking with negative impact on the street
- Use new development or townscape interventions to frame gateways and instil a sense of arrival

Considerations for future implementation

The aim of future studies, urban design work and masterplanning relating to all radial routes should be to establish a framework, adaptable to future growth and change, that allows a phased approach - from quick wins to higher-impact, more sophisticated interventions - to enable client bodies to identify short and longer term funding streams and put in place the structures to achieve optimum built schemes.

At the appropriate stage, all proposals will require engagement with stakeholders and with the public.

10 Next Steps

Next steps

The study has provided a useful insight into the main issues affecting the Midland Road and the barriers to movement and connectivity on this key radial route into Wellingborough. The work cross-cuts design, transport, infrastructure and movement, key to the delivery of attractive and functional streets and spaces for all and has established a set of key principles to overcome barriers to connections along key routes, in particular the link to and from the town centre, Wellingborough Train Station and the new Stanton Cross development.

The study has been developed in collaboration with key stakeholders and will provide a platform for further analysis, detailed projects and scheme development on individual aspects within the recommendations. In the short term, the Borough Council of Wellingborough will be considering the strategic level recommendations and reviewing the quick wins and priority projects in terms of how to develop, fund and implement these. The study will also be used to inform the Wellingborough Town Centre Design Guide and in the broader sense, the key principles established for the Midland Road will be used and applied to studies and projects on other radial routes across North Northamptonshire.

Appendix A - reference documents and useful links

Appendix A - references and useful links

Most of the planning policy and related documents referred to in the text and listed below can be downloaded from the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning and Delivery Unit [NNJDPU] website, and/ or from the Borough Council of Wellingborough. Transport strategies are available from Northamptonshire County Council website.

<http://www.nnjpdu.org.uk>

<http://www.wellingborough.gov.uk>

<https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk>

Local Plans -

- *Part 1 - The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031*
- *Part 2 - The Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough [January 2019]*
- *North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Map [interactive/ online]*

NNJPDU

North Northamptonshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan

North Northamptonshire Urban Structures Study, January 2015

Wellingborough

Stanton Cross Approved Masterplan, 2016 [and associated planning applications]

Wellingborough Town Centre Vision [2018 - ongoing] - Wellingborough Town

Centre High Level Review and Town Centre projects. Agreed at meeting of Town Centre Sub-Committee, Oct 18.

Wellingborough Town Centre and Retail Study, 2016

Wellingborough Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal, 2009

Wellingborough Public Realm Strategy, 2009, and Materials Palette, 2010

A spatial analysis of green infrastructure resources in Wellingborough Town [2016]

Trees and Landscape Supplementary Planning Document [East Northamptonshire and Wellingborough Councils, 2013]

Transport

Northamptonshire Transportation Plan, 2012

Thematic 'Daughter' Strategies, including Northamptonshire Cycling Strategy and Northamptonshire Walking Strategy, 2013

Wellingborough Town Transport Strategy, 2015

Propensity to Cycle Tool - <https://www.pct.bike/m/?r=northamptonshire>

River Nene

Destination Nene Valley Strategy - Destination Nene Valley Partnership - <https://nenevalley.net/>

River Nene Strategic Plan, 2010; Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area - River Nene National Park - <https://www.riverneneregionalpark.org/>

River Nene

Destination Nene Valley Strategy - Destination Nene Valley Partnership - <https://nenevalley.net/>

Key guidance on Streetscape and Green Infrastructure

Manual for Streets, Departments for Transport and of Communities and Local Government, 2007

London Cycling Design Standards, Transport for London, 2014

Designing for Walking, Planning for Cycling etc - Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, 2014/ 2015

Green Infrastructure - an integrated approach to land use - Landscape Institute Position Statement, 2013

Local history

The History and Antiquities of Wellingborough, John Cole, 1837

Free e-book, downloadable from Google Play - https://play.google.com/store/books/details/John_Cole_The_history_and_antiquities_of_Wellingbo?id=0RQHAAAAQAAJ